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# **The Invention of the Historic City**

**Building the Past in East Berlin  
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# The Invention of the Historic City – Building the Past in East Berlin

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# THE INVENTION OF THE HISTORIC CITY – BUILDING THE PAST IN EAST BERLIN 1970-1990

by

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## ABSTRACT

The idea of a “historic city” is a rather recent phenomenon. As a conceptual framework, it evolved over the course of the 1970s and 1980s from the intellectual foundations of modernist urban design. This is especially well illustrated in East Berlin, where a heterogeneous group of politicians, architects, and scholars called for an urban environment that provides the individual experience of historicity. Their ideas were most prominently infused in a series of showcase projects built during the 1980s. For the celebration of Berlin’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1987, some of the long-despised late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement neighborhoods were remodeled and fitted out with the insignia of historic every-day life. In addition, a number of representative architectural ensembles were built that made use of different historic styles.

The invention of the historic city collapsed the memories of different historic periods into a generic notion of “the past.” This process relied on a specific elasticity of the language employed by designers and theorists. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, terms such as preservation or reconstruction retained a positive connotation while simultaneously time undergoing a radical change in meaning. In the same way, the quasi-biological conception of the city as a body with a life cycle, where “obsolete” neighborhoods had to be regularly demolished, was gradually suspended.

Through both remodeling and new construction, the East German leaders and their collaborators initiated a renaissance of once neglected neighborhoods, which after the German reunification became prime locations for upscale housing and retail. Construction policy before and after the German reunification therefore has to be seen as a continuous development rather than a break. Despite the different political and economic system in the German Democratic Republic, East Berlin design politics during the 1970s and 1980s paralleled the approaches in Western countries, where real and imagined urban history was increasingly commodified and marketed to local elites and tourists. The historic city also became the conceptual background for a widely practiced exegesis of historic residues, through which Berlin’s middle classes claimed social and political legitimacy.

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## SPECIAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BArch	( <i>Bundesarchiv Berlin</i> ) Berlin Federal Archive
Central Committee	( <i>Zentralkomitee</i> ) The highest leadership organ of the Socialist Unity Party. In 1989, it had 165 members in 1989 and was directed by Head of State Erich Honecker. In practice, however, most decisions were taken by the Politburo, the inner circle of the Central Committee.
Chief Architect	( <i>Chefarchitekt</i> ). The leading official for city design, subordinate to the District Director of Construction, and with limited decision-making power.
Department of Special Projects	( <i>Abteilung Sondervorhaben</i> , later renamed <i>Generalbaudirektion des Ministeriums für Bauwesen</i> - General Office of Construction at the Ministry of Construction). An institution that supervised of the most prestigious construction projects in East Germany. Theoretically it was subordinated to the Ministry of Construction, but it had a great degree of decision-making powers. It was incorporated in 1974 and headed by Ehrhardt Gißke.
Department of Construction at the Central Committee	( <i>Abteilung Bauwesen beim Zentralkomitee</i> ). Leading party organ responsible for construction in East Germany. Since 1959 headed by Gerhard Trölitzsch
District	( <i>Bezirk</i> ) Administrative entity in the German Democratic Republic, comprising a city and the surrounding region, such as the districts of Leipzig or Neubrandenburg. The city of East Berlin was a district of its own. Not to be mixed up with city district ( <i>Stadtbezirk</i> ), a subdivision of a city, such as the Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, or Mitte districts in East Berlin.
District Director of Construction	( <i>Bezirksbaudirektor</i> , sometimes also <i>Stadtbaudirektor</i> ). The leading official for construction, superior to the Chief Architect, and responsible for most large construction projects in the city.
Economy Commission	( <i>Wirtschaftskommission</i> ) A subdivision of the Central Committee responsible for the state budget. Since 1976 headed by Günter Mittag, the second most powerful person in East Germany after Head of State Erich Honecker.
LAB	( <i>Landesarchiv Berlin</i> ) Berlin State Archive
<i>Magistrat</i>	The city government of East Berlin, headed by the mayor.
<i>Ministerrat</i>	Council of Ministers. The pro-forma government with predominantly representative functions.
Ministry of Construction	( <i>Ministerium für Bauwesen</i> ) Top civil (not party) authority over construction in East Germany. Since 1963 led by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker.
Politburo	( <i>Politbüro</i> , abbreviation for <i>Politisches Büro</i> – political office) The “government proper” of the German Democratic Republic and top decision-making committee. The Politburo was part of the Central Committee. It had 21 members in 1989, with an average age of 67 years.

*Staatsrat* The collective Head of State of the GDR, with predominantly representative functions.

Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands - SED*) The ruling party of the German Democratic Republic, often referred to as "the Party."

## INTRODUCTION

East German urban design – for large portions of the architectural world the term seems paradoxical. The endless estates of bleak standardized apartment blocks were apparently produced without any designer or architect. And this was all they built in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Or was it? More than fifteen years after Germany was reunified in 1990, architecture in East Germany is still largely seen as a footnote to modular housing. The numerous projects in the late phase of the GDR that do not fit this stereotype are ignored, or at best acknowledged as rare and inconsistent exceptions.

It is the objective of this study to add the forgotten final chapter to the history of East German urban design, focusing on the capital city East Berlin. This period spans from approximately 1970 to the end of the GDR. It coincides with the regime of Erich Honecker, who headed the “First Socialist State on German Soil” from 1971 to 1989. During that period, politicians, architects, and planners actively pursued the construction of a “historic city”; an urban environment that responded both to a new concern with the past, and to the political and ideological goals of the present. Their strategies paralleled the transformation of many capitalist cities at the time where the long-scorned inner-city districts were increasingly renovated for well-to-do residents and tourists and were outfitted out with the insignia of a real or invented past.

While some of these projects were actually carried out, such as the reconstructed medieval core *Nikolaiviertel* (Nikolai Quarter), others, such as the commercial and entertainment center along the boulevard *Friedrichstraße* remained unfinished at the time of German reunification. Most of these projects were indebted to Berlin's history, particularly the glamour of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were built of prefabricated concrete elements, which abstracted the previously unpopular slanted roofs, bay windows, ornamental stucco façades, backyards, and perimeter blocks. At the same time they made random references to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These buildings appear brash and garish today. They convey an image of socialist urban design that is quite different from the

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cliché of bleak standardized slab developments. Next to these examples of GDR postmodernism, a growing interest in historic preservation led to the remodeling of some of the long neglected historic neighborhoods, which were decorated with period accessories such as gas lamps, placard columns, and hand-painted shop signs to provide an “authentic” historic atmosphere. They challenged the standard Western view that East German construction merely completed the job that the bombers of the Second World War had left unfinished.<sup>1</sup> The shift towards neo-historical urban design, contemporaneous to the construction of several large modernist highrise developments in the East Berlin periphery, bore a greater parallel to West German design policy than is usually conceded. The emerging preoccupation with historical architecture was tied to a series of fixed images of the historic city whose meaning proved to be extremely flexible. These images gained significance at a time when the utopian visions of modernism had to be increasingly negotiated with the demands of the existing city. Scholars and researchers developed a growing concern with everyday urban life, and, as a result, an increasingly individualized view on the city.

How did the historic city become such an important image in the last decades of the German Democratic Republic? How did a regime, which until the early 1970s supported modernism as the only appropriate architectural expression of a socialist society, less than 15 years later represent itself with rebuilt gothic and baroque churches, remodeled 19<sup>th</sup>-century residences, and newly erected pseudo-historical department stores? And how was this shift situated in the social and political context in East Germany and its neighboring countries? To answer these questions, the present study follows a twofold approach. On the one hand, it traces the invention of the historic city as an intellectual endeavor that evolved from the foundations of modernism. On the other hand, it analyzes a number of architectural projects that significantly transformed the physical aspect of East Berlin, relating them to both the specific cultural and political background in East Germany at the time and to the international context of urban restructuring.

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<sup>1</sup> The Baedeker tour guide for the reunified Berlin writes under the entry “Prenzlauer Berg”: “What the bombs were not able to complete was ‘accomplished’ by the East Berlin city administration...” (“Was jedoch die Bomben nicht schafften, ‘gelang’ dem Ost-Berliner Magistrat...”) *Baedeker Berlin*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (Ostfildern: Baedeker, 1997): 209.

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My study connects the evolution of this new historic city to a reconceptualization of basic urban design concepts. During the 1960s the city was construed for the most part as an organism that followed life cycles of demolition and renewal. This conception gradually faded over the course of the 1970s and gave way to one that emphasized incremental change and historic continuity. Set against the background of a socialist system, as it turns out, the model was much less influential on the premises of East Berlin urban design than one might expect.

Like any scholar writing on East German history, I had to face a number of methodological problems. The first concerns the available sources. The archives of the late German Democratic Republic are open to the public now. From the correspondence of any given city district architect to the protocols of the Politburo meetings, all documents are generally accessible, often without the thirty-year restriction that many West German archives apply for politically sensitive materials. I soon realized, however, that the apparent abundance of historical information was fallacious. In the German Democratic Republic, oral culture played a much more significant role than in West Germany. Resources were limited, and written publications were much scarcer than in any capitalist society. If new ideas were published, they were often phrased in a roundabout way so not to rouse the suspicion of the superiors. The same applies to official correspondence. Not writing down certain ideas was a means to reduce the danger of state repression. The general estimation of nearly all East Germans I spoke with was that "one could say much more than one could write." For example, oppositional thinkers who were barred from publication were often still allowed to speak on meetings of professional organizations and discuss their ideas. As a consequence, their influence to a great degree relied on their oral presentations of which there are no records other than the memories of those who attended them. It was clear to me that relying exclusively on written sources I would neglect a great portion of the debates that lay at the bottom of East German cultural history. I therefore decided that interviews with witnesses had to play a key role in my investigation.

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Retracing oral culture through interviews was challenging for a number of reasons. The memories of my interview partners appeared to be a conglomerate of remembrance, wishful thinking, self-presentation, and personal judgments in which the lines between intuition and invention are impossible to draw. While this is true for any personal recollection, it was especially palpable in the German context, where the fact of being from the East and having lived and worked under a socialist regime in and of itself is political. I addressed this particular situation with a twofold approach. On the one hand, I always questioned the accuracy of personal memories. On the other hand, I used oral information to evaluate, structure, and order documents from the archives. Such information seemed reliable to me as long as it was given in a similar way by two or more different sources.

Interviewing former officials from the German Democratic Republic proved to be more complex than I had thought. First, during all interviews the constellation of interviewer and interviewee not merely influenced but implicitly set the parameters of the conversation. I, being a Westerner, was regarded as a representative of the winning power; my interview partners were Easterners and often felt the need to justify their own personal lives and actions under a regime that has been deeply discredited. At the same time they also attempted to clear the prejudices and preconceptions Westerners had about the East and once and forever set the record straight. To a certain point, I was able to reduce the tension that resulted from this situation by being upfront about my own persona. I grew up in West Germany and moved to West Berlin as a teenager, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. My own memories of the GDR are very limited. I started the research out of personal interest and with great sympathy for the particularities of East German culture. Since I studied at an American university and had lived abroad for several years, I had no interest in positioning myself in the swampy territory of Berlin's daily politics. And, after all, my objective was not to blame any of my interview partners for what had happened in East Germany but rather to understand the historical process.

A second obstacle was more intricate. The East German system had apparently trained its citizens in a particular form of ambiguous speech, where agency was hidden in endless sequences of passive

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voices. More than fifteen years after the dissolution of the once omnipotent *Stasi* (State Security Service), many of my interview partners still countered the question “who decided?” with skillful evasiveness, even if it referred to something as innocent as a bay window or a stucco ornament. Power, in East German collective memory, was exclusively exerted by “those above” – and few people seemed to remember who exactly they were and who collaborated in carrying out their orders. Disowning personal responsibility was obviously a strategy of professional survival under the East German dictatorship, and both former rulers and former subordinates still continue practicing it with eager virtuosity. This approach seems to have been internalized as an end in itself, to the point that it was applied even to those decisions that were widely applauded and could therefore be a source of personal pride. For example, former Politburo member Günter Schabowski was extremely hesitant to talk about his decision to preserve the Rykestraße historic neighborhood after citizens had protested against the local governments’ demolition plans, even though his role is well documented in letters and memos. Generally, my interview partners tended to be more opaque the higher a position they had assumed within the system. For example Günter Peters, who had served as East Berlin’s Director of Construction for almost two decades, would not answer any questions about his personal leeway in modifying the Politburo’s directives. In contrast, those who obviously had been in less powerful positions were more precise in their accounts. The same applied for former writers and academics in comparison to former officials and politicians. Their oral accounts were especially important to redraw the constellations of power within the complex East German political hierarchy. The influence of a particular official was not necessarily proportional to his (or in very few cases her) actual position within the party ladder. Beyond the well-known fact that all power in the German Democratic Republic originated from the Politburo there was very little written information about the decision-making power of certain individuals. In this context, the memories of colleagues and inferiors were of much value.

Of my interview partners, only the architect and university professor Gustav Hardt-Waltherr Hämer was from West Germany. All the others were former East German citizens. Most had been politicians or construction officials: next to Politburo member Günter Schabowski and Director of Construction

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Günter Peters there were high-ranking construction official Gerhard Trölitze and Chief Architect Roland Korn as well as Ludwig Deiters, the long-time head of the Historic Preservation Authority and his successor Peter Goralczyk. In addition, the architects Dorothea Krause, Manfred Zache, and Dorothea Tscheschner had been employed with the local East Berlin Office of Construction where they had supervised different construction projects. Six other interview partners were academics: sociologist Fred Staufenbiel and architectural theorist Bruno Flierl belonged to the founding generation of the GDR; architects Simone Hain and Gerd Zimmermann, sociologist Christine Hannemann, and urban planner Harald Kegler had just started their professional careers when the East German state ceased to exist. Manfred Prasser and Günter Stahn were first and foremost practicing architects, whereas Wolfgang Kil was trained as an architect but soon became a journalist writing on matters of art and architecture.

The degree up to which my interview partners could be classified as supporters of the East German regime varied from case to case, being dissimilar in different contexts and at different stages of their careers. Many of those who kept a high profile as critical voices, such as Bruno Flierl or Dorothea Tscheschner, at the same time strongly identified with the socialist regime under which they lived and would have rather seen it change than fail – after all, at least for their generation who had grown up before the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, remaining in East Germany had been a matter of choice. On the other hand, a loyal socialist and convinced party member such as Fred Staufenbiel on several occasions defied his dogmatic colleagues and superiors for the sake of academic freedom, and in these particular contexts could be considered a dissident. I admire the courage of anyone who at some point in his or her life resisted being compromised by a totalitarian regime; at the same time the question of personal integrity under the conditions of dictatorship is not part of this study.

My particular perspective also brackets out what for most former East Germans at a personal level were the fundamental features of the state they lived in: the daily negotiations with the ruling ideology and the powers that be, the comprehensive health-care and social security, the ubiquity of the State Security Service, the absence of unemployment and homelessness, the continuous mistrust

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against the next-door-neighbor, the unqualified solidarity and neighborly help, the omnipresent danger of personal repression, the jokes and the double entendre, the constant need for improvisation, the security and the protection, in short, all the small details that made up everyday life in the German Democratic Republic and that are often so difficult to understand for the outsider. The exclusion of these qualities of daily life, however, is intentional. Anyone who writes the intellectual history of a socialist state has to face the often highly contradictory relation between an idea and its reception among the decision-makers. Being rooted in socialist thinking was no guaranty that an idea was well-received by the rulers; being a steadfast supporter of the system did not mean that one could not face severe repression for making the wrong statement in the wrong context. On the other hand, there were numerous niches for critical thinking across ideological boundaries. Instead of agents and individual biographies, therefore, I chose to look at texts and buildings. Instead of analyzing why and under which context a particular individual was allowed to circulate a particular idea I start my investigation with the outcomes of East German architectural culture – both physical and written - and look at the underlying conceptions from the perspective of the buildings and texts they spawned.

My investigation is limited on East Berlin and only marginally touches on the development in the rest of East Germany, in other socialist countries, and in the West. This is not only for constraints of time and space. I believe that East Berlin in many respects was exemplary rather than extraordinary. It was not only a capital, a divided half, and a showcase of the Eastern Bloc, but at the same time a place where prevalent social and cultural phenomena manifested in a condensed form. Looking at East Berlin therefore means taking a slice from a compound of reciprocities that does not only comprise the German Democratic Republic but at the same time West Germany and large portions of Europe and North America. The conditions of modernity and its expression in architecture and urban design were similar in numerous industrialized countries; its modifications over the course of the 1970s and 1980s therefore have to be regarded as driven by reciprocal influences. In this system, East Berlin occupied a conceptual node whose interconnections reached beyond the boundaries of the city and the same time had a lasting influence beyond the end of the socialist regime. Although post-reunification policy in the Eastern half of Berlin lay almost exclusively in the hands of West Germans, the German

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reunification was hardly a “zero hour.” Contrary to what many critics claim there was a significant degree of continuity that extended beyond the end of the socialist era.

The first section of my study (chapters 1-3) provides an introduction into the topic, a review of the existing literature, and an overview over the political structures that determined construction in East Germany.

The second section (chapters 4-8) traces the idea of historic city in the East German context. Chapter 4 recounts the prevalent view on old buildings during the 1960s. At the time, the East German government carried out comprehensive demolitions, which critics later dubbed the “Second Destruction of Berlin.” Chapter 5 relates the destruction that took place to the concept of “obsolescence,” which determined East German design policy at the time. This idea was rooted in a quasi-biological idea of an “urban life cycle,” after the completion of which any neighborhood inevitably had to be torn down and built anew. Obsolescence gradually lost significance over the course of the 1970s as the idea of the historic city gained momentum. Chapter 6 investigates the contradictory history of the term *Rekonstruktion* (reconstruction), which until the 1960s stood for “demolition and rebuilding” and over the course of the 1970s and 1980s changed toward “preservation and remodeling of existing structures.” Chapters 7 and 8 set the work of the most eminent East German architectural theorists in the context of actual construction, and trace the origins of urban sociology in East Germany.

The third section (chapters 9 and 10) provides an overview of the construction policy during the Honecker era (1971-1989). It documents the decision-making processes that led to the first large-scale remodeling projects of historic tenement neighborhoods in East Berlin which were carried out in the early 1970s. It shows that, contrary to popular belief, these tenement remodeling projects were still indebted to the conception of “urban life cycles” and the logic of periodic demolition and rebuilding.

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The fourth section (chapters 11 to 14) analyzes the showcase projects in East Berlin's center that were planned in the 1980s and for the most part carried out to celebrate Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1987. These include the historicizing reconstruction of the medieval nucleus *Nikolaiviertel* (Nikolai Quarter), the rebuilding of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century boulevard *Friedrichstraße* with its adjacent baroque and neoclassical buildings, and the remodeling of the long-neglected tenement neighborhoods around *Sophienstraße* and *Husemannstraße* in the central Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg districts.

# I. BERLIN'S 750<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AND THE HISTORIC CITY

## Chapter 1: Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1987

The historical Berlin was scheduled for completion in 1987. The oldest documentary evidence of Berlin's existence is in a parchment from 1237, and for "the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary" both East and West Berlin foresaw extensive celebrations of the city's historic heritage.<sup>2</sup> In the East, however, the goal was far more ambitious. Only two years before the unexpected fall of the Berlin Wall, the socialist leaders planned to reconstruct a city center that was at the same time historic and socialist. It would heavily reference Berlin's historic development, particularly the glamour of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and at the same time convey the achievements of the socialist regime.

The showcase projects of the 1980s marked the culmination of an urban design approach that had gradually superseded the modernist conceptions of the late 1950s and 1960s. Most were originally planned without specific reference to the anniversary and were subsequently included in the festivities. In 1985 the East German leaders compiled a list of architectural tasks to be finished by the year of the anniversary, which set a clear focus on the densely built areas in the three inner-city districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain.<sup>3</sup> Three projects in the Mitte district were especially significant. On the boulevard Friedrichstraße, the socialist leaders intended to revive the splendor of the early 1900s, when the street was a hub of metropolitan commerce and nightlife. The Friedrichstraße development included the redesign of the adjacent Platz der Akademie (now Gendarmenmarkt) on which the baroque German and French Churches and Schinkel's Playhouse from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century were rebuilt according to the historical model. In the *Nikolaiviertel* (Nikolai Quarter), a neighborhood in Berlin's center which like the Platz der Akademie had been almost

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<sup>2</sup> The precious document, ironically, is merely a protocol of some juridical convention of minor importance. It lists the names of those who attended, including that of certain minister Symon "from Cölln" (one of the two adjacent settlements on the Spree River that would later unify as Berlin).

<sup>3</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, final copy. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095: 67-79. [There are two protocols of every Politburo meeting: the *Arbeitsprotokoll* – work copy – and the *Reinschrift* – final copy. The work copy often contains more detailed information, such as the names of the officials who prepared certain proposals.]

## Chapter 1: Berlin's 750th Anniversary in 1987

completely destroyed in the Second World War, the government planned to replicate a medieval old town. In Sophienstraße, a residential street with buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, they attempted to convey an idea of Old Berlin through the reconstruction of historic façades, shops, and restaurants.<sup>4</sup> A fourth historicizing urban design project, the “historically accurate” remodeling of tenement buildings, stores, and street furniture of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century street Husemannstraße in the Prenzlauer Berg district was subsequently included in the festivities. In addition, numerous small tenement renovation projects were launched. While *Nikolaiviertel*, Sophienstraße, and Husemannstraße were completed by 1987, (and since then have undergone only small changes), Friedrichstraße largely stayed under construction until 1990. The government of the reunified city has since abandoned the socialist plans, demolished the unfinished buildings, and commissioned international architects to redesign the boulevard.

The architectural projects of the 1980s also shared a revised attitude towards Berlin's famous *Mietskasernen* (rental barracks) – late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements with five-stories, an ornamental stucco façade towards the street, and backyards with barns and workshops in the inner parts of the block.<sup>5</sup> In the late 1950s and 1960s, both East and West Berlin had sponsored the state-sanctioned demolition of these tenements. This policy, dubbed by its critics the “second destruction of Berlin,” had been fueled both by the promise of a “new Berlin” and by the notoriously bad reputation of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>4</sup> Other focuses were put on the façades of squares and great thoroughfares, such as the Straße der Befreiung in the Friedrichshain and Lichtenberg districts, the Bersarinplatz and Stralauer Allee in the Friedrichshain district, and the Senefelder Platz in the Prenzlauer Berg district. Also a few projects in the outer districts of Köpenick, Weißensee, and Marzahn were mentioned. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, final copy. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095: 67-79.

<sup>5</sup> In the following, I will use “tenement” as a translation of the German *Mietskaserne* (rental barrack, pejorative) or *Mietshaus* (rental building, neutral). Both terms denote the five-story apartment buildings constructed before the First World War, specifically during the *Gründerzeit* (“founding period”), which followed the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. Following the standards in most German publications, I will not distinguish between luxurious upper class apartments and low-standard working-class dwellings, which were often erected in different wings of the same building. In German publications, the *Mietskasernen* are also referred to as *Altbauten* (old buildings). This term is for example used in Berlin's tenant legislation, where it denotes any building completed before the end of the Second World War. In this legal sense, *Altbauten* also includes the early modernist *Siedlungen* of the Weimar Republic, which were never reviled. The great majority of Berlin's *Altbauten* are nevertheless the *Mietskasernen*. In popular use, like in most texts I quote, *Altbauten* and *Mietskasernen* are synonyms.

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architecture. The rage against Berlin's "tenement city" (*Mietskasernenstadt*) – which until the 1950s comprised more than two thirds of the city's urban fabric<sup>6</sup> - was rooted in a persistent cultural construct that connected the architectural characteristics of these buildings to the social misery and political oppression of the early industrial era. In East Berlin at least, this negative view gradually changed in the 1960s. Already by the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention of the ruling Socialist Unity Party in 1962, the Head of State, Walter Ulbricht, had called for a greater attention to the tenement neighborhoods – probably with a more economical use of resources in mind.<sup>7</sup> In 1972, the first large-scale remodeling project was started around Arnimplatz in the Prenzlauer Berg district. The Housing Program, set forth in 1973 under the newly appointed leader Erich Honecker, promised a "solution to the housing question by 1990" and comprised both new construction and the preservation of old buildings. And in 1976 the Politburo mandated that new construction in East Berlin should increasingly take place in the inner city, that is, between and in relation to the existing tenement buildings. At the same time, the remaining tenement buildings were preserved and refurbished – a policy that became known as *komplexe Rekonstruktion* ("complex reconstruction").<sup>8</sup> It has to be mentioned that the attempts to preserve and renovate tenements were restricted by the limited resources of the flagging socialist economy. Thus they were in no way sufficient to stop the decay of most historic neighborhoods. This also explains why these buildings were often overlooked by scholars studying the period. However, over the course of the 1970s and 1980s the reputation of the tenements improved significantly. They were no longer connected with oppression and overcrowding but increasingly acknowledged as acceptable dwellings. The 1987 projects thus stood at the peak of a period in which a conception of the historic city increasingly determined East Berlin's urban design policy.

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<sup>6</sup> Günter Peters, *Gesamtberliner Stadtentwicklung* (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, 1992): 22.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Ulbricht called for individual solutions that varied between demolition and new construction, to the preservation of the existing buildings. See quotation in Peter Doehler, "Die sozialistische Umgestaltung der alten Wohngebiete der Städte in der DDR – Ziel, Aufgaben und Wege," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1963): 457.

<sup>8</sup> In West Berlin, a similar policy was developed around the same time and called *behutsame Stadterneuerung* (Careful Urban Renewal). It meant a remodeling of old (mostly late 19<sup>th</sup> century tenement) neighborhoods while conserving most buildings and providing rent subsidies for the tenants. The policy went along with the concept of *kritische Rekonstruktion* (Critical Reconstruction) which referred to new construction in the inner city and contained formal references to prewar buildings.

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The concept of a "historic neighborhood" as promoted by the East German leaders during the 1980s incorporated several historical periods. The official rhetoric made little distinction between late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements and buildings from other periods. The baroque Knoblauch House and Ephraim Palace in the Nikolaiviertel were summarized under the term *Altbauten* (old buildings) in the same way as the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements on Husemannstraße. The same confusion applied to the street plans. The *Nikolaiviertel* was laid out as a late-medieval city foundation, Friedrichstraße as a baroque axis, Sophienstraße as a 18<sup>th</sup> century suburb, and Husemannstraße as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century city extension. The differences were hardly ever mentioned, and neither were any differentiations in living conditions between these neighborhoods. Before the remodeling, both Sophienstraße and Husemannstraße were intact neighborhoods with only marginal wartime destruction. Both were predominantly defined by late-19<sup>th</sup>-century working class tenements, which in the case of the Sophienstraße were intermingled with some bourgeois apartment buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Nikolaiviertel had been almost completely leveled in the war and was comprised of ruins and green areas, while on Friedrichstraße a few surviving commercial buildings from the early 1900s were now surrounded by empty lots. In the vision of East German officials, all three areas became "reconstructed historic neighborhoods."

History was en vogue in the East Berlin of the 1980s. During the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, the socialist leaders promoted anything historical and mobilized all resources that were in any way connected to "tradition." The list of measures to be taken for the year 1987 – codified in the 1985 Politburo resolution – included events as diverse as the re-release of the record "Marlene Dietrich sings Old Berlin Songs," and the local folklore radio show "The Berliner loves music."<sup>9</sup> The state-owned film company DEFA was to produce historical movies such as the documentation "It began in Berlin," or the portrayal of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century artist and communist activist Käthe Kollwitz.<sup>10</sup> The city administration was ordered to install bronze plaques on historic buildings, such as the meetinghouse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Berliner Handwerkerverein* (Berlin Craftsmen's Association) on Sophienstraße, the rebuilt house of 18<sup>th</sup> century poet Gotthold Ephraim Lessing on Nikolaikirchplatz, and the short-time

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<sup>9</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21: 20-23.

<sup>10</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21: 133.

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residence of Karl Marx on Hermann-Matern-Straße (now Luisenstraße).<sup>11</sup> The list even included the schedule of theatre plays, which simply because they were performed in large Berlin theatres, were connected to the historic dimension of Berlin as a focus of cultural life.<sup>12</sup>

Only two decades earlier there had been very few references to history or tradition. Construction was comprehensively based on the tenets of modernism. On the first Building Conference in 1955, the East German leaders mandated the “industrialization of the building industry,” which was carried out between 1963 and 1968.<sup>13</sup> Construction firms were merged to form large *Kombinate* (state-owned construction companies); individual design disappeared in favor of mass production of standardized concrete blocks. As a consequence, the diversity of traditional craft and technology gradually vanished to the extent that by the end of the GDR prefabricated concrete slabs had virtually become the only method of construction. They were bleak and shoddy, but easy to build. Hence, as critic Bruno Flierl pointed out, “design for the working class” no longer met the needs of the workers who inhabited the new buildings but rather those who produced them.<sup>14</sup> East German construction became more and more a synonym for *die Platte* – the slab. The first developments were completed in the late 1960s. They were almost immediately criticized as ugly and monotonous, and at the same time celebrated by their inhabitants for the central heating and running warm water they provided. The criticism did not lessen the East German leaders determination to uphold this cheap and efficient construction method, which in their eyes was the only way to provide their citizens with sufficient apartments at an acceptable living standard. The debates in the following two decades, both at an academic and at a professional level, can be interpreted as attempts to broaden, diversify, complement, or abolish the use of “the slab.”

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<sup>11</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21: 71.

<sup>12</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21: 87-114.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 56 and 62.

<sup>14</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 67.

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In the late 1960s, still under Head of State Walter Ulbricht, East Berlin's center was redesigned. The 368 meter high Television Tower – to date Germany's tallest building – was built on the vanishing point of Berlin's radial boulevards, marking the center of the city to viewers from both East and West Berlin. It was surrounded by the *Centrum* department store, the thirty-seven-story *Hotel Stadt Berlin*, and numerous highrise residential buildings. The ensemble was completed in 1969. The redesign, however, was limited to the area around the Alexanderplatz and did not extend to the tenement neighborhoods in the surrounding Mitte, Friedrichshain, and Prenzlauer Berg districts.

In 1971 Erich Honecker became Head of State. Almost immediately after his ascent to power, he developed the ambitious Housing Program, which was passed in 1973. The socialist leaders planned to construct more than 3 million apartments in East Germany by 1990, of which approximately 2 million were actually built. The Housing Program proclaimed the *Einheit von Neubau, Modernisierung und Erhaltung* ("Unity of New Construction, Modernization, and Preservation") and explicitly included the production of "new" apartments through the rehabilitation of old buildings. The first large-scale tenement renovations in East Berlin were the projects on Arnimplatz (1973-1977, approximately 2300 apartments) and Arkonaplatz (1970-1984, approximately 900 apartments). They nevertheless appear small in comparison with the large-scale developments on East Berlin's periphery that were started at the same time. Marzahn (started in 1977), Hellersdorf (started in 1981), and Hohenschönhausen (started in 1982) together housed approximately 300,000 of East Berlin's 1.3 million residents in 1989.

During the Honecker era, the state leaders increasingly promoted an awareness for historic events and locations. In line with the Soviet doctrine of peaceful coexistence, Honecker pursued the establishment of East Germany as an independent nation and abandoned German reunification as a long-term goal of socialist policy.<sup>15</sup> In the new understanding of the socialist leaders there was a "progressive" (East) German nation and a "bourgeois" (West) German nation. This allowed the socialist leaders to

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<sup>15</sup> The constitution of the GDR was changed on October 7, 1974, and the German reunification as a goal of East German policy was removed. *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* no. 47 (1974): 425.

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rediscover certain pre-socialist traditions as their own. As a result, the German Democratic Republic forcefully reclaimed portions of German history that previously had been considered alien to the socialist cause, such as the bourgeois and noble classes and the spaces where they had lived and acted. Prussian King Friedrich II "the Great," once reviled as a feudal exploiter who strengthened Prussian militarism, was redeemed as one of the 18<sup>th</sup> century's most progressive rulers who supported Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire. His equestrian statue by Christian Daniel Rauch, taken down for political reasons in the 1950s, was set up again on its old position on the boulevard Unter den Linden in 1980.<sup>16</sup> Also Count Karl vom Stein, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century politician, was rediscovered as "a representative of those liberal reformist noblemen who defied the foreign Napoleonic occupation and supported progress with their bourgeois reforms [such as the abolition of serfdom in Prussia]." His bronze monument was set up on southern side of the boulevard Unter den Linden in 1981, a few yards from the Friedrich II monument.<sup>17</sup> Even Martin Luther, on the occasion of his 500<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1983, was extensively celebrated as a "progressive element," despite the fact that he had supported the nobility during the Peasants' War and repeatedly preached unconditional obedience to secular feudal lords.<sup>18</sup>

The architectural showcase projects from the 1970s and 1980s reflect the change in focus. The buildings erected during the 1970s were mostly modernist, while the ones from the 1980s made increasingly use of historic references. Since the early 1970s, all prestigious projects in East Berlin were supervised by the powerful *Abteilung Sondervorhaben* (Department of Special Projects), an office directly subordinated to the government and directed by Ehrhardt Gißke. The most eminent construction project of the 1970s was the Palace of the Republic, which was built in a largely modernist

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<sup>16</sup> The restitution was decided by the Politburo. See protocol of the Politburo meeting on June 10, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1843. It was discussed and probably decided a month earlier on a meeting between Günter Mittag, Konrad Naumann, Wolfgang Junker, Ehrhardt Gißke, and Gerhard Trölitersch. Protocol of the meeting, which took place on May 2, 1980, BArch DY 30/2851: 53.

<sup>17</sup> "...ein Vertreter jener liberalen Adelsreformer, die der napoleonischen Fremdherrschaft trotzten und mit bürgerlichen Reformen fortschrittsfördernd wirkten." Proposal by Konrad Naumann, First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party and Wolfgang Junker, Minister of Construction dated November 3, 1980, BArch DY 30/2842: 394.

<sup>18</sup> Cp. Honecker's comments to the Politburo on June 6, 1980, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1843.

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style between 1973 and 1976 on Marx-Engels-Platz (now Schlossplatz). It was a combined parliament, convention center, and entertainment building. Gißke's office also supervised construction on Friedrichstraße, on Platz der Akademie, and in the *Nikolaiviertel* and a number of other buildings, including the *Pionierpalast* (Pioneers' Palace) in the Wuhlheide park, the central hospital *Charité*, the department store at the Ostbahnhof train station, and the highrise *Internationales Handelszentrum* (International Trade Center) on Friedrichstraße.

Starting in 1976, the East German leaders directed more and more attention to Berlin's central districts. In that year, the Politburo passed a resolution titled "The tasks of the development of Berlin, capital of the GDR, until 1990."<sup>19</sup> The socialist leaders expressed their commitment with "those buildings, squares, and streets that are characteristic for the history of the people, ... the atmosphere of the city, the districts, and neighborhoods... [in order] to preserve *or recreate* the architecturally valuable of the past" [emphasis added].<sup>20</sup> The 1976 resolution for the first time called for the creation of a "characteristic atmosphere" in East German cities and explicitly stated the government's commitment to history and tradition. In addition, it implicitly advocated for pragmatism in light of the constant shortage of building materials and labor and therefore for continuing construction of prefabricated apartment blocks. Modernist developments and tenement remodeling were not seen as mutually exclusive opposites. A Politburo resolution from 1981 mandated that new construction was preferentially carried out in the inner city and no longer on the periphery. Subsequently, new developments continued to be built from prefabricated concrete slabs, but increasingly followed the

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<sup>19</sup> See protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1950 (work copy) and BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602 (final copy). The awkward formulation "Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic" was the official designation of East Berlin. Since the GDR had claimed separate nationhood in the 1970s, it felt the necessity to replace the older label "the democratic sector of Berlin." Official documents repeated the phrase over and over in full length and did not even allow for the acronym *DDR* (GDR), as if there was any potential for misunderstanding.

<sup>20</sup> "Ein Grundzug der städtebaulich-architektonischen Entwicklung muß darin bestehen, eine organische Verbindung von Altem und Neuem unter Nutzung und Ausgestaltung des Vorhandenen zu gewährleisten...Das gilt insbesondere für solche Gebäude, Plätze und Straßenzüge, die für die Geschichte des Volkes, ... für die Geschichte und das Gepräge der Stadt, der Stadtbezirke und Wohnviertel charakteristisch sind ... [Die Aufgabe ist daher] das architektonisch Wertvolle der Vergangenheit, der kulturhistorischen Bauten zu erhalten bzw. wiederherzustellen." Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602: 10.

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model of perimeter blocks and historical façades. The first experiments of neo-traditional prefabricated construction had been carried out around 1980 in Rostock and Greifswald, two cities on the coast of the Baltic Sea. In those cities, slab buildings were given "regional" forms that imitated historical north German architecture, such as the gables and pitched roofs of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In East Berlin's inner city, the prefabricated traditional developments of the 1980s borrowed from the façade design of 19<sup>th</sup> century tenements. These buildings filled the gaps that the air raids of the Second World War had left. From 1984 to 1989, the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhood *Spandauer Vorstadt* in the Mitte district, which had been damaged during the war, was completed with perimeter block buildings that took form from late-19<sup>th</sup>-century models. The area is situated north of the train station Marx-Engels-Platz (now Hackescher Markt). Other events that illustrate the East German leaders' increasing effort to visualize history in Berlin's urban fabric were the Karl Friedrich Schinkel exhibit of 1980 at the *Altes Museum*, and the subsequent rebuilding of Schinkel's Friedrichswerder Church.



*Figure 1: Mixed-used building on Kröpeliner Straße and Breite Straße in Rostock, built 1978-1980 after a design by Peter Baumbach and Erich Kaufmann. It is one of the first neo-historical prefabricated structures in East Germany. On the right a historical merchant's building; on the left a 10-story Stalinist building from the late 1950s that also made use of historical forms, albeit on a much larger scale.*

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This new conception of history assigned the architectural reminders of pre-socialist ages a much greater significance than the official interpretations of the 1960s and 1970s had done. In the German Democratic Republic, history was always presented as a predetermined progress governed by the struggle of the classes under different modes of production. In the 1950s and 1960s, the socialist leaders had stressed the moment of rupture and renewal that according to them derived from the take-over of the working class and the establishment of a socialist society. In the 1980s, they accentuated the continuity of the "historic progress" from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism. Thus the new conception now included the history of the bourgeois and noble classes. The titles of the exhibitions organized for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1987 reflected these historic stages, from the "feudal age" ("The Medieval Merchant Town Berlin-Cölln from its Beginnings until 1848," shown at the Nikolai Church), through the "capitalist age" ("Berlin from the Brandenburg-Prussian Residency to the Capitalist Metropolis," shown at the local history museum *Märkisches Museum*) to the present "socialist age" ("The Development of Berlin toward a Socialist Metropolis" (Building Exhibit presented at the Dynamo Sports Hall in the Hohenschönhausen district).<sup>21</sup> Also the state-sponsored publications planned for the year of the anniversary, such as "The History of the Workers' Movement from the Beginning to the Present" conveyed the conception of Berlin as a place where historic determination became manifest.<sup>22</sup> The passion for historic urban environments that imbued the 1987 projects was thus a direct outcome of the dogmas that guided the Honecker era. The reinterpretation of history was being inscribed in the urban design of Berlin's central districts. From the medieval *Nikolaiviertel* to the early industrial Husemannstraße Berlin was to be experienced as a historic continuum.

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<sup>21</sup> The titles were mentioned in a letter by mayor Erhard Krack to Günter Schabowski, First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, dated January 31, 1986, in the run-up to the meeting of the "party commission for the preparation of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary" on February 6, 1986, BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21: 14. The *Bauausstellung* (Building Exhibit) at the Dynamo Sports Hall was resolved by the Sekretariat of the Central Committee on October 8, 1986 and took place from May 20 to August 31, 1987. BArch DY 30/2567: 188.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.: 22 In the same way, the January 1985 Politburo resolution that codified the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, stressed Berlin as a motor of historic progress. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095: 70-71.

The historic awareness of the Honecker era was different from that of the so-called period of *Nationale Tradition* (National Tradition), which lasted approximately from 1950 to 1955, when East German architects were pressed to imitate Stalinist architecture from the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> The most famous outcome of this fashion, which West Germans soon reviled as *Zuckerbäckerstil* (wedding cake style), was the Stalinallee (now Karl-Marx-Allee) in East Berlin's Friedrichshain district, built between 1951 and 1955 as a sequence of representative block perimeter buildings with neoclassical façades and spacious apartments for deserving members of the socialist elite. Stalinallee was inspired by various historic styles and borrowed from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architects such as Carl von Gontard and Karl Friedrich Schinkel; although it was a break with the 19<sup>th</sup> century city and occasionally relied on demolitions of existing buildings, the new buildings nevertheless preserved the existing block structure. The "national tradition" was a relatively brief period in East German architectural history; by 1955 East German architects already began to orient themselves after international modernism.

Less researched than the products of the "national tradition" but closely connected to them are the historic reconstruction projects that were begun in the Stalinist era or shortly afterwards, most importantly the rebuilding of the baroque buildings on the boulevard Unter den Linden: the *Staatsoper* (State Opera House, rebuilt 1952-1955) the *Hedwigskathedrale* (St. Hedwig's Cathedral, rebuilt 1952-1963), the *Prinzessinnenpalais* (Princess's Palace, rebuilt 1963-1964), the *Altes Palais* (Old Palace, rebuilt 1964 – not to be confused with the Royal Palace which was damaged in the war and demolished in 1950) and the *Kronprinzenpalais* (Crown Prince's Palace, rebuilt 1968-1969). These buildings had been destroyed or heavily damaged during the Second World War; the rebuilding only loosely followed the historic models and can be deemed an interpretative reinvention. The result nevertheless was an ensemble that – contrary to the Stalinallee – most visitors now perceive as

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<sup>23</sup> For a review of the "National Tradition" in the context of the beginning Cold War see for example Simone Hain, "Reise nach Moskau. Wie Deutschland sozialistisch bauen lernte," *Bauwelt* 83 no. 45 (1992): 2546-1561 or Francesca Rogier, "The Monumentality of Rhetoric. The Will to Rebuild in Postwar Berlin," in *Anxious Modernisms*, ed. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Montreal: MIT Press and Centre Canadien d'Architecture, 2000): 165-190.

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originally baroque. This demonstrates that even before 1970, besides the modernist rupture within the existing city, the East German officials also occasionally favored historic continuity and the adaptation of historic architecture to contemporary purposes. During the 1970s and 1980s this approach became more and more significant, indicating a shift in the conception of the city that would leave its mark on Berlin's urban fabric until today.

## Chapter 2: Literature

One has to distinguish between authors who with their ideas *contributed* to the conception of the historic city in Germany and those who *historicized* this process. Among the former were numerous architects and historians; the most prominent ones lived in and published in the West. In the early 1960s journalist and publisher Wolf-Jobst Siedler and his co-author, the photographer Elisabeth Niggemeyer, indicted modernist designers for having “murdered the [old] city.” At the same time psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich accused modernist architects of producing “inhospitable” environments.<sup>24</sup> In the decades that followed, scholars such as Goerd Peschken, Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, or Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm published countless books, articles and pamphlets in defense of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements and other historic buildings.<sup>25</sup> At the same time practitioners such as Josef Paul Kleihues or Gustav Hardt-Walther Hämer, who both also published extensively, pioneered plans and projects ranging from the International Building Exhibit (IBA) to the renovations in post-reunification East Berlin. In the German Democratic Republic, voices that criticized modernist urban design and supported the historic city were less overt, but equally palpable. Many critics were affiliated with the *Kulturbund der DDR* (Association for Culture of the German Democratic Republic) or the *Institut für Denkmalpflege-IfD* (Historic Preservation Authority). The role of the numerous East German scholars and designers in the reconfiguration of ideas about the existing city is contextualized in chapters 7 and 8.

Scholars who historicized the re-evaluation process are much harder to find. Until 1990, East German documents on construction policy were difficult to access for both East and West German researchers. Therefore the history of architecture and urban design in East Berlin is far less researched than that in

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<sup>24</sup> Wolf-Jobst Siedler and Elisabeth Niggemeyer, *Die gemordete Stadt* (West Berlin: Herbig, 1978) [The murdered city, first published in 1964], Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965) [The inhospitability of our cities]

<sup>25</sup> See for example Goerd Peschken, “Das Berliner Mietshaus und die Sanierung” in *Architektur, Stadt und Politik* ed. Burkhard Bergius et al. (Gießen: Anabas, 1979): 209-219, Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, *Stadtkerne im Konflikt* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1970), Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, *Wie kommt die Geschichte ins Entwerfen* (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1987), or Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, “Die Provokation des Alltäglichen. Für eine neue Konvention des Bauens,” *Spiegel* no. 51 (1993).

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the West. The first attempt to historicize the process of demolition and reconstruction in Berlin was undertaken in the 1980s by architectural sociologist Harald Bodenschatz, who analyzed the cultural image on the *Mietskaserne* in its social and political context in both prewar Berlin and postwar West Berlin, with a strong focus on the debates over urban renewal in the West Berlin of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Hans Stimmann, who was a protagonist of West Berlin's "Critical Reconstruction" policy and later Head of Construction for the reunified Berlin government, provided an overview over the most important construction projects.<sup>27</sup> Neither Bodenschatz nor Stimmann had access to East Berlin archives. The same applied to the first West German scholar publishing on construction in the East, geographer Frank Werner, who lamented that being a Westerner there was no way for him to get access to most East German studies, which were classified as "confidential."<sup>28</sup> Werner's research since the early 1970s resulted in a number of publications on architecture as a representation of the East German state, mainly in the center of East Berlin.<sup>29</sup> While not disguising the gaps owed to his limited sources, Werner published a well-structured analysis of East German planning methods and the change in model concepts since the 1950s and detected partial parallels between East and West German urban design.<sup>30</sup> Werner wrote before the showcase projects of the

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<sup>26</sup> Harald Bodenschatz, *Platz frei für das Neue Berlin! Geschichte der Stadterneuerung in der "größten Mietskasernenstadt der Welt" seit 1871* (West Berlin: Transit, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Hans Stimmann, ed., *Stadterneuerung in Ost-Berlin - Vom "sozialistischen Neuaufbau" zur "komplexen Rekonstruktion"* (West Berlin: IBA, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik* (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 12-17.

<sup>29</sup> Werner's first publication on the topic mainly treated the rebuilding of the area around Alexanderplatz, which he – surprisingly for a West German scholar at the time – reviewed in a rather positive way. Frank Werner, "Der Städtebau in Berlin (Ost) und Berlin (West)" in *Zwischen Rostock und Saarbrücken*, ed. Mitteldeutscher Kulturrat and Hans Isenberg (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1973): 135-156. Five years later, Werner published the article "Das Stadtzentrum von Berlin (Ost)," *Geographische Rundschau* (1977): 254-261, in which he again attempted not to mix architectural form and the specificities of an undemocratic system. His research culminated in Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik* (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981).

<sup>30</sup> Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik* (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 27.

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1980s were begun and only briefly touched on the question of historic buildings.<sup>31</sup> Generally, he barely acknowledged that there was anything particular about East German urban design, but rather he detected a “rigorous pragmatism... that restricts any creative thinking.”<sup>32</sup> West Berlin scholar Gerlind Staemmler for the first time researched the treatment of the historic building stock in East Berlin.<sup>33</sup> Like Werner, Staemmler complained about her “trouble with the East German secrecy policy” that permitted her only to draw from official publications and limited the empirical portion of her research.<sup>34</sup> She thus analyzed classified ads in East German newspapers and drew conclusions on the wishes of East German tenants with regard to their housing conditions. At the same time, she provided an overview over of remodeling in East Germany and concluded that on the whole East Germany failed to maintain and preserve its dilapidating historic neighborhoods.<sup>35</sup> Political scientist Klaus von Beyme, who analyzed construction history in both German states in the 1950s and 1960s, argued from a position of an East-West polarity.<sup>36</sup> Although he acknowledged parallels between construction in East and West Germany, he still set the focus on the different political systems. Thomas Kristen, a student researcher at Kassel University, analyzed the history of urban renewal in the GDR in an extremely thorough and well-structured way despite his limited sources – he mostly relied on journal articles, legal texts, and the studies of Staemmler and Werner.<sup>37</sup> Kristen detected a paradigm change in East German construction policy after the 1970s and in opposition to Staemmler saw the preservation of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements as increasingly successful. The limited access to East German sources is also apparent in the publication of urban planner Thomas Hoscislawski, who

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik* (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 236.

<sup>32</sup> “Der rigorose Pragmatismus...verkürzt alles kreative Denken” Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik* (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 22.

<sup>33</sup> Gerlind Staemmler, *Rekonstruktion innerstädtischer Wohngebiete in der DDR* (West Berlin: IWOS-Bericht zur Stadtforschung, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*: 326.

<sup>36</sup> Klaus von Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau - Architektur und Städtebaupolitik in beiden deutschen Staaten* (Munich: Piper, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Kristen, *Stadtplanung und Stadterneuerung in der DDR* (Kassel: Gesamthochschule Kassel, 1988).

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was a researcher at West Berlin's Technical University.<sup>38</sup> Hoscislowski gathered the sources for his book predominantly in the two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The textbook on the history of Berlin's tenements since the 18<sup>th</sup> century is still Jonas Geist's and Klaus Kürvers's well-researched work *Das Berliner Mietshaus* (The Berlin Tenement), which appeared in three volumes during the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> The scope of this study, however, is limited. The portion on the postwar history of the tenement ends with the large-scale demolitions of the 1960s and does not treat the changing policy towards the tenements in the 1970s and 1980s. There is also only a small chapter on tenements in East Berlin.

East German histories of architecture and urban design focused on new construction rather than on historic buildings. An example is Thomas Topfstedt's anthology, which reaches from 1955 to 1971.<sup>40</sup> In most cases, academic architectural history was guided towards direct application. This applied similarly to the research in other socialist countries. The publications of the Polish architects Edmund Goldzamt<sup>41</sup> and Kazimierz Wejchert,<sup>42</sup> which also included examples from East German cities, became

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Hoscislowski, *Bauen zwischen Macht und Ohnmacht. Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Johann Friedrich Geist and Klaus Kürvers, *Das Berliner Mietshaus*. 3 volumes. Vol. 1 1740-1862, vol. 2 1862-1945, vol. 3 1945-1989. (Munich: Prestel, 1980, 1984, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> See Thomas Topfstedt, *Städtebau in der DDR 1955-1971* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1988). Topfstedt, a Leipzig art historian, was one of the first to treat the use of historic forms in East German architecture, although limited to that of the "national tradition" in the 1950s. Thomas Topfstedt, "Zur Frage des Historismus in der Architektur der DDR," in *Historismus - Aspekte zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Goldzamt was the ideological leader of Polish architects in the 1950s and at the time propagated a form of Stalinist neoclassicism that was to borrow from the studies of classics such as Palladio, Vignola, and Alberti. See for example his publication *Architektura zespołów śródmiejskich i problemy dziedzictwa*. (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1956) [Architecture in city centers and problems of tradition]. In the 1960s and 1970s he maintained an inclusive conception of urban design which always included the significance of historic architecture, including that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Edmund Goldzamt, *Urbanistyka krajów socjalistycznych - problemy społeczne* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1971), German translation *Städtebau sozialistischer Länder - soziale Probleme* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1974). On Goldzamt's influence on Polish urban design see Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era – an Aspect of Cold War History* (New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1992): 90, 104, and 262.

<sup>42</sup> Kazimierz Wejchert, *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1974) translated by Hans-Joachim Grimm, *Elemente der städtebaulichen Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1979).

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very popular in East Germany, and so did the work of Russian scholar Andrej Ikonnikov.<sup>43</sup> Both Wejchert and Ikonnikov analyzed city form over the course of different historical periods. Studying the factors that influence the perception of the city by its inhabitants they looked at both pre-socialist and socialist architecture. Although their work generally was celebratory towards socialist modernist urban design, they were nevertheless able to set it in a broader historic context and thus argue against the total neglect of pre-socialist architecture. Ikonnikov especially disapproved of a modernist urban design a la Corbusier and argued for the integration of old buildings into the modern socialist cities.

In the 1970s and 1980s there were a number of East German publications that were not strictly architectural historical but nevertheless provided a critical point of view on the official construction policy (see also chapter 8 "Function and appearance"). In the late 1970s, scholar and architectural critic Bruno Flierl investigated city form and its perception by the city dwellers.<sup>44</sup> Flierl's line of thought was followed by some of his former colleagues at the Building Academy, such as Achim Felz, Olaf Weber, or Ulrich Hugk.<sup>45</sup> Both Felz and Hugk translated their observation of urban form into a call for the preservation of old buildings. Sociologist Fred Staufenbiel, who since 1976 taught at the *Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen* (School of Architecture and Construction) in Weimar, pioneered analyses of cities as seen through the eyes of their inhabitants and thus in a similar way challenged the established views of politicians and construction officials.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Andrej Vladimirovich Ikonnikov, *Arkhitektura Goroda* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literaturny po stroitel'stvu i arkhitekture, 1972), translated *Architektur der Stadt. Ästhetische Probleme der Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1974). On modernist urban design see: 142.

<sup>44</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Zur Wahrnehmung der Stadtgestalt. Beispieluntersuchung im Stadtzentrum von Berlin* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, Institut für Städtebau und Architektur, 1979).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example Achim Felz, *Denkmale - von uns bewahrt* (East Berlin: Verlag neues Leben, 1988), Olaf Weber, "Über Versuche zur Entwicklung einer architektonischen Formensprache im zeitgenössischen Bauen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 353-356, Ulrich Hugk, "Überlegungen zur Kontinuität des Stadtbildes. Städtebauliche Denkmalpflege," *Bildende Kunst* no. 9 (1981): 430-433, Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk, "Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* no. 5/6 (1988): 206-213 or Klaus Aschenbach, Ulrich Hugk, Christian Enzmann, *Stadtgestaltung. Grundlagen zur städtebaulichen Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbauwohngebieten* (East Berlin, 1978).

<sup>46</sup> See for example his study on Magdeburg: Fred Staufenbiel, *Stadtzentrum, Hasselbachplatz, H. Beims-Siedlung* (Weimar: Schriften der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen, 1987) or his collection of articles Fred Staufenbiel, *Wohnen in der Stadt* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989).

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In the ensuing decade and a half since German reunification, researchers from both East and West Germany have been reluctant to investigate the neo-historical East German architecture of the 1980s. They generally associated the German Democratic Republic almost exclusively with the much better researched "National Tradition" of Stalinallee and the modernist tower-and-slab buildings of the 1960s and 1970s. Studies on early East German architecture, such as those by Carola Hein and Francesca Rogier, mostly pointed out the architectural differences in East and West Berlin against the background of two rivaling political systems.<sup>47</sup> Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow authored a two-volume work that largely refrained from interpretation, but reproduced a large amount of historic documents and provided a detailed insight into the discussions surrounding the most prestigious construction projects of the 1950s.<sup>48</sup>

In reunified Germany, writing the history of the late socialist state was and still is highly political. Historians are hardly ever detached from the debates over how to judge the socialist regime and the individuals that lived and worked under its governance. In this context, most scholars working in reunified Berlin argued from a leftist point of view. That includes Easterners such as Bruno Flierl, Wolfgang Kil, or Simone Hain, who had similar views to Westerners such as Werner Sewing or Harald Bodenschatz.<sup>49</sup> They agreed among each other that "not everything in East Germany was bad," and they pursued architectural history as a means to criticize neo-conservative construction policy, which under the label of "critical reconstruction" in the 1990s aimed at expunging the architectural traces of

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<sup>47</sup> Francesca Rogier, "The Monumentality of Rhetoric. The Will to Rebuild in Postwar Berlin" in *Anxious Modernisms*, ed. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, 165-190 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Montreal: MIT Press and Centre Canadien d'Architecture, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, *Aufbau. Städte, Themen, Dokumente. Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 1999) [volume 1] and *Ostkreuz. Personen, Pläne, Perspektiven. Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 1999) [volume 2].

<sup>49</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998), Wolfgang Kil, *Gründerparadiese – Vom Bauen in den Zeiten des Übergangs* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 2000) Simone Hain, "Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr in die Stadt," in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000* (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 337-347, Werner Sewing, *Bildregie: Architektur zwischen Retrodesign und Eventkultur* (Basel, Berlin, and Boston: Birkhäuser, 2003) Harald Bodenschatz, "Auf der Suche nach dem sozialistischen Städtebau," in *Grammatik sozialistischer Architekturen*, ed. Holger Barth (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2001): 321-325.

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the socialist state in favor of a restoration of Berlin's prewar urban fabric. They also jointly condemned many aspects of East German construction policy, such as the demolition of old buildings in the 1960s and the neglect of many tenements neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s. The bigger picture, however, remained vague. For left-wing historians, the forces at work within the German Democratic Republic were an unresolved question, especially since purely Marxist terms proved insufficient to explain the failure of a state that had claimed to be the result of Marxist historic determination. As a result, in most post-reunification publications the boundaries between left wing and right wing positions are blurred. In addition, for East German scholars interpretative historiography was a complex task since it involved an assessment of a political system that had often affected their personal lives in a very intimate way. Many of them had maintained a critical distance to the socialist regime, despite the fact that they subscribed to socialist positions. Their cases exemplify the difficulty in drawing a line between the supporters of the socialist system and its dissidents. Due to their critical attitude towards both East German socialism and West German capitalism, these scholars were marginalized in reunified Germany in the same way as they had been in the German Democratic Republic. Despite the fact that they often suffered under the socialist system, they reacted by calling for the preservation of the East German legacy against what they perceived to be its colonization by West German capitalists. Given these circumstances, their view on the East German past is often inseparable from their current political agendas.

After the German reunification in 1990, academic research on construction history advanced only slowly. Most scholars focused on the development of modernism under the conditions of socialism. In his doctoral thesis, West German journalist and scholar Joachim Palutzki gave a chronological account of architecture and urban design in East Germany. He construed architecture as an element of political culture and result of particular power relations.<sup>50</sup> Palutzki especially emphasized the chasm between far-reaching ideological claims and the often all-too-dreadful reality. He claimed that the "artificiality" of neo-historical architecture was related to the East German leaders' incapability to face the fact that

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<sup>50</sup> Joachim Palutzki, *Architektur in der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 2000): 8.

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that their state was on the brink of bankruptcy.<sup>51</sup> Rita Gudermann, who like Palutzki is a historian and journalist from West Germany, summarized the history of “Complex Reconstruction” and claimed that it was predominantly for economic reasons that the East Berlin government stopped the demolitions and started renovation.<sup>52</sup> Gudermann nevertheless did not investigate the conceptual background of that policy change. East German architectural critic Simone Hain, who was mostly concerned with the development of modernism’s social agenda in the German Democratic Republic and less with the demolition or preservation of historic buildings, saw both the demolition and complex reconstruction as a result of an ideological configuration that had developed in the 1950s and remained influential until the end of the GDR.<sup>53</sup> She also set the focus of her work on the early postwar period. Immediately after the German reunification, East German architect and researcher Dorothea Tscheschner published an account of planning in East Berlin’s city center during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>54</sup> Tscheschner, who had been employed by the East German Building Academy, had co-authored the 1961 master plan for the East Berlin center. While the authorities soon withdrew their support of her work, she managed to continue raising her critical voice in East German architectural circles over the course of three decades. Other accounts of the history of urban design in East Berlin, such as the publications of East German art historian Thomas Topfstedt, focus on the new developments that “caught up on modernism” rather than on the changing appreciation of historical architecture.<sup>55</sup> Sociologist Christine Hannemann’s publication on industrialized construction deserves

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.: 426.

<sup>52</sup> Rita Gudermann, “Wohnungsbaupolitik und –finanzierung in Ost-Berlin 1949-1989,” in *Wohnen in Berlin* ed. Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Berliner Wohnungsbaugesellschaften (Berlin: Edition StadtBauKunst, 1999) [catalog of an exhibit at the Investitionsbank Berlin]: 150-183.

<sup>53</sup> Simone Hain, “Archäologie und Aneignung. Ideen, Pläne und Stadtfiguration. Aufsätze zur Ostberliner Stadtentwicklung nach 1945,” in *Zur Stadtentwicklung und zum Wohnungsbau in Ost-Berlin* (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Dorothea Tscheschner, “Der Wiederaufbau des historischen Zentrums in Ost-Berlin,” in *Hauptstadt Berlin*, ed. Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1990).

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Topfstedt, “Die nachgeholte Moderne. Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR während der 50er und 60er Jahre,” in *Sädtebau und Staatsbau im 20. Jahrhundert* ed. Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper and Hiltrud Kier (Munich and Berlin, 1995): 39-54 and Thomas Topfstedt and Holger Barth, *Vom Baukünstler zum Komplexprojektanten* (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 2000). There are also several other brief historical accounts of new design in East Germany, for example Ulrike Pässe, “Stadtentwicklung und Wohnungsbau im Osten Berlins seit 1945,” in *Wohnkultur und Plattenbau. Beispiele aus Berlin und Budapest*, ed. Kerstin Dörhöfer (Berlin, 1994) or

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particular attention as the most thorough study of the socio-political configuration that underpinned the policy of prefabricated concrete slab housing in East Germany.<sup>56</sup> Hannemann, who had also worked with the East Berlin Building Academy before the German reunification, explained how *die Platte* ("the slab") became not only the construction method of choice in the GDR but also a cipher for the socialist state as a whole. One of the few attempts to historicize the architectural production in the late phase of the GDR was an article by art historian Alena Janatková who concluded that in the East Germany of the 1980s there was a politically motivated and thus highly selective turn towards the historic city. Janatková criticized current construction policy, drawing numerous parallels between the attitudes in the GDR and the equally selective and politically motivated treatment of East German architecture by West German politicians after reunification.<sup>57</sup> Simone Hain briefly mentioned the turn towards inner city construction in the East Berlin of the 1980s in her account of the conflicts over inner city redevelopment after reunification.<sup>58</sup> Brian Ladd published an article in which he claimed that the new appreciation of East Berlin's tenement buildings in the late 1980s was achieved by the East German opposition movement.<sup>59</sup> His article, however, relied almost exclusively on a few case studies from the East Berlin Prenzlauer Berg district.

English language literature on Berlin architecture and urban design was mostly written by American scholars. It predominantly focuses on the controversies after the German reunification and hardly ever

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Wolfgang Kil, *Gründerparadiese – Vom Bauen in den Zeiten des Übergangs* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte. Industrialisierter Wohnungsbau in der DDR* (Berlin: Schelzky und Jeep, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> Alena Janatková, "Tradition und Repräsentation im Zentrum von Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR," in: *GroßstadtDenkmalpflege, Erfahrungen und Perspektiven. Jahrbuch 1996*, ed. Landesdenkmalamt Berlin (Berlin: Landesdenkmalamt 1997): 27-33.

<sup>58</sup> Simone Hain, "Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr der Stadt," in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 337-347.

<sup>59</sup> Brian Ladd, "Altstadterneuerung und Bürgerbewegung in den 1980er Jahren in der DDR," in *Planen für das Kollektiv*, ed. Holger Barth (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 1999): 89-93. Ladd famously authored "The Ghosts of Berlin," in which he treated the predicaments faced by reunified Germany with regard to the construction of its capital. Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin. Confronting history in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Despite being one of the few books which summarized the complexities inherent in Berlin's urban design in a concise and yet thorough way, it has not been translated into German.

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includes an analysis of the debates during the times of division. Most significant were the books by Brian Ladd, Michael Wise, and Elizabeth Strom.<sup>60</sup> While Ladd and Wise analyzed the politicizing of architecture in the search for a German identity, Strom investigated the parameters that determined urban design policy during the 1990s. The two recent books on Berlin history by Alexandra Richie and David Clay Large only briefly mentioned the German Democratic Republic.<sup>61</sup> Both had lived in Berlin, but for their research they predominantly relied on secondary sources. For Large, the German Democratic Republic was mainly another oppressive regime in Germany's violent history, while Richie depicted it primarily as a dreadful place abounding with perfidious propaganda, crumbling buildings, and bad service.

In the late 1990s, a number of German scholars worked on establishing planning history as an academic discipline. In the context of these efforts, Holger Barth published several articles on East German planning, which nevertheless did not include the policy towards the historical tenements.<sup>62</sup> Two years later, he co-authored with Thomas Topfstedt a publication on the history of the architectural profession in East Germany, in which he demonstrated how the authoritarian structures in East Germany changed the position of the architect from an individual designer to a subordinate member of the socialist bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>63</sup>

There are several studies dealing with particular buildings or areas, such as Uwe Kieling's and Johannes Althoff's history of the *Nikolaiviertel*<sup>64</sup> or Benedikt Goebel's extraordinarily thorough and

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<sup>60</sup> Brian Ladd, *The ghosts of Berlin. Confronting history in the urban landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Michael Z. Wise, *Capital Dilemma – Germany's search for a new architecture of democracy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), Elizabeth Strom, *The New Berlin – the politics of urban development in Germany's capital city* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis – A history of Berlin* (New York: Carrol and Graff, 1998), David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> Holger Barth, *Projekt sozialistische Stadt. Beiträge zur Bau- und Planungsgeschichte der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> Since the 1950s, independent architects were reviled as "*Entwurfsspekulanten*" ("design speculators"). See Holger Barth and Thomas Topfstedt, *Vom Baukünstler zum Komplexprojektanten* (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 1999): 13-14.

<sup>64</sup> Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin-Edition, 2001) Kieling was *stellvertretender Bereichsleiter Denkmalpflege* (deputy

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well-researched study of the history of land-ownership and demolitions in Berlin's medieval nucleus over the course of the last 200 years.<sup>65</sup> There is no study that historicizes the comprehensive demolitions in East Berlin during the 1960s and 1970s and the re-appreciation of historic buildings during the 1980s; there is also no comparative history of construction policy in East and West Berlin.

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executive for historic preservation) with the East Berlin city administration in the 1980s and deputy chair of the Berlin local of the *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege im Kulturbund* (Association for Historic Preservation). Althoff is a West German historian.

<sup>65</sup> Benedikt Goebel, *Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum neuen Stadtzentrum* (Berlin: Braun, 2003).

## Chapter 3: The Players

The German Democratic Republic has been referred to as a *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* (society penetrated with control), that is, a totalitarian system whose rules of permitted thinking and behavior were at the same time ubiquitous and unspoken. It was a system where the extent to which individual actions were mandated or controlled by the state rulers was difficult to determine.<sup>66</sup> Decision-making processes were centralized and strictly hierarchical. There were two parallel administrative hierarchies: the civil administration, which included ministers, district parliaments, and mayors, and the administration of the omnipotent *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany), whose leading role since 1968 was inscribed in article 1 of the East German Constitution.<sup>67</sup> Decisions were taken by the Party and then confirmed by the civil administration; in case of controversy the Party always had the last word. Both civil and party hierarchies operated at three levels: the national level (concerning the whole GDR), the *Bezirk* (district or region, normally composed of a city and its surrounding area), and the *Kreis* (township). In East Berlin, each city district (*Stadtbezirk*, not to be confused with *Bezirk*), such as Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, or Friedrichshain, formed its own *Kreis*; together they formed the *Bezirk* (district) of (East) Berlin. The national level of the civil administration was composed of the *Ministerrat* (council of ministers, nominally the government of the GDR) and the *Volkskammer* (national parliament); there were similar assemblies at the district and township levels. The party administration since 1971 was headed by state leader Erich Honecker.<sup>68</sup> Its most powerful organ was the *Politbüro* (Politburo), the government proper of the GDR. The Politburo was the inner circle of the *Zentralkomitee der SED* (Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party). Theoretically it was controlled by the Central Committee. At least in the last two decades

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<sup>66</sup> See for example Jürgen Kocka, "Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft," in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994): 547-553. Kocka's notion is frequently quoted by historians and politicians.

<sup>67</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 188.

<sup>68</sup> There were two leaders of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht from 1949 to 1971 and Erich Honecker from 1971 to 1989. The East German leader's title was *Generalsekretär des ZK der SED* (General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party), from 1953-1976 *Erster Sekretär des ZK der SED* (First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party). Except for the a brief period between 1971 and 1976, the General Secretary was also Head of State in his function as chairman of the *Staatsrat* (Council of State, the "collective head of state").

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of the GDR, however, the influence of the Central Committee on Politburo decisions was virtually non-existent.<sup>69</sup> Also the decision-making process within the Politburo was rather opaque; on the regular meetings, at least, there was hardly ever any controversial discussion.<sup>70</sup> The Socialist Unity Party governed districts and townships through *Bezirksleitungen* (district offices) and *Kreisleitungen* (township offices); the township level was generally not very powerful. East German officials were chosen for their posts by the party leaders, who in various cases subsequently celebrated *pro forma* elections to confirm their decisions. In most East German elections the voters were only allowed to vote for an *Einheitsliste* ("unified list"), and not for individual candidates or parties. Unless they lost the favor of their superiors, East German officials stayed in office for decades. The most powerful party leaders held several positions at the same time. As a result of such long-term configurations, the degree of power and influence was associated with certain individuals rather than with their positions.

Like in the other states of the Eastern Bloc, the German Democratic Republic maintained strong ties to the Soviet Union. At the same time, the East German party leaders had significant leeway to determine their interior policy as long as socialist dominion was not put in danger. Apart from the Stalinist "national tradition" parallels between Soviet and East German architecture and urban design were a result of cultural influence rather than direct political control. Ideas were transmitted through the training of East German leaders in the Soviet Union and through German translations of Soviet literature. However, in the post-Stalinist era, the influences from the Soviet Union hardly ever outweighed those from the West.

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<sup>69</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 395-402.

<sup>70</sup> Günter Schabowski, interview by author, Berlin, April 26, 2004.

# The Administrative System in the GDR

## Party administration

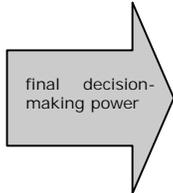
## Civil administration

Generalsekretär - *General Secretary of the Central Committee* (1953-1976 Erster Sekretär - *First Secretary*), since 1960 at the same time Staatsratsvorsitzender - *Chair of the State Council* Walter Ulbricht (1949-1971), Erich Honecker (1971-1989).  
De facto head of state, power only controlled by the Soviet leaders

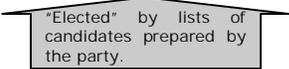
### National level

German Democratic Republic

Politbüro des Zentralkomitees der SED - *Politburo of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party*  
Government proper, center of the decision-making process.  
21 members and 5 candidates in 1989; the average age in 1989 was 69 years old.  
The Politburo was pro forma elected by the Central Committee



Staatsrat - *the state council*  
collective head of state,  
up to 30 members  
acclamatory functions  
Ministerrat - *the council of ministers*  
pro forma government  
The Minister of Construction was one of up to 30 ministers.



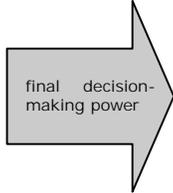
Zentralkomitee der SED (ZK) - *Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party*  
up to 200 members  
in the last decades of the GDR only acclamatory functions for the decisions made in the Politburo

Volkskammer - *Chamber of the People*,  
pro forma parliament, "elected" by popular vote involving lists of candidates prepared by the party.

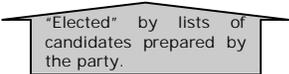
### Regional level

Bezirk (*District*)  
14 Bezirke, such as Rostock, Leipzig, or (East)

Bezirksleitung der SED - *District Office of the Socialist Unity Party*



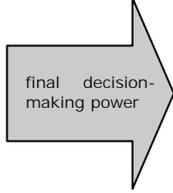
Rat des Bezirks - *district council*, in East Berlin called the *Magistrat* (*Municipality*)



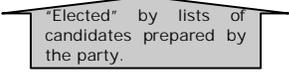
### Local level

Kreis or Stadtbezirk (*Township or City District*)  
217 Kreise. Also the 11 East Berlin City Districts Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, Treptow, Lichtenberg, Pankow, Weißensee, Köpenick, Marzahn, Hellersdorf, and Hohenschönhausen were Kreise

Kreisleitung der SED - *Township Office of the Socialist Unity Party*



Bezirkstag - *district council*, in East Berlin called the Stadtverordnetenversammlung - *district assembly*, "elected" by popular vote involving lists of candidates prepared by the party.

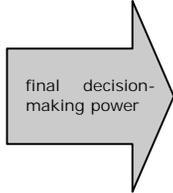


Rat des Kreises - *township council*, in East Berlin called Rat des Stadtbezirks - *city district council*

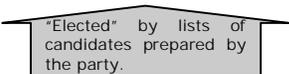
Kreistag - *township assembly*, in East Berlin called Stadtbezirksversammlung - *city district assembly*, "elected" by popular vote through lists of candidates prepared by the party.

### LOCAL LEVEL

Gemeinde (*Municipality*)  
town or village, the smallest administrative unit, non-existent in East Berlin



Rat der Gemeinde - *council of the municipality*



Gemeindeverordnetenversammlung - *assembly of the municipality*, "elected" by popular vote through lists of candidates prepared by the party.

The power at the local level (both Gemeinde and Kreis) was very limited.

### Chapter 3: The Players

At all three levels of administration, the *Plankommissionen* (Plan Commissions, such as State Plan Commission, District Plan Commissions, and Township Plan Commissions) decided on the allocation of state resources. Being the paymasters, they had a significant influence on the decisions taken by both Party and civil administrations. The *Plankommission* at the national level was called *Staatliche Plankommission* (State Plan Commission). Since 1965, it was headed by Gerhard Schürer, but de facto directed by Schürer's fellow Politburo member Günter Mittag, the GDR's number one economist and second most powerful person in the GDR after Erich Honecker.<sup>71</sup> The *Staatliche Plankommission* was one of the most powerful organs in the GDR, since it allocated the budget to all branches of the national economy, including the construction industry. Without approval from the State Plan Commission no architectural project could be carried out. The State Plan Commission nevertheless had to follow the decisions of the Politburo. Since the 1960s, all architectural projects in East Berlin were built by one of the two large state-operated construction firms. *Wohnbaukombinat* (WBK) was responsible for residential buildings, while *Ingenieurhochbau* (IHB) constructed industrial, commercial, and public buildings – for example the *Nikolaiviertel*.

Erich Honecker headed the East German state after 1971. Unlike his predecessor Walter Ulbricht, who according to his contemporaries had thought of himself as a tragically unrecognized architect, Honecker was rather indifferent to questions of architecture. He laid the focus of his construction activities on housing. Next to Honecker, most power in East German architecture and urban design was concentrated on three individuals who had ascended to their offices in the 1960s under Ulbricht: Günter Mittag, the director of the *Wirtschaftskommission* (Economy Commission) at the Central Committee, Gerhard Trölitersch, the director of the *Abteilung Bauwesen* (Department of Construction) at the Central Committee, and Wolfgang Junker, the Minister of Construction.<sup>72</sup> This "troika" – critic

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<sup>71</sup> Schürer's predecessor Erich Apel had collided with head of state Walter Ulbricht over failures to fulfill the plan and committed suicide or was possibly murdered in 1965. Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 180 and 489.

<sup>72</sup> The estimation that Mittag, Trölitersch, and Junker were the most powerful people in East German construction after Erich Honecker was confirmed by numerous interview partners, for example Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003, Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow, August 14, 2003, Gerd Zimmermann, interview by author,

### Chapter 3: The Players

Bruno Flierl called them a “self-sufficient automaton” - exerted its influence until the end of the GDR.<sup>73</sup> All three were members of the Central Committee, but only Mittag was a member of the Politburo. Of the three, only Trölitzsch was trained as an architect – Junker was an engineer and subsequently worked as a site supervisor, and Mittag had graduated as an economist. Mittag was in charge of the entire East German economy and enjoyed Erich Honecker’s unlimited confidence.<sup>74</sup> Although construction was only one of his numerous areas of responsibility, his power over the East German building industry was unmatched by that of Gerhard Trölitzsch and Wolfgang Junker.<sup>75</sup> As an expert for construction, Gerhard Trölitzsch was consulted by the Politburo in most construction projects. Junker’s office, the *Ministerium für Bauwesen* (Ministry of Construction) was the central directing organ of the construction business in the GDR. It was also responsible for the strategic direction of research at the Building Academy and eventually for the work of the *Baukombinate* (state-owned firms).<sup>76</sup> Junker, however, is described by his contemporaries as a rather weak character who hardly ever contradicted Mittag or Honecker and rarely asserted his own decisions.

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Weimar, September 2, 2003, and Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

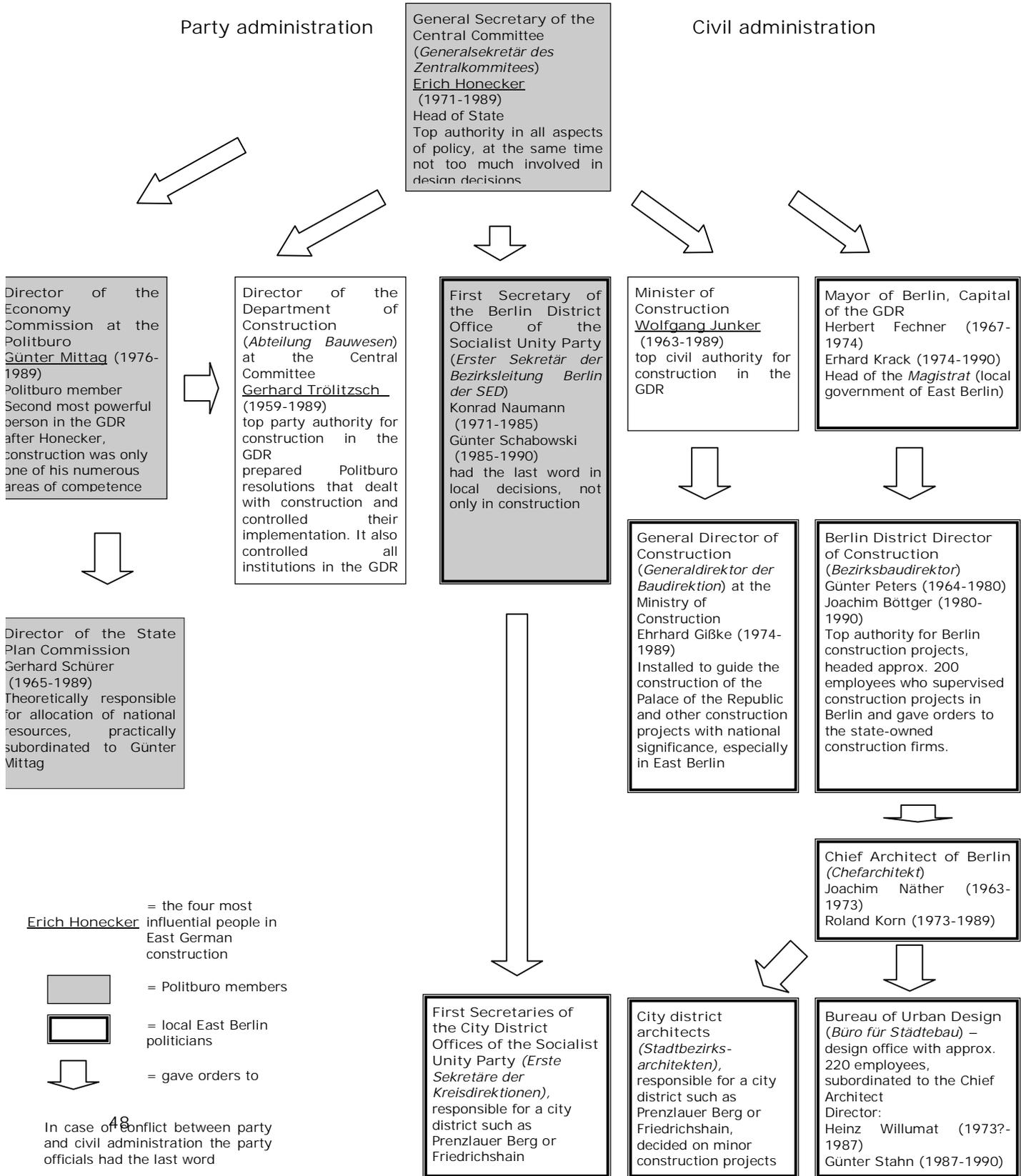
<sup>73</sup> See Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 54. In the 1960s and 1970s, this troika used their influence to install former employees from Trölitzsch’s office *Abteilung Bauwesen* in important positions, such as for example Gerhard Krenz, editor-in-chief of the magazine *Deutsche Architektur*, Alfred Hoffmann, the director of the theory group at the Building Academy, or Hubert Scholz, the First Secretary of the Architects Association. Through this system, they set the framework and limits for discussion and research. See Bruno Flierl, “Löcher im Bauch,” *ArchPlus* 22 n. 103 (1990): 70 [interview with Nikolaus Kuhnert and Philipp Oswald].

<sup>74</sup> Günter Schabowski, interview by author, Berlin, April 26, 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow (Brandenburg), August 14, 2003, Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, July 14, 2003.

<sup>76</sup> The *Ministerium für Bauwesen* (Ministry of Construction) was founded in 1949 as *Ministerium für Aufbau* (Ministry of Rebuilding) was superior to the Building Academy and of the state-owned firms. Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte* (Berlin: Schelzky & Jeep, 2000): 86- 87. The Ministry’s responsibility for design projects was scaled according to investment sums. Projects for more than 5 million marks had to be directly confirmed by the Ministry. Holger Barth and Thomas Topfstedt, *Vom Baukünstler zum Komplexprojektanten* (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 2000): 12- 13 The Ministry of Construction also directed the *Staatliches Kontor für Baumaterialien* (State Office for Building Materials), to which both district and township administrations had to apply for building materials. Thus the Ministry’s influence extended even on small projects. Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte* (Berlin: Schelzky & Jeep, 2000): 85.

# Responsibilities in East Berlin Construction Policy in the Honecker Era



### Chapter 3: The Players

All prestigious projects, however, were agreed in detail with Honecker. East Germany had no master architect in the sense in which Albert Speer had been the master architect of the Nazi regime. But there was an institution comparable to Speer's office with regard to its power to plan and carry out the most renowned state-sponsored construction projects: the *Abteilung Sondervorhaben* (Department of Special Projects), which was later renamed *Generalbaudirektion des Ministeriums für Bauwesen* (General Office of Construction at the Ministry of Construction) and directed by Ehrhardt Gißke.<sup>77</sup> Theoretically, Gißke was subordinated to Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker; practically his influence often outweighed that of his superior. He served on this post from 1973 until the end of the GDR.<sup>78</sup> The Department of Special Construction was incorporated in 1974 to supervise the construction of the new parliament building Palace of the Republic. It was an engineering office responsible for select construction projects in the whole GDR and extremely influential. After the Palace of the Republic was finished, Gißke's office continued to oversee the most prestigious architectural projects in East Germany, totaling more than a hundred between 1973 and 1986.<sup>79</sup> They included the prestigious buildings on Friedrichstraße and in the *Nikolaiviertel*. In the context of these projects, Gißke had a significant influence both on the selection of the respective designers and on individual design decisions. He was close friends with Gerhard Trölitersch and had good connections to the Politburo. Being a talented strategist and a strong character, he was often able to assert himself even when he could not count on the support of his superior Wolfgang Junker.<sup>80</sup> Beyond the "special projects," Gißke theoretically could give orders to Berlin's local administration bypassing the local civil (not party) administrative office, the District Office of Construction. He nevertheless made little use of

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<sup>77</sup> The comparison between Speer's office *Generalbauinspektion* and Gißke's *Generalbaudirektion* was made by Bruno Flierl, who nevertheless points out the ideological differences between both institutions. Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 57.

<sup>78</sup> Gißke from 1958-1963 was Berlin District Director of Construction and Günter Peters's direct predecessor. He lost the favor of the Party leaders, allegedly because of a minor difference with Walter Ulbricht about the rebuilding of Berlin. He was thus removed from his office and "banished" to the Building Academy, where he wrote his dissertation and became a professor. With the construction of the Palace of the Republic under Honecker, the Party leaders did not want to miss his organizational talent. In 1974, he was thus "rehabilitated."

<sup>79</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 102-104.

<sup>80</sup> Gerhard Trölitersch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004, Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

### Chapter 3: The Players

this power.<sup>81</sup> Gißke's hesitation to interfere with local East Berlin decisions eventually strengthened the position of the Berlin District Office of Construction for those tasks that were not considered "special projects."

Several observers claim that the Ministry of Construction, whose authority was unquestioned in the entire GDR at least until the 1980s, had less say in East Berlin.<sup>82</sup> This was because to the East German leaders construction in East Berlin had a special significance. Not only was it the capital but also a showcase for West German and international visitors. In addition, there was a general tendency to focus on prestigious construction projects and neglect tasks that were considered of minor importance for the reputation of the socialist government. Thus in many cases East Berlin was given preference over other East German cities. Most construction-related decisions in East Berlin were therefore taken directly by the Politburo, especially by Erich Honecker and Günter Mittag, but also by the First Secretary of the Berlin *SED-Bezirksleitung* (District Office of the Socialist Unity Party). The First Secretary was the most influential local authority. He could put pressure on individual designers, and his decisions could outweigh those of the top person in the civil administration, the District Director of Construction. The First Secretary - Paul Verner until 1971, Konrad Naumann from 1971 to 1985, and Günter Schabowski from 1985 to 1990 - was always a member of the Politburo. Paul Verner, a strong and assertive personality, was dubbed PVC ("Paul Verner, Chefarchitekt") by his colleagues because of his deep involvement in architectural decisions.<sup>83</sup> Verner thus had a strong influence especially on the urban design decisions that accompanied the Alexanderplatz redesign in the 1960s. Also his successor Konrad Naumann took decisions on prestigious projects such as the Husemannstraße renovation in East Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district in 1983.<sup>84</sup> The influence of the First Secretary on Berlin urban

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<sup>81</sup> Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

<sup>82</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003, confirmed by Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003, Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003, Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004, Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004. Trölitzsch remembered that Verner once admitted that he would have loved to become an architect.

<sup>84</sup> Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, July 14, 2003.

### *Chapter 3: The Players*

design only waned with the appointment of Günter Schabowski in 1985.<sup>85</sup> Schabowski was less interested in design-related questions than his predecessors and thus in most cases did not openly promote specific proposals.

There is evidence that the academic discourse on architecture and urban planning to a certain degree influenced East German leaders in their decisions.<sup>86</sup> Such discourse was constituted by educational and research institutions, by professional associations, and by state-sponsored journals and magazines. While both research and publication was extremely restricted under the socialist regime, there were nevertheless numerous areas in which controversial debate was allowed because it did not interfere with the foundations of the socialist worldview. One can detect such limited spaces of debate within professional associations or schools of architecture. Members of such institutions generally also had access to the latest professional publications from West Germany and other capitalist countries. Honest research was the rule rather than the exception, and the state authorities' strategy to prevent unfavorable results was to restrict the publication of critical investigations rather than to manipulate data.<sup>87</sup> Still East German universities were anything but transparent institutions. Even basic details such as class schedules or phone directories were not publicly accessible. All academic studies had to be approved by the authorities; and even if they were approved, in most cases they were barred from distribution beyond the university. The East German rulers' fear of uncontrolled information flows was extreme. To them, even an apparently innocent document such as a small-scale city plan was

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<sup>85</sup> Contrary to both Verner and Naumann, Günter Schabowski was concerned more with economic issues and did not pursue a strong urban design policy. Most East Germans will remember him mainly for one of his last actions in office: his memorable announcement to ease travel regulations for GDR citizens in the near future. That statement, uttered without previous consultation with the border guards and broadcasted live on TV on the evening of November 9, 1989, triggered immediate mass gatherings on the borders and the subsequent opening of the Berlin Wall. Günter Schabowski, interview by author, Berlin, April 26, 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Christine Hannemann, for example, made a distinction between public debate (in the media), and professional public debate (in professional circles). While the former was extremely restricted, the latter did exist and did have an effect on politicians' decisions. Christine Hannemann, interview by author, Berlin, June 10, 2003.

<sup>87</sup> None of the interviewed former East German researchers mentioned attempts by the authorities to manipulate their own or their colleagues' data; at the same time several of them reported difficulties to distribute undesired results or to continue critical research projects. Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, July 14, 2003, Gerd Zimmermann, interview by author, Weimar, September 2, 2003, Harald Kegler, interview by author, Berlin, August 7, 2003.

*Chapter 3: The Players*

potentially dangerous, since it could reveal politically delicate information, such as for example the exact location of the Berlin Wall. Plans were therefore classified top secret, and so was almost any exact information.

# New Ideas on Construction in the GDR

## Schools of Architecture

Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen (HAB) Weimar (School of Architecture and Construction Weimar)  
*Subordinated to the Ministry of Construction*

Technische Universität (TU) Dresden (Technical University Dresden)  
*Subordinated to the Ministry of Education*

Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee (School of Art Berlin-Weißensee)  
*Subordinated to the Ministry of Culture*

## Research Institutions

Deutsche Bauakademie, since 1971 Bauakademie der DDR – Building Academy, located in East Berlin Subordinated to the Ministry of Construction

Presidents:  
Kurt Liebknecht (1950-1961)  
Gerhard Kosel (1961-1965)  
Werner Heynisch (1965-1977)  
Hans Fritsche (1977-1990)

Different institutes, especially important were:

Institut für Städtebau und Architektur (ISA) – Institute for Urban Design and Architecture

Institut für Wohnungs- und Gesellschaftsbau (IWG) – Institute for Residential and Public Construction

## Discussion forums

Bund deutscher Architekten (BdA), since 1971 Bund der Architekten der DDR – Architects association

Presidents:  
Hanns Hopp (1952-1965),  
Edmund Collein (1965-1975),  
Wolfgang Urbanski (1975-1982)  
Ewald Henn (1982-1989)  
5500 members in 1989  
- not an independent organization, but to a high degree controlled by the Central Committee and the Ministry of Construction

## Journals, for example:

Deutsche Architektur, since 1974 Architektur der DDR  
Monthly, largest journal on construction in the GDR

Form und Zweck  
Monthly, publications mainly on product design, occasionally on architecture

### Chapter 3: The Players

The most important association of East German architects was the *Bund deutscher Architekten* (BdA, Association of German Architects), which was founded in 1952 and renamed *Bund der Architekten der DDR* (BdA/DDR Association of Architects of the GDR) in 1971. In contrast to its West German counterpart, the BdA of the GDR was not an independent professional association but an institution aimed at tying Eastern architects into the system. The activities of the BdA nevertheless cannot be reduced to ideological indoctrination; the numerous meetings, conferences, and seminars also provided a forum for discussion and intellectual exchange.<sup>88</sup> The BdA published the journal *Deutsche Architektur*, renamed *Architektur der DDR* in 1974, which was East Germany's most important architectural magazine. At the same time, *Deutsche Architektur* was in many respects less courageous about publishing controversial architectural ideas than those magazines that were not directly related to the architectural world, such as the design magazine *Form und Zweck* or the painters' and decorators' magazine *Farbe und Raum*.<sup>89</sup>

All research on architecture and urban design in East Germany was conducted at the state-operated *Deutsche Bauakademie* (German Building Academy), which was founded in 1951 and renamed *Bauakademie der DDR* (Building Academy of the GDR) in 1971. It was divided into several independent research institutes with different tasks. Starting out with 5 at the time of its incorporation, their number had increased to 18 in 1989. The Building Academy had 1200 employees in 1961 and 3700 in 1980, of which 2000 had a university degree.<sup>90</sup> Research on architecture and urban design was predominantly conducted at the *Institut für Städtebau und Architektur* (ISA, Institute for Urban Design and Architecture) and to a lesser degree at the *Institut für Wohnungs- und Gesellschaftsbau* (IWG, Institute for Housing and Public Buildings). At a university level, architecture

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<sup>88</sup> Holger Barth and Thomas Topfstedt, *Vom Baukünstler zum Komplexprojektanten* (Erkner: Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 2000): 15-16 and 21 and Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, July 14, 2003.

<sup>89</sup> For the history of *Deutsche Architektur* see Bruno Flierl, "Anspruchsvoll und waghalsig? Die Zeitschrift *Deutsche Architektur* in der DDR," in *Zwischen "Mosaik" und "Einheit": Zeitschriften in der DDR*, ed. Simone Barck (Berlin: Links, 1999): 252-257. See also Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik*. (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 172.

### Chapter 3: The Players

was taught at three East German schools: the Weimar *Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen* (HAB, School of Architecture and Construction), the Dresden *Technische Universität* (TU, Technical University), and the *Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee* (University of the Arts in the Weißensee district).<sup>91</sup>

The head of Berlin's civil construction administration was the *Bezirksbaudirektor* (District Director of Construction, sometimes also referred to as *Stadtbaudirektor*, City Director of Construction, or just *Baudirektor*, Director of Construction). This position had developed gradually since the 1950s. The Director of Construction was elected by the city parliament, which of course does not mean that his appointment was the result of democratic competition. He reported to the city mayor and since 1975 was also officially one of the mayor's deputies. From 1958 to 1963, the *Bezirksbaudirektor* was Ehrhardt Gißke, from 1964 to 1980 Günter Peters – with the exception of the years during the mid-1970s in which he was trained in Moscow – and from 1980 to 1990 Joachim Boettger. The District Director of Construction gave orders the *Hauptplanträger* (General Plan Authority), an institution which for all Berlin construction projects functioned as the client, distributing the government money and controlling the results.<sup>92</sup> Directing the *Hauptplanträger* was thus a major source of power for the District Director of Construction. District Director of Construction Günter Peters also worked out the two master plans for East Berlin in 1969 and 1980.

Next to the District Director of Construction stood the *Chefarchitect* (Chief Architect), who was equally elected by the city parliament. Theoretically he was inferior to the District Director of Construction; on the other hand the District Director of Construction did not have the right to fire him since he would have needed the city parliament's vote. The power of the Chief Architect was thus connected with individual personalities. East Berlin's first Chief Architect from 1953 to 1959 was Hermann Henselmann, at the time the GDR's most famous architect and well acclaimed in both East and West

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<sup>91</sup> The *HAB Weimar* was subordinated to the Ministry of Construction, the *TU Dresden* to the Ministry of Higher Education and the *Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee* to the Ministry of Culture.

<sup>92</sup> Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

### Chapter 3: The Players

Germany. Henselmann's degree of influence was matched by none of his successors. Henselmann was directly subordinated to the East Berlin mayor; his deputy Ehrhardt Gißke was the executive organizer carrying out Henselmann's decisions. In 1958, this hierarchy was reversed to match the administrative structure in other East German cities.<sup>93</sup> The organizer Gißke became *Bezirksbaudirektor* (District Director of Construction) and was now superior to the Chief Architect. Henselmann took the consequence and dedicated himself to other areas. His successors Hans Gericke (1959-1964), Joachim Näther (1964-1973) and Roland Korn (1973-1989) no longer held sole responsibility as coordinators of architecture and urban design as he had done, but were rather subordinated to and often entangled in rivalries with their respective District Director of Construction.<sup>94</sup>

In 1973 Chief Architect Roland Korn incorporated the *Büro für Städtebau* (Bureau of Urban Design) as an institution subordinated to his office. It was first directed by himself, later by Heinz Willumat, and from 1987 to 1990 by the architect of the *Nikolaiviertel* Günter Stahn. The Bureau of Urban Design's area of responsibility was never strictly split from that of the Chief Architect, in practice all tasks were coordinated.<sup>95</sup> For historic reconstruction the *Bereich Historische Bauten* (Department of Historic Buildings) at the Bureau of Urban Design played an important role. It was incorporated in December 1979.<sup>96</sup> Its director Heinz Mehlan had originally been a modernist architect who in 1968 co-designed the highrise residential complex on Leninplatz (now Platz der Vereinten Nationen) with Hermann Henselmann. As the director of the Department of Historic Buildings he was given the title Deputy Chief Architect and was the leading designer for most historic reconstruction projects; he designed several buildings at the *Nikolaiviertel*. Mehlan's employee, the architect Rolf Ricken, worked out the

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<sup>93</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 55.

<sup>94</sup> This applied, for example, for Chief Architect Joachim Näther and District Director of Construction Günter Peters. Näther, over six foot tall and assertive, obtained the greater public presence, while Peters as the *éminence grise* prevailed behind the scenes. Näther's conflicts with the Politburo, especially with Paul Verner, led to his spectacular dismissal from all political functions in 1973. Peters lost his job seven years later, officially for reasons of health, but possibly for his personal detachment from the Politburo and his incapacity to fulfill the plan. Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003, Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

<sup>95</sup> Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow, August 14, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> *Magistrat* resolution 114/76, passed on December 22, 1976.

### *Chapter 3: The Players*

proposals and drew most of the plans. Like Mehlan, Ricken was deeply concerned with the historical appearance of the reconstructed buildings. Both Mehlan and Ricken had a notable influence on the façade design in the *Nikolaiviertel*.

The decision process with regard to architecture and urban design has to be seen as systemic rather than individualized. In contrast to the Ulbricht era, when many design decisions originated from the supreme leader, urban design in the Honecker era was the result of a power constellation. Erich Honecker, while nominally having the last word in all questions of design, seems to have been all too often willing to concede this power to his immediate subordinates, or at least admit their influence on his decisions. The less significant the project was, the more leeway was given to the lower ranks of decision makers. Their freedom of design, however, was tightly restricted by the constant shortage of labor and materials. It was also limited by the production methods set up under the Ulbricht regime, that is, by an exclusive concentration on prefabricated parts. In this sense, the cultural dimension of architecture since the 1960s was more and more limited. This was also reflected by the fact that with the exception of the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* (Historic Preservation Authority) none of the institutions dealing with architecture and urban design was subordinated to the Ministry of Culture. Only for some showcase projects, such as in the rebuilding of Schinkel's Playhouse on the Platz der Akademie, the supreme leaders explicitly acknowledged the cultural significance of architecture; as a concession they allowed for expensive, custom-made parts. Anywhere else construction had to be entirely based on cheap, mass-produced materials. One has to mention, though, that over the course of the 1980s East German officials increasingly perceived industrialized construction as a straightjacket. The regime nevertheless proved to be too inflexible to admit substantial reforms.

## II. RE-CONCEIVING THE HISTORIC CITY

### Chapter 4: Modernism and Images of the Past

*From "Second Destruction of Berlin" to "Complex Reconstruction"*

"Our cities are still so young that their beauty is just being discovered. And like every beauty first provokes mistrust and revilement, it is the same here."<sup>97</sup> August Endell wrote these words on the burgeoning German metropolis in his 1908 publication *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* (The beauty of the big city), at a time when the great majority of his contemporaries harshly condemned the ugliness of Berlin's tenement quarters. The renewed appreciation of the residential architecture from the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century and its richly decorated façades is now manifestly apparent. It has entered the standard narrative of Berlin's urban history as a tale of sin and redemption. Most Berliners now believe that during the 1960s a group of insensitive bureaucrats aimed at the "second destruction" of their city (after the bombings of the Second World War) and unnecessarily demolished large amounts of beautiful old buildings. And most are relieved that since the 1980s construction officials apparently know better. The protagonists of the re-evaluation process, both in theory and in practice are well-known. The results are ubiquitous. From the upscale neighborhoods of Charlottenburg to the working class districts of Friedrichshain, Berlin boasts thousands of modernized tenements with high-standard sanitary facilities and carefully restored ornamented stucco façades. The process itself, however, is less evident. It is still unclear how the once unanimously despised architecture of Berlin's tenements came to experience a radical re-assessment in such a short time, and how this process was related to the political and social conditions of the time.

