COLD WAR CAPITAL: CONTESTED URBANITY IN WEST BERLIN, 1963-1989

by

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This dissertation explores the relationship between urban space, protest, and identity in West Berlin by investigating the politics of urban renewal in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg. In 1963, the West Berlin government announced a comprehensive program of urban renewal, which entailed the clearance of the nineteenth-century housing stock, its replacement with modern apartments, and a clear separation of urban functions. As was the case across West Germany and in West Berlin, modernist urban planning emerged in the late 1950s as a potent spatial expression and political tool of postwar capitalism and democracy. Given its status as a divided city, Berlin more than any other German city became a key site in postwar developments and discourses of modernization, urbanism, capitalism, and democracy. By the early 1970s, plans to transform and rehabilitate Berlin’s urban environment became inextricably linked to broader West German fears and anxieties about “foreignness,” the urban poor, and political radicalism. In this context, the cultural and political importance of Kreuzberg as a locus of West German anxieties cannot be underestimated.

In the same period, vocal opposition and protest against the city’s renewal plans took shape revealing the interplay between the urban environment and the possibilities of political action in postwar German history. This study sets out to investigate the historical counter-narratives beneath the iconic image of West Berlin as the symbolic capital of the “free world.”
I argue against customary representations of left-alternative protest in 1970s and 80s West Berlin as the work of a radical group of self-indulgent squatters, punks, eco-freaks, and dropouts, and offer a different reading of these ‘anti-establishment’ actors. My research demonstrates that this brand of urban radicalism of 1980s West Berlin had its roots in long-standing, broad-based political and cultural struggle with parallels in other Western European cities, all of which were attempts to redefine urban spaces from below.
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Introduction: A “Weltstadt” on the Margins

Cities change. But how do they change and for whom? Political, economic, social, and aesthetic developments and trends have all had a hand in the making and remaking of cities, particularly capital cities. Though comparatively young by European standards, Berlin’s tumultuous history from capital of the German Empire in 1871 to a democracy in 1919 to dictatorship in 1933 and to a city of competing ideological systems after World War Two offers the historian a unique perspective on politics and power and their relationship to the urban environment.¹

Much has been written of late about the efforts, both government and private alike, to redefine the “New Berlin.” For the past twenty years, the revived capital has been negotiating not only its place as the capital city of a reunified Germany, but as the capital of a country now recognizing its potential as a global economic and political powerhouse. Since 1990, the city has become the subject of numerous essays and monographs, not to mention heated public debates. In this context, urban geographers and sociologists have taken the lead in examining the ways in which expressions of national identity are spatially and architecturally given form.² Not surprisingly, the politics of memory and coming to terms with Germany’s National Socialist and divided pasts

continue to be the central focus of public debates on the building and/or flattening of monuments, memorial sites, government buildings, and museums in the capital city.³ Alongside these public and international debates about rebuilding, remembering, and forgetting, Berlin’s drive to once again become a world city has focused largely on marketing itself as the cultural capital of a reunified Europe.

This Berlin, too, has a very recent history. It can be found not only in academic treatments of government buildings, or large state-sponsored public monuments or memorials, but also in the city’s neighborhoods, tenement houses, and streets. This dissertation, “Cold War Capital: Contested Urbanity in West Berlin 1963-1989,” takes the politics of urban renewal in West Berlin to examine the historical counter-narratives beneath the iconic image of West Berlin as the shining capital of the “free world,” a mythology of the city that still has a hold on the public imagination.⁴ At its broadest level, this dissertation focuses on the relationship between urban planning and social control. It asks how governments see control of the urban environment as tantamount to the control of its people and thus a barometer of its own level of control and


effectiveness. But just as important here is how people wrest control from the government, why they do it, and how that in turn influences the government and its policies. Who has the power to control, to occupy, to reuse, or to amend space(s) or places within the urban environment? In this context, this project examines opposition and protest against urban renewal practices in postwar West Berlin, above all in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg. I explore the interplay between the urban environment and the possibilities and potentialities of political action in postwar German history. To me, these are particularly interesting issues in relation to West Berlin, since it was an occupied city and a symbol of the “free” (i.e., capitalist) world. As I argue, this makes any “anti-Western/capitalist” protests in West Berlin particularly visible but also particularly trenchant.

I lived in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg for over two years before deciding to focus on the neighborhood as the subject of my dissertation. In those two years, I strolled through its streets with visitors trying to keep my neighborhood tour lively with a patchwork of anecdotes about Kreuzberg. For the most part, I had picked up interesting tidbits of information from conversations I had with German and North American friends who had lived there longer. Most of these partial stories I had collected revolved around a particular historical moment in Kreuzberg—the 1980s—a time when most of those friends retelling the stories had been children or teenagers. Two things struck me: Firstly, the

mythology built up around the neighborhood as a space/site of resistance. Secondly, the centrality of the buildings, parks, and courtyards to this mythology, and to the very active left-alternative political subculture that still today calls Kreuzberg its home left a deep impression on me. Still very much a migrant and alternative neighborhood in terms of its visible population and character, I began to wonder how this neighborhood came to be the symbol for both ethnic and political difference in Germany. Reflecting on the neighborhood’s reputation as a space of difference led me to the possibility of exploring the interweaving histories of leftist activism and migration in Kreuzberg against the backdrop of urban planning and renewal in West Berlin. At the same time, I was interested in the neighborhood’s importance for the city’s Cold War history. From this vantage point, my research shows how the contestation of public and domestic space in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg articulated with a range of broader issues, from fears related to urbanity, to claims to citizenship, to the construction of German national identity.

In 1920, city officials reorganized the borders of Berlin and created Greater Berlin. As a result of this reorganization, parts of three historic neighborhoods merged to form the district of Kreuzberg, the southern part of Luisenstadt, Friedrichstadt, and Tempelhofer Vorstadt. Historically, the eastern part of the neighborhood was predominantly poor and working class. This part of Kreuzberg had been the final stop for many economic migrants from the far eastern reaches of the German Empire seeking work in the booming industrial capital. The construction of the Wall in 1961 consigned the district to the easternmost corner of West Berlin, surrounded on three sides by East Berlin. Its reputation as a home to migrants from Turkey, punks, squatters, anarchists,
and artists was established in the 1970s and 1980s. In terms of the history of housing politics in West Berlin, Kreuzberg is to West Berlin what West Berlin is to the Federal Republic: a more pronounced and perhaps intense example of phenomena that were more widespread in other parts of the city and West Germany.

