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HARD CORE URBANISM:
Urban Planning at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin after
the German Reunification

by

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ABSTRACT

HARD CORE URBANISM:
Urban Planning at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin after the German Reunification

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Hard Core Urbanism is the tendency to produce corporate enclaves within the fluid city. The garrison mentality denies the complex and interwoven processes exemplified by the history of Potsdamer Platz.

Breaking the completeness of the corporate plan, the project initiates the process of diversification; enabling a reoccupation by the city.
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This thesis is dedicated to my teacher Professor Manfred Klinkott.
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1. Introduction

The Potsdamer Platz is the best known of the ‘Plätze’ of Berlin. History forced it into a coma, as “if it had to carry all the weight of the results of the Nazi politics”\(^1\); then, after being almost completely cleared, it eventually became part of the no-man’s land of the iron curtain, separating East and West.

The German Reunification in 1989 seemed to offer a unique opportunity for Berlin, the “Rebuilding [of] the capital of Europe”\(^2\). After the Wall was removed, the city suddenly had a vast amount of open land available in its center. (Figure 1.1)

Potsdamer Platz, before W.W.II a symbol for progress and vivid urban culture, during the Cold War a symbol for the separation of Europe, is on its way to becoming a collection of corporate headquarters -- and a symbol for the sellout of the city. The former geometric center of Berlin is going to become an enclave, private property with limited access. Daimler Benz, Sony, and ABB are building about 5 million square feet of office space for their administrations and headquarters.

Even though within the last six years half a dozen architectural competitions and master plans have tried to diversify the program and break it down into little pieces, it still is impossible to hide the fact that the ‘Project Potsdamer Platz’ fails to connect to the city.

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\(^1\) Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.7
\(^2\) Title of the New York Times Magazine February, 5 1995, by Paul Goldberger, p1
Figure 1.1: Aerial view of Potsdamer Platz, looking northeast (September 1994)

Figure 2.1: Plan of area around Potsdamer Platz (1787)
The 19th century streetscape and sunken plaza of the ‘Instant-City’ at Potsdamer Platz follows the ideology of Berlin’s Director of Construction, Hans Stimmman, who presumably wishes himself to be in a position compared to Haussmann’s in Paris 130 years ago; however, his ‘Critical Reconstruction’ agenda for Berlin, a desperate attempt of reconnecting himself to romantic visions of a 19th century city, is limited to defining the design of facades. The actual urban planning is done by corporate boards, who decide where to locate their tremendous investment budgets.

Cosmetics and other formal attempts to integrate large structures into the fabric of the city remain only on the surface of the problem, which is how to find contemporary ways to integrate large entities into the city today; how could urban typology of the 19th century or any other time be interpreted as morphologies that have to be translated into today’s planning. It is useless to ruminate about images of the past, that one can also find printed on bags of ‘Pepperidge Farm’ cookies: “Imagine yourself strolling down a cobblestone road towards your favorite European Bakery.” It is more important to understand for example that today people don’t walk that much anymore to buy their cookies, to stay within this example.

I would like to use two strategies to weaken the negative effects (seclusion and separation) through hard core urbanism on the overall fabric of the city. The first attack against seclusion would be an integration of all possible infrastructures within the newly proposed corporate instant city. My proposed train station/infrastructural node Potsdamer Platz with its linked diverse programs establishes an interface between the enclaves and
the network of public transportation and an array of other functions in order to enable civic space at Potsdamer Platz.

The second strategy is a diversification of the site in order to avoid limited use for the site in the center of the city; reintroducing large quantities of residential architecture and quotidian programs will balance the site; urban spaces with different velocities will occur.
2. The History of Potsdamer Platz

2a. Beginnings

Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm (1640-1688) the electoral Prince of Brandenburg and Prussia, decided to reconstruct his residence Berlin-Coelln according to Dutch ideals after it was heavily damaged during the peasant war of 1618-1648.

Before the new fortifications were finished, his son, Kurfürst Friedrich extended the western edge of the city in along the ‘Unter den Linden’ road, that led to the electoral hunting grounds, the Tiergarten.

North of the ‘Unter den Linden’ was the ‘Dorotheenstadt’, started in 1674, and to the south the ‘Friedrichstadt’, started in 1688. The Friedrichstadt with its 400 lots gave home to Huguenot refugees from France. Both baroque city extensions were laid out in a geometric grid.

In 1701, the electoral Prince Friedrich III crowned himself to be the King of Prussia, and in 1710, the residences of Berlin, Coelln, Friedrichswerder, Dorotheenstadt, and Friedrichstadt were unified to become the ‘Residence City of Berlin’, and this preference of Berlin as the center of the Prussian state led to an accelerated construction, especially since the ‘Soldier’s King’, Friedrich Wilhelm I transformed Berlin into the largest garrison town of Prussia.³

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³ Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.12
When most of the 400 lots of the Friedrichstadt ‘phase one’ were sold around 1723, a further extension of the city was inevitable, expanding to the south and west with 1000 lots as the ‘extended’ Friedrichstadt. Christian Reinhold von Derschau and Phillip Gerlach designed three squares along the new axis Wilhelmstrasse as the western entrance points to the city. The first one in the north, the ‘Quarree’, or Pariser Platz (starting point for Unter den Linden towards the old palace); in the south, the ‘Rondell’, today Mehringplatz (focal point for Friedrichstrasse and Wilhelmstrasse); and in the middle the ‘Octogon’, or Leipziger Platz, (starting point for Leipzigerstrasse eastwards). These three squares were planned to be used as market squares or mustering grounds, surrounded by barracks. Four years later all the lots of the ‘extended’ Friedrichstadt were sold, and an eight kilometer long wall with 13 gates was built around the city to deter deserting soldiers from escaping and allowed the collection of taxes upon entry to the city.4

The entrance at the end point of Potsdamer Strasse, that led southwest toward the residence of Potsdam, became the Potsdamer Tor. (Figure 2.1)

The district south of the Tiergarten, the electoral hunting park, became a popular gardenscape, where Huguenot gardeners started tree nurseries and planted vegetables. The area in front of the Potsdam gate was mentioned first in the 1740’s as a meeting place for trippers to the Tiergarten, which eventually became a public park in 1742. Soon afterward the meadows and fields in front of the gate became popular among nobles and

4 Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.13
wealthy citizens of Berlin for promenades and picnics on weekends. The gardeners begun renting their houses during summers, offering food and coffee to their guests.

Romanticizing nature and a flight of wealthy citizens out of the city caused settlements west and south-westwards (in the districts of Schöneberg and Tiergarten), further increasing the traffic on Potsdamerstrasse and Tiergartenstrasse, which encouraged merchant families to settle close by. Around 1800, after a period of wars under King Friedrich II (1740-1786) this area became even more popular as a close by recreational and pleasure area, where coffeehouses and beer gardens were established.

In 1793 the Potsdamerstrasse was transformed into a ‘Chaussee’ by Langhans, the designer of the Brandenburg Gate. This encouraged settlements of some members of the bourgeoisie class in front of the Potsdamer Tor. In 1797, Friedrich Gilly proposed a design for a mausoleum for Frederic the Great in the style of French Revolution architecture for the Octogon (*Figure 2.2*), and a monumental triumphal arch for the Potsdam gate with a quadriga, inspired by Schadow’s for the Brandenburg gate.

2b. The New Epoque

After the Liberation War had ended the occupation of Napoleon, and a fast growing trade and economy boosted Prussia, the Octogon square was renamed into Leipziger Platz, and the adjacent Potsdamer Tor in Leipziger Tor, becoming a reminder of the victorious battle in Leipzig.
Inspired by Gilly, in 1815 Karl Friedrich Schinkel proposed a design for the Leipziger Platz as well, a Gothic cathedral, inspired by German Romanticism as a national monument in memory of the Liberation Wars. Like Gilly’s proposal Schinkel’s design was never executed.

But in 1823/24 Schinkel proposed a redesign for the Potsdamer Platz. This design suggested the Platz as a circular square with four radial streets and two symmetrical little gate houses in the style of doric pro stylos’ (Figure 2.3), one for tax collection and the other for guards. The two guard houses were built, but the proposal for the Potsdamer Platz itself was not realized because it was “too expensive to purchase the land in front of the gate”.

In 1828, the landscape architect Peter Joseph Lenne was commissioned to redesign the Leipziger Platz. His scheme divided the square into two lawns, following the geometry of the Octogon, and decorated with three groups of shrubbery on each side.

The tremendous incline in people flowing through the area of the Leipziger Platz and the Potsdamer Tor initiated radical changes in architecture. Most of the two story detached houses, originally designed for wealthy citizens in a style inspired by country seats of nobles, were replaced by elegant, but densely packed three or four story apartment houses.

According to the new urban planning directives, issued in 1828 by Schmid for the area outside of the Potsdam gate the later Potsdamer Platz underwent radical changes.

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5 Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.53
6 Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.28
The proposal demanded that the rural character of the area be altered into a suburban one.

In 1835, Bellevuestrasse, Potsdamerstrasse and Lennestrasse were completely occupied.

In 1843, the master plan of Lenne replaced Schmid's, and the 'faubourg' in front of the city gate eventually became part of the city of Berlin.
Figure 2.2: Mausoleum for Frederick the great by Friedrich Gilly (1797)

Figure 2.3: The two gate houses at Potsdamer Platz bei Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1823/24)
2c. Unrestrained Growth

In 1853, the ‘Strassenplan’, a set of regulations for the layout of streets and houses based on accessibility for fire engines, was set up by the President of the police (defining e.g. width of streets, height of buildings, size of courts etc.) This plan led eventually to the congestion and terrible living conditions, causing the city outgrow its old boundaries, the demarcation of the former tax wall in the 1860’s. (Figure 2.4) Unfortunately, the city planning guidelines for circulation and fire safety did not deal with the living conditions in terms of light, air or density, but instead with efficiency and surveillance.7

After realizing the terrible conditions in the ‘Mietskasernen’, in 1862 a new term was coined: the ‘Generalbebauungsplan’. This concept by James Hobrecht was a general strategy to reorganize the city according to the needs of the new industrial era, the Gründerzeit, that can be compared to Haussmann’s activities in Paris since 1853.

The Hobrecht plan did not bring relief to the city, since it still relied on the scheme of the ‘Strassenplan’ of 1853, that did not consider variation of the block scheme, guaranteeing a maximum output of apartments per perimeter block.

In 1836 approximately 450 families lived in close proximity of the Potsdamer Tor, mostly bankers, officers, business people and high ranking civil servants, giving it the nickname ‘Geheimratsviertel’8 (quarter of the privy concillors).

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7 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 176
8 Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.22
Figure 2.4: Mietskasernen (tenement housing) in Berlin Kreuzberg (around 1880)
In 1838 the Berlin-Potsdam Train Company began operating trains on a regular schedule from the new terminal station at the Potsdamer Platz to Potsdam, a distance of 28 km; About ten years later the line was extended further to connect to west Germany and France. The Bahnhof Potsdamer Platz, widely enlarged in 1872, and the Anhalter Bahnhof, just 600 meters away, increased the amount of people passing through the ‘eye of the needle’, Potsdamer Platz.

In 1874 the old tax wall (Akzisemauer) was torn down, which connected Leipziger and Potsdamer Platz, giving room to the new Königgrätzer Strasse; it connected Brandenburg Gate, Potsdamer Platz und Mehring Platz, the former Quarree, Octogon and Rondell. Schinkel’s twin guardhouses remained to mark the entrance into the old Berlin.

The Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71 led to the foundation of the German Reich. The five billion goldfrancs ‘reparation’, paid to Germany by France, were used to satisfy Germany’s desire for representation by funding new construction in the now imperial Berlin.

Until 1883 many of the Prussian and German federal institutions of Berlin had moved into the former palais of noblemen and bankers around Leipziger Platz, because of its proximity to the center of administration in Wilhelmstrasse. The parliament of the Norddeutsche Bund was located on Leipzigerstr. 3, which was the former palais of the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy family. In 1871, the parliament moved into the former building of the ‘Königlich Preussische Porzellanmanufaktur’ (Royal China Factory); just across
the street, where the assembly remained until the Reichstag by Paul Wallot was completed in 1894.

Between 1872 and 1881 two luxury hotels, the ‘Palast-Hotel’ and the ‘Grand-Hotel Bellevue’ were built at Potsdamer Platz to serve the wealthier travellers coming through; and the ‘Kunsthandwerkliche Museum’ (Arts and Crafts Museum, today Martin Gropius Bau, named after its architect, the uncle of Walter Gropius), was built along the Königgrätzer Strasse (today Ebertstrasse); between 1892 and 1899 the assembly building of the State parliament of Prussia was constructed just across the street.

In 1819 the population of Berlin was 200,000, and in 1910 increased to more than two million. In 1836 approximately 450 families lived in the area of the Potsdamer Platz, 4,500 in 1883; keeping distribution of income and occupation was still widely the same, causing its nickname “millionaire’s neighborhood”.

The area around the Potsdamer Platz, originally purely residential, developed gradually into a mixed use neighborhood with administration, public transportation, restaurants, hotels and retail, causing its transformation from a ‘Randplatz’ (marginal place) into a center of public life, the threshold between an old imperial and a new industrial Berlin of the “Gründerzeit”. Potsdamer Platz became the central locus of the exploding city.

Since lower Friedrichstadt and Geheimratsviertel had lost their status as suburbs, when the tax wall was torn down in 1874, and the area of the Potsdamer Platz obtained its particular blend of administration, representation, culture and trade after W.W.I, the

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9 Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.29
‘haute-bourgeoise’ eventually fled this quarter and moved to the calmer new suburbs in Grunewald, Zehlendorf and Wannsee. The former residences of nobles and bankers were now reoccupied by ambassadors and diplomats, highly preferred as offices and residences.

2d. Modern Times

Hundreds of thousands commuted through Potsdamer Platz every day, making it the busiest place in Berlin with adjacent two train stations and dense horse streetcar traffic (244 cars every hour in 1895). The electrification of streetcars and the construction of Berlin’s first ‘U-Bahn’ station (Underground train) in 1902 increased the flow of people even further.

This development caused a reversal in the way the twin-Platz Leipziger and Potsdamer Platz functioned: the former Octogon became an elegant park, and the former gate of the Potsdamer Platz became the ‘turntable of Berlin’s urban life’\(^\text{10}\).

More than 40 years after the introduction of the ‘Hobrecht-Plan’ in 1910, the term Generalbebauungsplan eventually evolved into action, as the population of the city reached two million. An urban design competition for Berlin’s gigantic metropolitan area with its diameter of 50 kilometers was proposed; a search for ideas to relieve the overcrowded city.

\(^{10}\) Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.55
Among the requirements for the competition was a shift from traditional concentric planning towards a radial and decentralized one, and embedded in this concept was a new train system and a reorganization proposal for streets, combined with a new north-south speedway.

The winning scheme by Jansen gave only a little idea of what could have been planned; mainly five large, 60 meter wide high speed roads radially going out of the city; a beltway to relieve the Potsdamer Platz, a network of new high speed trains with a new gigantic northern train station and a ring of parks for the city, that would bleed into Berlin 'Mitte', and finally a proposal for clearly demarked suburbs to fight land abuse and sprawl. But the scheme could not be realized because on one hand the separate planning authorities for Reich, state, city and federal trains were unable to arrive at a compromise, and on the other hand investors and developers feared major profit cuts.11

Only after World War I, in 1920, as the young Weimar Republic had established itself, parts of the plan to unify Berlin with its eight suburbs were executed and the city was reorganized for a more efficient administration; and Potsdamer Platz (Figure 2.5) eventually became the geometrical center of the city as well as it was the infrastructural center already. -Berlin became ‘Gross Berlin’ (greater Berlin) and the second largest city in the world with 883 square kilometers area. But due to waves of speculations and an irrational division of the city into building classes in combination with a height limit of 22 meters no major breakthrough for a general planning cold be achieved to accommodate the structure of the city to its fast changes.

11 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 178
Since the density of traffic and people kept growing even through the years of depression, Europe’s first traffic light (imported from America) was installed at the eastern entrance of the Platz, like a starting point for the ‘golden twenties’ of Berlin.

At the end of the 1920's the restaurants, hotels, beer gardens and cafes around the Potsdamer Platz had developed into famous entertainment attractions that promised to fulfill the desires of the entertainment-hungry crowds of the metropolis. The Cafe ‘Haus Vaterland’ (Figure 2.6) (former Cafe Piccadilly, which changed its name in 1914 due to the nationalistic imperative)\(^\text{12}\), the Cafe Josty, the Weinhaus Huth or the Weinhaus Rheingold with the dance club ‘Europa’, a 1000 feet long entertainment center along Königgrätzer Strasse, which contained different theme cafes like a ‘Wild West Cafe’, a ‘Turkish Cafe’, the ‘River Rhine Cafe’ and the ‘Mexico Bar’. Even the German National Film Industries, the UFA, moved into the offices adjacent to the Haus Vaterland, and in 1923 Europe’s first radio broadcast came from the Vox Haus at Potsdamer Platz.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{12}\) Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.75
\(^{13}\) Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.81
Figure 2.5: Aerial view of Potsdamer Platz, looking west (around 1920)

Figure 2.6: Haus Vaterland at Potsdamer Platz (1930)
In 1925, several architects proposed ideas how to solve the traffic problems of the Platz: Werner Hegemann and Oskar Lange suggested a separating of traffic through the introduction of an elevated deck for pedestrians. Berlin’s director of city planning, Martin Wagner developed a vision of an “organic metropolitan square as a stopping point for consumption power and threshold for moving traffic”\textsuperscript{14}, a scheme with a carousel in the center of the Platz, that contained cafes and stores on the top level, separating pedestrians, cars and trains. Additionally, he proposed a staggering high rise building as a focal point for Leipziger Strasse. Similar proposals were made by Hans and Wassili Luckhardt, who suggested a tall commercial building totally made from glass, the ‘Haus Berlin’. In 1929 their second proposal for the Platz, the ‘Telschow Haus’, a modernistic building back to back with the ‘Pschorr-Haus’ was built to host the famous Telschow cake-shop and cafe, just across the street of the future site of the ‘Columbus-Haus’ (\textit{Figure 2.7}), that was completed in 1931 by Erich Mendelsohn, “the most successful commercial architect in Berlin”\textsuperscript{15}.

The Columbus-Haus replaced the Grand-Hotel Bellevue, that was driven into bankruptcy through its surrounding competitors.\textsuperscript{16} Mendelsohn’s 10 story building was one of the few tall buildings in the city that was allowed according to the new zoning laws of 1926.

\textsuperscript{14} Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.57
\textsuperscript{15} Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.65
\textsuperscript{16} Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.65
Figure 2.7: Columbus Haus by Erich Mendelsohn, Design sketch (1930)
2e. New Order

When the National-Socialists took over in 1933, the pulsating life on the Platz didn’t seem to change right away, even though swastika flags appeared, uniforms of SA, police and Gestapo. (their headquarters and the torture chambers inhibited the former site of the Kunstgewerbeschule on Prinz-Albrecht Strasse, now called ‘the topography of terror’; and parts of Columbus-Haus were suspected to host a SS-prison and a torture facility until 1936).  

But Hitler’s ‘Machtübernahme’ led eventually to a shift in understanding and shaping the city, having a major impact on not only the history of the Potsdamer Platz: The reorganization of the city as a whole.

In December 1936 a new law for reorganization of administration and Legislation of Berlin came in effect; the city was now called ‘Reichshauptstadt Berlin’ (Berlin, Capital of the Reich). Albert Speer was commissioned to be the ‘Generalbauminsektor für die Reichshauptstadt’ several months later to “bring a grand line in the chaos of the development of the city, appropriate to the new capital of the Reich.”

Speer’s total authority, since he was only responsible to Hitler himself, allowed him to propose a Generalbebauungsplan. This amount of control enabled Speer to be the first person to have such an amount of planning authority since Friedrich Wilhelm I, the Soldatenkönig; and this amount of power allowed him to pursue the transformation of the

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17 Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.131 [which has been contested]
18 to add a title to Berlin became a tradition to be continued by the East German state. They coined the new title ‘Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR’ =Berlin, Capital of the GDR. I haven’t heard of ‘Berlin, Hauptstadt der Bundesrepublik’ yet....
19 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 185
city in largest scale. The main goal of this plan was the long intended ‘North-South Axis’ for the city, intersecting with the existing east-west streets Charlottenburger Chaussee and Unter den Linden to be the “Achsenkreuz”, further the introduction of five radial streets and the ‘Autobahnring’, planned by Generalinspektor Dr. Todt, partially completed in 1937.

We cannot understand what Speer has called “Hitler’s personal Berlin”\textsuperscript{20}; the monumental buildings and streets, as merely evolved out of Nazi agenda, but rather out of a development through time. Speer’s proposal for the North-South Axis (\textit{Figure 2.9}) was neither an idea exclusive to his imagination nor exclusively of the 20th century, since “even the most innovative design is not created in a vacuum.”\textsuperscript{21}

The desires to enlarge the representational spaces to suit imperial Berlin were as old as 1800. But the center of the city with its medieval and baroque ‘Weichbild’, was too complete to be changed.

Long before Speer’s proposals for a street running north to south to connect to the original east-west axis were made, beginning with Lenne and Schinkel in 1840. The traditional east-west orientation of the cities’ major axis, the unter den Linden/Charlottenburger Chaussee, related to the topography of the valley of the river Spree. This axis was proposed to connect Charlottenburger Chaussee (today Strasse des 17. Juni) with Invalidenstrasse just north of the Spreebogen.

\textsuperscript{20} as quoted in Stephen D. Helmers 'Hitlers Berlin', p.1
\textsuperscript{21} Stephen D. Helmers 'Hitlers Berlin', p.67
Figure 2.8: Potsdamer Platz in summer 1934
Figure 2.9: North South Axis by Albert Speer (1934)

Figure 2.10: North South Boulevard by Mächler (1917)
But a realization of these ideas did not start until after the wars of 1864 and 1866, and had to be limited to the part south of the Spreebogen, since in the meantime the basin of the Humboldt Hafen had been built north of it. In 1864 the 'Königsplatz' (Royal Square) was completed on the site of a former parade ground, and a 63 meter tall 'Siegessäule' (Victory Column) was erected in its center. In 1873, after the Franco-German war, the later Siegesallee was extended southwards, terminating at the Kemperplatz, that connected Potsdamer Platz with Bellevuestrasse.

But the 'Königsplatz' with the new 'Reichstag' by Wallot was still dissatisfactory as a space of representation of the Reich, which inspired the Kaiser in 1902 to dedicate the 'Siegesallee' with 32 statues, an alleé that led to Kemperplatz south of it. (the Siegesallee with its statues was later nicknamed 'the alleé of the puppets')

Further improvement of the new center occurred in 1913, when a new royal opera house was built on the site of the old 'Kroll'sche Etablissement' by the architect Genzmer, facing Wallot's Reichstag.