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<sup>97</sup> "Unsere großen Städte sind noch so jung, daß ihre Schönheit erst jetzt entdeckt wird. Und wie jede Schönheit zunächst befremdet, Mißtrauen und heftiger Beschimpfung begegnet, so auch hier." August Endell, *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1908): 34.



Figure 2

The re-evaluation of the “ugly big city” was very different from what Endell had foreseen. Unlike Endell however, present-day observers do not appreciate Berlin’s tenement quarters for the evocative veil of their fogs, the iridescent tinge of their lights and shadows, and the rhythmical movement of the passers-by. They are valued for their permanence rather than for their ephemeral beauty; they are admired for being historical. While current observers are likely to agree with Endell and his contemporaries in their admiration of medieval and Renaissance cities they are also likely to disagree with them in their condemnation of their own early industrial period. They are eager to put the city of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into a category with that of earlier epochs. Formal, functional, and aesthetic aspects are mingled together to make an image of “the past,” which stands for everything that the modernist city of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is not. The current obsession with historical architecture thus tends to neglect historical difference and historical evolution and in this respect it is profoundly a-historical.

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How did Berlin's historical buildings become such fixed images of "the past"? And how did these images play out in present socio-political realities? To answer these questions one has to look at the visions of a desirable city that Endell's intellectual heirs developed since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The desire to rid the city from remainders of the past was not new to the 1960s but has determined Berlin's construction policy since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>98</sup> After the First World War, however, modernist utopia came with a particularly strong imagery. For half a century, architects and urban designers imagined a city of light and glass, situated in a park environment, and navigated by individual motor traffic. In East Berlin, this vision was embodied in the plans for the city center. Head of State Walter Ulbricht, who was known for his passion for architecture, devoted his attention realizing the modernist dream in the area around Alexanderplatz. During the 1960s, the focus on such visionary projects was exclusive. The existence of other portions of the city took a backseat in both the press and in public attention. While the city center emerged as a shiny monument to the achievements of the fledgling socialist state, the surrounding residential neighborhoods became more and more neglected.

In East Germany – like in the West – there were few attempts to justify the neglect and destruction of historic buildings on a theoretical basis. The commonplace estimation that the promoters of the new socialist society simply wanted to do away with the architectural reminders of capitalism is occasionally mentioned in publications from the immediate postwar era; it is nevertheless not reflected in the writings of any socialist theorist after 1960, the time when the wave of demolition started.<sup>99</sup> One rather gets the impression that the enthusiasm for the new modernist city outshone any concern for the existing one. The inferiority of pre-socialist architecture was commonly assumed,

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<sup>98</sup> Historian Benedikt Goebel, for example, drew a line from late-19<sup>th</sup>-century reform planner James Hobrecht to the large-scale demolitions of the 1960s and claimed that the state-sponsored neglect and destruction of Berlin's historic architecture has been continuous over the past 150 years. Benedikt Goebel, *Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum modernen Stadtzentrum* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2004): 239-245.

<sup>99</sup> During the 1950s, one finds occasional diatribes against tenements, which are reviled as the most inhuman outcome of capitalism. See for example, Herbert Riecke's slide presentation given at the *Zentrales Haus der Deutsch-Sowjetischen Freundschaft* in East Berlin on January 15, 1954, published as Herbert Riecke, *Mietskasernen im Kapitalismus - Wohnpaläste im Sozialismus: Die Entwicklung der Städte im modernen Kapitalismus und die Grundsätze des sozialistischen Städtebaus* (East Berlin: Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, 1954).

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to the point that during the 1960s no one openly denounced, as modernists at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had done, the soulless ornamented façades or the inhuman backyards lacking light and air. In books, newspapers and journals, the tenements were hardly ever criticized. They were simply ignored. The standard narrative can be read from a 1975 publication by Gerhard Krenz.<sup>100</sup> Krenz, who was editor-in-chief of the journal *Architektur der DDR*, portrayed architecture in East Berlin using a picture of an unrenovated tenement backyard, which appeared on one of the first pages, described as the “obsolete” residences socialism was to overcome.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Gerhard Krenz, *Architektur zwischen gestern und morgen* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1974).

<sup>101</sup> Former Director of Construction Günter Peters also confirms that the existing tenements took a low priority in the official view. In retrospect, he claimed that the demolitions in East Germany could hardly be called systematic. Günter Peters, interview by author, Berlin, August 22, 2004. In 1992, however, he had published a book in which he mentioned that only in East Berlin were 20,000 tenement apartments torn down between 1961 and 1971. Günter Peters, *Gesamtberliner Stadtentwicklung von 1949-1990. Daten und Grafiken* (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, 1992): 57.



Figure 3: Tenement backyard in an East German publication from 1975. The original caption reads: "The architecture of the old social order still burdens our lives: narrow, dark tenement quarters from the capitalist era are a grave legacy that has not yet been overcome."<sup>102</sup>

The few attempts to theorize old buildings in a socialist society – most date from the late 1970s and 1980s when the intellectual climate was already changing – support historic preservation rather than

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<sup>102</sup> "Die Architektur der alten Gesellschaftsordnung belastet noch heute das Leben: Enge, lichtlose Mietskasernenviertel aus der Zeit des Kapitalismus sind ein noch nicht überwundenes schweres Erbe" Gerhard Krenz, *Architektur zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Ein Vierteljahrhundert Architektorentwicklung in der DDR* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1975): 24.

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the demolition of pre-socialist architecture. In this context Ludwig Deiters, the head of the East German Historic Preservation Authority, stood out with his sound theoretizations of historic architecture in a contemporary context, and at the same time for working the system in an unorthodox way. Deiters, who was anything but a Marxist doctrinaire, consciously used the founding texts of Marxist-Leninist ideology to defend the fundamental value of historic preservation. In a climate that was extremely unsupportive to his preservationist goals he aimed at conveying that historic heritage was an inseparable component of socialism.<sup>103</sup> He quoted Lenin's conception of the working class as the rightful heir of mankind's best achievements and invoked Marx's belief that the experience of beautiful objects contributes to the development of the human character and thus to the progress of humanity. Deiters supported these ideas with examples that were authoritative in a socialist context, for example pointing out that after the Russian Revolution Soviet functionaries on many occasions mandated the appropriation of historic monuments by the working classes and not their demolition. Deiters's propositions might have been controversial at the time but they were hardly ever contradicted in official publications. This suggests that the neglect of historic buildings was not a conscious goal of official socialist policy but rather a side effect of the general fixation on the future. It also implies that demolitions derived from a lack of consideration and an unwillingness to look for individual solutions rather than from a conscious destructive impulse. Deiters, in retrospect, supported this conclusion and drew attention to the fact that "in the GDR urban design was always pragmatic."<sup>104</sup> He pointed out that during the times in which he and his fellow preservationists were most hard-pressed to sanction demolition and neglect – that is during the 1960s and early 1970s – his opponents among the East German leaders in most cases confronted him with economic rather than theoretical arguments.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Deiters quoted Soviet commissar Lunacevskij, who in 1917 summoned the young Soviet regime to preserve the beauties of its country. He also mentioned Lenin who chose the Kremlin as the seat of his government and personally called for the immediate renovation of the Vladimir Gate. Ludwig Deiters, *Grundlagen und Ziele der Denkmalpflege in der DDR. Sozialistische Kulturpolitik – Theorie und Praxis* (East Berlin: Institut für Weiterbildung des Ministeriums für Kultur, 1981): 10-13.

<sup>104</sup> Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

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##### *Mutual influences between East and West Berlin*

The re-appropriation of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings over the course of the 1970s and 1980s was similar under the different economical and political conditions in East and West Berlin. There were continuous personal contacts between professionals on both sides. Architect Gustav (Hardt-Waltherr) Hämer, who pioneered the fight for tenement preservation in West Berlin, remembered having received substantial influences from the East.<sup>106</sup>



Figure 4: Renovated late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements in the Arniplatz neighborhood

<sup>106</sup> Gustav Hämer, who published under his given name Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, was born in 1922. He was trained as an architect at West Berlin's Technical University and subsequently worked with the Luckhard brothers. In 1967, he became a professor at West Berlin's University of Fine Arts. At the same time he directed the *Institut für Wohnen und Umwelt* (Institute for Housing and the Environment) in Darmstadt. Since 1979 he worked for the *Internationale Bauausstellung* (IBA - International Building Exhibit) where he directed the branch *IBA alt* (IBA-old) that became famous for their tenement renovations in the Kreuzberg district. Hämer was a pioneer of "careful urban renewal." In the late 1960s he worked for the West Berlin government on urban renewal projects in the Wedding district – at a time when urban renewal largely meant comprehensive demolition and subsequent rebuilding. Backed by surveys and interviews, Hämer claimed that the majority of the tenants opposed the demolition of their homes, and thus began to advocate for the preservation of the old buildings. Gustav Hämer, interview by author, Berlin, May 12, 2004.

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In the early 1970s, when Hämer and his colleagues started advocating tenement renovation in order to preserve valuable social structures, they visited the Arnimplatz remodeling in East Berlin and learned how an entire neighborhood could be upgraded to modern sanitary conditions without driving out the tenant population and disrupting community life. Similarly, East Berlin officials in the early 1980s observed the tenement renovations in the West Berlin. District Director of Construction Günter Peters undertook several business trips to West Berlin and other capitalist cities, as did Ehrhardt Gißke and many others.<sup>107</sup> Starting in the 1970s, in both East and West Germany there was an increase in academic research and publications on historical architecture and the remodeling of old buildings. Both designers and politicians considered the renovations pioneer work and widely discussed their theoretical basis in books, newspapers, and magazines. Western publications were largely available in the East – most East German professionals dealing with architecture or urban planning had detailed knowledge of the International Building Exhibit (IBA) that took place in West Berlin in 1987. The parallels between the “Complex Reconstruction” in the East and the “Careful Urban Renewal” in the West were thus not accidental. The change in East German policy has to be understood in relation to cultural communalities that were shared by East and West Germany and many countries neighboring them.

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<sup>107</sup> Günter Peters, interview by author, Berlin, August 22, 2004, Gerhard Trölitersch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.



Figure 5: *Sophienstraße*, 1987. On the right side and in the middle renovated buildings, on the left side new apartment buildings from prefabricated concrete elements.

#### *Historic architecture as a screen*

The conceptual shift in the interpretation of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture went with a reinterpretation of the recent past. In the period between 1960 and 1990, the typology of the tenement was crucial, both as an image of “the past,” and as an urban form that was closely tied to a particular understanding of life in the big city. From a contemporary point of view, it is surprising that despite their diametrically opposed design proposals, pre-1970s and post-1970s urban designers framed their visions of a desirable city in the same terms. Both equally rejected the immediate past. This was as apparent in East Germany as it was in the West, and was also demonstrated in numerous European and North American publications. In the 1960s architects and urban designers called for a city of “human scale” and associated this with loosely scattered highrise buildings made out of glass and

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concrete. Thirty years later they associated the same term with dense perimeter block housing. In the 1960s, they promoted an “organic city,” where the “restrictive” angular street pattern of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to be replaced by the smooth curves and bent lines of cloverleaves and freeway exits. Thirty years later they praised the “organic” life in the pre-modernist city as a valid alternative to the “cold and inhuman” modernist settlements. The ambiguity of these terms does not appear to have diminished their persuasive power as battle cries in decades of debate over Berlin’s historical tenement architecture.

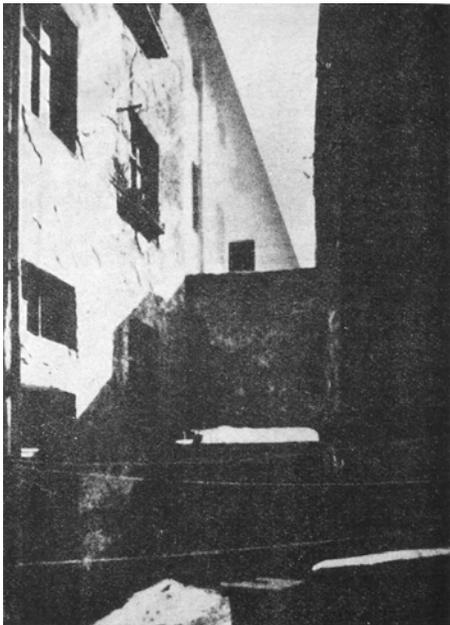


Figure 6 and Figure 7: Backyards, first reviled then celebrated. Left: Picture from a 1954 East Berlin publication that celebrates the achievements of socialist architecture. The author wrote: “The bourgeoisie determined the aspect and the atmosphere of our big cities [...] causing tenement quarters and slums.” Right: Picture from a 1984 issue of an East Berlin magazine, showing a backyard in the renovated Arkonaplatz neighborhood. The text on the opposite page reads: “In both its quality of life and its comprehensive urban design this residential neighborhood corresponds to current needs. Now, traditional and new aspects provide the neighborhood with an individual appeal; in any case it is an attractive milieu.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Left: “Das Gesicht, das Gepräge unserer großen Städte bestimmte die Bourgeoisie.[...] Sie ist der Urheber der Mietskasernenviertel und Elendsquartiere.” Herbert Riecke, *Mietskasernen im Kapitalismus - Wohnpaläste im Sozialismus: Die Entwicklung der Städte im modernen Kapitalismus und die Grundsätze des sozialistischen Städtebaus* (East Berlin: Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, 1954): 24. Right: “[Hier] entstand ein Wohngebiet, das sowohl in seiner Wohnqualität als auch in seiner städtebaulichen Gesamtgestaltung heutigen Lebensbedürfnissen gerecht wird. Traditionelles und Neues geben dem Wohngebiete einen individuellen Reiz, ein durchaus anziehendes Milieu.” *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 200-201.

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Before 1970, tenement neighborhoods were seen as “unhealthy,” because of their overcrowded apartments and their insufficient sanitary facilities, as “monotonous” because of their standardized height and repetitive stucco façades, and as “chaotic” because of their backyards and the mixture of residential and commercial spaces. After 1970, the same terms were used to tarnish the modernist satellite settlements. Now the large highrise developments were dubbed “unhealthy” because of their concrete façades and paved yards, “monotonous” because of their standardized forms and lack of ornamentation, and “chaotic” because of their lack of a traditional block structure. The imprecise definition of these terms was mirrored in shifting concepts of the city. Before 1970, the tenement neighborhoods were connected with social inequality because of the different amenities in front and back buildings; with oppression because the Prussian state sanctioned land speculation and overcrowded apartments; with alienation because the big city fostered anonymous encounters and the division of labor, and with the ousting of pedestrians because the boulevards were increasingly crowded with motor traffic. The modernist city, on the other hand, promised social justice, democracy, an authentic lifestyle, and the protection of the pedestrian. After 1970, the concepts were reversed. The tenement neighborhoods were now praised as socially integrative because of their backyard structures which fostered communication and better pedestrian access; as democratic because of the public life on their boulevards and as authentic because of the spatial contiguity of working and living. Another obvious bonus was the absence of high-speed motorways.

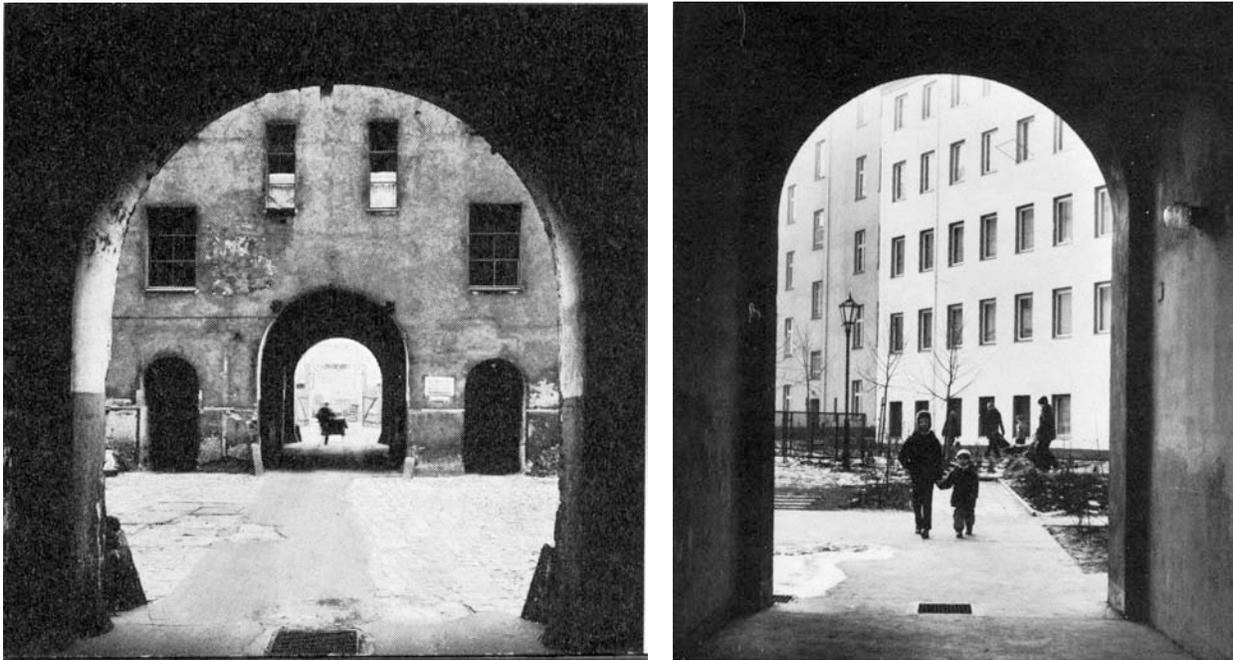


Figure 8 and Figure 9: Sixteen years of distance: Same motif, different meaning. Left: Picture from a West Berlin state-sponsored publication (1967) that presents tenement demolitions as a solution to urban misery. Right: Picture from a state-sponsored East Berlin magazine (1984) that celebrates tenement remodeling in the Arkonaplatz neighborhood.<sup>109</sup>

Neither the modernist nor the post-modernist urban design models were consistent programs. On a rhetorical level, however, the characteristics of a desirable city have been surprisingly stable since the 1960s. Only in practice Berlin experienced alternating waves of demolition and reconstruction. The contradictory perception of the tenement city is thus an example of the feeble connection between the built environment and its perception. The city escaped the attempt to be cast in unambiguous terms. The architectural language to a large extent seemed to have led a life independent from the forms it describes; the theoretical urban design principles that were so often the subject of fierce struggles were not directly translatable into analogous architectural forms. The physical environment of the city was always outweighed by the discrepancies of urban imagery.

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<sup>109</sup> Left: Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, ed., *Stadterneuerung Berlin* vol. 2 (West Berlin, 1967): 15, right: *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 201.



Figure 10 and Figure 11: Backyard children, once portrayed as disadvantaged, now as privileged. Left: Picture from a state-sponsored publication from 1974, justifying tenement demolition in West Berlin's Tiergarten district. Right: Picture from a state-sponsored publication from 1993, celebrating "careful urban renewal" in East Berlin's Lichtenberg district. Note how the clothesline first appears as a signifier of poverty and then as one of quasi-rural idyll, the backyard first as a manifestation of narrowness and restriction and then as one of peaceful enclosure.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Left: Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, ed., *Stadterneuerung rund um die Wilsnacker Straße* (West Berlin, 1974): 7 [backyard on Turmstraße], right Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, ed., *Kaskelstraße. Stadterneuerung in Lichtenberg* (Berlin, 1993): 18.

## Chapter 5: "Obsolescence" Becomes Obsolete

*"Obsolescence," "life span," and "moral depreciation"*

Obsolescence was a key concept in the East German construction policy of the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, planners and politicians cultivated the idea that every building, like a human body, had a "life span" after the completion of which it becomes "obsolete" and has to be torn down and rebuilt. Obsolescence of architecture and urban design was nevertheless not an invention of the socialist era. With the rise of modernism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century European and American architects and engineers started to scientifically define the wear and tear of a building and predict the expected time of demolition.<sup>111</sup> They thus codified an aspect of business life which since the beginning of industrialization became crucial to manufacturers and: the ability to predict and plan the necessary retirement of an instrument or machine.

Already Karl Marx reflected on the topic. In the first volume of *Capital*, he presented obsolescence as being determined by both physical and non-physical factors. On the one hand there was material depreciation - wear and tear deriving from both use and inactivity – and on the other hand a non-material aspect for which he coined the peculiar term *moralischer Verschleiß* ("moral attrition," "moral depreciation").<sup>112</sup> For Marx, "moral depreciation" meant that a machine was outmoded by the progressive change in standards and requirements, that is, either because the same machine could be produced more cheaply or because an equally expensive but more efficient machine had been invented. Marx described this technological ageing process in quasi-human terms, speaking of an

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<sup>111</sup> For a history of obsolescence cp. for example Daniel Abramson, "Obsolescence: Notes towards a history," *Praxis* no. 5 (2003): 106-112.

<sup>112</sup> "Neben dem materiellen unterliegt die Maschine aber auch einem sozusagen moralischen Verschleiß. Sie verliert Tauschwert im Maße, worin entweder Maschinen derselben Konstruktion wohlfeiler reproduziert werden können oder bessere Maschinen konkurrierend neben sie treten." Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, fourth section. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, collected works, vol. 23 (East Berlin: Dietz, 1968): 426.

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*aktive Lebensperiode* (active life period) and calling new machines *jung und lebenskräftig* (young and vital).<sup>113</sup> Marx, however, did not specifically extend this idea to buildings.

In this sense, "obsolescence" resulted from a conception of a building as a machine for dwelling whose efficiency can be expressed in absolute numbers, and at the same time as an organism, which ages, and which is eventually superseded by a younger generation. Also Friedrich Engels used this conception in the 1840s.<sup>114</sup> He stressed that a building which has completed its life inevitably had to be torn down and replaced by a new one. Engels mentioned a life span of 100 years, which he does not seem to have based on any scientific research, but which would be often repeated. In the 1920s and 1930s, architects assumed life spans of 30-years and less for newly constructed buildings.<sup>115</sup> The inherent necessity for demolition found its expression in the building codes and tax laws at the time, which clearly favored demolition over renovation. Eventually, obsolescence was applied to an entire portion of a city. Since the concept assumed that the older a building was the less appropriate it was for the needs of the present, it rendered impossible adaptive reuse in the sense in which European cities had practiced it over centuries. Originally architects and urban designers merely pointed out why and how certain buildings did not fit the requirements of the modern age any more, for example when they did not have toilets inside the apartments or running water. Later they started to extrapolate the current needs for reform into the future, gradually generalizing it to an ideology of current renewal. Starting as a reformatory idea, obsolescence became an obsession with constant reform.

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<sup>113</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, fourth section. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, collected works, vol. 23 (East Berlin: Dietz, 1968): 426-427.

<sup>114</sup> "Ein Laib Brot wird in einem Tage verzehrt, ein Paar Hosen in einem Jahr verschlissen, ein Haus meinetwegen in 100 Jahren....Am Ende der 100 Jahre ist das Haus aufgebracht, verschlissen, unbewohnbar geworden." Friedrich Engels, *Zur Wohnungsfrage* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1948): 55-57.

<sup>115</sup> Life spans were especially short in American publications of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cp. "Thirty years Average Life Span of Modern Skyscrapers," *New York Times* January 18, 1931, Real estate section, and Earle Shultz's study *The Effect of Obsolescence on the Useful and Profitable Life of Office Buildings*, published in 1922 by the National Association of Buildings Owners and Managers (NABOM), both quoted in Daniel Abramson, "Obsolescence: Notes towards a history," *Praxis* no. 5 (2003): 106-112.

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### *Cyclical renewal*

The idea of obsolescence and renewal received substantial input from economic theory at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter theorized economic development in cyclical terms. Like Marx, he drew on the concept of "moral depreciation." He nevertheless used it in a decidedly different way. He placed a strong emphasis on periodical spurts of growth in the economy, which made some portions of economic production obsolete and eventually entailed the upgrading of the system as a whole. He claimed that these spurts stem from entrepreneurialism and invention and are furthered by free competition. They proved destructive for certain products and modes of production, but promoted the progress of the system as a whole. The focus on innovative pushes and the powerful figure of the entrepreneur was present in Schumpeter's work since the publication of his *Theory of Economic Development* in 1912. During the 1940s, he started referring to this process as "Creative Destruction," a formulation which over the following decades was quoted extensively; not only by economists. The term first appeared in his late work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, which he published in his American exile at a time when, ironically, large portions of his native Central Europe were ripped to shreds in an unprecedented wave of devastation. Schumpeter claimed that the "process of Creative Destruction was the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists of and what every capitalist concern has got to live with..." and in the preceding sentence he described the spurt as "the same process of industrial mutation – if I may use that biological term –which incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one..."<sup>116</sup> Like Marx, Schumpeter took his metaphors from biology. In his *Theory of Economic Development* he compares the economic cycle with "the blood circulation in a biological organism," not without adding a caveat against generalizing such a concept.<sup>117</sup> This did not prevent his analogies from becoming extremely

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<sup>116</sup> Joseph, Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1975) [written in English, first published New York: Harper, 1942]: 82. His book was translated into German in 1946.

<sup>117</sup> "vergleichbar dem Blutkreislauf des tierischen Organismus" Joseph Schumpeter, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1926) [second edition, first edition published in 1912].

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popular, to the extent that the particularities of the current economic system were all-too-often seen as natural and unchangeable.

#### *Expanding obsolescence in the 1930s*

While organic metaphors for demolition and rebuilding became more and more common, the term obsolescence was expanded. In the United States of the 1930s, obsolescence was applied to an entire neighborhood, describing a social condition that was allegedly manifest in the buildings' dilapidation. Usage of this term marked the beginning of an era when the American federal government became increasingly involved in urban planning. The intention was to build a strong paternalistic state which would educate and supervise its citizens and use the force of science and technology to fight their ailments. It went along with the rise of urban planning as an academic discipline, and the evolution of a head-physician type of planner. This conception of an urban life cycle proliferated the biological views that already Marx had mentioned. Cities were construed as organisms whose elements – the neighborhoods – age, die, and eventually grow back. Many big cities were seen as ailing bodies from which the sick portions had to be cut away – like a surgeon who removes a tumor or a horticulturist prunes an old tree.<sup>118</sup> The operation was to be based on objective scientific knowledge, that is, on surveys and statistics. The temporal factor was inherent in this approach, because like a patient the city had to be observed over time. The concept of urban life cycles was firmly rooted in the classist and racist mindset of the time. American City Planning Institute member George Herrold claimed that "[t]he first rented house (even though rented to a very desirable family) in a district of single-family owner-occupied homes is the beginning of obsolescence" and traces the progressive decay of the neighborhood through the influx first of "less desirable families" and subsequently of "those that belong to the residue of society."<sup>119</sup> He also pointed out: "We speak of certain races as being inferior,

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<sup>118</sup> Cp. for example Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme* (Paris: Editions Crés, 1924) translated after the 8<sup>th</sup> French edition from 1929 by Frederick Etchells *The city of tomorrow* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1971): 251-171.

<sup>119</sup> George Herrold, "Obsolescence in cities," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 1, no. 11 (1935): 73.

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and when these races move into a district they depreciate it in the minds of many."<sup>120</sup> For Herrold, besides technological standards that make it simpler to build new homes rather than adapt existing ones the mind-set of the owner also influences obsolescence.<sup>121</sup> He therefore urged the planner to design structures that are more adaptable to change than those of the present time. Obsolescence, for Herrold, had to be "combated through organized and wisely directed community or governmental action." On an architectural level, the conception of urban life cycles was specifically directed against the "obsolete" 19<sup>th</sup> century tenements – the lack of light, air, and sanitary facilities in those buildings was construed as a residue from the past rather than a deficiency of the present. At the same time, Herrold and his contemporaries theorized current construction under the assumption that any new building would inevitably be demolished and rebuilt after a couple of decades.

### *Obsolescence under capitalism and socialism*

Obsolescence was a term with an extremely elastic meaning. It was used with equal frequency in socialist and capitalist countries, but connected to very different ideological concepts. Postwar theorists from Western capitalist countries tied obsolescence to what they saw as basic characteristics of their own societies: free business, fashion, individualism, and democracy.<sup>122</sup> Not only the continuing progress of science and technology rendered old buildings and neighborhoods obsolete, but the changing conceptions of taste. In that sense, obsolescence included an aesthetic quality. Italian architect Manfredo Nicoletti distinguished "aesthetic obsolescence" from "physical" (wear down) and "functional obsolescence" (outmodedness) and construed it as situated "beyond the threshold of rationality."<sup>123</sup> Others rooted it in the market economy claiming that it was connected to the individual

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<sup>120</sup> George Herrold, "Obsolescence in cities," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 1, no. 11 (1935): 75.

<sup>121</sup> He writes: "When one loses faith or confidence in his own creation, obsolescence takes place. Abandonment or careless handling brings about its disintegration." George Herrold, "Obsolescence in cities," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 1, no. 11 (1935): 73.

<sup>122</sup> Cp. for example Victor Gruen e.a.'s manual for up-to-date-stores with air conditioning, modern lighting and adaptation to suburban lifestyle. Victor Gruen, Morris Ketchum, Morris Lapidus, Kenneth Welch, Daniel Schwartzman, "What makes a 1940 store obsolete?" *Architectural Forum* 93 no. 7 (1950): 62-79

<sup>123</sup> See Manfredo Nicoletti, "Obsolescence," *Architectural Review* 143 no. 6 (1968): 413-415, or George Nelson, "Obsolescence," *Perspecta* no. 11 (1967): 176.

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interest in profit maximization, which in capitalist societies drives the development of new consumer goods. American industrial designer George Nelson specifically saw obsolescence as inseparably connected to business and therefore as a part of "the master idea" of contemporary society.<sup>124</sup> For him it was "wealth producing, not wasteful" since the constant renewal improved people's quality of life, which also applied to entire cities.<sup>125</sup> He therefore called for "more obsolescence, not less."<sup>126</sup> Along the same lines, British civil engineers Irwin and Bain saw the obsolescence of cities as required by modern economics and thus called for building structures that were easy to demolish once they become outdated.<sup>127</sup> Obsolescence was also seen as connected with democracy. For Nicoletti that democratic aspect lay in the fact that obsolescence "stated individuality" through its need for constant renewal.<sup>128</sup> It should also be mentioned that at the time when Western architects celebrated planned obsolescence as the motor of the capitalist economic system, it had already lost significance among marketing strategists. They felt that the era of mass consumption was coming to an end, and rejected obsolescence as too undifferentiated and therefore inappropriate for a clientele that was much more diversified than in the decades before.<sup>129</sup>

In the postwar period, the concept of obsolescence fit well into both the capitalist need for economic expansion and the socialist ideology of historic progress and comprehensive renewal. Under the regimes of both the Eastern and the Western Blocs, the life span of a building was regarded as a

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<sup>124</sup> George Nelson, "Obsolescence," *Perspecta* no. 11 (1967): 174 [first published in 1956]. Nelson for example claimed that "The traditional city has been obsoleted, in a very real way, by the automobile" and "what has happened just happened: there was no planning," and thus discarding the role of politics in the restructuring of modern cities. Nelson (1908-1986) was a modernist industrial and interior designer who collaborated with Charles Eames and Richard Buckminster Fuller.

<sup>125</sup> George Nelson, "Obsolescence," *Perspecta* no. 11 (1967): 176.

<sup>126</sup> George Nelson, "Obsolescence," *Perspecta* no. 11 (1967): 176.

<sup>127</sup> For them, functional obsolescence includes changes in taste. A. W. Irwin, and W. R. L. Bain, "Planned obsolescence and demolition of buildings," *Build International* 7, no. 6 (November 1974): 549-561.

<sup>128</sup> Nicoletti was a student of Pierluigi Nervi. In the 1960s he worked with Minoru Yamasaki and Yona Friedman before becoming a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design. Manfredi Nicoletti, "Obsolescence," *Architectural Review* 143 (June 1968): 415.

<sup>129</sup> Already in 1959, the majority of American business executives rejected mass marketing and planned obsolescence as being wasteful. John B. Stewart, "Problems in Review: Planned Obsolescence," *Harvard Business Review* 37 (September/October 1959): 22, cp. also Daniel Abramson, "Discourses on Obsolescence," Presentation at the Harvard Center for Studies in American History, Cambridge, Massachusetts, February 14, 2005.

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scientifically proven fact. In East Berlin, with the Marxist dogma of "objective historical progress" in mind, socialist officials predicted that even the apartments blocks that they built in the 1960s (with toilets, central heating and warm running water) would eventually suffer "moral depreciation" in a not too distant future, in the same way that the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements had become obsolete a few decades after their construction. Hence the city design plans of the time foresaw a gradual demolition and rebuilding of the entire city. This was to be repeated over and over by future generations. It was nevertheless conceded that to a certain point the building's life span was influenced by the amount of investment into it and the specificities of its use. In the East Germany of the 1960s, most sources mentioned a life span of approximately 80 years for both existing and newly constructed buildings.<sup>130</sup> That meant that the tenements built between 1870 and 1900 had to be taken down by year 1980 the latest, and that a new construction project in 1960s was expected to be demolished around 2040, despite repairs and improvements. The few planners who at the time advocated for tenement remodeling saw it as an investment which would ideally prolong the buildings' life span another twenty years. In the 1960s, the economic calculations deciding about preservation or demolition were all based on this assumption. In his 1961 dissertation, East German economist Peter Doehler asserted that "the age of a building is the decisive characteristic for estimating value and quality of an old residential building."<sup>131</sup> Doehler was an influential figure in East German academia. In the early 1960s he directed the *Institut für Architektur und Städtebau* (Institute for Architecture and Urban Design) at the Building Academy. He later taught at the School of Architecture and Construction in Weimar and eventually directed the *Institut für Weiterbildung* (Institute for Continuous Education) in Naumburg, a branch of the Weimar School where all East German planners were occasionally sent for continuing

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<sup>130</sup> For example his dissertation Peter Doehler, *Planungsgrundlagen zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnbausubstanz von Altbaugebieten insbesondere Städte über 10,000 Einwohner im Zeitraum 1965-1980* (East Berlin, 1961) [dissertation] [Fundamentals for the planning of the socialist redesign of old neighborhoods, particularly cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, in the period between 1965 and 1980] LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 554 or "Ökonomische Direktive zur Ausarbeitung des Planes Erhaltung des Wohnungsbestandes im Jahre 1965" [Economic directive to work out the plan on preservation of the building stock in 1965] authored by Berlin District Plan Commission, dated June 6, 1964 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555.

<sup>131</sup> "Das entscheidende Merkmal zur Kennzeichnung des Werts und der Wohnqualität alter Wohngebäude bildet das Baualter." Peter Doehler, *Planungsgrundlagen zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnbausubstanz von Altbaugebieten insbesondere Städte über 10,000 Einwohner im Zeitraum 1965-1980* (East Berlin 1961): 9.

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education seminars.<sup>132</sup> His publications reveal Doehler as a pig-headed number cruncher. Also for him, a new building could count on a life span of 80 years. He failed to reference the origin of this number, despite the fact that it constituted the basis for all calculations in his dissertation. He only warned that the life span could also be shorter due to technological advancement which outmodes the buildings.<sup>133</sup> Doehler then proceeded to compare the cost of remodeling with that of new construction, and concluded that, depending on the level of damage, cautious investment into old tenements could prolong their life span between 15 and 50 years. Since rehabilitation was cheaper than new construction, it could thus save the socialist national economy money that otherwise would have to be spent on new buildings. At the same time Doehler made it clear that whenever this relation was subject to change, for example through the "industrialization of the building trade," he favored "large-scale demolitions" and the construction of modern ensembles, which he praised as "architecturally unified, expressive, [and] beautiful."<sup>134</sup>

In retrospect, Doehler's work is remarkable for its ambiguity. On the one hand, Doehler was a radical at the time since he argued – under certain circumstances – for the preservation of the very tenement buildings that most of his contemporaries wanted to do away with as fast as possible. This might also have been the reason why until the end of the GDR his dissertation was classified "confidential" and not openly accessible. On the other hand, in Doehler's work we see, yet again, a blurring of ideas. He fashioned his study as a directive for the remodeling of old neighborhoods, but at the same time advocated for the demolition of most buildings in those areas. His aspired to "scientific objectivity" and at the same time failed to explain the basis of his calculations. His approach eventually reinforced the

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<sup>132</sup> The Institute for Continuous Study in Naumburg was founded in 1969 as an institution of the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction. Doehler's influence on the East German building industry can be inferred from the fact that every urban planner in the GDR at intervals, usually every three years, had to participate in seminars there. Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik*. (Erlangen: Verlag Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 179, confirmed by Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Doehler, *Planungsgrundlagen zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnbausubstanz von Altbaugebieten insbesondere Städte über 10,000 Einwohner im Zeitraum 1965-1980* (East Berlin, 1961) [dissertation]: 9.

<sup>134</sup> "großzügiger Flächenabriß" *ibid.*: 24, "[Ziel der Stadterneuerung ist]...die Bildung architektonisch einheitlicher, ausdrucksvoller, schöner Ensembles." *Ibid.*: 27.

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belief that even a policy that aimed at the preservation of old neighborhoods inevitably had to carry out large-scale demolitions.

This way of thinking was widespread not only in the GDR, but also in the neighboring socialist countries. In 1960 Czech architect Vladimír Matoušek wrote: "All in all it is obvious that with the exception of purely industrial towns a large amount of our cities have an obsolete building stock."<sup>135</sup> Matoušek did not explicitly propose demolitions in order to "improve" that situation; he rather presented it as natural and unavoidable that cities with buildings that are *přestárly* (obsolete) will not develop in a satisfactory way. In 1963, Polish scholars Chojecki and Srokowski counted approximately 80 years of life span, a figure that they claim to have obtained "from experience."<sup>136</sup> In 1965 Soviet engineer Boris Mikhailovic Kolotilkin published a 250-page manual in which he provided instructions for the "scientifically exact" calculation of a building's life span. He defined *dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdaniy* ("longevity" or "life span" of residential buildings) as

"the time over which a building wears out under the effect of the forces of nature or as a result of its use, independent from the applied measures, changes it into a condition under which further use is impossible, and repair and renovation is economically not purposeful."<sup>137</sup>

Kolotilkin, like Doehler a bone-dry bureaucrat, was a researcher at the *Tsentral'nij Nauchno-Izledovatel'skij i Proektnyj Institut Tipogo i Eksperimental'nogo Proektirovanija Zhilishcha* (Central Institute for Scientific Research on and Design of Typed and Experimental Building Projects) in Moscow. Already in the 1950s he had analyzed prefabricated concrete buildings as "products" whose

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<sup>135</sup> "Vcelku je však zřejmé, že až na průmyslová města má řada měst zvláště reservačních zemědělských a lázeňských značně přestárly bytový fond;..." Vladimír Matoušek, "Stavíme naše města ucelně a hospodárně?" *Architektura ČSSR* (1960) 10: 715. [Are we building our cities purposefully and economically?]

<sup>136</sup> S. Chojecki and W. Srokowski, *Inwestycje i budownictwo* (Warsaw, 1963) [investment and building industry].

<sup>137</sup> "[Dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdaniy] ...srok, v tecenie kotorogo, nesmotrja na prinimaemye mery, zdanie pod vozbejstviem sil prirody i v rezul'tate ego ekspluatatsii iznashivaetsja vetshaet i prikhodit v sostojanie, pri kotorom dal'neishaja ekspluatatsija stanovitsja nevozmozhnoj, a remont i vosstanovlenie ekonomicheski netselesoobrazny." Boris Mikhailovich Kolotilkin, *Dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdaniy* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literaturny po stroitel'stvu i arkhitekture, 1965) [Life span of residential buildings]: 11.

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quality was exclusively a function of their cost efficiency.<sup>138</sup> In his manual, Kolotilkin claimed that a building had to be demolished after either 20 years, 50 years, or 100 years, depending on the quality of the building materials and the climatic conditions, and specified the investments in current repairs according to the different stages of a building's "life."<sup>139</sup> For example, Nikolai Poljakov, an architect and corresponding member of the prestigious *Akademia Stroitel'stva i Arkhitektury SSSR* (Academy of Building Industry and Architecture of the USSR), assigned the cycle of demolition and rebuilding of the urban "organism" a quasi-biological significance, driven by the forces of "life": "Life breaks the old frames within which the city had developed over centuries; this generates the inevitability of different measures of reconstruction."<sup>140</sup> Poljakov thus deduced that "due to economic calculations" all "dilapidating" buildings had to be removed as fast as possible because they constitute an obstacle to a modern urban design.<sup>141</sup> This idea inspired a vast amount of researchers in socialist countries who attempted to determine a building's life span according to "scientific" principles.<sup>142</sup> Also East Berlin's Director of Construction Günter Peters, under whose auspices the first tenement rehabilitations in East Berlin were carried out, quoted Kolotilkin in his dissertation.<sup>143</sup> Polish researchers Chojecki and

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<sup>138</sup> Boris Mikhailovich Kolotilkin, *Voprosy ekonomiki krupnoblocnogo stroitel'stva* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literaturny po stroitel'stvu i arkhitekture, 1956) [Questions on the economics of large block buildings].

<sup>139</sup> Boris Mikhailovich Kolotilkin, *Dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdaniy* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo literaturny po stroitel'stvu i arkhitekture, 1965) [Life span of residential buildings]: 12-13.

<sup>140</sup> "Zhizn' lomaet starye ramki, v kotorykh skladyvalasja gorod vekami, vyzyvaja neobkhodimost' postojannogo provedeniya tech ili innykh rekonstruktivnykh rabot." N. Poljakov, *Vazhnejshie zadachi rekonstruktsii gorodov* [The most important problems in the redevelopment of cities] *Arkhitektura SSSR*, no. 1 (1961): 10 For a similar approach see also A. Proskurnin, "O rekonstruktsii zlozivsejsja zhiloy zastroiki v bol'shikh gorodakh," *Zhilishchnoe stroitel'stvo* no. 12 (1960): 26-28 [On the reconstruction of old residential neighborhoods in big cities].

<sup>141</sup> In the same article, Poljakov also predicted that in a near future a significant portion of inner-urban traffic will be taken on by helicopters. N. Poljakov, "Vazhnejshie zadachi rekonstruktsii gorodov," *Arkhitektura SSSR* no. 1 (1961): 16 [The most important problems in the redevelopment of towns].

<sup>142</sup> Nikolai Poljakov, "Vasnejsie zadachi rekonstruktsii gorodov," *Arkhitektura SSSR* no. 1 (1961): 10-16 [The most important tasks of the reconstruction of cities], A. Proskurnin, "O rekonstruktsii zlozivsejsja ziloy zastroiki v bol'shikh gorodakh" *Zhilishchnoe stoitel'stvo* no 12 (1960): 45-47 [On the reconstruction of old residential neighborhoods in big cities], Vladimir Matoušek, "Stavíme naše města ucelně a hospodárně?" *Architektura ČSSR* no. 10 (1960): 713-718 [Are we building our cities purposefully and economically?], Sándor Kántor, "Elavult városrészek újjáépítése," *Epitésügyi Szemle* [Budapest] no. 10 (1960): 300-307 [The reconstruction of obsolete districts].

<sup>143</sup> Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, East Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A/29 Peters quoted Kolotilkin's article on "the quantitative

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Srokowski - in reference to Marx's "moral depreciation" - calculated what they called "societal" or "moral depreciation."<sup>144</sup> Soviet architect S. Matveev in 1961 spoke of *moral'nij i tekhniceskij malotsennost'* (moral and technical worthlessness) of buildings which after a certain time span mandated the demolition and subsequent rebuilding of a historic neighborhood.<sup>145</sup> Also Kolotilkin in his 1965 manual defines *moral'noe znashivanie zhilishch* (moral depreciation of residential buildings) referencing Marx.<sup>146</sup> East German sources also mentioned a study by the Soviet engineers Babakin and I. Lavrenov, who in the early 1960s developed a sophisticated method to calculate "moral depreciation."<sup>147</sup> At the same time, the term also appeared in East Germany.<sup>148</sup> Those who used it all held a conviction that, independent of applied modernization measures, the preservation of residential buildings over 100 years old was incompatible with the demands of modern life.

The conception of urban life cycles blurred the distinction of "old" and "new." East German construction documents from the 1960s and early 1970s do not categorically differentiate between long-standing and newly erected buildings. The term *Wohnraumerhaltung* (preservation of residential space), which abounds in the documents, was not necessarily connected to the preservation and modernization of the existing buildings, but could equally refer to demolition in favor of a modernist

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expression of moral depreciation" in *Gorodskoe Khozjajstvo Moskvy* [Moscow] no. 38 (1964) and his *Dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdanij* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu, 1965) [Life span of residential buildings] of which he read both in an unofficial German translation.

<sup>144</sup> S. Chojecki and W. Srokowski, *Inwestycje i budownictwo* (Warsaw 1963) [investment and building industry].

<sup>145</sup> In his description of the reconstruction plans for Moscow, Matveev announced the demolition of all "dilapidated or wooden buildings" by 1966. Additional buildings were to be demolished for "reasons of urban design," such as an increase of light and air or the creation of thoroughfares and park spaces. S. Matveev, "Rekonstruktsija tsentra Moskvyy", *Gorodskoe Khozjajstvo Moskvy* [Moscow] 35 no. 3 (1961): 30 [the reconstruction of the center of Moscow].

<sup>146</sup> Boris Mikhailovich Kolotilkin, *Dolgovechnost' zhilykh zdanij* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu, 1965): 47-48 [Life span of residential buildings], reference to Karl Marx, *Kapital* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1955) vol. 1: 410.

<sup>147</sup> The Soviet study by Babakin and Lavrenov was quoted next to the Polish study by Chojecki and Srokowski in Ministerium für Bauwesen und Deutsche Bauakademie, eds., *Erhaltung und Modernisierung der Altbausubstanz* (East Berlin, 1966).

<sup>148</sup> "Konzeption für ein spezifiziertes Programm der Erhaltung der Wohnsubstanz in allen Stadtbezirken für die Jahre 1967 und 1968" [conception for a specific program of preservation of living spaces in all city districts during the years 1967 and 1968], (1969?) signed Hermann, LAB C Rep 110, 1525. Although the study does not quantify this "moral depreciation," it mentioned that it is included in the calculations.

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development. In a similar way, the preservation of historical residential neighborhoods – as in the Arkonaplatz remodeling in the Mitte district in the late 1970s – was not targeted at preserving the old as explicitly different from the new but rather to add sanitary facilities *despite* the fact that the buildings were old. There were other cases in which large-scale demolition and comprehensive remodeling went together. In the early 1970s, the entire *Spandauer Vorstadt* neighborhood in the Mitte district (at the time referred to as "Area south of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße") was still scheduled for demolition – although the plans were not carried out - while at the same time the adjacent neighborhoods were remodeled.<sup>149</sup> The term "preservation of living space" forbade construction officials to speak of "destruction," since, in their eyes, living space was not destroyed but merely transformed.

### *Determining a contradictory demolition policy*

An economic directive from 1964, issued by the East Berlin District Plan Commission, explicitly required the prolongation of a building's life span as a precondition for investment in the following year. The goal was to "unify" the quality of the residential area, which meant that the most damaged neighborhoods were to be demolished and replaced, while less dilapidated ones were scheduled for modernization.<sup>150</sup> As a result, the life span would be the same in an entire neighborhood, and comprehensive demolition in the future would be easier. Areas scheduled for imminent demolition

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<sup>149</sup> The demolition of the *Spandauer Vorstadt* is scheduled for the years after 1973. See letter by the Berlin District Office of Construction, Office of Chief Architect Joachim Näther to the "Wirtschaftsrat des Bezirkes, Bereich Leichtindustrie," (District Economy Council, Department of Light Industry) dated July 3, 1969, regarding the building Sophienstraße 17/18 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 556. Around 1970, most buildings in the neighborhood west of Weinbergsweg, immediately north of the Spandauer Vorstadt, were remodeled. See announcement in the "Konzeption für ein spezifiziertes Programm der Erhaltung der Wohnsubstanz in allen Stadtbezirken für die Jahre 1967 und 1968" [conception for a specific program of preservation of living spaces in all city districts during the years 1967 and 1968], (1969?) signed Hermann, LAB C Rep 110, 1525.

<sup>150</sup> "Der Aufwand für die Erhaltungsmaßnahmen muß in jedem Falle im Verhältnis zu der weiteren Verlängerung der Lebensdauer der Gebäude und Wohnungen stehen" Ökonomische Direktive zur Ausarbeitung des Planes Erhaltung des Wohnungsbestandes im Jahre 1965 [economic directive for the elaboration of the plan preservation of the housing stock in 1965], authored by the Berlin District Plan Commission, dated June 1, 1964, LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555: 2.

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included the southern part of the Friedrichshain district and several portions of the Mitte district.<sup>151</sup> Areas scheduled for demolition in the near future, where no work other than the most necessary maintenance was to be done, included the *Spandauer Vorstadt* (the "area south of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße") in the Mitte district and the neighborhood south of Frankfurter Allee in the Friedrichshain district – both were eventually spared and partially remodeled in the 1980s.<sup>152</sup> Areas scheduled as an experiment for "Complex Reconstruction" included the Weinbergsweg neighborhood in the Mitte district and the area northwest of Bersarinplatz in the Friedrichshain district.<sup>153</sup> This policy was confirmed in the proposal for a 1965 *Magistrat* resolution, which foresaw the demolition of approximately 3000 apartments by 1970, mostly in the Alexanderplatz area.<sup>154</sup>

The concept of life span was also inherent in the plan to schedule the whole inner city inside the S-Bahn train circle for future demolition – the area comprised the three inner-city districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain, and thus virtually all of East Berlin's late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement neighborhoods. On March 20, 1964 the *Magistrat* resolved an "economic conception of the housing development until 1970," in which the whole area within the train circle is slated for new construction, with the exception of singular buildings "who guarantee a life span of 50 years or more", such as the well-preserved Jugendstil development *Hackesche Höfe*.<sup>155</sup> In the *Spandauer Vorstadt* area, individual renovations were explicitly forbidden since the whole neighborhood was scheduled for demolition and

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<sup>151</sup> This included the Alexanderplatz area with the neighborhoods north and west of it (Mollstraße, Georgenkirchstraße, Alte Schönhauser Straße) the Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße), both sides of Karl-Marx-Allee, the Fisher Island neighborhood, the Leipziger Straße, and the Heinrich-Heine-Straße. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555: 2.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.: 5. The document makes reference to an "Ökonomische Direktive bis 1970 und ökonomische Konzeption zur Wohnstättenentwicklung der Hauptstadt bis 1970" [economic directive and economic conception for the development of housing in the capital city until 1970] LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555: 2.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.: 4 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555: 2.

<sup>154</sup> Proposition for the *Magistrat* resolution no. 84/65, dated April 28, 1965 to be passed on May 10, 1965 LAB C Rep 110, 1493.

<sup>155</sup> *Magistrat* resolution from March 20, 1964, quoted in a statement on the proposal of the Mitte City District Council for the preparation of the preservation of living space for 1965, dated April 15, 1964, signed Werner, : 2. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555.

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subsequent rebuilding in the near future.<sup>156</sup> In the remodeling of the Arkonaplatz neighborhood, planned in 1969 and carried out in the 1970s, the objective was simply to prolong the life span of the buildings another 30 to 40 years.<sup>157</sup> The same applied for the Arnimplatz remodeling, which was started in 1973 as the first large-scale renovation project in East Berlin. It was explicitly stated that the renovation was merely preliminary, and that by 2010 all tenements, including the renovated ones, had to come down.<sup>158</sup> Even after the East German authorities had shifted their policy towards densifying the inner city they still occasionally mandated comprehensive demolition as a long-term strategy.<sup>159</sup>

In the mid-1960s, the Berlin District Office of Construction authored a "Conception for the Preservation of Dwelling Space in all City Districts During the Years 1967 and 1968," in which the existing building stock in the entire city was analyzed to decide about preservation or demolition.<sup>160</sup> The document mentioned that in late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement neighborhoods it was almost impossible to raise the *Wohnwert* (housing value, housing comfort) of the apartments since in most cases the apartment plan would not permit the introduction of indoor toilets and bathrooms. It included a

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<sup>156</sup> *Magistrat* resolution from March 20, 1964, quoted in a statement on the proposal of the Mitte City District Council for the preparation of the preservation of living space for 1965, dated April 15, 1964, signed Werner, : 2. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555.

<sup>157</sup> This is stated by the Mitte City District Architect Max Kowohl in "Städtebauliche Direktive zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnbausubstanz – umfassend das Gebiet Rheinsberger Straße, Schwedter Straße, Fürstenberger Straße, Arkonaplatz und Ruppiner Straße, 1969(?), LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 550.

<sup>158</sup> "Direktive des *Magistrats* von Groß-Berlin für den Baureparaturschwerpunkt im Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg, Gebiet Schönhauser Allee, Bornholmer Straße und S-Bahn," passed on May 9, 1972, reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A55. The resolution is based on Peters's research, who was the supervising official of the Arnimplatz remodeling.

<sup>159</sup> See Institut für Städtebau und Architektur der Bauakademie, Bezirksplankommission, and Büro für Städtebau "Vorschlag einer strategischen Grundlinie," dated August 25, 1989, no author BArch DH 2 F2/198: 3-4. The proposal stated the necessity of densifying the "amply built" satellite settlements of the 1960s. On the other hand, it claims that of the approximately 200,000 tenement apartments built before 1919 one fourth was "not worthy to be preserved."

<sup>160</sup> "preservation of dwelling space" in the lingo of the time did not necessarily mean preservation of the building but could also be achieved by demolition and reconstruction. Cp. "Konzeption für ein spezifiziertes Programm der Erhaltung der Wohnsubstanz in allen Stadtbezirken für die Jahre 1967 und 1968" [conception for a specific program of preservation of living spaces in all city districts during the years 1967 and 1968], (1966?) signed Hermann, LAB C Rep 110, 1525.

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detailed list of dates when certain neighborhoods were to be demolished. Of the approximately 453,000 East Berlin apartments (the number included the 75,000 ones that were built after 1945) only 193,000 (43%) were to be preserved beyond 2000; according to the document 102,000 (22%) were to be demolished before 1985. The study substantiated these figures with a comparison between the cost for either maintenance and modernization or demolition and renewal. It mentioned only six *Instandsetzungsgebiete* (remodeling areas) where buildings could be used another 20 to 30 years and assigned the responsibility for enforcing the demolition plans to the city districts.<sup>161</sup> It also stressed that the plans for both 1965 and 1966 remained unfulfilled since current repairs had priority and there were barely funds for other measures. Generally, the policy of mandating demolition or remodeling was extremely inconsistent. A *Magistrat* resolution passed in 1972, approximately seven years after the study, determined quite different areas for demolition and preservation (see chapter 10 "Remodeling to defer demolition") – neither plan was carried out the way it was written down.<sup>162</sup>

Another directive of the Mitte City District Council from the late 1960s mentioned that 60% of East Berlin apartments were built before 1918, and 143,000 had insufficient sanitary facilities. It nevertheless claimed that for lack of resources these buildings had to be preserved for another 15 to 20 years.<sup>163</sup> Cables and pipes were to be renewed, single-pane windows replaced by double-glazing,

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<sup>161</sup> There were two remodeling areas in the northern Mitte district, two in the southern Prenzlauer Berg district, and two in the Friedrichshain district. In Mitte it was the area between Invalidenstraße, Chausseestraße, Bergstraße, Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße) and the area between Rheinsberger Straße, Brunnenstraße, Choriner Straße, Schwedter Straße, and Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße); in Prenzlauer Berg district the area between Eberswalder Straße/Dimitroffstraße (now Danziger Straße), Greifswalder Straße, Metzger Straße, and Heinrich-Roller-Straße, and in Friedrichshain the areas between Leninallee, Auerstraße, Bersarinstraße, and Weidenweg and between Leninallee, Bersarinstraße, Hausburgstraße, and Thaerstraße. "Konzeption für ein spezifiziertes Programm der Erhaltung der Wohnsubstanz in allen Stadtbezirken für die Jahre 1967 und 1968" [conception for a specific program of preservation of living spaces in all city districts during the years 1967 and 1968], (1969?) signed Hermann, LAB C Rep 110, 1525.

<sup>162</sup> "Direktive des *Magistrats* von Groß-Berlin für den Baureparaturschwerpunkt im Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg, Gebiet Schönhauser Allee, Bornholmer Straße und S-Bahn," passed on May 9, 1972, reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A54-A55.

<sup>163</sup> The directive specified three areas of *Komplexe Erhaltung* (Complex Preservation). One was bordered by Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße), Schönhauser Alle, Metzger Straße, and Heinrich-

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stairwells fixed, dry rot removed, and remaining backyard toilets demolished. According to the study, other measures in these areas should be postponed until the final urban design plan was resolved, which suggests that even for those "Complex Preservation" areas the possibility of a quick demolition was not entirely ruled out. The directive also mentioned another group of neighborhoods to be emptied as soon as possible and one in which repairs should be done only at the most basic level – these were the same areas that already the Berlin District Plan Commission's study from 1964 had designated for demolition in the near future.<sup>164</sup> Still in 1971, the Politburo saw the main problem of the housing situation in the GDR in the *Überalterung* (obsolescence) of the building stock which on average was almost 60 years old and "whose equipment significantly lags behind the increased demands and hygienic requirements [of the present]."<sup>165</sup>

#### *Self-referential financial calculations*

Financial calculations that compared renovation and demolition were especially dubious in a socialist system. Unlike freely convertible currencies, the value of the East German mark was not established by the market but by the government, which at the same time also determined salaries and prices for raw materials. This was a serious shortcoming of all East German studies on construction cost, even although observers claim that the prices set by the rulers were not totally arbitrary but calculated in relation to the market prices and salaries in the West.<sup>166</sup> However, both prices and salaries were often

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Roller-Straße, the other by Tilsiter Straße (now Richard-Sorge-Straße), Löwestraße, Thaerstraße, Hausburgstraße, and Thorner Straße (now Conrad-Blenkle-Straße), and the third by Saefkowpark und Dimitroffstraße (now Danziger Straße). "Direktive für die Erhaltung und Modernisierung der Wohnsubstanz in der Hauptstadt der DDR – Berlin – bis 1970" (Bezirksplankommission?), 1969(?). LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 554.

<sup>164</sup> The neighborhoods to be emptied included the Alexanderplatz area, the Fischerinsel (Fisher Island) neighborhood, and the area around Heinrich-Heine-Straße in the Mitte district and the neighborhoods on both sides of Karl-Marx-Allee in the Mitte and Friedrichshain districts; the neighborhoods for which only basic repairs should be done included the Spandauer Vorstadt in the Mitte district and the area north of the Ostbahnhof train station in the Friedrichshain district. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 554.

<sup>165</sup> "Das Hauptproblem der Wohnungssituation in der DDR liegt im qualitativen Zustand der vorhandenen Wohnungen, die mit fast 60 Jahren stark überaltert sind und deren Ausstattung erheblich hinter den gewachsenen Ansprüchen und hygienischen Erfordernissen zurückgeblieben ist." Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 5, 1971, work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1544: 49.

<sup>166</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003. Retail prices were set by the Amt für Preise (Price Authority); despite numerous corrections the price system stayed fundamentally contradictory, since it tried to combine economic incentives with ideological

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based on ideology. Meat was frequently cheaper than vegetables, and construction workers regularly earned more than university graduates.<sup>167</sup> The East German economic system thus lacked an independent measure (such as the market in capitalist economies) against which building costs could be gauged. The inherent self-referentiality of the cost factor, which was never officially mentioned, is a serious flaw of all East German studies on cost-efficiency in the construction industry. Another shortcoming of the "scientifically exact" calculations was the contradictory choice of the factors according to which construction cost was calculated. For example, the cost for new infrastructure in a development was generally not included. Also the price of preservation versus demolition was often not specified, which made it impossible to compare one study with another.<sup>168</sup> These deficiencies, however, did not prevent the East German authorities from producing tomes of statistics. Not surprisingly, these studies were rarely controversial. They miraculously found that what was most politically desirable also happened to be most economically efficient.

#### *Obsolescence becomes obsolete*

Obsolescence became obsolete over the course of in the 1970s when the concept of a building's life span gradually disappeared. At the same time, also the notion of "the old" was reconfigured. Publications in the 1950s and 1960s still made a distinction between the despised late-19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture, especially the tenements, and older buildings, such as the late medieval nucleus of Quedlinburg or the 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings in Old Town Weimar. In the 1980s, however, this difference disappeared. Now buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century were put in one category with those of earlier eras. Both were equally deemed worthy of preservation. Architect Helmut Stelzer, a functionary with the Architects Association, exemplified this new approach. In a 1983 article, he made repeated references to the "historic buildings" from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which in his eyes had to be regarded as monuments

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mandates and a general desire to keep prices stable. Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 497.

<sup>167</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 538.

<sup>168</sup> See for example the "Konzeption für ein spezifiziertes Programm der Erhaltung der Wohnsubstanz in allen Stadtbezirken für die Jahre 1967 und 1968" [conception for a specified program for the preservation of the housing stock in all city districts in the years 1967 and 1967] (1969?), signed Hermann. LAB C Rep 110, 1525.

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although they were not "monuments in the sense of the law." He claimed that they should be protected the same as half-timbered houses from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>169</sup>

In the 1970s, references to long-term planning strategies in the GDR diminished. This might be related to the increasing difficulties to fulfill the plan, but it nevertheless coincided with a period when also in West Berlin the role of the state became less and less that of a long-term planning authority. In the East, like in the West, the remodeling of an old building became a question of replacing worn down parts and inserting sanitary facilities wherever it was necessary, and no longer one of rebuilding the entire city. This suggests that the East German authorities, like those in the West, either assumed that given regular maintenance and repairs a building could theoretically last forever, or that they did no longer consider it the state's business to engage in comprehensive demolition and redevelopment planning. There are arguments for both. The first hypothesis is substantiated by the detail that in the 1980s projected life spans grew longer and longer. In his 1983 dissertation, Horst Rolle extended the anticipated use of a tenement almost infinitely. He did not provide any demolition date and only asserted that *load-bearing* parts should be renewed after 130 to 160 years – that is, not before 2000.<sup>170</sup> In February 1990 – Honecker had stepped down three months earlier, and free elections were announced for the following month – Dresden professor Kurt Wilde bluntly dismissed the East German calculations of the past as unscientific and ideological. He wrote: "The proof for 'necessary new building' is a 'proof' through appearance... The life span of 100 years that is sometimes mentioned is normative, not absolutely cogent!"<sup>171</sup> The second hypothesis that state-sponsored long-

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<sup>169</sup> Helmut Stelzer, "Wohnen in historischen Gebäuden. Zum Beitrag der Denkmalpflege nach dem VIII. Bundeskongress des BdA/DDR," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1983): 99. The author was the chairman of the *BdA Betriebsgruppe Denkmalpflege* (Work Group on Historic Preservation at the Architects Association).

<sup>170</sup> "Nach wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen können die Erneuerungsintervalle der tragenden Bauteile der Gebäude dieser Bauperiode [1870-1914] mit 130 bis 160 Jahren angenommen werden." Horst Rolle, *Die Lebensdauer von Konstruktionen des Wohnungsbaus – ein Beitrag zu ihrer Ermittlung und zu ihrer Anwendung bei der Vorausbestimmung der Baureparaturen und des Ersatzneubaus* (Leipzig, 1983) [dissertation at the Technische Hochschule Leipzig]. Rolle explicitly mentioned Sophienstraße in the Mitte district as an example.

<sup>171</sup> "Der Beweis zum ‚erforderlichen Neubau‘ ist ein ‚Beweis‘ durch Augenscheinlichkeit..." Die zuweilen angegebene Grenze der Lebensdauer von Bauten ‚von 100 Jahren‘ ist eine normative Grenze, keine

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term planning gradually became outdated is backed by the fact that since 1970 the amount of comprehensive redesign plans is diminishing. The reasons were practical. At the time, East German authorities were less and less able to cope with everyday problems of maintenance and supply. In light of a government that was merely administrating shortages, extensive projects were strikingly inappropriate. Although the state's authority over housing and construction was never called into question, the economic crisis of the 1980s forced the GDR to cut costs everywhere. Long-term plans thus silently fell victim to pragmatism, as did most other relics of utopian socialist thinking.

Inseparably linked to the modernist promise of comprehensive renewal, obsolescence and moral depreciation defy simple explanations. Even a thriving capitalist economy would be hard-pressed to finance the replacement of the entire building stock every 50 years. In a flagging socialist system such a waste of resources was simply disastrous. The parallels under both capitalism and socialism forestalls the hypothesis that the "economy of obsolescence" was kept alive by a powerful real estate industry who profited from the rapid demolition and rebuilding.<sup>172</sup> As a matter of fact, in the socialist countries no identifiable social group benefited from the demolitions in a material sense. Even more, this waste of national resources soon became a considerable impediment to the economic upturn. The persistence of obsolescence against all economic reason can only be seen as ideological. It was rooted in a cultural construct, which proved to be stronger than the official socialist doctrine and eventually contributed to the failure of Eastern European socialism.

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absolut zwingende!" Kurt Wilde, "Prinzipielle Überlegungen zur Einheit von Neubau, Erhaltung und Modernisierung," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1990): 50-51.

<sup>172</sup> Abramson for example sees the discourse on obsolescence in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America in relation to the specific anxieties of real estate capital. Daniel Abramson, "Obsolescence: Notes towards a history," *Praxis* no. 5 (2003): 110.

## Chapter 6: Preservation and "Rekonstruktion"

*Rekonstruktion, rekonstruksija, reconstruction*

*Rekonstruktion* (reconstruction) was one of the key terms of East German urban design policy. Like its English equivalent, the word carries several meanings. In an urban context, it can indicate the demolition of a neighborhood and its subsequent rebuilding in a modern style, or it can denote its preservation and comprehensive refurbishing according to its historical aspect. *Rekonstruktion* was never used in a general sense to describe the rebuilding of destroyed German cities after the Second World War. This process in German was called *Wiederaufbau* (rebuilding) and did not imply a specific form or degree of similarity to the lost building or neighborhood. *Rekonstruktion* always retained a positive connotation, regardless of its intended meaning. In the 1960s, East German publications almost exclusively used *Rekonstruktion* as a synonym for "total demolition and subsequent modernist rebuilding." The meaning "visually and structurally accurate restoration" gradually gained significance over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. A certain ambiguity has nevertheless always remained between the two extremes. There were, and continue to be, a large number of shades.

One finds a similar change in meaning in Soviet texts on urban design. The Russian *rekonstruksija* holds the same double meaning as the German *Rekonstruktion*. During the 1930s, the term was almost exclusively reduced to the sense of demolition and subsequent rebuilding. In the context of the Stalinist restructuring of Moscow *rekonstruksija* meant preserving the old neighborhood boundaries, while at the same time demolishing and rebuilding the buildings they enclosed.<sup>173</sup> Stalin's often declared belief in the historical structure of Moscow was from the very beginning limited to the ground plan. His urban design policy preserved the network of concentric boulevards and avenues; a reference to valuable historical buildings was not implied. Existing buildings, be it wooden sheds or

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<sup>173</sup> See for example Lazar M. Kaganovic's directives in the context of the 1935 Moscow master plan. Harald Bodenschatz and Christiane Post, *Städtebau im Schatten Stalins: die internationale Suche nach der sozialistischen Stadt in der Sowjetunion 1929-1935* (Berlin: Braun, 2003): 153-155.

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sumptuous upper-class residences, were unsparingly demolished.<sup>174</sup> *Rekonstruktsja* connoted development and progress. It was visualized in paved streets, motorcars, schools, theaters, and workers clubs; photographs celebrated the replacement of traditional log cabins by spacious stone buildings.<sup>175</sup> The approach was paralleled in East Germany during the short period of Stalinist urban design between 1950 and 1955, which followed the Soviet-inspired “16 Principles of Urban Design” and which was aimed at the creation of neoclassical perimeter block buildings along the historic boulevards.<sup>176</sup> In Soviet urban design of the post-Stalinist period, *rekonstruktsja* still predominantly meant demolition and subsequent rebuilding.<sup>177</sup> Only in the 1970s was the word used in a sense that could also comprise the meaning of historically accurate remodeling. For example, in her 1974 publication on the *rekonstruktsja* of old neighborhoods in Leningrad Aleksandra Makhrovskaja used the word for the sensitive remodeling of residential neighborhood, including late-19<sup>th</sup>-century districts, in close relation to the original state.<sup>178</sup>

*Rekonstruktion* in the Soviet Union or East Germany also had a specific meaning deriving from socialist economic theory. The *Kleines politisches Wörterbuch*, the authoritative East German college dictionary of Marxist-Leninist ideology, defined it as “comprising the complex renewal of the material

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<sup>174</sup> This applied especially to those buildings scorned for ideological reasons. By the mid 1930s, half of Moscow’s approximately 250 churches and monasteries had already been destroyed Barbara Kreis, *Moskau 1917-1935 – Vom Wohnungsbau zum Städtebau* (Düsseldorf: Edition Marzona 1985): 130.

<sup>175</sup> This is exemplified in a 1936 publication by the Soviet planning authority on the successful socialist *rekonstruktsja* of Novosibirsk. The ramshackle wooden houses on the “before” pictures are set in conscious opposition to the shiny modern multi-storied buildings “after.” For example page 79 shows the Central Square (Stalin Square) in 1925 and 1935, page 81 Krasnij Prospekt in 1906 and 1935. F. V. Popova, *Sotsialisticheskaja rekonstruktsija goroda Novosibirska* (Moscow: Vlast’ sovetov, 1936).

<sup>176</sup> “Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaus” [passed by the Ministerrat on July 27, 1950] *Ministerialblatt der DDR* no. 25 (1950) [September 16, 1950]. The term *Rekonstruktion* nevertheless does not appear in the 16 principles.

<sup>177</sup> Cp. for example A. Proskurnin, “O rekonstruktsii zlovisejsja zhilov zastroiki v bol’shikh gorodakh,” *Zhilishchnoe stroitelstvo* no. 12 (1960) [Moscow]: 26-28 [On the reconstruction of old residential neighborhoods in big cities] or N. Poljakov, “Vazhnejšie zadachi rekonstruktsii gorodov,” *Arkhitektura SSSR* no. 1 (1961) [The most important problems in the redevelopment of towns]: 10-16.

<sup>178</sup> Aleksandra Viktorovna Makhrovskaja, *Rekonstruktsija, starykh zhilykh rajonov krupnykh gorodov na primere Leningrada* (Leningrad: Stojizdat, 1974) [Reconstruction of old residential neighborhoods in big cities with the example of Leningrad]: 13. This new meaning also appear in Mikhail Vasil’evich Posokhin, *Gorod dlja cheloveka* (Moscow: Progress, 1980) [The Human City]. Posokhin was the Chief Architect of Moscow.

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and technical bases of existing processes, facilities, and entire companies."<sup>179</sup> This could include the improvement, modernization, or more efficient use of any means of production, be it a machine, a factory, or a residential building. This renewal was to be carried out at regular intervals, following the latest advances of science and technology and serving a quantifiable improvement in the living conditions of the working class.<sup>180</sup> *Rekonstruktion* thus implied progress and development rather than nostalgia. Like Stalin's modernization plans, it evoked images of shiny machines, bustling factory workers, and happy farm girls. At the same time it stood in contrast with the popular use of *Rekonstruktion*, which connoted half-timbered houses, church-towers, and stucco ornaments. In forty years of East German media history, the ambiguity of the two meanings was never fully unraveled.

### *Demolition and "Rekonstruktion" in the 1960s*

In a 1963 directive the East Berlin *Magistrat* (city government) used *Rekonstruktion* synonymously with comprehensive demolition and the rebuilding of an entire neighborhood. The case in question was the *Spandauer Vorstadt* in the Mitte district. The letter stated that in the area "complex modernization" through "general repair" would be "uneconomical." The only solution was therefore a *Rekonstruktionsmaßnahme* (reconstruction measure), consisting of "complex modernization through demolition and renewal" to be completed by 1970.<sup>181</sup> This semantic use was not particular to that directive. Seven years later, Berlin's District Office of Construction stated that the residence at Sophienstraße number 17-19, which is situated in the same neighborhood, "lies in the *reconstruction area* 'South of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße' [i.e. the *Spandauer Vorstadt*] and therefore ...is scheduled for demolition [emphasis added]."<sup>182</sup> The meaning, however, was not entirely fixed. In an academic

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<sup>179</sup> "Sie umfaßt die komplexe Erneuerung der materiell-technischen Grundlagen bestehender Prozesse, Anlagen und ganzer Betriebe" *Kleines politisches Wörterbuch*, third edition (East Berlin: Dietz, 1978): 381.

<sup>180</sup> "Die Rekonstruktion ist ein zeitlich begrenzter Erneuerungsprozeß, d. h., sie ist zum zweckmäßigsten Zeitpunkt, nach festen Terminen vorzubereiten und abzuschließen." *Kleines politisches Wörterbuch*, third edition (East Berlin: Dietz, 1978): 381.

<sup>181</sup> (*Magistrat* von Groß-Berlin, Bereich Bauwesen und Investitionen?) Bereich Städtebau und Architektur, dated June 8, 1963, signed Thiel and Schulz LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555.

<sup>182</sup> "Auf Ihre Anfrage teilen wir Ihnen mit, daß das Grundstück [Sophienstr 17/18] im Rekonstruktionsgebiet 'Südlich Wilhelm-Pieck-Str.' liegt, und daß mit dem Abriß des Gebäudes zu rechnen ist.... Nach dem derzeitigen Erkenntnisstand ist mit einem Abriß nicht vor 1973/74 zu rechnen."

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environment one finds a more qualified use of the term. In 1963, East German economist and urban planner Peter Doepler, the theorist of East German urban renewal, defined *Rekonstruktion* as "construction measures to modernize individual buildings and apartments in order to change the apartment and building structure, including extensions and alterations." He clearly distinguished it from *Erhaltung* (preservation), which he defined as repairs to guarantee a building's continuous use, and *völlige Umgestaltung* (total redesign), which he identified as the redesign of a whole neighborhood including large scale demolition and rebuilding.<sup>183</sup>

### *Shifting meaning*

Around 1970, one can detect a semantic shift. The signification of *Rekonstruktion* as comprehensive demolition and rebuilding gradually disappeared. Instead, one finds three different significations that are not clearly distinguishable. First, *Rekonstruktion* meant the renovation of an old neighborhood for the purpose of preserving its "historical character," which at the same time allowed for partial demolition, alteration, and extension of existing buildings. Second, it denoted the modernization of existing buildings without altering the building structure but merely adding toilets inside the apartments, bathrooms, and similar improvements. And third, it referred to the remodeling of old buildings as closely as possible to a real or imagined historical state, which might include substantial alterations to reinforce what is perceived as the spirit of the olden times. Now professionals and politicians used the term in this sense.<sup>184</sup> In the following years, the meaning "comprehensive demolition and new construction" declined further in use.<sup>185</sup>

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rechnen" Letter from Bezirksbauamt, Office of Chief Architect Joachim Näther to the "Wirtschaftsrat des Bezirkes, Bereich Leichtindustrie," dated July 3, 1969, LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 556.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Doepler, *Die sozialistische Umgestaltung der alten Wohngebiete der Städte in der DDR – Ziel, Aufgaben und Wege*, *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1963): 458.

<sup>184</sup> Joachim Näther, "Planung und Gestaltung des Wohngebiets 'Fischerkietz,'" *Deutsche Architektur* no. 1 (1967): 54, Richard Paulick, Erich Rank, and Werner Wolfram, "Erhaltung und Rekonstruktion der Altbausubstanz," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1967): 71-75. Horst Vysek, "Zur Rekonstruktion von städtischen Altbauwohngebieten," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 12 (1970): 712-715.

<sup>185</sup> Fritz Rothstein's report from the conference of the *Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Denkmalpflege* (Central Professional Group on Historic Preservation) at the Architects Association wrote of *Rekonstruktion* only in reference to the "inclusion of valuable old building stock" into the "socialist redesign" of the cities. Architect Klaus Pöschk presented the Arkonaplatz remodeling, which was based on the general preservation of the block perimeter structure with only marginal demolition, as an *Umgestaltung und*

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The definition of *Rekonstruktion* as a synonym for modernization – meaning the upgrading of the building stock with showers, toilets inside the apartments, and double-pane windows – became canonical in a 1971 guideline, which corresponded to the signification Peter Doehler had already used a decade earlier.<sup>186</sup> It was exclusively technical and did not include any references to the historical form or façade design; it nevertheless clearly distinguished *Rekonstruktion* from demolition and rebuilding and also separated it from more basic works that were referred to as *Instandhaltung* (maintenance) and *Instandsetzung* (repair). While not becoming the exclusive signification, this definition was used until the 1980s. In 1985 architect Ernst Kristen published an article about the Frankfurter Allee neighborhood in the Friedrichshain district. Kristen, who was in charge of the project, made a clear distinction between buildings that were “reconstructed”, that is renovated, and those that were “rebuilt [from scratch] in a traditional style.” In Kristen’s explanation reconstruction has even lost the meaning of structural alteration and extension and merely signified building sanitary facilities.<sup>187</sup> Other publications from the last years of the GDR paralleled Kristen’s use of the term.<sup>188</sup> The connotations for *Rekonstruktion* and modernization now fully merged.

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*Rekonstruktion* (redesign and reconstruction). Fritz Rothstein, “Zur Rekonstruktion der Altbausubstanz unserer Städte,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 9 (1971): 569-570, Klaus Pöschk, “Städtebauliche Umgestaltung und Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes “Arkonaplatz” in Berlin-Mitte,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1971): 602.

<sup>186</sup> “Rekonstruktionen sind Baumaßnahmen an bestehenden Gebäuden... Dazu gehören insbesondere ...Neugestaltung des Grundrisses sowie der Fenster und Türöffnungen, die Trennung bzw. Schaffung von Mehrraumwohnungen...[und die Verbesserung von] Heizungs- und Sanitärtechnik...” (“Reconstructions are constructional measures on existing buildings...[including] changes in the plan, changes of doors, and windows, the separation or combination of apartments with multiple rooms [...and the improvement] of heating and sanitary facilities.”). Ministry of Construction, ed., “Richtlinie Nr. 2 über die Weiterentwicklung der Hauptauftragnehmerschaft auf dem Gebiet der Baureparaturen,” dated Dezember 8, 1971, reprinted in Deutsche Bauakademie, ed., *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, 1973): 129. The guideline regulated the status of state-operated construction firms carrying out official commissions.

<sup>187</sup> In the area, 2600 apartments were “reconstructed” (rekonstruiert), 300 were “repaired” (instandgesetzt), 350 “newly created in a traditional construction method with six stories” (in traditioneller Bauweise sechsgeschossig neu geschaffen) Ernst Kristen, “Zur Gestaltung der Frankfurter Allee in Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1985): 149.

<sup>188</sup> Dresden professor Kurt Wilde wrote about the future of tenement remodeling in East Germany and called it the policy of *Rekonstruktion (Modernisierung)* (reconstruction/ modernization).” Kurt Wilde, “Prinzipielle Überlegungen zur Einheit von Neubau, Erhaltung und Modernisierung,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1990): 50.

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Over the course of the 1970s, *Rekonstruktion* became more and more associated with historic preservation. At the time when the law was passed, a structural reform at the Dresden Technical University established the section *Methodik der Rekonstruktion und Gebäudeerhaltung* (Methodology of Reconstruction and Preservation of Buildings) at the Department of Architecture. It was directed by Bernhard Klemm, who in the early 1960s had earned his reputation with the preservation of historic residences in the Old Town of Görlitz. The connection with historic preservation suggests that by that time *Rekonstruktion* was already widely understood not only as distinct from demolition but also as a measure to preserve or restore a historic state. This meaning soon became common. In a 1976 speech, Head of State Erich Honecker used “to reconstruct” as the contrary of “to demolish.”<sup>189</sup> So did the Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker in the same year, pointing out that the “*Rekonstruktion* of the materially valuable buildings is a mandate of economic reason.”<sup>190</sup> And so did the chairman of the *Ministerrat* Willi Stoph ten years later, connecting the term with existing buildings and at the same time distinguishing it from modernization.<sup>191</sup>

### *Reconstructing the “historic character”*

In the mid-1970s, the term *Rekonstruktion* reflected the growing fascination with a real or imagined past. In 1976 the Politburo used the term to denote the conversion of Sophienstraße into a historicized shopping and entertainment district.<sup>192</sup> Ironically, the project referred precisely to the *Spandauer*

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<sup>189</sup> “Bei den Bebauungsprojekten sollte auch verantwortungsvoll geprüft werden, ob... alle alte ‚Bausubstanz‘, die im Wege steht, ... völlig abgerissen wird. Vielmehr ist es manchmal besser, das eine oder andere alte Gebäude zu rekonstruieren.” Erich Honecker, Speech on the 6<sup>th</sup> Baukonferenz of the ZK der SED, quoted in *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1975): 389.

<sup>190</sup> “Rekonstruktion der materiell wertvollen Bausubstanz sei ein Gebot der wirtschaftlichen Vernunft.” Wolfgang Junker’s closing speech on the 7th Architektenkongress, quoted in Ludwig Deiters, “Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 388.

<sup>191</sup> For the five-year-plan that was to start in 1986, Stoph called for a more intense use of existing buildings and therefore for a higher investment into “repairs, modernization, and reconstruction.” “Die vorhandene Bausubstanz muß rationeller genutzt werden. Dafür sind höhere Leistungen als bisher für Baureparaturen, Modernisierung und Rekonstruktion zu erbringen.” Willi Stoph, “Bericht zur Direktive des 11. Parteitages zum Fünfjahresplan für die Entwicklung der Volkswirtschaft der DDR in den Jahren 1986 bis 1990,” *Neues Deutschland* April 20, 1986. [Report on the directive of the 11th Party Convention regarding the Five-Year Plan for the development of the economy of the GDR from 1986 to 1990]

<sup>192</sup> The resolution foresaw the *Rekonstruktion* of the neighborhood around Sophienstraße, Hackescher Markt, and Große Hamburger Straße in the Mitte district. It determines that in the area workshops for

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*Vorstadt* where *Rekonstruktion* plans in 1963 were to entail the demolition of the entire area and its rebuilding in a modernist style. Now, "ein Stück Alt-Berlin rekonstruieren" ("reconstructing a piece of Old Berlin") did not refer merely to the painting of façades, but to the establishment of traditional craftsmen's shops for purposes of education, entertainment, and tourism. *Rekonstruktion* now meant the staging of history through period stores, restaurants, and street furniture. In this sense, it was used for the historicized remodeling of the neighborhoods around Sophienstraße and Husemannstraße, which were both carried out in the early 1980s.<sup>193</sup>

The preservation and rebuilding of the "historical character" subsequently became the predominant meaning of *Rekonstruktion*. In its July 1979 issue, the magazine *Architektur der DDR* featured several articles on the topic. It included a report on the *Rekonstruktion* of the Quedlinburg Old Town, which contains the largest concentration of pre-1600 buildings anywhere in East Germany.<sup>194</sup> The demolition of the late-medieval half-timbered houses had never been at stake. The term, in this context, meant the remodeling of the long-neglected buildings in line with the premises of historic preservation current at the time. Six months later, in February 1980, the same magazine published a whole issue on *Rekonstruktion*, with detailed articles about how cities in different socialist countries adapt historic neighborhoods to their present needs.<sup>195</sup> *Rekonstruktion* was specifically tied to the activities of the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* (Historic Preservation Authority). It included the idea of a historical model.

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"traditional or rare professions" such as goldsmiths, cabinet-makers etc. be established in order to "reconstruct a piece of Old Berlin." Item on agenda "Aufgaben zur Entwicklung der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin," Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602: 12-13. It was confirmed on the District Delegates Conference on March 27, 1976, using the term *Rekonstruktion* in the same context. See "Beschlüsse des Politbüros der SED, des Ministerrates der DDR und der XII. Bezirksdelegiertenkonferenz der SED vom 27.3.1976 'über die Aufgaben zur Entwicklung der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin, bis 1990,'" *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1976): 520.

<sup>193</sup> Dorothea Krause, Uwe Klasen and Wolfgang Penzel, "Rekonstruktion im Stil der Jahrhundertwende. Husemannstraße in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987), Peter Gohlke, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Sophienstraße in Berlin" *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1988): 9-15.

<sup>194</sup> For example on the renovation in the Old Towns of Halle and Quedlinburg, Kurt Ludley, "Rekonstruktion von innerstädtischen Bereichen im Bezirk Halle," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1979): 434-435.

<sup>195</sup> On Moscow see Gerhard Krenz, "Rekonstruktion alter Stadtbereiche in Moskau," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 81-85, on Prague see Jiří Brabenec, "Zur Rekonstruktion alter Stadtviertel in Prag," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 86-87, and on Potsdam see Christian Wendland, "Rekonstruktion der Klement-Gottwald-Straße in Potsdam" *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 92-99.

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The title page of the January 1975 issue of the magazine *Architektur der DDR* showed the meticulously restored of a lush late-19<sup>th</sup>-century façade with the caption “Reconstructed façade.”<sup>196</sup> This suggests that in this case, reconstruction meant detailed restoration. The same meaning was used in a directive of the East Berlin *Magistrat* regarding the renovations in the Palisadenstraße neighborhood in the Friedrichshain district. The letter demanded that stucco ornaments be “preserved or reconstructed” in a way that the old character of the façade be restored.<sup>197</sup> As it turned out, the *Rekonstruktion* of the Palisadenstraße was a rather free interpretation of the buildings’ historical state.<sup>198</sup>

This meaning of *Rekonstruktion* as restoration and rebuilding that preserved the “character” of a neighborhood remained relatively stable throughout the 1970s.<sup>199</sup> Generally the term *Rekonstruktionsgebiete* (reconstruction areas) was used for remodeling projects such as Arnimplatz and Arkonaplatz and alluded to an “updating” of a historic neighborhood, with preservation as the rule and demolition as the exception.<sup>200</sup> This could still include the *Entkernung* (“coring”) of backyard

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<sup>196</sup> The caption reads “Rekonstruierte Fassade in der Stolpischen Straße, Modernisierungsgebiet Berlin-Arnimplatz,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 11 (1975), caption on page 2. It is slightly inaccurate, since the building shown actually is on Schönfließer Straße 5, fifty meters north of Stolpische Straße. The issue is titled “Modernisierung und Rekonstruktion.”

<sup>197</sup> Letter from Chief Architect Roland Korn to Gerhard Poser, dated August 28, 1980, with the enclosed “Städtebauliche Direktive ‘Rekonstruktionsgebiet Palisadenstraße.’” LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>198</sup> See chapter 10 “Remodeling to Defer Demolition.”

<sup>199</sup> One of the first conceptions for the remodeling of the Arkonaplatz neighborhood speaks of the “reconstruction of the Arkonaplatz residential area.” Konzeption zur Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes Arkonaplatz, worked out by the work group Arkonaplatz with the Mitte City District Council, dated May 21, 1970. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 550. In the following decades, *Rekonstruktionsgebiete* (areas of reconstruction) was the common term for these areas. See, for example Dorothea Krause et. al., “Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes ‘Palisadendreieck’ im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 521-526, or the letter by Berlin Chief Architect Roland Korn to deputy mayor Böttger, dated September 9, 1980, LAB C Rep 902, 4477.

<sup>200</sup> Architect Wolf Werner wrote in 1973: “Der Begriff Rekonstruktion muß im Zusammenhang mit einem vorhandenen urbanen System als eine erweiterte Rekonstruktion aufgefasst werden. Es geht hier nicht schlechthin um die Wiederherstellung eines gewesenen Zustandes, sondern um die Herstellung neuer, funktionsgerechter Wohnbeziehungen, die den Bedürfnissen des modernen Menschen in unserer Gesellschaftsordnung entsprechen...” (“In the context of an urban system, the notion of reconstruction has to be conceived as extended reconstruction. It is not just about the rebuilding of a past state but about the production of new functional dwelling relations that correspond to the needs of our social order.”) Wolf Werner, “Wohnraumreserven in Altbauten,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1973): 118.

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areas. In this sense in 1975 architect and Building Academy employee Günter Kabus spoke of "necessary demolitions in the context of reconstruction measures" in the city of Zwickau.<sup>201</sup> The aesthetics of the street façade, however, was to be preserved at all cost. This strategy paralleled the "coring" of West Berlin neighborhoods at the time, which aimed at the renovation of historic façades in combination with large-scale demolitions in the inner portion of the block. In many cases, however, the number of demolished buildings surpassed that of preserved ones. An example was the "historically conscious" *Rekonstruktion* of the Žižkov neighborhood in Prague, which included the demolition and replacement of 60% of the buildings.<sup>202</sup> The "character" of a neighborhood, which the reconstruction was to preserve and enhance, became a matter of surface rather than substance.

### *"Rekonstruktion" in West Germany*

The new meaning of *Rekonstruktion* as restoration of a historic state paralleled the understanding of the term in West Germany at the time. Rob Krier, one of the most impassioned critics of modernist urban design, spoke of *Rekonstruktion* in connection with the "necessary corrections" of modernism, that is, the dismissal of the tower-in-a-park vision.<sup>203</sup> His *Rekonstruktion* aimed at "repairing" the demolitions of the 1950s and 1960s, which he criticized as harmful and destructive. Krier pointed out the advantages of the pre-modernist city. When he favored *Rekonstruktion*, he nevertheless was not advocating for an exact replica of pre-modernist urban spaces, but rather for the creative use of historical references adapted to modern requirements for the purpose of mending the urban fabric. Also in the West there was a certain liberty with regard to the meaning of *Rekonstruktion*. In an 1978 report, two West German journalists writing on East German urban design felt the need to refer to the

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<sup>201</sup> "Abriss im Zusammenhang mit den Rekonstruktionsmaßnahmen" Günther Kabus, *Umgestaltung der Bahnhofsvorstadt in Zwickau*, *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1975): 13.

<sup>202</sup> 11,700 out of a total of 19,200 apartments. Jiří Brabenec, "Zur Rekonstruktion alter Stadtviertel in Prag," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 86.

<sup>203</sup> Krier claimed that "every new urban design has to be subdued to the order of the general texture and its form has to answer the given spatial situation. "Jede Neuplanung in der Stadt hat sich der Ordnung des Gesamtgefüges zu unterwerfen und in ihrer Gestalt eine formale Antwort auf die räumlichen Vorgaben zu leisten." In this context Krier wrote of "notwendige Korrekturen." Rob Krier, "Rekonstruktion zerstörter Stadträume demonstriert am Beispiel der Innenstadt Stuttgart," *Baumeister* 72 (March 1975): 223.

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specific East German meaning of *Rekonstruktion*, which they perceived as being defined more precisely than the West German term. They summarized that in East Germany *Rekonstruktion* was aimed at conserving the individual character of a historic neighborhood, and included "all measures, such as current repairs, remodeling, modernization, demolition and rebuilding of individual buildings."<sup>204</sup>

#### *Semantic flexibility and political adjustment*

The semantic flexibility of *Rekonstruktion* makes it difficult to draw sharp lines. Demolition in the 1960s and preservation in the 1980s was mandated by the same institutions and presumably implemented by the same officials. The different meanings of the term were also rooted in a similar approach. In one or the other sense, *Rekonstruktion* was supposed to improve people's living conditions in the most economical and efficient way. In both senses, it relied on centralized top-down planning and aimed at a unified, homogenized model for the whole society. The confusion nevertheless reflected the contradictory approach of certain East German construction officials in particular and their urban design principles in general. Instead of openly calling for the *Abriss* (demolition) of the existing city, designers in the 1960s rather framed the redesign in positive terms, of which *Rekonstruktion* became the most significant. The terminology reflected a way of thinking. East German officials for a long time considered old buildings a lower stage on the path to progress, a path that promised a scientifically measurable improvement in the living conditions of all East Germans. Thus they saw their removal as an upgrading of the city, not as its eradication, and not as a break of its historical continuity. Since the city as such continued and was merely upgraded, its essence was conserved. Over the course of the 1970s, the list of desirable living conditions was extended beyond light, air, and sanitary facilities. It now included concepts such as *Heimatgefühl* (the

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<sup>204</sup> "Mit der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten wird eine schrittweise Annäherung der Wohnbedingungen in diesen Gebiete an die Qualität der Bedingungen in den Neubaugebieten angestrebt, ohne die Individualität dieser Altbaugebiete zu zerstören. Alle Maßnahmen hierzu, wie Instandhaltung, Instandsetzung, Modernisierung sowie Abbruch und Neubau von Einzelgebäuden sind unter dem Begriff Rekonstruktion zusammengefaßt." The article is otherwise very critical with the demolition practice in Saxon small towns. Jochen Baur and Gerhard Niese, "Notizen aus Sachsen – Umgestaltung und Rekonstruktion in Altstadtbereichen," *Baumeister* 75 (April 1978): 335.

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attachment to one's home town) and *Stadtbild* (the visible experience of the city as a unified whole). At the same time, the meaning of *Rekonstruktion* was also broadened. The striving for continuity inherent in the term now comprised the concern with a neighborhood's historic buildings, both as the place of habit and familiarity (*Heimat*) and a harmonic visual appearance (*Stadtbild*). What at first sight appears as a reversal in meaning – preservation instead of demolition – upon closer examination can be understood as a mere shift.

During the 1960s the positive undertone of *Rekonstruktion* favored the promoters of comprehensive demolition given that it disguised an ambiguous and possibly destructive process. A decade later the term was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it allowed an increasing amount of dissidents to contest the demolitions while still nominally subscribing to the official policy of *Rekonstruktion*. On the other hand, the blurry signification forestalled invoking *Rekonstruktion* as a synonym for restoration and thus as an efficient battle cry against demolition. Given that in East Germany open disagreement with the officials was not permitted, this ambiguity of *Rekonstruktion* allowed for dissenting opinions under an apparently common denominator. When it became clear that in the near future the total demolition and rebuilding of Berlin's tenement quarters could not be financed, the flexibility of *Rekonstruktion* spared the East German rulers from admitting that they had pursued unrealistic goals. It allowed them to continue upholding their motto while at the same time reconsidering their policy. Simultaneously, those who pushed for a different attitude towards the historic cities evaded the suspicion of being nostalgic and backwarded. With regard to preservationists such as Fritz Rothstein of the *Kulturbund* (Association for Culture), whose work was inseparably connected with the propagation of *Heimatgefühl* (attachment to one's home country/region), one could speak of a strategy. Using the positive interpretation of the term, Rothstein managed to inscribe his appeal for historic consciousness into the larger narrative of progress.<sup>205</sup> Rothstein's approach was nevertheless exceptional. The straightforward and often inconsistent way in which most other scholars and construction officials used the different meanings of *Rekonstruktion* suggests that the semantic change over the course of the

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<sup>205</sup> See for example his use of *Rekonstruktion* in Fritz Rothstein, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Altbausubstanz unserer Städte," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 9 (1971): 569-570.

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1970s was not the result of a conscious tactic. It rather reflected a social and political transformation, which eventually led to a revocation of modernist urban design principles. It shows how the modernist narrative of total rupture was not abandoned but rather superseded by an idea of gradual evolution. In the context of East German architecture and urban design, *Rekonstruktion* was inseparably connected with both the modern desire for progress and comprehensive renewal and the postmodern interest in tradition and historical continuity. The "rediscovery" of the historic city can thus be understood as the story of a semantic superimposition.

## Chapter 7: Academic Research and the Individualized View on the City

### *Academics discover social practice*

The reinvention of the historic city in East Germany was facilitated by an intellectual change of focus. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, researchers and theorists increasingly conceived of the city as being constituted by the everyday life of its inhabitants rather than by the functional qualities of buildings and infrastructure. To the East German rulers, this development was extremely suspicious for a number of reasons. First, they deemed it unnecessary to study the needs and desires of “ordinary people” since in their mind they the formerly oppressed were already ruling – an agency of these groups beyond their activities in parties and mass organizations was not provided for in the Farmers’ and Workers’ State. Second, Marxists for a long time considered sociology a “bourgeois science” that looked at super-structural phenomena and denied the relevance of the material base. As a consequence, sociology as an academic discipline did not exist in East Germany before the 1960s, and even afterwards led a shadowy existence.<sup>206</sup> The group-specific data it produced was *per se* seen as an instrument of power to be controlled by the Party leaders. And third, the localized bottom-up approach of many social scientists potentially questioned the authority of the extremely centralized East German government. Whenever inventive scholars managed to skirt around the obstacles imposed by their superiors and conduct research on everyday life, they were hindered by the authorities’ general suspicion to any scientific method that was not based on statistics. During the 1960s, counts and numbers were as much adored in East Germany culture as they were in many Western countries. Given that the German Democratic Republic saw itself as the result of a scientifically provable historic process its policy hence had to be based on equally “objective”

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<sup>206</sup> For the beginnings of sociology in East Germany see Dieter Voigt, *Soziologie in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975): 11-21. Voigt pointed out that since the tenets of dialectical materialism were not to be questioned, Marxist sociological research had a predominantly affirmative character. It was to provide the materials for political agitation in the competition with capitalism. At the same time, it was also to collect data on the basis of which the rulers attempted to fine-tune their policies. For a list of all East German dissertations in the field of social studies see Jürgen Friedrichs, *Sozialwissenschaftliche Dissertationen und Habilitationen in der DDR 1951-1991: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993).

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information. It was the task of countless number-crunching bureaucrats to supply the rulers with quantifiable data and provide the basis for the planned economy. The irony was that in practice the rulers were only too willing to neglect these numbers whenever they contradicted their ideological expectations. They simply proceeded to fill the gap with misinformation. This did not take away from the fact that in the official rhetoric quantitative analysis was for a long time the key to absolute truth, and any methodological alternatives were potential heresy. Since the 1960s, the number of East German social scientists who challenged the official doctrine was nevertheless increasing.

