(Re)Presentation of "the" past in Berlin-Mitte after German Reunification, and its Implications for Cultural Production through Appropriation of Space

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Abstract

This paper examines the appropriation of space for cultural production in Berlin's central district Mitte in the years directly after German reunification (approximately 1990-1994) and suggests an explanatory model for the intensity of and motivations behind these changes. The research conducted for this paper used interviews, discourse analysis and historical research to identify three main impulses that guided spatial changes in Berlin's central district Mitte directly after reunification: the divergent post-war development of the two Germanys, the political and structural aspects of reunification, and the moving of the German capital back to Berlin after 40 years in Bonn. The author posits that these changes represent not only "simple" physical and symbolic appropriation, but also a proxy for the reinterpretation of the German national narrative after 1990. In the conclusion, the author discusses the role of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("coming to grips with the past") and divided development as pivotal to the spatial developments in Berlin's central district after reunification.

Keywords: Berlin, Critical reconstruction, Symbolic capital, Street names, Cold War, *Vergangenheitsbew ä ltigung*

Introduction

One could say that nearly nothing that we encounter in the built environment is arbitrary. The street that we drive on to work was laid out by street planners, the name chosen by a panel of experts. The buildings to either side are the carefully selected work of architects working under the guidelines of urban planners. The name of the city, the zoning of the districts, right down to the type and arrangement of street trees, everything that we see or experience in the urban landscape represents a human decision.

Since the beginning of time, humans have shaped their environment to suit their needs and tastes. As the necessities of shelter and community were sated, aesthetic considerations began to take hold. A house was no longer "just" a house, but the dwelling of a commoner, a chief, or a priest. The social differences of the residents were transcribed onto the built form. Similarly, the purpose of the different buildings determined their form. This originated with purely structural necessities, for example the different physical requirements of a house, a barn and a marketplace. However, certain buildings and built space forms were differentiated based not on structural necessities but rather to emphasize their cultural importance. This is above all the case in religious and government buildings. The emphasizing of some buildings and places over others determines and displays a cultural power gradient. In the words of Foucault, "both architectural and urban planning, both designs and ordinary buildings, offer privileged instances for understanding how power operates" (qtd. in Guy 77).

In the industrial and post-industrial world, we imbue spaces with cultural meaning as a way of highlighting this information; naming a fountain after a famous general is a way of honoring this person. It also tells us about the value system of the culture in which the fountain is located. It tells us that this general was, for those in power at the time of commemoration, more important than the local freedom fighter, the leading feminist, the last president, or any number of other possible candidates.

This process becomes even more controversial when one considers the situation in contested landscapes, for example colonies, war zones, and newly-acquired territories. The changing of names, removal of monuments, and adoption of new aesthetic styles represent in these cases the spatial expression of the new hegemony's cultural dominance.

Much research has been conducted about the active processes of cultural appropriation in Eastern Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This research project investigates the subtle and extremely potent changes in symbolic capital in post-socialist context in Berlin, specifically physical, symbolic and discursive *changes in Mitte since the fall of the Berlin Wall. As* "arguments about buildings and squares are inevitably arguments about history and identity" (Ladd 61), an investigation of these changes intends to shed light on expressions of identity in reunified Berlin and Germany.

The Research Project

The results outlined in this paper are part of a larger research project entitled "Urban development paradigms in post-reunification East Berlin, a grounded theory approach". As implied in the title, the project relies on the grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss), and employed a mixed-methods approach including demographic data analysis, interviews, historical research and discourse analysis.

The selection, portrayal and canonization of a selective historical narrative form a discursive practice set in motion by one or more powerful actors and carried on by other lesser distributors (Altrock et al.). Therefore, research methods such as discourse analysis and interviews are particularly well-suited to the answering of such questions. The author has conducted 21 30- to 90-minute interviews with renter advocacy groups, immigration delegates, urban researchers, and urban planning officials, and undertaken extensive research of planning documents, newspaper articles and academic literature.