Capital cities in the modern era have proven to be important sites for the formation and display of national identities. Historical studies of Berlin, however, have demonstrated that many Germans at various points never fully warmed to the idea of Berlin as their national capital and, in fact, its assigned role was often questioned.\(^6\) Instead, Germans’ loyalties remained regional.\(^7\) Thus, successive regimes continually and quite deliberately invested in making Berlin the capital. At the end of World War Two, the political fate of Berlin rested in the hands of the occupying powers, in particular the United States and the Soviet Union. As a direct result of its occupied and insecure status, among other reasons, officials chose the city of Bonn as the provisional capital of West Germany until the country reunified, as American, British, and French officials perceived it. Officially, between 1949 and 1989, West Berlin was not a part of the Federal Republic of Germany. Instead for many people in West Germany and around the world, West Berlin became a figurative symbol of democratic and capitalist values. Its “showcase” function had clear ramifications for the built environment, since these values and ideals were given expression in the city’s postwar urban design and architecture.

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It was the response of the Western powers to the Soviet blockade of their sectors in 1948-1949 that assured the West’s commitment to Berlin. For the remainder of the Cold War, West Berlin’s geographical location and its legal status necessitated military and financial assistance to keep the city afloat. The city’s main industries had decamped to West Germany, with thousands of its residents following the same trend year after year. This left a shrinking population comprised mainly of people and families with limited income: pensioners, students, and economic migrants. Migrants who arrived in the city after 1961 were the main source of cheap labor after East Germany built the Berlin Wall, leaving West Berlin with a shortage of semi- and low-skilled workers. And since residents of West Berlin were exempt from military service, the city became a magnet for young men of university age looking to avoid the draft. Still, its status as the “capital of the free world” meant that it had to appear prosperous and successful, even when, in reality, it was not.

Efforts to rebuild West Berlin in line with the government-endorsed vision of the city brought its own set of complications. Building and construction operated differently in the city given its isolated geographical location roughly 70 km inside East Germany. For instance, building materials were more expensive since they had to be “imported” from West Germany. From the 1950s through to the 1980s, a small group of companies worked closely with government agencies to supply the needed equipment and materials to the city. This system eventually led to corruption, with a number of construction scandals brought to light in the 1980s. Tax concessions and other forms of financial assistance from Bonn fuelled the city’s building and construction projects. Due to the volatile political situation in the first decade after the war, comprehensive rebuilding in
the city did not begin until the mid-1950s. For this reason, the pace of reconstruction in West Berlin lagged behind that of West German cities. The first major housing projects got underway in the early 1960s on the open tracts of land on West Berlin’s periphery.

This dissertation focuses on the 1970s and 1980s because these decades constitute a valuable, and until now overlooked, historical moment for exploring the tensions between competing visions of the city. It was during these decades that vocal opposition and protest against the city’s urban renewal program took shape claiming a “right to [define] the city.” In the context of an ideologically driven Cold War contest, the degree to which Cold War propaganda resonated with the West Berlin public, but also how it reflected Berliners’ daily realities is an important piece of West Berlin’s history. This story began in 1963. That year the West Berlin Senate announced the First Urban Renewal Program (Stadterneuerungsprogramm) that set out to address the city’s urban and social problems. In doing so, the program prescribed its official vision of the “modern” city onto Berlin’s nineteenth-century cityscape. The city’s housing authority

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slated large-scale urban renewal projects for its inner-city neighborhoods. Concretely this meant applying the principles of modern architecture and rational city planning to replace the blocks of five-story tenements (the so-called rental barracks or Mietskaserne) built around paved courtyards that had housed Berlin’s inner-city working class population since the last third of the nineteenth century. Such a program was not unique to Berlin. Across Western Europe and North America, postwar governments embarked on massive renewal projects, sometimes called “slum clearance,” to clear away the old, congested inner-city neighborhoods to bring in a new, “cleaner” form of urbanism.\(^{11}\)

This brings me to another important focus of this project. And that is the notion that a controlled urban environment is one that is orderly and clean, both in a literal and figurative or moral sense.\(^{12}\) The assumption that literal cleanliness is connected to moral cleanliness, especially with relation to housing, was a widely circulated idea amongst late nineteenth and early twentieth-century social and housing reformers. If one detects a

\(^{10}\) For the most part, I will use the German term Mietskaserne throughout since it is central to the story I am telling. At times, I will use tenement and Mietskaserne interchangeably.


common thread throughout the history of (West) Berlin’s twentieth-century urban
development that certain building types and urban arrangements will produce a certain
social orders, behaviors, and values in individuals, then the Berlin Mietskaserne and its
back courtyard or Hinterhof are of particular significance. In the early part of the
twentieth century, reformers and officials perceived the tenements and their courtyards as
the root of all urban social problems and in turn fertile ground for socialist agitation.

To many in the post-World War Two era, the West German and West Berlin
youth who squatted the run-down tenements lacked any apparent sense of “order.” As
one elderly West Berlin woman put it after being asked randomly on the street if she felt
sorry for the young squatter at a demonstration who had been run over and killed by a
transit bus, “No, I don’t feel bad at all. What’s that West German doing here anyway and
smashing everything up (alles kaputtschlagen). We rebuilt Berlin and they [those
squatters] get so much support. Why should I feel bad?!”13 Another bystander on the street
responded that “the young man doesn’t deserve any compassion since [those squatters],
they don’t work.”14 The lifestyle of these “unproductive” squatters living in so-called
squalor inside run-down old buildings stood in stark contrast to the desired image of an
affluent and orderly city. Migrants also came to represent the social problems associated
with the inner-city “slums.” Veiled and not-so-veiled references to the “dirty foreigner”
residing in the Mietskaserne rejecting German “conventions” of orderliness and
cleanliness must be placed within a larger context of a general uneasiness vis-à-vis the
permanence of immigrants in Germany. As a part of this, the Hinterhof and what it

13 U.K. Heye, S. Nawroth, and L. Rosh, “Räumung und danach,” a production by Kennzeichen D, October
5, 1981.
14 Ibid.
symbolized is particularly important. The fact that it is “hidden” from view appears to be part of why critics found it objectionable, even if they did not explicitly acknowledge this. It is a place where people can escape the watchful eye of the forces of social control (e.g., police or nosy neighbors).

