Komplexe Umweltgestaltung
[complex environmental design]

Architectural theory and the production of the built environment in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), 1960-1990

Torsten Lange
University College London
Ph.D.
Volume I
I, Torsten Lange confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This thesis explores the concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* [complex environmental design] in architectural theory and the production of the built environment in the GDR from the 1960s through the 1980s. Articulated most vividly by architectural theorist Bruno Flierl, the concept drew on ideas that previously emerged in disciplines such as cybernetics, sociology, and cultural theory. *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* sought to offer an integrative and 'complex' model for the production of the built environment across different scales – landscape, buildings, material objects (e.g. street furniture), public art, and visual communication.

Drawing on a wide range of unexplored written sources, especially grey literature including theses, conference proceedings, and expert reports as well as archival records (both national and local East Berlin) and oral history, this thesis situates *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* against the background of 'socialist modernity' – socio-economic transformations, intellectual openings, and disciplinary shifts – in the 1960s. It then examines the concept's relationship to the production of mass housing in 1970s and 1980s East Berlin through close analysis of the planning, design, and construction of Berlin-Marzahn (1973–1988).

Doing so, will show that Flierl's definition of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* stood in sharp contrast to the practice of *Komplexer Wohnungsbau* [complex housing construction]. This clash, I argue, was linked not only to his consultative involvement in the production of Berlin-Marzahn, but also rooted in Flierl's more fundamental rethinking of the social production process of the built-spatial environment, of the latter's specific cultural function as well as its role in the process of social reproduction.

The first detailed account of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in the GDR, this thesis calls for reconsideration of the concept beyond previous interpretations as ambivalent (Goeschen) or failed ideal (Guth), and instead proposes to understand it as a site of conflict, indicative of transformations and moments of crisis in architecture and modernity in late socialist East Germany.
Contents

Acknowledgements 7
Glossary of foreign terms and list of abbreviations 9

1 Introduction: theory and the production of the built environment 11
   Architecture, theory and ideology 16
   Researching the production of architectural theory in socialist East Germany 29

2 Architectural theory and socialist modernity, 1955-1963 34
   The industrialisation of construction as ideological challenge 38
   The architectural theory meeting of 1959 41
   The ‘First Theory Conference’ in 1960 47
   Debate within or without limits? Deutsche Architektur in the early-1960s 55

3 Re-defining architecture in the age of scientific-technological revolution, 1963-1967 60
   From architecture to the built environment: re-thinking systems 65
   Beyond walls: the international discourse on environmental design and East German architectural theory 78

4 From comprehensive reconstruction to the margins, again – Komplexe Wohnungsbau in the capital East Berlin, 1968-1973 90
   Housing construction under Walter Ulbricht 91
   Comprehensive reconstruction under scrutiny 95
   Re-adjusting investments in housing in East German cities 98
   Shifting housing policy and urban development in Berlin after 1971 102
   The development of Biesdorf/Marzahn 105
5 Planning (for) complexity in Berlin-Marzahn, 1973-1975

Beyond basic equipment
Developing a master plan for the new housing district

6 From environment to milieu, or the impossible in-between realm

in late-socialist mass housing, 1975-1988
From the synthesis of architecture and art to complex environmental design
Imagining the residential milieu in Berlin-Marzahn
The impossible in-between realm

7 Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as 'cultural process' - public participation

in the production of the built environment
Mass initiatives and the shaping of housing complexes
Re-thinking strategies for engaging the subject of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung
Individual expression in mass housing
Publicity and 'gesellschaftlicher Gesamtgestalter'

8 Conclusion: architectural theory beyond actually existing socialism

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

The production of a thesis, like the production of the built environment, is a social process. My first words of gratitude go to my supervisors, Professor Jane Rendell and Professor Adrian Forty. The generosity, warmth, and patience as well as intellectual rigour, in particular of Jane Rendell as primary supervisor of this thesis, were fundamental throughout. I would also like to thank other members of the Bartlett faculty, in particular Peg Rawes, Barbara Penner, and Tania Sengupta.

I wish to thank the AHRC who have provided funding for this project, giving me peace of mind to pursue my research for three years. They have also funded an essential fieldtrip at the beginning of my project. UCL’s Research Projects Fund, Student Conference Fund, and the Architecture Research Fund (ARF) have, at various points, supported me in presenting parts of this work at conferences and in carrying out archive visits abroad, which were of vital importance for this thesis. In my final year of research, the DAAD has provided a three-month grant to carry out further archival research.

My colleagues and friends from the Bartlett’s PhD programmes in Architectural Design and in Architectural History & Theory, whom I’ve missed in the last months of completing this thesis, have provided a supportive and stimulating environment throughout my entire PhD. I would like to thank in particular: Wesley Aelbrecht, Ricardo Agarez, Tilo Amhoff, Kalliopi Amygdalou, Nick Beech, Katy Beinart, Maria del Pilar Sanchez Beltran, Eva Branscome, Emma Cheatle, Ines Dantas, Mohamad Hafeda, Thomas-Bernard Kerniiff, Catalina Mejia Moreno, Eva Sopeloglou, Ben Sweeting, Lea-Catherine Szacka, and Danielle Willkens.

I am deeply indebted to my interviewees for sharing their thoughts and life stories. Moreover, I shall like to thank the researchers and technical staff in the following archives: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/CA; GTA Archiv; IRS Erkner; Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde; Landesarchiv Berlin, GESIS Außenstelle Berlin; Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin; Baukunstarchiv Berlin; Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Thanks also to my friends around the globe—especially to Ulrike Dix, Patrik Sonntag, Felix Scholz, and Bernd Woelfel in Berlin, and to Jessica Hoffmann in Los Angeles—for
accommodating me on my numerous trips to the archives. Finally, warm and special thanks to my fellow PhD travellers Sophie Hochhäusl and Jessica Jenkins with whom I was able to share my ideas and research findings in numerous personal and virtual conversations. Finally, I would like to thank my family and extended family in London for their loving care and support. Thank you Jürgen and Dagmar Lange; Grit and Louis Lange; Grace Chapman, Emma Jones, and Lorecan Chapman-Jones; Viktoria Hesse, Aisling O’Kane, Carol Choi, and Sarah Böttcher. My deepest gratitude goes to my partner Fabio Scotto, who never stopped supporting me throughout this 'marathon.'
### Glossary of foreign terms and list of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BArch (Bundesarchiv)</td>
<td>- German Federal Archives, Berlin-Lichterfelde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baukonferenz</td>
<td>- Nationwide conference of the construction industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauwesen</td>
<td>- Construction sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BdA/DDR</td>
<td>- East German Association of Architects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bildende Kunst</td>
<td>- East German art periodical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitterfelder Weg</td>
<td>- Socialist cultural policy programme first introduced in 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPSU</td>
<td>- Communist Party of the Soviet Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Architektur</td>
<td>- East German architecture periodical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimentalwerkstatt</td>
<td>- Experimental design studio at the Bauakademie in East Berlin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form + Zweck</td>
<td>- East German design periodical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDR</td>
<td>- German Democratic Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA (Institut für Städtebau)</td>
<td>- Institute for Town Planning and Architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komplexrichtlinie</td>
<td>- Guidelines for the planning and design of new housing districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komplexe Umweltgestaltung</td>
<td>- Complex environmental design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komplexer Wohnungsbau</td>
<td>- Complex construction of housing, i.e. provision of housing and all other necessary buildings for education, healthcare, sports and recreation, community facilities, civic buildings etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAB (Landesarchiv Berlin)</td>
<td>- Berlin State Archives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>- Socialist Unity Party of East Germany. Ruling party in the GDR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIA/IUA</td>
<td>- International Union of Architects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBK-DDR</td>
<td>- East German Association of Artists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBK (Wohnungsbaukobinat)</td>
<td>- Housing construction combine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WBS 70</strong></td>
<td>Standardised housing system using large precast concrete panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR</strong></td>
<td>Housing programme launched in October 1973 with the goal solving the housing problem in the GDR by 1990.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1

Introduction: theories and the production of the built environment in the GDR
In the late 1960s, a new term entered architectural and urban debates in the German Democratic Republic (GDR): the term *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, which translated means 'complex environmental design.' The term was introduced by cultural sociologist Fred Staufenbiel in his book *Kultur heute – für morgen*, in which he argued that *Umweltgestaltung* was both a 'social practice' and a 'cultural phenomenon' constituted by a 'comprehensive ordering of the living environment.' Within the context of Staufenbiel’s wider argument about the necessity for a 'cultural revolution' alongside the so-called 'scientific-technological revolution' – set off by the socialist leadership’s course of reforms that focused on the economy, modernisation, technological progress, and consumption – *Umweltgestaltung* sought to bring culture to everyday life through the shaping of the material sphere, which, he argued, included all aspects of design – urbanism, architecture, industrial design, product design etc.

The architectural theorist Bruno Flierl further developed Staufenbiel’s ideas in articles and lectures after 1967. Flierl worked as a researcher in the Department for Theory and History of Architecture within the Institute of Town Planning and Architecture (ISA) at the Deutsche Bauakademie in East Berlin, and as part of a group of researchers had been officially appointed to develop a conceptual basis for socialist architecture in 1966—a goal that was pursued from 1960 onwards. Building on Staufenbiel’s notion of *Umwelt*, Flierl redefined architecture as the 'built spatial environment for human life and practice' and in so doing situated it in relation to social practice and the development of socialist society. Strongly influenced by cybernetics and systems thinking, in particular the work of East German cyberneticist and philosopher Georg Klaus, Flierl began to develop abstract models and definitions to grasp the dynamic character of relationships between the 'system of architecture', the 'system of society', and the larger 'system of the environment.' It is in the context of this work that he began to define *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*. In a lecture in 1971 Flierl noted:

*Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* [complex environmental design] of the city or of urban

---

areas is only possible if the individual elements of the environment become integrated parts of a fully designed system of the environment, which, in turn, stands in a dialectical relationship with the planned system of social practice and all human needs as well as their corresponding elements of environmental design in the city and in urban areas.

Therefore, Komplexe Umweltgestaltung can only become possible through an interplay with the complex planning of the processes of daily life.\(^1\)

In 1973, Flierl further expanded this early definition to include, beyond semantic aspects, also economic aspects of urbanisation. From the beginning of the 1970s onwards, the term came into widespread use in discussions among town planners, architects, designers, and artists in the GDR, which can be traced through semi-official publications and articles in architecture, art, and design journals. At that time, comprehensive and strategic plans for the design of the public realm in East German cities were developed. In particular in the new mass-housing districts, constructed on the outskirts of all major cities of the GDR since the mid-1970s as part of the Honecker leadership's housing programme, Komplexe Umweltgestaltung was to create a stimulating environment and a sense of identity. Yet it was in those contexts where Flierl saw his ideas realised to the least extent. Often in direct critical response to the plans of architects, artists and designers and to various attempts at implementation, he emphasised aspects such as incremental process, growth, and adaptability, socialist forms of cooperation and collaborative work as well as meaningful integration of residents in the co-creation of their environment as key.

It is the aim of this thesis to trace the debate on Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in architecture,

---

\(^1\) Komplexe Umweltgestaltung der Stadt beziehungsweise städtischer Bereiche ist nur möglich, wenn die einzelnen Faktoren der Umweltgestaltung integrierte Teile (Elemente) eines gestalteten Ganzen (Systems) der Umwelt sind, das in dialektischer Übereinstimmung steht mit dem gestalteten System gesellschaftlicher Lebenstätigkeit des Menschen und allen seinen, den einzelnen Elementen der Umweltgestaltung entsprechenden Bedürfnissen seines Lebens in der Stadt bzw. in städtischen Bereichen.

Komplexe Umweltgestaltung ist also nur möglich im Wechselwirkungsprozess mit komplexer Gestaltung gesellschaftlicher Lebensprozesse.

Bruno Flierl, 'Zu Problemen der Synthese von Architektur und bildender Kunst im Rahmen komplexer Umweltgestaltung der Stadt [Regarding problems of synthesis of architecture and art in the context of complex environmental design of the city]', GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 289/fol. 7.
charting the term’s emergence and development as a concept within East German architectural and cultural theory in relation to architectural and urban design practice against the background of political, socio-economic and cultural developments in the GDR and beyond from the 1960s to the 1980s. In so doing, I seek to historicise the concept and its transformation, while drawing out its different and at times conflicting meanings in different contexts and across time. Investigating the shifting and radically expanding understandings of architecture in this process and in relation to the rise of new disciplines such as cybernetics and sociology in the 1960s, my research reflects on the changing role and influence of architectural thinking regarding the production of the built environment, in particular the construction of mass-housing districts in the 1970s and 1980s. The mass-housing district Berlin-Marzahn, designed for more than 100,000 residents and built between 1976 and 1988 as part of the state leadership’s housing programme, where a scheme following Flierl’s concept was to be implemented, forms the case study of this thesis. At various stages Flierl was involved in the project, at times offering consultative input, at times criticising the project for falling short not only of the designers’ ambitions, but also of his own definition of the potential of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in socialism.

The original contribution of this thesis lies in mapping out the discursive context of Flierl’s concept at the time of its emergence (the 1960s) and its development (the 1970s) in relation to the design of the housing district Berlin-Marzahn. Through an analysis of the design process, the project’s implementation and the district’s use tensions between different actors in understandings of ‘complexity’, ‘environment’, and ‘cultural process’ will be drawn out.

In this work, I pursue three major questions. First, how—in which context and under which conditions—did the concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung emerge, how did it develop over time, and in what ways did its development relate to political, socio-economic and cultural processes and transformations in the GDR from the 1960s to the 1980s? Second, what was the relationship between general theories underpinning Komplexe Umweltgestaltung and actual, on the ground design practices for creating ‘the built spatial environment for human life’, as Flierl called it, and the design and architecture of mass-housing districts in particular, and does this reveal anything about the role of architectural theory and its impact on architectural
practice in East Germany at that time? Or put differently, did implementations of the concept—full or partial—exist, or were idea and social reality in conflict? And third, was the idea of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung a specific, singular phenomenon within East German architecture, or part of and/or response to a wider disciplinary shift, perhaps even beyond the Eastern Bloc?

To answer these questions, I have pursued a strategy, which drew, among others, on the work of British historian Mary Fulbrook, who argued for a social history of the GDR, not as 'history with the politics left out' but as 'history with the people put back in.' Her concept of a 'participatory dictatorship,' with which she aimed to overcome the strict separation between state and people, official and private spheres, top and below as well as her call for greater exploration of the 'way in which there was space for some form of discussion within the system itself' have strongly informed my account of the transformations that led to the emergence of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung and its later development in the 1970s and 1980s. Doing so, my objective was to avoid presenting these processes in a way where they became reduced 'to the 'effects' of high politics and policies.'

There has in recent years been growing interest in architectural historical scholarship of East Germany to explore reform debates within the state-managed and tightly controlled construction system. Work in this field has focussed on individual players, or at times even institutions where spaces for debate could be carved out. My thesis seeks to make a contribution to this newly emerging scholarship. In my own previous Masters thesis I have discussed the role of alternative media, such as professional newsletters, in opening what I called 'spaces for critique'. Through the research carried out for this thesis, I was able to further expand this knowledge.

---

5 Ibid. p. 250.
6 Ibid. p. xii.
7 Städtebau-Debatten in der DDR: Verborgene Reformdiskurse, ed. by Christoph Bernhardt, Thomas Fliedl, and Max Welch-Guerra (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2012).
Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, an ever-increasing number of studies on architecture and art in the GDR became available. The authors of these works have contributed significantly to establishing East German architectural and art histories as distinct fields. Furthermore, they have developed a framework, which identifies key turning points in the development of these disciplines that can be used for further investigation. To date, few studies exist in English; existing English books tend to be written by North American scholars. What is common to all works, however, is that they engage in a highly contested and politicized field, as the heritage of socialist art and architecture remain controversial issues in the united Germany, even twenty-five years after the fall of the Wall, and despite the growing amount of scholarship and campaigns for the preservation of buildings and works of architecture-related art in the public realm.\(^9\) In the following section, I will discuss and contextualize various approaches to historicize GDR architecture and art after 1989, and will draw out particular problems that may be a sign of or may result from the above-mentioned political character of such research.

Studies of GDR architecture often emphasize communist politics and state ideology, reflected in building policies and physically manifest in the way cities and buildings were shaped. Employing a look from ‘above’, such studies usually try to answer the question of whether a distinct socialist architecture existed in the GDR. Examples for this approach are the work of Thomas Hoscislawski\(^10\) and the later study by Joachim Palutzki\(^11\) – both West German scholars. The two books cover the history of architecture in the GDR from beginning to end – Soviet Occupation Zone until 1949, and GDR from 1949 to 1989/90. In so doing, they aim to develop different models for periodization. While these studies are useful reference points, their methodological problem lies in seeing architectural culture in the GDR merely as an

---


\(^11\) Joachim Palutzki, Architektur in der DDR (Berlin: Reimer, 2000).
aftereffect of political campaigns and official ideology, consequently organising transitions neatly along party conferences and Politburo meetings. Moreover, in attempting to capture developments over the whole period of the GDR's existence they remain relatively broad. Parallel to these studies, monographs, investigating the work of individual figures, have been published. However, this raises a number of difficulties and controversies in the specific context of the GDR. For there is an often perceived absence, a strange invisibility of architects; as Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm has provocatively summed up, 'the GDR construction system managed to cut an entire profession, that of the architect [and instead realized] what Maoist theorists had hoped for: the complete collectivization of the designer'. The West German architectural magazine Arch+, which published Axthelm's article in its April 1990 issue on the architecture of the other German state, summed up the argument in its title: 'Architektur ohne Architekten' [architecture without architects]. Architects and architectural historians from both parts of Germany have since criticized this sweeping claim. Books like the one by East German architectural theorist Bruno Flierl, in which he recounts the conditions of working in the GDR based on personal memories and critically reflects on architectural practice under state-socialism, can be seen as a response to this negative verdict. In a similar vein, biographical studies like those by Holger Barth and Thomas Topfstedt contest the notion of the absence of architects. An interesting fact is that both of the above appear to fend off issues of critique or opposition among architects – peculiar, especially in view of Flierl's own investment in criticizing the GDR construction system. Frank Betker's work marks a first step in this direction. His book studies the persistence of 'Eigenverantwortung' [individual responsibility] among town planners in the GDR. Thus it turns to communal planning offices as refuges on the margins of the centralized planning system.

The majority of existing studies have dealt with the first two decades immediately after the

---

17

12 Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Rückblick auf die DDR', Arch+, 103 (1990), 66-73.
14 Vom Baukünstler zum Komplexprojektanten: Architekten in der DDR, ed. by Holger Barth and Thomas Topfstedt (Erkner: IRS, 2000).
Second World War, while the last two decades remain largely unexplored. Examples are the books by Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel and Niels Gutschow,\textsuperscript{16} by Andreas Butter and Ulrich Hartung,\textsuperscript{17} or by architectural historian Simone Hain, who worked at the Bauakademie in East Berlin in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{18} These studies focus on the years of 'Aufbau' [reconstruction], the architecture of national traditions of the 1950s (socialist realism), and industrial construction and the return to modernism in the 1960s. There may be three explanations for researchers' emphasis on the first two decades: first, the fact that the architecture of those years had a more clearly identifiable image that could be traced back to official ideology; second, the importance of urban design for expressing socialist centrality both in the rebuilding of existing cities and in the construction of new cities; and third, the presence of architect figures prior to the collectivization of architectural practice at the end of the 1960s.

The last two decades in the GDR's history remain insufficiently analysed. Two important studies, which focus different topics, need to be mentioned, however. The first is Christine Hannemann's [also a former employee at the East Berlin building academy] study of East Germany's pre-fabricated concrete panel construction systems.\textsuperscript{19} And the second is Florian Urban's recently published book that investigates the re-evaluation of the historic city by East German planners, architects and officials, and the return to historic forms – GDR postmodernism – in inner-city construction projects in 1980s Berlin.\textsuperscript{20} Urban's study offers an alternative history of architectural production in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the theoretical discussions that it traces remain centred solely on the historic city. The book also largely blinds out biographical aspects.

My final observation is that few existing studies deal explicitly with architecture in East Berlin.

\textsuperscript{16} Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, \textit{Architektur und Städtebau der DDR} (Frankfurt: Campus, 1998).
\textsuperscript{18} Simone Hain and Stephan Stroux, \textit{Die Salons der Sozialisten: Kulturhäuser in der DDR} (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1996); Simone Hain, \textit{Reise nach Moskau: Quelleneditionen zur neueren Planungsgeschichte} (Erkner: IRS, 1995).
\textsuperscript{19} Christine Hannemann, \textit{Die Platte: industrialisierter Wohnungsbau in der DDR} (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2005).
\textsuperscript{20} Florian Urban, \textit{Neo-historical East Berlin: architecture and urban design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990} (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
during the time of the GDR. While the overview literature often comes back to Berlin – Palutzki's study uses Berlin as one case study observed across the timeframe of his research – books about Berlin usually cover the GDR and the years of division as only one period, as in the case of Brian Ladd's work.²¹

Beyond those sources that were published in the GDR before 1989, and thus directly engaged with the discourse on Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, the concept and its history have only received peripheral treatment in published accounts from a diversity of disciples after the fall of the Wall. Until now, there have been no in-depth studies on the subject apart from book chapters, journal articles and in published interviews with key players such as Flierl. Yet none of these existing accounts, which I will discuss in depth in the following section, afforded a detailed analysis of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in its specific historical context, or as a characteristic and significant discourse in East German architecture since the late 1960s.

Virtually all existing accounts of the concept were written and published in German, making it largely unknown topic to wider audiences, and hence leaving a gap in the still fairly relatively small field of international scholarship on East German architecture and town planning.

The first post-Wende account of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung can be found in East German cultural theorist and art historian Peter Guth's comprehensive study of so called architekturbezogene Kunst [architecture-related art] in the GDR.²² Guth was born in Weimar in 1953, and, after his studies at the University of Leipzig, was appointed as lecturer in aesthetics, architectural and art history at a number of key institutions in the fields of art and design – for example, at the Burg-Giebichenstein School of Art and Design in Halle, which was instrumental in establishing modern industrial design in the GDR²³, and at the famous

---

²² Peter Guth, Wände der Verheissung: Zur Geschichte der architekturbezogenen Kunst in der DDR (Leipzig: Thom, 1995). As opposed to ‘public art’, architecture-related art in the sense as it was practiced in the GDR and described by Guth in his study included, beyond traditional forms of visual art also more utilitarian forms of design [landscape, secondary architecture, street furniture, graphics and signage etc.]
²³ See Eli Rubin, 'The Form of Socialism without Ornament: Consumption, Ideology, and the Fall and Rise of Modernist Design in the German Democratic Republic', Journal of Design
Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst [now Academy of Visual Arts] in Leipzig, where influential East German artists Bernhard Heisig, Werner Tübke and Wolfgang Mattheuer taught, and which, during the 1960s, was a centre for debates concerning socialist realism and a shift from formal dogmatism towards greater diversity of artistic expression.4 Furthermore, alongside the architect and designer Bernd Sikora from Leipzig, Guth was also a member of the Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Architektur und bildende Kunst, ZAG/AbK [central work group architecture and art] and, belonging to a younger generation of East German intellectuals, an active contributor to debates on architecture and art in the GDR, especially since the late 1970s. His book, published in 1995 under the metaphoric title Wände der Verheissung [Walls of Promise], is therefore both a unique insider’s account, especially in its detailed mapping out of internal professional discussions during 1980s, and a critical [and often self-critical] assessment of the practice of architecture-related art and its objects in their aspirations and failures. However, according to Sikora, Guth’s work has only slowly been recognized in the united Germany.5

This was despite the book’s other objective, aside of historic documentation, which was to engage in post-unification public debates about the removal of works of architecture-related art (often due to demolition or alteration of the buildings and ensembles in which they were situated—the Palast der Republik in Berlin being perhaps the most prominent case in point). Some commentators have noted how these transformations of East German cities could be seen as deliberate acts of history-construction through physical destruction as a means of undoing history/forgetting the past, turning the built environment into one of the major arenas of contestation over the preservation of material traces and collective memories of the socialist past.6

In Guth’s study, which follows a periodical structure, Komplexe Umweltgestaltung only emerged at its point of entry into public debate, that is, in the early to mid-1970s. Flierl

---


5 Interview with Bernd Sikora on 12 August 2010.

6 Flierl has been a prominent and very engaged contributor to these debates, particularly with regard to the transformation of Berlin.
received credit for first speaking about the concept, and relevant sources for the term’s first appearance were mentioned. Furthermore, Guth argued that the term could be considered as established in theory—he placed a cautionary exclamation mark behind the word *theoretisch* in his text, warning the reader that this did not entail the concept’s implementation in practice—since 1974, when it came to replace the term ‘synthesis’. However, rather strangely all of this is hidden in a footnote, and not described in the actual text. This is perhaps an indication that within his broader narrative Guth was less interested in the concept itself, but rather in how it operated in a particular discourse that led to greater openness in artistic expression—to include non-figurative forms—as well as to broader and more diverse approaches to architecture-related art, integrating graphic and industrial design, colour, light and landscape.

In chapter five specifically, Guth drew out how *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* emerged in relation (and in some ways as a response) to the radically altered building practice in the GDR in the 1970s, particularly the design and construction of housing complexes using concrete panel systems at a mass-scale and an accelerated rate. Known as *Komplexer Wohnungsbau* [complex housing construction], this practice, which had become official social policy with the introduction of the housing programme in 1973, was however radically different, even in sharp contradiction to the ‘factors that were meant to distinguish ‘sozialistische komplexe Umweltgestaltung’ from the shaping of the environment in capitalism: orderliness and optimised relationships between parts in town planning.’

While, he argued, it had become clear that the desired synthesis of architecture and art at this larger scale would only become possible if planned as an inherent part of urban and architectural design from conceptual stage to construction, reality often meant that art was either put in place after completion or, in some cases, left out altogether, as the public buildings to which the funds for artworks were tied never got built. The housing complexes and the realities of *Komplexer Wohnungsbau*, however, according to Guth not only became problematic due to the ‘anarchic installation of artworks, that is, their scattered, uncoordinated, belated and often random placement,’ but also because of a growing contradiction between artistic practice and recent theoretical

---

27 Guth, p. 266.
28 Ibid. pp. 259-60.
developments with regard to the meaning, form and symbolism of artworks and their programmatic planning. Here he pointed to Flierl in particular, who, as Guth showed, criticised the common practice of developing thematic briefs for artworks chiefly on the basis of political phrases without giving consideration to local context and irrespective of people’s needs, reducing the function of art to illustrating political statements whose skill and success in addition often depended on available funds. Instead, Flierl proposed that a developing society did not require artworks that made claims once and for all, but a complex design of the environment directed towards "process, growth, change and flexibility." For him was not an aesthetic problem, but a wider cultural one. Nevertheless, these far reaching theoretical approaches all remained illusions, Guth remarked. Problematic, as already mentioned above, is the strong, if not singular, focus on Flierl in Guth’s account of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, which isolates the former as an (heroic) idealist and the concept as an unfulfilled utopian promise. This, on the one hand, obscures the wider context in which Flierl developed his theories—the thinking and concepts of other intellectuals (both more and less dogmatic) that he drew on and reacted to—and, on the other hand, also quite boldly consigns the concept to the realm of failed alternatives, to utopian thinking without impact on practice in the GDR. Both these assertions in Guth’s narrative, I argue, warrant further enquiry and analysis.

A second account of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung was developed in art historian Ulrike Goeschen’s study of the shift from ‘socialist realism’ to ‘art in socialism’ and the discourse on modernism in East Germany. Her work focused on how developments in fine arts and art theory in the 1960s paved the way for later reform processes in the 1980s. For, she argued, the

70 Ibid., p. 266.
72 Guth, p. 266.
73 Ibid., p.266.
fact that artists did not have to comply with official policy and guidelines in the 1980s was linked to debates about modernism and its reconsideration as legitimate heritage in the 1960s, which created significant shifts in GDR art.\textsuperscript{34} Goeschen’s study drew mainly from written material and archival documents emphasising theoretical debates over discussion of artistic production or engagement with concrete artworks. Thus, she placed discourse predominantly in art writing. She stated that there is a wealth of literature on art from within the GDR, which, aside of the usual approach of focusing on individual artists, might also help to shift foci in order to liberate art from the stigma of having been state ’commissioned art.’\textsuperscript{35} In contrast to Western authors, who explained the widening of the artistic canon in the GDR since the 1960s through consideration of the relationships between art and politics, Goeschen’s objective was ’to reconstruct an inner logic to this development, given that the demands of official cultural politics remained the same throughout.’\textsuperscript{36} A central role in this inner development, apart from the artists themselves, played art historians and cultural theorists, who, like the former, often also had links to or personal experiences of modernism during the inter-war period in Germany. Both, she claimed, were therefore interested in ’rehabilitating’ their past after the Stalinisation of cultural politics in the GDR in the early 1950s.\textsuperscript{37} The most significant aspect in Goeschen’s narrative was, however, that of reclaiming artistic freedom as well as a degree power by the artists in this process of overcoming socialist realism in favour of modernism as the central paradigm in art. She concluded that artistic liberation preceded political liberation, and that in the course of this development ’artists managed to regain part of that power, which the avant-garde of the 1920s first claimed for themselves and later entirely handed to the party: the power to shape life [my emphasis].’\textsuperscript{38}

According to Goeschen, the concept of \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} played a certain role in this transformation process. This was, as she stated, due to the former’s ability to offer ’a lasting conceptual alternative to socialist realism’ by insisting on ’shaping aesthetic life in socialism universally,’ liberating art from mimetic function and symbolic meaning and, furthermore,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[34] Goeschen, pp. 9, 11.
\item[35] Ibid., p. 9.
\item[36] Ibid., p. 10.
\item[37] Ibid.
\item[38] Ibid., p. 229.
\end{footnotes}
permitting the inclusion of sensitive topics in artworks such as environmental damage or disarmament.\(^5\) Hence, similar to Guth, Goeschen also placed *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in a narrative of reform and liberation. However, her account of the term offered a little more detail concerning its emergence and theoretical foundations. She traced the concept back to the mid-1960s, when the East German cultural theorist Fred Staufenbiel introduced the term *Umweltgestaltung* [trans. shaping/design of the environment].\(^6\) His work, as Goeschen explained, was rooted in what could be called a humanist shift within cultural theory in the GDR, which, on the one hand, focused on the idea of the individual within society, and, on the other, on the process of shaping the environment – understood dialectically as the practice of altering the environment by humans in society and the created environment’s impact on the latter. The dialectic of creation and perception of the material world would allow greater potential for self-actualisation as social being would become objective reality within the physical environment, Staufenbiel argued according to Goeschen.\(^6\) At this point, however, she formulated a valid criticism of the notion of *Umweltgestaltung* as put forward by Staufenbiel, particularly with respect to its unclear position in relation to the individual. In her view, the rhetoric of the all-embracing development of individuals through socialist culture and the socialist shaping of the environment was based on the modernist idea that humans’ reactions are largely similar (and thus objectively quantifiable). It was therefore less about granting individual freedom to develop the self, but rather about ‘objective laws’ of perception and psychological processes.\(^6\) Goeschen’s critique then went as far as stating that this objective tendency formed the ideological basis of East German large scale planning, where ‘uniformity was interpreted as the realisation of egalitarian principles.’ Consequently, in her view, ‘the all-embracing individual was a stereotype that was realised in the image of the "socialist planner and leader."’\(^6\)

On the whole, Goeschen interpreted the concept of *Umweltgestaltung* in the GDR as ambivalent; she blamed it for the ‘bleakness of mass-housing districts and for linking

---

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 228.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 182.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 183.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 184.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 184.
architecture and applied arts to state ideology’, while recognising that it also ‘allowed broad acceptance of modern forms and freed architecture and art from the aesthetic principles of socialist realism. Like Guth, she also credited Flierl as central in developing the concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in architectural theory at the beginning of the 1970s, although she draws attention to earlier interdisciplinary discussions of the 1960s, which laid the foundations for his thinking. Her account of these developments, however, was relatively brief, and although she observed that the concept helped architectural theory out of an impasse at that time, she equally noted that it occupied a somewhat special position in architecture on the whole. Despite mentioning few references to institutions and an official document from 1975, which hint at efforts for an implementation of the concept, her verdict that Komplexe Umweltgestaltung had a ‘certain degree of significance’ within architecture remained elusive.

Even though Goeschen’s account of the theoretical roots of the concept offered valuable starting points for a genealogy of the term and its underlying ideas, her sweeping (too schematic) assessment of Umweltgestaltung as being responsible for the uniformity of housing complexes and the rise of the technocratic planner and disengaged architect-engineer as well as her too brief and vague account of the role of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in architecture demand both criticism and further elaboration.

Guth’s and Goeschen’s assessments of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung were the only more substantial treatments to this date. Strangely enough, even Flierl himself, despite his otherwise fairly substantial post-1989 reflections on architecture in the GDR, did not offer much information about the concept, for whose development he, as the above mentioned sources claimed, had significant responsibility. I was able to find references to the term and a brief account of the concept’s development in his ‘work autobiography’ published in 2007, which presented a unique view on the development of East German architecture from the perspective and through the personal narrative of one of its key players.

Other references to Komplexe Umweltgestaltung could be found in two sources. The first was

---

44 Ibid., p.184.
architectural historian Frank Betker’s study of communal planning offices in the GDR after
the fall of the Wall. His book with the intriguing title *Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit*
[Understanding Necessity]— a euphemism for enforcing unpopular demands on architects—
investigated the role of architects and the degree of agency they had within the centralised
bureaucratic structures and the institutional network of the East German construction system.
Consequently, Betker’s account of the concept drew greater attention to its role in
architecture and architectural discourse, specifically with regard to understanding the
relationship between society, city and individual. Similar to Guth and Goeschen before him,
he referred to Flierl and the idea of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* as ‘exceptions’, yet particularly
his interpretation of the notion of the individual in the concept differed greatly from that of
Goeschen. While the latter criticised it for demanding the internalisation of official ideology
and for creating technocratic planner individuals, Betker emphasised aspects such as dialectic
relations, productivity and open-endedness but also subjectivity, cooperation and democratic
participation in the theory of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*.

He argued that, at least the ruling party understood the relationship between society, city and
individual in the GDR in principle as hierarchical and centralist. The SED leadership in its
self-perceived vanguard role defined the interests, needs and objective laws for the
development of society. Citizens and individuals working for the state therefore generally had
to understand necessities and act accordingly. According to Betker, referring to the 1972
official publication *Architekturtheoretische Grundbegriffe* [Fundamental Terms of Architectural
Theory], the city was embedded in the leadership’s hierarchical and centralistic view of the
relationship between part and whole, particularly in their demands for comprehensive (or
holistic) design, in which the city was framed as part of the socialist state apparatus and thus
depending in its development on the fundamental social laws and necessities as defined by
the party. Betker placed Flierl’s concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, which also included
town planning, in contrast to these official hierarchical understandings, and contended that

---

8 Betker, pp. 108-09.
9 Ibid., p. 107.
11 Betker, p. 108.
the former was based on a productive and open-ended dialectic of part and whole instead.\textsuperscript{51}

This also meant, he continued, new consideration for who acted and took responsibilities in these processes of producing the environment. Two groups of actors identified in Flierl’s theory — there were also others, of course — were then specifically mentioned by Betker: town planners and architects, and, importantly, users. He contended that re-thinking their roles in Komplexe Umweltgestaltung did ‘not only call into question the principle of authoritarian leadership and hierarchical organisation, but also challenged the centrality and legitimacy of the leading role of the SED, and elevated/strengthened individuals and their subjectivity, whether they were professionals or normal citizens.\textsuperscript{52} Between Goeschen’s account and that of Betker, a number of fascinating questions open up regarding the concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung and its position in terms of the relationships between the principles underpinning the organisation of state, society and economy in socialism, and the production of the built environment, particularly (closed) models of comprehensive planning of the 1960s and 1970s. These issues would be valuable areas for further enquiry.

Finally, I located another brief reference to Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in the existing literature in a chapter by social scientist Heinz Quitzsch about East German philosopher (and architectural theorist) Lothar Kühne and the debate on functionalism in the GDR in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{53} The starting point of Quitzsch’s account, too, was the transformation of architecture in the 1960s. He recognised that within the historiography that described these changes, emphasis has so far been given to architectural practice, construction policy and building technologies, leaving shifts in aesthetic thinking, architectural and design theory largely unconsidered — something I will discuss in more detail further below.\textsuperscript{54} Goeschen’s work as one of the rare examples of investigating aesthetic theory and discourse was mentioned above. In a similar vein, Quitzsch’s chapter sought to overcome this lack of attention in existing research by mapping out the debates about functionalism in the GDR, which according to

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 108.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. p. 109.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 19.
him, started in the 1960s, intensified during the 1970s, and stretched into the 1980s. Kühne's role in these debates was seminal, and, at the same time, his own ‘theoretical work reflected essential developments in architectural theory since the 1960s, Quitzsch remarked.\(^\text{\textsuperscript{55}}\)

Nevertheless, in spite of numerous references to him, for example in Flierl's writing both before and after the fall of the Wall, Kühne became a somewhat obscure and almost forgotten figure after 1989. Drawing from the theory of communist society and the desire for a better future/utopia, his influential work on architecture, industrial design, aesthetic theory, theories of individuality and mode of life in socialism also had a controversial status versus the reality of actually existing socialism.\(^\text{\textsuperscript{56}}\)

His rethinking of the relationship between architecture and art, and his theory of *Gestalten*, in particular, had a strong influence on Flierl's redefinition of architecture and its integration in the wider concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, as well as the general repositioning of the term architecture in the GDR in this context.\(^\text{\textsuperscript{57}}\) Part of this process, Quitzsch argued, was the combination (or perhaps synthesis) of different ideas; first, regarding the functional and aesthetic aspects of newly emerging building tasks; second, regarding the function of architecture in socialist society in a broader sense; and third, regarding the role and specificity of architecture within *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*.\(^\text{\textsuperscript{58}}\) Quitzsch also highlighted that the analysis of international developments in architecture were a vital aspect of the reframing of architecture in East Germany, and doing so, also drew attention to the fact that the discourse on *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* and the debates on functionalism in the GDR were set against the background of larger controversies on functionalism at an international level at the time. Drawing out these broader links to aesthetic debates as well as relationships to discourses beyond the socialist state, even the Eastern Bloc, would raise further questions regarding the specificity of architecture in East Germany, and contribute to emerging research about modernity (and its critique) in socialist East and capitalist West during the Cold War.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 20.
In summary, my analysis of the historiography of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* helped to identify a number of areas for further investigation, analysis and (re-)interpretation. Both Guth and Goeschen’s accounts pointed to the need for further research concerning the history of the concept, its emergence and genealogy, disciplinary and intellectual roots. Her study also stimulated thinking about *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* across time – from the 1960s to the 1980s. Furthermore, Guth’s story in particular raised questions about a split between the theory of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* and its impact on and implementation in practice. Specifically Betker’s work – and to some extent also that of Goeschen – encouraged further enquiry into the relationships between the concept, the production of the built environment as well as the processes, structures, and roles of different actors within the specific context of state socialist East Germany. And finally, Quitzsch’s chapter, in which *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* was discussed in relation to the debates on functionalism, called for the consideration of wider international developments in order to identify the specific characteristics and qualities of architectural theoretical discourse in the GDR.

**Researching the production of architectural theory in socialist East Germany**

My research was guided by the objective to trace, on the one hand, the production of a theoretical concept (and of architectural theory more broadly), and, on the other hand, the mechanisms underpinning to production of the built environment through a case study – the design and construction of Berlin-Marzahn –, in order to understand the former’s main postulates and, importantly, criticisms of the latter. In both cases, my research focused on three main types of sources, each of which related to different kinds of actors within the interconnected networks that I sought to describe. First, I decided early on that I wanted to carry out oral history interviews with important protagonists, in order to get a better sense of the events I studied through their personal memories. Moreover, without these personal stories many links and connections would otherwise be extremely difficult to reconstruct from primary sources alone. It would also have been practically impossible to get a sense of the stakes of theoretical and critical work in the context of the GDR. The second group of sources
related to discursive materials, above all publications such as professional journals, but also grey literature, research reports, theses, and other written sources that related to the discourse on Komplexe Umweltgestaltung. These were important to figure out the degree of publicity of this debate, and to establish what could be said where and when. Finally, the research encompassed a detailed analysis of primary sources to analyse the role of institutions, and to understand relationships between institutions and the individuals working within them. Initially, I had chosen to interview four people, all of who were related in various capacities, and at different times to the Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Architektur und bildende Kunst (ZAG/AbK) [central work group architecture and art]: Flierl and Sikora, both of whom were mentioned above, as well as Wolfgang Kil and Karl Clauss Dietel. Flierl, the first and most important of my interviewees, was the ZAG/AbK's director from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. In the recent past, he has given several interviews in the media and to other scholars, and has recently published a 'work biography', an annotated autobiography focusing on his work during and after the GDR.\footnote{Flierl, Kritisch denken.} The architectural critic Wolfgang Kil, who was the chief editor of the journal Farbe & Raum in the late-1970s, also played an important role in the group from the late-1970s to the mid-1980s. Bernd Sikora, an architect and graphic designer from Leipzig, became involved in the group during the 1980s. In those years, he also worked in a sub-group of the ZAG/AbK, developing a draft for new legislation for the collaboration between architects, artists and designer in so-called 'complex projects'. Clauss Dietel, a designer from Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz) had been a member since the group's establishment in the late-1960s. Moreover, he had developed a modular 'urban furniture' program for the city of Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1969. In 1988, he was elected as president of the association of artists, and, along with a group of younger artists, attempted a reform of the professional body. All four interviews were carried out in summer 2010, at the end of the first year of my research, and formed the background, rather than the core, of my work. For this reason, interview transcripts based on voice recordings of my conversations with the interviewees – normally these took place in their home or, as in Sikora's case, their studio – were included in German original in an appendix in a separate, second volume of this thesis. I approached my
interviewees in writing, and informed them in advance both about the nature and purpose of the oral history interviews. All four protagonists agreed to conduct the oral history interviews, which usually lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, and they formally gave their consent to using the material gathered from these interviews in the thesis and in further publications. The interviews were semi-structured. Prior to meeting my interviewees, I had prepared a tentative list of questions structured by a number of key themes that I wanted to cover, which included issues such as the personal background and education of the protagonists, their entry into professional life and the specific structure of their respective professional and disciplinary fields in the GDR, their experience of the work environment and of interdisciplinary work, especially through their involvement in the ZAG/AbK, as well as their intellectual influences and their own contribution to theoretical and professional debates. By doing so, I pursued three major objectives. First, to document critical voices and alternative practices in architecture, art and design that would otherwise be difficult to trace in written sources, due to the limitations to 'official discourse' and conditions of censorship. Generally, it was easier to discuss critical ideas verbally than in the form of writing. Second, to account for and include key protagonists' subjective perspectives into the narrative so as to counter the usual emphasis on structures and institutions – above all of the ruling party and state – in the existing historiography, as outlined further above in this chapter. Third, to use their memories in order to uncover moments of conflict, friction and contradiction, and to better establish the complex network of relationships and influences between different agents and players in the processes that this thesis seeks to describe.

As a forum for professional debate the ZAG/AbK was also one of the key institutional actors of my research. It was founded in 1968 as a joint forum between two professional bodies, the East German association of architects (BdA/DDR) and the association of artists (VBK-DDR). Its aim was to establish exchanges between the two disciplines in order to improve the conditions for a 'synthesis of architecture and art' in the GDR. The collaboration between practitioners from both fields had become more frequent throughout the 1960s, and new tasks of collaboration – both in terms of scope and scale – made better coordination necessary. The ZAG/AbK soon developed into a forum for debates about Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, as the
integration of other elements aside from architecture and art – for example, landscape, street furniture, lighting, visual communications, and others – became a practical task. Every two years, the group held theory seminars, in which broader questions of the synthesis of architecture and art and Komplexe Umweltgestaltung were debated. I looked not only at the published proceedings of those two-yearly seminars, I also studied primary documents, held at the archive of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, so as to gain a better understanding of the group’s organisation, and its links to architectural and art practice and concrete project work.

In order to understand the development of architectural theory in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s, its principal tasks, main actors, research foci, and outputs, a study of primary documents relating to the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture at the Bauakademie in East Berlin, the GDR’s central research institution, became fundamental to this research, too. In particular, I have closely examined documents relating to the architectural theory conferences held by the institute in 1959/1960, and about its research activities in the 1960s, following its integration with architectural practice by becoming a department within the Institute of Town Planning and Architecture (ISA). The ISA also held records relating to Berlin-Marzahn, the main case study of this thesis, as well as about key planning documents such as the Komplexrichtlinie (guidelines for the complex construction of housing).

Analysing the written output of the two institutes from the 1960s to the 1980s has also been an important aspect of my research. A full bibliography of all written material prepared by the Bauakademie during its forty-year history has been an extremely useful research tool. Major libraries hold, for instance, the journals published by the Bauakademie, which presented research results. Other primary materials in archives that have been consulted for this research included documents relating to the construction of Berlin-Marzahn, and the involvement of artists and designers in this process as part of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung from the Berlin District Archives. The DDR collections at the Getty Research Institute Los Angeles/CA were another important source. This collection contained select documents from Flierl, not held at other

---

archives in Germany, and from Berlin-Marzahn’s chief architect, Heinz Graffunder. These materials included manuscripts of lectures as well as different reports and memos. In the case of the Flierl documents, the archive at the Getty has been of vital import for tracing his direct involvement with the design of Berlin-Marzahn.

