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Icons of the East: Urban Planning in Post Wende Berlin

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................2

Thesis Statement..................................................................................................................3

Introduction............................................................................................................................6

Chapter 1: Competing Identities..........................................................................................23

Chapter 2: Critical Reconstruction.......................................................................................40

Chapter 3: Icons of the East .................................................................................................86

Conclusion .............................................................................................................................113

References Cited....................................................................................................................116
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I will argue that critical reconstruction, the planning paradigm developed to reunite Berlin’s urban fabric architecturally (that is spatially) as well as Berlin’s identity, was spurred by the West German desire to normalize Berlin following its history split between East and West. Initially, in the years following unification, the city administration enjoyed success in implementing critical reconstruction. By the mid-to late ‘90s, however, critical reconstruction, that is the strictly defined urban plan developed by the Western dominated city government, was forced to come to a halt.

Opposition to critical reconstruction had gained considerable support by 1996. I propose that the waning popularity of critical reconstruction resulted from the continued struggle between the West German and East German identity, Berlin serving as an arena for that contest. Although initially West German identity had easily dominated its counter-part, East German identity gained strength and confidence in its substance and existence. The revitalization of East German identity destabilized the validity of critical reconstruction as an approach to mending Berlin’s fractured self. The opposition to critical reconstruction grew out of the self-reconstitution of a cultural identity, namely East German. As such these protests reflect a preservationist instinct on the part of the East.

Since a collective peoples’ identity is largely based on historical and cultural memory, East German identity was, in a sense, fighting for survival. Moreover, East Berlin’s place identity was innately linked to East German identity. The ties between the two were being weakened by critical reconstruction since the physical structure of East
Berlin was being remodeled. Place identity can best be understood as the complex amalgam of the discourse between architectural/spatial construct and its perception. This discourse is mediated by individual and or collective memory. Thus the resurgence of East German identity revalued East Berlin’s then waning place identity.

I am arguing that this opposition to normalizing Berlin’s identity through critical reconstruction halted the process before the result (at least as it was desired by the Western elites) was achieved. That is to say the two-sided nature of Berlin’s identity had not been eradicated or else mended. The disparity between Berlin’s two halves was abnormal and unwanted in light of Germany’s reunification. Furthermore the changing international climate and the continued trend of globalization, threatened Berlin’s newfound prominence.

It is commonly agreed among observers of urban phenomena that the need for a well-defined identity has grown as a result of globalization since cities as distinct places are less associated with national identity. To maintain global relevance, cities which are irrevocably fixed geographically must present easily consumable projections or identities. The validity and authenticity of these identities is not crucial to their success as marketing tools.

In Chapter One I discuss the creation of the different German identities. How, through the innate differences between East and West Germany, separate national identities developed. I then analyze the impact that these identities had on Berlin in the years after unification, especially in the sense that the competing nature of these identities gave rise to critical reconstruction.
In Chapter Two I discuss critical reconstruction as it was developed and presented by Berlin’s urban planners as well as the major occurrences of this planning paradigm within the actual urban fabric of Berlin. The most important instances that I address are Potsdamer Platz, Friedrichstadt, and the Spreebogen.

In Chapter Three I argue that in light of critical reconstruction’s failure Berlin’s elites, who can be labeled as Western actors, harnessed the opposition to critical reconstruction to advance the program of normalization. To do so, the city administration began a superficial process of preservation in East Berlin. This process involved the rehabilitition of certain monuments and sites of purported historical and cultural significance to the GDR and East Berlin. I propose that this process was knowingly tailored to create icons of the East that could and would be easily consumed. To fulfill this goal these icons (e.g. Checkpoint Charlie, the Eastside Gallery, the Bernauer Straße Memorial) were decontextualized and refashioned without historical authenticity. Although ostensibly the East was preserved, it was subdued to facilitate consumption and thereby normalize the city’s image (i.e., identity).
Introduction

The *Wende* in 1989 (i.e. the fall of the Wall) brought tremendous changes to Berlin. The political, economic, cultural, societal ramifications of unification were immense. Berlin had been politically divided in 1945; in 1961 the city was actually physically divided between the West and the East. The Western portion of the city was enshrined by the Wall; alternatively known as the “Anti-Fascist Protective Barrier” in the East. This physical and political divide greatly changed the perception of the city for those residing in the East and West. The divide also created economic, cultural, as well as physical differences between the Western and the Eastern portions of the city. During the period of division, both city governments necessarily sought to create autonomous cities, leading to an infrastructural and aesthetic disconnect that would greatly impact Berlin’s development after unification.

After the fall of the Wall and the reunification of Germany’s two separate governments in 1990, Berlin was forever changed. Germany and Berlin were theoretically one entity again. Quickly, however, this dream was shattered by the recognition of the enormous economic and cultural disparities between the East and the West. In the case of Berlin, two cities had to be made one again. This meant the reintegration of public transit systems and other urban infrastructural networks that had been disconnected by the Wall. At the time since, the West had a more developed urban planning institution and a politically superior hand, it took charge of the situation. Meanwhile, the *Treuhand* (the Agency in charge of the re-privatization of previous GDR
state property) was doing its best to revitalize the eastern economy by selling chunks of land in East Berlin to large investors.

These structural changes caused by the discrepancy in infrastructure and economic development necessarily changed East Berlin. Furthermore, Berlin was reinstituted as the capital city of Germany, necessitating the development of government buildings. Together, these factors led to a massive building boom in Berlin, especially in areas that had been previously consumed by the Wall and other parts of the East. What happened to the Wall? It was hacked up into small pieces by *Mauersprechte* (Wall-pickers), kept as memorabilia, or sold to eager tourists. Berlin’s most important icon was being sold off, commodified, when the city government wasn’t tearing it down.

This immediate action to remove any traces of the Wall speaks volumes to what has occurred in Berlin since unification, namely the eradication of the East as a cultural and physical entity/presence in Berlin. Beginning in 1990, even if not through explicit destruction or removal, many GDR monuments were subjected to proposals to render them politically meaningless, simply parts of the urban scenery. Meanwhile, among the urban planning cadre of the West, a “*Leitbild*” or planning paradigm was being developed. This *Leitbild* was “critical reconstruction” and demonstrated an attempt on the part of the city government, dominated by a Western bureaucracy, to create a new urban identity for Berlin. This drive to create a new Image, a new Berlin, on the whole involved a return to “the Golden Age” of Berlin, beginning in the 1870s until the early years of the 1900s. This period was typified by solemn stone architecture, building height regulations, and cosmopolitanism. The resulting guidelines, espoused by critical reconstruction, were unsurprisingly limited building heights, mixed uses, and traditional architectural styles,
projecting a façade of unity. It would seem that since the Socialist modernist architecture of the Eastern districts did not satisfy these guidelines, much of the East was to be deliberately demolished.

The reasons behind the eradication of the East are more complex than this, however. I argue that the East was deliberately destroyed in the process of refurbishing if not recreating an urban identity or Image of Berlin. After the fall of the Wall, Berlin as a city, as well as its inhabitants, experienced an identity crisis. Loss of the Wall caused insecurity – physically (that is spatially), economically, and culturally. This anxiety was crucial to the destruction of the East; it drove critical reconstruction to its continued success in the ‘90s without much resistance. To foster economic and cultural growth, perhaps it was thought to be most prudent to turn back to a period of Berlin’s history not tainted with the otherwise negative associations of Germany’s more uncomfortable past?

In order to understand this complicated process, I will first discuss the core historical developments of Berlin, as a city and a place of meaning. What exactly does Berlin stand for today? To secure a conception of Berlin I must address the socio-political climate of the city throughout the 20th century. Berlin was the center of a multitude of political and social states throughout this century, all of which (Socialist Nationalism, the FRG, the GDR, and reunited Germany) created their own identities. These identities are naturally, complicated especially due to the dually competing socio-political paradigms of socialism, East, and capitalism, West, between 1945 and 1989. Berlin, as a city, is especially complicated in this regard because it does not only exist on a nationally symbolic level, but also as a metropolis, a place where people live in close proximity. Proximity is, perhaps, the keyword for Berlin, the city where East and West met, the city
of the Iron Curtain. Thus to obtain a lucid understanding of the post-unification changes within Berlin, one must distinguish between the various competing identities present in Berlin after 1989, namely West German, East German, West Berlin, East Berlin, and city – Berlin.

Once these competing identities and their complex interrelations are decoded, I will discuss the specific examples of urban renewal and change that occurred in the years following German unification. These reconstructions or alterations, labeled the “critical reconstruction of Berlin,” include Potsdamer Platz, the Spreebogen, Leipziger Platz, Friedrichstadt, and Alexander Platz. As the primary examples of critical reconstruction these places represent a carefully calculated approach to subduing the weaker identities at play in Berlin. Moving beyond these cases, however, I argue that the more radical changes occurred in and around the sites inexorably linked to the memory of the East. The Wall, Checkpoint Charlie and a small list of other GDR monuments, were shaped by the city administration into iconic representations of the defeated socio-political paradigm of socialism. These sites have been deliberately fashioned into Icons of the East, simplified, thoroughly de-contextualized, ideal for consumption by the masses. These places, I propose, are part of the official projection of what Berlin’s identity is today. The facades of these places suggest clearly defined understandings of what Berlin ought to be, yet their presence and meaning for the city is not so clear-cut. Instead Berlin’s identity is still contested to this day.
Berlin, as the capital of the Third Reich, was captured in 1945, but its postwar fate had already been decided a year earlier. During the London Protocol in September 1944, Berlin was divided into three allied sectors, namely the British, American, and Soviet sectors.¹ Later, in 1945, a fourth zone of occupation was designated to the French. Berlin at the time was comprised of twenty districts, of which 6, 4, and 2 were assigned to the U.S., British, and French, respectively. The remaining 8 city districts were designated for Soviet control. Although the city was officially divided into four different sectors, the city itself could not be wholly divided, especially in the physical sense, until the rise of the Wall. Logically, the escalating stages of division occurred in conjunction with the growing discord between the three Western allies and the USSR. In 1948, in a deliberate attempt to force the withdrawal of the Western allies from Berlin, the USSR imposed a blockade on the Western sectors of Berlin. This blockade led to the Berlin Airlift, a massive effort on the part of the Western allies to supply their sectors with food and other forms of aid. The airlift lasted almost an entire year, from July 1948 to May 1949, and had politically significant implications. The political power struggle evoked by the blockade and the reciprocal airlift marked the beginning of the public Cold War and solidified the division of Berlin and Germany on the whole. Importantly, the blockade and airlift sowed the seeds of the diverging social and political identities between East and West. Whereas the USSR continued to be seen as an occupying power in East

Germany (the aggressor), the airlift changed the perception West Germans held of the Allied forces; no longer were they seen as occupiers but instead as protectors (saviors).²

While Germany itself had been slated for divided control between the four Great Powers, this process was not fully realized until 1949, when the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) were each created under the supervision of the Great Powers. The creation of two separate German states would create many disparities, economically, socially, and politically between the two nations over the next 40 years until their reunification in 1989. Nowhere, however, was the division between East and West more apparent than in Berlin. Nor would the consequences of division be felt more keenly than in Berlin after unification; this heightened experience of division has irrevocably shaped Berlin today.³

The Soviet blockade beginning in 1948 clearly demarcated the Allied zones of Berlin as an enclave of the West, an island in the East. Even so, the borders between the two states at this time still remained relatively porous.

As the two nations moved into the 1950s obvious disparities arose: the Western economy was much stronger, perceptibly so, as were political rights. During the 1950s, 60,000 East Germans held full-time jobs in the Western sectors of Berlin.⁴ Thus there was constant traffic between East and West. This exchange showed the clear differences between the two nations and led to increasing numbers of Republik Flucht (Republic flight, as it was designated by the SED) throughout the 1950s. Republik Flucht became a serious problem for the GDR, especially after the Socialist Unity Party (SED, Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) crushed a popular uprising in 1953. During the

² Verheyen, United city, divided memories?, 73.
³ See also A. James McAdams, Germany Divided (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
⁴ Verheyen, United city, divided memories?, 208.
course of the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of East Germans fled the GDR, endangering the social and economic stability of the socialist republic. In order to quell this increasing problem, the SED, with the support of the Soviets, erected the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961, cleaving the East and the West into two. Politically, the Wall and the tightening of border controls in the GDR showed a permanent split between the West and East. The Iron Curtain had become a physical reality, proclaiming to Germans in particular their divisions and inequalities.

*The Physical Barrier of the Wall*

When the SED erected the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961 both West and East Germans were caught off-guard; virtually overnight the city was physically split in two. The Wall developed in three major stages before it fell in 1989. These stages involved the creation of a more secure, tangible, and blatant border; necessarily the increasing physical division of the city led to the creation of hard infrastructural differences between East and West Berlin. Throughout the 1950s traffic and telephone infrastructures were increasingly disrupted. This growing infrastructural separation was fully pronounced by the Wall. The S- and U-Bahn lines, trams and subway respectively, between the two portions of the city were terminated overnight on August 13: “Some fifteen U-Bahn stations were closed altogether and turned into *Geisterbahnhöfe* (ghost stations), with travelers in the trains still in operation between north and south in West Berlin racing through the eerie darkness beneath the city’s historic center.”

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5 Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 207.
encompassed the entirety of the Western sector of the city, totaling 100 miles, 23 of which ran through residential areas. The Wall severed 190 main and minor roads and left only 7 official crossing points between the East and West, a drastic decrease from the previous 89.


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7 Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 209.
8 Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 209.
Thus in its first stage, as an amalgam of barbed wire, brick, and metal sheeting, the Wall wreaked havoc on the physical infrastructure. The East was quickly walled in (see Image 1). The complete bisection of Berlin’s infrastructure created duplicate systems and redundancies that required attention when recreating a unified city in the 1990s.

The Wall evolved throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, producing ever more pronounced physical and symbolic divisions within the city. In the early years, following the erection of the Wall, the SED expanded the border zone within Berlin to include an empty strip of land, encased by a wall on either side. At this time the no mans land had already been established (see Image 2; the border zone in 1967). In comparison to other sites throughout the city, the “death strip”\textsuperscript{10} represented in Image 2 is relatively small. Image 2 clearly represents how the border fortifications left a void, fallow land within the heart of Berlin. The land between the East and West would develop into one of the most secure borders in modern history; containing dog runs, trip wires, floodlights, and manned guard towers.

\textsuperscript{10} The name death strip arose out the various fatalities that occurred as people attempted Repulik Flucht. The most famous death was that of Peter Fechter, who was shot by the GDR’s border guard and bled to death in the no mans land in 1962.
In the 1970s the previous elements of the Wall, on both the East and West side of the “death strip,” were replaced with concrete fortifications. Finally, in the early ‘80s, the Wall received its final and most visually distinct form. The Wall on the Western side of the border was replaced by prefabricated concrete slabs and topped with a concrete pipe. Unlike the Eastern portion of the border fortifications, the Western Wall (the one most commonly understood as the Wall in popular culture) was approachable. West Berliners could actually interact with the Wall, whether by touching or graffiti-ing it. Image 3 depicts the Western portion of the Wall in 1984 as seen from the West. West Berliners were able to physically express their relationship and understanding of the Wall; the graffiti in Image 3 most prominently reads “Diary of a contemporary,” “Open your eyes,” and “For a united life.”

In this sense Westerners were able to vent their anxieties

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regarding the presence of the Wall, while East Berliners were forced to internalize their feelings; this suggests that the dichotomy was more burdensome for Easterners.

In its final form the Wall had become monolithic on both the Eastern and Western side, and the city was now not only divided by two walls, but also a massive stretch of barren land. This stretch of land, more so than the Wall itself, left a visible scar through Berlin’s center. After the fall of the Wall the issue of reclaiming the land that had been a void within the city was crucial to reuniting the city as a whole. Due to its important geographic location within Berlin, the former “death strip” was one of the primary targets of planning officials in the 1990s. Because it was developed before many other parts of Berlin, this border zone was subject to the urban planning paradigms established immediately after reunification.