#### *Research and distribution*

Academic research in East Germany, as in all socialist countries, was highly controlled. The state leaders influenced the selection of researchers, their choice of research topics, and the distribution of the results. Academic studies had a different audience than journal articles. University publications, including doctoral dissertations, were classified documents and only accessible for a very limited circle of readers, who in many cases had to ask for special permission.<sup>207</sup> This applied for most of the studies mentioned in this chapter. Also most libraries, such as that of the Berlin District Building Administration or those of the Building Academy were not open to the public. Journals on the other hand, such as *Deutsche Architektur/Architektur der DDR*, were not only generally available but much more widely read than similar publications in Western countries. The number of annually published books, newspapers, and magazines was only a fraction of that in the West, and given the notorious shortage of entertainment East Germans were passionate readers. Observers confirm that the content of any given article published in *Deutsche Architektur* was known to everyone in the profession and often discussed in great detail.<sup>208</sup> They also allude to the relative freedom of speech in academic or professional environments.<sup>209</sup> Hence the influence of a journal article was very high. Despite the Berlin

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<sup>207</sup> The general degree of confidentiality was *Nur für den Dienstgebrauch* (only for internal use). A higher degree of confidentiality was implied by *Vertrauliche Dienstsache* (confidential material for internal use). Jürgen Friedrichs, *Sozialwissenschaftliche Dissertationen und Habilitationen in der DDR 1951-1991: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993): vii.

<sup>208</sup> Cp. for example Dorothea Krause, interview by author, Berlin, March 31, 2004.

<sup>209</sup> Architectural critic Bruno Flierl, for example, pointed out the openness of the environment at East Berlin's Humboldt University, which was much less restrictive than that at the Building Academy. He

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Wall and the barely permeable borders, the GDR was not situated in a vacuum. The travel restrictions only encouraged the curiosity for the world outside the state borders. The latest publications from both socialist and capitalist countries were always available to East German professionals; in that respect the common language with the capitalist neighbor gave East Germans an advantage over their colleagues in Czechoslovakia or Hungary.<sup>210</sup> As a result, East German theory absorbed and developed significant influences from abroad; the theoretical discourse of architecture and urban design reflected ideas that at the time were debated all over the world.

This discourse was pervasive. The results of academic research eventually filtered through to the East German decision-makers.<sup>211</sup> Since the 1970s, the publications, including the few reports and newspaper articles that were accessible for a general audience, tended to be more radical than actual projects. The gap between theory and practice further widened during the 1980s, frustrating especially those researchers who sincerely thought of their work as a contribution to the socialist cause. Much of the academic research connected with the re-appreciation of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture was conducted at the *Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen* (School of Architecture and Construction) in Weimar. The school had a controversial history. Until 1945 it was directed by Paul Schulze-Naumburg and closely tied to the Nazi regime. In 1945, Hermann Henselmann became director and tried to revive the traditions of the Bauhaus, which had been the school's institutional predecessor. In the early 1960s, economist Peter Doehler conducted his studies on tenement

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also pointed out that potentially subversive ideas that would not be admitted for publication could nevertheless be uttered in public lectures without consequences for the speaker. Bruno Flierl, "Autobiographisches Gespräch," in *Den Himmel überlassen wir den Engeln*, ed. Hans Bergmann and Otto Hayner (Berlin: Volksbühne, 1993) [public interview at the Volksbühne theater]: 237-239.

<sup>210</sup> Although books and magazines from Western countries could not be purchased at East German kiosks and bookstores, they were available at certain libraries (for example at the Building Academy) to which many East German architects and urban planners had access. Dorothea Krause, interview by author, Berlin, March 31, 2004, Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2004, Simone Hain, interview by author, Berlin, April 9, 2004.

<sup>211</sup> Observers evaluate the influence of research on East German policy in different ways. Critics Bruno Flierl and Harald Kegler both claimed that the theories developed at the Building Academy had considerable impact on public policy. Interviews with Harald Kegler on August 7, 2003 and Bruno Flierl on July 14, 2003. The scholar and former Building Academy employee Christine Hannemann, on the other hand, detected a general weakness of the Building Academy, which allegedly did not arrange its scientific work in close relation to practice. She also lamented that the research was not systematically distributed. Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte* (Berlin: Schelzky & Jeep, 2000): 92.

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renovation at the school; in 1968, head preservationist Ludwig Deiters taught there as a visiting professor. In the 1970s, the school became the academic environment of scholars such as sociologist Fred Staufenbiel and architectural theorist Bernd Grönwald, who both increasingly promoted a localized and differentiated view on the city.

#### *Tenements become a material asset*

Already in the early 1960s there were occasional publications on tenement renovation, which suggests that the East German authorities have never completely dismissed short-term improvements of the dwelling conditions in old buildings.<sup>212</sup> Between 1962 and 1964 the Ministry of Construction published nine bulletins with guidelines for the evaluation of tenement buildings. Although quite bureaucratic in detail, they nevertheless document the Ministry's ambition to assess and potentially modernize those tenements that they deemed worthy of preservation within the assigned "life-span."<sup>213</sup> Peter Doehler's 1961 dissertation has already been mentioned; his calculations contributed to an increasing acceptance of tenement renovation.<sup>214</sup> In the late 1960s, numerous architects and scholars followed him and propagated tenement renovation as a method to "prolong the life-cycle" of these buildings and defer demolition. In a 1967 article in *Deutsche Architektur*, architect Richard Paulick and his co-authors complained that the old neighborhoods so far had been shamefully neglected by academic researchers and should be thought of as an important national asset.<sup>215</sup> Günter Peters, at the time Berlin District Director of Construction, assumed a similar position in his 1970 doctoral thesis. He pointed out that renovation could prolong the use of buildings for a certain time before knocking them

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<sup>212</sup> See for example Institut für Städtebau und Architektur der Deutschen Bauakademie, ed., *Besseres Wohnen in Altbaugebieten* (East Berlin: Deutsche Bauinformation, 1961) [brochure] or Deutsche Bauakademie, ed., *Erhaltung und Modernisierung der Altbausubstanz. Stand und Vorschläge zur Entwicklung* (East Berlin: Deutsche Bauinformation, 1965).

<sup>213</sup> Ministerium für Bauwesen, ed., *Umgestaltung städtischer Altbaugebiete, Bestandsaufnahme der Bausubstanz, Grundsätze*. (East Berlin: Ministerium für Bauwesen, 1962-1964) sheet 1 was published in January 1962, sheet 9 in March 1964.

<sup>214</sup> Peter Doehler, *Planungsgrundlagen zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnungsbausubstanz von Altbaugebieten insbesondere der Städte über 10000 Einwohner im Zeitraum von 1965 bis 1980* (East Berlin, 1961) [dissertation].

<sup>215</sup> Richard Paulick, Erich Rank, Werner Wolfram, "Erhaltung und Rekonstruktion der Altbausubstanz," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1967): 71-75.

down, and thus preserve valuable resources.<sup>216</sup> Several members of the Building Academy, such as Ule Lammert or Günther Kabus, shared Peters's opinion.<sup>217</sup> Generally, since the 1970s, publications on tenement renovation were increasing.<sup>218</sup> In line with the growing acceptance of tenements as an economic asset, there were also several publications on material and logistics of tenement renovation. Priority was put on how to rationalize and industrialize it so that it would be equally efficient as the "industrialized" construction of prefabricated concrete slab buildings.<sup>219</sup> These publications were complemented by several feasibility studies on tenement renovation in Berlin tenement

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<sup>216</sup> Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972.

<sup>217</sup> Lammert was the vice president of the Building Academy; Kabus taught at the Institute for Urban Design and Architecture. See Ule Lammert, "Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 18-25, Günther Kabus, "Zur Umgestaltung der Altbauwohngebiete," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1967): 70, Günther Kabus, "Städtebauliche Planung der sozialistischen Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten zur Vorbereitung der komplexen Modernisierung" in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion in Altbaugebieten* [Seminar on March 23/24 in 1972 in Halle] (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1972): 67-76, Günther Kabus, "Zur komplexen sozialistischen Umgestaltung von Altbauwohngebieten," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 390-393, and Günther Kabus, "Zu den Aufgaben bei der weiteren Umgestaltung und Erneuerung innerstädtischer Gebiete in Auswertung des IX. Kongresses des BdA" *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1987): 32-39. In 1975, Kabus published his dissertation on the restructuring of a tenement neighborhood in the Saxon city of Zwickau, in which he proposed a renovation policy determined by economic calculations and a great deal of pragmatism. The most dilapidated buildings were to be demolished and the best conserved ones renovated. Günther Kabus, *Zur Ausarbeitung von Bebauungskonzeptionen für die Umgestaltung von Altbauwohngebieten am Beispiel der Bahnhofsvorstadt in Zwickau* (East Berlin, 1975) [dissertation].

<sup>218</sup> See for example Roland Korn, "Zu den Aufgaben von Städtebau und Architektur in der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 5 (1977): 262-265 [presentation at a meeting with architects and urban planners at the office of the Berlin Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party on February 27, 1977]. According to Heinz Klückmann, old buildings should be a part of the "socialist face" of East German cities. Heinz Klückmann, "Altbausubstanz und sozialistisches Stadtbild," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 3 (1970): 188. For Werner Wolf, *Rekonstruktion* of old buildings was not only desirable for reasons of historic preservation but could satisfy contemporary needs. In a 1973 article, he pointed out that reconstruction therefore should not be mixed up with historical imitation. Werner Wolf, "Wohnraumreserven in Altbauten," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1973): 118-120. Since the 1970s, architect Grete Becker connected architectural historical research on late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements with the development of practical guidelines for their modernization. Her 1987 dissertation on "Multi-family Buildings of the years 1870-1918" was the culmination of her decade-long of work on the subject. Grete Becker, *Mehrfamilienhäuser der Baujahre 1870-1918 - Typologie der Gebäude und ihre räumliche Eignung für Wohnansprüche nach 1990* (East Berlin, 1987) [dissertation].

<sup>219</sup> Horst Vysek, "Zur Rekonstruktion von städtischen Altbauwohngebieten," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 12 (1970): 712-715, Hans Gericke, "Rekonstruktion von Altbauwohngebieten – eine erstrangige politische Aufgabe," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1972): 583 [seminar talk on March 24/25, 1972]. See also Brabec's report on Czech experiences with tenement renovation. František Brabec, "Erfahrungen in der ČSSR bei der Modernisierung alter Wohnsubstanz," *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1977): 223-232.

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neighborhoods, mostly dating from the late 1970s.<sup>220</sup> Tenement renovation also became an essential part of practical manuals for urban planners.<sup>221</sup> In 1979, Erich Honecker summarized the new position and officially declared that it was unacceptable to tear down inhabitable old buildings.<sup>222</sup> In the same year a legal provision largely banned demolition (see also chapter 9 “The Honecker Era and the Housing Program.”)<sup>223</sup> East Berlin’s tenements were now officially recognized as acceptable dwellings.

### *The cultural value of tenements*

Beginning in the 1970s, there was an increase in the number of studies that treated the tenements in a favorable way – not only because they provided valuable residential space, but because of the specific qualities of their architecture. Already Martin Pietz’s 1967 dissertation at the School of Architecture and Construction in Weimar assigned the old buildings a “cultural value.”<sup>224</sup> Three years later, in 1970, Pietz published an article in *Deutsche Architektur* and stressed the significance of historic old towns for their *ästhetische Erlebbarkeit* (“aesthetical experienceability”).<sup>225</sup> In 1977, Ule Lammert commended the *Fluidum* (atmosphere) of the tenement neighborhoods and pointed out the

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<sup>220</sup> Klaus Aschenbach, Ulrich Hugk, Christian Enzmann, *Stadtgestaltung. Grundlagen zur städtebaulichen Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbauwohngebieten* (East Berlin, 1978), Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Studie Modernisierungskomplex Humannplatz – Teilgebiet 1* (East Berlin, 1979).

<sup>221</sup> See Ule Lammert, ed., *Städtebau. Grundsätze, Methoden, Richtwerte, Beispiele* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987) or Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Wohnung, Gebäude, Wohnumwelt. Modernisierung von Altbauwohnungen der Baujahre 1870-1918* [text by Gerhard Herholdt] (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1982). See also Rautenberg’s and Schulz’s do-it-yourself manual for tenement tenants willing to improve their housing situation through hobby carpentry Ines Rautenberg and Joachim Schulz, eds., *Besseres Wohnen in Altbauten. Anregung für Einrichtung und Umbau* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1978).

<sup>222</sup> Erich Honecker, speech at the 11<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Central Committee in 1979, quoted in Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 226.

<sup>223</sup> “Durchführungsbestimmung zur Verordnung über die Planung, Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Folgeinvestitionen – Abriß von Gebäuden und baulichen Anlagen vom 18. September 1979,” *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* no. 34 (October 19, 1979): 325-326.

<sup>224</sup> Martin Pietz, *Der kulturelle Wert unserer Altstädte und sein Einfluß auf die sozialistische Rekonstruktion* (Weimar, 1967) [dissertation].

<sup>225</sup> Martin Pietz, “Zur Selektion städtebaulicher Denkmale,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 12 (1970): 327. At the same time, Pietz still lamented the lack of “socialist character” in Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg district since it was lacking schools, shops, and daycare centers. Martin Pietz, “Hat die Schönhauser Allee sozialistischen Charakter?” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1973): 121-122.

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necessity of preserving certain portions of history.<sup>226</sup> Others argued that in opposition to popular beliefs tenements were by no means the incarnation of capitalist oppression; hence there was no point in demolishing them just for the sake of being detrimental to the socialist cause.<sup>227</sup> In 1977 Peter Gerlach and Ulrich Hugk, who at the time worked at the *Institut für Städtebau und Architektur* (Institute for Urban Planning and Architecture) at the Building Academy, studied the structure of the Prenzlauer Berg district, and proposed a renovation project based on the preservation of the front buildings and the “coring” of the backyards.<sup>228</sup> Hugk subsequently taught at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction, where he continued his studies along with Johanna Sellengk.<sup>229</sup> Hugk and Gerlach claimed that late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements offered significant advantages to their residents, such as the option for a proximity of working and living. Next to such practical aspects, they emphasized the importance of tenements for the *Erlebnisvielfalt* (“multitude of experience”) of Berlin residents, a term by which they mean the everyday encounter with history as it is reflected in buildings from different periods.<sup>230</sup>

In 1985, Isolde Andrä, who like Gerlach and Hugk was employed at the Building Academy’s Institute for Urban Planning and Architecture, assumed a similar stance. She pointed out that architectural tradition was neither against progress; nor was it opposed to socialism. Historical forms of all kinds, according to Andrä, are a *Fundgrube* (rich source) that should be appropriated by the working classes to foster local identity. In that sense, the contemporary socialist society had to preserve historical

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<sup>226</sup> Ule Lammert, “Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 20-21.

<sup>227</sup> See for example Klaus Rasche, “Gedanken zur Gründerzeitarchitektur,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 11 (1979): 701. Along the same lines Hans-Jürgen Kluge with the Ministry of Construction argued for tenement renovation mainly for economic reasons. He confirmed that a modernized tenement was equally valuable as a new building. Hans-Jürgen Kluge, “Zur Vorbereitung des Wohnungsbauprogramms der 80er Jahre und zur Umgestaltung innerstädtischer Altbauwohngebiete,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1978): 132-137.

<sup>228</sup> Peter Gerlach and Ulrich Hugk, “Studie zur Erarbeitung von Umgestaltungsgrundlagen. Ein Beitrag zur Planung der Umgestaltung der Wohngebiete der Gründerzeit,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 12 (1977): 728-735.

<sup>229</sup> Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk, “Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung. Der Wandel der Altstadt als Voraussetzung ihrer Erhaltung und ihres Weiterlebens. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* 5/6 1988: 206-213.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*: 734.

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buildings, including tenements. Thus even the very unpopular narrow backyards could be acceptable abodes, since for Andrä quality of life was not only determined by adequate light and air, but equally by a familiar environment, density, and walkability. She pointed out that even more ideologically loaded buildings, such as the Schinkel's *Neue Wache* (Royal Guardhouse) on the boulevard Unter den Linden, could be reinterpreted and thus appropriated by a socialist society.<sup>231</sup> Her point of view was shared by several of her contemporaries.<sup>232</sup> Over the course of the 1980s, the critique of the official policy opened up considerably. In 1988 Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk vigorously condemned the ongoing destruction of historical inner cities by urban planners.<sup>233</sup> They insisted that historic neighborhoods should not be *Experimentierfelder* (fields of experimentation) and that the use of industrial construction methods endangered historical structures.<sup>234</sup> Their criticism was directed against urban design projects as in the Old Town of Gotha, where urban planners presented large-scale demolitions and subsequent rebuilding with prefabricated concrete blocks as historic preservation because the blocks contained formal references to the demolished buildings. Hugk and Sellengk called for the preservation of old buildings not only because of their material qualities but because they considered them historic monuments.

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<sup>231</sup> Isolde Andrä, "Tradition und Fortschritt – Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen im Städtebauprozeß," *Architektur der DDR* no. 8 (1985): 461-466.

<sup>232</sup> See for example Willibald Gutsche's vigorous pamphlet for the preservation of historic neighborhoods. He points out that historic buildings were an indispensable condition for recognizing the historic dimension of each individual's life – especially in the Marxist sense. Willibald Gutsche, "Zur Erhaltung und Entwicklung des historisch gewachsenen Charakters der Städte," *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1988): 6-7. Similarly, Weimar architecture professor Herrmann Wirth criticized the large-scale demolitions of tenements and advocated for a creative integration of both historic forms into contemporary architecture and historic buildings into contemporary cities. Herrmann Wirth, "Historische Werte im gegenwärtigen Architekturschaffen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 347-352.

<sup>233</sup> Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk, "Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung. Der Wandel der Altstadt als Voraussetzung ihrer Erhaltung und ihres Weiterlebens. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* no. 5/6 (1988): 210.

<sup>234</sup> They warned "Die historische Stadtgestalt in einer Vielzahl historischer Stadtkerne wird zur Zeit durch Planung bedroht" ("the historic aspect of numerous historic nuclei is currently threatened by planning.") Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk, "Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung. Der Wandel der Altstadt als Voraussetzung ihrer Erhaltung und ihres Weiterlebens. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* 5/6 1988: 210.

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Since the 1970s, historic preservation entered the public debate in East Germany. The first and at the same time most thorough publications were authored by Ludwig Deiters, the chief preservationist of the German Democratic Republic. Deiters was born in 1921, studied architecture, and in the late 1940s worked with the modernist architects Hans Scharoun and Hans Hertlein in the Western half of the still undivided Berlin. Subsequently, he collaborated with East Berlin architect Hermann Henselmann on neo-traditional Stalinallee before becoming a historic preservation official in 1957. From 1961 until his retirement in 1987 he headed the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* (Historic Preservation Authority of the GDR), which was situated in East Berlin. His passionate calls for the renovation of old residential buildings, including tenements, were based on his rigorous theories about the significance of historic preservation. Although his positions, at least during the 1960s, were rather unpopular among East German rulers, he managed to root his argumentations within the ideological foundations of a socialist society.<sup>235</sup> Deiters's positions gained significance during the 1980s, when they were increasingly spread in papers and magazines and shared by many architects and urban designers.<sup>236</sup>

#### *Tenement renovations in the press*

The rising significance of old buildings was reflected in an increasing media attention. The East German rulers extensively celebrated any accomplishment in their country as a success of the socialist system, and tenement renovation was no exception. Almost every remodeling project, be it only a

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<sup>235</sup> Ludwig Deiters, "Denkmalpflege bei der Umgestaltung der Städte," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1963): 464-465, Ludwig Deiters, "Warum Pflegen wir städtebauliche Denkmäler," *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1975): 4-6, Ludwig Deiters, "Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 388.

<sup>236</sup> See for example Werner Rackwitz, "Denkmalpflege als gesellschaftliche Aufgabe," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 75-80, Ulrich Hugk, "Überlegungen zur Kontinuität des Stadtbildes. Städtebauliche Denkmalpflege," *Bildende Kunst* no. 9 (1981): 430-433, or Achim Felz, *Denkmale - von uns bewahrt* (East Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1988). Publicity for the cause of historic preservation included published reports from preservation-related events, such as Muscher's report on a 1984 seminar of the Central Work Group on Reconstruction of the Architects Association, Stelzer's report from the 8<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Architects Association, or the proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), which took place in Rostock and Dresden in 1984. Martin Muschter, "Erhaltung und Weiterentwicklung des historisch gewachsenen Charakters der Städte," *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1984): 185-186 Helmut Stelzer, "Wohnen in historischen Gebäuden," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1983): 99-106, *Denkmale und kulturelle Identität. Beiträge zum Internationalen Symposium der VII. Generalversammlung des ICOMOS* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987).

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couple of buildings, was reported in the press, mostly in the magazine *Deutsche Architektur/Architektur der DDR*. The articles were all written by the designers responsible and provided detailed technical information; a critical assessment of the project was not allowed. The articles contained selected figures such as number of renovated apartments. They remained silent, for example, about the duration of the construction or about technical problems during the process. Almost all East Berlin renovations were presented in that way, starting with the small project in the Weißensee district in 1963 and continuing with the Arkonaplatz (1971) and Arnimplatz (1973). Subsequently, the *Nikolaiviertel*, the Palisaden Triangle, Frankfurter Allee, Husemannstraße, and Sophienstraße were portrayed.<sup>237</sup> In 1989, most of these projects were included in a glossy picture book on the successful remodeling of historic neighborhoods in the entire GDR.<sup>238</sup> Since the 1970s, there were also more and more reports on preservation-related events. These include the meetings of the Historic Preservation Group at the Architects Association, which was founded in 1969 and subsequently advocated for the preservation and renovation of tenement buildings.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ludmilla Herzenstein, "Komplexe Instandsetzung im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Weißensee," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1963): 468-469, Klaus Pöschk "Städtebauliche Umgestaltung und Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes 'Arkonaplatz' in Berlin-Mitte," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1971): 602-609, Manfred Zache, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz im Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1973): 354-357, Dorothea Krause and Manfred Zache, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 395-400, Günter Stahn, "Rund um die Berliner Nikolaikirche," *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1982): 218-225, Dorothea Krause, Ernst Kristen, Erika Neitzel, Rudi Musch, and Bernd Weber, "Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes 'Palisadendreieck' im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain," *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 521-526, Jürgen Schechert, Hannelore Vetter und Helmut Müller, "Vom 'Milljöh' zum Milieu – Modernisierungsgebiet am Arkonaplatz, Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 196-200, Dorothea Krause, "Innerstädtischer Wohnungsbau - Komplex Marchlewskistraße in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1984): 604-609, Dorothea Krause, Uwe Klasen, and Wolfgang Penzel, "Rekonstruktion im Stil der Jahrhundertwende. Husemannstraße in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 14-17, Ernst Kristen, "Zur Gestaltung der Frankfurter Allee in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1985): 148-152, Peter Gohlke, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Sophienstraße in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1988): 9-15.

<sup>238</sup> Werner Rietdorf, ed., *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989).

<sup>239</sup> Fritz Rothstein, "Zur Erhaltung und Umfunktionsierung wertvoller historischer Bausubstanz," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 11 (1969): 692-693 Fritz Rothstein, "Zur Rekonstruktion der Altbausubstanz unserer Städte," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 9 (1971): 569-570 [report from a meeting in Cottbus] Fritz Rothstein, "Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 7 (1972): 390-391. Rothstein was a public servant working with the *Abteilung Kultur* (Department of Culture) at the *Magistrat* and simultaneously the chairman of the Kulturbund, a national association of preservationists and *Heimat* activists.

Updating heritage

In the 1980s, the East German leaders attempted to synthesize disperse efforts into a canonical version of national heritage. A "General Declaration in Favor of Historic Heritage" had already been confirmed with the new program of the Socialist Unity Party in May 1976.<sup>240</sup> In 1980, the *Nationale Rat zur Pflege und Verbreitung des deutschen Kulturerbes* (National Council for the Preservation and Distribution of German Cultural Heritage) was founded, directed by the chair of the *Ministerrat* Willi Stoph.<sup>241</sup> At the time the definition of East Germany's architectural heritage was increasingly extended to those buildings, sites, and events that were connected not only with the working class but with all parts of society. In East Berlin, this historiographic shift was summarized in the "Conception for the Preservation, Conveying, and Appropriation of Historic Heritage and Revolutionary Tradition (Heritage-Conception)." It resulted from a collaboration between the mayor's office and leading figures from universities and state-sponsored associations and would have become a legally binding document if the GDR had not ceased to exist in 1990.<sup>242</sup> The first draft dates from 1988 and was subsequently reworked.<sup>243</sup> In the same year, the *Magistrat* passed general guidelines for the conception. It outlined individual chapters and also summarized all relevant anniversaries and memorial days until 2010.<sup>244</sup> There was a clear connection to the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Berlin: the Heritage Conception

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<sup>240</sup> "Prinzipielles Bekenntnis zum historischen Erbe" Excerpt from the *Magistrat* resolution 444/88, passed on September 13, 1988 LAB C Rep 121,761: 6.

<sup>241</sup> Excerpt from the *Magistrat* resolution 444/88, passed on September 13, 1988 LAB C Rep 121,761: 4.

<sup>242</sup> "Konzeption zur Pflege, Vermittlung, und Aneignung des historischen Erbes und der progressiven, humanistischen und revolutionären Traditionen in Berlin (Erbe-Konzeption)" See "Orientierung für die Erarbeitung der 'Konzeption zur Pflege, Vermittlung, und Aneignung des historischen Erbes und der progressiven, humanistischen und revolutionären Traditionen in Berlin.'" LAB C Rep 121, 761.

<sup>243</sup> In April 1989, the "Heritage Conception" was discussed with party leaders; at the same time the creation of a "council for the preservation and distribution of historic heritage and revolutionary traditions of Berlin" was projected. Letter by Werner Gahrig, director of the City Archive, to Christian Hartenhauer, Stadtrat für Kultur, dated August 8, 1988 LAB C Rep 121, 761.

<sup>244</sup> For example, the local history museum *Märkisches Museum* was responsible for the presentation of, Berlins striving for city autonomy against feudal rulers the late middle ages, the fight for religious tolerance in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the anti-Napoleonic wars and the women's movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Berlin District Plan Commission was to work out the mutual influences of science and industrial development and the historic social situation of the working classes. The city department of recreation was to present the history of the worker's sports clubs, and the department of agriculture was to show the historic achievements of both historic feudal and contemporary socialist farming. Excerpt from the *Magistrat* resolution 444/88, passed on September 13, 1988 LAB C Rep 121, 761: 11-28.

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was to be based on the "Theses on 750 years of Berlin" that were worked out two years earlier.<sup>245</sup> As in the "Theses," the portion of Berlin's heritage relevant to the socialist leaders was extended beyond the workers' movement to include "progressive achievements of the exploiting classes in the period of their rise, which is to be looked at in a differentiated way."<sup>246</sup> The Heritage Conception aimed at popularizing a general and inclusive presentation of history. In the portion on architectural heritage, which was worked out by Heinz Melahn's Department of Historic Buildings at the Bureau of Urban Design, urban design was presented as a dialectical process. It was claimed that on the one hand different social groups appropriate the existing ground plan with buildings suitable to their purposes, and on the other hand they develop different ground plans suitable to their changing processes of reproduction.<sup>247</sup> Melahn's office thus assigned the heterogeneity of Berlin's neighborhoods a fundamental significance, because it "documents the course of crucial historic processes and conveys the typical in our city's cultural heritage."<sup>248</sup> The "Heritage Conception" was not finished when the GDR ceased to exist. Had it become the basis of East Berlin historiography in the way it was planned, socialist ideology would have been even less influential on urban design than it already was.

#### *The celebration of everyday life*

The changing approach to the city which became manifest during the 1970s and 1980s involved the discipline of history. Historians became increasingly concerned with individual everyday life. This reflected an international tendency but was at the same time connected to a different understanding of Marxist history. While during the 1950s and 1960s East German historians predominantly focused on social groups, individual lives were now recognized as relevant because they reflected the bigger picture of class struggle. Dietrich Mühlberg, a professor at East Berlin's Humboldt University,

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<sup>245</sup> Ernst Diehl et al., "750 Jahre Berlin – Thesen," *Einheit* no. 1 (1986).

<sup>246</sup> "progressive Leistungen der Ausbeuterklassen in der differenziert zu betrachtenden Phase ihres Aufstiegs." Excerpt from the *Magistrat* resolution 444/88 LAB C Rep 121, 761: 7.

<sup>247</sup> "Zuarbeit für die 'Konzeption zur Pflege, Vermittlung, und Aneignung des historischen Erbes und der progressiven, humanistischen und revolutionären Traditionen in Berlin (Erbe-Konzeption)'" LAB C Rep 121,761.

<sup>248</sup> "....dokumentieren den Ablauf einschneidender geschichtlicher Prozesse und machen das Typische im kulturellen Erbe unserer Stadt aus." "Zuarbeit für die "Konzeption zur Pflege..." LAB C Rep 121, 761.

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researched the living conditions of working class inhabitants of Berlin's tenement neighborhoods at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on a micro-level. His detailed analysis contributed to a revision of popular myths about the "gloomy backyards" and helped to see them in a more differentiated way.<sup>249</sup> Along the same lines, the "Heritage Conception" of 1988 was to include historic feasts and celebrations of the working classes and advocated for further research on "animated social life with summer and garden parties, card tournaments, chess evenings, children's parties, [and] backyard feasts with lanterns [and] organ grinder's music...."<sup>250</sup> Such academic studies were paralleled by a number of extremely popular reports and newspaper articles, which reflect the increasing concern with local history among a general audience. The most famous author of this new literary genre was journalist Heinz Knobloch. One of his first books was the biography of Jewish 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, which was first published in 1979.<sup>251</sup> It was as much of a bestseller as Knobloch's later work on Mathilde Jacob, who was the secretary and intimate friend of communist politician Rosa Luxemburg.<sup>252</sup> The extreme popularity of Knobloch's books – he wrote more than fifty – was paralleled by that of his columns in the weekly magazine *Woche* and soon extended to West Germany. Knobloch was not only one of the first East Germans to write on topics that were excluded from the official narrative, such as Jewish history. His success also relied on his particular method of documenting the daily routines, needs, and desires of his protagonists in great detail, and on the sensitive way in which he anchored the results of his research in the contemporary fabric of Berlin's tenement districts. His historiographic approach – which can be deemed a popular version of Carlo

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<sup>249</sup> Dietrich Mühlberg, ed., *Arbeiterleben in Berlin um 1900* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1983).

<sup>250</sup> "Gab es doch ein reges geselliges Leben mit Sommer- und Gartenfesten, Skatturnieren, Schachabenden, Kinderfeste, Hoffeste mit Lampions [und] Leierkastenmusik..." "Zuarbeit für die 'Konzeption zur Pflege...'" LAB C Rep 121, 761.

<sup>251</sup> Heinz Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin* (East Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1979). Knobloch (1926-2003) received no formal training as a historian. In the 1980s he was one of the most popular East German journalists. Only until the end of the GDR, four editions of "Herr Moses" were sold between 1979 and 1986 and another five re-editions of the revised version of 1979 – West German editions not included. The number has to be seen in an East German context where the total amount of published books was significantly smaller than in the West.

<sup>252</sup> Heinz Knobloch, *Meine liebste Mathilde* (East Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1985). In another book Knobloch presented concealed and repressed "underground" history in a literal way. In *Stadtmitte umsteigen* (East Berlin, Buchverlag der Morgen, 1982) he tells the story of the subway station *Stadtmitte* ("City Center"), which once connected the subway systems of East and West Berlin and which, although it was situated under East Berlin territory, in 1961 became partially inaccessible for East German citizens.

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Ginzburg's micro-histories - can be read from the subtitles to the Mathilde Jacob book. The one of the first edition was "*Geschichte, zum Berühren*" (History, to be Touched), that of the 1986 re-edition "*das unauffällige Leben der Mathilde Jacob*" (The Inconspicuous Life of Mathilde Jacob). It is also summarized in the title of a book in which he re-published his newspaper columns: "*Zur Feier des Alltags*" (The Celebration of Everyday Life).<sup>253</sup> His dictum "mistrust the green spaces!" – written in the context of an apparently unspectacular "pocket park" surrounded by tenements that was the site of Berlin's first Jewish cemetery – initiated a new affection with hidden remainders of historic everyday life. It became the gospel of countless spare-time explorers and tour guides, who by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century converted Berlin into the world capital of historic walking tours – currently the city magazine *Tip* lists more than a hundred different offers for any given Saturday.

In the late 1980s and well beyond, scores of authors and hobby historians followed in Knobloch's footsteps. One of them was East Berlin journalist Daniela Dahn, whose concern with her own neighborhood connected with historical interest at a micro-level and with oral accounts of the past. She drew an affectionate portrayal of the Prenzlauer Berg district as the hub of the East German alternative art scene.<sup>254</sup> Dahn, who published simultaneously in West Germany and specifically addressed a West German audience, played out the peculiar connection between remainders of the past and the artsy lifestyle of her contemporaries. Her juxtaposition of oral histories, crumbling façades, and long-haired bohemians was typical for an entire generation of Berlin residents and visitors who construed artistic innovation as contingent on dilapidating backyards. Her approach approximated the standard self-portrayal of reunified Berlin, in which the visible neglect of inner-city neighborhoods and the residents' memories of elderly working-class inhabitants appear as the soil on which creativity and non-conformism could grow.

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<sup>253</sup> Heinz Knobloch, *Zur Feier des Alltags* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1987).

<sup>254</sup> Daniela Dahn, *Prenzlauer Berg-Tour* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1987) published in West Germany as *Kunst und Kohle – die Szene am Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, DDR* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand 1987).

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*The evolution of urban sociology*

The investigation of tenement districts and their inhabitants from a sociological point of view is inseparably connected with the name of Fred Staufenbiel. Staufenbiel, who was born in 1928, was a central figure in establishing urban sociology in East Germany. After an apprenticeship as a bricklayer and training as an engineer he entered the doctoral program in philosophy at the *Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften* (Institute for Social Sciences) which was an elite educational and research institution for socialist cadres. It was directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party. In 1962 he graduated with a dissertation on the concept of culture and its operative significance under a socialist regime and subsequently joined the faculty in the department of art history.<sup>255</sup> In the mid-1960s, the institute established a *Wissenschaftlicher Rat für soziologische Forschung* (Scientific Council on Sociological Research), where Staufenbiel founded the interdisciplinary *Arbeitskreis Kultursoziologie* (Work Group on Cultural Sociology).<sup>256</sup> Staufenbiel's premise was that "it is not so much the working class who has needs, but rather individual workers who do."<sup>257</sup> He therefore felt the necessity to investigate individual workers' lives, and developed a sociological methodology to map the reality of different social environments. His approach was nevertheless, as he put it, "dynamite" for the bureaucrats in the omnipotent Plan Commission.<sup>258</sup> It went directly against what GDR citizens had long been ridiculing as the *Tonnenideologie* ("ton ideology") – the socialist plan reducing human lives to numbers of bricks and tons of cement. On the other hand Staufenbiel could rely on an academic tradition in the Soviet Union, where sociology had long been practiced to illuminate the effects of socialist restructuring on workers' lives.<sup>259</sup> His first

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<sup>255</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, *Wesen und nationale Bedeutung der Kulturrevolution in der DDR* (East Berlin, 1962) [dissertation at the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften with the Central Committee].

<sup>256</sup> The Scientific Council on Sociological Research was founded under the influence of Soviet ideas and directed first by Erich Hahn and then by Rudi Weidig. It was the publisher of the first sociological investigations in East Germany. Dieter Voigt, *Soziologie in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975): 15 and 203. Members of the Work Group on Cultural Sociology were Alice Kahl from Leipzig, Bruno Flierl from Berlin, Heinz Schwarzbach from Dresden, and approximately seven other researchers from different disciplines. Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>257</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>258</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>259</sup> Contrary to East Germany, the Soviet Union since the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1956 (re)admitted sociological research. It was built on and embedded in historical materialism and constantly limited

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milieu study dates from 1966. It was a comparative survey of lifestyle and dwelling behavior in ten East German cities. It was inspired and co-authored by Hermann Henselmann, who at the time was the most respected architect in East Germany.<sup>260</sup> Staufenbiel recalled immense bureaucratic problems carrying out the study. All questionnaires had to be presented to the East German central statistics authority and were eventually approved only thanks to Henselmann's incontestable authority.<sup>261</sup> Staufenbiel learned from this lengthy procedure and subsequently conducted all of his surveys without approval. His position as a member of the Institute for Social Sciences protected him to a certain point. In addition, it was known that he was not only an assertive and straightforward personality but also a steadfast supporter of the socialist regime with good contacts to high-ranking officials.<sup>262</sup> Staufenbiel used that position to carry out his investigations with a degree of personal freedom that would have been denied to less well-connected researchers. The result was a series of sociological studies that showed a disciplinary rigor which was so far unknown in the German Democratic Republic, and which – although none of them was available to a general audience – are likely to have significantly changed the view on the city in the academic context.

In 1977 Staufenbiel was appointed professor of Marxist-Leninist sociology at the Weimar School. He was thus the first tenured sociologist at an East German school of architecture. In that position, he resumed the work on cities that he had started eleven years earlier and investigated the social conditions in different East German provincial towns.<sup>263</sup> He recalled that his most surprising finding –

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itself against the “bourgeois sociology” in capitalist countries. Cp. Elizabeth Weinberg, *Sociology in the Soviet Union and Beyond* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004): 11-19.

<sup>260</sup> Fred Staufenbiel and Hermann Henselmann with the collaboration of Hans Tollkühn, Peter Feix, Hannes Kießig, Horst Baeseler, Isolde Sommer, *Zum Verhältnis von Kultur-niveau, Lebensstil, und Wohnverhalten in 10 Städten der DDR*. The study remained unpublished and was only accessible to a small circle of professionals. It is mentioned in Fred Staufenbiel, “Wohnen ohne Urbanität – zu Stärken und Grenzen der Stadtsoziologie,” in *Wohnen und Stadtpolitik im Umbruch*, ed. Peter Marcuse and Fred Staufenbiel (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1991): 11. See also Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>261</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>262</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>263</sup> He carried out studies on Erfurt, Halle, Eisenach, Leipzig, Magdeburg and numerous other cities. Staufenbiel never worked on East Berlin – in retrospect he admitted that an analysis of the conditions in the capital of the German Democratic Republic would have put him on the spot, which he wanted to avoid given his many opponents. Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

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at least for the construction officials at the time – was the fact that for the inhabitants the city center and its old buildings played a fundamental role. The same applied for cities with a stable local population as for those with a large share of migrants from other regions.<sup>264</sup> During the 1980s, Staufenbiel carried out a number of investigations on the degree of satisfaction of inhabitants with their neighborhoods.<sup>265</sup> Although he predominantly relied on quantitative methodology, he nevertheless complemented the results of his surveys with detailed descriptions of streets, squares, and apartments. His goal was a multi-faceted view of the neighborhoods that would do justice to the individual lifestyles of the different inhabitants. In his studies, Staufenbiel demonstrated that tenement inhabitants were often rather satisfied with their residential environment. He showed that they felt strong ties to their apartments and purposefully invested large amounts of time and work into halting decay and creatively refurbishing the interiors of their apartments.<sup>266</sup>

Staufenbiel collaborated with numerous colleagues at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction.<sup>267</sup> At the same time, he worked relentlessly on connecting his discipline with others. The Work Group on Cultural Studies continued to exist and facilitated exchange with East Berlin scholars. He also established contacts with the University of Trier/West Germany and invited numerous visiting professors, including urban planner Peter Marcuse from Columbia University, who in 1988/89 became probably the first American scholar to teach at an East German university. In the sixteen years of Staufenbiel's tenure in Weimar – he retired in 1993 – he significantly expanded the discipline of urban

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<sup>264</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005. Staufenbiel claimed that in the town of Sömmerda in Thuringia the result of his study influenced local politicians to the point that plans to demolish large portions of the Old Town were discarded.

<sup>265</sup> See Fred Staufenbiel, *Stadtzentrum, Hasselbachplatz, H. Beims-Siedlung* (Weimar: Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen, 1987): 99 – 210, and Fred Staufenbiel, *Olvenstedt Dorf* (Weimar: Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen, 1987): 282 – 325. The results of other studies were published in Fred Staufenbiel, *Wohnen in der Stadt* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989).

<sup>266</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, *Wohnen in der Stadt* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989) and Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005.

<sup>267</sup> One of them was Bernd Hunger, who in the 1980s pointed out the advantages of tenement neighborhoods with regard to both architectural and social aspects. See Rolf Kuhn, und Bend Hunger, "Wohnen in älteren Wohngebieten. Soziologische Untersuchungen des engeren Wohnbereiches," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 121-125, Bernd Hunger, "Zur Verbesserung der Wohnbedingungen in Altbaugebieten," *Architektur der DDR* no. 11 (1985): 686-689.

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studies in East Germany, advocating cities that afforded mixed use, local difference, and grassroots culture.



Figure 12: One of Fred Staufenbiel's publications on the social structure of neighborhoods<sup>268</sup>

*Subversive research*

The radical potential of the new individualist, sociological approach to the city should not be underestimated. Whenever research was connected to individualistic practice, the East German rulers tended to perceive it as a threat to the Party authority, and occasionally reacted with harsh repressions. The subversive power of certain scholarly publications can only be understood in the particular context of a regime that constantly attempted to propel its subjects into standardized collectivity – through mass education, mass organizations, and mass events. Against this background, any form of idiosyncratic expression was potentially dangerous.

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<sup>268</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, *Stadtzentrum, Hasselbachplatz, H. Beims-Siedlung* (Weimar: Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen, 1987).

In January 1983, *Form und Zweck* ("form and purpose") triggered a massive scandal. It was the only journal in East Germany dedicated to issues of design. Since the magazine was not as closely monitored by the top leaders as *Architektur der DDR*, its editor-in-chief Hein Köster repeatedly managed to publish critical articles. With *Form und Zweck*, architectural critics such as Lothar Kühne or Karl-Heinz Hüter over several years encountered a forum of public debate where they were allowed to publish sequences of thesis and response. The outrage of 1983 was one of the few occasions on which a publisher was openly reprimanded for distributing politically undesired opinions – generally East German rules of censorship were internalized to the point that authors knew exactly what they were allowed to write and what not and behaved accordingly. The bone of contention, from a contemporary point of view, appears surprisingly inoffensive. It was a colorful issue portraying the lively urban atmosphere in the Prenzlauer Berg district where artists and bohemians found their niches in rundown tenement apartments. Editor-in-chief Hein Köster himself contributed scores of his own photos, which showed precious moments of the everyday. Depicting brick walls, backyards, children, artists, workers, and idlers he celebrated ordinary life in an extraordinary neighborhood. In line with the message transmitted in his photos, Köster praised the local atmosphere and advocated for the construction of a "museum of urbanity" to document this specifically urban milieu.<sup>269</sup> In another article, Fred Staufenbiel pointed out that urban restructuring had to be conceived first and foremost as a social process, and Wolfgang Kil called the boulevard Schönhauser Allee a work of art which is determined by its users rather than by its designer.<sup>270</sup> In addition, the issue featured a self-portrayal of an independent group of designers who worked in a "backyard workshop."<sup>271</sup> The most scandalous article was a report in which architects Herbert Pohl and Wolf-Dietrich Werner gently criticized the official construction policy.<sup>272</sup> Pohl and Werner, who at the time worked on a study on the Prenzlauer

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<sup>269</sup> Hein Köster, "Transparenz der Zeichen," *Form und Zweck* no. 1 (1983): 18-20.

<sup>270</sup> Fred Staufenbiel, "Von sozialen Prozessen ausgehen," *Form und Zweck* no. 1 (1983): 4-8, Wolfgang Kil, "Kunstwerk Schönhauser?" *Form und Zweck* no. 1 (1983): 23 – 25.

<sup>271</sup> Karl Groß, Jörg Grote, and Stefan Weiß, "Hinterhof-Werkstatt," *Form und Zweck* no. 1 (1983): 29-30.

<sup>272</sup> Herbert Pohl and Wolf-Dietrich Werner, "Analysen und Vorstellungen," *Form und Zweck*, no. 1 (1983): 8-14. On the repercussion of the issue see Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen 120

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Berg district, called for an urban design policy that followed social criteria and aimed at a long-term stability of the neighborhood. They made clear the significance of preserving the urban fabric and pointed out that this objective should determine the capacities of the construction industry. Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker and his colleagues were shocked. Given their sensitivity for dissenting opinions, Pohl's and Werner's rather moderate formulation was immediately interpreted as a criticism of the top leaders who were not mobilizing sufficient resources to stop dilapidation in Berlin's tenement districts. In addition, Pohl and Werner were charged with revealing confidential information. The authors immediately lost their job with the Berlin District Office of Construction and were only re-employed after some of their superiors intervened in their favor.<sup>273</sup> Editor-in-chief Hein Köster was threatened with the suspension of his magazine if he ever again dared to publish on urban design politics.

Journalist Wolfgang Kil, one of the contributors to in what was dubbed a "perestroika-issue" by contemporaneous observers, remembered that at the time he did not really understand what was so offensive to the top rulers.<sup>274</sup> After all, none of the authors was unsympathetic with the socialist system as such. To the contrary, they all expressed their personal commitment to stay in an East Berlin neighborhood that many dissidents at the time left for West Berlin. It is therefore likely that it was not merely the evocation of artsy life on Prenzlauer Berg and the dissemination of confidential data had roused the wrath of Junker and his colleagues. To them, the transgression was more fundamental. A view of the city as propagated in *Form und Zweck* assigned power to the city dwellers rather than to politicians and urban designers. Not only did it sanction the numerous grassroots activities that had been sprouting in the Prenzlauer Berg district during the 1980s, but it construed them as the real determinants of urbanity. This was obviously a threat to the legitimacy of the socialist hierarchy.

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Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003, Simone Hain, interview by author, Berlin, April 9, 2004, interview with Wolfgang Kil February 7, 2003.

<sup>273</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003.

<sup>274</sup> Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005.

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Also in a few other cases the top leaders attempted to stifle such thinking.<sup>275</sup> Likewise, the constant monitoring of the art scene in the Prenzlauer Berg district and elsewhere by local authorities and the State Secret Service has to be seen in the same context. It was not so much directed against possible political opponents, but rather against a cultural practice that allowed the city to be represented and shaped by its inhabitants. The clashes of Prenzlauer Berg residents with the authorities during the 1980s – for example in protests against the gasometer demolition on Greifswalder Straße in 1981, the initiatives for the preservation of the historical public bathhouse on Oderberger Straße in the late 1980s, or the residents' movement to preserve the Rykestraße tenements in 1988 – show how this view had become progressively more prevalent in East Berlin everyday life, and at the same time less and less compatible with the dogmatic models of socialist governance.

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<sup>275</sup> Distribution of bottom-up approaches was generally hampered or prevented. For example, Wolfgang Kil remembers a study which he carried out in the mid-1980s as a commission by the state-run *Büro für architekturbezogene Kunst* (Bureau for Architecture-related Art, an organization co-sponsored by the Artists Association and the East Berlin government). He proposed community-run art projects in the public space in the Prenzlauer Berg district. Distribution of the work was denied, and Kil and his co-authors were forced to abandon their work after serious threats by local Berlin politicians. Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005. Another example was the provocative design proposal by Bernd Ettl and Christian Enzmann for the 1984 architectural competition Bersarinplatz. The two architects, who four years earlier had authored a much-celebrated, second-prize winning proposal for the Friedrichstraße competition, proposed an "Icarus Flight" stage in the middle of the square. As part of a public spectacle, volunteers could put on artificial wings and jump from a tower while being shot at by guards on duty. Both Ettl and Enzmann were arrested upon submission of the proposal and sentenced to two and three years in prison for subversion. See Wolfgang Kil, "Staatsfeindliche Entwürfe," *ArchPlus* no. 103 (1990): 62-65.

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### *Contested functionalism*

In the 1980s, many East German theorists – including the most prominent figures such as Bruno Flierl, Bernd Grönwald, and Lothar Kühne – held that the built form stood in a dialectical relation between architecture and society. The conviction contained a mandate: Architecture should reflect the structures of society and at the same time influence them in the service of the underprivileged classes – a position which they called “functionalist” in line with the conceptions of left-wing modernist architects during the 1920s.

The history of functionalist thinking in East Germany is closely linked to the architect and theorist Hans Schmidt. Born in Basle in 1895, Schmidt gained international reputation after the First World War. In collaboration with Mart Stam and Emil Roth he published the journal *ABC – Beiträge zum Bauen* in Basle and subsequently worked with Ernst May in the Soviet Union. A committed socialist, he moved to East Germany in 1955 to take over the *Institut für Typung* (Institute for Typization) at the Building Academy. His aim was to provide the conceptual basis for what he saw as a historic chance to build better cities: the standardization of building and the industrialization of the construction industry. If there had ever been a serious chance to meet his idealistic goals that moment quickly passed. In 1961 the administrative structure of the Building Academy was changed, and Schmidt’s research institute lost a great deal of its independence. Now called *Institut für Theorie und Geschichte* (Institute for History and Theory), it was subordinated to the newly formed *Institut für Architektur und Städtebau* (Institute of Architecture and Urban Design). Schmidt subsequently engaged in systematic, architectural theoretical research, and on the other hand in publications on the design of the city.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> His publications include Hans Schmidt, Konrad Lässig, Werner Rietdorf, Gerd Wessel, and Gerd Zeuchner. *Funktion und Komposition von Stadtzentren. Untersuchungen am Beispiel von Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden und Karl-Marx-Stadt* (East Berlin: 1966), Konrad Lässig, Rolf Linke, Werner Rietdorf, Gerd Wessel, *Straßen und Plätze. Beispiele zur Gestaltung städtebaulicher Räume* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1967) [worked out under Schmidt’s auspices, with an introduction by Schmidt] or Hans Schmidt, Rolf Linke, Gerd Wessel, *Gestaltung und Umgestaltung der Stadt. Beiträge zum sozialistischen Städtebau* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1969). These books were based on the work of Schmidt and his younger colleagues, including Konrad Lässig, Rolf Linke, Werner Rietdorf,

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Until his retirement and return to Switzerland in 1969 Schmidt was an active researcher; his former colleagues remembered him as an encouraging mentor and constant source of inspiration.<sup>277</sup> The significance of his institute, however, was diminished in favor of those departments at the Building Academy that dealt with technology and economy. Schmidt's personal position as both a foreign citizen with the option to travel to the West and a veteran from the heydays of modernism made him a "well-respected outsider" in East Germany – but not a key force in the restructuring of East German cities.<sup>278</sup>

Schmidt's research was of an ambivalent kind. On the other hand his repeated references to cities such as the 17<sup>th</sup> century extension of Amsterdam or the Rue de Rivoli in Paris showed that neither mass-produced buildings nor the variation of the same aesthetic motif necessarily leads to bleakness and monotony – a position which was taken up by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani thirty years later and triggered a major controversy.<sup>279</sup> On the one hand the very nature of Schmidt's enterprise entailed the atrophy of aesthetic quality in East Germany's prefab settlements. While the "industrialization of the construction industry" – with a significant input from Schmidt's ideas – can be blamed for the increasing inflexibility of East German architectural design and hence for the condition of modernism that led to its decline, Schmidt's work at the same time contained the very origin of an impulse that was to eventually supersede the modernist urban design paradigm. There is a line of thought running from Schmidt's typed "Socialist City" to Aldo Rossi's typology of the "Architecture of the City."<sup>280</sup> Rossi

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Gerd Wessel, Gerd Zeuchner, and Bruno Flierl. See also Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 87.

<sup>277</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 79.

<sup>278</sup> Schmidt's successor was Alfred Hoffmann, a staunch doctrinaire who had a political rather than scholarly agenda; hence the department lost its academic profile. Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 79.

<sup>279</sup> Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, "Die Provokation des Alltäglichen. Für eine neue Konvention des Bauens," *Spiegel* no. 51 (1993). Lampugnani's article triggered a harsh controversy on traditional standardized architecture known as "The Berlin Architectural Debate." It is summarized in Gert Kähler, ed., *Einfach schwierig. Eine deutsche Architekturdebatte* (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1995).

<sup>280</sup> This influence is acknowledged, for example, by Marco de Michelis. See Marco de Michelis, "Aldo Rossi and Autonomous Architecture," in *The Changing of the Avant-Garde – Visionary architectural* 124

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resumed Schmidt's approach to standardization and transposed it into the context of existing cities.<sup>281</sup> The connection is not accidental: Rossi's convictions were deeply indebted to his travels to the German Democratic Republic and his encounters with Hans Schmidt. He had visited East Germany together with Carlo Aymonino and Franco Berlander in November 1961.<sup>282</sup> They lectured in Weimar and East Berlin on contemporary Italian architecture, pointing out the "progressive" (leftist) convictions of Italian architects. In an interview they summarized their positive impressions in East Germany. They praised the examples of industrialized construction they had seen in Rostock and Hoyerswerda and pointed out that this path should be followed. They further suggested making the slab the module for architectural variety.<sup>283</sup> Rossi deeply admired Hans Schmidt and as one of the few international architects recognized his significance as an architectural theorist. Due to Rossi's support, Schmidt's 1964 book *Beiträge zur Architektur* (Contributions to Architecture) was translated into the Italian in 1974.<sup>284</sup>

After Schmidt had left the German Democratic Republic, arguably the most important figure in East German architectural theory was Bruno Flierl, who had been working at the Building Academy under Schmidt since 1965.<sup>285</sup> Flierl, who was born in 1927, throughout his life managed to position himself in

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*drawings from the Howard Gilman collection* ed. Terence Riley et al. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002): 89-98. exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, October 2002].

<sup>281</sup> Rossi's approach is laid out in Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1966) translated *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982)

<sup>282</sup> Alfred Schwandt, "Italienische Architekten in der DDR" *Deutsche Architektur* no. 1 (1962): 59.

<sup>283</sup> Bruno Flierl, "Interview with Carlo Aymonino, Franco Berlanda, and Aldo Rossi," [the answers of the individual interview partners were not specified] *Deutsche Architektur* no. 1 (1962): 59-60.

<sup>284</sup> Hans Schmidt, *Beiträge zur Architektur 1924-1964* [with an introduction by Bruno Flierl] (East Berlin, 1965) translated *Contributi all'architettura* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1974) [with an introduction by Aldo Rossi]. Rossi's contacts with East German architects lasted for decades. In 1970, for example, he invited Hans Schmidt, Kurt Junghanns, and Bruno Flierl to a conference on the socialist city in Venice, providing a rare opportunity for them to travel to the West. See also Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 89 and *Hans Schmidt 1893-1972 – Architekt in Basel, Moskau, Berlin-Ost* (Zurich: gta-Institut 1993) [includes contributions by Bruno Flierl and Simone Hain].

<sup>285</sup> When Hans Schmidt returned to Switzerland in 1969 Flierl was asked to take over Schmidt's post as Institute Director. Flierl, however, asked for an assistant to take over the administrative tasks so that he could concentrate on research. His condition was rejected. Eventually, the narrow-minded and dogmatic party secretary Alfred Hoffmann was appointed. Bruno Flierl, "Autobiographisches Gespräch," in *Den Himmel überlassen wir den Engeln*, ed. Hans Bergmann and Otto Hayner (Berlin: Volksbühne, 1993) [public interview at the Volksbühne theater]: 237.

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moderate opposition to the party rulers. On several occasions he was reprimanded by the authorities and his professional career was seriously obstructed; he nevertheless always retained a certain intellectual influence and never became an outcast like many of his rebellious colleagues.<sup>286</sup> Flierl, who claimed that the driving force in his research was his desire to understand the mutual influence of society and architecture, first collaborated with Schmidt on an ambitious book project that was aimed at integrating architectural theory psychology, sociology, and semiology.<sup>287</sup> Subsequently, Flierl wrote his doctoral dissertation, which was published under the title *Industriegesellschaftstheorie im Städtebau* (The Theory of the Industrial Society in the Context of Urban Planning).<sup>288</sup> He continuously had to defy the suspicion of his superiors, partially because in the eyes of many East German bureaucrats it was already a sacrilege to conduct research based on the grounds that the current socialist society could be possibly improved. From a contemporary perspective, their skepticism is nevertheless a surprise, since Flierl's analysis was firmly set on Marxist principles and designed as a self-confident polemic against the West. Flierl vigorously attacked the theory of *Industriegesellschaft* (industrial society), which at the time was held by many Western authors. It maintained that a "second industrial revolution" since the late 1950s had led to mass production and mass consumption, and as a consequence to an increase in wealth, a dissolution of class differences, and a mutual approach between the capitalist and communist systems ("theory of convergence"). Flierl condemned these ideas as treacherous capitalist promises, irrespective of the fact that they were predominantly

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<sup>286</sup> Flierl studied architecture at the West Berlin *Hochschule für bildende Künste* (School of Fine Arts, now *Universität der Künste – University of the Arts*) from 1948 to 1951 before moving to the Eastern half of the city. In 1962 he became the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Deutsche Architektur*, but lost his job only two years later after a controversy with Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker – at the time Flierl was 35 years old, Junker was 33. In 1970s and 1980s he taught at both the Humboldt University and the Art School in Berlin-Weißensee, where for political reasons he was often not allowed to publish. After the German reunification he became the most prominent architectural voice from the East and defended the heritage of East German urban design against West German attempts to eradicate this part of Berlin's common history. At the time, not only had his long-time opponent Wolfgang Junker committed suicide, but also Bernd Grönwald, the director of Flierl's former institute at the Bauakademie, and Lothar Kühne, Flierl's former colleague at the Humboldt University and fellow critic.

<sup>287</sup> The book, which was created by approximately seven co-authors under the auspices of Hans Schmidt, was eventually printed in 300 copies and barred from public discussion. Bruno Flierl, *Die gebaute Umwelt des Menschen* [Interview] *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 8 no. 3 (1999): 45.

<sup>288</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gesellschaft und Architektur in unserer Epoche. Ein Beitrag zur Architekturtheoretischen Forschung in der ideologischen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Sozialismus und Kapitalismus* (East Berlin, 1972) [dissertation at the Humboldt University].

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advocated by leftists. He argued that the theory of the industrial society neglected the actual power relations and the material conditions of production. Against the concept of *Industriegesellschaft*, he aimed at establishing an integrative theory of society that allowed for individual human agency. As part of such a conception he construed architecture as the environment that is shaped by man's abilities. In the context of his work, concepts such as *Lebensumwelt* (living environment) gained significance. Flierl aimed at formulating what in retrospect he called "the spatial dimension of the social."<sup>289</sup> His ideas stood in opposition to the temporal dimensions of social production on whose primacy Marxist theory had so far been insisting. The bone of contention in Flierl's doctoral dissertation was his reference to systems theory and cybernetics. Flierl conceived of systems theory as a way to deepen Marxist dialectics, not to deny it. His focus on the system as a point of reference, however, contained an implicit doubt in the Party's claim to exclusive societal leadership. In addition, from the point of view of the East German leaders, it was already considered suspicious that he dared to discuss Western theorists.<sup>290</sup> The radical potential of his work for readers in both East and West also lied in his critique of the concept of progress, of the presumptuous idea that the "industrial society" could serve as the model for the entire world, and of the deterministic theory of urbanization that was exclusively based on technological innovation.<sup>291</sup> His superiors took it as a provocation: Flierl's thesis defense was spectacularly called off at the last moment. Only half a year later Flierl was eventually allowed to graduate, presenting a slightly revised version of his work.<sup>292</sup> The final clash with the

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<sup>289</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Die gebaute Umwelt des Menschen* [Interview] *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 8 no. 3 (1999): 45.

<sup>290</sup> Flierl's major opponent was Central Committee member Kurt Hager. See Bruno Flierl, "Autobiographisches Gespräch," in *Den Himmel überlassen wir den Engeln*, ed. Hans Bergmann and Otto Hayner (Berlin: Volksbühne, 1993) [public interview at the Volksbühne theater]: 242-244 and Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, April 25, 2005.

<sup>291</sup> In this respect, Flierl's publication paralleled Manuel Castells's unmasking of any urbanization theory that conceives of the city as a quasi-natural entity and neglects power relations as an "urban ideology." Castells's opponents were particularly the acolytes of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology, whose tenets had not been questioned since the 1930s. Cp. Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question* (London, 1977) [English translation of *La question urbaine*, first published in 1972]: 73-74.

<sup>292</sup> Flierl himself, in retrospect, remembered that he was merely urged to take out the references to systems theory. Bruno Flierl, conversation with the author, Berlin, April 25, 2005. Contemporaneous observers suggest that Flierl's rehabilitation might have been indebted to personal intervention by Christina Lindemann, the daughter of Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker. She was a student of Flierl's. Her father, in turn, was the son-in-law of *Staatsrat* Chairman Willi Stoph and therefore largely immune to party intrigues. The revised version of Flierl's dissertation was defended on April 20, 1972

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authorities nevertheless came a decade later. In May 1982, Flierl published a text in which he not only criticized the “postmodern disguise architecture” of the prestigious new variety theater Friedrichstadt Palace, but also called for a greater autonomy of the civil city administration from the Party and for a less centralized construction policy.<sup>293</sup> Both Ehrhard Gißke, the instigator of the Friedrichstadt Palace, and Gerhard Kosel, the former president of the Building Academy and *éminence grise* of industrialized construction, were furious. Flierl was summoned to appear at the Board of Directors meeting at the Architects Association, where he was accused of subversion and counter-revolution and barred from most public activities; he subsequently suffered a stroke and took retirement. Nevertheless this did not prevent him from a variety of activities; given that as an old age pensioner he was allowed to travel to the West, he engaged in comparative research project on skyscrapers under socialism and capitalism. He occasionally lectured at the Humboldt University and at the *Verband Bildender Künstler*, the East German Artists Association.<sup>294</sup> After the end of the GDR, he became the most prominent East German voice on architectural topics and joined the uphill battle against the demolition of socialist buildings in reunified Germany.

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and published, first as a booklet – Bruno Flierl, *Gesellschaft und Architektur in unserer Epoche* (East Berlin: Bauinformation 1973) – and a year later as a paperback – *Industriegesellschaftstheorie im Städtebau* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1973). Flierl was also allowed to continue his academic career with his *Habilitationsschrift*: Bruno Flierl, *Zur sozialistischen Architekturentwicklung in der DDR. Theoretische Probleme und Analysen in der Praxis* (East Berlin, 1979).

<sup>293</sup> The text in question was a speech which he had given in November 1981 at the 13<sup>th</sup> Seminar on Theory of the Architects Association in Erfurt and which was published in May 1982 by the Artists Association. He repeated some of his positions shortly after in the catalog for the 9<sup>th</sup> Art Exhibit in Dresden. The article was cut out of the already bound book and replaced. Whether or not a certain position was considered subversive in East Germany was surprisingly relative; this is evidenced by the fact that Flierl’s dissertation, which at the East Berlin Building Academy had roused a scandal, was published two years later in an art historical context – with no consequence whatsoever. See Bruno Flierl, *Architektur und Kunst – Texte 1964-1983* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1984). Flierl related the particular sensitivity of the East German authorities at that particular moment to the protest movement in Poland. See Bruno Flierl, “Autobiographisches Gespräch,” in *Den Himmel überlassen wir den Engeln*, ed. Hans Bergmann and Otto Hayner (Berlin: Volksbühne, 1993) [public interview at the Volksbühne theater]: 238-239, Bruno Flierl, “Löcher im Bauch,” [interview with Nikolaus Kuhnert and Philipp Oswald, *ArchPlus* 22 n. 103 (1990): 74-76 and interview on April 25, 2005.

<sup>294</sup> Since 1966 Flierl was member and since 1975 the director of the *Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Architektur und bildende Kunst* [Central Work Group on Architecture and Fine Arts], which united members of the Artist Association and the Architects Association. Bruno Flierl, “Autobiographisches Gespräch,” in *Den Himmel überlassen wir den Engeln*, ed. Hans Bergmann and Otto Hayner (Berlin: Volksbühne, 1993) [public interview at the Volksbühne theater]: 246-247.

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Another prominent promoter of East German functionalism was Lothar Kühne. He was born in 1931 and since 1971 a professor of philosophy at East Berlin's Humboldt University. Since 1980 he taught in the department of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. He was a colleague and close acquaintance of Bruno Flierl's, and a fellow thinker in his grappling with functionalism. Flierl commended Kühne as the first in East Germany to realize the spatial dimension of society, as opposed to the social dimension of space. In this respect, Kühne aimed at architecture as a societal category, in the Marxist sense, which reflects and is a function of man's life. Architecture, for Kühne, was precisely not art.<sup>295</sup> Kühne established his reputation with his books *Gegenstand und Raum* (Object and Space, 1981) and the collection of essays *Haus und Landschaft* (House and Landscape, 1985).<sup>296</sup> Analyzing the relations between man and his objects in a socialist society, Kühne created a peculiar theory in which he saw architecture as a mediator between man and his natural environment. To achieve this, architecture has to make a "landscape" in the sense of an environment that unifies spaces of nature, production, and social exchange.<sup>297</sup> Kühne's ideas opened up a position towards contemporary architectural practice. Firmly based on Marxian thoughts, Kühne's conception of architecture as mediation of landscape and his focus on *Behutsamkeit* (carefulness) in the relation between man and his objects under socialism nevertheless related to ecological concerns which at the time were increasingly present in the international discourse. It was thus that Kühne's idiosyncratic thinking provided for his contemporaries a pathway towards a different view on the city.<sup>298</sup> Like Grönwald, Kühne in the 1980s advocated for political change in East Germany while still believing in the socialist project. His contemporaries remember him as a relentless thinker who inspired a wide circle of intellectuals, but at

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<sup>295</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 35.

<sup>296</sup> Lothar Kühne, *Gegenstand und Raum. Über die Historizität des Ästhetischen* (Dresden: Fundus, 1981) and Lothar Kühne, *Haus und Landschaft* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1985). See also Lothar Kühne, *Zu erkenntnistheoretischen und ästhetischen Problemen der Architekturtheorie* (East Berlin, 1965) [dissertation at the Humboldt University] Lothar Kühne, *Das Ästhetische als Faktor der Aneignung und des Eigentums. Zur Bestimmung des gegenständlichen Verhaltens* (East Berlin, 1971) [*Habilitationsschrift* at the Humboldt University].

<sup>297</sup> Lothar Kühne, *Gegenstand und Raum. Über die Historizität des Ästhetischen* (Dresden: Fundus, 1981): 268. See also his essay "Haus und Landschaft. Zu einem Umriß der kommunistischen Kultur des gesellschaftlichen Raumes," *Haus und Landschaft* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1985): 9-46 [first published in *Weimarer Beiträge* no. 10 (1974)].

<sup>298</sup> For example Kil stressed the influence of Kühne's ideas on East Berlin's architectural critics in the 1980s. Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005.

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the same time as an obsessive oddball character who lived in his own world. Kühne became more and more marginalized under an inflexible political system and died in 1985.<sup>299</sup>

Kühne developed many of his ideas as a reply to the positions of his colleague Karin Hirdina, who at the time was a professor in Kühne's department and published her book *Pathos der Sachlichkeit* (The Pathos of Objectivity) on the history of functionalist architecture in 1981, the same year in which Kühne brought out "Object and Space."<sup>300</sup> Both Hirdina and Kühne frequently attacked each other's publications with benevolent polemics. With more than two decades of distance, however, their positions appear quite similar. Both Kühne and Hirdina supported functionalism as the most appropriate approach to architecture. Whereas Kühne attempted to distill the Marxian definitions of object and form into a perspective for contemporary aesthetic practice, Hirdina focused on the architects of the 1920s as a source for inspiration. Her book is a polemic against West German authors who, according to her, misunderstand the modernist architects of the 1920s by separating their theories into a (presumably good) *Produktionsästhetik* ("aesthetic of production") that they connect with the social approach in the architecture of the 1920s, and a (presumably bad) *Abbildästhetik* ("aesthetic of reproduction") that they tie to an architecture of signs and symbols and at the same time to the art of socialist realism.<sup>301</sup> For Hirdina, this approach is a reflection of capitalist ideology

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<sup>299</sup> Kühne drowned in the Baltic Sea on November 7, 1985. Although he did not leave a farewell letter, it is generally believed that he deliberately took his life or at least challenged his fate when swimming in spite of the cold weather. Cp. Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005 and Christine Hannemann, interview by author, Berlin, June 10, 2003; both rely on Kühne's friends and colleagues. For an estimate of Kühne's influence from the particular perspective of one of his former colleagues see Karin Hirdina and Michael Brie, eds. *In memoriam Lothar Kühne. Von der Qual, die staatssozialistische Moderne zu leben* (Berlin: Gesellschaft für sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung und Publizistik, 1993).

<sup>300</sup> See Karin Hirdina, *Pathos der Sachlichkeit. Tendenzen materialistischer Ästhetik der zwanziger Jahre* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1981). Contrary to Kühne, Hirdina explicitly sought the connection with an international discourse. Her book was simultaneously published in West Germany (printed, however, in East Germany): Karin Hirdina, *Pathos der Sachlichkeit: Funktionalismus und Fortschritt ästhetischer Kultur* (Munich: Damnitz, 1981).

<sup>301</sup> Karin Hirdina, *Pathos der Sachlichkeit: Funktionalismus und Fortschritt ästhetischer Kultur* (Munich: Damnitz, 1981): 15 and 195-212. Hirdina used the concept of functionalism as a weapon against Western authors such as Heinrich Klotz, Julius Posner, and Aldo Rossi, who criticized the concrete blocks of the 1960s as oppressive and inhuman and at the same time historicized its predecessors, the projects of Neues Bauen during the 1920s, as fashion and style rather than a serious attempt to resolve the housing question.

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which attempts to discredit certain modernist architects as communists while redeem others as acceptable models. For her, this classification did not do justice to the modernist movement, which in its entirety is inseparably connected to socialism. In accordance with the architects whose work she analyzed she spoke of "functionalism," which she defined as the expression of a new way of life that derived from the increasing *Vergesellschaftlichung* ('societalization' of production, in the Marxian sense). Functionalist architecture, in that sense, embodied the complex social function of the societalized individual. Hirdina saw this approach in the work of numerous designers from the 1920s, including the Bauhaus architects or the Russian constructivists. She also saw it as the underlying principle of East German construction policy as propagated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention under the label "Unity of Social and Economic Policy."<sup>302</sup> For Hirdina, functionalism was the expression of the individual's way of life under the condition of increasing societalization, although she granted that this was probably "more of an utopian potential than an actual effect."<sup>303</sup> Despite this concession, however, she strongly propagated functionalism as a blueprint for contemporary architecture. It has to be mentioned that the West German scholars whom she attacked most passionately largely ignored both her and Kühne's positions. Functionalism, for most Western theorists at the time, had long lost its lure, and few believed that it was able to guide present critical practice.

Bernd Grönwald was another central figure in the architectural debate in East Germany during the 1980s. He was born in 1941 and studied architecture at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction where he became a professor of architectural theory in 1980. In 1986, he was appointed director of the influential *Institut für Städtebau und Architektur* (Institute for Urban Design and Architecture) at the Building Academy. Grönwald was originally a steadfast supporter of the socialist state to which he owed his career. In the 1980s, he nevertheless became more and more frustrated with the shortcomings of East German policy, to the point that he ended up supporting the protesters of 1989. He strongly believed in the possibility for a better but nevertheless socialist German

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<sup>302</sup> Karin Hirdina, *Pathos der Sachlichkeit: Funktionalismus und Fortschritt ästhetischer Kultur* (Munich: Damnitz, 1981): 195.

<sup>303</sup> "zugegeben mehr als utopisches Potential denn als tatsächliche Wirkung" Karin Hirdina, *Pathos der Sachlichkeit: Funktionalismus und Fortschritt ästhetischer Kultur* (Munich: Damnitz, 1981): 207

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Democratic Republic. In the late 1980s, he was secretly discussed as a possible successor to Wolfgang Junker for the post of Minister of Construction, and it is likely that he would have played a central role in East German construction had the reforms of the post-Honecker era been guided by the Socialist Unity Party.<sup>304</sup> His hopes were finally shattered when after the German Reunification East Germans were largely excluded from the debates on construction. Shortly after the end of the GDR, Grönwald committed suicide.<sup>305</sup> Throughout his professional life, Grönwald maintained continuous contact with colleagues at the West Berlin Bauhaus Archive and the Venice School of Architecture and was therefore familiar with the development in the West.

Also Claude Schnaidt was an important architectural critic and a regular guest in the German Democratic Republic. Schnaidt was born in Geneva in 1931 and subsequently lived in West Germany and France. He was a committed communist and persistently advocated for an architecture in the service of the disadvantaged. He studied and later taught at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* (School of Applied Arts) in Ulm/West Germany, where he published one of the first monographies on Hannes Meyer. In 1971, he moved to Paris.<sup>306</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s he maintained close relations with the architectural world in East Germany and was frequently invited to conferences and symposia.

### *Positions against postmodernism*

With the concept of functionalism in mind, many East German authors criticized postmodernist architects in capitalist countries for their “exclusive orientation towards the satisfaction of idealist needs” (Flierl), that is, for their lack of a social agenda.<sup>307</sup> This reproach was frequently repeated in

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<sup>304</sup> Cp. Wolfgang Kil interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005 and Fred Staufenbiel, interview by author, Berlin, February 8, 2005. See also Simone Hain, “Ein deutsches Schicksal. In memoriam Bernd Grönwald,” *ArchPlus* 107 no. 3 (1991): 21-22.

<sup>305</sup> Simone Hain summarized Grönwald’s life achievements. Simone Hain, “Ein deutsches Schicksal. In memoriam Bernd Grönwald,” *ArchPlus* 107 no. 3 (1991): 21-22.

<sup>306</sup> Claude Schnaidt and Hannes Meyer, *Bauten, Projekte, Schriften* (Teufen/Switzerland: Niggeli, 1965).

<sup>307</sup> According to Flierl, postmodern buildings are “nur auf die Erfüllung ideeller Bedürfnisse ausgerichtet, also kommunikativ” (exclusively directed towards the satisfaction of idealist needs, that is, communicative). Bruno Flierl, “Die Postmoderne in der Architektur” in *Postmoderne und* 132

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conference papers and journal articles, including those of Flierl, Kühne, Hirdina, Grönwald, and Schnaidt. The ways in which they defined their own positions in relation to postmodernism was nevertheless quite diverse. The June 1982 issue of *Architektur der DDR* prominently featured two controversial articles. In the first Bernd Grönwald criticized postmodernism as a “new formalism,” which was super-structural in the Marxist sense, derived from the whims of an American or West German ruling class, and ignored social problems.<sup>308</sup> Modernism, in turn, as exemplified in Le Corbusier’s Athens Charter or in the “socialist” ensembles of highrise buildings grouped around social amenities, was acceptable because it tackled the material base of society.

Only a few pages after, Claude Schnaidt interpreted postmodern architecture in a diametrically opposed way. He analyzed it against the background of French politics of the early 1980s.<sup>309</sup> At that time, French large-scale modernist developments were associated with capitalism, with top-down planning, and with the old conservative president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. Postmodernism, on the other hand, was associated with the liberation of the working class and with the newly elected socialist government of François Mitterand. Hence Schnaidt interpreted the rise of postmodernism as a symptom for the crisis of capitalism. He accused modernist architecture, especially the bleak “concrete boxes” in the Paris *banlieue*, as “the axe of the destroyer” which forced the working class to live in “exile” far away from the city. Against this form of oppression, in his opinion, socialist activists have to unite. Their weapon, according to Schnaidt, was neotraditional postmodern architecture, whose “character of the habitual contained an infallibly mobilizing potential.”<sup>310</sup>

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*Funktionalismus. Sechs Vorträge* ed. Bruno Flierl und Heinz Hirdina (East Berlin: Verband bildender Künstler, 1985): 140.

<sup>308</sup> Bernd Grönwald, “Architekturprogrammatik für die 80er Jahre,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 335-339 In the same volume, also Christian Schädlich, professor at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction, reviled postmodern architecture for similar reasons as inappropriate for a socialist country. Christian Schädlich, “Der Postmodernismus – eine alternative Architektur?” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 340-346.

<sup>309</sup> Claude Schnaidt, “Einige Feststellungen zum “Postmodernismus” und seine sozialökonomischen Ursachen in Frankreich,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 361-362.

<sup>310</sup> “Für die Aktivisten in den Kämpfen um die Stadt hat die Imitation traditioneller Modelle einen entscheidenden Platz in ihrer Strategie, weil sie meinen, dass der Charakter des Gewohnten ein unfehlbar mobilisierendes Potential in sich birgt.” Claude Schnaidt, “Einige Feststellungen zum

In 1982, the year in which Grönwald and Schnaidt published their critiques, Lothar Kühne interpreted modernist and postmodernist architecture again in a different way.<sup>311</sup> In an article in *Form und Zweck* he argued for a “true functionalism” in opposition to both modernism and postmodernism and thus in resistance of “two capitalist mistakes” which both neglect that society is moved by material forces.<sup>312</sup> From his positions one can assume that he thought of modernism as the architecture of the allegedly unpolitical Mies van der Rohe and the “fashion” of the International Style, and postmodernism as another “fashion” based on the playful use of historic quotes and pop-cultural references. Functionalism in turn for him was an architecture that reflected class relations, and followed the traditions of the more political architectural currents of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kühne saw architecture as being situated in a dialectical relation with the structure of society and the class relations that underlie it, and censured Western theorists for denying this situation.<sup>313</sup>

In accordance with that line of thinking, Bruno Flierl also claimed that there was no such thing as postmodern architecture in the German Democratic Republic.<sup>314</sup> According to Flierl, the “neo-historical contextualism” on Friedrichstraße and in the *Nikolaiviertel* could not be deemed postmodern, since these projects were no self-conscious image production of private investors who aim at questioning design through design.<sup>315</sup> Flierl strongly disapproved of both Friedrichstraße and *Nikolaiviertel* from an

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‘Postmodernismus’ und seine sozialökonomischen Ursachen in Frankreich,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1982): 362.

<sup>311</sup> Lothar Kühne, “Über den Postmodernismus,” *Form und Zweck* 14 no. 6 (1982): 29-32.

<sup>312</sup> Lothar Kühne, “Über den Postmodernismus,” *Form und Zweck* 14 no. 6 (1982): 29-32. Kühne repeated his position on numerous occasions, for example at the third Bauhaus Kolloquium on which he was on a panel with Bruno Flierl. The talk took place in 1983 at the reopened Bauhaus in Weimar. Kühne’s theses on this panel were quoted in Bruno Flierl, “Streit um Architekturströmungen,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* 29 n. 5/6 (1983): 369-372. A long version of his article was published three years later: Lothar Kühne, “Über Postmodernismus,” in *Haus und Landschaft* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1985): 187-199.

<sup>313</sup> Lothar Kühne, “Über den Postmodernismus,” *Form und Zweck* 14 no. 6 (1982): 29. He already uttered that thought in the late 1950s. Cp. Lothar Kühne, “Der Revisionismus in der Architekturtheorie,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1959): 575-577.

<sup>314</sup> Bruno Flierl, “Die Postmoderne in der Architektur” in *Postmoderne und Funktionalismus. Sechs Vorträge* ed. Bruno Flierl und Heinz Hirdina (East Berlin: Verband Bildender Künstler, 1985): 90.

<sup>315</sup> Bruno Flierl, “Die Postmoderne in der Architektur” in *Postmoderne und Funktionalismus. Sechs Vorträge* ed. Bruno Flierl und Heinz Hirdina (East Berlin: Verband Bildender Künstler, 1985): 150.

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aesthetic point of view, but at the same time was eager to point out that they were very different from the disagreeable Western postmodernism since they functioned in a non-capitalist context. Therefore he exempted them from what he thought to be the worst effect of contemporary Western architecture, that is, the affirmation of bourgeois society through nostalgic images of the past. At the same time, he remained silent about their origin, purpose, and function under socialism.

### *Architecture and social context*

The East German debate over postmodern architecture was very different from the debates in West Germany at the time, which mainly evolved over whether or not architecture should convey meaning and whether or not neoclassicism was a sign of Nazi ideology. With twenty years of distance, the controversies among East German architectural theorists such as Grönwald, Schnaidt, Kühne, and Flierl appear nevertheless strangely lofty. They are especially difficult to comprehend if one takes into account that the four did not only belong to the same generation and held common Marxist convictions but were also close allies in their advocacy for a user-oriented, incremental urban design policy. All four had frequent personal contact. And all, with different degrees of straightforwardness, criticized the dogmatic party doctrine. Their analyses of postmodern practice in the West are nevertheless extremely contradictory. Grönwald believed that modernism meant liberation of the working class, Schnaidt thought that it signified its oppression, and Kühne assumed that it was deceptive for any kind of political awareness since it denied the implications of dialectical materialism. Grönwald and Flierl thought that postmodernism reflected capitalist injustice, while Schnaidt claimed that it mirrored working class emancipation. And all four held very different definitions of modernism and postmodernism. Grönwald thought of Le Corbusier's Athens Charter versus Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia, Schnaidt of Giscard d'Estaing's top-down planned satellite settlements versus Mitterand's incrementally planned inner-city neighborhoods, and Kühne and Flierl of Mies's steel-and-glass fashion versus Stirling's façade ornament fashion. All four formulated the binary opposition in different ways – for Grönwald modernism was good and postmodernism bad, for Schnaidt it was the other way round, and for Kühne and Flierl both modernism and postmodernism were bad and only functionalism was good. And all four associated concepts as different as that of “oppressive” or “liberating” for the same

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highrise block and the same ornamented façade. This confusion stands in opposition to a concept which all four claimed to share, and which was essential to their idea of functionalism: the belief in the *Abbildcharakter* (“reflective character”) of architecture, that is, the capacity of architectural form to reflect societal structures. Contrary to what Flierl, Grönwald, Kühne, and Schnaidt maintained, their categorizations rather suggest that the “reflective character” of postmodern architecture, in and of itself, was completely unintelligible and thus open to multiple and contradictory interpretations.

Contemporaneous observers lamented that the narrow-minded pragmatism of the Honecker regime led to a waning of theory over the course of the 1970s.<sup>316</sup> As a matter of fact, the passionate debates over the nature of “socialist architecture” that had filled East German magazines during the 1950s and 1960s miraculously disappeared by 1980 – the time by which West German scholars such as Frank Werner concluded that “socialist architecture” as an aesthetic or functional category did not exist.<sup>317</sup> They had given way to the idiosyncratic microcosms of thinkers such as Lothar Kühne, whose intellectual constructs were far removed from architectural practice. Theoretical discussions became limited to a few meetings and conferences such as the well-reviewed “Bauhaus Colloquiums” at the re-opened Bauhaus in Dessau. Indeed, from a contemporary perspective the theoretical blade of East Germany’s most renowned architectural theorists during the 1980s appeared strangely blunt. Too contradictory were their definitions of modernism, functionalism, or postmodernism, too vague their conception of a mutual influence between architecture and society. Evoking the spatial dimension of social structures in light of increasingly decrepit cities was clairvoyant at a level beyond their intentions – East Germany’s dilapidated buildings, unlike shiny capitalist façades, actually *did* reflect the structures of the political system that had produced them, which at the time was conspicuously at the brink of economic collapse. And yet one should at least question such simplifications in light of the

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<sup>316</sup> Cp. Simone Hain, interview by author, Berlin, April 9, 2004 and Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003.

<sup>317</sup> Frank Werner, *Stadt, Städtebau, Architektur in der DDR: Aspekte der Stadtgeographie Stadtplanung und Forschungspolitik*. (Erlangen: Deutsche Gesellschaft für zeitgeschichtliche Forschung, 1981): 9-11. According to Werner, the predominant characteristic of East German research policy on urban design was the effort to justify the existing spatial forms and formulate goals that were already met by the current conditions.

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complex intellectual situation. Most likely, the fragility of much theory work in the late phase of the German Democratic Republic derived from the inability to test hypotheses against current conditions – an accurate assessment of the socialist society was never allowed. What possibly had most bearing, therefore, was a general concern with social structures and a very straightforward appeal for social justice.

### *Monotony*

Since the 1970s, Flierl and many of his functionalist colleagues acknowledged the necessity to improve the modernist highrise developments, which in East Germany – like in the West – were increasingly criticized as being “monotonous,” “uniform,” and “carelessly designed.” A 1975 report to top leader Gerhard Trölitersch’s office pointed out the gravity of the situation, suggesting that the low aesthetic quality of East German housing blocks, particularly of the infamous prefab series WBS 70, seriously endangered the citizens’ identification with the socialist state.<sup>318</sup> The functionalists, however, initially neglected such findings in their theories since, as they pointed out time and again, aesthetic appearance was not to be looked at as a problem of its own, but always in connection with the surrounding social conditions. The underlying assumption was that socialism, which aimed at an improvement of these conditions, would necessarily produce aesthetically satisfactory buildings. Referencing Alexander Mitscherlich’s popular criticism of “inhospitable” modernist urban design, Flierl claimed in 1973 that there was “no exit from the inhospitable city within the inhospitable capitalism.”<sup>319</sup> That also socialist cities could be inhospitable was originally not provided for in the functionalist mindset. Hence coming to terms with the monotony of East Germany’s slab developments was thus a painful process, and it was only achieved through sleight of brain.

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<sup>318</sup> “Architekturanalyse im Bezirk Leipzig,” presented to the *Abteilung Bauwesen* (Department of Construction, Materials of the Abteilung Bauwesen at the Central Committee (Gerhard Trölitersch’s office) for the 7<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Architects Association on November 13 and 14, 1975, BArch DY 30/18088.

<sup>319</sup> “Es gibt keinen Ausweg aus der unwirtschaftlichen Stadt im unwirtschaftlichen Kapitalismus” Bruno Flierl, *Industriegesellschaftstheorie im Städtebau* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973): 120 Mitscherlich’s book – a bestseller at the time – was entitled *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965) [The inhospitability of our cities].

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In the 1970s, researchers such as Bruno Flierl pointed out that formal similarities between capitalist and socialist architecture were insignificant, since the difference lay in the societal conditions of which the actual buildings were only one factor.<sup>320</sup> That could be understood as: we should continue to build modernist slab developments even though they are increasingly despised in West Germany, since our East German slabs are not inhabited by underprivileged and marginalized social groups but by a proud working class. It could also translate into: one should not take for granted that “socialist” slabs are good and “capitalist” ones bad, but rather investigate how the inhabitants relate to either buildings. Thus Flierl opened a backdoor for an analysis of aesthetic appearance. He agreed with orthodox Marxists that it was “bourgeois ideology” to look at aesthetic appearance as an autonomous expression, but he allowed for an academic analysis that included appearance as a manifestation of societal structures. Subsequently, perception became a central concern of Bruno Flierl’s Architectural Theory Group at the Building Academy. Flierl directed the group from 1965 until its dissolution in 1979; his colleagues included Olaf Weber and Gerd Zimmermann.<sup>321</sup> For several years during the late 1970s, Flierl and his coworkers conducted studies on how certain portions of the city were perceived and remembered by their inhabitants.<sup>322</sup> In this context, they construed the appearance of a building as a part of its function. Using psychological methods, they investigated successful urban design from the users’ perspective. Especially Weber and Zimmermann, under the influence of cybernetics and semiotics, analyzed architecture as a means of communication. They saw the city as a hierarchically organized system of meaning and strove to set rules how to moderate subjective experience through a broad array of architectural expressions.<sup>323</sup> Such investigations roused the suspicion of the East German leaders. On the one hand, Flierl and his colleagues centered their research on individuals rather than social classes, and on the other hand they were prepared to admit results that would potentially question existing design guidelines. As a consequence, their research department was

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<sup>320</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Industriegesellschaftstheorie im Städtebau* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1973): 120.

<sup>321</sup> The group operated at the *Institut für Städtebau und Architektur* (Institute for Urban Design and Architecture), which was a part of the Building Academy.

<sup>322</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Zur Wahrnehmung der Stadtgestalt. Beispieluntersuchung im Stadtzentrum von Berlin* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, 1979).

<sup>323</sup> See for example Olaf Weber and Gerd Zimmermann, *Probleme der architektonischen Gestaltung unter semiotisch-psychologischem Aspekt* (East Berlin: Institut für Städtebau, 1980).

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dissolved in 1979, and in the following years Flierl was repeatedly barred from both teaching and publication.

### *The image of the city in the Eastern Bloc*

Flierl's research reflected an international concern with city perception and contextual urbanism, which in Western countries is connected with the works of Aldo Rossi, Christopher Alexander, Colin Rowe, or Kevin Lynch. Lynch's 1960 book "The Image of the City" appeared in West Germany in 1968 and was widely read by both West and East German scholars.<sup>324</sup> In East Germany, Lynch's studies on orientation and recognizability were set in the context of both historic and modern cities. This resulted in the notion of *Stadtbild* (city image, aspect of the city). Understood as an integrative, long-lasting quality of a city that is worthy to be preserved and developed, *Stadtbild* became a key concept of contextual urban design.<sup>325</sup> Numerous scholars from both East Germany and other socialist countries contributed to this approach. They studied city form through observation and other qualitative methods rather than through statistical analysis. Such research was first carried out at the Building Academy in the late 1960s under the auspices of Hans Schmidt.<sup>326</sup> At the same time, another group of researchers at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction aimed at an operative use of psychology of perception for architectural design. Olaf Weber, and Gerd Zimmermann, who would later join Bruno Flierl's theory group in Berlin, met in Weimar in the late 1960s. Together with Friedrich Rogge they jointly wrote their doctoral dissertation on architecture as a means of communication, which was published in 1973.<sup>327</sup> In their book, they assumed influences from both

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<sup>324</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1960) translated *Das Bild der Stadt* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1968).

<sup>325</sup> In 1977 *Stadtbild* was the title of a two-day seminar in Rostock, which was organized by the Work Group on Architecture and Fine Arts of the Architects Association under Bruno Flierl's direction. Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 43.

<sup>326</sup> One of the first East German publications on the subject was Konrad Lässig, Rolf Linke, Werner Rietdorf, Gerd Wessel, *Straßen und Plätze. Beispiele zur Gestaltung städtebaulicher Räume* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1968).

<sup>327</sup> Friedrich Rogge, Olaf Weber, Gerd Zimmermann, *Architektur als Kommunikationsmittel. Eine Untersuchung ideeller Aneignung baulich-räumlicher Umwelt unter informationellem, semiotischem und psychologischem Aspekt* (Weimar: Bauakademie der DDR and Hochschule für Architektur und

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Gestalt psychologists and systems theorists; they also drew from Kevin Lynch and his followers in both West German and the Soviet Union. Rogge, Weber, and Zimmermann tried to grasp “perceived space.” They sought to arrive at an architectural design that would facilitate orientation in the city through improving the signaling function of architecture. Individual experience, thus they claimed, was an objective outcome of particular design characteristics. To them, their focus on experience (and not on material needs) was not a contradiction to socialist beliefs; they rather claimed that their objectives were firmly rooted in the tenets of functionalism. In a later study, when they were already working at the Building Academy in East Berlin, Weber and Zimmermann compared the perception of Old Town Halle by its inhabitants with that of the modernist satellite settlement Halle-Neustadt (New Town Halle).<sup>328</sup> Using mind-maps and surveys they found out that Old Town residents had a rather stable image of their city. This image was shared by a large group and did not vary significantly according to how long individual residents had been living in Halle. In Halle-Neustadt, on the other hand, city perception tended to be much more variable and for the most part centered on the residents’ respective home. Hence the authors concluded that Halle-Neustadt lacked a precise *Stadtbild*. They found out that in Old Town Halle city image was anchored to streets and squares and in Halle-Neustadt to individual buildings. As a consequence, orientation in Halle-Neustadt was only possible through habitual sequences, which explained why strangers regularly lost their way. Rogge’s, Weber’s, and Zimmermann’s study thus contained a clear criticism of modernist design on the basis of its insufficient communicative qualities.

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, researchers in other socialist countries undertook similar investigations on *Stadtbild*. Their approach paralleled that of East German scholars in the sense that they also attempted to arrive at guidelines for aesthetic appearance on the basis of communicative qualities. Russian architect Nikolai Baranov stressed the particular importance of the silhouette for the

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Bauwesen, 1973) [two volumes]. See also Gerd Zimmermann, interview by author, Weimar, September 2, 2003.

<sup>328</sup> Olaf Weber, Gerd Zimmermann, “Orientierungen in der Stadt,” *Form und Zweck* no. 4 (1980): 21. See also Friedrich Rogge and Gerd Zimmermann, *Zur Wirkung der Stadtgestalt. Beispieluntersuchungen in Halle, Halle-Neustadt und Erfurt* (East Berlin: Institut für Städtebau, 1980).

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design of a city. He celebrated, for example, the view of Leningrad from the bank of the Neva River. He also lamented the lack of a dominant building on Ploshchad Mira (Square of Peace, now Sennaya Ploshchad) in Leningrad after the demolition of the Uspensky Cathedral – the building had been blown up under Stalin.<sup>329</sup> His Polish colleague Kazimierz Wejchert assumed a similar take, drawing on a vast array of examples from historic cities such as Venice, Prague, Riga, or St. Petersburg/Leningrad.<sup>330</sup> Likewise, Russian architect Andrej Ikonnikov theorized the necessity to preserve the entire structure of a city rather than individual historic buildings.<sup>331</sup> In his 1978 book on urban monuments, Ikonnikov did not only analyze 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, but also presented the remodeling of a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement neighborhood on Vasil'evskij Island in Leningrad.<sup>332</sup> In a 1985 publication on art in the city he called to remove the shortcomings of modernist design and create integrative urban environments that foster individuality and emotional attachment.<sup>333</sup> So did Mikhail Posokhin, the chief planner of Moscow and former modernist architect, who in his 1981 book *Gorod dlja cheloveka* (The human city) conjured historic continuity as a founding principle of urban design.<sup>334</sup> Ikonnikov's

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<sup>329</sup> Nikolai Nikolaevich Baranov, *Siluet Goroda* (Leningrad: Strojizdat, 1980) translated *Die Silhouette der Stadt* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1985): 37.

<sup>330</sup> Kazimierz Wejchert, *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej* (Warsaw: Wydawstwo Arkady, 1974) translated *Elemente der städtebaulichen Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen 1979). See also Nikolai Nikolaevich Baranov, *Siluet Goroda* (Leningrad: Strojizdat, 1980) translated *Die Silhouette der Stadt* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1985), and Andrej Vladimirovich Ikonnikov, *Arkhitektura Goroda* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu, 1972) translated *Architektur der Stadt. Ästhetische Probleme der Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1974).

<sup>331</sup> See for example, Andrej Vladimirovich Ikonnikov, *Pamjatniki Arkhitektury v strukture gorodov SSSR* (Moscow: Strojizdat, 1978) [Architectural monuments in the structure of the cities of the USSR].

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*: 146-148.

<sup>333</sup> Andrej Vladimirovich Ikonnikov, *Iskustvo, sreda, vremja. Estet. organizatsija gorodskoj sredy* (Moscow: Sovjetskij khudoznik, 1985) [Art, environment, time: The esthetic organization of the urban environment]: 16.

<sup>334</sup> He wrote "Moskva, nepreryvno sovershenstvujas', sochranit svoj osobyj kharakter i budet jarkim vyrazheniem idei nashei epochi, ibo ona razvivaetsja po nauchno obosnovannomu planu, sberegaja tsennosti proshlogo, priumnozhajaja ikh novymi svershenijami i peredavajaja tvorcheskiju estafetu potomkam." ["Moscow, incessantly developing towards perfection, obtains its character and will always be an expression of our epoch because it is founded on a scientific plan and contains the treasures of the past and increases it through new achievements, thereby passing the creative relay to the descendants."] Mikhail Vasil'evich Posokhin, *Gorod dlja cheloveka* (Moscow: Progress, 1980): 186 [The Human City].

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and Wejchert's works were soon translated into German and widely read among professionals in the GDR.<sup>335</sup>

Authors such as Baranov, Ikonnikov, or Wejchert viewed the ideal city as a harmonic compound overarched and unified by *Dominanten* ("dominant elements"). Their examples for such well-designed cities included Prague with its castle overlooking the city and Riga with its spectacular skyline dominated by the Cathedral on the Daugava River, but also modernist developments such as the area around the Moscow Television Tower. To determine the right shape and distribution of a "dominant element," they engaged in detailed analyses. They openly admitted pre-socialist cities as authoritative examples for urban design under socialism, which at the time was a novelty. They also focused on the composition of architectural compounds rather than on that of individual buildings, which corresponded to a preservationist approach that was most prominently expressed in the first article of the 1964 Venice Charter. However, their interest in historic cities did not derive from a concern with historic preservation. They did not even necessarily criticize the modernist demolition practice. Baranov's, Wejchert's, or Ikonnikov's image of the historic city was first and foremost an aesthetic quality of the present moment, even if the city had been successively altered over a long time. Like a photograph it collapsed centuries of construction into one single comprehensive form.

Studying the appearance of a city, the proponents of *Stadtbild* in the Eastern Bloc faced an intrinsic contradiction. On the one hand they were deeply indebted to functionalism, and had a tendency to neglect aesthetic analyses as "bourgeois deception." On the other hand, their critique was based on appearance, even if this appearance was merely to facilitate better orientation. In their analyses, aesthetics was always present, but at the same time not openly acknowledged. This became evident

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<sup>335</sup> Andrej Vladimirovich Ikonnikov, *Arkitektura Goroda* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo literatury po stroitel'stvu, 1972) translated *Architektur der Stadt. Ästhetische Probleme der Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1974), Kazimierz Wejchert, *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej* (Warsaw: Wydawctwo Arkady, 1974) translated *Elemente der städtebaulichen Komposition* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen 1979). Harald Kegler, who taught at the Weimar School of Architecture and Construction in the 1980s, called both works extremely influential for East German construction. Harald Kegler, interview by author, Berlin, August 7, 2004.

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the more they presented historic cities as examples of successful urban design. Here, functional questions were inseparably intermingled with aesthetic concerns. At the same time, empirical research on city perception was equally complicated in other Eastern European countries as it was in the German Democratic Republic. The state leaders did not desire to investigate the actual conditions in socialist cities fearing that such research could potentially contradict the premises of Marxist theory. Scholars thus faced increasing difficulties to support their hypotheses with surveys and interviews. In the 1980s, all these factors contributed to a growing inability of Eastern European authors to formulate theoretical responses to a modernist urban design conception, which had increasingly lost its momentum.

### III. CHANGING POLICY

#### Chapter 9: The Honecker Era and the Housing Program

##### *The beginning of the Honecker era*

In the late 1960s, East German politics was at a turning point. Walter Ulbricht's half-hearted attempt to introduce a competitive element into socialism by strengthening the decision-making power of the state-owned companies had failed. The feeble reforms of this "New Economic System" were revoked before they could affect the national economy. The result was an increase in central control; politics again prevailed over economics. The failed experiment also damaged Walter Ulbricht's reputation among Soviet leaders. In January 1971, a group of critics within the Politburo – under the leadership of Ulbricht's former protégé Erich Honecker – obtained Soviet permission for Ulbricht's removal. Leonid Brezhnev ordered Ulbricht's "voluntary" resignation on April 12, 1971.<sup>336</sup> Ulbricht complied and at the Politburo meeting of April 27, 1971 requested his own dismissal "for reasons of age."<sup>337</sup> Erich Honecker was his successor. The beginning of the Honecker era thus saw the continuation of a retrograde step begun under Ulbricht. Control functions over the economic system were centralized and concentrated on an inner circle of political leaders. Decisions were based on political rather than economic goals. While Ulbricht's competitive experiment had aimed to increase standards of living via increased efficiency, Honecker tried to raise efficiency by providing increased standards of living.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> The "*Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung der Volkswirtschaft – NÖSP*" (New Economic System of Planning and Direction of the National Economy) was propagated by the Ulbricht regime in 1963 as an attempt to increase the significance of the profit factor within the socialist economy; put the wage and price system on an economic rather than on a political basis. The party leaders however, fearing a decrease in their own power, shied away from its implementation and limited themselves to uncommitted pseudo-reforms. The end of the Prague Spring in 1968 also marked the end of these East German half-hearted attempts to reform the socialist system. Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 178-180.