In terms of published materials, my research has focussed, on the one hand, on Flierl's theoretical writings in various professional and academic journals, and, on the other hand, on articles concerning the Berlin-Marzahn, and construction in East Berlin from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s in general. Even though nearly all of Flierl's texts on the relationship between architecture and art and the concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* from the 1960s through the 1980s have been published in a collection of his writings in 1984, I have made an effort to consult the original source of first publication – in some cases journals, in others conference proceedings – in order to get a better understanding of the specific context of each text, historical as well as disciplinary and institutional.

This broad range of sources has allowed me to construct a narrative, in which the actions of individual subjects within institutional structures became visible, and in which the production of architectural theory, the discourse on *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in particular, and its influence on architectural practice could be tracked.
2

Architectural theory and socialist modernity,
1955-1963
Nikita Khrushchev’s speech ‘On wide-scale introduction of industrial methods, improving the quality and reducing the cost of construction,’ delivered at the All-Union Conference of Builders and Architects in Moscow in 1954, beyond its impact in the Soviet Union also marked a turning point in architecture and town planning in the GDR. Here, the principles of comprehensive industrialisation and standardisation were adopted after the first Baukonferenz in 1955. Nevertheless, as architectural historian Anders Åman and sociologist Christine Hannemann pointed out, industrial construction methods had been tested as early as 1953 in experimental buildings such as the concrete panel housing block in Berlin-Johannisthal. The Baukonferenz, like its Soviet counterpart, also put an end to the aesthetic principles of Architektur Nationaler Tradition [Architecture of National Tradition], the East German variant of Socialist Realism in architecture, which had been adopted in 1951 to bring cultural development in the GDR in line with the Zhdanov Doctrine. Krushchev’s speech is well known for accusing architects that they ‘have been carried away with putting spires on buildings’, and stating that the people ‘do not want to admire silhouettes but a place to live!’ Ulbricht’s speech at the Baukonferenz followed Krushchev in its general arguments, yet hit a slightly more cautious note, arguing that the ‘external decoration of buildings’ presented ‘a

---

4 The paradigm shift toward Architektur Nationaler Tradition ended the initial period of experimentation with modernist architecture in the Soviet Occupation Zone after WWII, and, as in other Eastern European countries that had to follow the same path of Soviet cultural policy, can be understood as a Stalinisation in architecture. This development was paralleled by the implementation of institutional structures that were modelled on Soviet precursors, and whose function was to implement the new aesthetic principles as well as to carry out architectural research—a central aspect at the time was architectural history, e.g. studies of Medieval German architecture or of nineteenth century architects like Karl Friedrich Schinkel – to support the historicist aesthetics of Nationale Tradition. The founding of the Deutsche Bauakademie [German Building Academy] as the GDR’s central research institution for architecture and town planning in 1951 is key to this development. See Simone Hain, Reise nach Moskau: Quelleneditionen zur neueren Planungsgeschichte (Erkner: IRS, 1995).
5 Khrushchev, pp. 169-70.
false understanding of the lively development of tradition." He critically remarked that, ‘some newspapers had used the critique of unnecessary decoration at the Builders Conference in Moscow as an opportunity to disseminate formalist and constructivist ideas,’ signalling that, for the time being, an official acceptance of modernist aesthetics in the GDR would remain taboo. However, like Krushchev, he demanded that architecture ‘serve the interests of all people.’

The route to achieving this goal was similar to the one sketched out by Krushchev: introduction of industrial construction techniques, and the increase of productivity and efficiency, linked to rapid reconstruction of war-damaged cities as well as overcoming the housing shortage. As Hain notes, Ulbricht’s shift in policy under the dictate ‘Besser, schneller und billiger bauen!’ [Building better, faster, and cheaper!] resulted in a productivist turn in architecture and town planning, which was embedded in the ensuing fierce and, as she believes, ultimately fatal economic competition between West and East. Archival documents give an impression of the ambitions of the seven-year plan of 1958-1965 and the suggested methods of achieving set targets. The SED leadership not only planned to construct at least 750,000 flats so as to improve people’s living conditions, but also to largely reconstruct the war-damaged cities by 1965. At the third Baukonferenz in 1958, the Ulbricht administration thus ordered that construction activity be doubled, which could only be achieved by doubling productivity. For this reason, the industrialization of the construction sector should be further accelerated.

Structural and institutional transformations, above all the reshaping of the Ministerium für

---

7 Ibid., p. 7.
Aufbau [Ministry for Reconstruction] into the Ministerium für Bauwesen [Ministry for Construction] in 1958, as Hannemann remarks, pointing also to the significance of the name change, were key to this process of accelerating building production. Indeed, as economist Fritz Liebscher’s talk at the first Baukonferenz in 1955 confirms, Bauwesen [Construction] was a direct translation of the Russian term ‘stroitelstvo’, which had been adopted in Soviet literature, and which denoted ‘construction in the broadest sense, that is, including planning. Projektierung [production design], production of building materials, and the entire construction process as such.’ Thus, according to Liebscher, Bauwesen [Construction] and Bauwirtschaft [Construction economy] were identical, because they both referred to the same branch of the national economy. However, he argued, the branches of construction materials industry and construction proper that formed sub-branches of Bauwesen should still be seen as separate, since the technical means were not yet developed to consider both branches as a unit—something that would change with the introduction of Produktionsbauwesen [Production-oriented construction] in 1963.

What I believe is remarkable about this process of transforming construction in the GDR is its hybrid character; that is, the adoption of the Soviet economic model, while the transfer of building technologies and technical expertise for industrial construction, as Hannemann shows, went in the opposite direction; from West to East. She notes how, at the time, leading East German engineers collaborated with the engineer Robert von Halász, who worked at the Technical University in West Berlin, where he had also studied between 1925 and 1930. Referring to the work of Flierl and Thomas Topfstedt, Hannemann states that this technological transfer was not acknowledged in histories of architecture of the GDR written before the fall of the Wall. This is all the more interesting given that, as I will show below, this technological transfer from West to East was overtly addressed in the architectural theory

---

*a* Hannemann, p. 86.


*c* Ibid., p. 39.

*d* Hannemann, p. 59.

*e* Ibid., pp. 59-60.
debate of the late 1950s, and, within this debate, marked the permissible limit of engagement with the architecture of the other capitalist part of Germany.

The industrialisation of construction as ideological challenge

Architectural theorists considered it a necessary evil to raising productivity, yet held that architects must not adopt the aesthetic principles of modern architecture along with modern construction technology. Those who dared to cross this boundary (or even suggested doing so) faced being accused of ‘opportunism’. The theorist Lothar Kühne, for example, published an article in Deutsche Architektur in 1958, in which he attacked the authors of a previous piece about housing and denounced them for holding opportunistic views.\(^5\) Quoting the authors, he stated that they believed the characteristic of socialist housing was the ‘absolute harmony of all gemeinschaftsbildenden [collective-forming], technical, functional, hygienic, and aesthetic relationships,’ and that, according to them, capitalist architecture contained elements that would help bring about future socialist society.\(^6\) Kühne harshly dismissed their views, arguing that it was unacceptable to lump together these criteria without recognising that both the shaping of collectivity and aesthetics were strictly class-related and could not be mixed with other class-neutral factors.\(^7\) Thus, he insisted on a strict separation between building-technical and aesthetic characteristics as essential to any differentiation between capitalist and socialist architecture:

The character of the social relations that are reflected by architecture in essence determines architecture’s artistic character, not [building] technology. For this reason, it is wrong to assume a relationship between capitalist and socialist architecture on the basis of certain similarities in construction methods. Even though there often exist great similarities on the formal level between capitalist and socialist architecture, and the application of [technical] principles [those developed in the West] is possible and

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 243.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 243.
even necessary, a fundamental rift in artistic terms persists between capitalist and socialist architecture.\textsuperscript{18}

Kühne concluded his article by stating that it would become ‘necessary to develop an architectural theory on the grounds of of Marxism-Leninism’, which could allow for ‘[e]very aspect of architecture to be judged from a partisan standpoint for socialism.’\textsuperscript{19}

In the late 1950s, Kühne was not alone in calling for the development of architectural theory as an ideological tool. Even architects who fully embraced the new course of scientific and technical modernisation, above all the architect Gerhard Kosel who had remigrated from the Soviet Union in October 1954 and was initially appointed to the Ministry of Construction but soon after replaced Kurt Liebknecht as the president of the Building Academy, argued for the need of systematic theoretical knowledge firmly rooted in Marxist ideology.\textsuperscript{20} The ‘system builder’ Kosel, as Hannemann calls him with reference to his instrumental role in the industrialisation of construction in the GDR, belonged to the more technocratic fraction among architects at the time.\textsuperscript{21} Following his return from the Soviet Union, he sought to establish his concept of \textit{Produktivkraft Wissenschaft} [science as productive force], which he had developed in the late 1940s.\textsuperscript{22}

As Kosel’s published autobiography of 1989 suggests, his role in the background of the shift toward industrialised construction in the GDR may not have been entirely dissimilar to that of the architect Georgi Gradov in the Soviet Union, who, as Adrian Forty revealed, wrote a letter to Krushchev in February 1954—ten months before Krushchev’s speech on


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p. 243.


\textsuperscript{21} Hannemann, pp. 75-85.

industrialised construction methods—discussing at length the shortcomings of the Soviet construction industry. Kosel recalled a meeting with Alfred Schwanz, the director of the Department of Construction at the Central Committee, immediately after his arrival in the GDR in October 1954. In this meeting Schwanz laid open the problems of construction in the GDR and asked Kosel to take up a position at the Ministry of Reconstruction to contribute his extensive knowledge of construction in the Soviet Union, which he had gained alongside other German modernist architects in the 1930s. The meeting predated Kruschev’s speech; however, it was in the immediate aftermath of that event that Kosel began to lobby with greater vigour for the wide-scale introduction of standardisation and industrialised construction methods in the GDR as well, as Andreas Schätzke uncovered.

But let me return to the issue of architectural theory. In his speech at the second Baukonferenz in February 1958, Kosel—now State Secretary—reported that he had asked professors of the architecture school in Weimar for details about how architectural theory was taught at their institution. Allegedly, he received a response that it had not been possible to develop a concept for teaching theory in the short timeframe. Thus, he went on to blame architectural education for the lack of ideological clarity in architectural practice. Pointing out that there existed neither Marxist concepts nor analyses of bourgeois architectural theory, from which progressive elements could be adopted, Kosel thus asked, ‘seeing that a gap exists here, through which hostile ideologies gain unhindered access, can we further delay this task of developing a concept for Marxist architectural theory?’

---

23 Ibid., pp. 161-72.
24 The fact that Kosel did not mention the workers uprising of 17 June 1953 in his description of causes and events leading up the Baukonferenz and the subsequent introduction of industrialised construction methods, I presume, is due to the fact that the book was published before the fall of the Wall. The uprising remained a highly sensitive issue throughout the existence of the GDR.
25 Kosel, Unternehmen Wissenschaft, p. 162.
26 Schätzke, p. 114.
28 Ibid., p. 76.
The architectural theory meeting of 1959

It was at this critical moment, when the Swiss modernist architect Hans Schmidt – famous for his involvement in the magazine ABC and in the Neues Bauen movement before WWII – got appointed as director of the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture at the Bauakademie in East Berlin in 1958, following a brief period of working as chief architect at the Institut für Typung [Institute for Standardisation] after his move to the GDR in 1955. As well as Kühne and Kosel, Schmidt noted that a socialist architectural theory was required to resolve the ideological question of socialist architecture, and to ‘mobilise architects for the tasks of socialist architecture and socialist town planning.’ Common to Kühne’s article, Kosel’s remarks, and internal memos by Schmidt is that they show that there been widespread concern among theorists and officials that architects at the base perceived the comprehensive industrialisation of construction and the standardization of buildings as mere economic necessity and as a threat to individual design solutions. According to Hain, some architects dismissed industrial construction as the ‘work of a lost lot’ and viewed the development of standard building types as ‘architecture for the ungifted.’ It was precisely those architects, who, in the eyes of Schmidt, needed to be ‘mobilised’. But how to do this? In April 1958, soon after his appointment as director of the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture, Schmidt wrote a proposal for a ‘conference about the principles and tasks of socialist architectural theory.’ In this proposal he formulated the significance of architectural theory in resolving architecture’s new social tasks as follows:

The new demands in the field of architecture and town planning as well as the requirements of the socialist economy and planned socialist reconstruction [Aufbau]
cannot be met without a theory that corresponds to actual developments. The task of architectural theory is to provide for practice a maximum of objective and scientifically founded knowledge in all areas of construction. Simultaneously it must advance this knowledge in relation to practice.\textsuperscript{34}

For Schmidt, developing a definition of architecture that united architecture’s altered conditions of production as well as its specific cultural functions within socialist society was a key element of architectural theory. Thus, he offered a preliminary definition in his conference proposal:

a) Architecture is a branch of society’s material production. It is dependent on the productive forces of society and develops synchronous to them.  
b) Architecture is also, insofar as it serves specific non-material needs of society, part of the artistic production of society. Therefore, it depends on the relations of production, which in turn determine ideas.  
c) Socialist architecture develops on the basis of a planned industrialisation of the building sector and is simultaneously enlisted with the task of exploring expressions of a new socialist society’s consciousness in given elementary forms of construction, and, in so doing, support industrial construction.\textsuperscript{35}

Schmidt’s definition, in particular the suggested synthesis of material production and art under point ‘c)’, displays his seriousness in taking up the challenge of finding aesthetic

\textsuperscript{34} ‘Ohne eine der tatsächlichen Entwicklung entsprechende Theorie können die neuen Aufgaben auf dem Gebiete der Architektur und des Städtebaus ebensowenig gelöst werden wie die Aufgaben der sozialistischen Wirtschaft und des planmäßigen sozialistischen Aufbaus. Die Aufgabe einer Theorie der Architektur ist es, der Praxis ein Maximum an objektiven wissenschaftlich fundierten Erkenntnissen auf allen Gebieten des Bauwesens zu liefern und diese Erkenntnisse gleichzeitig in Verbindung mit der Praxis weiterzutreiben.’ Ibid. 

solutions for standardisation and industrialised construction, as has also been noted by scholars like Flierl and Hain.\(^3^6\) At the same time, it fell firmly within the official consensus of seeing architecture as both material production and an art form, which came to dominate architectural theory at the end of the 1950s.

On the basis of his initial conference proposal, Schmidt and other colleagues from the Institute, including the architectural historian Kurt Junghanns and young architectural theorist Bruno Flierl, developed a more detailed outline for a two-day theoretical conference to take place in June 1959.\(^3^7\) Initially planned as an event for 130 participants, the planned conference turned into an **Arbeitsberatung** [work meeting], a smaller internal gathering at the **Bauakademie**. According to the outline, the main speakers were Schmidt himself and Kühne. In addition to them, Flierl and Junghanns were to present shorter papers alongside the architect Edmund Collein, the theorist Georg Münter, and Horst Redeker from the Institute of Applied Arts.\(^3^8\)

Shortly before the meeting, Redeker had published a long and scathing review in *Deutsche Architektur* of the German translation of Russian scholar Aleksandr Ivanovich Burov’s book *Das ästhetische Wesen der Kunst* [The Aesthetic Character of Art]. This review set the tone for much of the papers in the theory meeting.\(^3^9\) In his article, Redeker rejected Burov’s thesis of a non-identity of architecture and art, which, as the latter admitted in his book, was still considered controversial in the Soviet Union, too. Redeker argued:

> As Burov separates architecture from art, he places it in the realm of applied arts, and at the same time presumes that applied arts do not belong to art, but rather stand in contrast to “autonomous” art—a bourgeois term, rooted in Kant’s aesthetics, which Burov uses without hesitation. In the whole system of the arts, architecture indeed

---

\(^3^6\) His example of how this could be achieved successfully was the reconstruction of Le Havre by Auguste Perret. Hans Schmidt, ‘Keine Furcht vor Monotonie!’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 6 (1956), 389.

\(^3^7\) Vorlage an das Präsidium der Deutschen Bauakademie zum 16.3.1959 [Proposal to the committee of the Deutsche Bauakademie on 16 March 1959], BArch, DH\(2/21201\).

\(^3^8\) Ibid.

belongs to the applied arts, but there is no reason to exclude this category from art as such, which constitutes a practical form of appropriating reality. Architecture and applied arts too follow the rules of art. They represent both the essence of material and Zweckmäßigkeit [functionality] for human being, the objective and subjective element of art in the dialectical unity of form.40

Drawing on the ideas of Semper, Redeker put forth the idea of a unity of Materialgerechtheit [truth to material] and Zweckmäßigkeit [utility/function] as underpinning applied art, which he believed was as a specific form of art.41 According to Redeker, there could be no division between the technical-utilitarian and the social and aesthetic aspects of architecture; their unity had to characterise the entire building and all of its parts.42 Yet the fact that such claims did not necessarily reflect the reality of expanding standardised mass-construction and the growing divergence between the technical and economic constraints of architecture, on the one hand, and its proclaimed social and aesthetic functions, on the other, became visible in new housing districts across the GDR, for example the new town of Hoyerswerda.43 Redeker’s arguments, albeit rather dogmatic in their plain dismissal of Burov’s concept of art as ‘altogether flawed’ as well as in their categorical insistence on art’s mimetic function, however largely reflected those put forth by Schmidt in his keynote lecture at the theory meeting in 1959. Using the term Baukunst [Building Art] in its title, Schmidt’s paper offered an updated definition of architecture:

The task of architecture and town planning is to create buildings and ensembles for

41 Ibid., p. 161.
42 Ibid. p. 162.
43 Architectural competition in 1956, construction of the first housing complex 1957-59.
social life. Works of architecture are products of material production and are determined by their practical use for society. They are part of society’s material existence and directly contribute to its transformation. Using artistic means to reflect social reality and actively transform people’s consciousness, works of architecture turn into works of art. They are thus reifications of social consciousness.⁴¹

In line with this definition, the remainder of the paper demanded the application of socialist realism as the general aesthetic principle in town planning and architecture, whilst respecting the specificity of both disciplines. In the past, ignoring this specificity caused ‘dogmatic interpretations and restrictions’ in the implementation of socialist realism, which in turn prepared the ground for an ‘infiltration’ of western ideas, Schmidt argued.⁵ Socialist architecture should reflect the reality of socialism in its ‘typical and universal forms’ as well as in its ‘simplicity, clarity, and clear and coherent order’, and in so doing place it in contrast to the ‘chaotic, random, and mechanically ordered’ character of capitalist architecture which, Schmidt held, was rooted in its material and ideological conditions.⁶ This emphasis on socialist exceptionalism characterised not only Schmidt’s paper, but was a recurring feature across the other contributions as well, all of which were published in Deutsche Architektur in October 1959.⁷

---


⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

Somewhat surprisingly, shortly after the 1959 meeting, Schmidt, Flierl, and the other organisers claimed that the theory meeting at the Bauakademie had failed to answer the complex urgent questions and problems posed by the comprehensive industrialisation of construction. Thus they proposed to organise another larger theoretical conference. In their outline proposal for this conference written in January 1960 they argued that the previous meeting had succeeded only in characterising architecture as art in very broad terms, primarily through its social function. However, applying the method of socialist realism to architecture, as suggested in Schmidt’s paper, required definition of what the specific character of architecture was. This definition had remained unresolved, as did the definition of artistic criteria.

The organisers provided three reasons for why they believed the meeting had failed to meet its goals: first, they argued, the topic had been framed too broadly, to include problems as diverse as Marxist aesthetics and industrial construction; second, there had been a lack of clarity owing to the neglect of theoretical activity in earlier years; and third, the meeting was insufficiently prepared due to lack of staff. Therefore, they argued that the goal of addressing questions universally should be abandoned. Instead, a series of conferences should be held in short succession—about every four to five months, according to the proposal—, in which more precisely framed issues could be discussed, and, so the organisers hoped, also solved. The first conference, which would remain the last however, should discuss the ‘tasks of architecture in the seven-year plan’.

From today’s perspective, this goal rather suggests a programmatic orientation towards greater operativity of architectural theory for the needs of production and reproduction instead of identifying more discrete questions. That is not to say, however, that the organisers had not identified such questions. According to their proposal the issues that should be

verstehen wir unter sozialistischer Baukunst?’, Deutsche Architektur, 9 (1959), 577.


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
discussed under the umbrella of the seven-year plan included: the character of architecture and its specificity in socialist society; the general and specific artistic criteria of socialist architecture; the reconstruction of city centres; architectural questions in relation to the construction of housing; aesthetic questions of industrial building and standardization; relationships between town planning and standardization; the relationships between industrial construction and non-standardized buildings; and the relationship between architecture and visual art.52

The First Theory Conference in 1960

While the internal theory meeting of 1959 had been a more closed event, the First Theory Conference was held in conjunction with the 25th Plenum of the Bauakademie in October 1960 and was both a more prolific and official affair with clearly set goals, as I mentioned above. Under the topic ‘Probleme des Städtebaus und der Architektur im Siebenjahrplan’ [Problems of Town Planning and Architecture in the Seven-Year Plan], the conference brought together members of the Bauakademie as well as representatives of the party and state leadership, delegates of the FDGB, the Free German Trade Union Federation, scientists, and practitioners.53 Preceding the theory conference was the Third All-Union Conference of Builders in the Soviet Union, which left its mark on the thematic foci of the discussion, specifically the issues of social development, national economy, and the development of a socialist mode of life. Its broader challenge of defining the social content of town planning and architecture within the context of an accelerated programme of modernisation and scientisation—the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party were about to announce the goal of transition from socialism to communism by 198054—to some extent also translated into the papers presented at the theory conference at the Bauakademie, in which utopian aspirations.

52 Ibid.
and technocratic language converged.

In preparation of the theory conference two key speeches that had been delivered at the All-Union Conference were translated from Russian into German, and their main content was taken up in a draft document that set out ‘main goals of socialist architecture in the GDR.’ The first of the two papers was Georgei Gradov’s speech, whose title had been translated—with an odd reference to the Heideggerian term ‘Sein’—as ‘Die Stadt und das Sein’ [City and Being]. Gradov, whom I mentioned before in the context of the Krushchev speech, was the director of the Institute for Public Building and member of the Academy of Construction of the USSR. His book Gorod I Byt [City and Mode of Life], which was published in the Soviet Union in 1968 and appeared in translation as Stadt und Lebensweise in the GDR in 1971, became ‘the primer for revived byt reformist city planning in the 1960s,’ as anthropologist Victor Buchli noted.

The notion of ‘byt’, which Buchli translates as daily life in the German translation into the word Lebensweise carried specifically Marxist connotations, deriving from Marx’s understanding of the relationship between Lebensweise [mode of life] and Produktionsweise [mode of production].

This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce.

55 II. Die Hauptaufgaben der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR [The central tasks of socialist architecture in the GDR], BArch, DH2/21201.
56 The original Russian title has not been given in the translation. ‘Die Stadt und das Sein - Übersetzung [City and Being - Translation], BArch, DH2/21201.
57 G. A. Gradow, Stadt und Lebensweise [Berlin: VEB Verlag für Bauwesen, 1971].
60 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy (Glasgow: Collins, 1974).
Buchli discusses how social reformers in post-revolutionary Russia in the 1920s believed that ‘a radically new material culture and infrastructure based on socialist principles’ was required to facilitate the development of socialism and to overcome old social structures and habits.\(^6\) This idea then reemerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as he states, ‘almost indistinguishable in rhetorical form from its roots in the late-1920s.’\(^6\) Developing architectural models that anticipated the communist future while also actively working to facilitate the transition to the next stage of social development, both materially and socially, thus also entailed a good portion of tracing the past—also in the GDR—, as I will discuss in the next chapter. At the same time, this sort of utopian thinking had a lasting legacy on architects and architectural theorists in the GDR, not least on Flierl.

Gradov’s paper, in byt reformist spirit focussed on the development of communist being through architecture and town planning. Gradov argued, embracing earlier ideas of collective living, that the specifically socialist content of socialist housing complexes lay in the relationship between individual flat and communal facilities to satisfy a whole complex of material and cultural needs of individuals in a family. He held that the system of collective supply was not an addition to the individual flat but should be considered an integral part, so that the private flat would extend into the communal space of the district.\(^6\)

In addition to Gradov’s paper, that of Aleksandr Vlasov, Vice President of the Academy of Architecture of the USSR, had been translated by young Berlin architect Werner Strassenmeier. The title of Vlasov’s speech may seem somewhat anachronistic: ‘Der Stil unserer Architektur’ [The Style of Our Architecture].\(^6\) Yet the paper as a whole sought to perform a sort of de-stalinisation on the level of architecture, pointing to ‘failures of the past’, and putting to rest B.P. Mikhailov’s stylistic definition of architecture of the early 1950s.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Buchli, p. 161.
\(^6\) ‘Die Stadt und das Sein’, BArch, DH2/21301.
\(^6\) Aleksandr Vlasov, ‘Der Stil unserer Architektur - Übersetzung Dr.-Ing. Strassenmeier [The Style of Our Architecture - Translation Dr. Ing. Werner Strassenmeier]’, BArch, DH2/21301.
Beyond that it called for fresh consideration of the category ‘beauty’ as a material and social quality rather than an aesthetic one. Vlasov wrote:

Sadly, style in architecture has primarily been viewed as an aesthetic category for a long time. However, style is unthinkable outside technological progress and, more importantly, outside the social character of architecture, whose purpose is to serve society, the people.\(^66\)

Vlasov contended that the style of future building needed to be judged from the standpoint of the future as well as from the present.\(^67\) A socialist style of architecture, he argued, should be modern and needed to be characterised by useful simplicity and a high degree of utility, framing beauty as deriving from comfort and progressive technical and economic solutions.\(^68\) Anything superfluous, according to Vlasov, was alien to socialist ideology.\(^69\)

While Gradov’s speech embraced utopian ideas of the transformation of people’s daily life developed by the avant-garde in the 1920s, that of Vlasov legitimated the formal and aesthetic characteristics of modern architecture. A document in the archive, in which the ‘main tasks for socialist architecture in the GDR’ were set out, suggests a translation of these Soviet ideas, in particular those of Gradov, into the German context. In this document, architecture’s task was defined as ‘the organisation of the socialist city as an expression of the socialist mode of life in society.’ Moreover, the authors demanded rethinking the relationship between individual and collective aspects of housing, and suggested that the antagonism between both should be overcome in favour of more collective forms of living.\(^70\)

The stance taken in the papers of Gradov and Vlasov radically differed from the position East German theorists and officials had adopted at the theory meeting in 1959. Hence, the views of Gradov and Vlasov were received rather suspiciously among the latter. The official consensus,

\(^{66}\) ‘Leider wurde lange Zeit der Stil in der Architektur nur als rein ästhetische Kategorie betrachtet. Dabei ist der Stil undenkbar außerhalb des technischen Fortschritts und was noch wichtiger ist, außerhalb des sozialen Wesens der Architektur, welche dazu berufen ist, der Gesellschaft, dem Volk zu dienen.’ 'Der Stil', BArch, DH2/21201.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) 'II. Die Hauptaufgaben', BArch, DH2/21201.
as I have shown above, had been to acknowledge town planning and architecture as
constituting the material sphere of social life whilst also insisting that both were forms of art,
and therefore carriers of ideological contents. Whilst this understanding was key to
maintaining exceptionalism, a fuller embrace of modernist design concepts and aesthetics, as
proposed in the Soviet speeches, bore the risk of blurring the boundaries between West and
East Germany and challenged the idea of exceptionalism. Given that, after the Second World
War, architectural modernism became quickly aligned with Western democracy, not least by
its main protagonists like Gropius, who publically denied any links between the Bauhaus and
leftist groups during the Weimar era, the East German leaders remained deeply suspicious
about the modernist heritage.71

The speech of cultural official Alfred Kurella made visible this concern, insofar as it
connected the development of architecture to general cultural developments in the GDR.72
Kurella, who was ‘disciple of Georg Lukacs’ and had been involved on the latter’s side of the
Expressionism-Realism debate between German writers and intellectuals in the late 1930s;73
after his return from exile became the director of the Culture Committee at the Politburo and,
in this role, was chiefly responsible for the implementation of socialist realism and other
cultural political interventions of the party.74 Perhaps not surprisingly then, he saw the return
to modernist principles in the papers of Gradov and Vlasov as a ‘revisionary attempt’, a
potential threat that architects needed to confront. Taking up the issue of transition from one
social system to another – in the context of the GDR the transition from capitalism to
socialism –, he was anxious to stress that each epoch of transition was also an epoch
characterised by antagonisms and fierce conflicts, and that in view of the Cold War
confrontation with West Germany, the two Soviet architects’ ideas about modern architecture

71 Greg Castillo, ‘The Bauhaus in Cold War Germany’, in Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the
72 ‘Prof. Alfred Kurella - Leiter der Kommision für Fragen der Kultur beim Politbüro des
Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Prof. Alfred Kurella -
Leader of the Commission for Cultural Questions at the Politburo of the Central Committee
of Socialist Unity Party of Germany]’, BArch, DH2/9201.
74 Wer war wer in der DDR? Ein Lexikon ostdeutscher Biographien, ed. by Helmut Müller-Enbergs
and others, 5th revised ed. edn (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010), pp. 751-52.
ought to be read with caution. Kurella believed that the arguments of German architects for modernisation and for keeping pace with developments in the West were grounded in a ‘gesamtdeutsche Auffassung’ [the perspective of a united Germany] was secretly at work, which needed to be challenged. Reiterating the fear that East German architects might be drawing inspiration from the architecture of the West under the banner of striving for Weltniveau [international standard] beyond merely adopting technical solutions, he urged that they should instead focus on seeking out the unique and original aspects of socialist architecture.

Later on in the 1960s, Kurella developed these ideas into a polemic, in which he contrasted the aesthetics of the two conflicting political systems as Das Eigene und das Fremde [The Intrinsic and the Foreign].

In contrast to Kurella’s plea for socialist exceptionalism, Flierl’s paper in mildly provocative manner—considering his caveat on partisanship right at the start—asked whether something could be learned from town planning and architecture in capitalist countries, and if so, how this knowledge could be made productive. Answering in the affirmative, Flierl stated—without directly referring to Kurella or other defenders of the idea of exceptionalism—that those who believed that learning from the West was ‘harmful or irrelevant’ argued ‘dogmatically’, since any position towards capitalist architecture needed to be scientifically founded rather than being based on ideology. Thus, he rejected the imposed limit on technical aspects and questioned why any attempt to study aspects of modern architecture in the West beyond technology was officially dismissed as ‘reactionary’.

Reversing the notion of systemic difference, Flierl argued that anything which constituted ‘a representation or embodiment of capitalist relations of production, capitalist ideology and bourgeois-capitalist Lebensweise [mode of life], hence a reflection of the character of capitalist

---

25 ‘Prof. Alfred Kurella’, BArch, DH2/21201.
26 Ibid.
27 Alfred Kurella, Das Eigene und das Fremde: neue Beiträge zum sozialistischen Humanismus (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1968).
29 Ibid.
society’ was not useful to the development of architecture in socialism. However, there remained a long list of ‘progressive elements’, which, he believed could be appropriated, including anything that directly relates to the development of productive forces, the development of modern technology and modern traffic, new types of construction and materials, and innovative technical and technological methods in building, but also certain aesthetic concepts in form-giving as they emerge from the application of modern construction and modern materials, as well as new functional solutions in town planning and architecture so long as they succeed in rationally serving people’s well-being.

Among the positive examples of Western architecture picked out by Flierl were Lucio Costa’s plans for Brasilia, the design of Havanna-East in Cuba, Selman Selmanagic’s proposal for the East German industrial city of Schwedt, but also designs for large spaces and innovative construction systems, such as tensile structures and concrete hyperboles, for example Maciej Novicki’s Norton Arena and the market hall in the French city Royan, designed by the engineer René Sarger. In contrast to these examples, Flierl dismissed Le Corbusier and Saarinen for he believed that their work was not based on structure, but purely formal.

The outcome of the theory conference with respect to the two positions concerning the development of socialist architecture represented by Kurella and Flierl – on one side, those who emphasised systemic exceptionalism, on the other, those who argued in favour of modernisation, reform and greater openness under the banner of technological and social progress – remained ambiguous. As the final declaration of the 25th Plenum that marked the outcome of the theory conference reveals, Kurella’s position was considered vital in taking a

80 Ibid.
81 ‘Alles was unmittelbar mit der Entwicklung der Produktivkräfte zusammenhängt, mit der Entwicklung der modernen Technik und des modernen Verkehrs, mit neuen Konstruktionen und Materialien sowie mit neuen bautechnischen und bautechnologischen Verfahren, ferner bestimmte ästhetische Auffassungen in der formalen Gestaltung, wie sie auf der Grundlage und der Anwendung moderner Konstruktionen und moderner Baustoffe heranwachsen, aber auch neue funktionelle Lösungen in den Werken des Städtebaus und der Architektur, sofern sie auf zweckmäßige und rationelle Weise Aufgaben erfüllen, die dem Wohl des Menschen dienen.’ Ibid.
82 Ibid.
principle stance toward architecture in the West.\textsuperscript{83} At the same time, the declaration stated that experimental projects for new building types and experimental housing districts should be developed, the quality of standardised construction be improved, new construction techniques and materials be explored, and scientific research be strengthened— including interdisciplinary studies of economics, social hygiene and social sciences—in order to meet international standards.\textsuperscript{84} [my emphasis]

After the theory conference, the magazine \textit{Deutsche Architektur}, at least for a short time, came to play a vital role in fulfilling this goal of reaching the ‘international standard’. The declaration of the 25\textsuperscript{th} Plenum of the \textit{Bauakademie} had already demanded that the content of the GDR’s only architecture magazine be improved in order to turn it into an effective tool for town planners and architects again.\textsuperscript{85} As an internal protocol of a meeting concerning the city centre designs for Berlin confirms, Ulbricht himself had ordered that ‘one must deal with the magazine \textit{Deutsche Architektur}, since it has no clear profile.’\textsuperscript{86} It was in this context that Flierl was appointed as the magazine’s chief editor, replacing the older Kurt Magritz who had been criticised by the leadership, as the quote above shows, for his positions in the controversy around the planning of Berlin’s city centre between 1959 and 1961, which ran parallel to the architectural theory conferences. This controversy cannot be recounted here; it has been analysed in great depth not least by Flierl, but also by other architectural historians.\textsuperscript{87}

Interestingly, Flierl himself remembers the circumstances in which he was asked to become chief editor not as an intervention from ‘above’, but as the result of criticisms among the magazine’s readership— East German architects—, whose interest in \textit{Deutsche Architektur} had

\textsuperscript{83} Abschrift - Entschließung des 25. Plenums der Deutschen Bauakademie [Copy - Resolution of the 25th plenum of the Deutsche Bauakademie], BArch, DH2/21201.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.


waned because of ‘it's unliveliness, colourlessness, and self-opinionatedness,’ as he remarks.\textsuperscript{88}

However, the course of events leading up to Flierl’s quick dismissal as editor after only eighteen months,\textsuperscript{89} as I will discuss below, may suggest a different reading; namely, that it wasn’t the political leadership’s desire to accommodate architects’ criticisms, but rather more pragmatic concerns that stood behind the change. The first hypothesis could be worth exploring, however, particularly in view of the flight of professional elites to affluent West Germany in the late 1950s, which was halted only by the permanent closing of the border between the two countries, articulated most violently by the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961.\textsuperscript{90} Thus, instead of a commitment to open up architectural debate, the leadership’s desire may simply have been to get rid of an uncomfortable figure – Magritz – and replace him with Flierl who after his speech at the theory conference may have appeared to them as a useful force in pushing the agreed agenda of further modernisation. But too much remains open to speculation here.

**Debate within or without limits? *Deutsche Architektur* in the early-1960s**

Nonetheless, it has been Flierl’s goal as new editor of *Deutsche Architektur* – a title he despised – to open up the journal and its content, and to promote public debate not only between theorists and practitioners but also between the profession as a whole and the state leadership.\textsuperscript{91} A point in case is the emphatic statement in an article by the editors in the January issue of 1963: ‘we have an architectural debate once again. Suddenly, overnight the interest for architecture has become a public concern, a *res publica*. [my emphasis]\textsuperscript{92} In this context, I wish to briefly point to the virtually unknown publication of the *BdA* district group


\textsuperscript{89} Flierl argues that he remained in the position for another year, because there had been nobody to step in immediately The change to Gerhard Krenz as editor took place with the September issue of 1964. See: Ibid. p. 27.

\textsuperscript{90} I am not aware of a study that has looked at how architecture as a profession, which played a vital role in constructing socialism, was affected by the movement of people from East to West Germany. On reasons for the construction of the Berlin Wall see: Sunil Manghani, *Image critique & the fall of the Berlin Wall* (Bristol: Intellect, 2008), p. 120.

\textsuperscript{91} Bruno Flierl, ‘Eine Zeitschrift, wie wir sie brauchen’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 12 (1962), 15-16.

\textsuperscript{92} red., ‘Architekturdiskussion’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 13 (1963), 37.
Berlin with the title *Architekturdiskussion* [Architectural Discussion], which the young Bruno Flierl co-edited in the mid-1950s alongside the architect Heinz Graffunder who would later become the chief architect of Berlin-Marzahn.\(^{93}\) I have previously carried out research into these semi-official internal publications and professional newsletters and analyzed their role in facilitating debate outside more official and controlled professional media.\(^{94}\)

As editor of *Deutsche Architektur* Flierl not only tried to make architectural debate more democratic and less dogmatic than it had been in the past, he also sought to discuss architecture in an international context, analysing examples from Eastern Bloc countries as well as from the West. As well as opening up architectural discourse to international developments, he tried to launch discussions about the role of modernist heritage for contemporary and, importantly, future tasks of architecture and town planning. Connecting both these concerns were the articles by Gradov on ‘Collective Housing Complexes’ and by Flierl himself on *Großwohneinheiten* [large-scale residential units] in the June 1962 issue of *Deutsche Architektur*.\(^{95}\) While the former discussed the author’s own experimental designs for collective housing, the latter analysed Le Corbusier’s Unité in Marseille alongside visionary schemes such as Kenzo Tange’s utopian bay projects for Tokyo and Boston or Swiss painter Walter Jonas’ *Trichterhäuser* [funnel houses] as potential models for collective housing in the communist future. More pragmatic in their call for considering future needs in present design were the articles by Hermann Henselmann.\(^{96}\)

Adding to these efforts to broaden debate, were articles that discussed scientific and technological developments both within and outside the discipline of architecture. This concern for the wider disciplinary context to which architecture and town planning related was an essentially new development and foreshadowed the developments in architecture in

---

\(^{93}\) ‘Architekturdiskussion 5/1955’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 4.


\(^{96}\) Hermann Henselmann, ‘Wie wir heute bauen, werden wir morgen leben’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 12 (1962), 75-77.
the second half of the 1960s. During those years, in East Germany (as elsewhere in the world) modern disciplines such as sociology, psychology, environmental health and public medicine, but also economics, cybernetics and systems thinking increasingly came to influence understandings of architecture as situated within an expanded field of human-environment relations. In its early stages this development also became visible on the pages of Deutsche Architektur. In separate issues, the magazine published two articles, which discussed the significance of two of these new scientific disciplines—sociology and cybernetics (in the issue referred to as mathematical methods)—at a time, 1963, when they were barely officially acknowledged by the party leadership.

However, as Flierl reports in his ‘work biography’, the published excerpts of an internal discussion between young architects and the Minister for Construction Wolfgang Junker as well as two articles on the Bauhaus by Flierl and the architectural theorist Georg Münter, which had been censored even before publication, went beyond the gradually shifting, yet still narrowly defined, official discursive limits. Particularly the first article, according to Flierl, had overstepped the mark. In it the following statement by the young architect Lothar Kwasnitza was reprinted:

Young architects in the Soviet Union—is my impression—are different from architects here. They are all [...] “angry”! But they are angry and impatient because of the cause they are fighting. The direction of their anger is right. Many among us—at least that is my impression—are already too satisfied.

Kwasnitza’s statement, now printed black on white and readable for architects across the GDR, articulated—via the Soviet example—the dissatisfaction of young architects in the GDR

---

See for example: Hans Schmidt and others, Beiträge zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung: Diskussionsmaterial (Berlin: Deutsche Bauakademie 1967).


Flierl, Kritisches denken, pp. 23-27.

with their working conditions. In so doing, it pointed to one of the central taboos in state-
socialist East Germany throughout its history: the subject of alienation of workers—in this
case young architects—from their work, which according to official views did not exist in
socialism."

In July 1963, the Bauakademie held a closed plenary meeting that was preceded by a similar
meeting in which the party leadership had attacked artists’ and writers’ lack of partisanship
and ideological clarity."The ‘critical discussion’ at the Bauakademie, whose aim was no other
than to ‘enforce the principles of Marxism-Leninism in Town Planning and Architecture’, as
Kosel clearly stated in his closing remarks, followed the pattern of the party’s previous
meeting with the artists. It denounced the ‘false views’ that had been expressed by
architectural theorists—who were to provide a clear ideological compass, as I have discussed
before in this chapter—as well as by members of the architectural profession. All members of
the Bauakademie and others who were involved in the affair had to go through the painful
mechanism of party criticism and public self-criticism."Their individual statements were
circulated as a 56-page insert via the magazine Deutsche Architektur, whose editor Flierl was
dismissed.

Beyond the shrill language invoked by officials, such as Kosel’s statement that ‘[w]e live in an
intense battle on the front of ideology’,"and the tragic tone of the architects’, theorists’ and
historians’ statements, the meeting’s subtext was to ‘resolve’—at least temporarily—the
tension between, to use Peteri’s phrase again, ‘the need for modernisation and the production

"On the issue of Entfremdung [alienation] in socialism and the GDR in particular see: Achim
Trehel, Entfremdung und Ästhetik. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Studie und eine Analyse der
ästhetischen Theorie Wolfgang Heises (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001).
"The plenary meeting in this respect marked the end point in a string of calls for
partisanship and ideological clarity during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Kühne; Kurt
Magritz, ‘Das Prinzip der offenen Parteilichkeit und die Architekten’, Deutsche Architektur, 8
(1958), 357-58; red., ‘Die Architektur, die Architekten und die Ideologie’, Deutsche Architektur,
13 (1963), 98.
[Berlin: Deutsche Bauinformation 1963].
"Ibid., p. 53.
and reproduction of systemic exceptionalism.\footnote{György Péteri, ‘The Occident Within - or the Drive for Exceptionalism and Modernity’, \textit{Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History}, 9 (2008), 929-37 (p. 933).} This tension, as I have explored in detail throughout this chapter, became visible in architectural theoretical debates that followed in the wake of the wide-scale introduction of industrial construction methods in the second half of the 1950s. The various attempts to define architecture and its specific characteristics, roles, and functions in socialist society on the basis of a distinct Marxist architectural theory were connected to the logics and politics of Cold War ideological conflict. This became visible above all in the tension between the two understandings of architecture as either a part of material production or a form of art. While the former resulted from the state leadership’s drive towards modernisation by means of industrialised construction, the latter was connected to the desire for systemic exceptionalism. In this chapter I have pointed to the wider problem of discursive limits, their strict policing, and the harsh mechanisms of ideological control that characterised architectural theory in state-socialist East Germany throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Within the context of the Bauakademie, the most effective means of controlling speech were the research plans. Moreover, any publication usually had to be discussed and officially granted the approval of institute or academy directors.\footnote{Wolfgang Tripmacker, \textit{Bibliographie Bauwesen, Architektur, Städtebau: Veröffentlichungen der Bauakademie 1951-1991} (München: K. G. Saur, 1993).} However, I have also sought to demonstrate that since the beginning of the 1960s an increasing number of new—and historic—terms, ideas, and concepts as well as technical, structural, material, formal, and aesthetic solutions began to populate the imaginary of architectural theorists and practitioners under the banner of scientific and technological progress and the ongoing transformation of socialist society. This included terms such as \textit{Lebensweise}, questions about the relationship between the material sphere and social life connected to this term, or the modernist idea of \textit{Gestaltung}, which, as I will show in the next chapter, played a significant role in redefining architecture as ‘built-spatial environment’ through an engagement with the disciplines of cybernetics, cultural sociology, and aesthetics in the period of reform after 1965.
Re-defining architecture in the age of the scientific-technological revolution, 1963-1967
In 1967, the architectural theorist Bruno Flierl wrote, 'scientific research strives for and uses terms that denote a precise content and that are unambiguous. Definitions, to great extent, not only determine knowledge itself, but also its impact on practice.' Calling for systematic and continuous work on the definition of terms that are central to architecture as well as investigation of their history, he went on to argue that such definitions would be both 'necessary and useful first and foremost at the outset of developing a theory, or—as in the case of Marxist architectural theory—at the start of a new phase in the development of theory.' Flierl's plea for a redefinition of the terms and concepts of 'Marxist architectural theory', as he and his colleagues called their field at the time, formed the core of his chapter 'Zum Begriff Architektur' [On the Term Architecture] within the collaboratively authored study Beiträge zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung [Contributions to architectural theory], a semi-official publication produced by a young team of scholars at the Bauakademie in East Berlin between October 1965 and April 1967—just in time for the VII Congress of the Socialist Unity Party.