The squatters’ movement, central both to the history of postwar Berlin and to contemporary political debates in Germany about the disposition of urban space, has not been told.15 My project makes several contributions to a variety of literatures. Firstly, it corrects popular and scholarly misperceptions of radical leftist activism in West Berlin. Secondly, it links the story of one of the most important architectural events of the 1980s (International Building Exhibition or IBA) to grassroots activism and ideas around participatory planning and design. Thirdly, in creating a more inclusive narrative of protest in Berlin, it asks questions about the striking absence of the category of “race” in radical leftist politics. It also challenges a widespread preconception that in the 1980s

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migrants from Turkey passively accepted their disadvantaged position in West German society.

In historical analyses of postwar German debates on urban planning and reconstruction (e.g., historical preservationists vs. modernist planners), urban and architectural historians have rejected the long-standing myth of a supposed “fresh” start or “zero hour” for German cities. Similarly, Brian Ladd’s *The Ghosts of Berlin* does an admirable job in revealing the extent to which the past continues to influence and shape architectural and planning debates in the present. In addition to historians, literary scholars, sociologists, and geographers have taken up the more recent work on memory work in Berlin. The focus of these rich and theoretically engaging studies has primarily been on monuments, memorials and civic buildings, in particular since the surge of rebuilding in the 1990s. My project differs in that I turn to the rebuilding and rehabilitation of neighborhoods, with a focus on a particular type of housing, the *Mietskaserne* to enter into historical debates on the identity of the city. I draw on the work of historians who focus on urban politics from the bottom up, such as Pamela Swett’s monograph, *Neighbors and Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin 1929-1933* and Belinda Davis’, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*.16

Without a doubt the literature on “race” in German history is vast. Until the late 1990s, however, the majority of studies that historicized the category of “race” in modern German history focused, with good reason, almost exclusively on the virulent and

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exterminatory racial ideology of the Nazi period. Recently scholars of modern German history have turned their attention to the period of German colonialism to locate continuities between German colonialist thinking and the Nazi extermination of European Jews. Inspired by interventions made by postcolonial theory, the more recent literature in this field has extended this analysis of “race” and difference into the postwar period. Methodologically, this scholarship reflects the theoretical advances made in recent decades by gender history, the “new” social history and cultural history. It is, therefore, surprising that a major cultural and social force that has shaped postwar West Germany society, culture, and politics has garnered such little attention by historians working on modern Germany. German-based social scientists, including some historians, have contributed greatly to the existing literature on migration in the German context. Their scholarship, however, often takes a more traditional approach to the topic, focusing more on politics and the economy. And the more contemporary work by a set of critical


19 See Klaus J. Bade, Migration in European History (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Bertold Huber and Klaus Unger, “Politische und rechtliche Determinanten der Ausländerbeschäftigung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in Hans Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny, Karl Otto Hondrich eds. Ausländer in der
scholars of migration, many of whom consider themselves both academics and activists, seldom take an historical approach to the question of migration and difference.

These scholars have done much to highlight the racist dimension of postwar Europe’s migration policies and of the asylum and immigration policies of a “new” Europe post-1990. Many of these younger scholars are sociologists or political scientists and have been influenced by a more critical, Marxian approach such as Stephen Castles’, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe or Here for Good: Western Europe’s New Ethnic Minorities.* Rita Chin’s monograph, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany,* is the first comprehensive study of postwar migration in the Federal Republic to be published in English that examines the ways in which the category of “race,” thought to have disappeared in a post-Holocaust Germany, still informed government and public discourse in the Federal Republic. Conceptually, my work bridges the literature on Afro-Germans and the extensive literature on migration in Germany by employing a social and cultural history approach to my examination of public discourse on integration and migration in 1970s and 80s West Berlin, specifically in Kreuzberg. My work differs in that I examine these broader issues by investigating how they played out on the local or neighborhood level. My project illuminates the process in which the space

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of Kreuzberg becomes a synonym for “foreignness” and difference, which in turn makes it a suitable starting point for understanding the history of the Federal Republic and post-1990 Germany.

My study of the politics of urban renewal in Kreuzberg draws on research in a number of alternative archives and city libraries including the Senatsbibliothek, the Zentrum für Berlin Studien at the Zentral und Landesbibliothek Berlin, Papiertiger Archive and Library, Sammlung Berlin (a private archive of radical politics), the Kreuzberg Museum, and papers from private collections. With its interdisciplinary blend of history, urban studies, and historical geography, this dissertation draws on new and neglected sources ranging from academic and government reports on urban planning and redevelopment, to urban planning and architectural journals, to tenant newspapers and newsletters, to the underground literature produced by the squatters’ movement, much of it drawn from not-yet-utilized personal collections and private archives.

This examination of previously unexplored materials offers a different reading of these “anti-establishment” actors and the importance of these protests in offering both a counter-model of German urban life and a redefinition of the city. In addition, I place these social and political activists in a longer trajectory, moving beyond the upheavals of the 1960s into the subsequent decades. Among other things, this study shows how the upheaval of “1968” became transformed into the concrete politics of the left-alternative
movement (Alternativbewegung) in West Germany. More generally, it examines the neglected history of the 1970s and 1980s in the context of the “Second Cold War.”

This dissertation begins with a discussion of urban development in Berlin from the last decades of the nineteenth century up to the early 1960s. I contextualize the postwar planning and building ethic by looking back to the nineteenth century to understand how this “tenement city” came about. I then trace the various social and political demands for its reform that emerged over the course of a century. Regardless of political persuasion, politicians and reformers were almost unanimous in their loathing of the Mietkaserne.

The second chapter explores the first “break” with the official vision of the “new” West Berlin. In the first part of the chapter I outline the government’s wholesale redevelopment plans for West Berlin generally, and Kreuzberg specifically. I then turn to a discussion of why and how urban planners and architects began to question these postwar urban policies. The last section of the chapter focuses on the International Building Exhibition 1984/87 or IBA. The two directors (Paul Josef Kleihues and Hardt Waltherr Hämmer) of the world-renowned building exhibition rejected the official modernist orthodoxy of demolishing the nineteenth-century urban texture and instead promoted an architectural postmodern approach to the city by repairing and restoring.

21 Bernd Hüttner, Gottfried Oy, and Norbert Schepers, eds., Vorwärts und viel vergessen. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung neuer sozialer Bewegungen (Neu-Ulm: SPAK Bücher, 2005); Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008).
The IBA directors and its architects are located in between the institutions of power and the more grassroots opposition groups.

Chapter Three explores the role of grassroots opposition in more depth. I examine the modes of protest and oppositional practices of activists, their day-to-day rhythms, and the inter- and intrapersonal dynamics both on the street and inside the squats. I first situate the radical protest that has long marked the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg within a broader context of opposition to modernist urban renewal. I then show how these activists, both moderate and radical, formulated a third voice in between the government officials and the planners and architects who distanced themselves from the official “burn and build” approach to the inner city.