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14 See Image 2 and 16.
After the construction of the Wall, the tensions between West and East Berlin stabilized or, that is, became normalized. As a result overt efforts were made to create new city centers on either side of the Wall. Both the West and the East turned away from each other; high-rises were built along many parts of the Wall, creating “a second Wall.” Although ostensibly life in Berlin was now defined through division, the relationship between either part of the city was far from normal. The presence of the Wall was undeniable; it was present in everyday life, and it reoriented the city for its inhabitants. Thus, in the physical sense, the Wall succeeded in creating a feeling of normality in regards to division, yet it also induced severe feelings of abnormality among city residents. In the West the Wall was approachable as a physical construct, in the East it was inaccessible and enigmatic in this respect. Individuals on either side of the Wall, especially those who lived in close proximity to the border, were diagnosed with a form of depression aptly named *Mauerkrankheit* (Wall sickness). On top of the alienating presence of the Wall, there were hundreds of fatalities among those trying to escape over the Wall. The proximity to such violence induced an abnormal sense of excitement and tension, especially for West Berliners, who literally lived in a frontier town. Thus, insofar as the Wall became a symbol of increasingly ‘normal’ division, it was simultaneously ‘abnormal’ in its nature. In this sense the Wall reshaped Berlin both physically and mentally. The immense impact that the Wall had on the city increased over time, even after its demolition. The fall of the Wall, both in its symbolic and physical essence, disrupted urban life in Berlin on a massive scale. Once more, as quickly as the barrier had

17 Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 70.
sundered the city, it fell, leaving Berliners confused and insecure. No longer was the Wall ever present and gone with it were the “Cold War certainties” of life in a divided city.¹⁸

_The Process of Reunification and its Connotations for Berlin_

When the Wall fell on November 9, 1989 it came as a surprise not only to Germans on the whole but also to political analysts. The unexpected nature of the collapse of the SED regime in East Germany produced a mixture of feelings among Berliners and Germans. Nestled within the sudden sense of hope, however, was immense insecurity in both West and East.¹⁹ This feeling of insecurity arose out of the previously discussed political, cultural, and economic values that had developed separately in the FRG and the GDR.²⁰ Since it was the GDR that was collapsing, this feeling of insecurity would not be shared at equal levels for very long. In fact the increasing insecurity among the residents of the former GDR would shape the unification process, which in turn would shape Berlin.

At first, in 1989, GDR citizens were highly skeptical of unification as a worthwhile effort, yet as the SED continued to unravel, by March of 1990 this skepticism was largely reversed.²¹ This shift in the majority of Eastern attitudes in favor of unification most likely resulted from the increasing insecurity and inferiority felt by East Germans. As a result in the free elections held on March 18, 1990, the East favored the political party that had allied itself with the political party of the current Chancellor of the

¹⁸ Verheyen, _United city, divided memories?_, 6.
²⁰ The concept of the Rechts and Unrechtsstaat is crucial to the notion of Eastern inferiority.
FRG, Helmut Kohl. Kohl’s political party, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union, Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands), was the strongest proponent of rapid unification. At the time there were two widely publicized legal approaches to unification, the first, under Article 23 of the FRG’s constitution, was championed by the CDU. The other approach, under article 146, was supported by the more liberal SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands). Article 146 called for the creation of a new constitution, drafted by both the East and West. Naturally, this solution to the question of unification would have been more time-involved than Article 23. Due to the CDU’s success in the March elections, Article 23 was adopted as the manner of unification. Under Article 23, the GDR was divided into Länder (States) as the West had been since its creation in 1949. These new Eastern Länder would then vote on their ascension to the West German government and nation. Unsurprisingly, all five new states were incorporated into the West after the ratification of the treaty for unification by the end of 1990. By accepting unification under Article 23, the GDR’s electorate, “essentially abdicated a significant role in the design and implementation of the unification process.”

As previously noted, Article 23 was the answer to a popular call for rapid reunification. As such, however, the manner in which reunification occurred created economic problems and social disillusionment in the East. Under Article 23 reunification proceeded through institutional Anschluß (incorporation) of the East into the West. Anschluß or, “the absorption of the East into the Federal Republic while the West maintained the status quo reflected the belief that western-style economic systems were

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superior to communist systems. Westerners viewed Easterners as outsiders – and therefore as needing to be integrated.”

The Western view of the East as the Other, the outsider, shows the extent to which the West had and would continue to operate through the perspective of the outsider looking in on an ‘inferior’ East. The resulting “notion that German unification would basically involve ‘the absorption’ of the GDR by the FRG,” thus became the political paradigm for the following years. Since GDR institutions were thoroughly replaced by their Western counterparts, many former East German bureaucrats’ skills and experience were rendered useless. Therefore the institutional takeover over of the East by the West not only replaced Eastern institutional structures, but also excluded former East Germans on many levels. The exclusivity and supremacy of Western institutions would prove to be critical in the urban planning of Berlin and the resulting marginalization of the East in Berlin.

Rapid economic unification, or shock therapy, accompanied the political unification of the two Germanys. The method of shock therapy is not difficult to decipher; it was to merge the two economies as rapidly as possible. This approach however would prove to be problematic due to the discrepancies that had developed between East and West, economically and culturally. The first step, currency union, occurred between the East and West on July 1, 1990. East German currency (Ostmarks, OM) could be exchanged for West German currency (Deutschmarks, DM) at a 1-1 ratio up to a certain amount. Beyond a $4000 dollar limit, the rate of conversion became 2 OM: 1 DM. As a result, many East Germans and Eastern businesses witnessed the
evaporation or the halving of their savings and capital.\(^{26}\) Meanwhile the *Truehandanstatl* (commonly known as Treuhand) was charged with the task of privatizing former GDR state-owned enterprises. To do so the Treuhand was to restructure and bring previously state-owned firms up to free-market speed. Although the Treuhand was highly successful in privatization, many of the firms quickly folded or became marginalized because they were not ‘seaworthy’ in the new political-economic clime.\(^{27}\) Due to the failure of many firms, unemployment spiked in the East in the years following reunification; by 1992 employment in the East had fallen 34% and incomes were 60-70% of Western levels.\(^{28}\) Some of this decrease in employment must naturally be attributed to the artificially high employment under a communist regime, yet it remains a significant statistic. Other, non-business sectors also saw massive increases in unemployment. Approximately 70% of the employees of universities and technical schools in the East lost their jobs due to the invalidity of their fields of study in Western society and the resulting wholesale closure of academic departments.\(^{29}\) These massive structural shifts in the Eastern economy directly affected Berlin’s built environment; as firms closed they left behind vacant buildings that fell into further disrepair and people were forced to relocate within or outside of the city. Such changes in East Berlin as a result of economic turbulence would provide a fertile ground for the reshaping of Berlin’s identity by the city administration.

Understandably, the FRG and GDR have been the subject of academic scrutiny in various fields, political, economic and cultural. Much scholarly work has focused on the

\(^{26}\) Smith, introduction, 11.
\(^{27}\) “By December 1993, just three-and-a-half years later, Treuhand had privatized 92 percent of its firms.” Smith, introduction, 11.
\(^{28}\) Verheyen, *The German question*, 214.
period of Germany’s division, between 1945 and 1989. Two core themes are reflected in this body of work that pertains to the era of division. The first theme can be designated as a study of separate routes, namely the divergence between the FRG and GDR, politically and economically. Out of this topic, the second core point of interest has arisen, which revolves around German identity, both in the West and in the East. The issue of German identity, post-WWII, has received a lot of attention, and is even considered to be the “German Question.”\textsuperscript{30} The so called “German Question” was originally that of division and the Nazi past; however, after the Wall fell in November of 1989 this question of identity was further problematized by reunification.

\textsuperscript{30} Verheyen, \textit{The German question}, title page.
Chapter 1: Competing Identities

In almost all aspects, the FRG and GDR increasingly diverged; this divergence, especially in political culture, lead to the creation of different national identities. The rise of two Germanys and two German identities would ultimately determine the manner in which unification proceeded during 1989 and 1990. In post-unification Berlin, these disparate national identities would prove to be extremely influential in the physical formation of the city, even more so than they had been in the creation of East and West Berlin.

In order to fully grasp the developments resulting from German division and their impact on Berlin the theoretical underpinnings of identity and place identity must be defined. To define identity is inherently difficult; “Identity is contingent on ideas and interpretations, actions, and reactions; it is something that is formed through discourses and can change and be cross-cutting so that those who share one identity may not share others.”\(^{31}\) That is to say identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the case of the two Berlins this is particularly apt.

National identity is an outgrowth of alignment with a particular symbolic community. The division of Germany and Berlin marked a new kind of artificiality in the delineation of nation states and thereby complicated the process of creating a national identity. Thus the two German states hotly contested the very nature of Germanness. This was no small feat since in doing so each state had to distance its burgeoning identity from

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Nazism while maintaining and recycling national symbols. Ultimately, both the FRG’s and GDR’s national identities were contingent upon one another, in fact so much so that, “the two states fabricated themselves as moieties in dual organization.” Put differently, the two German national identities were fundamentally constituted through contrast.

In Berlin, the battleground of West and East German identity, the struggle to define place identity reached new heights. Berliners were subjected to considerably more acute experience of East-West tensions due to the proximity of the border and the focus of both the FRG and the GDR in redefining the city as the expression of their socio-political organization. Berlin’s symbolic significance to German identity cannot be denied. Due to its importance Berlin was both an asset and a bump in the road to creating new Germanies since, “Places are places (and not just spaces) because they have identities.” Constructions of identity are necessarily always based on the past, in so far as meaning is derived from past experiences, collective and individual, i.e. memory. Although places are subject to projections of futures by individuals and communities, these themselves are necessarily grounded in the past. This can easily be understood in Berlin’s case; Berlin’s richly troubled history had shaped a strong place identity for the city. The memory of Berlin as the Nazi capital, as well as its previous incarnations, was not easily rooted out of the urban fabric. As Hague and Jenkins point out, “Past and present realities cannot be easily erased in favor of some ersatz new identity, even if those with power wish to do so.”

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33 Borneman, Belonging in the two Berlins, 17.
34 Borneman, Belonging in the two Berlins, 4.
35 Hague and Jenkins, introduction, 7.
36 Hague and Jenkins, introduction, 11.
reshape Berlin since place is a “socio-cultural perception and definition of space and is an important element of social identity.” By shaping new German national identities, “at the level of signification techniques the two states intended to create differently valued objects (both people and things) through oppositional names of similar experiences.” As a result, both Berlins developed contradictory identities, founded in their difference. The Berlin-East and Berlin-West identities that resulted from these efforts were necessarily exaggerated and therefore also deeply rooted by 1989 when the Wall fell. The deep level of signification that East and West attained would need to be reversed in order to realize normality, as defined by the re-united German government and city administration.

*German National Identities, West and East before the Fall.*

As previously mentioned, the FRG had a distinctively different relationship with the occupying forces that originally controlled its territory. This amicable relationship grew out of the economic prosperity that the FRG experienced as well as the vast amount of financial, political, and cultural support provided by the Allied powers, initially during the Marshall Plan and thereafter during the Cold War. The West German *Wirtschaftswunder* (Economic Miracle) in the postwar years provided the foundation for the FRG’s assimilation into the West as well as its political structure. The FRG, beginning with its creation in 1949, was a multi-party democratic republic, composed of *Länder*. The FRG’s democratic political system, especially during the Cold War, was crucial in the formation of West German identity. Although citizens of the FRG became

37 Hague and Jenkins, introduction, 20.
increasingly less nationalistic as division came to be seen as permanent.\(^\text{39}\) The relinquishment of ‘Germanness’ as central to identity among FRG citizens was the result of the continued division of the two nations as well as the constitutional basis of the FRG. Although the FRG’s \textit{Grundgesetz} (constitution) declared that it was \textit{the} German nation, the FRG’s political system was constructed as to ensure that there was no chance of resurgent nationalism as seen during the Third Reich.\(^\text{40}\) The taboo nature of extremism thus came to represent a core aspect of the FRG’s political identity. In this sense the relinquishment of pride in Germanhood in the West would be a source of conflict in the urban environment of Berlin, since the same did not occur in the East.

The FRG, after its inception, was declared the legal heir to the Third Reich. Inevitably, this meant that the FRG and its citizens had to come to grips with the Third Reich’s legacy. This in itself was a major difference between West and East Germany. The GDR, unlike the FRG, did not confront the guilt of the Holocaust, instead declaring itself an explicitly anti-fascist state. At the same time, the West distanced itself from the Nazi past by creating new institutions, allying itself with the free West and labeling the GDR as the continuation of German totalitarianism. The FRG’s politicians further extended this feeling of Western legitimacy through the concept of the \textit{Rechtsstaat} (Legitimate/ Fair State) denouncing the GDR as an \textit{Unrechtsstaat} (Unjust state).\(^\text{41}\) The GDR’s legitimacy as seen by the Western outsider was largely false; it was widely viewed as a Soviet Satellite state. The construction and maintenance of the Berlin Wall, beginning in 1961, only served to propagate this view. Although the Wall was officially named \textit{Antifaschistischer Schutzwalle} (Antifascist Protective Barrier) by the SED, it was

\(^{39}\) Verheyen, \textit{The German question}, 63.
\(^{40}\) Borneman, \textit{Belonging in the two Berlins}, 16.
\(^{41}\) Verheyen, \textit{United city, divided memories?}, 185.
clear that the Wall was not to keep people out but instead served to keep people in. The Berlin Wall became a symbol of inequality, politically, culturally, and economically. As the most definitive symbol of the rift between East and West Germany, the manner in which the Wall was perceived transformed the Berlin of today. Thus the West assumed a national identity of political legitimacy, founded in its economic success and alignment with the West. East Germany developed a starkly contrasting socio-political identity.

The socio-political divergence and the oppositional relationship of the two nation states created different dialects of self and nationhood that would clash during and after reunification.\textsuperscript{42} West German national identity was considerably secure since both the economic and cultural prosperity enjoyed by the citizens of the FRG nurtured a confidence in the collective West German folk. This confidence may be the most crucial aspect of West German national identity before reunification, since it dictated the power-relationship between East and West.

Although the GDR proclaimed itself the legitimate successor of German nationhood, it fashioned a distinctly more fractioned and insecure national identity than did the West. By declaring itself as an (if not the) anti-fascist state, the SED created a less legitimate source of political identity than the FRG. In deeming itself anti-fascist, the GDR, like many Soviet Bloc countries, adopted a selective history that espoused victimization at the hands of Nazism.\textsuperscript{43} The Nazis had indeed politically persecuted many members of the primary SED regime as communists, yet the stalwart and totalitarian nature of the SED would disparage the GDR regime more than the Nazi past. Although the SED held regular elections, these were largely events for show. As the continued

\textsuperscript{43} Verheyen, \textit{The German question}, 80.
presence of the SED regime became apparent, its legitimacy as seen within the GDR decreased. John Borneman, an American anthropologist who studied both East and West Berlin in the late ’80s, argued that for East Germans, “since the ruling SED in the East was not able to plan an economy that could keep pace with the Federal Republic, whatever political legitimacy it attained on other fronts just as quickly disappeared into the quicksand of its growing economic swamp.”

Many GDR citizens realized the inexorable connection between Moscow and the SED – this was especially apparent due to the constant presence of Soviet troops throughout the SED’s reign. The totalitarian nature of the SED would ultimately lead to a rift in national identity in the GDR. The SED posited the official political culture and identity, yet it was not recognized by a large percentage of the population.

The SED’s flaws were clearly visible, yet they existed and had to be ‘ostensibly’ accepted. Mass public sentiment was internalized, not publicized due to the constant surveillance of the Ministry for State Security (MfS, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, commonly known as Stasi). The necessary internalization of dissent and personal opinion ultimately shaped the process through which reunification occurred. In Berlin, where the headquarters of the MfS were located, a disturbing history of mass surveillance and political persecution would be unveiled in the 1990s. The negative and destructive legacy of the Stasi would become a focal point of the debate around the architectural and cultural preservation of the East in Berlin. Were the prisons and archives to be opened as museums, as places of remembrance, or were they to be razed? This debate shows one aspect of the problem that arose out of the GDR’s creation of an image among the people of its own nation as an *Unrechtsstaat*. This classification, by both East and West

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44 Borneman, *Belonging in the two Berlins*, 17.
Germans of the SED regime, is important in understanding post-Wall Berlin. East Germans, politically repressed for 40 years, were well aware of the failings of the GDR, leading to an Eastern inferiority complex immediately after the fall of the Wall.

East German national identity pre-unification can therefore be seen as dual in nature, official and unofficial. The dialectic between these two identities created an unsubstantiated meta-identity for the nation. It was clear that socialism had lagged behind the West economically and culturally; unlike the West, the East had not experienced a *Wirtschaftswunder*. Germanhood thus remained the core virtue that East Germans identified with, not the SED regime but their origin as Germans. What then was East Germany after the collapse of the SED? It was hard to say, especially for East Germans who were now essentially without a valid “western” political identity. In this sense the West and East German national identities were constructed on one another during division, ultimately to the detriment of the East, which lost its previous identity as proper Germans.