Space as a Political and Symbolic Good

According to Altrock et al, a symbolic place is "a physical space that possesses a surplus of significance that is not directly connected to its physical appearance" (7). This significance is called "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu), and, i *n contrast to the tangible characteristics of a space, is not transmitted through objective observation of the space but rather through the examination of the space in its cultural and political context. The ascription of symbolic capital can take place either*

formally or informally, intentionally or spontaneously. S ymbolic spaces can possess a range of meanings and values as wide as that of the culture in which they are contextually embedded (Altrock et al.). Indeed, this is the very aspect of symbolic spaces that makes them so fascinating; their reflection of the values of society, officially condoned, egregiously ignored, and/or surreptitiously pursued.

Officially-sanctioned symbolic spaces mass-produce traditions by legitimizing the hegemonic worldview (Hobsbawm; Azaryahu, "German Reunification"); "from this perspective urban identity becomes a product of deliberate selection processes by urban elites and governments in order to create the intended narrative or story" (Tölle 349). This is particularly important where the tradition or worldview is under debate, for example in times of revolution and radical change (Hobsbawm; De Soto; Azaryahu, "German Reunification"; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu). The commemoration of space through the naming of places and consecration of memorials, as well as the de-commemoration of space through the replacement of existing names and the removal of existing monuments, represents an ideological domination through spatial domination (De Soto; Azaryahu, "German Reunification"; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu), hearkening back to Lefebvre's claim that "one of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space" (De Soto 33).

These acts select an appropriate version of historical events to portray as "the" past by selecting from among the many possible historical discourses (Wodak). In this respect, "the" past is a historical narrative: a subjective selection, a politicized ideology, and a discursive process. The inculcation of these ideologies into the landscape makes them ordinary, even banal, and allows the politicized historical narrative to become part of the 'natural order' through "a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition" (Hobsbawm 4). In this way, official symbolic spaces say just as much about what should be remembered as what should be ignored (Altrock et al.).

Naming and describing, in the formal sense, define the structure that the social world (may) have (Bourdieu). Therefore, sanctioned, officially recognized, and condoned symbolic spaces serve in the construction of social reality through their establishment of a selected history at the cost of all other possible realities (Bourdieu; Altrock et al.); "...the past serves and legitimizes open political

goals, or supports a specific genealogical or teleological representation of history or simply reinforces the dominant political culture" (De Soto 45). Indeed, the selection of one history at the cost of all others underlines the legitimacy of the dominant cultural group and simultaneously the illegitimacy of all other groups and viewpoints; "The results of these ... struggles have a direct bearing on whose vision of 'reality' will appear to matter socially, since landscapes are not just the products of social power but also tools or resources for achieving it" (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 462–463).

The topographic ascription of symbolic capital is therefore an act of power through which some groups have the authority to name while others do not (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu). In this respect, place-making can be seen as an act of dominance (Bourdieu) through the topographical inscription of a selected past, and the resulting canonization and normalization of the hegemonic political power (Azaryahu, "German Reunification"; Azaryahu, "Critical Turn"). This power is exercised by the dominant cultural group; "dominant class fractions, whose power rests on economic capital, aim to impose the legitimacy of their domination ... through their own symbolic production" (Bourdieu 168).

The selection, portrayal and canonization of a selective historical narrative form a discursive practice set in motion by one or more powerful actors and carried on and legitimized by other lesser distributors (for example, mass media, professionals and academics) (Altrock et al.). These powerful actors are legitimate representatives of the dominant power, and, following Bourdieu's division of specialized labor, are vested with a power to connote symbolic power and capital; they are "legitimate speaker(s), authorized to speak and to speak with authority" (Bourdieu 41). In this way, the legitimate speakers support the dominance of the dominant group, and the dominant group supports the legitimate speakers' claims to legitimacy.