Chapter Four has two goals. First, I make a case that Kreuzberg has cultural and political importance as a locus of West German anxieties around difference. To do this, I demonstrate how Kreuzberg was continually constructed in both the mainstream media and the popular imagination as a “Turkish ghetto.”\(^{23}\) The second part of the chapter turns its attention to the squatters’ movement to interrogate the limitations of community as articulated the leftist rhetoric and political practices. In doing so, I draw attention to the underlying racialized and ethnicized assumptions embedded in leftist political struggles in 1980s West Berlin.

I conclude my analysis in the fifth and last chapter of this dissertation with an examination of competing images and representations of West Berlin that emerged most forcefully in the 1980s. A 1979 Der Spiegel report on the West Berlin “scene” declared

that, “the left is alive. But the “scene” has replaced the “streets.” Protest has changed its appearance – now its seen in shared living (Wohngemeinschaften) and work collectives, in the Mietskasernen and back courtyards (Hinterhöfen) of Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Wedding’s working-class neighborhoods.”24 Chapter Five challenges such assumptions and shows how the “scene” privileged both the streets and the neighborhoods to practice their oppositional politics. The “scene” took the opportunity on the occasion of two U.S. state visits in 1981 and 1982, by Secretary of State and President Reagan respectively, to disrupt West Berlin’s global image and attack the city’s postwar special relationship to the United States.

During the late 1970s and 1980s, the district of Kreuzberg specifically but West Berlin more generally came to symbolize the highly charged debates over leftist radicalism, immigration, and the related supposed disintegration of traditional German values. As one disgruntled journalist concluded in 1983, West Berlin is “kaputt.”25 In the 1980s, the “old industrial metropole” was now “synonymous with riots and scandals (Randale und Skandale).”26 Together these five chapters attempt to tell the story of the social and cultural forces at play in a neighborhood located on the margins of a city itself strangely inhabiting a politically marginal position, yet still defined as a symbol of the West.

26 Ibid.
Chapter One

From the ‘City of Stone’ to the ‘City of Tomorrow’: Urban Development in Berlin between 1871 and 1963

In his 1930 book entitled *Das steinerne Berlin* (Berlin: City of Stone), left-liberal urban planner and architectural critic Werner Hegemann made the following observation about Berlin’s urban development up to 1914: “[unlike] a snake that sheds its skin when it grows too big for it, [or] like some larvae […] trapped as it were in a self-built coffin only to colorfully burst out of it, Berlin is suffocating in its stony casket, one it was not only forced into but which it also helped to build.”²⁷ The “stony casket” to which Hegemann referred was constituted by the rows of four- to five-story tenements located on generous street blocks. These tenements were designed in order to maximize building lots by including a front house with side and rear wings to enclose a narrow courtyard. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, such tenement blocks had come to dominate Berlin’s urban form and shaped popular perception of the cityscape. In this context, as Hegemann’s casket metaphor was meant to suggest, the German capital could never truly claim international standing until it ridded itself of this “suffocating” urban form, replacing with a “healthier housing type.”²⁸

Echoing Hegemann’s sentiment almost five decades later, a 1964 urban renewal pamphlet distributed by the West Berlin Senator for Building and Construction directly

²⁷ Hegemann’s critique, although first published as a collection of essays in 1930, was widely known in urban planning circles since 1911. He had published many of the essays separately and in his role as editor of *Städtebau* he had ample opportunity to advocate in professional circles his views on architectural and planning reforms. For more on his critique see Werner Hegemann, *Das steinerne Berlin: Geschichte der größten Mietskasernenstadt der Welt*, 4th Edition (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1988), 16.
²⁸ Hegemann, *Das steinerne Berlin*, 343.
addressed the so-called “evils of urban development” that had produced a “city of stone.” In it the reader was informed that the existing inner-city housing stock, above all the “rear wings and air shafts of Berlin’s tenements, have [in fact] always been used as a warning and example to generations of architectural students of bad urban design.”29 Schwedler’s evaluation of this housing type, specifically its rear wings and back courtyards, cast it as incompatible with the promise of prosperity in the “new” West Berlin. For Schwedler, the “rental barracks” or Mietskaserne served as an emblem of working-class misery of an era now decidedly over. Fixated for over a century on removing these objects of scorn, housing reformers, government officials, urban planners, and architects had developed plans of various stripes to replace Berlin’s Mietskaserne. Thus, the issue over what to do with these “stone caskets” was a mainstay in housing and urban planning discussions from the late nineteenth-century through to the 1970s. What united planners and politicians across time and the political spectrum was a distinct loathing of this urban form, rather than a consensus on what should eventually replace it.30

In order to fully understand the post-WWII urban planning ethic that was so intent on “sweeping away the Mietskasernenstadt,”31 one has to understand how this “tenement city” came about, as well as the varied social and political demands for its reform that emerged over the course of a century. After 1945, given the desire of Germans to distance themselves from the Nazi past, it is not surprising that architects and planners saw in their plans to remake West Berlin the opportunity to architecturally embody their

own “Stunde Null” or “zero hour.”

To be sure, the post-Nazi urban form of German cities was passionately debated between modernists, traditionalists and historic preservationists; yet all parties agreed on ridding every German city of its Mietskaserne. In fact, as historians have now solidly established, the year 1945 did not represent a fresh start in German architecture and urban planning any more than it did in other realms of German society, culture, and politics. It would be wrong then to view the postwar treatment of extant nineteenth-century residential neighborhoods as solely construed to produce this architectural “zero hour.”

Instead, as this chapter will make clear, West Berlin’s reconstructionist tendencies to rid the city of the Mietskaserne must be placed in the context of an urban planning ethos with a long history in German planning and urban design. The first part of this chapter deals with the period before WWI –the period in which the Mietskaserne became a fixture on the urban landscape in Berlin. The remainder of the chapter looks at the varied architectural and political responses to Berlin’s tenement neighborhoods, ranging from the “Neues Bauen” movement in the Weimar period to the revival of modernist urban design in postwar West Germany exemplified in two architectural competitions for the city, the 1957 Interbau (International Building Exhibition) and the 1958 Hauptstadt competition, which was sponsored jointly by the federal government in Bonn and the city of West Berlin.