The more than two hundred pages long manuscript was the outcome of an interdisciplinary and collaborative study developed out of an engagement between architecture and new disciplines such as cultural theory, sociology, psychology, cybernetics, and semiotics. As the authors stated in the preface, the study sought to make a contribution to the development of systematic and continuous research in the field of architectural theory in the German Democratic Republic with the aim of gaining a scientific understanding of architectural practice in the shaping of the developed social system of socialism.

2 Ibid., p. 38.
3 Referred to as short Beiträge in the following chapters.
4 Beiträge zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung - Diskussionsmaterial, ed. by Hans Schmidt and others (Berlin: Deutsche Bauakademie 1967).
5 'Die vorliegende Arbeit will einen Beitrag zur Entwicklung einer systematischen und kontinuierlichen Forschung auf dem Gebiet der Architekturtheorie in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik leisten, deren Ziel es ist, die Parxis der Architektur bei der
Their ambitious goal was to 'consider architecture in its totality as an object of investigation,' since in their view it was Marxist architectural theory’s task to 'uncover, make conscious and controllable the laws of architecture,' and in doing so 'develop theories, criteria and norms, methods and models for practice.'

However, as the preface also reveals, the manuscript had been 'critically discussed' within the Bauakademie. The outcome of this discussion was that the manuscript could only be distributed internally 'for information and discussion.' In an essay about Hans Schmidt’s and his work at the Bauakademie—he was responsible for guiding the group of young researchers—Flierl later argues that the reason for the criticism of the study had been the team of authors' overall approach of placing humans beings 'who create and use architecture as the built environment for their life' at the centre of their ideas. He described the situation thus:

This [approach] is why there was a lot of fear and caution among those who realised that beneath what we thought and wrote lay not only the question of architecture but the question of society, within which architecture is being created and used. No wonder then that our work was immediately subjected to a restriction imposed by the Ministry of Construction without consulting the director of the Institute: the number of copies was restricted to 300 and their distribution controlled through lists.

Considering that in East Germany institutional research was centrally planned just like any

Gestaltung des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus wissenschaftlich zu durchdringen.' Ibid. p. V.

6 Ibid., p. V.
7 Ibid., p. V.
8 According to Flierl, the number was limited to 300 and circulation controlled with name lists. See: Bruno Flierl, 'Hans Schmidt in der DDR: Reflexionen eines Mitarbeiters', in Hans Schmidt, 1893-1972: Architekt in Basel, Moskau, Berlin-Ost, ed. by Ursula Suter (Zürich: gta Verlag 1993), pp. 63-81 (p. 79). My working copy at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin was copy nr. 89 of 300.
9 'Gerade deshalb war aber auch die Angst und Vorsicht gross bei denen, die genau begriffen, dass hinter allem, was wir dachten und schrieben, die Frage nicht mehr nur nach der Architektur stand, sondern nach der Gesellschaft, in welcher Architektur geschaffen und gebräucht wird. Kein Wunder, wenn unsere Arbeit—über den Kopf des Institutsdirektors hinweg—sofort einer vom Ministerium für Bauwesen verfügten Restriktion unterworfen wurde: Die Anzahl der Exemplare wurde auf unter 300 beschränkt, ihre Verbreitung anhand von Namenlisten kontrolliert.' Ibid., p. 79.
other aspect of the planned economy, the imposed censorship seems surprising.\textsuperscript{10} The authors themselves noted that at the beginning of 1966 they were officially appointed to develop a ‘Konzeption der architekturtheoretischen Forschung’ [Concept for architectural theoretical research], which they completed at the end of that same year.\textsuperscript{11}

Moreover, the study appears to deliver—with a delay of about seven years—exactly what had been requested in the final declaration of the First Theory Conference of 1960. I have discussed this conference at length in the last chapter. This declaration concluded: that no general concept for the development of town planning and architecture in the GDR existed; that the social content of architecture was not yet the object of scientific research; that theory and practice were lagging behind social demands; and that on the whole the relationship between theory and practice was unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{12} It had therefore been noted that a concept for the future development of town planning and architecture would become necessary; that research needed to catch up; and that the separation of theory and practice should be overcome through ‘Gemeinschaftsarbeit’ [collective work], one of the key words of Gerhard Kosel’s concept of Produktivkraft Wissenschaft [science as productive force], which I have mentioned in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{13}

An internal document written in the context of the theory conference, which carried the tone of Kosel’s ideas about the role of science in increasing productive forces in society, argued that the Bauakademie as the coordinating centre of building research in the GDR must develop a ‘comprehensive, scientifically grounded concept of socialist town planning and socialist architecture’ focussing on three aspects in particular.\textsuperscript{14} First, to ‘scientifically define

\textsuperscript{10} The entire research output of the Bauakademie has been compiled and published in a bibliography. A brief essay by Wolfgang Tripmacker who worked with Gerhard Kosel in the late 1950s in setting up a system for the dissemination of this centralised research introduces this bibliography. Wolfgang Tripmacker, Bibliographie Bauwesen, Architektur, Städtebau: Veröffentlichungen der Bauakademie 1951-1991 (München: K. G. Saur, 1993).

\textsuperscript{11} Beiträge, p. V.


\textsuperscript{14} ‘IV. Die Aufgabe der Wissenschaft für die Entwicklung von Städtebau und Architektur in der DDR’ [The purpose of science in the development of town planning and architecture in the DDR], BArch, DH 2/21201.
the *new social content* of town planning and architecture' and to 'develop scientific principles for the planning and organisation of the city and the development of various building types.

Second, to achieve 'the highest standard of technological-scientific progress in all areas of construction through advancing industrialisation and standardisation so as to increase utility, *use-value*, technical perfection, and beauty.' And third, to foster the 'creative development of architecture based on industrial building and provide scientific criteria for architectural design in town planning and architecture.' 

The document closed with the phrase: 'Research activity must strive to achieve and influence *international standards* in town planning and architecture,' making necessary 'frequent analysis of the present standard of our practice, the development of theory on the basis of most progressive practical experiences and the implementation of theoretical knowledge in practice, as well as experimental probing of knowledge through building prototypes, experimental structures, and urban experiments.'

*my emphasis*

These documents from the beginning of the 1960s—with the exception of more overtly technical aspects of construction—seem to sum up some of the goals that the authors of *Beiträge* later pursued. In particular key words such as 'new social content', 'use-value', or 'international standard' resonate strongly with the work of Flierl and his colleagues. This is especially true of Flierl's definition of architecture as the 'built spatial environment for human life and practice' and his idea of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, which drew on terms and concepts developed in disciplines such as cybernetics, cultural sociology, and aesthetics. In this new definition of architecture, in contrast to the one which prevailed during the late 1950s, and which I have discussed in the last chapter, architecture's specifically socialist character was no longer rendered through form, as an idea reflected by an object, but rather through the relationships between architecture and society, their character and behaviour within a larger system of *Umwelt* [environment] in socialism. How to understand this

---

64

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
redefinition of architecture and the emergence of the term *Um weltgestaltung* or, as Flierl later called it, *Komplexe Um weltgestaltung*?

**From architecture to the built environment: re-thinking systems**

Before unpacking Flierl’s definition, discussing in detail terms and concepts he builds on in re-defining architecture, I will briefly sketch out the historic context of the GDR in the mid-1960s. Flierl’s rethinking of architecture in the *Beiträge* study was set against a background of reforms in the areas of economics and culture, as, among others, the historian Andrew Evans shows. In 1963, the SED leadership introduced the so-called New Economic System (NES), which Evans notes, ‘heralded a new focus on building socialism with economic mechanisms and levers’, leading to significant alteration of the planning system.\(^8\) A cultural programme known as the ‘Bitterfelder Weg’ accompanied these economic reforms. This cultural programme, he states, aimed to ‘overcome the separation between literature and real life.’\(^9\)

Yet neither the party’s economic reforms nor its cultural reform agenda remained without conflicts, leading to increasing interferences from the side of the party, in particular by a fraction around Erich Honecker—he then replaced Walter Ulbricht as general secretary in 1971—that remained more loyal to the Soviet Union leadership had passed to Leonid Brezhnev in 1964.\(^10\) In the economic sphere, as Peter C. Caldwell documents, the reforms were already viewed suspiciously by 1964-1965.\(^11\) As well as ending the economic reforms, the 11\(^{th}\) Plenum of the Central Committee of the *SED* in 1965 largely put an end to the process of reform in culture.\(^12\)

The construction of the Wall played a crucial role in these reform processes as Caldwell

---

\(^8\) Evans in his text sticks to the German abbreviation NÖS. He as well as other historians like Peter C. Caldwell have highlighted that the NES made deliberate reference to Lenin’s New Economic Programme of the 1920s. Andrew Evans, *The Last Gasp of Socialism: Economics and Culture in 1960s East Germany*, *German Life and Letters*, 63 (2010), 331-44 (p. 332).

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 332.


notes, arguing they represented a 'symbolic refounding of the East German state.'\textsuperscript{23} He argues that

\[\text{[…]}\] by closing off access to the West, the Wall opened up possibilities for creative intramural approaches to the real problems of state socialism. The coherence and power of official theory, for example, declined; \[\text{[…]}\] Within this context a new, technically competent elite, trained in the language of Marxism-Leninism but oriented toward the realities of East Germany, began to emerge.\textsuperscript{24}

Like Caldwell, the historian Mary Fulbrook too highlights how '[i]n the 1960s—within the security of the Wall—state leader Walter Ulbricht sought to involve more technical experts in the processes of planning and advising as an integral part of political decision making.'\textsuperscript{25}

Within this changed political and intellectual landscape of East Germany after 1961/2 not only a number of new disciplines emerged, positions in established disciplines such as aesthetics were also gradually revised, challenging and eventually replacing old terms and dogmas.

Three aspects seem particularly important, since they had a direct impact on Flierl's definition of architecture as the 'gebaute räumliche Umwelt des Menschen, in der er sein Leben und seine Tätigkeit vollzieht' [built spatial environment for human life and practice].\textsuperscript{26} The first is the development of cybernetics and systems theory in the GDR—most strongly associated with the philosopher Georg Klaus and his colleague Heinz Liebscher—since the beginning of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{27} Second is the development of sociology, in particular the sub-discipline cultural sociology and the work on the concepts Umwelt and Umweltgestaltung within a Marxist conception of culture by Fred Staufenbiel since the mid-1960s.\textsuperscript{28} Third are developments within aesthetics in connection with the rise of industrial design as a discipline, and the

\textsuperscript{23} Caldwell, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 142.
\textsuperscript{25} Mary Fulbrook, The people's state: East German society from Hitler to Honecker (New Haven, Conn.: London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 257.
\textsuperscript{26} Flierl, 'Zum Begriff Architektur'.
\textsuperscript{27} Georg Klaus, Kybernetik in philosophischer Sicht (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1961).
\textsuperscript{28} Fred Staufenbiel, Kultur heute - für morgen: Theoretische Probleme unserer Kultur und ihre Beziehung zur technischen Revolution (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1966).
development of a theory of *Gestaltung* by Siegfried Heinz Begenau also in the mid-1960s.\(^9\)

During the first half of the 1950s, cybernetics was initially dismissed as a bourgeois 'reactionary' science in the GDR, much like in the Soviet Union, and was accused of mechanic materialism.\(^8\) Yet, in the late-1950s, under the new Soviet leader Kruschev, the transdisciplinary science gradually became re-evaluated, and its terms and concepts were applied to other disciplines, above all economics and planning. The arrival of cybernetics in the GDR in the late 1950s was stimulated by these ideological changes in the Soviet Union, but its remarkable rise to becoming a science capable of rethinking socialist society by the mid-1960s, and its sudden fall in 1969 followed their own logic.\(^9\) The term cybernetics goes back to Norbert Wiener's book *Cybernetics or control and communication in the animal and the machine*, first published in 1948.\(^3^2\) In it he argued that contemporary machines (or 'automata'), in terms of their way of functioning, were no longer fundamentally different from living beings, as they became 'coupled to the outside world both for the reception of impressions and for the performance of actions. They contain sense organs, effectors, and the equivalent of a nervous system to integrate the transfer of information from the one to the other.' Wiener concluded, '[t]hey lend themselves very well to description in physiological terms.'\(^3^4\) Cybernetics – from the Greek *kybernetike* for governing, or steering – was, according to Wiener, the 'study of automata, [...] a branch of communication engineering, and its cardinal notions are those of message, amount of disturbance or "noise".'\(^3^5\)

In the GDR the mathematical Philosopher Georg Klaus, a former student and successor of Max Bense on the chair for philosophy in Jena, 'played a key role in legitimizing cybernetics',

---

\(^8\) Siegfried Begenau, *Funktion, Form, Qualität* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Gestaltung, 1967).


\(^1\) Ibid., p. 236.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 236.

\(^3\) Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics or control and communication in the animal and the machine*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1961).

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 43.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 43.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 42.
as Caldwell reports.\(^{36}\) In his introduction to the German translation of Igor Poletaev’s book *Kybernetik*, published in 1962, Klaus largely followed Wiener in defining cybernetics as the ‘science of control processes and the process of transmitting information in machines and animals.’\(^{37}\) However, he also noted that, while information science was one of cybernetics’ fundamental pillars, it would be ‘too narrow to think of the transmission, transformation and storage of information as its sole content.’\(^{38}\) Asking, for example, for ‘the relationship between a total system and a subsystem as well as the stability and instability of this system was not primarily a question of information theory’, and yet it was an important aspect of cybernetics. Klaus even went as far as stating that the systems aspect – and not information – would be the ‘primary’ concern for cybernetics, defining the latter thus as the ‘theory of dynamic, self-regulating systems and self-organising systems.’\(^{39}\) And as such a general science of systems, Klaus believed cybernetics was ‘destined to become a fundamental science of production of the near future, of production on the basis of automation’, and would therefore have a ‘great impact on economic planning in socialism, and will revolutionise the entire administrative system’ of socialist East Germany.\(^{40}\) Indeed, cybernetics greatly influenced the New Economic System of 1963, and the *Perspektivplan 1964-1970*, visible for instance in the reform of industrial prices, which were to be calculated dynamically in relation to production costs and anticipated profit rates.\(^{41}\) In addition to economics, Klaus’s ideas also instilled hopes for further social and political reforms. He provided a ‘progressive interpretation of democratic centralism, in which he implicitly began to question the leading role of the party, while also presenting it as a learning (and evolving) system.’\(^{42}\) In the introduction to his 1972 book *Sprache und Politik* [Language and Politics] Klaus wrote:


\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. XII.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. XII.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. IX.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. IX.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 237.
In a socialist system [instead], leadership and those being led – themselves active and conscious subjects of social processes – form an organic whole. Human beings are at the heart of socialist society and its organs. They are the central element of the total system. Thus, human beings in socialism are not 'steered' from a command centre.

Instead, a system of interactions is being formed between controlling and controlled, which is conditioned to allow creativity and initiative of each individual worker as a potent factor in the refinement of the total system.

Nevertheless, Klaus equally sought to align the general principles and forms of knowledge produced by cybernetics with dialectical materialism. *Kybernetik in Philosophischer Sicht*, published in 1961, was his first full-length work on cybernetics. As Caldwell stresses, like his Soviet colleagues, Klaus 'justified cybernetics vocabulary by asserting its identity with the substance of dialectical materialism.' However, in his book Klaus argued that, while material was important, the cyberneticiest’s primary interest lay in 'structure' and 'function' as well as in the 'behaviour of things and their dynamic', since control of the environment depended on understanding the behaviour of things. According to Klaus, cybernetics was not only able to 'contribute to understanding actually existing structures and their behaviour,' it also would provide an 'instrument of theoretical prediction [...] of the possible behaviour of dynamic structures.'

How then was cybernetics taken up by architectural theory and practice in the GDR? In his study of the rise of cybernetic thinking in architecture in the Western world as part of a wider embrace of technological progress between the mid-1950s and late 1960s, Georg Vrachliotis has noted that a significant degree of faith was put in the potential of cybernetics to solve 'concrete methodological problems' through 'rigorous thinking'. Cybernetics offered a 'way of thinking through reality with the help of technical models', of discovering the 'circuit diagram of the world.' To great extent, as I will show, this was also true of the application of

---

43 Caldwell, p. 151.
44 Klaus, p. 17.
cybernetics and systems thinking, in particular, in East German architectural theory, above all by Flierl. But in the mid-1960s there were also great hopes of a swift application of cybernetics and automation in planning and design. In 1965, the Bauakademie, for example held a large conference on the ‘application of mathematical methods and computers in the construction sector’. The goal of the conference was to discuss the use of computers in planning organisation, management and control of building production, and an implementation of computer-based data processing was to be achieved between 1965 and 1970. The motivation for doing so was to achieve greater efficiency, for instance in the coordination of work across different project management stages. Another goal was to develop a unified programming code for all Comecon countries. Moreover methods of network planning were to be used on the basis of two large construction projects, one of which was the Berlin city centre. In 1969, the city government of Berlin also sought to implement a systems based model for the reorganisation of the construction sector on the level of the entire city.

While for practice the development and use of new technologies stood in the foreground, it was the general ways of thinking about methodically about problems that fascinated architectural theorists. Cybernetics offered methods to develop abstract systems, which could ‘either represent fundamental underlying properties of […] reality or be themselves seen as theoretical models of possible dynamic systems’. Moreover, cybernetics had advanced a specific system of terms from different sciences, some of which it had made more precise, others more abstract. Flierl (and to some extent his colleagues) used both of these strategies. To Flierl and his colleagues, Klaus’ systems theoretical approach was eminently important in defining the relationship between the ‘system architecture’ and the ‘system society’ within the ‘system environment’. In the first chapter of Beiträge, which focussed on methods of architectural theory, Alfred Schwandt thus noted that a basic condition of understanding

7 Ibid.
8 ‘Modell der Planung Leitung - Teilsystem Bezirksbaumaan, März 1969’, GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 270/fol. 3.
architecture scientifically would be to recognise the systemic character of all relationships necessary for architecture's existence and function. He continued stating that

Architecture in this sense only appears to be a partial area of a total system, which includes all interrelationships between architecture, society, and other special areas of social practice (production, economy, technology, culture, art, and so on) in their complexity.

And Flierl noted that it would be architectural theory's task in particular to 'define architecture's place and role as a social subsystem within the total system of society.' In the past, he argued, 'the relationship between architecture and society had often been analysed through two discrete methods', whereby the first of these methods understood architecture as a 'specific phenomenon of one or more social practices' — he mentions production, technology, science, art, and culture — and the second 'studied architecture's specificity through the unity of its determining components, for example construction, function, design, or beauty.' However, he concluded that cybernetic thinking would allow investigating architecture in the 'dialectical unity of its external system, formed by society, and its inner system, which determines its particular social character.' Significant inputs toward better understanding of these relationships, according to Flierl, were offered by Marxist cultural sociology, in particular the work of Fred Staufenbiel, which had developed at the intersection of cultural theory and sociology.

Dietrich Mühlberg explains that in 1958 the SED leadership decided that in the GDR a 'socialist cultural revolution' would be necessary. This decision, he notes, followed the self-
critical congress of the CPSU after Stalin's death, at which 'general principles' for building socialism were discussed; and a cultural revolution—a term that goes back to Trotsky, as he states—was one such principle. According to Mühlberg, the cultural functionary Alfred Kurella played a key role in working out a concept for this cultural revolution in the GDR, in which the leadership pursued three major goals: first, to lift the cultural knowledge of the 'working masses'; second, to create new cultural elites after a large amount of the intellectuals had left the GDR for West Germany; third, to overcome 'bourgeois ideology' and establish a new system of values in society. Mühlberg goes on to describe that cultural theory, which at the beginning of the 1960s was still characterised by a 'dogmatically restricted Marxism', became a site where concepts of socialist society were debated in the aftermath of the XXth Congress of the CPSU and the introduction of Ulbricht's reform course. He points out that, in discussions around topics such as technological progress, the role of the youth, or the economy, the recently published early writings of Marx opened up fresh perspectives on these processes, in particular individual subjectivity and human self-determination. Parallel to this development of cultural theory as a discipline ran the formal establishment of sociology in the GDR with the 'Zentralen Programm der soziologischen Forschung' [Central Programme for Sociological Research] in autumn 1964, as sociologist and historian Vera Sparschuh explains. Sparschuh too highlights the role that sociology played in these early days of attempting to reform the socialist system. As a semi-official publication from 1966 confirms, there existed a strong connection between architecture and sociology the earliest days through the work group 'cultural sociology,' which covered three areas of sociological research: first, problems relating to human environmental conditions, which also included town planning and architecture; second, questions dealing with the arts and their perception;

---

*Online Journal für Kultur, Wissenschaft und Politik, 31 (2008), 3-17 (p. 7).*

58 Ibid., p. 7.
59 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
60 Ibid., p. 9.
61 Ibid., p. 9.
and third, sociological problems of mass media such as television, radio or theatre.\(^{63}\) Leading this branch of cultural sociology was Fred Staufenbiel, who in the late 1970s would become the first professor of sociology in an architecture school in the GDR, as Florian Urban notes.\(^{64}\)

In 1966, Staufenbiel published the book *Kultur heute – für morgen* (Culture today – for tomorrow), which became highly influential in architectural debate, specifically because of the ideas on *Umwelt* and *Umweltgestaltung* put forth in it.\(^{65}\) Staufenbiel argued, that technological progress should not only 'lead to a continual increase of the population’s standard of living'; it also raised questions about the planned development of culture.\(^{66}\) However, he rejected the superstructural function of culture, which 'separated it from economy, production and technology', and which reduced culture to 'intellectual, chiefly artistic activity', focusing only 'on the aesthetic realm.'\(^{67}\) He acknowledged that this artistic aspect of culture was important, yet

> [i]t fell short of grasping the material process of *Gestaltung* [form-giving/shaping] social life and the material *Umwelt* [environment] as a central process of *kulturschöpferisch* [culture-forming] action—of understanding *Gestalten der Umwelt* [shaping the environment] and human life as an integral part of social practice and as a cultural phenomenon.\(^{68}\) [my emphasis]

Referring to Friedrich Engels’s argument in *'Anteil der Arbeit und der Menschwerdung des Affen'* Staufenbiel emphasised the human potential for transforming the environment, and, he believed, controlling it.\(^{69}\) He saw labour not merely as the basis for culture, but also an act of

---


\(^{65}\) Staufenbiel, *Kultur*.

\(^{66}\) Ibid. p. 10.

\(^{67}\) Ibid. p. 38.

\(^{68}\) Auch ist es nicht möglich, den materiellen Prozess der Gestaltung des gesellschaftlichen Lebens sowie der gegenständlichen Umwelt als Kernprozeß kulturschöpferischen Wirkens—also Gestalten der Umwelt und des menschlichen Lebens als integrierenden Teil gesellschaftlicher Praxis und Kulturphänomen zu begreifen. Ibid., p. 38.

\(^{69}\) Ibid. p. 40.
'making culture' itself.²⁶ Using cybernetic language he noted that, in order to foster cultural development it was vital not only to capture culture’s specific character, but to understand the 'cultural process', or rather the 'system of cultural processes', which, following the ideas of Klaus, he thought to be a self-regulating process.²⁷ Part of this process, he believed, would need to be the 'development of a socialist mode of life by way of Gestaltung of the entire social and intimate milieu.'²⁸ In line with the so-called scientific-technological revolution in the GDR, he noted that the Gestaltung of the living environment was one of the key areas in which technology could be employed, for instance through the use of computers in defining various parameters of territorial and urban design.²⁹ Staufenbiel’s ideas on Umwelt and Umweltgestaltung were taken up in very direct form by Flierl both in his definition of architecture as ‘built spatial environment for human life and practice’ and in his concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, which drew on and developed further Staufenbiel’s work. Fundamental to both Staufenbiel’s and Flierl’s work is the extensive use of the term Gestaltung, which I argue requires explanation.

In his work on the German avant-garde journal G—edited by Hans Richter, Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, Mies van der Rohe, and others between 1923 and 1926—architectural historian Detlef Mertins points to the specificity of the term Gestaltung within 1920s German modernist discourse.³¹ He argues that, in contrast to other ‘–isms’ of the time, the principles of ‘elementare Gestaltung’—‘economy, order, regularity, and especially total control of materials and processes’—as propagated by the editors of G, stood out because of their ‘emphasis on the process and materials through which cultural objects are produced.’³² Mertins further suggests, that these principles were ‘founded upon extensive fieldwork in the cultural

²⁶ Ibid., p. 50.
²⁷ Ibid., pp. 51-52.
²⁸ Ibid., p. 86.
²⁹ Ibid., p. 98.
³¹ Ibid., p. 4.
anthropology of early-twentieth industrial society. He highlights that, 'especially in the literature on the Bauhaus [the term *Gestaltung*], is often rendered as 'design'*, while historically the term was 'highly polemical' due to its 'comprehensive, environmental scope', integrating diverse art forms such as architecture, industrial design, product design, graphic design, lighting design, and others and because of its 'designation of a new postrepresentational approach to the production of culture that foregrounded formative and constructive processes ahead of the forms themselves.' Mertins states that the German verb *gestalten* could best be translated as form-giving or even production, and that rather than to a style it alluded to a *mode* of work and production. I believe that Staufenbiel's and Flierl's usage of the term is much in this original modernist sense described by Mertins. Yet this is surprising given the official ban on the *Bauhaus* in 1960s East Germany. I have already mentioned how the clash between ideologies during the Cold War also extended into the cultural sphere. As the *Bauhaus* had become identified with Western (in particular West German) democracy – chiefly through the active denial by Gropius of the school's leftist past after the war –, it remained taboo in the GDR until official diplomatic relations between the two German states started developing. Even though scholarship on the Bauhaus was started, especially within architecture and design, and three books were published by the mid-1960s, Karl-Heinz Hüter's study of the Bauhaus's ties with social democratic city governments in the interwar period could not be published in 1968, as intended. Flierl notes that acknowledging the Bauhaus as heritage had been a personal taboo for Ulbricht. As I have discussed in the last chapter, as editor of *Deutsche Architektur* in the early 1960s Flierl made very personal experiences with this official ban on the Bauhaus, when he tried to launch an article in honour of Gropius's 80th birthday written by Georg

---

75 Ibid., p. 4.
76 Ibid., p. 6.
77 Ibid., p. 5.
78 Ibid., p. 6.
Münter and another article on the Bauhaus building in Dessau.\textsuperscript{80} In contrast to the reforms in the sphere of the economy and other aspects of culture, which I have described above, the leadership’s stance on embracing modernist heritage remained relatively backward. The art historian Karl-Heinz Hüter, who worked alongside Kurt Junghanns at the ISA in the mid-1960s, for example, had finished the manuscript of his book about the Bauhaus in 1966, and yet its publication was stopped in tumultuous period of the Prague Spring, as he reports.\textsuperscript{81}

It was in this context that Siegfried Heinz Begenau published his book \textit{Funktion, Form, Qualität}, in which he developed a theory of Gestaltung.\textsuperscript{82} Begenau was an art theorist and worked as one of the editors of the East German art magazine Bildende Kunst in the late 1950s. In 1956, he edited the German edition of Henri Lefebvre’s today little known\textsuperscript{85} book \textit{Contribution à l’Esthétique} published as \textit{Beiträge zur Ästhetik}.\textsuperscript{86} The book, in which Lefebvre grapples with the Socialist Realist aesthetic, remained his only published work in the GDR. After his break from the Communist Party, official discourse across most of Eastern Europe ignored him, yet, as Łukasz Stanek describes, he maintained exchanges with Marxist dissidents in countries such as Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{87}

To return to Begenau and his book, however. Begenau, much like Staufenbiel, felt discontent with the disregard of everyday material culture in official aesthetic discourse in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s. He noted:

\begin{quote}
The fact remains unusual that in publications on aesthetics in our republic the problem of Gestaltung of industrial products of the twentieth century is either not mentioned at all or only considered as an insignificant addition to art. However, this addition makes up almost the entire material environment, with and within which we
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{80} ‘Artikel über das Bauhaus [Articles about the Bauhaus]’, GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 5.
\textsuperscript{81} Hüter, ‘Dem Bauhaus Bahn brechen’.
\textsuperscript{82} Begenau.
\textsuperscript{86} Henri Lefebvre, \textit{Beiträge zur Ästhetik (Contribution à l’Esthétique)} (Berlin: Ministerium für Kultur der DDR, 1956).
\textsuperscript{87} Łukasz Stanek, \textit{Henri Lefebvre on space architecture, urban research, and the production of theory} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
\end{footnotesize}
spend our lives.\textsuperscript{88}

Mirroring Staufenbiel's arguments, Begenau also stated that the modern material world did not just create 'representative' objects but also 'a new material perception, and new practical and sensual relations with the world involving all the senses.'\textsuperscript{89} Therefore, his belief was that a theory of \textit{Gestaltung} was required, which should replace the synthetic or additive as-well-as constructions, which, he believed, only insufficiently 'solved' the problem of the material versus the artistic. Suggesting that the positions of conservative art historians in West Germany, such as Hans Sedlmayr, were in principle identical to those of officials in the GDR he noted with regard to their arguments:

Their arguments always amount to the same, even if they take different routes: the low, practical, material realm requires art to become culture. Without art it is almost a threat to culture.\textsuperscript{90}

Begenau then contrasted this position, which favoured art over material production, with reference to Gropius's, distinguishing between art and \textit{Gestaltung}:

Through its specific character art offers an intellectual-aesthetic interpretation of life, while \textit{Gestaltung} is primarily the aesthetic ordering of the real human environment and of its elements.\textsuperscript{90}

In a similar vein, Staufenbiel then concluded that \textit{Gestaltung} was an 'ordering or forming that follows recognised laws, and which unites technical, hygienic, psychological, aesthetic, and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{88} Es bleibt eine auf den ersten Blick ungewöhnliche Gegebenheit, daß in Veröffentlichungen über Ästhetik, die in unserer Republik erschienen sind, die Problematik der Gestaltung von Industrieprodukten des 20. Jahrhunderts entweder gar nicht oder nur als bedeutungsloses Anhängsel der Kunst erwähnt wird. Aber dieses Anhängsel bezieht sich fast auf die gesamte gegenständliche Umwelt, mit der und in der wir leben.

Begenau, p. 23.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 23.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{90} Diese Argumentation läuft immer auf das gleiche hinaus, wenn auch verschiedene Wege dahin führen: Der niedere, praktische, materielle Bereich bedarf erst der Kunst, um kulturfähig zu werden. Ja ohne Kunst sei er teilweise schon eine Gefahr für die Kultur.

Ibid. p. 33.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{91} Die Kunst ist ihrem spezifischen Wesen nach geistig-ästhetische Deutung des Lebens, Gestaltung dagegen primär ästhetische Ordnung realer menschlicher Umwelt und ihrer Elemente.

Ibid. p. 41.}
economic components' and which 'culminates in the unity of use-value and cultural value.'

To sum up, in the context of economic and cultural reforms in the GDR in the early and mid-1960s, new terms and concepts emerged within disciplines such as cybernetics, cultural sociology, and aesthetics. These terms were used and developed further by Flierl (and his colleagues) to arrive at a new definition of architecture as the 'built spatial environment for human life and practice.' Cybernetics and systems thinking in particular helped to investigate the relationships and processed between the system of architecture and the system of society within a larger system of the environment, whilst understanding these systems as dynamic and self-regulating. The terms Umwelt and Umweltgestaltung provided an understanding of the relations between human beings and their material environment, whereby humans shape their environment according to their needs. This environment in turn determines their life. In the context of this relationship Gestalten was understood as a mode of work, as a conscious and comprehensive process of ordering the material environment, which created both use-value and cultural value.

Beyond walls: the in international discourse on environmental design and East German architectural theory

After discussing the narrower historic and discursive context that underpinned Flierl’s re-definition of architecture in Beiträge in 1967, I am now going to turn to international debates on Umweltgestaltung, and examine how these may have impacted on discussions in architectural theory and practice at the ISA in the late 1960s. This is an issue, which is hardly ever addressed in the literature on East German architecture, and Flierl himself did not usually talk about external influences either in his published memories or in the interview with me. Yet there are pieces of evidence in the archive, which suggest that the debate around Umweltgestaltung in the GDR in the late 1960s and Flierl’s concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung should be seen in relation to the — to borrow the East German phrase— 'international level' of debate at the time.

Fred Staufenbiel, *Kultur*, p. 103.
One of these archive documents is the manuscript of a lecture on 'Architektur und Umweltgestaltung,' which Flierl delivered in November 1967 at the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture at the Technical University in Dresden. Before he began to talk about the relationship between architecture and Umweltgestaltung, setting out the three key terms Architektur, Umwelt, and Gestaltung and placing them in a system-theoretical framework much along the lines of his contribution in Beiträge and his article in Deutsche Architektur, to both of which he also referred, Flierl opened his paper by stating:

For a while now, the relationship between architecture and Umweltgestaltung has been at the centre of attention not only of architects but also of society at large – not only in our socialist countries, but also in the entire world, especially in leading industrial nations.

This growing interest is connected to certain processes in practice.

The scientific-technological revolution—especially where it can flourish without economic restraints under the conditions of socialist development—leads to the unleashing of vast productive forces. This enables man to use his environment for his purposes, to transform it.

This also concerns architecture, the built spatial environment of man. Thus, Umweltforschung and Umweltgestaltung are on the agenda within architecture, too. The British and the Americans have established the terms environmental research and environmental design. Behind these terms stands a process of systematically developed research and practice—with a number of remarkable results.

Recently (at the 42nd meeting of the BDA in West Germany), Professor Julius Posener made a fitting remark concerning the altered social tasks of architecture and of the

---


54 Flierl uses the term ‘der Mensch’ in the universal sense in the German original. I have used the English ‘man’ as the historic term in this translation in line with historic usage in the combination man-made environment, or man-environment relationships etc.
architect in the present and the future. He stated that the architect today—in contrast to the renaissance when, in line with social conditions, he saw himself as an artist and treated architecture as art—had the task, according to present and future social needs, to shape the built environment; however, he could no longer do this from the position of the artist-as-architect, but must do this from the position of the architect as Umweltgestalter [environmental designer].

It was due to this advanced situation of architecture and the architectural profession that the international professional body of architects, the UIA, turned to the topic of "architecture and living environment" at their IXth Congress in Prague this summer. 

Flierl’s opening remarks warrant further attention. In what follows, I build on arguments developed by Benjamin Robinson in an essay about the East German cyberneticist Georg
Klaus and the writer Franz Fühmann. In this essay Robinson notes that, while the GDR may not offer new standards of modernity as such, a closer look might be able to reveal 'something important about the limits of the criteria of modernity that decided [on] the outcome of the cold war and now seem so self-evident.' According to Robinson, this includes criteria such as 'openness, pluralism, experimentalism and incrementalism.' He notes:

The challenge that GDR modernity posed—and as a historical legacy still poses—is not the challenge of alternate criteria per se, but of understanding how roughly the same criteria could refer to two distinct systems of modernity and to the qualitative difference between those systems.

Consequently, Robinson believes that the reformer Klaus and the writer Fühmann considered an 'underlying qualitative difference between their system and that of the West, where their system figures for them as both present actuality (energeia) and future potential (dynamis). This meant that while socialist society had become a reality, it should also remain open for further development. My aim is to show that this interpretive framework is helpful for understanding Umweltgestaltung and the thinking of Staufenbiel and Flierl within international 'environmental design' discourses of the late 1960s, in the sense that 'the creation a liveable built spatial environment' for Flierl turned into one of the central goals and challenges for developing socialism. The overarching horizon of 'scientific-technological revolution' in the 1960s, which, as Hubert Laitko notes, was a term introduced by British scientist John Desmond Bernal in the 1950s and which was gradually adopted in the GDR after the translation of his book in 1961 thus poses what Robinson calls the 'same criteria' against which Flierl measured the quality of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in socialism. In both West and East there prevailed an emphatic belief in the potentials of science and technology in increasing productive forces. This however also created anxieties about environmental

---

97 Benjamin Robinson, 'Socialism’s other modernity: quality, quantity and the measure of the human', Modernism/modernity, 10 (2003), 765-28 (p. 706).
98 Ibid., p. 706.
99 Ibid., p. 706.
100 Ibid., p. 706.
destruction and management of the environment in ways that would be favourable for individual and social development.

Let me return to the opening statement of Flierl's lecture. Not only does he relate the discussion on Umweltgestaltung in the GDR—the ideas of Staufenbiel and above all his own reading of those ideas—to international developments, arguing that the topic was one of general concern, he also explicitly refers to 'systematically developed research and practice' in environmental research and environmental design in the USA, which, he noted, had brought about 'remarkable results.' Indeed as architectural historian Eric Mumford states, as early as 1953, under Josep Lluís Sert's deanship at Harvard University the city planner Reginald R. Isaacs and the landscape architect Hideo Sasaki 'began to teach collaborative studios in environmental design, engaging issues of what they called "human habitat in the totality of environmental design".' Furthermore, he mentions the joint work of Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes on the 'Perceptual Form of the City', which, Mumford states, had been summarised in a report in 1955. Mumford continues that in this report Lynch had asserted that their working premises "affirm that a good urban environment has at least two basic qualities: it is coherent and connected; it is growth-facilitating." They defined coherence as a "physical patterning" that is "perceived as a perceptual, emotional, and conceptual continuity," with the "material environment." Their goal was to help create a "world which encourages human growth and development," noting that a "rhythm of stimulus and withdrawal" is also required in the urban environment.

As I have discussed above, notions such as 'continuity' and 'human growth and development' were key also to Flierl's understanding of the 'built spatial environment' in socialism. Florian Urban has noted that East German architectural theorists, architects and planners at the ISA

---

99* 'Architektur und Umweltgestaltung' GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 6.
104 Ibid. pp. 140-41.
105 Ibid. p. 141.
intensely reflected on the semiotic aspects of Lynch’s work, especially in relation to the
reconstruction of city centres.\textsuperscript{106} The degree to which those American studies and
architectural designs were researched and their findings 'translated' into East German
architecture is visible not least in the ISA’s own publications on the planning and (re-) design
of cities at the time, such as the multi-authored study \textit{Gestaltung und Umgestaltung der Stadt}
[Design and Reshaping of Cities] conducted also by Schmidt around the same time as the
more theoretical \textit{Beiträge}.\textsuperscript{107} Explicit references are being made in these publications to
American urban design scholarship, for example the work of Jane Jacobs and the more
perceptually oriented studies of Lynch. But, as I will discuss briefly further below, East
German researchers working at the ISA in the 1960s not only reflected upon international—
mainly North American—scholarship, interdisciplinary studies that followed similar routes of
enquiry—environmental behaviour, psychosocial and psychohygienic factors—and which also
employed empirical methods were carried out since 1965 in newly built housing districts in
the GDR, too.\textsuperscript{108} In addition to Mumford, Dana Cuff in her introduction to the work of
American sociologist Robert Gutman emphasises that in architecture schools across the
USA—she mentions Berkeley and MIT as early examples—'a new interdisciplinarity seduced
architects from their isolation.'\textsuperscript{109} She reports how departments of planning and architecture
were merged, 'bringing social scientists, preservationists, and building scientists into the fold,'
and how these realignments in turn 'served to reframe architecture as an expanded field,
appropriately named "environmental design."\textsuperscript{110} Under notably different political conditions,
which of course had their own implications on research—primarily, as I have highlighted
above, through control of publications, but also through controlling research itself—in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[106] Urban, p. 152.
\item[107] Hans Schmidt, Rolf Linke, and Gerd Wessel, \textit{Gestaltung und Umgestaltung der Stadt: Beiträge
zum sozialistischen Städtebau} (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1970).
\item[108] Helga Wetzel, Alfred Schwandt, and Rolf Xago Schröder, 'Ausgewählte Probleme des
Sozialverhaltens im städtischen Milieu', in \textit{Schriften reihen der Bauforschung, Reihe Städtebau
\item[109] Dana Cuff, 'Before and Beyond Outside In: An Introduction to Robert Gutman’s Writings',
in \textit{Architecture from the Outside In}, ed. by Dana Cuff and John Wriedt (New York: Princeton
\item[110] Ibid. p. 16.
\end{footnotes}
comparable interdisciplinary structures emerged within the Bauakademie, specifically within the ISA during the mid-1960s. This included collaborations between members of the ISA and those of other institutions in interdisciplinary workgroups such as the joint workgroup cultural sociology between the ISA and the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED, who coordinated a sociological study in ten cities of the GDR. On the level of university education, albeit with a significant delay to Western precursors, the Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen (HAB) would be worth mentioning, where the sociologist Fred Staufenbiel took up a professorship in urban sociology in 1977, and where subsequently sociological fieldwork was integrated into the curriculum, as Rolf Kuhn notes. Interestingly, it was also here where the term architecture had been replaced with 'gestaltete [formed] built spatial environment' in 1981, according to Flierl.

The IXth UIA Congress held under the topic 'Architecture and the Living Environment' in Prague in 1967, I believe, brought together the environmental concerns—or rather growing environmental anxieties—of architects and planners in different countries of the two systems. Architectural historian Miles Glendinning explains that in the post-War era the UIA became an international organisation 'shaped by the conventions not of intellectual debate but of cultural diplomacy, and focusing chiefly on international goodwill, combined with politically consensual policy objectives, such as advancement of the architect's professional status.' He continues

[1]here was, after all, a huge amount in common between the architectures of the two 'blocs', focused on providing their citizens with a 'constructed happiness' of material-cum-social betterment in both the collective and individual spheres. Most of their

---

114 UIA/UIA International Union of Architects.

84
competition was merely over which was the more efficacious, and overt differences were concentrated in the macro and micro extremes, in the overriding political rhetoric and the details of planning.\textsuperscript{96}

Glendinning shows that the UIA, in contrast to other organisations like the CIAM, was based not on the membership of individuals but of national professional associations so as to ensure equal geographical representation.\textsuperscript{97}

The 1967 UIA meeting, on the eve of the Prague Spring, brought to the fore the topic that in both the capitalist and state socialist systems solutions needed to be found to counter the negative effects of rapid development, technological progress, and increasing urbanisation. The conference chair's opening remarks read as follows:

The geographical situation of Prague has made this incomparable town the meeting point for knowledge, but its history shows us that has been above all a centre for independent thought over the centuries, where the sparks of revolt have more than once demonstrated the reactions of man to his environment.

Thus, it was almost traditional that at the IXth Congress in Prague the eternal conflict between man and his creation should be treated under the name "Architecture and the living environment" and that remedies should be sought to counter the misdeeds of this sorcerer’s apprentice, victim at once of his ingeniousness and his successes in the race for progress, but also of his ignorance or contempt of the consequences.

Rarely has a topic been of such universal interest, representing a need common to nations at all levels of their development.\textsuperscript{98}

The fourteen point resolution of the congress, which highlighted that the objective behind the overall theme 'architecture and the living environment' was to understand the 'mutual relations of the three human functions: housing, work and recreation,' noted as its central

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid. pp. 197-98.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid. p. 199.
goal the need to 'improve the environment' and to counter its 'rapid deterioration.'

Measures to be taken, according to the declaration, would require coordination on the levels of national and physical planning, and a rational utilisation of all natural resources.

Furthermore, urbanisation in which a 'satisfactory human environment' was to be achieved could only be based on 'comprehensive, far-seeing programme[s] for agglomerations, regions, countries, and groups of countries.' Beyond this scale of macro-planning, the declaration also stressed issues such as the urgent need for the preservation of historic monuments. A third larger area of concern—besides issues as industry and the preservation of nature—was the greater inclusion of the general public in the design process. Point eight of the declaration thus stressed the integration of housing with other elements of the environment as well as allowing adaptability to accommodate creativity and individuals' needs. And the declaration's final point called for public education and participation in democratic processes of shaping the environment.

As archival records from one of the East German participants in the congress—the architect Hans Gericke—confirm, the Czech organisers had decided to interpret the overall theme of the meeting in an exhibition, which, according to the German translation of the catalogue, 'did not seek to display the successes in human cognitive and creative capability, but instead wanted to challenge and warn' its viewers. Thus it did not merely want to show 'good examples of town planning and architecture, but contrast the potential means with the current unsatisfactory condition of the world.' In Berlin, prior to the Congress, Staufenbiel delivered a speech to East German architects. Even though Staufenbiel arguments remained locked in a fairly schematic positivist and humanist ideological framework—he outright dismissed the organisers' question how a satisfying material environment could be created without harming the natural environment as kulturpessimistisch [culturally pessimistic]—he hit

---

90 Ibid. p. 28.
91 Staatliche Kommission für Technik der CSSR, 'Ausstellung anlässlich des IX. UIA-Kongresses Prag 1967 [Exhibition in conjunction with the IXth UIA Congress Prague]', GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 62/fol. 12.
92 Ibid.
on a number of general issues later raised in the declaration of the congress: particularly the
need for comprehensive planning linked to social prognoses as well as studying and
considering in design individual needs and human behavioural factors." One argument in his
paper is particularly interesting, in the sense that it appears to point to the specific way in
which Flierl would develop his concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in his doctoral
dissertation at the *Bauakademie*. Staufenbiel called for the need for various prognoses 'of the
character of work, life standard, cultural development, behaviour, and individual needs so as
to be able to better project the *use-value* and *necessary quality* of urban ensembles and
settlement structures, and to develop socio-cultural parameters for the architectonic
*Gestaltung* [formation] of the living environment of developed socialist society.' [emphasis in
original] Referring to various types of studies that had already been carried out, he concluded
that 'all of the studies so far underestimate or neglect the objective relationship between
socio-economic formation and the character of the *Gestaltung* of the living environment as an
aspect of the system.' And he continued, '[t]his [neglect] is particularly astonishing if one
considers that the bourgeois theory of "industrial society" is gaining influence within this
field.'