Toponymic and Symbolic Inscription in Berlin after 1990

The changes in Berlin after the fall of the Wall can be divided into two broad categories: removal or changing of street names and the reforming of the socialist downtown under the auspices of critical reconstruction. These changes represented a conservative and stringently anti-modernist

and anti-socialist stance; "reunification brought demands to remove all traces of the Communist state" (Ladd 209). This paper discusses changes in Mitte, the geographic and historic central district in Berlin, and former government center of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

In Berlin's central district Mitte, where relatively few sculptural monuments were located, the socialist street names formed the backbone of symbolic capital on the landscape, above all in the main thoroughfares. In June of 1991, the Berlin Senate suggested the renaming of 190 streets in East Berlin (Azaryahu, "German Reunification"). In total, more than 80 streets were renamed between 1990 and 1994, including nearly all of the main thoroughfares in the district. The official decree about street (re)naming from 1994 was phrased as follows: "the second German democracy has no reason to honor politicians who actively contributed to the destruction of the first German democracy. The same goes for politicians who, after 1933, opposed one totalitarian dictatorship, that of the National Socialists, in order to replace it with another totalitarian dictatorship, that of the Communists" (Ladd 210). The conservative political stance of the bill writers is clear from the wording, above all the equivocation of both the Third Reich and GDR as "totalitarian dictatorships", as well as the description of reunified Germany as the "second German democracy". Despite the theoretical application to the entire city (for example the lingering national socialist street names in West Berlin), as Brian Ladd points out, "the government... restricted its purview to the former East Berlin, effectively limiting its purge to *leftist* opponents of the Weimar democracy" (Ladd 211).

These changes were accompanied by sweeping changes to the architectural structure of the city center, which took place through the introduction of a new aesthetic *Leitbild* called "critical reconstruction". Critical reconstruction was developed in West Berlin during the 1987 International Building Exhibition (IBA 1987) as an innovative new (postmodern) approach to urban renewal, and was expanded after reunification into an all-encompassing vision for the city. It continues in a slightly less dominant form as the prevalent style in the city today (for more about critical reconstruction and its role as a *Leitbild* , please see Hennecke).

Critical reconstruction bundled together several typical postmodern stances with a distinct nostalgia for the industrial-era city structure. The new aesthetic ideal combined the rediscovery and revitalization of inner city areas, an aversion to high-rises as bastions of the modernist past, and the heralding of the "European city". These efforts were combined with a desire to create an

"authentic" historical Berlin (Strom) through the fabrication of a new "Prussian" architectural and cultural tradition based on pre-WWI urban development, in particular the tenement housing erected during Berlin's industrial boom (Strom; Ladd; Spittler and Knischewski; Huyssen; Marcuse). The new building guidelines followed in part those of the nineteenth century, for example by setting building height limits, and embraced a fine-grained urban structure (Ladd).

The new planning based itself on the industrial-era street plan of the city, what the planners called "the memory of the city" (Dörries et al.; Stimmann), and included not only construction in empty lots, for example on the former border area, but also the demolition of modernist buildings and squares to make way for the reconstruction of the former street grid. These processes were most intensive in Mitte, where socialist modernist planning and building had been most concentrated.

Critics of critical reconstruction, such as Simone Hain & Wolfgang Kil, questioned the invented traditionalism and Prussian nostalgia of the planners; "Berlin must be Berlin, they say. Identity is at stake. … Prescriptions such as city block building, traditional window facades, a uniform height of twenty-two meters …, and building in stone are vociferously defended against all evidence that such traditionalism is wholly imaginary" (Huyssen 68). In addition, many critics saw the decisively anti-modern stance of the planners as a politically-desired denial of the GDR past; "from this perspective, it is no wonder that the devaluation of post-war urban structures … became a strong conflict point in former East Berlin as it was seen by many as yet another attempt to eradicate East Germans' past and identity" (Tölle 352).