Architects like Hans Poelzig, Peter Behrens and Hugo Häring proposed schemes for the redesign of the 'Königsplatz' during a period of economic growth between 1925 and 1927, the latter, Häring, also suggested a North-South Axis. The architect Max Berg published these works on the occasion of the 'Grosse Berliner Kunstaustellung' in 1927; including the work of Martin Mächler, and it is known that Hitler had studied these designs.

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22 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 197  
23 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 202
When he came to power in 1933, he ordered the city planning authorities to propose a scheme for the ‘Nord-Süd Achse’. But it took another three years until a planning effort was undertaken, when Speer officially became Hitler’s master planner for the capital, enabled with infinite authority, only responsible to the ‘Führer’ himself.

However, Hitler seemed primarily interested in large monuments like the ‘great hall’ or the ‘great arch’. Therefore Speers’ general urban planning strategy was widely independent of Hitler. The two major planning goals pursued by Speer: first a set of radial streets, originally proposed by Jansen in 1910, and second the North-South Axis, inspired mostly by Mächler’s scheme of 1917 for a street that would contain all representative buildings relevant for Berlin as capital and metropolis. (Figure 2.10)

Speer’s approach to urban planning seemed comparable or even to have its roots in Ernst May’s ribbon city schemes or Leonidovs Magnetogorsk, where functions were located apart in several ribbons or sectors: manufacturing, services, recreation, housing etc, as reflected in Speer’s planning for the ‘Berliner Südstadt’ of 1939.  

What made Speer’s scheme of the axis, also called ‘Germania’, different from previous designs, was the fact that it was not based on purely functional issues but rather on the desire to create a “monumental and spiritual experience” of seven kilometers length and 156 meters width, a “ritual passage” which though, could also be seen as a function; using architecture for an ideological statement; a concerted effort to surpass the old envied rival Paris (the only major city occupied by German military forces during the

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24 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 185
25 Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.83
war that was left mostly unharmed) - a street longer and broader than Champs-Elysées, with a triumphal arch ten times as big as Arc de Triomphe.

The crossaxis scheme by Speer abandoned the older zoning law for Berlin of 1926, which still intended radial growth, in favor of a city that would grow in a linear fashion.

As soon as the National-Socialist rulers had established themselves, the Potsdamer Platz became more and more important as a stage for representation; the Olympic games of 1936, the 700 year anniversary of Berlin, party rallies, state receptions; the Platz became the true gate to the city, due to its infrastructural importance. The necessity to express the 'new order' also caused the only 7 years old Reichs chancellery on Vosstrasse to be replaced by Speer's design, a 1260 feet long building, (Figure 2.11) completed after one year of planning and construction\(^{26}\) with "4,500 workers in two shifts a day"\(^{27}\) in the winter, 1938.

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\(^{26}\) This is still the myth of how fast the Reichskanzlei has been designed and built in only one year. Anyhow, recent studies (Angela Schönberger, Die Neue Reichskanzlei, Mann Verlag, Berlin) have proven that this was a Propaganda move by Hitler and Speer (Speer still kept the lie of the one year planning in his autobiography from 1968) to impress the world with the efficiency of the 'New Germany'. But the decision to built a new Reichskanzlei and its location along Vosstrasse were already made in 1934. The houses along Vosstrasse were purchased between 1935-37, paid for out of a secret fund. In July 1937 the construction drawings for all floors were already drawn in scale 1:100.

\(^{27}\) Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.75
Figure 2.11: Plan of 'Neue Reichskanzlei' by Albert Speer (1934-38)

Figure 2.12: Section of Speer's North South Axis at Potsdamer Platz with 'Runder Platz'
Hitler envisioned the grand axis of ‘Germania’ and its monumental buildings to be completed by 1950; parts of the city had to be demolished to make way. Beginning on the west side of Potsdamer Strasse in 1938, dozens of houses were purchased and torn down. Construction of the first building on the great axis, the ‘Haus des Tourismus’, began immediately at the ‘Runder Platz’, visible from the Potsdamer Platz. (Figure 2.12) The ‘Runder Platz’ was supposed to mark the functional division of the political and symbolic city to the north and the commercial and social city to the south.28

Speer’s plan for the creation of the capital proceeded at full pace until 1942. The “House of Tourism” was ready for occupation in fall of 1941, but it remained the only building to be completed within the Great Axis.

Hitler’s Minister of Armaments, Dr. Fritz Todt, died in a plane crash in February 1942, and Speer was appointed to replace him immediately. Thereafter the demands of war and Speer’s central occupation with it increasingly interfered with the project of ‘Germania’, so that only minor construction work was undertaken, and it eventually came to a complete stop in 1944.29

At the end of April 1945 the attacks of invading Russian troops focussed eventually on the ‘Regierungsviertel’ (Government District), along Wilhelmsstrasse and Wilhelm Platz towards Potsdamer Platz which was called ‘Zitadelle’30 (citadel), until Hitler’s last bastion, the Reichskanzlei, was conquered on May 231.

28 Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.85
29 Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.97
30 1945, In der Reichskanzlei, by Ernst Schenck, p.192
31 On this day the famous hoisting of the red Russian flag on top of the Reichstag took place. The forces took it mistakingly for the center of Nazism. They totally missed to celebrate the seizure of the Reichskanzlei.
2f. Ground Zero

On May 2 1945, after Germany's surrender, the negotiations begun where the Potsdamer Strasse crossed the Landwehrkanal, and the total capitulation was in full effect on May 8th. The victorious Super Powers divided the city into four sectors. The area around Potsdamer Platz, in immediate proximity to Hitler's chancellery and bunker, had suffered most severely in the last days of the war.

Clean up on site continued until 1949. (Figure 2.13) Soon afterwards the area was filled with life again. The Russian, the British and the American sectors connected at the Platz, enabling a flourishing black market.

The Platz was not only a place where the allied sectors connected, but also where confrontations took place after the beginning of the 'Cold War'. The revolution of East-Berlin workers in June 1953, that was suppressed bloodily by Russian tanks, took place here as well. The Columbus-Haus, that caught fire in the riot, was eventually demolished in 1956, even though the damage was minor; but "the city was dying along its division"32, and the East German authorities decided to demolish all the buildings on their triangular peninsula of land, projecting into West-Berlin (the so called 'Lenné-Triangle').

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32 Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.147
Otherwise there were attempts and thoughts to rebuild Berlin right from 1945 on. In August 1946 an exhibition with the title ‘Berlin plant’ opened the discussion for reconstruction on a broader basis. The exhibition was the result of weekly meetings of a committee of architects appointed by the Allies according to the motto ‘Neuer Städtebau dargestellt am Beispiel Berlins’ (new urbanism shown at the example of Berlin).

But the reconstruction of the city was difficult, since the four Allies forbid the reconstruction Berlins as a capital. The head of the city’s Department for Construction and Housing, Hans Scharoun, the leading member of the ‘Planungskollektiv’, understood the destruction of the city as “a catharsis, a chance to get away from the city of the 19th century”. He suggested to shape Berlin according to the ‘Charter of Athens’, but at the same time he rejected a radical ‘ex nihilio’ urbanism and suggested a more integrative approach. Scharoun was also a former member of the modernist architecture group ‘Der Ring’ during the Weimarer Republik (among its members were Mendelsohn, the Tauts, Häring, Mies and Gropius).

32 quoted in “Hans Scharoun”, by Peter Pfankuch, p.153
34 quoted in “Hans Scharoun”, by Peter Pfankuch, p.151
35 Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.60
Figure 2.13: Potsdamer Platz (1946)

Figure 2.14: Stadtlandschaft (City Landscape) by Hans Scharoun. (around 1940)
Hans Scharoun had only a few commissions during the war, but did not leave Germany because he could not imagine to work anywhere else. Between 1939 and 1945 he went into inner immigration; “Everyday I sketched, designed and wrote. (Figure 2.14) I worked out of an instinct of self preservation, and also out of a necessity to deal with the shape of the future”\textsuperscript{36}

Scharoun’s ‘Planungskollektiv’ initiated a ‘Kollektivplan’ for Berlin, that relied on a cityscape consisting of four ‘functional ribbons’: city, culture, residential and working; these linear systems would follow the topography of the landscape, the valley of the river Spree.

These ideas of linear city-scapes were not only related to the ideas of the ‘Charter of Athens’, but also a continuation of Speer’s ribbon-cities of the late 1930’s as well.

But in distinction to Speer’s ideas the ‘Kollektivplan’ rejected any hierarchies or axis; all city parts were supposed to be equal and connected to each other with a regular network of infrastructure, since the city of Berlin was “fallen apart into its singular quarters or body parts.”\textsuperscript{37}

Max Taut proposed a plan for a ‘vermutliche Stadtkernbildung Berlins’ (probable development for the city center) in 1946, in which he envisioned the metropolis as a ‘Landschaftsstadt’ (city in rural landscape), that mostly consisted of single family houses.

Scharoun’s conservative successor in the city office, Karl Bonatz proposed the ‘Neuen Plan für Berlin’, in which he tried to reorganize the city more modestly; a

\textsuperscript{36} quoted in “Hans Scharoun”, by Peter Pfankuch, p.121
\textsuperscript{37} quoted in “Hans Scharoun”, by Peter Pfankuch, p.153
combination of radial and circular streets, and the integration of Leipziger and Potsdamer Platz. The "Gross-Berlin Kompositionsplan Zentrum mit Hauptstrassenetz" (composite plan for Greater-Berlin with network of major streets) from 1953 shows a still unified Berlin, that respects the traditional fabric of the city and the markers within its context. But it seemed to be fictitious, since both West and East developed separate city centers. The Western development occurred around the Kurfürstendamm, the Berlin equivalent for the Champs-Elysees, and the Eastern development concentrated mostly around Alexanderplatz in Berlin-Mitte; and this urban mitosis weakened the Friedrichstadt and made it lose its old central role in the cities' fabric.

2g. Two Cities

But against all odds of an increasing ideological separation of East and West the idea of unity still had importance for the city: so in 1957, when the International Urban Design Competition 'Hauptstadt Berlin' (Capital Berlin) was initiated by the West-German Ministry of Housing. This competition was considered as a gesture to reach out towards the East; an attempt to reconnect the two German States that existed separately since 1949.\(^\text{38}\)

But since the Cold War started, the ideological gap between the former World War II Allies USA and USSR grew bigger and bigger, and the idea of Berlin as a German capital became less and less disturbing, since each Super Power tried to develop its share

\(^{38}\) Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.62
of Germany as an ally against the other. Therefore the major requirement of the 
Hauptstadt Berlin competition of 1957 was to embody the Berlin Mitte programmatically 
as the center for a new Berlin, preparing it for tasks of a future democratic capital and 
metropolis. The ring of the 'Stadtautobahn' (city highway) defined the site of the 
competition. Among the few requirements was to keep the important historical buildings 
in the inner city, along Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden.

Le Corbusier participated in the 'Hauptstadt Berlin' competition but got rejected 
because he denied any context. The architects Sprengelin, Eggeling and Pempelfort won 
the first prize. They responded to the existing fabric in general, but the area around 
Potsdamer Platz became totally dissolved. This concept of an 'open green city scape' showed significance in the second price, given to Hans Scharoun. He dissolved several 
areas of the historic city plan in favor of a parkscape, an idea that related back to his 
original 'Kollektivplan' of 1946. Scharoun kept the geometry of the Leipziger Platz, but 
transformed it into an urban plaza with separated traffic. The third prize was given to A. 
and P. Smithson with Sigmond-Wonke. Their proposal suggested a "redesigned 
infrastructural grid for the Friedrichstadt, overlayed with freely shaped pedestrian areas 
flowing through".