The discrepancy between the well-substantiated Western identity and Eastern insecurity greatly impacted the development of the East after unification. The political and cultural differences between East and West, however, have not been the only determinants of post-Wall Berlin's cultural and built environment. Naturally the actual physical division of Berlin has played a large role in Berlin due to both mental and built barriers. When reunification occurred, the question of German identity was necessarily raised again. This question has led to perhaps the most prolific field of German studies. Studies of mass sentiment towards unification and its results were regularly conducted during the ‘90s. A distinct trend appeared on both sides of the divide during these years:
Western Germans or “Wessis” grew resentful of the large amounts of aid that the West poured into the East, whereas East Germans or “Ossis” resented their marginalization through the political and cultural hegemony of the West.45

The conception of the terms “Wessi” and “Ossi” represents the extent to which the regional identities between West and East had diverged. By the mid ‘90s the realities of unification led to the resurgence of East German identity, an identity distinct from its previous incarnation, more defensive and prideful, especially in light of national and local attempts at normalization.46 Growing West German disdain and unfulfilled promises caused East German identity to resurge. East Germans had come to expect economic prosperity and political equality through unification. Instead East Germans had little to show for in the years following unification. The societal sentiment among East Germans in the years after 1989 has been termed Ostalgie, but can perhaps be better defined as a gathering of confidence and acceptance in the East German understanding of the GDR’s past.47 That is to say, East German identity, evolved from an inferiority complex into an appreciation of East German culture for what it was beyond a social experiment gone awry, and a social experiment that had, perhaps, not failed as drastically as the Western world had claimed. West German identity after the fall of the Wall did not change as drastically as the East German. Instead West German identity grew elitist, defined by the FRG’s success and the GDR’s failure; this change has aptly been labeled cultural and political imperialism. West Germans grew resentful of the large amount of fiscal transfers to the Eastern Länder and the economic and societal problems resulting from unification.

46 Verheyen, The German question, 207.
West Germans were financially better off than their Eastern countrymen and feared that this too would change. West Germans, to some extent, also regarded East German culture as vulgar, low-brow, and most importantly out-of-date. The cultural discrepancy and differing identities between East and West was apparent to both East and West Germans.

Normalization

The lack of a unified identity in unified Germany was problematic. Germans were highly cognizant of this void, on all levels of society. As a result, overt political efforts were made to ‘normalize’ Germany. The problem of normalizing German culture is multifold: what does normal mean, is a normal culture and identity for a nation of people possible, how does one normalize identity in a democratic society without diminishing diversity? These questions are inherently difficult to answer, especially in light of Germany’s past. The shadow of Nazism has shrouded Germany since 1945. One of the main attempts at normalizing German culture grew out of the desire to come to grips with this tragic past. This process became know as Vergangenheitsbewältigung (overcoming the past) in German society. With unification, however, another burdensome past, that of the SED regime and the political repression at the hands of the Stasi, came to light. The MfS had not only been responsible for international but also domestic espionage. To keep a close eye on the GDR’s citizenry, the Stasi employed a vast number of informers (IM, Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter, “Unofficial Co-workers”). It is believed that there was up to 1 IM per 120 GDR citizens by 1989.\(^{48}\) As part of its surveillance the MfS kept a vast collection of files devoted to individuals; around 180 kilometers of files, 100 km of which were located at its headquarters in Berlin. When reunification took place, GDR citizens could

\(^{48}\) Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 146.
apply to see their own file. Thus the Stasi became an apparition, more real than it ever had been before. People discovered that their spouses and friends had been informing on them. The social upheaval resulting from the legacy of the Stasi as well as official attempts at confronting this specter were difficult to cope with for both East and West Germans. Thus the Stasi gave birth to the concept *Doppelte Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (double overcoming of the past).

The legacy of the MfS added more significance to the notion of creating a normal Germany. There are two widely portrayed examples of such attempts in Berlin. Perhaps the most overt attempt at reclaiming a normal identity by the newly united German government was through the symbolic vote in 1991 to move the federal government from Bonn, its residency during division, to Berlin. This move implied retaking the city that had not only been the most blatant symbol of division but also the historic capital of Germany. The move declared a united state and united people, whether or not they yet existed. For Berlin, the move of the Bundestag meant massive physical change, as new buildings for ministries and bureaucrats had to be built. The high demand for new government buildings would be a critical tool in the eradication of the East. The second much discussed event is the rededication of the Neue Wache in 1993.\(^{49}\) The Neue Wache is a small domed building in neo-classical style, a relic of Prussian militarism that was reclaimed by the GDR as a monument to the victims of fascism and militarism. Under Kohl, the memorial was redesigned, removing all the GDR’s modifications, and designated the Central Memorial of the German Republic.\(^{50}\) Arguably these events showed that, “the Western-dominated city administration in Berlin and the Federal


\(^{50}\) Verheyen, *United city, divided memories?*, 40- 41.
government in Bonn were fundamentally disinterested in genuine confrontation with the GDR past.”51 This is important to understand: confrontation of the SED’s past was another hurdle towards the creation of a unified German identity.

The “normalization” of German identity was, understandably, not welcomed on all fronts. Importantly, the drive for normalization was largely based in a West German desire to continue with life, unhindered. This desire manifested itself in Berlin most distinctly during the ‘90s. In Berlin Western city planners championed “critical reconstruction” as a return to normality, as a way to redefine Berlin, its people, and to set a national example. The process of reinventing a city such as Berlin is no small task, especially in light of the competing identities of West and East Germans. In the ‘90s these identities were embroiled with Berlin’s own fractured identity as a city. The struggle between these forces can best be understood as contests to be remembered and forgotten between different cultural memories.

Berlin’s Identity

Berlin’s history like all cities is multi-faceted. Each incarnation of the city has projected a distinct Image or in other words held a singular place identity. The lineage of different Berlins that are most relevant to understanding Berlin today begins with Wilhelmine Germany. During the Wilhelminian Era, 1871-1918, Berlin was a burgeoning metropolis, in the truest sense of the word. The period was marked by prosperity and is commonly referred to as the Golden Age of Berlin. Before Germany’s

defeat in WWI, Berlin was the bustling capital of the German empire, its identity based on progress, prosperity, and cultural diversity. The period was also architecturally distinct – stone architecture and grand facades – most commonly defined by historians as the era of Mietskasernen. Vibrancy, beauty, and legibility of the physical environment leading up to and during the 1920s are considered hallmarks of the period. After 1918, during the Weimar Republic, Germany and Berlin declined, suffering massive inflation and economic distress. Although Berlin was still an important cultural and political seat, its identity had become retrospectively defined by its previous success. As a result of Weimar Berlin’s prominent identity and the rise of National Socialism during the 1930s, Berlin’s identity changed again. Hitler and Albert Speer shaped plans to refashion Berlin into Germania, the capital of the Third Reich. The plans never came to fruition due to Berlin’s capture in 1945; however, the plans represent an overt attempt to recreate Berlin’s urban identity. This failed attempt marked the beginning of urban planning aspirations in regard to modeling Berlin’s identity.

After Berlin was divided in 1945, the Western and Eastern portions of the city developed distinct urban identities. Both halves of the city were intrinsically marked by the city’s past. Not only was Berlin almost entirely destroyed, it had also been the Nazi capital; Berlin was, “reduced from Reichshauptstadt to Reichstrümmerstadt, from the Capital of the Empire to Capital of Rubble.” Just like each successor German state, the two Berlins were forced to grapple with the process of reinventing themselves. To do so, both adopted a simple strategy – namely, to deride the other and to champion their

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52 Large apartment buildings, built around a courtyard, and at the time criticized for their squalor and resemblance to barracks.
54 Borneman, Belonging in the two Berlins, 20.
respective socio-political causes. The projection of opposing identities quickly led to the manifestation of actual differences between the Soviet and the Allied Sectors: “The West was soon the rich zone, the East the ‘poor brother’; the West called itself free, the East democratic and socialist.” The need to create place identity within Berlin-West and Berlin-East mirrored the Cold War arms race; as each city portion strove to place itself, the West and East became garish exaggerations of the socio-political ideals with which they were aligned. The exuberance of self-portrayal and definition became self-fulfilling prophecies in both the East and the West that would have to be overcome to re-unite the city.

Moreover, West Berlin was no longer a capital city and grew increasingly physically separated from the FRG throughout the years. West Berlin’s special political status as a member of the FRG greatly contributed to the evolution of West Berlin as a highly individualistic urban space. Subsidies were awarded to residents of West Berlin as was exemption from the military draft. Thus West Berlin became a haven for intellectuals, artists, political dissidents, and students. As such, West Berlin’s identity as a place became politically and culturally progressive and diverse, tinged by the danger of the East and the constant presence of the Wall. The single most important facet of West Berlin’s place identity was its status as Western. In a physical sense, the city also changed. West Berlin was largely rebuilt and continued to change according to the latest western urban planning paradigms – high-rise apartment buildings, broader streets for higher volumes of traffic. In this sense, the Western portion of the city also became architecturally linked with the Western world.

55 Borneman, Belonging in the two Berlins, 21.
Unlike West Berlin, East Berlin became the capital of the GDR. East Berlin’s status as the capital of the GDR is key to understanding the development of its place identity. East Berlin was the seat of both the SED and the MfS, yielding a more serious and oppressive identity. The Eastern sector was reconstructed under socialist urban paradigms that produced several satellite cities\textsuperscript{56} as well as a distinctly modernist downtown. Unlike the West of Berlin, which was largely devoid of nationalistic monuments, the East was not. Since the SED had declared itself the progressive anti-fascist party, it could endorse and create more monuments without an innate sense of self-consciousness regarding blatant nationalism. Soviet monument culture clearly influenced the creation of several GDR monuments in Berlin, yet it was the GDR’s ability to neglect the negative aspects of monumental glorification that led to the proliferation of monuments in East Berlin. Furthermore, the totalitarian nature of the SED regime, like that of the Soviets, involved “the more or less deliberate and explicit imposition of symbols of identity and rituals of commemoration ‘from above’.”\textsuperscript{57} Thus East Berlin had a strictly controlled official identity, the capital of a socialist republic.

East and West Berlin during division developed radically opposed place identities. These conflicting urban identities became problematic with the fall of the Wall in 1989. The two halves of the city represented ideologically contradictory cultures, their opposition having been succinctly defined by the symbolic and physical barrier of the Wall. Beyond the Wall, the continued legacy of \textit{Abgrenzungspolitik} (political demarcation) on either side had served to widen the divide. The discrepancies after the

\textsuperscript{56} Marzahn is perhaps one of the best examples these satellite cities which consisted of large apartment blocks, designated for the GDR’s workers.

fall were blatantly apparent; not only was the city divided by the void of the Wall, the West was more prosperous and a member of the *Rechtstaat*. The East was dilapidated, poorer, lacked up-to-date infrastructure, and was scattered with SED and Soviet monuments. Said simply: the East appeared starkly different than the West. This physical and cultural contrast led to an initial devaluation of the Eastern portion of the city by Berlin’s population on the whole.\textsuperscript{58} The confusion created by the fall of the Wall was based in the oppositional identities of the two cities. It is important to understand that East Berlin had never been “East” Berlin in the GDR. That is to say, the portion of Berlin that was under GDR control was officially labeled Berlin.\textsuperscript{59} In fact, West Berlin’s presence, after the erection of the Wall, wasn’t officially acknowledged by the SED – East German maps represent the area as void.\textsuperscript{60} The discrepancy between official and popular East German identity was especially blatant in Berlin due to the omnipresence of the border. Borneman aptly characterizes this dichotomy: “the state looked East to Moscow for direction and support, the people looked to West Berlin.”\textsuperscript{61} The manner in which East Berlin was perceived and identified by its residents was thus innately shaped by the presence of Berlin-West. As a result, when the Wall fell, East Berlin’s place identity was inadvertently subsumed, hierarchically, by West Berlin’s identity. This initial ascension of Berlin-West over Berlin-East as the primary place identity proved key in the rise of critical reconstruction.

\textsuperscript{58} The initial decline of East Berlin is undoubtedly linked with the East German identity that had formed throughout the reign of the SED. The most important aspect of which was the East-West inferiority complex.
\textsuperscript{59} Borneman, *Belonging in the two Berlins*, 9.
\textsuperscript{60} Borneman, *Belonging in the two Berlins*, 25.
In the years following the fall of the Wall, the call for normalization on a national scale led to increasing efforts to normalize Berlin. During its existence as a divided city, Berlin’s identity was fractured. The city that had existed before and whose unified existence was once more at hand, had become “a theoretical, abstract issue, a political topic and not a living city.” \(^{62}\) The move of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin was one of the first major attempts at directly doing so. This represented not only a symbolic but also a physical incursion into the fabric of the city. Similarly, the city administration implemented critical reconstruction as a \textit{Leitbild} for the city. Thus the official identity of post-Wall Berlin was created; it was to be reflected in the new city’s architecture and physical design.

The self-superiority of West German national identity was bolstered by the FRG’s economic success and alignment with the West. Since East German identity was fractured between the state led and the popular-individual’s identity, individual East German identity was founded on the ideal of Western culture. In this sense, West German culture had become the ersatz identity of many East Germans. \(^{63}\) This relationship can be understood through the commonly noted relationship between a younger and older sibling, in which the younger attempts or wishes to assume the identity of the older. This phenomenon is a particularly apt description of what occurred between East and West Berlin identities. Throughout division, although the Wall had prevented large-scale interpersonal discourse between East and West, East Germans still consumed popular Western culture via radio, concerts held close to the Wall on the Western side, the ubiquitous

\(^{62}\) Borneman, \textit{Belonging in the two Berlins}, 25.
Western visitor to East Berlin, and Western television as of 1971. Thus it is understandable that in the euphoria following the *Wende*, East Berliners and Germans tried to distance themselves from their immediate past. To normalize Germany and Berlin was, therefore, understood as becoming Western, which would become problematic due to the indictment of East German culture and society that it implied.

The ‘mental Wall’ that remained in Berlin even after the removal of the Wall would leave the city divided for years. Today the East-West divide is still present, although, not as distinct as it was throughout the 1990s. By ’95 it had became painstakingly clear that the societal wounds of division and reunification had not been healed in the course of the past five years. Erik Kirschbaum, a journalist, noted that, “East Berliners despise the arrogance of west Berliners, who in turn can’t stand the easterners for their lack of gratitude for the billions of dollars the west is paying to rebuild the East.” On a national level, the rift between the two German identities, East and West, grew greater. An observer of this trend wrote in 1996, “now that Berlin is the capital, that euphoria (of unification) is gone. Germans complain about taxes they pay to subsidize the rebuilding of the former East, including Berlin.” The bitter tension between East and West would shape Berlin’s physical structure as well as its social organization.

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Chapter 2: Critical Reconstruction

My examination of *Kritisichen Rekonstruktion* (critical reconstruction) and the *Leitbild der europäischen Stadt* (Guiding image of the European city) is largely founded on the manifesto of this planning paradigm – the *Berlin Mitte: die Enstehung einer urbanen Architektur* (Downtown Berlin: Building the Metropolitan Mix). The volume was edited and published in 1994 by Hans Stimmann, the chief urban planner in Berlin from ’91-’96. The publication provides detailed architectural plans of the construction projects underway in 1994 and planned for Berlin’s future. More importantly, however, *Berlin Mitte* clearly articulates the basis, the specifics, and the goals of critical reconstruction as a tool for leading Berlin to a prosperous and united future. As such the text is a key primary source that, when analyzed, yields considerable evidence of the bias against the Eastern urban form.

The amount of construction going on in Berlin during the ’90s was truly incredible and therefore denies the possibility of analyzing each instance of critical reconstruction in detail. In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the period, I will address the most important occurrences of critical reconstruction in Berlin, as *Berlin Mitte* also cites them; these are Potsdamer Platz, Friedrichstadt, Alexander Platz, and the Spreebogen.⁶⁷ These projects were not only the largest building sites in 1990’s Berlin but also the clearest examples of critical reconstruction in effect. Although it is not immediately apparent, these projects served to diminish the presence and legacy of East Germany in Berlin. Buildings sprouted in place of the former death strip throughout the

city, most notably in Potsdamer Platz; the traces of the Wall and, in a sense, socialism were quickly subsumed by the new architectural order.