Critical reconstruction and the tenets that it sets out went well beyond a few overview plans. Indeed, through the aesthetic dominance of the legitimate speakers, the new ideal created an invisible guideline by which all other built form was measured. The changes were pervasive, sudden and irreversible; "In this process, it's not just about a concrete problem in a single place, but about the orthodox enforcement of an overarching principle through which 80 years of urban development according to the principles of 'light, air, and sun' can be discredited as completely misguided" (Hain, "Berliner Städtebaudiskurs" 115). In this way, a selected few actors not only succeeded in dominating the discussion about building the new Berlin, but also in creating an all-encompassing aesthetic model based on western aesthetic ideals, democracy, postmodernism, and capitalism, led by critical reconstruction and the new planning for the inner city, " *Planwerk*

Innenstadt "; "there is a sociopolitical background … behind *Planwerk Innenstadt* , for example the plan to reparcel Alexanderplatz and sell those plots to urban citizens. These plans don't just clear away architectural Modernism, but also the welfare state promise that Modernism was all about. So: light, air & sun for everyone, good apartments for large portions of society. And that was replaced with the figure of the urban citizen, who, as an investor, is supposed to occupy the center of the city, and be the savior for urban development" (Interview, 8 May 2012).

The new guideline provided for the complete restructuring of the socialist downtown beginning in the early 1990s and continues to this day, including the removal of many of the central government buildings of the GDR and the dismantling of the architectural ensemble in which they were embedded (for an exhaustive examination of individual examples, please see Danesch). The most hotly debated of these changes was the closing and demolition of the Palace of the Republic (*Palast der Republik*), the seat of the GDR parliament; "the street renaming got a lot of publicity, but it was only one of the many symbolic appropriations. The biggest symbolic appropriation was … the city palace and the palace of the republic" (Interview, 25 May 2012). The Palace of the Republic had been erected on the former location of the Hohenzollern palace (here described as the city palace, *Stadtschloss*), which had been badly damaged in bombing attacks during the war and demolished by the socialists in 1950. Many conservatives saw the demolition of the Palace of the Republic as the only option after reunification; "here, East German history was embodied by the Palace of the Republic" (Ladd 62). When, shortly after reunification, a private lobby was created for the reconstruction of the Hohenzollern palace, conservative politicians were the first to laud the idea; "the CDU party members jumped at the idea. The talk was all about 'we have to show an image of German history on this location'" (Interview, 9 May 2012).

As already discussed, the appropriation of space for cultural production is an important part of the establishment of "the" past, and the normalization of hegemonic historical and cultural discourse in the landscape. The demolition of the Hohenzollern Palace and the construction of the Palace of the Republic in its place was an unmistakable expression of cultural power on the part of the socialists. The location represents the geographical, historic and cultural focal point of the city, therefore the building or monument occupying this spot defines the tone of the spatial and cultural hegemony in Berlin. For this reason, the lobby to remove the Palace of the Republic is not surprising. Indeed, it

epitomizes the reactionary nature of anti-communism after the end of the cold war; "The perspective of the victor, wishing to ratify a triumph, just as the Communist victors of 1945 had triumphantly cleared away the royal palace" (Ladd 63).

Critical Impulses in Post-Reunification Development: an Explanatory Model

The removal and discrediting of the symbolic and architectural representation of "unwanted" histories signifies a restriction in symbolic representation of these eras. In post-reunification Berlin, the concept of architecture and urban planning as expressions of national and civic identity became a flashpoint of political, aesthetic and symbolic debates (Ladd). But how were such sweeping changes possible? What were the mechanisms by which they were achieved and in which historic discourses were they embedded?

This project identified three main factors that played significant roles in the scope and ideological direction of the changes described: the divergent post-war development of the two Germanys, the political and structural aspects of reunification, and the moving of the German capital back to Berlin after 40 years in Bonn.

Divergent Architectural Discourses in Postwar Germany

The 1970s marked the so-called "collapse of Modernism" (Kraft 49) in Western Europe and the US, a cultural movement said by many to have been set in motion by the works of Jane Jacobs (Jacobs) and Robert Venturi (Venturi) in the early-to-mid 1960s in the US. Postmodernism moved away from the so-called "international style" of the postwar period, which was dominated by orthogonal angles, extensive use of glass and concrete, open interior spaces, disconnection with surrounding buildings and a complete lack of ornamentation, to embrace a return to facade ornamentation, a relation to surrounding buildings, historic reference in decorative elements, and the use of non-orthogonal angles. The postmodern movement criticized modernism as monotonous, disruptive, hostile, utopian and totalitarian. Whereas the modernists had sought a utopia beyond industrial