39 Ein Stück Großstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M. Lampugnani, p. 63 
40 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 212
Figure 2.15: Masterplan Berlin by Sprengelin and Pempelfort (1957)

Figure 2.16: Berlin Proposal by Smithson and Sigmund-Wonke (1957)
In 1958 East Germany responded to the ‘Hauptstadt Berlin’ competition of the West. The Magistrat of East-Berlin and the government of the GDR announced a competition with the long title: ‘Ideenwettbewerb zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung des Zentrums der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin’ (competition of ideas for the socialistic reconstruction of the center of the capital of the German Democratic Republic, Berlin).

The competition was limited to the area of the GDR and became the basis for future plannings of the Eastern city center. One example is the proposal of Hermann Henselmann, the designer of the Stalin Allee. He inspired also the symbol of East-Berlin, the ‘Fernsehturm’41 (TV-Tower) from 1969. Henselmann’s Berlin scheme fades out towards the west; Potsdamer and Leipziger Platz did not exist any more, giving an outlook on future developments of the Cold War.

Beginning in August 1961, the separation of the city became physical fact, when the Berlin Wall was erected, starting at the Potsdamer Platz. The Platz became the symbol for the divided city. What had started in the East, the systematical demolition of all buildings along the wall, continued on the Western side as well. The only remaining buildings of former Potsdamer Platz were the Weinhaus Huth and the Hotel Esplanade.

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41 A funny anecdote about Berlin’s tallest building is worth telling: The spherical shaped restaurant and observation platform on top of the tower is cladded with stainless steel. The reflections of the evening sun on the cladding look like a gigantic cross. Many techniques have been applied to it to keep the symbol of glorious (atheistic) Socialism clear of christian symbols, but without any success.
2h. The Kulturforum

The first major architectural intervention after the war near Potsdamer Platz was Hans Scharoun's 'Neue Philharmonie' (1956-63). The original site for the building during the competition in 1956 was the 'Bundesallee' (Federal Boulevard), a representational street connected to West-Berlin's major street, the Kurfürstendamm. But due to "difficulties to integrate the complex into the dense urban fabric, the 'Berliner Abgeordnetenhaus' (city parliament) decided to locate the Philharmonic (Figure 2.17) in the no man's land at the south edge of the Tiergarten (Figure 2.18), which would follow the 'Hauptstadt Berlin' competition from 1957, that suggested cultural institutions in this area"\(^{42}\), and "to renew life and order in this center of devastation."\(^{43}\)

Scharoun suggested a pedestrian pocket with piazza, shops, galleries and cafes, relating it to Stüler's reconstructed Matthäikirche.

The Berliner Abgeordnetenhaus decided in 1963 "to establish a cultural center at this crystallization-point"\(^{44}\), since most of the cultural institutions of the city remained in Berlin-Mitte, inaccessible for the Western population of Berlin due to the physical separation of the city when the wall was built in 1961-- the loss had to be replaced. A 'Kamermusiksaal' (chamber music hall), the 'Staatsbibliothek' (Federal Library) and several museums were proposed.

\(^{42}\) quoted in "Hans Scharoun", by Peter Pfankuch, p.282
\(^{43}\) Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.215
\(^{44}\) quoted in "Hans Scharoun", by Peter Pfankuch, p.283
Figure 2.17: Neue Philharmonie (New Philharmonic) by Hans Scharoun (1957-1963)

Figure 2.18: Berlin Wall at Potsdamer Platz, looking north towards Brandenburg Gate
The original location for the Philharmonic was closer to the Potsdamer Platz, next to the Hotel Esplanade, but was moved further to the west to the Matthäikirche because of a planned north-south highway, the ‘Westtangente’. The ‘Flächennutzungsplan’ (land use plan) by Senatsbaudirektors Werner Düttmann of 1965 shows a ‘Stadtautobahn’ next to Potsdamer Platz, and a “cultural ribbon” along it, according to the familiar idea of the “city band”.\(^{45}\)

The next building on the site was Mies’ ‘Neue Nationalgalerie’, commissioned in 1962, ground breaking in 1965 and completed in 1967. The design was inspired by his original scheme for the Cuban headquarters of Bacardi Rum, and is “an abstraction of reality more extreme than anything previously seen around the Potsdamer Platz”.\(^{46}\) The site is located south of the Matthäikirche, right next to the former site of the Haus des Deutschen Tourismus, originally designed by Speer’s planning-team architects Böttcher and Dierksmeyer.

Hans Scharoun’s design for the ‘Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz’ from 1964 oriented itself towards the other buildings of the site, creating an ensemble with Philharmonic, Matthäikirche and Neue Nationalgalerie. The building responded to the cities’ ‘Flächennutzungsplan’ (land use plan), shielding off the planned city highway through locating archives and offices at the eastern (back)side of the building. But the consequences of locating the 750 feet long library with its back facing towards the Wall, were severe: The library blocked off the old Potsdamer Strasse; a symbolic gesture that

\(^{45}\) Ein Stück Großstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.64
\(^{46}\) Berlin, Politics of Order, by Alan Balfour, p.225
expressed that one came to terms with Berlin’s separation into East and West. The ‘Umgehungsstrasse B96’, the beltway that led around the Staatsbibliothek, reconnected to the old Potsdamer Strasse where it crosses the Landwehrkanal.

In 1973 the Senate of Berlin purchased the site of the former Potsdamer Bahnhof from the GDR, and immediately afterwards the remains of the buildings along Linkstrasse and Köthener Strasse were demolished, among them the former famous entertainment complex Haus Vaterland. In the same year a competition took place, the ‘Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb Landwehrkanal - Tiergartenviertel’, but without further consequences except a recommendation “to keep the area around the Potsdamer Platz open for future developments.”

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47 Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.65
Figure 2.19: New National Gallery by Mies, formerly Bacardi Headquarters (1965)

Figure 2.20: IBA Masterplan by Kleihues (1987)
2i. IBA

From 1977 on the Senate of Berlin proposed the 'Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin' (IBA). The 'Berliner Architekten und Ingenieur Verein' coined the term 'Zentraler Bereich' (Central Area), which defined an area between the center of West-Berlin and the eastern part of Kreuzberg, that eventually became the site of the IBA.

But these plannings represented a shift in the agenda of Berlin planning, since the quarters south of Tiergarten and Südliche Friedrichstadt "are not any more designated as 'Hauptstädtische Zentrumsfunktionen' (central function of the capital) but rather 'Mischgebiete' (mixed quarters) at the edge of West-Berlin."\(^{48}\) This could be considered as eventually recognizing the reality of the city being divided; an attempt of planning based on a fact rather than political agenda. -But the area around the Potsdamer Platz remained still untouched.

In 1980 Leon Krier suggested a redefinition of the area around Matthäikirche, the Kulturforum, which he saw as the Western counterpart of the 'Museumsinsel' in Berlin Mitte; the Kulturforum floating in midst of a park scape, that connected to Tiergarten. At the same time he proposed to move the Westtangente away from the Staatsbibliothek closer to the Wall.

In the meantime many citizens' action groups opposed the Westtangente as being unnecessary. The city highway was also questioned by the IBA. Josef Paul Kleihues (Berlin's Philip Johnson), the director of the Bauausstellung 1984, suggested a boulevard

\(^{48}\) Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lampugnani, p.65
instead, that connecting new residential quarters in the south (Tiergarten and Südliche
Friedrichstadt) with the parts of the city north of Spreebogen on one hand, and Potsdamer
and Leipziger Platz with the Kulturforum as a counterweight on the other. But even
though Kleihues considered his scheme as a conceptual plan, suggesting long term
possibilities for the Zentrale Bereich, the Senate of the city decided the void should be
“left untouched as an open and green center.”49

In 1983 a competition ‘Internationales Gutachten Kulturforum’ (International
Report Kulturforum) was proposed to stimulate a further development of the Forum in
connection with the north-south traffic. Submissions by Hans Hollein and Oswald Ungers
suggested further projects for the site, while maintaining its heterogeneity.

Between 1985 and 1988 Potsdamer Platz was the site of a magnetic train
prototype, but after an accident its use was discontinued.

In 1989 the Senate of West-Berlin decided to continue the idea of an open green
space in the Zentralen Bereich and make it a part of the ‘Bundesgartenschau’ (National
Park and Garden Exhibition) in 1995.

2j. Unified Under One Star

The Reunification of the two German States took place after the weakened East
German government had responded to the demonstrations of its citizens in November of
1989. This lead to the first official exchange on November 12th, when the Mayors of both

49 Ein Stück Großstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M.Lamplughani, p.65
Berlins met at the opening of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz, *(Figure 2.21)* “where the old heart of Berlin used to beat and it will beat again.”\(^{50}\)

But the heart was already determined to beat in spring of 1989, when the board of the Daimler-Benz Holding under the chairmanship of Edzart Reuter expressed interest to put the headquarters of their service division on the site between Kulturforum and the Wall. There were two reasons for that decision: first, the movement of fabrication and administration from Western Germany to Berlin was highly subsidized by the Government, since attracting companies to West-Berlin as an island of liberal capitalism in a sea of GDR Socialism was very difficult, and the German Federal Government tried to make Berlin more interesting for investors; secondly, Mr. Reuter was very interested in Berlin, since his father was the first Mayor of Berlin after the liberation of Nazism.

There were rumors that the city administration of Berlin had sold out its historical center to a car maker after the fall of the wall, but the decision had been made before the Reunification in 1988, and the land was sold in spring 1990.

But protests against the headquarters caused the city to demand a more diverse use of the site, responding to its location and significance.

In August 1991 the ‘Städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb Potsdamer Platz’ has been initiated to investigate the possibilities of the site for a diverse program with administration, retail, residential, (the city required a share of 20% for apartments) culture and entertainment.

\(^{50}\) West Berlins Mayor Walter Momper as stated in *New York Times* Monday, November 13
Figure 2.21: Removal of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz in January 1990

Figure 2.22: Masterplan for Potsdamer Platz by Hilmer und Sattler (1991)
The Munich located firm of Hilmer und Sattler won the first prize with a scheme that “stands in the continuity of the European city.”\textsuperscript{51} (Figure 2.22) It is to a certain extent a scheme according to the term ‘critical reconstruction’, coined in the mid 80’s by IBA director Kleihues, relating strongly to traditional ideas of urbanism with an emphasis on public streetscape.

The competition was followed by a period of public discussions with city officials and investors. The investors had commissioned a masterplan by Richard Rogers, independent of the cities’ ‘Städtbaulicher Ideenwettbewerb Potsdamer Platz’, which resulted in a reworking of the Hilmer und Sattler scheme in cooperation with the investors. Based on this process two ‘Realisierungswettbewerbe’ (Building Competitions) were commissioned, one for Sony, and the other for Debis; the engineering corp. Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) joined the site some time later.

In Summer 1992 the juries decided for the masterplans: Sony for Helmut Jahn and Debis for Renzo Piano Building Workshop; Rogers, Isozaki, Lauber und Wöhr, Moneo and Kollhoff are further architects that work within the masterplan of Piano.

The ground breaking ceremony took place in the beginning of 1995, and Europe’s largest construction site is supposed to last until December 1998 -- and then- according to Berlins Senator of Construction Hans Stimmann ‘ein Stück Stadt’ (a piece of city) is supposed to be “ready for christmas shopping.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.152
\textsuperscript{52} Daimler Benz: Potsdamer Platz brochure, p.9
3. The Potsdamer Platz today

3a. Resurrection or Simulation?