This then is the larger project, which Flierl took up at the end of the 1960s, and which he
completed in 1971 and published in 1972 as *Gesellschaft und Architektur in unserer Epoche: Ein
Beitrag zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Sozialismus und
Kapitalismus* [Society and Architecture in our epoch: a contribution to architectural theoretical
research in the context of ideological confrontation between socialism and capitalism].

---

1. Auszug - Vortrag Dr. Staufenbiel Vorbereitung IX. UIA Kongress v. 23.5.1967 "Probleme
des Verhältnisses von Kulturosoziologie und Architektur" [Excerpt - Lecture Dr. Staufenbiel
Preparation IXth UIA Congress on 23 May 1967 'Problems of the relationship between
cultural sociology and architecture'], Getty Research Institute, DDR Collections, Accession
no. 940002, 62/11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
architekturtheoretischen Forschung in der ideologischen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Sozialismus
describes this study as 'necessarily more of a social theory rather than architectural theory.'

The work itself could be read as part of what György Péteri called a 'major wave of publications trying to assert the exceptionalism ['systemic identity] of socialist society against contemporary social ['bourgeois'] theories of modernity ['stages of growth', 'industrial, consumer, postindustrial societies,' and various convergence theories].' The work, which, as Flierl summarises, took as its premise the 'transition from capitalism to socialism' as a historic necessity in contrast to the model of industrial society, an idea that, as Flierl states, was dominant in socialist states at the time, and which he backed, yet now sees as an 'illusion.' In his thesis Flierl thus defined Komplexe Umweltgestaltung specifically in relation to this process of transition from capitalist to socialist society, arguing that 'the task of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in socialism is to gestalten [form] the spatial and material environment for the social process of reproduction as a unity of mode of production, mode of life, and culture' and that therefore 'Komplexe Umweltgestaltung was a basic requirement of socialist society.' This in his view set up a dialectic in which Komplexe Umweltgestaltung would become more necessary the further society progressed, yet at the same time, it would only become possible under the conditions of socialism and eventually reach completion in communism. In practice, he continued to argue, this would then entail two principal problem areas in relation to the social function of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung: first, economic issues with regards to the 'use-value of the built-spatial' environment; and second, issues regarding what Flierl called the 'Informationswert [semantic value] of the environment in relation to the complex needs of human life in society.' While the former built on the ideas of Marx regarding the economy of time as well as the work of the Iranian communist architect

---

127 Flierl, Kritisch Denken, p. 36.
128 György Péteri, 'The Occident Within - or the Drive for Exceptionalism and Modernity', Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, 9 (2008), 929-37 (p. 935).
129 Flierl, Kritisch Denken.
130 Flierl, Gesellschaft und Architektur, p. 49.
131 Flierl embraced the idea of a transition from socialism to communism, officially promoted by the Soviet leadership and by intellectuals in both the Soviet Union and the GDR [e.g. Klaus] since the beginning of the 1960s. Ibid., p. 49.
132 Ibid., p. 49.
Noureddin Kianouri, who, in the 1960s via Moscow where he had worked with Gergei Gradov came to work at the Bauakademie in East Berlin, the latter emerged out of discussions among professionals around the interrelationship between architecture and art in public space. Kianouri, who published in the GDR under the name Silvio Macetti, argued that the concept of the economy of time when translated into the built environment would necessitate an economic use of space—a highly rational and empirically based argument for urban density and against functional separation, which he founded on studies of the use of time as well as analyses of material investment in extensive construction. These arguments had their root in the second half of the 1960s, when the intensive reconstruction of the city—‘re-building the city within the city’—to meet the demands of modern socialist society had been discussed, and the loss of valuable agricultural land through extensive construction of housing became criticised by architects such as Henselmann. The semantic Gestaltung of the environment, according to Flierl, entailed organising and ordering all elements of the environment so that they would form a coherent whole, creating a specific character of the environment as well as stimulating (and ultimately shaping) the consciousness of its users in ways favourable for socialist transformation. This included architecture and visual art, but also landscaping, parks, visual communication, public transport systems, and other technical structures in the public realm. It was both these aspects and the way in which they were linked to the idea of the advancement of socialism, which led Flierl to criticise the character and quality, but more fundamentally also the state-managed production of housing in the GDR in the 1970s.

131 ‘Auskunft über Silvio Macetti’, IRS, Bestand Bruno Flierl.
133 ‘Erste Auswertung des Entwurfskolloquiums Leipzig [First report of the design colloquium Leipzig]’, BArch, DH2/9359.
134 Flierl, p. 49.
From comprehensive reconstruction
to the margins, again – *Komplexer Wohnungsbaus* in the capital
East Berlin, 1968-1973
The leadership change within the Socialist Unity Party from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker in 1971 resulted in significant changes to urban development and construction. The Wohnungsbauprogramm [housing programme] of 1973, one of the key elements of Honecker's unity of social and economic policy led to the construction of numerous large scale housing districts at the margins of big cities. The central element of this construction programme in the capital East Berlin, Berlin-Marzahn became the largest construction site of the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. The turn to extensive construction marked a departure from the urban policies and development of the late 1960s, above all the city's Generalbebauungsplan [general development plan] of 1968. This chapter maps out these national policy changes and connects them to the development of Berlin-Marzahn.

**Komplexer Wohnungsbau under Walter Ulbricht**

Up until the end of the 1960s, the East German leadership under Ulbricht had followed two strategies for Komplexer Wohnungsbau [complex housing construction]. These two strategies were outlined in the 'Principles for the Planning and Design of Cities in the GDR in the Period of Extensive Construction of Socialism'.² Developed by members of the ISA at the Bauakademie in East-Berlin, a draft of the document was published in the journal Deutsche Architektur in January 1965.² Its purpose was to update the previous binding document for town planning and architecture in the GDR, 'The Sixteen Principles of Town Planning', which was associated with Stalinist principles of town planning and the aesthetic ideals of Architektur Nationaler Tradition [architecture of national tradition], most strongly embraced during the first half of the 1950s.³

The first of the two strategies connected the construction of housing to large-scale structural investments. The foundation of new towns such as Eisenhüttenstadt (1950), Hoyerswerda (1957), Schwedt (1958), and Halle-Neustadt (1964) linked to newly built or expanded production

---

1 Bauakademie der DDR, 'Grundsätze der Planung und Gestaltung der Städte der DDR in der Periode des umfassenden Aufbaus des Sozialismus', Deutsche Architektur, 15 (1965), 4-8.
2 See especially the section: 'Die städtischen Wohngebiete' [urban housing districts]. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
facilities in key industries—steel, mining, petrol, chemical industry—was an example for this approach. In the aftermath of the introduction of the NES, the party leadership considered housing secondary to the so-called central task of ‘extensive construction of socialism’; that is, shaping the national economy according to the highest standards in science and technology.

In other words, housing (as indeed other elements of social policy) was seen as subordinate to modernisation and economic progress. Just how fundamental the connection between the provision of housing and industrial investment was, can be grasped from a letter issued by the Council of Ministers to all City and District Councils, which stated that ‘housing construction must serve the planned economic development of our economy’s leading branches.’ The letter said further:

[I]t is necessary to bring citizens’ interests into agreement with the social interest of strengthening our workers’ and peasants’ state in the area of housing policy as well. In order to fulfil the central task of reinforcing the economic base of our republic, the construction of new housing must be concentrated, above all, close to industrial sites that are vital for the national economy and in the most important areas of agricultural production. It is necessary to design and build housing complexes that are created in connection with new industrial centres as a complex whole complete with all production facilities.

This statement reflects the view among economic leaders and technocrats in the Ulbricht administration that the population’s demands for the provision of new housing needed to be harmonised with the ‘objective’ necessity for housing construction to serve the leading areas

---

4 See chapter three.
5 ‘Brief des Ministerrates an alle Räte der Bezirke, Städte und Kreise zu Fragen der Wohnungsbaupolitik [Letter regarding questions of housing policy issued by the Council of Ministers to all District, Town, and Township Councils]’, BArch, DY/3o/IV A 2/6.66 48.
6 Ibid.
7 ‘Es ist…notwendig, auch in der Wohnungspolitik die persönlichen Interessen der Bürger mit den gesellschaftlichen Interessen zur Stärkung unseres Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staates in Übereinstimmung zu bringen. Um die zentrale Aufgabe zu verwirklichen, die ökonomischen Grundlagen unserer Republik zu stärken, ist der Neubau von Wohnungen vor allem an den Standorten der volkswirtschaftlich wichtigen Industrievorhaben und in den wichtigsten Gebieten der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion zu konzentrieren, Wohnkomplexe, die im Zusammenhang mit der Errichtung neuer Industriezentren geschaffen werden, sind als rationelle komplexe Einheit mit dem Bau kompletter Produktionsanlagen einschließlich der Nebenanlagen zu projektieren und zu bauen.’ Ibid.
of the GDR’s national economy. This understanding of housing coupled with the fact that new housing districts were commonly built from scratch using standardised building types and industrial construction methods caused a number of aesthetic and sociological problems, specifically, monotony and lack of identification. A noteworthy and distinctive characteristic of this first strategy, particularly during the early years of the NEP, was that factory managers in conjunction with local councils were given the right to decide relatively independently over new development sites as well as the quantities of new housing according to their labour demand, only following general guidance by the State Plan Commission. The Council of Ministers’ letter noted:

Based on the planned economic development in key investment areas, exact studies should be carried out to investigate labour demand, relationships between spaces of living and working, demographics, the existing housing stock and conditions of housing. Schematic definition of sites for housing development must be avoided.

District councils in conjunction with managers of key industrial investment projects as set out by the State Plan Commission ought to make an allocation of flats, which managers have at their disposal in order to accommodate workers.  

In the 1970s, this aspect of the spatial distribution of new housing in particular became subject to greater central control, as I will explain further below in this chapter.

The second strategy for complex housing construction was as part of the so-called ‘socialist reconstruction’ of major cities. Chosen areas were regenerated, existing tenement housing demolished and new high-rise mass housing built in its place. The aim—not entirely dissimilar to modernist regeneration in the West—was to replace the housing stock that was considered morally ‘obsolete’ and unfit for repair, and to increase density as well as create

---


9 On the notion of ‘obsolescence’ see Chapter 2 ‘Obsolescence Becomes Obsolete:

---
open spaces for residents and the general public. Nevertheless, beyond apparent similarities in construction technology and the overall approach to comprehensive reconstruction, architectural historian Ulrich Hartung argues that there continued to be significant differences in urban form and composition, or the distribution of communal facilities, which make the reconstruction in East Germany distinct.” He highlights the lasting efforts (until the 1970s) among officials, planners, architects, and theorists in the GDR to demonstrate through urban design the socialisation of all aspects of life.” Discussing different functional and design typologies in East German architecture of the 1960s, he also points to the increasing tensions and contradictions in achieving this goal after the introduction of industrial construction technologies.

This second strategy of comprehensive reconstruction became the determining feature for Berlin, where as Stephanie Warnke argues, urban reconstruction was emphatically embraced during the 1960s, not least for ideological reasons in the ongoing confrontation with the West, albeit no longer seeking obvious formal distinctiveness.” The major goal, according to the ‘Directive for the development of complex housing construction and city centres from 1964-1970,’ was to ‘concentrate planned new housing in city centres and in areas close to the centre’ in order to ‘visibly transform the face of our large cities, especially of Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt, and Magdeburg.” Areas for new housing were specified in the master plans of these cities; for Berlin the directive ruled that, ‘housing should be constructed on all suitable areas in the centre until 1970,’ and thus ‘necessary site investigations and designations should be completed at short notice, especially for the areas Leipziger Straße, Fischerinsel, Heinrich-Heine-Viertel, Alexanderstraße, Karl-Marx-Allee, and south of Arnimplatz, Arkonaplatz, and Beyond’ in: Florian Urban, Neo-historical East Berlin: architecture and urban design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 35-65.


Ibid., pp. 181-208.


Friedrichshain to Luxemburg-Platz.\textsuperscript{14}

However, like housing construction in the new towns, inner city reconstruction also came with specific problems and challenges. In particular, these included construction and technology; that is, how to adapt industrial construction methods so as to respond to the demands and restrictions of the urban context, and to produce aesthetically satisfying results as well as a sense of urbanity. Evidently, the problems of urban reconstruction were a concern to the Central Committee’s Department for Construction from the earliest days, in particular from a financial point of view, as their comment to the above-mentioned directive written after the 8\textsuperscript{th} plenum at the Bauakademie confirmed.\textsuperscript{15} Worried about the escalating costs of these inner city projects, the Department criticised the focus on questions of construction technology, and demanded that research and development of housing types should focus instead on increasing the quality of housing \textit{without} requiring any additional funds.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Comprehensive reconstruction under scrutiny}

It may not be surprising then that, in the face of looming economic crisis since the end of the 1960s, of the two strategies outlined above the second one came under tighter scrutiny. As the first strategy emphasised the link between housing and the material base of socialist society – perhaps the determining factor all along – it was formally continued throughout the 1970s. A thesis paper from 1977, for example, made reference to the ‘Directive of the IX\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress of the SED concerning the five-year plan for the development of the economy of the GDR from 1976-1980’ stating that, the ‘inseparable unity of economic and social policy demands the construction of housing and other facilities of complex housing construction preferably in places that also form core areas of economic policy.’\textsuperscript{17} In turn, the second strategy, in spite of its role in the process of production and reproduction on the level of the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
city (so often stressed by architects and theorists since the late 1960s), appeared to have been dismissed by the party’s technocratic fraction as fulfilling a primarily superstructural function. Urban reconstruction schemes increasingly came to be seen as a costly vanity that failed to serve the material base. And, as Frank Betker reveals, it was not only party bureaucrats concerned about the national economy who began to fall out of love with the ambitious inner-city projects that were conceived by Hermann Henselmann in his *Experimentalkwerkstatt* [experimental design studio] at the *Bauakademie* in East-Berlin.\(^8\) Local architects in different district cities also frequently took issue with the paternalistic attitude with which these schemes were delegated to them for implementation straight from what they perceived as the centre of power within their own profession. This suggests that, beyond the frictions between politics and discipline, there also existed within the discipline a tension between centre and periphery, which, from the late 1970s onward, resurfaced in different shapes in response to the allocation of resources for the implementation of the housing programme in the capital.

To return to the previous point, however, documents from Gerhard Trölitzsch’s office at the Central Committee’s Department for Construction concerning the perspective plan for 1971-1975 revealed the mounting concern over the uneven developments that the urban reconstruction projects seemed to cause. The celebratory tone that was invoked shortly before at the state’s twentieth anniversary in 1969,\(^9\) now appeared to be replaced with a sense of doubt. Key architectural projects of the 1960s were included in the important exhibition ‘*Architektur und bildende Kunst*’ [Architecture and Visual Arts] held in Berlin in 1969 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the GDR. The exhibition showcased socialist reconstruction and the role of socialist realist art in the transformation of the built environment, especially in the city. The Department for Construction at the Central

---


Committee attempted to intervene in the selection and arrangement of projects, as documents from the German Federal Archives reveal. The industrial infrastructure projects were positively noted, but it was suggested to show all of these projects alongside each other. On the other hand, any of the city centre projects that weren’t yet confirmed by the Council of Ministers and the Politburo should not be included in the show (e.g. Rostock or Erfurt). An internal note stated:

A key deficit is that neither the State Plan Commission nor the Ministry for Construction have exact data concerning any extra costs associated with the city centre construction projects, and that further economic effects these projects may cause on the territorial scale (requirement of additional labour force, shift in relations between industry and service sector) so far also haven’t been studied.  

The statements in these internal documents, however, not merely expressed a sense of unease. The turn to a generally more conservative tone in these files may be indicative of a wider shift from modernisation under the late Ulbricht to stabilisation under Honecker. In this light, not only a few architectural projects were at stake, but instead a whole complex of economic reforms, including aspects of decentralisation and self-management, modernisation and urbanisation that underpinned official policy in the second half of the 1960s. The criticised lack of information about projected costs within central authorities provides evidence for this point, as does the suspicious attitude towards the shift from industrial production to the service sector, which had been important in the later stages of Ulbricht’s economic reform programme. The documents stated further:

A comparison of the costs for some city centres with the district’s overall volume of construction in housing, public buildings, and communal civil and underground engineering already serves to illustrate that the reconstruction of city centres, from the

---

97 'Ein entscheidender Mangel ist, daß weder bei der staatlichen Plankommission noch beim Ministerium für Bauwesen exakte Angaben über die mit der Zentrumsbebauung verbundenen Mehraufwendungen vorliegen und daß auch die sonstigen ökonomischen Auswirkungen auf das Territorium (Bedarf an zusätzlichen Arbeitskräften für die neue Zentrumsbebauung, Verschiebung der Relationen zwischen Industrie und Dienstleistungsbereich) bisher kaum untersucht worden sind.’ Zu einigen Problemen der sozialistischen Entwicklung des Städtebaus und der Architektur in der DDR [Regarding some problems of socialist development of town planning and architecture in the GDR], BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06 48.
perspective of the national economy and also within the districts, constitute a
significant factor within the plan, which absolutely has to be brought in line with the
whole national economic structural policy.\textsuperscript{9}

Re-adjusting investments in housing in East German cities

The party leadership's call to bring the reconstruction of city centres in line with the national
economy was urged in Berlin in particular, where, as a result of the high investment in urban
reconstruction in the 1960s and the comparably low investment in industrial production, a
staggering disproportion between these two areas was detected compared to other cities in the
republic such as Erfurt, Halle, or Karl-Marx-Stadt. While in Berlin the ratio between the
investment for building industrial complexes and investment in housing and consumption
came in at approximately 1 : 4.6, in those other cities it ranged from 1 : 0.7 to 1 : 0.9, which not
only meant that it was about eighty percent lower than in the capital, but also that the
relationship between these two investment areas of the national economy was more balanced
in these other cities in general.\textsuperscript{22} This led to the conclusion that 'evidently a number of
desirable visions in the field of town planning will need to be corrected at least temporarily, to
ensure that a fair amount of investment in construction is directed towards the increase of the
national income across all districts of the GDR—also in Berlin—during the perspective plan
1971-1975.\textsuperscript{23} In other words, the effort to balance investments (that is, readjust them towards
productivity) demanded that a number of projects—especially the costly city centre designs—
needed to be put on hold (or shelved altogether), and instead industrial investment was
pushed so as to increase productivity.\textsuperscript{24}

Against this background, the decision was made to expand the industrial estate 'Lichtenberg-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{9} Bereits die Gegenüberstellung der Aufwendungen für einige Stadtzentren zum
Gesamtbauaufkommen des Bezirkes für Wohn-, Gesellschafts- und kommunalen Tiefbau
macht jedoch deutlich, daß der Aufbau der Stadtzentren gesamtvolkswirtschaftlich und
besonders auch im Bezirk einen Planungsfaktor von einer Größenordnung darstellt, der in
der Ausarbeitung des Perspektivplanes unbedingt mit der gesamtvolkswirtschaftlichen
Strukturpolitik in Übereinstimmung gebracht werden muß.' Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
Nordost’ on the outskirts of Berlin. Günter Peters, director of the District Construction Office during those years, later reported that plans for this large industrial site became implemented with the 1968 master plan for Berlin; following this plan, infrastructures and roads were built, so that numerous companies were able start manufacturing in the 1970s.\footnote{Günter Peters, ‘Zur Baugeschichte - Drei Gründerzeiten’, in Marzahn, ed. by Gerrit Engel (Köln: Walther König, 1999), pp. 13-17.} By 1985, these newly formed companies provided about fifty-eight thousand jobs in the electronic industry, in machine tool building and other areas of engineering and technology. The creation of this new industrial estate on the outskirts of Berlin, as I will show later, eventually became one of the main drivers in the search for new sites for housing development in the early 1970s.

But the tipped balance between low industrial development and high investment for housing in urban reconstruction was not the only area that, in the eyes of officials, called for urgent re-adjustment. Despite the significant funds and creative efforts invested in the reconstruction of the existing city, in Berlin—as in other cities across the GDR—this strategy had failed to deliver new flats at the pace in which they were required. In October 1972, the Association of Architects of the GDR [BdA/DDR] organised a meeting of different workgroups under the programmatic title ‘Complex Housing Construction: The Architects’ Tasks.’\footnote{Komplexer Wohnungsbau: Aufgaben der Architekten: Arbeitstagung des BdA/DDR am 26. und 27. Oktober 1972 in Leipzig, ed. by Institut für Städtebau und Architektur (Berlin: Bauinformation, 1973).} Generally, the seminar’s significance perhaps lay in the attempt to critically discuss among professionals the background as well as the wide-ranging consequences of the party leadership’s decision at the VIIIth Party Congress in 1971 to drastically expand housing construction so as to increase the rate of housing provision within relatively short timeframes. A great many of the contributions warned of the longer term effects of a blind focus on productivity, and highlighted the potential economic, social and cultural implications of this approach. The basis of this meeting was an analysis of housing in the GDR, which had been prepared by the Central Expert Group for Housing and Public Buildings within the BdA, and which was based on a count of flats in 1971 and an analysis of housing policy in 1972.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 9-10.} Despite the positive note at the start of the presentation, according to which the ‘housing stock was increased by more
than 550,000 [units] to about 6,057,000 from 1961-1970' and '764,000 flats were gained through new construction, refurbishment and extension during those years,' the presented results and conclusions were rather sobering. Although the figures for occupancy per flat and space per individual were considered to be statistically fine, two problem areas emerged from the analysis: the first was the condition of the existing housing stock, and the second was a mismatch between available flat types and the size of households. According to the analysis, the average age of houses was sixty-one years – the highest in Europe, as the authors stressed – and over twenty percent of those houses were either in bad condition or significantly damaged. The count furthermore confirmed that fifty-six percent of housing was constructed before 1949, only ten percent of the flats had central heating, and forty percent had bathrooms or toilets. As far as the ratio of sizes within the existing housing stock was concerned, flats with two or three rooms made up about seventy percent. There existed, however, a relatively large amount of one-person households compared to a significantly lower number of one-room flats as well as an unmet demand for larger flats by households over four persons across the country. With regard to the condition of buildings, the report concluded that, 'in order to prevent the average age of houses from increasing beyond 61 years, 110,000 flats per year need to be constructed within the next 15 years.' Furthermore, the authors added, to meet the current demand of housing – precise figures of actual demand were not however mentioned – a backlog of about 850,000 units on top of the constructed 764,000 flats needed to be cleared. While buildings that were classified 'unsuitable' or 'significantly damaged' and thus needed to be replaced made up the largest proportion of that figure, 200,000 flats alone were required across the GDR to meet the current number of valid applications for a rented home.\(^{38}\) Karl-Heinz Blaurock, deputy mayor of the city of Leipzig, described the situation in his city as follows:

> In Leipzig the average rate of residential space is relatively high. According to the statistics, it is 22m\(^2\) per person, or put differently: there are 1056 residential spaces for 1000 inhabitants. And still, we are confronted with thousands of people searching for

\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 9-10.
accommodation, unsatisfactory housing conditions, and unresolved problems with respect to a healthy reproduction of the existing housing stock. The reasons for this are disproportions between the sizes of flats and household structure, the age of buildings, the partly inadequate level of fitout, and a generally poor structure of the housing stock. 30

At the same time, as Blaurock began to reflect on measures how to overcome these issues, he expressed the dilemmas and contradictions that planners and architects faced in the coming two decades: the required rapid increase in production of new housing, the focus of development on large sites at the periphery, and the consequences those processes were likely to have on the city and the wider region.

We are faced with the following problems in the selection and timing of development sites: In order to increase building production, that is, to achieve a high productivity…it becomes desirable, even necessary, to make preparations for one or more larger sites with 10,000 residential units or more. However, in Leipzig this is only possible at the periphery of the city. In contrast to this stands that a great number of old flats, or in some cases whole districts, in central areas of the city need to be cleared during the same time period. To redevelop these areas would be necessary, yet seems unfavourable and hardly justifiable in light of the above-mentioned restrictions, at least until 1980. Therefore, there is a risk that the differences between new and old housing districts might increase, or cannot be reduced over the next few years. In our view, this is not merely a problem of town planning but also of social policy. The social differences between new and old housing will increase. The only solution we can envision is to create conditions within building production as well as supply and civil engineering, which would also allow the regeneration of urban sites and districts.

Shifting housing policy and urban development in Berlin after 1971

In Berlin the situation was not fundamentally different; reconstruction on inner city sites had progressed too slowly and because of the party leadership’s shifted focus on production output to increase the supply of housing the slower and more expensive process of redeveloping inner city sites was given up. From a social perspective, discontent had grown among the population over the slow rate with which decent housing was provided and the long waiting lists for a flat. District Construction Director Günter Peters later explained that 'East-Berliners were angered by the miserable state of housing provision and the long and time-consuming commutes to work,' and, on top of that, 'the construction activity in West Berlin, where 20,000 flats per annum were built from 1960-1970, further increased dissatisfaction among the citizens [in East Berlin].' At the VIIIth Party Congress in 1971, the socialist leadership under Honecker thus decided to bring economy, modernisation and socialist urbanisation into balance with social policy, and to focus its policies on the 'fulfilment of people’s needs,' on increasing welfare and the standard of living, and as cultural secretary Kurt Hager put it: 'the growing wealth and happiness of our people.' Thus, in


33 Kurt Hager at the 6th meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, quoted in: *Komplexer Wohnungsbau*, p. 11.
Berlin (as in other cities of the GDR) the strategy of building new housing within the 'compact city'—initially defined as the main strategy in the general development plan for Berlin from 1968—was dropped, and local planning policy turned instead to the construction of new housing in undeveloped areas on the outskirts of the city, as it was possible to use industrial construction methods with greater efficiency in those areas.

In June 1973, the journal Deutsche Architektur published a series of articles outlining the long-term development of Berlin. Opening the feature was an extract from a speech by Construction Minister Wolfgang Junker, which he had given at a meeting of the city council in May. The purpose of the meeting was for the council to decide upon—or rather, formally sign off—an extensive building programme for Berlin that was based on previous decisions by the Politburo and the Council of Ministers, and through which the city was to be turned into the 'socialist metropolis of the GDR'. By doing so, the leadership hoped to raise the city's profile, as the GDR's international recognition increased. The key element of this programme was—fully in line with general policy—the expansion of Housing construction; in the five-year plan from 1976-1980, 80,000 modern flats along with all necessary communal facilities were to be built in Berlin, and the vast majority of these flats—a total of 55,000—were planned as newly constructed housing. Junker pointed out that most of the newly constructed flats would have to be concentrated in large complexes, and that the selection of suitable sites had to follow these criteria. Furthermore, it needed to be based on exact economic calculations as well as establishing the most efficient option. Given the scale of the undertaking—the overall sum for investment and construction was five billion East German Mark—the factor that Junker stressed above all, was the long-term perspective of those plans for Berlin. He noted:

> It will be our task to harmoniously link present and future challenges. For this reason, the decision of the Politburo and Council of Ministers also stated that work must commence on the development of a general plan for the development of the capital of the GDR, Berlin, under the leadership of the State Plan Commission. [...] In this task

---

34 Flierl, 'Urban Design', p. 98.
there cannot be any room for wishful thinking. Everything must be well calculated in line with the national economy, and plans have to conform to actual possibilities.\textsuperscript{36} A central element within this ambitious long-term perspective for the development of Berlin was a 'planned' growth of the city’s population by about 25,000 citizens between 1980 and 1990, from 1.14 million to 1.265 million Berliners, according to documents from the Magistrate's Department for General Planning.\textsuperscript{37} This growth became necessary in order to enable the city to 'fulfil its tasks' within this officially decreed development programme. The Department for General Planning wrote:

The continuing development of the capital of the GDR/Berlin is determined by its growing social functions. It is founded in the basic principle of national and international policies or our state within the socialist community of states as has been agreed at the VIIIth Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party.\textsuperscript{38}

This centrally planned growth made necessary an increase in the provision of housing in the region of fifty-five thousand dwelling units between 1973 and 1980 plus 20,000-25,000 units, which should be gained through refurbishment.\textsuperscript{39}

Berlin’s chief architect Joachim Näther – shortly after replaced by Roland Korn – in the same issue of the journal Deutsche Architektur described that, in order to respond to this demand in housing, the city’s town planners pursued a triple strategy of maintenance and refurbishment of existing housing, replacement of unsuitable housing, and construction of new housing construction on appropriate sites with a low ratio of demolition and with existing


\textsuperscript{37} ‘Grundlagenmaterial für die Bebauungskonzeption des Stadtteils Biesdorf/Marzahn [Basic information for the master plan of the district Berlin/Marzahn]’, BArch, DH 2/21389.

\textsuperscript{38} ‘Die weitere Entwicklung der Hauptstadt der DDR/Berlin wird durch ihre wachsenden gesellschaftlichen Funktionen bestimmt. Sie ergibt sich aus der Grundlinie der nationalen und internationalen Politik unseres Staates als Bestandteil der sozialistischen Staatenengemeinschaft, wie sie auf dem VIII. Parteitag der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands beschlossen wurde.' Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
infrastructures – making the districts Lichtenberg, Hohenschönhausen, Biesdorf-Nord, and Friedrichsfelde focus areas of extensive housing construction. The aim of this triple strategy, which, in contrast to the past development of Berlin, also required an ‘expansion of investments into the surrounding territory’ was to view the city as a whole in relation to its surrounding territory. However, in order to bring social policy and national economy into equilibrium – this balance had to be tipped towards extensive development, at least temporarily, because reconstruction on inner city sites was delayed until the backlog in housing demand was cleared. That this eventually would never happen, and that extensive construction would remain the dominant feature of Berlin’s housing provision (eating further and further into the landscape surrounding the city) until the fall of the Wall—in spite of refurbishment of areas in the city as described by Florian Urban—may not have been clear to town planners at that time.

The development of Biesdorf/Marzahn

The expansion of the industrial estate in Lichtenberg-Nordost since 1968, as I have already mentioned, formed the basis for the decision to initiate the expansion of Berlin in the district of Lichtenberg – more precisely, in the area surrounding the two villages Biesdorf and Marzahn, after which the project was named. Only in the late 1970s, the Magistrate decided to form a new district, the ninth in the capital, with the name Berlin-Marzahn. The decision where to expand had been made by the SED District Leadership following a consultation in September 1973, in which the territorial economic development of Lichtenberg was discussed. Subsequently, the Head of the District Plan Commission of Berlin, whose responsibility was the economic planning of the capital, was appointed to develop an initial programme for the development project, specifying relevant conditions – technical infrastructure, requirements of territorial reproduction with regards to population, and spatial

---

41 Ibid. p. 330.
42 Urban.
43 Magistrat, 'Grundlagenmaterial', BArch, DH 2/21389.
distribution of social infrastructures. Of the 55,000 new flats that were to be built in Berlin in line with the earlier mentioned general plans, 35,000—that is, 60 percent—should be constructed on areas that were under the jurisdiction of the district of Lichtenberg.⁴³

Within these areas, the industrial estate  *Lichtenberg-Nordost* was to form a hub, around which the new housing district was to be developed so as to guarantee short travel distances between workplace and home—to ’connect’ working and living.⁴⁵ The concentration of depots, construction companies—within the estate a concrete panel factory was built to secure the city’s provision with system panels for its construction projects—and industry was considered a good basis, which further supported the development of the ’territorial economic functions ’’living and working’ in the eastern part of Lichtenberg.’⁴⁶ The planners continued to argue that, due to the character and scale of these functions and their spatial distribution within the district as a whole, it would become necessary to understand this new eastern area as a ’relatively independent functional unit,’ which they initially called Lichtenberg 3.⁴⁷ The suggestion for this separation came from the District Plan Commission at the Magistrate in September 1973, because the projected increase of residents resulting from this concentrated development—estimated to be about 150,000-160,000 people after the completion of  *Construction*—would make leadership and administration of social-political and economic processes difficult.⁴⁸ The new district was going to be 5700 hectares in size, and defined by the border of the city in the east—thus just within the 1968 development area, the district border of Köpenick in the south, the outer railway ring in the west, and the locality Falkenberg in the north. After 1980, 170,000 residents were predicted (the numbers constantly seemed to change—mainly upwards) to live in this area. In addition to the industrial estate that was already under construction, the city had planned to develop a further area for

---

⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Ibid.
⁴⁷ Ibid.
⁴⁸ ’Protokoll über eine Problemeratung zum Aufbau des Wohnkomplexes Biesdorf/Marzahn - 'Nur für den Dienstgebrauch' [Protocol of a meeting concerning the construction of the housing complex Biesdorf/Marzahn - 'Internal use only’]’, LAB, C Rep 121, 653.
working, which would also become part of the district.\textsuperscript{49}

Through this combination of working and living, and by linking the two with the aspect of leisure – the district’s location on the outskirts of the city promised fast and easy access to the surrounding landscape—as well as culture, education, and recreation, the planners hoped to solve the problem of ‘monotony’, which had plagued the housing districts in industrial new towns of the 1960s, whilst at the same time creating a ‘relatively autonomous functional unit’ that was like a city, yet remained a district in the city.\textsuperscript{50} Given Marzahn’s unprecedented scale—it was the largest town-planning project of the GDR so far—it was perhaps not surprising that architects appeared equally daunted and encouraged by the task handed to them by the economic planners of the state and city.\textsuperscript{51} A joint document prepared by the Office of the Chief Architect of Berlin and the ISA at the Bauakademie opened with the following passage:

As experience shows, the design of cities is one of the most complex and difficult tasks of our time. There are no recipes for it. This applies to us and our friends in the other socialist countries as it does to town planners in the rest of the world. The General Plan for Moscow\textsuperscript{52} paradigmatically shows the level of political responsibility and foresight, and the high degree of scientific potential with which town planning must be carried out. This should be a means of introducing what can be no more than suggestions for the development of a complex social planning objective for the new district of Biesdorf/Marzahn—a district of our capital Berlin, which is bound to set

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} ‘Grundlagenmaterial’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
\textsuperscript{51} ‘Diskussionsgrundlage zu städtebaulichen Anforderungen an die Planung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf/Marzahn’ [Discussion paper outlining requirements for the urban planning of the district Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.
\textsuperscript{52} The General Plan for Moscow dated back to 1935 and to Stalin, but it was under Kruschev and Brezhnev’s leaderships (particularly between 1956 and 1970) that Moscow witnessed its most rapid growth and construction activity. In an article reporting from the UIA Congress in Moscow in 1958 Hans Schmidt described the spatial transformation of Moscow into a socialist metropolis. Hans Schmidt, ‘Die sozialistische Wandlung des Raumes’, Deutsche Architektur, 8 (1958), 596-98. For accelerated housing construction as a distinct feature of urban development under Kruschev see: Steven E. Harris, Communism on tomorrow street: Mass housing and everyday life after Stalin (Bartimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
new standards in town planning in the GDR.\textsuperscript{53}

The architects understood the 'qualitatively new problem' of planning a district like Berlin-Marzahn: the fact that it would be 'neither a large housing district nor an independent city, but a part of the entire city with metropolitan dimensions.' Therefore, part and whole needed to be 'organically linked' so as to 'achieve social and urban qualities, which exceed the value of traditional housing districts.'\textsuperscript{54} This required addressing the issue of complexity in developing the master plan for the new district, which will be the focus of the next chapter.


'Diskussionsgrundlage', BArch, DH 2/2i389.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
Planning (for) complexity in Berlin-Marzahn, 1973-1975
'Housing districts must be planned in a complex manner' stated the official and legally binding document for the planning and design of new housing districts in the GDR – the 'Komplexrichtlinie für die städtebauliche Planung und Gestaltung von Neubauwohngebieten' [Complex Guidelines for the Planning and Design of New Housing Districts], which was prepared by the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture at the Building Academy by order of the Ministry of Construction. This implied that new housing districts, regardless of their scale or programme of implementation, were to be planned as functionally complete entities on the basis of various officially predefined parameters with the intent of optimally fulfilling the 'material and cultural' needs of the population, or the districts' future residents. The guidelines stressed that complexity in the early stage of town planning was imperative, because only during this stage would it be possible 'to link all functional elements.'

Yet, while there appeared to be widespread consensus as to the need for complexity among officials, planners, architects, theorists, artists, and others involved in the process of developing an overall plan for Berlin-Marzahn between 1973 and 1975, their positions on whether and how to create 'a fully functioning entity' differed significantly, to the extent of calling into question the idea of creating such an entity in itself. Flierl increasingly came to emphasise 'process, growth, change, and flexibility' as central aspects in his theory of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, which he put forth as an alternative to the target-oriented character of Komplexer Wohnungsbau [complex housing construction] – the established and dominant method of production of new housing at the time. He developed and presented his theories in conference papers and articles written during the intense stage of planning and conceptual design for Berlin-Marzahn, a process he was himself involved in at different stages and in different capacities. For instance, in October 1974 Flierl and five other academics prepared and submitted to the local party leadership an expert report, in which they critically

1 Komplexrichtlinie für die städtebauliche Planung und Gestaltung von Neubauwohngebieten, (Berlin: Bauinformation, 1976), p. 32.
2 Ibid., p. 10.
analysed initial plans for the new district and highlighted a number of sociological and environmental design problems within this preliminary scheme. I will return to this report and its criticisms further below in this chapter, but it presents one—perhaps the most openly critical insofar as it was directly addressed at the political leaders—of several practical interventions in the planning and design process. In Flierl’s view, the established methods of housing construction—centred on the idea of the housing district as a final product including all ‘basic equipment’—continued to fall short of its own goals, because it ignored changing human needs after the end of construction and during the use of new districts.

In the following chapter, I will unpack the different positions concerning complexity at play as they became visible during the early stages of development of the Berlin-Marzahn mass-housing district. I suggest that the methods of housing construction in the GDR and Flierl’s theoretical concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung were rooted in different meanings of the terms complex and complexity. An East German etymological dictionary published by the Central Institute for Linguistics at the Academy of Sciences defined the adjective ‘complex’ as:

comprehensive, interrelated, multilayered, [and noted that its contemporary usage was] influenced by the Russian kompleksnyi ‘general, all encompassing’ as a term of economic planning relating to the concurrence of individual factors in investment plans and processes of production.

However, in the Marxist-Leninist Dictionary of Philosophy the East German philosopher and cyberneticist Georg Klaus defined ‘complexity’ in the following way:

Complexity [lat] – Property of systems, determined by the number of elements within the system and by the relations that exist between the elements. The greater the number of elements and relations between them, the higher is the degree of a system’s

---

4 ‘Studie über soziologische und umweltgestalterische Probleme der städtebaulichen Planung des neuen Stadtteiles in Biesdorf-Marzahn [Kurzfassung] [Study about sociological and environmental design problems in the urban plan for Berlin-Marzahn]’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 941000, Box 53/fol. 14.

complexity.\(^6\)

It is these contrasting understandings – one temporal and linked to processes of planning and production, the other systems based and focusing on elements and their relations, which I argue, formed the background to the conflicting views about designing the new district as a whole.

**Beyond 'basic equipment'**

That new housing districts should form a functional entity had been a widespread if debated principle of modern town planning throughout the 20\(^{th}\) century,\(^7\) and was not new in the GDR either. As planning and design of the new housing district in Berlin-Marzahn commenced in 1973, town planners and architects were able to rely on a wealth of knowledge and expertise—national and international—experience, and material equipment. That same year, the first *Komplexrichtlinie* was released in draft form along with a similar document, which covered housing construction within city areas. The purpose of these Guidelines, which since 1976 were released in regular intervals to reflect changing parameters of 'material and cultural needs' in line with the leadership's five-year-plans, was to provide a nationwide legally-binding basis for the planning and design of new housing districts that was applicable to different players in this process: organs of the state, state-owned companies, *Kombinate*, and institutions.\(^8\)

The document itself established basic principles, standards and recommendations for the development of functional programmes and the layout of housing and all necessary public buildings, for the design of open areas for recreation, and for planning traffic and civil engineering infrastructures, and, in so doing, focused primarily on essential *material* aspects.

---


\(^8\) *Komplexrichtlinie*, p. 5.
of housing construction. The document specifically stated that it did not regulate decisions concerning timing, stages of implementation, or the use of investments.

These underlying *immaterial* aspects were subject to central planning and leadership through annual and five-year-plans, respectively.⁹ These legal documents aimed at defining the basic criteria for the whole sum of objects that should form a housing district, which rendered the latter as an end product in a mass-production process that stretched from building parts through building types to entire urban areas. Nevertheless, the *Komplexrichtlinie* did also formulate a set of basic 'social requirements', which reflected fundamentally ideological principles of designing housing districts. Among those principles were: the integration of newly planned districts into the overall structure of the existing city – a central tenet of socialist town planning, as has been noted by Western town planners,",⁹ the equipment with public buildings for learning and education, consumption, medical and social services, sports and culture; and finally, the claim that individuals would be able to orientate themselves within the whole, and were thus able to understand themselves in relation to society.¹¹

Most of those points rehearsed what had been defined long before in the 'Sixteen Principles of Town Planning and Architecture,' which were introduced in 1950 under the guise of the socialist reconstruction of cities in East Germany. They defined housing districts as part of an ordered and harmonious hierarchy of elements:

Housing areas are formed of housing districts with district centres at their core.

Located within these cores are all the necessary facilities for culture, consumption, and social services for the population of the district. The second element in the structure of housing areas is the housing complex, which consists of a group of housing quarters connected by a garden that serves several quarters and comprises schools, nursery schools, and facilities to serve the population's daily needs. Urban traffic must not be allowed in these areas; however, neither housing complexes nor

---

⁹ Ibid., p. 5.


¹¹ *Komplexrichtlinie*, p. 10.
housing districts should be self-contained isolated areas. Their structure and planning depends on the structure and requirements of the city as a whole.

Similar to these general principles, the work on quantitative standards, ratios and target figures also went back to the mid-1950s, when scientification of construction and the introduction of industrial building methods began to form the basis for a radical expansion of housing construction. These early attempts of defining quantitative standards for follow-on public buildings and services in the housing districts, which preceded the Complex Guidelines for the Planning and Design of New Housing Districts, are documented in the files of the Institute of Town Planning and Architecture at the German Federal Archives.

I feel that it is important to recall that during those early years, Hans Schmidt, first as director of the Institute for Standardisation at the Ministry of Construction and later as the director of the Institute for History and Theory of Architecture at the Building Academy, never tired to remind architects, planners and officials that the industrialisation of construction, above all in the production of housing, was not merely a technical and economic question, but also needed to consider qualitative, above all aesthetic questions.

---


⁺ 'Richtzahlen für Folgeeinrichtungen in Wohnkomplex und Wohnbezirk (Dr. Ruth Günther) [Guidelines for civic buildings in housing complexes and housing districts (Dr. Ruth Günther)]', BArch, DH 2/91328.

¹¹ 'Konzeption zur Auflösung des Instituts für Theorie und Geschichte der Baukunst und Bildung einer Abteilung Theorie der Komposition am Institut für Städtebau und Architektur entsprechend...des Ministerratsbeschlusses vom... [Concept for the closure of the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture and the establishment of a department for Theory of Composition at the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture according to the decision...by the Council of Ministers of...]', BArch, DH2/2020.
company for the design of standardised buildings [VEB Typenprojektierung], the Institute for Construction, and the Institute for Regional-, Town-, and Village Planning—‘insufficiently addressed aesthetic questions’ of industrial building. In several articles and conference papers written in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he insisted on a perspective that didn’t only focus on economic and building technological parameters, but would take into account the experience of the human subject within the spaces created by industrialised mass housing. He believed that classical principles of order—in contrast to the ideas of his contemporaries such as Hans Scharoun and Ernst May of an ‘urban landscape’—would make the socialist housing complex distinct from the neighbourhood, allowing residents to perceive their environment as a harmoniously ordered whole. The idea of urban landscape came to play an important role in German reconstruction debates after the Second World War, in which it was understood as the ‘product of organic of town planning’. The concept signalled a complete departure from the structure, form and materiality—from the entire fabric—of the existing city. Like a living organism, the city was to be completely rebuilt and reconnected with its surrounding territory and landscape. Its structure should be defined by a network of alternating areas for working and living (clusters of housing forming neighbourhoods), connected to linear traffic infrastructure systems that radiated out into the landscape from a ‘monumental’ urban core, which contained central administrative and cultural functions. Schmidt, despite passionately supporting industrialised building methods for the purpose of reconstruction and to improve people’s living conditions, as his colleagues in the West did, was, however, strongly arguing against this model of urban landscape and its anti-urban undertones. He firmly believed in the value of urban form, and the experience of urban space thus argued in favour of maintaining and extending existing urban forms with new buildings and housing complexes.