expansion based upon ultimate truths and implemented through overarching landscape plans, postmodernism preferred variety and subjective preferences that created the landscape as a tapestry of many diverse elements. One interview partner described it as follows: "these days it seems nearly self-evident that Industrial-Revolution-Era historic buildings (and) inner city areas are cool and livable, and that [Modernist buildings and satellite housing projects] are inhuman and hostile... And if you look back historically, that's comparatively new. In the 60s and even part of the 70s, the common understanding was that the inner-city areas were run down, that no one can live in these dark courtyards, and therefore we have to renovate them to death. If you walk through West Berlin, you often see houses that were renovated during the 50s and 60s. They have these plain gray plaster facades. That's where the intricate plasterwork that was on there was chipped off, because it was seen at that point in time as outdated kitsch from the times of the monarchy" (Interview, 18 July 2011).

Postmodernism did not achieve cultural hegemonic status in all parts of the world equally, a characteristic that is particularly apparent in the comparison of East and West Cold War era architecture and planning in Berlin. While the eastern half of the city took its cue from the USSR (Hain, "Reise Nach Moskau"), West Berlin, like West Germany, oriented itself towards the West, in particular the USA (Becker-Cantarino); These different cultural orientations were solidified in the architecture and urban planning of the time; while postmodernism became the overwhelmingly dominant aesthetic discourse in West Germany and West Berlin in the 1970s, culminating in the 1987 international building exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung*) which ran from 1979 to 1987, in East Berlin the discourse was limited to isolated neo-historical projects in the 1980s (Urban). East Germany continued to build in the international style into the 1980s, well after this style was spurned for its monotony, totalitarianism, and hostility by its western counterpart. In this way, it was possible for the construction of socialist modernist and western postmodernist building projects to occur simultaneously just a few kilometers from one another within the same divided city.

Accession Not Reunification

With the signing of the unification contract in 1990, the accession of East Germany into West Germany gained legal legitimacy. This step consisted of the replacement of the institutional systems of the GDR with the legal, political, and economic systems of West Germany (De Soto; Häußermann and Strom; Strom). Due to institutionalized exclusion of pro-Western citizens in the GDR, there was a distinct dearth of qualified bureaucrats, trained administration personnel and civil servants familiar with or sympathetic to the western system in East Germany, a situation that led to nearly all of these positions being filled by West Germans after reunification (for a detailed description of this process, see Strom, ch. 4). According to one of my interview partners, "it was an accession, not a reunification. … East Berlin was incorporated as a new part of West Berlin. The existing West Berlin Senate became the government for both sides, so to speak, and the positions of power were correspondingly already filled. There were hardly any East Germans from the intermediary civic government or from the popular movements with influential positions in urban planning or urban development policy after 1990. There were a few individuals in the senate, but you could count them on one hand. In most cases, the East Germans were just token representatives on the district level. And as a result there was a very clear power differential" (Interview, 8 May 2012).

The new aesthetic ideal was championed by a small set of powerful actors, namely urban planners and leading politicians, and was disseminated by the media. The major actors of the period directly after the *Wende* were the politicians of the CDU (Christian democrats) and SPD (social democrats) who ruled in coalition from 1990 to 1995, the then-construction senator Hans Stimmann, urban planner Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, Vittorio Lampugnani, then-director of the German Museum of Architecture in Frankfurt am Main, and a few lesser bureaucrats (Strom). These actors, the "legitimate speakers" of the new hegemony, were high-ranking aesthetic and political elites from the West German expertocracy, and thus socially and culturally embedded in the western architectural culture of postmodernism. Their efforts were supported by the Axel Springer publishing house, whose dailies constitute the majority share of circulation both in Berlin and Germany. Indeed, the nationalistic, conservative Springer publishing house had been "vocal advocates of conservatism, Cold War politics, and a strong anti-communist stance in Berlin" (Becker-Cantarino 17), thereby adding yet additional clout to this propensity; "From my