The groundbreaking ceremony took place at Potsdamer Platz on October 29, 1994 after four planning and competition stages: an Urban Design Competition in October 1991, Second Stage Competition in September 1992, Masterplan in April 1993 and eventually the Realization Planning with construction documents from March 1994 on; and the largest construction site in Europe became reality, stretched out for two miles, and supposed to last four years.

Potsdamer Platz, the famous void, the former site of Germany's first traffic light (imported from the USA), in proximity to the former site of Speer's Reichskanzlei and, until recently, an open meadow between the two Super Powers USA and USSR, represented through their satellites East and West Germany.

"What struck me first in Berlin was not energy but emptiness. This city that is supposed to be the capital of the new Europe begins with a void, with the startling discovery that its center is 17 acres of weed and debris, [...] a sprawling vacant lot."  

The groundbreaking ceremony on Potsdamer Platz indicates the end of the void, ‘normal’ German history is resumed by filling it in an attempt to continue the ‘good’ history, that was interrupted by Hitler.

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Therefore Berlin’s architects of today are drowning in a flood of commissions and totally fixated on the drawing-board, ponder frequently pre-determined ground-plans, sections and structures, and try to locate their leeway left for their designs.\textsuperscript{54}

But it is not necessarily the pace of change, that seems questionable, but rather how things are pursued. Even though for some people changes are not fast enough,\textsuperscript{55} The problem is how this change is happening, and how it is controlled and directed. But unfortunately architectural debates are limited only to how many stories a building is allowed to have or the design of ‘suitable’ facades, may be “spray-on elevations”\textsuperscript{56}, occasionally assuming somewhat grotesque dimensions; as if facade designs (Figure 3.1) are likely to decide whether Germany is going to relapse into fascism in the next few years or not.

The city’s Director of Construction, Stimmann, proposed what he calls ‘Critical Reconstruction’ as a guideline for urban planning, intending to eliminate fashions and speculations in Berlin. “The Unification of Germany would allow a return to a ‘Berlin Tradition’ after Nazism and decades of heteronomy through American and Russian Identities.”\textsuperscript{57}

Erich Mendelsohn, in the 1920’s the most successful architect in Berlin [Balfour], designer of the Columbus Haus on Potsdamer Platz, states in his manifesto ‘Synthesis’ in 1928: “The history of America is the history of maximum economic development, the

\textsuperscript{54} Werk,Bauen,Wohnen, 1/2 1995 p.21
\textsuperscript{55} After being asked about the present emotions in Berlin, Ulrich Roller-Momina, the city’s Senator for Culture stated: “After the euphoria of 1989, we are now in the desert. We have to march through to the other end--but the wall in the mind is higher than the real wall was.” New York Times, Febr. 5, 1995, p. 46
\textsuperscript{56} Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.4
\textsuperscript{57} Werk,Bauen,Wohnen, 1/2 1995 p.23
history of the new world is based on technology and realistic intelligence. The history of Russia is the history of the unparalleled leap from absolutism and maximum agrarian power to state socialism. [...] Hence for both of them, Russia and America, technology is the common soil. [...] Europe will mediate between these two poles of the creative will...”

According to Stimmann, Berlin architecture was defeated, but now, in a sense of ‘Dunkirk’-urbanism, architecture casts Modernism as a “learning experience, from which its practitioners can be ‘born again’, baptized by total immersion in ornament.”

There are many Berlin traditions, among them Gilly, Taut, Mies and Mendelsohn; but Stimmann prefers a stilistic blend of Behrens and Schinkel: “rather disciplined, Prussian, restrained in color and out of stone, rather straight than curved.”

The schizophrenic denial of Potsdamer Platz’s history of the period between 1933 and 1945 and all ‘after-effects’ - the separation of the city, cutting the site into margins of East and West between 1961 - 1989; as well as for example ‘socialistic’ names of streets in the Eastern part of Berlin were changed back to their Prussian names soon after 1989, history undone within the process of Unification; the ‘history- laden’ void is replaced with high class shopping and corporate images. (Figure 3.2)

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58 as stated in: Programs and Manifestos of 20th century architecture, by Ulrich Conrads, p.106/107
59 Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.171  Pawley refers to the W.W.II Battle of Dunkirk, where the defeated French and British Forces embarked to England to avoid total capitulation, and this event was eventually coined as a victory.
60 Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.11
61 Werk, Bau, Wohnen, 1/2 1995 p.21
Figure 3.1: Design for a house according to ‘Critical Reconstruction’ 

Figure 3.2: Suburban Family in Daimler-Benz presentation for Potsdamer Platz
History is never selective or formalistic. It is related to experience, it is alive, is experienced. History is not invented in history books; but there is a selective understanding of history in the process of the competition for the Potsdamer Platz, most documentation material from the senate of Berlin showed the state of the site in the 1930's, lines and structures that were valid half a century ago.\(^{62}\)

Berlin's good history is kept, like the Avus, (the Autobahn loop around Berlin), and the bad one is extinguished, annihilated, an 'Auschwitz urbanism', for the sake of a 'larger idea' of what Berlin is supposed to be, unpleasant periods of history are erased.

So on Potsdamer Platz as well, where the two remains of pre-war Berlin, the Huth winery (1912) (Figure3.3) and the abandoned Hotel Esplanade (1907/08, used for punk concerts until recently) suddenly become architectural landmarks, worthy to be preserved and rebuilt for 50 million marks and a fifteen story student housing building from the seventies is torn down without further notice. [But noteworthy is the fact that none of the above mentioned buildings have made it into the 500 page 'architectural guide to Berlin'\(^{63}\)]

The roots for amnesia, leading to selective urbanism, can be located in the development of the German Nation, the Nationalstaat, after 1871. Germany was the country in Central Europe that got a relatively slow start in the boosting economic growth of the second half of the 19th century, but eventually caught up and grew twice as fast; the population of Berlin doubled between the 1870's and the beginning of World War I.

\(^{62}\) Radix-Matrix, Daniel Libeskind, Prestel 1992 p. 147

\(^{63}\) Architekturführer Berlin, by Wörner, Mollenschott und Hüter, [Reimer, Berlin 1991]
Figure 3.3: Huth winery, the last building on Potsdamer Strasse (1990)

Figure 3.4: Striking workers in Berlin at Friedrichstrasse (1929)
The mechanization of manufacturing processes around 1900 caused the loss of half the jobs (Figure 3.4) previously occupied by craftsmen; the fast ‘attack’ of economic and cultural changes, that threw Germany from Biedermeier into Modernity, required radical ruptures in society and caused ‘Weltschmerz’ (total pain or suffering) in wide parts of society. This pain was, unlike in other European countries, expressed in an undistinctive and exalted manner, which responded to fears and disgusts for a reality with romantic desires for a vanishing arcadian order,⁶⁴ (reflecting Rousseau’s tradition of ‘devastation’ through civilizing processes)

A perception of the world, that despised the ‘side effects’ of progress; fragmentation, diversification, mobilization, the uprooting of society simultaneously to taking advantage of Modernity, led to a fear for deprivation of the mystique of the world through Modernity and a ‘future pessimism’.

"The pattern of thinking in town planning in the [...] post-war period provides no way for us into the future. No true city can emerge from the building requirements and desires which may appeal to private and state investors at one particular moment, or from the contributions added on by individual architects who take only themselves for reference.

No city can emerge from wishes of politicians or individual citizens. The vision of a new Berlin, arising from the ruins of the old, has proved to be an error with serious consequences. The requirement for the capital, the financial and economic metropolis of tomorrow is to respect the historical strata of the city, which it is replacing and interpreting in a new way." (Stimmann)⁶⁵

But how can this ‘new old city’ emerge, when the decision making is informed by an ideology of the ‘right’ city, and how is it possible to respect the historical strata through replacement?

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⁶⁴Joachim C. Fest, Adolf Hitler, p. 138 (die grosse Angst)
⁶⁵Berlin’s Senator for Building and Construction, as stated in the urban structural plan for Berlin. [692]
How can this "vision of a new Berlin, arising from the ruins of the old", be defined as an "error with serious consequences"?

Stimmann's criticism refers to the reversal of the figure ground of the Berlin perimeter Block, in 1950's and 60's urbanism, when the object buildings replaced the block. This 'fluidity' opposed the traditional 19th century city scape, but is the consequence a 'still-born Phoenix', in the shape of a Biedermeier extrusion? The complex and dialectic relationship of tradition and modernization cannot be reduced to the iconography of plans and elevations. When historical continuity is only limited to a reconstruction of an image of the city, history is rather destroyed than saved because it denies the forces that shape it. As Walter Benjamin puts it; "All concretization (Verdinglichung) is forgetting."66

Potsdamer Platz being a realm between past and future makes it a place of the presence, according to the equation past plus future equals present [presence]. This should not be understood as an encouragement for monuments devoted to the loss or wailing walls for a sacrificed history, but rather remaining within the concept of a fluidum between two states, neither solid nor gas; allowing the psychological presence to be present as a void, a state of mind, desire, grief, whatever, that eventually interacts with the physical presence, (Figure 3.5) appropriating what seems to be necessary for the programming of the site. (as opposed to a total replacement of the past through the image of itself, creating an amnesia of its reality)

66 Walter Benjamin; Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner Technischen Reproduzierbarkeit, p.
Figure 3.5: Potsdamer Platz looking east towards Leipziger Platz (1964)

Figure 3.6: Billboard at Potsdamer Platz (Mai 1995)
Stimmann assumes the power of disposal (Verfügungsgewalt [Libeskind]) for history, which he uses to establish his 'Critical Reconstruction', which is overly uncritical towards the history of architecture, because it concretizes history as imagery, blurring the boundaries between old and new, therefore being nostalgic.

This nostalgia has shaped a deep desire to reconquer the lost territories of Potsdamer Platz by any means.

‘Loss creates desire, significance lies in the mind and imagination’ [Balfour]

‘Wo ist denn der Potsdamer Platz... Ich kann ihn nicht finden... Ich höre nicht auf zu suchen bis ich den Potsdamer Platz gefunden habe’ [Himmel über Berlin]

But what are the mechanisms of desire that suggest the re-use of this site as a commercial district/center, is it a focal point of power, a monument in the 19th century sense;

What are the implications for creating a center in a city that looses its edges, a city that is shaped through centri-pedal forces since the straight jacket of the Wall came down, now becoming somewhat similar to Paris, Milan or Madrid with neatly preserved downtowns and proliferous fringes?

Only political pressure could increase the amount of residential units in the Potsdamer Platz scheme up to 20% of the total square footage, but these units are build for the highest standards, which makes them almost unaffordable. All those that hoped for a city planning that takes advantage of the knowledge gained through todays use and appreciation of the 19th century perimeter block, or how this knowledge could be translated into todays architecture, will be disappointed.
‘Learning from Paris or Milan or Madrid’, is not going to happen, mistakes are going to be repeated, as if the discussions of the 1980’s and the Berlin IBA never ever happened, which meant a high residential component in inner cities.

Dozens of suburban satellite towns are being built for 10,000 to 30,000 inhabitants along the fringes of Berlin, to leave downtown ‘unharmed’ by disturbances from contemporary life. This inner city is reconstituted as coherent ‘European city’ for strollers and tourists; full of life until the stores, offices and museums close; and that is--unfortunately--very early in the day.

The construction for the corporate headquarters for Debis (Daimler - Benz Data Systems) and Sony Europe, (designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop in Collaboration with Christoph Kohlbecker and Helmut Jahn) have begun. The design follows the guidelines of the Hilmer and Sattler masterplan, which makes an attempt to break the corporate monostructure down into smaller hybrid buildings, that somewhat try to reassemble the scale of a pre-war city.