Potsdamer Platz was the site of Berlin’s largest building boom after unification, the manner in which the square was designed and reconstructed in the early ‘90s reflects the desire of the planning administration to create a unified Berlin identity physically and culturally. Much scholarly attention has been given to the overt attempts made by the city government to create a ‘unified’ Berlin beyond its political union; especially the planning attempts made to realize a singular identity for Berlin. This ‘identity’ became the holy grail of the city’s planners. Not only was forging a new identity considered vital to the creation of a functional city but it also reflected a desire to create revenue through tourism and place/image branding that would ideally bring in large businesses to bolster Berlin’s economy but also return it to a globally significant city.

On the whole, the literature regarding critical reconstruction espouses the notion that in the 1990s, Berlin planners created a Leitbild that dictated the development of the city until the end of the decade. This planning vision was fundamentally aesthetic and sought to create an urban identity for Berlin not tainted by its tumultuous history. The Leitbild was named the European City, and it would be realized through critical reconstruction. This plan called for mixed uses, set building heights, pedestrian and

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public transportation, as well as the creation of a city center. The specific regulations for Berlin’s development were meant to increase the legibility of the city, thereby leading to a unified urban identity. Ladd noted that, “critical reconstruction” “excluded every facet of East German architecture and planning.” This position has been further developed in post-colonial theory, or as Molnar puts it, “to advance the ‘civilizing process’ of East Germany in the realm of the built environment. The re-urbanization of East Berlin through adherence to the model of the ‘European city’ was to correct the ‘mistakes’ of East German modernist architecture and urban planning, thereby contributing to the general re-civilization of the East.” Supporters of critical reconstruction during its heyday argued that it was, “not a slavish imitation of the past, but rather a critical re-appropriation of the urban virtues of the traditional European city.” It is widely accepted among scholars that critical reconstruction was rather successful in the realization of its vision throughout the ‘90s. As a result Berlin has changed substantially since the fall of the Wall, especially the Eastern portion of the city.

_Critically Reconstructing the ‘Golden Age’_

_Berlin Mitte: Die Entstehung einer urbanen Architektur_ reads, simultaneously, like a political manifesto, a condescending instruction manual, and an investment brochure. Not only does the text champion critical reconstruction/ the European City, it clearly and

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repeatedly defines the parameters under which Berlin is to be rebuilt, but it also attempts to attract investment in Berlin’s construction boom. In doing so, the text reveals crucial information about the Western desire to create a singular and new place identity for Berlin, one not marred by the East. Furthermore, the text reveals the devaluation of the previously socialist portion of the city by the planning administration.

It is important to note that *Berlin Mitte* was published at the height of critical reconstruction, in 1994, in both German and English. The incorporation of an English text adjacent to the German\(^74\) text reflects the desire of the urban planning administration to attract foreign interest and investment in Berlin. Indeed, the second header of *Berlin Mitte*’s introduction is entitled “Office Space: Availability and Demand,” exhibiting the potential for investment by corporations.\(^75\) Furthermore, the text repeatedly notes the financial worth of new construction projects in Berlin during the 1990s. The reiteration of the fiscal worth of construction reflects one of the core tenets of critical reconstruction, namely economic development; it also, however, serves as an attempt to attract investors through a show of success.\(^76\) The priority given this subject throughout the manifesto, especially commercial buildings as the key component of critical reconstruction, reveals the need to secure Berlin’s economy and global relevance. This in itself may not seem out of the ordinary since urban planners must ensure the viability of their city in the future; attracting business and advertising the city are understood as key elements in this process. Rather it is the manner in which Berlin was rebuilt during the 1990s that makes it open to criticism.

\(^{74}\) The English translation provided by the book itself will be used throughout. If the translation contains noteworthy differences from the original, the German text will also be provided to aide its discussion.  
\(^{76}\) The financial worth of construction projects in Berlin is noted on pages 6,6,7,7, 208, 209.
The text as a manifesto seeks to firmly ground the importance of critical reconstruction and the *Leitbild* of the European City for Berlin’s future through a simplistic explanation of their core components in contrast to Berlin’s past. To do so, *Berlin Mitte* recalls that, “Berlin was the city whose recent political history as the capital of Nazi Germany imbued it with the understandable desire for consistent destruction of the historical urban plan in the centre,”77 and that, “Berlin is also the place where the urban planning strategies of the postwar decades, with their radical separation of functions, their ignorance toward the ownership conditions of individual lots and their automobile-oriented traffic planner were tested and failed – in the capitalist west as well as in the socialist east.”78 These statements can best be read as an articulation of Berlin’s confused identity, its lack of a downtown, and the need to reverse the destruction resulting from division by turning to a historically tested planning paradigm.

One of the main goals established within *Berlin Mitte* was to change the peripheral nature of what had once been Berlin’s inner city into the center of the city again.79 According to the text this development is crucial to the European city, as envisaged by the urban planning administration. In fact the first heading in the introduction is, “The Rebuilding of a City Centre.”80 This need is explicitly expressed: “The question being posed here is instead, at the end of the 20th century, once again that of structure and form of the centre of a European capital and service metropolis.”81 Since there wasn’t really an other option or guideline at-hand to revitalize the “inner

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periphery,” critical reconstruction as based on the historical plan for the city, specifically its 1929 incarnation, was proposed.

The text defines, “the fundamental parameters for building projects of the 1990s …: - The urban planning concept for the inner city; - the urban planning concept of ‘Critical Reconstruction’; - the guiding image of the ‘European City’; - the re-introduction of private real-property ownership in the eastern part of the city; and – the German parliamentary resolution to make Berlin the capital and the corresponding clarity of economic prospects for the city.” Among these parameters, “the urban planning method of Critical Reconstruction can be reduced to a few rules: - The historic street network and the associated historic frontage lines of the streets and squares should be respected or restored. – The maximum admissible height of development should be 22 metres to eaves and 30 metres to ridges. – Certification of a share of approximately 20 % of the gross floor area of housing use is required as the condition for approval. – The density of development (floor space ratio) is not prescribed. It is yielded by the parameters named above, the type of use and specifications of the building code. As a rule it is 5.0. – The aim of new development is the urban house on one lot; the maximum admissible lot size is the block.” The guidelines of Berlin’s renewal, as outlined above, are not only stringent but also clearly programmatically oriented. Throughout the rest of the text GDR buildings are repeatedly devalued, aesthetically and functionally, relegating them, and leaving no place for the East in the ‘new’ Berlin as defined by the standards set out in Berlin Mitte.

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82 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 7.
83 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 13.
84 See, in particular, page 30 and 31 in Berlin Mitte.
In this sense critical reconstruction is heralded as a solution to Berlin’s troubled urban fabric, a solution that is unlikely to founder based on its previous track record. The plan is further justified by the text as reliable due to their support by both the East and the West: “both east and west displayed a desire for resumption of the urban planning tradition, for urban regeneration along the course of the former Wall and for a joint future in a center that would provide a new identity.” 85 Although the claim asserted in the previous quotation regarding the communal desire to rebuild the city in this manner may have, initially, been true, it does not address the waning popularity of the program nor the drawbacks of a so firmly defined planning paradigm. In a sense the quote can be read as a projection of a new Western urban identity onto the East. In this manner the master plan would fashion a new identity by subsuming the East in favor of a historically defined city center. It is important to note that the historical basis of critical reconstruction was Wilhelmine and Weimar Berlin, whose development plans for the city did not allow for any of East Berlin’s urban characteristics as they evolved during division.

The text as a manifesto is highly self-aware and seeks credit for future changes in Berlin’s urban fabric. It notes that critical reconstruction, “has a considerable influence on the new face of Berlin, it is a good example of the relationship between a new urban architecture and an emerging cityscape which will determine life in the metropolis of Berlin until far into the next millennium.” 86 Clearly the city administration was aware of the impact its construction projects were having on the city and had lofty aspirations for Berlin, including the creation of a new urban identity. The fact that the text is so acutely

85 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 11.
86 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 25.
aware of its own position reveals, ultimately, the contested nature of critical reconstruction and the *Leitbild* of the European City.

The frantic debate revolving around whether or not to implement critical reconstruction is known as the *Architekten Streit* (Architect Dispute, conversely known as the Architecture Debate). Hans Stimmann, Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm (an architect and planner), Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (an architect/architectural theorist), and Josef Paul Kleiheus (the conceiver of critical reconstruction during the International Building Exhibition in the ‘80s) were the main proponents of critically reconstructing Berlin. Although Lampugnani never participated directly in Berlin, he wrote a much-discussed essay regarding the necessity of ‘stone architecture’ for the creation of urbanity. Lampugnani’s insistence on the matter can be attributed to his championing of the *Neue Einfachheit* (New Simplicity) in architecture on the whole. Stimmann defended the oft-criticized simplicity of the *Leitbild* saying that, “Every city in Europe has a very special feeling, a unique atmosphere that has something to do with required traditions and the materials that are used locally.”  

Daniel Liebeskind, the American architect, was conversely the most outspoken opponent of critical reconstruction. Liebeskind argued that, “It really is a part of a revision of the history of Berlin, a belief that says Berlin has one history and it’s 1871. That seems to be the period when everything was going great (for Germany)… It’s an obsession with returning to an image of the past.” Other critics and Berliners often echoed this view. Liebeskind feared that critical reconstruction would decrease the architectural, cultural, and historical diversity of Berlin; he noted during the ‘90s that, “When you go around the hundreds of building sites in Berlin, you see that all

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88 Liebeskind as quoted in Atkinson, “Building a Better Berlin?”
the buildings are the same.” Repetition and simplicity are banal, argued critics. Jean Novel, the architect of the Friedrichstadt Passagen said of critical reconstruction, “I think they went about it as if nothing had happened, as if they were erasing history between 1933 and 1989…’critical reconstruction’ reflected a desire for continuity, a policy of little risk, nowhere near as adventurous or prestigious as you might have hoped.”

The subject was further debated among the general public.

The intensity, both in the exchanges among public figures and the conflicts among the general population of Berlin, with which this debate raged during the 1990s, was immense. Even so the opponents of critical reconstruction didn’t gain the upper hand until the late ‘90s; since, “the Berliner Architecture debate is an ideological trench war, like none ever experienced by the Republic. Regarding urban planning. In the highly polemic debate since 1993 over the rebuilding of the capital, the proponents of the progressive new light architecture have opposed the conservative wardens of Berlin’s traditional stone architecture.”

The force with which the building boom swept through Berlin worked to the advantage to the city administration. As a commentator on the subject of Potsdamer Platz’s redevelopment wrote, “‘Tomorrowland’ is now at hand, even though cranes, fences, and scaffolding hem the border of the quarter…It’s not the first time the slogan ‘Enough with looking back’ is being promoted.” According to an opponent of the Leitbild one of the core problems in the reconstruction of Berlin was that, “It wasn’t builders, who besides their money put a little pride in the appearance of

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89 Liebeskind as quoted in Atkinson, “Building a Better Berlin?”
buildings, but investor-coalitions that are interested in rents not the face of a settlement, who erected most new buildings.”⁹³ A Berliner argued that the, “Formalities such as the old street grid or maximum building heights cannot solely revive the spirit, vitality, and diversity of a neighborhood.”⁹⁴ Either way Berlin had to change; this was agreed to on all fronts. Thus, critical reconstruction rolled on, largely unhindered, until the mid ‘90s.

The contested nature of critical reconstruction is also apparent in the text’s expression of the beneficial results of the multitude of construction projects it endorses. Contrary to what critics like Daniel Liebeskind argued, the text claims that critical reconstruction is not meant to reestablish a historical era, nor that it is nostalgic in its use of the 1929 plan for Berlin, and that instead it is using the historical plan to move forward to the European city.⁹⁵ The self-aware nature of the planning paradigm is reflected again in the text, “Architecture as a social art needs rules as the expression of society’s ideas of the city.”⁹⁶ Thus it also becomes clear that Berlin’s societal values ought to adapt to this new model of the European City. In its self-justification, the text notes that there was genuine public involvement in the development of the major building projects. Yet it also casts these public interventions in a negative light: “Openness should not be confused with randomness and experimentation should not become equivalent to destruction of the urban planning structure. The category of ‘metropolis’ can be claimed only by that city which asserts itself as a site of history.”⁹⁷ The question not raised by the text is which history of Berlin ought to be asserted; implicitly it states that of the West and not that of the East.

⁹⁵ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 13.
⁹⁶ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 17.
⁹⁷ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 19.
The zeal with which a new Berliner identity was sought during the 1990s is reflected throughout Berlin Mitte. On the first page of the introduction Hans Stimmann distances Berlin’s urban renewal projects from other notable European city planning and urban revitalization projects; La Défense in Paris and Canary Wharf in London are used as negative examples of what Berlin will not become.\textsuperscript{98} Both La Défense and Canary Wharf are prime examples of urban renewal projects. They are business districts, not centrally located either in Paris or in London, respectively. The architecture of La Défense is comprised of tall business towers; the most notable building is the Grande Arche, a white and grey tower in the shape of a squared arch. The grand business oriented architecture of La Défense and Canary Wharf was considered by Berlin’s planning administration as alienating to the urban dwellers. The urban atmosphere that results from the clustering of such buildings in a new business district was seen as innately contradictory to what Berlin should become. Berlin, as the European city, was to become a vibrant city with one city center, not multiple centers or districts slated for different uses. Thus the two negative counter examples of La Défense and Canary Wharf reflects the struggle to create a unique identity for reunified Berlin. In the sense that these two examples are in two of the most globally recognized metropolises, critical reconstructionists were seeking to situate Berlin in the global arena. This global approach to place identity is crucial to the developments of the 1990s, since it valued the international image of Berlin over its local identity and in doing so neglected the complex identities at play in Berlin.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{98} Burg, Berlin Mitte, 7.
\textsuperscript{99} For further reading on this subject see, C. Girot, “Eulogy of the void. The lost power of Berlin landscapes after the wall,” DISP 156 (2004), 35-38.
Furthermore Berlin as the European City was not supposed to be like the American city with high-rise towers but a compact and spatially complex urban center. During the 1990s New Urbanism, a new urban planning movement, evolved in the United States. New Urbanism shuns the manner in which many American cities have developed lifeless inner-city business centers, are focused on transportation by car, and strictly zoned into separate uses. The mixture of uses as advocated by New Urbanists is clearly present in critical reconstruction and the concept of the European City. Berlin’s planning administration was seeking to recreate the cosmopolitan mixture of uses and architecture that have become synonymous in popular culture with what an ideal city in Europe ought to be. This notion is founded in a dense urban fabric, bustling streets, an historic center, and widespread public transportation and pedestrianism. In a European City people are to be able to walk easily, converse, consume, due to an innate feeling of security produced by, as Berlin Mitte puts it, ‘stone architecture’ of a human scale.

The Leitbild proposed by the text is, “based on the conviction that an urban atmosphere derives from the emphasized materiality of the city.” 100 And that, “a European city needs walls and openings that mark the transition between building and city.”101 This emphasis on the materiality of the city and the manner in which its buildings are constructed and used reveals the core principle of critical reconstruction. A city should be whole, centered, not fractured by austere and/or alienating architecture. Buildings in East Berlin did not fit the model of the European City due to their modernist steel and glass construction; “high-tech buildings consisting solely of glass or displaying

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100 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 19.
101 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 19.
all their structural elements cannot allow the creation of a city in the traditional sense.”¹⁰²

Put differently, “office and commercial buildings must free themselves from an all too frequent triviality. They must be more than just a vehicle for fleeting messages and a surrogate reflection of consumer images, they must regain their urban dignity.”¹⁰³ Dignity and tradition are thus clearly defined as crucial to Berlin’s new identity. This emphasis on a traditional urban form led critical reconstruction to devalue the architecture of East Berlin. Berlin-East as a valid urban entity is essentially discard by the text in its mention of the rejection of East Berlin’s zoning and development plan on the grounds of its socialist nature; “The East Berlin general development plan was not used as a basis for the land use plan for the eleven boroughs of East Berlin because its contents, oriented to a socialist society, had become outmoded.”¹⁰⁴

Ultimately, Berlin Mitte suggests that if the guidelines of critical reconstruction are not adhered to, then, “the urban image will be dominated by everyday, or even run-of-the-mill consumer architecture, driven more by a need to reflect transitory visual fashions and façade treatments than a concern for longer-lasting urban quality and architectural composition.”¹⁰⁵ In this sense Berlin Mitte expresses concern for the improvement of Berlin through planning practices, yet its one-sided understanding of what Berlin should become is problematic. The city planning administration clearly expresses the, as it perceives it, dire need for critical reconstruction as a return to normality; “In a city, such as Berlin with its history of psychological trauma, architecture must surely revert to norms, to composition and – in the tradition of the one-time solid, ‘stone’ city of Berlin –

¹⁰² Burg, Berlin Mitte, 19.
¹⁰³ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 209.
¹⁰⁴ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 11.
¹⁰⁵ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 209.
to the physical, the material and the tectonic; only in this way can architecture fulfill its
dual role as a factor in the urban image of the city and as a social and working
environment.”¹⁰⁶ This urge to normalize Berlin clearly drove critical reconstruction to its
success in producing a physically new downtown Berlin.