<sup>337</sup> The protocol of the meeting already contained printed versions of the three resolutions that the Central Committee was to pass "unanimously" only a week later on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971: the confirmation of Ulbricht's request, the ornate thank-you-letter honoring his "great revolutionary work," and the appointment of Erich Honecker as his successor. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on April 27, 1971, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1336: 34-36.

<sup>338</sup> Cp. Wolfgang Kenntemich, Manfred Durniok, Thomas Karlauf, eds., *Das war die DDR* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1993): 72-73. This argument was also mentioned by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker in his official announcement of the 1973 Housing Program. See Wolfgang Junker, *Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR für die Jahre 1976-1990*, *Deutsche Architektur* no. 12 (1973): 708.

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Historians now agree that the amenities and social improvements conceded at the beginning of the Honecker era from the very beginning surpassed the capacities of the East German national economy.<sup>339</sup> As historian Klaus Schroeder put it, the party leaders merely produced the “illusion of a modern welfare state.”<sup>340</sup> It should be noted that from a contemporary point of view this “illusion” appears rather modest. For example, in 1971 the Central Authority for Statistics proudly presented the “substantial improvements” in the housing situation in the preceding decade. It especially commended that the amount of East German apartments equipped with a bathroom or shower had risen from 22.4% to 38.7%, and that apartments equipped with central heating had increased from 2.5% to 10.6%.<sup>341</sup> That nevertheless meant that despite the “improvements” nine out of ten East Germans still relied on coal stoves to heat their homes and two out of three still bathed standing in the kitchen in a tin pot using heated water from the stove. Given these low standards, the social improvements over the course of the following two decades were substantial. In 1989 82% of East German households had a bathroom or shower (West Germany: 96%) and 47% had a modern heating system (West Germany: 74%).<sup>342</sup> However, these moderate comforts, were accompanied by a fatal overexploitation of national resources that eventually led the East German state into a vicious circle of excessive debt and insufficient reinvestment. Freezing housing costs to the amounts charged in 1936 was one of the most significant examples how East German authorities – under both Ulbricht and Honecker – ignored undesired economic truths in favor of ideological premises. Starting with Friedrich Engels, the fight against housing speculation and rent boosting had been at the core of the workers movement. Hence low rents were the showpiece of socialist superiority for East German rulers. In 1964, East German households with 2-4 members spent an average of 3.3% of their income on rent. A West Berlin household of the same size paid approximately 12%, a number that compared to American standards

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<sup>339</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 74.

<sup>340</sup> “die Illusion eines modernen Sozialstaats” Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 74.

<sup>341</sup> Fritz Hagemann, “Ergebnisse der Wohnraum- und Gebäudezählung 1971,” *Statistische Praxis* no. 9 (1972): 373. The author was the director of the East German *Zentrales Zählbüro* (Central Counting Office).

<sup>342</sup> Hannsjörg Buck, “Wohnungsversorgung, Stadtgestaltung und Stadtverfall,” in *Am Ende des Realen Sozialismus*, vol. 2, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), 82-84, Fritz Hagemann, “Ergebnisse der Wohnraum- und Gebäudezählung 1971,” *Statistische Praxis* no. 9 (1972): 373.

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might still qualify as low, but within Germany first and foremost was perceived as three times the rent level in the East. Socialist leaders were not unaware of the economic problems resulting from rent subsidies. In January 1970 Gerhard Trölitzsch, the director of the Department of Construction at the Central Committee, warned top economist Günter Mittag about an alarming increase in housing costs that was not covered by the disproportionately low rents.<sup>343</sup> According to Trölitzsch's report, tenants in newly constructed highrise buildings had to pay an average of 40 pfennigs per square meter for heating costs. Those living in the Stalinist apartment buildings on Karl-Marx-Allee (the former Stalinallee) only paid 5 pfennigs per square meter. The state-owned building management company *Kommunale Wohnungsverwaltung – KWV* (Communal Housing Administration), however, had to pay 66 pfennigs per square meter to the power station. An average employee in a state-operated factory, who at the time earned approximately 900 marks per month, paid less than 40 marks per month (excluding utilities) for a one-bedroom apartment of 40 square meters.<sup>344</sup> According to Trölitzsch, already by 1963, an East German household's average percentage of income spent on rent was only a third of that in West Berlin.<sup>345</sup> The policy of unnaturally low rents was nevertheless upheld until the end of the GDR. The building management company KWV was thus forced to default on the most basic maintenance measures. Meanwhile, behind closed doors East Germans began to refer to the acronym *KWV* as "*Kann Weiter Verkommen*" – "Dilapidation Being Continued." Honecker's reinforced investment in residential construction from 1973 onwards continued neglecting economic facts for ideological reasons. It was part and parcel of a strategy to improve living conditions despite the insufficient capacities of the East German national economy.<sup>346</sup> From the very beginning the results did not live up to the promises; the inconsistencies between aspiration and reality had to be covered

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<sup>343</sup> Letter dated January 20, 1970 BArch DY 30/IV A2/2.021/616: 69.

<sup>344</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 540 and Tanja Blankenburg, "Stadterneuerung im Konflikt – das Modellvorhaben Rykestraße in Berlin," in *Grammatik sozialistischer Architekturen*, ed. Holger Barth (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2001): 254.

<sup>345</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 74.

<sup>346</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 220.

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up by propaganda.<sup>347</sup> The contradictions in the East German approach to construction over the following two decades were rooted in this dilemma.

### *“Unity of Economic and Social Policy” and the Housing Program*

Erich Honecker announced the new governmental strategy *Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik* (Unity of Economic and Social Policy) – only one month after the change in government – at the 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party, celebrated from June 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 1971. It was to be understood as the conscious dismissal of Ulbricht’s “New Economic System,” which had been directed towards an increase in economic power. Opposing this approach, Honecker set the focus on social policy, which included a decrease in work hours, a prolongation of maternity leave, an increased supply of consumer goods to the population; most importantly, a gradual improvement of the desolate housing situation.<sup>348</sup> The slogan “Unity of Economic and Social Policy” was misleading, since the social services and consumer goods provided by Honecker’s administration did not derive from economic growth. They were instead offered to instigate an economic upswing, since the East German leaders thought it would motivate people to work harder. Although Honecker presented his policy as a change in direction, he nevertheless continued the strategy of his predecessor. In his last years in office, Ulbricht had realized the importance of tackling the imminent housing question.<sup>349</sup> His comrade Gerhard Trölitisch, the director of the Department of Construction at the Central Committee, had also

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<sup>347</sup> In the last decades of the GDR, numerous East German officials dared to point to the desolate state of most tenement neighborhoods. In 1980, the Township Plan Commission of the city district of Berlin-Mitte issued a report on construction in the district in the upcoming five-year-plan period, most likely commissioned by Chief Planner Gerhard Schürer. It mentioned an “increasing deficiency of fundamentally necessary repairs” in the whole district (“zunehmend ein Fehlbedarf von unbedingt notwendigen Baureparaturleistungen”) It also lamented that while in 1976 still 66% of the repairs classified as “fundamentally necessary” were carried out, in 1980 this figure should have decreased to 57%. “Notwendige Maßnahmen zur Konzentration und zur Investitionsdurchführung für das volkseigene stadtbezirksgeleitete Bauwesen Berlin Mitte im Fünfjahrplanzeitraum 1981-1985,” dated January 1980, LAB C Rep 902, 4480.

<sup>348</sup> As a result of this policy, in 1975 81.6% of East German households owned a TV set (69.1 in 1970), 84.7% a refrigerator (65.4% in 1970), and 26.2% a car (15.6% in 1970), Ibid: 220.

<sup>349</sup> In a hand-written note to Günter Mittag, dated February 23, 1970, Ulbricht stated “One has to demand extraordinary measures from the Ministerrat to support residential construction.” (“Man muss vom Ministerrat außerordentliche Maßnahmen fordern, um den Wohnungsbau planmäßig zu gewährleisten”) BArch DY 30/IV A2/2.021/616: 76.

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pointed to the responsibility of the building industry for the “general strengthening” of the GDR.”<sup>350</sup> Despite Ulbricht's recognition of the problems resulting from his policy, it seems that he was nevertheless unwilling to change it.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party, Honecker announced the construction of half a million apartments by 1975.<sup>351</sup> His announcement comprised only two sentences in a speech that stretched over three consecutive sessions and lasted more than eight hours in total. It was nevertheless immediately perceived as a turning point. Chair of the Ministerrat Willi Stoph confirmed Honecker's approach in his own speech at the same Party Convention.<sup>352</sup> Subsequently, it was specified and worked out by the different governing institutions.<sup>353</sup> The modernization of existing buildings from the very beginning was part and parcel of the “solution to the housing question.” A Politburo meeting in October 1971, five months after the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention, called to “augment the capacities in the field of preservation, remodeling, and modernization.”<sup>354</sup> Five years later when the Politburo mandated a further increase of residential construction in East Berlin, of the 300,000 “new” apartments to be completed by 1990, approximately only 200,000 were to be newly built and the

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<sup>350</sup> “allgemeine Stärkung der DDR” Gerhard Trölitersch, opinion on a speech delivered by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, in the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> national Building Conference in 1969 BArch DY 30/IV A2/2.021/624: 2. At the conference itself the importance of restructuring the historic cities was repeatedly mentioned; formulations such as “socialist face of the city” nevertheless prevailed. There is no mention of concepts such as “traditional” or “historic.” BArch DY 30/IV A2/2.021/624.

<sup>351</sup> Erich Honecker, Bericht des ZK an den VIII. Parteitag der SED in *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VIII. Parteitages der SED*, vol. 1 (East Berlin: Dietz, 1971): 63. [report of the Central Committee to the 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party]

<sup>352</sup> He promised to increase residential construction 160 to 162 percent in the five-year-plan from 1971 to 1975. Willi Stoph, “Bericht zur Direktive des VIII. Parteitages der SED zum Fünfjahrplan zur Erweiterung der Volkswirtschaft der DDR in den Jahren 1971-1975,” in *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VIII. Parteitages der SED*, vol. 2 (East Berlin: Dietz, 1971), 23.

<sup>353</sup> Less than a week after the Party Convention, Stoph mandated to form a group at the Ministry of Construction, which was to work out an analysis of the housing problems. See letter by Karl Schmiechen to Horst Sindermann, dated April 19, 1972. The report “Analyse der Wohnungsprobleme für die Ausarbeitung der Aufgaben der Wohnungspolitik der DDR” was completed in March 1972. BArch DC 20/17247. For the Politburo decisions on the Housing Program see Protocol of the Politburo meeting on June 29, 1971, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1343: 29, and on October 5, 1971 DY 30/J IV 2/2 1357: 3. A more detailed work copy of the same protocol can be found in BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1544. It also stated that the demolition of residential buildings be only permitted after a resolution of the local authorities and only if it is justified on a macro-economic level and mandated the modernization of 113,000 apartments in the GDR until 1975.

<sup>354</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 5, 1971, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1357: 23.

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other 100,000 were to be “created” through modernization of existing buildings.<sup>355</sup> The Politburo thus remained ambivalent. On the one hand, it promised the construction of “urban ensembles where the socialist man had his homestead” – modernist tower-and-slab developments on the periphery. On the other hand it emphasized the importance of conserving “valuable historic architecture” – that is, tenement areas in the city center. The decree thus continued the strategy of combined modernization and new construction, which East German leaders continued to corroborate at all following Party Conventions.<sup>356</sup> The October 1971 Politburo meeting defined modernization according to three levels of living comfort. The first level of modernization was reached with the construction of a toilet inside the apartment, the second one with the construction of a bathroom and an improvement of the electricity; the third level with an improvement of the electricity and “occasionally the equipment with a modern heating system.” Modernized apartments could also “occasionally” have communal bathrooms.<sup>357</sup> According to this official classification, an apartment was considered modernized as soon as its standard was increased one level. The definition was thus flexible enough to consider an apartment with coal stoves and no shower or bathroom “modernized” as long as it contained a toilet inside the apartment that had not been there before.

Modernization was also not necessarily connected with the long-term preservation of old buildings. In October 1971 the Ministry of Construction, issued a guideline to “improve the use of existing buildings.” At the same time it subscribed to the doctrine of urban life cycles in the sense that it stated

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<sup>355</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602: 10. On the same Politburo meeting, also the rebuilding of the Semper Opera and other historic buildings in Dresden was resolved. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976 work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1950: 1-22.

<sup>356</sup> The 9th Convention of the Socialist Unity Party in May 1976, the 10<sup>th</sup> Convention in April 1981, and the 11th Convention in April 1987 all confirmed the “Unity of New Construction, Modernization, and Preservation” and announced that by 1990 the housing question was to be resolved. Günter Peters, “Berlin im 20. Jahrhundert (3). Ein Beitrag zur Bau- und Architekturgeschichte” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 33-40.

<sup>357</sup> Information material for the Politburo in the context of the resolution “First Measures to Secure the Housing Program during the Five-Year-Plan 1971-1975” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 5, 1971, work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1544: 81. A week later the guidelines were specified by the Ministry of Construction. Karl Schmiechen, “Richtlinie zur besseren Nutzung des baulichen Grundfonds durch Um- und Ausbau, Modernisierung und Erhaltung,” issued in the Ministry of Construction on October 13, 1971, reprinted in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Deutsche Bauakademie (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, 1973): 124.

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as a precondition for modernization that after the completion of the remodeling, the building had a “residual time of use of at least 30 years”. This meant that even a remodeled building had to be torn down by the year 2000 or soon after.<sup>358</sup> It also stated that the cost for tenement modernization was not to surpass 70% of the cost for new construction – otherwise demolition was preferable.

Over the course of the following two years, the new housing policy gradually adopted the character of an all-encompassing social program. The official presentation of the tasks mandated by 8<sup>th</sup> Convention, published in 1973, underlined the priority of housing in a much stronger way than the original convention proceedings.<sup>359</sup> The tone of the March 1973 Politburo meeting that specified the new policy for East Berlin, was also more sweeping. It announced that “by 1980 every household in East Berlin should have their own apartment.”<sup>360</sup> Two months later, in May 1973, Erich Honecker declared to the Central Committee that the housing question was to be resolved by 1990.<sup>361</sup> Another four months later, in October 1973, the new policy was canonized. Wolfgang Junker, Minister of Construction officially presented the Housing Program that would determine East German construction policy for the following two decades.<sup>362</sup> It promised an improvement of the housing conditions for almost two thirds of approximately 17 million East Germans. By 1990, 2.8 to 3 million apartments

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<sup>358</sup> Karl Schmiechen, “Richtlinie zur besseren Nutzung des baulichen Grundfonds durch Um- und Ausbau, Modernisierung und Erhaltung,” issued in the Ministry of Construction on October 13, 1971, reprinted in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Deutsche Bauakademie (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, 1973): 124.

<sup>359</sup> Wolfgang Junker, *Die Aufgaben des VIII. Parteitages der SED für das Bauwesen der DDR* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1973): 6.

<sup>360</sup> “Bis 1980 [soll]...jedem Haushalt eine Wohnung zur Verfügung stehen” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1440: 17-18. The resolution mandated the completion of 30,000 apartments in the capital of the GDR by 1975, of which 10,000 were to be “produced” through remodeling and modernization of existing old buildings. It was accepted by the Berlin District Administration of the Socialist Unity Party on May 9, 1973. Günter Peters, “Berlin im 20. Jahrhundert (3). Ein Beitrag zur Bau- und Architekturgeschichte,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 33-40.

<sup>361</sup> Declaration at the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Central Committee on May 28/29, 1973, quoted in Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990,” in *Protokoll der 10. Tagung des Zentralkomitees*, vol. 2, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin): 5, copy at BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 479 [The Convention of the Central Committee took place on October 2, 1973].

<sup>362</sup> The Housing Program was presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Central Committee on October 2, 1973. Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990,” in *Protokoll der 10. Tagung des Zentralkomitees*, vol. 2, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin, 1973): 5 [copy at BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 479].

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were to be “produced,” that is, either newly built or “gained” through modernization of run-down tenement apartments.<sup>363</sup> What had begun as merely one measure among many to increase the welfare of the people had now developed into the backbone of Honecker’s domestic policy. Honecker’s rather modest declaration at the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention was now regarded as a milestone in East German history.<sup>364</sup> The Housing Program was now called “the most significant task of the socio-political program determined by the 8th Party Convention” and repeatedly mentioned as the most important evidence for the superiority of the socialist system.<sup>365</sup> To ensure that no one would miss this historic endeavor, Junker’s announcement of the Housing Program at the 10<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Central Committee was first published in full length in the daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland*. It was later reprinted as a book, and a shortened version was republished again in the *Deutsche Architektur* magazine.<sup>366</sup>

It must be stressed that Honecker’s declared commitment to improving the housing situation from the very start surpassed the capacities of the East German construction industry. Although the authorities in the following three decades enthusiastically reported the annual fulfillment of the ambitious plan, the numbers were always exaggerated. Further, many “modernized” apartments listed were in fact

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<sup>363</sup> Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990,” in *Protokoll der 10. Tagung des Zentralkomitees*, vol. 2, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin): 5 [copy at BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 479].

<sup>364</sup> This becomes evident by the fact that many construction directives such as the one concerning “Entwicklung des komplexen Wohnungsbaus für die Jahre 1976-1980” (Development of complex residential construction in the years 1976-1980), passed by the Politburo in March 1973, were directly related to the “Directive of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention.” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1440: 17.

<sup>365</sup> “Das...Wohnungsbauprogramm...wird zurecht als die bedeutendste Aufgabe des vom VIII. Parteitag festgelegten sozialpolitischen Programms verstanden.” Paul Verner, “Bericht des Politbüros auf der 11. Tagung des Zentralkomitees der SED” in *Protokoll der 11. Tagung des Zentralkomitees* vol. 1, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin, 1973): 11 [copy at BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 483]. The convention took place on December 14, 1973

<sup>366</sup> Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990” *Neues Deutschland* October 4, 1973, Wolfgang Junker, *Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990. Materialien der 10. Tagung des ZK der SED* (East Berlin: Dietz 1973) and Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 12 (1973): 708-712.

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barely improved.<sup>367</sup> Thus the real number of apartments built or modernized in the GDR between 1971 and 1990 was closer to two million, not anywhere near the fabricated official numbers of more than three million.<sup>368</sup> The Housing Program nevertheless completely changed the physical shape of East German cities to date.

#### *Forced labor loan from the provinces to rebuild East Berlin*

At the February 1976 meeting the Politburo decided that a disproportionately high amount of the new apartments – over 300,000 – were to be built in East Berlin by 1990.<sup>369</sup> The focus on the capital city was politically motivated. Not only was East Berlin “the strong beating heart of our socialist German state,” as Erich Honecker put it, but the preeminent destination for tourists from the West, and therefore the official showcase of the socialist regime.<sup>370</sup> East German leaders’ concern with their capital city, however, was only partially successful. Over the following years, it became more and more apparent that construction was lagging behind the plan and that under the current conditions the goal of building three million apartments in the GDR by 1990 could not be completed. In order to reduce the embarrassment, the East German government attempted to conceal these shortcomings, at least in the capital city. In 1984, the Politburo – without prior notice – suddenly decided on the construction of an additional 20,000 apartments to be built in the following two years.<sup>371</sup> This meant that the planned production target for these years nearly doubled. The decision was made public at

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<sup>367</sup> Hannsjörg Buck, “Wohnungsversorgung, Stadtgestaltung und Stadtverfall,” in *Am Ende des Realen Sozialismus*, vol. 2, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), 72.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*: 73.

<sup>369</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602. The resolution was confirmed on March 27, 1976 by the 12<sup>th</sup> District Delegate Conference in Berlin. Extracts were published in the journal *Architektur der DDR* six months later. *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1976): 520-527. The number of 200,000 apartments to be newly built and the focus of the three central city districts Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain was mentioned in the Arbeitsprotokoll. The Politburo also mandated the remodeling of the Roedernstraße area (700 apartments), the first old buildings in East Berlin which were to be fitted with modern heating systems. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1950: 23-26. The completion of the 300,000<sup>th</sup> apartment built in East Berlin since 1971 was officially scheduled for 1987. Erhard Krack, speech at the second meeting of the Committee for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin on September 26, 1986, BArch DY 30/2567: 148.

<sup>370</sup> “Die Hauptstadt Berlin ist das kräftig schlagende Herz unseres sozialistischen deutschen Staates.” Closing speech at the 15<sup>th</sup> District Delegates’ Conference of the Socialist Unity Party on February 12, 1984, official conference notes in LAB C Rep. 902, 5000: 292.

<sup>371</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037: 171.

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the 15<sup>th</sup> District Delegates' Conference on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1984, when Erich Honecker announced that "construction of apartments in Berlin will be continued at a pace that has been unprecedented in our Republic."<sup>372</sup> Despite the fact that, according to the official conference notes, "our comrades gave a long standing ovation [and] cheers [were] given to the General Secretary of the Party, comrade Erich Honecker,"<sup>373</sup> the announcement must have struck the party officials like a bolt from the blue during the otherwise minutely staged event. Even Gerhard Tröllitzsch, one of the GDR's most influential construction officials, claimed he had not been informed beforehand.<sup>374</sup> Similarly, Chief Architect Roland Korn admitted that he was taken by surprise and had great difficulties in determining possible locations for the additional apartment buildings.<sup>375</sup> The arbitrary increase of the plan was only possible by mobilizing additional labor. Since the early 1970s, the East German authorities had occasionally ordered youth to "volunteer" at construction sites. This was often staged as an event to foster international solidarity. In June 1971 there were 25,000 East German university students working in construction, aided by 1,600 students from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the USSR.<sup>376</sup> In addition, the socialist youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend* – *FDJ* (Free German Youth) was ordered to form "youth brigades" of young construction workers from all over East Germany. They would be granted leave from their jobs in their hometowns and sent to East Berlin. The so-called "FDJ-Initiative," which also played an important role in the realization of the Friedrichstraße project, was part of an organized drain of resources from the provinces to boost construction in the capital city. Ordering construction workers both with and without FDJ-affiliation to East Berlin was an intrinsic part of the Housing Program. In a Politburo resolution passed on March 27, 1973 – the "solution of the

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<sup>372</sup> "Der Wohnungsbau in Berlin wird in einem Tempo weitergeführt, das bisher in unserer Republik beispiellos ist. In den Jahren 1985 und 1986 werden jeweils 10 000 Wohnungen zusätzlich zum Plan geschaffen. Das bedeutet, daß in Berlin 1985 anstelle der bisher vorgesehenen 13800 Wohnungen 23800 und 1986 statt 14000 Wohnungen 24000 neu gebaut werden." Closing speech on the 15<sup>th</sup> District Delegates' Conference of the Socialist Unity Party on February 12, 1984, official conference notes in LAB C Rep. 902, 5000: 303.

<sup>373</sup> "Die Genossinnen und Genossen erheben sich von den Plätzen und spenden starken, minutenlang anhaltenden Beifall. Es werden Hochrufe auf den Generalsekretär der Partei, Genossen Erich Honecker, ausgebracht" official conference notes in LAB C Rep. 902, 5000: 306.

<sup>374</sup> Gerhard Tröllitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 10, 2004, confirmed by Dorothea Tscheschner, interview on August 27, 2003.

<sup>375</sup> Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004.

<sup>376</sup> Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1971-1976* vol 2 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1979), 6.

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housing question by 1990" was not yet officially announced – state leaders already determined that East German construction industry capacities should first and foremost be concentrated on projects in the capital city.<sup>377</sup> Employees from the state-owned construction firms from all districts of the German Democratic Republic built in East Berlin. Workers from Schwerin built the Bersarinplatz, workers from Suhl renovated the Palisaden Triangle, workers from Halle worked on Greifswalder Straße. While the East Berlin population generally welcomed the boost of construction in the capital, the reaction in the provinces was ambivalent. The construction workers themselves profited from higher wages for their out-of-area operations, and often enjoyed the stay in the attractive capital city.<sup>378</sup> The rest of the population, however, felt that the construction workers were badly needed to fix the dilapidating buildings in their hometowns, whose uninterrupted decay they could not help set in direct relation to the increasing beautification of Berlin. The province population perceived the capital city as leaching their reserves. In the late 1980s this led to increasingly unconcealed resentment towards the central authorities, to the extent that certain district leaders openly refused to obey orders; rejected orders sending their construction workers to Berlin. On November 6, 1989, while the GDR was already on the verge of collapse, *Volkskammer* (parliament) member Rainer Lösekann from the northern city of Parchim complained to the Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker that over 30% of the labor capacities in his home district had been ordered to work in Berlin.<sup>379</sup> Junker eventually conceded. The plan to end the out-of-area operations, however, was in vain as a year later the GDR ceased to exist.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> The Politburo decided on the allocation of 450 million marks worth of materials and labor for the period between 1974 and 1975, and 400-500 million marks for the period between 1976 and 1980. The resolution also ordered the East Berlin government to increasingly push highschool graduates to start apprenticeships in construction-related professions. Further they should support construction workers to move to Berlin, especially to the newly to be built peripheral districts. Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1440: 27.

<sup>378</sup> Gerhard Trölitzsch remembered that especially members of the Youth Brigades often regarded the out-of-area operation as a great adventure and insisted on being sent to Berlin, even against the will of their superiors.

<sup>379</sup> Letter by Rainer Lösekann to Wolfgang Junker, dated November 6, 1989 (three days before the fall of the Berlin Wall) BArch DH 1/35670.

<sup>380</sup> A plan worked out by Junker and head of the state planning authority Gerhard Schürer in the fall of 1989 proposed the return of construction workers to their home districts. BArch DH 1/35670.

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The state propaganda presented the activities of the provincial construction firms in East Berlin as a collective commitment by all East Germans to their capital city. Memorial plaques celebrating the efforts from the provinces can still be found on many Berlin buildings. Books and articles gave precise accounts on which construction firm was involved in which project.<sup>381</sup> In these publications, the regional affiliation of the workers was connected to alleged regional architectural designs. The white and red façade design and the rounded gables of the apartment blocks on Stralauer Straße, built by Rostock workers, were presented as “unmistakable Rostock architecture.” The sculptures and house numbers in an interior courtyard allegedly related to the “Brandenburg atmosphere” of the Potsdam workers who built it.<sup>382</sup> The references were extremely contrived and barely noticeable to the uninformed visitor. They nevertheless document the authorities’ attempt to foster regional variety and diversified identity, an important element of East German construction policy in the 1980s.

#### *The economic approach: Tenement neighborhoods in conjunction with satellite cities*

The reevaluation of old buildings in East Berlin around 1970 first concerned their usage. Based on economic calculations, around 1970 the East German government started to perceive tenement buildings as macroeconomic value, rather than as liabilities preventing modern urban design. The most decisive event in this conceptual shift was the building count in 1971, the first tally of the national building stock since 1961. A confidential report to the *Ministerrat* demonstrated that despite the fact that from 1961 to 1971 approximately 764,000 dwelling units had been built in East Germany the total increase was only 550,000 apartments. During the same period 214,000 apartments were

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<sup>381</sup> For example Achim Felz, Karl-Heinz Brunner, Bettina Adermann, *Bezirke bauen in Berlin, beschleunigte Durchführung des Wohnungsbaus in der Hauptstadt mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik in den Jahren 1985 und 1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987) or Horst Adami and Ingeborg Pallaske, *Mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik Wohnungsbau in Berlin 1984-1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987).

<sup>382</sup> “unverwechselbare Rostocker Architektur,” “märkische Wohnatmosphäre.” Horst Adami and Ingeborg Pallaske, *Mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik Wohnungsbau in Berlin 1984-1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987): 95 and 105.

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demolished.<sup>383</sup> Simultaneously, the dilapidation of existing buildings increased. In East Berlin, the numbers appear even more dramatic. Despite the new construction of 73,000 apartments from 1961 to 1971, the total number increased only by 20,000, since 53,000 apartments had been demolished.<sup>384</sup>

The increase of apartments was frequently quoted in speeches and party reunions to demonstrate the achievements of the socialist regime. Yet there were significant contradictions in the numbers – a quite unexpected detail in a country obsessed with statistics and the “scientific” way of solving macroeconomic problems.<sup>385</sup> In addition, most East German publications omitted numbers that would evidence the disastrous effect of the state-sponsored demolition policy.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Confidential report to the Ministerrat authored by a work group at the Ministry of Construction led by Staatssekretär Schmiechen BArch DC 20/17247: 1-3 The qualifying dates of the two building counts were March 15, 1961 and January 1, 1971.

<sup>384</sup> Confidential report to the Ministerrat authored by a work group at the Ministry of Construction led by Staatssekretär Schmiechen BArch DC 20/17247: 1-3.

<sup>385</sup> The inconsistencies can only partially be explained by the fact that East German authorities often – yet not always – classified modernized apartments as “newly completed apartments” to boost the statistics.

<sup>386</sup> Günter Peters, former Berlin District Director of Construction, published figures on construction and demolition in East Berlin two years after the German reunification. Günter Peters, *Gesamtberliner Stadtentwicklung von 1949-1990. Daten und Grafiken* (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, 1992), 22 and 57. Some of the graphics were already published five years earlier, in a report that celebrated the merits of the socialist housing program. The figures on demolition, however, were not yet included. See Günter Peters, “Die Lösung der Wohnungsfrage als soziales Problem in der Hauptstadt Berlin,” in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte* vol 35, ed. Gerhard Keiderling, Ingo Materna, and Wolfgang Schröder (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987): 617-638.

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Approximate number of apartments in the GDR					
in 1961	in 1971	total increase 1961-1971	newly built, fitted , and modernized 1961-1971	demolished 1961-1971	source
5,507,000	6,057,000	550,000	764,000	214,000	Ministerrat 1972 <sup>387</sup>
No number	6,068,000	561,000	762,000	200,000	Edmund Collein 1971 (chair of the Architects Association) <sup>388</sup>
5,507,000	6,057,000	500,000 (550,000 according to the text)	No number	No number	Hagemann 1972 (director of the counting office) <sup>389</sup>
No number	6,057,000	No number	764,000 (659,000 new, 105,000, fitted )	No number	Statistical Yearbook of the GDR 1975 <sup>390</sup>
Approximate number of apartments in East Berlin					
in 1961	in 1971	total increase 1961-1971	newly built, fitted , and modernized 1961-1971	demolished 1961-1971	source
444,000	464,000	20,000	No number	53,000	Ministerrat 1972
No number	457,000	No number	No number	No number	Hagemann 1972
No number	No number	No number	No number	No number	Statistical Yearbook of the GDR 1975
427,000	456,000	29,000	No number	No number	West German Statistic 1994 <sup>391</sup>
442,000	464,000	21,000	58,000	20,000	Peters 1992 (former East Berlin Director of Construction) <sup>392</sup>

According to contemporaneous observers, the building count was nevertheless a shock for the authorities to realize both the terrible inefficiency of their housing policy and the wastefulness of the neglect and demolition of old buildings.<sup>393</sup> The Housing Program was a clear reaction to this

<sup>387</sup> Confidential report to the Ministerrat authored by a work group at the Ministry of Construction led by Staatssekretär Schmiechen BArch DC 20/17247: 1-3.

<sup>388</sup> Edmund Collein, "Die Aufgaben des BdA der DDR bei der Entwicklung des Städtebaus und der Architektur..." *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1971): 326-332.

<sup>389</sup> Fritz Hagemann, "Ergebnisse der Wohnraum- und Gebäudezählung 1971" *Statistische Praxis* no. 9 (1972): 371.

<sup>390</sup> Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, ed, *Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR* (East Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1975): 156.

<sup>391</sup> Number of apartments according to Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Ausgewählte Zahlen der Volks- und Berufszählungen und Gebäude und Wohnungszählungen 1950-1981* (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1994).

<sup>392</sup> Günter Peters, *Gesamtberliner Stadtentwicklung von 1949-1990. Daten und Grafiken* (Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, 1992): 22 and 57.

<sup>393</sup> Manfred Zache, at the time head of the Bereich Generalplanung (Department of General Planning) at the District Authority of Construction, assigned the building count a key role for the subsequent swing in policy towards the preservation of old buildings (Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003). In a 1997 presentation, Zache quoted numbers that appeared even more dramatic than the publications of the 1970s. He claimed that from 1961 to 1971 the total increase in apartments in East Berlin was only 2000. Manfred Zache, "Stadterneuerung in

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unpleasant surprise. It was the basis for both the new construction of immense satellite cities on the fringes of cities and for the renovation of tenement areas in the city center. Renovation of tenement buildings did not aim to substitute but rather to complement the construction of modernist tower-and-slab developments. The urban design model at stake was no more, as it had been in the 1960s, a gradual replacement of the existent urban fabric with modern buildings, but a combination of old and new buildings equipped with the same sanitary standards. The model was extremely pragmatic. On the one hand it relied upon the assembly-line-like construction of tower-and-slab development, which since the “industrialization of the building trade” in the 1960s was far more efficient than the individualized renovation of tenements. On the other hand it promised to cease the accelerating dilapidation of the central city, which had become so obvious that it could no longer be denied. Large-scale tenement renovations were not only carried out, but also proudly presented as socialist regime achievements. The results of this strategy nevertheless did not live up to the expectations. The East German government’s decade-long focus on industrialized construction techniques had driven most small firms out of business, who would have been able to renovate tenement buildings in an efficient and individual way. Socialist leaders thus lacked the resources for individual non-industrialized remodeling of old buildings and were simultaneously unwilling to re-diversify the industrialized building trade.

The new construction policy of the Honecker era was referred to as *Einheit von Neubau, Modernisierung und Erhaltung* (Unity of New Construction, Modernization, and Preservation) – a reference to the motto “Unity of Economic and Social Policy” that was issued at the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention. This formula was quoted repeatedly over the following fifteen years.<sup>394</sup> Ule Lammert, vice

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Ost-Berlin.” Presentation for the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Stadtforum Berlin on May 23, 1997. East Berlin scholar Simone Hain confirms Zache’s general estimation about the swing in policy. She nevertheless did not assign such a great importance to the building count, yet rather stressed that the authorities were mainly moved by the uncanny prognosis that in a not too distant future historic old towns would disappear. Simone Hain, interview by author, Berlin, April 9, 2004.

<sup>394</sup> Johannes Schattel, “Eine neue Etappe der Generalbebauungsplanung,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1980): 585, Dorothea Krause, Uwe Klasen, Wolfgang Penzel, “Rekonstruktion im Stil der Jahrhundertwende. Husemannstraße in Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 15, Klaus Andrä and Wolfgang Weigel, “Tendenzen der städtebaulichen Entwicklung von Stadtzentren in sozialistischen

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president of the Building Academy, translated it into plain language: "Since the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention, it belongs more and more to the principles of our activities to be economical with the existing [building stock], to take care of it and to develop it."<sup>395</sup> In its ambiguity the formula left a certain margin for the old policy of demolition, which was still occasionally pursued, although considerably less than in the 1960s. The integrative syntax – neither old nor new, but *unity* of old and new – also freed East German leaders from the necessity to admit revision of their strategies. Policy was not changed, it was just extended.

The extension was nevertheless substantial and meant a complete revision of modernist principles of urban design. Instead of strict functional separation Lammert propagated the mixture of "clean" industries and small businesses in residential areas. Instead of the comprehensive demolition of tenement neighborhoods, he proposed to tear down only the most densely built backyard buildings, complemented by new construction "in the old scale." He advocated for a contextual approach to urban design, praising the *Fluidum* ("aura, atmosphere") of the tenement neighborhoods, the "values represented by characteristics of the city," the "local tradition" and the "living milieu." In this respect, he called for a restructuring that allowed for preservation and not only for demolition, since "[w]e need both harmony and contrast, the love for and care of tradition are inseparable from the use of industrial building techniques, from modern construction, and current architectural ideas."<sup>396</sup>

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Ländern," *Architektur der DDR* no. 8 (1988): 6, Kurt Wilde, Prinzipielle Überlegungen zur Einheit von Neubau, Erhaltung und Modernisierung, *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1990): 50-52.

<sup>395</sup> "Seit dem VIII. Parteitag gehört es in verstärktem Maße zu den Prinzipien unserer Tätigkeit, mit dem Vorhandenen gut zu wirtschaften, es zu pflegen und weiterzuentwickeln." Ule Lammert, Aufgaben des Städtebaus zur Erfüllung des langfristigen Wohnungsbauprogramms bis 1990 als Beitrag zur Lösung der Hauptaufgabe des VIII. Parteitages *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1975): 135-142.

<sup>396</sup> "Wir brauchen die Harmonie wie den Kontrast, die Liebe zur Tradition und ihre Pflege sind nicht zu trennen von der Anwendung industrieller Bauemethoden, von modernen Konstruktionen und zeitgemäßen architektonischen Auffassungen." Ule Lammert, "Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 18-25. Lammert's thinking was paralleled by that of Hans-Jürgen Kluge, the director of the Department of Urban Design at the Ministry of Construction, who in 1978 conjured the "unity of new construction, modernization, and preservation" and called for a construction policy that would provide an individual *Stadtbild* and a combination of "different spheres of life", that is, of working and living. Hans-Jürgen Kluge, "Zur Vorbereitung des Wohnungsbauprogramms der 80er Jahre und zur Umgestaltung innerstädtischer Altbauwohngebiete," *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1978): 132-137.



Figure 13: Urban Design Guidelines for the Prenzlauer Berg district, directed by Wolfgang Weigel and Martin Beutel, 1976. The “total chop down policy” did not completely disappear from East German leaders’ horizon. An example is a proposal for the Prenzlauer Berg district, produced by the Institute for Urban Design and Architecture at the Building Academy. Most tenements in the district were to be torn down. Certain front buildings were to remain only around Kollwitzplatz and Helmholtzplatz squares. A map of “fixed points” showed the few buildings to be spared, such as the synagogue on Rykestraße, the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Zion Church, and Bruno Taut’s apartment complex on Grellstraße. The proposal called for the removal of almost all backyard situations at the expense of the back buildings. Only in the Animplatz area back buildings that had been renovated in the early 1970s were to remain. Kastanienallee was to be converted into a pedestrian zone. The demolition was scheduled to be finished by 1990.

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Lammert called for a “dialectical unit” of old and new buildings.<sup>397</sup> He thus used a particularly evocative term: “dialectics,” in a Marxist context, sounded unambiguously positive. Since the 1970s, it increasingly appeared in the context of urban design.<sup>398</sup> Due to its prominent position in Marx’s works, “dialectical” sounded unambiguously positive in the East German context and connoted scientific truth. The rhetoric of “dialectical unit of old and new” thus helped to make tenement preservation compatible with socialism. The “extension” of East Berlin’s construction policy was also reflected in the different *Bebauungspläne* (development schemes). Günter Peters’s District Direction of Construction worked out new development plans in 1967 and in 1980. While the 1967 plan predominantly focused on the city center around Alexanderplatz and its representative buildings, the 1980s plan supported the “unity of new construction, modernization, and preservation” as a general strategy; included the new-to-be built developments in the eastern periphery.<sup>399</sup>

Lumping together new construction and modernization of old buildings had twofold consequences. One positive outcome was an improved reputation of the tenements, which were now considered an asset rather than a liability. A modernized tenement apartment was seen as valuable as a newly built apartment with central heating and running warm water. Even though, tenement modernization in the 1970s usually only included the construction of bathrooms and showers, not the removal of coal

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<sup>397</sup> Ule Lammert, “Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 18-25.

<sup>398</sup> Cp. for example Ludwig Deiters’ comment on the remodelings in Altenburg where he calls for a “dialectical” inclusion of old buildings into the new developments, *Deutsche Architektur* no. 3 (1973): 130, Ule Lammert’s presentation of principles of urban renewal as a “dialectical” unity of old and new, Ule Lammert, “Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 25, or Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk “Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* no. 5/6 (1988): 206, where the authors advocate for a dialectical connection between old and new.

<sup>399</sup> A *Generalbebauungsplan* [general development scheme] was passed by the Ministerrat on November 30, 1967. LAB C Rep 110, 1430. The new scheme presented a “compact city” model utilising a close connection between the spheres of everyday life and work. One should nevertheless not be confused by the terminology. The city favored in the plan was only compact in the sense that it foresaw large settlements of multistory buildings, rather than single-family homes; not in the sense that it advocated for block-perimeter buildings and walkable neighborhoods. It provided a close connection between everyday life and workspheres by situating settlements nearby industrial areas, not by grouping residential and commercial spaces ed around the same backyard or united them in the same building. For the 1980 plan see BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1822 and Johannes Schattel, “Eine neue Etappe der Generalbebauungsplanung,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1980): 584-585.

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stoves in favor of central heating. Yet the failure to distinguish between modernization of existing buildings on the one hand and demolition and new construction on the other still denied the value of social community. In the official rhetoric, existing neighborhoods were still referred to exclusively by the number of their apartments. The Housing Program disfavored the old neighborhoods also on another level. It took the “number of dwelling units” as the relevant size for the fulfillment of the plan, as opposed to “number of square meters” like in the Soviet Union. This was a disadvantage for the old apartments, which were often much larger, and whose renovation in terms of cost per dwelling unit could far exceed that of building a small new apartment.<sup>400</sup>

The strategy of increasing the number of apartments at all costs also informed the ousting of demolition. Over the course of the 1970s, legislation was enhanced. Demolition was first made more complicated and later virtually banned. These legislative measures were not entirely enforced; demolition nevertheless diminished significantly. In 1973, the Politburo still suggested that new apartments should “first and foremost be constructed in great complexes.” Further, these complexes should “be erected in neighborhoods where the building stock due to its age, its physical condition, and its sanitary facilities is not worthy of modernization, particularly in the city district of Berlin-Mitte south ... of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße [now Torstraße]” – that is, in the *Spandauer Vorstadt* neighborhood.<sup>401</sup> In

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<sup>400</sup> Tscheschner saw this form of calculation as detrimental to East German housing, as it fostered the construction of tiny apartments. She pointed out that it also led to the excessive construction of nursing homes in East Berlin. State officials soon discovered that nursing homes were the most efficient way of fulfilling the plan and constructing the largest “number of dwelling units” per buildings, as each bed in a nursing home was considered one “dwelling unit.” Dorothea Tscheschner, interview by author, Berlin, August 27, 2003. See also Richtlinie für die statistische Abrechnung und Erfassung des Wohnungsbaus (Guideline for the statistical calculation and registration of residential construction, 1971), which mandates the counting of 30 square meters in a nursing home as one dwelling unit. BArch DY 30/IV A2/2.021/616.

<sup>401</sup> Durchzuführen auf Flächen “mit geringer Abrißquote”, “Der Ersatzwohnungsbau ist auf Flächen durchzuführen, deren Bausubstanz auf Grund ihres Baualters, des Bauzustandes und der Ausstattung nicht mehr modernisierungswürdig ist, besonders im Stadtbezirk Mitte südlich und nördlich der Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße.” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, final copy. The bill was drawn up, among others, by Wolfgang Junker, Minister of Construction and his undersecretaries Karl-Heinz Martini and Karl Schmiechen. A drawing enclosed with the draft of the protocol specified the area, which was bordered by Oranienburger Straße, Rosa-Luxemburg-Straße, Torstraße, Brunnenstraße, Invalidenstraße, and Chausseestraße. Draft protocol of the Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1669: 44 The demolition was not carried out, and the area is now one of Berlin’s most expensive neighborhoods.

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the official presentation of the Housing Program that same year, Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker announced that after a short period of complete preservation from the 1980s on the authorities plan to “renew on a large scale those portions of the building stock that are not worthy of being modernized.”<sup>402</sup> Six years later, at the July 1979 meeting, the Politburo stated that the demolition of inhabitable buildings “is generally not permitted.”<sup>403</sup> Exceptions could only be granted by the Minister of Construction. Existing development plans that were based on demolition were now “to be reworked and...altered to fulfill the requirements.”<sup>404</sup> The resolution also mandated a strict adherence to the 1978 directive on residential construction, which had already regulated that “[t]he demolition of workshops and buildings or their relocation is only allowed in exceptional cases.”<sup>405</sup> The bill was prepared by the powerful top economist Günter Mittag, despite the fact that he was not exactly a supporter of historic preservation.<sup>406</sup> That year, the East German rulers passed a law determining that “buildings and building structures classified with the degrees of structural soundness (*Bauzustandstufen*) 1 to 3... are generally not to be demolished” statewide in the GDR.<sup>407</sup> That meant that the only buildings allowed to be torn down were those classified with a “degree of structural soundness” 4 (not usable) – that is buildings whose structural stability was not guaranteed and/or buildings that required the replacement of more than 50% of its parts. The classification had to be carried out by the *Staatliche Bauaufsicht* (State Construction Authority) after a thorough examination

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<sup>402</sup> “[Es ist geplant,] in den 80er Jahren den nicht mehr modernisierungswürdigen Wohnungsbestand durch Neubauten im größeren Umfang zu ersetzen” Wolfgang Junker, “Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990,” in *Protokoll der 10. Tagung des Zentralkomitees*, vol. 2, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin, 1973): 10 BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 479.

<sup>403</sup> “Abriss...hat grundsätzlich nicht zu erfolgen” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 19, 1979, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788: 108. The prohibition referred to all buildings classified as “usable.”

<sup>404</sup> “Bestehende Bebauungskonzeptionen [sind]...durchzuarbeiten und... zu verändern, so daß die Bedingungen eingehalten werden.” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 19, 1979, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788: 109.

<sup>405</sup> “Der Abriß von Produktionsstätten, Gebäuden und baulichen Anlagen bzw. ihre Verlagerung auf einen anderen Standort darf nur in begründeten Ausnahmefällen vorgesehen werden.” The council of the district is to decide on the application or to pass it on to the Ministerrat. “Verordnung über die Planung, Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Folgeinvestitionen,” [passed on July 13, 1978], *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* No. 23 (August 10, 1978): 258.

<sup>406</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 19, 1979, work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 2248: 56.

<sup>407</sup> “Gebäude und bauliche Anlagen der Bauzustandsstufen 1 bis 3 ...sind grundsätzlich nicht abzureißen.” “Durchführungsbestimmung zur Verordnung über die Planung, Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Folgeinvestitionen – Abriß von Gebäuden und baulichen Anlagen vom 18. September 1979,” *Gesetzblatt der DDR I*, No. 34 (October 19, 1979): 325-326.

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of the condition of the building. Demolitions of buildings classified as “usable” had to be approved by the Minister of Construction. Observers agree, however, that despite its rigorous formulation in the statute books, there were frequent exceptions.<sup>408</sup> In the 1980s, the ban was further reinforced. In June 1980, the *Magistrat* resolved to concentrate remodeling activities in East Berlin predominantly applied to measures that guaranteed dry and warm living and the functioning order of pipes. toilets outside the apartments were to be removed and replaced with inside toilets and bathrooms.<sup>409</sup> It also resolved that modernization was generally to be carried out while the tenants remained in their apartments.<sup>410</sup> Demolitions are to be reduced to a minimum, backyards are to remain; stables and sheds in backyards are to be examined for possible use. In areas of complex modernization backyards are to be landscaped. Gaps between buildings are to be rebuilt. Factories and workshops in backyards that are still in use are to be repaired. With regard to modernized buildings, it was resolved that no changes should be effected on structural constructive parts. Building parts should also be preserved if possible (wooden floor planks, old double windows, doors, stairs etc.).<sup>411</sup> A 1989 study carried out by the Building Academy continued this approach.<sup>412</sup> The study declared the necessity for a “densification” of the “amply built” satellite settlements of the 1960s.<sup>413</sup> It criticized the old strategy, referring to the “struggle of the residents against the demolitions [that] is among other things grounded in experiences with ... the poor and careless design of the ‘products’ [=apartment blocks], which does not take into account the specific character of the neighborhood.”<sup>414</sup> It nevertheless

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<sup>408</sup> Interview with Dorothea Tscheschner August 27, 2003, Christine Hannemann, interview by author, Berlin, July 1, 2003.

<sup>409</sup> Magistrat resolution no. 197/80 from June 15, 1980 “Grundsätze und Vorgaben für die Modernisierung und Instandsetzung von Altbauwohnungen in der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin” LAB C Rep 100-05, 1830

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> “Wohnungsbau in Berlin 1991-2000 Vorschlag einer strategischen Grundlinie”, dated August 25, 1989 jointly authored by Insitut für Städtebau at the Building Academy, ISA, Bezirksplankommission, Büro für Städtebau BArch DH 2 F2/198.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid: 3-4.

<sup>414</sup> “Der Kampf der Bewohner gegen Abrisse wird u. a. mit Erfahrungen und Vermutungen über die gestalterisch anspruchslose Lieblosigkeit der ‚Erzeugnisse‘ begründet, die den spezifischen Charakter des Kiezes nicht aufnimmt und weiterführt.” Ibid: 2. A number of maps and drawings specified the new strategy, proposing the “coring” of backyards instead of comprehensive demolition. The focal points of this approach include the Teutoburger Platz and Humannplatz neighborhoods in the Prenzlauer Berg district and a portion of the Spandauer Vorstadt in the Mitte district. The study

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showed that as a result of the pragmatic effort to increase the total number of apartments, the modernist “total chop-down” approach was largely revised. By the late 1980s, East German authorities unanimously acknowledged the necessity to modernize East Berlin tenement neighborhoods without demolishing them. Had the German Democratic Republic continued to exist, it is likely that demolition had come to a complete halt.

#### *The conceptual approach: Tenement modernization for preservationist reasons*

Shortly after the 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party in 1971 the Building Academy issued a set of guidelines for urban design under socialism.<sup>415</sup> After the “16 Urban Design Principles” of 1950, which had mandated Stalinist neoclassicism, and the “Principles of Planning” of 1960 and 1965, which had called for an ample and well-structured modernism, this was a further attempt by the East German leaders to set a comprehensive framework for urban design.<sup>416</sup> The authors – East Germany’s most eminent architects and critics at the time – pointed out that the economical use of urban resources had to involve the use of existing neighborhoods, as long as their “reproductive cycle” permitted it; hence there should be a balanced proportion between demolition, new construction, and modernization.<sup>417</sup> At the same time, they stressed the importance of integrating contemporary construction of the socialist city in the monuments of past epochs. They dismissed the “placelessness” of modernist cities in the same way as their orientation to individual motor traffic. This was decidedly different from the preceding urban design principles which were published in 1965 after the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Convention, which had mandated to remove buildings that “obviously did not correspond to socialist

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nevertheless followed the old pattern of thought claiming that out of the approximately 200,000 tenement apartments built before 1919, one fourth were “not worthy of being preserved.”

<sup>415</sup> Deutsche Bauakademie and Bund der Architekten der DDR, eds., *Entwicklung des sozialistischen Städtebaus und der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR* (East Berlin: Bauinformation 1971) [authors: Ule Lammert, Edmund Colleln, Hermann Henselmann, Fred Staufenberg, Benny Heumann, Gerhard Krenz, Bruno Flierl, and Alfred Hoffmann].

<sup>416</sup> See “Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaus,” [passed by the Ministerrat on July 27, 1950], *Ministerialblatt der DDR* no. 25 (September 16, 1950), Deutsche Bauakademie, “Grundsätze der Planung und Umgestaltung der Städte in der DDR in der Periode des umfassenden Aufbaus des Sozialismus,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 1 (1965): 4-8, and Deutsche Bauakademie, “Grundsätze der Planung und Gestaltung sozialistischer Stadtzentren,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1960) [supplement].

<sup>417</sup> Deutsche Bauakademie and Bund der Architekten der DDR, *Entwicklung des sozialistischen Städtebaus und der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR* (East Berlin: Bauinformation 1971): 10-11.

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forms of life.”<sup>418</sup> In an unusually open way, the 1971 guidelines criticized that the task of providing satisfactory design with industrial techniques was not yet fully mastered.<sup>419</sup> They called for unique and memorizable architectural forms that would be able to generate distinctive experiences. In this respect “dominant buildings” were important in the same way as a harmonious integration of old and new elements; the preservation of entire historic districts.<sup>420</sup>

The change in legislation was informed by the debate in numerous expert circles. In 1971, the same year the guidelines were passed, the *Zentrale Fachgruppe Rekonstruktion* (Central Work Group on Reconstruction) at the Architects Association was founded.<sup>421</sup> The group was chaired by Ludwig Deiters, the director of the East German Historic Preservation Authority. The goal was to strengthen the cause of historic preservation and to raise public interest awareness. On March 23/24, 1972, the group organized a seminar on “Problems of Complex Reconstruction”, where Deiters launched a harsh critique against the demolition practices in the GDR.<sup>422</sup> The group also included a number of prominent historic preservation activists, both theorists and practitioners: Bernhard Klemm, who pioneered the restoration of old buildings in Görlitz in the early 1960s, the professors at the Building Academy Günter Kabus and Achim Felz, and Klaus Pöschk, the leading architect in the Arkonaplatz reconstruction project. In regular conferences and meetings, the Central Work Group on Reconstruction discussed the value of historic preservation. This explicitly included the once vilified late 19<sup>th</sup> century tenement buildings, which, according to Ludwig Deiters, were not only a material but

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<sup>418</sup> “...wobei diejenige Substanz beseitigt wird, die den sozialistischen Lebensformen offensichtlich nicht mehr entspricht oder auf dem Wege der Modernisierung nicht rationell verwendet werden kann.” Deutsche Bauakademie, Grundsätze der Planung und Umgestaltung der Städte in der DDR in der Periode des umfassenden Aufbaus des Sozialismus, *Deutsche Architektur* no. 1 (1965): 5.

<sup>419</sup> Deutsche Bauakademie and Bund der Architekten der DDR, *Entwicklung des sozialistischen Städtebaus und der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR* (East Berlin: Bauinformation 1971): 19.

<sup>420</sup> Deutsche Bauakademie and Bund der Architekten der DDR, *Entwicklung des sozialistischen Städtebaus und der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR* (East Berlin: Bauinformation 1971): 20.

<sup>421</sup> The group was founded in November 1971. On the work of the group see BArch DY 15/123.

<sup>422</sup> “Es sei ideologisch Front zu machen gegen jene radikalistischen und utopischen Vorstellungen im Städtebau, die aus Kritik an den offensichtlichen Mißständen an der überkommenen Wohn- und Stadtbausubstanz gleich die gesamte alte Bausubstanz unserer Städte stur beseitigen möchten. Solche Vorstellungen hätten schon in einigen Städten zu wesentlichen Verlusten an städtebaulicher Schönheit und Harmonie geführt” Deiters quoted by Fritz Rothstein, “Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 7 (1972): 390.

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also a cultural asset since they were remainders of bygone times.<sup>423</sup> Deiters's astute analyses of the difficult relationship between material value and projected cultural significance of old buildings made him a visionary among his colleagues. He also appeared ahead of his time when in 1982 – demolitions of historic neighborhoods were occasionally still occurring – he warned against a nostalgic overrating of old buildings.<sup>424</sup>

Since the 1980s, the reevaluation of old buildings in East Berlin was extended to a value connected with their age or their quality to convey the spirit of an earlier epoch. In 1982, the Politburo passed the *Grundsätze für die sozialistische Entwicklung von Städtebau und Architektur in der DDR*. (General Principles for the Socialist Development of Urban Design and Architecture in the GDR).<sup>425</sup> These "principles" were subsequently published in the daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland* in May 1982.<sup>426</sup> They were formulated by Wolfgang Junker's Ministry of Construction and Gerhard Trölitzsch's Department of Construction at the Central Committee, yet relied on opinions expressed at the 8<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Architects Association three weeks earlier.<sup>427</sup> That convention was not merely a meeting of professionals. The presence of numerous high-ranking party officials stressed its political significance. This included the four most influential figures in East German construction: Günter Mittag, Gerhard Trölitzsch, Wolfgang Junker, and Konrad Naumann.<sup>428</sup> At the convention, East German leaders confirmed their commitment to the inner city, where small-scale construction on empty lots between existing buildings would be increased from 4,000 apartments in the current five-year-plan to 15,000 in the 1985-1990 five-year-plan.<sup>429</sup> The "principles" mandated the preservation of

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<sup>423</sup> Protocol of the ZFG Rekonstruktion meeting on September 17, 1982 on Friedrichsfelde Castle in Berlin, dated October 20, 1982. BArch DY 15/123.

<sup>424</sup> Protocol of the ZFG Rekonstruktion meeting on September 17, 1982 on Friedrichsfelde Castle in Berlin, dated October 20, 1982. BArch DY 15/123.

<sup>425</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on May 18, 1982, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1947: 238.

<sup>426</sup> "Grundsätze für die sozialistische Entwicklung von Städtebau und *Architektur in der DDR* – Beschluß des Politbüros des ZK der SED und des Ministerrates der DDR," *Neues Deutschland* May 29, 1982: 9-10.

<sup>427</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on May 18, 1982, work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 A 2476: 153. The 8<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Architects Association took place on May 6 and 7 in the Palace of the Republic in Berlin.

<sup>428</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on May 18, 1982, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1947: 239.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*: 241.

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the *Stadtbild* (city image) "for the sake of citizen's welfare " and deemed the preservation and modernization of existent buildings as a "task of equal importance to new construction."<sup>430</sup> They stressed the "emotional effect" of the old ensembles, which instigated "joie de vivre, appreciation of beauty, social activity, and a readiness for high work performance."<sup>431</sup> They also advocated for a harmonious connection between new and existing buildings, and an increasing "care for the city center with its ensembles and historic buildings."<sup>432</sup> Thus the city dweller should develop an *erlebnisreiche Beziehung* ("relation rich with personal experience") with the existing historical buildings. In the official presentation of the Housing Program nine years earlier the term was used to describe modernist tower-and-slab developments.<sup>433</sup> These fundamental principles interpreted historical buildings as containing positive cultural values upon which a socialist society should build in order to progress into the future. The construction policy of the 1980s was thus accompanied by a different definition of oldness. In the 1960s, there was a clear distinction between old architecture that was conceived as heritage – mostly pre-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings – and architecture that was seen as outmoded – mostly late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements. Beginning in the 1970s, the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements were lumped together with buildings from earlier epochs. The lack of explicit distinction between tenements and the typologically very different older buildings was characteristic to the debate on residential architecture as heritage in the 1980s. Especially in Berlin, a city with very few pre-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, this reevaluation had significant consequences. The positive reputation of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century bourgeois residences and the 17<sup>th</sup> century half-timbered homes that could be found in other East German cities was now extended to Berlin's late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements. At the same time,

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<sup>430</sup> "Für das Wohlbefinden der Bürger wie für die Pflege des Stadtbildes und nicht zuletzt aus ökonomischen Gründen ist von größter Bedeutung, die Erhaltung und Modernisierung der vorhandenen Bausubstanz als eine dem Neubau gleichrangige Aufgabe zu behandeln." Helmut Stelzer, "Wohnen in historischen Gebäuden. Zum Beitrag der Denkmalpflege nach dem VIII. Bundeskongress des BdA/DDR," *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1983): 99.

<sup>431</sup> "Lebensfreude, Schönheitsempfinden, gesellschaftliche Aktivität und Leistungsbereitschaft" "Grundsätze für die sozialistische Entwicklung von Städtebau und *Architektur in der DDR* – Beschluß des Politbüros des ZK der SED und des Ministerrates der DDR," *Neues Deutschland* May 29, 1982: 9.

<sup>432</sup> "Pflege des Stadtzentrums mit seinen Ensembles und historischen Gebäuden" "Grundsätze für die sozialistische Entwicklung von Städtebau und *Architektur in der DDR* – Beschluß des Politbüros des ZK der SED und des Ministerrates der DDR," *Neues Deutschland* May 29, 1982: 9.

<sup>433</sup> Wolfgang Junker, Das Wohnungsbauprogramm der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Jahre 1976 bis 1990, in *Protokoll der 10. Tagung des Zentralkomitees*, vol. 2, ed. Büro des Politbüros (East Berlin, 1973): 12 BArch DY 30 IV 2/1 479

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tenements were no longer exclusively seen as a tool of working class oppression. It became topical for almost any East German writing in favor of tenement preservation to mention the significance of conserving the locations of working class culture and working class struggle.<sup>434</sup> Official publications began to emphasize that tenements were the historic birthplace of the socialist workers' movement. They reminded their readers that Lenin had theorized in his concept of two parallel cultures that under the conditions of capitalist oppression and exploitation, the working class was able to generate a progressive culture, which existed parallel to the waning bourgeois way of life; was designed to eventually supersede it.<sup>435</sup> Tenement neighborhoods were connected to progressive proletarian spirit. One could find this argument even in the late 1980s when the official conception of heritage was already extended beyond the limits of working class history. This shift in focus allowed for a positive view of the tenements within socialist ideology, while at the same time upheld the idea of historic progress and comprehensive renewal.

### *Historic Preservation after the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention*

The protection of historic monuments was anchored in East German legislation since the 1950s, albeit with little effect.<sup>436</sup> In any case of doubt, party officials were able to decide irrespective of historic preservation laws. During the 1950s and 1960s, historical monuments were occasionally destroyed for ideological reasons. The most infamous examples were the gothic University Church in Leipzig, the baroque Garrison Church in Potsdam, and the Royal Palace in Berlin. Generally, old structures were simply neglected and left for dilapidation. During the 1970s, however, the political climate started to be slightly more favorable towards the case of historic preservation. In the 1970s, the German

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<sup>434</sup> See for example Ludwig Deiters, "Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 388, Ernst Kristen, "Zur Gestaltung der Frankfurter Allee in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 3 (1985): 148-152, Bernd Hunger, "Zur Verbesserung der Wohnbedingungen in Altbaugebieten," *Architektur der DDR* no. 11 (1985): 686-689 or Dietrich Mühlberg, ed., *Arbeiterleben in Berlin um 1900* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1983).

<sup>435</sup> Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," in *Collected Works*, 4<sup>th</sup>. English Edition vol 20 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), 32 [first published in 1913]

<sup>436</sup> See "Verordnung zur Erhaltung und Pflege der nationalen Kulturdenkmale" [Decree for the preservation of and care for national cultural monuments] *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* no. 84 (June 26, 1952): 514. The decree was modified, yet without substantial improvement, in the "Verordnung über die Pflege und den Schutz der Denkmale" [Decree for the maintenance and protection of monuments] *Gesetzblatt der DDR II* no. 72 (September 28, 1961): 475.

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Democratic Republic joined the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).<sup>437</sup> ICOMOS was established in 1965, as a result of the Second Congress of Architects, Conservationists, and Technicians of Historical Monuments. They met in Venice in May of 1964 and subsequently laid out their principles in the Venice Charter and in the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO in 1972. The Venice Charter for the first time defined not only the single architectural works but also an entire urban setting, where evidence of a particular civilization as a historic monument exists. It documented a rising concern with the remainders of everyday life in the fabric of contemporary cities. In the two German states, the influence of the international preservationist movement was particularly felt during the (West) "European Year of Historic Preservation" in 1975 and in the context of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ICOMOS, which took place in the East German cities of Rostock and Dresden in 1984.<sup>438</sup> Both events were milestones for the renewed appreciation of historic buildings by both experts and the general public. It provided significant publicity for the case of historic preservation and bolstered an awareness of the historic city in East Germany.<sup>439</sup>

Ludwig Deiters played a crucial role in East German relations with ICOMOS.<sup>440</sup> He joined the General Assemblies of ICOMOS in Budapest in 1972 and in Rome in 1981. Although the cooperation with ICOMOS did not oblige East German rulers to adopt a specific historic preservation policy, it had a symbolic value. Preservationists were increasingly granted a forum in the state-sponsored media, and historic preservation concerns appeared on local agendas.<sup>441</sup> After the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of

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<sup>437</sup> See Hans Müller, ed., *Zu Fragen der neuen gesellschaftlichen Nutzung monumentaler Baudenkmale* (East Berlin: Institut für Denkmalpflege, 1974). The publication mentions a convention of the East German National Committee of ICOMOS.

<sup>438</sup> The "European Year of Historic Preservation" was proclaimed by the (West European) Council of Europe. It was adopted by the West German *Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz* (German National Committee for Historic Preservation) and celebrated under the auspices of the Federal West German President Walter Scheel with a variety of exhibits, conferences, and public lectures in West Germany. See for example Michael Petzet, ed., *Eine Zukunft für unsere Vergangenheit* [Exhibition catalog] (Munich: Prestel, 1975). The exhibit opened on July 3, 1975 at the Munich Stadtmuseum. The catalog is typical in its comparisons between old and new buildings that vigorously denounce Bauen als Umweltzerstörung (construction as destruction of the environment) in West German cities during the 1960s.

<sup>439</sup> See for example Joachim Palutzki, *Architektur in der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 2000): 425.

<sup>440</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>441</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

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ICOMOS in 1984, Ludwig Deiters became a member of ICOMOS's executive committee.<sup>442</sup> The years after 1975 saw a slight strengthening of his Historic Preservation Authority which since the 1960s had lived a shadowy existence.<sup>443</sup> Deiters remembered the atmosphere during the 1960s as "really nasty." From his point of view, the industrialization of the building trade culminated with "sacrificing the art of building to the economy."<sup>444</sup> In the mid-1970s, Deiters felt an increasing tolerance towards his institution and a rising interest in old buildings rise among both the population and some leaders. Over the course of the 1970s, the East German historic preservation laws were reformed.<sup>445</sup> In 1975, the East German leaders passed a new "Law for the Preservation of Monuments in the GDR," in which they heroically stated their commitment with the historic heritage.<sup>446</sup> The law, which was accompanied by extensive publicity, obliged the townships to prepare lists of monuments; complemented with a precise directive it allowed the municipalities to designate and restore historic neighborhoods – of course only in theory, since the decision-making power of East German municipalities was significantly restricted by the Party administration.<sup>447</sup> Two years later, in November 1977, a *Rat für Denkmalpflege* (Council for Historic Preservation) was incorporated at the Ministry of Culture.<sup>448</sup> In the same year, the *Bezirksvorstand für Denkmalpflege* (Berlin District Council for Historic Preservation) was incorporated. The lists of monuments were completed for the whole GDR in 1979. Similar lists had been prepared before by township and regional authorities. In practice, it mattered little whether a particular

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<sup>442</sup> Helmut Stelzer, "The Seventh General Assembly of ICOMOS – 1984" [Conference Report], [www.international.icomos.org/publications/JS5\\_7.pdf](http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/JS5_7.pdf), first published in ICOMOS Newsletter July 1984: 50.

<sup>443</sup> Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

<sup>444</sup> "...eine ganz miese Zeit...die Baukunst wurde der Ökonomie geopfert." Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

<sup>445</sup> The most thorough account of the history of historic preservation laws in East Germany can be found in Felix Hammer, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Denkmalrechts in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995). On the consequences of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention on the historic preservation laws in East Germany see: 377. Hammer detects a similar development in West Germany. In 1971 only two länder (Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein) had region-wide historic preservation laws. Between 1971 and 1980 all länder passed such preservation or strengthened existing ones. Starting in 1971, federal laws for the first time protected urban ensembles and streets and squares of historic significance. See: 341.

<sup>446</sup> "Gesetz zur Erhaltung der Denkmale in der DDR – Denkmalpflegegesetz," *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* no. 26 (June 19, 1975): 458.

<sup>447</sup> The concretizing directive was passed on August 25, 1978 Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 144.

<sup>448</sup> Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 105.

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monument was listed on a municipal or national inventory. The fact that since 1979 the GDR for the first time counted with a national register of historic monuments had nevertheless a symbolic quality.<sup>449</sup> At the time, approximately 350 monuments were listed in East Berlin, including “spatial monuments” comprised of entire historic areas. This might appear little for a city of that size, but it documents a change in policy and a greater attention towards historical buildings. To maintain and restore these monuments, the East German authorities in January 1977 combined several small state firms to form the *VEB Denkmalpflege*.<sup>450</sup> It was a state-owned construction firm specialized in preservation tasks. Among its first commissions was the restoration of Pergamon Museum and Neues Museum on Museum Island. The firm was subsequently involved in all Berlin historic reconstruction projects, most famously the rebuilding of the Playhouse on the Platz der Akademie/Gendarmenmarkt square. The 1972 UNESCO “Resolution for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage” was accepted on March 12, 1989, eight months before the collapse of the socialist regime.<sup>451</sup> It has to be mentioned, though that these laws only partially provided a basis for the protection of East Germany’s historic heritage. The disparity between legislation and practice was often blatant. It is nevertheless too simplistic to dismiss East German preservation policy, as West German historian Felix Hammer does, as pure lip service which in the early phase of the GDR disguised “blind hatred against all monuments” and in the later years “splendid mismanagement.”<sup>452</sup> East German preservation laws might have failed to stop neglect and decay of many monuments. But their progressive development over the course of the 1970s and 1980s documents a relation towards the country’s architectural heritage that cannot be overlooked.

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<sup>449</sup> see also Werner Rackwitz, “Denkmalpflege als gesellschaftliche Aufgabe,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 2 (1980): 75-80. Rackwitz was deputy minister of culture and chairman of the *Rat für Denkmalpflege* (Council for Historic Preservation).

<sup>450</sup> Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 48 and 119.

<sup>451</sup> Felix Hammer, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Denkmalrechts in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995): 341. The resolution was accepted by West Germany in 1976.

<sup>452</sup> Felix Hammer, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Denkmalrechts in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995) “blinder Haß gegen alle Denkmale”: 361, “grandiose Mißwirtschaft”: 362.

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One characteristic of East German preservation policy is particularly striking. The national heritage was rediscovered at a point in time when it also became necessary to write GDR history. In the 1970s, the East German state was old enough to have assembled its own collection of historic architecture, for example the buildings of the “national tradition” such as the Stalinallee. Head Preservationist Ludwig Deiters remembered that the question of whether or not to list the Stalinallee as a protected monument became moot with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR in 1979.<sup>453</sup> This development coincided with an international trend to disassociate historic preservation from oldness. Also in East Germany, in the 1970s for the first time rather recent buildings could be listed as historic monuments.<sup>454</sup> The East German leaders thus discovered historic preservation at a point in time when they were able to instrumentalize it for writing their own history, and similarly, following Honecker’s claim to separate East German nationhood, when they could use it to stress their own portion of German history. That did not mean that from now on the Historic Preservation Authority could count with the leaders’ unconditioned support, rather to the contrary. But certain restoration projects were easier to realize in the 1970s than before.

Both head of the East German Historic Preservation Authority Ludwig Deiters and head of the Berlin branch office Peter Goralczyk remembered the debate around demolition versus rebuilding of the Berlin Cathedral a decisive turning point.<sup>455</sup> The Berlin Cathedral, which was built in 1894 on the Museum Island next to Schinkel’s Altes Museum, had long been deemed a particularly ugly example of monstrously overscaled neo-baroque not only by hard core modernists. The building was heavily damaged in the Second World War. Its half caved-in dome populated by hundreds of pigeons was considered an eyesore next to the shiny brown glass façade of the newly finished Palace of the Republic. The preservationists eventually prevailed over the demolitionists and the Cathedral was remodeled between 1974 and 1982. According to Goralczyk, however, this victory of traditional urban

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<sup>453</sup> Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

<sup>454</sup> Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

<sup>455</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004, Ludwig Deiters, interview by author, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

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design over modernist rupture was facilitated by a large portion of pragmatism.<sup>456</sup> After all, the East German leaders considered a representative building on such a prominent location in the city center essential, and the demolition and subsequent rebuilding would have been far more expensive than the reconstruction of the Cathedral, not to mention the difficulty to decide on a particular design. Also the willingness of the Federal West German government and the West Berlin protestant congregation to generously support the remodeling is likely to have influenced the decision. In the same way as the first renovations of tenements, the reconstruction of the Berlin Cathedral also originated in the failure of the East German state to provide convincing and viable alternatives rather than in the commitment to the architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At the same time when the Berlin Cathedral was remodeled, the German Democratic Republic prepared to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Berlin's most celebrated 19<sup>th</sup>-century architect: Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Numerous observers see the Schinkel anniversary and the extremely popular exhibit at the *Altes Museum* as a turning point, spawning a wave of interest in historic architecture among both academics and a general audience.<sup>457</sup> Only twenty years before, in July of 1961, the war-damaged ruin of Schinkel's Building Academy close to the Marx-Engels-Platz (now Schlossplatz) was torn down - despite a flurry of protests from both Easterners and Westerners, including Max Taut from West Berlin and East Berlin theorist Hans Schmidt.<sup>458</sup> Now, Schinkel was celebrated in an extensive exhibit, which took place at the *Altes Museum* in 1981. At the same time, one of his other buildings, the Friedrichswerder Church next to the demolished Building Academy, was restored and re-opened as Museum exclusively devoted to Schinkel's work. Like all East German showcase projects, also the Schinkel revival was to a significant degree directed toward the West: the Schinkel exhibit was shown in Hamburg in December 1982 and thus provided an opportunity to proliferate an image of East Germany as center of arts and culture.

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<sup>456</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>457</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004, Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow, August 14, 2003.

<sup>458</sup> Bruno Flierl, *Gebaute DDR. Über Stadtplaner, Architekten und die Macht* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998): 83.

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### *The intricacies of preservation policy in East Berlin*

In East Germany, “bourgeois structures” such as private property and individualized production did not immediately disappear after the foundation of the “First Socialist State on German Soil” in 1949. The process took several decades and was not completed until the 1970s. In that sense the beginning of the Honecker era was a break in East German history. Not only did the new regime aspire to the establishment of an independent nation. Also the East German society – ten years after the construction of the Berlin Wall – had become more and more distinct from the West German one. Private businesses had largely disappeared, the building industry was successfully “industrialized,” and a new generation had grown that only knew socialism and not the preceding political systems of monarchy, Weimar Republic, and National Socialism. Since the architectural forms of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements no longer represented the unsatisfactory social conditions of the pre-socialist era they could even be used for the representation of the East German state. This representation was rather different than two decades before. The focus was shifted from evocative government buildings and vast squares for state performances and military parades toward building structures of everyday life: apartment buildings and shopping centers. The Honecker regime attempted to buy the loyalty of its citizens through material wealth and sought to instrumentalize bay windows and adorned façades for that goal. “Socialist Architecture” as the subject of public debate gradually disappeared; at the same time the achievements of the regime were no longer exclusively seen in modernist steel-and-glass architecture but equally associated in the stucco ornaments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Next to claiming authority over the future of its citizens, the East German government fashioned itself as the guardian of historical continuity.

In the late 1980s, most East German leaders agreed that old buildings should be preserved. However, the difficulty to realize it within the given context became more and more apparent. Throughout its existence, the East German economy had been restricted by shortages of materials and labor. Construction policy in the GDR was thus always determined by pragmatism. This was not the construction officials’ free choice but the result of an inefficient economic system and a homemade

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crisis that had been shaking the East German construction since the 1970s. In the 1960s, the East German authorities had almost driven into extinction the traditional companies, technologies and skills needed to maintain, repair, or renovate old buildings. The deadlock situation was aggravated by the flagging imports from the Soviet Union and the increasing debts of the East German government. These factors led to a contradiction in East Germany between intellectual development and construction practice. While in the 1980s scholars and theorists increasingly called for a historically conscious architecture, the building industry still followed the mandates of the 1960s. The contradiction reached its peak with Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. Since anniversaries were a welcomed opportunity to present the socialist system's latest achievements, they were also prone to convey its inherent contradictions. To any cautious observer the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration clearly revealed the disjuncture between renovation and neglect, between pretension and reality. The contrast between the few remodeled buildings and the dilapidating surroundings made it apparent that Berlin's historic tenements theoretically could be renovated, and that they were attractive in a renovated state. It showed a blatant divergence between claims and reality. Observers from the West had long accepted it as a given fact that East Berlin's buildings were quietly rotting away, and contemporaneous newspaper reports wrote about it hardly any more than travel magazines mentioned that Chinese eat with chopsticks. Irrespective of whether or not they were linked to the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary they perceived the renovations as a drop in the ocean, but in any case approved them as being a step into the right direction. At the same time they intuitively felt that at a general level the desolate economic situation in East Germany would not even have permitted the authorities to halt further dilapidation of their building stock, no matter how much they tried. This attitude was very similar to that held in the East. Not only the residents who suffered from leaking roofs and crumbling walls supported any measure that would improve their living comfort, but also many construction officials saw the renovations as an all-too-small but in any case necessary response to the catastrophic state of most old residential buildings. Many even might have deluded themselves that at the pace given by the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary projects the dilapidation of the tenements actually could be stopped, and eagerly awaited that the showcase projects be followed by a comprehensive renovation program. In any case, in the late 1980s most East German residents, scholars, and construction

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officials were convinced that the tenements were worthy to be preserved, not only as valuable material resources but also as precious historic artifacts.

## Chapter 10: Remodeling to Defer Demolition: Arnimplatz, Arkonaplatz, and Beyond

### *The Arnimplatz remodeling, an unintended success*

The remodeling of the Arnimplatz area in the Prenzlauer Berg district, which was carried out between 1973 and 1977, was a turning point in East German construction policy. For the first time, an entire historic neighborhood was not demolished in favor of new buildings but renovated and adapted to the demands of modern life. Contrary to popular belief, however, the stated long-term goal of the Arnimplatz renovation was not preservation but demolition and rebuilding. This was stated clearly in a 1972 *Magistrat* resolution, which mandated the renovation of the neighborhood to preserve the buildings only for another 30 years.<sup>459</sup> Thus by 2000 all old buildings, including the renovated ones, had to come down. The same *Magistrat* resolution which prepared the modernization of the Arnimplatz area foresaw the demolition of the neighborhood half a mile south, with 13,700 apartments.<sup>460</sup> The goal of demolition in a not-too-distant future was also pointed out in Günter Peters's 1972 doctoral thesis. Peters at the time was the Berlin District Director of Construction and thus responsible for the remodeling. His thesis, classified "confidential" at the time, was the basis for the *Magistrat* directive.<sup>461</sup> Peters built his ideas on the theory of "life span," and pointed out the inevitability of "moral

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<sup>459</sup> See "Direktive des Magistrats von Groß-Berlin für den Baureparaturschwerpunkt im Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg, Gebiet Schönhauser Allee, Bornholmer Straße und S-Bahn" passed on May 9, 1972 reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A54-A55. The resolution stated that buildings constructed before 1900 were to be knocked down soon, and buildings constructed between 1900 and 1918 remodeled in order to prolong the remaining life span to 20 to 40 years.

<sup>460</sup> *Magistrat* directive on May 9, 1972, reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A57. The area that was to be torn down was bordered by Kollwitzstraße, Dimitroffstraße (now Danziger Straße), Prenzlauer Allee, Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße), the city district border in the west, Eberswalder Straße, Schönhauser Allee, and Wörther Straße.

<sup>461</sup> Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972.

depreciation" which in the long run mandates demolition and rebuilding.<sup>462</sup> The Arniplatz renovation would prolong the buildings' "life span" another 40 to 50 years.<sup>463</sup>

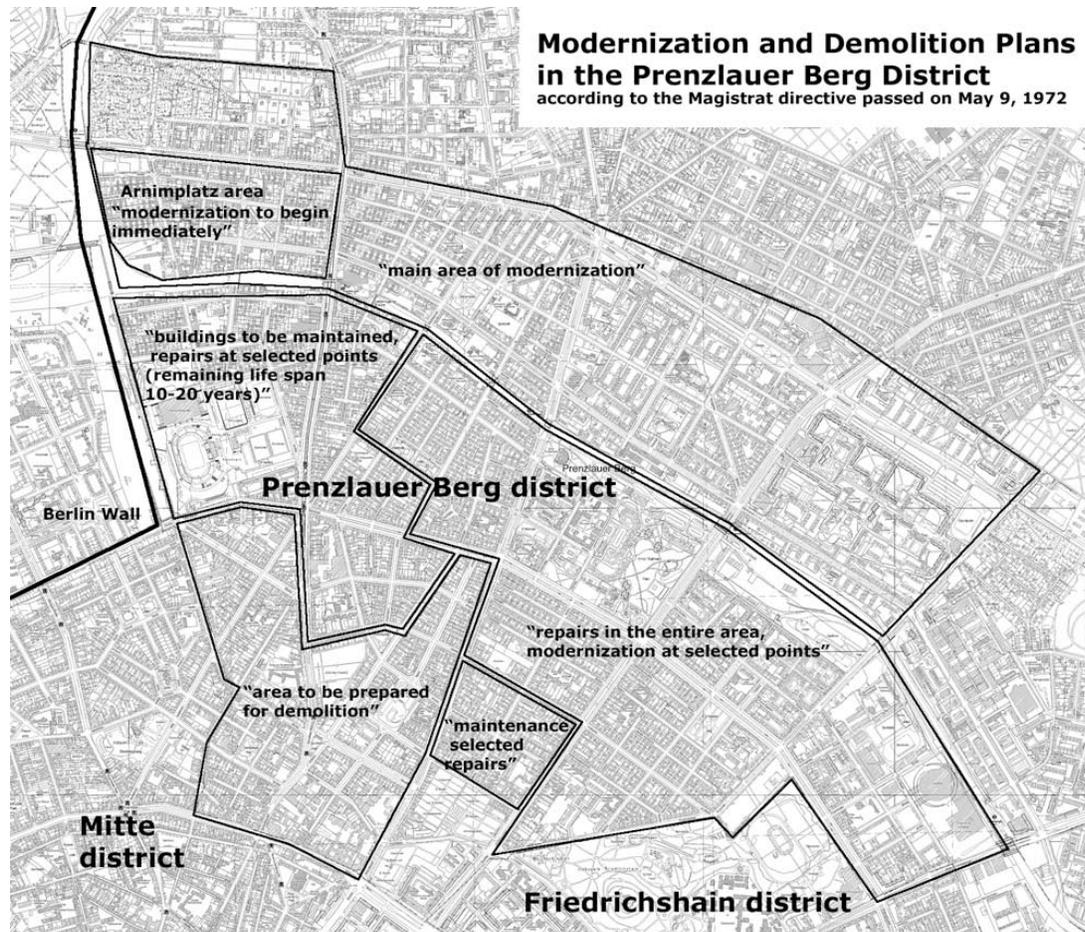


Figure 14

In his dissertation, Peters claimed that the strategy of "*Rekonstruktion*" (demolition and rebuilding) consisted of two different phases.<sup>464</sup> During the first, the goal was to stop demolitions, preserve dwelling space, and build new apartments until the overall need for housing was satisfied. In that period tenement renovations were justified. In the second phase, demolition was to be accelerated together with new construction, so that gradually the entire housing stock was replaced. The renovation of the Arniplatz area was thus a step towards the completion of the first phase. Peters

<sup>462</sup> *ibid.*: 23-24.

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*: A/54 and A/59.

<sup>464</sup> *ibid.*: 161.

clearly distinguished between apartments that were *modernisierungswürdig* (worthy of being modernized) and ones that were *nicht modernisierungsnotwendig* (unworthy of being modernized). The latter, which included almost all buildings erected before 1900, were to be prepared for demolition.<sup>465</sup> In this context, Peters announced the demolition of 110,000 apartments in Berlin by 1990.<sup>466</sup>



Figure 15: First plan from Günter Peters's dissertation: Remodeling of most existing buildings (carried out)

<sup>465</sup> Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: 98.

<sup>466</sup> approximately 33,000 in every five-year-plan Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: 81. The entire amount of apartments in East Berlin that were built before 1900 were approximately 93,000 out of a total of 455,000 apartments. Ibid.: 52. In the Prenzlauer Berg district, this ratio was considerably higher, approximately 30% ibid.: A52.



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pointed out that comprehensive demolition and rebuilding was a considerable waste of national resources and should only be allowed for once the housing shortage was removed. In this sense his approach was more pragmatic than earlier treatments of the topic. He aimed at the most efficient way to preserve the number of "dwelling units," given that they had to be replaced at regular intervals.

The significance of the Arnimplatz project was first and foremost connected with its scope. Approximately 2300 apartments were remodeled - at the time this was unprecedented in both East and West Germany.<sup>468</sup> Second, contrary to earlier renovations, the Arnimplatz remodeling conserved the feel of the historic neighborhood. Although it had not been explicitly mentioned in Peters's thesis, the *Magistrat* resolution called to save "façades containing cultural value," and many stucco ornaments were carefully renewed.<sup>469</sup> And third, the project inspired several other renovations of entire East Berlin neighborhoods, such as the Arkonaplatz area in the Mitte district, which was decided upon in 1969, begun in 1970, and extended over the course of the 1970s (approximately 900 apartments); or the *Palisadendreieck* (Palisaden Street Triangle) in the Friedrichshain district, carried out after 1979 (approximately 180 apartments). The buildings around the Arnimplatz were nevertheless not the first ones to be remodeled in the capital of the German Democratic Republic. During the 1960s, local administrations had occasionally commissioned the renovation of old buildings.

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*Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A43 and A44.

<sup>468</sup> The amount of 2300 apartments was mentioned in the May 9, 1972 *Magistrat* resolution and referred to all buildings between S-Bahn train line, Bornholmer Straße, and Schönhauser Allee. This was seen as a first step to renovate the whole Prenzlauer Berg district north of the S-Bahn, with a total of 8300 apartments. This goal was still proudly announced in a 1973 article by Manfred Zache; it was nevertheless soon abandoned. Manfred Zache, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz in Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1973): 354-357. It is likely that the number of renovated apartments eventually even fell short of 2300. In April 1976 the authorities celebrated the completion of merely the 1500<sup>th</sup> apartment. See Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1971-1976* vol 2. (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1979): 236. In a confidential letter to Party Secretary and Politburo member Konrad Naumann, an official claimed that by 1977 2300 apartments were completed, at the same time complaining about a stagnation of the project. Letter to Konrad Naumann, dated 10 January 1978, with unreadable signature ("Gwermicke"?), probably from the City District Office Prenzlauer Berg of the Socialist Unity Party. LAB C Rep 902, 4477.

<sup>469</sup> *Magistrat* directive on May 9, 1972, reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: A73.

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Among the first Berlin examples were a block in the Weißensee district (renovated in 1963),<sup>470</sup> and two blocks between Weinbergsweg and Choriner Straße in the Mitte district (renovated between 1964 and 1968).<sup>471</sup> In the eyes of the East German authorities, however, these early remodeling projects were very distinct, since they did not involve infrastructural improvements and the celebrated “communal facilities” such as schools, supermarkets, or cultural centers.<sup>472</sup> Unlike the Arnimplatz project, this earlier remodeling followed the modernist taste of the time: ornamented stucco elements were removed and substituted by roughcast façades.

The preparations for the Arnimplatz renovation began in 1969 with a number of feasibility studies.<sup>473</sup> Construction started on January 1, 1973.<sup>474</sup> With a demolition rate of only 18% of the buildings, the Arnimplatz was the first remodeling project in East Germany that aimed at preserving the

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<sup>470</sup> The block between Bizetstraße, Smetanastraße, Meyerbeerstraße, and Herbert-Baum-Straße was renovated in 1963. Numerous back buildings were demolished, the remaining tenements were equipped with bathrooms. See Ludmilla Herzenstein, “Komplexe Instandsetzung im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Weißensee,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1963): 468-469. The project was promoted and executed by architect Ludmilla Herzenstein, the director of the Weißensee planning office. In the late 1940s, she had been a member in Scharoun’s team. In 1950, she had designed the first building on the south side of Stalinallee, which unlike the later Stalinallee had a modernist steel and glass façade.

<sup>471</sup> See “Städtebauliche Konzeption zur Projektierung der Erhaltungsmaßnahmen im Komplex Fehrbelliner Straße, Choriner Straße, Gormannstraße, Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße und Weinbergsweg [Urban design conception for the complex Fehrbelliner Straße, Choriner Straße, Gormannstraße, Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße and Weinbergsweg], dated August 28, 1964, signed by city district architect Max Kowohl, LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 555. A bill for the Mitte city council meeting on January 27, 1965 presented a detailed analysis of the Weinbergsweg neighborhood between Weinbergsweg, Fehrbelliner Straße, Choriner Straße, and Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße, including a list of all businesses in the area. The study recommended to get rid of 166 apartments, but preserve the neighborhood in its structure as a whole. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 554. The date of the renovation is mentioned in Klaus Pöschk, “Probleme und Methoden der Projektierung am Modernisierungsbeispiel Arkonaplatz in Berlin” in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Bauakademie der DDR (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973): 91.

<sup>472</sup> Klaus Pöschk, “Probleme und Methoden der Projektierung am Modernisierungsbeispiel Arkonaplatz in Berlin” in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Bauakademie der DDR (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973): 91.

<sup>473</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003. In 1969, Zache was the personal consultant of Chief Architect Joachim Näther, and as of 1970, deputy department director with the East Berlin District Office of Construction. The Arnimplatz project was his area of responsibility.

<sup>474</sup> See “Direktive des Magistrats von Groß-Berlin für den Baureparaturschwerpunkt im Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg, Gebiet Schönhauser Allee, Bornholmer Straße und S-Bahn” passed on May 9, 1972 reprinted in Günter Peters, *Möglichkeiten und Probleme der langfristigen Planung von komplexen Modernisierungsmaßnahmen am Wohnungsbestand in Großstädten, dargestellt am Beispiel der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, East Berlin, 1972: 100.

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neighborhood as an architectural ensemble.<sup>475</sup> Even the once vilified backyards were to remain. On only very few occasions were the rear wings in the dense inner portion of the blocks to be removed. Such careful design allowed for a maximum of additional light and air with a minimum of demolition. On four blocks individual buildings were torn down to broaden existing gaps and make space for two kindergartens, a cultural center, and a number of playgrounds and sports fields.<sup>476</sup> In the middle of Arnimplatz it was planned to honor the authors after whom the square was named. Romantic poet Achim von Arnim (1781-1833) was to be remembered for “supporting the development of the German national consciousness.” The focus, however, was to be centered on his wife, writer Bettina von Arnim (1785-1859) who following the orders of the East Berlin authorities was to be celebrated as a “progressive woman character.”<sup>477</sup> A bronze statue for this purpose was commissioned in the 1970s by sculptor Michael Klein. It was nevertheless only put up in the late 1990s, and now shows both Achim and Bettina sitting on a bench.

The remodeling hit the nerve of the time. Journalists and urban planners from both Eastern and Western countries flocked to Prenzlauer Berg and applauded. In 1978 deputy district mayor Heinz Schmaida proudly reported to his superiors that in the past one and a half years 56 delegations had visited the Arnimplatz, including a group of Norwegian journalists, a “friendship committee” from Paris, a leading party official from Ulan Bator, the United Nations Commission for Construction, and a delegation of journalists from the West Berlin newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*.<sup>478</sup> In retrospect, West Berlin urban planner Gustav Hämer acknowledged the significance of his visit for his professional practice. Hämer was a driving force in West Berlin’s remodeling policy known as *Behutsame Stadterneuerung* (“Careful Urban Renewal”). He saw the Arnimplatz in 1973, and this encounter had a lasting impact.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid.: 355.

<sup>476</sup> See Manfred Zache, “Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz in Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1973): 356-357.

<sup>477</sup> Bettina was called a “fortschrittliche Frauengestalt.” Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Heinz Schmaida, letter to first secretary of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Office of the Socialist Unity Party Ernst Heinz, dated July 4, 1978 LAB C Rep 902, 4477.

<sup>479</sup> Gustav Hämer, interview by author, Berlin, May 12, 2004.

*Iconic stucco ornaments*

The local East Berlin authorities were apparently flattered by the unexpected popularity of their project. Over the following years, they presented the renovated Arnimplatz façades as icons of their architectural policy.<sup>480</sup> Due to these efforts, the most distinctive feature of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements, the ornamented stucco façades, became a cipher for a desirable residential environment. One of the most heavily distributed images was the house on Schönfließer Straße number 5, which was lushly decorated and, contrary to most other buildings in the area, extraordinarily well preserved. The image was reproduced over and over, which obscured the fact that the opulence of this particular building was exceptional and that the remodeling comprised only a small portion of East Berlin's decaying tenements. The building was first emblazoned on the frontpage of *Architektur der DDR* in 1975 under the title *Rekonstruktion und Modernisierung* (reconstruction and modernization). A year later it re-appeared on the cover of the same magazine. Subsequently, the picture was reprinted time and again in books and journals to the extent that it became emblematic for the "new old" city.<sup>481</sup>

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"Visionen einer besseren Stadt: Städtebau und Architektur in Berlin 1949-1999, Berlin: 2000" wurde herausgegeben anlässlich einer Festsitzung des Architekten und Ingenieurverbands 2000.

<sup>480</sup> See for example Manfred Zache, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz in Stadtbezirk Prenzlauer Berg," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1973): 354-357, and Dorothea Krause and Manfred Zache, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 395-400.

<sup>481</sup> See cover pages of *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1975) and no. 7 (1976). The picture was republished, for example in Manfred Zache and Dorothea Krause, "Modernisierungsgebiet Arnimplatz im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg," *Architektur der DDR* no. 7 (1976): 397, Ule Lammert, "Städtebauliche Planung der Umgestaltung von Altbaugebieten und Stadtkernen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 1 (1977): 25, Roland Korn, "Ergebnisse und Aufgaben in Städtebau und Architektur bei der weiteren Ausgestaltung der Hauptstadt der DDR," *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1979): 538, Jürgen Schechert, Hannelore Vetter, and Helmut Müller, "Vom 'Milljöh' zum Milieu – Modernisierungsgebiet am Arkonaplatz Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 201, Günter Peters, "Berlin im 20. Jahrhundert (3). Ein Beitrag zur Bau- und Architekturgeschichte" *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 34.



Figure 17: The Arnimplatz area after renovation as presented in *Architektur der DDR*. On the right the building on Schönfließer Straße number 5, which was reprinted over and over.

The Arnimplatz project became a milestone in Berlin construction policy. In newspapers and journals the beauty of tenements was now conspicuous. The icon of a sumptuous façade suggested that with only a few changes tenements could provide delightful accommodation. For the first time since their construction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these buildings were recognized as acceptable dwellings and consciously spared from demolition. The Arnimplatz was thus crucial for the re-evaluation of old buildings in general. In the 1960s, the term *Altbau* (old building, tenement) equaled toilet on the half-landing outside the apartment, coal stove, and no shower. The insufficient sanitary facilities had been the main reason why most people preferred to move to prefab highrise buildings. Now the Arnimplatz remodeling showed that it was in fact possible to have your cake and eat it. The tenants could remain in their old social context and at the same time enjoy in-house toilets, showers, and warm water. For

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the first time, it became possible to disassociate the opposition between old buildings and new buildings from the question of unequal sanitary standards. Demolition or preservation thus became a merely social, functional, and aesthetic question.

*Practical problems*

Despite its popularity, the Arnimplatz remodeling did not become a pilot project for a long-term preservation and remodeling of all old buildings, as many observers had hoped. There were a number of reasons for this. It has already been mentioned that due to their larger size tenement apartments were less compatible with the plan requirements than new construction since it took longer to renovate an existing unit than to build a new one. In addition, contrary to the “industrialized” construction of tower-and-slab blocks, tenement renovation was full of logistical catches. The late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings were mass-produced but not standardized. Although the doubled windows and massive wooden doors all appeared similar, they varied considerably in size. Their renovation thus required customized replacements and individual craftsmanship – which the East German authorities had long dismissed as both obsolete and inefficient. The old buildings were also in very different physical conditions and required individually adjusted measures. In addition, persistent tenants often managed to negotiate individual improvements that had not been planned initially, such as gas stoves or balconies.<sup>482</sup> Thus the final cost frequently surpassed the initial calculations.<sup>483</sup> As a result of these problems, the Arnimplatz remodeling was increasingly criticized within the Socialist Unity Party while paradoxically its popularity rose significantly among the inhabitants.<sup>484</sup>

From the very beginning, local authorities complained about delays in construction due to inconsistencies between Ministry of Construction, East Berlin city administration, and Prenzlauer Berg

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<sup>482</sup> This was possible through a “citizen’s office,” which was opened by the project managers to involve inhabitants in the modernization process. This office was soon overwhelmed by tenants who called for additional improvements to their apartments. The rents, however, only increased 10 pfennigs per square meter after the renovation, a price that approximately equaled that of a bread roll. Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003.

<sup>483</sup> Interview with Manfred Zache August 13, 2003.

<sup>484</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003.

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city district administration, who regularly interfered with each other's decisions.<sup>485</sup> The scarcity of substitute apartments for the current tenants retarded the progress on the construction site.<sup>486</sup> A local administrative did not mince his words and wrote to Konrad Naumann, First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party that if the current delays in modernization were to continue, it would take more than eighty years to modernize all the old buildings in East Berlin.<sup>487</sup> The author also lamented the lack of a realistic perspective for the whole city, given the constant shortage of labor and materials, and given that many tenement neighborhoods in Berlin were in a far worse condition than the Arnimplatz area. The inefficiency of the Arnimplatz project in view of the sheer amount of dilapidating buildings did not remain unnoticed by government officials.<sup>488</sup> In 1980 Ernst Heinz, First Secretary of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Office of the Socialist Unity Party wrote to Konrad Naumann and called for a unified direction of the modernization measures in the entire district, not only for the few selected areas.<sup>489</sup> His suggestions fell on deaf ears; at the time, their realization lay well beyond the economic capacities of the socialist state.

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<sup>485</sup> Heinz Schmaida, deputy city district mayor in Prenzlauer Berg and local representative for complex modernization, letter to Konrad Naumann, dated October 19, 1977, LAB C Rep 902, 4477.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> Letter to Konrad Naumann, dated 10 January 1978, with illegible signature ("Gwermicke"?), probably from the City District Office Prenzlauer Berg of the Socialist Unity Party: 2. LAB C Rep 902, 4477.

<sup>488</sup> Manfred Zache, interview by author, Hohen Neuendorf (Brandenburg), August 13, 2003.

<sup>489</sup> Ernst Heinz, letter to Konrad Naumann, dated April 7, 1980, LAB C Rep 902, 4478.