---

6 Ibid.
6 Hans Schmidt, 'Der sozialistische Wohnkomplex als Architektur', Deutsche Architektur, 8 (1958), 324-29.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
9 Simone Hain, 'Hans Schmidt in der DDR: Annäherungen aus historischer Sicht', in Hans
Let me return to the definition of standards in the *Komplexrichtlinie* of 1976, however. The general social requirements formulated in this document combined with quantitative standards thus presented the official status quo of more than a decade of research and work towards the definition of scientifically based parameters as to what exactly was needed in addition to housing for new districts to become ‘fully functioning entities.’ Yet, the 1976 (1973) *Komplexrichtlinie* did not seem to account for insights and theoretical concepts about qualitative aspects of life in housing districts that had emerged during the 1960s under the influence of disciplines such as cybernetics, sociology, semiotics, psychology, and cultural theory. I have discussed those shifts in chapter three. This new knowledge rendered suspicious some of the officially accepted and now legally established principles of housing construction, or at least exposed their limits and shortfalls – foremost the idea of planning large residential districts on the basis of a predetermined catalogue of ‘things’. During the 1960s, architects and urban sociologists in the GDR—similar to their colleagues in the West (and frequently referring to their work)—through interdisciplinary research also uncovered that there often existed discrepancies and contradictions between the initial planning of mass-housing districts and their later stages of use. These discrepancies could be felt most strongly in what constituted the ‘material and cultural needs’ of the population, and therefore what needed to be supplied as the basic material equipment of a ‘fully functioning’ housing district.” In other words, sociologists and architects began to notice that what had been rationally planned with the best intentions beforehand, might not be considered sufficient, or might be rendered obsolete later on in the life of a district. Gathering and analysis of empirical data about people’s daily lives in new housing districts should allow better methods of forecasting, allowing for a higher degree of coordination and greater efficiency – through


I have noted before that East German sociologists referred numerous times to the work of the West German scholar Alexander Mitscherlich, for example, or on the work of Jane Jacobs.

'feedback' – in answering the population's changing demands with adequate architectural 'products' (from entire housing districts to standardised furniture) supplied by town planners, architects, designers, and the entire apparatus of state-owned production.

Meanwhile, and in contrast to these observations about the qualitative development, change, and general diversification of needs in developing socialist society, the catalogue of elements available to town planners and architects for the holistic design of new housing districts became tailored further to the needs of the national economy and was increasingly rationalised. As Christine Hannemann has shown in her detailed historical and sociological account of industrialised construction in the GDR, increasing simplification rather than differentiation became the determining feature of mass-housing in the GDR since the mid-1960s. As for the main two ingredients of housing districts, residential and public buildings, standardised types were initially developed both centrally and locally (by the Building Academy and the district based offices of state-owned construction firms) throughout the 1960s. And, as I already discussed, there had been a number of 'experiments' both in the design of housing and public buildings as well as their combination into Großwohneinheiten [large mixed use units] based on a combination of sociological, economic, and, not least, ideological factors. However, under the increasing pressure of economic demands since the late 1960s, along with politically motivated calls to increase housing production at the beginning of the 1970s, this strategy was revised.

At the 4th in 1966, Günter Mittag, Secretary for Economy at the Central Committee of the SED had formulated the central tasks of the construction sector as 'high efficiency of investments, short construction periods, low costs.' And the Minister for Construction, Wolfgang Junker,

---


In Berlin, the reinforced concrete post and slab system called SK would be an example for this process. The system was developed for inner city sites and was manufactured and offered by the district-based state owned construction company 'WBK Fritz-Heckert' also for extensive housing construction projects from the 1960s through the 1980s.


in his speech, called for the gradual transition from standardisation to greater levels of prefabrication. Writing in his autobiography in 1989, the architect Gerhard Kosel—an avid supporter and a key player in the scientification of architecture in the GDR since the late 1950s, but a critic of the concentration of all aspects of housing production in one single entity—noted the way in which large state-owned housing construction firms became the sole suppliers of the complete product 'housing district', from research into standardised types through design, production and supply. A central aspect of this monopolisation of the state-owned firms—I will return to this point further below in this chapter—was also, as Kosel highlighted, the 'integration of so far independent design offices into Wohnungsbaukombinate (WBK) [housing construction combine] with the aim of increasing the influence of the final producers on projects so as to improve their compliance with economic parameters and prerequisites of production. This step, perhaps the most decisive in the development of architecture and construction in the GDR from the point of view of the profession and of professionals, had the effect of a more or less total subsumption of architectural

Demokratischen Republik (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1966), pp. 6-10.


Christine Hannemann refers to him as the 'system builder' in her work on industrialisation. Hannemann., p. 75.


In 1963, under the NES the legal framework was created under which Wohnungsbaubringe—large conglomerates on the district level—became solely responsible for the supply of the complete 'product' housing district. See: Wolfgang Junker, 'Beschluß über die Anwendung der Grundsätze des Neuen ökonomischen Systems der Planung und Leitung der Volkswirtschaft im Bauwesen, 14.6.63', in Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Teil II Nr. 63 (Berlin: Büro des Ministerrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1963), pp. 437-52.

Kosel, Unternehmen Wissenschaft, p. 316.

It has been in many ways the point of reference in discussions after the fall of the Wall in 1989 concerning the 'disappearance' of the architectural profession in the state socialist apparatus of building production, as Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm's first argued in his provocative article 'Rückblick auf die DDR', published in a special post-Wende issue of the German architectural magazine Arch+ with the no less provocative title 'Architektur ohne Architekten' [Architecture without Architects]. Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, 'Rückblick auf die DDR', Arch+ 103 (1990), 66-73. East German architects, themselves not unaware and uncritical
production—foremost the production of mass housing—under the demands of economic plans and target figures, and the requirements of technological apparatuses enlisted in their fulfilment. Somewhat euphemistically, Kosel wrote in 1989, that ‘this development was not without contradictions.’ He continued:

Nevertheless, we can note that, in the course of time [...] apparently diverging developments—full responsibility of state owned firms [combines] for the entire reproduction process from research, development and design through prefabrication and site installation, on the one hand, and the idea of an all-encompassing 'radical standardisation' and of a unitary building system, on the other hand—converged more and more productively. The successful development and implementation of the Housing Construction Series 70 (WBS 70) and other 'open' construction systems in the GDR’s construction firms provides telling evidence.30

Where Kosel spoke of ‘contradictions’, he referred to his own opposition (as well as that of many of his colleagues at the Bauakademie and within the profession)—or, as he said later on in text, ‘scepticism’—towards this decision by the economic leaders of the state.31 And behind what he termed 'apparently diverging developments' stood the foresight that, once development, design, production, and implementation of building types were all connected in the hands of a single entity, which was obligated to fulfil national economic plan targets, both the quantity and quality of the products might fall prey to economic interests.

As Hannemann shows, this process became immanently visible in the development of the

---


31 Later in the text he said: ‘I do not wish to deny that I was sceptical about some of the changes resulting from the 4th Building Conference… I was saddened to witness how many of those [means his] views were quickly pushed aside.’ ibid. p. 317.
WBS 70 housing construction series, which emerged out of Kosel’s work on the Einheitsystem Bau (ESB) [Unitary Construction System] since the late 1960s; the latter may also explain his glossing over the numerous problems with the new housing series, which became the dominant system employed in mass housing projects across the GDR during the 1970s and 1980s. In Hannemann’s view, the system represented ‘the culmination’ of a systematically pursued reduction of housing production to the application of standardised buildings and layouts.34 She explained how this system, which, was initially conceived as ‘open’, soon after the construction of the first flat in the city of Neubrandenburg in 1972, became increasingly simplified in order to accelerate production and to cut costs in the expensive newly built slab factories.35 Conceived as a building kit of standardised modular precast concrete elements with measurements between 1.2 m and 6 m maximum span, the WBS 70 system would, in theory, have been able to adapt to different conditions (such as site) and requirements (such as flat size). Yet, Typisierung [typification, the development of type projects], the standardisation of floor plans, and eventually of the entire building – a necessity for developing parameters and standardised values for economic planning in building production – effectively counteracted and thwarted this inherent flexibility of the WBS 70 system.36 This led Hannemann to conclude that decisions about structural amendments to the system, such as changes to ‘ceiling spans or the location of kitchen and bathroom’ were not rooted in a ‘plan layout determined by the social and psychological needs of residents,’ but rather by construction economy and political decisions.37

Confirming Hannemann’s later assessment was an article in the May 1973 issue of the architectural journal Deutsche Architektur, which discussed the numerous problems encountered with the first applications of the new WBS 70 in Neubrandenburg, and emphasised that only solid sociological and town planning research – as opposed to dogmatic focus on economical construction – would lead to satisfying results. The author opened her

---

34 Hannemann, p. 96.
35 Ibid., pp. 97-104.
37 Hannemann, p. 103.
article in a cautionary tone:

The process of further developing exemplary designs of the WBS 70 by town planners has confirmed that, without foundational social and town planning studies, the detailed development of construction will lead to unsatisfactory results, and may even put a question mark over outcomes of construction, especially economic and technological goals.  

She warned of the risk that the individual elements, whose purpose was to form a whole on a wider urban scale, in the hands of 'construction' and under the stress of economic constraints, could become 'autonomous' in relation to their context, and may thus lead to significant problems with potentially unforeseeable consequences. She thus suggested that the further development of the WBS 70 system should follow a series of town planning goals such as: offering more differentiated floor plans (from 1- to 7-room apartments), improved occupancy rates, expansion of segments to include flats on gables (so avoiding the 'dead' end gables that had become a characteristic feature of this series, and a site for artists' decoration), floor plans for gables and corner sections, passages at ground floor level to permit flexible access and to establish relationships between streets and courtyards, and flexible building lengths for effective use of land and technical infrastructures.  

Based on these goals, she then introduced six different programmes for use by the state-owned construction firms, which included different mixes of apartments with various plans and sizes.  

How important the WBS 70 system—used among other Berlin-specific building systems and alongside a fixed catalogue of standardised public buildings—became in the construction of housing in Berlin during the 1970s and 1980s, was visible not least in the design of Berlin-Marzahn, as I will show. Files from the District Construction Office contained the catalogue

---

38 'Im Verlaufe der städtebaulichen Bearbeitung der Beispielplanungen hat sich bestätigt, daß hochbauliche Entwicklungsarbeit ohne soziale und städtebauliche Grundlagenuntersuchungen zu unbefriedigenden Ergebnissen führt und sogar die Ergebnisse des Hochbaus, insbesondere die Zielsetzungen in technologischer und ökonomischer Hinsicht in Frage stellen kann.' Mercedes Sanchez-Cruz, 'Städtebauliche Grundlagen für die Entwicklung der Wohnungsbauserie 70', Deutsche Architektur, 23 (1973), 270-72.  
39 Ibid., p. 270.
of all ‘products’ of Komplexer Wohnungsbau in the five-year plan 1976-1980. Two sheets were enough to display the entire range of buildings to be used in housing projects across the city in that five-year plan period. There were six different housing series: the five-storey WBS 70 with nine basic modules; the eleven-storey WBS 70 with eight different modules; the QP system that consisted of two modules, which were slimmer in plan and across ten storeys achieved high densities; the WHH slab also in two options of up to 21 storeys; the fourteen-storey SK system, which also accommodated a high number of residents; and the two high-rise towers of the WHH-SK system. And the range of standardised public buildings to be constructed alongside the residences consisted of five differently sized supermarkets, two service points, one restaurant, one health centre, one pharmacy, one pensioner’s home, one combined nursery school, one large school complex, one school, one multi-purpose building, two sports halls, and one swimming pool – that is, eighteen different ‘products’. How to create a new district for 100,000 residents out of these elements – this was the task that town planners and architects faced. The complex and contradictory situation that I have tried to sketch out here formed the backdrop to conflicts over the production of complexity in the stages planning and concept design for Berlin-Marzahn. On the macro-scale these included questions of creating functional entities versus the ideas of complexity, incrementalism and adaptability to changing needs developed out of 1960s sociological studies and cybernetic thinking. On the level of legal frameworks and planning guidelines these ideas of complexity, incrementalism and adaptability were contrasted with the focus on the production of the final product housing district by the Wohnungsbaukombinate as well as the idea of districts as fully functioning entities in the Komplexrichtlinie.

Developing a master plan for the new housing district

Where these positions usually clashed, as Frank Betker notes, was during the early stages of

---

40 ‘Erzeugnisse, Komplexer Wohnungsbau [Products Complex Housing Construction]’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 264/fol. 1.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
Since the beginning of the 1970s, the process of planning and designing new mass housing districts in the GDR had become a highly formalized and hierarchically structured process, in which fundamental decisions about the long-term demand and local distribution of housing were made centrally on the basis of prognoses about national economy, population, and construction, as Frank Betker has noted. These prognoses, according to a diagram taken from a contemporary architectural theory publication, covered time spans between 30 and up to 50 years, and were translated into General Development Plans, which in turn underpinned long-term development concepts of ten to fifteen years, perspective plans of five years, and the annual plans. In this process, Betker highlighted, District Councils formally acted as decision-making and executive players; yet the work of their Plan Commissioners, who had a critical role in preparing the ground for decisions, was based on central plans for development sites prepared by the coordinating State Plan Commission to orders by the Central Committee of the SED and the Council of Ministries. Hence, when the new chief architect of Berlin, Roland Korn, started working on the plans for the new district Berlin-Marzahn under the general supervision of Günter Peters, the first Construction Manager and former District Construction Director at the Magistrate of Berlin, all principle parameters had been predefined: the size and location of the development site, the required number of apartments, and the general timeframe of implementation. Work on the overall layout itself had to progress extremely quickly—the entire process took just under two years—in order for the project to be ready for start on site with the commencement of the next five-year-plan in 1976, as requested by the state and district planners. The previously-mentioned Komplexrichtlinie also defined the general sequence of actions from the preparation of a programme through the production of the master plan. Because of significant time

---

44 Ibid., pp. 130-31.
46 Betker, p. 131.
47 'Grundlagenmaterial für die Bebauungskonzeption des Stadtteils Biesdorf/Marzahn [Basic information for the master plan of the district Berlin/Marzahn]', BArch, DH 2/21389.
pressures on delivery – the project had to go into the five-year plan from 1976-1980 – the planning and design process became extremely congested, resulting in a certain degree of overlap between different aspects of design in the preparation of the master plan. The diverging positions adopted by economic planners and town planners and architects concerning the planned complexity of Berlin-Marzahn became apparent from the start and continued throughout this process. In October 1973, nearly six months after the leadership's decision to extend the city, both sides – the Department for General Planning of the Magistrate and the chief architect's office in cooperation with the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture at the Building Academy – produced two principal documents, in which goals and parameters for the design of the new district were set out; however, with distinct foci. The fact that the chief architect worked in conjunction with the Bauakademie was not an anomaly given the project's scale. As the architect Hans Gericke described in the journal Architektur der DDR, since 1972, it had become a standard procedure – by order of the Ministry for Construction – that District Councils needed to submit all conceptual designs for new mass housing districts with more than 1,000 new flats to the Ministry for official approval. The Ministry, with the help of members of the ISA at the Bauakademie, then assessed these proposals in joint meetings with district representatives including planners, designers, and others. According to Gericke, between 1972 and 1975 the Institute was involved in the assessment of 145 projects, 30% of which consisted of more than 5,000 flats, as a graph published alongside the article confirmed. The procedure focused on five aspects in submitted schemes: the programme, the relationship between development site and city and the economical use of land, the functional layout of districts and civic centres, the arrangement of volumes and spaces, and the project's compliance with national cost limits. In addition to this official assessment process, Gericke continued, the Institute also got involved in consultations prior to drawing up master plans on a number of large-scale investment projects – as was the case in Marzahn, which had the benefit that the 'Institute's research

expertise could be applied to practice.\(^6\)

The first of the above-mentioned documents, the Department for General Planning’s basic information for the development of a master plan, had the objective of establishing parameters for the regional economy and defining the principal structure of the new district.\(^5\)

In so doing, it fixed a set of prerequisites for the design, particularly concerning the spatial distribution and differentiation of the so-called social infrastructure – that is, housing alongside all required basic facilities for the public within a network of district and local centres, whose capacities were calculated in relation to other centres, including the city centre of Berlin. The area for new construction, which had to ‘form a functional and aesthetic entity,’ was specified at 580 hectares, and was bound by several roads and railway lines as well as topographical features. At least 48,000 apartments for 137,000 residents were to be built, and project proposals had to provide three different types of centres: first, a city district centre, which should become the political and administrative hub for the newly created administrative city district ‘Lichtenberg 2’; second, a district centre for the housing district; and third, several centres within the housing complexes that needed to be linked with each other. In addition to these, there was to be a leisure and recreation park. The planners pointed out that, linking this network of facilities for the public, differentiated ‘communicative areas of a new type’ ought to be created. Nevertheless, public buildings permitting multiple uses and the concentration of different facilities ‘under one roof’ should be constructed only within the new district centres. Outside of these centres however, all elements that formed part of the basic programme of the new district’s social infrastructure – housing, schools, nurseries, shops, restaurants – should strictly be taken from the city’s catalogues of standardised ‘products’, according to the document. As for the implementation of the project, construction had to be planned across two stages; a first stage from 1976-1982, during which the majority of housing – 35,000 flats for 100,000 residents – was to be built, and a second stage containing further 13,000 flats whose date of construction was left open.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 598.

\(^5\) ‘Grundlagenmaterial’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
although tentatively specified to take place after 1990—after the end of the housing programme. All three types of centres, the document highlighted, should be constructed as part of the first project stage, forming a 'self-contained new housing district', to which the second part could merely be added 'without substantial structural and functional changes' whenever it was needed. The main district centre was geographically fixed in the southern part of the district, where it could easily be connected to the industrial estate 'Lichtenberg-Nordost', and the local district centre placed in the northern part, connected to a main thoroughfare that linked the new district with the city centre.\textsuperscript{51}

In essence, all of these prerequisites were in line with the general standards for newly designed mass housing districts as set out in the \textit{Komplexrichtlinie}. In other words, the complexity of Berlin-Marzahn envisaged by the economic planners of the Magistrat largely stayed within nationally fixed parameters, and complied with well-established methods of housing construction—planning the whole at the outset—although now on a larger scale and for an even longer perspective than ever before. However, as a passage in the document revealed, there had at least been an awareness of the problem of changing needs—although treated ambiguously, only to be resolved by the option of the second project stage. The planners wrote:

\begin{quotation}
Residents’ anticipated needs should form the basis [for the design of the social infrastructure], but it should be considered that present day needs and technical means for their fulfilment may no longer exist at a later date, and others may form instead. Material and technical possibilities of implementation and future design must be differentiated in this respect. This is also why construction is planned across two stages.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quotation}

The message to the designers at the chief architect’s office was thus: regardless of making

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} ‘Dabei ist vom zu erwartenden Bedarf der Bevölkerung auszugehen und zu berücksichtigen, daß gegenwärtige Bedürfnisse und Methoden zu ihrer Befriedigung zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt nicht mehr existent zu sein brauchen und sich andere herausbilden. Hierbei ist konsequent zwischen materiellen und technischen Realisierungsmöglichkeiten und zukünftiger Gestaltung zu unterscheiden. Auch aus diesem Grund ist der Aufbau des Stadtteils in zwei Phasen vorgesehen.’ Ibid.
\end{quotation}
long-term goals the basis of planning, designs should stay within today’s material and
technical possibilities – that is, using the standardised 'products' from the district’s catalogue
of buildings – and resist the temptation to link anticipated needs to design in the present;
things could be improved or adapted – or not – by providing other 'things' in the second
stage, if and whenever that might follow.
In contrast to these 'realistic' official parameters defined by the Magistrate’s Department for
General Planning stood the arguments put forth in the discussion paper that was prepared in
parallel by Berlin’s chief architect Roland Korn in conjunction with members of the Institute
for Town Planning and Architecture at the Building Academy.53 Much of the tone of the paper
reflected the anger among architects and town planners over economic planners’ disregard
for the needs of future residents, the ignorance towards urban sociological expertise, and the
general insensitivity towards the profession and its primary 'business' – designing
environments for people. The architects not only challenged some of the decisions put
forward by the economic planners regarding the spatial structure of the district and the
distribution of centres; they warned, for example, of the increasing traffic caused by daily
commuters in and out of the district or the strain on existing public transport infrastructures,
and called into question the location of the 'main centre' (city district centre) in the southern
part, where it was cut off from major roads and thus poorly connected to other parts of the
city.
Where the economic planners’ document lacked statements about the specific quality and
design of the new district – or replaced them with quantitative parameters and general
formulas about the strict use of standardised buildings for the material supply of residents –
the architects countered with arguments about quality of life in socialism that were backed up
by official statements about the leadership’s social agenda. In their plea for what was required
in Berlin-Marzahn words such as 'growth', 'adaptability', or the 'social space of the city'
occupied a central place – however cautiously they had to be framed. They wrote:

53 ‘Diskussionsgrundlage zu städtebaulichen Anforderungen an die Planung des Stadtteiles
Biesdorf/Marzahn [Discussion paper outlining requirements for the urban planning of the
district Biesdorf/Marzahn]’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
In socialism personal and social development objectively lead to more complex and
differentiated needs. An important feature of socialist town planning is thus, to secure
the growth of those public facilities that meet new needs and requirements on the
basis of economic resources.\textsuperscript{54}

The 'growth' of facilities for the public, in the eyes of the architects, should not only consist
in a general expansion of the network of facilities in new housing districts, but also include
the development of new building types that went beyond mere 'supply', offering cultural and
leisure activities as well. This implied, they argued, overcoming the usual practice of
constructing separate standardised buildings for different uses – or as they put it further
below in the paper, referring to popular perception of these objects: a 'Betonhütte' ['concrete
hut'] for each kind of material need. Instead, combined or multipurpose facilities that were
'more efficient' should be designed.\textsuperscript{55} The understanding of the term efficient as alluded to
here was distinctly different from that of the economic planners, to whom efficiency was a
matter of the most economical use of investments either in planning or the production
process, achieved through application of preengineered solutions in order to satisfy
quantifiable requirements.\textsuperscript{56} However, to Korn and the architects from the Institute for Town
Planning and Architecture efficiency was constituted during use – through the way in which a
specific structure would be able to meet residents' needs qualitatively.\textsuperscript{57}

Without directly referring to Flierl's theory of \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} in this particular
context, the arguments in the discussion paper nonetheless seemed to reflect the conceptual
understanding of efficiency also developed in his concept.\textsuperscript{58} Drawing on use-value and on
arguments about the economy of time in Marx, Flierl argued that in order to fulfil its social

\textsuperscript{54} 'Die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung führen im
Sozialismus objektiv zu immer verzweigteren und differenzierteren Bedürfnissen. Ein
wichtiges Merkmal sozialistischen Städtebaus ist es daher, auf der Grundlage der
volkswirtschaftlichen Möglichkeiten das Wachstum jener gesellschaftlichen Einrichtungen zu
sichern, die den neuen Bedürfnissen und Bedingungen Rechnung tragen.' Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Bruno Flierl, \textit{Gesellschaft und Architektur in unserer Epoche: Ein Beitrag zur
architekturtheoretischen Forschung in der ideologischen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Sozialismus
function (within developed socialist society) the practice of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* needed to consider the 'use-value of the built-spatial environment' in people’s lives—the way in which it met human needs qualitatively—as its primary measure. This qualitative dimension, Flierl believed, referring to the work of his colleague Macetti (N.K.), was not intangible or immaterial; it could be measured in the use of 'time' and 'space'. He wrote in his doctoral thesis in 1973:

> For complex economical design of the built-spatial environment to conform to the complex needs of social praxis, built-spatial conditions must be created, which allow humans to gain an optimum of time in their processes of life both within and outside of production. But since these life processes take place not only in time, but always also in space—through movement in time and space—the law of the economy of time can only function properly by means of an economy of space, by 'saving' space.

According to Korn and the architects from the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture, facilities for the public had to be characterised by their capacity for 'constant adaptation to changing programmes, functions, and habits.' They continued to argue that 'standardised types with their outmoded monofunctional character we|re both technically and aesthetically unfit to meet those requirements' of adaptability, and that 'the advantage of industrialised construction consist[ed] not in the implementation of rigid types, but in the application of industrial technologies, which combine high economic efficiency with variability in design.'

---


61 ‘Diskussionsgrundlage’, BArch, DH 9/21389.

62 ‘Typenprojekte mit überholter monofunktionaler Orientierung sind diesen Anforderungen weder technisch noch gestalterisch gewachsen. Der Vorteil des industriellen Bauens liegt nicht in der Anwendung starrer Typen, sondern in der Anwendung industrieller Technologien, die einen hohen ökonomischen Effekt mit städtebaulicher Variabilität verbindet.’ Ibid.
Using open building systems and kits would allow the production of structures that are specific to certain uses and others that would be 'neutral' and open. These structures could then be combined into 'free-standing complexes under one roof,' into 'ensembles with the possibility of creating squares and streets,' or into 'complex built structures which would integrate residential buildings.'

Further into the paper, Korn and his colleagues offered an example to illustrate what kinds of complexes they had in mind. In typically East German fashion, the architects coined a new term for their proposed structure and called it 'Zentrum der aktiven Erholung' [Centre for active recreation] – an updated version of the 'worker's club' for 'developed' socialist society, which was planned to include a fitness and leisure area, hobby rooms, physiotherapy, a beauty centre, and childcare facilities. Topping the programme would be restaurants and bars, which would 'lift the whole thing to the level of hospitality and sociability,' the authors declared, however cautiously adding that this didn’t need to lead to 'exclusive forms.' The whole complex – apparently no bigger than a standard school combination – would be constructed from a standardised kit, which could be freely combined during construction and extended over time, using elements from the SK-Berlin system. According to the discussion paper, this design had been fully developed in a study at the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture and would thus be readily usable.

But it was not only the facilities for the public that should be improved, according to Korn and the architects from the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture; in their eyes, Berlin-Marzahn should become a prototype for future living. Therefore, systematic experiments in housing were essential, too. Crucially, they noted, this had to include a

---

63 Ibid.
64 Projects like this may serve to illustrate the paradoxes of late socialist society. They further show the balancing acts architects performed between responding to the diverse needs of an increasingly differentiated society and staying within the parameters of official understandings of a socialist way of life based on moral categories and imperatives such as 'meaningful leisure'. A publication from 1972, for example, highlighted the importance of 'active recreation' for the reproduction of labour power in view of the transformations of labour from physical to skilled work as a result of scientific-technological progress. See: Autorenkollektiv, *Lebensweise und Moral im Sozialismus* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972), pp. 374–76.
65 'Diskussionsgrundlage', BArch, DH 2/21389.
concept for the further development of the ‘products’ of Komplexer Wohnungsbaus, since the existing range of residential buildings was ‘suitable only to a limited extent’ for shaping a ‘differentiated residential and urban environment.’ In this context, they directly criticised the work carried out by the state-owned housing construction combine on other sites in Berlin. On these sites mostly eleven-storey high-rise slabs had been constructed along with two-storey buildings for different public functions, creating open spaces of about 70-100 meters width, which, the authors argued, were perceived as being ‘without scale, oppressive, and uninhabitable.’ In contrast to these negative examples, Berlin-Marzahn should be characterised by a reasonable mix of ‘interlinked coexisting’ buildings of different heights, and by familiar urban typologies such as street, boulevard, square and courtyard. Houses should be arranged more freely, become accessible from both sides, and be permeable and used flexibly at ground floor level, according to the discussion paper.\textsuperscript{66}

In January 1974, chief architect Korn called for a meeting at the District Construction Office in Berlin. Attending were city and district architects with a high level of experience in designing new mass housing districts from four of the GDR’s major cities Leipzig, Rostock, Magdeburg, and Erfurt, the president of the BdA as well as delegates of the Ministry of Construction and the Central Committee’s Department for Construction to secure representation of the leadership’s interests.\textsuperscript{67} The two documents prepared by the economic planners and by Korn and members of the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture formed the basis of the discussion. The meeting, whose objective was to discuss strategic plans for the whole site, thus focussed on those areas in which the positions of economic planners and architects diverged: the overall structure of the district and the location of the main centre, the relationship between development site and surrounding areas, and improvements to the palette of standardised buildings. The principle outcomes hinted at a compromise. Instead of the previously planned two construction stages, the district was now

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{67} ‘Information über die Beratung am 8.1.1974 zur städtebaulichen Lösung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf-Marzahn [Information about the meeting on 8th January 1974 concerning the proposed urban plan for the district Biesdorf-Marzahn],’ BArch, DH 2/2389.
going to be divided into three residential areas with varying densities, connected to three stations along the existing suburban railway network. It was concluded that the main district centre should be located on the northern edge of the central district, and that no facilities with metropolitan character should be planned – a definite end to the debate whether Berlin-Marzahn was 'almost a city' or a 'housing district' with far-reaching consequences for future residents, who were forced to accept longer commutes to the city centre for certain leisure activities. The new district was now conceived of as an 'interconnected functional system related to the whole city.'

As for standardised building types, the development of facilities for the public – previously a central concern to the architects – received no mention. And except reiterating the need for 'diversity', defining in very general terms that the height of residential buildings should increase from the edges to the centre, and stating that, following the planned schedule of construction in south north direction, the ratio of low-rise five-storey blocks should steadily increase, no firm decisions were taken concerning the mix of housing types.

On the basis of this compromise, the further development of a master plan for the housing district proceeded between the end of January and the end of April 1974. In this process, five teams prepared individual proposals for the layout of the district, using six different types for housing and nine standard building types for various facilities for the public that were available for implementation through the Berlin housing construction combine. Heading four of the five teams were the city architects of Rostock (Rudolf Lasch), Magdeburg (Hanspeter

---

68 Ibid.
69 This was predominantly a problem of production for the local construction industry, which was tailored to producing multi-storey slabs and high-rises as a result of the predominant use of those typologies on inner-city redevelopment sites. Changing the system to low-rise typologies on suburban sites, which promised to be more efficient in terms of overall residential densities and the cost and effort of civil engineering works, required significant short-term investments in new production facilities. The first new concrete panel factory was opened in 1976 in close proximity to the Berlin-Marzahn construction site, and a second factory took up production in 1979.
70 ‘Aufgabenstellung zur Erarbeitung der Bebauungskonzeption für den neuen Stadtteil in Biesdorf/Marzahn’ [Project definition for the development of a master plan for the new district in Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.
Kirsch), Erfurt (Ewald Henn), and Leipzig (Horst Siegel)\textsuperscript{7} so as to make use of their ‘positive experience’ in increasing the variability of housing types, as the architectural brief stated. The other team was chaired by Roland Korn, and consisted of members of the District Construction Office, the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture at the Building Academy, the state-owned housing construction firm WBK-Berlin, and other local specialist construction firms. As both the schedule for the preparation of master plans and the composition of teams, particularly the Berlin team, suggested, this was not intended to be an ordinary architectural competition. The goal was not to develop genuinely competing visions, but rather to create synergies between different proposals within an extremely short time frame, whilst making sure that the results remained realistic and feasible, and could be easily translated into production within given conditions. Following an initial briefing, individual teams had five weeks to work on their proposals at a scale of 1:2000, and then presented their projects to the economic planners at the Magistrate as well as the major local ‘producers’ of housing. At this point, the local political leadership and the Ministry of Construction also checked the different designs, and then guidelines were developed for the detailed development of the master plan at a scale of 1:1000 by the team from Berlin and the Building Academy with consultative input from the other city architects – a process, which took another five weeks. At the end of April the finished master plan was then to be presented to the Magistrate, the district leadership of the SED, and the Ministry of Construction.\textsuperscript{72}

As noted at the outset of this chapter, an interdisciplinary team composed of local experts and academics including sociologists, geographers and environmental scientists and – importantly – Flierl co-authored an independent ‘study regarding sociological and environmental design problems in the planning of Biesdorf-Marzahn’.\textsuperscript{73} In their joint report, Flierl and his colleagues critically analysed the emerging plans for the new mass housing district on the outskirts of Berlin (11 km from the city centre), and addressed their findings to the local party leaders.

\textsuperscript{7} Before starting work as city architect in Leipzig in 1967, Siegel was the deputy chief architect in Halle-Neustadt, and thus served in the development of the mass housing project that constituted the main reference point in the planning of Berlin-Marzahn.

\textsuperscript{72} ‘Aufgabenstellung’, BArch, DH 2/91389.

\textsuperscript{73} ‘Studie’ GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 14.
leadership. This was a highly unusual course of action. The researchers had not officially been instructed to do this work – rather, they prepared the report as a group of experts wanting to contribute their knowledge to this major undertaking through 'schöpferischer Meinungsstreit' [creative controversy]. And issuing their advice straight to the political leaders, well aware that their suggestions for solving the identified problems might go beyond current economic and technical capabilities, was also uncommon. While a detailed account of the contents of the report would go beyond this chapter, I would briefly like to highlight some key arguments put forth by its authors.

The report’s section on ‘socio-spatial problems’, authored by Flierl, discussed, for example, the adverse effects the city leaders’ choice of development site in a suburban context may have on its residents as well as on public transport infrastructures, due to the expected increase in commuting. Moreover, the particular relationship between the new district and the existing city – that is, the fairly large distance between the two – combined with the predicted social mix of its residents – according to the sociologists, disproportionately young, highly qualified, and publically engaged – would also have a significant impact on the planning of and necessary investment in public infrastructures and buildings for supply, service and leisure. Both ‘physical-regenerative’ and ‘cultural-entertaining’ aspects of recreation would need to be met, Flierl and his colleagues argued, as demands for urban life in socialism were evolving. The authors feared, however, that the planned distribution of leisure and entertainment buildings unlikely to fulfil these demands. For instance, they criticised the lack of a cinema in the southern part of the district, where approximately thirty thousand to forty thousands residents were expected to live. Moreover, they negatively commented on the long walking distances between the district’s main centre from its northern and eastern edges, and proposed the construction of another cultural facility in the northern part of Berlin-Marzahn. All this suggests that Flierl and his colleagues not only wanted to support the architects’ arguments in favour of making significant qualitative

---

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
improvements to consumption, leisure, culture and entertainment in the new mass housing district in line with the anticipated (and constantly evolving) 'actual needs' of its future residents; they also seemed to imply that what was proposed in the current plans would still not meet their predictions as regards residents' demand.

In January 1975, the State Planning Commission responded to a draft of the urban development plans, developed in Korn’s office for town planning on the basis of the preliminary work of the five city architects’ teams. Their message was clear enough: while they acknowledged the significance of Berlin-Marzahn as a major step towards solving the ‘housing question in the capital Berlin’, they felt that the architects’ goals could also be fulfilled more efficiently, and that 'substantial savings' would be possible. Proposed cost savings were predicted by using standard building types based on available element-ranges that would not exceed current standards in Berlin, by reducing the number of communal buildings that would be required in the early stages of the district’s twelve-year construction period, and, thus, deferring the construction of those buildings to a later date when housing construction was finished (and actual demand existed). The total investment cut proposed by the state economy planners was drastic: the budget for Berlin-Marzahn was to be reduced by thirty percent, from approximately four billion East German Mark to under three billion East German Mark. While housing itself had to take a fourteen percent cut, communal facilities and landscaping were hit hardest, as investments for the former had to be reduced by thirty-five percent. Not only one of the two planned department stores was axed along with four restaurant complexes, significant savings also needed to be achieved in the construction of schools and other public facilities.

In summary, close analysis of the process of developing the master plan for the new district Berlin-Marzahn reveals the degree to which the ideas developed by architectural theorists and

---

76 ‘Stellungnahme zur gesellschaftspolitischen und volkswirtschaftlichen Zielstellung für den komplexen Wohnungsneubau im Stadtteil Biesdorf/Marzahn der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin, 16.1.1975 - Vertrauliche Dienstsache - [Response to the social-political and economic objectives for complex housing construction in the district Biesdorf/Marzahn in the capital of the GDR, Berlin]’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
77 Ibid.
social scientists in the 1960s had translated into design practice and here began to clash with the mechanism of state managed production of housing. This included thinking about a large district like Berlin-Marzahn as an entity whilst anticipating changing needs during the long period of construction and in later stages of use. It also included considering actual rather than abstract needs of residents. However, the long term plans of state planners demanded relatively firm commitments as to what was realised and when. Furthermore, town planners and architects by the 1970s had become critical of separating functions in standardised buildings and instead aimed to create urbanity and complex typologies to accommodate multiple uses—hence openness rather than rigidity. This however clashed not only with 'taylorist principles' of standardised housing production, but also with increasingly tight budgets for the growing number of large-scale housing projects.
From environment to milieu,
or the impossible in-between
realm in late-socialist mass
housing, 1975-1988
All other elements of the environment must be arranged in accordance with the urban-architectural design of the new district Biesdorf/Marzahn so that a cultured and beautiful urban environment can be developed. This comprises natural landscaping and the layout of plantation, colour schemes and the integration into public open space design of art, small structures and visual communication – issues that, in the past, have been insufficiently and often belatedly considered in the complex environmental design of our cities.¹

The concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, as this statement from the early stages of planning Berlin-Marzahn highlights, was to be field-tested for the first time in the construction of the vast new mass housing district northeast of Berlin’s city centre. The district’s planners set out to create a total environment through comprehensive and integrated design not only of buildings, spaces and works of architecture-related art, as had become standard practice in new housing complexes across East Germany during the 1960s, but by incorporating all other elements of the environment across all scales, as well – from large to small, from landscape to letterbox. According to them, Berlin-Marzahn should 'serve as a model for future living.'²

Thus, their goal was to create a 'residential milieu', which would fulfil residents' needs for 'social communication, sociability and hospitality, protection, intimacy and rest.' They sought to establish a network of differentiated public spaces as 'places of encounter' – 'centres of social communication that contrasted with intimate residential areas and interconnected green open spaces'. To this end, between April 1974 and February 1975, a team of ten artists and designers headed by graphic designer and academic Rolf Walter developed a

¹ 'In Übereinstimmung mit der städtebaulich-architektonischen Gestaltung des neuen Stadtteils Biesdorf/Marzahn sind auch die anderen Elemente der Umwelt zu gestalten, damit eine Stadtumwelt entstehen kann, die kulturvoll und schön gestaltet ist. Es handelt sich hierbei um die Gestaltung der natürlichen landschaftlichen Bedingungen und um die Grünstückung, um die Farbgestaltung und um die Einbeziehung der bildenden Kunst, der Kleinarchitektur und der visuellen Kommunikation in die Gestaltung der Freiräume – also um Aufgaben der Gestaltung, die in der Vergangenheit oft in nicht genügendem Maße und oft erst nachträglich in die komplexe Umweltgestaltung unserer Städte und Wohngebiete einbezogen worden sind.' ¹ 'Diskussionsgrundlage zu städtebaulichen Anforderungen an die Planung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf/Marzahn' [Discussion paper outlining requirements for the urban planning of the district Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.

² Ibid.
Rahmenkonzept für den künstlerisch-ästhetischen Bereich komplexer Umweltgestaltung für den 9. Stadtbezirk[^1] [concept for the artistic-aesthetic realm of complex environmental design of the 9th district].[^2] Their scheme was drawn up in sync with the ‘Bebauungskonzeption des Stadtbezirks Biesdorf/Marzahn’[^3] [urban development concept for the district Biesdorf/Marzahn], devised by Berlin’s chief architect Roland Korn and his deputy Peter Schweizer under the supervision of first construction manager Günter Peters – a process described in the previous chapter. Herbert Matthes was responsible for landscape design and greenery.[^4] (see Figs. 6.1 and 6.2)

Between 1977 and 1988, in the course of Marzahn’s detailed design and construction by the Wohnungsbaubereitschaft Berlin [Berlin housing construction combine], led by district chief architect Heinz Graffunder, difficulties in the implementation of the ambitious plans for Komplexe Umweltgestaltung became increasingly evident. For growing material and financial scarcity as well as mounting time pressure presented significant challenges to the execution of the designs developed by Walter and his colleagues. The sheer dimension of the site – conceived as a ‘linear city’, stretching 5.5 km in north-south direction and up to 1.8 km in east-west direction, and covering an area of 600 hectares (1,500 acres) for housing and 200 hectares (500 acres) for recreation – made the scope of the project seem vast and daunting. Initially, thirty-five thousand new flats were to be built in three large housing complexes until 1985; twenty thousand of them should be completed by 1980.[^5] In 1980, this figure was further

6.1 Plan of East Berlin showing location (11 km from the city centre) and size of the new district Biesdorf/Marzahn relative to the area of the city. BArch, DH v/29131.

6.2 Model of the urban development concept for Biesdorf/Marzahn by Roland Korn, Peter Schweizer, Herbert Matthes, and Rolf Walter, 1975. BArch, DH v/29131.
increased, and the total development rose to over sixty thousand flats by 1990, extending the district by adding four complexes to the north and east.\textsuperscript{7} Short timescales and phased implementation – four different design teams led by individual \textit{Komplexarchitekten} [complex architects/lead designers] worked in parallel on the design of certain parts of the district while others were already being built\textsuperscript{8} – made coordination between different practitioners from different institutions [architects working in centralised construction offices, artists and designers initially working individually] highly complex. Moreover, while the material and technological resources for the construction of prefabricated housing were readily available, technologies and production facilities for many of the elements proposed in the concept for \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} were underdeveloped to say the least. In the face of these constraints, precious little of the original plans could be realized, despite the fact that the overall concept, just like the initial urban-architectural scheme, was developed in greater detail throughout subsequent stages of the project.\textsuperscript{9} To Marzahn's first residents the empty, often untreated spaces between the newly built prefabricated housing thus bore little resemblance to the cheerful, densely populated sketch perspectives and renderings drawn by Walter's colleague Lutz Brandt, which had been published in professional and popular magazines, and which exalted people's imagination.\textsuperscript{10} (see Fig. 6.3)

This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposals for \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} and discusses the – albeit fairly limited – extent to which they could be realized in the construction of Berlin-Marzahn. It starts by mapping the historic context of these complex

\textsuperscript{7} 'Bauen in Berlin - Informationen über Stadtgeschichte, Stadtentwicklung, historische Gebäude, städtebaulich-architektonische Ensembles, Neubaugebiete für Stadtführungen und Modellerläuterungen im Jahr der der 750-Jahr-Feier. Nur für den Dienstgebrauch!' [Building in Berlin - Information concerning urban history and development, historic buildings, urban-architectural ensembles, new residential districts for guided city tours and descriptions of the model during the 750-year-anniversary. For internal use only.], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 256/fol. 14.

\textsuperscript{8} The four \textit{Komplexarchitekten} working in Marzahn were: Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut (VEB IHB-BMK Berlin), Helmut Stingl (VEB WBK Berlin), Herbert Boos (VEB WBK Berlin), and Arno Weber (VEB WBK Berlin).


\textsuperscript{10} Korn, Schweizer, and Walter, pp. 554-55; 'Berlins Neunter', \textit{Neue Berliner Illustrierte}, 1 February 1977, pp. 12-17, 43.
Skizzen der Architekten

Vorgaben: 3 Wohnhäuser, 12. Kaufhäuser, 6 Pizzerien, 4 Dienstleistungskomplexe, 2 Sparkassen, 2 Ärztehäuser, 8 Klubsäle, 3 Gastrostätten, 1 Buchhandlung, 3 Bibliotheken, 1 Filmtheater, 1 Freibad, 1 Volkssportbahn, 1 Volksbad, 6 Jugendkneipen, 100 Wohnungen und 65 Zimmer.

Die Parkplätze, ebenso wie angelegt, werden so platziert, daß kein unnötiger Verkehr in die Wohngebiete hineingerät wird. Bei 1985 sind je 100 Wohnungen 65 und im Zenitum bis 1990 rund 800 Wohnungen vorgesehen.

Der 3. Stadtwagen, umschließt das Dorf Marzahn. Welche Aufgaben haben die Architekten bei der Rekonstruktion dieser altere Siedlungsgeschehen und eine Einbeziehung in die neue Wohngebiete zu lösen?

Unsere Aufgabe ist es, nicht nur, neue Wohngebiete zu planen und zu verwerten, sondern auch kulturelle geschichtliche zu erhalten und es sinnvoll und organisatorisch in die neue Bewohner einzubeziehen.

Die Dorfarchitektur ist ein typisches Beispiel für die Lage und die Bewahrung alter bäuerischer Orte.

Wir führen Untersuchungen und Analysen durch, nach den Ergebnissen dann die zu erhaltenen historischen und für dieses Gebiet typischen Gebäude festgelegt werden. Wir haben uns bei der Auswahl beziehungen, dem schließlich muß der finanzielle Aufwand für solche Rekonstruktionen auch ökonomisch vertretbar sein.
designs, showing how – in both theory and practice – they moved beyond previous examples of the concept of 'synthesis of architecture and art' in the planning of housing districts. This will be followed by a discussion of their scope and degree of implementation, based on Walter’s proposal for Berlin-Marzahn, pointing also to internal criticisms by practitioners and theorists involved in the project, in particular Bruno Flierl. Finally, the chapter will reflect on different reasons for the deficient implementation of the original scheme, drawing on archive documents and a close analysis of financial, legal, administrative and institutional issues therein.

This will show that the definitive configuration of urban spaces and buildings in the district as it can be experienced today might, in fact, say more about the conditions of East German building production in the 1970s and 1980s – its tight restrictions and dogged focus on output targets – than about the state of architectural discourse, theories, and paradigms at that time. Late-socialist mass housing districts such as Berlin-Marzahn may be less the result of a fusion between specific planning and political ideologies, neither belated apotheosis of CIAM’s slab-in-a-park urbanism nor embodiment of ‘the utopian promise of a space-aged communist future’¹, as historians like Eli Rubin claim, but rather the product of a technical apparatus at the hands of number-crunching officials from the powerful State Planning Commission. The texts and drawings for the unrealized schemes of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in Berlin-Marzahn, at least, suggest not only that a revision of modernist planning principles was well underway in the GDR (much like in the West); they also show that there was criticism – even discontent – among theorists and practitioners concerning the status quo of East German building production.