Critical Reconstruction in Practice

As outlined in Berlin Mitte, the Western elites were disinterested in the
preservation of East Berlin’s urban structure due to its “outdated” architecture and
socialist heritage. Critical reconstruction was to make the city legible, flowing,
“perceptible in its historical scales and layerings, its sequences of urban spaces and its
differentiated variety of uses, but also as a site of contemporary architecture and of
economic conditions.”¹⁰⁷ Berlin thus became the site of a massive building boom
throughout the ‘90s including, primarily, the large-scale construction of office and
commercial space. The construction of further office and commercial floorage in Berlin
was seen as justified by Berlin’s new status as the capital of Germany and the scarcity of
available office space in comparison to other major German cities. The scarcity arose due
to, “the sub-standard quality of existing buildings in East Berlin,”¹⁰⁸ which, in the eyes of
the city administration, had to be remedied.

The massive scale of construction throughout Berlin during the ‘90s reflects the
widespread nature of critical reconstruction and also suggests the enormity of the impact
it had on East Berlin’s cityscape and cultural legacy. The Wall is a good point of
departure for the analysis of the actual physical changes that resulted from the program of

¹⁰⁶ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 211. My italics for emphasis.
¹⁰⁷ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 13.
¹⁰⁸ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 9.
critical reconstruction, especially seeing as the Wall was the most prominent physical and cultural relic of the GDR and the first such remnant to disappear. The questions of when, how, and why the Wall disappeared are crucial to understanding the changes brought about by the various instances of critical reconstruction.

The Wall’s ubiquity in Berlin then and now is undeniable. The Berlin Wall is and most likely will forever be identified with Berlin, but its symbolic meaning (division) could not be more detrimental to the creation of a singular urban identity in Berlin, or so it was thought. Necessarily the city government rapidly removed major portions of the Wall and immediately sought to address the void that had been the “death strip.” The void left by the GDR’s urban border infrastructure was immense, and in a plainly physical sense had to be changed in order to knit the two halves of the city together once more. As a physical and mental barrier, the Wall zone could not remain undeveloped in the planning perspective. Among West Berliners a unique phenomenon emerged in the early 90’s, Mauer-Nostalgie (or Wall-Nostalgia) due to the identity and security, physically and socially, that the Wall had provided, which was now glaringly a thing of the past.\(^\text{109}\) The very presence of such nostalgia signaled the extent to which the Wall had impacted Berlin.

The Berlin Wall had evolved, structurally throughout its existence, yielding to either side of the city distinct feelings towards it. In West Berlin the Wall was seen as a symbol of oppression yet it also delineated the boundaries of the city to its residents. At first it was understood as a temporary inconvenience. As the border fortifications became more formidable it became clear to West Berliners that they would have to live with the

concrete barrier. Unlike in the East, in the West one could walk alongside the Wall, touch it, graffiti it, most importantly interact with it as an urban form. This is why Mauernostalgie occurred among West Berliners, who had come to know the Wall as an enduring presence. The East Berliner’s relationship to the Wall was extremely different from his/her Western counterpart. From the beginning, access to the border zone was prohibited. After the Wall was first erected, the buildings adjacent to the border on the Eastern side were vacated by state mandate; the windows were bricked up and residents were relocated. Eventually these buildings were destroyed to make room for further border fortifications, including the “death strip” and the primary wall on the Eastern side of the border. East Germans were not allowed to approach the border fortifications at all, if one was caught nearing the Eastern wall one was charged with Republik Flucht. Residential high-rises were built alongside to the Wall to utilize the ‘no-go’ area; the only people permitted a residence in these buildings were those most trusted by the SED regime, i.e. Stasi and government officials. Thus the vast majority of East Berliners never were able to interact with the Wall; the Wall represented an unknown and unseen barrier that enshrined the city. The disparate experiences with the Wall that constituted its understanding in the East and West explains the euphoria of East Germans and the insecurity felt by West Berliners when the border opened on November 9th 1989.

Frederick Baker provided one of the earliest critical discussions of the Wall as a “20th century monument,” and its consumption by the public. When the Wall fell, it was immediately consumed physically, whether by climbing on top of it or through its

110 See Image 3.
111 Windows and entrances to these buildings were bricked up before they were razed in order to prevent people from jumping out of windows into the Western sectors of the city.
112 Baker, “The Berlin Wall,” 709. Baker was one of the first to note the monumental nature of the Wall, and its immediate erasure, both willing and unwilling, through popular consumption.
actual destruction. *Mauerspechte* (Wall-pickers, both Berliners and tourists) hacked away at the Wall, selling the pieces or simply keeping them in order to obtain a piece of history.\textsuperscript{113} In Image 4, below, a *Mauersprecht* is hacking away at a portion of the Western Wall, which was more sought after than the Eastern barrier due to the coloration of graffiti.

\textsuperscript{113} Baker, “The Berlin Wall,” 709.
In this sense even the Western Wall was more highly valued than its Eastern counterpart.

Baker notes that through its physical consumption the Wall not only became a commodity but also monumental in its disappearance. Baker writes that this is the result of “the paradoxical mutually dependent relationship between consuming and the

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preserving of monuments.”

It was through the individual consumption of the Wall that Berliners and tourists were able to fulfill their longing for the presence of the Wall as producer of certainty during division as well as their simultaneous urge to be rid of it. In a sense, by exerting physical mastery over the Wall, the Wall regained the quality of certainty that it had projected during its existence. The physical disappearance of the Wall, however, has not diminished its powerful image; in 2000, BTM (Berlin Tourisomous Marketing GmbH, or the Berlin Tourism Agency) observed that 1/3 of visitors to Berlin ask for Wall-related memorabilia. Since then, “as a result of the 2001 administrative reorganization of Berlin’s districts, reducing them from twenty to twelve through amalgamation, in certain areas of the city not even the district boundary where the Wall stood exists anymore, either on the street or on paper. In these cases, the Wall Path will be its only trace.” The physical eradication of the Wall zone has been criticized extensively. By the end of 1991, the city had hauled the majority of the Wall’s fortifications to peripheral scrap yards, where the concrete and symbol of division was vigorously ground into gravel. See Images 5 and 6, depicting the rapid removal of the Wall.

116 Verheyen, United city, divided memories?, 219.
117 Loeb, “Planning reunification,” 67-68. The Wall path is a pedestrian path that traces the course of the Wall throughout Berlin, it will be discussed in more depth in chapter 3 as an Icon of the East.
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The removal of the Wall was supposed to change the symbolic relationship between the Wall and Berlin during the years of division. To many Germans the Wall had been the signifier and Berlin the signified. Thus by removing the Wall and healing the wounds it had inflicted, Berlin was to become the signifier of the European city, united not divided. Much like the Wall many GDR monuments were seen as relics of a bygone era that could only serve to harm the unification of Berlin. Since the, “GDR worked hard to make its memorials a part of its people’s consciousness and identity,” not only were there many monuments but they were also deeply ingrained within East Berlin’s place identity.\(^{121}\) Immediately in the months following the fall of the Wall calls for the removal of the GDR’s monuments were made; “It was above all Western conservative politicians


who wanted to ratify their triumph by sweeping away the communist past.”122 It was not only the West that was in favor of removing many of the traces of socialism because, “the first steps were taken during the GDR’s final months by the democratically elected councils of East Berlin’s districts. At least three district councils ordered the prompt removal of plaques.”123 Even so, the East’s initial attempts at disremembering its past would change. The West would continue to rally around the reduction of blatant symbols of socialism, while the East would attempt to prevent such actions. The undeniable effects of monuments as aids to memory, whether desired or not, would shape the city government’s decisions with regard to many of East Berlin’s districts and monuments. The lack of identity in Berlin naturally meant that monuments and other embodiments of Eastern political doctrine were closely scrutinized.

Ladd’s insights into memorial culture in Berlin reveal the unfolding of tensions around critical reconstruction throughout the 1990s. It is important to note that the majority of GDR monuments were aesthetically modeled on Soviet memorials. The grand triumphalist style embodied by these memorials did not fit, in the slightest, into a united Berlin. The national pride and politically contentious messages evoked by this style of monument were inherently difficult to come to terms with for the German nation and Berlin. More than anything, monuments are symbols that also inhabit and define the urban spaces in their surrounding. Monuments essentially project an aura, especially when they are massive and imposing in nature. This characteristic of monuments in East Berlin, thus, had to be addressed. Two monuments in East Berlin provide good examples of the problem.

The colossal statue of Lenin in Lenin Platz and the Ernst Thälmann statue became the center of public attention in the debate about what to do with the GDR’s monuments. The statue of Lenin had been commissioned in the 1970s and was the work of Nikolai Tomsky, a noted Soviet sculptor.¹²⁴ The statue towered over Lenin Platz, measuring 63 feet, and thus represented an appropriately large object to focus the debate about monuments on. As plans for the statue’s removal were widely circulated, opposition arose, and “the furor over the Lenin statue revealed the extent to which former East Germans were choosing between assimilation into West German society and insistence on a separate identity.”¹²⁵ Images 7 and 8 show the statue of Lenin: note its enormity as well as the slogan that demonstrates against the monument’s removal. The slogan reads, “You FRG occupiers! Do you even fear a Lenin made of stone?” clearly articulating the outrage felt by East Germans over the removal of the statue as well as its political and cultural implications.

Image 7. The Lenin Statue by Tomsky in Lenin Platz, now the Platz der Vereinten Nationen.

Ladd’s observation locates the beginning of *Ossi* resentment over the plans taking shape for Berlin under critical reconstruction at the end of 1991. The extent to which this resentment manifested itself in 1991, however, would not be enough to put a stop to

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critical reconstruction until 1996. Most Westerners, “found this Ossi identity unfathomable. The former symbols of communist authority were becoming monuments to an ominous crack in the façade of German unity.¹²⁸ This crack unsettled both the national and local government in Berlin. As a result the Lenin statue was removed in 1992, although with considerable setbacks, and Lenin Platz was renamed Platz der Vereinten Nationen (United Nations Square).¹²⁹ The removal of the statue and the renaming of the square reflect the initial success of critical reconstructionists in overcoming the East German past and in doing so, deliberately trying to erase it.

The Ernst Thälmann monument in Prenzlauer Berg met a different fate than Lenin’s statue. Today the monument is a protected landmark and as such represents the success of the growing opposition to critical reconstruction during the 1990s. The Thälmann monument, pictured in Image 9, was slated for removal by the city government in 1993; by 1995, however, opponents to its removal had succeeded in ensuring its continued presence in Berlin’s landscape.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin, 199.
Thus the Thälmann memorial reflects, particularly well, the resurgence of East German identity as oppositional to the Western desire to forget the GDR and to critically remake Berlin.

One of the most common focuses of criticism leveled against critical reconstruction is Potsdamer Platz. Potsdamer Platz was perhaps one of the most obvious scars left by the Wall zone. Before the Wall and throughout much of Berlin’s modern history, Potsdamer Platz had been one of the most vibrant hubs of the city and had come to represent modernity, commerce, and the ideal urbanity. When the Wall went up in 1961, the entire area, or what was left of it from WWII, was razed and converted into no-

man’s land. Thus it came to be viewed, by the city’s planning administration, as one of the most important portions of the city that needed to be rebuilt. According to Ladd, “the Kulturforum and other steps to erase the historical urban fabric had their critics before 1989, but it was after the opening of the Wall that the spirit of ‘critical reconstruction’ came to Potsdamer Platz. The idea of reconstructing Potsdamer Platz aroused widespread enthusiasm. It offered a symbolic as well as a practical reconciliation of the East and West.”

The enthusiasm regarding the project ultimately waned in the Eastern portions of the city since it represented a blatant disregard for the legacy of the GDR.

In July 1990 the West Berlin mayor Walter Momper made a 670,000 square meter real estate deal with Daimler-Benz, one of Germany’s largest corporations, for land in Potsdamer Platz. This particular real estate deal highlights the urgency with which Berlin was to be rebuilt as well as the manner in which critical reconstruction was to proceed. Soon thereafter contracts were struck up with Sony, who would locate its European headquarters in Potsdamer Platz, Hertie (a West German department store chain, and Asea Brown Boveri (ABB, an international engineering firm), to develop Potsdamer Platz. The architectural design of Potsdamer Platz is, perhaps, best described as shocking; the architectural confusion is clearly visible in Image 10.

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The Sony Center’s tent-like roof resembles an abstracted circus canopy; in this sense the building’s design reveals the deliriously jubilant and ridiculous nature of Potsdamer Platz’s critical reconstruction. The guidelines detailed by critical reconstruction required that the square obtain a cosmopolitan mix of uses, that it be accessible and enjoyable to the pedestrian, and that it recreate the qualities of a European city center. This, however, was not the result. Although Potsdamer Platz is bustling with tourists and shoppers during the day, it is deserted at night. Furthermore the odd mix of architectural forms (which was not supposed to be the case in the European city) is confusing to the pedestrian. One knows not where to enter, exit, or sit for a moment, the space has become

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136 See Image 10.
chaotic and not in the positive manner that promotes interaction with the built
environment. A critic of Potsdamer Platz writes that, “In fact space is the only thing that
Potsdamer Platz lacks, instead narrow asphalt alleys, comparable to those named after
German poets and thinkers, unto which only a modicum of Berlin’s winter light falls due
to their location between the steeply rising, newly constructed buildings. It is a city
within the city, retort-proof, with hotels, sushi bars, bagel shops, movie theaters named
Cinemaxx and Cinestar, underground parking garages, a playground, and glass roofed
shopping mall.” This critique reveals the overemphasis on cosmopolitanism that haunts
Potsdamer Platz and detracts from the atmosphere as envisioned for a “true” European
City.

Notably, this European city center was based in the glorified vision of Potsdamer
Platz’s past. Ladd notes that, “in rebuilding Potsdamer Platz, and its old urban grid,
Berlin has chosen to embrace an early phase of modernity that concluded in 1918 and to
distance itself from more recent and disquieting assaults on tradition.” The extent to
which Potsdamer Platz was refashioned in the vision of its past would become one of the
major points of contention about the square’s redevelopment. The cosmopolitanism,
vibrancy, and stone architecture seen in Image 11 of Potsdamer Platz in 1929, reflects
what critical reconstructionists sought to emulate. As seen in Image 10, the results of the
building projects on Potsdamer Platz did not come close to resembling its Weimar
heyday.

In *Berlin Mitte* Potsdamer Platz is allotted the fifth and final chapter, highlighting its significance to the city administration’s goals for critical reconstruction. The chapter title itself, *Potsdamer Platz: Die Neue Mitte* (Potsdamer Platz: the New Centre), speaks volumes to the city’s aspirations for the space. Within the chapter, attention is immediately drawn to Potsdamer Platz’s ‘Golden days’, stating that the plans for its reconstruction are thus in line with a proud tradition.\(^{140}\) The text further aligns the project with the proud tradition of modern and great architects in Potsdamer Platz, including Erich Mendelsohn’s Columbus Haus, Martin Wagner, and the Luckhardt Brothers.\(^{141}\) The intent of the project as described by the text is to revert the space to Potsdamer Platz’s

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heyday. The details of the architectural plans were to ensure that, “various types of
building use that are intended to promote the urban vitality of the district through into the
early hours of the morning.”¹⁴² This is not the case; at night the square obtains the feeling
of a no-man’s land (exactly what it had been only a decade previously, see Image 12
below of what the no-man’s land looked like).


To observers of the manner in which Potsdamer Platz was created, this goal seemed
facetious. The true mission statement encapsulated in the chapter on Potsdamer Platz
reveals the intent of the city administration to gloss over the troubled years of the space,
to create a new Berlin; “The nature and location of this new district taking shape on

¹⁴² Burg, Berlin Mitte, 171.
Potsdamer Platz are unique in Europe. In the very heart of a European capital, on historic ground, a completely new section of the inner city is being created for 20,000 workers, many more visitors, customers and business partners. Located between the City West and City East, on ground where the Berlin wall once stood, it knits the city together into one functional and spatial unit.”