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Until the mid-nineteenth century Germany was a largely rural society and Berlin a sleepy, provincial capital. An industrial economy in Germany developed rapidly if unevenly from the mid to late nineteenth century. By 1900, the young German nation-state had transformed into one of Europe’s leading industrial powers, with the capital city Berlin acquiring a corresponding importance. Urban growth rates matched the transition of Germany from a primarily agrarian state to an industrial powerhouse; the number of Germans in the last decades of the nineteenth century living in rural areas declined exponentially, matched with a dramatic explosion in populations of large cities. Fuelled by technological improvements and innovations, the rate at which the German economy industrialized and society urbanized brought about significant socio-economic dislocations. Early critics of Berlin’s tenement neighborhoods such as Hegemann were responding to the social discontents that they associated with modern urban life at the turn of the century.

Pronounced levels of urban growth occurred in the two decades following German unification as mass migration occurred from the countryside to larger towns and cities. An uneven physical and economic development of urban centers gave rise to housing shortages, as most cities could not adjust quickly enough to accommodate the pace of growth.\textsuperscript{34} In Berlin, the most populous city in Germany and the one with the highest rate of industrialization, private builders and developers capitalized on this housing demand and began constructing large tenement complexes that contained a high

proportion of one-room apartments to maximize their profits. However, even this new 
housing construction could not match the pace of urban growth, and by the late 
nineteenth century, many of the troubles associated with modern life and a new urban 
culture had become all too evident. Poor sanitation, overcrowding, inadequate housing 
and widespread poverty characterized everyday life in Berlin’s growing proletarian 
neighborhoods.35

The writings of contemporaries in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-
century Berlin articulated explicit concerns and apprehensions over the visible effects of 
an expanding urban, industrial society, ruminating on ways to control or contain 
disruptions to the traditional social order. The late nineteenth-century saw the 
Mietskaserne, located on unsanitary streets with overcrowded back and side wings that 
received little natural sunlight, emerge as an unambiguous signifier for the alienating and 
negative features of the modern, industrial city. Life in the close quarters of the 
Mietskaserne, sometimes bringing together strangers in the same apartment, fed 
bourgeois fears of sexual impropriety, sexual deviance, particularly female sexuality, and 
a breakdown of gender hierarchies. Inadequate heating and plumbing and shared toilets 
located in stairwells or in the back courtyard conjured up anxieties over proper hygiene 
and health standards, issues that contemporary observers understood as a pillar of moral 
and physical health. It was at this historical moment in Germany that the housing

35 Jörg Vögele, Urban Mortality Change in England and Germany, 1870-1913 (Liverpool: Liverpool 
University Press, 1998); Anthony McElligott, The German Urban Experience, 1900-1945: Modernity and 
Crisis (New York: Routledge, 2001); Sabine Hake, Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass 
problem (Wohnungsfrage) became the dominant theme in reform discussions about the social consequences of industrial capitalism.36

In the three decades before Hegemann published his acerbic condemnation of the Mietskaserne and the Prussian urban plan that he held responsible for the widespread construction of these residential buildings, Berlin was one of the most densely populated European cities. Once designated the capital of a formally unified Germany in 1871, Berlin’s population had grown exponentially. As the capital of Prussia, the city’s population had already risen steadily, from 200,000 inhabitants in 1817 to 800,000 at the time of German unification in 1871. Unification only heightened this trend and just thirty years later, Berlin’s population had reached two million. The establishment of Greater Berlin in 1920 extended the city limits to include neighboring municipalities and villages, and the amalgamation positioned Berlin as the second largest European city after London. In the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War, the city boasted a population of four million residents.

The economic upturn in the 1870s that accompanied the German wars of unification supported a building boom in the newly declared capital. Many distinct populations seeking better employment flooded Berlin, and needing appropriate accommodations. To keep up with the housing demand brought about by a steady stream of German and Polish migrants from the eastern provinces, four- to five- story residential buildings were built. As mentioned, these dwellings consisted of a front house, side

wings and a rear wing that encircled an inner courtyard; depending on the size of the building lot, this pattern was repeated to include two additional sets of side and rear wings so that two more courtyards followed the first; alternatively, a small factory was erected in the back courtyard to make use of the remaining space. The eagerness of private builders and speculators to make a profit resulted in the hasty construction of a housing type whose dense physical form filled the prescribed building lot. By the turn of the century, this type of dwelling had become the prototype of urban housing in Berlin.\(^{37}\)

The term *Mietskaserne*, literally rental barracks, is used in reference to any apartment house built between 1860 and 1914 that architecturally adheres to the abovementioned form. *(Figure 1.1)* The military reference reveals Berlin’s long-standing status as a garrison city in which its military barracks housed generations of Prussian soldiers. The word first appeared in the mid-1860s as shorthand, albeit with pejorative connotations, for any newly and hastily constructed multi-story dwelling in Berlin that housed multiple families or residents much like a military barrack.\(^{38}\) Critics of the *Mietskaserne* have applied the term to a wide range of buildings that indeed share common architectural characteristics but differ substantially in quality. Despite sharing the same ground plan and historicist style façade, the buildings differed greatly in the width and depth of the lot, the size of the courtyards, the number of rooms and size of apartments, and the façade ornamentation.

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\(^{37}\) This form was also common in other German cities, but has become synonymous with Berlin due to the size of the buildings in the city and because the city contains the highest density of such apartment houses. For the earliest statements on the tenement, see Architekten-Verein zu Berlin, ed., *Berlin und seine Bauten, Wohnungsbaule*, 2nd ed. of 1896 (Berlin: Ernst, 1988). I will use “tenement” as a translation for the German *Mietskaserne*.

\(^{38}\) According to the authors of a three-volume series on the Berlin apartment house, the term *Mietskaserne* first appeared in the writings of housing reformers in the mid-1860s. Johann Friedrich Geist and Klaus Kürvers, *Das Berliner Mietshaus*, vol. 2 (Munich: Prestel, 1984), 198-220.
Moreover, who lived in these buildings and where within them varied from city district to city district. In some, middle-class or lower middle-class residents occupied the front building, while just behind it in the side wings lived the servants, skilled artisans or tradesmen. Unskilled and often unemployed workers inhabited the rear wings of the first or second courtyard. Toward the back of the tenement complex, living conditions worsened: The courtyards became narrower and thus darker and the apartments were smaller. However, the division between social classes was not strictly defined by the front and back wings; it was not uncommon to see sharp social differences inside the front house, with the more well-to-do residents on the first few floors of the tenement and the very poor in the small cellar or attic apartments. In terms of apartment size, in the more affluent areas of the city such as Wilmersdorf, the Mietskaserne contained apartments with a minimum of five rooms; in contrast, in the district of Wedding, an area along the river Spree where a large portion of Berlin’s major industries had their first factories, tenements were comprised largely of two-room apartments. 39

As the pace of urbanization continued and Berlin’s overcrowded housing conditions worsened, some late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reform-minded architects designed alternate housing with the goal of improving housing conditions for the city’s working classes. Motivated by the idea that the role of the architect was to negotiate between economic constraints, requirements of the authorities, and the needs of the residents, turn-of-the-century architects hoped that the structural reforms to inner-city housing such as the ground and floor layout would in turn engender better living

conditions. The successive reforms by Weimar architects and planners placed an even greater emphasis on the social and political task of architecture in providing decent housing for the masses, primarily by reducing the density of working-class quarters.