From the synthesis of architecture and art to complex environmental design

By the mid-1970s, when the plans for Berlin-Marzahn were being developed, the idea to integrate other elements, especially art, in the design and production of the built environment

was not entirely new. Over a period of more than two decades, extensive experience with the planning and implementation of architecture-related art was built up. During those years, major changes not only occurred in style and formal expression, format, media and techniques; there had also been shifts regarding sites as well as legal and institutional frameworks for implementation. While a detailed description of these transformations would go beyond the scope of this chapter, key issues and turning points shall be discussed below.

A basic tenet that characterized architecture-related art, which also remained fundamental to Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, was the notion of gesellschaftlicher Auftrag [societal mandate]. This meant in principle that architectural and artistic production, on the one hand, were based on a mandate by society – they were carried out on behalf of society –, while, on the other hand, being directed towards society – that is, they had to fulfil a social mission. This general aim to respond to 'social needs' and, by doing so, to contribute to the 'wellbeing of society as a whole' was embraced by most practitioners, especially during the early decades of Aufbau [the construction of socialism]. In practice, however, it was the state, in particular its ruling party the SED, who granted this mandate and thus acted as 'client' in the production of architecture-related art, and of the built environment as a whole. This meant that state and party held a significant degree of power and control over all aspects of this process; yet, within these general boundaries there remained great diversity and room for debate, which resulted in a significant degree of change.

---


\(^{14}\) Mann, p. 583.

\(^{15}\) Guth, pp. 29-34.

In line with the above-mentioned aims, the state leadership developed legislative frameworks for the production of architecture-related art and the collaboration between architects and artists (later also others). From as early as 1949, a fixed proportion of the construction budget (1-2%) was to be set aside for 'artistic decoration'. As Peter Guth showed, a great diversity of building types – administrative, cultural, healthcare-, civic, and residential buildings – as well as architectural elements – balconies and loggias, balustrades, lobbies, facades and interior spaces – were initially covered by these regulations in order to meet the broad objective that buildings should represent the GDR’s 'democratic order'. The first nationwide regulation from 1952 limited this scope again to 'administrative buildings', which, however, were described relatively broadly to include schools, nurseries, buildings for youth and sport, care homes, vocational training facilities, hospitals, clinics and health centres, town halls, cultural buildings etc. Nonetheless, buildings and structures relating to production, traffic and housing were explicitly excluded. According to Guth, this regulation had a lasting effect insofar as it provided a definition of 'administrative buildings', and because it ruled that objects of architecture-related art would not need to be physically connected to the fabric of the building, thus offering a broad understanding of architecture-related art and its production, which, nevertheless, was rarely put into practice.

In 1959, new regulations were passed, which also permitted the use of 0.2% of the overall investment in housing for architecture-related art. Two – ultimately conflicting – reasons behind this change may be identified. First, the industrialisation of construction, whose impact could be felt most strongly in the production of housing, was widely seen as diminishing the quality of the built environment and as depriving architecture of its ideological function as it turned buildings into technical objects and highly standardized mass products. Therefore, art became charged with the task of ameliorating the effects of

---

7 See fn. 19, Guth, p. 392.
9 Guth, p. 393.
10 Büttner, p. 22.
11 See chapter two.
industrialised construction; its function was to provide an antidote to the perceived monotony, dullness and repetitiveness of standardized prefabricated buildings. Second, the cultural policy of the so-called Bitterfelder Weg, named after the city where a major party conference was held in 1959 (the former also being the centre of the East German chemical industry, one of the cornerstones of socialist modernisation), sought to strengthen art’s impact on people’s daily life while underscoring its ideological role in forging socialist citizens.22 This not only led to a dramatic increase in public spending on state-commissioned art from eleven million East German Mark between 1955 and 1959 to twenty million East German Mark in the following five years.23 Under the Bitterfelder Weg, socialist realism also became the binding doctrine for all artistic production, and national as well as local art commissions considered its enforcement to be their primary task.24 Thus, the aesthetic and ideological void left by the industrialisation of construction (Hans Schmidt was among the few architects who held that this need not be the case, providing industrialisation’s consequences of for architecture, town planning and socialist society were rigorously examined and publicly discussed25) became filled with decorative, during the 1960s, increasingly overpowering forms of monumental socialist realist art.

As housing districts became a key area of work and therefore also a focal point in debates concerning architecture-related art throughout the 1960s, the conflict between these two positions – one aimed at the improvement of material conditions of people’s daily lives chiefly with non-ideological means (including other forms of design), the other focused on the

---

23 Mann, p. 584.
24 Ibíd., pp. 583-85.
political-representative function of art in the built environment – increasingly came to
determine discussions. However, the systematic integration of architecture-related art in the
planning and construction of large-scale housing projects, first attempted in a number of
prestigious projects throughout the country such as the second stage of Karl-Marx-Allee in
Berlin (chief architect: Josef Kaiser, 1953–1965)\textsuperscript{26}, the expansion of Schwedt (chief architect:
Richard Paulick, from 1959)\textsuperscript{27}, or the new town of Halle-Neustadt (chief architect: Richard
Paulick, from 1964)\textsuperscript{28}, raised rather more practical than ideological questions about a possible
'synthesis of architecture and art'. This included problems of scale, aesthetics and materiality
as well as questions about the need to adopt new technologies in the production of artworks,
or the reorganization of artistic practice in favour of collective labour and interdisciplinary
collaboration. In November 1965, a large conference was held in Berlin, organized by the
association of artists, which addressed those ‘problems of synthesis of architecture and art’.\textsuperscript{29}
Participating were not only architects and artists who worked on the housing and town
planning projects mentioned above, for example sculptor Ludwig Engelhardt or painter
Walter Womacka, but also official representatives from the Ministry of Culture, from
professional bodies, and from research institutions such as the Bauakademie, including, of
course, Schmidt and Flierl.

While the latter were primarily concerned with rethinking the ‘problem of synthesis’ at the
urban scale, addressing issues such as the size of an artwork, its degree of abstraction, or the
dimensions of spaces in which art was situated in relation to individuals’ experience,
Womacka turned to practical questions of collaboration and technology instead. Artists not
only needed to develop a better understanding of the fundamentally changed conditions of

\textsuperscript{26} Werner Dutschke, ‘Bildende Kunst im Wohngebiet an der Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin:
Erfahrungen und Probleme der Zusammenarbeit von Architekten und bildenden Künstlern’,
\textsuperscript{27} Philipp Springer, Verbaute Träume: Herrschaft, Stadtentwicklung und Lebensrealität in der
sozialistischen Industriestadt Schwedt (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006); Siegfried Kress and Werner
Rietdorf, Wohnen in Städten: Planung und Gestaltung der Wohngebiete (Berlin: Verlag für
\textsuperscript{28} Kress and Rietdorf, pp. 361–81.
\textsuperscript{29} Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Synthese von Architektur und bildender Kunst, ed. by
Zentralvorstand Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands (Berlin: Verband Bildender
Künstler Deutschlands, 1965).
architectural labour and building production, he argued, they also needed to be integrated to
greater extent into the design and construction process (from its earliest stages through
implementation) as well as master new production technologies in line with industrialised
construction methods.\textsuperscript{30} To this end, the School for Applied Arts in Berlin-Weissensee
(whose director Womacka became in 1968) in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture
established an \textit{Institut für baugebundene Kunst} [Institute for architecture-related art]. Its
workshops should provide the 'technical basis for researching new materials and for new
possibilities in building design', for practical experiments as well as for realizing commissions.
Moreover, they should offer room for scholarly work and dissertation projects.\textsuperscript{31} The Institute
came to play an important role in the development of architecture-related art and \textit{Komplexe
Umweltgestaltung} in Berlin and beyond. Its members were not only was responsible for the
preparation of proposals for a comprehensive design of Schwedt's housing complex VII\textsuperscript{32},
Walter, the leader of the team of artists and designers behind the scheme for \textit{Komplexe
Umweltgestaltung} of Berlin-Marzahn, also worked at the Institute.

Günter Meier, a representative from the Ministry of Culture, introduced proposals for new
legislation to supersede previous regulations from 1952 on the basis of the new laws for
investments in construction.\textsuperscript{33} To be sure, it took another six years for these new regulations
to come into effect, following much deliberation between responsible governmental bodies in
the fields of state economy, construction and culture. Many of the policy's principles did not
change until its commencement in 1971; for instance, the different stages in the process of
planning and implementing the design concept for the 'artistic-aesthetic realm' in Berlin-
Marzahn, including the various duties and relationships between different partners, were
effectively anticipated in the proposed regulations. If anything, in the final version of the
regulations that was passed in December 1971, their overall scope appears to have been

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 111.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 113-14.
\textsuperscript{32} Kress and Rietdorf, pp. 261-81.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Beiträge zur Diskussion}, pp. 122-31.
reduced.\textsuperscript{34} A key change from former legislation of 1952 was the proposal to raise the proportional allowance for architecture-related art in projects of \textit{Komplexer Wohnungsba} (to 0.25\%) and in industrial buildings (to 0.6\%), which reflected the ambition of the \textit{Bitterfelder Weg} to strengthen the role of art in people’s daily lives.\textsuperscript{35} In the final legislation of 1971, a general allowance of 0.5\% for non-residential construction (public buildings) up to a total sum of five hundred thousand East German Mark was specified, de facto leading to a reduction of funds (the previous allowance was 1-2\%) regardless of the ever-expanding scope of projects; and another decade on, only forty five East German Mark per flat, on average, could be spent on art and design.\textsuperscript{36} The proposed policy for complex planning of funds for art and design in complex construction projects – that is, to allow for funds to be used flexibly instead of being tied to investments for specific buildings – was a major source of dispute with economic planners from the State Planning Commission,\textsuperscript{37} while among practitioners in architecture and art this aspect reached widespread consensus. As I will discuss later, it was precisely this issue that became crucial for \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung}.

Also significant was the fact that Meier had started his presentation by noting that ‘[t]he term architecture-related art ultimately does not cover what we demand and strive for’.\textsuperscript{38} The shift in terminology he alluded to signalled a conceptual shift, which took place in the second half of the 1960s, when the concept of \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} gradually came to replace the idea of ‘synthesis of architecture and art’. The wider context of intellectual and disciplinary transformations that contributed to this change has been discussed in a previous chapter of this thesis, but it is worth recounting what Flierl described as ‘semantic aspects of environmental design’, which entailed coordinating and ordering all elements of the environment into a coherent whole, including architecture and art as well as landscaping.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Beiträge zur Diskussion}, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Mann}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Beiträge zur Diskussion}, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 123.
parks, visual communication, public transport systems, and other technical infrastructures in the public realm. By the late 1960s, the first practical proposals for such comprehensive design of urban spaces in cities had been developed. I already mentioned the work of the Institute for architecture-related art in Schwedt, which comprised a colour scheme for the entire housing complex as well as a complete catalogue of objects for the public realm – street furniture, playgrounds, small structures, shelters, sales kiosks, refuse bins, public phone booths, lighting etc. (See Figs. 6.4 and 6.5) In Karl-Marx-Stadt (now called Chemnitz), a team around the designer Karl Clauss Dietel had also developed a design programme for the entire city, which included benches made from glass-fibre reinforced plastic, a set of chairs and tables for garden restaurants and boulevards, a system of modular elements for playgrounds made from concrete and polyester, concrete elements that could be used for different purposes (as seats or stacked up as space dividers), steel and plastic structural elements for advertising displays, stands and podia, street lighting, bins, and a signage and visual information system. (See Figs. 6.6 to 6.8)

In their modular principle and distinct materiality, these designs shared many similarities with the work of West German designers, in particular those associated with the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm [HfG] (Ulm School of Design) – itself one of the major centres of the discourse and practice of Umweltgestaltung in the West. Those designers began to focus on the urban realm at the same time as their East German colleagues, and their projects received significant professional and public attention. A proposal by an interdisciplinary team of students from Ulm, for example, won a national competition for the design of a bus stand. Their scheme, which utilized modular elements from glass-fibre reinforced plastic, was exhibited as the German contribution at the infamous XIV Triennale in Milan on the theme

---

40 Kress and Rietdorf, pp. 261-81.


6.7 Modular elements for playgrounds, street furniture programme Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz). Horst Hartmann, Roland Lößler, Werner von Strauch. Ibid., p. 27.

6.8 Podia, stands, and displays, street furniture programme Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz). Paul Jung and others. Ibid., p.29.
of 'Greater Number', curated by the architect Giancarlo de Carlo.41 (see Fig. 6.9) This highlights the degree of exchange between professionals and the transfer of ideas and concepts across the rather permeable 'Iron Curtain' – unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the fact that West German design journals were available in design offices and academic institutions, and taking into account that one of the supervisors of the award-winning design project was Claude Schmaidt, a Swiss leftist architect who visited the GDR and contributed to East German architectural discourse. But the terminology of Umweltgestaltung in East and West Germany bore striking resemblance, too. Writing in the West German design journal form in 1968, HfG professor Gui Bonsiepe defined Umweltgestaltung by distinguishing it from the practice of Umweltkontrolle [environmental control], arguing that the former concerned humans’ 'physical environment', while the latter dealt with aspects such as climate, geophysics and ecology in the conscious and planned transformation of the natural environment.45 As a field of practice, Umweltgestaltung thus encompassed many disciplines including ‘regional planning, landscape design, urban (or town) planning, architecture and industrial design, and should also stretch to the environment of signs – that is, the discipline of visual communication.’46 Bonsiepe’s discussion of Umweltgestaltung situated the concept in a Cold War geopolitical framework, by foregrounding its links to ‘environmental design’ in North American academic institutions. By contrast, his colleague Gerda Müller-Krauspe insisted on the German term; however, she, too, sought to grasp Umweltgestaltung’s scope by means of differentiation – in her case, between the individual sphere (of the home), where users possessed a certain degree of influence through consumption, and the social or collective sphere of the ‘environment’, whose material composition did not usually lie in the hands of its users.47 According to Müller-Krauspe, Umweltgestaltung by far exceeded what was commonly referred to as ‘design for the public’, as it included not only ‘transport systems and

43 Ibid., p. 40.
road infrastructures, but also hospitals and schools, production facilities from the factory building through the conveyor belt down to the individual work place’, which meant that it was really the ‘design of complex systems and its elements’ that was at stake. Following this brief excursus on the contemporaneous West German debate on Umweltgestaltung, I return to 1970s East Germany, where these diverging understandings of Umweltgestaltung – one more object-centred, disciplinary and practical, the other more systemic and societal with specific consequences for the organisation of labour and the production process – also began to take root.

To sum up the developments that took place over the course of the 1960s: the shift from discrete objects (architecture/building and art/decoration) and their direct relationship (the notion of synthesis) to larger and more complex systems (e.g. housing districts or entire cities) brought with it a series of discursive, aesthetic, formal, material, technical, institutional and legislative changes. In practice, the idea of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung meant not only a proliferation of new elements and material objects that needed to be considered in the production of the physical environment – leading to the inclusion of disciplines such as landscape, industrial and visual design –, but also a significant expansion of the scale of planning, and, as a consequence of these processes, new forms of collective and collaborative labour. The city of Rostock, for instance, was among the first in East Germany to develop a complex strategy for artistic development at a scale of 1:25,000 to accompany the city’s general development plans. This expansion led to greater centralisation on the level of local government and planning institutions, as it was usually city or chief architects and their offices for town planning who coordinated these complex proposals. Subsequently, separate interdisciplinary administrative structures were formed on the city level; in Berlin, for example, a Beirat für Stadtgestaltung [advisory council for urban design] headed by the city’s chief architect (first Joachim Näther, then Korn) was established April 1970. Its task was to

88 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
89 Hermann Meuche, ‘Bildkünstlerische Planung Rostock I’, Bildende Kunst, 25 (1977), 196-98. The plans were developed between 1970 and 1973, and were discussed at a joint seminar between architects and artists, but were not published until several years later.
coordinate art and design on the level of the entire city, and to ensure the artistic quality (and ideological fitness) of proposals as well as approve completed works. On the professional level, the Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Architektur und bildende Kunst (ZAG/AbK) [central work group architecture and art], which existed from 1968 as a joint forum between the BDA/DDR [Association of Architects] and the VBK-DDR [Association of Artists], played an important role in establishing and fostering debate about Komplexe Umweltgestaltung. It provided a space for interdisciplinary encounter where architectural and urban design projects could be analysed and critically discussed, theoretical concepts for the collaboration between architects, artists and designers developed, especially in the construction of housing, and where it would be possible to furnish new legislative frameworks for this type of collective labour. Between 1975 and 1983, Flierl was the group’s co-director from the architects’ side, and put questions of environmental design at the heart of debates. The extent to which the idea of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, by the early 1970s, had entered mainstream discourse on architecture and town planning in the GDR, and became recognized as a necessity was visible not least in internal documents and publications. A pamphlet discussing the ‘development of socialist town planning and socialist architecture’, prepared by the Bauakademie in 1971, included a section dedicated to the ‘complexity of socialist urban design’ that stressed the importance of integrated planning of green areas, open spaces, visual elements, lighting and technical infrastructures. Moreover, the book Wohnen in Städten by Bauakademie scholars Werner Rietdorf and Siegfried Kress, published in 1972 – an important handbook for the design of residential districts – also contained an entire chapter on Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, which outlined good design practice, giving detailed attention to each different element of complex design and including precedent where possible. Lagging behind – with fatal consequences as I will discuss below – remained only legislation. The updated regulations of

52 Kress and Rietdorf, pp. 261-81.
1971, mentioned earlier in this chapter, fell far short of what would have been necessary to allow successful practical implementation of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*. In the consultation process before passing the new law, the president of the association of architects Edmund Collein wrote to the Ministry of Construction, expressing his concerns that the regulations would not allow to deliver what was needed, and calling not only for an expansion of the new regulations to cover housing and the ‘entire socialist environmental design’, but also to increase the allowance from 0.5% of the construction budget for public buildings to a proportion of the entire housing project budget to be set aside for the design and production of additional elements of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*.\(^{53}\) His intervention remaining without success, it was within these regulations – out of step with both discourse and practical demands – that the team of artists and designers in Berlin-Marzahn were forced to work.

**Imagining the residential milieu in Berlin-Marzahn**

In February 1974, as set out in chief architect Korn’s brief for the preparation of an urban development concept, the city magistrate’s department for culture and the association of artists nominated a ‘collective of artists’.\(^{54}\) Their task was to devise an overall artistic strategy that should include a thematic programme as well as a plan identifying suitable sites for art and design, both of which were to be developed in greater detail as plans for individual parts (housing complexes) of the district moved forward. Their work commenced only one month later, immediately after first urban layout options had been drafted on the basis of the internal competition for the master plan – discussed in the previous chapter. The brief specifically noted that the leader and members of this collective must to be adequately trained to design ‘areas that are beautiful, have an experiential quality, and give aesthetic pleasure and joy to

---

\(^{53}\) ‘Schreiben von Edmund Collein an den Staatssekretär im Ministerium für Bauwesen Dr. Ing. Schmiechen vom 25.5.1971 [Letter from Edmund Collein to the state secretary in the Ministry of Construction Dr. Ing. Schmiechen]’, BArch, DY 15/778.

\(^{54}\) ‘Aufgabenstellung zur Erarbeitung der Bebauungskonzeption für den neuen Stadtteil in Biesdorf/Marzahn [Project definition for the development of a master plan for the new district in Biesdorf/Marzahn]’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
both residents and visitors.\textsuperscript{55}

Several reasons may have been behind the choice for Walter as team leader. Previously, he had worked alongside Womacka and other members of the Institute for architecture-related art on a number of high profile urban design tasks in Berlin. The most significant of these commissions was the design of temporary structures, architectural and visual elements for the Xth World Festival of Youth and Students in 1973.\textsuperscript{56} The experience gained from this project entered in a dissertation ‘on problems of visual communication in the city’, which he submitted to Humboldt University the same year.\textsuperscript{57} Walter’s colleagues in the World Festival of Youth and Students design project, painter Heinrich Tessmer as well as architect and illustrator Lutz Brandt, also became members of his team in Berlin-Marzahn. The designer Gunter Wächtler, who alongside Peter Rossa and Wolf-Dieter Schulze established the independent design studio GAT in 1970, had made a name for himself because to his designs for playgrounds and environments for children.\textsuperscript{58} Other team members were sculptors Ingeborg Hunzinger and Karl Blümel, painters Horst Göhler and Peter Hoppe, and designers Wolfgang Weber and Kurt-Heinz Rudolf.\textsuperscript{59} This mix of people – most of them educated at the progressive School for Applied Arts in Berlin-Weissensee and working at the intersection of art, architecture and design – was to ensure that the requirements for experience, aesthetic pleasure and joy set out in the brief would be met.

One person, however, usually remained in the background and was not publically credited, despite his involvement in the process of concept development: Flierl. By July 1974, just three months after their appointment, Walter’s team had prepared a first draft of the thematic concept, which it discussed with Flierl, who then drafted a section of the ‘overall concept for the artistic-aesthetic realm of complex environmental design’.\textsuperscript{60} In it, he pointedly reiterated

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{VIII. Kunstausstellung}, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{IX. Kunstausstellung}, pp. 294-97.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Zuarbeit zur: Rahmenkonzeption des künstlerisch-ästhetischen Bereiches komplexer
his sharp criticisms concerning issues of scale and semantics in the planning of artworks for large urban areas, previously formulated at the conference about ‘problems of synthesis of architecture and art’ in 1965, and published in the journal *Bildende Kunst* thereafter. In particular, Flierl raised suspicions about the common practice of employing ‘abstract’ political-ideological programmes as the basis for the spatial distribution of works of architecture-related art. He argued that, a ‘division of urban areas according to ideas would easily lead to the misconception that political-ideological premises could simply be converted into quantitative visual and spatial realities, thus equating the political-ideological programme with the artistic concept itself’. Flierl, however, believed that the challenge lay in successfully translating ideological intent into an artistic and spatial composition, which would allow for the former to ‘actually be experienced’ by people in day-to-day use. This meant, according to him, that ‘political-ideological intent’ must not be something ‘abstract, external and applied to urban ensembles’, but instead should be ‘developed in tune with social life’ as it unfolded in these concrete situations. Thus, ‘unimaginative and deadening repetition as well as ideological bias should be avoided from the outset’, and the viability of works of architecture-related art be more carefully considered with regards to scale, since decisions regarding sites were often made during the first stages of planning on the basis of drawings and models at a scale of 1:1000. Based on these earlier criticisms, Flierl started his text for the design of Berlin-Marzahn by warning that, without the necessary degree of ‘openness’, any conceptual proposal would run the risk of being ‘removed from everyday life.’

Experience has shown that overly schematic forms of communicating political-ideological contents in urban areas, especially in housing areas, are not only failing in

Umweltgestaltung für den Stadtteil Biesdorf/Marzahn, 10.7.1974 | Preliminary work: overall concept for the artistic-aesthetic realm of complex environmental design in the new district Biesdorf/Marzahn]1, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 14.
52 Ibid., p. 20.
53 Ibid., p. 22.
54 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
their effect, but even lead to residents' frustration with respect to political-ideological messages in their urban environment, their living environment in particular.\textsuperscript{66}

Flierl's sceptical outlook on the implementation of political-ideological programmes in the process of \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} did not mean, however, that there should be no overriding political themes in the design of the new district at all. Rather, these themes should be sufficiently open and generic so as to allow a differentiated approach to the content, form and disposition of works of architecture-related art, whereby messages could be toned down in some areas – mainly those for living – and accentuated in others – mainly those for public gathering. According to his text, the subject of 'life in socialism' was proposed as the overarching theme for the entire district, while 'working towards people's happiness' and 'life in the union of socialist nations' were identified as more 'specific' themes to be applied to the southern and northern parts of the district, respectively. Any recognizable spatial separation of these subjects according to housing complexes should nonetheless be avoided; for that reason, the two sub-themes as well as the larger theme were meant to converge in the central part of the new district.\textsuperscript{67}

Another four months on, in November 1974, Walter presented a draft of the overall concept for Berlin-Marzahn at the seventh seminar of the ZAG \textit{Architektur und bildende Kunst} in Dresden, dedicated to the topic 'design of the living environment'.\textsuperscript{68} This draft reflected, in principle, the final concept that was published alongside the urban development plan in the journal \textit{Architektur der DDR} two years later, in October 1976, just months before the first tenants moved into their newly built homes on East Germany's largest construction site.\textsuperscript{69} The


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{69} Korn, Schweizer, and Walter, pp. 553-55.
proposals sought to respond to the aspects of complexity, experiential quality, aesthetic pleasure and joy in the official brief as well as answer Flierl's concerns regarding thematic and spatial differentiation and balancing everyday aspects with political-ideological concerns. Walter and his team thus defined five 'principles of design': first, to achieve a harmony between use-value and experience-value based on the requirements of socialist urban living; second, to create spaces that are inviting and rich in variety, and which enhance people's wellbeing; third, to make statements about the specific character of the era as well as about distinctive natural conditions of landscape and place through works of art, applied arts and design – the former accentuating (rather than dominating) the environment; four, to avoid both overemphasizing the meaning of art and technically-rooted monotony and perfection by developing designs that were oriented towards people's actual needs while harmonizing aesthetic aspects with use; five, to consider, even actively promote residents' collective and individual activities.\textsuperscript{70} Issues as everydayness, usability, personal wellbeing, identification of residents with the new neighbourhood, and user-engagement evidently stood in the foreground of these proposals, and it is clear enough that they were formulated in contrast to persistent dogmatic positions concerning the 'monumental' character of socialist-realist art in its synthesis with architecture, which, as proponents of this idea held, ought to 'challenge its viewers'.\textsuperscript{71}

On the basis of these principles, Walter and his colleagues devised a strategy for the implementation of architecture-related art in the new housing district, which proposed a methodical framework for the distribution of all elements of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung that consisted of three levels. The first level integrated landscape and open space design with large-scale structural design features on buildings and complexes. Visual communication, elements of urban infrastructure, so-called Sekundärarchitektur – that is, ancillary small structures for different amenities that were not included in the standard for 'basic equipment'

\textsuperscript{70} Walter, 'Probleme', p. 16.
of the housing district –, and street furniture formed the second level. And the third level included decorative designs and realist artworks. By doing so, the artists and designers sought to accommodate the frequent calls for complexity and for integrating overlooked and previously unconsidered elements into a comprehensive scheme for art and design in the entire district. However, the authors also did not fail to recognize the degree of ambition in their proposals, which, first and foremost, defined an overarching goal and a basic strategy as to how this goal might be achieved. There already appeared to be a sense of apprehension in their text, however, in particular where they point to aspects such as the lack of formal guidelines to maintain overall objectives during stages of implementation or the division of labour – between themselves as overseeing the production process and individual artists and designers working as subcontractors to the housing construction combine (who was the main contractor for overall works). I will return to these concerns further below in this chapter.

Work on the overall concept for art and design in the district was completed in February 1975, concurrent with the urban development plan. This concept was accompanied by a series of imaginative and enticing sketch perspectives prepared by Brandt. These drawings fittingly illustrated the ambitions of the artists and designers. They depicted residential courtyards full of lush vegetation; winding paths, lined with carefully designed lighting features, cut through intricately landscaped areas, leading to intimate spaces and places for informal gathering, social interaction and communication. One image showed innovative play areas, including what looks like a BMX or skateboard track, next to a picnic area covered by an awning and populated by a mix of fixed furniture and deck chairs. Another sketch comprised intersecting planes of vertical timber poles and horizontal decks, which formed a landscape of platforms waiting to be inhabited. Lastly, there were secluded communal areas with cobbled floors. Ready with parasols, the message these images seemed convey was one of life in the new housing district as one endless sun-filled summer’s day.

---

28 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
29 Korn, Schweizer, and Walter, pp. 554-55; ‘Berlins Neunter’, pp., 12-17, 43.

6.12 Concept design sketch by Lutz Brandt showing residential courtyard in Berlin-Marzahn. Ibid., p. 555.
6.13 Concept design sketch by Lutz Brandt showing residential courtyard in Berlin-Marzahn. Ibid., p. 555.

6.14 Concept design sketch by Lutz Brandt showing residential courtyard in Berlin-Marzahn. Ibid., p. 555.
Aesthetic pleasure and joy they surely did promise. With hindsight, the worlds imagined by Walter’s team and captured on paper by Brandt appear to be strangely apt representations of ‘developed’ socialism under Honecker. Lacking people while being full of things – thus more suggestive of use and action than actually showing it – they portray a sense of standstill, of being frozen in time, and thus could be read as emblems of and statements about (intentional or not) the social trade-off that characterized this period: ‘expanded consumption and material security in return for political quietude, if not loyalty.’ The crucial role played by housing in this social deal, summed up in the slogan ‘To each person not a dwelling, but his dwelling’, has often been remarked upon, also by the protagonists themselves. Flierl, for example, has noted how under Honecker socialist utopianism was substituted by pragmatism in architecture, as well as in other aspects of life.

Regardless of how we read Brandt’s images today, at the time, they did address serious problems in the production of the built environment, in particular of new housing districts. And they offered serious and workable solutions to widely discussed (especially among architects and socialists) problems of life in these new environments, as well. The hand drawn sketches attempted to illustrate how the practice of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung – a planned process that integrated landscape, architecture, design and art in the environment – would become a means for creating a ‘milieu’, a distinct social and material reality, as its product. The term milieu was in widespread use by East German urban sociologists throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The cultural sociologist Fred Staufenbiel defined milieu as follows:

---


Not only houses, alleyways, streets, squares and parks etc. are called 'milieu' by their users; it [milieu] is also the appropriation and integration of the spatial-material environment by its users. People's social relations are reflected in the appearance of the things they use, which create the [material] conditions for their lives. Therefore, in the cooperative use of built structures, social relations, more specifically the culture of social relations, can bring about a degree of self-regulation among users.\footnote{Es sind nicht einfach die Häuser, Gassen, Straßen und Plätze sowie Parkanlagen u.a., die von den Nutzern als Milieu bezeichnet werden, sondern die im sozialen Gebrauch erfolgte kulturelle Aneignung und Vervollständigung der räumlich-gegenständlichen Umwelt. Die sozialen Beziehungen der Menschen finden ihren Niederschlag im Aussehen der Dinge, mit denen sie umgehen, die sie als Bedingungen ihres Lebens benutzen. Also sind es besonders die sozialen Beziehungen, genauer die Kultur der zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen, die im kooperativen Gebrauch der Baulichkeiten eine gewisse Selbstregulation des Verhaltens der Nutzer hervorbringt.' Fred Staufenbiel, 'Stadtmilieu - wodurch wird es gebildet und welche Bedeutung hat es als Planziel? Soziologische Aspekte', Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der HAB Weimar, 32 (1986), 65.}

However, Staufenbiel's description of milieu, and the summary of 'milieu-forming' factors that followed from it, seemed to rest upon a pre-existing built environment. What if there were no houses, alleyways, streets, squares and parks in the first place? It is worth recounting here the critical expert report Staufenbiel, Flierl, and others prepared in October 1974, during the early stages of the planning and design process, with the intention of influencing it.\footnote{Studie über soziologische und umweltgestalterische Probleme der städtebaulichen Planung des neuen Stadtteiles in Biesdorf-Marzahn [Kurzfassung] [Study about sociological and environmental design problems in the urban plan for Berlin-Marzahn'], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 14.} This report highlighted problems in the overall urban development plans from the perspective of sociology and environmental design. It boldly argued that it would require significant efforts to create an environment, in which functioning communities from more than one hundred thousand new residents – effectively strangers – would form, and which could stimulate identification and a sense of 'Heimischfühlen' [feel at home] in the new district.\footnote{Ibid.} Comparative sociological analyses of historic residential neighbourhoods and new housing districts carried out in the 1970s had revealed, unsurprisingly perhaps, that the former possessed specific social qualities, which the latter were lacking. While here a milieu existed, or rather had formed with time, there it had to be created 'from scratch'. From today's perspective, the
positivist transfer of findings gained from quantitative and qualitative analysis (often a mix of survey statistics, drawing and photography combined with methods borrowed from environmental psychology etc.83) of ‘found’ residential environments – including underlying biases and presumptions – into a role model for the design of new housing districts seems rather problematic.

Nonetheless, it was precisely those social and spatial qualities that Brandt’s sketches alluded to; and within them, the elements that were described by Walter and his colleagues as belonging to the second level – small structures and street furniture – were granted a special role in the fabrication of a residential milieu, and were thus given major attention by both architects and designers. In spring 1974, Walter, Brandt and another colleague from the Institute for architecture-related art in Weißensee had, for instance, developed a modular construction kit for an urban communication and information system.84 (see Fig. 6.15) ‘At present’, they wrote, ‘efforts are concentrated on utilising urban furniture to complement urban-architectural designs and to differentiate public spaces, and, in doing so, raise the experiential quality of new housing districts.’85 Flierl also collaborated on the project by preparing a text, in which the scheme and its potential for flexible use as well as near universal application in different contexts were discussed at length.86 According to him, the system’s benefit lay in its ability to encourage communication between people by defining designated spaces within the urban environment for personal information and communication. Employed, above all, in heavily frequented areas, at intersections or in pedestrian zones, the single-storey structures would help ‘to clarify spatial situations, order the flow of movement, and organize different kinds of information and functions into a coherent and easily comprehensible whole.’87 Thus, elements of Sekundärarchitektur such as the modular system proposed by Walter and Brandt were seen to fulfil two major functions: first, a more social function in providing spaces for

85 Ibid., p. 6.
87 Ibid.
6.15 Spread from the journal *Form + Zweck* showing design proposal for modular street furniture series *Kominform* by the Institute for architecture-related art (Lutz Brandt, Mathias Frotscher, Rolf Walter). Walter, Rolf, 'Baukasten für Stadtmöbel', *Form + Zweck*, 7 (1975), 6-8.

6.16 Spread from the journal *Form + Zweck*. Köster, Hein, 'In Städten gesammelt', *Form + Zweck*, 7 (1975), 17-23.
encounter and communication between people, and, by doing so, to overcome anonymity in new mass housing districts; and, second, a more aesthetic function by helping to differentiate large open spaces between standardized housing blocks with the help of a highly recognizable yet flexible building system, which could integrate other elements such as bins, advertising, signage, lighting, and others. This second aspect resonated particularly strongly with efforts among architects and designers in the GDR (and elsewhere\(^{88}\)) to improve the character of the urban environment by coordinating and organizing the different elements and material objects that could be found in it. During the 1970s, the East German design journal *Form + Zweck* ran a series of photo essays (with images by Ulrich Wüst) under the title 'In Städten gesammelt' [collected in cities], which visually documented, in an objectifying style not dissimilar to that of Bernd and Hilla Becher, the great variety of objects in the urban realm – benches, bike stands, bins, bus stops, ticket machines, clocks etc. – as well as their situation.\(^{89}\) [see Fig. 6.16]

But let’s return to Brandt’s sketches once again. These images, while presenting valid proposals to improve the environment of the new mass housing district, also revealed something about its overall production process – the role given to art and design in this process, and, crucially, the incapacity of building production to adapt standardized housing to local conditions and the growing social demand for differentiation and individualisation. In Brandt’s illustrations the buildings had receded into the background. They merely became abstract wire-frames, between and over which were placed the elements that ‘added’ life to the environment. This additive understanding of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, which eventually signalled the disappearance of architecture from its scope did not go unnoticed, and became a source of criticism – and eventually resentment – among architects and theorists such as Flierl. In an article published in a special issue of *Form + Zweck* dedicated to the topic of ‘living with street furniture’, Flierl denounced the additive approach to *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*.

\(^{88}\) See for example the handbooks for urban design published by the *Institut für Umweltgestaltung* [institute for environmental design] in Aachen, West Germany. Dieter Boeminghaus, *Fussgängerzonen: Gestaltungselemente* (Stuttgart: Krämer, 1978).

\(^{89}\) Hein Köster, 'In Städten gesammelt ', *Form + Zweck*, 7 (1975), 17-23; red., 'In Städten gesammelt ', *Form + Zweck*, 9 (1977), 18-24.
Umeweltgestaltung visible in Brandt’s sketch perspectives and rooted in Walter’s methodological framework for the design of the ‘artistic-aesthetic realm’.

This method is problematic, for it only covers the ‘artistic-aesthetic realm’ of complex environmental design, and level one contains only architecture’s visible surface as an object of design. [...] If it is accepted from the outset that newly constructed buildings are unchangeable, the task of environmental design becomes limited to the external appearance of the built environment. [...] Above all, this concerns ’products’ of building production. An industrially mass-produced building can only be moved a few meters here and there in the urban plan if necessary in case any design changes occur [...], but otherwise it can only be decorated.90

To be sure, Flierl’s criticism was primarily aimed at building production; yet, his disdain for surface decoration of otherwise unchangeable standardized buildings persisted, and later he even coined the pejorative term ‘Archigrafik’ [graphics applied to architecture] for this type of work91, which came to play an important role in housing projects all over East Germany during the 1970s. Different techniques had been developed to apply large-scale murals and abstract graphic patterns to the surface of prefabricated concrete panels in the production process at the panel factories – from inlaid mosaics and coloured glazed tiles to pigments and special aggregates for exposed concrete surfaces.92 (see Fig. 6.17) Minutes from the archives of the district’s chief architect Graffunder and object lists confirm the significant amount of attention as well as funding given to these decorative works, which were most often installed

6.17 Spread from the journal *Deutsche Architektur* showing the application of art to prefabricated concrete panels in the district Cottbus, Kästner, Heinz, 'Baugebundene Kunst im industriellen Fertigungsprozess', *Deutsche Architektur*, 22 (1972), 38-41.

on the bare gable walls of eleven-storey blocks so as to alleviate monotony and aid orientation.\textsuperscript{93}

Weber and Tessmer – both members of Walter’s concept development team – had developed such decorative designs for end gables, which were installed in the third housing complex north of the main district centre. The first of Weber’s designs (1980/81) was installed on two opposite corners along Märkische Allee, the main north-south axis along the western edge of Berlin-Marzahn.\textsuperscript{94} (see Fig. 6.18) It dealt with a typical design and construction problem of the standardized ten-storey QP 71 blocks: the open corners created by two perpendicular adjoining blocks, where untreated end gables created a canyon-like entrance into the residential courtyards. Weber continued the horizontal structure of the modular façade, using green and white ceramic tiles, and created an abstract pattern which formed an oval shape. The same principle was repeated on the opposite corner, thus forming an accentuated gateway into the district. His second design was located further east into the complex, opposite the Bürgerpark Marzahn [residents’ park].\textsuperscript{95} (see Fig. 6.19) On the gable of an eleven-storey block from the WBS 70 series, Weber installed a decorative graphic using red-stained gravel, factory-applied to the surface of the prefabricated concrete panels, which depicted seven large leaf shapes in response to the open landscape context. Compared with the work of Weber, Tessmer’s murals were more ‘conventional’ (though not necessarily in formal terms) works of architecture-related art, insofar as they were directly painted onto a rendered finish applied to surface of the prefabricated panels. (see Fig. 6.20) He worked typically on public rather than residential buildings, in particular schools, which were however constructed alongside the housing blocks as part of the ‘basic equipment’ of Komplexer Wohnungsbau.

Gertraude Pohl was another artist whose work was installed on a building type that was granted a great deal of attention: so-called Kinderkombinationen (KiKo), a mix of day nursery

\textsuperscript{93} Entwurf. Bericht zur Untersuchung weiterer Verbesserungen der städtebaulich-architektonischen Qualität im Investitionsgebiet Berlin-Marzahn, 13.07.1978 [Draft: report about possible improvements to the urban-architectural quality in the investment area Berlin-Marzahn], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 3.

\textsuperscript{94} IX. Kunstausstellung, p. 297.

\textsuperscript{95} Kunst in der Großsiedlung, pp. 39, 151.


and pre-school combined in one. Highly standardized buildings, they existed in each housing complex, so that creating individual character for each of those buildings became a key issue in order to improve orientation of children and parents. To this end Pohl developed a system for decorating entrance porches with abstract reliefs made from modular pre-cast concrete blocks decorated with bright acrylic paint, which resembled animals such as birds, trees or flowers.\(^6\) (see Fig. 6.21) Seven different Kikos were realized in Berlin-Marzahn using this system. All of these works – and indeed many others carried out in a similar vein – aimed at improving the 'experiential quality' as well as enhancing spatial and visual orientation. Moreover, their content and theme were frequently related to the natural and historical context of Berlin-Marzahn, making numerous references to local landscape and fauna as well as to the former rural character and peasant tradition. The latter was particularly important to creating a specific local character (or identity), evident not least in the preservation of the medieval village in the centre of the new mass housing district – itself a strong indicator of shifting planning paradigms –, which shows that Berlin-Marzahn was not, in fact, planned as a greenfield utopia, and that architecture combined with elements of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* should instil a sense of place and tradition instead.\(^7\)

The impossible in-between realm

The examples described above might, at first glance, suggest a successful implementation of the ideas of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in Berlin-Marzahn. And to some extent this was true, especially in the case of the above-mentioned abstract decorations or more 'traditional' works of architecture-related art such as murals and sculpture – occasionally even more 'functional' objects such as fountains. But what about other crucial elements of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* such as landscape design and greenery, visual communication systems, and street furniture objects? The story of their implementation, as I will discuss below, was not one of success – much to the frustration of Berlin-Marzahn's two lead designers during construction,

\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 84–85, 99, 156, 73, 75.

Graffunder and Walter. In 1979, the latter would even state that their work was, 'if not for the bin, then only fit for theory but not for practical implementation during construction.' To be sure, beyond the overall concept for the artistic-aesthetic realm (described above), Walter and his team had also developed detailed proposals for each housing complex as architectural design of these complexes progressed. In theory, this should have made their implementation relatively straightforward. For each of their detailed proposals, not only plans but also detailed perspective sketches – similar in style to those described above – were drawn up and made permanently available to the site management office in order to complement the urban-architectural plans for each individual complex. What, then, stood in the way of their implementation? Why was it that, as Walter furiously remarked, 'levels one and two of the overall concept were simply being disregarded during construction'?

Studying the difficult transition from design to construction of the different elements proposed by Walter and his colleagues reveals many of the problems and inherent flaws of East German building production, and highlights a number of contradictions between the frequently invoked ideal of collaboration between architects, artists and designers in the process of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung and the 'on-the-ground' reality of tinkering and 'makeshift' work, at its best, and open hostility and refusal to cooperate, at its worst.

The biggest obstacle, perhaps, lay in the structural separation between the stages of design and implementation, including the effects this had on the shifting role of involved actors in these stages – an inheritance from architecture, as art and design became more and more drawn into the logic of its production process. As urban plans moved out of the hands of city planners and into the hands of workers...

---

99 Ninth Kunstausstellung, p. 294.
100 Walter, 'Referat', p. 39.
101 On the notion of 'makeshift' as a broader phenomenon that characterized the reality of socialist life in contrast to the frequent claims of perfect planning and design, endemic specifically within debates about industrialized construction, see the recent work of Susan E. Reid on 'home making' in the Soviet Union under Krushchev. Susan E. Reid, 'Makeshift Modernity: DIY, Craft and the Virtuous Homemaker in New Soviet Housing of the 1960s', International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity, 2 (2014), 87-124.
6.22 Plan showing locations of works of architecture-related art in WK III Berlin-Marzahn by Rolf Walter and his team, 1979. LAB, C Rep 110-05 Nr. 18
6.23 Sketch showing public space designs for S-Bahn station in Berlin-Marzahn by Rolf Walter and his team. LAB, C Rep 110-05 Nr. 18

6.24 Sketch showing public space designs for S-Bahn station in Berlin-Marzahn by Rolf Walter and his team. LAB, C Rep 110-05 Nr. 18
6.25 Sketch showing public space designs for S-Bahn station in Berlin-Marzahn by Rolf Walter and his team. LAB, C Rep 110-05 Nr. 18

6.26 Sketch showing public space designs for S-Bahn station in Berlin-Marzahn by Rolf Walter and his team. LAB, C Rep 110-05 Nr. 18
architects (and their offices for town planning) and into the hands of so-called
Komplexarchitekten [lead architects responsible for the complex implementation of
architectural projects] in the housing construction combines, their schemes had to be
translated into the reality of the locally available standardized buildings and prefabricated
components, supplied by panel factories that were owned by the same combines.102 City
architects and their offices were only involved in the preparation of urban development plans;
the resulting architectural project and its implementation lay in the hands of architects that
were tied to the building industry, and city architects had little say in the development of
these projects. In principle, this split between concept design and implementation was
echoed in the role of Walter's team in the design and construction process of Berlin-Marzahn.
While the overall concept was prepared in conjunction with the urban development plan by
Berlin's chief architect Korn, the concepts for individual housing complexes were designed in
close relationship with the construction combine's chief architect for Berlin-Marzahn,
Graffunder. Yet, neither the overall concept nor the detailed schemes for individual
complexes were binding documents, which explains why they could be sidestepped so easily
during construction. The elements proposed in these schemes still had to be integrated into
the production process, which included aspects such as allocating budgets, appointing
individual artists and designers, resourcing suitable manufacturers (in case the former were
unable to produce the work by themselves), and sorting out materials and construction
facilities on and off-site. In all of these aspects, Walter and his team had little to no say. As
documents from Graffunder's archive show, they were responsible for concept development
only, and their contractual involvement ended after the stages of design and planning. Thus,
they were cut off from realization, unless they had landed individual contracts for the
implementation of one specific object (e.g. a work of architecture-related art).103

This meant, on the one hand, that the schemes developed by Walter and his colleagues had a

102 Frank Betker, "Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit": kommunale Stadtplanung in der DDR und nach
103 Über Fragen der Planung und Leitung bildender Kunst am Beispiel von Berlin-Marzahn
[Concerning questions of the planning and management of art based on the example of
Berlin-Marzahn], GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 11.
fundamentally non-binding nature, on the other hand, architects as well as economic planners could take great liberties as to whether they wanted to implement them, and to what extent. The latter proved particularly useful in the face of constant economic scarcity (financial, material etc.). With regards to level one of the overall concept – that is, landscape and greenery – significant budget cuts and transfers of funds from one budget item to another (another strategy to reduce costs and/or delay certain items in favour of others such as housing) occurred already during the first stage of the planning process. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the powerful State Planning Commission replied to a first draft of the urban development plan only weeks before its approval, asking for an overall cut of the project budget by about thirty percent, from between 3.8 to 4 billion East German Mark, as suggested in chief architect Korn’s proposal, to about 2.8 billion East German Mark. Among the items that were, in proportion, most severely affected by these early budget cuts were landscaping works. Not only did the state economic planners axe about fifty percent of the municipal gardening office’s funding, which meant that the planned park for public recreation had to be deferred to a later date, by when it was to be realised for only half the planned cost. Moreover, no million East German Mark of their budget were transferred to the budget for Sekundärschließung [secondary access], meaning that there was no separate funding for greenery; this also had to come out of the budget for landscaping and paving around the newly built blocks, which was cut, too. The State Planning Commission calculated that, compared to precedent, the proposed overhead allowance for these works was about two to three times above the national average for newly built suburban housing districts. The architects and designers had not provided any calculations to substantiate this increase, they argued, and so this allowance was cut by about twenty-five percent. The fact that Korn and Walter’s teams aimed to make significant qualitative improvements compared to older mass

\[104\] ‘Stellungnahme zur gesellschaftspolitischen und volkswirtschaftlichen Zielstellung für den komplexen Wohnungsnachbau im Stadtteil Biesdorf/Marzahn der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin, 16.1.1975 - Vertrauliche Dienstsache - [Response to the social-political and economic objectives for complex housing construction in the district Biesdorf/Marzahn in the capital of the GDR, Berlin]’, BArch, DH 2/21389.
housing districts went largely unheeded.\textsuperscript{105} The lush vegetation and intricate landscaping shown in Brandt’s sketches were thus, in effect, cut right at the outset. Walter countered in 1979, arguing that the elements included on level one of their overall concept were, in fact, free; they were ‘gifts given by nature, landscape and construction technology.’\textsuperscript{106} Either they already existed in the suburban landscape of Marzahn, or building activity formed them.