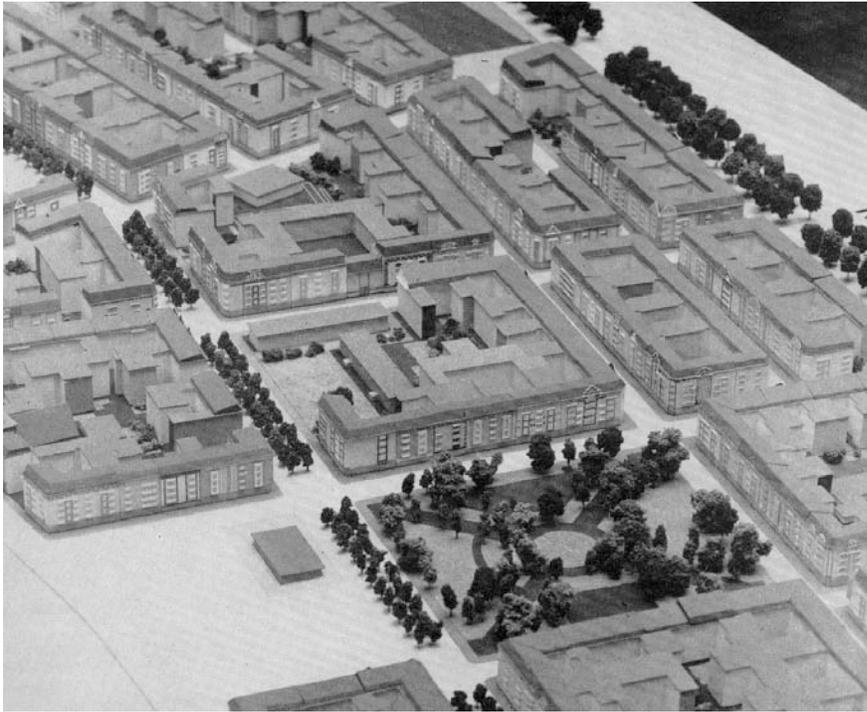


Figure 18: Arnimplatz, model

With thirty years of distance, it is easy to criticize the East Berlin tenement renovation projects on the Arnimplatz and elsewhere. The work was often shoddy, the building materials poor, and the “modernization” did not even include central heating. In many cases walls and foundations were not dried out, and damaged façades were simply painted over instead of being re-plastered. Whenever historic windows, doors, or stucco ornaments required complex restoration, they were removed rather than repaired. Within ten years of the German reunification, almost any building renovated under the socialist regime had to be renovated again. This criticism nevertheless misses some crucial points. First, the remodeling an entire late-19<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhood at the time was unique in both German states. Second, in the 1970s even in West Germany central heating was not as widespread as it is today. And third, in the context of the German Democratic Republic, the Arnimplatz renovation was a significant improvement. It delayed the ongoing dilapidation and contributed to the preservation of social structures in the neighborhoods. Last but not least, the quality of work and building materials in new apartment blocks was not considerably better, and also most tower-and-slab buildings had to be renovated after the German reunification.

*The Arkonaplatz renovation*

The remodeling of the Arkonaplatz neighborhood in the Mitte district, approximately two kilometers south of the Arnimplatz, was planned since the late 1960s. It thus preceded the plans for the Arnimplatz, although it was only begun in 1970 and took more than ten years to be completed.<sup>490</sup> It comprised approximately 900 apartments.<sup>491</sup> Like the Arnimplatz remodeling, the Arkonaplatz project was also originally conceived as a mere prolongation of the buildings' life span with the long-term goal of their demolition. It was also planned to remove a substantial share of the existing buildings, mostly in the backyards.<sup>492</sup> However, the Arkonaplatz project involved the renovation of front buildings from the 1880s and 1890s, while the directives surrounding the Arnimplatz remodeling had foreseen the wholesale demolition of any building erected before 1900.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> In 1977, buildings were still under construction. Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1971-1976* vol 2. (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1979): 53.

<sup>491</sup> Like on the Arnimplatz, the number of renovated apartments on Arkonaplatz also remains unclear. In 1973, Klaus Pöschk announced that 900 apartments were to be renovated. Klaus Pöschk, "Probleme und Methoden der Projektierung am Modernisierungsbeispiel Arkonaplatz in Berlin," in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Bauakademie der DDR (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973): 19. In January of 1977, however, the construction firm VEB Baureparaturen had allegedly completed only 152 apartments and at the same time claimed that the entire project comprised 1000 apartments. Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 53.

<sup>492</sup> A 1968 bill for the Mitte City District Council foresaw the demolition of all backyard buildings in the interior of the block in the southern portion of the Arkonaplatz by October 1969 and the remodeling of the remaining buildings by 1971. See bill no. 121 for the meeting of the Mitte City District Council on September 24, 1968, signed by director of the *Hauptplanträger* Authority Hecker. The bill draws the boundary of the area at Wolliner Straße, Griebenowstraße, Zionskirchstraße, Swinemünder Straße, and Granseer Straße LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 554.

<sup>493</sup> The age of the buildings is mentioned in Klaus Pöschk, "Probleme und Methoden der Projektierung am Modernisierungsbeispiel Arkonaplatz in Berlin," in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Bauakademie der DDR (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973): 91-95.



Figure 19: Remodeled tenement on Arkonaplatz

In 1969 the *Arbeitsgruppe Arkonaplatz* (Arkonaplatz Work Group) was founded to investigate the feasibility of the project.<sup>494</sup> The group proposed to renovate included more than 300 buildings – approximately 1000 apartments – that were divided into three “complexes” of one to two blocks, and to be finished by 1972.<sup>495</sup> Klaus Pöschk directed the remodeling. He was an executive project manager with the state-operated firm *VEB Baureparaturen* in the Mitte district and had already in 1967

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<sup>494</sup> The group was founded following the resolution No. 52 a/69 of the Mitte City District Council. It was directed by the chair of the City District Plan Commission Sorg. LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10.

<sup>495</sup> Complex 1 was bordered by Rheinsberger Straße, Schwedter Straße, Fürstenberger Straße, and Wölliner Straße; complex 2 by Rheinsberger Straße, Wölliner Straße, Granseer Straße, Swinemünder Straße, and complex 3 by Rheinsberger Straße, Swinemünder Straße, Granseer Straße, and Ruppiner Straße. Proposition for the meeting of the Mitte City District Council on July 7, 1969, referring to its March 12, 1969 resolution titled “Konzeption zur Verbesserung der Wohn- und Lebensbedingungen der Bürger in den Altbaugebieten des Stadtbezirks Berlin-Mitte bis 1980” (“conception for the improvement of the dwelling and living conditions of the citizens in the district Berlin-Mitte until 1980”). LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10.

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prepared a study on the remodeling of the area.<sup>496</sup> Construction started in 1970.<sup>497</sup> In December 1971 the first 74 apartments were completed.<sup>498</sup> The remodeling nevertheless continued slowly. In September 1976, Berlin District Director of Construction Günter Peters reported to the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party that in the Arkonaplatz area since 1970, only 472 out of 1000 apartments had been completed.<sup>499</sup> By the early 1980s, the “three complexes” that comprised approximately six blocks had not been entirely finished.<sup>500</sup>

In May 1970, the Arkonaplatz Work Group presented a conception that specified the objectives of the remodeling. The document left no doubt that the modernization was only scheduled because of the relatively good condition of the buildings, which were assigned a remaining “life span” of 30 to 40 years after the renovation.<sup>501</sup> It pointed out that this distinguished the Arkonaplatz from “especially bad neighborhoods” such as the *Spandauer Vorstadt* half a mile south, which was scheduled for demolition. It also emphasized the insufficiencies of tenement neighborhoods in general, where as a “legacy of the capitalist era... facilities...of commerce, service, and culture are completely lacking or exist only at an insufficient level.”<sup>502</sup> According to the study, the foremost objective of the remodeling

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<sup>496</sup> Klaus Pöschk, “Städtebauliche Umgestaltung und Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes ‘Arkonaplatz’ in Berlin-Mitte,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1971): 602-609.

<sup>497</sup> LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 550.

<sup>498</sup> Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1971-1976* vol 2. (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1979): 24.

<sup>499</sup> Günter Peters, Vorlage für das Sekretariat der Bezirksleitung Berlin der SED, vom 20.9.1976, LAB C Rep 110, 1520. Peters referred to the resolution of the 12<sup>th</sup> District Delegates Conference in March 1976, which confirmed the March 2, 1976 Politburo resolution “on the tasks of the development of the Capital of the GDR, Berlin, until 1990.” See also official publication in *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1976): 520-527; for the Politburo resolution see BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602. Other estimates were even more conservative and claimed that January of 1977 the project comprised 152 apartments. Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Chronik Bauwesen DDR 1977-1981*, vol. 3 (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1985): 53.

<sup>500</sup> This becomes evident from the fact that in 1983 an Arkonaplatz apartment was selected to celebrate the completion of the two-millionth apartment built since the introduction of the housing program in 1971. LAB C Rep 902, 5439.

<sup>501</sup> “Konzeption zur Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes Arkonaplatz, erarbeitet durch die AG Arkonaplatz des Rates des Stadtbezirks Mitte” [Conception of the Arkonaplatz Work Group, presented to the Mitte City District Council] dated May 21, 1970: 5 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10.

<sup>502</sup> “Die städtebauliche Struktur und Gestalt des Wohngebietes entspricht dem Erbe der kapitalistischen Epoche. Es trägt charakteristische Merkmale der Mietshausviertel der Gründerzeit für die Arbeiterbevölkerung. Dabei ist kennzeichnend, daß Anlagen und Einrichtungen für die Versorgung und Betreuung der Bevölkerung, insbesondere des Handels, der Dienstleistungen und Kultur

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was the “increasing similarity of old and new buildings” – of course with regard to sanitary facilities and the availability of schools and shops.<sup>503</sup> The official reports referred to the “reconstructed” Arkonaplatz neighborhood in the same way as they did to new satellite settlements. Both old and new buildings were, in the long run, projected for demolition. Only the slightly different physical conditions of the buildings led the authorities decide on the short-term demolition and rebuilding of the *Spandauer Vorstadt* on the one hand and the preservation and modernization of the Arkonaplatz area on the other.

Although the study of the Arkonaplatz Work Group pointed out that “we have to see the new in the context of the preservation and modification of the existing,”<sup>504</sup> it abounded with terms of rupture and extermination. The group did not see the Arkonaplatz reconstruction in opposition to the politics of demolition and rebuilding but rather as a part of it. The focus was laid on the “complex” aspect, i.e. the “communal facilities” such as schools, shops, and cultural venues, which according to the East German rhetoric were inexistent or insufficient in capitalist urban design. They consisted predominantly in a school extension and a supermarket; further the Arkonaplatz square was to be landscaped and adorned with sculptures, the streets repaired, and the gas piping system upgraded.<sup>505</sup> Hence the standards for the modernized buildings on Arkonaplatz (sanitary facilities, larger apartments, light and air, green spaces) were approximately those mandated for new developments.

*Staging a historic neighborhood*

Although the objectives of the Arkonaplatz project were originally pragmatic, the remodeling contained a symbolic quality that grew over the years. The East German leaders consciously staged the area as

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vollständig fehlen bzw. nur in völlig unzureichendem Maße vorhanden sind.” “Konzeption zur Rekonstruktion des Wohngebietes Arkonaplatz, erarbeitet durch die AG Arkonaplatz des Rates des Stadtbezirks Mitte” dated May 21: 5 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10.

<sup>503</sup> “Angleichung der Altbauten an die Neubauten” Ibid.: 3.

<sup>504</sup> “Wir müssen das neu Entstehende im Zusammenhang mit der Erhaltung und Veränderung des Bestehenden sehen.” Ibid.: 3.

<sup>505</sup> Klaus Pöschk, “Probleme und Methoden der Projektierung am Modernisierungsbeispiel Arkonaplatz in Berlin,” in *Komplexe Rekonstruktion von Altbaugebieten*, ed. Bauakademie der DDR (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973): 91.

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a historic neighborhood. This is already noticeable in the late 1960s, but played an increasingly important role over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. A 1969 directive signed by the Mitte City District Architect Max Kowohl stated the goal of restoring the ornamented stucco façades “in the sense of the historic preservation laws.”<sup>506</sup> Only a few years before these ornaments had still been deemed ugly and not worthy of preservation.<sup>507</sup> By the 1980s, the esteem for a “historic value” had eclipsed the concern with modern housing standards. The Arkonaplatz remodeling was now seen as an attempt to both preserve and rebuild a historic environment. This is evident in a 1983 document in which the leading construction official of the Mitte district pointed out that the remodeling should “preserve or rebuild the historic Old Berlin character of the neighborhood.”<sup>508</sup> New street signs were designed according to historic models, and on at least three stores hand-crafted wrought-iron signs were put up that reminded historic guild symbols. Like on Arnimplatz, the “Old Berlin” theme became iconic: since the 1980s almost every photo selected for official publication was taken from an angle that put the guild signs in a central position.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> “Bei der architektonischen Gestaltung der Altbauten ist der Erhaltung guter, alter Fassadenelemente größte Aufmerksamkeit zu widmen. ... Zu untersuchen sind besonders die Gebäude, die wegen ihres künstlerischen Wertes oder ihrer kulturgeschichtlichen Aussage erhaltungswert sind. Im Falle ihrer Wiederherstellung wird empfohlen, sie im Sinne der Denkmalspflege zu behandeln.” Städtebauliche Direktive zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Wohnbausubstanz – umfassend das Gebiet Rheinsberger-, Schwedter-, Fürstenbergerstraße, Arkonaplatz, Ruppinerstr. (1969?), signed Kowohl, Stadtbezirksarchitekt LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 550.

<sup>507</sup> After an evaluation of the available resources, however, the Kreisplankommission recommended “for economical reasons” to remove the ornaments, renounce the application of balconies, and plaster the façades. Proposal for the meeting of the Mitte City District Council on December 30, 1970. 30.12.1970 LAB C Rep 131 Nr. 9/10, 550.

<sup>508</sup> “Mit diesen Maßnahmen [Instandsetzung, Fassadenrekonstruktion etc.] ist der historische Altberliner Charakter des Wohngebiets weitgehend zu erhalten bzw. wiederherzustellen.”, “Festlegungsprotokoll” dated 1983 signed “Stadtbezirksbaudirektor” LAB C Rep 902, 5439.

<sup>509</sup> See for example Jürgen Schechert, Hannelore Vetter und Helmut Müller, “Vom ‘Milljöh’ zum Milieu – Modernisierungsgebiet am Arkonaplatz Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 200, Werner Rietdorf, “Wohnungsbau mit neuen Zügen,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 5 (1985): 281, or Werner Rietdorf, ed., *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989): 78.

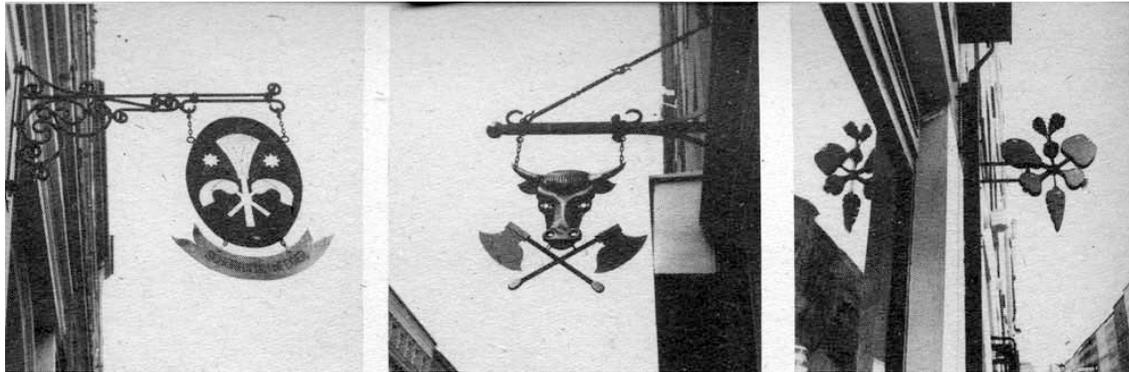


Figure 20: Guild signs in the Arkonaplatz neighborhood

Now the Arkonaplatz neighborhood was also deemed sufficiently representative to serve as the backdrop for a spectacular celebration of the official housing policy. In 1983, the government chose the area to commemorate the completion of the two-millionth apartment built in the GDR since the proclamation of the Housing Program in 1971. Head of State Erich Honecker was the central figure of the event, which took place on February 9, 1983 in and around an apartment on Swinemünder Straße number 120. The ceremony was minutely staged, from Honecker's solemn handing over of the keys to the "commendable working-class family" Hans and Ilona Fichtner and their two sons to the festive dinner with construction workers and party officials, on which typical Berlin *Eisbein* (knuckle of pork with sauerkraut) was served.<sup>510</sup> Honecker also visited the shop of butcher Kayser one block down on Wolliner Straße – adorned with a guild sign in the form of a bull's head – and had, as an official reporter put it, "cordial conversations with long-term Berlin residents."<sup>511</sup> At the time, it was also published that around Arkonaplatz approximately 3000 apartments had been "modernized or repaired" since 1971, which significantly exceeds the numbers that were previously published. Of course one has to take into account that already the replacement of a broken coal stove with a new one was considered a repair.<sup>512</sup> In any case historians now agree that the number of two million was widely exaggerated even if one defines, as the East German authorities did, renovated old buildings equally

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<sup>510</sup> LAB C Rep 902, 5439.

<sup>511</sup> "...die Fleischerei von Handwerksoberrmeister S. Kayser, in der Erich Honecker... herzliche Gespräche mit alteingesessenen Berliner Bürgern führte." Werner Rietdorf, "Wohnungsbau mit neuen Zügen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 5 (1985): 281.

<sup>512</sup> Werner Rietdorf, "Wohnungsbau mit neuen Zügen," *Architektur der DDR* no. 5 (1985): 281.

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as “new” as newly constructed ones. Most researchers hold that at the time of the “two-million” celebration only a little more than one million apartments had been built or modernized since 1971.<sup>513</sup> The choice of the Arkonaplatz neighborhood for a first-class propaganda event nevertheless confirmed the increasing significance of the tenements in the eyes of the authorities. Like in the Arnimplatz example, the iconic quality of the remodeling also derived from the continuous proliferation of similar pictures in the media. Here, the picture of one beautifully remodeled backyard was reprinted time and again, showing the contiguity of residences and schools, and thus establishing the quality of life in renovated tenement districts as an irrefutable fact.<sup>514</sup>

*Remodeling in the Friedrichshain and Lichtenberg districts*

Such renovations continued at a slow pace. Between 1981 and 1986, the authorities of the Friedrichshain district renovated several tenement blocks located in a triangular area around Palisadenstraße which was referred to as *Palisadendreieck* (Palisaden Triangle).<sup>515</sup> In this project, renovation from the very beginning was to be complemented with new construction on the empty lots between the old buildings.<sup>516</sup> Eventually, 182 apartments in 22 buildings were modernized and 128

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<sup>513</sup> Hannsjörg Buck, “Wohnungsversorgung, Stadtgestaltung und Stadtverfall,” in *Am Ende des Realen Sozialismus, Vol. 2 - Die wirtschaftliche und ökologische Situation der DDR in den 80er Jahren*, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996): 73, Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 283.

<sup>514</sup> The backyard was situated between Wolliner Straße, Swinemünder Straße, Arkonaplatz and Zionskirchplatz. For example, it was shown three times in Jürgen Schechert, Hannelore Vetter and Helmut Müller, “Vom ‘Milljöh’ zum Milieu – Modernisierungsgebiet am Arkonaplatz Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 4 (1984): 196, 198, and 201, once in Werner Rietdorf, “Wohnungsbau mit neuen Zügen,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 5 (1985): 285, and three times in Werner Rietdorf, ed., *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989): 29 and 78 (twice).

<sup>515</sup> The Palisaden Triangle was situated just north of Karl-Marx-Allee and bordered by Palisadenstraße, Koppenstraße, and Friedenstraße. The remodeling was based on a Politburo decision taken in July 1979, which mandated the enhanced continuation of the Housing Program. In September of the same year, the City District Council of Friedrichshain approved the design conception. The state-operated *Kommunale Wohnungsverwaltung-KWV* (communal housing administration) was the client. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 10, 1979, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788. Construction started in 1981 and was largely finished in 1986. See Horst Adami and Ingeborg Pallaske, *Mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik Wohnungsbau in Berlin 1984-1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987): 115.

<sup>516</sup> See letter by Dorothea Krause, Büro für Städtebau to Secretary for Construction at the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party Gerhard Poser, dated October 28, 1980 LAB C Rep 902, 5430. In 2003, the Fichtners still lived in the “two millionth apartment.”

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apartments newly built.<sup>517</sup> An urban design directive from 1980 still announced the renovation of almost twice as many apartments, which suggests that the scope of the projects was downscaled, probably for economic reasons.<sup>518</sup> Only three front buildings and three side wings were torn down.<sup>519</sup> Out of all apartments that existed in the larger area in 1980, 52% had been equipped with toilets outside the apartments on the half-landing, and almost 90% had been without showers – one can assume that after the renovation all apartments contained toilets and most of them also bathrooms.<sup>520</sup> Following a proposal of the Friedrichshain mayor, the Ministry of Construction commissioned construction firms from the Thuringian district of Suhl to carry out the project; as a gesture towards the construction workers the restaurant on Palisadenstraße number 65 at the corner of Palisadenstraße and Koppenstraße was named *Suhler Ecke* (Suhl Corner). The remodeling plan included an effort to preserve the business structure of the area. It was determined that after the construction measures the old private stores and workshops, including a bakery, a butcher's store, a mechanic's shop, and a state-operated grocery store could return to the area. This approach differed considerably from the East German policy of the early 1970s, when large amounts of private businesses were dissolved for being relics of a bourgeois society.<sup>521</sup> The designers of the Palisaden Triangle also were concerned to preserve the aspect of the historic neighborhood. From the very

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<sup>517</sup> Dorothea Krause, Ernst Kristen, Erika Neitzel, Rudi Musch, Bernd Weber, "Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes 'Palisadendreieck' im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain," *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 522. Other sources speak of 285 remodeled and 119 new apartments. Horst Adami and Ingeborg Pallaske, *Mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik Wohnungsbau in Berlin 1984-1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987): 115.

<sup>518</sup> The directive spoke of 372 apartments in 37 buildings "Urban design directive for the reconstruction area Palisadenstraße" sent by Chief Architect Roland Korn to Secretary of the Berlin Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party Gerhard Poser, dated August 28, 1980. LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>519</sup> See rebuilding plan in Dorothea Krause, Ernst Kristen, Erika Neitzel, Rudi Musch, Bernd Weber, "Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes 'Palisadendreieck' im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain," *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 522.

<sup>520</sup> "Urban design directive for the reconstruction area Palisadenstraße" sent by Chief Architect Roland Korn to Gerhard Poser, Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, dated August 28, 1980 LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>521</sup> The situation of "private" business owners in East Germany was very different from that of a capitalist society. Shop-owners had to comply with numerous restrictions and were not allowed to freely establish their prices. In comparison to state-operated companies, however, they had a considerable degree of liberty.

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beginning, the façade designs for old and new buildings were produced in concert; new façades were modeled according to the old ones without imitating the historic ones.<sup>522</sup> Only one old building was to be demolished “for aesthetic reasons.”<sup>523</sup> On that site, the local Civil Registry Office was to be erected as a representative modern building. The stucco ornaments on many old buildings were renovated and completed with elements produced by the state-owned firm *VEB Stuck und Naturstein Berlin*.<sup>524</sup> The general guideline was that “the historic character of the area be preserved.”<sup>525</sup>

In the Palisaden Triangle one can nevertheless detect to which extent “historically accurate” remodeling in the GDR always meant new invention. The tenement on Palisadenstraße number 58 with its rich ornamental stucco façade was one of the most prestigious – and most photographed – buildings in the area. It was therefore the one example where the architects mandated a detailed restoration of the complicated façade elements. A comparison between the design proposal of the *Büro für Städtebau* (Bureau of Urban Design) on the one hand and the design that was eventually carried out on the other nevertheless shows a gradual simplification of the ornaments.<sup>526</sup> This was most likely due to the limited variety of mass-produced stucco elements that were available from the firm *VEB Stuck und Naturstein*. It thus exemplified that even when there was a political will for an accurate historic remodeling, the remodeled buildings were always different from the historic ones. Dorothea Krause, a former executive at the Bureau of Urban Design and one of the leading architects in the renovation, remembered the project as being as close as one could get to the state leaders’

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<sup>522</sup> Dorothea Krause, Ernst Kristen, Erika Neitzel, Rudi Musch, Bernd Weber, “Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes ‘Palisadendreieck’ im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983), see enclosed drawings.

<sup>523</sup> The corner building Palisadenstraße number 53 at the corner of Palisadenstraße and Friedenstraße.

<sup>524</sup> Dorothea Krause et al., “Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes ‘Palisadendreieck’ im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 525.

<sup>525</sup> “Der historische Charakter des Gebietes ist zu wahren” Chief Architect Roland Korn to Secretary of the Berlin Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party Gerhard Poser, dated August 28, 1980 LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>526</sup> Dorothea Krause et al., “Erfahrungen und Probleme bei der Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Modernisierungs- und Rekonstruktionskomplexes ‘Palisadendreieck’ im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 524, confirmed in Dorothea Krause, interview by author, Berlin, March 31, 2004.

ideal of inner city remodeling.<sup>527</sup> Contrary to the renovations on Arnimplatz and Arkonaplatz, the Palisaden Triangle was a close combination between old and new buildings and showed a unified aspect. The details of the reconstruction show that this harmony first and foremost was meant to reflect an image of "the historic" rather than an accurate original state of the neighborhood.

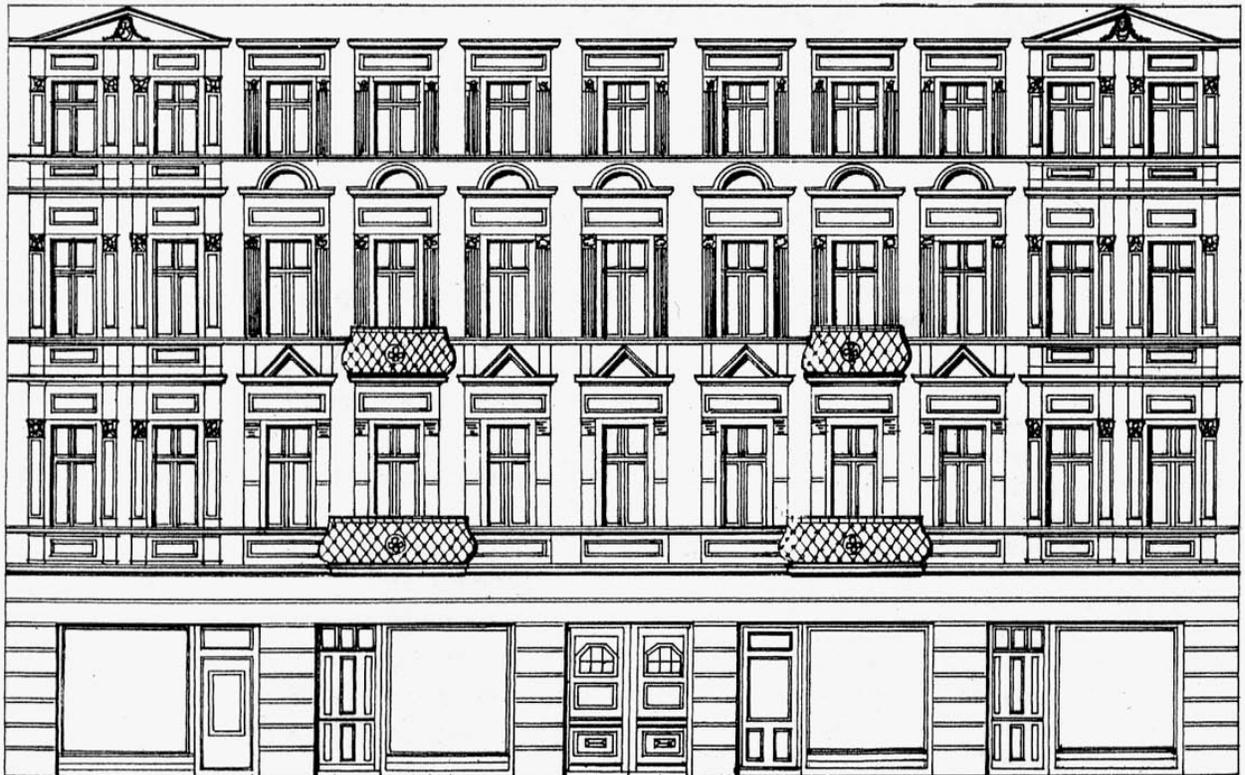


Figure 21: Plan...Palisadenstraße number 58, Design proposal by the Bureau of Urban Design. The proposal only includes the first four stories and dismisses the fifth story whose historic ornaments were to be plastered over. For the other stories the historic aspect is to be restored

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<sup>527</sup> Dorothea Krause, interview by author, Berlin, March 31, 2004.



Figure 22: ...and reality. Palisadenstraße number 58 after the renovation. Especially the ornaments on the second and third floors were simplified.

Several similar remodeling projects were carried out in adjacent neighborhoods. They addressed 200 tenement apartments around Straße der Befreiung (now Alt-Friedrichsfelde) in the Lichtenberg

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district, which was started in 1979,<sup>528</sup> approximately 250 apartments around Marchlewskistraße in the Friedrichshain district, started in December 1980,<sup>529</sup> and an undefined number of apartments around Frankfurter Allee in the same area, started in October 1980.<sup>530</sup> In all three cases, the strategy was the same as in the Palisaden Triangle. Most old buildings were modernized, a relatively small amount was demolished – 220 on Frankfurter Allee, 22 on Marchlewskistraße–, and empty lots were rebuilt with prefab buildings modeled after the adjacent tenements. As in the Palisaden Triangle, the design was to draw attention to the “experience” of old and new buildings next to each other.<sup>531</sup> The significance of preserving the tenements was underlined with real or imagined historic references, including associations with the city’s socialist and non-socialist past.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> The area was situated on the southern side of Straße der Befreiung (now Alt-Friedrichsfelde). “Überprüfung der Bebauungskonzeption” Report by managing architect Oschatz to the Berlin Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party, dated August 22, 1979 LAB C Rep 902, 4475.

<sup>529</sup> The remodeling area was bordered by Warschauer Straße, Helsingforser Straße, Pillauer Straße, Marchlewskistraße, and Revaler Straße “Städtebauliche Kurzdirektive Rekonstruktionsgebiet Marchlewskistr,” sent by Chief Architekt Roland Korn to Secretary of the Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party, Gerhard Poser, dated December 4, 1980. LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>530</sup> The remodeling area was situated between Frankfurter Alle S-Bahn, Scharnweberstraße, Weserstraße, Boxhagener Straße, and Niederbarnimstraße. See “Konzeption der Entwicklung des Wohngebietes südlich der Frankfurter Allee und Maßnahmen zur Erhaltung und Verbesserung des Wohnungsbestandes” (“Conception of the housing development in the area south of Frankfurter Allee,” authored by the Council of the City District of Friedrichshain, Kreisplankommission (City District Plan Commission), dated October 10, 1980, LAB C Rep 902, 5430.

<sup>531</sup> See comment of managing architect Oschatz on the Straße der Befreiung project, Report to the Berlin Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party, dated August 22, 1979 LAB C Rep 902, 4475.

<sup>532</sup> The urban design directive for the Marchlewskistraße remodeling strongly referenced the alleged socialist past of the neighborhood: “Das zu bearbeitende Gebiet ist eng mit den Traditionen der deutschen Arbeiterklasse verbunden... Die heftigsten Kämpfe der Spartakustage fanden im Berliner Osten, auch in der Warschauer Straße, statt. Der ehemalige Küstriner Platz, heute Franz-Mehring-Platz, war Schauplatz großer Demonstrationen und Versammlungen der KPD. Hier fanden die Reichstreffen des Rotfrontkämpferbundes in den 20er Jahren statt. Die Demonstrationen führten auch in die heutige Marchlewskistraße.” (“The area to be designed is closely tied to the traditions of the German working class. The harshest fights of the Spartakus days took place in East Berlin, also in the Warschauer Straße. The former Küstriner Platz, today renamed Franz-Mehring-Platz, was the location of large demonstrations and meetings of the Communist Party. Nationwide meetings of the Red Front Fighter Association in the 1920s took place on this square. The demonstrations also led through the Marchlewskistraße.”) “Städtebauliche Kurzdirektive Rekonstruktionsgebiet Marchlewskistr,” sent by Chief Architekt Roland Korn to Secretary of the Bezirksleitung of the Socialist Unity Party, Gerhard Poser, dated December 4, 1980. LAB C Rep 902, 5430, enclosure 2: 2.

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*Restoring appearance in the Spandauer Vorstadt*

The *Spandauer Vorstadt* (Spandau suburb) in the Mitte district – currently an artsy neighborhood with swanky bars, high-class boutiques, and rising real estate prices – was the only quarter in Berlin where a substantial amount of pre-1870 buildings had survived the Second World War. The area comprises approximately a triangle between the present train stations Hackescher Markt, Oranienburger Tor, and Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz and received its name in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, the settlement was situated outside the city walls near the Spandau Gate, which stood at what is now the elevated train station Hackescher Markt. Having undergone few renovations, the buildings in the *Spandauer Vorstadt* were generally in a worse state than the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements in the adjacent areas. For decades, leading officials had agreed that they should therefore be taken down. In the 1960s, the comprehensive demolition and rebuilding of the *Spandauer Vorstadt* appeared in different master plans which were eventually confirmed at a 1973 Politburo meeting.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> See proposal for the resolution “Entwicklung des komplexen Wohnungsbaus...” On a drawing the area bordered by Oranienburger Straße, Rosa-Luxemburg-Straße, Torstraße, Brunnenstraße, Invalidenstraße, and Chausseestraße is presented as a location for the construction of concrete blocks. In this resolution, the demolition plans were extended to the adjacent late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement district *Rosenthaler Vorstadt*, which is situated immediately north of the *Spandauer Vorstadt*. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on March 27, 1973, work copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2A 1669: 44. The proposal was worked out by a group that included Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker and the undersecretaries Karl-Heinz Martini and Karl Schmiechen.

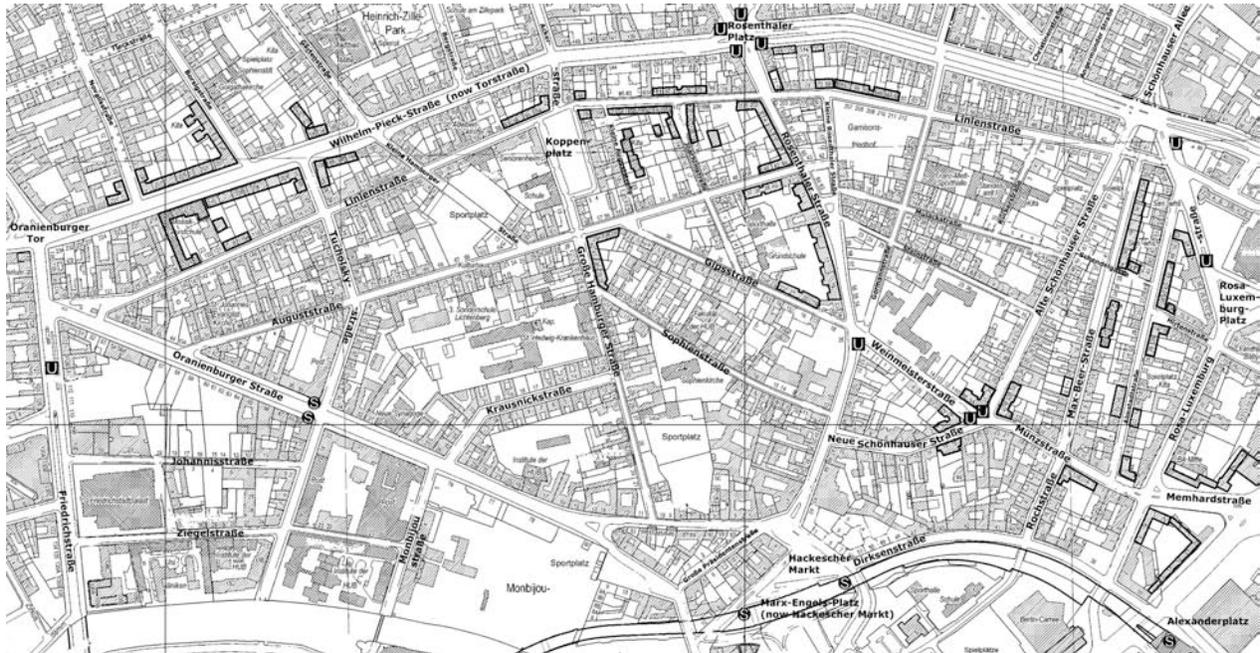


Figure 23: Spandauer Vorstadt, ca. 1990. The marked buildings were completed between 1984 and 1989.

In 1979 the Politburo revised this decision. Six years after Honecker and his colleagues had passed the Housing Program and three years after they had initiated the preservation and redesign of East Berlin's central city districts, they called for a straightforward conservation and "most effective use" of all inhabitable buildings, including those in the *Spandauer Vorstadt*.<sup>534</sup> The resolution mandated a strict observation of the 1978 rules on demolition, which foresaw that only buildings classified "uninhabitable" could be demolished. At the same time, it called the offices of Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker and top planner Gerhard Schürer to "rework existing master plans with regard to demolition...and change [them] so that the rules are being observed."<sup>535</sup> The demolition of the

<sup>534</sup> Resolution "Maßnahmen zur weiteren Verwirklichung des Wohnungsbauprogramms im Zeitraum 1976 bis 1980 einschließlich der effektivsten Nutzung und Erhaltung vorhandener Bausubstanz" [measures for the further realization of the Housing Program in the period from 1976 to 1980 including the most effective use and preservation of the existing building stock] Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 10, 1979, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788 The measures were to be carried out by Gerhard Trölitczsch's office.

<sup>535</sup> "bereits bestehende Bebauungskonzeptionen ...sind hinsichtlich ...vorgesehener abriß- und Verlagerungsmaßnahmen durcharbeiten und zu verändern, dass...die Bedingungen eingehalten werden." East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack was ordered to present a new conception for construction.

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*Spandauer Vorstadt* was thus dismissed. In practice, the new regulations still allowed to destroy numerous buildings if they were declared uninhabitable or if the Ministry of Construction allowed for an exception.<sup>536</sup> The explicit ban on demolition nevertheless stood for a new policy. Now, the historical neighborhood as such was to be preserved. When in 1982 the Politburo confirmed its new doctrine of "Construction in the Inner City," (and especially after Honecker in 1984 unexpectedly mandated to double the "plan,") the *Spandauer Vorstadt* became a focus of new development. Between 1983 and 1988, Rosenthaler Straße, Linienstraße, Münzstraße, and other streets were built up with perimeter block buildings that contained bay windows and slanted roofs and thus to a certain degree blended in with the historical ensemble. The façade structure was also to recall the historical re-partitioning into individual buildings. The planners proudly proclaimed that they managed to adapt the prefabricated modules to a non-orthogonal street pattern.<sup>537</sup> Next to the new construction, a number of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings were renovated. The remodeling was mostly limited to the front buildings. The demolition of the backyard wings ("coring") was planned but eventually not carried out, probably because of the logistic problems of finding substitute apartments for the tenants.<sup>538</sup>

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Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 10, 1979, final copy: 107 and 109 BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788.

<sup>536</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on July 10, 1979, final copy: 107 and 109. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1788. There are no statistics on the frequency of such exceptions. A spectacular case, however, happened in 1988, when numerous mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings on Mulackstraße were knocked down before the tenant association *Bürgerinitiative Spandauer Vorstadt* eventually succeeded with their protests and the demolitions were halted. See Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 150-151.

<sup>537</sup> Werner Rietdorf, *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989): 47-49.

<sup>538</sup> This becomes evident in a proposal for urban design in East Berlin in the 1990s, which was worked out at the Building Academy in 1989. The study revised the old model concept in acknowledging the necessity to modernize inner city neighborhoods, especially in Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, and Friedrichshain. It even mentioned the residents' protests against demolition which it describes as being rooted in "experiences and suppositions about the poor and careless design of the 'products', which do not include the specific character of the neighborhood." "Der Kampf der Bewohner gegen Abrisse wird u. a. mit Erfahrungen und Vermutungen über die gestalterisch anspruchslose Lieblosigkeit der 'Erzeugnisse' begründet, die den spezifischen Charakter des Kiezes nicht aufnimmt und weiterführt." Institut für Städtebau und Architektur (Institute for Urban Design and Architecture) of the Building Academy, District Plan Commission, and Bureau of Urban Design "Vorschlag einer strategischen Grundlinie," dated August 25, 1989, no author. BArch DH 2 F2/198: 2



Figure 24 and Figure 25: Perimeter block building on Rosenthaler Straße in the Spandauer Vorstadt neighborhood, built 1985-1987 by the state-operated construction firm of the Schwerin district. The contribution of the district is commemorated in the gable mosaic showing a crowned bull, Mecklenburg-Schwerin's historic coat of arms.

Also the *Spandauer Vorstadt* was a “complex reconstruction;” next to residences a number of schools, retirement homes, youth clubs, daycare centers, playgrounds, and pocket parks were built. Also new shops were integrated in the apartment blocks. The four-story building at the corner of Sophienstraße and Große Hamburger Straße, for example, featured two fashion stores, a sports goods shop, a Workers Club, and a “People’s Art Gallery.”<sup>539</sup> It is likely that the rebuilding of the *Spandauer Vorstadt*, which started in 1985, was a direct consequence of Honecker’s surprising order to increase construction. Berlin’s construction industry was hard-pressed to comply. Approximately 780 new apartments were exclusively built by workers from the provinces, mostly from the districts of Gera, Cottbus, Schwerin, and Erfurt.<sup>540</sup>

The rebuilding of the Koppenplatz was a typical example for the new urban design. It started in 1981 with a competition.<sup>541</sup> On the quadrangular square, only the buildings on the western, southern, and

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<sup>539</sup> Achim Felz, Karl-Heinz Brunner, Bettina Adermann, *Bezirke bauen in Berlin, beschleunigte Durchführung des Wohnungsbaus in der Hauptstadt mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik in den Jahren 1985 und 1986* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987): 16.

<sup>540</sup> Werner Rietdorf, *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989): 47.

<sup>541</sup> In 1981, the Architects Association called for proposals; the competition was anonymous and restricted to young architects of age 35 and below.

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eastern side were still standing. The competition guidelines asked for completion of the northern side of the square and a portion of the adjacent street. They specifically pointed out that “given that it was the year of Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s 200<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary” entrants were expected to work out “exquisite elaboration” and show “refined draughtsmanship.”<sup>542</sup> They also pointed out that the Koppenplatz was listed as a historic monument.<sup>543</sup> The first prize was awarded to Dresden architect Martin Navratil. His design was eventually built workers from the Gera district. It was a series of perimeter block buildings made from prefabricated concrete slabs with bay windows, arches, and tile ornaments.



*Figure 26: Koppenplatz with seven-story mixed-use building (1985). Each story is significantly lower than those in the five-story tenement from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (left). The exterior, however, matches the historic buildings.*

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<sup>542</sup> “Besonderen Wert wurde in Anbetracht des Jahres des 200. Geburtstages K.F. Schinkels auf eine gediegene gestalterische Durcharbeitung gelegt, die mit einer kulturvollen zeichnerischen Darstellung interpretiert werden sollte.” LAB C Rep 902, 5431.

<sup>543</sup> As an architectural ensemble, the Koppenplatz did not appear in the nation-wide list of monuments that that was passed on September 25, 1979, published in *Gesetzblatt der DDR I* No. 26: 458. The competition organizers probably referred to the most spectacular building on the square, the former retirement home *Hollmansche Wilhelminen-Amalien-Stiftung* of 1835, which around 1980 was listed as a historic monument.



Figure 27: Apartment building on Koppenplatz. The designers tried to imitate a historic arch with prefab concrete elements

Immediately north of the Spandauer Vorstadt, on Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße), a series of perimeter block buildings with seven stories and a total of 525 apartments was built between 1984 and 1988, predominantly by construction workers from the Neubrandenburg district.<sup>544</sup> Architects Iris Grund and Manfred Hartung designed moderately adorned concrete façades towards the street, balconies towards the green block interiors, and tiled roofs replicating the traditional slanted form. On the corner of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße and Borsigstraße, they managed to assemble the prefab elements to form an obtuse angle, imitating the so-called “Berlin corners” on 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings where balconies overlook an entire intersection. All buildings were equipped with modern gas heating whose central engine was located in two little sheds in the backyard.

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<sup>544</sup> Werner Rietdorf, *Stadterneuerung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1989): 43-46.



Figure 28 and Figure 29: Apartment buildings on Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße) number 201-209, built 1984-1988 after a design by Iris Grund and Manfred Hartung. The name of the restaurant on Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße and Borsigstraße was a reference to the builders' home district, Neubrandenburg.

Throughout the *Spandauer Vorstadt*, the new apartments had much lower ceilings and smaller rooms. The height of the buildings and the ornamentation of the ensemble nevertheless referenced the adjacent late-19<sup>th</sup>-century residences. Hence the neighborhood could again be experienced in its historic dimensions. Again, the commitment to the historical neighborhood was concentrated on the surface, expressed in the perception of the block perimeter and in the appearance of historical building outlines and ornamented façades.

The *Spandauer Vorstadt*, which for decades was scheduled for demolition, then miraculously saved and renovated, and eventually upgraded to a hip central city district, is the most extreme example of the contradictory approach towards East Berlin's historic neighborhoods. Like few other areas it raises a number of questions. What sparked this change in attitude and subsequent complete reversal of the urban design paradigm? What made politicians and designers return to block perimeters, small-scale development, and contextual design? At first glance, the new approach was purely pragmatic. The developments on the periphery were not finished fast enough; hence the government mandated

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additional construction in the inner city where it could save on infrastructure. Large-scale demolition was forbidden to save resources; hence the city districts assigned empty lots on the block perimeters for new development. The small lot size impeded highrise structures; hence the designers were encouraged to acknowledge the neighboring 19<sup>th</sup>-century façades and build bay windows and ornaments on the new buildings. Upon closer examination, however, the apparent pragmatism relied on a specific image of the city. The new design has to be seen against the background of the neo-historical Sophienstraße that was built in the same neighborhood a few years earlier (see chapter 14 “The vindicated historical neighborhood”). In the context of the Sophienstraße, the perimeter block buildings with ornamented façades in the other portions of the neighborhood were a similar attempt to facilitate subjective experience through carefully designed surfaces.

## IV. THE 750<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY PROJECTS

### Chapter 11: The Celebration of Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*The true Berlin is in the East*

"We have always said hopefully there will be an anniversary soon, so that for once some construction will get done." Thus former Chief Architect Roland Korn remembered the East German policy to time prestigious architectural projects with anniversary celebrations.<sup>545</sup> Schinkel's reconstructed *Altes Museum* on Museum Island was opened on October 5, 1966, a few days before the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR. The Television Tower on Alexanderplatz, the *Weltzeituhr* (world time clock) and the *Staatsrat* Building on Marx-Engels-Platz (now Schlossplatz) were inaugurated on the wake of the GDR's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on October 7, 1969. The Palace of the Republic was completed to celebrate the 9<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party in May 1976. The cult of anniversaries helped the East German leaders to achieve consensus for their political programs.<sup>546</sup> In a society that was suffering from constant shortages of materials and labor, anniversaries provided convenient incentives to get things got done that otherwise would have been delayed. Being fixed points, such dates were undisputable and could therefore justify the preference of particular projects over daily tasks. In addition, the public attention connected with official celebrations was an opportunity for the East German leaders to present the socialist system in the best possible light, both to their own citizens and to the West. As long as its photograph was published widely enough, a single new building outshone entire neighborhoods that were silently dilapidating.

Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1987 was a particularly convenient opportunity to convey the superiority of the socialist state. Since Berlin's historic nucleus lay in the East, East Berlin naturally boasted a

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<sup>545</sup> Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004.

<sup>546</sup> This relation between the celebration of anniversaries the construction of national identity was analyzed in William Johnston, *Celebrations. The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

*Chapter 11: The Celebration of Berlin's 750th Anniversary*

much larger amount of historic monuments than the Western half of the city.<sup>547</sup> From this perspective, it was indisputable what East German politicians would otherwise in vain try to convey to their citizens: The Capital of the German Democratic Republic was the more important part of the city, and West Berlin was nothing but an agglomeration of suburbs whose claim to fame since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of an "upstart." The East Berlin authorities thus condescendingly rejected West Berlin's attempts to organize a common celebration: it was actually the West which needed the East in order to present Berlin's 750-year-long history, and not vice versa. The East felt an unshakeable legitimacy connected with its historic treasures, and it was not willing to share this with its capitalist rival.

In the 1980s, East German leaders showed an extremely contradictory attitude towards the West. On the one hand, the doctrine of a separate East German nationhood, which the GDR pursued since the 1970s, mandated a blissful ignorance of anything West German; as a result in newspapers, magazines, and in official speeches, the area west of the Elbe River ostentatiously ceased to exist and on all publicly available maps West Berlin was printed as a white spot shrunk to half of its actual size. On the other hand, behind closed doors, the East German rulers anxiously courted their capitalist rivals for recognition. This was apparent in the extent to which they minutely observed the West German press and rejoiced at the smallest positive statement about their own state. This obstinate comparison with the West was tied to the fact that there was never a generational change in the East

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<sup>547</sup> The East German Government owed this trump card to Stalin's negotiations with the Western powers. Berlin's center was assigned to the Soviet sector, and not, as it was stipulated for Vienna's inner city, administered by the four allied powers together. It is unclear whether this was a conscious compensation for the fact that it was the Red Army who was about to deal the death blow to the Nazi regime. In any case, in the year-long negotiations with the Western Allies the Soviets seemed to have been able to maintain a strong position with regard to their claims to Berlin's center. These negotiations mostly took place at the European Advisory Council (EAC), which was founded in December 1944, as a consequence of the Tehran conference in 1943, and was composed of the ambassadors of the allied powers to Britain. The exact borders of the Soviet, American, British, and French sectors were renegotiated several times. The Mitte district, however, already appeared as part of the Soviet sector on the first exact plan, which was presented to the EAC by Soviet ambassador in Britain Fyodor Gusev in June 1944. This was not changed in all subsequent proposals though, including those authored by the Western Allies. Gerhard Keiderling, "Die Alliierte Kommandantur der Stadt Berlin," in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte* vol 35, ed. Gerhard Keiderling, Ingo Materna, and Wolfgang Schröder (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987): 569.

### *Chapter 11: The Celebration of Berlin's 750th Anniversary*

German political elite. Throughout the forty years of the GDR, all main leaders belonged to the prewar generation. They had grown up in a unified Germany and subsequently participated in a competition with the West for a more successful society. Until the very end of the GDR, most members of the Politburo and Central Committee seriously believed that the race with capitalism was still on – while for the young generation it had been lost long ago. Their obsession with the West also defied the diminishing attention on the Western side. The East German rulers barely realized that in the eyes of most young Westerners the German Democratic Republic was a distant and unappealing country, and by no means the precious homeland of beloved brothers and sisters that it had been for their grandparents. And they were also incapable of grasping the irony that for most West Germans – maybe with the exception of West Berliners – the East had long ago become the foreign state that Erich Honecker had always claimed to represent.

#### *The Committee for Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

In 1981 Erich Honecker founded the *Komitee zur Vorbereitung des 750. Jahrestages der Gründung Berlins* (Committee for the preparation of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Berlin) and ordered it to prepare “scientific, cultural, museological, propagandistic, and architectural measures.”<sup>548</sup> The committee was formally established four years later at the *Staatsrat* Building, staged as a mass event with numerous speakers.<sup>549</sup> Lobbies and corridors of the building were adorned with artifacts from Berlin's 750-year-long history. By this time, the rulers increasingly counted on the significance of such an event for the representation of the East German state. Erich Honecker was appointed chair, Erhard Krack and undersecretary Kurt Löffler were his deputies. The 162 other members of the Committee were politicians, executives, artists, and *Arbeiterveteranen* (“veteran workers”). The list of affiliates included police president Werner Gröning, Chief Architect Roland Korn, “former rubble

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<sup>548</sup> “[das Komitee dient der] langfristigen Vorbereitung wissenschaftlicher, kultureller, museologischer, propagandistischer und städtebaulicher Maßnahmen.” See document from Erich Honecker's office dated October 5, 1981 BArch DY 30/2565: 1-2.

<sup>549</sup> The celebration took place on on February 7, 1985. BArch DY 30/2567: 6 and 61.

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woman" Charlotte Mandel, and sales clerk Bärbel Böttcher.<sup>550</sup> This heterogeneous composition already suggests that the members hardly had any influence on the decisions taken by the Committee's chair; their presence was predominantly symbolic. The Committee was designed to coordinate the celebrations, and at the same time to secure that they conveyed a favorable image of the German Democratic Republic. Certain Committee members also established contacts with West Berlin.<sup>551</sup> After lengthy and delicate negotiations, they initiated the first visit of a West Berlin mayor in the Eastern half of the city: on October 22, 1987 Eberhard Diepgen met with his East Berlin colleague Erhard Krack in the East Berlin *Marienkirche* (St. Mary's Church).<sup>552</sup> The Committee also commissioned a group of historians under the direction of Ernst Diehl to work out a series of "Theses on 750 years of Berlin," which were to summarize Berlin's turbulent past on 40 pages.<sup>553</sup> After revising the first draft, the Politburo explicitly asked to further accentuate (East) Berlin's upswing after 1945, especially the period after the 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party in 1971.<sup>554</sup> The final version was approved by the Politburo (!) and thus canonized as the official version of Berlin's history.<sup>555</sup> It was subsequently published in the daily press, allegedly translated into 22 languages, and distributed in 100,000 illustrated copies.<sup>556</sup> Berlin's past was presented as a sequence of revolutionary movements that furthered historic progress, and thus provided the condition for ending 750 years of war and

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<sup>550</sup> BArch DY 30/2567: 61-70 Also on the second meeting of the committee on September 26, 1986 in the Staatsrat building the members were relegated to the role of a receptive audience. See guidelines for the meeting, BArch DY 30/2567: 129-130.

<sup>551</sup> On February 27, 1987 the deputy chair of the committee, undersecretary Kurt Löffler for the first time met with the deputy director of the West Berlin "Arbeitskreis 750 Jahre Berlin" Detlef Stronk to discuss a possible participation of West Berlin's mayor Eberhard Diepgen on the official celebrations. BArch DY 30/3056.

<sup>552</sup> Helmut Börsch-Supan et al., *Berlin Chronik* (Gütersloh and Munich: Chronik-Verlag, 1997): 576.

<sup>553</sup> Ernst Diehl (1928-2004) studied history at the Humboldt University, where he became a professor in 1959, five years before completing his dissertation on "The Policy of the Communist Party in 1923." From 1964 to 1989 he was the deputy director of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism with the Central Committee, where he pursued extensive research on the history of the German workers movement. Next to Diehl, the group was composed of the historians Ingo Materna (Humboldt University, Department of History), Gerhard Keiderling (Academy of Science, Institute for History), Hans-Joachim Krusch, Alfred Loesdau, Eckhard Müller-Mertens (Humboldt University, Department of History), and Helga Schütz. See Ernst Diehl et al., "750 Jahre Berlin – Thesen," *Einheit* no. 1 (1986): 47.

<sup>554</sup> Letter by Egon Krenz to Hannes Hörnig dated November 13, 1985 BArch DY 30/2565: 209.

<sup>555</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095. The theses were subsequently published Ernst Diehl et al., "750 Jahre Berlin – Thesen," *Einheit* no. 1 (1986): 47-83.

<sup>556</sup> At least this is what East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack pretended in his speech at the second meeting of the Committee for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin on September 26, 1986, BArch DY 30/2567: 154.

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struggle. In that sense, the feudal lords of the Middle Ages were equal with the industrialists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Nazi rulers. All were depicted as enemies of the exploited classes, which after numerous backlashes were eventually defeated by the international socialist workers' movement. However, the paper not only implicated workers and farmers as carriers of progress, but also "progressive elements" among the ruling classes. The document particularly acknowledged the achievements of humanist thinkers in the Ages of Reformation and Enlightenment. Almost half of the article was dedicated to postwar history. The authors extensively praised the political and economic achievements of the "First Socialist State on German Soil." They explained the "protective measures against the West German currency reform of 1948" (the Berlin Blockade) and the "peak of the imperialist economic war against the GDR in 1961" (the construction of the Berlin Wall). Both were construed as victories in the ongoing struggle of the working class against its enemies.<sup>557</sup> Time and again they praised the socialist city's accomplishments for keeping peace in the world – "City of Peace," thus they claimed, has become "Berlin's new name of honor."<sup>558</sup> For those who were able to read between the lines, the "Theses" nevertheless transcended some of the well-known ideological patterns. Its authors, who were all well-acclaimed members of the state apparatus, extended official socialist historiography to the bourgeois and noble classes that had been thoroughly neglected in earlier studies. Thus they opened the field of state-sponsored historic research to a whole array of topics that related to a new conception of tradition.

#### *Embellishing the city*

The broadened view on Berlin's history was also to be visualized in the aspect of the city. The East German leaders scheduled numerous prestigious construction projects for completion in the year of the anniversary. The list of inaugurations projected for 1987 included the art gallery Bode Museum, Schinkel's Friedrichswerder Church, the Nikolai Church, the Ephraim Palace, the French and German Churches on Platz der Akademie (now Gendarmenmarkt), the partial reconstruction of the local history

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<sup>557</sup> Ernst Diehl et al., "750 Jahre Berlin – Thesen," *Einheit* no. 1 (1986): 70 and 75.

<sup>558</sup> Ernst Diehl et al., "750 Jahre Berlin – Thesen," *Einheit* no. 1 (1986): 48. "Berlin – Stadt des Friedens" (Berlin – City of Peace) also emblazoned on the southeast corner of the Nikolaiviertel.

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museum *Märkisches Museum*, the Postal Museum, and the *Neues Museum*.<sup>559</sup> Only some of these projects were actually completed on time. The East German rulers also planned a number of publications on Berlin's history. A 1985 list included Ingo Materna's Berlin general history, Hubert Laiko's history of science in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lotte Zumpe's economic history in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Helga Schulz's social history, and a number of specifically doctrinaire publications such as Georg Aßmann's book on the "socialist way of life" in Capital of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>560</sup>

The list of measures to be taken for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which included architectural projects, was prepared in January 1985 by Party Secretary Konrad Naumann, who consented with Egon Krenz and Günter Mittag.<sup>561</sup> As a leitmotiv, contemporary Berlin was to be characterized as "City of Peace."<sup>562</sup> Furthermore, the celebrations should attract international attention, particularly tourists from the "non-socialist economic area" (= the West). The latter was to be supported by a specific cultural program at Berlin's theatres and concert houses, by an increase in bars and restaurants, and by the organization of guided tours on art and architecture.<sup>563</sup>

The Office of the Central Committee supervised the implementation of the Politburo resolutions. For June 1 to 5, 1987 it scheduled a meeting of international mayors whose declared goal was to

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<sup>559</sup> "Einen hohen Stellenwert im Jubiläumsprogramm wird die Würdigung solcher baulichen und denkmalpflegerischen Leistungen erhalten, wie die Wiedereröffnung des rekonstruierten Bode-Museums, die Schaffung eines Schinkel-Museums in der wiederaufgebauten Friedrichswerderschen Kirche, der Wiederaufbau der Nikolai-Kirche, des Ephraim-Palais und des Französischen Doms, die Teilrekonstruktion des Märkischen Museums, der Umbau des Postmuseums und die Bautätigkeit am Deutschen Dom sowie am Neuen Museum." "Information über den Stand der Verwirklichung des Programms zum 750. Jahrestag von Berlin und weitere Festlegungen" presented at the Politburo meeting on January 6, 1987 DY 30/J IV 2/2 2200: 5-6.

<sup>560</sup> Ingo Materna, ed., *Berlin – Abriß seiner Geschichte* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987), Hubert Laiko, ed., *Die Wissenschaft im gesellschaftlichen Leben Berlins 1700-1945* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987), Lotte Zumpe, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte Berlins von der Gründerzeit bis 1945* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1986), Helga Schultz, *Sozialgeschichte Berlins 1650-1800* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1986), Georg Aßmann, ed., *Zwischen Alex und Marzahn, Studien zur Lebensweise in Berlin* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987). The list was compiled at the Central Committee on January 7, 1985, BArch DY 30/ 2204: 146-154.

<sup>561</sup> Both Krenz and Mittag modified the list. BArch DY 30/2565: 161-194.

<sup>562</sup> BArch DY 30/2565: 170.

<sup>563</sup> BArch DY 30/2565: 189-190.

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"consolidate the international position of the capital of the GDR – the City of Peace Berlin – as a location of peaceful encounters, origin of numerous peace-furthering activities and location of a comprehensive peaceful rebuilding."<sup>564</sup>

On May 16, 1986 Politburo members Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, and Günter Schabowski and construction officials Wolfgang Junker, Erhard Krack, Gerhard Trölitzsch, and Ehrhart Gißke met to establish design guidelines for Friedrichstraße. It was agreed to support the use of "design elements typical for the central city, such as arcades, loggias, bay windows, and ledges."<sup>565</sup> A few days later, on May 21, 1986, Günter Schabowski's office met to discuss the refurbishing of historic façades for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The protocol of the meeting mentioned not only Husemannstraße and Sophienstraße as focal points, but also a number of large thoroughfares, including Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße) and Frankfurter Allee, on which in the following years a number of perimeter block buildings with vaguely historicizing façade ornaments were built.<sup>566</sup> Schabowski's office decided that in 1986 and 1987 special attention be paid to the renovation of whole portions of streets in order to provide a comprehensive aesthetic impression. It also called for the careful renovation of balconies and bay windows, and decided on the design of selected highly visible gables by local artists.<sup>567</sup> Also the prefabrication of historic stucco ornaments was to be increased.<sup>568</sup> Schabowski's office clarified the

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<sup>564</sup> "Mit diesem Treffen ist die internationale Stellung der Hauptstadt der DDR – der Stadt des Friedens Berlin – als Stätte der friedlichen Begegnung, Ausgangspunkt zahlreicher Friedensaktivitäten und Stätte eines umfassenden friedlichen Aufbaus zu festigen..." bill for the *Sekretariat* of the Central Committee, authored by Oskar Fischer, Erhard Krack and other members of the Ministerrat, BArch DY 30/2565: 192.

<sup>565</sup> "für die Innenstadt typischen Gestaltungselemente wie Arkaden, Loggien, Erker und Gesimse" materials for the meeting, BArch DH 1/36305.

<sup>566</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/30: 8.

<sup>567</sup> Works of art were to adorn Peter Behrens's Berolinahaus on Alexanderplatz (artist: Heinrich Tessler), the Antonplatz square in the Weißensee district (artist: Viktor Tapia), and the corner of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße) and Karl-Liebknecht-Straße (artist: Ingo Arnold). BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/30: 16.

<sup>568</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/30: 10 The meeting explicitly referred to the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, on which the measures for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the "Theses on 750 years of Berlin" were approved. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985, final copy, DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095.

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responsibilities: the city districts (Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg etc.) were to propose specific streets and buildings for renovation, the *Magistrat* was to take the final decision.<sup>569</sup>

For the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary, history was to be inscribed in the urban fabric. In 1985, Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker decreed that the primary goal of the Friedrichstraße reconstruction was historic continuity and the synthesis of new buildings on the one hand, and “existing urban and cultural historically valuable buildings” on the other.<sup>570</sup> In this context, the declared intention to “express the socialist character of the capital of the GDR”<sup>571</sup> was nothing more than a formality, with no consequences for the design. In the same year, a design proposal related the northern part of Friedrichstraße with the “immediate proximity to the traditional Berlin working class neighborhood north and south of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße.”<sup>572</sup> The design thus, in the eyes of its authors “supports and shows to advantage this historically mature and extant Berlin urban milieu.”<sup>573</sup> The official narrative now clearly distinguished the urban design of the Honecker era from both the neo-classicism of the Stalin era and the modernist model concepts of the 1950s and 1960s. The 1987 exhibit *Unser Berlin* (“Our Berlin”) differentiated between two periods.<sup>574</sup> “The rebuilding of Berlin from 1949 to 1970,” which included Stalinallee, the city center with its Television Tower, the reconstructed historic buildings on the boulevard Unter den Linden, and, last but not least, “The creation of a socialist

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<sup>569</sup> BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/30: 12. For the gable program, the city districts also had the right to make proposals; the city-operated Bureau of Urban Design, however, was to decide on the design principles. Bill for a *Magistrat* resolution, worked out at the District Office of Construction, signed Lederer, *ibid.*: 21.

<sup>570</sup> “Synthese des Neubaues mit der vorhandenen stadt- und kulturhistorisch bewahrenswerten Bausubstanz... [und] zugleich den sozialistischen Charakter der Hauptstadt der DDR zum Ausdruck [bringen].” Decree by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, dated March 31, 1985, BArch DH 1/35504: 4.

<sup>571</sup> BArch DH 1/35504: 4.

<sup>572</sup> The quote is taken from the light design proposal for the Friedrichstraße, authored by Mr. Herrmann, director of the Construction Ministry's *Abteilung Vorhaben Industrie und Stadttechnik* (Department of Projects for Industrial and Urban Technology), dated November 1985 BArch DH 1/35504: 2.

<sup>573</sup> “Mit den neuen Gestaltungslösungen... [wird das] historisch gewachsene und noch vorhandene Berliner Stadtmilieu unterstützt und voll zur Geltung gebracht.” BArch DH 1/35504: 2.

<sup>574</sup> The exhibit was celebrated from August 1 to October 10, 1987 at the fairgrounds next to the Television Tower on Alexanderplatz, documenting architecture and urban design in Berlin since 1945. It is reviewed in *Komitee der DDR zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin*, ed., Berlin-Jubiläum 1237-1987 – Das Buch zum Fest (East Berlin: Tourist-Verlag, 1986) LAB C Rep 124-01, 17: 34-36.

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metropolis from 1971 to 1985," which began with the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention and showed predominantly achievements in the construction of apartments. The latter portion also showed the projects that were planned for completion by the year 2000, including a model of the reconstructed Friedrichstraße.<sup>575</sup>

*Beerfests and poetry*

In 1986, the *Magistrat* founded the *Organisationsstab 750 Jahre Berlin* (Organizing Committee 750 Years of Berlin). Under the direction of Wolfgang Spitzer, a former Ministry of Defense worker, the committee was to coordinate the numerous parades, street fairs, and exhibits in collaboration with the different state institutions.<sup>576</sup> The Organizing Committee was structured into different departments (culture, Waterfront Fair, international events, historic market etc.).<sup>577</sup> The number of events the Organizing Committee compiled for the anniversary was surprisingly small in comparison to the entertainment options in any major capitalist city. The complete list of fairs, parades, sports events, art shows, theatre, dance, music, and literary performances, book presentations, and film premieres for the entire year fit on less than 200 pages.<sup>578</sup>

The Organizing Committee also worked as a contact office for the public. It answered suggestions and requests, including a vast number of unsolicited contributions. 77-year-old Mrs. Käthe Milk of Bad Muskau was so touched by the TV-transmission of the New Years concert at the reopened Playhouse on the Platz der Akademie that she expressed her feeling about the new Berlin in a handwritten poem, which she dedicated to mayor Krack, enclosing "best wishes" from her 91-year-old aunt.<sup>579</sup> The

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<sup>575</sup> Komitee der DDR zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, ed., *Berlin-Jubiläum 1237-1987 – Das Buch zum Fest* (East Berlin: Tourist-Verlag, 1986) LAB C Rep 124-01, 17: 34-36.

<sup>576</sup> Conception "Struktur, Aufgaben, und Arbeitsweise des Organisationsstabs 750 Jahre Berlin," dated November 18, 1986, LAB C Rep 124-02, 1. Spitzer was appointed director on November 17, 1986 by mayor Erhard Krack. LAB C Rep 124-02, 2

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. On July 18, 1986 Wolfrad Schulze was put in charge of the musical program accompanying the mass celebrations, and Stefan Taubitz became the chief consultant for fairs in the city districts. LAB C Rep 124-02, 2. The Committee did not organize any inaugurations of what were to become the most important architectural projects, such as the rebuilt Nikolai Church and Ephraim Palace.

<sup>578</sup> Komitee der DDR zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, ed., *Berlin-Jubiläum 1237-1987 – Das Buch zum Fest* (East Berlin: Tourist-Verlag, 1986) LAB C Rep 124-01, 17: 34-36

<sup>579</sup> "Die Berliner sind lustig und froh/ oho, oho. /Die schönen neuen Häuser wachsen aus dem Erdboden heraus, /und auch wieder sehr schön gestaltet das Schauspielhaus. /Am Neujahrstag war 218

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Organizational Committee replied politely, wishing her good health. It showed even more support for the poetic outpourings of citizen Dietrich Knorr of Frankfurt/Oder, which it forwarded to the local affairs office of the daily paper *Berliner Zeitung* for possible publication.<sup>580</sup> Other citizens had more practical problems. Horst Wagner of Thuringia, for example, requested an address for the reservation of tickets for the celebration, stating "we folks from the countryside also want to party once in a while and not always just work."<sup>581</sup> His letter was also respectfully answered.

A book compiled by the *Magistrat* in 1987 outlined other events "for Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary." Starting with a New Year's concert at Schinkel's reconstructed Playhouse (now Concert House), the program included mostly events that anyway were celebrated every year, such as the "17<sup>th</sup> Festival of Political Songs" on February 15 to 20; the annual Labor Day demonstrations on May 1; the 40<sup>th</sup> international "Peace Bicycle Tour" with participants from Poland and Czechoslovakia on the anniversary of the German capitulation on May 9, the Children's Fair on May 31; the "Day of the Construction Worker" on June 19 and 20; the exhibit "Art in Berlin" at the *Altes Museum* from July 7 to November 1; and the ceremonial *Große Zapfenstreich* (last post) of the National People's Army on October 6, in the wake of the GDR's 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>582</sup> The *Magistrat* publication summarized the portion on popular fairs under the title "*Lebensfreude*" (joy of life), and included the "Great Berlin Birds Market" in the Prenzlauer Berg district on September 26, the "Parade of Soldiers' Songs" at the Palace of the Republic on October 1, and the "Seventh Educational and Accomplishment Show of

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ein festliches Konzert zur Eröffnung der 750 Jahrfeier Berlins. Weltbekannte Melodien erklingen, /es war alles ein sehr gutes Gelingen..." [The Berliners are joyful and glad, oho, oho. The new houses grow out of the earth, and the Playhouse is again very nicely decorated. On New Year's there was a solemn concert for the opening of Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary. World-famous melodies are played, it all went very well...] Letter by Käthe Milk to the Organizational committee, dated January 5, 1987. LAB C Rep 124-02, 14.

<sup>580</sup>"Am Roten Rathaus grünen junge Bäume, /auch wir, in blauen Blusen, haben sie gepflegt. /Ja, mit den Händen haben wir für unsere Träume, / den Trümmerschutt vergangner Zeiten weggefeigt..." [At the Red Town Hall young trees grow green, we, too, groomed them, wearing blue shirts (of the socialist youth organization). Yes, for our dreams we swept away the rubble of bygone times with our bare hands.] Letter by Dietrich Knorr to committee director Wolfgang Spitzner, dated June 29, 1987 LAB C Rep 124-02, 14.

<sup>581</sup> "Auch wir vom Lande möchten gern einmal mitfeiern können und nicht immer nur arbeiten." Letter dated March 16, 1987 LAB C Rep 124-02, 14.

<sup>582</sup> Komitee der DDR zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, ed., *Berlin-Jubiläum 1237-1987 – Das Buch zum Fest* (East Berlin: Tourist-Verlag, 1986), copy at LAB C Rep 124-01, 17: 8-40.

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Pomaceous Fruit" from October 2 to 18 at the exhibition center in Karlshorst. The fairs in the city districts – most of them were rather small festivities on a weekend – were pompously announced as reviving "events and traditions from the history of the city districts, especially...historic events...revolutionary events, important characters, buildings, streets, etc...."<sup>583</sup> They included the "Lichtenberg Druzhba-Fair" in June, the "Fair on the Panke River" in Pankow in August, and the "Harvest Fair" in the highrise development Hohenschönhausen in September 1987.<sup>584</sup>

#### *A medieval market and a historic parade*

Aside from state visits and private political ceremonies, only three events were specifically designed to celebrate Berlin's anniversary: the "Historic Parade" on July 4, on which costumed performers presented scenes from Berlin's history, the "Historic Market" on July 4 and 5, and the "Berlin Water Fair" on July 25, 1987.<sup>585</sup> The Historic Parade was considered the climax of the Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary events.<sup>586</sup> It was designed for 45,000 participants. The 1986 conception assigned it a clear political message. The mantra *Stadt des Friedens* ("City of Peace") was reiterated time and again. One thousand doves, which were released during the parade, contributed to transmitting the message. And for those who still would not get it, the East German leaders prepared colorful illustration: a gaudy poster showed a battalion of armed forces securing the "Anti-Fascist-Protection-Wall" at the Brandenburg Gate.<sup>587</sup> Contemporary Berlin, the "Capital of the German Democratic

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<sup>583</sup> Davon ausgehend sind Ereignisse und Traditionen aus der Geschichte der jeweiligen Stadtbezirke starker sichtbar zu machen, insbesondere... historische Begebenheiten... revolutionäre Ereignisse, bedeutende Persönlichkeiten, Gebäude, Straßen usw." Konzeption für Stadtbezirksfeste, 1988, LAB C Rep 124-02, 4.

<sup>584</sup> Konzeption für Stadtbezirksfeste, 1988, LAB C Rep 124-02, 4.

<sup>585</sup> The political ceremonies were the international meeting of mayors on June 1-5 at the Berlin Town Hall, with the presence of West German mayors of Hamburg, Hanover, and Stuttgart, the act of state at the Palace of the Republic on October 23 and the Festive Meeting at Berlin's Red Town Hall on October 28 - the day on which the historical attendance sheet that in 1237 first evidenced Berlin's existence was signed. Komitee der DDR zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, ed., Berlin-Jubiläum 1237-1987 – Das Buch zum Fest (East Berlin: Tourist-Verlag, 1986) LAB C Rep. 124-01, 17p 8-40. The Berlin Waterfront Fair was specified on the *Magistrat* resolution *Magistrat* resolution 63/87, dated February 6, 1987 LAB C Rep 124-01, 7.

<sup>586</sup> "massenpolitischer Höhepunkt der Veranstaltungen zum 750. Jubiläum Berlins" "Konzeption des historischen Festumzuges anlässlich des 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin", BArch DY 30/2567: 95.

<sup>587</sup> Both events were listed under the headline "Berlin-Stadt des Friedens" "Konzeption des historischen Festumzuges anlässlich des 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin", BArch DY 30/2567: 102.

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Republic" was presented as "the crowning of the city's 750-year-long history, the incarnation of all humanist and revolutionary traditions."<sup>588</sup> The parade was called "a balance of the time between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Convention, the most successful period in the history of the GDR."<sup>589</sup> The first group of floats presented Berlin's history as a sequence of progressive and revolutionary events from the foundation of the city in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention in 1971.<sup>590</sup> The second group showed contemporary Berlin, which "successfully realized the general guidelines issued by the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention."<sup>591</sup> The parade was specifically designed to show the official version of history as an entertaining event, which contained colorful placards, bands, and artistic performances. After the parade, the "Historic Market" was to be opened.

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<sup>588</sup> "Das heutige Berlin, die Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ist die Kränung der 750jährigen Geschichte der Stadt, die Verkörperung aller humanistischen und revolutionären Traditionen." "Konzeption des historischen Festumzuges anlässlich des 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, BArch DY 30/2567: 95.

<sup>589</sup> "Der Festumzug ist eine Bilanz der Zeit zwischen dem VIII. und dem XI. Parteitag, der erfolgreichsten Periode in der Geschichte der DDR." Konzeption des historischen Festumzuges anlässlich des 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin, BArch DY 30/2567: 95.

<sup>590</sup> BArch DY 30/2567: 96.

<sup>591</sup> "[Berlin hat] erfolgreich die Generrallinie verwirklicht, für die der VIII. Parteitag die Weichen gestellt hat." BArch DY 30/2567: 96.

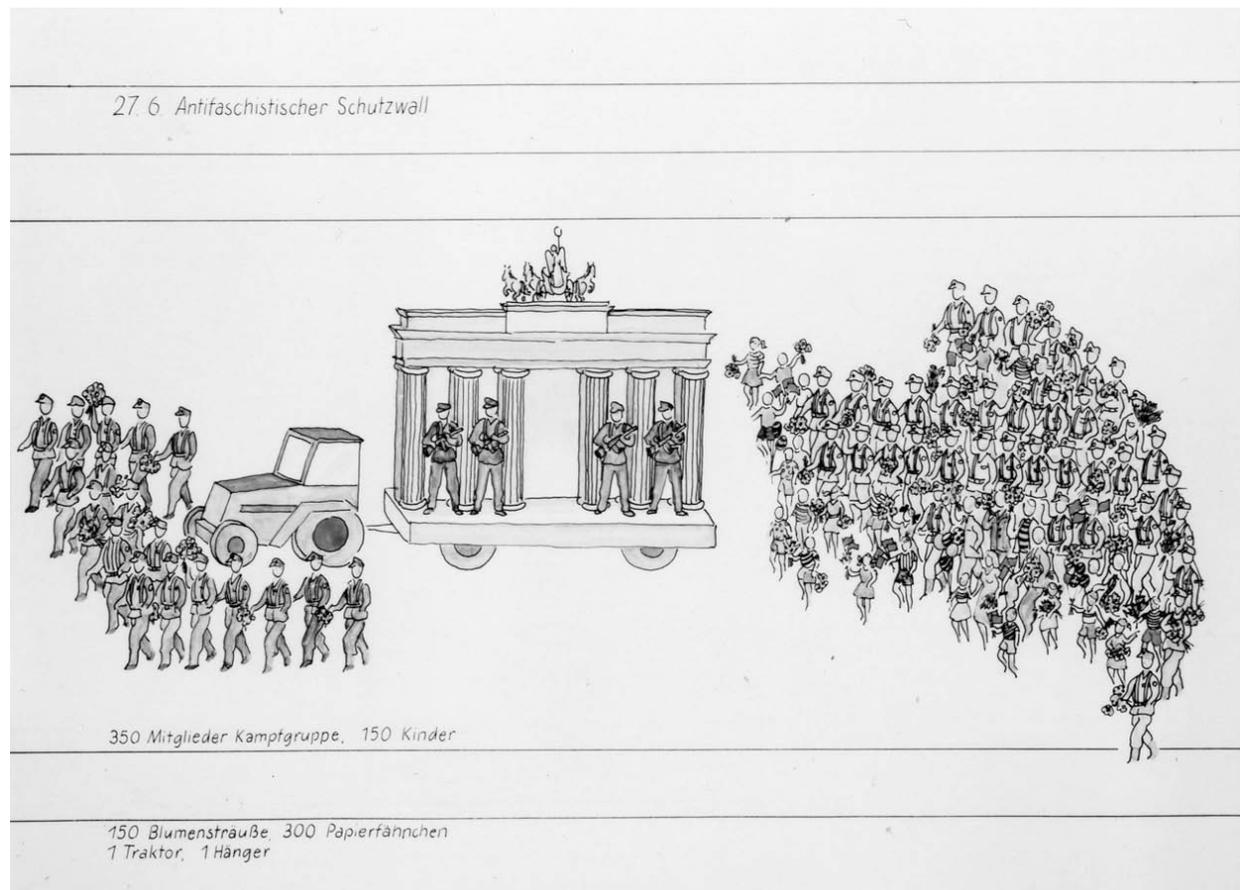


Figure 30: Sketch for a bandwagon design for the Historic Parade, presenting the construction of the "Anti-Fascist Protection Wall" in 1961 ("350 members fight group, 150 children, 150 bunches of flowers, 300 paper flags, 1 tractor, 1 trailer")

The Historic Market was one of the main events of the year. The spectacle was centered on the *Nikolaiviertel* that had recently been finished, and the adjacent *Grunerstraße*.<sup>592</sup> It included livestock shows, performances by basket weavers, scissor grinders, blacksmiths, spinners and weavers, shows by acrobats, singers, and musicians, and sales of traditional arts and crafts.<sup>593</sup> Next to period market stands, contemporary Berlin artists and artisans presented their work.

<sup>592</sup> BArch DY 30/2567: 96.

<sup>593</sup> *Magistrat* resolution no. 098/87, dated March 9, 1987 LAB C Rep 124-01, 7.

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Unlike previous state-sponsored celebrations, the "Historic Market" was perceived as a joyous festivity.<sup>594</sup> In comparison to, for example, the annual Labor Day Parades, the degree of explicit state doctrine was low and the fun factor high. The market also attracted a large number of visitors from West Berlin, where there was no comparable central mass event for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Like their East Berlin fellows, they enjoyed the spectacles with fire, music, and costumes and barely bothered about historic accuracy or political references. From that perspective, it came close to the East German leaders' wishes to make their half of the city an attractive place in the eyes of their capitalist neighbor.

#### *Anxiously looking West*

The anxious anticipation of West German reactions was a driving force in the the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary events, no matter how much the East German leaders tried to deny it officially. A statistical "Comparison of the Capital of the GDR with Berlin (West)" was among the first measures to be taken for the anniversary, commissioned in 1985, and of course classified "top secret."<sup>595</sup> The top leaders also received detailed information on the activities planned in the West.<sup>596</sup> Trivial details seemed of great importance to them. For example, they discussed re-scheduling the act of state for the beginning of October 1987 after Politburo members had found out that the West Berlin government planned its main events for the end of October – apparently the East German leaders did not want to compete with the West for greater attention in the West German press. Eventually it took place on October 23, 1987, possibly because this was the only date on which West Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen could participate.<sup>597</sup> The East German leaders must have been relieved when their capitalist

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<sup>594</sup> Carsten Wannemüller, interview by author, phone conversation, April 7, 2005. Wannemüller participated as a showman/blacksmith in a historic costume.

<sup>595</sup> "Ausarbeitung eines statistischen Materials... zum Vergleich der Hauptstadt der DDR mit Berlin (West)" BArch DY 30/2565: 174.

<sup>596</sup> for example the bill "On the program for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration," presented to the West Berlin parliament on August 19, 1986. A copy of the bill, which listed all events sponsored by the West Berlin government (total budget: 75 million deutschmark), was enclosed in a letter by H. Geggel to Egon Krenz, with copies to Honecker, Schabowski, Herrmann, Krack, and Löffler, dated September 8, 1986 BArch DY 30/2567: 1-85.

<sup>597</sup> Letter by Politburo member Egon Krenz to Erich Honecker, dated January 21, 1985 BArch DY 30/2565: 180.

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counterparts finally recognized their efforts: a *Magistrat* report to Schabowski's office proudly mentioned that the West German paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* had commended the East Berlin *Wasserfest* (Waterfront Fair) on being "just as attractive" as similar events in West Berlin.<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> "In der Ausgabe der 'Süddeutschen Zeitung' vom 27.7.1987 wird deutlich, daß in der Gegenüberstellung der Wasserfeste in der Hauptstadt der DDR und Berlin (West) die Veranstaltungen in der Hauptstadt einen Vergleich zu Berlin (West) nicht zu scheuen braucht." Draft of the *Magistrat* for the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, dated July 28, 1987, signed Hannelore Mensch LAB C Rep 124-01, 9. The Berlin Waterfront Fair on a broadened part of the Spree River in the Köpenick district was to boast a variety of state-sanctioned East German pop culture. This becomes evident from a *Magistrat* resolution which announced "...schwungvoller musikalischer Auftritt mit der 'All-Star-Big-Band' der DDR, die speziell zu diesem Anlaß zusammengestellt wird...Vorbeifahrt von 20 Motorrennboten mit den Fahnen der DDR...Wasserskivorfürhungen der Trickski-Sportler, ...DDR-Medley mit bekannten 'Wasser-Schlagern' und ihren Interpreten, die jeweils unterschiedlich präsentiert werden (z.B. Gerd Christian in einem Schlauchboot mit seinem Titel "Sie lag im Schlauchboot" oder Tina mit "Urlaub auf dem Meeresgrund", die mit Neptun-Gefolge erscheint, usw.)." ("...animated musical opening with the 'All-Star-Big-Band' of the GDR...passing of twenty motor boats with GDR flags...water ski performances of the trick ski athletes ...GDR-Medley with famous 'water-pop-songs', to be presented in different ways - for example Gerd Christian on a raft with his song 'She lay on a raft' or Tina with 'Vacations on the Ground of the Sea' appearing with a Neptune entourage...") *Magistrat* resolution 63/87, dated February 6, 1987 LAB C Rep 124-01, 7.

## Chapter 12: Surface and Erlebnis - Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt)

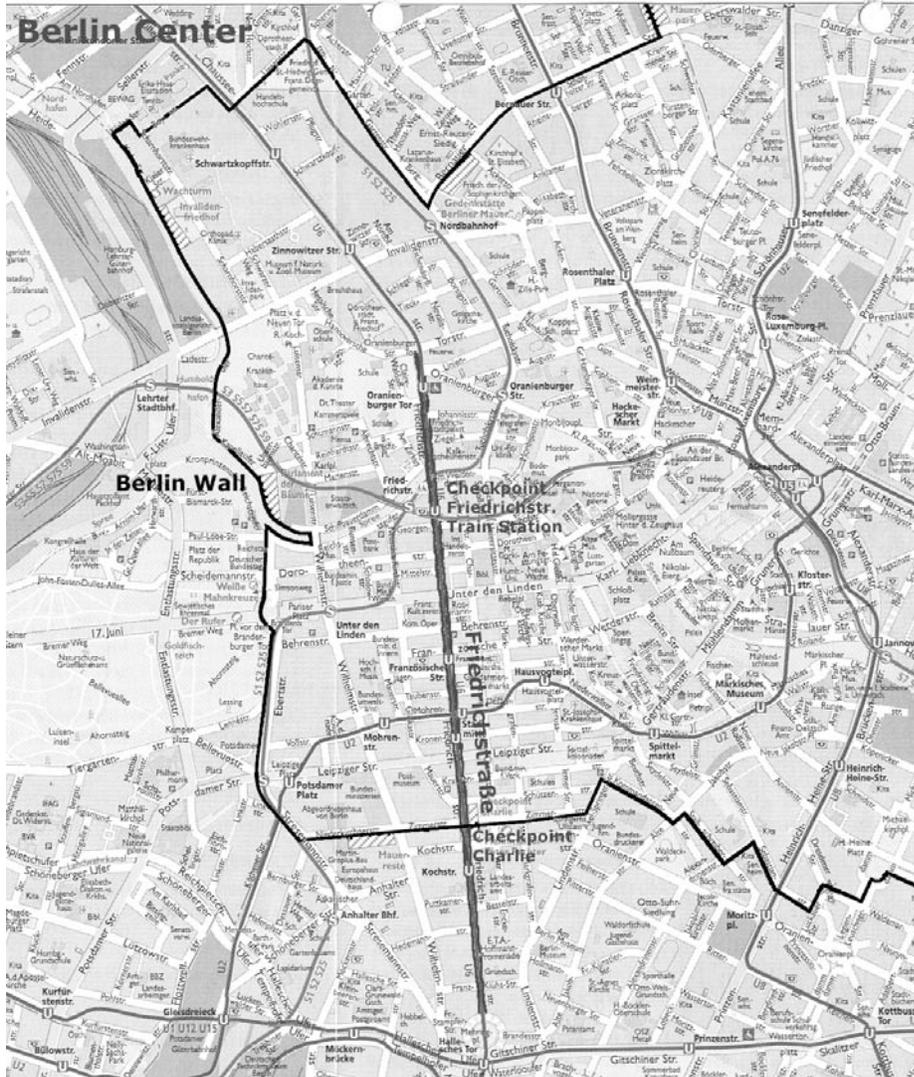


Figure 31: Friedrichstraße – in the center of East Berlin and close to the Wall

### *The History of Friedrichstraße*

Friedrichstraße was laid out in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century under elector Friedrich III for whom it was later named. Together with the surrounding *Friedrichstadt* (Friedrich City) it was part of a baroque city extension. It is a straight, two-lane north-south axis of 3.3 kilometers length. The street now intersects at right angles the Spree River, the elevated central train line, and the major boulevards

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Unter den Linden and Leipziger Straße. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Friedrichstraße was “the first truly commercial street, and the street most geared to entertainment of the whole city... with lavish hotels and banks, operette venues, beer halls and pleasure domes.”<sup>599</sup> Most of its more illustrious buildings were destroyed in the Second World War. The division of Berlin reinforced the decay since it split Friedrichstraße into a large northern portion that belonged to East Berlin and a smaller southern portion that belonged to West Berlin. The once central boulevard was thus relegated to a peripheral position. With regard to East Berlin’s significance as the showcase of the Eastern Bloc, Friedrichstraße was nevertheless crucial. For most Western visitors it was the first street they would experience in the “Capital of the German Democratic Republic,” because the two most popular crossing points between West and East Berlin were Friedrichstraße train station and the “Allied Checkpoint Friedrichstraße,” which is better known as Checkpoint Charlie. Despite the proximity to the Berlin Wall, the East German government always considered the areas around Friedrichstraße the center of their capital city, and the importance of an adequate design was never questioned. Newspaper articles from the 1950s and 1960s nevertheless referred to the street as the “forgotten city center” and a “dead area.”<sup>600</sup> At the time, the authorities in both East and West Berlin planned to broaden Friedrichstraße from 22 meters – approximately 60 feet - to 66 meters – approximately 200 feet, thus converting it into a six-lane-thoroughfare and knocking down almost all remaining prewar buildings.<sup>601</sup> These plans were not carried out and were eventually dismissed in the 1970s.<sup>602</sup>

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s there was little construction activity on Friedrichstraße. The East German leaders made a half-hearted attempt to convert the boulevard into a modernist

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<sup>599</sup> “die erste Geschäfts und vor allem Vergnügungsstraße der Stadt... mit noblen Hotels und Banken, Operettenhäusern, Bier und Revuepalästen...” *Baedeker Guide Berlin*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, (Ostfildern: Baedeker, 1997): 131-132.

<sup>600</sup> Dieter Dose, “Vergessene City,” *Telegraf* December 23, 1960, “Die Friedrichstraße bleibt sonntags geschlossen,” *Tagesspiegel*, October 28, 1956.

<sup>601</sup> “Die Friedrichstraße bleibt sonntags geschlossen,” *Tagesspiegel*, October 28, 1956. In West Berlin, investment into the old buildings was stopped as a consequence of the plans. Cp. also Dieter Dose, “Friedrichstraße soll neu erstehen,” *Telegraf*, March 10, 1957.

<sup>602</sup> Like many ambitious plans that involved major demolitions also the Friedrichstraße redesign project was dropped rather secretly. From the 1970s onwards, it was barely talked about any more; with a 1976 Politburo decision it was officially dismissed. See also Interview with Roland Korn April 20, 2004.

*Chapter 12: Surface and Erlebnis - Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt)*

downtown area with loosely scattered steel-and-glass buildings, both low and highrise. In November 1961, the East Berlin government organized competitions for the design of two prominent buildings on Friedrichstraße that were subsequently built in a modernist style: a five-story shop and restaurant complex with a blue steel-and-glass façade that was later named *Lindencorso* (built between 1963 and 1966, demolished in 1993), and a ten-story hotel with a sober concrete façade, low ceilings, and brown glass windows that was later named *Metropol* (completed in 1977, demolished in the 1990s).<sup>603</sup> Simultaneously with the *Lindencorso*, the *Appartementhaus* on the southwestern corner of Friedrichstraße and Unter den Linden (a state-operated guest-house for visiting actors and singers, designed by Emil Schmidt and Heinz Dübel) was built between 1964 and 1966 – in the 1980s it was clad with a historicizing façade and integrated into the *Grand Hotel*. Another modernist building followed. In 1966, the *Hotel Unter den Linden* opposite of the *Lindencorso* was completed.<sup>604</sup> The 8-story building with a glass-and-concrete façade was designed by Heinz Scharlipp and Günter Boy. Both the *Lindencorso* and the *Hotel Unter den Linden* were set back a way, to enable the amplification of the street. This generated a small square on the southeastern corner of Friedrichstraße and Unter den Linden in front of the *Lindencorso*, which was adorned with planters and a fountain (now built up). Similarly, the headquarters of the *Nationaldemokratische Partei* (an organization associated to the ruling Socialist Unity Party), built in a Stalinist style between 1950 and 1954 on the eastern side of Friedrichstraße between Mohrenstraße and Kronenstraße (design: Hans Gericke) was set right back off

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<sup>603</sup> Peter Schweizer, "Zwei Wettbewerbe in Berlin," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 11 (1962): 661-674 The *Lindencorso* was situated on the southeastern corner of Friedrichstraße and Unter den Linden. It was designed by Werner Straßenmeier and featured a café, a wine restaurant, a night bar, and dance bar, and three floors of office space. Werner Straßenmeier and Jürgen Köppen, "Gaststättenkomplex 'Unter den Linden' in Berlin," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 6 (1964): 325-329. Originally a fashion store "as in Paris" and an Italian style Espresso bar was planned. Cp. Eine neue Ladenstraße im Zentrum in Sicht, in *Berliner Zeitung* August 4, 1957. The Hotel *Metropol* was located on the western side of Friedrichstraße between Clara Zetkin-Straße and Mittelstraße. It was built by the Swedish firm SIAB, which also built the *Palast-Hotel* on Spandauer Straße in 1976 and who collaborate with the Japanese firm Kajima on the *Grand Hotel* in 1987. For a brief overview over the history of Friedrichstraße before the rebuilding of the 1980s see also Peter Mugay, *Die Friedrichstraße* (East Berlin: Berlin-Information, 1987) and Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 192-194.

<sup>604</sup> It opened on July 10, 1966 with a capacity of 440 beds and is still situated at the northeast corner of Friedrichstraße and Unter den Linden. *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1966): 624.

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the street. When the amplification plans were ditched in the 1970s, the setback was built up.<sup>605</sup> Between 1976 and 1978, another modernist building was completed on Friedrichstraße. The *Internationales Handelszentrum - IHZ* (International Trade Center) with its conspicuous brown glass façade – widely condemned as an eyesore - housed the offices of international trade missions and two cafés on the first and second floors.

Generally, the half-hearted attempts to rebuild Friedrichstraße with modernist blocks were not too popular. Even in 1966, the East Berlin philosopher and architectural theorist Lothar Kühne used unusually open words to criticize the design as too conventional and a mismatch with the baroque buildings on the boulevard Unter den Linden that were (re)built approximately at the same time.<sup>606</sup> Many Berliners perceived the loss of the old entertainment district and the current bleakness as painful. This becomes evident from the unconcealed nostalgia for the prewar Friedrichstraße, which filled numerous articles from both East and West Berlin newspapers.<sup>607</sup> It was nevertheless not until the late 1970s that the East German leaders worked out a comprehensive reconstruction plan for Friedrichstraße.

*Günter Stahn's design proposal (1971)*

Architect Günter Stahn, who ten years later would design the *Nikolaiviertel*, completed his doctoral thesis on Friedrichstraße in 1971.<sup>608</sup> In this work he developed key elements of an urban design

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<sup>605</sup> The building is now only accessible from Mohrenstraße. It now houses the *Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks* (Central Association of German Craft).

<sup>606</sup> Lothar Kühne, "Über den Wiederaufbau der Straße Unter den Linden – eine Kritik," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1966): 624-625. Kühne also disapproved of the highrise Foreign Ministry on the left bank of the Spree river south of Unter den Linden (now demolished) and criticized it as "deplaziert" (misplaced) and out of scale.

<sup>607</sup> Cp. for example Hans Heistermann, "Friedrichstraße – Glanz und Elend," *Tagesspiegel*, December 9, 1951, "Eine neue Ladenstraße im Zentrum in Sicht," *Berliner Zeitung* August 4, 1957, Dieter Dose, "Vergessene City," *Telegraf* December 23, 1960, Walter Kiaulehn, "Gleich um die Ecke lag der große Amüsierbetrieb," in *Berliner Morgenpost*, June 26, 1966.

<sup>608</sup> Günter Stahn, *Probleme der räumlichen Umgestaltung großstädtischer Zentrumsbereiche im Prozeß der Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise, dargestellt am Beispiel der Friedrichstraße in Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Building Academy, Department of Architecture, East Berlin, 1971.

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approach that over the following two decades became fundamental in East German planning. Stahn proposed to rebuild Friedrichstraße as a carefully engineered communicative system. He analyzed precedents to gauge the right assemblage of dominant buildings. He calculated pedestrian movements and the best possible way of assembling use functions and visual stimuli to create areas that are “exciting and full of character” and thus capable of generating vibrant urban life. What could be understood as a straightforward instruction for a late capitalist shopping precinct – Stahn explicitly mentioned Covent Garden in London as a successful model – is nevertheless presented as firmly socialist. Stahn made frequent references to the “socialist way of life” and claimed that the increasing need for culture, recreation, and entertainment was related to the “development of the socialist personality.”<sup>609</sup> These formulations were of course partially owed to the habits and constraints in East German academia; at the same time it seems that Stahn in fact believed that his proposals were very different from what capitalist designers had in mind. He saw urban design that would facilitate “human needs” as a necessary response to the contemporary individual’s striving for knowledge and social contact. Stahn referenced Kevin Lynch’s studies on city perception, Christopher Alexander’s critique of “artificially” planned (modernist) cities and Christian Norberg-Schulz’s call for a greater concern with the genius loci. With Lynch he sought to contrive “characteristic city areas” whose “intensity” is determined by the number of buildings and abundance of formal difference.<sup>610</sup> With Christopher Alexander he conceived the city as a complex interactive system while at the same time criticizing him as mechanistic and disrespectful to human needs.<sup>611</sup>

Stahn pointed out that a city had to form a “semiotic system” communicating with the inhabitant through meaningful forms and images. “Information” was a buzzword in his work. The inhabitant was to gain knowledge from his interaction within and with the city, especially in the city center and in other areas of intensive use. For him, the relation between inhabitant and built environment is one of information exchange. What is perhaps most surprising is his call for an urban design that does not

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<sup>609</sup> Ibid.: 20-22.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.: 28.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid.: 24.

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only satisfy but also *generates* human needs. Friedrichstraße was to “produce and stimulate ways of behavior” for example through carefully positioned shops and theatre entrances that attract the passer-by and foster experience.<sup>612</sup> Stahn’s approach was interwoven with behavioral analysis and psychological studies of perception. Given a carefully compiled program of visual experiences, thus he concluded that Friedrichstraße had the potential to provide the “feel of city center.” Subjective experience is a key concept in his study.