But this is not a re-writing of the site, a re-use, palimpsest, (Figure 3.6) but a simulation of an image of what is supposed to be the “right city”.

Vittorio M. Lampugnani, the director of the German Architecture Museum, stated in an interview in the weekly ‘Der Spiegel’ that “a chaotic world, pluralism and heterogenic culture” would suggest a condition of complete sinfulness, an apocalyptic state, out of which only a ‘Neue Einfachheit’ (new simplicity) in architecture would point a way out.” - a rhetoric that seems related to protestant ideas.

Another Berlin architectural critic is Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm:
"The definition of city is reduced to a term of vernacular architecture. The set of established rules (archetypes) suggests a historically founded order; since it is there already, it has not to be invented."

Hoffmann-Axthelm talks about building a consensus, based on history. But how about the 18th century, when Frederic the Great welcomed the Huguenots that fled from France, or the cultural and ethnic diversity during the Imperial and Weimar Berlin, with 175,000 Jewish citizens; or during the Cold War of the 20th century, when Berlin was a symbol of freedom for many Eastern-Europeans (and actually many West-Germans, too)?

Berlin is historically shaped by its heterogenity, a state described as entity that is assembled of unequal individuals (Duden dictionary). This heterogeneity is essential for individual freedom; a less ordered and more diversified urban and historical environment allows a higher amount of personal mobility and also a higher acceptance of disturbances and the other.

Only 5% of all constructions in and around Berlin are informed by ‘Critical Reconstruction’; downtown sites like the Potsdamer Platz are among these exceptions; it took six years from purchasing the land by Daimler Benz in 1988 until the groundbreaking in 1994.

Large Corporations are spending billions of Dollars for construction in the boom town Berlin, but the majority of proposed projects are ignored by city planners; and

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67 NZZ of February 3, 1995, p.63
68 Stadtstruktur und Stadtgestaltung, by Gerhard Curdes p.177
beyond an interest in ‘spray-on’ elevations for selected projects like Potsdamer Platz these do not particularly differ from what happens in the burbs.

The German Government with its 300,000 employees and eventually an estimated one million people are prophecized to move to Berlin within the next 15 years; an estimated 2,000 billion Marks worth of construction is proposed for the metropolitan area, and most of these projects are largely unharmed by discussions beyond how many floors a ‘good Berlin building’ is supposed to have or ‘Critical Reconstruction’.

These constructions are hardly driven by any urban planning directive or theory. It seems rather that the profession of architects and planners is wasting a unique chance to take advantage of its tools to lay out a notwork for the city based on an agenda of providing an urban framework for the 21st century, but unfortunately the focus is on recreating the city as a mirage of itself, since the planning efforts relate to Hobrecht’s era and not to Stimmann’s own. Reminiscing an urban tradition of the 19th century does not inform the Berlin of today. Has Architecture lost its social and cultural significance as an active component of our environment? (Architecture is obsolete in 1990)\textsuperscript{69}

But what is the driving force behind this attempt to resurrect what remains surface beautification; behind this agenda of urban (non) design, mainly represented through Stimmann, imposing materials, proportions, height, scale, depth etc. etc. of any building in historical context according to the so called Berliner Block, and a maximum the roof line of 22 meters, the plan-extruded Prussian instant city?

\textsuperscript{69} Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.11
Berlin is and actually was even before W.W.II a multi-centered metropolis, a fragmented body without borders. Martin Wagner, the Director of City Planning in the 1920's stated that the heterogenic metropolis Berlin is not controllable as a whole. His interventions into the city fabric were always punctual, limited and within the larger metropolitan context.

Other forms of large planning, entire cities, city quarters or city centers did always fail, because urban reality is more complex than idealized images or objects.70

What actually happens at the Potsdamer Platz, one of many voids in the city, appears to be contrary to the heterogenic and non-hierarchical fabric of Berlin; Potsdamer Platz was never the focal point of urban life or representation of the city, but rather one of many centers of life and foremost a transportation node.

The notion of a typical Berlin architecture seems to distract from a unique situation that could suggest alternative investigations or ideas for an urbanity of the future. Maybe braveness to save the 'central void' for later generations instead of historical city planning.

Does the re-programming of Potsdamer Platz with private developments like office parks and malls respond to future needs of the city? The masterplan proposes a private quarter, that opposes ideas of a metropolitan life. Piano's 'Piazza', neatly presented in colorful renderings to appeal to the public, hides the fact that his site close by the high security Government district is a forbidden one. Downscaled buildings and a mocked urban imagery of 'European City' as a diverse and complex fabric only blurs the

70 Werk, Bauen, Wohnen, 1/2 1995 p.27
actual ownership; a city quarter owned by a handful of corporations. The city becomes private property, freedom of movement is limited.

Looking at the Potsdamer Platz as a place for architecture means two things: what are the implications of using and reoccupying this realm, and to what extent does history inform occurring activity;

And how relevant is the constitution of an urban center (= hard core) (*Figure 3.7*) for a sprawling city like Berlin; is it necessary as a 'Staedtebauliche Ordnungsfigur'\(^{71}\) (urban organizer), that works against the dispersion of "parts and interests"; in a metropolis close to the 21st century/global village/communication highway etc. realities.

\(^{71}\) D. Hoffmann-Axthelm, in "the city needs rules, the architecture fantasy" Arch+ 122
Figure 3.7: Medieval core of Berlin, imposed in city plan of 1900

Figure 3.8: Panoramic rendering of Potsdamer Platz in 2005, looking southwest
3b. Theme Park

The World headquarters of Debiis, the Daimler Benz Media and Services Division, Sony Electronics European Headquarters and Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) European Headquarters are the main occupants of the site.

The primary reason for the use of this prominent location is a fear of leaving a void in the city. An unfinished site or non-occupied space in the ‘new capital of Europe’ would counterattack the image that one has of oneself as successful and producing. *(Figure 3.8)*

Secondly, there is a tendency in the ‘industrialized’ world for an accumulation of economic power of never known dimensions. The era of nations seems to have come to an end, and the quasi monopoly multinational corporations take over. *(this is not intended to state that the term nation, as shaped in the 19th century, is outdated, but the apparatus’ of global acting businesses are more and more controlling the actual decision making on most levels of societies as in the case of Potsdamer Platz, where the companies made their ‘bargain of the century’)*

These Multi-National Companies do not replace the administrations or bureaucracies through revolution, but rather through a substitution of services, that previously have been provided by the former. Control of space in Heidegger’s sense of ‘Raum’, is becoming more and more obsolete, and the public realm seems to slip away into virtuality. Terms like ‘electronic village’ or ‘informational superhighway’ reflect this

\[72\text{ Werk,Bauen,Wolken, }1/2\text{ 1995 p.29}\]
shift into a different dimension. - And this dimension is controlled through a network of multi-faceted giants like Warner or Turner Media in the US and RTL in Europe.

Protestantism, Romanticism, Modernism, Internet.- A chronology, that describes the development of the western world since Martin Luther nailed his 99 thesis to the door of the cathedral in Wittenberg.

The internet is the elysium of the Protestant world, the total simulation (vulgo: elimination) of the flesh, body-denying and physically challenged and deprived of 'Raum', the cable-TV or Internet user seems perfectly predetermined to qualify for the antiseptic Nirvana.

"Wo es war...soll Museum werden" (Where it was...a museum shall be) 73

In his essay "abattoir", Georges Batailles talks about the former slaughter houses (Figure 3.9) of Paris, that were on the site of the Technology Park de La Villette, where a post modern park scape has "dismantled meaning"(Tschumi).

D. Hollier asks in the introduction of "Against Architecture":

"What is hiding under this uncanny park that somehow claims to be the official park of the Uncanny? Or really, what would a labyrinth be without a minotaur: a labyrinth without blood? And, since it is all taking place in real space, in a real city, since this performative loosening of space in a precise spot on the map of Paris, namely La Villette, I am going to take a short detour to the butcher's." 74

There is a dual analogy of 'bloody' history on one hand, and a 'technological' park scape as a contemporary 'counterpart' on the other- on both of the two sites LaVillette in Paris and Potsdamer Platz in Berlin.

73 Denis Hollier in the Introduction of Bataille's "Against Architecture", p.xiv
74 ibid. p. xi
Figure 3.9: Mechanization increased the production of meat (1900)

Figure 3.10: Ultrasound soil profiles of 'Kulturschutt' (cultural debris) at Spreebogen
La Villette was the location of one of the largest “meat factories” of the 19th and 20th century Paris, and Potsdamer Platz was a neighbor of the site for the planning of the biggest blood bath of the 20th century, and its annihilation a direct result of it.

The re-occupation of both sites with technology/culture/museum does after Bataille not represent a re-programming but rather a shift; this reconversion of a harsh expenditure (bloody mess, so to speak; where [human] animals are killed) into a soft expenditure, “where time is killed”.

In an era, where the image replaces the multi-dimensional experience, the blood, the carnal, is ignored, knowledge annihilated, and pasted with the universal panacea of technology and beauty, (according to Bataille the replacement of religion through art; technological art), released from its “cultic foundation” through mechanical reproduction.

[...]Cultural appropriation, this redressing of the repugnant, can be interpreted in the light of Bataille’s theory of depense. This is primarily a theory of the need for loss rather than a theory of loss strictly speaking. It responds to the need to believe that there is a pure loss, that there is a difference between consuming and consummating, that there is lost time and there are waste lands, unproductive expenditures, things one never gets over, sins that cannot be redeemed, garbage that cannot be recycled.

Stimmann’s vision of a new Berlin, that is “arising from the ruins of the old”, has “proved to be an error with serious consequences”, to use his own words against himself; his understanding of old/new Berlin ignores the “memory” of the wastelands, its stratos.

75 ibid p. xv
76 Walter Benjamin: Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner Technischen Reproduzierbarkeit, p.25
77 Denis Hollier in the Introduction of Bataille’s “Against Architecture”, p.xiv
(in the more detailed descriptions of the construction procedures of the Potsdamer Platz it is talked about Kulturshutt, which means cultural debris, that has to be moved off the site) A redemption from history through its sterilisation, the ‘New Simplicity’ (Neue Einfachheit) of rejuvenated architectural style seems accessible.

The ‘byproducts of history’ are reflecting the true nature of their cause, but they are completely separated from presence; a separation of the dirt from the city. A monstrous strategic planning is undertaken by a joint venture of City Senate, clients and the federal Reichsbahn (East German Train Company) and the “Logistikgesellschaft” (Logistics Corporation) to deplace the 16 billion cubic feet of Kulturschutt, deleting up to 16,000 tons per day. (Figure 3.10)

The frenzy of the re-making of a particular site like the Platz expresses a deep desire to unify the counterpoles of complete erasure/destruction/amnesia with the simulation of a particular preferred imagery of past, and it also explains the exclusiveness of the amount of attention that some few locations of the city have gained; opposing the vast majority of construction totally left aside by city authorities.