Hills and depressions, large boulders, sand pits, trees and bushes characteristic for the residential milieu, shrubs and flowers, if possible, small ponds, the existing network of paths etc. all lend themselves as beautiful natural design elements.\textsuperscript{107}

However, such a de facto ecological approach, he continued, could ‘not be planned five years in advance’, but demanded spontaneous decision-making ‘on site, whenever such a beautiful boulder has been dug up.’\textsuperscript{108} In addition to this, architects needed to be more flexible with regards to applying construction norms for external areas, and should instead test ‘new solutions, which may help reduce costs while increasing functionality and experiential quality.’\textsuperscript{109}

As regards the elements that belonged to the second level of Walter’s overall scheme – visual communication and orientation systems, small structures and street furniture, lighting, and others – the situation was even more complicated. If the landscaping budget had merely been cut, there was not even an allocated budget for those other items to begin with. Archive documents reveal that it was these cost issues, and connected with it, uncertainties about the production of elements such as orientation systems and street furniture, which significantly hampered their implementation, regardless of the fact that both sides – Graffunder, initially representing the housing construction combine, as well as Walter and his team – frequently insisted on their importance for the project. Indeed, as previously discussed in this chapter, Walter and Brandt as well as Wächtler (with his design studio GAT) had developed solutions

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Walter, ‘Referat’ p. 39.
\textsuperscript{107} ‘Hügel und Senken, große Findlinge, Sandkuhlen, für Wohnkieze charakterisierende Baum- und Straucharten, Stauden und Blumen, soweit möglich, kleine Teiche, die Linien des Wegenetzes usw. bieten sich als schöne natürliche Gestaltungselemente an.’ Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 39
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 39.
for these elements from the first stages of planning Berlin-Marzahn; and as detailed design moved on, these and other proposals were further developed, too. Yet, by March 1979, almost two years after work on site started and with more and more people moving into the new district, still none of these proposals had been implemented. Some remained stuck at the stage of modelling, others had been prototyped and were ready for production, but due to unclear funds no work contracts had been signed between the housing construction combine and the nominated manufacturers. One of those items, the signage and orientation system designed by Hans Michael Linke, Utz Müller and Klaus Stützner, was delayed by more than a year, and could not be produced by the signage factory in Beutha even though production drawings had been issued, as Walter remarked.** (see Fig. 6.27) Archival records reveal that this was caused by the continuing resistance of the housing construction combine, so that contracts could not be signed until March 1980, another year on, and the signs had to be retrofitted to the finished blocks in housing complexes one and two; only in complex three could they be installed without delays. Production drawings for the street lighting programme for main pedestrian areas were also completed; Walter and Brandt’s own urban communication and information system was also ready for partial production; GAT’s modular building system for playgrounds as well as awnings to be installed on residents’ loggias and a system for customized entrance porches were all at detailed design stage. ‘The drawers are full of thoughts, ideas, concepts and designs’, Walter noted, but it was down to the site management team and the housing construction combine to ‘decide whether they wished to identify with these design proposals that were essential for raising the experiential quality.’***

In April 1980, the journal *Form + Zweck* published another special issue on ‘urban spaces’, which included an article by Walter that introduced a building system for the intensified use of open areas developed by the Institute of architecture-related art in Berlin.**** (see Figs. 6.28 to 6.31) It featured not only a modular system of coloured concrete paving slabs with a (curved or diagonal) stepped profile, designed by Jürgen and Ursula Thierfelder, which could be used.

---

**Ibid., p. 41.
***Ibid., p. 41.

6.29 Awning designed by Christian Tietze from the street furniture programme for Berlin-Marzahn. Ibid., p. 8.
6.30 Sketches showing concrete parasols and wall elements from the street furniture programme for Berlin-Marzahn designed by members of Institute for architecture-related art. Ibid., p. 9.

6.31 Model of modular system for single-storey buildings from the street furniture programme for Berlin-Marzahn designed by members of Institute for architecture-related art. Ibid., p. 9.
to form raised planting and public seating areas. It also presented designs for a concrete wall system, based on the the same module size of 120 x 120 cm (coordinated with the 6 m module of prefabricated housing so as to allow easy production and on-site installation, and to extend buildings). This system could be combined with square concrete parasols that formed sheltered areas. The accompanying sketches (presumably by Brandt) suggested different uses such as bus shelters, covered picnic areas in residential courtyards, or open-air bowling alleys.

Another system that consisted of light structural beams and wall panels could be used to create small buildings such as sales kiosks or cafes. The last element was a prototype for an awning, designed by Christian Tietze, which had been installed outside a nursery in Berlin-Marzahn.

Behind the façade of progress, however, the situation had become increasingly hopeless, and the relationship between chief architect Graffunder, the team around Walter, and the architects in the housing construction combine turned increasingly bitter, as problems and tensions kept mounting. Letter exchanges between the city leadership, site management team and the housing construction combine reveal that, even if they essentially welcomed the artists' and designers' proposals for improvements to the quality of the built environment, they were sceptical and rather hesitant as to their swift implementation.\(^\text{113}\) While the site manager noted that production capacities for the proposed elements still needed to be clarified, and that the items proposed by Walter and his colleagues might come at the expense of ‘other projects', the housing construction combine insisted that it would not be able to supply the proposed standardized street furniture items as had been claimed by the designers. Memos, both by Walter’s team member Wächtler and by Graffunder provide a sense of the degree of frustration and offer glimpses of the intense conflict between architects and artists.

\(^\text{113}\) ‘Schreiben des Aufbauleiters Eschricht an den stellv. Oberbürgermeister Dr. Günter Peters vom 25.8.1977 [letter from site manager Eschricht to deputy mayor Dr. Günter Peters]’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. gj0002, Box 68/fol. 3; ‘Schreiben des Direktors des Wohnungsbaukombinats Berlin Obering, Radke an den Magistrat Berlin [letter from the director of the housing construction combine Radke to the city magistrate Berlin]’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. gj0002, Box 68/fol. 03.
as well as designers over the question of what was desirable and what was feasible. Both sides admitted to being partially responsible for the situation. Wächtler noted that some artists acted irresponsibly and unreasonably, and showed little willingness for interdisciplinary cooperation. At the same time, their proposals were met with a great degree of resistance from lead architects and project managers, who sought to diminish the role of art, and who regarded artists as partners forced upon them, arguing that it was down to the artists and designers themselves to establish subcontracts with manufacturers – practically impossible in the case of mass produced items such as the proposed street furniture series, as Wächtler emphasized. The housing construction combine, the main ‘producer’ of the district, often delayed the implementation of architecture-related art, Wächtler noted, and its representatives held the view that any illusions were dangerous and that project changes were impossible. Even if they were legally obliged to set aside 0.5 % of the construction budget for public buildings for architecture-related art, they might still not use it. In his view, it was intolerable that the housing construction thwarted all efforts to realize aspects from the overall artistic-aesthetic design concept by threatening that this would lead to a shortfall of two hundred flats. Graffunder’s notes in many ways confirm these grievances. For instance, he, too, acknowledged that there were ‘cases where ignorance meets indignation, where balance sheets, norms etc. are turned into a bulwark of defence; and as endless bickering offers no results, the ideological field of rubble is happily left to more senior managers.’

That said, artists’ concepts and design schemes, according to Graffunder, also needed to be feasible – technologically, economically, and so on – just as any architectural project. Thus, he

---


65 Guth has noted that tax regulations in the GDR made such work almost impossible, since the reduced tax rate of 20% only applied to work within the fields of graphic design and applied arts if artists could prove a thematic link to ‘realist’ art; otherwise a significantly higher tax rate of up to 90% was charged, making mass production beyond small series of more than twenty items economically unsustainable. See fn. 777, Guth, p. 441.


67 ‘Über Fragen der Planung und Leitung’, GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 11.
placed great hope in the Büro für architekturbegleitende Kunst (BfK) [office for architecture-related art] in Berlin-Buch, which was established in 1980 as a local production company for works of architecture-related art, and which, he hoped, would be a more equal professional partner for the production-oriented and industrially organized housing production combine, while, at the same time, supporting artists in administering contracts and supplying materials and technologies for production and on-time delivery.\textsuperscript{118}

All this points to the serious structural, administrative, and legal deficiencies, which were adding to financial and material deficits, and which resulted, as Flierl critically remarked in a talk in 1977, in an insufficient degree of complexity in the design of the environment.\textsuperscript{119} The main target of his criticism was the increasingly strong division of labour in the process of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in its first attempts at practical implementation in the GDR.\textsuperscript{120} This was, above all, a social challenge, which called for a thorough analysis of current labour processes in the design and production of the physical environment in order to further qualify this process in the transition from socialism to communism.\textsuperscript{121} (see Fig. 6.3) Flierl thus confronted his – negative – analysis of the actual situation with an ideal scenario for the organization of work as well as relationships between different professionals. He argued that there needed to be a dialectic relationship between the unity of objects that make up the environment and the socialisation of subjects in their production process. Different objects—landscape, buildings, street furniture, graphics, and others—corresponded to distinct subjects of environmental design—landscape and urban planners, architects, industrial, graphic designers, and so on. Each subject was accountable for the design of its matching object, but

\textsuperscript{118} ‘Entwurf, Verfahrensordnung über den Prozessablauf bei der Planung, Vorbereitung und Durchführung von Aufgaben der komplexen Umweltgestaltung in Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR [Draft, code of procedure concerning the process of planning, preparation and implementation of tasks of complex environmental design in Berlin, Capital of the GDR]’, LAB, C Rep 735, 308.


\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 61.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 60.
also for the resulting totality of all objects. It was the task of the ‘manager’, Flierl continued, to integrate the different design activities, and to ‘enable cooperation’ as well as ‘release creative potential’, so that all partners in the process could recognize their ‘individual desire in the whole’ as well as their ‘collective responsibility for Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in its entirety’.

Next to Flierl’s utopian claims, Graffunder’s suggestions seemed rather more pragmatic: to remove the 0.5% clause and allow for funds to be used flexibly for complex projects by making an overhead allowance for art and design per newly built flat; to introduce binding object lists so as to ensure continuity between concept design and production stages; to assist artists by budgeting all necessary construction work for the installation works of architecture-related art on buildings and in urban spaces; and to systematically check whether work has been implemented as planned prior to issuing completion certificates. Yet, even those seemingly small steps must have felt like bold claims in the face of the general situation of further budget cuts for the construction of housing, introduced by the state leadership in January 1980, which as Graffunder pointed out, stood in sharp contradiction to the desire to introduce new elements. The following September, the housing construction combine issued a catalogue of standard street furniture objects for the district Berlin-Marzahn. It included not all, but some of the elements originally designed by Walter, Brandt and other members from the Institute for architecture-related art, and indicated quantities for each item according to each of the housing complexes. By 1987, only three of the concrete parasols were built.

This chapter set out to describe the design proposals for Komplexe Umweltgestaltung in Berlin-Marzahn and to discuss their degree of implementation. By initially mapping out the historical context of these proposals, I showed how the strategies and methods put forth in them

\[^{122}\] Ibid., p. 59.
\[^{123}\] Ibid., p. 60.
\[^{124}\] ‘Über Fragen der Planung und Leitung’, GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 11.
\[^{125}\] ‘Sekundärarchitektur, Ergänzung des Angebotskatalogs Freiflächen des VEB WBK Berlin, Erstanwendung in Berlin-Marzahn’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 71/fol. 2.
2. FREIRAUMÜBERDACHUNGEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POS.</th>
<th>SYMBOL-BEZEICH.</th>
<th>HERSTELL.</th>
<th>SKIZZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>WAETENHALLE FUR BUS UND STRASSENBAHN</td>
<td>VEB WERKSTEIN MUSSOELHEIM</td>
<td>![Sketch of a waiting hall for buses and streetcars]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>PILZ-ÜBERDACHUNGEN</td>
<td>VEB BAU-OEST &lt;br&gt; (VARIAZIE PSH BETONKUNST PETERSDORF)</td>
<td>![Sketch of a mushroom-shaped roof]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>PERSOLA</td>
<td>VEB WERKSTEIN MUSSOELHEIM</td>
<td>![Sketch of a pergola]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>SOLJEN-SEDEL</td>
<td>VEB FAVORIT TAUCHER &lt;br&gt; [Konstruktion]</td>
<td>![Sketch of a sail-like structure]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.33 Page from the housing construction combine’s catalogue of street furniture elements, 1980. GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 71/fol. 2.
critically responded not only to the intensification of building production – the construction of housing in particular – but also to previous attempts for a planned integration of architecture-related art in larger urban areas and mass housing districts from the late-1960s. I emphasized that the expanded scope of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung was meant to fill a material void in the newly constructed mass housing districts of the 1970s; it should increase their experiential quality and respond to users’ everyday needs. The proposed integration of landscape, architecture, art and design – in particular in the open spaces in-between standardized buildings (residential courtyards) – was seen as a means of forming a spatial framework for social encounter, individual and communal activities. The practice of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung should thus produce a specific ‘milieu’ in new housing districts like Berlin-Marzahn. While this goal inspired numerous design proposals for different elements in the urban realm – visual communication systems, street furniture, pavilions etc. – the implementation of these elements was frequently hampered by a mix of financial and material as well as structural, administrative, and legal issues, causing much frustration and intense criticism among architects, artists, designers, and theorists. There seemed to be an evident contradiction between the growing demands for increased qualitative standards in the production of the built environment, budget cuts and internal pressures to fulfil plan targets in housing construction that were further amplified in the capital East Berlin. This left many of the ambitious plans for an integrated comprehensive design of Berlin-Marzahn unrealized. As spaces between new housing blocks frequently remained untreated, residents began to implement landscaping and other works by themselves. This stimulated debates about the ‘subject’ of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, which I will turn to in the next chapter.
Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as
'cultural process' – public participation
in the production of the built
environment
The last chapters examined in detail the proposals by planners, architects, artists and designers for a complex design of the new housing district Berlin-Marzahn, and have emphasized the limited extent to which their ambitious plans could be put into practice. Shifting from ‘production’ to ‘use’, from the role of experts and professionals in the production of the built environment to that of residents in shaping the new housing district during and after its construction, this chapter investigates Flierl’s understanding of \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} as a ‘cultural process’. This idea, first formulated in 1974, drew from the work of East German cultural theorists working at the Central Committee’s Institute for Social Sciences. However, Flierl subsequently expanded their ideas into the notion of a ‘gesellschaftlicher Gesamtgestalter’ [socialised total designer] of the built environment, which he put forth in his post-doctoral thesis B in 1978. His ideas were based on the concept of the ‘total worker’, developed by Marx in his analysis of the production process. Flierl suggested forms of cooperation between experts and users, and called for democratic design processes that would engage residents beyond well-established practices of merely involving them in landscaping as well as maintenance and minor building works after the housing construction combine’s cranes of the had stopped swinging. According to Flierl, \textit{Komplexe Umweltgestaltung} demanded collective work based on ‘democratic decision-making processes, and through a step by step stimulation of peoples’ creative potential.’

In November 1974, at the 7th theory seminar of the ZAG/AbK [central work group architecture and art] on the subject of ‘the design of the living environment’, Flierl sharply criticised the hitherto existing approaches to involving residents in the production of the built environment.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2} ‘Thesen zur sozialistischen Kulturtheorie (2. Entwurf \textquoteleft Vertraulich\textquoteright [Theses for socialist cultural theory (2nd draft) \textquoteleft confidential’], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 303/fol. 7.
\end{itemize}
environment, especially the housing district. He noted that past attempts of Komplexer Wohnungsbau, despite their best intent to create complexity, had been largely unsuccessful, because they failed to produce an 'artistic-aesthetic milieu, which residents accept as an expression of their lives and thus respect as their environment, as something that belongs to them.' For Flierl, the recently finished housing districts of Halle-Neustadt provided the negative example on which he based his analysis as well as his emphatic (if somewhat presumptuous) statement that everybody, including the residents, 'felt a sense of unease' about these completely imagined environments, which were created entirely from scratch. Against this background, he argued that Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, as well as being aimed at 'process, growth, change, and flexibility' – I have discussed these demands in chapter five of this thesis – should, first and foremost, 'stimulate and foster the initiative of residents to transform their environment.' However, this statement did not seem to diverge from official calls for engaging residents in projects of Komplexer Wohnungsbau at the time. A related paragraph in the Komplexrichtlinie – the legal document for the planning of new housing also discussed in chapter five – stated:

Along with the urban planning, conditions must be created that will stimulate residents' need for active co-creation of their living environment and for forming relationships in a socialist community. Identification and feeling at home can only develop if we succeed in stimulating activities and initiatives, and, in so doing, manage to awaken a sense of responsibility and personal engagement. Socialist democracy offers numerous possibilities to include citizens in the planning and implementation of urban design projects.

6 Ibid., p. 19.
7 Ibid., p. 21.
8 'Mit der städtebaulichen Planung sind auch die Voraussetzungen dafür zu schaffen, daß das Bedürfnis der Bewohner zur aktiven Mitgestaltung ihrer Wohnumwelt und die Herausbildung sozialistischer Gemeinschaftsbeziehungen gefördert werden. Identifikation und Heimischfühlen entwickeln sich in dem Masse, wie es gelingt, Aktivitäten und Initiative zu
In which way then did Flierl’s notion of residents’ involvement in the process of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* differ from official understandings, and, above all, from the established practices of community participation in housing construction? In his eyes, the latter normally constituted ‘a singular cultural act,’ which, he believed, had ceased to be a workable model in developed socialist society, while the former offered a more appropriate vision of a ‘cultural process.’ In this process, residents should be enabled to participate and cooperate with different specialists and professionals in the design and production of their environment from the earliest stages, rather than merely being called in for manual labour—carrying out improvement and repair works to newly built housing and assisting in landscaping the often unfinished surroundings of housing blocks—after the implementation of finished plans. Flierl wrote:

> It would be a huge cultural advancement if people’s impulse to transform their environment was used not merely for shifting earth or for gardening works as part of the design of open spaces following the motto <Beautify our cities and villages>, and primarily in order to compensate shortages in labour, but rather for the intellectual-cultural aspects of environmental design as well. 

The notion of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* as cultural process put forward by Flierl was not completely new, however. In 1970, only four years before, the Chair for Cultural Science and Art History at the Institute for Social Sciences of the Central Committee had prepared a manuscript with the title ‘theses regarding socialist cultural theory’—marked ‘confidential’—, which, it seems, were intended to form the basis of a book project, as is suggested by a series
of internal documents from the following year. A section within this manuscript was entitled ‘Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as a cultural process’, and, as the outline of the planned book revealed, should have been further developed into chapter seven of the publication. Although the finished book appeared to have never been published – it may have been a victim of the leadership change that year –, the similarities between these earlier 'confidential' documents and Flierl’s paper from 1974 imply a relationship between the two.

Indeed, the chapter outline read like a blueprint of the ideas later drawn out in the ZAG/AbK seminar presentation. Among familiar issues such as the decisive role that the formation of the environment played in the development of socialist society, its integrative function linking various creative disciplines, and the man-environment-relationship, also featured 'peoples' democratic participation in the design of their environment.

However, while the authors of the cultural theory text praised the voluntary work carried out in country-wide competitions of mass-initiatives—in their eyes these initiatives were a 'true cultural process' that not only had positive economic effects but also bore potential for social transformation through joint work within the neighbourly community, Flierl’s understanding of the 'cultural process' of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung countered their view. In fact, as I showed above, it hinged on a scathing criticism, even dismissal of those initiatives as merely 'compensating shortages in labour.'

Mass initiatives and the shaping of housing complexes

The mass-initiatives that mobilised people for voluntary unpaid work outside their normal work hours had indeed been rooted in the wish to boost the national economy, especially in

\[a\] No author was given on the document, but I presume that Fred Staufenbiel had prepared the manuscript. He was Professor for Cultural Theory at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED since 1967, and served as head of the Chair for Cultural Theory and Art History at the same institution, meanwhile renamed Academy for Social Sciences, from 1974-1977. ‘Thesen zur sozialistischen Kulturtheorie’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 303/fol. 7.

\[b\] ‘Konzeptionelle Überlegungen zum Kulturtheorie-Projekt [Outline concept for cultural theory project]’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 303/fol. 10.

\[c\] ‘Thesen zur sozialistischen Kulturtheorie’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 303/fol. 7.
construction, and was embraced by the leadership for precisely this reason, even if over time economic aspects were superimposed with the ruling party's goals of reaching out to the population and increase its reputation. In the 1960s, for example, the Council of Ministers had called upon people to partake in after-work improvement and maintenance tasks through contracts for tenants' co-determination in publicly owned housing, and suggested that workers should be 'systematically integrated in the development of plans and the later final inspection of completed building and repair works.' In 1973, Wolfgang Junker, Minister for Construction, wrote in connection with the implementation of the leadership's housing programme that, 'planting and care for open spaces in our housing districts continue to be an important concern and a rewarding field of activity, which helps to extend our citizens' initiative in the 'Join – in!' competition.'

This landscaping and gardening work—either carried out a long time after the construction of the buildings, or not at all, due to site schedules and lack of funding—became an important feature of residents' life in Berlin-Marzahn, too (as in many other mass-housing districts of the GDR during the 1970s and 1980s), and to some extent succeeded in creating a sense of ownership, belonging, community and identity—of feeling at home. Writing in a photography catalogue about the district in 1999, the journalist Karin Matthees, who moved to Berlin-Marzahn in 1981—three years after construction started—positively remembered this voluntary collective work, commonly referred to as 'Subbotnik' (after the Soviet example).

Back then we kept our noses to the grindstone. There was a day of collective work among the community of the house on a Saturday of every third month. No, not officially ordered. We volunteered for this, and we enjoyed it. Together we painted and decorated the entrance to our house, cleaned the hallways, windows and

---

4 'Brief des Ministerrates an alle Räte der Bezirke, Städte und Kreise zu Fragen der Wohnungsbaupolitik [Letter regarding questions of housing policy issued by the Council of Ministers to all District, Town, and Township Councils]', BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06.48.
6 See chapter six.
stairways, created front yards, and planted trees. [...] Yes, socialist work in the collective was a point of honour. We were used to it. And still, we never won the 'Golden Street Number.' Others had the honour of winning this GDR-award for especially clean collectibly owned houses. Well, at least we had fun while doing it. Because after work was finished there was almost always a small house party: with grilled sausages, a few bottles of beer for the adults and plenty of lemonade for the children. We talked with each other, built trust, and helped each other.  

Sociological research carried out in Berlin-Marzahn during the 1980s measured the relative success of the citizens' initiatives and, at the same time, assessed the leadership's motives behind them. According to the published version of the report from 1987, Berlin citizens invested increasing amounts of their free time in measures to improve their residential milieu, in particular in organised form through the countrywide competition 'Beautify our cities and villages – Join in!' (the target of Flierl's criticism of 1974).  

The continuing engagement in these measures may have had two reasons: first, a purely pragmatic self-help attitude among the residents, and, as I showed, the state, faced with ever growing scarcity, systematically made more and more use of this; second, the peculiar mix of self-management and local institutional arrangements behind the initiatives. They were, as Matthees described, usually organised by Hausgemeinschaftsleitungen (HGL), housing community management teams formed amongst tenants in state and cooperative housing. Their voluntary work, however, was coordinated and supervised by the district committees of the National Front (WGA), an organisation founded by the SED after World War II, whose

---


task was to pursue socialist party interest across the coalition with other factions. However, during the 1970s and 1980s its tasks shifted predominantly to the regional level, in particular to the improvement of people’s daily lives, while fulfilling economic goals, at the same time. The countrywide ‘Join in!’ competitions provided an efficient means for doing so. Their precursor was the so-called Torgau-Initiative (named after a small town on the Elbe river), which started in April 1967 in the context of the VIIth Party Congress of the SED. The initiative’s calls for order, cleanliness, beautification of the residential environment, and tangible improvements to living conditions fitted well with official views of ‘socialist morality’, so that the leadership soon took notice, and decided to formalise the competition scheme and expand it to all district cities in the GDR. This model existed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and its official mottos were usually linked to Party Congresses or commemorative events – in its first round, the twentieth anniversary of the GDR and the hundreth birthday of Lenin, who had established voluntary labour in Russia after the October Revolution.

So even if the impulse to volunteer in these work initiatives came from the residents themselves, these initiatives were integrated into formalised structures and institutional frameworks with clear aims from the start, and, in the last instance depended on a system for the supply of tools and materials. The state-owned supply firm for construction materials in Berlin, for example, was responsible for securing the provision of materials for improvement works under the ‘Join In!’ competition in the capital, including the site of the housing district Berlin-Marzahn. And as the publication from 1987 confirmed, the function of both the district committees and housing community management teams was to reach all citizens

---

20. ‘Aufruf des Kreisausschusses Torgau “Wir sind dabei!”’ [Call of the district commission Torgau ‘We are joining!’], BArch, DY 6/2324.
23. Hanson, p. 99.
through a system of information and management of local activities, and to effectively include residents in working towards the completion of the 'central task' of resolving the problem of housing by 1990 under the leadership of the SED.\textsuperscript{25} And yet, the residents' wish for comfort and neighbourly activity in the new districts—to 'feel at home'—may have secured their continuing support.\textsuperscript{26}

The unpublished results of long-term sociological studies in Berlin-Marzahn revealed a certain indifference towards political ends. The report to the third interval of the study, carried out in 1986 (the first and second intervals were in 1980 and 1982), stated that, 'the hypothesis that the political system gained significance among citizens can not be confirmed; however, the authors still held that, 'the effectiveness of the political system within the district was perceived best through people's active participation in shaping their living conditions.'\textsuperscript{27}

The sociologists further noted factors of diversification such as age, social structure, and professional qualification, which all caused a highly differentiated perception of the leadership. Generally, with growing age and experience the interest in and knowledge of neighbourly activities as well as personal contribution to those activities increased, according to the report. Still, only twenty-seven percent of residents judged the effectiveness of the system to be positive, while about the same proportion felt it was ineffective and the rest believed it performed moderately, with a generally negative trend since 1980.\textsuperscript{28} At the same time, the proportion of people who didn't know of the system's activities grew. The recognition of local politicians (whose influence in district councils was extremely limited), for example, dropped by twenty-four percent in only six years.\textsuperscript{29} Nevertheless, according to the report, immediate neighbourhood services and the work of the National Front were judged positively, with seventy-nine percent of residents valuing the housing community.

\textsuperscript{25} Autorenkollektiv, \textit{Zwischen Alex und Marzahn}, pp. 134-35.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. pp. 134-37.
\textsuperscript{27} Forschungsbericht "Wohnen 86 - Marzahn": Zur Entwicklung eines Neubaugebietes der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin. 3. Intervall der Untersuchung (Beginn mit Wohnen 80 - Fortsetzung Wohnen 82) [Final report "Housing 86 - Marzahn": Regarding the development of a new district in the capital of the GDR, Berlin. Third interval of the study (first interval Housing 80 - continued Housing 82)", GESIS, 622 FOB H4B Wohnen 86 Marzahn.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
management-teams, while less than half of the residents positively noted the National Front’s district councils. And as regards citizens’ participation in the activities and mass-initiatives organised by these groups, thirty to forty percent stated that they invested more than three hours per month for tasks in the management teams or the district, however – perhaps surprisingly – forty-nine percent of workers said they would not carry out any voluntary unpaid work after hours, compared to around forty percent of qualified professionals and ‘intellectuals.’ The research also suggested a correlation between activity and types of housing, with lower rise and lower density showing more and different types of activity among residents. Nevertheless, similar to the perception of the political system, the report also noted that the quantity of communal engagement had declined since 1980.  

**Re-thinking strategies of engaging the subject of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung**

It was against this background of formalised and institutionalised communal improvement work to a readily supplied, and yet insufficient and incomplete built-spatial environment, produced by the technocratic and economically determined apparatus of the GDR’s state-socialist construction system (and by the architects and artists who had to work in it), that Flierl called for initiating Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as a ‘cultural process.’ Activating, as he called it, the ‘subject of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung’, Flierl argued, should increasingly lead to the meaningful intervention of residents, both on the material level of the environment as well as in the social process of its production. Flierl sought to integrate into the mass-housing schemes of Komplexer Wohnungsbau concepts and practices of resident involvement that were established in comprehensive refurbishment schemes of historic tenement quarters in the Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte neighbourhoods in Berlin.  

Sociologists noted the different qualities of involvement in these two parallel types of housing in the 1970s and 1980s:

While, during the extensive stage of our [urban] development, new housing districts could still be seen as the exclusive products of town planners, architects, and builders,

---

30 Ibid.
handed over to their users after their completion—during the concept phase the user remained an anonymous quantity of universal social-political goals, in refurbishment projects users are known already prior to the planning decision. They exist, they live in the area, they cannot simply be ‘factored in’, but they need to become engaged in conversation. They witness the development of the final product and therefore have to relate to it as its socialist owners, which means—actively and co-determinately.30

The issue of anonymity—alluded to in this statement—became a central subject in debates about social, functional and aesthetic parameters of standardized and industrialized mass housing in the GDR from its earliest days, and was addressed relatively openly by sociologists and architects. Flierl, too, recognised ‘that future users in industrially built mass housing, above all, were anonymous flat-hunters, who were lucky to receive a new home;’ therefore, ‘communication between producers and users could only take place through mediation: through intermediary institutions, or through the public sphere by means of publicity.’33 In light of the contemporary forms and official understandings of democracy and the public sphere in ‘real existing socialism’, it wasn’t surprising that Flierl instantly followed up his previous statement by noting that, ‘socialist democracy on the level of cities and villages and also the socialist press still have a lot left to accomplish.’34 Especially his last point concerning publicity, as I will discuss below, seemed to be a reference to Berlin-Marzahn and its makers, who remained strangely silent and undercover about the new district during its planning and design stages, at least compared to previous large-scale projects such as Halle-Neustadt and even other contemporary mass housing developments outside the ‘socialist metropolis’ Berlin,

34 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
which were covered more densely in the professional and daily press.\textsuperscript{35}

**Individual expression in mass housing**

However, I wish to briefly return to the previous point and talk about Flierl’s thinking concerning relationships between the individual subjects of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* and the material sphere, rooted in his critique of the 'underdeveloped expression of the individual in the city,' in particular in the design of mass-housing.\textsuperscript{36} In a paper presented in November 1977 at the colloquium of the International Association of Art Critics’ section on art and environment,\textsuperscript{37} Flierl reflected on a process that staggered sociologists, architects, artists, and designers:

> It seems as though tenants of newly constructed housing, as soon as they had moved and settled in, had nothing better to do than to transform their loggias – to paint, decorate, and furnish them – until this extended residential space suits them, and until they become unmistakably recognizable as residents of the building also from the outside, from the city – inside these grids of sameness and uniformity produced by

\textsuperscript{35} All the new towns were reported on and discussed in the professional journal *Deutsche Architektur* throughout the 1960s. Especially Halle-Neustadt was extensively covered in its various stages from the competition entries for the different districts through the scheme of public art. On publicity in Halle-Neustadt see: Albrecht Wiesener, ‘Steinerne Verheißungen einer sozialistischen Zukunft? Der Bau Halle-Neustadts aus gesellschaftsgeschichtlicher Perspektive’, in *Schönheit und Typenprojektierung: Der DDR-Städtebau im internationalen Kontext*, ed. by Christoph Bernhardt and Thomas Wolfes (Erkner: IRS, 2005), pp. 239-55. During the 1970s, the mass-housing developments in district cities like Erfurt and Rostock strongly featured in the renamed journal *Architektur der DDR*.


\textsuperscript{37} This original source is given in the published version of the text in *Architektur und Kunst*. An unpublished version of the paper is held in the DDR Collections at the Getty Research Institute. However, a note accompanying this document stated that the presentation was initially prepared as an inaugural lecture at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 1977. Yet the date on the typescript is March 1978. Bruno Flierl, 'Das Wohnhaus als Gehäuse und Zeichen des Individuums und der Gesellschaft: Gedanken zum Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR und zur kommunistischen Perspektive des Wohnens [The residential block as enclosure and sign of the individual and of society: thoughts concerning the housing program of the GDR and a communist perspective of housing]', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/1ol. 1.
industrialized mass housing.\textsuperscript{38}

This observation, which experts made in the rapidly growing mass housing districts across the GDR—including Berlin-Marzahn, where, in December 1977, the first residents had moved in\textsuperscript{39}—led Flierl to pursue two questions. If residents were happy to have a new home in the first place, and given that the socialist state actually attempted to satisfy their need for a decent apartment on an unprecedented scale: ‘What are those people missing?’ and ‘What do their houses lack?’\textsuperscript{40} These two apparently harmless questions gained further weight in relation to the subtitle of his unpublished manuscript—‘thoughts about the housing programme of the GDR and the communistic perspective of dwelling.’\textsuperscript{41} Flierl’s paper sought to provide a critical analysis of the leadership’s social policy, while invoking a utopian perspective: what did people miss in the new districts produced by the state’s housing programme, and what did contemporary housing lack within a communist perspective of the individual subject?

The first question tried to grapple with people’s visible desire to articulate their individuality within a predetermined, highly structured and regulated spatial (and socio-political) milieu. Individual expression in the city, Flierl argued, was only possible wherever the ‘individual sphere of domesticity could visibly transgress from inside into the exterior space of the city, through different openings\textsuperscript{42}—and the loggias of the standardised WBS 70 housing system formed one such ‘opening’. Berlin-Marzahn resident Matthees remembered such individual expressions in her neighbourhood, as well:

People got cartwheels, flails, and even timber rafters from god knows where, in order to give those concrete lookouts some Gemütlichkeit [cosiness]. Others, in turn, hand painted romantic alpine scenes or Mickey Mouse and his whole family on the rough


\textsuperscript{39} Peters, ‘Zur Baugeschichte’, in Marzahn, ed. by Engel, p. i5.

\textsuperscript{40} Flierl, ‘Ausdruck’, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{41} Flierl, ‘Das Wohnhaus’, GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
wants. And in spring people went hunting for sought-after geranium plants, best in bright red: yes, Marzahn began to blossom. Flierl (and others) became increasingly interested in these forms of self-expression in the late 1970s. Since its introduction into the construction sector at the start of the 1970s, the WBS 70 system had become the most widely used system in Komplexer Wohnungsbau. I previously pointed out that the Berlin District Plan Commission had recommended eighty percent use of the WBS 70 in Marzahn. In contrast to earlier types, every apartment now had its own loggia, thus further creating more and more potential spaces for individual design. In view of this fact, Flierl asked how to confront this phenomenon of residents' aesthetic interventions, which, he argued, presented 'anti-authoritarian forms of self-help directed against the authoritarian designs delivered by society and its designers.' Rather than responding with bans and rules – 'enforcing society's authority against the individual' – he argued that (socialist) society should develop this creative impulse among individuals by encouraging communication between architects and residents in the interest of 'harmonising social and individual intentions.' With regards to architecture, according to Flierl, this meant providing scope for expression either through an architecture that was "strong" enough to be able to "cope" with residents' individual expressions," or through buildings that were incomplete and open for individual action. This notion of the incomplete also underpinned his second question – What do houses lack?, which addressed mass housing and the use of standardised systems in the GDR on a deeper, more structural level. In so doing, Flierl's analysis went

43 'Also wurden von Gott weiß woher Wagenräder, Dreschflegel, sogar Fachwerkbalken besorgt, um dem Beton-Ausguck so etwas wie ländliche Gemütlichkeit zu verleihen. Andere wieder ließen selbstgemalte Alpenromantik oder Mickey Mouse samt Verwandtschaft auf den rauhen Wänden erstrahlen. Und im Frühjahr ging man auf Pirsch, um Pflanzen der begehrten Hängegeranien zu ergattern, am liebsten in Knallrot: Ja Marzahn blühte auf.' Matthees, 'Marzahn', in Marzahn, ed. by Engel, p. 7.
45 Flierl, 'Ausdruck' p. 66; Flierl, 'Das Wohnhaus', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.
46 Flierl, p. 66; Flierl, 'Das Wohnhaus', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.
47 Ibid.
beyond previous debates about monotony in the 1960s, which criticised primarily the aesthetics of standardised housing blocks (yet remained on the surface of their objects of critique) rather than engaging its actual structure from a social perspective. Flierl explained that the contemporary house as a standardised mass-produced object fundamentally differed from earlier socialist housing experiments, for example Soviet communal houses of the 1920s, since it no longer constituted a 'social organism in the sense of social community,' but instead had become an 'additive accumulation of apartments with individuals and families, who were relatively autonomous from each other and not functionally connected.'

The construction module formed the typical unifying grid pattern, and yet, as Flierl vividly described, residents' spontaneous individual articulations unwittingly created a startling effect at nighttime: as the built structure faded into the dark, 'self-display through light and colour' dominated the exterior. This led him to ask: could this not also be achievable in daylight

'Would it not be an imaginable model for a house: a house that expresses individual lifestyles within a structure defined by society! As a unity of societal design and individual forms of design. Architecture alone would not be the determining factor then. Its value could only be measured by the degree to which it can tolerate these individual expressions, because it becomes their basis [or carrier, T.L.]'

With this suggestion Flierl had moved far away from the actual conditions and restrictions of 'real existing' Komplexer Wohnungsbau under state socialism and forged ahead into the realm of future possibility, in which residents of mass housing had ceased to be 'objects of design' and instead became liberated 'subjects shaping their lives and environment.' It is unknown to what extent Flierl's ideas may have drawn from architectural theories and user-oriented or participatory design projects by his contemporaries in Eastern and Western Europe. In his

---

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
text, at least, he made no explicit reference to their work; there are, however, several
indicators that he was intimately familiar with the state of contemporary architectural
discourse and practice, as all major journals were available at the Bauakademie.
In the mid-1970s, the design journal *Form + Zweck* became the centre for debates concerning
how architecture and design might be able to negotiate between the growing social demand
for individualisation and individual expression, on the one hand, and the methods of
standardization and mass production, on the other. These were indicators of a postmodern
discourse beginning to take root in East Germany, too. Alexander Ryabushin, for example,
published a long article in which he discussed the notion of the ‘user as producer’.\(^5\) In it he
argued that people strove to ‘personalise their surrounding environment, and, by doing so, to
bring it closer to them, as if to leave their mark on it. Therefore, truly complex design must
give people the freedom to choose from variety, which meant creating a maximally elastic,
flexible environment – subordinate to their will [or desire, T.L.] – with the potential for
individual fulfilment and self-affirmation.\(^5\) This needed to encompass, he argued, not only
changing the functionality of given elements, but also having greater influence on their form.
According to Ryabushin, with regards to housing and the design of homes, this meant change
in two separate directions; first towards the development of ‘neutral systems of fixed
equipment, integrated with architectural design’, and, second the development of
‘complementary items, more closely linked with decorative and applied arts’.\(^5\) Ryabushin’s
ideas were limited to the domestic interior, a field East German architects and designers had
also ventured into at the beginning of the 1970s, with design experiments for ‘flexible living’
that were realised in different cities – among them also Berlin.\(^5\) Flierl, however, suggested to
go beyond the interior space of the home, and called for developing means to express users’
individuality in the structure, in the fabric of the building itself. Doing so, he also maintained
a division between hard/fixed elements and soft/flexible ones.

\(^{50} \) Ibid., p. 25.
\(^{51} \) Ibid., p. 25.
\(^{52} \) Harald Engler, *Wilfried Stallknecht und das industrielle Bauen: ein Architektenleben in der DDR*
(Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2014), pp. 74-76.
In Western Europe, the Dutch architect and theorist John Habraken had put forth the notion of ‘support’ structure and ‘infill’ as ‘an alternative to mass housing in his influential book *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing*, published in 1972. Another reference may have been the work of Polish architect Oskar Hansen, who first presented his concept of ‘open form’ to the members of TEAM 10 at the CIAM meeting in Otterloo in 1959. Hansen had worked on a project for the linear urbanisation of Poland called ‘Linear Continuous System’ since the late 1960s. In particular Hansen’s ‘Western belt’ project for the city of Lubin from 1976, which proposed a fixed structure of terraces with individual self-built units, seemed to resemble the structuralist vision for mass housing put forth in Flierl’s paper. As architectural historians Aleksandra Kędziołek and Łukasz Stanek argued, Hansen’s Przyczółek Grochowski housing estate in Warsaw, which was executed using standardised panel systems and in which the architect, despite the system’s rigidity and inflexibility, sought to implement his original intentions for adaptability, could be seen as a ‘transitory object’, as an actual step towards these visions. This project was also published in the GDR, and must have been known to Flierl. Thus, Hansen may have been one source of inspiration.

What is certain, however, is that Flierl had been acutely aware of developments in architectural theory and experimental practice, both through his own work on the signifance of visionary architecture and design experimentation as part of the *Beiträge zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung* in 1967 and through his close collaboration with Silvio Macetti (N.K.) at the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture at the Bauakademie in the late 1960s. Macetti’s book *Großwohneinheiten* [large housing units] featured several projects in this vein: Yona Friedman’s ‘Paris Spatial’, the study for a new settlement form by Russian

---

architects Gruntov, Leszhava, and Diumenton, or the concept for a spatial metamorphosis by Loktev to name a few. Reflecting on as well as re-thinking these international influences for the production of a built environment for developed socialist society in the GDR was thus a continuation of his earlier work as editor of Deutsche Architektur and as an assistant at the Building Academy. Even if the endnotes and image references in his manuscript do not suggest any direct references to the above texts and projects, I suggest they may have formed a background for his idea of the duality of socially determined structure and individual expression, and for his call to integrate the 'subject' in the production of the built environment.

Since Flierl’s criticism primarily aimed at the failure of industrialised building production to provide forms of urban housing that can adequately express the individuality of their users and newly emerging social relations – the first being a problem of the architectural object, the second being a problem of how this object relates to other objects and the city as a whole –, he made little suggestions as to how this integration of the 'subject' could take concrete shape. He did, however, allude to some potential perspectives for future development. First, he argued that it would be necessary to acknowledge users’ desire to transform their environment and express their individuality into social space, even if this only took place within the regimented framework of their private loggias in standardised housing. Flierl proposed that architects should develop this drive rather than try killing it, and should seek to integrate future residents of housing districts, above all, in the design of colour schemes for residential blocks and housing districts. His second suggestion concerned building production. The architectural object needed to be improved to allow individual expression. I have mentioned above, how this, according to Flierl, entailed changing (and improving) the character of buildings, so that they could 'tolerate' individual expressions, or that they were sufficiently 'incomplete' to provide room for the individual actions of their future users. However, he also held that residents' transformations of their loggias could at best be 'signs of

---

6 Silvio Macetti, GroßwohnEinheiten (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1968).
future developments, but not the solutions as such. Generally, the design and production of housing would need to significantly improve to become larger, more flexible and more open, he noted. His third suggestion addressed the abstract term 'user' as such. While in state housing future residents were usually an unknown abstract mass of 'users', in cooperative housing future residents were personally known, and could therefore be more directly involved in the design and construction of housing as had been the case thus far.