The language herein shows that Potsdamer Platz’s development represents the desire to reconnect with the confidence of pre-division Berlin. Many Berliners who were discontent with the notion of superficially covering the past harshly critiqued the development of the square.

The superficiality and the artificiality of the Potsdamer Platz project roused heated debates and proved crucial to the resurgence of East German identity. Many opponents to the project saw it as a blatant commercialization of Berlin’s downtown and an unjust allotment of real estate to four major conglomerates when there were a multitude of smaller proposals. According to a writer for Der Speigel, Potsdamer Platz is a, “purely commercial, questionably planned boom quarter, that has over the course of the past years, raised itself out of the fallow land through violent construction. Even today it seems foreign like a donor’s heart in the fabric of the city – isolated and always in danger of being rejected.” Furthermore a critic of the Sony Center’s design wrote that Helmut Jahn’s, “de-nationalized architecture places itself, proud and frigid, above everything that the ideal of what the ‘Euorpean City’ should be.” Thus it is clear that development of Potsdamer Platz was and still is seen as an accidental parody of urbanity, an utter failure to rebuild Berlin.

144 Burg, Berlin Mitte, 173.
Critics worried that the area would become a lifeless business center. Beyond this point of contention more serious questions of historical preservation arose regarding the two sole buildings on the site. The Hotel Esplanade and the building in which the restaurant Weinhaus Huth had been located at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{147} Both buildings were to be preserved; the Weinhaus was left untouched due to its residents’ opposition to anything remotely concerning its alteration. The portions of the Hotel Esplanade that had survived, however, were incorporated into Helmut Jahn’s design for the Sony Center. Protests arose due to the plans to keep the Hotel’s exterior intact, while renovating the rooms within. Finally, in 1996, two years after construction had begun on Potsdamer Platz, the Hotel Esplanade was moved approximately 75 meters from its original location to its new home within the would-be Sony Center.\textsuperscript{148} Another commentator from \textit{Der Spiegel} noted, “the restoration and relocation (of the Hotel Esplanade) via air-pillow by 75 meters cost approximately 30 million Euro, slightly less than the price of a small and pretty new museum – but for this price the capital city now has one more puppet theater, set behind glass in a contemporary ambiance.”\textsuperscript{149} Image 13 depicts the Hotel Esplanade’s \textit{Kaisersaal} (Emperor’s Room) as it can be seen today.

\textsuperscript{147} Ladd, \textit{The Ghosts of Berlin}, 122.
Today pedestrians that enter the Sony Center’s forum can see the exterior of the Esplanade, enshrined by a glass wall, as they exit into Potsdamer Platz’s main square. The experience resulting from this view is at once startling and confusing. Although the Esplanade’s exterior is labeled as such, it seems out of place since it is thoroughly de-contextualized in contrast with the Sony Center’s ultra-modern design. In a sense, the hotel’s exterior appears like a piece of art on display, meant to give credence to the legitimacy of the institution/building that houses it. Simultaneously, it appears artificial, a Disneyfied façade. The sense of thematic artificiality is further enforced by the replica of what is considered by some to have been Europe’s first traffic light, which holds a prominent place in the center of Postdamer Platz (see Image 14, below).

151 See Image10.
It is exactly this impression of artifice and historical selectivity that concerned many critics, although the Esplanade had no connection to East Berlin, its rendering alluded to the overall impact critical reconstruction was having on the city, especially in the East.\textsuperscript{153}

Construction began on Postdamer Platz in 1994 after the finalization of the plans for the site; the entire project was not fully completed until 2000 after critical reconstruction had lost its impetus. The Sony Center was completed in 2000, the Daimler-Benz building in 1998; during this period of construction, especially from 1994

to 1996, Berlin branded itself, “Europe’s largest construction site.” The idea of construction tourism was promoted by the city administration in order to bolster Berlin’s economy and to garner support for the widespread implementation of critical reconstruction. To do so the Info Box, essentially a tourist center with an observation platform, was constructed in the vicinity of Potsdamer Platz. A critic of the endeavor wrote, “The Wall had barely been toppled when its torturous memory was quelled; ‘Visit Tomorrowland’ was the new motto and quickly, the red Info Box went up on the edge of the construction sight as a tourist attraction.” The Info Box was opened in 1995, a year after construction had begun and closed in 2000 after the completion of the Sony Center.

Image 15. The Info Box next to remnants of the Western part of the Wall.

The garish red façade and protruding walkways that comprised the Info Box (as seen in Image 15) clearly signified the spectacle at hand. Directly adjacent to this hyperbolized info booth lay remnants of the Wall, close to which Potsdamer Platz was taking form. The Info Box blatantly displayed the marvels of engineering in the construction of Potsdamer Platz through virtual tours of the building site as well as its observation platform; thereby it served to focus tourist attention on Berlin’s future not past, its changing physical and social climate. This direct accent on change in Berlin, booming with construction, devalued the Eastern parts of the city that “needed” to change. The “new Berlin” appreciated; the old, as in the East, was devalued. It is undeniable that the Info Box and the spectacle it highlighted glossed over the remnants of what had been the East. In this sense the Info Box was a crucial part of the critical reconstruction agenda in so far as it served, or perhaps attempted to justify, critical reconstruction as a beneficial program for Berlin. In a sense the Info Box was a triumphant propagator of Berlin’s simulacrum of the boom of the Gründerzeit (Founding Era). Furthermore, by focusing international and local attention on the very act of construction, the city was able to deflect attention from the erasure of Potsdamer Platz as a void during division. The Info Box, however, can also be seen as a reflection of the economic motivations of the city administration. To critics of critical reconstruction, the Info Box and Potsdamer Platz represented the unwillingness of the West to engage openly in a discussion about the GDR’s legacy; “In the search for an identity and trapped in a myth, that was never more than a metaphor for un-tempered longing for the past, Berlin is experiencing its metamorphosis into a European capital, caught between freedom and defeat.”

Although Potsdamer Platz is the largest example of critical reconstruction, it is not the only site where critical reconstruction was put into practice. The two other most prominent sites of critical reconstruction were the Spreebogen (the arc in the river Spree that runs through Berlin’s center), where the new government district was built, and the Friedrichstadt Passagen (Friedrichstadt Arcades, an indoor shopping complex comprised of several buildings connected by an underground passage). The extent of critical reconstruction and its symbolic significance can be quantified in so far as, “The federal government is pouring nearly DM 30 billion (19.4 billion) annually into the redevelopment of Berlin,” and “DM 20 billion, or $ 13.5 billion, required to move the national government from Bonn to Berlin.”

Furthermore, critical reconstruction was not only limited to large sites like Potsdamer Platz, the Spreebogen, and Friedrichstadt, it also affected individual lots and streets. Notable streets include Unter den Linden, Glinkastrasse, und Frankfurter Allee. Unter den Linden, in particular, had been cut into two by the Wall and had seen serious neglect between 1945 and 1989. A commentator on Berlin during critical reconstruction, proudly noted in 1996 that, “Even that dismal reminder of a city divided, Checkpoint Charlie, has been embellished, though it remains caught up in the clutter and confusion of…another construction project. The American Business Center is going up on Charlie’s eastern flank.”

Note here that the American Business Center was being built directly in the East over the erstwhile border crossing.

The Spreebogen is a geographically notable portion in the center of Berlin, due to the singular curve of the Spree River. The area had been largely cleared during the Nazi regime under Albert Speer’s supervision for the creation of Germania. During the years

\[160\] Burg, Berlin Mitte, 23.
of German division, the area was essentially fallow due to the extensive presence of border fortifications. Thus the area presented the perfect space for the new federal government quarter that had to be constructed to facilitate the German parliament and federal agencies after the historic vote on June 20, 1991 to move the federal government from Bonn to Berlin. The critical reconstruction of the Spreebogen is perhaps the least criticized project of the 1990s in Berlin. The move of the government from Bonn to Berlin took place in 1994. The architectural design by Axel Schulte received widespread praise by international and German critics. In its popularity the new government quarter successfully overrode the void that had been left by the Wall without much consternation from West and East Berliners. Thus the Spreebogen project subsumed a considerable portion of the GDR’s physical legacy in Berlin as well as symbolically replacing Berlin as the capital of united Germany, not divided, nor the capital of the East. The other major construction site during the 1990s was also located in the East of Berlin.

Friedrichstadt underwent massive changes during the 1990s. During Berlin’s turn of the century boom years, Friedrichstadt had been an important part of inner city Berlin. Its architecture was defined by the block structures of the Mietskasernen. In this sense, Friedrichstadt necessarily had to be reclaimed through critical reconstruction; not only had it been a bustling downtown area but it had also been defined by the architecture that critical reconstruction sought to emulate. During WWII the area sustained heavy damage and was thereafter cleft in half by the erection of the Wall in 1961. On either side of the Wall, during division, residential high-rises rose up in great numbers, turning each portion of the city away from the other. Thus after the fall in 1989 the area was targeted for revitalization. Many of the GDR high-rises were torn down in favor of creating the
European city mix. The largest construction project in the area during the ‘90s was the Friedrichstadt Passagen. Ironically, although the neighborhood was to receive a treatment of ‘stone’ architecture as proscribed by critical reconstruction, construction of the Passagen was begun before Stimmann succeeded in passing the legal specifications for critical reconstruction. Thus the completed Friedrichstat Passagen have a prominent glass façade antithetical to critical reconstruction (see Image 16), similar to many of the high rises that had been demolished for its construction. Even so, a critic of the project noted that, “Friedrichstrasse, even after being stylized as a Flanuerie street can’t compare to the urbanity of the Kurfürstendamm in the West, thus sinking its arcades into the deep. Here, instead of creating urbanity,… the idea of the shopping mall on a green meadow in refined form is being transferred into the depths of the city.”

Image 16. Friedrichstadt Passagen as seen today.

Aside from this one failing, the Friedrichstadt Passagen is an exemplary element of the envisaged European city insofar as it made Friedrichstadt easily legible as a Western city not Eastern.

The Passagen were completed in 1996 and symbolically heralded the return of capitalist consumerism in East Berlin. The complex of buildings that comprises the Passagen forms a continuous shopping mall. Similarly to its treatment of Potsdamer Platz Berlin Mitte also tries to align the Passagen with Friedrichstadt pre-Nazi history; “Particularly in Friedrichstrasse, a street where arcades and galleries have a long tradition, we see buildings with shopping arcades. The biggest and most internationally renowned project is the Friedrichstadt Passagen, covering three blocks between Friedrichstrasse and the back of the Schauspielhaus and the churches on Gendarmenmarkt.”¹⁶⁴ As a shopping mecca of commercial arcades, the Friedrichstadt Passagen recalls the musings of Walter Benjamin in his opus, Das Passagen Werk (Arcades Project). Benjamin observed the peculiar social phenomenon of the bourgeois flaneur, who escaped reality by observing his own city from an outsider’s perspective. In a sense, as Ladd notes, critical reconstruction can be seen as a planning paradigm defined by exactly the city that the flaneur inhabited.¹⁶⁵ This can in turn be interpreted in a most basic way to reflect the socio-political and cultural imperialism of the West. In this vein, the Friedrichstadt Passagen can be seen as supplanting the previously socialist urban values through direct exertion of capitalist architecture and culture in the area. This notion is important to understanding the erosion of the East as a place in Berlin, projects like the Passagen subsumed the East in favor of their capitalist/ Western construct.

¹⁶⁴ Burg, Berlin Mitte, 101
Notably, unlike Potsdamer Platz, the Passagen are pleasant to behold and to wander through making the area one of the period’s only successes in revitalizing a neighborhood. Even so Peter Davey, an architectural critic, noted that even after its ‘rejuvenation’ the Friedrichstadt area on the whole was lacking; “The succession of commercial object-buildings along Friedrichstraße is as clumsy as any to be found in the world. They may all have the same height, as Stimmann wanted, but common eaves heights do not make an urbane city.”

_The Turn From Critical Reconstruction to Planwerk Innenstadt_

The guiding principles of critical reconstruction, especially their rigidity and inability to include the East, worked to undermine the planning paradigm. In 1996 during local elections, Hans Stimmann, a member of the SPD, was ousted from his position as _Senatsbaudirektor_ (Chief Urban Planner) by the CDU, “who sought a more uncritical reconstruction of Berlin.” Insofar as Stimmann was the person most responsible for the implementation of critical reconstruction from 1990-1995, his departure from the office of _Senatsbaudirektor_ marked the end of critical reconstruction in its radical form during the first half of the 1990s. Stimmann and his closest ally - the architect Dieter Hoffmann-Axhelm who, under Stimmann’s guidance, had flushed out the concept of critical reconstruction – were increasingly criticized during the 1990s. A large number of East and West Germans who were aligned with the Eastern identity criticized the impact that the building boom had on the Eastern portions of Berlin. The artificiality and superficiality implied by critical reconstruction as a method of healing a ruptured city

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was criticized. Furthermore, the unwillingness of critical reconstruction to incorporate or, perhaps better put, its exclusion of much of East Berlin’s physical, cultural, and political legacy, was seen as a serious failing and offense. It had become apparent to many onlookers, Berliners in particular that, “the 1890s or 1920s cannot be restored except as a stage set for tourists.”\(^\text{168}\) Furthermore, Stimmann’s removal from his office reflected a change in the urban planning administration’s power structure and composition. Immediately after unification, Western actors dominated the city government; “although several actors from the GDR remained active after the Fall of the Wall, essentially it was Western actors that decided the planning decisions during the 1990s.”\(^\text{169}\) The domination of Berlin’s government by Westerners continued, but its support had significantly waned.

The resurgence of East German identity and the growing public support it received ultimately led to the decline of critical reconstruction. This shift in identity politics was made particularly clear when the Party of Democratic Socialism (\textit{Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus}, reformed communist party) won 36 percent of the vote in the mayoral elections of Berlin in 1995.\(^\text{170}\) At the time Lothar Bisky, the chairman of the Democratic Socialist party, said of the Western elites, “they can no longer stick to the old misguided formula that easterners are losers and always wrong and westerners are the victors and always right…this has led to the creation of a new identity in the east.”\(^\text{171}\) This new Eastern identity, which Bisky alluded to, is the stronger and more confident reiteration of East German identity as discussed previously. Ralf Urlich, a sociologist at Humboldt University in Berlin described the heightening East-West tensions in 1995,

\(^{168}\) Ladd, \textit{The Ghosts of Berlin}, 231.  
\(^{170}\) Kirschbaum, “5 years after reuniting, Berlin still split,” 112.  
\(^{171}\) Kirschbaum, “5 years after reuniting, Berlin still split,” 112.
“Easterners stay in east Berlin, marry in east Berlin, have their friends in east Berlin and identify themselves with the east. They’ve given up on the westerners. A trip to west Berlin is still like traveling to a different country.”172 The personal loss experienced by many East Berliners was emotionally disturbing. Wolfgang Kil, a noted east German architect, spoke of Berlin in 1997, “I’m very sad about the future of this place… The city has no power and no money. It’s begging for every investor to come here, and the investors can set the rules.”173 As evidenced by these statements, Berlin was growing further apart, into a socially polarized city, not together.

Although by 1996 there was a solid oppositional basis to critical reconstruction, several proponents of the planning paradigm remained, and some things could not be undone, i.e. Potsdamer Platz. Stimmann, after being removed from his position as chief urban planner obtained another planning position; “After assuming a position as state secretary in the Senate’s Urban Planning, Environmental Protection, and Technology Agency and thereby obtaining the power to implement planning practices, the first necessary step was the transmission of the guiding vision of critical reconstruction into a master plan, which Stimmann designated ‘Planwerk Innenstadt’.174 Planwerk Innenstadt (Master plan for the city center) can be understood as a continued yet, “weakened version of critical reconstruction.”175 Planwerk Innenstadt was developed under Stimmann’s supervision between 1996 and 1999, when it was ratified as the master plan for Berlin’s center. In the sense that critical reconstruction was transferred from a planning paradigm into an actual master plan reflects the continuation of the Western desire to subsume the

172 Kirschbaum, “5 years after reuniting, Berlin still split,” 112.
Eastern portions of Berlin. The nature in which critical reconstruction was thus continued in Berlin reveals the more subtle approach taken by the Western dominated planning administration in the implementation of its goals.

In its “ignorant success,” critical reconstruction has received a lot of attention, especially in regard to its detrimental impact on the East of Berlin. Molnar notes that, “a debate about the architecture appropriate to the desired image of the city is in an important sense a debate about collective identity, about the ‘we’ that is to be constituted and addressed by the built form of the city. Indeed, the narrowness of the ‘we’ implied in the transformations of Berlin’s public spaces is an important cause for concern.”