The creation of completeness and coherence is a desperate attempt to tie down the centrifugal forces, that explode the city of schrapnel Berlin further, since the corset of the Wall has fallen down, and it seems unlikely that this development could be stopped through attempts to achieve salvation from history through disrespecting and denying it. The mechanics of urban sprawl have replaced the corset of the city of monuments, that is about to arise, and this monument is about to erase the memory, so that nothing is left except an ‘Abbild’ (reflection, reproduction).
3c. Reinventing Potsdamer Platz

The machinery, that overruns the 'Heteropolis' Berlin in order to shape it into an "Instant Capital-Metropolis" endangers the open and fragmented texture of the city, the result of history. Berlin was always polycentric, therefore it was even necessary to name the center as ‘Berlin-Mitte’ (Center), so that everybody knew that the historic center was actually the center. In these terms Berlin seems to be very similar to a city like Houston, fragmented and polycentric. But since the Reunification the idea of ‘Mitte’ has regained relevance in Berlin because the galvanizing role of the ‘Capital’.

Current activities in and around Berlin are the results of history, but it seems likely that the historical dimensions that shaped the pre-1989 Berlin were quite different than the ones operating today; the inevitable trajectory of a bomb underlies other criteria than the decision making in a democratic society, where planning can be influenced by elected representatives.

The site of Potsdamer Platz has to be seen within the larger context of Berlin, (Figure 3.11) where it regains its transformal qualities as an interface/traffic node between parts of the city. It has also to be clarified that the ‘Platz’, the square never could have been defined as space in the Kantian sense, embodying the possibility of separation,

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78 Ein Schweizer in Berlin, by Peter Rupli, WBW, Zürich, 1995
because during the period of physical separation into East and West Potsdamer Platz kept his function as a transformator of space, it was a system that connected all into a whole.\footnote{Stim and Dross, Lars Lerup p.4}

The Heteropolis of Berlin, as an assemblage of independently operating systems, relates heavily on the programmatical autonomy of the individual system, quarter etc. But the circumference of the ‘Berlin Hauptstadt’ plannings, of which the project Potsdamer Platz is a part, are problematic because the contradiction of land use and ownership on one hand and a romantic desire for a pedestrian cityscape on the other. It is necessary here not to condemn the necessity of this development but rather to develop strategies how to make these big chunks of instant city easier digestible for the overall fabric.

An appropriate strategy could be to maintain a diverse cityscape through allowing a coexistence of different scales and programs in close proximity of each other. A city quarter can operate as a megashape in terms of its autonomy, but only based on a minimum of diversity of use and program.

According to the Swiss Philosopher Peter Rupli Berlin’s heterogenic topography is threatened through the plannings for the ‘Hauptstadt’.\footnote{Ein Schweizer in Berlin, by Peter Rupli, WBW, Zürich, 1995} -Which is highly unlikely, because it may seem that the idea of an urban core with streets and public spaces is a gross contradiction to the nature of the sprawling city, but it does not ‘threaten’ it. The sprawl will continue to dominate.
Figure 3.11: Masterplan for Berlin  (proposed constructions for the capital until 1998)
But if this new core of the city actually is discrete and sensible, linking itself to the rest of the city as far as possible through infrastructure and program, there is a chance to avoid a secluded core on the site of the former Berlin Wall, where seclusion has manifested itself in the most totalitarian way until the Reunification.
4. The Future of Potsdamer Platz

Die Zivilisation ist das unausweichliche Schicksal einer Kultur

[Oswald Sprengler]81

4a. Trains and Tracks

“Highway to Berlin. Radiotower. Tempo, Initiative, Movement and the Fair. Down there, that’s Berlin. Berlin? The main body is the train, tracks, shops, plants, houses and steel structures. Right here, close to Charlottenburg, but also over there, Lehrter Bahnhof, Anhalter, Potsdam Train. The space that is left over by the trains, the inbetween space, that’s where the houses are, that’s what you call Berlin.

Crazy, such a city, that consists mainly out of shops and tracks, unable to get rid of them, because it needs nourishment and it has to ship all the hammered, crafted and casted things that it makes all over the place.

You were travelling, out of town; didn’t you just say that word: complicated existence? Yes, our complicated existence... You can see it all from the top of the Radiotower82

The city as an organism relied heavily on the mechanics of transportation, and within the city’s network the trains, S-, U-, Regional- and Schnellbahn had the most prominent role until 1945. This is reflected in the fragment of Gabriele Tergit’s short-story ‘Eingewöhnen in Berlin’ (getting used to Berlin), in which it is stated that the infrastructure is deeply embedded in the fabric of the city, establishing an inseparable assembly. (Figure 4.1)

This system appears in Berlin at the beginning of the machine age, most influential for the rapid growth and change of the city. The terms ‘Progress’ and ‘Industrial Revolution’ dominated the shaping of the metropolis from the 1830’s on.

81 Der Untergang des Abendlandes, by Oswald Sprengler, 1923
82 Atem einer anderen Welt, by Gabriele Tergit, Reports and Feuilletons on Berlin p.14 original 1927
Within two decades five major train networks are installed around Berlin, penetrating the city’s fabric, terminating in ‘Kopfbahnhöfen’ (Terminal Train Stations). *(Figure 4.2)*

Berlin had twelve major terminals at the beginning of the 1880’s, and in 1882 all twelve stations were connected with a local train, the ‘Stadtbahn’. Manifold increases in the amount of passengers and goods transported caused a constant jamming of the trains. The dead end train stations appeared to be the problem. Even though traffic accessing to and departing from the city was overwhelming compared to through traffic, the connections between the twelve stations were very slow and inefficient.  

From 1900 on there was a desperate search for solutions to increase the traffic flow within the city. First concrete suggestions were part of the 1909/10 ‘Grossen Berliner Städtebauwettbewerbs’ (great Berlin urban planning competition), where the winner of the first prize, Hermann Jansen, suggested a connection from Anhalter and Potsdamer Bahnhof to Lehrter Stadtbahnhof just above the Spreebogen. The second first prize of this competition proposed a North-South Tunnel underneath Tiergarten and Königsplatz. But the scale of this operation, especially the construction of the tunnel system, seemed too daring for the city authorities.

Further steps towards an improved train system did not occur until 1919, just after W.W.I, when Martin Mäehler proposed a North-South street with a Tunnel to connect to the Stadtbahn North of Spreebogen with a newly projected train station named after the

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83 Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 150
composer Friedrich Lizst, designed by Ludwig Hilbersheimer. As well as in 1910 this attempt failed due to the volume of the undertaking.

Generalbauinspektor Albert Speer and Reichsbahn suggested the third major concept to reorganize the trains right before the outbreak of W.W.II: All incoming trains were supposed to connect tangentially to a radial system in order to be distributed towards their further destination. All trains would have passed through stations along the radial system, North and South stations would have taken the place of the dead end stations as being parts of Speer’s ‘Great-Axis’.

None of these plannings got executed during and after W.W.II, and the Cold War put all development on ice. Each of the Berlins became part of the separate train networks of Reichsbahn (East) and Bundesbahn (West), and half of the twelve train stations of Berlin, if not destroyed by Allied bombs, got demolished afterwards, since the marginalized and isolated city did not operate as a European traffic node anymore. Among the demolished stations were Lehrter Bahnhof (East), Anhalter Bahnhof (West, Europe’s former largest station), and Potsdamer Bahnhof (West).

Stadtmitte Berlin, by Rudolf Wolters, p. 152
Figure 4.1: Aerial view of Anhalter and Potsdamer station, looking northeast (1940)

Figure 4.2: Berlin railroad system (1940)

Figure 4.3: Proposes train network for 1998
The German Reunification brought the unified trains ‘back on track’. Then the decision was made to locate Government facilities in the Spreebogen, an idea that dates back to the late 1800’s, when Prussian Parliamentarians planned to locate all democratic facilities on the middle ground between the Imperial old Berlin and the bourgeois Berlin in the West.

North of the Government district, just across the river Spree the Bundesbahn is planning a new ‘Main’ Train station, on the site of the old station Lehrter Strasse and Stadtbahnhof. This station, which is supposed “to be similar to an airport”, will connect the East-West trains with the newly built (old idea) North-South train tunnel. Designed by Gerkan, Marg und Partner and developed by Tishman Speyer Properties, this large structure is laid out for the annual transit of 75 million passengers. (Figure 4.3)

The North-South tunnel for Suburban, Regional and high speed trains runs parallel to the S-Bahn right underneath Potsdamer Platz.

4b. Potsdamer Platz and Traffic

In distinction to the baroque ‘Octogon’ of the adjacent Leipziger Platz, Potsdamer Platz was never a Platz (Square) in the literal sense of the word, its identity always derived out of its activity, never being an actual destination in a spatial sense. Transportation, flow of people defined the shape of the Platz; it became an urban theatre, and the only thing that changed thorough the years was the stage set design of the back

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\[65\] Berlin Foyer, 2/94 p.18
drop buildings like 'Josty's' or 'Haus Vaterland'. From cafés to entertainment compounds to 'Iron Curtain' watch-towers to enclaves. But in distinction to the proposed scheme for the future Platz it was possible to establish a relationship between the flow of people and the adjacent buildings. The 'Josty's' for example enabled direct interaction between the Platz and travellers. The Hilmer und Sattler masterplan is not able to establish this relationship between program and site. Potsdamer Platz is degenerated into an icon of extinct memory. The transitory place Potsdamer Platz that became a destination, develops now into a destination that dissolves into total transitory.

The new Potsdamer Platz will be synonymous for corporate identity. As a two billion mark development, the Mercedes Benz masterplan, is going to create a large administration and entertainment enclave, private property in the shape of a city quarter. The planning articulates the necessity for the central role of technology in our societies on one hand, and on the other it is denying its 'shape' and organization; by breaking it down into pieces according to the 'Berlin Traufmass'(the building code that allows only a certain total height of elevations).

Including the two other enclaves for Sony and ABB, about 30 hybrid buildings (somewhere between perimeter block and object building), are evenly distributed over the site, simulating a pedestrian city. *(Figure 4.4)*

But "the more emphasis there is on the pedestrian, the more hollow such an area becomes"³⁶; and how should this compound operate, structurally separate from the rest of

³⁶ Rem Koolhaas, Arch. at Rice p.41
the city. The scheme appears as an urban Frankenstein, sown together out of images of a nostalgic city, awaiting its electric shock to come alive. But it is fairly unclear, where that spark is supposed to come from.

Edzart Reuter, the CEO of Daimler Benz' talks in the introduction of the glossy presentation brochure for the scheme about a "breathtaking project, that will provide jobs for 8,000 people and serve 100,000 visitors, clients and guests daily." Reuter sees himself as responsible for the city, since his father was its first post-World War II Mayor, and the historical image of the Platz seems appealing to him, maybe applicable to his employer Daimler Benz: "With the stripping away of the real historical context of [Potsdamer Platz's] plan and structure, [...] all architecture has been reduced to imagery, and all imagery is available to be used in any combination. There can be Mayan shopping centers, Gothic petrol stations and Renaissance electronic Banks [and Biedermeier streetscape office parks]."

But the scheme, with the name of Potsdamer Platz, fails to "allow East and West to flow into one another at this point"; and also falls short of connecting itself to the former traffic node and gate to the baroque city spatially, historically, and programatically; it even seems that the proposal avoids any spatial link to the Platz, since the office buildings turn their faces away from it.

Where originally cafes and restaurant attractions gathered around the continent's busiest square, relating themselves to a 'theatre' of Berlin before its destruction, and

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87 Daimler Benz: Potsdamer Platz brochure, p.2
88 Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.4 [Pawley refers to 'HRM' Prince Charles' understanding of architecture, and I 'abused' this quote for my purposes]
89 Masterplan Gutachten Potsdamer Platz, Renzo Piano/Christian Kohlbecker, p.9
tourist booths and watchtowers afterwards, the current planning avoids any connection with the location that carries the prestigious name. Knife sharp building fronts make it impossible to establish any relationships between architecture and Platz, since the masterplan insists on preserving all existing streets including the 'Neue (new) Potsdamer Strasse'.