Ironically, Stahn’s proposals are very similar to the strategies of a capitalist mall-owner. Only his justifications are different. He presented the experiential quality of an environment as an end in itself rather than a means for maximizing profit. Billboards and advertisement screens were not, as in a capitalist economy, communication media for individual business owners but instruments by which “the city” communicates with its inhabitants. At the same time, he did not specify who assumed authority over these communicative processes. He referenced the West German philosopher Max Bense, who under the influence of cybernetics and computer technology during the 1960s developed a system of rational aesthetics based on information theory.<sup>613</sup> Quoting Bense, Stahn claimed that only a meaningful urban environment was inhabitable.<sup>614</sup> His critique paralleled that of Charles Jencks who lamented the impoverishment of modern architecture through the loss of an apparent meaning that is communicated in the forms of the city. At the same time, he played on Berliners’ century-old propensity to represent their city first and foremost as a cultural metropolis. For Stahn, the meaningless, non-communicative modernist façade from the 20<sup>th</sup> century was *provinziell* (provincial) whereas the meaningful neoclassical one from the 19<sup>th</sup> century was *weltstädtisch* (metropolitan).<sup>615</sup>

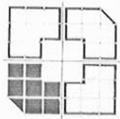
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<sup>612</sup> “Verhaltensweisen produziert und stimuliert” Ibid.: 21-24.

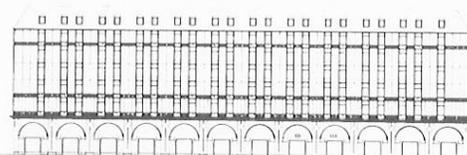
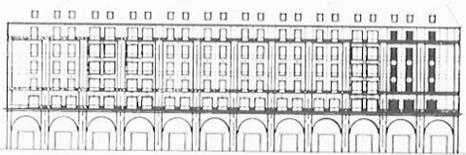
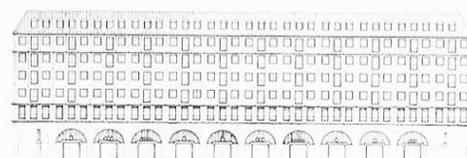
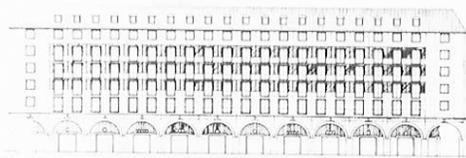
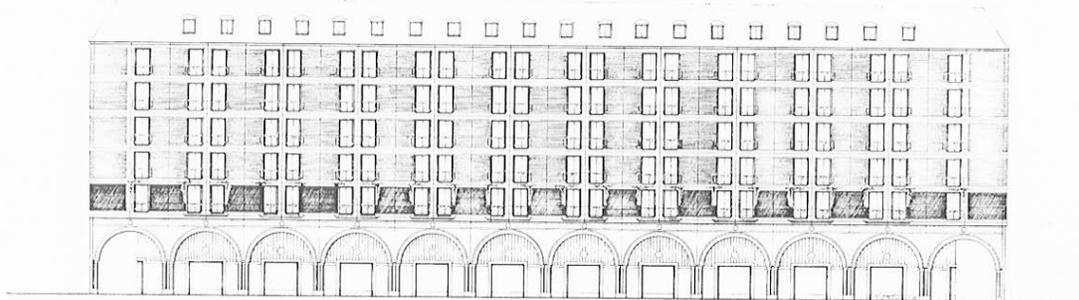
<sup>613</sup> Bense was born in 1910 and died in 1990. Since 1949, he was a professor at the Technische Hochschule Stuttgart.

<sup>614</sup> Günter Stahn, *Probleme der räumlichen Umgestaltung großstädtischer Zentrumsbereiche im Prozeß der Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise, dargestellt am Beispiel der Friedrichstraße in Berlin*, Doctoral Dissertation A (Ph.D. Thesis), Building Academy, Department of Architecture, East Berlin, 1971: 33.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.: 32.



# VARIABLE GEBÄUDELÖSUNGEN IN GROSSTAFELBAUWEISE - WBS 70 - FÜR BERLIN - HAUPTSTADT DER DDR



## STANDORT 1 : FRIEDRICHSTRASSE ANSICHTEN VARIANTEN

ENTWURF: DR. ING. GÜNTER STAHN  
DIPL. ING. ACHIM WOLFF



Figure 32: Günter Stahn and Achim Wolff, design proposal for neo-historical façades on Friedrichstraße. The proposal was part of the internal competition *Variable Gebäudelösungen in Großtafelbauweise* (Variable Solutions to Prefab Slab Buildings), which was organized by the construction company Ingenieurhochbau in 1982.

Stahn's proposal for a diversified, aesthetically pleasing, and functionally satisfactory environment did not pay particular attention to historical buildings nor does it rely upon incremental implementation. It did not question the amplification of Friedrichstraße from 22 to 60 meters at the expense of most remaining old buildings but rather proposed to take out existing structures whenever they did not fit

*Chapter 12: Surface and Erlebnis - Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt)*

into his proposed sequence of building volumes and heights.<sup>616</sup> At the same time it introduced a notion of urban design as a meaningful surface and backdrop for the pageant of life, oriented towards individual human activity and at the same time carefully staged. Neo-historical forms were part and parcel of this strategy. When the rebuilding of Friedrichstraße was started in the 1980s, Stahn's proposals significantly influenced the final design. As an employee of the state-owned construction firm *Ingenieurhochbau*, Stahn was responsible for preparatory planning and worked on the design of various façades.

*Decisions in the Politburo*

In 1976, the Politburo eventually decided to rebuild Friedrichstraße and the surrounding areas. The plan was very different from the East German urban design projects of the 1960s. Friedrichstraße was to be recreated as similar as possible to its prewar aspect without building an exact copy. The remaining old buildings were to be preserved. New buildings were to repeat the historic backyards, building heights, and block perimeter; the façade design was to freely interpret the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century ornaments. In the same year, Ehrhardt Gißke's powerful Department of Special Construction commissioned a study on the rebuilding options of the Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt) one block east of Friedrichstraße.<sup>617</sup> The study was worked out by a team around Gißke's protégé Manfred Prasser. Prasser had gained Gißke's favor working on the Palace of the Republic, where he designed the Great Assembly Hall. Due to the support of his mentor, he subsequently directed the Platz der Akademie rebuilding and collaborated on the design of various buildings on both Platz der Akademie and Friedrichstraße, including the Playhouse, Friedrichstadt Palace, the *Grand Hotel*, and the Friedrichstadt Arcades. Prasser's buildings followed a historicizing design; at the same time he claimed that this was also supported by Ehrhardt Gißke.<sup>618</sup> His study contains numerous characteristics that were later realized. Façades are lushly decorated with neoclassical elements, arbors pass along the edges of the square. Large blocks are divided into individually designed buildings – a homage to the

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid. Stahn's design proposal is shown on three drawings between pages 49 and 50.

<sup>617</sup> *Magistrat* von Berlin, Abteilung Kultur, ed., *Studie Platz der Akademie* (East Berlin, 1976).

<sup>618</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

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historic aspect that did not go uncontested. According to Prasser, some party officials deemed it deceptive that a socialist regime would attempt to convey the impression of individual building ownership.<sup>619</sup> Prasser's vision for the new Platz der Akademie could hardly be more different from the reality at the time. In the 1970s, at least compared to a capitalist city center, the area around Friedrichstraße was bleak. At the time, a West Berlin journalist described the few shop windows as carelessly decorated and the ambiance in the few remaining cafés as gloomy. According to his account, there was nothing left that even remotely reminded the inspiring nightlife of the Roaring Twenties.<sup>620</sup>

After 1976, the Friedrichstraße redesign was concretized on three other Politburo meetings in January 1984, January 1985, and February 1985.<sup>621</sup> A 1980 document listed a number of mandatory design principles for Friedrichstraße – most had already been part of Prasser's 1976 Platz der Akademie study: preservation of the historic block perimeters and building heights, mixed-use with storefronts on the ground floors, and the "restoration of the historic structure of the neighborhood."<sup>622</sup> This suggests that the basic conception was similar for both Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie and did not substantially change since 1976. Since the early 1980s, a work group *Staatliche Leiter Friedrichstraße* ("state directors Friedrichstraße") was responsible for general planning tasks in the area.<sup>623</sup> Head of state Erich Honecker closely observed the project.<sup>624</sup> On February 5, 1985, he

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<sup>619</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

<sup>620</sup> Ralf Grauer, "Berlins Zentrum verödet im Abseits," *Volksblatt* November 13, 1983.

<sup>621</sup> Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037, Politburo meeting on January 22, 1985 BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2095, Politburo meeting on February 5, 1985 BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2097. See also decree issued by the Polituro in January 1984 that mandates the preservation of the "characteristic city structure." BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037: 166.

<sup>622</sup> "Wiederherstellung der historischen Quartierstruktur, Beibehaltung vorhandener Baufluchten, Einhaltung der vorhandenen Bebauungshöhe, Gesellschaftliche Nutzung der Erdgeschoßzone" letter by Heinz Willumat, director of the Bureau of Urban Design, to Gerhard Poser, Secretary for Construction Industry at the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, dated June 5, 1980. The letter was written on the occasion of a request by the director of the Komische Oper, Werner Rackwitz, who wanted to build an annex for his opera house. LAB C Rep 902, 4480.

<sup>623</sup> The group had existed since 1984. Among the – changing – group members were Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker (director), undersecretary Karl-Heinz Martini (deputy director), Ehrhardt Gißke, and East Berlin mayor Erhart Krack. See resolution dated February 10, 1984 BArch DH 1/35670.

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approved the “general conception” and officially assigned Ehrhardt Gißke’s office the supreme authority over the project.<sup>625</sup> Nine years after the first decision in the Politburo, Friedrichstraße was finally to become a showcase project of East Berlin’s historic revival.

*The Friedrichstraße competition (1979)*

Between September 1979 and January 1980 the *Magistrat* called for proposals to redesign the southern part of Friedrichstraße between Spree River and Leipziger Straße.<sup>626</sup> The competition *Friedrichstraße Süd* (Friedrichstraße South) was open to international architects. The East Berlin administration invited the Chief architects of Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, and Sofia; a total of 35 proposals were submitted.<sup>627</sup> The call for proposals already mandated the preservation of the basic historic structure, the historic building height. Existing buildings were to be “largely preserved.” It also suggested a multifunctional use with “diverse institutions with great appeal to the public.”<sup>628</sup> Among the submissions, especially the proposal of Bernd Ettl and Christian Enzmann with its representative

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<sup>624</sup> The Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984 referred to a reunion with Honecker two weeks before, suggesting Honecker’s active participation in the design process. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037.

<sup>625</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 5, 1985, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2097: 44. The general contractor was to be the state firm *Ingenieurhochbau*. Exceptions were only “Block 102,” “Block 404,” and “Block 408.” BArch DH 1/35670: 7.

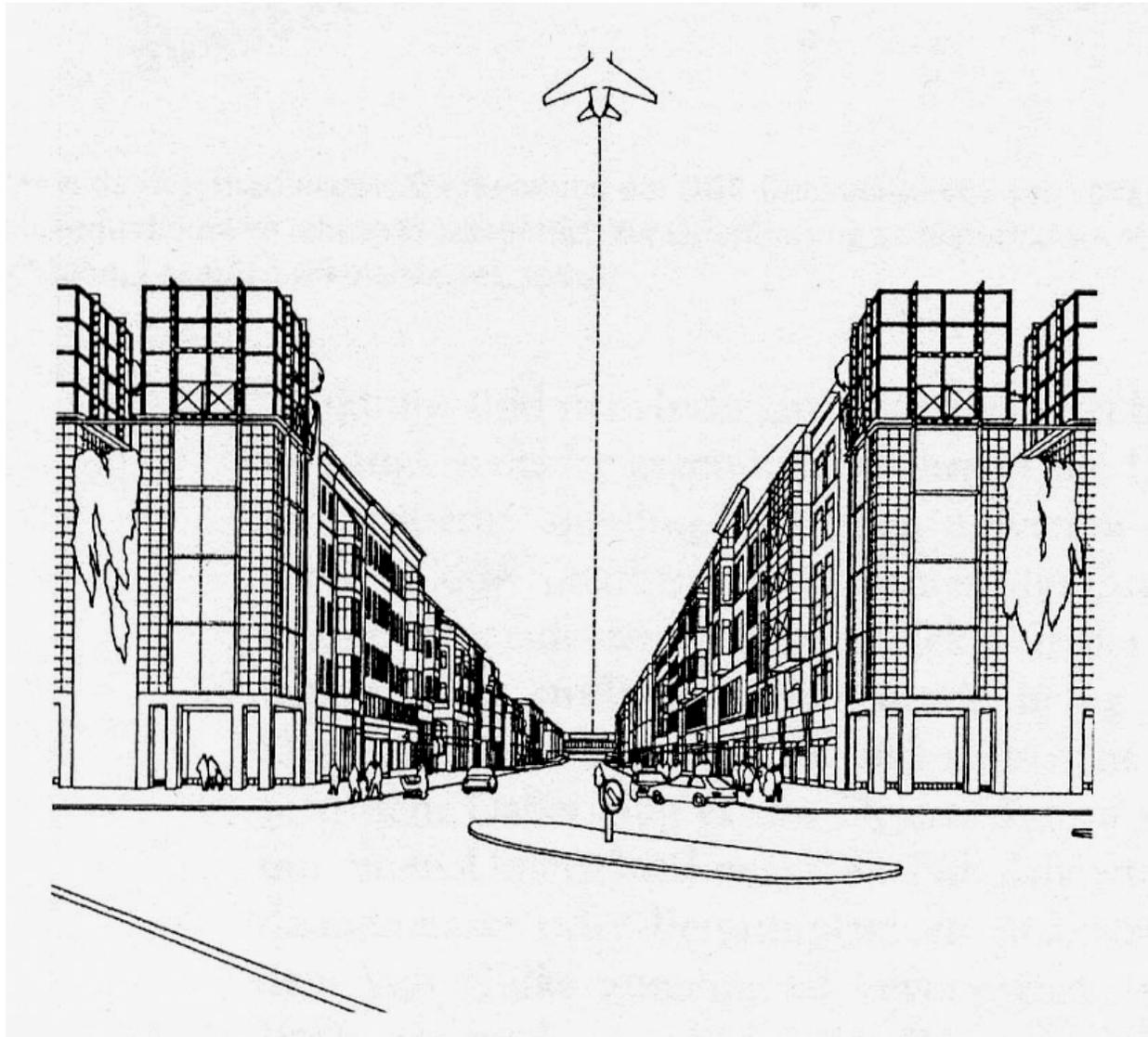
<sup>626</sup> Simone Hain, “Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr der Stadt,” in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 344 The former archive of the *Magistrat* contains a series of photographs of the models, unfortunately without the names of the authors. A handwritten remark on one photo mentions that the proposals of Heinz Willumat, Heinz Krause, the collective Arzt, and the collective Trebs were purchased, another form of recognition for entries that did not receive a prize. See Photo Archive of the Berlinische Galerie, BG-AS-1436-002873. The same series of documents also mentioned the winners of the second prize in the competition Friedrichstraße Nord of 1983, Heinz Kristen, and again the collective(s) of Willumat, Krause, Arzt, and Trebs. Photo Archive of the Berlinische Galerie BG-AS 1436-002888, No. 82-884 and 82-885.

<sup>627</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, ed., *Berlin Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße gestern und heute: Konzeption und Baumaßnahmen bis 1987* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR/Bauinformation, 1987): 41.

<sup>628</sup> “Die Friedrichstraße soll eine multifunktionelle Nutzung ermöglichen, mit vielfältigen publikumswirksamen Einrichtungen und Wohnungen.” Call for Proposals Friedrichstraße Süd, 1979, quoted in Ehrhardt Gißke (authors collective), *Berlin Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße gestern und heute: Konzeption und Baumaßnahmen bis 1987* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR/Bauinformation, 1987): 41. The competition was preceded by a study that recorded the current situation of the boulevard. See photos in Photo Archive of the Berlinische Galerie BG-AS 1436-002875, No. 84-61 to 84-69.

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and at the same time highly geometrical façades was much discussed – its formal language, according to contemporary observers, was so extraordinary in an East German context that it was long thought it had been authored by Soviet architects. It eventually received the second prize.<sup>629</sup>



*Figure 33: Bernd Ettel and Christian Enzmann, proposal for the competition Friedrichstraße South, 1979 (second prize)*

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<sup>629</sup> Cp. Wolfgang Kil, interview by author, Berlin, February 7, 2005 and Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow, May 2, 2005. Three years later, Ettel and Enzmann were arrested and tried for submitting an allegedly subversive proposal to the Bersarinplatz competition (see footnote in the subchapter "Subversive Research," chapter 7 "Academic Research and the Individualized View on the City").

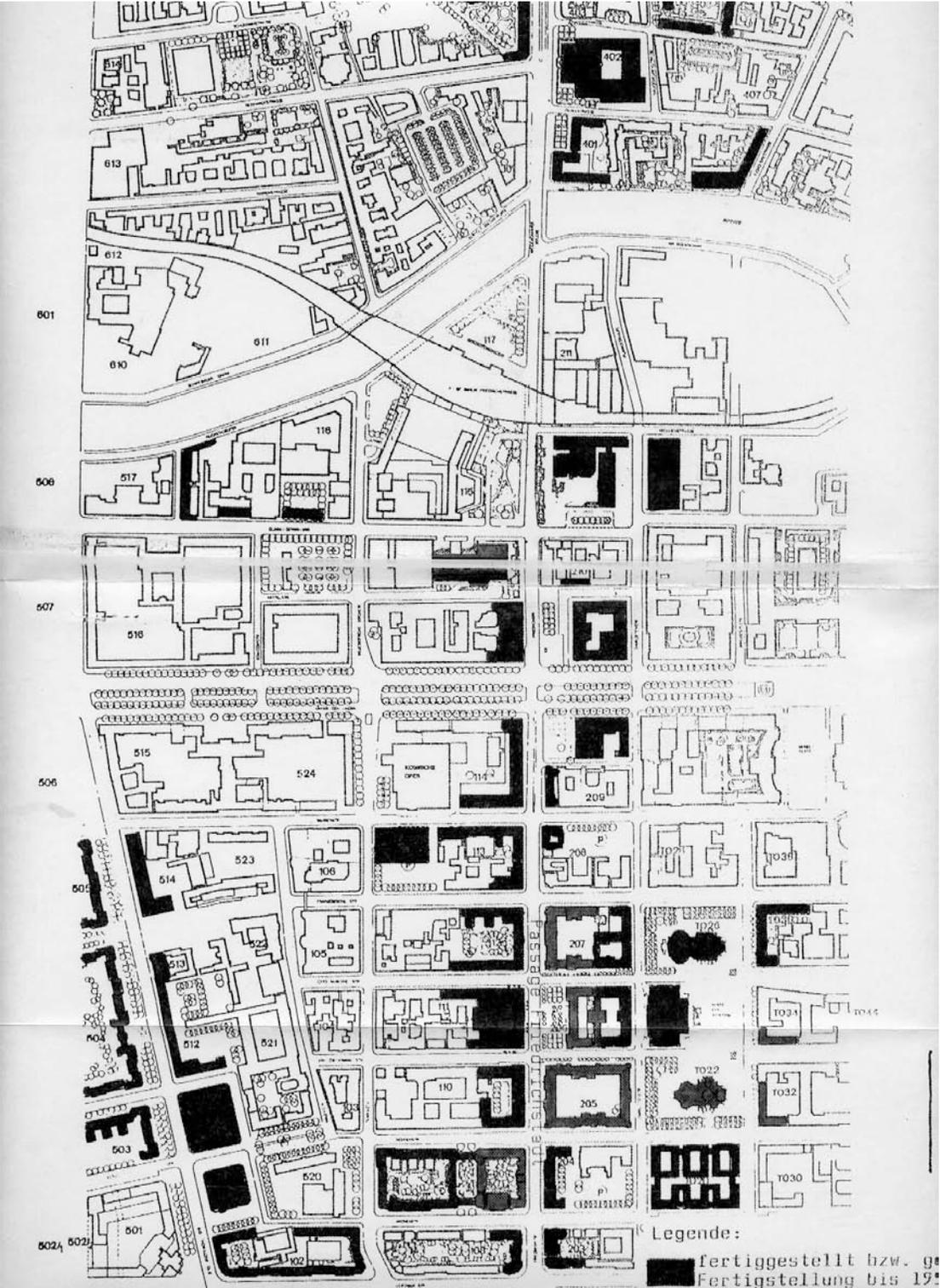


Figure 34: Friedrichstraße, plan from 1986 with planned buildings.

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The final master plan for Friedrichstraße did not derive from one single proposal, but the results of the competition were synthesized at Bureau of Urban Design under the direction of the leading architect of the Mitte city district Solveig Steller.<sup>630</sup> The result was a directive, confirmed by Chief Architect Roland Korn on June 30, 1981, which promised to create an “interesting, metropolitan atmosphere.”<sup>631</sup>

### *Passagen Friedrichstadt*

The East German leaders envisioned a glitzy entertainment district unheard of under the “real existing socialism.”<sup>632</sup> Its focal point was the *Passagen Friedrichstadt* (Friedrichstadt Arcades), a glamorous shopping and entertainment center on the eastern side of the boulevard between Französische Straße und Mohrenstraße. The concept was developed by a work group at the Ministry of Construction under the direction of undersecretary Karl-Heinz Martini; Manfred Prasser collaborated on the final design.<sup>633</sup> Had the ambitious plans of the East German leaders come to fruition, this portion of Friedrichstraße would have been hardly distinguishable from a swanky West German commercial boulevard. The project was scheduled for completion by 1992.<sup>634</sup> Over the course of its construction, it was substantially downgraded for economic reasons, and the shell was eventually demolished after the German reunification.

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<sup>630</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke (authors collective), *Berlin Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße gestern und heute: Konzeption und Baumaßnahmen bis 1987* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR/Bauinformation, 1987): 42.

<sup>631</sup> “interessante, großstädtische Atmosphäre” Ehrhardt Gißke (authors collective), *Berlin Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße gestern und heute: Konzeption und Baumaßnahmen bis 1987* (East Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR/Bauinformation, 1987): 42 Korn also mentioned that architect Fritz Kalusche significantly contributed to working out a detailed master plan. In 1983, the design process was completed by the competition *Friedrichstraße Nord*, which comprised the northern part of the boulevard between Spree River and Oranienburger Tor. see Simone Hain, “Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr der Stadt,” in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 344. Photographs of some of the entries (without names of the authors) can be found at the Photo Archive of the Berlinische Galerie BG-AS 1436-002888.

<sup>632</sup> See the proposal signed by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, head of the state planning commission Gerhard Schürer and East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack with the title “Information zur weiteren Durchführung des Investitionskomplexes Friedrichstraße/Otto-Grotewohl-Straße in der Hauptstadt Berlin, insbesondere für den Zeitraum bis 1990” dated August 18, 1988. It was authored by a work group at the Ministry of Construction under the direction of undersecretary Karl-Heinz Martini and presented to the Politburo, BArch DY 30/2847: 170-187.

<sup>633</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 21, 2004.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid*: 176.

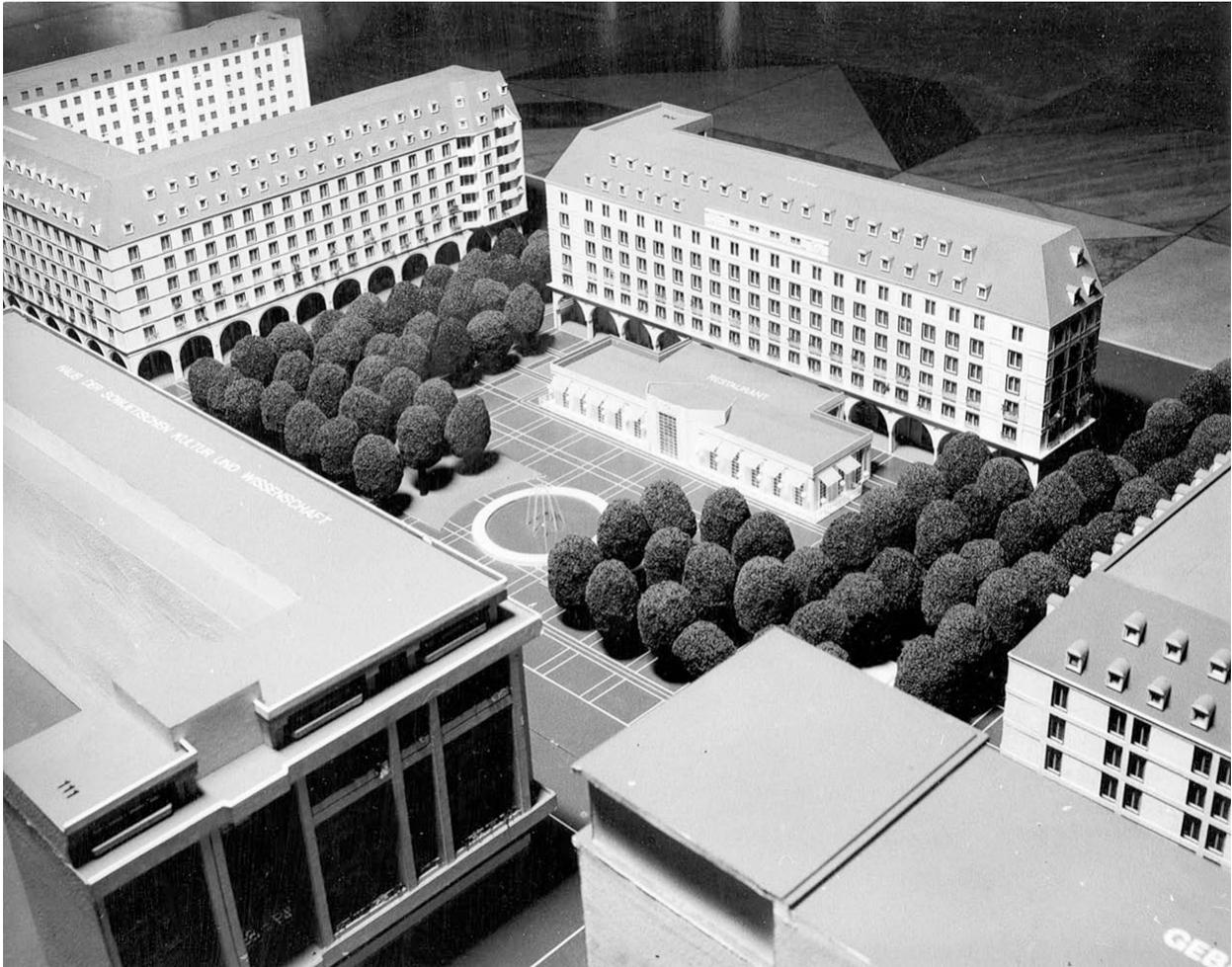


Figure 35: Friedrichstadt Arcades, model, early version, later dismissed (1984)



Figure 36: Friedrichstadt Arcades, model (later version, 1987, partially built, shell demolished after 1990)

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Versions from the early 1980s were still rather modest. They show three separate buildings with arbors and neoclassical façades similar to those carried out at the Platz der Akademie and at the *Grand Hotel*.<sup>635</sup> The left building was to contain a hotel. Later versions from the mid-1980s were more extravagant. The Friedrichstadt Arcades were now to stretch over three blocks. The descriptions and drawings bear a stronger resemblance to a flashy capitalist shopping center rather than a supply store in a consumer-reticent socialist country. They show a row of three interconnected buildings with a four-story shopping area in the middle, covered by a glass dome. It included a "palm-tree house," a restaurant area, and an "atrium-like department store."<sup>636</sup> The visitor was invited to wander through the building on transparent catwalks, stairs, and bridges that provided carefully designed vistas.<sup>637</sup> All interior spaces were to be air-conditioned, which was a novelty in East Germany. They were to comprise 105 shops, 4 department stores, and no fewer than 44 restaurants.<sup>638</sup> Above the shopping and entertainment zone, the Friedrichstadt Arcades were to contain luxurious apartments stretching over two stories and facing green backyards and winter gardens. The architects pointed out that this was to support the "unity of living and working and the connection of both with different public spaces."<sup>639</sup> They nevertheless did not mention how the inhabitants of those luxurious spaces were to be selected among the 70,000 East German citizens who at the time were applying for an apartment and who had been on the waiting lists for years.<sup>640</sup> The official practice at the time can be read from official regulations. It was mandated that new apartments were preferentially allocated to certain elite

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<sup>635</sup> The early version was exhibited on the 15<sup>th</sup> District Delegates Conference in 1984. See caption on the backside of the photo, IRS Erkner.

<sup>636</sup> Design proposal commissioned by the Ministry of Construction in June 1986 and authored by the state-owned construction company VEB BMK Ingenieurhochbau Berlin, BArch DH 1/36355: 5 The design proposal for the building was carried out by the state construction firm *Ingenieurhochbau* Berlin. It had been commissioned by the Ministry of Construction on June 27, 1986 and was turned in on March 31, 1987. BArch DH 1/36355: 3.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*: 9.

<sup>638</sup> BArch DY 30/2847: 176. The proposal explicitly included stores and bars that one would not normally expect in a State of Workers and Farmers, such as a jeweler's store, a porcelain shop, a "Jeans Store," a fashion boutique ("City Tex"), a discotheque, and a *Nachtbar* (night bar).

<sup>639</sup> "Ein wichtiges gesellschaftspolitisches Ziel ist die Einheit von Arbeiten und Wohnen in Verflechtung mit Öffentlichkeitsbereichen zu erreichen." BArch DH 1/36355: 14.

<sup>640</sup> The number refers to the amount of apartments applied for in 1989. Insitut für Soziologie und Sozialpolitik der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, ed., *Sozialreport Ost-Berlin* (East Berlin, 1990): 125 and Hannsjörg Buck, "Wohnungsversorgung, Stadtgestaltung und Stadtverfall," in *Am Ende des Realen Sozialismus, Vol. 2 - Die wirtschaftliche und ökologische Situation der DDR in den 80er Jahren*, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996): 75.

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groups of the socialist society, such as decorated workers, officers of the State Security Service, or high-ranking party officials.<sup>641</sup>

With its steel and glass façade the building would have looked like an urban version of an American mall. The design nevertheless abounded with references to the historic architecture of the area. Height and block perimeter were modeled after the prewar buildings on Friedrichstraße. The slanted roof and the fenestration echoed the rhythm of the remaining old buildings. Also the arcades type was presented as a specific reference to the heyday of Friedrichstraße at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Berlin was a *Weltstadt* (world city, metropolis) and the aristocrats of the imperial capital shopped in the boulevard's fashionable covered passages. In the soon to be built arcades – like in the old days, and like in capitalist malls, the traditional separation of street and shop would be removed.<sup>642</sup> The project also blurred the shopping and leisure activities, measuring “the possibility for both target-oriented shopping and a relaxing stroll, for resting and meeting in a comfortable atmosphere”<sup>643</sup> – language redolent of the programming of West German or American shopping centers. Also the plaza outside the building resembled capitalist models. It was composed by the setback of the middle of the three blocks, opposite of the “House of Soviet Sciences.”<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> This practice was officially sanctioned in the *Wohnraumlennungsverordnung* (directive for the distribution of living space). Ibid.: 76. This directive was introduced on September 14, 1967. See also analysis of the housing problems by the *Ministerrat*, 1972. BArch DC 20/17247: 57.

<sup>642</sup> BArch DH 1/36355: 6-9.

<sup>643</sup> “[Der Besucher] hat sowohl die Möglichkeit des gezielten Einkaufs als auch des erholsamen Bummels, des Verweilens oder sich Begegnens in einer angenehmen Atmosphäre.” Ibid.: 9.

<sup>644</sup> According to Chief Architect Roland Korn, the setback was an idea by General Director of Construction at the Ministry of Construction Ehrhart Gißke and architect Solveig Steller. Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004.

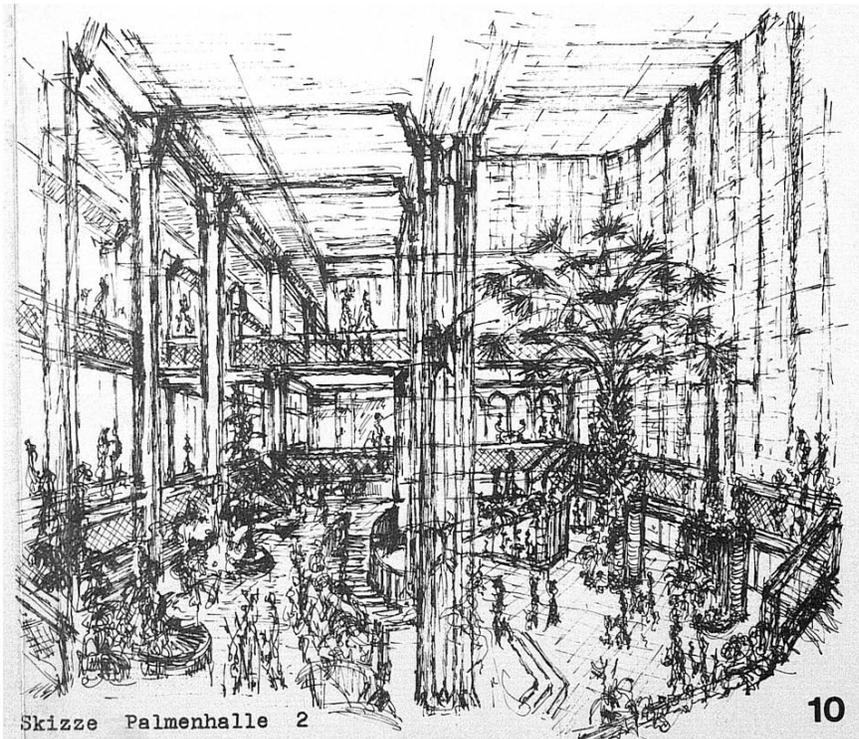


Figure 37: Friedrichstadt Arcades, atrium

However, this newly awakened enthusiasm for historic arcades did not prevent the Friedrichstraße designers from trying to rid the city of the dilapidated remainders of the only historic arcade on Friedrichstraße that had survived the war: most of the *Friedrichstraßenpassage* (Friedrichstraße Arcade, not to be confused with the planned *Passagen Friedrichstadt*), built in 1908, which was sacrificed for a plan to redesign the intersection of Friedrichstraße and Oranienburger Straße.<sup>645</sup> The tower on Friedrichstraße was blown up in 1977 because its poor condition was considered a safety hazard.<sup>646</sup> At that time, the building was closed for use, except the portion on Oranienburger Straße - the present cultural center Tacheles - which was used as a school for international economy and a circus artist school. Schmidt recommends the clearing of some rooms in the school of economy and the demolition of the tower roof on Oranienburger Straße until October 1980.

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<sup>645</sup> Due to the end of the GDR, the redesign of the intersection could not be carried out. The last wing of the Friedrichstraßenpassage, scheduled for demolition in 1990, was squatted by a group of artists in 1990, who founded the cultural center Tacheles and thus saved the building.

<sup>646</sup> Letter by Schmidt, director of the *Staatliche Bauaufsicht*, to Gerhard Poser, dated July 7, 1980.

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The plans for the Passagen Friedrichstadt were eventually dismissed in 1988 and the site was scheduled for less spectacular apartment buildings with shops on the ground floors. The reasons were clearly economic: it dawned upon the socialist leaders that the East German economy would have never provided the basis to fill the projected commercial spaces with all the luxury goods that they wished to offer.<sup>647</sup> Another reason was political: The project was dealt the death blow when the projected supply center between Voßstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße (now Wilhelmstraße), and Leipziger Straße, two blocks west of Friedrichstraße, could not be built because it turned out that the real estate was partially owned by a foreign, rather than West-German government.<sup>648</sup>

Together with the construction of the Friedrichstadt Arcades the East German leaders proposed to convert Friedrichstraße into a pedestrian zone. Thus they followed a trend that was widespread in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Certain boulevards in the city center were reserved for pedestrians as a space for both commerce and leisure, while other streets were amplified to better fit the requirements of motor traffic.<sup>649</sup> The proposal was eventually dismissed in 1986. The East German leaders might have realized that pedestrian zones were not that fashionable any more; they also might have decided to save on the construction of costly underpasses.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> Gerhard Trölitzsch, one East Germany's three most powerful construction officials remembered a meeting in 1988 on which the Minister of Commerce communicated that he could not guarantee the supply of the Friedrichstadt Arcades with goods. Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.

<sup>648</sup> Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004. The supply center was scheduled for completion in 1992 to supply bars and restaurants on Friedrichstraße with food and drinks..

<sup>649</sup> The idea for a car-free Friedrichstraße was already mentioned in the early 1960s. See "Gastliche Stätten entworfen," *Der Morgen*, July 27, 1962. It then became part and parcel of the 1976 rebuilding plans. See protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602: 11. In the former archive of the *Magistrat* there are a number of photographs of architectural models showing different solutions of this pedestrian zone, taken approximately 1976, Photo Archive of the Berlinische Galerie BG AS-1436-02883. Referring to "international experiences," First Party Secretary Konrad Naumann in 1979 called for more café terraces with awnings, sunshades, functional tables and chairs. See note by Gerhard Poser to Chief Architect Roland Korn about a meeting between him and Konrad Naumann, dated May 25, 1979 LAB C Rep 902, 4480. Only in May 1986 meeting between Honecker and his most powerful construction officials, the idea to convert Friedrichstraße into a pedestrian zone was rejected.

<sup>650</sup> Protocol of a meeting between Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, Günter Schabowski, Wolfgang Junker, Erhard Krack, Gerhard Trölitzsch, and Ehrhart Gißke on May 16, 1986. BArch DH 1/35670: 3. 242

### Friedrichstraße Redesign

*the year dates in parentheses indicate the beginning of construction*

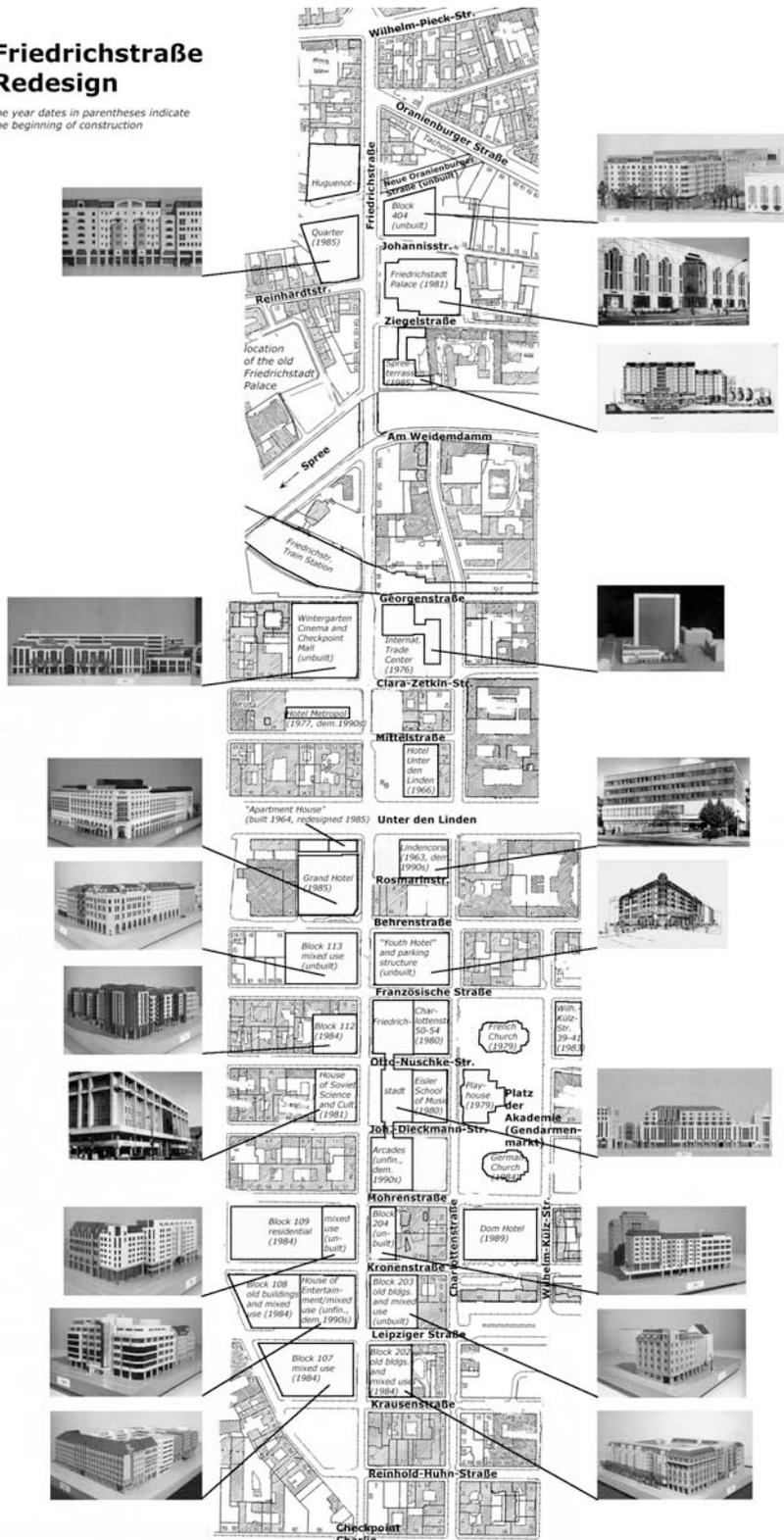


Figure 38: Friedrichstraße Redesign

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*Other locations of culture and consumption*

Next to the Friedrichstadt Arcades, a number of other shopping and entertainment buildings were planned. Directly opposite of the *Passagen Friedrichstadt* the *Haus der sowjetischen Wissenschaft und Kultur* (House of Soviet Science and Culture) opened in 1984, following a design by Karl-Ernst Swora. It was the largest Soviet cultural center outside the USSR and contained a concert hall and a Russian language library with 40,000 volumes.<sup>651</sup> On the block immediately south of the *Passagen Friedrichstadt* the East Berlin leaders planned the mixed-use complex "Block 204," which was to include thirty apartments, numerous shops, a combined apartment/artist studio, a gallery for applied arts, and a "Day Bar and Disco Bar."<sup>652</sup> Like the other buildings on Friedrichstraße, it was to be carried out with prefabricated concrete slabs but designed with pitched roofs, bay windows, and tile ornaments that were to loosely reference late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings.



Figure 39: "House of Entertainment" at the corner of Leipziger Straße and Friedrichstraße (in the middle with arched windows). The neo-traditional structure was to be erected next to a modernist mixed-use structure by Peter Maier (on the right). Of the buildings shown in the model only the apartment buildings on the left were built.

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<sup>651</sup> In 1981, Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker determined that it be built to include a concert hall, cinema, conference room, and 20 apartments. Possible locations on Friedrichstraße were discussed, both north and south of the Spree River. Berlin District Director of Construction Joachim Boettger – Günter Peters's successor – favored the present location and called for an increase in size, so that it would fit the general design of Friedrichstraße. See letter by Joachim Boettger to Gerhard Poser, dated June 22, 1981 LAB C Rep 902, 4480.

<sup>652</sup> BArch DH 1/36354 The proposal was worked out by the state firm Ingenieurhochbau Berlin and turned in on September 30, 1986, signed by Mr. Hering. It made specific reference to design similarities with the Altbauten.: 7-10.

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On the block no. 108 on the western side of Friedrichstraße between Kronenstraße and Leipziger Straße, a *Haus der Unterhaltung* (House of Entertainment) was foreseen, with beerhalls, wine bars, and ballrooms for more than 1400 patrons.<sup>653</sup> It was scheduled for completion in 1990. In 1987 the project was significantly downgraded. But even so, in 1990 only the shell with the ornamented façade was partially completed. The building was nevertheless subsequently demolished.<sup>654</sup> On the northern bank of the Spree River, on the eastern side of Friedrichstraße, the restaurant complex *Spreeterrassen* (Spree Terraces) was built between 1985 and 1987 to accommodate another 550 guests (design: Karl-Ernst Swora with Gunter Derdau, Dora Immerschied, and Alexander Stephan).<sup>655</sup> On top of the restaurants there were 118 apartments on eight floors. The “international flair” of the area was to be supported with a Chinese restaurant and tea-house on the southeastern corner of Friedrichstraße and Leipziger Straße – a rarity in a city where restaurant cuisine mostly equaled traditional German dishes such as sausages and knuckle of pork. Other mixed-use developments included the blocks number 202 and 112.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> The complex is later referred to as “Haus der Gastronomie und Unterhaltung” (House of Gastronomy and Entertainment). A letter by Junker to Mittag, dated December 15, 1988, specifies the use. Next to the beer hall and the wine restaurant, the letter mentions a ballroom with two bars, two discotheques, a pool room, and a “leisure space” with sauna and solarium. Junker only mentions that the proposals “effectuated by commercial institutions” to put up slot machines were rejected. BArch DY 30/2847: 262.

<sup>654</sup> Joachim Palutzki, *Architektur in der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 2000): 417 Palutzki mentioned that the building was supposed to remind the prewar entertainment palace Haus Vaterland on Potsdamer Platz that was destroyed in the Second World War and refers to the proposal description by Junker, Krack, and Schürer for the Politburo meeting on August 23, 1988, dated August 18, 1988 Arbeitsprotokoll, BArch DY 30 JIV 2/2A/3148.

<sup>655</sup> Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 193.

<sup>656</sup> Block 202 was situated on the Eastern side of Friedrichstraße between Leipziger Straße and Krausenstraße. Several prewar buildings were included. The new buildings (design by Peter Meyer, Eckart, Schmidt, Ulrich Kunc, and Jörg Müller, remodeling of the old buildings by Gerd Pieper) included 176 apartments on six floors. The façades were clad with glazed ceramic tiles, the inner portion of the block was a green patio. On the five-story corner building on Leipziger Straße, a prewar structure, housed the Staatliche Kunsthandel, including exhibition spaces and an auction hall. Block 112 was located the Western side of Friedrichstraße between Französische Straße and Otto-Nuschke-Straße (now Jägerstraße), just north of the Center for Soviet Science and Culture. The new buildings included 156 apartments on six floors; a prewar building on Friedrichstraße 171 was included. The complex was designed by Klaus Bläsing and Michael Anniés with Reinhardt Wekel and Joachim Ludewig. Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 194.



Figure 40: Friedrichstraße: Block No. 208 (Youth Hotel), design Peter Baumbach and Arndt Zintler, unbuilt

The “Block 208” on the eastern side of Friedrichstraße between Französische Straße and Behrenstraße, just north of the *Passagen Friedrichstadt*, was planned to house a *Jugendhotel* (“Youth Hotel”). It was to be administered by the socialist youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend - FDJ* whose headquarters was already situated in the surviving old building. In 1986, architects Peter Baumbach and Arndt Zintler presented a block perimeter building with a steel-and-glass façade, bay windows, slanted roofs, and covered passages in the inner parts of the block.<sup>657</sup> The three surviving prewar buildings were to be integrated in the new building, the new building was to preserve the block perimeter, the heights and dimensions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, the proportions of the façades, the arcade structure. The whole design was an explicit attempt for a “synthesis with the

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<sup>657</sup> Both were employed by the state construction firm of the Rostock district BArch DH 1/36357.  
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existing buildings of importance for their cultural and urban design history.”<sup>658</sup> Following models from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they decided to emphasize the corner buildings through signal tower elements on the roof, to be executed in glass. Also the dimensions of the glass bay window elements imitated models from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The façades, however, were composed of prefabricated steel, glass, and concrete elements.

In addition to the Youth Hotel, the complex included shops, restaurants, and a number of apartments, some of which were, considering the East German context, unusually luxurious, complete with duplex plan comprising the individually designed slanted roof zones.<sup>659</sup> On the southeastern corner of the block, the architects planned to build a “high-end restaurant.” It was to revive the historic wine restaurant *Lutter und Wegner*, which was the favorite drinking place of early-19<sup>th</sup>-century author E.T.A Hoffmann and the setting of Jacques Offenbach’s 1881 opera “The tales of Hoffmann.”<sup>660</sup> The most peculiar building was to be erected on the northern part of the block: the parking garage on Behrenstraße, a masterpiece of prefabricated concrete slab historicism. Protruding concrete elements imitate a row of arched windows whose rhythm continues the fenestration of the adjacent 19<sup>th</sup> century building.

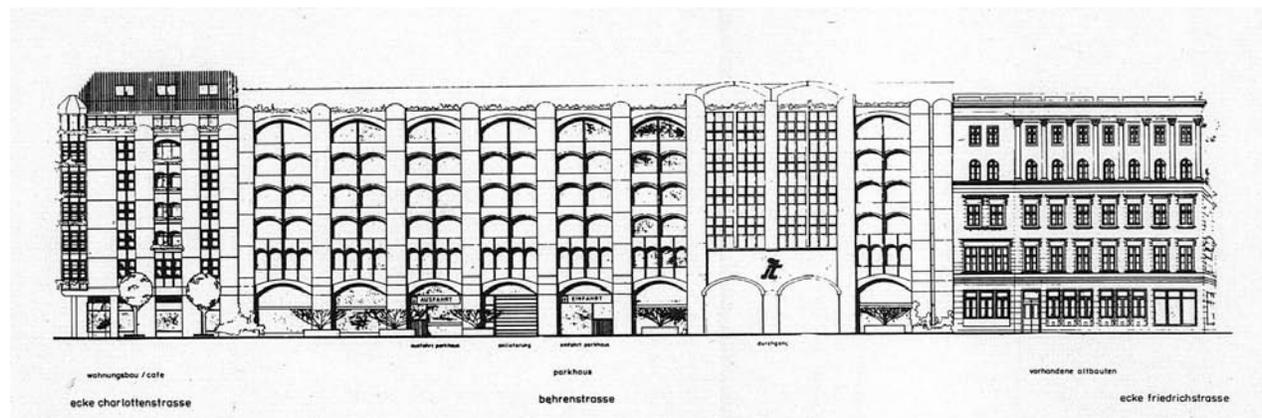


Figure 41: Friedrichstraße: Parking garage on Behrenstraße (middle)

<sup>658</sup> “Synthese mit der vorhandenen stadt- und kulturhistorisch wertvollen Bausubstanz” Ibid.: 7.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid.: 23.

<sup>660</sup> The proposal writes of a “hochwertigen gastronomischen Einrichtung (Weinhaus – Qualität ‘Lutter und Wegner’)” Ibid.: 23. When the lot was eventually rebuilt in the 1990s, a restaurant with the name *Lutter und Wegner* was included.

It was exclusively for economic reasons that the ambitious proposals were never realized. The decision to dismiss the Youth Hotel was initiated by Gerhard Trölitzsch, who in April 1987 called for a strict capping of the cost.<sup>661</sup> Next to the Youth Hotel the House of Entertainment was also canceled; both lots were subsequently used for apartment buildings with shop fronts.

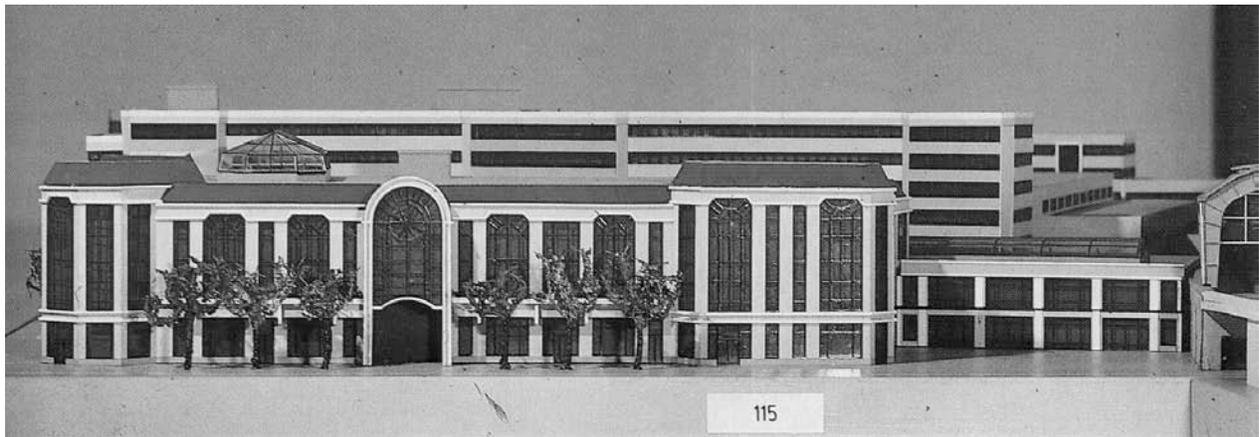


Figure 42: Wintergarten cinema and new checkpoint

On the lot south of Friedrichstraße train station, the East German leaders planned the construction of a “representative premiere movie theatre”, called the *Wintergarten* (Winter Garden).<sup>662</sup> The name was a reference to a famous variety theatre from the prewar era that stood on the same site forming part of the *Hotel Central* and was destroyed in the war. The old *Wintergarten*, which had opened in 1887, featured artists such as the Tiller Girls, Fritz Massary, and Otto Reutter under an artificial starry night sky. According to Gerhard Trölitzsch, the idea to revive the showpiece of prewar entertainment derived directly from Erich Honecker, who had experienced the old *Wintergarten* before the war.<sup>663</sup> In

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<sup>661</sup> Letter from Gerhard Trölitzsch to the office of Günter Mittag, dated April 21, 1987, BArch DY 30/2846: 270. Trölitzsch remembers that the Youth Hotel seemed of minor importance to him because the socialist youth organization Freie Deutsche Jugend had just completed a “Youth Tourist Hotel” close to the zoo in East Berlin’s Lichtenberg district. Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004. The actual decision to dismiss the youth hotel was eventually taken by either Minister of Construction Junker or by director of the planning commission Gerhard Schürer. See letter from Wolfgang Greß to the office of Günter Mittag, dated May 7, 1987 BArch DY 30/2846: 283.

<sup>662</sup> Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984 BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037: 167.

<sup>663</sup> Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.

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1985 Honecker determined that the venue be rebuilt as a premiere cinema – not as a variety theatre – and housed in a building “with high architectural effect.”<sup>664</sup> The East German leaders were eager to stress that at least in one aspect the new use had a historic precedent: the old *Wintergarten* had been the site of Max Skladanowsky's 1895 demonstration of the “bioscop” which showed moving pictures – the first public cinema show in Germany. Next to the *Wintergarten* cinema, the East German authorities planned an attraction of a very different kind: a new customs and checkpoint building that would substitute the current one north of the station and lead visitors from the West directly into the new boulevard.<sup>665</sup> The models show the new *Wintergarten* as a three to four-story building with a slanted roof, balconies, an ornamented façade and large divided arch windows. It was to contain a system of passages that connected the train station and the new checkpoint area. Like most Friedrichstraße buildings, also the *Wintergarten* cinema and the new checkpoint were never realized.

*Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt)*

The Gendarmenmarkt square, which was renamed Platz der Akademie in 1950 and since 1991 again bears its old name, was the heart of the Friedrichstadt and one of the best-known architectural ensembles in Berlin. Berlin guidebooks frequently call it “the city's most beautiful square.”<sup>666</sup> Although this might be more telling about the aesthetic qualities of Berlin as a whole than those of the square, the Platz der Akademie is impressive. It boasts three monumental free-standing buildings: on the edges the *Französische Kirche* (French Church, begun in 1699) and the *Deutsche Kirche* (German Church, begun in 1701), in the middle the *Schauspielhaus* (Playhouse, begun in 1817 after a design by Karl Friedrich Schinkel), which is now known as *Konzerthaus* (Concert House) and used for musical performances. The two churches are similar in their exterior design and are topped with widely visible golden statues, that of the French Church symbolizing the “Triumphant Religion” and that of the

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<sup>664</sup> “Der entsprechende Gebäudekomplex ist mit hoher architektonischer Wirksamkeit und einer Bebauung unmittelbar an der Straßenfront in der Friedrichstraße einzuordnen.” Protocol of the Politburo meeting with Erich Honecker on February 5, 1985 “about the continuing preparations...of the construction complex Friedrichstraße/Otto-Grotewohl-Straße”, dated February 6, 1985 BArch DH 1/35670: 2.

<sup>665</sup> Peter Gärtner, “Es wird eine Freude sein, dort zu bummeln,” *Volksblatt* December 4, 1986.

<sup>666</sup> Cp. for example *Baedeker Guide, Berlin* (Ostfildern: Karl Baedeker, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1997): 136 [edited by Rainer Eisenschmidt].

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German Church the "Triumphant Virtue." Since 1871, a bronze statue of German national poet Friedrich Schiller, sculpted by Reinhold Begas, adorned the space in front of the Playhouse. The monument was removed in 1935, obviously because *Sturm-und-Drang* rebel Friedrich Schiller, despite being the second most famous German poet after Goethe, was not too popular among the Nazi rulers.<sup>667</sup> The richly decorated residential buildings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century that once surrounded the square had already largely disappeared by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the three public buildings on the square were destroyed or heavily damaged in the Second World War.<sup>668</sup> Also most surrounding buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were destroyed, including the famous wine store and restaurant *Lutter und Wegner* on the northwest corner of the square. Churches and Playhouse were heavily damaged during the Second World War. As one of the few prewar buildings the former Prussian State Bank from 1901 on Markgrafenstraße number 38 (architect Paul Kieschke) had survived the bombings. Since 1950 it housed the Academy of Sciences of the GDR and thus gave the square the name it would bear during most of the socialist era. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Gendarmenmarkt/Platz der Akademie was "firmly anchored in the people's memory," as Chief Architect Roland Korn put it, and its imminent rebuilding according to the old beauty – at least as far as the façades were concerned – was never doubted.<sup>669</sup> In practice, however, the square was neglected for decades. Historian Laurenz Demps, who had taught at East Berlin's Humboldt University during the times of the GDR, blamed the East German authorities' "'hatred' for their own history" for the default to rebuild the square.<sup>670</sup> According to Demps, Schinkel until the 1980s was reviled as a *Fürstenknecht* (henchman of the nobility) in East Germany and further discredited for being the favorite architect of Nazi planner Albert Speer.<sup>671</sup> The eventual rebuilding of the square, according to Demps, was therefore accompanied by "continuous struggle" and took a "cunning roundabout way."<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 196.

<sup>668</sup> Volker Wagner, *Materialien zur Informationsfahrt Berlin* (Berlin: Presse und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, 1994): 110.

<sup>669</sup> Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004.

<sup>670</sup> "'Haß auf die eigene Geschichte'" Laurenz Demps, *Der schönste Platz Berlins: der Gendarmenmarkt in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: Henschel, 1993),: 120.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*: 20.

<sup>672</sup> "Ringeln um den Platz...listenreiche Umwege" Laurenz Demps, *Der schönste Platz Berlins: der Gendarmenmarkt in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: Henschel, 1993),: 120.

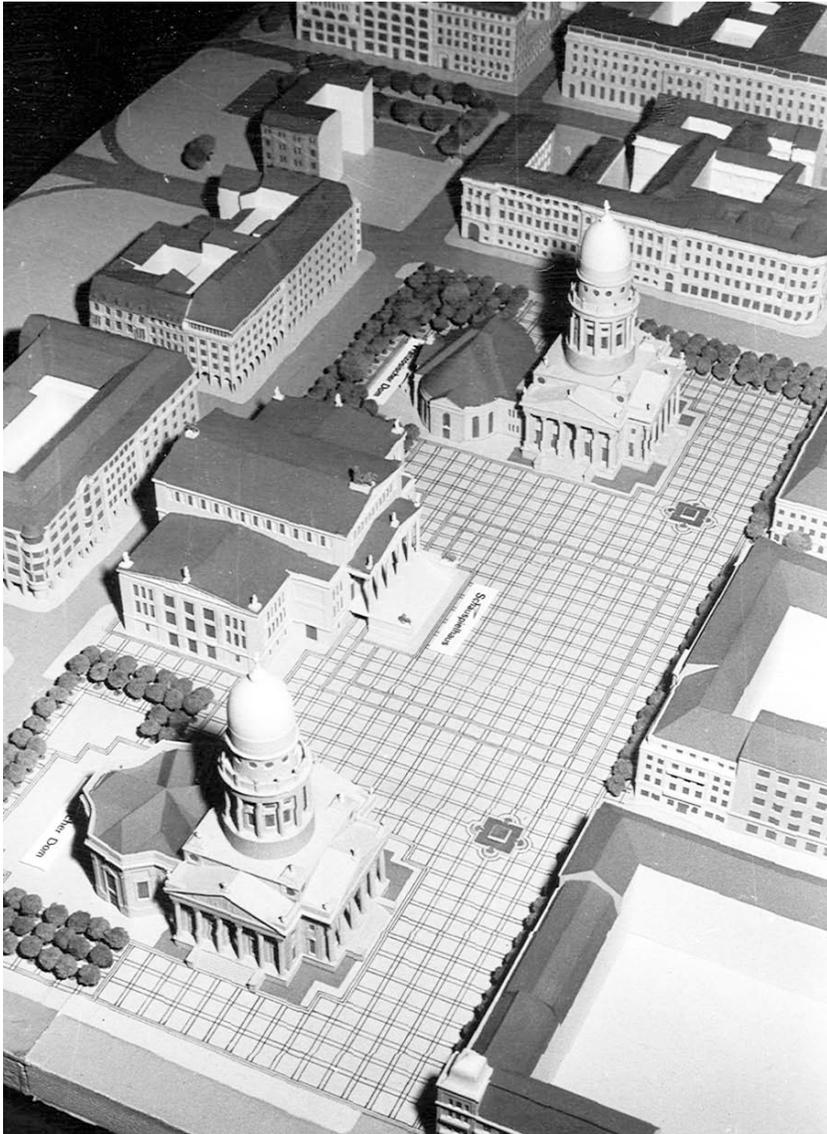


Figure 43: Platz der Akademie, model from the early 1980s. On the top the French Church, on the bottom the German Church, in the middle the Playhouse.

With the plans to rebuild Friedrichstraße in the 1970s, the attention of the East German leaders was also directed towards the adjacent Platz der Akademie. It has already been mentioned that the neo-historical reconstruction of the entire area was initiated with Manfred Prasser's 1976 study on the square. Chief Architect Roland Korn remembered the square as being closely connected with the

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GDR's attempt to convey a favorable image to Western visitors.<sup>673</sup> The Politburo decided to rebuild the square "according to the historical form" in 1976 in the same meeting in which it mandated the rebuilding of Friedrichstraße.<sup>674</sup> Two months later, First Secretary Konrad Naumann announced on the one hand the reconstruction of the three public buildings on the square according to their historical form and on the other the rebuilding of the famous restaurants *Café Bauer* and *Lutter und Wegner* as "historically valuable places" – the latter was not executed during the times of the GDR.<sup>675</sup> Subsequently, Manfred Prasser was appointed leading architect for the reconstruction. Prasser was chosen by his mentor Ehrhardt Gißke and led a team of 60 employees; among his chief designers were Matthias Borner, Peter Weiss, Michael Ulbrich, Ernst Wallis, Roland Steiger, and Günter Boy.<sup>676</sup> In 1979 it was decided that the French and the German Churches were to be rebuilt according to their historic forms, and even the Playhouse, which had been damaged much more heavily than the two churches, was a more or less exact copy of Schinkel's original design - at least from the outside.<sup>677</sup> Since the new building was planned as a concert hall with a significantly different structure of stage and audience room, Schinkel's interior design could not be rebuilt. The cladding of the walls with stone elements, which had been planned by Schinkel, were carried out after his death, was restored. Most

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<sup>673</sup> Korn claimed that the rebuilding of the square was a corollary of the construction the *Dom Hotel* (now *Hotel Berlin-Hilton*) on the southern edge of the square, one of several luxury hotels restricted to guests from Western countries who had to pay with foreign currency. Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004. While there is no evidence that the construction of the Dom Hotel was planned before the restoration of the square (it was built from 1989-1990 after a design by Bernd Seidel), the strong fixation of East German leaders on visitors from the West is confirmed by other interview partners. See for example Günter Schabowski, interview by author, Berlin, April 26, 2004, or Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

<sup>674</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602.

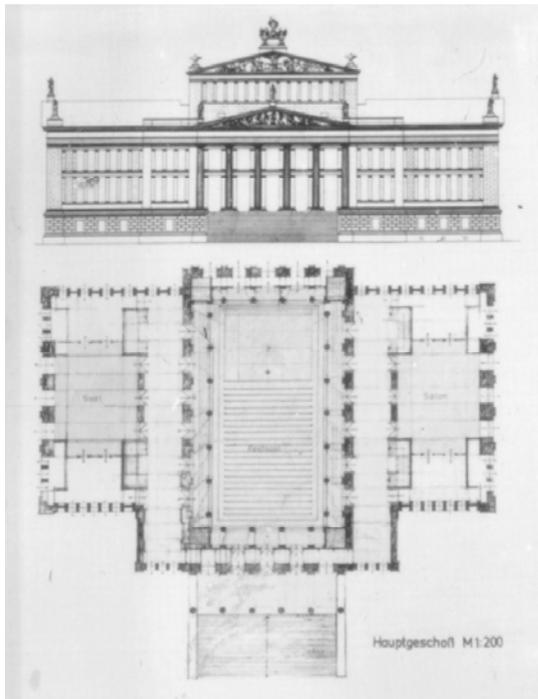
<sup>675</sup> "Der Platz der Akademie wird in ursprünglicher Form mit dem ehemaligen Schauspielhaus, dem Deutschen und Französischen Dom wiederaufgebaut. Um den Platz entstehen Gebäude in historisch getreuer Fassadengestaltung. ... Sicher entspricht es dem Wunsch der Berliner, dass damit auch Cafes, Weinrestaurants und Speisegaststätten errichtet werden. Mit dem Cafe Bauer, dem Weinkeller Lutter und Wegener soll historisch Wertvolles wieder entstehen." Konrad Naumann, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Berlin der SED an die XII. Bezirksdelegiertenkonferenz on March 26/27, 1976,; 443 BArch DY 30/2850.

<sup>676</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

<sup>677</sup> On May 14, 1979 director of the planning commission Gerhard Schürer sent a proposal for the reconstruction of the Platz der Akademie to top economist Günter Mittag. The proposal, which was probably worked out by Manfred Prasser under the responsibility of Ehrhardt Gißke, suggested the rebuilding of the churches and the Playhouse. A week later, on May 22, 1979, Schürer asked Honecker for his approval of the plan, which was probably granted. BArch DY 30/2850: 62-63.

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sculptures, including the Apollo statue on the gable, were rebuilt referencing historic postcards. Hence the whole pictorial program of the façades was restored.<sup>678</sup> Originally it had been planned to give the interior a modern design, a historicizing design was decided upon. The “new old design” was inspired by Schinkel’s *Kleiner Konzertsaal* (Small Concert Hall), which had been a part of the original building and whose decorations were enlarged maintaining the old proportions. The interior design by Manfred Prasser was nevertheless substantially different from Schinkel’s; the auditorium was almost twice as big, and instead of the second auditorium “King’s Hall” in the left wing and his administrative offices in the right wing Prasser chose to build two large foyers. Against the views of some of his colleagues, Prasser insisted on a historicizing interior design.<sup>679</sup> Construction began in 1979. The Playhouse was inaugurated on October 1, 1984 under presence of Head of State Erich Honecker.<sup>680</sup>



*Figure 44: Rebuilding of the Playhouse – façade and plan of the main floor. The auditorium is much larger than in Schinkel’s original design.*

<sup>678</sup> Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 187-188.

<sup>679</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004. For the design of the Playhouse Prasser received the National Prize of the GDR.

<sup>680</sup> BArch DH 1/36305. Korn claimed that there were discussions about carrying out the interior of the building in a modern style, but both he and architect Manfred Prasser favored a historicizing interior design. Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004.

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The French Church was rebuilt according to the prewar aspect and inaugurated on April 17, 1983. The project for the rebuilding of the church was authored by Manfred Prasser, Roland Steiger, Uwe Karl, and Silva Dumanjan.<sup>681</sup> The interior, however, was changed. The main room was split in two stories. The lower room now housed offices and the upper space the church room proper. To reach the church room, an exterior staircase had to be added.<sup>682</sup> The rebuilding of the tower was begun afterwards, designed to house on the one hand a museum on the history of the Huguenot immigrants since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and on the other hand a small wine hall.<sup>683</sup> The reconstruction of the German Church had begun in 1984; in the same year the dome was put on the building.<sup>684</sup> The church, in which the 18<sup>th</sup>-century architect Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff and his contemporary, the court painter Antoine Pesne are buried, was to be converted into an art exhibition hall.<sup>685</sup> It was still under construction in 1989 and only reopened in 1996. The building is now used for changing exhibits.

The inconsistencies and contradictions of this “reconstruction according to the historical form” did not go unnoticed. The director of the Berlin Historic Preservation Authority Peter Goralczyk, who had written his doctoral dissertation on the Playhouse, pointed out that the interior design has to be seen as neo-historical architecture, not as a reconstruction of a historical building. He criticized that the rebuilding was a “confusing juxtaposition, an irritating mixture of preservationist reconstruction, that is, rebuilding of buildings that in fact once existed in their historic form, and a historicizing new construction” and disapproved of the blurry border between reconstruction and historicizing new invention.<sup>686</sup> At the same time, he commended the rebuilding as such and stressed that the harmony

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<sup>681</sup> Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 172.

<sup>682</sup> Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 192-193 [revised version of Goralczyk's dissertation].

<sup>683</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 142.

<sup>684</sup> Peter Mugay, *Vom Gendarmenmarkt zum Platz der Akademie* (East Berlin: Berlin-Information, 1987): 37.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*: 39.

<sup>686</sup> “Tatsächlich stellte dieses Baugeschehen jedoch ein verwirrendes Nebeneinander dar, eine irritierende Vermischung von denkmalpflegerischer Wiederherstellung, d. h. Rekonstruktion einer tatsächlich einmal vorhanden gewesenen historischen Form, und einem historisierenden Neubau.” Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 12.

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of interior and exterior design was accepted by the audience.<sup>687</sup> Goralczyk's approach, which he also took vis-à-vis the Nikolaiviertel, is typical for the attitude of many East German intellectuals at the time. It oscillated between a pragmatic acceptance of both economic limitations and popular taste on the one hand and a desire for historic accuracy in the reproduction of the destroyed city on the other. Goralczyk did not condemn eclecticism as long as it was upfront and not deceptive. His goal, however, was the rebuilding of destroyed monuments as closely as possible to the historic model. In this respect, his concern was for accurate historic appearance rather than historicity.

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<sup>687</sup> Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 191 and 196.

## The rebuilding of the Platz der Akademie

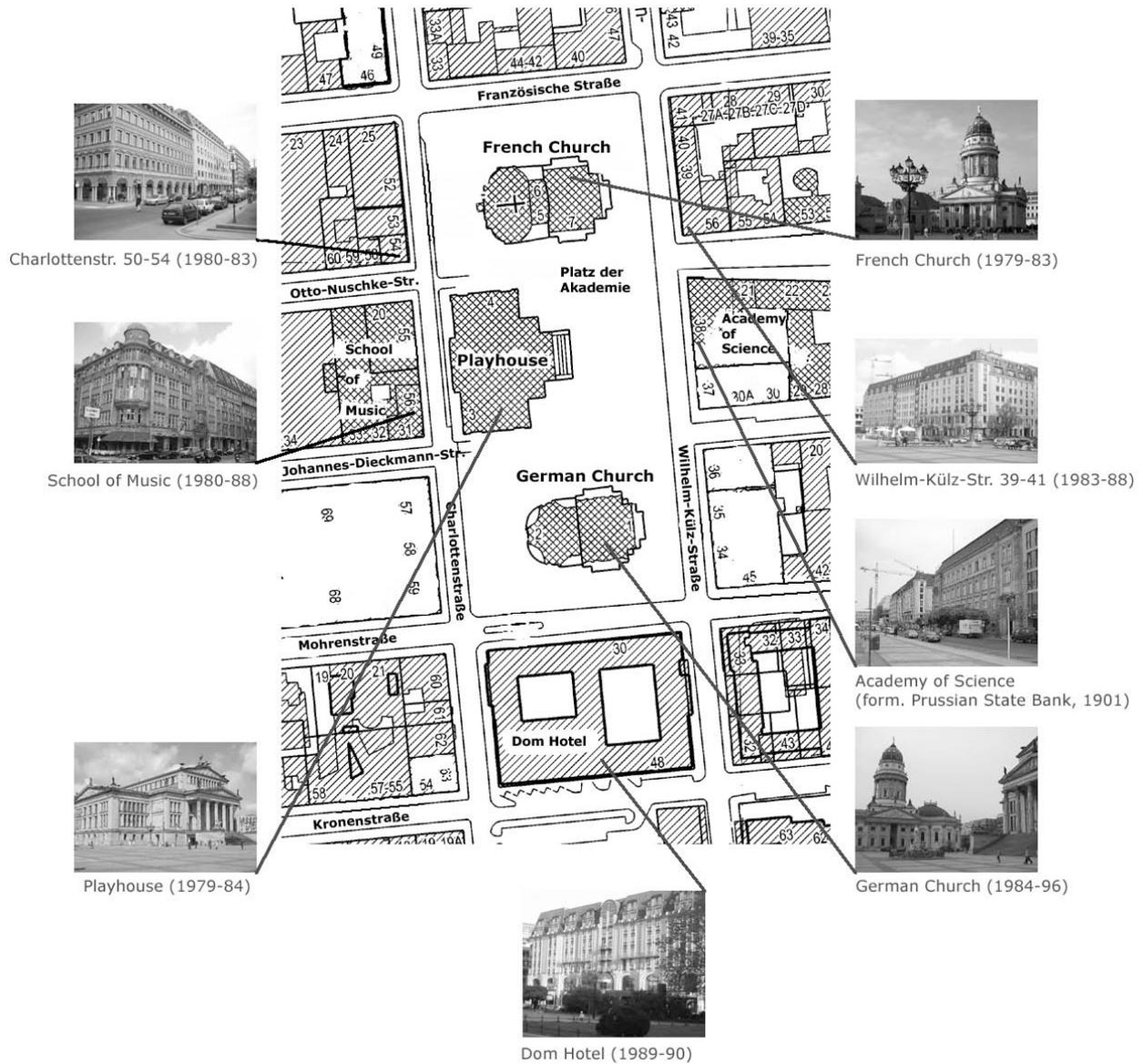


Figure 45

When it came to the buildings on the edges of the square, rebuilding "according to the historical form" as mandated in the 1976 Politburo meeting became even more problematic. For the two churches and

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the Playhouse, which had not undergone substantial changes since their construction, at least the exterior form was easy to determine. For the other buildings on the square, which over the course of two centuries were repeatedly demolished and rebuilt, the case was far more complex. Consequently, the right “historical form” became the subject of a lasting debate. In 1976, it was proposed to reconstruct the surrounding buildings on Platz der Akademie according to the state of 1848.<sup>688</sup> In that year, those who had died in an uprising against the Prussian nobility were put to lie in state on the square and publicly honored. Even King Friedrich Wilhelm IV was forced to assist.<sup>689</sup> The revolution of 1848, despite the fact that it eventually failed, played an important role in the Marxist narrative of historical progress, and some East German leaders therefore considered the date persuasive to inspire an authoritative historic reconstruction. Others thought it too narrow and called for a freer interpretation. The difficulty to agree on one single historic model eventually favored the advocates of an eclectic historicism. Among them was architect Manfred Prasser, whose 1976 study presented façades that loosely reflected models from both the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>690</sup> Prasser’s proposal abounded with pediments, pilasters, columns and other façade decorations that were easy to determine as somewhat historical and difficult to classify as belonging to a specific period. He also suggested the use of arbors to provide a spatial connection of the square with the surrounding buildings. Most buildings on the square were eventually rebuilt under Prasser’s direction and reflected his eclectic approach. They were executed with prefabricated concrete slabs, yet according to the proportions of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. The rebuilding started with the two “arbor buildings” Charlottenstraße number 50-52 and Charlottenstraße number 53-54 between 1980 and 1983. Both buildings have the same height as the rest of the square despite their seven stories. Charlottenstraße number 50-52 is a white seven-story building clad with historicizing concrete elements. It served as a rooming house for the *Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften* [Academy of Social Sciences], an institution of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party. Club rooms and other functional

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<sup>688</sup> Laurenz Demps, *Der schönste Platz Berlins: der Gendarmenmarkt in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: Henschel, 1993): 121.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*: 99.

<sup>690</sup> *Magistrat von Berlin, Abteilung Kultur, ed., Studie Platz der Akademie* (East Berlin, 1976).

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spaces are grouped around a winter garden; on the ground floor there was the restaurant *Arkade*. Next to Prasser, Ernst Wallis, Wolfgang Sebastian, and Dieter Bankert collaborated on the design.<sup>691</sup>



Figure 46: Platz der Akademie - Charlottenstraße number 53-54 (left) and number 50-52

The adjacent seven-floor building south, Charlottenstraße number 53-54, has a red façade clad with pediments and protruding lintels. It was designed by a collective led by Manfred Prasser and Günter Boy.<sup>692</sup> Their superior Ehrhardt Gißke mentioned long discussions about the façade design.<sup>693</sup> The arbor walk on its ground floor is separated from the street with a row of double columns. The building

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<sup>691</sup> Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 172.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 141.

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also has a roof terrace. It housed the office of the block party *Christlich-Demokratische Union*, which was associated to Socialist Unity Party; on the second and third floors there are offices and a conference room with 200 seats.<sup>694</sup> The building on Charlottenstraße number 55 and 56 was built from 1980 to 1988 and inaugurated in various portions. It included the director's office of the Concert House, the *Berliner Sinfonieorchester* (Berlin Symphonic Orchestra), and the Hanns Eisler School of Music with classrooms, sound studios, and a concert hall. Like the first buildings, it is a steel skeleton with monolithic reinforced concrete ceilings, clad with precast concrete façade elements. Its pilasters were modeled to continue the rhythm of the façade of Schinkel's Playhouse across the street.



Figure 47: The reconstructed Playhouse (left) and the School of Music which continues its façade rhythm

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<sup>694</sup> Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 172.

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The building was designed by Manfred Prasser, Peter Kobe, Ernst Wallis and others. At the time, the patio behind the building was open to the public and included a beer bar and the café *Konzertkonditorei*. The structure also houses the central technical facilities for the surrounding buildings; it is connected with the Playhouse through a subterranean tunnel.<sup>695</sup> Re-usable façade elements from the prewar building were used for the reconstruction.<sup>696</sup> Manfred Prasser, together with his colleague Matthias Borner, also designed an eight story residential building with 114 apartments on the Western side of the square, situated on Wilhelm-Külz-Straße number 39-41 (now Markgrafenstraße) between Französische Straße and Otto-Nuschke-Straße (now Jägerstraße). The groundfloor included a “representative restaurant” and a café.<sup>697</sup> The two subterranean floors were built in steel skeleton structure, the top floors with prefabricated concrete slabs of the famous type WBS 70. Also with these buildings Prasser defied critical voices that deemed it inappropriate for a socialist society to construct different buildings with distinguishable façades on the same block.<sup>698</sup> Prasser nevertheless wanted to optically subordinate the residential buildings to the Playhouse and the two churches. On the southern side the Dom-Hotel (now Hilton Hotel) was erected between 1989 and 1990 after a design by Bernd Seidel. With its two-story arched windows on the ground floor, its curving pilasters, and its jagged roof with ornamented dormers, protruding balconies and a semi-circular skylight it is the freest interpretation of the historic theme on the Platz der Akademie.

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<sup>695</sup> Ibid.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.: 173.

<sup>698</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.



Figure 48: Platz der Akademie – Dom Hotel

The western side of the square between Mohrenstraße and Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße (now Taubenstraße) – the backside of the Friedrichstadt Arcades – was to become a mixed-use block with 200 apartments and a variety of shops and restaurants, including a beer bar on the corner of Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße (now Taubenstraße) and Charlottenstraße and the *Café Stehely*.<sup>699</sup> The building was not finished and the structure was demolished to make way for Oswald Mathias Ungers's Block 205, a mall with shops and restaurants. The *Café Stehely* on the corner of Otto-Nuschke-Straße (now Jägerstraße) and Charlottenstraße, which had opened in 1820, was one of Berlin's oldest coffee

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<sup>699</sup> Peter Mugay, *Vom Gendarmenmarkt zum Platz der Akademie* (East Berlin: Berlin-Information, 1987): 47.

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houses and featured a reading room with hundreds of journals.<sup>700</sup> Among its regular patrons was the young Karl Marx, who met here with the “Doctor’s Club” and debated the problems of the time. The building was destroyed in the Second World War; the new café was to open one block south of the old location. It was to include a “Red Room” similar to the one frequented by Marx.



Figure 49: Platz der Akademie – Apartment buildings on Wilhelm-Külz-Straße between Französische Straße and Otto-Nuschke-Straße, built between 1983 and 1987

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<sup>700</sup> In 1832, Berlin novelist Friedrich Arnold Steinmann called the *Café Stehely* “das Eldorado der Pflastertreter Berlins, ... die größte besuchteste Bildungsanstalt der Hauptstadt Preußens” (“the Eldorado of Berlin’s idlers, the grandest, most often visited educational institution of the capital of Prussia”) Friedrich Arnold Steinmann, *Briefe aus Berlin* (Hanau: Friedrich König, 1832).



Figure 50: The same block according to the first design proposal from 1977



Figure 51 and Figure 52: The first 1977 design proposals for two blocks on the eastern side of Platz der Akademie (Wilhelm-Külz-Straße) between Otto-Nuschke-Straße and Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße (left) and Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße and Mohrenstraße (right). The figure on the left shows an amplification of the existing late-19<sup>th</sup>-century building that housed the Academy of Science. The existing building ended with the portal in the middle; the four window axes on the right were to be added. The figure on the right shows three newly-to-be-built structures, of which the one on the left was to reflect the existing façade of the Academy of Science building. Both the amplification and the new block remained unrealized.



Figure 53: Another design proposal for the eastern side of Platz der Akademie (1977)

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The design was a clear reference to the historic aspect of the square. Some observers even detected a reference of the apartment buildings on Wilhelm-Külz-Straße (now Markgrafenstraße) number 39-41 on the eastern side of the Platz der Akademie to the Otto Wagner's Jugendstil façades on the Naschmarkt square in Vienna or the buildings of Ricardo Bofill which Prasser had seen in Paris.<sup>701</sup> Prasser, in retrospect, denied such influences, and his superior Ehrhardt Gißke merely remembered intensive discussions on the façade design. He insinuates that he had to assert himself against a faction that merely wanted to copy historic models.<sup>702</sup> The western front of the Platz der Akademie was built in the famous prefabricated concrete slab system WBS 70, which was the raw material for the largest satellite cities in the GDR.<sup>703</sup> After some portions had been returned to the GDR from West Berlin in 1986, the Schiller monument was also re-erected on its old location in 1988, with Honecker's personal permission.<sup>704</sup> The reconstructed Platz der Akademie was again presented as "one of the most beautiful squares in Europe"<sup>705</sup> and a "pearl of architecture in our capital city."<sup>706</sup>

### *The Friedrichstadt Palace and adjacent blocks*

Like the Platz der Akademie, the *Friedrichstadtpalast* (Friedrichstadt Palace) project also preceded the rebuilding of most other buildings on Friedrichstraße proper. Around 1980, this entertainment hall was at the brink of collapse. The building, situated a few meters from the northern end of Friedrichstraße on the street Am Zirkus next to the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm* (now *Berliner Ensemble*), was built in 1867 after a design by Friedrich Hitzig. It was originally a covered market hall and since the late

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<sup>701</sup> Volker Wagner, *Materialien zur Informationsfahrt Berlin* (Berlin: Presse und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, 1994): 111 (Vienna) and Simone Hain, "Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr der Stadt," in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 344.

<sup>702</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004. Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 141-144.

<sup>703</sup> The acronym stands for Wohnungsbauserie (residential construction series). Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 146.

<sup>704</sup> BArch DY 30/2847: 255.

<sup>705</sup> "Heute kann der Platz wieder zu einem der schönsten in Europa gezählt werden..." Peter Mugay, *Vom Gendarmenmarkt zum Platz der Akademie* (East Berlin: Berlin-Information, 1987): 47.

<sup>706</sup> "die Perle der Architektur in unserer Hauptstadt" Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 147.

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19<sup>th</sup> century it was used as a circus.<sup>707</sup> Berlin's famous theatre director Max Reinhardt bought the building in 1918 and converted it into the *Großes Schauspielhaus* (Great Playhouse), with an expressionist design by architect Hans Poelzig. After the war some of the GDR's most popular TV variety shows were produced in the building, including *Ein Kessel Bunter* (A pot of variety) and *Da lacht der Bär* (Laughing Bear).<sup>708</sup> It was thus both a showcase piece of East German popular culture and a remnant from the heydays of the old Friedrichstraße. The building was erected on a foundation of more than 800 wooden tree trunks rammed into the swampy bank of the Spree River. An expert report dated from January 1980 stated that the trunks were more than 60 percent destroyed, and recommended to close down the building within no more than six months for safety reasons.<sup>709</sup> The Politburo reacted immediately. Less than a month later, a proposal signed by four Politburo members foresaw the immediate demolition and subsequent rebuilding of the *Friedrichstadtpalast* on the eastern side of Friedrichstraße between Johannisstraße and Ziegelstraße where it still stands.<sup>710</sup> The Politburo decided on the construction of the new venue in October 1980; the groundbreaking ceremony was eight months later, on June 26, 1981.<sup>711</sup> The architects' description explicitly mentioned the noteworthy technological equipment that enabled the new theatre building to "continue the good tradition of the revue theatres of the 1920s, such as Wintergarten, Skala, and Plaza."<sup>712</sup> The building was designed by Manfred Prasser who at the time was also working on the Platz der Akademie rebuilding, in collaboration with Walter Schwarz, and Dieter Bankert.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Hans-Jürgen Mende and Kurt Wernicke, *Berlin-Mitte, Das Lexikon* (Berlin: Stapp, 2001): 223.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid: 224.

<sup>709</sup> Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, letter to Günter Mittag, with a report dated January 17, 1980, BArch DY 30/2842.

<sup>710</sup> The Politburo discussed three possible locations. Besides the existing one, the amusement hall could have been built just south of the Friedrichstraße train station or in the southern part of the boulevard, bordered by Mohrenstraße, Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße and Platz der Akademie. Proposal dated February 12, 1980, signed Günter Mittag, Gerhard Schürer, Wolfgang Junker, and Konrad Naumann, BArch DY 30/2842. Eventually, they decided on the present location. Protocol of a meeting with Honecker, Mittag, Naumann, Junker, Gißke, and Trölitersch on May 2, 1980 in Honecker's office. BArch, DY 30/2851: 53.

<sup>711</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 51-53 and Berliner Geschichte no. 3 (1982): 85.

<sup>712</sup> "Der Friedrichstadtpalast ist damit bühnentechnisch in der Lage, die guten Traditionen der Revuetheater der 20er Jahre wie Wintergarten, Skala, Plaza weiterzuführen." BArch DH 1/36373: 2.

<sup>713</sup> Chief Architect Roland Korn approved the design on January 7, 1981 BArch DH 1/36373: 2.



Figure 54: The new Friedrichstadtpalast, built 1981-1984 after a design by Manfred Prasser, Walter Schwarz, and Dieter Bankert.

The façade was to be built from two-meter-broad prefabricated concrete slabs, whose ornaments were to “reflect the cheerfulness and joy of life of its function.”<sup>714</sup>In the final proposal the designers repeated their desire that “the cheerfulness and joy of life could be read from the façade design is continued into the foyer.”<sup>715</sup> Prasser originally proposed a façade composed of slim rectangles topped by half lying circles – in his interpretation abstracted revue girls with raised arms.<sup>716</sup> He was not too happy that his superiors insisted in reversing the half circles and thus “converting them into weeping willows.”<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>714</sup> “Das Gebäude soll in seiner äußeren Erscheinung die Heiterkeit und Lebensfreude seiner Funktion widerspiegeln.” *Magistrat* von Berlin, Abteilung Kultur, ed. “Friedrichstadtpalast, Dokumentation zur Investitionsvorbereitung” (Berlin 1980): 7 [study worked out by Prasser]. “cheerfulness and joy of life” was also mentioned in the Politburo resolution that mandated the construction. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 53.

<sup>715</sup> “Die in der Formgebung der Fassade ablesbare Heiterkeit und Lebensfreude wird im Foyer aufgenommen.” BArch DH 1/36373: 4.

<sup>716</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

<sup>717</sup> Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

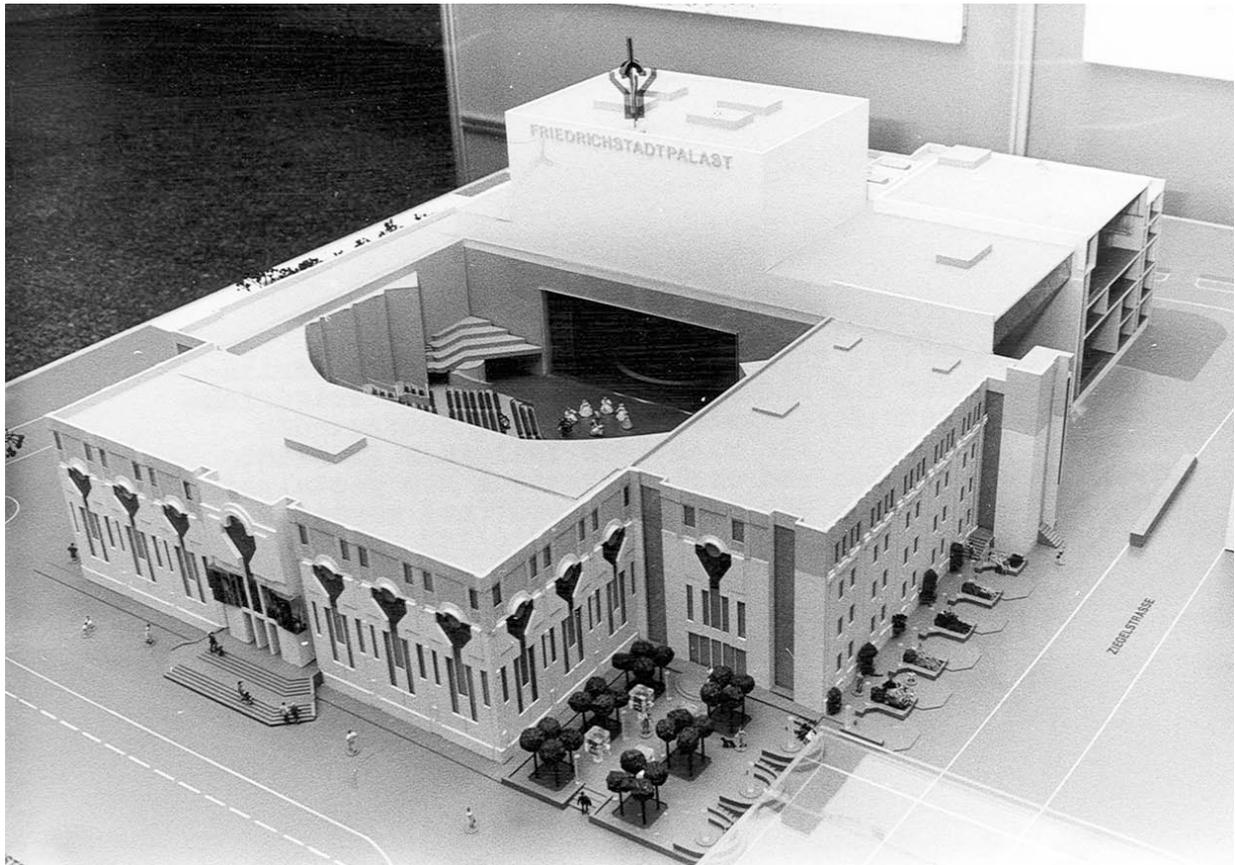


Figure 55: Friedrichstadt Palace, model of Prasser's first façade design with "raised arms" (1981)

The high-tech apron with a diameter of 12 meters could be converted into a circus arena, a water pool, a dancefloor, or an ice rink. The main room with its 24 meter wide stage was illuminated by more than 100 spots and could fit an audience of 1900 people.<sup>718</sup> Prasser enthused that it would enhance the sensual experience of the audience to be confronted with the different smells of a water dance and an animal show.<sup>719</sup> Officially to receive inspiration for the design an all-male delegation headed by Ehrhardt Gißke undertook a "research trip" to Paris and toured the revue theatres from

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<sup>718</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 53, see also Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 139.

<sup>719</sup> Prasser's desire to see revue girls being undressed by trained dolphins the way he had experienced in Paris was allegedly rejected by his superiors for reasons of animal protection. Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

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*Moulin Rouge to Folies Bergère*.<sup>720</sup> Prasser claimed that the purpose of the trip was purely strategic, using the comparison with Paris to convince the party officials of the already existing design proposal. The new Friedrichstadt Palace was to exceed all other entertainment venues in the GDR. In addition to the main stage room, the new Friedrichstadt Palace building was to contain a smaller performance space. It was called *Kleine Revue* (Little Revue Theatre) and had 240 seats in the southern portion of the building. It derived from the variety stage *Das Ei* (The Egg), which had already been founded in the old *Friedrichstadtpalast* in 1978 and derived its name from the oval palmtree foyer.<sup>721</sup> Somewhat unexpectedly, the new theatre building also was to include extensive medical facilities for employees, including rooms for physiotherapy and radiotherapy, a staff sauna, and an air raid shelter for 120 employees.<sup>722</sup> The new *Friedrichstadtpalast* was inaugurated on April 27, 1984.<sup>723</sup> Ever since, it has been one of Berlin's most popular musical and revue theatres. Unlike almost any other socialist entertainment venues its fame and relentless popularity was unscathed by the end of the German Democratic Republic and the take-over by the forces of market economy.

The surroundings of the Friedrichstadt Palace between the Spree River and Oranienburger Straße were rebuilt with predominantly residential block-perimeter buildings with commercial ground floor use that included numerous shops, restaurants, and cafés. Like on the southern portion of Friedrichstraße, the façade design echoed the aspect of prewar tenements with bay windows, slanted roofs, and ornaments. Opposite the *Friedrichstadtpalast*, the *Hugenottenviertel* (Huguenot Quarter) was erected, a residential complex with six-floor perimeter block buildings.<sup>724</sup> One block north of the

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<sup>720</sup> The delegation included Manfred Prasser, several other architects and "some Stasi officers disguised as technicians." On the trip Prasser was reprimanded for "unsocialist behavior" because he – at the time a cheerful middle-aged man of 300 pounds – had allowed a revue girl at the *Folies Bergère* to drag him on the stage and join her for a can-can. Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004. The delegation was also shown the insufficient artist cloakrooms at the Moulin Rouge, which influenced Gißke's decision to build especially comfortable artist facilities at the Friedrichstadt Palace. Interview with Manfred Prasser May 20, 2004, confirmed by Gerhard Trölitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.

<sup>721</sup> BArch DH 1/36373

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.: 6.

<sup>723</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 139.

<sup>724</sup> It was comprised two blocks on the west side of Friedrichstraße north of Reinhardtstraße and built between 1985 and 1988, following a design by Karl-Ernst Swora with Dieter Bankert and Herbert

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*Friedrichstadtpalast*, a new street with the name Neue Oranienburger Straße was to cut through a block connecting Oranienburger Straße and Friedrichstraße. It was to be bordered by a multi-use building with a façade similar to that of the *Friedrichstadtpalast*, containing an ice-cream parlor, a beer hall, several shops, 76 apartments, and a roof terrace for tenant use. North of the Neue Oranienburger Straße a small triangular block was to be redesigned. The remaining wing of the *Haus der Technik* (which now houses the cultural center *Tacheles*) and two adjacent residential buildings were to be demolished in 1990 in favor of a department store “with the character of a multi-story covered market” and only spared due to the unexpected end of the socialist regime. It was planned to calm the traffic on the portion of Oranienburger Straße outside of the department store and to extend the market sale on the street “like a bazaar.”<sup>725</sup>

### *Valuta-Hotels*

To a certain extent the Friedrichstraße reconstruction was an image marketing project directed at Western observers and visitors. This is supported by the fact that the Politburo during the same meeting on which it resolved the Friedrichstraße project also decided on the construction of two so-called *Valuta-Hotels* in Berlin's Mitte district.<sup>726</sup> *Valuta-Hotels*, also known as *Interhotels*, were restricted to guests from Western countries who had to pay with freely convertible currency (*Valuta*). They had been built in East Berlin since the 1960s; since 1966 Friedrichstraße boasted the “Hotel

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Knopf. The buildings had arcades and bay-windows on the façades towards Friedrichstraße and an extended green backyard in the inner part of the block, which was initially planned to offer six bars and restaurants and ten shops. Adalbert Behr, *Bauen in Berlin 1973 bis 1987* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1987): 192, for the plans for the interior courtyard, which were not carried out, see Raumprogramm für Quartier 302 und 303, in Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin des Ministeriums für Bauwesen der DDR und Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Berlin-Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße, gestern und heute* (East Berlin, 1987): 88. See also Joachim Palutzki, *Architektur in der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 2000): 412.

<sup>725</sup> The design of the northern portion of Friedrichstraße was complemented by a number of minor construction projects in the adjacent streets, such as a dorm for students of the Humboldt University on Tucholskystraße between Ziegelstraße and Spree River, a school on Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße) and a daycare center in the interior of the block between Friedrichstraße, Claire-Waldoff-Straße, and Hannoversche Straße. See Ehrhardt Gißke, Jürgen Ledderboge, Hans Erdmann (authors collective), *Berlin Friedrichstraße, Otto-Grotewohl-Straße gestern und heute: Konzeption und Baumaßnahmen bis 1987* (East Berlin: Bauinformation, 1987): 86-89.

<sup>726</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602.

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Unter den Linden."<sup>727</sup> The most famous was the 39 story high Hotel Stadt Berlin (now Hotel Park Inn), built between 1967 and 1970 on Alexanderplatz.<sup>728</sup> The *Valuta-Hotels* offered a comfort that was significantly superior to that of hotels open to East German citizens. *The Hotel Stadt Berlin* on Alexanderplatz even contained a casino where the capitalist guests were allowed to support the socialist state with their gambling losses - of course to be paid in capitalist currency. Designed to profit from Western visitors and thus eventually serve the socialist cause, the *Valuta-Hotels* nevertheless reinforced the impression held by many East Germans that they were second-class citizens in their own country.



Figure 56: Grand Hotel, built 1985-1987

<sup>727</sup> For the conception of the Hotel Unter den Linden by Günther Boy see Günther Boy, Hotel "Unter den Linden" Ecke Friedrichstraße, *Deutsche Architektur* no. 2 (1964): 84/85. The hotel opened on June 11, 1966 with a capacity of 440 beds. *Deutsche Architektur* no. 10 (1966): 624.

<sup>728</sup> The design was worked out by a collective that included the architects Hans Erich Bogatzky, Johannes Brieske, Josef Kaiser, Roland Korn, Günter Kunert, Heiz Scharlipp, and Roland Steiger. Hans-Jürgen Mende and Kurt Wernicke, *Berlin-Mitte, Das Lexikon* (Berlin: Stapp, 2001): 213.