Publicity and 'gesellschaftlicher Gesamtgestalter'

That this integration, in fact, necessitated more developed forms of socialist democracy than those officially advocated by the party and state leadership – including both decision-making structures in the process of producing the environment and a functioning public sphere – has been mentioned above. In official understandings of socialist democracy, every citizen formally had the right and duty – legal and moral – 'to assist in shaping socialist society,' based on a constitutionally fixed principle of 'codetermination and co-creation.' However, codetermination and co-creation beyond active participation in the various institutions of party, state, and society was not intended; historians like Mary Fulbrook have thus noted how difficult it became to draw clear boundaries between state and society. The authors of the book Lebensweise und Moral im Sozialismus [way of life and morality in socialism], published by the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee in 1972, described codetermination as follows:

The workers pursue their right to codetermination in manifold ways: in social and state institutions, in the socialist production process, in the housing district and at school, in mass organisations, in social organs of control [...] and others.

62 Flierl, 'Das Wohnhaus', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.
64 Flierl, 'Das Wohnhaus', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.
67 Ihre Mitverantwortung üben die Werktätigen in vielfältigen Formen aus: in
The hierarchy may be suggestive of the importance state and party leadership assigned to the housing district as an arena for the formation of socialist consciousness and morality, particularly under Ulbricht. The basis for codetermination in the official understanding—different to the 1960s, when greater leeway was given to intellectuals and experts in the process of socialist modernisation—was ‘responsibility’ rather than mere political or specialist knowledge. In addition to this, ‘partisanship’ and being ‘principled’ were considered vital necessities. Invoking these relatively abstract moral categories aimed at securing the influence of central decision-making powers in the name of the greater good— the grand central task of social policy, at whose heart was the housing programme.

*Komplexer Wohnungsbau* in Berlin-Marzahn (and elsewhere) depended on the principle that all players in the process of the production of the built environment—planners, architects, artists, and users—understood objective ‘necessities’ first and foremost, the long-term objectives of economic plans (albeit put in the service of social goals), while *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* sought to stimulate the individual responsibility of those players for their ‘products’ from a cultural perspective. For all citizens (thus also for residents of housing districts), the system of so-called ‘Eingaben’ [petitions, or citizen complaints] officially was considered to be the only legitimate means of voicing their opinion or criticism of the state’s products, including housing. Even if these complaints gave the socialist leadership an effective tool for measuring its citizens’ needs, and although their volume and role increased over the years—historian Paul Betts has discussed the history and significance of the petition system in the GDR (and in West Germany)—they were, of course, not suited to provide a direct encounter or dialogue between ‘producers’ and ‘subjects’ of the built environment in

---

68 Ibid., p. 306.
70 Flierl, p. 59.
71 Autorenkollektiv, *Zwischen Alex und Marzahn*, p. 311.
the way imagined by Flierl. The citizen complaints ended with the party, yet did not reach the architects in the Wohnungsbaubetriebe, who in turn had to work within the tight restraints of annual and five-year plan figures and targets.

The limits of socialist democracy within Komplexer Wohnungsbau that set boundaries to the deeper, more meaningful integration of the 'subject' in the process of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, as requested by Flierl, also became perceptible in the underdeveloped public sphere and system of publicity within and about the built environment. This was also evident in the project for Berlin-Marzahn, which, despite its scale and significant role in the transformation of Berlin during the 1970s and 1980s, remained strangely absent from public view, in particular during its early stages, but also later. Not only the fact that almost all documents, memos, and reports associated with the planning and design of Marzahn were marked 'confidential' or for 'internal use only', the great cautiousness to publically discuss the results of sociological research in the district may be cases in point. Adding to this was the generally low number of publications in the professional media about the district. But not only was the number of publications different compared to past projects of an equal scale; but the quality of publications differed, too. The project for Berlin-Marzahn, as I mentioned at the start of this chapter, had first been publicly discussed in the context of the official announcement of the long-term development plans for Berlin into the 'socialist metropolis' of the GDR in June 1973. It was more than three years until a big feature about the project in its different facets was published in September 1976—nearly two years after the architectural competition was held, and more than a year after the Magistrate had confirmed the master plan for the district.

During the 1960s, new large-scale construction projects were discussed in the press in different stages and options—albeit at times with aggressive accusations and public defamations, as in the case of the project for the new town of Schwedt designed by Selman

---

Nevertheless, an architectural discourse with visible differences concerning approaches to form and design method, or architectural theoretical positions was still traceable. At the end of the 1960s, however, the official attitude towards public discussion of projects in their early design stages shifted, primarily for reasons of the national economy. As an internal memo from the Department for Construction at the Central Committee about a conversation with Ulbricht at the end of 1967 confirmed, there had been an order that 'as a matter of principle, no project may be published in the press, unless the funds for its construction had been confirmed.' This principle appeared to have been embraced and indeed extended in the case of Marzahn. The purpose of the 1976 feature clearly was to present *faits accomplis*; and even though model photographs of the individual competition designs were depicted and other aspects of the project such as the general concept for aesthetic and artistic design described in the article, nothing was up for debate here. Since all decisions had already been made in the background, the project needed only to be described. Given this obvious lack of available information and open discussion about the project in the public sphere, architects and other professionals involved in the production of the new district had to resort to other forums and media within their professional associations in order to discuss ideas about the design and production of Berlin-Marzahn. For architects, artists, and designers the ZAG/AbK meetings that I have mentioned earlier became an important forum for debate; and architects from Berlin could turn to *babl*, the newsletters of the district section of the BdA, which were produced by a young and engaged team of local architects and critics to stimulate and facilitate communication with their colleagues. Just how necessary these informal media were, was confirmed by the first edition of the newsletter—published in 1975 after some difficulties with the official authorities, in which Berlin-Marzahn formed the

---

2 Richard Paulick, Hans Schmidt, and Peter Doehler, 'Diskussion um Schwedt u.a.', *Deutsche Architektur*, 13 (1963), 269-77.
2 Information über die Beratung des Genossen Walter Ulbricht zu Problemen der Entwicklung von Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR am 8.12.1967 [Information about the meeting with comrade Walter Ulbricht concerning problems of development in architecture and town planning in the GDR on 8 December 1967]. BArch, FY/3o/IV A 2/6.06 48.
central topic. Responding to a questionnaire distributed among three different architects who were involved in the design of Berlin-Marzahn in different institutions and stages, Edith Diel from the housing construction combine – responsible for the delivery of the project – noted that she was not even aware of the results of the architectural competition for the district, as these had not been publicly presented and discussed. In light of such official disregard for architectural competitions as a vital element of the profession – a tool for architects, forum to test ideas, create discourse, and to communicate with the public – the architectural critic Wolfgang Kil, who was one of the founders of the newsletter, wrote a longer plea for the importance of competitions.

As documents from 1973 prove, town planners and architects themselves, both locally and centrally within the Building Academy had encouraged different forms of public engagement during the design stage:

Following the publication of the official decision, a programme of publicity should be implemented as soon as planning the new district commences, in order to include in the process of design and development representatives of the future population. In this process, established ways of informing citizens about different issues and actively engaging them such as public lectures, exhibitions, and films should be utilised. A public discussion of the architectural competition is recommended.

While professionals were able to create ‘spaces’ in which to have informed conversations about the production of the built environment in large-scale projects such as Berlin-Marzahn, the wider public, and most importantly the districts’ future residents, appeared to have largely been left in the dark about the shaping of the milieu into which they were expected to settle. Even though archival records from the City District Council Lichtenberg confirmed that an ‘information office’ was formed in the old village of Marzahn in April 1975, and that part of the Construction Management Team, which had been formed the year before, had been given the

---

30 ‘Diskussionsgrundlage zu städtebaulichen Anforderungen an die Planung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf/ Marzahn’ [Discussion paper outlining requirements for the urban planning of the district Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.
task to carry out publicity work on site, this work did not appear to involve consultations
between architects and future residents about the design of the new district. Instead, as
these documents show the programme of information carried out in the district had a clear
aim: to ‘prepare dispossessions in order to clear the site for the 9th district.’ The conversations
that were held with local residents thus had more of an administrative character, and, as the
documents reveal, had been ordered by the Magistrate in December 1984. In the following
April, a first ‘public’ information meeting with members of different social institutions and
party members from the villages Biesdorf and Marzahn was held. According to the report, the
development project had been welcomed at that meeting. Two days later, a discussion with
local residents took place, which apparently also was a success. In May 1975, tenants and
owners of the allotment gardens were informed about the city’s plans. According to the
documents, approximately 50-80 people visited the information office each day during the
first weeks after its opening; yet in May that number had sharply dropped to about 30 persons
per week, suggesting that only residents from the villages came to the office, but no visitors
from central Berlin, who wanted to find out about their future home.81

Areas of disagreement between the Magistrate and local residents included demands for
compensation by house owners affected by demolition. Others had asked whether they could
sell their plot to the state if they could move elsewhere. Furthermore, most people—especially
young families—wished to stay in single-family houses, and the Magistrate intended to either
move them to other houses in Berlin, or grant permission for the construction of new houses
in the district. Those residents who were prepared to move into a newly built apartment in
the mass housing district usually asked for financial contributions to costs of moving.83

Following this first round of information meetings, the Magistrate had planned further

81 ‘Information über die bisher durchgeführte Öffentlichkeitsarbeit in Biesdorf/Marzahn
hinsichtlich der Vorbereitung von Räumungsmaßnahmen zur Schaffung der Baufreiheit für
den 9. Stadtbezirk und Maßnahmen zur weiteren differenzierten politischen Massenarbeit
[Information about publicity carried out in Biesdorf/Marzahn in preparation of evictions and
site clearance for the construction of the ninth district, and about further political agitation],
LAB, C Rep 167-03, 7.
80 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
meetings with those affected by demolition between June and August 1975. According to the files, the objectives for those conversations were: to defend the choice of Biesdorf/Marzahn as a site for *Komplexer Wohnungsbau* as part of the leadership's housing programme; to explain the rationale for dispossessions; to inform decisions to be taken concerning the next steps; to point to the information office on site; and to tell residents that party members would visit those affected by demolition in order to discuss applications for a new apartment in the district; and to discuss the possibility of a single-family house. All of the meetings with residents had to be completed by mid-August 1975, which meant that the entire consultation period with local residents lasted for just four months. With respect to the staff chosen to carry out this 'politically significant action,' the files stated that 30 qualified political representatives should lead the group meetings and individual conversations, 20 of whom were sent by the Magistrate (not locals!), and a further ten needed to be representatives who were 'particularly politically reliable.'

The files relating to these consultations were the only traces of publicity during the early development stage of Berlin-Marzahn that I found. And even throughout its construction, the district appeared not to feature much in the public and in public perception. Only an information leaflet, produced by the Magistrate of Berlin in January 1978, celebrated the start of work on site. And six months later, in July 1978, the party leadership held an event on site to honour the handing over of the 1,000,000th apartment since the start of the housing programme. In both the leaflet and in Konrad Naumann's speech at the event, complexity had almost become footnotes; when the term was mentioned, it was either used synonymous with 'leadership and planning', or had been replaced by the phrase 'complete and fully-functioning.'

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
87 'Lieber Genosse Erich Honecker! [Dear Comrade Erich Honecker!]', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 5.
88 The only exception was a short text by Heinz Graffunder on the leaflet, which talked about the interplay of architecture and art in the district.
All of the circumstances described above—lack of democracy, opaque institutional structures, invisibility of architects, weak public sphere with more or less absent publicity, and not least the dominant understanding of complexity that was diametrically opposed to that put forward by Flierl—appear to paint the picture of a situation, in which the theory of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* was about as far removed from the actual conditions of production of the built environment as imaginable. And yet, in a theoretical extract from his post-doctoral dissertation B (1978) with the title ‘On the socialist development of architecture in the GDR: 20 Theses,’ Flierl finally summarised his idea of the ‘subject of environmental design,’ now using the term ‘*gesellschaftlicher Gesamtgestalter*’ [socialised total designer]. He wrote:

*Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in socialism demands the development of a ‘socialised total designer’ of the environment because: firstly, *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* can only be solved through social cooperation – as socialised ‘total work’ – of all those who participate in shaping the environment: collectively, through divided labour and the cooperation of landscape designers, town planners and architects, artists, industrial designers, building conservators, and many more. Secondly, *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* can no longer be only the work of experts in politics, economy and culture, who manage [lead] and plan processes in society as a whole, including the process of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, and who appear as social awarding authorities [client]. In socialism, [management and planning] increasingly become public affairs of user-citizens, who demand and have the capacity to join in to the process of designing their environment—singular areas or elements, or the environment as a whole—insofar as they learn to control social processes of production and living.89

Drawing on the concept of the 'total worker'\(^9\), developed by Marx from the analysis of productive labour and the production surplus value so as to describe the character of social forms of labour, Flierl called once more for the democratisation of decision-making processes and the mobilisation of the individual subject’s creative potential within society. Considering the production of Berlin-Marzahn: in view of the scale of the task and the required pace of planning and design—since everything needed to be planned as a whole right from the start, different project stages had to be run in parallel—Flierl’s ideas of complexity in environmental design—determined by a multitude of relations between objects, subjects and society, and therefore integrative, collective, participatory and democratic—may simply have proved impractical, if not impossible. In the context of the GDR’s social and economic policies of the 1970s and 1980s—the housing programme occupying a central place—and in light of the actual conditions of ‘actually existing socialism’, his thinking about *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* as a cultural process appears to have been simply beyond the ‘system’.

Conclusion: architectural theory beyond actually existing socialism
At the beginning of the 1980s, *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in the GDR seemed everywhere, and nowhere at the same time. On the one hand, the impending return to the historic city defined new areas as well as different methods for a complex design of the environment, since the elements of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* now had to be integrated into an existing environment, rather than into newly formed urban ensembles or suburban mass-housing districts as had been the case in the late-1960s and throughout (most) the 1970s. On the other hand, the nearing completion – at least of parts – of these new housing districts called for taking stock of what had been achieved, and, crucially, what had not been achieved in the past decade since the claim to a complex design of the urban environment in conjunction with the needs of socialist society was first made.¹ To this end, journals such as *Form + Zweck, Architektur der DDR* and *Bildende Kunst* all published extensive articles and reviews of realised projects, many of them in a singularly celebratory in tone, although this depended very much on the medium. The design journal *Form + Zweck* under its chief editor Hein Koster, for instance, had developed into a 'niche'² for debates among professionals and theorists, who were eager to critically analyse the conditions of East German society, and of design and architecture as its material aspects, during the 1970s. As Wolfgang Kil, one member of these debates remembered, '[s]omehow the editorial staff around Hein Köster and Dagmar Lüder also only used the rather depressing reality of the state of design in the GDR as a vehicle to place their own topics: leftist culture as the aesthetics of resistance, but also of promise.'³ In

¹ Autorenkollektiv, *Entwicklung des sozialistischen Städtebaus und der sozialistischen Architektur in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik - Arbeitsmaterial* - (Berlin: Deutsche Bauakademie zu Berlin, Bund der Architekten der DDR, 1971); Bruno Flierl, 'Zu Problemen der Synthese von Architektur und bildender Kunst im Rahmen komplexer Umweltgestaltung der Stadt [Regarding problems of synthesis of architecture and art in the context of complex environmental design of the city]', GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 289/fol. 7.

² The term 'niche' was coined by Günther Gaus, the first permanent representative of the FRG (West Germany) in East Berlin. According to Gaus, these niches formed private refuges, in which East Germans could live their private lives, without interference by the state. The term 'niche' is often used by East Germans to describe parts of the public sphere in which a culture of free speech and open debate managed to survive. This could be discussion groups, small magazines, artist run galleries, and other spaces for critical debate, even entire urban districts. Wolfgang Kil, 'Prenzlauer Berg - Aufstieg und Fall einer Nische', in *Die Stadt als Gabentisch: Beobachtungen der aktuellen Städtebauentwicklung*, ed. by Hans G. Helms (Leipzig: Reclam, 1992), pp. 508-20.

³ Wolfgang Kil, 'In der Rückschau: Der Traum von der idealen Zeitung', in *Zwischen "Mosaik"*
the journal’s April 1980 issue on ‘urban spaces’, Köster wrote:

Urban spaces are settings for human actions formed by architecture. Without art, equipment and furnishings they seem like blown eggs. [...] An integrated management and planning of economic, technological, social, and cultural processes is necessary, in order to achieve the required use-value of housing. Interdisciplinary dialogue and interdisciplinary work must play a bigger role in this [process]. [...] Since our cities are spatial totalities. Human actions ought to take place in spaces that are intelligible and cheerful. The underlying spatial factors for socialist ways of life in our cities must be determined and implemented. To this end, the dialogue of all actors involved in the design of cities becomes necessary, and experiments are required.¹

Köster’s comments were a reminder that, at the beginning of the 1980s, the goal of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung still remained firmly ahead of architects, artists and designers – and society as a whole – instead of being a fulfilled promise. Many, not least Flierl, shared this assessment. In November 1981, Flierl and other members of the ZAG/AbK such as Kil organised one of their two-yearly ‘theory’ meetings in the city of Erfurt; this time on the topic of ‘theoretical problems of complex design of cities in the 1980s’.² The seminar’s goal was twofold, to offer critical analysis of already implemented solutions, on the one hand, and to develop theoretical questions for the tasks that still lay ahead on the basis of the analyses of those built projects. Ahead of the meeting, Flierl and the other members deliberately launched articles, interviews and questionnaires with involved professionals in all major


journals across the three disciplines architecture, art, and design. Flierl’s lead article in *Architektur der DDR* began with the sober observation that, despite the fact that *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* has been at the heart of the ZAG/AbK’s work during the 1970s, the need for complexity in design and interdisciplinary cooperation had not yet sufficiently been recognised and practically implemented.\(^6\) He identified three problem areas to explain why this was the case; these were the ‘scope’, ‘character’ and ‘social mandate’ of complex design. With regards to the first two of these areas he rehearsed by then well-known criticisms and arguments: for instance, that *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* should lead to ‘openness’ rather than ‘planned totality’, that it should encompass buildings as much as the spaces between them, and that it became possible only if it strove for the integration of different objects, while also demanding cooperation among different subjects (the ‘producers’ of those objects), including architects, artists, designers, and users. His comments regarding the social mandate of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung*, however, were aimed straight at the present state of building production, and the organisation of the production process of the built environment in socialist society in the GDR as a whole, a process that was in principle ‘managed’ by the leadership of the party whose claim was to represent the interests of its citizens. He argued:

The complex design of the urban environment can only be practised [or pursued, T.L.] if rooted in the complexity of the social mandate. It is the task of the *gesellschaftlicher Auftraggeber* [contracting authority, i.e. city councils as ‘elected’ representatives] to ensure this is the case. [...] It is only possible to properly implement and qualitatively sustain such a process, if the contracting authority manages to bring out the various actors in the design of the urban environment as organs of a *gesellschaftlicher Gesamtgestalter* [socialised total designer] of the environment as well as include future users [...] – the entire population in the broadest sense – creatively in this process. All these practices must be transparent and free of anonymity in their organisational form as socialist processes of collectively cooperating groups and individuals. The complex

design of cities in socialism can only flourish if it is founded on socialist democracy.

With regards to current practice, this meant, according to Flierl, to grant district and city architects and their offices for town planning, who developed town planning proposals, and Komplexarchitekten [lead architects in the state-managed construction firms], who worked on their implementation through architectural projects, a greater role in the design and implementation of such complex projects again, instead of, and this remained unspoken in his article, being faceless actors in the process of building production. At the same time, representatives of the state, acting on behalf of the population by instructing architects, artists and designers, should be held accountable, as Flierl already argued in a talk in 1979.

Concentrating too much power in individuals, according to him, not only contradicted the 'objectively' growing demand for socialisation, but also often led to wrong decisions. If 'bureaucratisation, technocratic principles and anonymity' were to be avoided, principles of collectivity and socialist democracy needed to be established.

Following the 1981 seminar, the party leadership started a series of actions against Flierl and other members of the ZAG/AbK, and attempted to censor their usual publication of seminar papers, which was circulated in a small run of four hundred copies among members of the two professional associations. In the events that unfolded over the course of the second half of 1982, Flierl would become expelled from the association of architects, thus losing his position as leader of the ZAG/AbK, and encountered another act of censorship of his work – a


8 Ibid., p. 596.


10 Ibid., p. 151.
chapter on architecture-related art which he contributed to the catalogue of the IXth national art exhibition in Dresden, 1982/83. For Flierl, who suffered a stroke in December that year, this meant more or less the end of his work on the idea of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung. Writing in retrospect in 2007, he noted that his larger theoretical project of exploring the ‘dialectical field of relationships between society and architecture in the development of socialist society in the GDR’ had already become ‘historically questionable’ at the end of the 1980s, due to the sense of stagnation and general exhaustion of socialist ideas that characterised East Germany (and other Eastern European countries) at the time, before finally becoming ‘obsolete’ with the fall of the Wall in 1989 and subsequent German unification in 1990.” In the January 1990 issue of the rebranded architectural journal Architektur – its new title seemingly anticipating the disappearance of the GDR –, Flierl wrote a final response to the charges brought against him in the aftermath of the 1981 ZAG/AbK meeting of being ‘an enemy of the state, damaging the party, and being counterrevolutionary’. Moreover, he wanted to make available the ideas outlined in his seminar paper to a wider audience, hoping that they might prove relevant to the social transformation processes that began to unfold since Honecker and the party leadership had stepped down, and East Germany was shaken up by democratic reforms. It would, however, remain his last word on Komplexe Umweltgestaltung.

This thesis set out to describe the emergence and development of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung from the 1960s to the 1980s, while examining its impact on the production of the built environment in the GDR, particularly the construction of mass housing. Its aim was to illuminate the intellectual context of its rise in late-1960s East Germany, while highlighting its many links with contemporaneous international architectural discourse. By doing so, this work has not only sought to identify the place of this concept within East German architectural theory more broadly, but also to discuss its relationship to architectural – and indeed – other practices in the social production process of the built environment. Finally,

---

the thesis has closely examined the main postulates of Flierl's theory through the in-depth analysis of a historical case study, the design and construction of the Berlin-Marzahn between 1973 and 1988.

I began by outlining how the momentous transformation of both the discipline and profession of architecture, brought about by the industrialisation of construction, from 1955, posed a challenge, above all, to architecture's ideological function. Between the late 1940s and the mid-1950s, during the early years of the Cold War, architecture's role as an ideological object was clearly delineated by seeking visible difference to 'modern' architecture in the West, as architectural modernism, too, became ideologically charged through its alignment (by its own protagonists such as Gropius) with Western (American) democracy. Within this geopolitical constellation and its resulting cultural policy, socialist architecture became socialist by means of representing – much the same as art – the 'real' values and traditions of socialist society in its process of construction (Aufbau). The implementation of industrialised building technologies – often imported from the West – under the revised premise to build 'better, faster, and cheaper', however, fundamentally altered this relationship by calling into question architecture's representative function. Against the background of these changes, taking place between the mid-1950s and the early-1960s, architectural theory was charged with the task of redefining architecture in the face of becoming a technical object rather than being a form of art. Analysing the debates among theorists of architecture and art as well as East German cultural officials during those years, has revealed the great difficulty encountered by players such as Schmidt, director of the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture at the Bauakademie, and his young assistant Flierl to reconsider architecture's relationship to socialist society – not as its representation (or the representation of its values), but as the 'material' environment, in which socialist forms of life began to take shape (Schmidt). This thinking reflected in many ways a return to earlier materialist and environmental-determinist thinking that had underpinned the work of many leftist modernists in the interwar period. Yet, while their Soviet colleagues were able to reengage their own history in this process, re-examining the constructivists' ideas of shaping byt (people's way of life) through a revolution
in the cultural sphere parallel to the material transformation in the revolutionary process, East German architectural theorists struggled to return to German interwar modernism. As the Bauhaus initially could not serve as 'progressive heritage', regardless of gradually being studied by historians, other emerging ideas in recently established fields such as cybernetics, sociology and cultural theory came to significantly influence architectural theory in the GDR during the so-called scientific-technological revolution between 1963 and the late-1960s.

In this process, a 'Marxist architectural theory', geared towards practice, was established and architecture's basic terms were being rigorously examined and redefined, in particular in the publication *Beiträge zur architekturtheoretischen Forschung*, produced by a team of young scholars – including importantly Flierl – headed by Schmidt in 1967. The principle outcome of this study was a new definition of architecture as *Umweltgestaltung* (environmental design).

The idea of *Umweltgestaltung*, as developed by East German cultural theorists, above all Fred Staufenbiel, held that there was a dialectical relationship between socialist society and its *Umwelt*, or (material) environment, which, on the one hand, was being shaped according to human needs, while, on the other hand, forming the basis for life in socialism. This dialectic of shaping the environment in relation to society was taken up by Flierl as the basic concern of his architectural theory, and further developed therein. The term *Umwelt* was itself borrowed from cybernetics and systems thinking, which came to play an important role during those years, as well. Flierl, took up these ideas, in particular from the writings of Georg Klaus, in order to develop abstract models that could grasp and visually represent dynamic processes such as the relationship between architecture and art, which had also been a central topic in 1960s architectural discourse in East Germany. Adding to this was sociology, which provided empirical data not only about people's perception of and satisfaction with the 'socialist transformation of cities' and the newly built housing districts, but also about their 'actual needs'. Moreover, it sought to advance theoretical knowledge, which formed the basis for predictions as to the future development of people's needs. Thus, it was the combination of these disciplines and the distinct forms of knowledge they advanced, which contributed to the development of Flierl's concept of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* at the turn to the 1970s. If
cultural theory's notion of a dialectical relationship between architecture and society, which meant that both needed to be studied in tandem, since they developed in relation to one another, established the basic framework, cybernetics and systems theory, in particular, provided the analytical tools and abstract intellectual models (as well as fresh terminology), which could then be fed with the data and predictions about people's changing lives offered by sociologists. Moreover, as occasional links across the various chapters of this thesis have sought to show, the development of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung took place in dialogue with the ideas, concepts and projects developed by planners, architects and designers on an international level, and appears to have taken inspiration, for example, from the work of the HfG Ulm in West Germany and interdisciplinary colleges of environmental design, established in North America from the late 1950s. All of this took place against the background of 1960s 'socialist modernity' (or rather modernisation), its technological, social and political optimism, and the attempts at economic and cultural reform in East Germany (and beyond), which, however, quickly came to a halt with the defeat of the Prague Spring in 1968, and the leadership change from Ulbricht to Honecker in 1971.

This change had a fundamental impact on architecture, too, as the new leadership pledged to provide three million new flats between 1973 and 1990 as part of their housing programme, chiefly through the construction of mass housing districts on the outskirts of major cities. As discussed at the end of the third chapter of this thesis, when published in 1973, at this very turning point, two central aspects underpinned Flierl's concept of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung, both of which were rooted in the peculiar mix of technological, socio-economic, intellectual and cultural transformations outlined above, which took place during the 1960s: first, the notion of a harmony between the 'economy of time' and the 'economy of space', an argument in favour of urban density and the combination of diverse programmes (or functions) in buildings and urban space, and against functional separation and extensive construction on greenfield sites, which drew from the work of Silvio Macetti (Noureddin Kianouri); second, the notion of integrating a greater variety of elements – apart from architecture and public art also landscape, industrial, lighting, colour as well as graphic design – in the design of the
[physical] environment with the goal of creating stimulating and well-ordered (harmonious) urban spaces that would meet the steadily evolving demands of evolving socialist society on its course towards a communist future. It was these two aspects, the second in particular, that formed the basis for Flierl’s continuing criticisms of extensive housing construction and the attempted implementation of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in mass housing districts in the GDR in the 1970s. In this process, terms such as growth, adaptability, and flexibility came to play an important role. More importantly, however, Flierl began to further qualify his concept, not only by thinking in detail about the different elements that, according to him, needed to be integrated into a whole in the production of the built environment, but, first and foremost, by analysing the production process itself, and the roles and relationships between the different actors that were involved in it.

The analysis of the Berlin-Marzahn project revealed the degree to which Flierl managed to gain insight into these processes, not least through his instrumental role as leader of the interdisciplinary work group ZAG/AbK. It also uncovered, through the study of primary sources, the attempts of Flierl and others to critically intervene in the project’s design and construction in order to improve it. Thus, this thesis was able to show that the, at times, very abstract ideas put forth in Flierl’s writings were, in fact, linked to a detailed knowledge of ‘on the ground’ processes in Berlin-Marzahn. At the same time, the relationship between his critical and theoretically dense appraisals of *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* and the models for a practical application of his theory developed by his colleagues, most importantly the designer Rolf Walter, could be further illuminated through this research. Both Flierl and Walter, as is clear from the analysis of primary sources, were well aware of the shortfalls in the implementation of the ambitious programme for *Komplexe Umweltgestaltung* in Berlin-Marzahn. Walter pursued a pragmatic strategy that sought to achieve a maximum effect (or output) under the difficult conditions that characterised the construction of the new mass housing district – financial and material shortages, time pressure, lack of production facilities, lack of cooperation among architects and artists as well as designers, and, significantly, lack of binding legal frameworks to sustain the forms of cooperation that were necessary to create a
complex environment. Generally, the close investigation of the Berlin-Marzahn project could show that among architects, artists and designers, but also external experts such as sociologists there was not only widespread awareness of the inherent problems of building production in the GDR, but also broad consensus as to the need for structural improvements to this system of production. To this end, detailed proposals were developed, which sought to tackle phenomena such as the dullness and monotony of mass housing districts; or to use Walter’s phrase again, ‘the drawers were full of ideas’. Behind Flierl’s at times overly principled criticism of his colleagues’ more pragmatic approaches thus seemed to lay a fundamental agreement.

At the same time, the fact that there was general agreement as to the need to raise the ‘experiential quality’ of new housing districts and to create an ‘aesthetically pleasing and joyful residential milieu’, did not in turn mean that there was consensus between the different actors in this process as to how this should be achieved. In fact, the thesis has uncovered the extent to which contradictions and conflicts were often built into the system. Through his sharp analyses of the realities of production processes in the built environment, highlighting their lacking degree of integration, coordination and collaboration, Flierl frequently pointed to these systemic flaws. He contrasted them with an ideal model of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as an ‘optimally controlled system’, in which noise – actual conflicts and contradictions – had been eliminated. Moreover, by rethinking Marxist concepts such as that of the ‘total worker’, Flierl posited Komplexe Umweltgestaltung as a theory for the production of the built environment on the basis of a fully socialised design practice, which pointed well beyond the limits of actually existing socialism.

This thesis had to leave open many questions, however. How the idea of Komplexe Umweltgestaltung emerged again in various contexts at the end of the 1980s is one such question. During my interviews, carried out at the outset of this research, for instance, several references were made to small local initiatives and interdisciplinary groups that had formed in different district cities or smaller towns such as Leipzig or Dessau, often motivated by participatory, socially and ecologically-driven approaches to urban design. In the case of
Leipzig, a group of architects and artists, including ZAG/AbK member Bernd Sikora had been established around the project 'Pleiße ans Licht', which advocated the exposure of the city’s network of rivers that had been covered over. In Dessau, the newly founded 'Zentrum für Gestaltung', headed by the architect and urban sociologist Rolf Kuhn, became a space for international and interdisciplinary discourse and design experimentation, specialising in socially and ecologically-driven urban and landscape regeneration as well as territorial planning projects. Investigating these examples may reveal surprising continuities both regarding concepts and networks of local actors in East German cities (in the shadow of the capital) beyond the dissolution of the GDR.
Bibliography

Archive documents

Academy of Arts Berlin

Wächtler, Gunter, 'VBK Aktivitäten zu Wohnungsbau Berlin Biesdorf/Marzahn, 17.3-78 [Activities of the artists' association in the construction of housing Berlin Biesdorf/Marzahn]', Akademie der Künste (Kurzform: AdK), Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands/der DDR Archiv, Nr. 5201.

IRS Erkner

'Auskunft über Silvio Macetti', IRS, Bestand Bruno Flierl.

GESIS Berlin


Soziologie, Lehrstuhl marx.-len., 'Rostocker Wohngebiete', GESIS, FOB 317.

Berlin District Archives


'Information über die bisher durchgeführte Öffentlichkeitsarbeit in Biesdorf/Marzahn hinsichtlich der Vorbereitung von Räumungsmaßnahmen zur Schaffung der Baufreiheit für den 9. Stadtbezirk und Maßnahmen zur weiteren differenzierten politischen Massenarbeit [Information about publicity carried out in Biesdorf/Marzahn in preparation of evictions and site clearance for the construction of the ninth district, and about further political agitation] ', LAB, C Rep 147-03, 7.

'Protokoll über eine Problemeratung zum Aufbau des Wohnkomplexes Biesdorf/Marzahn - 'Nur für den Dienstgebrauch' [Protocol of a meeting concerning the construction of the housing complex Biesdorf/Marzahn - 'Internal use only'] ', LAB, C Rep 121, 653.

German Federal Archives


Aufgabenstellung zur Erarbeitung der Bebauungskonzeption für den neuen Stadtteil in Biesdorf/Marzahn [Project definition for the development of a master plan for the new district in Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH2/21389.

IV. Die Aufgabe der Wissenschaft für die Entwicklung von Städtebau und Architektur in der DDR [The purpose of science in the development of town planning and architecture in the GDR], BArch, DH2/21201.

Aufruf des Kreisausschusses Torgau "Wir sind dabei!" [Call of the district commission Torgau "We are joining!"], BArch, DY 6/2324.

Brief des Ministerrates an alle Räte der Bezirke, Städte und Kreise zu Fragen der Wohnungsbaupolitik [Letter regarding questions of housing policy issued by the Council of Ministers to all District, Town, and Township Councils], BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06 48.

'Der Stil unserer Architektur - Übersetzung Dr. Ing. Strassenmeier [The Style of Our Architecture - Translation Dr. Ing. Werner Strassenmeier], BArch, DH2/21201.

II. Die Hauptaufgaben der sozialistischen Architektur in der DDR [The central tasks of socialist architecture in the GDR], BArch, DH2/21201.

Die Stadt und das Sein - Übersetzung [City and Being - Translation], BArch, DH2/21201.


Direktive für die Vorbereitung und Durchführung der 16. Öffentlichen Plenartagung der Deutschen Bauakademie, BArch, DH 2/20649.


Diskussionsgrundlage zu städtebaulichen Anforderungen an die Planung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf/Marzahn [Discussion paper outlining requirements for the urban planning of the district Biesdorf/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.

Erste Auswertung des Entwurfskolloquiums Leipzig [First report of the design colloquium Leipzig], BArch, DH2/21359.

Grundlagenmaterial für die Bebauungskonzeption des Stadtteils Biesdorf/Marzahn [Basic information for the master plan of the district Berlin/Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.
Information über die Beratung am 8.1.1974 zur städtebaulichen Lösung des Stadtteiles Biesdorf-Marzahn [Information about the meeting on 8th January 1974 concerning the proposed urban plan for the district Biesdorf-Marzahn], BArch, DH 2/21389.

Information über die Beratung des Genossen Walter Ulbricht zu Problemen der Entwicklung von Architektur und Städtebau in der DDR am 8.12.1967 [Information about the meeting with comrade Walter Ulbricht concerning problems of development in architecture and town planning in the GDR on 8 December 1967], BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06.48.

Konferenz über Grundlagen und Aufgaben einer sozialistischen Architekturtheorie [Conference about principles and tasks of socialist architectural theory], BArch, DH2/21201.

Konzeption zur Auflösung des Instituts für Theorie und Geschichte der Baukunst und Bildung einer Abteilung Theorie der Komposition am Institut für Städtebau und Architektur entsprechend des Ministerratsbeschlusses vom... [Concept for the closure of the Institute for Theory and History of Architecture and the establishment of a department for Theory of Composition at the Institute for Town Planning and Architecture according to the decision...by the Council of Ministers of...], BArch, DH2/21201.

Prof. Alfred Kurella - Leiter der Kommision für Fragen der Kultur beim Politbüro des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Prof. Alfred Kurella - Leader of the Commission for Cultural Questions at the Politburo of the Central Committee of Socialist Unity Party of Germany], BArch, DH2/21201.


Richtzahlen für Folgeeinrichtungen in Wohnkomplex und Wohnbezirk (Dr. Ruth Günther) [Guidelines for civic buildings in housing complexes and housing districts (Dr. Ruth Günther)], BArch, DH 2/21328.

Schreiben von Edmund Collein an den Staatssekretär im Ministerium für Bauwesen Dr. Ing. Schmiechen vom 25.5.1971 [Letter from Edmund Collein to the state secretary in the Ministry for Construction Dr. Ing. Schmiechen], BArch, DY 15/778.

Stellungnahme zur Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK “Konzeption der Gestaltung Architektur und bildende Kunst zum 20. Jahrestag der DDR“ [Response to the draft "concept for the design of the exhibition architecture and art in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the GDR" prepared for submission to the secretary of the Central Committee], BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06.53.

Stellungnahme zur gesellschaftspolitischen und volkswirtschaftlichen Zielstellung für den komplexen Wohnungsneubau im Stadtteil Biesdorf/Marzahn der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin, 16.1.1975 - Vertrauliche Dienstsache - [Response to the social-political and economic objectives for complex housing construction in the district Biesdorf/Marzahn in the capital of the GDR, Berlin], BArch, DH 2/21389.


'Zu einigen Problemen der sozialistischen Entwicklung des Städtebaus und der Architektur in der DDR [Regarding some problems of socialist development of town planning and architecture in the GDR]', BArch, DY/30/IV A 2/6.06.48.

'Zur Rationalisierung und Weiterentwicklung der Erzeugnisse im komplexen Wohnungsbau der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin [Concerning rationalisation and further development of products in the complex construction of housing in the capital of the GDR, Berlin]', BArch, DH 2/2935.

'Architekturdiskussion 5/1955', GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 4.


'Artikel über das Bauhaus [Articles about the Bauhaus]', GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 5.

'Ausstellung anläßlich des IX. UIA-Kongresses Prag 1967 [Exhibition in conjunction with the IXth UIA Congress Prague]', GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 62/fol. 12.


Das Wohnhaus als Gehäuse und Zeichen des Individuums und der Gesellschaft: Gedanken zum Wohnungsbauprogramm der DDR und zur kommunistischen Perspektive des Wohnens [The residential block as enclosure and sign of the individual and of society: thoughts concerning the housing program of the GDR and a communist perspective of housing], GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 54/fol. 1.


Entwurf: Bericht zur Untersuchung weiterer Verbesserungen der städtebaulich-architektonischen Qualität im Investitionsgebiet Berlin-Marzahn, 13.07.1978 [Draft: report about possible improvements to the urban-architectural quality in the investment area Berlin-Marzahn], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 3.

Erzeugnisse, Komplexer Wohnungsbau [Products Complex Housing Construction], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 26/fol. 1.

Konzeptionelle Überlegungen zum Kulturtheorie-Projekt [Outline concept for cultural theory project], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 36/fol. 10.

Lieber Genosse Erich Honecker! [Dear Comrade Erich Honecker!], GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 5.

Modell der Planung Leitung - Teilsystem Bezirksbauamt, März 1969', GRI, DDR Collection Accession no. 940002, Box 270/fol. 3.

Schreiben des Aufbauleiters Eschricht an den stellv. Oberbürgermeister Dr. Günter Peters vom 25.8.1977 [letter from site manager Eschricht to deputy mayor Dr. Günter Peters], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 3.

Schreiben des Direktors des Wohnungsbaukombinats Berlin Obering, Radke an den Magistrat Berlin [letter from the director of the housing construction combine Radke to the city magistrate Berlin], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 63.

Sekundärarchitektur, Ergänzung des Angebotskatalogs Freiflächen des VEB WBK Berlin, Erstanwendung in Berlin-Marzahn’, GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 71/fol. 2.

Studie über soziologische und umweltgestalterische Probleme der städtebaulichen Planung des neuen Stadtteiles in Biesdorf-Marzahn [Kurzfassung] [Study about sociological and environmental design problems in the urban plan for Berlin-Marzahn], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 14.

Thesen zur sozialistischen Kulturtheorie (2. Entwurf) 'Vertraulich' [Theses for socialist cultural theory (2nd draft) 'confidential'], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 36/fol. 7.

Über Fragen der Planung und Leitung bildender Kunst am Beispiel von Berlin-Marzahn [Concerning questions of the planning and management of art based on the example of Berlin-Marzahn], GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 68/fol. 11.
Zuarbeit zur: Rahmenkonzeption des künstlerisch-ästhetischen Bereiches komplexer Umweltgestaltung für den Stadtteil Biesdorf/Marzahn, 10.7.1974 [Preliminary work: overall concept for the artistic-aesthetic realm of complex environmental design in the new district Biesdorf/Marzahn], GRI, DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 53/fol. 14.

'Zu Problemen der Synthese von Architektur und bildender Kunst im Rahmen komplexer Umweltgestaltung der Stadt [Regarding problems of synthesis of architecture and art in the context of complex environmental design of the city]', GRI DDR Collections Accession no. 940002, Box 289/fol. 7.

**Books, chapters, articles in journals (including grey literature)**


Begenau, Siegfried, *Funktion, Form, Qualität* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Gestaltung, 1967).


'Berlin's Neunter', *Neue Berliner Illustrierte*, 1 February 1977, pp. 12-17, 43.


Cuff, Dana, 'Before and Beyond Outside In: An Introduction to Robert Gutman’s Writings', in Architecture from the Outside In, ed. by Cuff, Dana and John Wriedt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), pp. t3-25.


Durth, Werner, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, Architektur und Städtebau der DDR (Frankfurt: Campus, 1998).


Engel, Gerrit, Marzahn (Köln: König, 1999).


Evans, Andrew, 'The Last Gasp of Socialism: Economics and Culture in 1960s East Germany', German Life and Letters, 63 (2010), 331-44.


Gericke, Hans, 'Moderne Technik und sozialistischer Realismus in der Architektur', *Deutsche Architektur*, 9 (1959), 574-75.


———, 'From socialist realism to art in socialism: the reception of modernism as an instigating force in the development of art in the GDR’, *Third Text*, 23 (2009), 45-53.


———, 'Der kollektive Wohnkomplex', *Deutsche Architektur*, 12 (1963), 345-49.


———, 'Hans Schmidt in der DDR: Annäherungen aus historischer Sicht', in *Hans Schmidt,


Henselmann, Hermann, 'Wie wir heute bauen, werden wir morgen leben', *Deutsche Architektur*, 12 (1962), 75-77.

Hoffmann-Axthelm, Dieter, 'Rückblick auf die DDR', *Arch+* (1990), 66-73.


— — , 'Beschluß über die Anwendung der Grundsätze des Neuen ökonomischen Systems der Planung und Leitung der Volkswirtschaft im Bauwesen, 14.6.63', in *Gesetzblatt der


———, 'Der Revisionismus in der Architekturtheorie', Deutsche Architektur, 9 (1959), 575-77.


Ladd, Brian, The ghosts of Berlin: confronting German history in the urban landscape (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).


Lefebvre, Henri, Beiträge zur Ästhetik (Contribution à l’Esthetique), trans. Adolf, Karl. ed. by
Begenau, Siegfried Heinz (Berlin: Ministerium für Kultur der DDR, 1956).


Macetti, Silvio, Grofswohnseinheiten (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1968).


Magritz, Kurt, 'Das Prinzip der offenen Parteizugehörigkeit und die Architekten', Deutsche Architektur, 8 (1958), 357-58.

Manghani, Sunil, Image critique & the fall of the Berlin Wall (Bristol: Intellect, 2008).


Mittag, Günter, 'Hauptaufgaben des Bauwesens: Hoher Nutzeffekt der Investitionen, kurze Bauzeiten, niedrige Kosten', in Die weitere Verwirklichung des neuen ökonomischen Systems der Planung und Leitung der Volkswirtschaft im Bauwesen, ed. by Republik,


Paulick, Richard, Hans Schmidt, and Peter Doehler, ‘Diskussion um Schwedt u.a.’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 13 (1963), 269-77.

Péteri, György, ‘The Occident Within - or the Drive for Exceptionalism and Modernity’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 9 (2008), 929-37.


red., ‘Die Architektur, die Architekten und die Ideologie’, *Deutsche Architektur*, 13 (1963), 198.

red., ‘Junge Architekten diskutieren mit dem Minister für Bauwesen’, *Deutsche Architektur*,


Sabrow, Marin, 'Chronos als Fortschrittsheld: Zeitvorstellungen und Zeitverständnis im kommunistischen Zukunftsdiskurs', in Die Spar des Sputnik: Kulturhistorische Expeditionen ins kosmische Zeitalter, ed. by Poljanski, Igor J. and Matthias Schwarz (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2009), pp. 119-34.


Sanchez-Cruz, Mercedes, 'Städtebauliche Grundlagen für die Entwicklung der Wohnungsbauserie 70', Deutsche Architektur, 23 (1973), 270-79.


Schmidt, Hans, 'Keine Furcht vor Monotonie!', Deutsche Architektur, 6 (1956), 389.


———, 'Was verstehen wir unter sozialistischer Baukunst?', Deutsche Architektur, 9 (1959), 577.

———, 'Der sozialistische Wohnkomplex als Architektur', Deutsche Architektur, 8 (1958), 324-29.


Stanek, Lukasz, Henri Lefebvre on space architecture, urban research, and the production of theory (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Staufenbiel, Fred, Kultur heute - für morgen (Berlin VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1971).


———, 'Baukasten für Stadtmöbel', *Form + Zweck*, 7 (1975), 6-8.


**Theses**