By the interwar period, decades of both conservative and reformist observations, writings, and ruminations on the visible effects of an urban industrial society had solidified the view the Berlin Mietskaserne represented the poverty and the working-class milieu. When, in the 1950s, reconstruction plans proposed a full-scale razing of these buildings, this conflation had become by and large so commonplace that no official distinction was made between a tenement in Wilmersdorf and one in Wedding or Kreuzberg. In the mindset of postwar government officials, planners and architects, the Mietskaserne represented the unsavory elements of a supposedly bygone industrial age: overcrowded and squalid housing conditions, working-class radicalism, and social outcasts (the prostitute, the beggar, the criminal). Indeed, the specter of the nineteenth-century industrial city could not be so easily erased.

In postwar West Berlin the Mietskaserne was profoundly implicated in attempts to transform West German urban space and society. Planners, architects, and politicians who sought to shape the urban appearance of the former capital tied their visions to a new and “better” future. Suspicious of the social blight of the poor they identified with the Mietskaserne, these observers collapsed their fears of the radicalized worker onto the architectural form most closely associated with this population. In its function as both a physical building and a social space, the Mietskaserne represented the various

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communities that had been deemed a “threat” to the German body politic defined and redefined by public discourse between the Kaiserreich and the “new” Germany of the postwar era.

*The Hobrecht Plan in the Prussian Capital*

Berlin’s modern urban form dates back to the 1862 city plan developed by and named after its principal designer James Hobrecht.42 Appointed by the Prussian police planning authority to create a new street plan and sewer system for Berlin in 1859, Hobrecht drew up a master plan to include the newly incorporated areas of Berlin that lay just outside of the old city wall. Once completed, his 1862 approved plan encompassed an area twice the size of the existing developed urban space, anticipating an eventual urban population of up to four million.43 Although Hobrecht and his team conceived of the plan for future land use, the actual building regulations fell under the authority of the Berlin police presidium, a body that answered to the Prussian Interior Ministry. In other words, Hobrecht provided the layout that would govern the physical development and zoning of Berlin as it was predicted to develop over the next century, but how the spaces inside those lines would be used and what form the structures built in those spaces would take was decided upon by Prussian officials.44

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42 James Hobrecht was born in 1825 and was a building engineer by training. He undertook trips to Paris, London and Hamburg to observe urban developments and planning in those cities before drawing up the Hobrecht Plan.


The Hobrecht Plan divided Berlin and its surrounding undeveloped areas into fourteen sections. In each section, the plan assigned large lots for buildings, streets, and squares, and parks while integrating the existing layout of streets and main travel roads into the new plan. Hobrecht anticipated that his design for wide streets and generous building lots would encourage the allocation of gardens and green spaces strewn in amongst the carving up of the large lots into smaller parcels.\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} Instead, the plan’s generous block size, together with the modest building codes and regulations made it possible for private developers to exploit the building conditions and maximize the use of lots to accommodate the needs of the market. A row of large five story tenements faced the street and medium to small-scale factories took up the remaining space in the interior of the lot layout. At the most basic level, Hobrecht was interested in developing a pattern for the future expansion of the city and left aesthetic guidelines up to the single builders or stock corporations. While the typology of the Mietskaserne has been closely associated with the Hobrecht Plan, the plan did not specify such a building form and similarly styled tenements can be found in Leipzig, Dresden, Vienna, and Cologne, albeit in lesser numbers.\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} Thus, by the turn of the century, the Hobrecht Plan came to be primarily identified with Berlin’s densely built neighborhoods that were characterized by a multi-functional use of the block, in particular the rear courtyards.

Hobrecht’s vision however was not responsible for the widespread development of the densely built tenements. And as Claus Bernet has indicated, critics of the Hobrecht Plan have failed to acknowledge the generous green spaces and multi-functional squares

\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} Bernet, The Hobrecht Plan, 404.
for which the plan allowed. In fact, it was not the Hobrecht Plan but rather the lenient Prussian building regulations, including nonexistent municipal or state regulation of land speculation, together with the capitalist interests of private developers and investors that encouraged the maximum use of the building lots and floor plans. In turn, the high cost of purchasing the land determined not only the property owner’s use of the allotted space but also the inflated rents charged for the average worker’s apartment that consisted of a basic room and a kitchen. The most evident result of late nineteenth-century market forces combined with negligible state intervention was the rapid growth of overcrowded tenement districts whose residents lacked any immediate access to green gardens or courtyards as Hobrecht himself had envisioned.

The minimal provisions of the Prussian building code (Bauordnung) of 1853 restricted the height of a building to 22 meters and the size of an inner courtyard to a minimum of 5.34m x 5.34m; these measurements were consistent with the official fire regulations at the time. The prescribed size of the inner courtyard just had to be wide enough to turn a fire engine, while the maximum height of the buildings together with the standard size of the courtyards guaranteed that in case of fire, parts of a burning building would not collapse and damage the other wings of the tenement. Thus developers would adhere to the modest building codes while maximizing the lot coverage (average size of one block 75 x 120m or approximately 400 square meters with an average lot size of 10

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49 Prussian authorities slightly modified these dimensions in 1875, 1887 and again in 1897. See Horst Matzerath, “Berlin, 1890-1940,” 294.
meters wide and 56 meters deep), which set up the built conditions for a crowded, unsanitary, dark, and poorly ventilated living environment.\textsuperscript{50}