How could the flow of 'hundreds of thousands' of people be connected to the site, how to actually link destination and traffic. The Piano/Kohlbecker masterplan report lists under 'Underground facilities': "In order to fulfil the spatial program required: Parking space for 2,500 cars [...] of which 1,500 can be provided in conventional [underground] format, about 1,000 more will have to be provided by using mechanical systems in order to economize on space."

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90 Masterplan Gutachten Potsdamer Platz, Renzo Piano/Christian Kohlbecker, p.54/55
Figure 4.4: Renzo Piano Masterplan, model of Potsdamer Platz proposal (1993)

Figure 4.5: S-Bahn station Potsdamer Platz in the condition of 1961, photographed 1990
It seems obvious then that most traffic accessing to and departing from the site has to be conducted through public transportation, since 2,500 parking spaces would hardly be enough for the proposed quantities of employees or visitors. (100,000 plus 8,000 people distributed on 2,500 parking spots equals 0.02 parking spots per person) There are two U-Bahn lines, one S-Bahn line, and a Suburban train, that intersect underneath Potsdamer Platz: "[...]the site will be connected underground to the Potsdamer Platz Station. At this point, the underground railway, suburban railway and regional railways will interconnect at levels down to -16.00m."\(^91\) The old S-Bahnhof Potsdamer Platz will be reconstructed to look the way it was before the war, and it is going to connect to the shopping area of the new Potsdamer Platz under ground. Even some retail areas will be added to the Bahnhof by the designers of the masterplan, Hilmer und Sattler. (Figure 4.5)

But this connection of trains reveals a misunderstanding of how the site operates. "...all Machine Age operations [will be disguised] under a Canaletto syndrome."\(^92\) The image of the pedestrian enclave is properly kept up, and the mechanics are hidden under ground, as well as it happens with a vehicular tunnel on the site, that runs parallel to the train tunnel at the Western edge of the site: "To relieve pressure on the public roads, the site will be crossed by a road tunnel,[...] with access to the service area at level -14.10."\(^93\)

\(^{91}\) Masterplan Gutachten Potsdamer Platz, Renzo Piano/Christian Kohlbecker, p.58
\(^{92}\) Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.18
\(^{93}\) Masterplan Gutachten Potsdamer Platz, Renzo Piano/Christian Kohlbecker, p.58
4c. Infrastructural Node Potsdamer Platz (planning proposal)

It seems critical that the surrender of the civic expresses itself in its disability to articulate its way of operation. The totalitarian power of Haussmann and Hobrecht enabled them to shape cities according to an agenda of technology, but renegade elites have ceased to exist; even though they state that they are still influential (Stimmann of Berlin: "I am a powerful man"). Thomas Mann states symptoms like these as "the threat to civilized life that arises when a culture has become incompetent, when it has ceased to honor its own scientific and technological prowess, has 'lived itself out, and its people have reverted to a primitive, unhistoried condition', becoming 'nomads of the big city' who are 'no longer the people, but formlessness, the end, nothingness'. Stimmann represents what Pawley calls a 'conscientious objector' to progress and technology, 'rejecting his technological duty in favour of one Bundalog nostrum after another'.

But technology like Europe's first traffic light and the vibrant crowds on Potsdamer Platz attracted people to places like the urban stage of the Cafe Josty, or the Wild West cafe of 'Haus Vaterland', establishments that lived off of the transitory quality of the Platz.

But then Christian Sattler of Hilmer and Sattler Architects, stated for Potsdamer Platz that public life will not occur inside of buildings, but rather on squares and streets.

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94 Werk, Bauen, Wohnen, 1/2 1995
95 Thomas Mann quotes Spengler in: past masters, 1933
96 Theory and Design in the second Machine age, by Martin Pawley p.170
But unlike during the Weimar Republic, public life is more internalized today, there are
no horse carriages, flower selling children, large train stations in walking distance any
more; except a traffic jam. Sattler’s understanding of the site must fail, since its
programming bases on interior organization, therefore independant of ‘square and street’.
(Figure 4.6)

Concluding this it seems most obvious to link the Daimler Benz enclave to the
cities’ network within the actual mechanics of flow -- public transportation. The train
station, previously hidden under ground, develops into a vertical link between the
underworld of infrastructure and pedestrian enclave. It literally comes up to the surface
of Potsdamer Platz and occupies the void, a gate to the enclave, connecting not only
programmatically to the city but also structurally in a sense similar to a proposal by
Martin Wagner from 1929, when he presented a scheme for the redesign of Potsdamer
Platz, called ‘stopping point for the consumption power and transitory pass-through for
the flowing traffic’ 97. Even though his goal, simplification of traffic, implied a separation
of pedestrians and cars, it still relates to the contemporary situation, where the enabling of
flows is the main goal. The current proposal, the train stop + n, makes an attempt to
organize and link most of the present systems. Then it is possible to locate other programs
in or along this flow in order to diversify and open the site.

97 Ein Stück Grosstadt als Experiment. Katalog, editor V.M. Lampugnani, p.57
Figure 4.6: Ground floor of Renzo Piano design, showing the mall (planning as of 1994)
With this strategy in mind the Bahnhof should also take advantage of the 'Fernbahnen', the high speed long distance trains, that are going to pass underneath the Platz as well. Similar to Hamburg, Berlin could have several metropolitan train stations that serve the high speed train ICE. In Hamburg one particular station, which is Dammtor, serves the International Convention Center and the city's largest hotel, the SAS-Hamburg. It would be appropriate for Potsdamer Platz with its proposed 100,000 daily visitors to offer a similar infrastructural transformer.

The head of this station would be located directly at Potsdamer Platz, (Figure 4.7 and 4.7a) and the 400 meter long platform, that is required for the ICE, would be buried in a tunnel underneath the corridor between Daimler Benz and ABB, in between Linkstrasse und Köthener Strasse, on the site of former Potsdamer Bahnhof. But the platforms would not just remain below ground, they would interact with the surface, connecting themselves with it, animating the void between the two corporate enclaves beyond being a sculpture garden.

The infrastructure connects itself to the program above ground to reveal its secret operation, transportation and movement; and while appearing on the surface, they are still strongly connected to their original hidden purpose. (Figures 4.8 and 4.9)
Figure 4.7: Potsdamer Platz site model with insertion of project, looking southwest

Figure 4.7a: Plan view of Potsdamer Platz, showing the train station (right)
Figure 4.8: Sectional model of train station, circulation bridge and main space of building

Figure 4.9: Interior of main building, looking up from the train station
In addition to linking the enclave to the network of infrastructure, it is necessary to pursue a diversification of the site. This would weaken the seclusive character of the site through connecting it to the rest of the urban ‘grain’ with its distinctive composite of housing, retail, office, entertainment etc.

My proposal introduces traffic interface, hotel, restaurants, train station, dance club, health club, student housing, and housing.98

The scheme operates comparable to a leech, sucking passengers out of the underground to distribute them into the surrounding program. Housing and health club establish the ‘tail’ of the parasite. It is organized through two strategies: first the horizontal layering of program, implemented through the palimpsest-like built up of the site, and second the vertical linkage of the programs through light and circulation.

The program is like a sandwich: circulation, subway, parking, dance clubs, retail, health club, hotel and restaurants are stuffed between housing and the train station.

‘Toothpicks of light’ punch through the layers: establishing vertical connections all the way down to level -2 (train station).

The ‘semipermeable program’ allows a diffusion in, or interaction with the context; while the coherent figure allows a clear distinction between outside form and interior space.

The head of the project with its ‘Piranesian space’ establishes the first vertical connection between infrastructure, program and Potsdamer Platz. The second ‘toothpick’ punctures through health club and student housing, bringing light to the train station.

98 Julius Posener complains that the construction of housing is neglected in Berlin WGW 1/2 1995(p. 28)
Additional shafts establish courts for housing, as well as they articulate the vertical relationship between tunnel and above ground program.
5. Conclusion

"The last chance of individual freedom that remains to us is the one of planning. Why do we not grasp this chance with vigor? One is restrained; for many of us planning is a threatening term (Angstwort). Indeed do we hardly know a different kind of planning, the creating kind, the one that does not inhibit but challenges, putting incentives (Anreize) in the world, and through taking advantage of the natural self-interest of people, creating the desired; a creative planning that does’nt say ; ‘here you can’t, but ‘there you can’

It doesn’t prohibit, it enables! It doesn’t personify in a policeman but in a pioneer; it is opening up opportunities, it liberates, it thrills, and it’s power is the only acceptable, namely the power of the productive idea"

(Max Frisch, 1953)

The ‘project’ Potsdamer Platz is on its way, as well as we are inevitably on our way to ‘Christmas Shopping in December 1998” 99 in the new ‘heart of the city’. The execution of the masterplan is coordinated precisely as a clockwork. Each day of delay costs millions of marks. The opportunities left to planners who are interested in the site are either lunatic ignorance or anarchy.

The elimination of a “chaotic and heterogenic culture”100, as a strategy of urban planning causes the new Potsdamer Platz to be an architectural oneliner. (Bernhard Schneider called this an ‘officially prescribed cultural fasting’101). No coincidence, no lack of control, and no conflict of the site is revealed. What we find instead increases the happiness of visitors and tourists alike and stimulates their consumption;

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99 Daimler Benz: Potsdamer Platz brochure, p.9
100 V.M. Lampugnani in ‘der Spiegel’
101 ‘Amtlich verordnete kulturelle Nulldiät der neunziger Jahre’, as stated in Radix-Matrix, p.128
However, the site could be where the conflicts of destruction and separation could be conquered; symptoms that were created and caused at this very place, could be cured. These conflicts cannot be solved through a reconstruction of a hollow past, new foundations have to be laid as well. Daniel Libeskind submission for the Potsdamer Platz competition in 1992 was an example for and overlay of different systems and scales, allowing the coexistence of different strata that shaped the site.

The burying of the site’s complexity will only be temporary, since the site with its memory and vision still exists in the minds of its users and visitors; one day it might break out and collide with the ‘European City’.

The attempts of planners to create a landscape of completeness will inevitably fail, it is impossible to resolve the site’s complexity to a single image. Berlin, like any city, is in a constant process of becoming, and never frozen into one moment of being. My proposal is an attempt to contribute to this process of becoming.

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102 Daniel Libeskind in ‘Radix-Matrix’, p.58
103 referring to the movie ‘Himmel über Berlin’, (Wings of Desire), by Wim Wenders
104 In my thesis presentation I showed a film, in which I juxtaposed the glossy presentation of the new Potsdamer Platz with fragments of the movie ‘Poltergeist’. A subdivision is built on top of a cemetery, and at one point the pasted underground breaks up and causes an apocalyptic catastrophe. ("You moved the tombstones but you didn’t move the bodies!!!")
105 The designers of the masterplan see their project in the ‘tradition of the Euroean city’. Der Potsdamer Platz, eine Geschichte in Wort und Bild, p.152
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7. APPENDIX
Figure 7.1: Potsdamer Platz (1900, 1936, 1984, 1998)
Figure 7.2: Site plan Potsdamer Platz
Figure 7.3: Plan @ level -2
Figure 7.4: Plan @ level -1
Figure 7.6: Plan @ level +1 to +4
Figure 7.8: Plan @ roof plan
Figure 7.9: Elevation west
Figure 7.10: Elevation east
Figure 7.11: Section east
Figure 7.12: Section west
Figure 7.13: Cross sections and elevations
Figure 7.14: Axonometric