There are ongoing debates as to whether or not Berlin was successful in shaping a unified urban identity, or image/brand. A recent essay by Alexander Tölle argues that Berlin was largely successful in its attempt to create such an image, or at least fulfilled many of the necessary stages in the process of doing so. Tölle, however, notes that the city administration has recently realized its mistake in trying to create a unified image of Berlin and is now seeking to return to the image of division to bolster tourism. This goal is more questionable than critical reconstruction itself since the city succeeded in creating a master plan, Planwerk Innenstadt, that has continued to reshape Berlin in the image of critical reconstruction, albeit in a watered down version. Although Tölle’s argument is flawed, it raises the important question of how the city administration has addressed the preservation of East Berlin in light of protests against its eradication.

Chapter 3: Icons of the East

Planwerk Innenstadt successfully harnessed the opposition to critical reconstruction to continue the process of normalizing Berlin’s identity. To continue normalization, the city administration sought to further subsume the East by creating Icons of the East. In this sense the word Icon ought to be understood as the reduction of an aspect of East German culture, identity, and history into a basic essence of the original. Furthermore, the word icon implies a visually consumed sign that in its simplicity and root connection to its signified is easily understood, processed, and consumed. The term is also particularly fitting since the original goal of critical reconstruction during the 1990s and its embodiment in Planwerk Innenstadt is to simplify the complex interrelations of German identities in Berlin through the physical alteration of the cityscape, thereby allowing for the creation of a communal Berlin identity that is ultimately productive in the economic sense.

The Icons of the East are scarce considering the extensive urban legacy of the GDR; the most important Icons are the East Side Gallery (as well as a few other Wall remnants), Checkpoint Charlie, and the Stasi Prison Museum. As Icons these places are easily consumed by the modern flaneur, whether tourist or Berliner. The ease with which the Icons of the East are consumed can be attributed to their de-contextualization and their artifice, that is, their lack of historical authenticity. In this sense the Icons serve as urban spectacles, alluding to the exotic socialist culture of the GDR. The creation of Icons served as an appeasement of the preservationist desire of East Germans in a historical and cultural sense. This form of appeasement was overdue since, “GDR
nostalgia and an upsurge of support for the revamped communist party, the Partei der
demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS), were the inevitable political results,” of critical
reconstruction. While serving to appease this preservationist instinct, the creation of
such Icons like Checkpoint Charlie allowed Berlin’s urban planning administration to
further normalize the city. The process of normalization was continued through the
reincarnation of critical reconstruction in the Planwerk Innenstadt as well as the
deliberate erasure of decidedly socialist urban remnants.

This altered process of normalizing Berlin has been ongoing since the late ‘90s. A
prime example of the continued efforts to normalize Berlin is the debate that revolved
around the Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic), the GDR’s parliament building.
Although the building had been slated for removal in the mid-1990s, removal was not
begun until 2006 and completed in 2008. The issues regarding the Palast der Republik
will be discussed in more detail in this chapter since it represents the deliberate reduction
of the GDR’s presence in East Berlin as to allow for the creation of relatively few Icons
of the East. The logic is simple – the efficacy of Icons grows exponentially with the
increasing scarcity of other signs of what the Icon signifies. Thus the ostensible
preservation of the East through the creation of Icons was not only a manner of
appeasement but also allowed for the creation of a normalized Berlin, by and large
untainted by the GDR’s legacy. This process was seen to be necessary due to
globalization and the importance of place marketing, “the current discourse of the city as
image is one of ‘city fathers,’ developers, and politicians trying to increase mass

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tourism.” Furthermore the continuation of critical reconstruction “is itself primarily concerned with image and advertising.”

The emphasis that was increasingly placed on branding Berlin can be traced back to the end of critical reconstruction in its original form as well as the erection of the Info Box near Potsdamer Platz. The Info Box represents the first openly and decisively city sponsored creation of an urban spectacle after the Wende. Due to protests against critical reconstruction, the city administration sought to move beyond the Info Box and to create further spectacles. In this case these spectacles are the Icons of the East, which serve several strategic purposes, “the sublime intention to streamline information, documentation, and remembrance is clearly intertwined with the economic target of catering to tourists, for whom the identity of Berlin is above all the Wall city.” Since tourism was one of the only growing economic sectors in Berlin at the end of the 1990s, the creation of Icons became a primary concern for the city government.

The notion of the outsider as the consumer of the urban is crucial to comprehending the development of Berlin since 1991. Seeing as the Western portion of the city essentially subsumed the East of Berlin, hierarchically speaking, the planning perspective of the West was that of the outsider. For the outsider’s perspective, according to Benjamin, is focused on the urban spectacle and its visual consumption. Thus, to overcome the difficulty of the interpretation of an urban identity in Berlin’s palimpsest of urban scenery, the most deliberate way of creating a sense of preservation was through the creation of Icons. As Icons, these physical remains of the East are easily consumed; especially by the outsider who does not question historic authenticity as long as they

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179 Huysen, “The Voids of Berlin,” 58.
provide spectacle. In this sense I also argue that the East has been subjugated for the consumption of the outsider, whether the West German or the foreign tourist.

These outsiders can be considered flaneurs, in the Benjaminian sense. Huyssen and Goebel both evoke the notion of the flaneur in their analysis of Berlin: “The flaneur, even though something of an outsider in his city, was always figured as a dweller rather than as a traveler on the move. But today it is the tourist rather than the flaneur to whom the new city culture wants to appeal.”182 Goebel notes that the replicas in Berlin today are designed for a new flaneur who is not interested in conflicts of historical authenticity; instead transcending their lack thereof to garner a snippet of culture that no longer exists.183 Although, Goebel’s notion is closer than that of Huyssen’s, it does not hold up fully. In fact, the lack of authentic experience serves to heighten the value of his visual consumption. Furthermore, the flaneur viewed the urban milieu through the outsider’s gaze, thereby necessarily denying the authenticity of his observations. Baker highlights the process of the typification of the East: “By reducing the Wall to the museum equivalent of the sound bite it may be more consumable for passers-by, but it is also more forgettable.”184 The Wall was already a monument, but it was further reduced into an Icon of the East. As such, these places are incredible understatements of the cultural, political, and historical complexity and significance of the Wall and the East. By typifying certain Eastern landmarks, the outsider/ tourist/ flaneur is easily able to identify and to regard the East. This is crucial to tourism, removing the ‘subjectivity’ of the East, allowed for its branding and mass consumption in certain locales within Berlin. Resina discusses the manner in which the Image of the city is formed through the scopic

apprehension of visual, cultural, mobile stimuli. Resina’s theory conjures an Image of the city that is multi-dimensional, spatially and temporally speaking, a notion that is very fitting with Berlin’s palimpsest of an urban fabric. Especially in the sense that Resina argues that fleeting images form the true Image of the city, a devaluation of their former self, they need not be authentic to be apprehended and consumed.\textsuperscript{185} Thus the modern tourist or outsider glimpses a shadow of the former GDR in the Icons of the East allowing him/her to create an Image of Berlin that is in its fragmentation false yet also benign.

\textit{Deliberate cases of the Erosion of the East}

In order to create an icon, one must make it distinctly signify something. Thus, to create Icons of the East, much of the former East Berlin had to be removed or redefined. Huysen notes that critical reconstruction, “was not just tinkering with the communist city-text. It was a strategy of power and humiliation, a final burst of Cold war ideology, pursued via a politics of signs.”\textsuperscript{186} The resurgence of East German identity that had halted critical reconstruction in 1995, however, did not prevent the continued eradication of the East. Such changes in the urban fabric, to the detriment of the GDR’s legacy, continue to this day under Planwerk Innenstadt. This continued erosion of the East Berlin landscape as it had existed during socialism can most notably be identified in the case of the GDR’s former Palast der Republik.

The Palace of the Republic was constructed in 1976 and served as the seat of the GDR’s parliament. Aside from its function as a government building, it also contained various restaurants and a bowling alley. This eclectic mixture of uses garnered the austere

\textsuperscript{185} See Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay eds., \textit{After-Images of the City} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{186} Huysen, “The Voids of Berlin,” 60.
modernist building a large basis of support among East Germans before the fall of the Wall. After the Wende, the building was closed due to asbestos contamination and slated for destruction. Immediately protests sprung up and several camps emerged. To Ossies the Palace of the Republic, “represented their few good memories of the Communist regime.”\footnote{Riding, “A Capital Reinstated and Remodeled,” 1.} Even though, “Not a few East Berliners, while conceding the palace is an ugly modern building want it preserved,” because it was a significant symbol of their lives before unification.\footnote{Moseley, “The Berlin Facelift,” 5.} At the same time, many Wessies wished to restore the Hohenzollern Palace (Emperors’ residence) designed by Karl Friederich Schinkel, one of Germany’s most revered architects. Various solutions were proposed, including tearing down the Palace to replace it with a historical reconstruction of the Hohenzollern Place, to keep half of the GDR’s Palace intact while replacing the other half with the Hohenzollern residence, or simply to renovate the Palace of the Republic. The resulting political gridlock took years to pass. In 2006 the building was slowly removed, not fully until 2008. Even in 2006 the public outcry against the building’s destruction was massive. As one of the GDR’s most important buildings in Berlin, the removal of the Palace of the Republic reflects the continuation of critical reconstruction, but also the reduction of East Berlin into a few iconic locations. To the Western-dominated city administration, the Palace was not only an obstruction, but also needed to be removed to create effective Icons of the East. The Palace, an authentic remnant of the GDR regime, was not conducive to creating an easily consumed icon.

The rapid disappearance of the “death strip” and GDR buildings in its vicinity was crucial to the erasure of the East. Even though the border fortifications within Berlin
were dismantled in order to negate the adverse effects of the Wall’s continued presence, the fallow land that had comprised the “death strip” had similar effects. As a result, the land was quickly built on; “Gleaming office buildings are emerging from the former death-strip along what used to be the Berlin Wall. Fashionable restaurants have taken the place of proletarian cafes. Crumbling buildings that housed communist apparatchiks are being renovated for government ministers.”\(^{189}\) Thus the area that had been so eloquently defined by the Wall was wiped clean and rebuilt. By the end of the ‘90s, “the ‘critical reconstruction’ of the city with set building heights and closed block-structures as based on the historic master plan was implemented in large stretches as the new Berlin’s urban plan with an iron hand by the city administration – nowhere as explicitly as in Friedrichstadt, the quarter between the Brandenburger Tor, the Gendarmenmarkt, Unter den Linden, and Checkpoint Charlie.”\(^{190}\) It is interesting to note that the area that was refashioned to the greatest extent contains two Icons of the East, namely Checkpoint Charlie and the Mauer Path/ cobblestones marking the Wall’s former path. This concentration of two major Icons of the East in a relatively small area within downtown Berlin suggests that the city planners did indeed have an interest in reducing the extent of the GDR’s physical legacy in the area.

*The Icons*

The Icons of the East that exist today in Berlin are few in number. As previously noted, to aide in their easy consumption, they were de-contextualized and are either artificial or misconstrued. Aside from these communal properties the Icons differ in scale,


\(^{190}\) Neffe, “Metamorphose der Metropole,” 60. My translation.
prominence within the urban environment, and success. Checkpoint Charlie and the East Side Gallery are to this day the two most consumed Icons of the East, the third being the Bernauer Straße Wall Memorial. It is no coincidence that these Icons are the most visited and seen since they are centrally located within Berlin. Their location within central Berlin makes them easily accessible for tourists, shoppers, and Berliners. The ease with which strollers can identify and then consume these Icons without being deterred from more urbane activities is the direct result of the erosion of the East and the lack of historical authenticity of the Icons.

It can be contested which Icon of the East was first established. The Mauer Museum (Museum Haus am Checkpoint Charlie) was established in 1963 by the private initiative of Rainer Hildebrandt, a historian and activist; whereas the East Side Gallery was begun and completed by the end of 1990. The Gallery was officially made into a monument in 1992. Although there is a larger temporal difference between these two dates, the Mauer Museum itself at Checkpoint Charlie isn’t truly an Icon of the East. I therefore situate the East Side Gallery as the first completed Icon of the East. Ironically, both the museum and the East Side Gallery were founded by private initiatives, not city led. Even so these two sites have been utilized by the city administration to appease East German identity as well as to promote the agenda of economic and tourism development within Berlin.

The East Side Gallery today is the longest standing portion of the original Wall, nearly 1.3 km in length along Mühlenstraße in former East Germany. As its name connotes, the East Side Gallery is an exhibition of 90 paintings by over 100 artists. Christine McLean conceived and organized the project, which was to turn the former
portion of the Eastern Wall into an open-air gallery.\textsuperscript{191} The most common themes emerging from the project were peace, tolerance, and love. Perhaps the most renowned painting among the collection is the kiss of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker by Dimitri Vrubel, entitled Brüderkuss (Brother kiss). [See Image 17, a photograph of the original painting.] To gain an understanding of the enormity of the project and its troubled location see Image 18.

Image 17. Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker kissing. Painted by Dimitri Vrubel, as seen on July 26, 1991. The caption reads of the painting reads, “My God, help me survive this deadly love.”

Originally when the monumental open-air gallery was conceived its artists hoped that it would become a traveling exhibition, spreading its message around the world. The monetary costs of doing so, however, were prohibitively high since each mural or

painting weighed close to 3,000 tons. Thus, since its dedication as an official monument, the gallery has largely remained stationary.

Although the gallery consists of an original remnant of the Wall, its location did not bode well for the preservation of the project. Within a few years, automobile pollution and graffiti had become serious problems, eroding the original content of the East Side Gallery. [See Image 19 of the Brezhnev and Honecker kiss in 2005.]

Thus within years after its creation, the East Side Gallery, as it had been intended to be seen, was gone, paint was peeling, graffiti was everywhere. Even though it had started

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as a private initiative, it was an official city landmark. Yet this did not prevent its continued destruction. The city took action to restore the gallery in 2009 – some artists were willing to re-paint their portion, others were not. Dimitri Vrubel did in fact restore his portion of the exhibit in 2009, as can be seen in Image 20.


The fact that the significant portions of the East Side Gallery were restored in 2009 reflects the city administration’s preservation of a few Icons. The city government couldn’t afford to lose one of the few vestiges of the East that it had preserved due to its touristic and symbolic power.

The East Side Gallery can be attributed Icon status for several reasons. Primarily the information regarding the actual piece of the Wall that is the East Side Gallery is often misunderstood. The gallery is located on what was the Eastern portion of the Wall that had been unapproachable during the years of division. In this sense, it had been the ideal blank canvas for the project since it had not been marred by graffiti as the Western portion of the Wall had been. Tourists who believe that the Wall consisted of a singular wall, namely the Western one, often confuse this fact. Notably there is no official demarcation of the gallery, aside from a small plaque that states its name, that it is a monument, and that it should be respected as such. Thus it becomes clear that the city administration is not concerned with the historical accuracy of the East Side Gallery’s perception. Instead, the lack of information regarding the gallery allows for it to be rapidly absorbed by the visitor who assumes that it is the Wall, hardly noticed by the resident. Furthermore, the definition of the gallery as an exhibition and monument detract from its original understanding as a portion of the border fortifications, easing the interpretation of the gallery. This cements the East Side Gallery as an Icon of the East, which has been left largely without context, ready for mass consumption.
As is often noted by critics of the Wall’s rapid disappearance, hardly any original pieces of the Wall remain today, aside from the East Side Gallery. This is crucial in understanding the Icons. Today the space where the Wall stood is either built upon or traced by the Mauer Path, a double row of cobblestones set in the pavement of the street or elsewhere an actual path. [See Image 21 of the cobblestones demarcating the Wall’s prior presence.]

Image 21. Cobblestones and Plaque marking the presence of the Wall.

The cobblestones represent one of the most basic Icons of the East, yet4 they hardly occupy any space whatsoever within the city. They are sunk into the sidewalk and pavement, glimpsed while walking, nothing more. Yet it is this momentary

comprehension that contributes to the success of the cobblestones as an Icon. At first glance, the cobblestones signify the Wall. In their simplicity they induce a sense of satisfaction and comprehension that is entirely deceptive. Yet the cobblestones do not mark both Walls since they form a single file, furthermore they do not provide any information beyond the period of the Wall’s existence. In fact the cobblestones, in a historical sense, hardly signify anything beyond the popular conception of the Wall as barrier that was and is now, resolutely, no-longer. What could be easier to comprehend? The Wall existed, yes, it was located here; project the cobblestones upon those who gaze at them. Thus the cobblestones serve as a passive reminder that the Wall was truly located in Berlin. This is their beauty. Simplicity equates consumption.