Blamed by housing reformers for the “inevitable” construction of the Mietskaserne and, therefore, the ills of urban housing in Berlin, the Hobrecht Plan encountered sharp criticism for the remainder of the nineteenth century and well into the second half of the twentieth. Contemporary criticisms of the Mietskaserne blamed Hobrecht’s master plan as the main hindrance to any further construction that would, among other things, remedy the large residential blocks that were home to the Mietskaserne. Hobrecht responded to such assessments by insisting that it was not the job of the planner to determine aesthetic or building guidelines but to provide a master plan for future growth.\textsuperscript{51} Furthermore, he maintained that a mix of social classes within one building or on one building lot would inevitably lead to social harmony, i.e., the working classes would see the errors of their ways and change their living situations simply by being in the mere presence of upright middle class professionals.\textsuperscript{52}

This ubiquitous contempt of the Mietskaserne across a century was as much cultural as it was architectural. Subsequent criticisms ranged from the purely architectural to ones that advanced a social critique that tied the real and perceived social problems of Berlin’s working-class tenement neighbourhoods to the built form. To put it another way, architectural determinism would dominate the discourse on housing reform from the late nineteenth century until the late 1960s. And though Werner Hegemann’s 1930 polemic

\textsuperscript{50} The most extreme example of maximizing the allotted space was Meyer’s Court (Meyers Hof) on Ackerstrasse in the Berlin district of Wedding with its six rear courtyards. Meyer’s Court was demolished in 1972 as part of the city’s 1963 urban renewal program.

\textsuperscript{51} For Hobrecht’s defense of his plan, see Geist and Küvers, \textit{Das Berliner Mietshaus 1740-1862}, vol. 1 (Munich: Prestel, 1980).

\textsuperscript{52} Vögele, \textit{Urban Mortality and Change in England and Germany}; Forsell, \textit{Property, Tenancy, and Urban Growth}, 118.
was not the first to blame the *Mietskaserne* and the Hobrecht Plan for the widespread misery of the late nineteenth-century industrial city, his loathing of the city plan and its architectural legacy would advance from being an exaggerated professional opinion to unquestioned dogma. Most importantly, this orthodoxy provided a thread that connected advocates of urban reform at the end of the nineteenth century through to city planners in both postwar German states, the common goal being to do away completely with the *Mietskasernen*.53

**The working-class tenement and its ‘Hinterhof’**

To the turn of the century German contemporary observer, e.g., the social reformer, clergyman, writer, intellectual, or administrator, the housing question was at the center of their reflections on the modern, urban environment. Chronic poverty, residential overcrowding and disease characterized the Berlin’s working-class tenement neighborhoods. This was an unfortunate albeit not an unusual consequence of the city’s late nineteenth-century private building boom and speculative investment. The maximum utilization of the building lots, the division of the side and rear wings into smaller units and the exorbitant rents helped bring about the dismal overcrowding inside the working-class tenement districts. On the eve of World War One an average of 76 people would call one Berlin tenement house home.54

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Until the introduction of state-sponsored housing policies in the interwar period, this unregulated private market continued to dictate the construction and variation of the *Mietskaseren* in their size, form, and quality. In the bourgeois sections of Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, and Schöneberg (all three had independent city status until incorporated into Greater Berlin in 1920), one could find examples of *Mietskaseren* whose apartments contained anywhere from five to ten rooms that extended from the front house into the side wings of the buildings. Smaller apartments in the rear wing were used to house the servants. The façades of these *Mietskaseren* were prominently endowed with historicist ornamentation; each apartment had large double-paned windows to brighten the front rooms and a balcony or loggia. Once inside the tenement, the foyer leading to the stairwell featured decorative motifs and marble floors. There was one unit to each of the five floors and all apartments had a bathroom and central heating in every room.

In comparison, the façades of the working-class tenements were plainly adorned but not completely without ornamentation. Within the working-class sections of Wedding, Friedrichshain or Kreuzberg, for example, the size, quality, and prestige of apartments still varied from front to back and from the first floor to the top. In the front house, where factory managers, low-level civil servants, small-business owners, or sometimes upwardly mobile skilled workers resided, the façade was moderately decorated, some apartments had balconies, and stucco adorned the ceilings of the main rooms facing the street. In the front building there were two, sometimes three, apartments on each floor with at least one heated room. Skilled artisans and tradesmen often resided

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in one or two room apartments in the side wings adjoining the front building. Unskilled workers and the lower classes inhabited the rear wings and side wing apartments in the first or second courtyard that had one room and a kitchen (Stube und Küche), one or two smaller windows that faced onto a dim courtyard, no central heating, and a shared toilet in the stairwell or an outhouse in the yard. The one room functioned mutually as the family living room and bedroom and as a workspace for working-class women who took in piecework to supplement the family income. Undoubtedly, housing conditions in the fast-growing working-class districts of the industrial city were less than ideal. In 1900, there were areas of Moabit, Wedding, Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg with more than 42 percent of the residents living in apartments with just one heated room and a kitchen.

Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, these small, dark, poorly ventilated and scantily equipped courtyard apartments were in high demand due to a recurring shortage of housing together with rising rents disproportionate to workers’ wages. As such, the working classes in Wilhelmine Berlin could barely afford to pay market rents for small, unheated or modestly heated apartments. It was not unusual for large families to live in a one-room apartment with a kitchen or, in extreme cases, a similarly sized basement or attic apartment with no windows. Moreover, renters were dependent on the good will of landlords who had complete power over contractual

57 In 1900 70 percent of all Berlin dwellings consisted of two rooms with a kitchen and 50 percent of only one room and a kitchen, quoted in Hsi-Huey Liang, “Lower-Class Immigrants in Wilhelmine Berlin,” Central European History 3, nos. 1-2 (March 1970): 105.
obligations. This uneven power relationship between property owning organizations or house owners and tenants eased slightly with the introduction of the Rent Protections Law in 1917. Wartime conditions helped augment reform. Until then, when house owners would arbitrarily increase the rents, this placed an added strain on the working classes who already faced a shortage of affordable accommodation. Two practices were common to offset the high costs of rent for the poorest members of the working classes. Families would take in single male boarders or lodgers who would share a bed to sleep in—one occupying the bed during the day and other at night—depending on when the factory shift ended. By the mid-1890s nearly one-quarter of working-class tenants relied on this practice in which a stranger shared the same room with the family.

Another common practice taken up by lower working-class families was to move into newly built tenements where they could occupy an apartment rent-free or with a reduced rent for half a year until the house dried. The property owners relied on these so-called Trockenwohner to heat their apartments, which in turn would speed up the process of drying the tenement until it could be “officially,” that is, legally occupied. Thus, poor working-class families in Berlin would regularly move from one damp apartment to the next, often contracting tuberculosis and other communicable diseases due to poorly heated and poorly ventilated apartments. Both practices were strongly discouraged by the Prussian authorities as well as eliciting strong misgivings on the part of social reformers alarmed by severe urban overcrowding and disease. By the 1870s and

1880s, middle-class reform movements started identifying above all improvements to the living conditions of the urban working classes as essential to the worker’s “family life, stability and patriotism.”