The Friedrichstraße rebuilding comprised two *Valuta Hotels*, the *Dom Hotel* (now Hilton) on Platz der Akademie and the *Grand Hotel* (now Westin Grand Hotel), built between 1985 and 1987 as a collaboration of the Japanese Kajima Corporation, the Swedish firm SIAB, and a number of state-operated East German firms.<sup>729</sup> In a 1985 Politburo meeting, the project was referred to as "*Hotel Adlon*," which was another proof of the socialist leaders' attempt to reconnect to the glamour of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Berlin. The *Hotel Adlon* was one of the most famous hotels in prewar Berlin, situated opposite of the Brandenburg Gate. It burned down at the end of World War II, and was only re-erected after the German reunification. At the time of the proposal for the *Grand Hotel*, the old Adlon was a ruin.<sup>730</sup> When *Grand Hotel* opened in 1987, it reflected some of the old Adlon's glamour. The façade was structured by arches and pilasters in the style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The centerpiece of the building was an eight-story high octagonal lobby with ornamented balconies, false marble columns, and a skylight. Also the representative interior rooms contained numerous quotations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to increase the number of rooms while at the same time maintaining the historic building dimensions, the height of each story was significantly reduced. The designers attempted to create a homogenous appearance of the whole block. Thus an adjacent apartment building, a modernist steel and glass creation from the late 1960s, was clad with a historicizing stone façade and visually integrated into the *Grand Hotel*. Like other buildings on Friedrichstraße, the *Grand Hotel* was promoted with references to the glamour of the prewar period. The famous Café Bauer, once situated across the street from what was now the *Grand Hotel* and destroyed in the Second World War, was resurrected as a representative coffeehouse integrated in the hotel. Like the other hotel bars, it was of course restricted to patrons who were able to pay with West German or other freely convertible currency.

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<sup>729</sup> Ehrhardt Gißke, *Bauen, mein Leben* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1987): 170.

<sup>730</sup> The slightly modified "original" Hotel Adlon was rebuilt in 1995 next to the Brandenburg Gate by a West German investor after a design by the firm Patzschke & Klotz – also with a reduced ceiling height that allowed for one additional story.

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*Characteristic atmosphere through light design*

The “characteristic atmosphere” of Friedrichstraße was to be reinforced by a particular lighting design. This was stated in a 1985 proposal elaborated by the Eastern German Ministry of Construction, which provided a detailed conception of streetlights, shop signs, and billboards.<sup>731</sup> If realized, the proposal would have topped everything known so far in the East Bloc. A “comprehensive impression” was to be created through a “special light dramaturgy,” using lamps “with high aesthetic and visual value and futuristic design.”<sup>732</sup> This was to include large slide projections, time-controlled light effects, illuminating moving elements and combined visual-acoustic special effects.<sup>733</sup> Illuminated commercials were to hang over the street; neon signs were to stretch over entire buildings. “Artistic elements” were planned to adorn the floor. Cascades and water fountains were to be set up on the sidewalks, bathed in fluorescent light. Spots were to accentuate “architectural highlights.” The *Grand Hotel* was to be illuminated by historic “Karl-Friedrich Schinkel lamps” on the sidewalks. The conception was to be carried out with light in different colors and intensities. A spectacular newly-to-be-developed laser system - the so-called “Laser City Program” – was to project laser beams along the street, providing information on time, temperature, humidity, and air pressure.<sup>734</sup> The distinctive element of the proposal was the conscious use of light and sound to create atmosphere in a way that would have let Albert Speer’s Cathedral of Light for the Nazi Party Rally in Nuremberg in 1936 appear clumsy in comparison: Friedrichstraße was to be minutely staged as a gesamtkunstwerk that combined shopping and entertainment facilities with a flood of visual, acoustic, and dramatic elements blended together.

The contrast between the “Delirious East Berlin” outlined in the Friedrichstraße proposals and the center of the real socialist capital city could have hardly been more extreme. One has to assess the

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<sup>731</sup> See proposal authored by Mr. Herrmann, director of the Construction Ministry’s Department of Projects for Industrial and Urban Technology (Abteilung Vorhaben Industrie und Stadttechnik), dated November 1985 BArch DH 1/35504: 1.

<sup>732</sup> Dazu wird eine spezielle Lichtdramaturgie Friedrichstraße entwickelt und Beleuchtungskörper mit hohem ästhetischem Schauwert in zukunftsorientiertem Design gestaltet.” Ibid.: 4.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.: 4.

<sup>734</sup> A letter by Mr. Herrmann with the Ministry of Construction to secretary Martini dated November 6, 1986 announced a “large scale experiment,” scheduled for November 1985 on Friedrichstraße to test the laser beamers developed by the firm Carl Zeiss Jena. Ibid.

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scope of the Friedrichstraße project against the background of a country that notoriously lacked both consumer goods and entertainment options. East German shop windows were generally bleak and unwelcoming, and every weekend prospective guests formed long lines at the doors of the few bars and dance halls. Like many East Berlin boulevards, Friedrichstraße was also not particularly inviting. It was gray and abounded with crumbling façades. There were hardly any shops or cafés. Motorized traffic was minimal, and the few pedestrians appeared lost between the numerous empty lots. If anything, its charm was one of melancholy, incompleteness, and decay.

*A socialist adventure space*

In 1984, the Politburo ordered that Friedrichstraße be “redesigned to be the most important commercial street with diverse experience areas.”<sup>735</sup> The neologism “experience area” - *Erlebnisbereich* in German - was emblematic of a new urban design approach. *Erlebnis* is an evocative term that translates into “experience,” “event,” or “adventure.” As an urban design concept, “*Erlebnis*” preceded the redesign of Friedrichstraße. Already Günter Stahn in his 1971 dissertation uses the term ubiquitously to describe the effect of his proposal.<sup>736</sup> Similarly, a 1973 study issued by the East German Building Academy mandated high-ranking construction officials to judge East German master plans according to whether or not they were able to create “impressive *Erlebnis* areas.”<sup>737</sup> In the proposals for Friedrichstraße, the term *Erlebnis* was used extensively. According to the architects’ conception, the connection between building and boulevard was supposed to “create a large spectrum of *Erlebnisse*.”<sup>738</sup> The interior spaces were to present an “*Erlebnis* world”<sup>739</sup> Shopping and

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<sup>735</sup> “Die Friedrichstraße... [ist] zur bedeutendsten Handels- und Geschäftsstraße Berlins mit vielfältigen Erlebnisbereichen auszubauen” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984, final copy. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037: 166-167.

<sup>736</sup> See for example Günter Stahn, *Probleme der räumlichen Umgestaltung großstädtischer Zentrumsbereiche im Prozeß der Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise, dargestellt am Beispiel der Friedrichstraße in Berlin* (East Berlin, 1971): 24 or 32.

<sup>737</sup> “Gestaltung einprägsamer Erlebnisbereiche.” Bauakademie der DDR, ed., *Forschungsvorhaben Sozialistischer Städtebau, Programm zur Begutachtung von Generalbebauungsplänen ausgewählter Städte, Berlin 1973* in BArch DH 1/25247: 17.

<sup>738</sup> “In diesem Bereich ist die städtebauliche Attraktivität der die Seitenräume erfassenden Atmosphäre geradezu eine Herausforderung, gefühlvoll differenzierte Verknüpfungen zu schaffen... und so mit den Möglichkeiten unserer sozialistischen Gesellschaftsordnung den Menschen ein großes Spektrum an

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entertainment was to be done in “*Erlebnis* zones.”<sup>740</sup> The light design was to convert Friedrichstraße into an “*Erlebnis* street,”<sup>741</sup> on which individually designed lamps were to pick out “*Erlebnis* highlights,” such as the entrances to arcades, dance halls, or restaurants.<sup>742</sup> The authors of the Friedrichstraße proposal and the socialist leaders who commissioned and approved it thus had apparently no qualms about dismissing one of the foundations of Marxism, according to which the production of value lies exclusively in the fabrication of material goods and not in the creation of ideas or experiences. By propagating the creation of *Erlebnis* they redirected the focus of their policy from collective action to individual experience, and at the same time they implied that such experience could be generated and molded by physical design.

The term *Erlebnis* has a long and complex history. It was a fundamental concept in German hermeneutics around 1900. Most prominently, Wilhelm Dilthey used it to theorize a method of cognition through empathy. His approach stood in opposition to the methods associated with the natural sciences, which at the time had been widely applied in both science and the humanities.<sup>743</sup> For Dilthey, the understanding of someone else’s utterance was based on the ability of “re-living” his or her feelings and mental conditions, which he saw as being rooted in a common “human nature.” According to Dilthey, *Erlebnis* as a form of empathy enables interaction on an everyday level in the same way as it facilitates the understanding of a foreign culture or the reception of a work of art. After Dilthey, philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer or Jürgen Habermas rejected *Erlebnis* as being too subjective for hermeneutic understanding.<sup>744</sup> Of course neither Dilthey nor Gadamer or Habermas

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Erlebnissen zu schaffen.” BArch DH 1/36355: 5. The proposal was commissioned by the Ministry of Construction on June 27, 1986.

<sup>739</sup> “eine Erlebniswelt...möglichst bunt und vielschichtig” Ibid.: 6.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.: 8.

<sup>741</sup> The proposal was authored by Mr. Herrmann, director of the Construction Ministry’s *Abteilung Vorhaben Industrie und Stadttechnik* (Department of Projects for Industrial and Urban Technology) BArch DH 1/35504: 1.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.: 4.

<sup>743</sup> Dilthey used the term frequently in his 1877 essay on Goethe, which was republished in 1905 in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), translated *Poetry and Experience*, eds. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985).

<sup>744</sup> see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Second revised edition. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993): 67. On the controversies 274

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thought of the manufactured *Erlebnis* in a mall or entertainment center, where the understanding process is reduced to the re-living of the stimuli provided by the store designer. A parallel can nevertheless be drawn on a different level. In a way, the modernist urban developments of the 1960s were an outcome of the scientific method and the allegedly exact assessment of people's needs and desires. The *Erlebnis* spaces of the 1980s, however, were based on a method of subjective experience. Both environments sought to exert a high degree of control over their users. In the case of the *Erlebnis* spaces, this control was decidedly aimed at the assumed ability of different individuals to experience certain stimuli in the same way. The *Erlebnis* spaces thus attempted to propel their visitors into a different form of collectivity than modernist spaces had sought to achieve, a forced collectivity that was based on the illusion of subjective agency. The coercive potential of this approach made the mall effective under both capitalist and socialist regimes of the 1980s, where control exerted through regulation of mass behavior was less effective than the direct channeling and manipulation of individual perceptions and experiences.

*Trying to speed up construction*

The socialist leaders were of course hesitant to admit that they were not able to keep their consumerist promises and that the East German economy was not strong enough to guarantee the supply of the projected commercial spaces.<sup>745</sup> When the economic situation further deteriorated in the late 1980s, project after project was dismissed, including the Friedrichstadt Arcades, which were to be replaced by a significantly less spectacular apartment building. At the same time construction on all Friedrichstraße projects was delayed due to constant shortages of materials and labor. In 1985, Erich Honecker tried to speed up the project by all means necessary.<sup>746</sup> He declared Friedrichstraße a

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between Gadamer and his former student Habermas see Allan How, *The Habermas-Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social* (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 1995).

<sup>745</sup> Gerhard Tröltzsch, one East Germany's three most powerful construction officials remembered a meeting in 1988 on which the Minister of Commerce communicated that he could not guarantee the supply of the Passagen Friedrichstadt with goods. Gerhard Tröltzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.

<sup>746</sup> It was probably Honecker's personal decision in January 1984 that "die Ausgestaltung der Hauptstadt Berlin [ist] mit der Kraft der ganzen Republik und mit höherem Tempo fortzusetzen....Die Gestaltung des Stadtzentrums soll im wesentlichen bis 1988/1989 abgeschlossen sein." [the redesign

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“special initiative of the socialist youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend*,” and thus used the structures of that organization to send young construction workers from different parts of the GDR to East Berlin.<sup>747</sup> Once it became clear that Friedrichstraße would not be completed for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1987, Erich Honecker at all costs wanted construction on Friedrichstraße to be finished by 1990 – the year in which the Housing Program announced in 1973 officially was to be completed. In May 1986, he urged his most powerful construction officials “to speed up significantly the construction of the investment complex Friedrichstraße/Otto-Grotewohl-Straße.”<sup>748</sup> He ordered that by the celebrations for Berlin’s 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1987 entire portions of the west side of Friedrichstraße between Unter den Linden and Leipziger Straße were to be finished, including the *Grand Hotel*. Also construction between Leipziger Straße and Checkpoint Charlie was to be completed.<sup>749</sup> For the year 1987, he ordered to increase the capacities of labor and materials employed on Friedrichstraße to double the 1986 level. For the whole five-year-plan 1986-1990 he ordered an increase in the investment into Friedrichstraße by 450 million marks.<sup>750</sup> By the time of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Honecker’s goal was to make “the contours of the future

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of the capital city be continued at a higher speed and with the force of the whole Republic... [and] essentially be finished by 1988/1989.] Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 17, 1984, final copy BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 2037: 166.

<sup>747</sup> Friedrichstraße was determined as a “complex youth object in the context of the ‘FDJ-initiative Berlin’” (“komplexes Jugendobjekt im Rahmen der ‚FDJ-Initiative Berlin‘”) meeting on February 5, 1985, BArch DH 1/35670: 8 The “FDJ-Initiative” had been incorporated in 1981. Those members of the socialist youth organization FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend – Free German Youth) who had been trained as construction workers were sent to work on several prestigious East Berlin construction sites, such as the park Marx-Engels-Forum south of Alexanderplatz in the Mitte district, the Ernst-Thälmann-Park in the Prenzlauer Berg district, and the large residential developments in the Marzahn, Hellersdorf, and Hohenschönhausen districts. In some cases the FDJ-Initiative included a mobilization of additional labor, for example in 1985, when 45,000 university and high school students from all over the GDR were recruited to “volunteer” on construction sites during their summer vacations. Letter by Eberhard Aurich, First Secretary of the FDJ, to Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, dated April 16, 1985, which included a draft for the inclusion of FDJ-members as construction workers for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary projects. BArch DH 1/35670.

<sup>748</sup> “[Es] sind die Baumaßnahmen für den Investitionskomplex Friedrichstraße/Otto-Grotewohl-Straße wesentlich zu beschleunigen.” Information by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, dated July 3, 1986. The meeting took place on May 16, 1986 with the participation of Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, Günter Schabowski, Wolfgang Junker, Erhard Krack, Gerhard Trölitzsich, and Ehrhardt Gißke. Files of the Ministry of Construction, Sekretariat, BArch DH 1/36305.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.: 1.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.: 2.

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Friedrichstraße clearly visible” despite some unfinished buildings.<sup>751</sup> This included unusual measures. In 1986, there were 300 Polish guest workers “outside the plan” employed on the Friedrichstraße construction site.<sup>752</sup> Given the constant labor shortage in the GDR this additional reinforcement was a great privilege. When the additional workers still proved insufficient to meet the deadline, Honecker even discussed ordering military battalions for the reinforcement of the Friedrichstraße construction sites.<sup>753</sup> On the May 1986 meeting between Honecker and other Politburo members it was also decided to increase the yearly budget invested into the complex from 320 million marks in 1986 to 700 million marks in 1987 and 780 million marks in 1988. The total budget during the five-year-plan period was 3.1 billion marks.<sup>754</sup> Although it is difficult to assess this figure against the background of an economy where the *value* of money is not contingent on market forces, one can nevertheless gauge the huge dimensions of the projects bearing in mind that in 1989 an East German construction worker or medical doctor would make approximately 1300 marks per month before tax.<sup>755</sup> The May 1986 meeting also determined that by 1990 a number of projects should be finished: the *Wintergarten* premiere cinema (scheduled begin of construction 1988), the renovation of the Metropol Theatre, the reception hall for the checkpoint at Friedrichstraße train station, the supply center on Voßstraße, and the refurbishing of the Weidendamm Bridge on which the Friedrichstraße crosses the Spree River. Of all these projects, only the remodeling of the bridge was carried out.

The protocol of the May 1986 meeting mentioned that the conception for speeding up the construction had been worked out by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, which included ordering state firms

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<sup>751</sup> “Durch weitere im Bau befindliche Gebäudekomplexe sind die Konturen der künftigen Friedrichstraße deutlich sichtbar zu gestalten.” Ibid.: 1.

<sup>752</sup> Letter by deputy Minister of Construction Manfred Kurtzer to his superior Wolfgang Junker dated March 26, 1986, BArch DH 1/35533.

<sup>753</sup> Honecker’s idea is mentioned in a letter from Trölitzs to Mittag, dated August 23, 1988. The same letter also refers to Honecker’s wish to start shift work on the Friedrichstraße construction sites. BArch DY 30/2847: 193.

<sup>754</sup> Information by Minister of Construction Wolfgang Junker, dated July 3, 1986. The meeting took place on May 16, 1986 with the participation of Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag, Günter Schabowski, Wolfgang Junker, Erhard Krack, Gerhard Trölitzs, and Ehrhart Gißke. Files of the Ministry of Construction, Sekretariat BArch DH 1/36305.

<sup>755</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1998): 534.

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from the districts of Schwerin, Neubrandenburg, and Potsdam to work on the Friedrichstraße project.<sup>756</sup> This drain of resources from other projects both in the provinces and in the capital city was not unanimously approved. In July 1986, Berlin deputy mayor Dieter Müller used an unusually direct tone to express his concern to the deputy Minister of Construction.<sup>757</sup> Müller feared that the capacities used for the acceleration of the Friedrichstraße project could be taken away from Berlin housing projects where they were urgently needed. He thus remained hesitant to consent to the proposal. Construction on Friedrichstraße also instigated the envy and covetousness of the neighbors. In a July 1985 letter, an indignant director of the renowned theatre Berliner Ensemble urged the “worthy comrades” in the Ministry of Construction to include his building into the remodeling efforts, because it will otherwise “stand like a coal box” amidst the new buildings.<sup>758</sup> His wish was fulfilled in 1987.<sup>759</sup> Other officials were less fortunate. In May 1986 Potsdam Head of Construction Günther Klein got wind of the 300 Polish extra workers on Friedrichstraße and wanted them to be sent to his own understaffed district once they completed their tasks. The Ministry of Construction harshly turned down his request stating that the Polish workers were badly needed in Berlin.<sup>760</sup> Despite these efforts the situation on Friedrichstraße remained precarious. The fact that even “with the power of the whole Republic” the East German economy was too weak to finish Friedrichstraße was nevertheless officially denied until the end of the socialist regime.<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> The same meeting is mentioned in the files of the Ministry of Construction, department of Sonderbauvorhaben (special projects) BArch DH 1/35670: 2.

<sup>757</sup> Dieter Müller, deputy mayor, responsible for the coordination of construction tasks, to Manfred Kurtzer, deputy minister of construction, on July 2, 1986, BArch DH 1/35670: 2.

<sup>758</sup> “...wenn die Umgebung freundlicher wird, steht dieses an sich schöne Gebäude da wie ein Kohlenkasten.” Letter by Manfred Wekwerth, Director of the theatre “Berliner Ensemble” to Staatssekretär Martini, dated July 15, 1986, BArch DH 1/35495.

<sup>759</sup> The plan of the renovation, which included the theatre and the neighboring buildings such as the wine restaurant Ganymed on Schiffbauerdamm on the right bank of the Spree River, was confirmed by Ehrhardt Gißke on March 31, 1987. BArch DH 1/36360.

<sup>760</sup> Letter by undersecretary Karl-Heinz Martini with the Ministry of Construction, to Günther Klein, Head of Construction of the district of Potsdam, dated May 8, 1986 BArch DH 1/35495.

<sup>761</sup> See for example the celebratory article by General Director of Construction with the Ministry of Construction Ehrhardt Gißke, in which he announced the coming completion of 3000 apartments and 63 bars and restaurants and celebrated that almost 4000 construction workers are employed on the Friedrichstraße site. Ehrhardt Gißke, “Historisch, lebendig und weltoffen – die Friedrichstraße erhält ein neues Gesicht” *Neue Zeit* January 14, 1987.

## *Chapter 12: Surface and Erlebnis - Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt)*

### *Friedrichstraße after 1990*

After the German reunification, Friedrichstraße continued to be a focus of urban design activity. Most state-owned parcels were quickly sold to private investors, who commissioned a number of internationally renowned architects to design shops and offices. The plans from the socialist period were reworked. The unfinished shell of the Friedrichstadt Arcades was demolished to make space for three new developments that were designed by Jean Nouvel (northern block, department store Galeries Lafayette), I. M. Pei (middle block, shopping center), and Oswald Mathias Ungers (southern block, shopping center "Block 206"). Many East Germans perceived the demolition as a conscious humiliating gesture of the triumphant Western capitalists over the defeated East German state and its citizens.<sup>762</sup> They perceived the new projects as another piece of evidence that the German reunification had in fact been an act of colonization and subjugation by the West German ruling class. The criticism, to some extent, was justified, since the redesign was without exception guided by politicians and planners from the West, and the wholesale dismissal of all plans from the socialist period can only be explained as politically motivated. Yet the critics from both East and West Germany failed to notice that the capitalist conception for Friedrichstraße was not that different from the one the socialist leaders had envisioned. If there ever was such thing as colonization in East Germany, the citizens of the German Democratic Republic had been colonized by their own leaders long before the Berlin Wall came down.

### *Erlebnis space*

With the Friedrichstraße redesign, the socialist government pursued a policy that in a peculiar way paralleled the international development in capitalist countries. Like the *Nikolaiviertel*, Friedrichstraße was a break with the ideal of equal housing standards for everyone, which, at least as a goal, had guided the construction policies of the 1960s and 1970s. The double-story apartments and penthouses with winter gardens and views to Schinkel's Playhouse were never meant to house the average East

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<sup>762</sup> Cp. for example Roland Korn, interview by author, Dannenreich (Brandenburg), April 20, 2004, Manfred Prasser, interview by author, Zehlendorf (Brandenburg), May 20, 2004.

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German worker, but rather appealed to members of the socialist elite. They were akin to the *Intershops* and *Interhotels* reserved to the fortunate few who possessed West German currency. Social polarization was still small in East Germany in comparison to the West. With Friedrichstraße, however, unequal standards, once again, were inscribed into the urban fabric. The neo-historical developments were distinct from modernist projects insofar as they made social stratification explicit.

The declared belief in *Erlebnis* as an element of urban design was part and parcel of this strategy. It shows that in their political practice East German leaders increasingly abandoned Marxist positions. Rather they began to rely on the socio-political significance of staged individual experiences to stabilize their power. The plans for proto-commercial *Erlebnis* zones in East Berlin shows that the East German regime, though nominally still socialist, in the last decade of its existence underwent a gradual transformation and increasingly aimed at integrating capitalist principles. The fixation on the rival in the West was a continuous undercurrent of this policy; it was no accident that the *Erlebnis* city was to be built on Friedrichstraße, which was only a couple of blocks from the Berlin Wall and one of the prime destinations for Western tourists.

The East German desire to build a shopping and entertainment center nevertheless appears bizarre in every respect. In the United States, malls were an outcome of suburbanization. The combination of retail, entertainment, and leisure under one roof was contingent upon a car-oriented society moving further and further away from the inner cities. The meticulously designed atmosphere of the interior spaces catered to the interest of business owners, who wanted to increase their sales rates while at the same time excluding undesired individuals. This is not to say that this was an effective solution of the social challenges of East Berlin of the 1970s and 1980s. But one has to point out the awkwardness of transplanting a specifically capitalist model of urban control into a socialist planned economy. In a country with minimal suburbanization, low rates of car ownership, and a completely state-controlled market, a mall was as incongruous as a ski lift in the desert. Why would East German leaders want to create a large shopping center while the existing small shops were alive and well? And why would they try to increase consumption through staged experiences while they were already hard-pressed to

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satisfy the basic needs of their citizens? If one assumes that an enterprise of that scope was not exclusively designed for Western tourists, there are two possible answers. One is that in the 1980s the notion of a city characterized by individual *Erlebnis* was similarly appealing in capitalist and socialist countries. It did not originate in the commercial strategies of capitalist retailers but was a genuine reaction to the monotony of the mass-produced modernist residential buildings. It attempted to produce neighborhoods that were as manufactured and artificial as the modernist spaces, but at least full of color, diversity, and imagination. The other answer is that the new focus on *Erlebnis* responded to the unsatisfied desire shared by many East Germans, including many members of the ruling class. *Erlebnis*, the subjective, uncontrolled, and possibly extreme experience was precisely what was missing in the restrictive East German society, where collective work, collective leisure, and collective political activity were mandated by the ruling ideology and where everyday life was endured with stifling routines. The East German rulers seem to have acknowledged this shortcoming, but were at the same time unwilling to loosen the regulative power over their citizens. Thus for them the mall would be the perfect match. It would give an illusion of indeterminacy and chance while at the same time guaranteeing careful control. It would feign unrestrained experience in a prefabricated environment. And it would provide emotion without the danger of destabilization.

If the socialist system had in fact been able to produce all the goods and services necessary to make the Friedrichstraße development work, the outcome would have been ambiguous. Then Friedrichstraße could have become a consumerist heterotopia that satisfied all the desires that were left unfulfilled under the "real existing socialism." A place where emotional excess and visual excitement were to happen within the secure boundaries of monitored spaces. A protected zone where one could enjoy the pleasures of "excessive consumption" without the inconveniences and risks of a capitalist society. It could also have become a step towards a postmodern version of the Orwellian nightmare, in which the dictatorial system would not only have controlled thought and action but individual emotion and experience.

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### *The center of Berlin*

"We have always said it's a little bit like Las Vegas, and a little bit like a dollhouse." Thus the architectural critic Bruno Flierl from East Berlin remembers the debates that surrounded what arguably became East Germany's most popular reconstruction project – the *Nikolaiviertel* (Nikolai Quarter).<sup>763</sup> Some of Flierl's East German colleagues were less diplomatic. They bashed it as "a swansong of East German architecture,"<sup>764</sup> an "urban design experiment at the border between architecture and theatrical backdrop,"<sup>765</sup> or a "city fantasy dreamt in a somewhat scientific way."<sup>766</sup>



Figure 57: Nikolaiviertel

<sup>763</sup> Bruno Flierl, interview by author, Berlin, July 14, 2003. In a contemporaneous public lecture, Flierl called it *Weihnachtsmarkt* ("Christmas fair") – a reference to popular German tinsel and gingerbread markets. Bruno Flierl, "Die Postmoderne in der Architektur," in *Postmoderne und Funktionalismus. Sechs Vorträge* ed. Bruno Flierl and Heinz Hirdina (East Berlin, 1985): 120.

<sup>764</sup> "Schwanengesang der Architektur der DDR" Simone Hain, "Rekonstruktion made in GDR," *Foyer* 2 no. 6 (1997): 10.

<sup>765</sup> "städtebauliches Experiment an der Grenze zwischen Architektur und Theaterkulisse" Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 120.

<sup>766</sup> "gleichsam wissenschaftlich geträumte Stadtphantasie" Ulrich Hugk and Johanna Sellengk, "Stadterhaltung durch Stadterneuerung. Der Wandel der Altstadt als Voraussetzung ihrer Erhaltung und ihres Weiterlebens. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* no. 5/6 (1988): 210.

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Between 1983 and 1987, the East German authorities developed a largely empty site south of Alexanderplatz and built a prefabricated concrete slab version of a historic old town. In the area where Berlin's medieval nucleus had once stood, architect Günter Stahn designed a mixed-use development composed of a few reconstructed historic buildings and various newly created commercial and residential structures with neo-historical façades. The *Nikolaiviertel* was the largest neo-historical development in East Germany, unique also with regard to its design process: it was the first major project since the 1950s to be published under the name of an individual architect and not an anonymous collective. Inaugurated in April 1987 on the wake of the Socialist Unity Party's 11<sup>th</sup> Convention, it comprised a total of 800 new apartments for approximately 2000 fortunate residents, among them the architect Günter Stahn. 60 apartments had been executed in a traditional brick structure; the rest were assembled from prefabricated concrete slabs.<sup>767</sup> Restricted to pedestrian traffic, the *Nikolaiviertel* provided 1900 square meters of retail space, several museums, and East Germany's largest concentration of bars and restaurants – 22 eateries and drinking places on less than half square kilometer.<sup>768</sup> To date, the area still boasts a multitude of touristy bars and restaurants, and remains consistently popular among visitors to Berlin.

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<sup>767</sup> "Aufgabenstellung für den Wohnungsbau im Gebiet zwischen Rathaus und Spree im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte", dated November 1980 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669: 23.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.



Figure 58: Nikolaiviertel

*Rebuilding plans from the prewar and postwar periods*

The plans to rebuild a new Old Town around the Nikolai Church - Berlin's oldest house of worship – preceded the German Democratic Republic. In the 1930s, there were plans to convert this neighborhood into an open-air museum for architectural treasures. Even before the area was devastated by the air raids of the Second World War, frequent demolition and rebuilding had left only a handful of buildings that could be deemed truly historical.<sup>769</sup> The National Socialist authorities therefore wanted to recover the old-town aspect. They planned to take down approximately thirty long-standing residences from the 18<sup>th</sup> century in different parts of Berlin and rebuild them on the streets adjacent to the Nikolai Church. The existing buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were to be torn down.<sup>770</sup> The embankment of the Spree River two blocks south of the church was

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<sup>769</sup> In 1935, only 20 out of the approximately 65 buildings in the area that is now occupied by the *Nikolaiviertel* were built before 1800. One can therefore hardly speak of a “historic neighborhood.” Benedikt Goebel, *Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum modernen Stadtzentrum* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2003) map 1.

<sup>770</sup> The plans can be seen at LAB F Rep. 270, 684. Palutzki suggests that the prewar plans inspired the rebuilding plans in the 1970s. Joachim Palutzki, *Architektur in der DDR* (Berlin: Reimer, 2000): 383.

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designed to feature a complete row of baroque façades meant to provide a scenic skyline from the other bank.<sup>771</sup> In the same way, the north and east sides of the area – the houses facing Mühlendamm and Spandauer Straße - were to be adorned with relocated historical buildings.<sup>772</sup> None of these plans were carried out; most buildings that were to be relocated were subsequently destroyed during the Second World War.

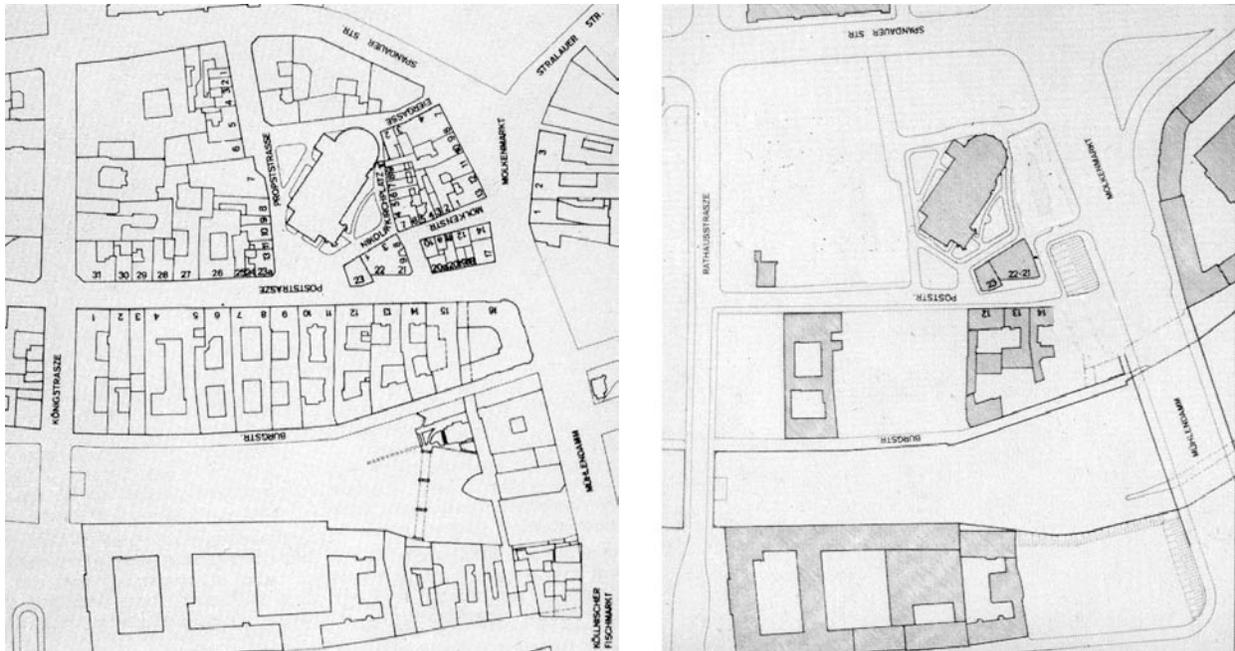


Figure 59 and Figure 60: left: The area around the Nikolai Church in 1900; right: the same area in 1982 before the redevelopment.

Neglected during the immediate postwar period, the area around the Nikolai Church re-entered the planning debate in the 1960s. The redevelopment plans reflected the modernist enthusiasm for large

<sup>771</sup> Buildings from right to left, viewed from the Spree: Taubenstraße 42, Mittelstraße 46, Kleine Stralauer Straße 4, Kreuzstraße 19, Fischerstraße 18 cross street, Köllnische Straße 9, Petristraße 22, Alte Jakobstraße 101, Stallschreiberstraße 17, Köllnische Straße 3, Stallschreiberstraße 20, Stralauer Straße 39, Ephraimpalais. LAB F Rep. 270, 684.

<sup>772</sup> View from the Mühlendamm/Spandauer Straße, from left to right: Ephraimpalais, (Poststraße), Alexanderplatz 10, Neue Friedrichstraße 35, Märkisches Ufer 18, Roßstraße 3, Landsberger Straße 49, Neue Grünstraße 10, Neue Grünstraße 12, Kleine Kurstraße 5, Neue Promenade 2, Breite Straße 23, Fischerstraße 13 (crossed out), Königstraße 51, Breite Straße 21 (Probststr), Spandauer Brücke 8. Poststraße northern side: adjacent to the Knoblauch House, Rosenthaler Straße 37 should be rebuilt, next to it to the right Landsberger Straße 64. Opposite of the Knoblauch House, on the southern side of Poststraße, the Krögelhaus was planned, next to it from left to right Jüdenstraße 22, An der Schleuse 12, Parochialstraße 31, and the Horch Foundation.

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open spaces, geometrical forms, and new technology.<sup>773</sup> Two projects were particularly noteworthy. In 1968, a group of architects proposed to convert the church ruin into a *Museum der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin City Museum), cover the old nave with a modernist concrete roof, and build a rectangular conference hall on top of the tower shafts.<sup>774</sup> The project was explicitly presented as a socialist re-appropriation and re-interpretation of architectural remnants from the pre-socialist period.<sup>775</sup> In the same year, another group of designers presented a plan to rebuild the Nikolai Church as a Historic Museum with landscaped surroundings.<sup>776</sup> The area was projected to continue the park space south of Alexanderplatz, which is now known as *Marx-Engels-Forum*. Immediately west of Rathausstraße, a huge government center was planned – the park-like Nikolai Church area would thus be the garden of the government center. The plan foresaw the demolition of the few remaining buildings next to the Nikolai Church with the exception of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Knoblauch House. An ultramodern *Raumflugplanetarium* (space flight planetarium) was planned next to the church. In front of the church a large square was to be laid out, paved with concrete tiles, and adorned with flowerbeds. It was to continue into a promenade flanked by water basins and leading down to the river. The church was to be rebuilt three stories high and covered with an angular steel roof. The tower shafts were to be topped with a conference hall in the form of a pointed ship. Despite its futuristic exterior, the proposal did not deny the past, but rather aimed at expressing historical progress and technological advancement. On the floor, colored ribbons were to mark different alterations and additions to the building over the course of the centuries. An exhibit on the wall was to teach the visitor about the

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<sup>773</sup> Before the 1960s, the was not included in any of the official reconstruction plans, despite its proximity to what was to become the center of the socialist capital city. The 1961 master plan by Peter Schweizer and Dorothea Tscheschner showed the ruin of the Nikolai Church in the middle of a park space; only a small area between church and Rathausstraße was to be developed. Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 112.

<sup>774</sup> LAB C Rep 121 Nr. 759.

<sup>775</sup> LAB C Rep 121 Nr. 759.

<sup>776</sup> "Studie für den Umbau der Nikolaikirche zum 'Historischen Museum der Stadt Berlin'" LAB C Rep 121, 759.

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“historic steps of mankind,” such as the “liberation of man from the medieval shackles” or the “liberation of Man from the capitalist yoke.”<sup>777</sup> None of these plans, however, were carried out.

At the same time, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the East German authorities did not deem the Nikolai Church a historic building worthy of protection in its own right. They would not even guarantee the preservation of the ruin at all.<sup>778</sup> In December 1971, Fritz Rothstein with the Department of Culture at the *Magistrat* inquired with Chief Architect Joachim Näther about the plans for Nikolai Church area.<sup>779</sup> Näther’s answer was terse. He replied that in line with the decisions of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Convention, the predominant task for the near future was housing; the construction of any public buildings, including a church, in the city center was not foreseen in the near future.<sup>780</sup> An earlier draft of Näther’s letter dismissed Rothstein’s ideas to rebuild the area as unrealistic.<sup>781</sup> Five years later the situation seemed to have changed. One can detect an increasing concern with the re-creation of “Old Berlin” among both Berlin citizens and local authorities. This is documented in the large number of individual appeals and petitions in favor of old buildings. In 1976, concerned citizen Hermann Schirrmeister wrote a letter to the “worthy comrades” of the Berlin District Office of Construction, in which he called for the re-construction of the historical *Gaststätte Zum Nussbaum* (Walnut Tree Inn).<sup>782</sup> Schirrmeister proposed its re-erection on the Rolandufer street two hundred

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<sup>777</sup> “Befreiung des Menschen aus den mittelalterlichen Fesseln” and “Befreiung des Menschen vom kapitalistischen Joch” LAB C Rep 121, 759.

<sup>778</sup> Kieling and Althoff claimed that in the 1960s the holes for blowing up the church ruin had been already drilled. Unfortunately they do not provide their source. Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 113.

<sup>779</sup> The inquiry was authored by the Kulturbund, which Rothstein presided. Letter by Fritz Rothstein to Chief Architect Joachim Näther, dated December 23, 1971. LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669. Already in 1968 Rothstein’s department had commissioned a study on the possibilities to reconstruct the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ephraim Palace Rolf-Herbert Krüger, *Das Ephraim-Palais in Berlin* (East Berlin: 1988): 60.

<sup>780</sup> Letter by Chief Architect Joachim Näther to Fritz Rothstein, dated January 11, 1972 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> The Walnut Tree Inn was located on Fischerstraße 21 on the *Fischerinsel* (Fisher Island) south of the *Nikolaiviertel*. It was one of Berlin’s oldest restaurants. The Walnut Tree Inn boasted a number of famous patrons, such as folk singer Claire Waldoff and draughtsman Heinrich Zille, of whom it also owned a collection of drawings with folksy Berlin characters. Zille repeatedly celebrated the restaurant’s genuine Old Berlin atmosphere. The building burned down in 1943 after an air raid, its location seized to be recognizable with the rebuilding of the Fisher Island with highrise towers. The construction date of the restaurant is contested. Günter Stahn claims that an inscription on the cellar

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meters upstream from the Nikolai Church ruin. He claimed that this would be a better way to revive the typical Berlin milieu than the “pathetic” tourist bar *Zille-Stuben* in the highrise *Hotel Stadt Berlin* on Alexanderplatz, named for the well-known early-20<sup>th</sup>-century working class artist Heinrich Zille but which, according to Schirrmeister, “Old Zille would have never frequented because of its prices.”<sup>783</sup> Nätther’s successor, Chief Architect Roland Korn, in a personal letter stated his commitment “to preserve or recreate urban neighborhoods with a typical Berlin character.”<sup>784</sup> Korn did not favor the location proposed by Schirrmeister; his office concurrently investigated the possibilities for re-building the Walnut Tree Inn on the right bank of the Spree a little further downstream – the Nikolai Church area where the Inn was eventually re-created.<sup>785</sup> Korn and Schirrmeister exchanged another two letters, in which Schirrmeister, among other things, expressed his approval that in recent years the East Berlin authorities “returned to paying more attention to the local Berlin color.”<sup>786</sup>

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entrance suggested 1705 as the year of construction. Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen): 49. Heinz Mehlan, allegedly referring to the same inscription, dated the Walnut Tree Inn back to 1571. Heinz Mehlan, “Zur historischen Umbauung der Nikolaikirche” *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n.10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 39. A plaque on the current reconstructed building refers to the older date, 1571.

<sup>783</sup> “Die Zillestube im Interhotel-Haus-Berlin ist doch nur eine kümmerliche Talmi-Touristen-Attracke [he probably means ‘Attrappe’]. Vater Zille wäre hier schon wegen der Preisstufe nicht eingekehrt.” The letter is signed in Berlin dialect “Herrmann Schirrmeister, jeborener Berliner, wohnhaft in Fredersdorf bei Berlin” [Herrmann Schirrmeister, born in Berlin, living in Fredersdorf near Berlin]. It is dated October 29, 1976. LAB C Rep 110-01/4413.

<sup>784</sup> Answer by Roland Korn, dated January 7, 1977. Korn personally reviewed the letter before signing it. This is evident since the second version which was eventually sent away contains several corrections in Korn’s handwriting. LAB C Rep 110-01/ 4413.

<sup>785</sup> Answer by Roland Korn, dated January 7, 1977, LAB C Rep 110-01/4413.

<sup>786</sup> “Und die letzten Jahre bewiesen ja auch, daß man dem Berliner Kolorit wieder mehr Beachtung zollt.” Letter by Hermann Schirrmeister, dated January 15, 1977, LAB C Rep 110-01/4413.



Figure 61 and Figure 62: Left: The Walnut Tree Inn in its original location, ca. 1900. Right: The reconstructed Inn in the Nikolaiviertel, 2005

#### *The Nikolaiviertel gets historicized*

The plan to rebuild the *Nikolaiviertel* with historicizing façades originated from Günter Peters's Berlin District Office of Construction.<sup>787</sup> Although it derived from a consensus among leading officials and not from a democratic process, it is safe to say that the development towards historicism reflected the desires of large parts of the East German population at the time. The *Nikolaiviertel* design evolved as a process and cannot be traced back to the decision of one single leader. This distinguished it from the East German showcase projects of the 1950s and 1960s, which had been directly mandated by head of state Walter Ulbricht. Like any major construction project, the approval of the *Nikolaiviertel* project was decided in the Politburo. The respective resolution, however, was passed in 1980 at a moment in

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<sup>787</sup> Peter Goralczyk, "Die denkmalpflegerische Zielsetzung für den Wiederaufbau des Stadtviertels um die Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 28.

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which the general neo-historical character as well as numerous details had already been decided.<sup>788</sup> The historicizing of the *Nikolaiviertel* therefore did not originate from the top leaders; they merely confirmed a proposal that had been largely molded by subordinate city officials. The inclination towards a neo-historicism also predated the competition held in 1979.<sup>789</sup> It eventually affected the competition-winning design by Günter Stahn, which was stripped of numerous modernist elements in the years that followed the competition.

The Politburo decided the construction of the *Nikolaiviertel* in January 1980, in the same month in which it also discussed the rebuilding of the famous variety theater Friedrichstadt Palace on Friedrichstraße.<sup>790</sup> The resolution, however, did not mandate to build an entire neo-historical neighborhood but merely foresaw the rebuilding of a handful of historic structures, including the Nikolai Church.<sup>791</sup> Neither did Erich Honecker, in a meeting with Politburo construction experts five months later, mention the historic aspect of the area.<sup>792</sup> With regard to the Günter Stahn's proposal, the protocol of the meeting merely praised economic aspects.<sup>793</sup> History was only brought up on a city level. A *Magistrat* resolution in November 1980, which referred to the Politburo decisions six months earlier, announced to build a "characteristic central area which on a historic ground combines valuable

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<sup>788</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 29, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1842.

<sup>789</sup> As documented in its comments, the jury was to admit an entirely modernist design. For example, with the proposal by the collective of architect Wagner, the jury pointed out: "In der Fassadengestaltung vermögen die z. T. angewandten modernistischen Formelemente nicht zu überzeugen". (With regard to the façade design the partially used modernist forms are not convincing.) Other than that, all winning proposals contained numerous modernist elements. Jury protocol LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902: 21.

<sup>790</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 29, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1842. Somewhat surprisingly, the resolution also stressed the significance of the project in the context of the Housing Program. The plan was specified nine months later in the Politburo resolution on October 14, 1980. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 48. The decision was confirmed by the *Magistrat* on November 26, 1980. The *Magistrat*, department of culture, also was the client. The bill was worked out by a group with the Ministry of Construction under direction of undersecretary Karl-Heinz Martini. Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, work copy, DY 30/J IV 2/2A 2354: 132.

<sup>791</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on January 29, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1842.

<sup>792</sup> Protocol of a meeting with Honecker, Mittag, Naumann, Junker, Gißke, and Tröllitzsch on May 2, 1980 in Honecker's office. BArch, DY 30/2851: 51.

<sup>793</sup> The proposal commended favorable relation of cost and benefit because of the relatively high percentage of residential buildings whose first floors are used for small shops and gastronomic facilities. *Ibid.*

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elements from the past with newly erected buildings in a meaningful way.”<sup>794</sup> Given that in the early phase of the project neither head of state Erich Honecker nor top economist Günter Mittag or his fellow Politburo members were particularly supportive of historicizing architecture, how did the area become the textbook example of East Berlin historic revival?

Two factors seemed to have been effective in this change. First, Erich Honecker, who was personally rather indifferent to architectural design, was receptive to the argument that a historicizing development could be a major attraction for West German tourists, and would eventually bolster the German Democratic Republic’s claim for independent nationhood connected to particular portions of the German history.<sup>795</sup> Second, the neo-historical façades in the *Nikolaiviertel* were perceived as a complement to the modernist Television Tower and the highrise developments of the 1960s and by no means as diametrically opposed. Eventually both were comprehensive planning schemes, both were to propagate East German superiority vis-à-vis the West, and both paid tribute to the specificity of the site: the one by prominently marking the center of the city, and the other by referring to its 800-year long history.

In retrospect, Günter Stahn also saw the significance of the *Nikolaiviertel* for the East German leaders in the context of their claim for independent nationhood. He denied that there was any discussion about the historicist aspects of the project.<sup>796</sup> According to him, a “historically conscious” redevelopment of the area was the natural outcome of this particular location and was never questioned by any of the political leaders.<sup>797</sup> He only remembered facing opposition from the directors of the state-owned construction firms who feared that the ornamented façades and irregular buildings,

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<sup>794</sup> “[Es] ist ein weiterer charakteristischer Zentrumsbereich zu schaffen, der auf historischem Territorium Wertvolles aus der Vergangenheit mit neu Gebautem sinnvoll verbindet.” *Magistrat* resolution no. 423/80 “Aufgabenstellung für den Wohnungsbau im Gebiet zwischen Rathaus und Spree im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte”, resolved on November 26, 1980, LAB C Rep 100-05, 1842: 8.

<sup>795</sup> Stahn repeatedly pointed out the East German leaders’ desire for self-representation vis-à-vis the West. Günter Stahn, interview by author, phone conversation, May 2, 2005.

<sup>796</sup> As a matter of fact, there is no evidence of any major debate among architects and politicians which set the historicist *Nikolaiviertel* in opposition to modernist developments.

<sup>797</sup> Günter Stahn, interview by author, phone conversation, May 2, 2005.

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in contrast to the much cheaper modernist concrete blocks, would consume too many resources per apartment and thus endanger the fulfillment of the plan. For Stahn, the numerous modernist elements in his original, prize-winning proposal – irregular block perimeters, concrete façades, and six to eight story buildings – were merely “fashionable elements,” which he himself chose to remove over the course of the implementation process. Whether or not his memories were accurate, his attitude demonstrated the extent to which the neo-historical *Nikolaiviertel* grew from modernist roots and was not conceived as a denial of modernism. Stahn saw his design as being generated from its use. For him it was the best solution to the problem of combining a pedestrian-oriented entertainment district, with a visualization of the city’s historic origin. In a peculiar way he thus upheld the modernist tenet of form follows function; for him, the neo-historical design was a consequent result of the area’s particular purpose.<sup>798</sup> Similarly and somewhat surprisingly, Stahn declared his strong opposition to postmodernism and decidedly claimed that neither his non-modernist site planning nor his reinvented historical buildings had anything to do with postmodern architecture or urban design.<sup>799</sup>



*Figure 63: The Knoblauch House*

<sup>798</sup> Günter Stahn, interview by author, phone conversation, May 2, 2005.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid.

An early predecessor of the rebuilding plans was a proposal from 1976 to renovate the Knoblauch House on Poststraße 23, one of the few 18<sup>th</sup>-century residences in the area that had survived the Second World War.<sup>800</sup> The building was designed to contain a branch of the century-old local history museum *Märkisches Museum*, which was to be entitled "Berlin Enlightenment." The house was built in 1759 for Johann Christian Knoblauch, who was a wealthy merchant and grandson of a protestant immigrant from Hungary. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Knoblauchs became well known in Berlin; among the family members were several university professors and the architect of the New Synagogue Eduard Knoblauch. In their house on Poststraße they hosted famous guests such as the poet Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and the philosopher and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt. Since the 1930s the building housed a restaurant.<sup>801</sup> The façade, which had originally been baroque, was rebuilt in 1835 with neoclassical elements. In the 1970s, the Knoblauch House was the only building other than the Nikolai Church ruin that visualized some the area's long history. Ironically, the Knoblauch House was among the last buildings in the *Nikolaiviertel* to be finished.<sup>802</sup> Several members of the Knoblauch family were consulted for the refurbishing of the building according to a specific historical state.<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>800</sup> The proposal was worked out by a group of architects from the District Administration of Construction. See Peter Goralczyk, "Die denkmalpflegerische Zielsetzung für den Wiederaufbau des Stadtviertels um die Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 28. Günter Stahn, however, denied that the Knoblauch House played any significant role in the early phase of the project or triggered the plans to renovate the *Nikolaiviertel*. Günter Stahn, interview by author, phone conversation, May 2, 2005. As a matter of fact, the final decision to remodel the Knoblauch House was only passed on November 3, 1986. It followed the suggestions of a study formulated that the Berlin Historic Preservation Authority worked out in April 1985 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>801</sup> Heinz Mehlman, "Zur historischen Umbauung der Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 33.

<sup>802</sup> It was still under construction in the spring of 1988, a year after the official inauguration of the *Nikolaiviertel*. See letter by the chairman of the Berlin District Plan Commission Neubauer to the *Magistrat*, dated April 6, 1988, LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>803</sup> Architect Günter Stahn was contacted by Mrs. Knoblauch from Hinterpforten in the Black Forest/West Germany after the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* had published an article on the reconstruction plans. Mrs. Knoblauch, at the time in her eighties, had lived in the house as a child. Stahn subsequently received permit to visit several members of the Knoblauch family in West Germany. Günter Stahn, interview by author, phone conversation, May 2, 2005.

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The ideas to historicize the *Nikolaiviertel* eventually coalesced in Günter Peters's office between 1976 and 1978. It is not clear if Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was already on the horizon at the time.<sup>804</sup> In February of 1976, Peters mentioned plans to create an "area with Old Berlin character around the Nikolai Church, partially through the relocation of old bourgeois residences and partially through the rebuilding of valuable buildings that had been destroyed."<sup>805</sup> His office had worked out two variations. One was a series of modernist buildings and the other one a row of historicizing buildings around the church ruin with a small market place in front of it. The latter proposal was well acclaimed during the 1976 District Delegate Conference of the Architects Association.<sup>806</sup> To arrive at a more detailed design, a student competition was held in 1977. Unfortunately for the historicists in Peters's office, the first prize of the competition was not awarded to one of the more traditionalist design schemes but to a modernist proposal with rectangular two-storied skeleton buildings. When the results of the student competition were exhibited in 1979, the modernist proposals nevertheless did neither appeal to party officials nor to a general public. The historicist proposals, on the other hand were strongly supported by the powerful First Party Secretary Konrad Naumann.<sup>807</sup>

Support for a "historical" *Nikolaiviertel* also came from the *VEB Denkmalpflege*, the state-owned construction firm for historic preservation. Immediately after its incorporation in 1977, the firm

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<sup>804</sup> The earliest specific references to the anniversary only date from the early 1980s, for example Peter Goralczyk, "Die denkmalpflegerische Zielsetzung für den Wiederaufbau des Stadtviertels um die Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 27.

<sup>805</sup> "[Es ist geplant], rund um die Nicolaikirche ein Gebiet mit altberliner Charakter z. T. durch Umsetzung alter Bürgerhäuser oder teilweisem Wiederaufbau bereits zerstörter wertvoller Objekte entstehen zu lassen..." As a first step, Peters mandated to remove the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century building on Poststraße 12 from a list of projected demolitions. Letter by Berlin District Director of Construction Günter Peters to Mitte City District Director of Construction Kurt Goldberg, dated February 12, 1976 LAB C Rep 110-01 2583. The Nikolai Church had been the starting point of the reconstruction efforts. Peter Goralczyk, "Die denkmalpflegerische Zielsetzung für den Wiederaufbau des Stadtviertels um die Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 27.

<sup>806</sup> See letter by Berlin District Director of Construction Günter Peters to Mitte City District Director of Construction Kurt Goldberg, dated February 12, 1976 LAB C Rep 110-01 2583: 29.

<sup>807</sup> The exhibit took place at the exhibition hall under the Television Tower on Alexanderplatz, the motive was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR. Naumann's role was pointed out in an Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004. See also Peter Goralczyk, "Die denkmalpflegerische Zielsetzung für den Wiederaufbau des Stadtviertels um die Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 29.

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proposed to restore the building on Poststraße 12 – another of the few buildings around the Nikolai Church that had survived the Second World War – and convert it into its headquarters with 90 office spaces.<sup>808</sup> It planned to occupy not only the front building but also the side wings, whose demolition had already been called for.<sup>809</sup> The plan was approved in October 1977. Chief Architect Roland Korn subsequently mandated a historically accurate reconstruction of the front and back façades, which was to include a reconstruction of the stucco ornaments.<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>808</sup> Memorandum by the city district plan commission, dated July 19, 1977 LAB C Rep 110-01 2583. See also Alena Janatková, "Tradition und Repräsentation im Zentrum von Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR," in: *GroßstadtDenkmalpflege, Erfahrungen und Perspektiven* (Berlin: Beiträge zur Denkmalpflege in Berlin, vol. 12, 1997): 29.

<sup>809</sup> Memorandum by the city district plan commission dated July 19, 1977 LAB C Rep 110-01 2583.

<sup>810</sup> The VEB Denkmalpflege in 1977 and 1978 resided in Brüderstraße 13 and Grünstraße 27. The plan to remodel the front building on Poststraße 12 was approved by Chief Architect Roland Korn on October 3, 1977, the reference to historic accuracy from a memorandum by Korn which is dated April 5, 1978. The remodeling of the building apparently took more than five years. LAB C Rep 110-01 2583.

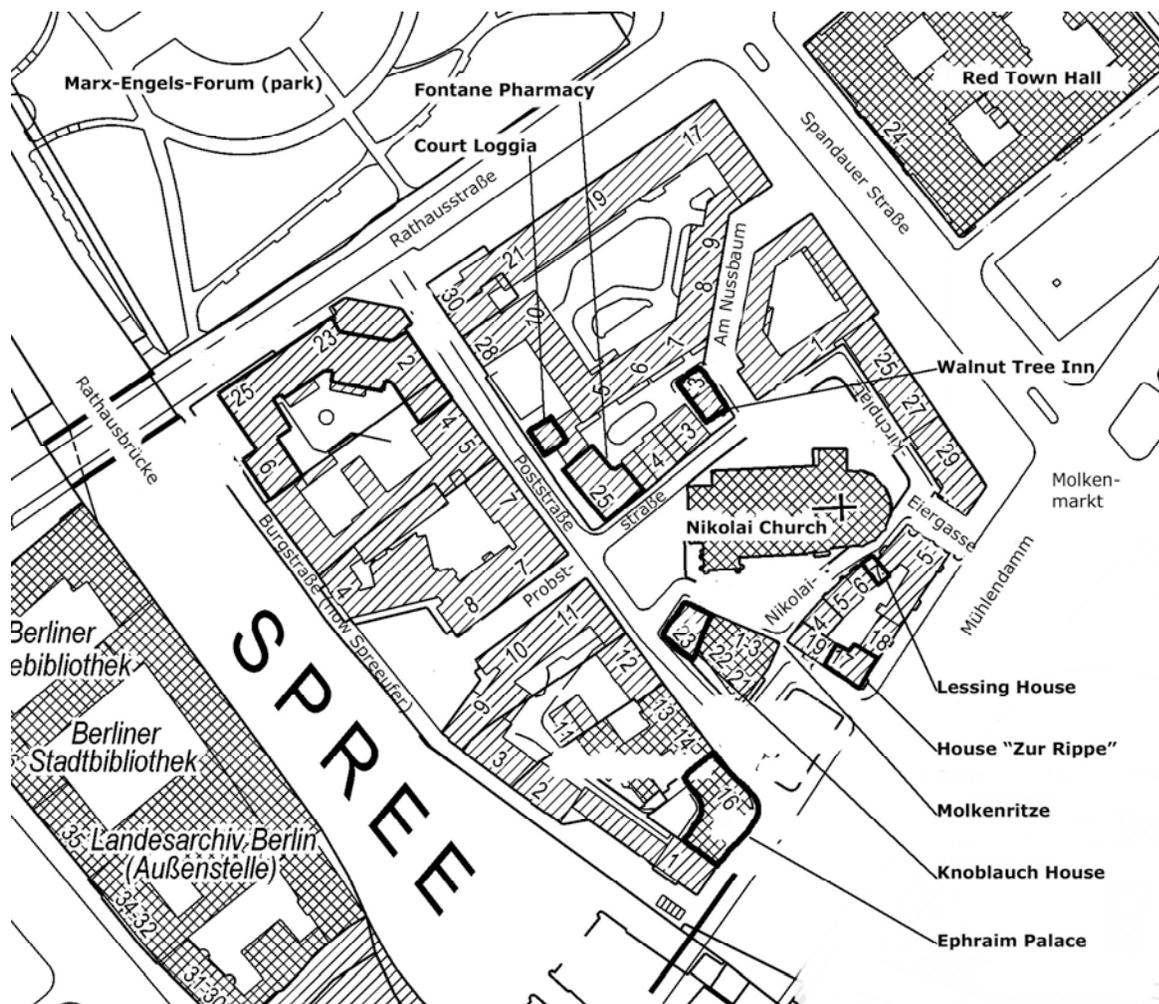


Figure 64: The Nikolaiviertel in 1989.

Within Peters's office, the architect Heinz Melahn (1926-1987) was among the strongest supporters of a reconstructed *Nikolaiviertel* with noticeable historic references.<sup>811</sup> His professional career exemplifies the connections between modernist and historical revivalist architecture. Melahn was trained as an architect at West Berlin's Technical University before accepting a job with the city of East Berlin in 1959. He had already worked on several reconstruction projects, of which the remodeling of Schinkel's Royal Guardhouse on the boulevard Unter den Linden and that of the *Marstall* (former royal stables) close to the *Nikolaiviertel* were the most famous ones. Simultaneously, he had designed several modernist buildings that were constructed from prefabricated concrete slabs, such as the

<sup>811</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

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*Stadtbibliothek* (City Library) on Breite Straße, the *Haus der Elektroindustrie* (House of Electrical Industry) on Alexanderplatz, and the highrise blocks on Leninplatz (now Platz der Vereinten Nationen). From 1977 to 1984 Melahn was *Bereichsleiter Historische Bauten* (Executive for Historic Buildings); his department was incorporated into Günter Peters's Berlin District Office of Construction in 1977 and later subordinated to the newly created *Büro für Städtebau* (Bureau of Urban Design). His employee and closest collaborator was Rolf Ricken, who drew most of the plans for the reconstruction and co-authored several of Melahn's directives that specified the *Nikolaiviertel's* neo-historical character.<sup>812</sup>

#### *The Nikolaiviertel competition (1978/79)*

A more serious architectural competition was held in 1978. This time professionals rather than students were called, and the commitment to the historical aspect of the area was mandated in the guidelines.<sup>813</sup> At the time, Peter Goralczyk's *Büro für Denkmalpflege* (Historic Preservation Authority) was developing a conception for the preservation and complete rebuilding of the Nikolai Church and Heinz Melahn's *Bereich Historische Bauten* (Department of Historic Buildings) was working out a proposal for other historical buildings.<sup>814</sup> Goralczyk's office thus formulated the fundamental principles for the rebuilding while Heinz Mehlan's office worked out details such as "historic" façades.<sup>815</sup> Both were reflected in the call for proposals, which set precise requirements to preserve the three old

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<sup>812</sup> Before joining Melahn's office, Ricken had already worked on the remodeling of the Royal Library on the boulevard Unter den Linden in 1970. Most of his plans are conserved. LAB C Rep 110-01, 7031 Ricken's work at the Royal Library is mentioned in *Deutsche Architektur* no. 3 (1970): 138.

<sup>813</sup> "Ausschreibung zum Ideenwettbewerb für die architektonische und funktionelle Gestaltung des Komplexes Rathausstraße im Zentrum der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin." The call for proposals was based on a *Magistrat* resolution taken on October 19, 1977 and published in June 1978. The competition was anonymous; only architects, artists, urban planners, and university students who were citizens of the German Democratic Republic could participate. Deadline was November 15, 1978, the jury was supposed to make a decision in early 1979. The first prize was 20,000 marks. The jury was composed of mayor Erhard Krack, undersecretary Karl Schmiechen, Secretary of the Party District Office Gerhard Poser, deputy mayor and chairman of the District Plan Commission Kümmel, District Director of Construction Günter Peters, Chief Architect Korn, director of the Department of Special Projects Ehrhardt Gißke, the professors Wolfgang Urbanski, Ule Lammert, and Werner Dutschke, Head of the Historic Preservation Authority Ludwig Deiters and several others, including leading engineers from the state construction firms. LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>814</sup> See Heinz Mehlan, "Zur historischen Umbauung der Nikolaikirche," *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 47.

<sup>815</sup> Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 114.

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structures, rebuild the church, and recreate “the small street system typical of medieval buildings.”<sup>816</sup>

In addition, it determined the “preservation or reconstruction” of several old structures: the Nikolai Church, the Walnut Tree Inn, and the three existing buildings on Poststraße. It also called for the re-erection of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ephraim Palace, which had been dismantled in 1936 for the amplification of the Mühlendamm street and had been waiting for rebuilding ever since.<sup>817</sup>



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<sup>816</sup> “Wiederherstellung der für die mittelalterliche Bebauung typischen Gassen” Call for proposals.: 1-2 LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>817</sup> The Ephraim Palace was built from 1761-1763 after a design by F. W. Diederich for Nathan Veitel Heine Ephraim, who was a Jewish banker and manager of a gold and silversmith factory and at the same time an intimate ally of Prussian King Friedrich II. It was laid down in 1936 for an amplification of the Mühlendamm. Heinz Mehlan, “Zur historischen Umbauung der Nikolaikirche,” *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 10 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1983): 41. For the rebuilding of the Palace between 1985 and 1987 see Rolf-Herbert Krüger, “Das Epharaim-Palais in Berlin,” *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins*, n. 25 (East Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1987).

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Figure 65: The Ephraim Palace, built in 1761, dismantled in 1936, rebuilt in 1983 a few meters from its original location – and again renovated in 2005.

The brief made it clear that different degrees of historic accuracy were expected. The closest adherence to the historic model was demanded for the block between Eiergasse, Mühlendamm, and Nikolaikirchplatz, which was once made up of 18<sup>th</sup>-century residences and which included a scenic alley known as Molkenritze. This block was to be recreated and harmonically integrated into the other blocks, whose reconstruction did not have to be as “historical.”<sup>818</sup> On Rathausstraße the sidewalks were to be covered with arcades. The building height was not to exceed 30 meters in order to provide a transition between the highrise residential buildings on Alexanderplatz (42 meters), the slightly lower Palace of the Republic (approximately 32 meters), and the three surviving old buildings on Poststraße (28 meters). The church, which was designed to become a local history museum, was to remain visible from the embankment promenade. The whole complex was to be a pedestrian zone set off from the six-lane thoroughfares Spandauer Straße and Mühlendamm that bordered the area to the north and east.<sup>819</sup> The rebuilding of historic bourgeois residences from different parts of Berlin was explicitly prohibited, which one could interpret as a concealed attempt to avoid any connections to the plans from the Nazi period.<sup>820</sup> There was nevertheless an important modernist element in the call for proposals: the façades on Rathausstraße, looking towards the Television Tower and the park *Marx-Engels-Forum*, were explicitly expected to be executed in a non-historicizing style.<sup>821</sup>

At the time of the competition, the *Nikolaiviertel* was largely a void. The remainders of the prewar buildings had been cleared off, with the exception of the Nikolai Church, which was deprived of its roof and its two towers, the Knoblauch House, and the three buildings on Poststraße. The whole area contained a total of twelve inhabited apartments. These buildings were surrounded by a number of

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<sup>818</sup> Cp. plans number 2 and 6, both dated May 1978, and call for proposals. LAB C Rep. 110-01, 6902.

<sup>819</sup> Call for proposals: 4. LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>820</sup> Memorandum by Roland Korn, dated September 6, 1978, LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902. Korn nevertheless did not mention the proposals from the 1930s. Two years before, this idea must have been debated. Letter by Berlin District Director of Construction Günter Peters to the Mitte City District Director of Construction Kurt Goldberg, dated February 12, 1976. LAB C Rep 110-01 2583.

<sup>821</sup> Memorandum by Roland Korn, dated September 6, 1978, LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

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provisional sheds that originally had been built to house facilities for the near-by construction site of the Palace of the Republic and were now used as offices, storehouses, or workshop spaces.<sup>822</sup>

Since the specificity of the requirements did not leave much room for creativity, the proposals were quite similar and the jury assessments were accordingly dull.<sup>823</sup> The jury, which included Heinz Willumat, the director of the *Büro für Städtebau*, and his colleagues Heinz Mehlan and Rolf Ricken, came together on March 8, 1979.<sup>824</sup> Two first prizes were awarded to the collective of Günter Stahn, Werner Petzolt, and Rainer Rauer, and to that of Dietrich Kabisch, R. Mösing, M. Muschter, P. Natuschke, U. Weigert, and C. Witkowski. With regard to the proposal of the Stahn group, the jury first and foremost praised the fulfillment of the requirements. It also commended the diagonal view from the Red Town Hall into the ensemble (what is now the street Am Nussbaum), the façades, and the integration of the design into the existing urban fabric. Other distinctive aspects in the eyes of the jury were the clear functional structure of the area, the consequent use as a pedestrian zone, the “leisure zone” on the bank of the Spree, and the idea to integrate a copy of the demolished 13<sup>th</sup> century *Gerichtslaube* (Court Loggia).<sup>825</sup> In its original form, Günter Stahn’s and his colleagues’ prize-winning proposal contained numerous modernist elements.<sup>826</sup> Most buildings were eight

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<sup>822</sup> “Aufgabenstellung für den Wohnungsbau im Gebiet zwischen Rathaus und Spree im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte”, dated November 1980 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669: 9

<sup>823</sup> Jury protocol, LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>824</sup> LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902: 8-9.

<sup>825</sup> Jury protocol, LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902: 42-43. The *Gerichtslaube* (Court Loggia) was built around 1270 as a public site for jurisdiction. Originally it was a groin vault structure open on three sides. It was situated on Königstraße 15, on the corner of Königstraße and Spandauer Straße just north of the *Nikolaiviertel*. The location was adjacent to Berlin’s old town hall that was torn down in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to build the Red Town Hall which to date houses the mayor’s office. The aspect of the *Gerichtslaube* was changed numerous times; the building eventually featured a renaissance façade and no open arches. The upper floor was fitted out to accommodate the *Kämmereikasse* (cash office of the city’s finance department). The Court Loggia was demolished in 1871 shortly after the construction of the Red Town Hall, and rebuilt from some of the old stones in the park of Babelsberg Castle near Potsdam. The current Court Loggia in the *Nikolaiviertel* is strictly spoken the copy of a copy of a repeatedly altered historic building. Benedikt Goebel, *Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum modernen Stadtzentrum* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2003): 113-115.

<sup>826</sup> See photograph of Stahn’s 1978 model in Simone Hain, “Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr der Stadt,” in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 344. The same model was re-published in Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1991): 34.

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stories high, which was significantly taller than the prewar structures. Not only were the buildings to be constructed from prefabricated concrete elements, most façades were also meant to be modernist. The designers chose to broaden the sidewalks on Rathausstraße to form a small square. They drew the diagonal transition between Nikolai Church and Town Hall – the future street Am Nussbaum – as a jagged sequence of squares flanked by rectangular steel-and-concrete buildings. They also favored a clear contrast between the reconstructed buildings – the Court Loggia, the Walnut Tree Inn, and the re-constructed 18<sup>th</sup>-century residences on Nikolaikirchplatz – with the modernist façades of the other buildings.

The three models from 1979, 1981, and 1983 document the gradual “historicizing” of Günter Stahn’s proposal. While the 1979 version (figure 66) appears rather modernist, the 1981 version (figure 67) already shows more traditional building shapes. The buildings on Rathausstraße are moved towards the block perimeter and the sidewalks are covered with arbors. The façades are nevertheless still modern. The model from 1983 (figure 68) appears even more traditional. Prefab gables on Probststraße (on the right side next to the church) are a distinctive element in the architectural compound. The block between Mühlendamm, Eiergasse, and Nikolaikirchplatz (in the lower left corner) is composed of individual buildings in the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Only the buildings towards Rathausstraße (on the right side behind the trees) are designed with modern façades and contain only a few historical elements. In the final version from 1987 also these buildings look “historical.” There are four additional prefab gables facing Spandauer Straße (in the lower right corner). In addition, the corner building on Spandauer Straße and Mühlendamm (on the lower edge in the middle) is modeled after the adjacent block between Mühlendamm, Eiergasse, and Nikolaikirchplatz, imitating a design from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

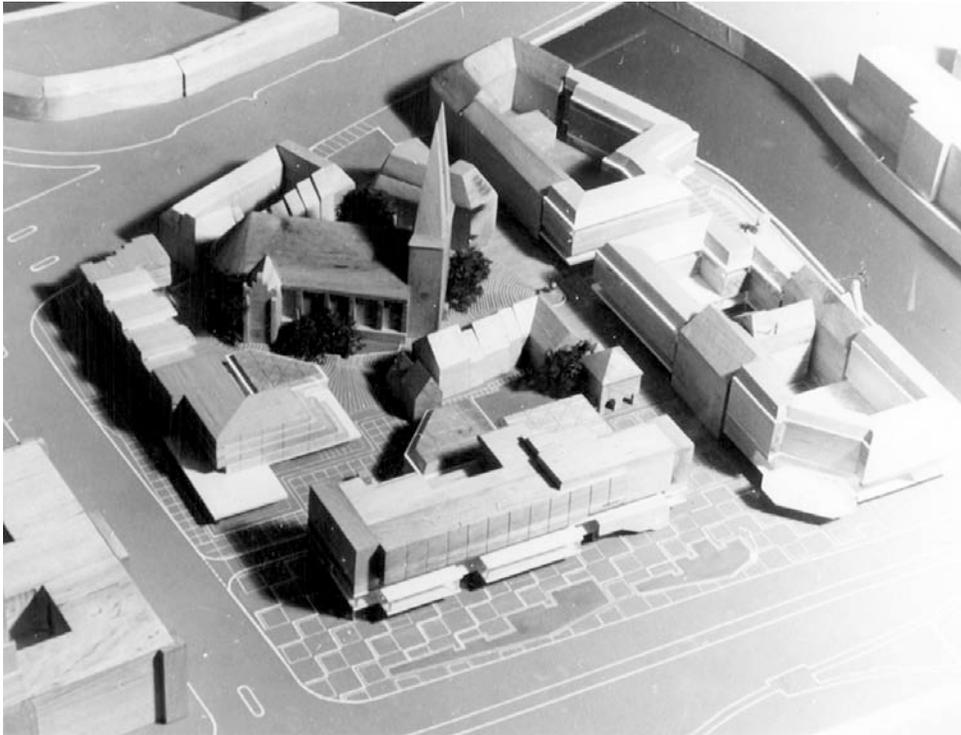


Figure 66: Nikolaiviertel (model): Günter Stahn's prize-winning competition entry, 1979

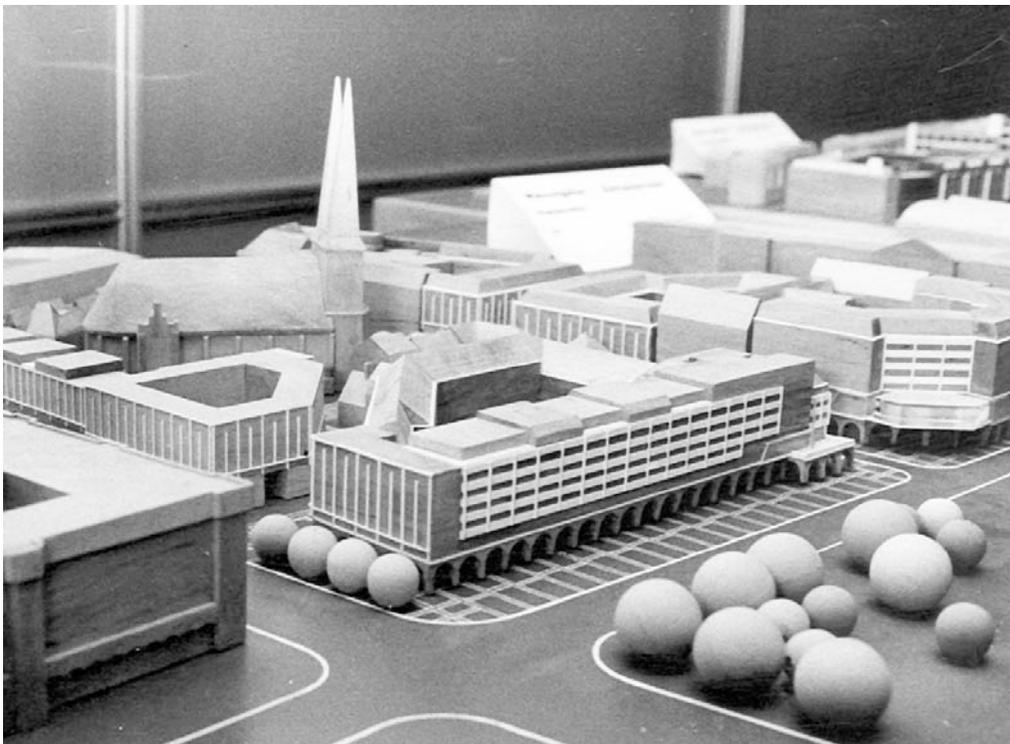


Figure 67: Nikolaiviertel (model): revised version, 1981



Figure 68: Nikolaiviertel (model): revised version, 1983



Figure 69: Nikolaiviertel (model): revised version, as built, 1987

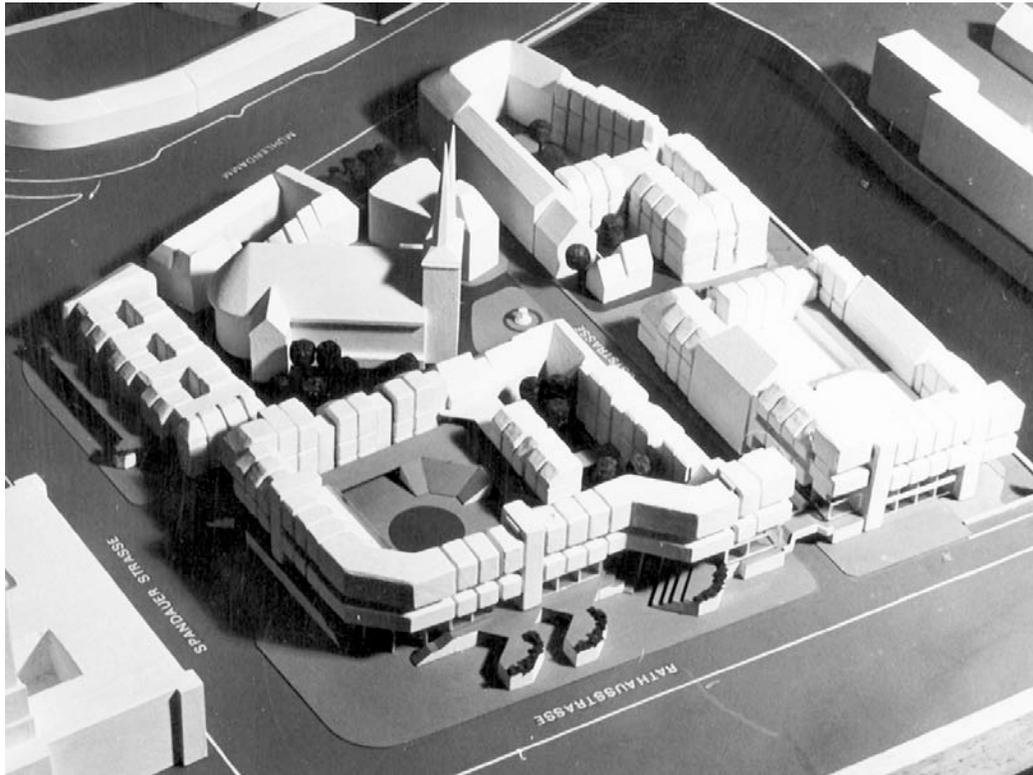


Figure 70: Nikolaiviertel, model of the competition entry by Dieter Bankert (1979)

Mixing modernism and historicism was not unique to Günter Stahn. Architect Dieter Bankert, who like Stahn was employed with the state firm *Ingenieurhochbau (IHB)*, also frequently switched back and forth between modernist or neo-historical forms. In the mid-1970s Bankert had worked on the Palace of the Republic – a cubicular steel-frame building clad with a tinted amber glass façade. Only a few years later he had submitted a design proposal for the commercial center in the satellite district Marzahn in which he had playfully assembled arcades and pediments that were nevertheless built from prefab concrete slabs.<sup>827</sup> His proposal for the *Nikolaiviertel* competition, then, was a compound of curved four-story buildings on pilotis that had no historic references whatsoever (see figure 70). It was purchased by the organizers, another form of award. Simultaneous with his futuristic *Nikolaiviertel* proposal, Bankert co-designed two buildings on Platz der Akademie (Charlottenstraße

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<sup>827</sup> The proposal, submitted in 1978, was part of an internal competition in Bankert's employer firm. Simone Hain, "Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr in die Stadt," in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 342.

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number 50-52 and number 53-54, built 1980-1982) and adorned the concrete façades with pediments, architraves, and small Doric columns (see cover picture and figure 46 in chapter 12 “Surface and Erlebnis”). Bankert is likely to have exerted significant influence on the plan to build arcade-structured perimeter block buildings in Friedrichstraße and Platz der Akademie.<sup>828</sup>

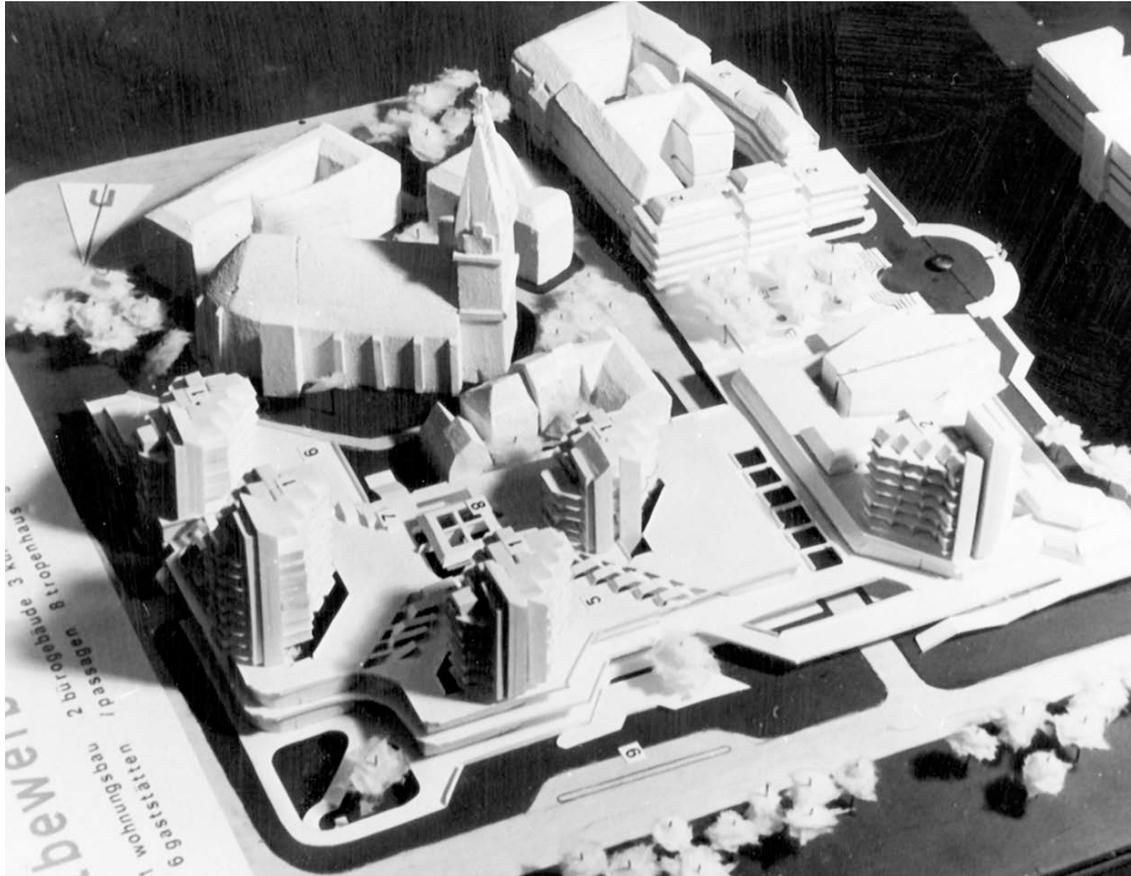


Figure 71: Nikolaiviertel, model of the competition entry by Ute and Peter Baumbach (1979)

The work of architect Peter Baumbach also oscillated between modernism and postmodernism. His proposal for the *Nikolaiviertel* competition was a Corbusian assemblage of cross-shaped highrise towers. At the same time, he worked together with Erich Kaufmann on the famous *Fünfgiebelhaus* (Five Gable House) in Rostock, which was built after his design between 1978 and 1980. The building,

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<sup>828</sup> Bankert played an important role in the organization of the competition *Variable Gebäudelösungen in Großtafelbauweise* (Variable Solutions to Prefab Slab Buildings) which was held in 1982. Simone Hain, “Zwischen Arkonaplatz und Nikolaiviertel. Stadt als soziale Form versus Inszenierung. Konflikte bei der Rückkehr in die Stadt,” in *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000): 342.

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which showed strong influences of a North German regionalist tradition, is still celebrated as a successful synthesis of modular construction and individual expression. Also his proposal for the Youth Hotel on Friedrichstraße, which he co-authored with Arndt Zintler in 1986, uses the forms of the adjacent late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings (see figure 40 in the chapter 12 "Surface and Erlebnis").



Figure 72, Figure 73, and Figure 74: Left: The Court Loggia in its original location, ca. 1860, with a baroque façade. Middle: The reconstructed Court Loggia in the Babelsberg park, 1995, with references to its original 13<sup>th</sup> century exterior, right: the reconstructed Court Loggia in the Nikolaiviertel, 2005, with references to both its original gothic arches and its subsequent alterations.

In the context of "recreating" those buildings that had been lost or were only partially conserved, such as the Court Loggia, the Ephraim Palace, and the Walnut Tree Inn, the call for proposals already used the term *Denkmalpflege* ("preservation of historic monuments").<sup>829</sup> The word choice is surprising, since, strictly speaking, none of the buildings could be "preserved." While the Ephraim Palace had been carefully taken down with the intention to be subsequently rebuilt, the Court Loggia, the Walnut Tree Inn, and to a certain extent also the Nikolai Church, were entirely new buildings with only superficial formal references to the destroyed structures. This was hardly debated. Only on a different occasion chief preservationist Peter Goralczyk called for a more conscious separation of "preservationist rebuilding, that is, reconstruction of an accurate historic form that once existed, and historicizing new construction."<sup>830</sup> In the context of the *Nikolaiviertel*, however, even Goralczyk was

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<sup>829</sup> Call for proposals.: 1-2 LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>830</sup> He uttered this call in the context of the Gendarmenmarkt rebuilding. "...denkmalpflegerische Wiederherstellung, d. h. Rekonstruktion einer tatsächlich einmal vorhanden gewesenen historischen 306

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willing to sacrifice principles for pragmatism. He eventually supported a development that did not conform to his preservationist standards but at the same time advanced the preservationist cause.<sup>831</sup> Since at the time historic preservation was in such a weak position in East Germany, his Historic Preservation Authority simply had to collaborate in one of the few projects that valued historic buildings and turn a blind eye towards the liberties taken with the historical models. Goralczyk expressed his position in a 1980 study on the future *Nikolaiviertel*.<sup>832</sup> Despite its historical inaccuracy and the staging of authenticity, he praised the decision to rebuild famous monuments “with a particular memory value.”<sup>833</sup> Next to Walnut Tree Inn, Court Loggia, and Ephraim Palace his list included the statue of St. George, which was originally located in the courtyard of the demolished Royal Palace.<sup>834</sup> Goralczyk also mentioned a number of other historic buildings, such as the house *Zur Rippe*, the café on Molkenstraße, the *Rolandseck* corner building, and the Knoblauch House with the Historic Wine Hall.<sup>835</sup> In retrospect, Goralczyk justified his approach as pragmatic and goal-oriented. After all, his basic premises were followed – all old buildings were preserved, and further dilapidation was stopped. Goralczyk thus still considered the *Nikolaiviertel* a good example for the synthesis of old and new buildings.<sup>836</sup> In a broader context, his point of view exemplified a general shift in the conception of “the historic” from actual historic remainders towards references to a generic conception of the past.

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Form, und ...historisierenden Neubau.” Peter Goralczyk, *Der Platz der Akademie in Berlin* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1987): 12.

<sup>831</sup> Goralczyk spoke of “in den sauren Apfel beißen” (swallowing the bitter pill) to achieve that all old buildings in the area were to be preserved. Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>832</sup> Study by head conservationist Peter Goralczyk, dated February 8, 1980, reprinted in LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1: 22 In the study, Goralczyk also called for a precise coordination of lighting, pavement, and street signs with both form and scale of the buildings to support the perception of the project as a unified whole.

<sup>833</sup> “mit besonderem Erinnerungswert” LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1: 22.

<sup>834</sup> LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1: 22.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid.: 4.

<sup>836</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.



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actually built.<sup>837</sup> The project was allocated a budget of 106 million East German marks, the largest percentage of which was to be used for the Ephraim Palace (15 million marks) and the Nikolai Church (11.5 million marks). The rebuilding of the Court Loggia and the Walnut Tree Inn (together 3 million marks) seemed cheap in comparison. The whole project was to be finished by fall of 1987.<sup>838</sup> Nine months later, by the time the *Magistrat* confirmed the plan, the budget had already risen to 162 million marks.<sup>839</sup> Construction started in 1981. After completion of the project, a West Berlin newspaper reported that the amount that was actually spent had risen to 300 million marks.<sup>840</sup> It was on this basis that most East German officials arrived at the conviction that the *Nikolaiviertel* might be a programmatic and aesthetic success, but could by no means be a prototype for the remodeling of other city centers.<sup>841</sup>

From the very beginning entertainment and consumption played a key role in the complex. The *Nikolaiviertel* was to boast an amount of exhibits, shops, services, bars, and restaurants that was unheard of in a socialist capital city. Like in the Friedrichstraße redevelopment, the primary focus was *Erlebnis* – the subjective individual experience of the visitor.<sup>842</sup> The November 1980 *Magistrat* resolution specified businesses and small exhibit spaces similar to those one would expect in a touristic West German old town.<sup>843</sup> On Probststraße the plan projected individual shops for flowers,

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<sup>837</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 48.

<sup>838</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861: 48-50. At the same time, the demolition of the building on Burgstraße 3 was resolved. "Aufgabenstellung für den Wohnungsbau im Gebiet zwischen Rathaus und Spree im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte", dated November 1980 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>839</sup> "Aufgabenstellung für den Wohnungsbau im Gebiet zwischen Rathaus und Spree im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte", LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>840</sup> Kurt Geisler, "Neues Nikolaiviertel lockt mit einem Hauch von Mittelalter," *Berliner Morgenpost* July 12, 1987.

<sup>841</sup> Günter Stahn, interview by author, Schildow, August 14, 2004.

<sup>842</sup> Already the call for proposals stressed the goal of providing "attraktive und interessante Erlebnisbereiche für die Berliner und ihre Gäste" ("attractive and interesting entertainment zones for Berliners and their guests."). It called for 1600 qm shop space and 1300 seats in bars and restaurants. Call for proposals: 5. LAB C Rep 110-01, 6902.

<sup>843</sup> *Magistrat* resolution no. 423/80 from November 26, 1980, LAB C Rep 100-05, 1842. A larger master plan, dated January 11, 1982 showed approximately the same shops. Just the goldsmith and the metal caster do not appear any more. In the reconstructed bourgeois houses on Mühlendamm, the older plan projected the Barber Museum, the newer a Craftsmen's museum. Both plans foresaw a

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tea, spices, cookies, and chocolate. The Nikolaikirchplatz square would feature a goldsmith, a cloth printer, a hand-weaver, a metal caster, a wood-turner, and a potter; on the Am Nussbaum street one would find three fashion boutiques. Rathausstraße was to boast another three boutiques, a crafts store, and a souvenir store. A 1982 master plan showed approximately the same number of shops. Only the goldsmith and the metal caster no longer appeared in the later plan.<sup>844</sup> With the general supply situation in East Germany in mind, it is hard to imagine how the socialist economy would have ever been able to produce sufficient luxury goods to fill all of these shops.

In January 1981 Chief Architect Roland Korn approved the request by the *Abteilung Sondervorhaben*–Ehrhardt Gißke's office – to rebuild the Nikolai Church according its historic appearance.<sup>845</sup> The rebuilding had been decided by the Politburo three months earlier.<sup>846</sup> The request from Gißke's office is nevertheless much more precise, suggesting that the Politburo generally supported the rebuilding but left it to Gißke to work out the details. The request favored the reconstruction of the tops that had covered the two towers between 1878 and 1945 rather than the much smaller medieval top that existed before 1878. It also mentioned the importance of the building as a *städtebauliche Dominante* ("dominant building in the city"). The load-bearing parts were projected as a reinforced concrete construction; the tiled roof was to be supported by a steel truss.<sup>847</sup> Although a year earlier the Nikolai Church had been included on the first list of protected monuments in the GDR, a historically accurate reconstruction was not prescribed.<sup>848</sup> A report by the Historic Preservation Authority mentioned historic preservation concerns only in passing. Dismissing what it considered to be "forced historic accuracy," the report called for the realization "in the formal language of our present architectural

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tourist information on both sides of the prolonged Probststraße, which in the newer plan was already called Spreegasse LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>844</sup> It was an official master plan, January 11, 1982, and signed by Günter Stahn LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>845</sup> Korn writes "äußere Wiederherstellung," (exterior reconstruction) which explicitly excluded the preparation for the future use as a local history museum. Letter by Chief Architect Roland Korn to the construction firm *VEB Denkmalpflege*, dated January 20, 1981. The request for a building permit, authored by the Department of Special Projects (Gißke's office) is enclosed LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>846</sup> Protocol of the Politburo meeting on October 14, 1980, final copy: 50. BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1861.

<sup>847</sup> Request for a building permit (*Standortgenehmigung*), authored by the Department of Special Projects (Gißke's office) LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>848</sup> The list was past into law on September 25, 1979, *Gesetzblatt der DDR* October 5, 1979.

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conception.”<sup>849</sup> Thus the Historic Preservation Authority allowed for modernist doors and windows, and for the numerous changes that it considered necessary for the reuse of the church as a local history museum. It also celebrated the “reduced historic form” of the new towers, which was not only different from the original medieval tower and but also from the two towers that had been added in 1878.<sup>850</sup> Despite these liberties, Gißke’s office was eager to praise the Nikolai Church as “Berlin’s oldest building,” “origin of Berlin’s earliest settlement,” and “visible testimony of historical contexts.”<sup>851</sup> At the same time Gißke’s office reframed the meaning of the church, referring to it a “monument [that] documents the technical and artistic mastery of the working classes during different epochs and periods of architectural development.”<sup>852</sup> Formerly a house of worship and a monument to the power of the clergy, it was now connected to social history. This reframing allowed the East German authorities to build an architectural ensemble dominated by a church while at the same time following the usual rhetoric of secularism and the merits of the historic working class. The tenuous references to the working class, however, only barely concealed the real reinterpretation. More than anything else the church had become an aesthetic backdrop for a quaint entertainment district. Watched by a fascinated crowd, the new towers were set on the church on August 20, 1982. Ever since they have been prominently marking Berlin’s historic nucleus in the silhouette of the city.<sup>853</sup> Choosing the conspicuous 19<sup>th</sup>-century towers over the unspectacular medieval one, the East German leaders gave their concern with history a literally heightened degree of visibility. And yet their statement is quite different from Walter Ulbricht’s construction of the Television Tower two decades

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<sup>849</sup> “in der Formensprache unserer heutigen Architekturauffassung” “Erläuterungsbericht zur Aufgabenstellung für den Wiederaufbau der ehemaligen Nikolaikirche,” dated January 30, 1980, reprinted in the *Nikolaiviertel* study LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1: 20-21.

<sup>850</sup> “historisch reduzierte Form”. “Erläuterungsbericht zur Aufgabenstellung für den Wiederaufbau der ehemaligen Nikolaikirche”, dated January 30, 1980, reprinted in the *Nikolaiviertel* study LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1: 21.

<sup>851</sup> The designation referenced archeological excavations made in 1980. Request for a building permit (*Standortgenehmigung*), authored by the Department of Special Projects (Ehrhardt Gißke’s office) LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>852</sup> “Das Denkmal dokumentiert die technische und künstlerische Meisterschaft der werktätigen Klassen und Schichten des Volkes in verschiedenen Epochen und baugeschichtlichen Entwicklungsphasen.” Request for a building permit (*Standortgenehmigung*), LAB C Rep. 110-01, 2669.

<sup>853</sup> See photograph in *Miniaturen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Denkmalpflege Berlins* no. 10 (1983): 2, see also photographs in LAB F Rep 290/66/697.

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before. Unlike the Television Tower, the Nikolai Church does not mark the vanishing point of a great thoroughfare. Being considerably smaller, it rather brackets the buildings around it, separates them from the highrise towers that surround them, and casts them into a miniature skyline of an all-German Old Town reflected in the Spree River. As a postcard image, it communicates continuity rather than progress and enclosure rather than movement.



*Figure 76: The rebuilt late-17<sup>th</sup>-century house Zur Rippe ("The Rib," left) and two neighboring buildings without historic precedents. The rib and hipbone on the façade are the remains of giant Rolbert who in ancient times was defeated and killed after attempting to rape the building owner's daughter. More prosaic interpretations suggest that they belong to a green whale. The bones on the picture, however, are neither one nor the other but plastic replicas of the original ones.*

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In line with that postcard image, the general appearance of the neighborhood as “historic” was taken seriously. For example, in July 1986, Chief Architect Roland Korn dismissed a proposal by Günter Stahn to build a flower-covered wooden pergola on the street Eiergasse with the argument that this would “contradict the character of the neighboring buildings and disproportionately restrict the vista to the choir of the Nikolai Church.”<sup>854</sup> Other accessories were more favorably looked upon. In 1986 Günter Stahn proposed the construction two historic *Litfass-Säulen* (placard columns) in the *Nikolaiviertel*, one next to the Walnut Tree Inn, and one at the south of the Court Loggia, and pointed out that their historic existence on these locations is evidenced by an old photograph.<sup>855</sup> Roland Korn approved the rebuilding and suggested replicas of placard columns from the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>856</sup>

Heinz Melahn’s office at the *Büro für Städtebau* (Bureau of Urban Design) also continued to promote the historicizing of the *Nikolaiviertel*.<sup>857</sup> Melahn’s deputy Rolf Ricken, who designed numerous façades, had precise ideas about the right historic appearance. He rejected the inclusion of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century elements in the façades on Nikolaikirchplatz, stating that the original 18<sup>th</sup>-century façades were well documented and possessed “historic preservation value.”<sup>858</sup> He also stressed that in those cases in which the prewar buildings dated from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – as was the case with the corner buildings on Eiergasse and Molkenmarkt and on Molkenmarkt and Spandauer Straße – the model for the new façades should be buildings from “the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were such an important

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<sup>854</sup> The pergola was originally planned to accommodate trashcans. Korn stated that it contradicts the character of the neighboring buildings. Letters by Roland Korn to the firm *Ingenieurhochbau*, dated June 5, 1986 and July 25, 1986 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>855</sup> Letter by Stahn to Chief Architect Roland Korn, dated December 12, 1986 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>856</sup> Korn suggested that the *Litfass-Säulen* from the time period between 1855 and 1880 were different from later versions (so-called *Trafo-Säulen*), and thus more appropriate. Memo by Roland Korn, dated December 12, 1986 LAB C Rep 110-01, 2669.

<sup>857</sup> See report on the *Nikolaiviertel* by the state-owned construction firm BMK, commissioned by Ehrhardt Gißke’s office, dated February 28, 1980. LAB C Rep 110, 1512/1. The report mentioned that Melahn’s office designed the “historic” buildings on the Nikolaikirchplatz square. For Ricken’s façade designs see LAB C Rep 110-10 7031 and LAB C Rep 110-10 7035.

<sup>858</sup> “die einzelnen Objekte [sind] durch alte Fotos dokumentarisch belegt und [besitzen] denkmalpflegerischen Wert. Eine willkürliche Veränderung mit Elementen der Gründerzeit bedeutet einen gewaltsamen Eingriff in baugeschichtliche Tatbestände, der nicht zu verantworten ist. ...Detailtreue beim Aufbau dieser Bürgerhäuser ist oberstes Gebot. Eine bloße Dekoration mit stillwidriger Auffassung würde zu einer Kulisse werden.” Handwritten memo by Rolf Ricken, dated November 11, 1984, folder “Altberliner Fassaden” LAB C Rep 110-01, 7035.

period for the architectural development of Berlin.<sup>859</sup> Eventually, Ricken's position was adopted. For example, the prewar buildings at the corner of Molkenmarkt and Eiergasse, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and well documented on historic photographs, were replaced with buildings in the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 77 and Figure 78: Molkenmarkt and Eiergasse around 1920 (left) and 2005 (right). The prewar corner buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was not rebuilt but replaced with an 18<sup>th</sup>-century-style building.