The Mauer Path has grown slowly throughout the years since reunification. Today in its largely completed form, the Wall path traces the route of the former death-strip, over 100 miles, through various Berlin neighborhoods. At times street signs or the cobblestones only demarcate it. This is particularly true for inner city Berlin; as one follows the path to more peripheral locations in the city it becomes identifiable and bike-able. Notably, there are information signs posted at various places of import, detailing the Wall’s history and its victims. Even so there are hardly any traces of the border fortifications; they simply do not exist anymore. This too, is part of its appeal. One can follow the path’s course, whether on bike or foot, obtain snippets of recorded history, yet not have to face or interact with tangible reminders of the Wall’s destructive presence. In this sense the Mauer Path is easily consumed. Interestingly, although the path doesn’t reveal many traces of the Wall it represents another form of physical consumption of the

199 Susan James, “Germany: All along the old watchtowers; East meets West again as Berlin marks the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall that divided it for decades,” LA Times May 17, 2009, L8.
structure, as Baker noted in the early ‘90s. By riding or walking along the path, one consumes the erstwhile presence of the Wall by physically tracing its route. Thus the Wall path is not only historically inauthentic but it is also a remarkable Icon of the East.

In 2008 the city unveiled a new addition to Wall tourism. Today a visitor to Berlin can rent a handheld GPS device that leads one along 22 stops of significance to the Wall. The device provides audio-information for each specific location along the tour. Thus the Virtual Wall Tour, as it is known and advertised, advertises the erasure of the Wall as a physical entity. The virtual tour focuses the gaze of the outsider onto Berlin as a city of change, no longer divided. In reality this is not the case, but virtual reality is often easier to reconcile with one’s expectations and understanding of place. After all it is virtual, a projection of the past into the present of Berlin.

Beyond the East Side Gallery and the cobblestones/ Mauer Path, the city created another icon pertaining to the Wall. The Bernauer Straße Wall Memorial is more complex than its two predecessors, yet it still functions as an Icon of the East. In 1998 the city administration began construction of the monument, which is dedicated to the victims of the Wall and the SED regime. Although the city had preserved a portion of the Wall along Bernauer Straße with the intent of creating a monument, it failed to do so before Mauersprechte largely destroyed the original portions. Thus when the city government began construction of the memorial, it was forced to replicate the original fortifications, deeming that a memorial, even in replica form, provided the most historically authentic way of honoring victims. The proponents of this approach argued that the location of the would-be memorial validated the replication of the Wall. Bernauer

Laure Bly, “After the fall; Cold War nostalgia grips reunited Berlin 20 years after the wall came down,” USA Today Oct 23, 2009, D1.
Straße had been the sight of the first Wall related death and the much publicized escapes from windows and roofs overlooking the barrier, immediately after its erection in 1961.\(^{201}\) Whereas opponents and critics responded that, “the politicians don’t want an authentic Wall. They want a museum,” the design of the memorial has been criticized as well.\(^{202}\)

The Bernauer Straße memorial consists of the two walls as they stood during division. The Walls are sandwiched between two massive iron plates at each end. This complex enshrines a replica of what the death strip at Bernauer Straße looked like. At first visitors could peer through slits fashioned into the Wall, catching a glimpse of what looking upon the border would have been. Eventually the compound was expanded to include an observation tower, which also contains a small museum of sorts. Today the Bernauer Straße Wall Memorial appears, as pictured below, from the observation platform.

![Image 22. The Bernauer Straße Memorial as seen from the observation deck.](image)


The view a visitor to the memorial obtains from the platform is problematic since it is a gaze that was never a reality while the Wall existed. Although there was an observation platform near Potsdamer Platz during the Cold War, this view was only possible on the Western side. Thus the view granted by the memorial is exclusively western and to some extent fictitious. During everyday life the Wall wasn’t seen from above, if at all. What becomes clear in light of this false view is that the memorial is really more of a museum than a memorial, since it only allows one view, a freeze frame of sorts. The singular nature of the gaze allotted is narrow and confining in a commemorative sense. The memorial, by granting this view, glosses over the feelings actually initiated by the Wall as an actual and historical barrier. Thereby what one, so to speak, remembers when observing the site is a mirage, splendidly portrayed, yet also blinding. As Evelyn Preuss, a media theorist, said, “the Wall was not only designed to prevent the concrete and physical removal of people from the east. The movement that the Wall was to limit was also of a more virtual kind…By screening out the other side of the border the builders also sought to curtail the agency of the look.”

Although the Bernauer Straße memorial does this too, in a sense, it is highly ironic since the memorial is meant to commemorate the victims of the Wall by disseminating information and recollection; instead the site, like the Wall, restricts the view one can obtain into the past and thus also limits remembrance. Ultimately, the Bernauer Straße memorial is a replica, this can hardly be stressed enough. Although the memorial is a historically accurate replication of the Wall, it is an Icon of the East. Devoid of reality, just like, “the Berlin Wall dissimulated ‘the
real’ behind it, leaving a void to project upon,” the memorial rewrites the gaze of history.  

The Bernauer Straße memorial is easily consumed, but it cannot compare in this sense to the power of Checkpoint Charlie as an Icon of the East. Today Checkpoint Charlie, the former Allied border crossing point during the period of division, is one of the most visited sights in Berlin. It is a hotspot for GDR tourism; the Museum at Checkpoint Charlie draws over 700,000 visitors a year and this figure doesn’t include the countless people that stroll past the icon without entering the museum. The site itself is laden with history, which is no longer discernable. When the Wall went up in 1961, Checkpoint Charlie became one of the 3 Allied border crossings. In 1961 the area appeared as below.

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The Checkpoint Charlie border crossing never acquired a permanence that the GDR’s border fortifications did. The American army didn’t treat the crossing as an international border and thus didn’t erect any permanent structures. Therefore the most important signifiers of Checkpoint Charlie became the guard booth and the sign reading in English, German, and French “You are leaving the American Sector.” The crossing point received

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international attention during the Berlin Crisis, when American and Soviet tanks faced-off at its height. Ever since then Checkpoint Charlie has been an important signifier of Cold War tensions and the division of Berlin.

In 1963 Rainer Hildebrandt established the Mauer Museum in extreme proximity to the Wall. Throughout the years, the museum was to document the Wall’s atrocious existence in detail. After people escaped over, under, or through the Wall, they often donated their method of escape to the museum. As a result the museum displays a one-man submarine used to cross the Spree, hot-air balloons, and a Trabant (the infamous East German car) customized to hide an escapee in a seat and in its gas tank. Although these methods of escape are amazing to behold, the overall presentation of the museum is questionable. The views expressed therein are dogmatically western. After the Wende, Checkpoint Charlie and the museum’s relationship to the Wall changed. In 1998 Hans Jurgen Byck, an employee of the Haus am Checkpoint Charlie Museum said of the changes in Berlin, “Until 1989 we were fighting against the Wall, and now we are having to fight to keep some of it.”

The dramatic changes that the area underwent are pictured in Image 24.

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The Checkpoint Charlie area underwent massive development during the 1990s. Image 24 reveals the already underway Disneyfication of the border crossing, in 1996; note the golden statue of liberty placed on top of an Eastern guard post. The most prominent addition was the American Business Center. The complex consists of five buildings designed by five different architects, including Philip Johnson. Baker noted that, “A lapse of memory definitely seems to have occurred with the developers of the planned American Business Centre at Checkpoint Charlie,” which is jarringly juxtaposed next to the replica of the Allied guard booth.²¹⁰ [See Image 25, it pictures Checkpoint Charlie in the present day.] The modernist glass facades of the three of the buildings mark three of the five buildings comprising the American Business Center.

The replica of the Allied checkpoint, from 1961, as it can be seen today. The glass and modernist façade of the three buildings surrounding the booth are portions of the American Business Center.

A billboard-like picture of a Soviet soldier when seen from the West and an American soldier from the East frames the Checkpoint Charlie booth.

The development of the crossing zone into a major tourist attraction wasn’t completed until mid-2005. The length of the process can be attributed to the construction of the business center and various property disputes. The most notable and significant dispute occurred between 2004 and 2006 between the widow of Rainer Hildebrandt and the current museum owner, Alexandra Hildebrandt, and the city. In 2000 the last actual border fortifications of the checkpoint, a guard tower (seen in Image 24) with the statue

Image 25. The replica of the Allied checkpoint, from 1961, as it can be seen today. The glass and modernist façade of the three buildings surrounding the booth are portions of the American Business Center.

of liberty on its roof was removed. The lot remained empty until 2004 when Hildebrandt erected a memorial to the victims of the Wall. The memorial consisted of an original portion of the Wall, which the museum had preserved and 1,065 black wooden crosses marking each casualty of the East-West border (as counted by the museum organization). Hildebrandt had never obtained permission from the city to establish the memorial. Not surprisingly a controversy ensued; Berlin’s authorities, “find it unhistorical and symbolically inaccurate, the wrong design in the wrong place. They also do not like that it is a memorial in one of the city’s most visible locations established by a private individual according to her private inclinations, rather than one that has the seal of approval of Berlin itself.” Furthermore, the portions of the Wall that were put up on the lot were not placed in a historically accurate location. Thus the city government dismantled the memorial in 2005, after a court ruling in their favor.

The removal of Hildebrandt’s memorial in 2005 transcends the immediately apparent reason for the city’s action. The city government was not willing to tolerate a privately established memorial to this dark and recent history, especially since it had already dedicated the Bernauer Straße memorial to the same end. This motive for the monument’s removal is readily apparent. The more elusive reason for the city’s counteraction to Hildebrandt’s memorial was that of securing the memorial at Bernauer Straße and Checkpoint Charlie as Icons of the East. To ensure the efficacy of these two icons, the memorial couldn’t be tolerated. It had to be removed since it detracted from the Bernauer Straße memorial’s significance as the central memorial to the victims of the Wall. More importantly, the memorial’s proximity to Checkpoint Charlie seriously

214 Rising, “Private Berlin memorial is torn down,” A2.
complicated and confused the area’s projection of what the East had been. The checkpoint booth couldn’t be as easily read and consumed in the presence of over a thousand black crosses. The mood and thoughts evoked were too brutal and enigmatic for the easy consumption of the checkpoint area as an Icon of the East.

The iconization of Checkpoint Charlie was well under way by 1996 (see Image 24), the first steps in the process, however, were taken almost immediately after reunification. The Allied guard booth in its final incarnation was removed from the site and moved to the Allied Museum.

The Allied Museum is located in Dahlem, a neighborhood in the district Steglitz-Zehlendorf. Note that the checkpoint resembles the booth of the 1960s, not the one removed in 1990. The reason for this can easily be identified as a calculated decision on the part of the city administration. Because of the 1961 Berlin Crisis, the popular signifier of Checkpoint Charlie is the original guard booth. Thus to increase the power of Checkpoint Charlie as an Icon, the ‘60s booth was replicated. This in itself evokes the principle of historical selectivity underlying critical reconstruction. The Icon’s power is further amplified by the addition of the pictures of the Soviet and American soldiers. This addition clearly defines the site as a place of Cold War tension, leaving it at that. The last major signifier that comprises the checkpoint, as an Icon of the East, is the sign that warns the viewer of their imminent departure from the Allied sector. The sign’s message confers a modicum of historical authenticity, even though it is a replica, to its beholder, since it instills a sense of transition between West and East. Even so, this transient historical reminder is not marked by any other distinction than the cobblestone trace of the Wall.

Today Checkpoint Charlie is, easily, Berlin’s greatest tourist mecca, aside from the Brandenburg Gate and the Holocaust Memorial. Checkpoint Charlie’s significance as a tourist destination can be derived from its thorough iconization at the hands of the city administration. Its popularity and artifice is heightened by the omnipresence of an actor dressed as an American soldier, with whom one can be photographed for a small fee. The

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216 See Image 23 and 25.
217 See Image 25.
fact that an American soldier is chosen explicitly recalls Image 24, one of the most famous photographs of the site, and also reveals the extent to which Checkpoint Charlie has been fashioned into an Icon of the East. The East represented by Checkpoint Charlie today is minimal and clearly defined by a Western perspective. Nearby tourists can partake in the Wild-East Trabi Safari, a tour during which one chooses a Trabant to drive through Berlin.\footnote{A little further away is the Ostel Hotel, a hostel whose name is a pun on hostel and Ost (East), which offers rooms decorated in a “socialist East German” fashion. The atmosphere generated today by Checkpoint Charlie is astounding in its artificial potency.}

The visitor, the outsider to Berlin, is presented with a reduced image of the past, the bare essence required for instantaneous signification, by any of the Icons of the East. In the case of Checkpoint Charlie this is especially true, the gaze into the past is momentary, gone as soon as it is acquired, fleeting. In this way the modern day flaneur obtains that which he/she desires with impunity. The result is a misconstrued understanding of what the East was but this is the ideal, which was pursued by the city administration through critical reconstruction and the creation of Icons of the East.

\footnote{James, “Germany: All along the old watchtowers,” L8.}
Conclusion

East and West have stood in opposition since the advent of modernity. The Cold War and the division of Germany into autonomous states in 1949 hyperbolized this tension. This was especially true for Germans on the whole and nowhere as pronounced as in Berlin. The two German identities, arising from division and the place identities of East and West Berlin, were defined through their opposition. The fall of the Wall in 1989 marked a period of immense insecurity in identity, especially on the part of East Germans. The process of unification was largely determined by the skewed power relationship between East and West, resulting in the wholesale *Anschluss* of the GDR into the FRG. In Berlin the process of *Anschluss* allowed for the Western city’s planning administration to dictate the manner in which the fractured cityscape was to be mended.

The route undertaken by the city administration up until 1996 was the critical reconstruction of Berlin as defined by the *Leitbild* of the ideal European City. The European city as envisioned by its proponents did not allow for the preservation of the East. As Francesca Rogier aptly summarized, “Initially, Berlin’s unexpected return to the world stage caused city officials to overreact, adding to the pressure to reconnect the two halves of the city, rid it of all traces of division, repair its old war wounds, and grow as fast as possible.”

What resulted during the ‘90s was a massive and frenetic construction boom. The major urban rejuvenation projects during this period were Potsdamer Platz, the Spreebogen and Friedrichstadt. These areas underwent massive changes many of which were meant to deliberately subsume the former East.

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By 1996 opposition to the critical reconstruction of Berlin had solidified, Stimmann was removed from his office, and the planning paradigm was ostensibly brought to a halt. The still western dominated planning administration, however, had not achieved one of its primary goals; namely the creation of a new, a revamped, cultural and place identity for Berlin. To fulfill the quest embarked upon by critical reconstruction the city government worked to create Icons of the East.

These icons were to appease East German identity, spur the economic growth of the city, and to fashion a single identity for Berlin. To ensure the success of the icons the traces of the East that hadn’t already been overridden previously were largely removed. The few traces that did remain are today, undeniably, Icons of the East. These icons are tools that further the mass consumption of Berlin as a place. In their artifice and simplicity the Icons are easily consumed. They signify a partial – a fraction of what the East truly was, thereby allotting an explicitly defined gaze into Berlin’s past. This gaze, generally, favors a western perspective, subsuming the eastern one, in order to provide a non-troubling retrospective; the icons present a sugarcoated past that is easy to digest for outsiders. In light of the historical revisionism of critical reconstruction this is fitting since the icons project a specifically tailored image of the past that suggests a united city.

To Berliners and critics, Berlin’s identity may not be clear, but this doesn’t necessarily matter. To the outsider, the tourist, visiting the city, Berlin seems reunited. Even though there are still points of cultural division between East and West Berlin that are readily apparent to many of the city’s inhabitants, the city has succeeded in subsuming the East by trapping it in a revised past, thereby presenting a mirage-like identity to the world of unity. Here division, the East, and its turbulent history, are
literally a thing of the past. And in doing so, the planning administration has triumphed.

Yes, the Wall is still part of Berlin’s identity, so is the East. But the manner in which it is understood by the outsider, i.e. the rest of the world, is as defined by a Western perspective. Today, Berlin’s only growing market sector is tourism. The irony of Berlin’s situation today is undeniable. Historical tourism, especially that related to Germany’s Socialist and Nazi past, is Berlin’s greatest draw. At the onset of unification the city thought it best to eliminate the historical traces of the East, today it relies on them as its bread and butter. The Western Elites strove to accomplish the opposite, but in doing so realized a Berlin that is largely defined by its recent socialist past.
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