perspective, it wasn't discussed publicly really, much more after the fact. ... People talked more about the result, rather than discussing it beforehand. Even the *Stadtforum* (City Forum) which was active at the time... was always the same people. And for me, everything just went around in circles – everyone said their opinion but there was never really any constructive discussion about it ... The *Stadtforum* was made up of architects, urban planners, administrators .... The public could attend ... At the beginning you could see that it really was an attempt at coming to some sort of common opinion, but later it was very one-sided. It always ended up just confirming the status quo – 'it's good, and that's how it will be done'" (Interview, 9 May 2012).

Berlin, the Once and Future Capital

The 1991 declaration that the German seat of government would indeed move back to Berlin after 40 years in its provisional seat in Bonn (*Hauptstadtvertrag*) added additional layers of complexity and implication to the structural changes in Berlin; "That the capital would return to Berlin was undisputed, but that the government center should return to Berlin, that was disputed, and had to be decided by the Bundestag" (Interview, 29 May 2012). As the new seat of German government, Berlin took on further significance as a model of "new German identity" (Strom) in a country struggling to reframe its national narrative in terms of reunification and democracy. The German legacy of the Second World War, which had defined the West German national narrative in the postwar period, could now be reframed in terms of reunification. Symbolic and architectural changes in Berlin were therefore both parallel to and more intense than de-communism efforts in eastern Europe, where "the main strategy to be observed since the 1990s was undoubtedly the creation of a 'European' identity, aiming at shaping modern, international and capitalist place identities, which meant in consequence the complete rejection of the socialist past" (Tölle 349); "Berlin had the unique situation, we had the singular chance to design the inner city new" (Interview, 29 May 2012). These changes carried the weight of the new national narrative and the singular chance to re-contextualize German identity in new terms not solely centered around the Second World War; "the political postures of the Communist regime, even those carved in stone, had no place in the unified German democracy" (Ladd 193).

Discussion

The new spatial hegemony in post-reunification Berlin championed the western ideals of capitalism, democracy, market forces, consumerism, and postmodernism. The physical legacy of the socialist era was thusly damned in two regards: as the ideological tools of a fallen political regime and as modernist architecture and urban design. In the eyes of the West Germans who came to power, the socialist urban landscape was "non-representative for the new Germany" (De Soto 37) and the modernist urban landscape "unattractive and inefficient" (Strom 2).

The changes discussed represent not the creation of a new common Germany from two concurrent histories, but the reversal of changes performed during the socialist era; Clara Zetkin Straße was reverted to Dorotheenstraße, Klement-Gottwald-Straße to Berliner Allee, the Palace of the Republic is currently being replaced by a reconstruction of the Hohenzollern Palace, and the city structure will, through continued critical reconstruction, be reverted to an ideal of what might have been before the Second World War, just to name a handful of examples. But why were the debates surrounding these changes so fierce?

In Germany, the Berlin Wall had provided a singular opportunity for coping with the cultural heritage of the Second World War; "The East-West division provided by the Wall permitted Germans themselves to project 'otherness' onto their fellows. … Germans could interpret official propaganda as implying that the people on the other side of the Wall monopolized the prejudiced, predatory, or authoritarian traits of the bad old days" (Ladd 31). Thus, the Wall allowed the ideological divide, particularly in reference to Germany's Nazi heritage, to widen, with both sides "grant(ing) the other the honor of being the Third Reich's true successor" (Ladd 180). The intensity of the ideological rift became particularly apparent in the 1980s with the so-called *Historikerstreit* ("historians' debate"), in which several well-known west German academics attempted to equate the communist and national socialist regimes (Spittler and Knischewski; Ladd). Descriptions of the GDR as "totalitarian" and "the second German dictatorship" (Saarinen) implied a "fundamental similarity between Nazism and Communism" (Ladd 23). In this way, "the Cold War (was) a continuation of the West's struggle in World War II and, in the German context, East German

Communist leader Walter Ulbricht as Hitler's successor" (Ladd 23). The removal of monuments and street names and the rebuilding of the city in the image of a capitalist democracy attempted to give the semblance of continuity with a bygone prosperity and peace, but, upon closer examination, it reveals a grave historic perversity; "Half a century after its end, and years after the division it spawned has been overcome, Hitler's war remains the event that has defined and shaped Berlin" (Ladd 175).