For Ricken, “the typical formal characteristics of the bourgeois buildings from that time [the 18<sup>th</sup> century], such as sobriety of forms, moderate use of architectural means of expression, harmony of proportions between solid and void, and vertical and horizontal structures were to be seen as the leitmotiv.”<sup>860</sup> Ricken thus modeled his façades according to specific buildings from those centuries, which “preferably do not exist any more.”<sup>861</sup> At the same time he took considerable liberties with historic accuracy even in those cases where they worked in reference to historic models.

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<sup>859</sup> “Zur Gestaltung dieser Fassaden mußte also eine der jetzigen Situation entsprechende Form aus den vielfältigen Beispielen der für die Entwicklung Berlins baugeschichtlich so bedeutsamen Epoche des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts gesucht werden.” Projekt Altberliner Fassaden zum Neubauprojekt F 60 Spandauer Straße – Mühlendamm – Eiergasse – Nikolaikirchplatz, dated December 12, 1984, signed Rolf Ricken, LAB C Rep 110-01/7035: 2.

<sup>860</sup> “Die für Bürgerhäuser Berlins aus dieser Zeit so typischen Gestaltungsmerkmale wie Schlichtheit der Form, maßvolle Anwendung architektonischer Ausdrucksmittel, Ausgewogenheit der Verhältnisse zwischen Öffnung und Fläche, vertikale und horizontale Gliederung waren als Leitmotiv anzusehen. Dabei sollten Fassaden bestimmter, der städtebaulichen Situation entsprechender, möglichst nicht mehr vorhandener Gebäude als Vorbild dienen.” Ibid.: 3.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid.



Figure 79: The "Fontane Pharmacy" on Probststraße and Poststraße



Figure 80 and Figure 81: The east side of Probststraße north of Poststraße, approximately 1910 (left) and 2005 (right). The new buildings have wrought-iron shop signs, and the new street is paved with cobblestones. Also the building on the far left is different. On the old picture it is a five-story 19<sup>th</sup>-century building (only the brick wall is visible), on the recent picture the four-story "Fontane Pharmacy."

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For example, it was decided to recreate the so-called Fontane Pharmacy where 19<sup>th</sup>-century author Theodor Fontane had been employed as a young man. The late baroque building had once stood at the north corner of Poststraße and Rathausstraße and was demolished long before the Second World War. Since it did not match the design Stahn had projected for that spot, he chose to move it one block west and rebuild it on the corner of Poststraße and Probststraße.<sup>862</sup> But not only was the site changed. To adapt the façade design of the “historic model” to the new location, the number of windows on each story was reduced from nine to seven.<sup>863</sup> The adjacent buildings on Probststraße were nevertheless modeled after the prewar houses. Only particular details such as complicated façade ornaments were simplified. Wrought-iron shop signs were added to reinforce the “historic” aspect.



*Figure 82 and Figure 83: Nikolaikirchplatz around 1910 (left) and 2005 (right). The new three-story “Lessing House” in the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (the second building from the left after the church, with protruding second and third floors) was designed after a historic etching, replacing the narrow four-story house that stood on the same site before the Second World War (in the middle of the old picture). Also the five-story building from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on the right edge of the old picture was not rebuilt but replaced with a smaller 18<sup>th</sup>-century style building (not visible on the new picture).*

<sup>862</sup> The address of the old location was Poststraße 31 and Rathausstraße 6, that of the new one Poststraße 25.

<sup>863</sup> Uwe Kielsing and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 116.

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The buildings on Nikolaikirchplatz were redesigned in a similar way. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century "Lessing House" on Nikolaikirchplatz number 7, where poet Gotthold Ephraim Lessing had lived between 1752 and 1755, had been demolished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and replaced with a five-story apartment house. Günter Stahn chose to redraw it from an old etching.<sup>864</sup> He similarly "adjusted" a number of other buildings on Nikolaikirchplatz whose accurate rebuilding would have disturbed the visual harmony.

The *Nikolaiviertel* was adorned with numerous historic statues. The 1855 "Holy Dragon Killer" of sculptor August Kiß was brought from the Duck Pond in the Friedrichshain park where it had stood since its removal from the first court of the Royal Palace after the Second World War. Next to the Walnut Tree Inn, four bronze statues were set up, representing "Berlin Characters": a shoemaker's boy, a flower vendor, an organ grinder, and the literary figure *Eckensteher Nante* (loafer Nante). The wall relief on Rathausstraße took historic continuity literally: showing scenes from Berlin's 20<sup>th</sup>-century history, it carried on the chapters from previous centuries that adorned the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Red Town Hall one block north. The wrought iron *Gründungsbrunnen* (Foundation Fountain) in front of the Nikolai Church, provided an equally literal allegory for the source of Berlin's historic development.<sup>865</sup>

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<sup>864</sup> Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1991): 54

<sup>865</sup> The fountain was wrought by blacksmith Kunsch after a design by Stahn and sculptor Gerhard Thieme. Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 118-119.



Figure 84: The Organ Grinder, a “typical Berlin Character”

For the construction of the *Nikolaiviertel*, the East German leaders mobilized resources from the entire GDR. Since the project was a considerable challenge for the East German economy, construction workers from Dresden, Cottbus, Nauen, Eilenburg, Bad Salzungen, Hoyerswerda, and Halle were ordered to work in Berlin.<sup>866</sup> Only a third of the construction work was actually carried out by Berlin-based construction workers – most were employees of the state-operated historical preservation firm *VEB Denkmalpflege*. Like it was the case with other East Berlin construction projects, the drain of resources from the provinces provoked resentment among many East Germans who lamented that the rebuilding of Berlin’s center was carried out at the cost of continuing dilapidation in their own historic town centers.<sup>867</sup> These provincial city centers had often been much better preserved than Berlin’s historic core; one could thus say that the neo-historical *Nikolaiviertel* took place at the expense of the decay of real historic cities.

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<sup>866</sup> “Wo Berlin begann: Ein neues Wahrzeichen der 750jährigen Stadt” *Märkische Volksstimme* May 15, 1987.

<sup>867</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.



Figure 85: Nikolaiviertel and Television Tower. The relief above the archway shows scenes from Berlin's 20<sup>th</sup>-century history. It continues the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century relief on the façade of the Red Town Hall. On the right communist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg speak to the people, in the middle a group of demonstrators gather around the memorial for Liebknecht and Luxemburg on Friedrichsfelde cemetery (designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1926, destroyed in 1935), on the left a demonstrating worker is shot, presumably by Nazi police.

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*The response in the West*

The inauguration of the *Nikolaiviertel* on May 14, 1987 was staged with great pomp. Strictly speaking, only the Historic Museum in the reconstructed Nikolai Church was opened. The event, however, celebrated the completion of the development as a whole. Numerous party leaders participated, including Head of State Erich Honecker and East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack. Most speakers dwelled extensively on historic events and spiced their presentations with entertaining anecdotes and historic trivia.<sup>868</sup> Their stories related to all parts of society, and not exclusively to the working class, as it had been the rule in official speeches of the 1950s and 1960s. Honecker's greeting ceremony for the future residents featured the usual props: a married couple, happy children, and a flower bouquet. It demonstrated that the leader had an interest to stress housing as a significant aspect of the project. A week later, on May 19, 1987 Honecker inaugurated the Ephraim Palace as an exhibit space.<sup>869</sup> Both events were included in the official list of celebrations for Berlin's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



*Figure 86: Gables from prefab concrete elements, Spandauer Straße*

<sup>868</sup> "Wo Berlin begann: Ein neues Wahrzeichen der 750jährigen Stadt" *Märkische Volksstimme* May 15, 1987 [report on the inauguration of the *Nikolaiviertel*].

<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*: 115.

The inauguration, to some extent, meant to impress the capitalist neighbors. In this respect, it was an indisputable success. The West Berlin press was full of praise. Ekkehard Schwerk of the liberal *Tagesspiegel* commended the “loving and lavish reconstruction” and excused the liberties taken with the historic originals as being typical for Berlin and not subtracting from the attractiveness of the new neighborhood.<sup>870</sup> Peter Gärtner of the equally liberal *Volksblatt* mentioned that after the unsatisfactory design of the preceding decades the “overwhelming part of the people in the eastern half of the city are enthused” about the new historic awareness.<sup>871</sup> According to Gärtner the project was therefore “allowed to cheat a little bit” with the historic accuracy of the buildings. Gärtner suggested that “the enthusiasm is more likely to have petty bourgeois roots,” since the majority of the visitors were less interested in the historic façades but in the shops and restaurants.<sup>872</sup> Even the conservative *Berliner Morgenpost* was fully enthused. In his article, journalist Kurt Geisler included only a few critical remarks about the inaccurate historic reconstruction.<sup>873</sup> A few months later he attacked critics who reviled the *Nikolaiviertel* as a “socialist Disneyland” and “synthetic city” – most likely in reference to both Easterners and Westerners. He commended that the birthplace of Berlin was not rebuilt as a gray highrise development but as a “colorful and interesting neighborhood.”<sup>874</sup> He also lauded the “bourgeois and Old Berlin atmosphere under socialist roofs.”<sup>875</sup> In general, West Berlin journalists were relieved that the area was not rebuilt with socialist tower-and-slab buildings, a concern that

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<sup>870</sup> “liebevoll und aufwendig” Ekkehard Schwerk, “Von der Rippe eines Riesen und von berauschten Padden – Geschichten im neuen ‘alten’ Nikolaiviertel, *Tagesspiegel* October 26, 1986.

<sup>871</sup> “Der überwiegende Teil der Menschen in der östlichen Halbstadt ist begeistert” Peter Gärtner, “Nicht allein touristische Attraktion – Das neue ‘alte’ Nikolaiviertel ist nahezu wiederaufgebaut” *Volksblatt* January 1, 1987.

<sup>872</sup> “Dabei darf auch ein bißchen gemogelt werden....Die offenbare Begeisterung scheint jedoch eher kleinbürgerliche Wurzeln zu haben.” Peter Gärtner, “Nicht allein touristische Attraktion – Das neue ‘alte’ Nikolaiviertel ist nahezu wiederaufgebaut” *Volksblatt* January 1, 1987 Gärtner repeated his positive comments eight months later in the biweekly magazine *Zitty*, praising the lovingly reconstructed buildings and exquisite shops. Peter Gärtner, “Reiche Wahrnehmungserlebnisse – Das neue ‘alte’ Nikolaiviertel ist nahezu wiederaufgebaut,” *Zitty* no. 9 (1987).

<sup>873</sup> Kurt Geisler, “Wo in der Gerichtslaube Sünder am Pranger standen, treffen sich bald fröhliche Zecher” *Berliner Morgenpost* March 22, 1987.

<sup>874</sup> “An der Wiege Berlins entstand hinsichtlich der Architektur keine graue sozialistische Alltagsmaus, sondern ein schillernder und interessanter Kiez-Käfer.” Kurt Geisler, “Neues Nikolaiviertel lockt mit einem Hauch von Mittelalter,” *Berliner Morgenpost* July 12, 1987.

<sup>875</sup> “ein Hauch von Bürgerlichkeit und Alt-Berlin unter volkseigenen Dächern.” Kurt Geisler, “Neues Nikolaiviertel lockt mit einem Hauch von Mittelalter,” *Berliner Morgenpost* July 12, 1987.

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largely prevailed over worries about historic accuracy. The apparent acceptance of the neighborhood among both East Berlin residents and tourists contributed to pacifying criticisms regarding the pastiche façades. According to the general consensus, the *Nikolaiviertel* at least had the potential to be different from most other locations in the city center in that it promised to be filled with lively activity.



*Figure 87: Nikolaiviertel: caricature by Andreas Prüstel (East Berlin), 1988*

*The image of the past*

In its mixture of styles and quotations the *Nikolaiviertel* is profoundly a-historical. Rather, it conveys a generic image of “the past.” Gothic pointed arches are juxtaposed next to Renaissance gables, baroque arbors and 19<sup>th</sup>-century stucco ornaments. Eight centuries of history, it seems, have suddenly collapsed into a visualization of a non-present, which nevertheless seems to be sufficiently clear as to be understood by most visitors. What is perceived as historical is anything that is not modern. This includes brick walls, pointed arches, and gables in the same way as stucco ornaments, guild signs, and pointed church towers. The buildings just have to be small scale and follow the block perimeter.

For Günter Stahn, the managing architect of the *Nikolaiviertel*, the reconstruction of completely destroyed buildings was legitimate whenever such edifices were still “alive as pictorial memories in the

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consciousness of the people.”<sup>876</sup> In other words, he never claimed historic accuracy. To the contrary, he flatly refused to create a precise image of medieval Berlin, since he rejected fostering the “dubious nostalgia for the return to a seemingly unambiguous [and] harmonic past.”<sup>877</sup> Stahn sought to revive Berlin’s historic center from the memory of its citizens, that is, he saw his design as the outcome of a collective imagination. That means he aspired for a subjective impression rather than an objective truth. For him, this subjectivity was nevertheless the path to the universal. He spoke of his architectural ensemble as being a “reference to the primordial,” which therefore could be “determinant for the structure of the city.”<sup>878</sup> In the revised version of his book, he varied his claim and announced that the *Nikolaiviertel* could become “a central place for the city as a whole.”<sup>879</sup> Stahn thus saw his architectural ensemble as archetypal. Since he claimed having distilled his architectural forms from pictorial memories he conceived of them as being primeval and thus authoritative – at least in the context of one particular city. For him, the *Nikolaiviertel* was a universal matrix for Berlin, manufactured and at the same time universally valid.

#### *The Nikolaiviertel, continuously popular*

In contrast to many other showcase projects built under the German Democratic Republic, the *Nikolaiviertel* continued to remain attractive after the German reunification. Two years after the opening of the Berlin Wall it was even chosen to stage another event of historic significance. In 1991 the Nikolai Church became the location for the constituting meeting of the first democratically elected unified Berlin parliament since 1946 – a reference to the first Berlin parliament that had met in the same church in 1805. In the following years, especially tourists were attracted to “Berlin’s historic

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<sup>876</sup> “Auch bei völliger Zerstörung sollte man sich nicht mit dem Verlust historischer Bauwerke abfinden. Solange diese Gebäude noch als bildhafte Erinnerung im Bewußtsein der Bürger lebendig sind, ist deren sinnvolle Einbeziehung beim Wiederaufbau und der weiteren Ausgestaltung der Stadt kulturpolitisch legitim.” Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel am Marx-Engels-Forum. Ursprung, Gründungsort und Stadtkern Berlins. Ein Beitrag zur Stadtentwicklung* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1985): 8.

<sup>877</sup> “[es] konnte... nicht Ziel sein, das mittelalterliche Berlin zu rekonstruieren im Sinne einer Traditionspflege mit zwiespältiger Sehnsucht nach der Wiederkehr einer scheinbar widerspruchsfreien harmonischen Vergangenheit.” Ibid.: 9.

<sup>878</sup> “[Ziel ist ein] Bezug zum ursprünglichen... [Es soll ein Stadtviertel geschaffen werden,] das sich für die Stadtstruktur als bestimmend erweist.” Ibid.: 9.

<sup>879</sup> Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel* (East Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1991): 59.

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nucleus" and continued to fill the numerous bars, shops, and restaurants. Few visitors associated it with the unloved socialist regime who built it, and only insiders are able to tell from the formulations on the various commemorative metal plaques that they were set up during the socialist period.<sup>880</sup> Between 1997 and 1999, most of the buildings were renovated.<sup>881</sup> From a commercial point of view, at the turn of the millennium the *Nikolaiviertel* was one of the most successful developments of the late socialist regime. Visitors, both domestic and international, love to have dinner at the Walnut Tree Inn or the Court Loggia-turned-restaurant, see historic exhibits in the Nikolai Church, and shop at boutiques and souvenir stores. What made the *Nikolaiviertel* so popular? One reason might be geographical: it is one of the few spots in Berlin's downtown where the bank of the Spree River is developed with cafés and restaurants. Second, it seems that Stahn's strategy of reassembling a "historic" neighborhood from mental images has won favor. The *Nikolaiviertel* presents a picture perfect image of the German old town. Any visitor, tourist or local, sees his preconceptions of a historic old town confirmed. Everything that is already familiar from German city centers is there: the gothic cathedral, the cobblestone alleys, the market square with quaint pitched roof buildings, the gift-shops, the beer-halls, and the restaurants with wrought iron guild signs above the entrance. The development plays upon the visitor's expectation of a medieval nucleus. Since the arches, pillars, and gables, made from precast concrete slabs, do not claim authenticity, they also leave space for imagination. Their generic aspect resuscitates the visual memories that the visitor might carry from his or her experience of genuine historic cities such as Quedlinburg, Prague, or Rothenburg. These memories involve the visitor in a reciprocal play between experience and perception. The success of the *Nikolaiviertel* is thus a direct outcome of its historic inaccuracy.

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<sup>880</sup> The Court Loggia, for example, is still commemorated as a "site of early bourgeois jurisdiction" and the Knoblauch House as a "testimony of bourgeois culture," in reference to the socialist distinction between bourgeois and working class culture. Misleading East German historiography can be read from the references to the "Fascist World War" that destroyed the Walnut Tree Inn and the "Anglo-American fighter planes" which bombed the Nikolai Church. Throughout its existence, the East German state assumed no responsibility for the Second World War and considered the German working class a victim rather than a collaborator of "fascist imperialism" (hence the avoidance of the word "National Socialist," which sounded too similar to "socialist").

<sup>881</sup> Uwe Kieling and Johannes Althoff, *Das Nikolaiviertel. Spuren der Geschichte im ältesten Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Edition 2001): 115.

## Chapter 14: The Vindicated Historical Neighborhood – Husemannstraße and Sophienstraße

### *The Husemannstraße remodeling (1983-1987)*

It was Konrad Naumann's idea to restore a portion of Berlin's tenement fabric as a real-life museum depicting living conditions around 1900. Naumann was the First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party and a Politburo member; in practice his influence outweighed that of East Berlin's mayor.<sup>882</sup> In October 1983 local party official Ernst Heinz from the Prenzlauer Berg district deferred to Naumann's suggestion and proposed a two-block area of Husemannstraße, which comprised a total of 30 buildings built between 1870 and 1900.<sup>883</sup> East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack confirmed Naumann's proposal in the same month; the *Magistrat* decided upon the redesign of Husemannstraße in February 1984.<sup>884</sup>



Figure 88: The renovated Husemannstraße, 1987

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<sup>882</sup> A letter by Ernst Heinz, First Secretary of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, suggests that the remodeling was Naumann's idea. The letter is dated October 12, 1983. LAB C Rep 902, 5440. Gerhard Tröllitzsch confirmed that the national (=GDR-wide) authorities, including Erich Honecker and Günter Mittag, played a minor role in the decision on the Husemannstraße remodeling. Gerhard Tröllitzsch, interview by author, Berlin, May 11, 2004.

<sup>883</sup> Letter by Ernst Heinz, dated October 12, 1983 LAB C Rep 902, 5440

<sup>884</sup> Letter by mayor Erhard Krack to Konrad Naumann, dated October 27, 1983, and *Magistrat* resolution no. 090/84, passed on February 29, 1984, LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

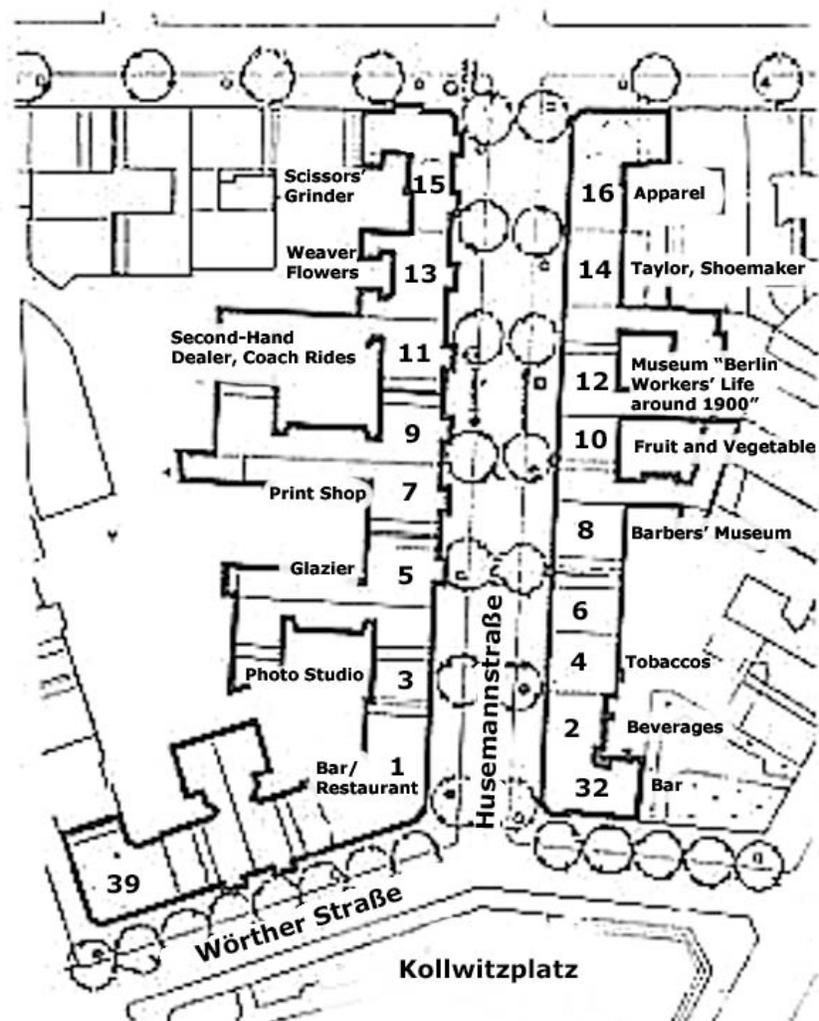


Figure 89: Husemannstraße, plan with functions

As a result of Naumann's suggestions Husemannstraße was remodeled "according to the Old Berlin character." *VEB Baureparaturen*, the state-owned repair firm of the Prenzlauer Berg district, refurbished façades, doors and windows and modernized selected apartments in accordance with the standards of the time.<sup>885</sup> Façades, business signs and shop decorations were painted in a turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century style, and gas lanterns, placard columns, and a water pump were crafted according to

<sup>885</sup> "dem Altberliner Charakter entsprechend" letter of the First Secretary of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Office of the Socialist Unity Party Ernst Heinz, dated October 12, 1983. LAB C Rep 902, 5440. See also Dorothea Krause, Uwe Klasen and Wolfgang Penzel, "Rekonstruktion im Stil der Jahrhundertwende – Husemannstraße in Berlin," *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 14.

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historic models.<sup>886</sup> In addition, the streets were adorned with benches and concrete planters. Along the sidewalks several street cafés and restaurants opened, which was an important attraction in the gastronomically undersupplied socialist capital.<sup>887</sup> Party leader Konrad Naumann had also called for period shops where the passer-by could watch craftsmen at work; accordingly a scissors grinder, a barber, a tailor, a potter, a florist, and a drape maker were established. Against the original idea, motorized traffic was not barred from the street. This was nevertheless a minor detail in a country in which car ownership for most people was a dream rather than a serious aspiration. The project managers claimed that by 1987 368 apartments in the Husemannstraße area had been “repaired and modernized.”<sup>888</sup> Most likely, however, in most apartments this only meant current repairs – in 1983 party official Ernst Heinz had suggested that only 78 apartments be modernized.<sup>889</sup>

From the beginning, Husemannstraße was staged as a piece of historiography-turned-architecture with recreational and educational purpose. In February 1984, leading Party officials pointed out the historic significance of the location for the struggle of Berlin’s working class at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “Here one can vividly show a historic development, which under the conditions of socialism can be refined and preserved for the historic consciousness of our times.”<sup>890</sup> The *Magistrat* resolution on the remodeling, which was passed in the same month, reiterated the significance of the project “for the preservation of the historic character of our capital city.”<sup>891</sup> It rooted Husemannstraße in the

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<sup>886</sup> Proposition “Grundsatzentscheidung für den Modernisierungskomplex Husemannstraße – östliche Seite” for the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on December 20, 1984: 2, LAB C Rep 134-02-02, 1333.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid.: 14-16.

<sup>888</sup> Dorothea Krause, Uwe Klase and Wolfgang Penzel, “Rekonstruktion im Stil der Jahrhundertwende – Husemannstraße in Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 10 (1987): 14.

<sup>889</sup> Letter of the First Secretary of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Office of the Socialist Unity Party Ernst Heinz, dated October 12, 1983. LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

<sup>890</sup> “Hier lassen sich anschaulich historische Entwicklungen darstellen, die unter sozialistischen Bedingungen für das Geschichtsbewußtsein unserer Zeit aufbereitet und aufgehoben werden können.” Letter by Hans Schmidt with the Department of Construction and Investment at the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party to his superior Gerhard Poser, dated February 6, 1984 LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

<sup>891</sup> “Als Beispiel für die Wahrung des historischen Charakters unserer Hauptstadt wird... das Typische eines Altberliner Straßenzuges um die Jahrhundertwende wieder hergestellt und mit modernen Wohnverhältnissen verbunden” *Magistrat* Resolution no. 090/84, passed on February 29, 1984 LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

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founding narrative of the socialist state through the reference to the local workers' movement: "The political activism of the marginal groups of the proletarians and their sympathizers evolved [in these neighborhoods]. The inhabitants developed forms of mutual help to aid their misery."<sup>892</sup> With regard to Husemannstraße, this information was at least misleading. The proletarian dwellings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to which the resolution referred, abounded in the wider Prenzlauer Berg district but were comparably rare on that particular street. A renovation of real proletarian apartments, which were mostly situated in narrow backyards, would obviously have been considerably less quaint than that of the spacious middle-class front buildings on Husemannstraße. The presentation of the street as a "historic working-class" district was thus for the most part a marketing image. It was bolstered with the memory of two famous former residents, whose dwelling unfortunately was destroyed in the Second World War: sculptor and draughtswoman Käthe Kollwitz, who in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century depicted the plight of the local working class in expressive drawings, and her husband, the "doctor of the poor" Karl Kollwitz. Käthe's bronze portrayal by sculptor Gustav Seitz had adorned Kollwitzplatz on the southern end of Husemannstraße since 1961; in December 1984 the City District Council decided to refurbish both the sculpture and the adjacent landscaping.<sup>893</sup>

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<sup>892</sup> "[Hier]... bildete sich die politisch aktive Teilnahme der Randgruppen des Proletariats und seiner Sympathisanten in solchen Wohngebieten heraus. Es entwickelten sich Formen der gegenseitigen Hilfe zur Linderung des Elends." *Magistrat* Resolution no. 090/84, passed on February 29, 1984 LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

<sup>893</sup> Protocol of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on December 12, 1984, LAB C Rep 134-02-02, 1333.



Figure 90: Husemannstraße: Scissors grinder's store (now a souvenir shop). The neo-historical signs read: "Grinding of knives, tailor's scissors, and barber's scissors" (left) and "Grinding and repair of surgical instruments, microwave grinding" (right).

The City District Council stated that the Husemannstraße remodeling express the "biggest possible truth to the historic model."<sup>894</sup> At the same time, it already cut back the expenses at the cost of historical accuracy, especially in secluded locations. While the stucco ornaments on the front façades were still to be restored on all buildings, the same ornaments on throughways and backyards walls were to be remodeled only in "selected locations," and otherwise taken off and plastered over.<sup>895</sup> In some cases the resolution also allowed for a substitution of front façade stucco ornaments by

<sup>894</sup> "größtmögliche Treue zum historischen Zustand." Protocol of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on December 12, 1984, LAB C Rep 134-02-02, 1333: 2 and 8.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.: 2 and 10.

simplified “modern versions” – “for reasons of production technique,” which meant that the district did not have enough resources to reproduce the sophisticated adornments.<sup>896</sup>



Figure 91: Husemannstraße with neo-historical signs for a horse-carriage operator (left) and a second-hand store (right). In the 1990s, the buildings were dilapidating again. Wooden shelves were put up after a pedestrian was hit by a falling piece of stucco.

For the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Husemannstraße was complemented with a series of temporary events somewhat tied to the district’s historic heritage. They were themed around tenements, backyards, and proletarian culture – the historical accuracy of the references was often secondary.<sup>897</sup> A typical example was the “Old Berlin” street party “Schwoof of’m Hof” (“shindig in the

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<sup>896</sup> “aus produktionstechnischen Gründen” Ibid.: 10.

<sup>897</sup> In November 1986, the Prenzlauer Berg city district assembly passed a list of events that included a “Literaturball mit Berlinkolorit,” (“writers’ ball with Berlin folklore”) a “Volkskunststrade ‘Berlin, wie 330

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backyard,” in Berlin dialect).<sup>898</sup> Contrary to what the nostalgic title suggested none of the “shindig’s” various locations actually was a backyard – the beer garden of the century-old restaurant *Prater* on Kastanienallee, surrounded by tenements, was as close as it got. The organizers avidly attempted to relate the Old Berlin theme to socialist history: the *Prater* was claimed to be the location where in 1923 a group of “proletarian circus artists” were bid farewell before traveling to the Soviet Union.<sup>899</sup> The group allegedly defied a German boycott against the fledgling Soviet regime – in the eyes of the local authorities reason enough to declare the beer garden a shrine of class struggle and international solidarity.

Describing the historical context of Husemannstraße, project manager Dorothea Krause presented a view on the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century working class that was quite different from earlier treatments of the subject. She pointed out that workers’ lives at the time were not only determined by “murderous work schedules, overcrowding, and social insecurity” but also by solidarity between workers and by the companionable environment in the residential neighborhood. According to Krause these positive aspects of historic working class life could only be acknowledged due to the victory of socialism, which finally did away with capitalist oppression. With 80 years of temporal distance the tenements could now be disassociated from plight and misery and appreciated merely for their beautiful forms. Krause accentuated that the “ornamented façades of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century...do not have the objective to deceive and to hide miserable housing conditions.”<sup>900</sup> Krause’s argumentation reflected a historiographic shift. Since the tenements ceased to represent the social and political system in which they were built they could be re-evaluated and ascribed a different meaning.

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haste dir verändertert” (“pop art show ‘Berlin – how did you change?’”), and numerous events in the factory-associated workers clubs. Protocol of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on November 27, 1986, LAB C Rep 134-02-02, 1387.

<sup>898</sup> The City District Council planned to celebrate the event on September 28, 1986 and repeat it in the following year the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Protocol of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on April 28, 1986. LAB C Rep 134-02-021370.

<sup>899</sup> Next to the *Prater* the street party was to be celebrated at the socialist Kulturhaus (culture house) in Ernst-Thälmann-Park and the surrounding streets Dimitroffstraße (now Danziger Straße), Diesterwegstraße, and Franz-Dahlem-Straße (now Ella-Kay-Straße). Protocol of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council meeting on April 28, 1986 LAB C Rep 134-02-021370.

<sup>900</sup> “Die ...verzierten Fassaden der Gründerzeit...haben heutzutage nicht mehr die Aufgabe, etwas vorzutäuschen und das Wohnungselend zu verbergen.” Ibid.: 16.



Figure 92: Husemannstraße: Period drugstore (picture from 1987)



Figure 93: Husemannstraße - "Museum of Berlin Workers' Life Around 1900"

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The “Museum of Berlin Workers’ Life Around 1900”

The reinterpretation of history became most apparent from the Historic Museum on Husemannstraße number 12. The first proposal for such a museum dated from January 6, 1984, when the Prenzlauer Berg Township Plan Commission presented a proposal for a *Museum für die Arbeit und Lebensweise der Jahrhundertwende* (Museum of Work and Way of life at the Turn of the Century).<sup>901</sup> The museum was subsequently established as a branch of the local history museum *Märkisches Museum* under the name *Museum Berliner Arbeiterleben um 1900* (Museum of Berlin Workers’ Life Around 1900).<sup>902</sup> It showed an original working class apartment with living room, kitchen, and bedroom, adorned with documents and historic pictures showing bars, garden plots, cultural associations, and trade unions. The museum opened on Labor Day (May 1) 1987 with the exhibit *Anfänge der Arbeiterfreizeit* (The Beginnings of Workers’ Leisure Time), which was shown for an entire year. It was subsequently shipped to West Berlin, where it was shown at the local history museum of the Neukölln district.<sup>903</sup> The exhibit was conceptualized by the *Forschungsgruppe Kulturgeschichte* (Research Group on Cultural History) under the direction of Dietrich Mühlberg. Mühlberg, who since 1976 was a professor at the Humboldt University and chair of the newly established Cultural Theory section at the Department of Art History, had worked extensively on the cultural history of the German working class.<sup>904</sup> He investigated the everyday life of ordinary people to draw conclusions on the larger historical context. His approach can be read from his 1983 publication *Arbeiterleben um 1900* (Workers’ life around 1900, co-authored with an “authors collective”), which he published in close connection with the Husemannstraße project.<sup>905</sup> In the preface of the book, he straightforwardly asked “why is the working class life around 1900 interesting?” and gave two answers. On the one hand, “a simple comparison [of the workers’ life around 1900] with life in our society highlights the advantages

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<sup>901</sup>“Vorschlag zur Nutzung der Erdgeschoßzone in der Husemannstraße,” [proposal for the groundfloor use on Husemannstraße], authored by the Plan Commission of the Prenzlauer Berg City District Council, dated January 6, 1984. LAB C Rep 902, 5440.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid.

<sup>903</sup> It was shown from June 24 to September 24, 1988 at the Emil-Fischer-Heimatismuseum, which also published a catalog. Tobias Böhm, ed., *Anfänge der Arbeiterfreizeit* (West Berlin: Emil-Fischer-Heimatismuseum, 1989).

<sup>904</sup> The research on working class history was the explicit purpose of Mühlberg’s research institute. Dietrich Mühlberg, ed., *Arbeiterleben in Berlin um 1900* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1983): 185.

<sup>905</sup> Dietrich Mühlberg, ed., *Arbeiterleben in Berlin um 1900* (East Berlin: Dietz, 1983).

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of socialism.”<sup>906</sup> On the other hand “this history also contains the sprouts of the new, the preconditions of the socialist way of life.”<sup>907</sup> The authors emphasized that also in the GDR the history of working man’s everyday life so far had been neglected. They interpret the growing interest in these topics as a sign of an increasing self-esteem of the working class vis-à-vis “the ideological enemies” – the bourgeois classes – who for a long time had underestimated working class culture.

Mühlberg’s publication documents an important step in the re-evaluation of Berlin’s historic tenements. First, next to misery and oppression, Mühlberg mentioned numerous positive aspects of workers’ lives at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Second, he pointed out several advantages of tenement housing in comparison to rural dwellings at the same time. He showed that the tenements provided both a higher living standard and higher degree of individual freedom.<sup>908</sup> Unlike most rural dwellings at the time, tenement apartments had glass windows, running water, gas lighting, and often a connection to the sewerage system. They also offered the worker a high degree of mobility, which was an increase in personal freedom in contrast to the restrictions on residence in the rural society at the time. For Mühlberg, even the fact that the high rent level forced many working class families to sublet beds in their already overcrowded apartments to single young men, so-called *Schlafburschen* (“sleep lads”, “sleep tenants”), was not exclusively a sign of workers’ misery. For him, this practice had the advantage of teaching young immigrants from rural areas the rules of urban proletarian life, including “class-specific” solidarity.<sup>909</sup> Mühlberg also resisted the temptation to lump the forty-eight years of the German Empire between 1871 and 1919 together as one single period of plight and despair for the German workers, but rather to present a differentiated view. He thus showed that due to architectural

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<sup>906</sup> “[Es] läßt ein einfacher Vergleich mit dem Leben in unserer Gesellschaft die Vorzüge des Sozialismus plastisch hervortreten.” Ibid: 6.

<sup>907</sup> “Diese Geschichte enthält auch die Keime des Neuen, Voraussetzung sozialistischer Lebensweise.” Ibid: 6.

<sup>908</sup> Ibid. Unlike the bourgeois, workers usually chose their partners because they loved them, since economic reasons did not count for the poor (p. 91), unlike the rural workers the urban proletarians did have some spare time which they could use for social activities (p. 132-160), proletarians developed forms of organization and class consciousness (p. 103-122).

<sup>909</sup> Ibid.: 70-71.

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reforms proletarian housing was already much better in the early 1900s than it had been thirty years before.<sup>910</sup>

Mühlberg's publication nevertheless should not be seen exclusively as a reconfiguration of socialist historiography. It also exemplifies the shift towards an individualized view to the city, which at the time was palpable in different contexts of East German academia (see chapter 7 "Academic Research and the Individualized View on the City"). Like many of his fellow academicians at the time, Mühlberg contributed to an increasing recognition of sociology and cultural studies. He thus initiated a view of the city that, instead of being preoccupied with the quantity of factories, schools, and grocery stores, was centered on the every-day practices of its inhabitants.

The *Museum of Berlin Workers' Life around 1900* opened one year before the *Lower East Side Tenement Museum* in New York City, which was founded by historian Ruth Abram and is affiliated to the US American "National Trust for Historic Preservation."<sup>911</sup> There is no evidence that one was informed by the other and it is quite possible that the organizers of both institutions were not even aware of each other's existence. However, aside from the socialist rhetoric in the former and the focus on immigrants on the latter, there are numerous similarities between both museums. Both shed light on the living conditions of underprivileged classes at the turn of the century. Both preferred to depict the everyday lives of "ordinary people," rather than merely divulging about celebrities. Both presented "history to be touched," stressing the authenticity of the location, and set a strong focus on traces and residues. In both cases, the success story was connected to a social agenda. In East Berlin, the museum showed the struggle of workers under capitalism in order to reinforce the visitor's commitment to the socialist regime and its achievements. In New York it presented the misery of past settlers whose descendents are now well established in the American society, in order to relate the

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<sup>910</sup> Ibid.: 83-84.

<sup>911</sup> See Diana Linden, "Lower East Side Tenement Museum, New York City," *Antiques*, no. 8 (2001): 198-205.

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visitor to the hardships of present immigrants.<sup>912</sup> And in both cases, the museum building was situated in a neighborhood, which at the turn of the century was extremely ill reputed, but at the time when the museums opened became increasingly *en vogue*. The irony was that the neighbourhood represented by the museums had now become unaffordable for those very classes whose lives were to be commemorated.

*Reception of Husemannstraße*

Like the *Nikolaiviertel*, Husemannstraße proved to be an instantaneous success. Despite frequent supply shortages the weaver's and tailor's shops became popular gift stores, and in front of the bars "Budike" and "1900" patrons lined up every night waiting to be granted access to the limited seats. The West Berlin newspapers applauded. Journalist Sonja Gladigau of the liberal *Volksblatt* commended that to her great surprise the "movie backdrop" was able to generate an authentic street life and attracted a young, arty, and often local crowd.<sup>913</sup> Even the conservative *Berliner Morgenpost*, usually extremely critical with East Berlin prestige projects, called the street "an attraction for both locals and visitors."<sup>914</sup> Husemannstraße offered as much consumerism as the socialist state was willing to permit, and to the daily visitors – most of who were Berliners rather than tourists – the references to class struggle and historic determinism was as faint as postwar small town life is to the patrons of Disneyland. Most observers were not disturbed by the poor quality of the remodeling or by the fact that on many occasions only the façades of the buildings were painted while backyards and staircases were left untouched. The shine of Husemannstraße offered a visible contrast to the neighboring streets, paradoxically making the neglect of the adjacent area even more obvious. Rather than the artificiality of its historic references, the main criticism against Husemannstraße at the time was that

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<sup>912</sup> Aside from showing period interiors, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum supports exhibits that deal with present issues of immigration and integration.

<sup>913</sup> Sonja Gladigau, "Restaurierte Husemannstraße für Filmarbeiten immer beliebter," *Volksblatt* July 31, 1988.

<sup>914</sup> "Attraktion für Einheimische und Touristen" K. G., "Attraktion in Ost-Berlin: die Husemannstraße," *Berliner Morgenpost* November 4, 1988.

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in view of thousands of dilapidating façades the remodeling of thirty buildings was a drop in the ocean.<sup>915</sup>

For a brief period after the end of the GDR Husemannstraße was reviled. In August 1992 a piece of stucco spectacularly fell onto a café terrace badly injuring a woman. The sidewalks subsequently had to be protected by graceless wooden awnings. The West Berlin press welcomed that event in order to rage against the miserable quality of East German construction work.<sup>916</sup> At the same time “the roofer from Wiebelskirchen” (Erich Honecker, who ironically had been trained as a tiler) was ridiculed for his peculiar idea of renovating a single street in an otherwise dilapidating neighborhood.<sup>917</sup> The unconcealed sarcasm in those articles suggests that for many West German journalists who wrote in the time immediately after the Reunification the constructive flaws of Husemannstraße embodied the failure of the socialist system as such, and the law-suit that the formerly state-owned housing company filed against its contractors in 1994 was a settling of accounts with the late East German state as a whole. Once the façades were renovated again in the late 1990s and the wooden sidewalk protections successively disappeared, criticism waned and commercial success increased. Rising rents forced low-profit shops such as the shoemaker, the barber, and the drugstore to move. The “Museum of Berlin Workers’ Life around 1900” and the “Barber’s Museum” closed and the remaining stores were brought up to the aesthetic level of a West German commercial street. Most buildings were remodeled again in accordance with the new *Weststandard* for modernizations (Western standard; for example central heating instead of coal stoves).

The style nevertheless remained the same. Contrary to most other once prestigious architectural projects from the times of the GDR, the conception of Husemannstraße design was accepted without

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<sup>915</sup> Husemannstraße was nevertheless well advertised. In East Germany, scores of letters, memorandums, studies, and presentations were produced. And all repeat more or less the same statements.

<sup>916</sup> See Adrienne Kömmler, “Husemannstraße: Pfüsch am Stuck bedroht Passanten,” *Berliner Morgenpost* April 25, 1993 Ute Semkat, “Der Putz bröckelt gefährlich,” *Die Welt* July 21, 1993 Uta Keseling, “Kühle Blonde unter Bretterdächern: An der Husemannstraße bröckelt der Putz,” *Berliner Morgenpost* April 28, 1996.

<sup>917</sup> Andrea Schewing, “Honis Filmkulisse bröckelt ab,” *Berliner Zeitung* May 10, 1993.

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reservations. Unlike most “modern” East German restaurants, the Old-Berlin-style bars were well liked by the numerous West German tourists. The Wood Carver’s and the Basket Weaver’s stores perfectly matched the boutiques and galleries that opened there after capitalism had taken over. At the turn of the millennium, Husemannstraße was the heart of a gentrified historic neighborhood. Throughout the whole area, ornamental stucco façades are carefully restored. Well-to-do couples filled the streets and café terraces; the backyard buildings were rented out to dentists and law firms. Real estate agents explained the ongoing demand for rental apartments in the area with the “neighborhood atmosphere,” which especially attracted young professionals from West Germany. The area thrived to the point that strolling down the Husemannstraße, few visitors can now imagine that they are admiring a showcase project from the times of the late German Democratic Republic.

#### *The Sophienstraße remodeling*

Sophienstraße could be called a sister project of Husemannstraße, situated in the heart of the *Spandauer Vorstadt* of East Berlin’s Mitte district. The plan to remodel or “reconstruct” the area north and south of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße (now Torstraße), which includes the *Spandauer Vorstadt*, was first announced in the February 1976 Politburo resolution on the “tasks for the development of the capital city of the GDR, Berlin.” It ordered the demolition of all “worn down buildings” and the integration of “well preserved or valuable buildings.”<sup>918</sup> The area around Sophienstraße and the adjacent streets Große Hamburger Straße and Hackescher Markt was to be “built [not rebuilt] as a piece of Old Berlin respecting historic traditions, integrating valuable façades, and incorporating workshops for spectacular or rare professions (goldsmiths, cabinet makers, engravers, piano tuners etc.).”<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>918</sup> “...die in den dicht bebauten Arbeiterwohnbezirken vielerorts noch vorhandenen ungenügenden Wohnverhältnisse, die der Kapitalismus als schlimmes Erbe hinterlassen hat, Schritt für Schritt zu überwinden” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602.

<sup>919</sup> “Der Raum Sophiestraße/Hackescher Markt/Große Hamburger Straße ist unter Einordnung wertvoller Fassaden und durch Einrichtung von Werkstätten für bevölkerungswirksame bzw. traditionelle oder seltene Berufe (Goldschmiede, Kunsttischler, Graveure, Klavierstimmer usw.) als ein Stück Alt-Berlin unter Berücksichtigung historischer Traditionen aufzubauen.” Protocol of the Politburo meeting on February 3, 1976, final copy, BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2 1602.



Figure 94: Sophienstraße. On the left the oldest building on the street, the “colonist house” number 11, which was constructed around 1750 and since 1987 houses an “Old Berlin” restaurant.

This resolution was remarkable for two reasons. First, it mandated the theming of a historic neighborhood as an integrative part of the remodeling process. And second, the theme was explicitly related to the traditions of working class tenements. With regard to both, one can detect a blurred view of “the historic,” informed by nostalgic images rather than historically accurate conceptions, and

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decidedly different from a preservationist approach. The average visitor of Sophienstraße immediately grasps its “historic character.” It is a quaint, narrow street, bordered by two to three-story buildings with ornamented stucco façades. The baroque Sophien Church, surrounded by old trees and an idyllic cemetery, gives the area the atmosphere of a village green. Yet it is anything but a typical tenement neighborhood. It is practically the only Berlin street with a considerable amount of 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Its comparably low houses and luminous backyards are very different from the dark and narrow late-19<sup>th</sup>-century working class dwellings. And its inhabitants since the 18<sup>th</sup> century were in the majority petty bourgeois rather than factory workers.<sup>920</sup> The politically motivated connection of the idyllic Sophienstraße with the struggle of the industrial working class was eased by the existence of building number 18. Since 1905, it housed the *Berliner Handwerkerverein* (Berlin Craftsmen’s Association).<sup>921</sup> The Craftsmen’s Association, founded in 1844 on the nearby Oranienburger Straße and located on Sophienstraße since 1863, was an important force in the Berlin workers’ movement. In 1905, the association moved from building number 15 into newly constructed assembly rooms in the back building of Sophienstraße number 18. Here, they hosted speakers as famous as Karl Liebknecht, the co-founder of the Communist Party, or Wilhelm Pieck, a workers’ leader who in 1949 became the first president of the GDR.<sup>922</sup> It must have been for that reason that the well-preserved but aesthetically unspectacular building prominently appeared on the first national list of protected monuments in 1979. It was one of only 60 buildings on that list, and was called the “oldest site of tradition for the Berlin workers movement.”<sup>923</sup> In 1983, the magazine *Architektur der DDR* presented

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<sup>920</sup> Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 29-41.

<sup>921</sup> The craftsmen’s association was founded in 1844 and since 1859 resided in the Sophienstraße. Laurenz Demps, *Die Oranienburger Straße* (Berlin: Parthas, 1998): 141. Since 1905 it occupied the building Sophienstraße 18. Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 29. In 1905, the Association commissioned the construction of the backyard buildings, which were designed by the architects Joseph Frankel and Theodor Kampffmeyer, who also designed the lushly ornamented terracotta relief on the street façade of the already existing front building. Hans-Jürgen Mehde and Kurt Wernicke, eds., *Das Berlin-Mitte-Lexikon* (Berlin: Stapp Verlag, 2001): 266.

<sup>922</sup> Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 30.

<sup>923</sup> “Älteste Traditionsstätte der Berliner Arbeiterbewegung”, *Zentrale Denkmalsliste vom 25.09.1979* (East Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1979) [Central List of Monuments of September 25, 1979]: 3 copy at BArch DH 1/33710.

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its history in an unusually detailed article.<sup>924</sup> For the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations a memorial plaque was fixed at the entrance.<sup>925</sup> The most visible remainder of the association, a lushly ornamented false gable over the entrance gate, which was added to the front building in 1905 when the new back buildings were constructed, was renovated in the mid 1980s.<sup>926</sup> However, the interior of the historic assembly rooms stayed unrenovated. At the time they housed workshops for the Maxim Gorki Theatre and the state-owned carpentry *VEB Holzverarbeitung*.<sup>927</sup>



Figure 95: Sophienstraße, façade painting “Handwerk und Tradition” (Craft and Tradition) from 1987. On the left the steeple of the Sophien Church (built 1729-35).

<sup>924</sup> Renate Petras, “Das Berliner Handwerkervereinshaus,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 37. The building had already been presented to the East German public in two newspaper articles from the 1960s (Kurt Wernicke, “Der Handwerkerverein und sein Haus,” *Neues Deutschland* December 18, 1962 and Kurt Wernicke, “Schule für künftige Kämpfer,” *Neues Deutschland* April 5, 1969) and in a 1973 book on central Berlin’s historic monuments: Hans Maur, *Mahn-, Gedenk- und Erinnerungsstätten der Arbeiterbewegung in Berlin-Mitte* (East Berlin, 1973): 62-63.

<sup>925</sup> Letter by East Berlin mayor Erhard Krack to Party Secretary Günter Schabowski on January 31, 1986 BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.040/21.

<sup>926</sup> Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 31.

<sup>927</sup> The location is now known as Sophiensäle and used for dance performances.



Figure 96: The building of the Berlin Craftsmen's Association on Sophienstraße number 18. The terracotta relief was added in 1905. The handshake above the entrance was a symbol of the German workers movement. It was associated with the conclusion of a craftsman's contract, but also with a form of greeting that at the time was considered specifically proletarian.<sup>928</sup> In East Germany it figured prominently on the emblem of the Socialist Unity Party and represented the handshake between Social Democratic Party Leader Otto Grotewohl and Communist Party leader Wilhelm Pieck, which in 1946 concluded the unification of both parties (hence Socialist Unity Party).

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<sup>928</sup> For a discussion of the handshake in 19<sup>th</sup>-century proletarian culture see for example an article by researcher Horst Groschopp, who in the 1980s worked with Dieter Mühlberg at the Humboldt University's Department of Cultural Studies. Horst Groschopp, "Proletarische Organisation als Kulturprozess" [online], (Berlin, 1992). Cited on May 20, 2005. Available from World Wide Web <http://www.horst-groschopp.de/Arbeiterkultur/Kulturprozess.html>.



Figure 97: The “colonist house” on Sophienstraße number 11, built around 1750 (picture from 1987)

It is likely that Party Secretary Konrad Naumann, who had also pushed for the Husemannstraße remodeling, was the driving force behind the Sophienstraße renovation.<sup>929</sup> The “Work Group of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party for the Mitte City District” worked out the specificities.<sup>930</sup> The street was eventually remodeled between 1983 and 1987 by workers of the district-operated repair firm *VEB Baureparaturen Mitte* under the direction of architect Peter Gohlke. Gohlke called the area a *Denkmalpflegegebiet* (area listed as historic monument).<sup>931</sup> In comparison with the mass of dilapidating buildings in the area, the scope of the remodeling was rather small. It

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<sup>929</sup> This is how Peter Goralczyk remembered the origin of the remodeling. Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>930</sup> “Arbeitsgruppe des Sekretariats der Bezirksleitung der SED im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Mitte” LAB C Rep 902, 5431, confirmed by Peter Goralczyk, interview on April 7, 2004.

<sup>931</sup> Peter Gohlke, “Zur Rekonstruktion der Sophienstraße in Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1988): 9-15.

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comprised the 32 buildings on Sophienstraße and approximately 10 buildings on the adjacent Gipsstraße and Große Hamburger Straße. In most cases, only the façades and the front buildings were remodeled, not the back buildings and the façades towards the backyards. The remodeling of the 321 residential apartments corresponded to the standards of Husemannstraße: bathrooms inside the apartment were added wherever they were lacking and the existing coal stoves were repaired. On the corner of Sophienstraße and Große Hamburger Straße a few prefab slab buildings were erected and were fitted out with the old fabric. They followed the Historic Preservation Authority's recommendation "generally to give new buildings modern...façades" and therefore lacked historicizing ornaments.<sup>932</sup> They nevertheless were reminder of the existing buildings: low size, perimeter block, windows, and slanted roofs aimed at following old models and thus added to the perception of the street as generically historic.



Figure 98: "The Dollhouse" – historicizing shop sign for a toy maker

<sup>932</sup> "Uns ist dies Anlaß, wiederholt darauf hinzuweisen, daß seitens des Instituts für Denkmalpflege grundsätzlich die Meinung besteht, den neu zu bauenden Häusern moderne...Fassaden zu geben." Letter by *Chefkonservator* Stark and *Konservator* Schulz with the Berlin Historic Preservation Authority, dated May 6, 1985. The letter refers to the extensive debate on the reconstruction of the building Sophienstraße 23, which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but was a ruin by the early 1980s. LAB C Rep 110-01, 4330.

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Peter Goralczyk, at the time director of the East Berlin Historic Preservation Authority and deeply involved in the remodeling, remembered that Party officials had suggested staging a historic craftsmen's district with "hammering shoemakers" and other performances.<sup>933</sup> Thus not only the historic craftsmen's shops were introduced at the Berlin party leaders' request, but also the wrought-iron guild sign decoration.<sup>934</sup> Goralczyk remembered that he and his colleagues at the Historic Preservation Authority reluctantly supported the dubious staging of historicity because they felt that it was better than letting the buildings rot.

The party leaders called for anything historical and did not specify particular periods or images. Designers were expected to comply.<sup>935</sup> The remodeling followed the "Old Berlin theme," which had already infused the 1976 Politburo resolution. Sophienstraße now reflected the historiographic turn specified in the 1988 "Heritage Conception."<sup>936</sup> Like in East Berlin's other neo-historical developments the significance of history was no longer limited to the working classes but included feudal and bourgeois traditions. The focus was nevertheless still, as the "Heritage Conception" wrote, "the progressive part of our heritage."<sup>937</sup> Hence the authorities accentuated the Craftsmen's Association in number 18 rather than the sumptuous bourgeois residence on number 3, the small workshops on number 16 and 17 rather than Alfred Messel's swanky *Wertheim* department store on number 12-15 (built in 1903), the "colonist house" on number 11 that followed a mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century type for poor rural immigrants rather than on the baroque Sophien Church and the adjacent grave of 19<sup>th</sup>-century

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<sup>933</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>934</sup> Goralczyk remembered a directive from the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party. Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>935</sup> Peter Goralczyk, interview by author, Berlin, April 7, 2004.

<sup>936</sup> "Konzeption zur Pflege, Vermittlung, und Aneignung des historischen Erbes und der progressiven, humanistischen und revolutionären Traditionen in Berlin - Erbekonzeption" [Heritage Conception] worked out in 1988 and eventually passed by the *Magistrat* on September 13, 1988. LAB C Rep 121, 761.

<sup>937</sup> "Das Primat in unserem Erbeverständnis hat der progressive Teil des Erbes [zu sein], aus dem wir die historischen Traditionen unserer sozialistischen Gesellschaft ableiten." Excerpt from the *Erbekonzeption* (Heritage Conception) that was passed by the *Magistrat* in its resolution no. 444/88, passed on September 13, 1988, LAB C Rep 121, 761: 7.

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historian and aristocrat Leopold von Ranke.<sup>938</sup> According to the same pattern “historical” details were added: 16<sup>th</sup>-century-style metal guild of unclear historical origin, ornamented gas lanterns that recalled the early industrial age, and shop signs painted directly on the façade in the fashion of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A metal statue in the beer garden next to building number 2 was designed to remember a local working class celebrity from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the circus artist Water-Minna.<sup>939</sup> The theme of the street emblazoned on a huge painting on the gable wall of building number 16: *Handwerk und Tradition* (Craft and Tradition). Like Husemannstraße, Sophienstraße was fashioned as an entertainment and shopping district with historic flair. The newly incorporated small businesses included a pewterer, a clothes store, a straw artist, a wood carver, a potter, a hand weaver, a flute maker, a goldsmith, a baker, a puppet theatre, a local history museum and two bars with period interior from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In two “Old Berlin restaurants” – *Wein-und Spirituosenhandlung* on Sophienstraße 11 (now called *Sophien 11*) and *Sophieneck* on Große Hamburger Straße number 37 – the visitors could breathe the atmosphere of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, completed with a few specifically East German details such as waiters in black suits.<sup>940</sup> Both bars were open seven days a week and did not even close over the summer – a novelty in East Germany.<sup>941</sup> On Sophienstraße number 23, in one of the three newly erected buildings in the street, the administration of the city district of Mitte opened the *Heimatgeschichtliches Kabinett Mitte* (Local History Cabinet of the Mitte district), which presented local historic buildings and events such as the famous prewar cabaret *Wintergarten* on

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<sup>938</sup> See also Peter Gohlke, “Zur Rekonstruktion der Sophienstraße in Berlin,” *Architektur der DDR* no. 6 (1988): 9-15.

<sup>939</sup> Minna Schulze (1893-1959), better known as *Wassermanina* (Water-Minna), for decades lived on the second floor of the side wing on Sophienstraße number 30/31. Born as a washerwoman's daughter, she became famous at the Berlin Circus Busch with her artistic jumps into a small water basin from 27 meters height. The statue was designed by Kurt Hartwig and scheduled for inauguration in 1987, but never erected, allegedly because the city administration lacked the money for a fountain that was planned next to it. In 1993 it was put up in the winter quarters of Circus Busch. Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994): 33-34.

<sup>940</sup> Ekkehard Schwerk, “Zunftzeichen und alte Adresse der Arbeiterbewegung – Die restaurierte Sophienstraße in Ost-Berlin,” *Tagesspiegel* January 10, 1988.

<sup>941</sup> This was particularly praised by a West Berlin visitor. Kurt Geisler, “Ost-Berlin restauriert traditionsreichen Stadtteil,” *Berliner Morgenpost* May 17, 1987.

*Chapter 14: The Vindicated Historical Neighborhood – Husemannstraße and Sophienstraße*

Friedrichstraße.<sup>942</sup> In addition, every year the local government celebrated a “Historic Christmas Market” with gift stands and demonstrations of historic crafts.

West Berlin’s press reviewed Sophienstraße in a similarly sympathetic way as they had done with the other neo-historical developments. The *Volksblatt* praised the “nice guild signs” and the “richly decorated shop windows.”<sup>943</sup> The conservative *Berliner Morgenpost* acknowledged the successful “revitalization” of a dilapidating city district.<sup>944</sup> In another article two months later, it even admitted that Sophienstraße with its “Old Berlin atmosphere” had become “an almost friendly neighborhood.”<sup>945</sup> Only the liberal *Tagesspiegel* criticized that behind the renovated façades one still saw “the misery and rottenness” of the decaying backyards.<sup>946</sup> But nevertheless it commended the successful building of a lively historic neighborhood and conceded that also in West Berlin one would still find disconcerting ruptures between renovated and unrenovated buildings.

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<sup>942</sup> See Klaus Klöppel, “Handwerksbetriebe prägen Sophienstraße,” *Volksblatt* November 16, 1988.

<sup>943</sup> “hübsche Zunftzeichen... reich dekorierte Schaufenster” Klaus Klöppel, “Handwerksbetriebe prägen Sophienstraße,” *Volksblatt* November 16, 1988.

<sup>944</sup> Kurt Geisler, “Ost-Berlin restauriert traditionsreichen Stadtteil,” *Berliner Morgenpost* May 17, 1987.

<sup>945</sup> “Entstanden ist ein fast gemütlicher Kietz mit ‘Alt-Berliner Stimmung’” “‘Alt-Berliner Stimmung’ in der kunstvoll restaurierten Sophienstraße,” *Berliner Morgenpost* July 5, 1987.

<sup>946</sup> “das Morsche und Erbärmliche” Ekkehard Schwerk, “Zunftzeichen und alte Adresse der Arbeiterbewegung – Die restaurierte Sophienstraße in Ost-Berlin,” *Tagesspiegel* January 10, 1988.



Figure 99 and Figure 100: Historicizing shop-signs on Sophienstraße

It should be mentioned that like Husemannstraße and contrary to most other once prestigious architectural projects from the times of the GDR, Sophienstraße was soon accepted in reunified Berlin. Only during the economically difficult years immediately after reunification the old customers shunned the craft stores.<sup>947</sup> A few years later the street was back on the map of Berlin's commercialized historic neighborhoods – or, as the *Berliner Morgenpost* put it, “Sophienstraße... conserved its traditional image as a historic craftsmen's street.”<sup>948</sup> The toymaker and the straw artist were completed with a Whisky-and-Cigars Store and a photo gallery; the old-style restaurants needed only little retouching to please the West German tourists flocking to the area in the 1990s. The Historic Christmas Market continued to be an annual highlight for local businesses, and the puppet theatre continued to attract patrons of all ages. Most buildings were remodeled again and central heating was built in. The general concept of commercialized historic neighborhood nevertheless remained as successful as ever.

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<sup>947</sup> See Helga Pett, “In der einstigen Vorzeigegasse herrscht jetzt Stille,” *Tagesspiegel* October 19, 1991.

<sup>948</sup> “Die Sophienstraße im Herzen von Berlins Mitte hat sich ihr Traditionsimage als historische Handwerksgasse bewahrt.” Rebecca Elsässer, “350 Meter Kunst und Kommerz,” *Berliner Morgenpost* December 30, 1999.

## V. CONCLUSION

### Chapter 15: Faux Past

#### *History through the backdoor*

In an unprecedented way, the liberal middle classes of Berlin claim social and political legitimacy through the exegesis of historic residues on walls, façades, and sidewalks, and through a detailed knowledge of local history. Bricks and stones have become the condensers of a personalized historic continuum. For today's privileged groups, the fascination with the historic city is centered on the dilapidating brick walls, crumbling stucco ornaments, and corroded doorknobs of Berlin's past. They see "narrative" 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements as inherently superior to the "timeless" modernist developments, and venerate the histories of shopkeepers, factory workers, blacksmiths, and washerwomen who had once inhabited these old buildings. Their knowledge of a building's past has become a mark of distinction by which they claim authority over their place of residence. The mere fact that a Berlin tenement has seen over a hundred years of changing residents gives it a pedigree that cannot be claimed by a recently finished suburban home. In the present flexible society, the middle class declares local connectedness through the interpretation of micro-historic facts rather than genealogical constructs. The historic city, as invented during the 1970s and 1980s, constitutes the stage on which these strategies are performed.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is hard to imagine that the historicity of Berlin's residential buildings were ever *not* valued. In an unprecedented way, the liberal middle classes claim legitimacy through the exegesis of historic residues on walls, façades, and sidewalks, and through a detailed knowledge of local history. Bricks and stones have become the condensers of a personalized historic continuum. For today's privileged groups, the fascination with the historic city is centered on dilapidating brick walls, crumbling stucco ornaments, and corroded doorknobs. They see "narrative" 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements as inherently superior to the "timeless" modernist developments, and venerate the histories of shopkeepers, factory workers, blacksmiths and washerwomen who had once inhabited these old buildings. Their knowledge of a building's past has become a mark of distinction by which

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they claim legitimacy over their place of residence. The mere fact that a Berlin tenement has seen over a hundred years of changing residents gives it a pedigree that cannot be claimed by a recently finished suburban home. In the present flexible society where family ties are much less important than they used to be, the middle class declares local connectedness through the interpretation of micro-historic facts rather than genealogical constructs. The historic city, as invented during the 1970s and 1980s, constitutes the stage on which these strategies are performed.

The intellectual field in which this historic city is situated reaches beyond the borders of the German Democratic Republic and includes both capitalist and socialist societies. The case of East Berlin, however, is remarkable for its interplay of multiple forces under a seemingly omnipotent dictatorial regime. During the 1970s, a motley crew of institutions and associations advocated for narrative, neo-historical buildings: the Institute for Historic Preservation, the Architects Association, the *Kulturbund*, the Institute for Urban Design and Architecture at the Building Academy, groups of scholars at the architectural schools in Weimar and Dresden, and numerous concerned architects and designers in different city and district administrations. It would nevertheless be exaggerated to speak of a grassroots movement. None of these groups had direct influence on the Politburo's decisions. They nevertheless were able to secure niches for professional debate and the international exchange of ideas, which eventually allowed for a revised approach to urban design. It might remain forever speculative what personal motives drove the gerontocrats in the Politburo to take up these impulses and approve the projects that made the invented historic city. The fact that they were not part of one comprehensive plan, however, makes the enterprise no less consistent. The different political bodies – including the Politburo, the Ministry of Construction, the Berlin Office of Construction, and the local city district administration – were allies in their top-down approach to city design, their interest with architectural surfaces that instigate individual experience, and their concern with a generalized notion of “the past.”

Like the large-scale demolitions had done twenty years earlier, the historic city entered the political arena through the backdoor. There was no point of rupture at which the Politburo officially dismissed

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modernism and changed its policy towards a promotion of historicity. To the contrary, the key decisions that contributed to historicist urban design were all framed in different, apparently purely pragmatic terms. The Housing Program of 1973 was launched as a comprehensive solution to the housing shortage. The 1976 resolution for the development of East Berlin, which spawned the rebuilding of the Platz der Akademie, was construed as a measure of maintenance and public works. And the 1981 resolution that mandated construction in the inner city seemingly only attempted to save on costly new infrastructure on the periphery. Even the Schinkel exhibit at the Altes Museum in 1980, which condensed much of the popular debate on architectural heritage, at first glance was a display of cultural goods not that different from those the East German regime had been showing for decades. And yet a sophisticated theoretician of historic architecture such as Schinkel seemed the perfect choice to herald an epoch in which the past again became a matrix for architectural inquiry.

Political support for neo-historical projects in East Berlin was overall incoherent. In East Berlin, there was no such thing as an IBA, the famous West Berlin International Building Exhibit that in the 1980s spawned a plethora of publications and construction projects in relation to historic architecture. The historic city in East Berlin was fabricated by multiple agents, of which hardly anyone would openly acknowledge his support for the the historic city. The most powerful leaders in the GDR were definitely not vocal advocates for such a cause. Erich Honecker kept a low profile as promoter of urban design in general. His deputy Günter Mittag was a steadfast acolyte of modernism and repeatedly expressed his resentments against heritage workers and preservationists. Even construction official Ehrhardt Gißke, who was arguably one of the most influential supporters of historic building projects in East Berlin and the main responsible for the Platz der Akademie and Friedrichstraße projects, refrained from fashioning himself as a defender of neo-historical design. As a matter of fact his office sponsored modernist as much as neo-historical urban design. Both Manfred Prasser and Günter Stahn, the principal designers of the Platz der Akademie and the Nikolaiviertel development respectively, flatly rejected any connotation with historicism and postmodernism while at the same time designing columns, arbors, and façade ornaments. The “turn towards the historic city” was not perceived as such by those who witnessed and promoted it.

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Language – in the sense of word choice, rhetoric, and semantic context – played a twofold role in this process. On the one hand the description of the design process in ambiguous terms such as “reconstruction” or “life span” allowed an inherently conservative regime to reconsider its policy while simultaneously upholding the same principles in a seemingly unchanged way. On the other hand it blurred the relation between architects/policy makers and the object of their work by construing the process of urban design as fixed, natural, or unavoidable. In a similar way as modernist architects and urban planners had presented their design strategies as natural and organic, the protagonists of historic revival posited their work as self-evident. In their rhetoric, the small scale street plan of the Nikolaiviertel was the “natural answer to the demands of the site,” the ornamented façades on Platz der Akademie a reflection of the “square’s inherent logic.” In the architectural discourse of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s language was both shelter and veil.

### *The historic city, a modernist phenomenon*

The invention of the historic city in East Berlin’s center, which partially paralleled and partially relieved the construction of modernist satellite cities on the periphery, was in itself a deeply modernist enterprise. It can be told as a story of suspended images. At first there was a utopian vision of the future that had its own particularly strong imagery. In the end, a series of picture postcards of the past with extremely flexible meanings. Over several decades, the utopian ideal was negotiated with the daily needs of individual residents. The significance of concepts that originally described the utopian vision gradually shifted along with the terms that were utilized by designers and politicians. While it became increasingly difficult to describe a desirable urban environment in unambiguous terms, urban design was guided more and more by images of the past. This process was initiated under the socialist regime during the 1970s and 1980s. Its points of reference can nevertheless be found in an overarching discourse on modernism, rather than in socialist doctrine or the economic necessities of the socialist system. This explains the numerous parallels between the architectural development in East and West Berlin and also the persistence of neo-historical imagery after the collapse of the socialist regime.

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During the late 1950s and 1960s, urban design in East Berlin was deeply indebted to the modernist visionaries of the 1920s. Culminating with the construction of the *Hotel Stadt Berlin* and the Television Tower on Alexanderplatz, it reflected an image that had been a beacon for two generations of architects: the highrise tower, equipped with the latest technology, flooded with light and air; surrounded by open park spaces. For East German architects, this image constituted a *Leitbild* ("guiding image") – a pictorial tangibility of the principles of a desirable city. During the 1960s, it informed the "industrialization of the building trade" in the same way as the subsequent construction of the first large-scale housing developments. Here both living standards and sanitary conditions were considerably ameliorated than in the old neighborhoods. However, these tower-and-slab simultaneously faced numerous obstacles. They did not engender a "new way of life" that was decidedly different from that in the old neighborhoods. Their design was perceived as monotonous. Their construction, which often relied on the comprehensive demolition of existing tenements, challenged the national economy. And the relocation of the population destroyed social networks. Compared to the utopian vision, the reality of the new neighborhoods was disenchantingly lackluster.

During the 1970s, East German architects and scholars sought solutions to remove some of these shortcomings. They undertook studies on the perceptions of the city and investigated architectural meaning, to tackle the "monotony" of industrialized construction. Adopting a semiotic approach, they aimed to establish universally valid criteria for "communicative" and "characteristic" design. At the same time, they postulated that the visual appearance of built environments were after all insignificant. The most eminent East German theorists positioned themselves as functionalists in the tradition of Hannes Meyer, and stressed the importance of social context. According to them, the aims of architecture were to dissolve the separation between art and everyday life, thereby improving both; not simply concealing dreadful life with aesthetically pleasing façades. In this respect, they supported the "industrialization of the building trade." This entailed the related centralist, top-down planning strategies as the only means of pursuing the welfare of the citizens.

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This position was inherently contradictory. On the one hand, many functionalists related the unsatisfactory reality of the tower-and-slab developments predominantly to formal shortcomings, since they approved of the social and functional programs of these neighborhoods and of the way they were implemented. Fundamental critique was not allowed under the East German regime. On the other hand, they insisted on the primacy of social and functional programs and therefore had a penchant to neglect visualizations of a desirable urban environment. The difficulty to formulate the city in unambiguous terms was a result of this contradiction. The vision of the modernist city was powerfully present in the minds of East German designers. Simultaneously, that or any other image was considered insignificant in the creation of desirable urban environments. As a result, images became more and more dissociated from functions.

Urban design proposals for East Berlin's center since the early 1970s reflected this contradiction. They centered on the formal characteristics of an urban ensemble and its capacity to facilitate individual experiences. The notion of *Erlebnis*, which translates as "event" or "positive experience," became a buzzword for the design proposals of the time. The "*Erlebnis* city" was one of surface. It was a blank canvas, waiting to be filled with an image. Its characteristics can be read from Günter Stahn's 1971 proposal for the redesigning of the Friedrichstraße. They reappeared in his design of the Nikolaiviertel. They were also employed by various other designers who worked out the final plans for the Friedrichstraße and various other neo-historical developments in the 1980s. Although the "*Erlebnis* city" was designed for a socialist system, in many respects it resembled the shopping and entertainment spaces built in capitalist countries at the time. It promised a consumer-oriented, aesthetically pleasing environment that would, on the one hand, respond to the inhabitants' desire for entertainment, and on the other hand channel their behavior. Every detail of this environment was cautiously styled and carefully programmed in order to increase both communication and consumption. It was in line with the principles of the Honecker era. Standards of living were to be raised, allowing for a certain degree of consumerism within the socialist state. Given East Berlin's position as a showcase window to the capitalist West, the proposals for the "*Erlebnis* city" were not only targeted towards East German citizens, but also specifically towards capitalist visitors. They were

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influenced by and measured against ideas from Western countries. At the same time, the “*Erlebnis city*” in East Berlin was dissociated from the context of profit maximizing which at the time inspired similar design in Western countries.

This new approach to urban design commenced without specific references to historical architecture. East Berlin examples only later became invested with the insignia of the historic city. The first plans for the Friedrichstraße, including Stahn’s proposal, were anything but a reconstruction of pre-war urban environments. Further the preservation of tenements neighborhoods around Animplatz and Arkonaplatz, as envisioned by East Berlin’s head planner Günter Peters, did not derive from a concern for historical architecture. It was originally only conceived to defer comprehensive demolition and modernist redesign for another thirty years. Even Günter Stahn’s award-winning proposal for the *Nikolaiviertel*, in its original form, featured numerous steel-and-glass façades that had little in common with the pre-war perimeter block buildings and less with the original medieval nucleus; only later it became the re-invented old town that it is now. In all these cases, the modernist urban approach was suspended rather than abandoned. This explains why designers and politicians in retrospect did not perceive the neo-historical *Nikolaiviertel* all too differently from the modernist Palace of the Republic that was erected on the opposite bank of the Spree River eight years earlier. In this sense, the evolution of urban design in East Berlin during the 1970s and 1980s was not a break with modernism and a return to the historic city. Instead, Modernism shifted to a different level and, as a result, was gradually reversed and clad with real and invented images of the past.

### *Collapsing history into an image of “the past”*

The urban designers of the 1980s rejected the immediate past just as their predecessors did in the 1960s. This past was nevertheless construed differently than in the prior decades. Before 1980, the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture on Friedrichstraße and elsewhere had represented the social conditions that modernism – especially in its socialist version – attempted to overcome. The tenements painfully reminded them that their promises were left still unfulfilled. In the 1980s, late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements ceased to represent the disagreeable social conditions of the present; they became unambiguous

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signifiers of the past. This change in perception was not accidental. In the early 1970s, East Germany, along with its neighboring Western states, celebrated the most successful years of its postwar history with respect to social security and individual prosperity. At the same time, private businesses had largely dissipated and the building industry was successfully "industrialized". A new generation had grown up without memories of the Wilhelmine period, the Weimar Republic, or the Nazi era. The temporal distance facilitated the reinterpretation of the once despised buildings. With decades of temporal distance from misery and overcrowding, ornamental façades could now be seen as a mark of technical mastery rather than one of deception. Dense buildings were seen as a signifier of community and familiar spaces rather than one of oppression and disenfranchisement. And the existence of buildings from different periods on the same block was no longer viewed as a sign of underdevelopment, rather one of progression and historical continuity. In this context, Erich Honecker's 1973 Housing Program, which proliferated the mass-production of prefabricated concrete blocks on East Berlin's periphery, is sometimes erroneously construed as the deathblow to the historic neighborhoods. The contrary is actually true. Not only did the Housing Program explicitly include the renovation of historic tenements, yet it also supplied a gradual alleviation of the housing shortage. The decrease of overcrowding in East Berlin's tenements, as facilitated by the Housing Program, opened the possibility for a different take on the old buildings.

Redesigning East Berlin's center with prefabricated elements of dubious historic origin was quite different from earlier examples of historicism. Renaissance and neoclassical architecture made use of Greek and Roman forms to reference ideas and values associated with antiquity. Mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century German theorists called for a return to the Romanesque style as they deemed it distinctly German. Even the Stalinist architects in East Germany in the 1950s invoked Schinkel in reference to a period of national strength. One might claim that the Friedrichstraße and the Husemannstraße are references to Berlin's Golden Era at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the city was the most important European metropolis after London and Paris. In the case of the *Nikolaiviertel*, these references were completely blurred. The historicity was a generic one in the *Nikolaiviertel*, and to a lesser degree also at Platz der Akademie and Sophienstraße. The architect of the *Nikolaiviertel* Günter Stahn was very much aware of

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this fact, claiming that his design was not historicist, since it did not reproduce one specific historic form and was not connected to one specific historic period. Gothic gables are put next to 17<sup>th</sup> century guild signs, 18<sup>th</sup> century façade ornaments to 19<sup>th</sup> century shop signs. At the same time, Berlin's late 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements were included into a broad overarching historic category. The distinction between late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings and the typologically very different dwellings from earlier centuries – until the 1960s still a frequently repeated opposition – gradually faded in the 1970s, when any pre-modernist building came to be lumped together as *Altbauten* (old buildings). Avoiding favoring one particular epoch, East German officials mentioned tenements in one breath with baroque residences and gothic half-timbered houses. In their presentation of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary projects, the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Husemannstraße coalesced with the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sophienstraße and the pseudo-medieval *Nikolaiviertel* to a generic image of "Old Berlin." East Berlin's historicizing architecture was not, like 19<sup>th</sup>-century historicism, aimed at defending good traditions against bad ones, but a notion of the historic city against the modernist one. In their entirety, the images were and still are commonly understood. To date, most visitors immediately agree that the *Nikolaiviertel* is a "historic neighborhood." Giving this appearance, however, it relies on a deeply modernist approach. It presents the past as the generic embodiment of anything that is not modernist, positioning past and present in opposition to one another. In this sense, the *Nikolaiviertel* is as a-historical as the steel-and-glass façade of the Palace of the Republic: it rejects the notion of history as a continuous development.

Through the notion of "the past" the value of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements became as firmly acknowledged as that of gothic cathedrals and baroque castles. At the same time the need for modernization continued. Also during the 1980s few people defended coal stoves and backyard toilets on the basis that they reflected the spirit of the good old days. The buildings were nevertheless to be preserved at all costs. The undisputed value of the old in and of itself was not a function of material qualities. It did not originate from the excellent woodwork and flooring in most tenements, nor was it diminished by the mostly shoddy painting and insufficient insulation. It also left no space for discussions on aesthetics. Conceiving historicity as a value as such, since the 1980s no columnist or architectural critic did ever condemn the tastelessness of the decorated façades and the falseness of the marble imitations in entrances and stairwells. Reminders of the past became sacrosanct. Today

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there are even indications that the limits of what is venerated as historical are pushed more and more towards the present. It might only be a question of a few years until even the prefabricated concrete slab buildings become the object of collective nostalgia. The interest in the German Democratic Republic is currently expressed in the numerous TV shows that proliferate what German media call *Ostalgie* – the feeling that made *Ostdeutschland* (East Germany) the subject of collective *Nostalgie* (nostalgia). One can only assume that the increasingly positive images of East German things will soon be extended to the mass-produced residential buildings of the vanished Farmers' and Workers' State. It is likely that this will first apply in the cases where they are situated in favorable locations or if substantial structural modifications remove their shortcomings without taking away their advantages.<sup>949</sup>

The undifferentiated reference to an architectural past was eased by the fact that on an international scale, century-old neighborhoods have become rare. Not only in New York, London, or Moscow but also in many East German cities 19<sup>th</sup>-century districts comprise only tiny portions of the urban agglomeration. Historical buildings are therefore scarce goods. The relatively small size of the Old Towns was nevertheless contrasted by a disproportionally high significance for the public image of these cities. In this sense Berlin is untypical. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when urban centers all over the world exploded, Berlin's population grew only marginally – the comparison with other cities also made East Berliners feel the exclusiveness of their historic neighborhoods. They became aware of the exceptional fact that despite wartime destruction and postwar demolitions, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhoods still comprised a much larger share of the urban area than in other major

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<sup>949</sup> An example is the *Ahrensfelder Terrassen* (Ahrensfelde Terraces) project in the peripheral Marzahn district, which was initiated in 2002. Close to a dozen eleven-story slab buildings the upper seven stories were removed, and the remaining apartments were given individually designed exterior stairways and roof terraces. The new buildings look much friendlier than the socialist blocks and provide a higher standard of living. However, the modular variation of a prefabricated program is still visible; remainders from the original East German design include the balconies, the entrances, and the situation in a quiet, green, luminous and at the same time urban area with good public transit and communal facilities. Like the modernization of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century tenements in the 1980s and 1990s, also the *Ahrensfelder Terrassen* project was built with generous subsidies from the local government.

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cities. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Berlin is one of the few capitals worldwide where entire historic neighborhoods have been spared from gentrification. Their number, however, is diminishing.

During the 1970s, the socialist regime's authority over a present that was allegedly predetermined by historical progress was waning. At the same time "the past" was approached on heterogeneous individual routes. The inhabitant-oriented view on the city, as supported by East German social scientists, was paralleled by a personalized approach to the memories connected with old buildings. Since East German journalist Heinz Knobloch started his investigations in the late 1970s, small-scale histories of the tenement districts became increasingly popular among both scholars and popular authors and have remained ever since. Research was done street by street and house by house, exploring the past of Berlin's central districts at a micro-level. Most publications combine historic documents and interviews with former residents. Their focus is not on kings and conquests, but on the daily chores of fishmongers, tinkers, backyard blacksmiths, and innkeepers that once inhabited these buildings. They prominently feature, but are not limited to the working class; they devote particular attention to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, yet also extend beyond these boundaries. They involve the fate of Nazi victims, but also of "ordinary people." The new pop historians do not attempt to blend out big names and great historic events, yet look at them through the eyes of undistinguished observers, rooting them in the streets and buildings that to date stand witness to them. The desire to integrate local history into present everyday life followed a conviction that had already been held in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1875 it emblazons on the coat of arms of the *Verein für die Geschichte Berlins* (History of Berlin Association), Berlin's oldest historic association, which once had its headquarters in the German Church on Platz der Akademie/Gendarmenmarkt, and which to date organizes tours and exhibits: *Was du erforschet, hast du mit erlebt* (That what you have researched, you have also experienced). The motto of the association provides a clue to the understanding of a peculiar impulse, which since the 19<sup>th</sup> century has motivated members of Berlin's privileged classes to explore of a vanished world- that is both familiar and exotic to them, both part of their own culture and a revelation of a mysterious other. What in East Germany appeared to be a method of sophisticated resistance against the standard group-oriented socialist historiography had a

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significance well beyond the socialist context. Micro-historians and hobby researchers felt their work enabled them to share the personal adventures of their historic subjects. The complex history of *Erlebnis* in German intellectual history has already been mentioned; the idea that through historic knowledge one can take part in this unique subjective experience of another person constitutes another aspect of the invented historic city.

### *Suspending the ideology of constant renewal*

The standard account of East German construction policy – held by numerous former officials – insists that the socialist economy could not afford further demolitions and therefore they were stopped. This concept is flawed in several ways. First, it is hard to verify the validity of East German financial calculations. In a system where both the prices of materials and salaries are fixed by the state, cost-benefit analyses were to a certain degree arbitrary; so were the cost estimates of demolition and rebuilding as opposed to renovation and the numerous calculations that omitted the cost for infrastructure. Second, a purely economic explanation fails to elucidate why the demolitions were instigated in first place. In the 1960s, the urge to demolish the great majority of East Berlin's urban fabric for being "obsolete" defied economic necessities. It also did not favor any discernible social group. Contrary to the situation of 1960s West Berlin, there were no powerful quasi-corporate building cooperatives who profited from the commissions for large-scale demolitions and subsequent rebuilding. Socialist bureaucrats nevertheless equaled their Western colleagues in their belief in obsolescence and the need for large-scale demolition and supported their convictions through meticulous scientific calculations. This was the argument to end all arguments in a political system that claimed to be the result of objective scientificity. It is thus fair to say that the demolitions in the 1960s and early 1970s were predominantly driven by ideology – not by socialist dogmas, but by a modernist ideology of comprehensive renewal. In both socialist and capitalist countries this ideology was firmly acknowledged in the 1950s and 1960s. When it became clear in the 1970s that the renewal fell short of the expectations the ideology was gradually suspended. The shift in construction policy was a consequence of this ideological change.

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There was no such thing as socialist architecture or urban design in the sense of a formal or programmatic specificity. East and West Berlin have to be seen in a common cultural context. One has to amplify the limited view of many German historians during the Cold War who merely focused on the social and political differences in both German states. The intellectual development in East Germany of the 1980s paralleled that in the West. Both in East and West Berlin, the paradigm change developed over the course of 20 years. In West Berlin, the first renovations began around 1970 with a significant degree of input from the East. The example of the Arnimplatz in East Berlin strengthened the position of West Berlin tenement defenders by showing that renovation and modernization of an entire tenement neighborhood was in fact possible. It took fifteen years of fierce political struggle until the new paradigm was established and the West Berlin government finally halted demolitions of old buildings. In East Berlin the process was similarly slow. The government's belief in ceasing the demolitions was declared in the anti-demolition law of 1979. Nevertheless demolition was not completely stopped and the bulk of construction activities still followed the modernist urban design concepts of the 1960s. However, in the 1980s, demolitions significantly diminished. Eventually, the forces in favor of preservation gained power in the GDR to the extent that the historic city was used for official state representation. This is not to say that on a surface level economic aspects did not play a role in the decision to abandon the demolition policy in East Berlin. Both interviews with former construction officials and publications at the time confirm that by the 1970s old buildings were perceived as an asset not to be wasted by a national economy, especially not by one constantly troubled by need and shortages. However, financial arguments were construed very differently at different points in time; demolitions had been justified by economic necessity. Thus once neighborhoods were also viewed as social environments and once the historicity of tenements became a value, the need to preserve them was also supported by economic calculations. The course of construction policy in the late phase of the German Democratic Republic was thus not a function of the economic situation, yet a consequence of an increasing focus on social environments and a gradually evolving image of the historic city.

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### *Historicism and social inequality*

During the last two decades of the German Democratic Republic, East German designers transcended modernism in their own peculiar way and engaged in a complex appropriation and interpretation of history. They actively shaped a trend, which at the time became palpable in many industrialized nations. Several characteristics that played out in reunified Berlin during the 1990s were in fact anticipated by the socialist regime ten years earlier: the increasing acceptance of social inequality as the foundation of urban design policy, the renaissance of the city center, and the commercialization of public space. In this respect, the historic city – both original and reconstructed – was invented and instrumentalized for present needs and desires.

These invented historic neighborhoods are now prime locations for upscale housing and businesses. After the end of the German Democratic Republic, West German architects and politicians continued to redesign these areas by means of so-called “Critical Reconstruction.” The post-reunification design of Friedrichstraße – like that of most other central districts - was carried out without the participation of a single East German architect, planner, or policy-maker. It nevertheless perfectly matched the socialist neo-historical façades that had been built on the adjacent Platz der Akademie a decade earlier. Some of the trendiest areas in reunified Berlin, including Platz der Akademie/Gendarmenmarkt, the *Spandauer Vorstadt* north of Sophienstraße, and the Kollwitzplatz neighborhood in the Prenzlauer Berg district had already become popular under the socialist regime. The renaissance and subsequent gentrification of these areas began under East German rule and was not, as many critics claim, initiated by West German policy makers following reunification. Unlike the East Berlin design projects of the 1960s, the neo-traditional construction projects on Friedrichstraße, in the *Nikolaiviertel*, and elsewhere were designed for a social and political elite. Even prior to these proposals it was a privilege to be assigned an apartment in a newly constructed building. Yet the policies of the 1960s and 1970s intended to provide similar standards of living for everyone. In the 1980s, East German increasingly blatantly allocated new comfortable apartments catered only to selected citizens. Had the spacious penthouse apartments under the roofs of Friedrichstraße ever been

### *Conclusion*

finished, they would have perfectly matched the surrounding *Interhotels*. The average East German had no access to these hotels, nor to the state-operated *Intershops*, where privileged citizens with West German currency could buy everything the socialist economy was unable to produce. Although social differences in the GDR were much smaller than in most capitalist societies, the plans for the Friedrichstraße and the reconstruction of the *Nikolaiviertel* were not egalitarian attempts. On the contrary, they accepted social polarization and rendered this explicit in the building designs. Within the context of a nominally socialist system, East German rulers supported a development, which at the time could be observed in many capitalist cities: the redevelopment of the city center for the privileged classes based on a commodification of a real and imagined history.

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## e. Picture Credits

Title page: author [façade detail of the building Charlottenstraße 53-54 on Platz der Akademie/  
Gendarmenmarkt]  
Figure 1: author  
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Figure 3: Gerhard Krenz, *Architektur zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Ein Vierteljahrhundert  
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Figure 21: *Architektur der DDR* no. 9 (1983): 524 [conception of the Büro für Städtebau for the façade  
design of the building Palisadenstraße number 58, no reference to the original author]  
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Figure 23: author's map [construction in the *Spandauer Vorstadt*].

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## APPENDIX: CONSTRUCTION IN EAST BERLIN 1970-1990

1971 (May 3) Erich Honecker is appointed First Secretary of the Central Committee and Head of State of the German Democratic Republic, succeeding Walter Ulbricht.

1971 Konrad Naumann is appointed First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party, succeeding Paul Verner.

1971 (June 15-19) 8<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party. Honecker announces that he will tackle the Housing Question.

1971 A GDR-wide count of apartments shows that despite continuous construction efforts the increase in dwelling space is low, partly due to the ongoing demolition of old buildings. Only 20 percent of East Germany's apartments were built after the Second World War.

1971 (December) Completion of the first 74 apartments in the remodeling of the Arkonaplatz neighborhood in the Mitte district. Approximately 900 apartments are renovated by 1984. Plans had been prepared since 1968, construction started in 1970.

1972 (May 9) The *Magistrat* decides upon the modernization of the Arnimplatz area, the first large-scale remodeling of a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century neighborhood. The resolution also lays out plans for the demolition and modernist rebuilding of large portions of the Prenzlauer Berg district in the following decades, which is not carried out. Construction on Arnimplatz starts on January 1, 1973. By 1976, 1500 apartments are remodeled and fitted out with toilets inside the apartments and bathrooms.

1972 (November) Berlin District Director of Construction Günter Peters completes his doctoral thesis on urban renewal. In accordance with widely held convictions, he stresses the appropriateness of tenement modernization, at the same time pointing out that such measures can only delay comprehensive demolition. For him, it is inevitable that both physical and "moral depreciation" will eventually result in the end of a building's "life span."

1973 Chief Architect Joachim Näther falls from grace and is replaced by Roland Korn.

1973 (October 2) Presentation of the Housing Program on the 10<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Central Committee, following a Politburo resolution six months earlier. By 1990, in the entire GDR three million apartments are to be newly constructed or "produced" through modernization of existing buildings.

1973-1976 Construction of the Palace of the Republic on Marx-Engels-Platz (now Schlossplatz) on the site formerly occupied by the Royal Palace, which was damaged in the Second World War and blown up in 1950. The building is inaugurated on April 25, 1976.

1974 Incorporation of the Department of Special Projects in the context of the construction of the Palace of the Republic. The office, which is later renamed General Office of Construction at the Ministry of Construction is led by Ehrhardt Gißke. It supervises the most prestigious construction projects, including the developments on Friedrichstraße, on Platz der Akademie, and in the *Nikolaiviertel*.

1975 European Year of Historic Preservation, proclaimed by the Council of Europe, and celebrated with conferences and exhibits in numerous Western European countries. Although the GDR does not officially participate in the celebrations, preservation becomes increasingly popular.

1975 Construction starts on the Berlin Cathedral. The church on Marx-Engels-Platz (now Schlossplatz) was built in 1894 and damaged in the Second World War. The reconstruction, which is finished by 1983, is mainly financed by the West German government and the West German Protestant Church. The project was preceded by a harsh debate over the aesthetic quality of the neo-baroque building.

1975 (June 19) Law for the Protection of Historic Monuments. Although limited in its influence, it nevertheless documents an increasing awareness of historic preservation. Until 1979, GDR-wide listing of protected monuments is passed, which completes the already existing lists at the township and regional levels.

1975 (February 25) The Politburo decides the development of the Marzahn district on the eastern periphery of the city. Construction starts in 1977. Highrise residential buildings, schools, daycare centers, and supermarkets are constructed from prefab concrete slabs. Subsequently Marzahn becomes the largest of East Berlin's satellite cities, followed by Hellersdorf (started in 1981) and Hohenschönhausen (started in 1982). In 1989, approximately 300,000 of East Berlin's 1.3 million inhabitants live in these three "slab developments."

1976 (February 3) The Politburo passes the resolution "Tasks for the Development of the Capital of the GDR, Berlin, until 1990." It mandates the rebuilding of the Friedrichstraße, the Platz der Akademie (Gendarmenmarkt), the Sophienstraße, and numerous other construction projects. It also mandates the "production" of 300,000 apartments in East Berlin by 1990 through both remodeling and new construction.

1977 (June 3) The Association for Historic Preservation is founded.

1979 East Berlin journalist Heinz Knobloch (1926-2003) publishes *Herr Moses in Berlin*, a biography of the Jewish 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. The book pioneers what Knobloch calls "history to be touched." In his over fifty extremely popular books Knobloch investigates everyday history and connects it to vestiges of the past in Berlin's urban fabric. His approach shaped a trend that became increasingly important among both academics and the general public.

1979 Construction starts on Platz der Akademie. Most buildings on the square, including Schinkel's Playhouse and the baroque French and German Churches, had been destroyed in the Second World War. The Playhouse is reconstructed as a Concert House and inaugurated on October 1, 1984; the French Church is reopened on April 7, 1983. The reconstruction of the German Church starts in 1984 and is only finished in 1996. Around the square, prefab buildings with historicizing façades are erected under the direction of architect Manfred Prasser.

1979 *Nikolaiviertel* architectural competition. The first prize is awarded to a collective led by architect Günter Stahn.

1979 (September 18) Demolition of old buildings is severely restricted. A legal provision generally forbids taking down buildings qualified as inhabitable. Exceptions have to be permitted by the building authority. The provision is further enhanced in 1982; now all demolition permits have to be approved by the Ministry of Construction. Despite these restrictions, however, there are still cases of redevelopment through demolition and new construction.

1980 Re-erection of the equestrian statue of Prussian King Friedrich II. It was taken down for political reasons in the 1950s and now stands again on its old location on the boulevard Unter den Linden. On March 26, 1981, also the bronze statue of general Count Karl vom Stein is re-erected on the same boulevard. Other monuments follow.

1980 (October to March 1981) Karl Friedrich Schinkel exhibit at the Altes Museum on the occasion of the architect's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. The exhibit is very popular (approximately 200,000 visitors) and is shown in Hamburg in the following year. Subsequently, Schinkel's Friedrichswerder Church is rebuilt from ruins and inaugurated in 1984 as a Schinkel Museum.

1981 Construction starts in the *Nikolaiviertel*. The project is largely completed by 1987. A large portion of the *Nikolaiviertel* is constructed from prefabricated parts with historicizing façades. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century Nikolai Church, which was destroyed in the Second World War, is rebuilt. The new *Nikolaiviertel* also contains replicas of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Court Loggia, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Nussbaum Inn, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ephraim Palace, and a number of baroque residences.

1981 (April 11-16) The resolution "Essentials for the Socialist Development of Urban Design and Architecture" is passed in the context of the 10<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Socialist Unity Party. It mandates an increasing focus on construction in the inner city and stresses the positive emotional effect of historical neighborhoods.

1981 Citizen protest against the demolition of the gasometers on Greifswalder Straße in the Prenzlauer Berg district. Despite the demonstrations, the buildings are demolished; on the site the tower-and-slab development Ernst-Thälmann-Park is built from 1983-1987. In the following years, numerous Prenzlauer Berg residents bypass the state bureaucracy and remodel their old apartments and backyards.

1981 (October) On a seminar in Erfurt organized by the Architects Association and the Artists Association architectural critic Bruno Flierl calls for a democratization of the construction industry and a strengthening of local decision-making competences. The talk is published seven months later and rouses a scandal. Flierl, who at the time was East Germany's most popular architectural critic, loses his position and is barred from most public activities.

1981 Construction starts on Friedrichstraße. Milestones are the House of Soviet Sciences and Culture (completed in 1984), the entertainment hall Friedrichstadt Palace (completed in 1984), the *Grand Hotel* (completed in 1987) and the residential and entertainment complex *Spreeterrassen* (completed in 1987). The entire project, however, remained unfinished by 1989; numerous shells are subsequently demolished.

1983 The January issue of the design magazine *Form und Zweck* creates a scandal. The magazine openly criticizes the official construction policy and calls for increasing participation of residents in the planning process. It also celebrates the artist life in East Berlin's tenement district Prenzlauer Berg. The authors of the respective articles and editor-in-chief Hein Köster either lose their jobs or are severely threatened.

1983-1987 Remodeling of the Sophienstraße neighborhood in the Mitte district with period shops and historicizing façade elements.

1984-1987 Remodeling of the Husemannstraße neighborhood in the Prenzlauer Berg district as an open-air museum for the living conditions around 1900. Like the Sophienstraße, it includes period shops and restaurants.

1984 (February 12) On the 15<sup>th</sup> District Delegates Conference Erich Honecker surprisingly announces an increase of apartment construction in East Berlin from 10,000 per year to 20,000 per year. The new apartments are predominantly built in the inner city (perimeter block buildings with formal references to historical tenements).

*Appendix: Construction in East Berlin 1970-1990*

1984-1987 Construction in the *Spandauer Vorstadt* neighborhood in the Mitte district. Since the 1960s, the area had been scheduled for comprehensive demolition and rebuilding. It is now preserved and built up with perimeter block buildings that fill the gaps between the old residences.

1984 (May 12-17) Meeting of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Rostock and Dresden.

1987 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin. The event is celebrated separately in both halves of the city. Important events in East Berlin include the re-opening of the Bode Museum on Museum Island (January 7), the opening of the "Museum Berlin Workers Life Around 1900" on Husemannstraße (April 30), the inauguration of the Nikolai Church and the Ephraim Palace in the *Nikolaiviertel* (May 14 and 19), the Building Exhibit at the Dynamo Sports Hall in Hohenschönhausen (May-August), the international meeting of mayors (June 1-5), the Historic Parade and the Historical Market in and around the *Nikolaiviertel* (July 4/5), the visit of West Berlin mayor Eberhard Diepgen (October 22), and the act of state in the Palace of the Republic (October 23).

1988 Citizen protest on Rykestraße in the Prenzlauer Berg district. The residents succeed in preventing the demolition of their neighborhood. First Secretary of the Berlin District Office of the Socialist Unity Party Günter Schabowski gives in after conversations with community activists and approves their remodeling plan, which preserves most of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings.

1988 (October 12) Erich Honecker officially inaugurates what was allegedly the three millionth apartment that was built or remodeled in East Germany since 1971. In fact, the number of completed apartments approximates only two million.

1989 (Summer) Nation-wide demonstrations call for reforms.

1989 (October 18) Erich Honecker resigns under pressure. His successor is Egon Krenz.

1989 (November 9) Opening of the Berlin Wall.

1990 (March 18) First free elections in the German Democratic Republic. The conservative Lothar de Maizière is elected Prime Minister.

1990 (October 3) German reunification.