Seen in the context of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (a West German term coined in the 1955 meaning "coping with the past", a term often used to refer to the process of coping with the legacy of the national socialists), the motivations behind the need for cultural dominance become clearer; "Nostalgia, according to this thinking, implies a denial of inconvenient facts, in particular, an exclusion from German history of the Third Reich and the GDR" (Ladd 66).

The style set out in critical reconstruction and the reversion to earlier street names hearken back to an idealized golden age in Berlin's history before the traumata of two world wars and forty years of division (Ladd). In a symbolic and spatial context, where the socialist urban planning had replaced the remains of the pre-war city, these acts needed to be overturned to underline the legitimacy of the new hegemony and a continuity with the west German historical mythos, reflecting a deeply conservative view of history (Jarausch).

Critics argue that this approach systematically excludes the built space of the Weimar, Nazi, and GDR eras (Huyssen; Ladd; Strom; Marcuse). The removal of the architectural representation of "unwanted" histories from the landscape signifies a restriction in symbolic representation of these eras; "for Hobsbawm and many other commentators, the redevelopment of Berlin has been characterized by a form of collective, even purposeful amnesia in which the physical erasure of the city has encouraged a wider forgetting" (Guy 79). The spatial and aesthetic delegitimization of 80 years of history amounts in the eyes of critical reconstructions' critics to the delegitimization of these regimes and their heirs, a particularly thorny issue in regard to the built legacy of the GDR.

Why is this significant? Hobsbawm argues that the invention of tradition is evidence of discontinuities in the historical order; "they are important symptoms and therefore indicators of problems which might not otherwise be recognized" (Hobsbawm 12). Indeed, this debate may never have been of any importance had the German government not decided in 1991 to return the

seat of government to Berlin. It was this pivotal decision that imbued the built urban landscape with its critical meaning; "here the crisis of modern architecture and urban planning coincides with the crisis of national identity" (Ladd 230).

Conclusion

In Berlin's central district Mitte, active physical and symbolic strategies were used together to accommodate the landscape to the new hegemonic power structure. As the historical, cultural and geographic center of the city, Mitte possesses a symbolic worth higher than any other district and an incontrovertible opportunity for the presentation of a selected ideology.

The view of the socialist built space as inferior, inappropriate, ugly and inefficient reflected deeply seated cultural beliefs of "correct" and "incorrect", "appropriate" and "inappropriate". For planners in reunified Berlin both nostalgic for the lost Berlin of the era before the ravages of two world wars and raised with western cold war and postmodernist ideologies, the socialist construction of the city center represented the embodiment of the "other", the image of the enemy (*Feindbild*). The establishment of one Germany meant not the forging of a new common history and image, but the adaptation and assimilation of deviant eastern landscapes and their residents to the western cultural myth. The framing of these changes not in a discourse of colonization (appropriation by an external aggressor) but rather in a discourse of reunification (restoration of historical continuity), allowed the logical dismissal of the 40-year East German existence and its history written in stone as a historical aberration and break in the "normal" historical development (Häußermann and Kapphan, "Von Der Geteilten Zur Gespaltenen Stadt"; Ladd), at least by those western bureaucrats in charge of city planning. Through a reunification-oriented discourse, more and more intensive landscape changes were possible, as the symbolic and structural changes were framed as a return to the "natural order". With the relocation of the capital back to Berlin, the "destruction of the city by modernist urban design and state centralism" (Häußermann and Kapphan, "Divided to Fragmented City" 49) in its literal and metaphorical significance could be "set right", thus restoring the continuity of the (west) German historical worldview (Jarausch) as "the" German past, a process that continues today, not least of which through the current "reconstruction" of the city palace in the center of the city.

All translations are the work of the author.

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