Central to the anxiety that permeated bourgeois thinking concerning the discontent of the urban proletariat was the association of housing misery with the physical space of the tenement’s Hinterhof. However, more than just a location of material squalidness as defined by middle-class reformers, the Hinterhof also represented a space of working-class sociability. It met a wide range of social and practical needs for the majority of the rural to urban migrants whose attachment to communal or village customs did not immediately recede once arriving in the cities. Particularly prevalent in Kreuzberg’s tenement blocks was the mixed use of the courtyard and street block space. In addition to the pubs and small shops that occupied the first floor or basement of the tenement facing the street, artisan workshops and small to medium sized manufactories were located in the back courtyards. These factories and workshops employed local residents from the neighborhood providing a workplace in close proximity or literally in the backyard to the homes of the artisans, factory managers, and working-class families.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, this practice in Kreuzberg of establishing places of work and production in the courtyards or on street blocks alongside the Mietskasernen was called the Kreuzberg Mix (Kreuzberger Mischung). In other parts of

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the city where large-scale industry developed this close mix of functions was the
exception rather than the rule as it came to be in Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg sustained its
nineteenth-century Mix into the 1960s, until postwar economic and political
transformations rendered the Mix ineffectual. Likewise, other informal aspects of the
back courtyards helped ease the transition to life in the city for new arrivals. Face-to-face
social interactions and the use of shared facilities (which included the toilets but also
caring for communal livestock kept in the courtyard) functioned as a social network that
could provide information on jobs, rumors of rent increases, or as base for political
mobilization.64 These pre-industrial structures and the social networks, often with women
at the center, characteristic of the Kreuzberg Hinterhof formed a picture that stood in
sharp contrast to the middle-class cult of domesticity.

Remarked upon by contemporary critics and observers, the physical form of
Berlin’s working-class districts thus produced a spatial arrangement in which the most
conspicuous signs of working-class poverty were hidden in the back courtyards.65 It was
in these hidden courtyards that middle-class social reformers, much like their
counterparts in other European cities, envisioned a direct connection between
overcrowding and disease and a fear of social unrest.66 The enclosed courtyard of Berlin’s
tenements, and the concomitant material suffering of its residents, was conceived as a
likely place for the dissemination of socialist ideas. As historians of working-class culture
in Germany have pointed out, middle-class concerns that the visible contradictions of the

65 Liang, “Lower-Class Immigrants in Wilhelmine Berlin,” 99. In his study, Liang cites a newspaper
article by Werner Hegemann.
66 Friedrich Lenger among others has discussed middle class anxieties vis-à-vis urban developemnt.
“Building and Perceiving the City,” in Towards an Urban Nation, ed. Friedrich Lenger, 96; Harald
Bodenschatz, “Die Berliner ‘Mietskaserne’ in der Wohnungspolitischen Diskussion seit 1918,” in
Massenwohnung und Eigenheim: Wohnungsbau und Wohnen in der Großstadt seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg,
eds. Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek (Frankfurt: Campus, 1988), 130.
capitalist order, i.e., squalid living conditions, would lead to class warfare were particularly sharp in Berlin where members of the middle- and working-classes lived in close proximity to each other. The explanation for this anxiety is that the spatial separation of social classes was not as pronounced in Berlin as was the case in other industrial areas in Germany given the socio-economic mix typical of the Berlin *Mietskaserne*.  

Set in the context of European developments in the medical and social sciences such as eugenics, demography, sociology, and anthropology, reformist concerns over Berlin’s overcrowded tenements, high-density neighbourhoods, and the lack of parks, sunlight and greenery were configured in terms of moral health and degeneration. Conservative commentators in particular viewed the working classes and urban poor housed in the large tenement buildings as a “rootless” population dangerously cut off from the traditional institutions of social control. Responding to the intensity and rate of urban growth, these observers associated modern life in the big city with a social and moral decline that they articulated as directly related to a weakening of traditional social hierarchies and community (read rural) networks. Commentators collapsed their anti-urban hostility onto the bustling capital, the place where young rural out-migrants were

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arriving daily and where class conflicts were perceived as volatile.70 Plainly embedded in these conservative critiques of urbanism was a fear of the radicalized proletariat. The overcrowded working-class neighborhoods of Berlin, specifically the back courtyards of the tenements, embodied the threat of socialist or communist agitation.

Grounding their views in biological, social Darwinist thinking, conservative urban intellectuals and reformers held overcrowding in Berlin’s working-class tenements largely responsible for the threat to “the health, the size, and even the survival of the German Volk as a whole.”71 By the 1920s, eugenics would become the dominant mode through which responses to modernity were mediated. Thus, the overcrowded, dark, and unsanitary wings and courtyards of the Mietskasernen endangered the health of the families residing in them, and by extension, threatened the health of society on the whole. And as historians have emphasized, in the decades before the Second World War anti-urban sentiments in Germany were not only ubiquitous but also virulently articulated.72 And more than any other German city, Berlin served as an emblem of the moral and spiritual degeneration that worried conservative critics. According to this rhetoric, in the fast growing “metropolis,” urban “rootlessness” replaced a healthy and solid connection to nature, the land, and to the family.

70 At the turn of the century, every year close to 40,000 young women arrived in Berlin from the eastern provinces to work in the service or domestic industry. See Martin Düsphol, Kleine Kreuzberg-Geschichte (Berlin: Berlin Story Verlag, 2009), 61. On rent strikes, see Forsell, “‘Paying the Rent.’”
As historian Andrew Lees has suggested, parallel to the concerns over individual behavior in the big city was the fear of new forms of social and political organizing that could challenge the “established patterns of political authority and social stratification.” Conservative cultural and political observers identified this challenge with the growing popularity of social democracy in Berlin. This social and political peril, both real and imagined, extended to the physical places in which the worker lived, worked, and socialized. As indicated earlier, the middle-class reform discourse in the late nineteenth century was overtly expressed in terms of the corrupt morality of the urban poor and the built environment inside which this supposed immoral and deprived lifestyle flourished. Rather than focusing on the root causes of urban poverty and inadequate housing, official reports and investigations continued to hold the working-class populations and especially their housing in suspicion. (Figure 1.2)

By the mid-twentieth century, this set of anxieties may have lost much of its classist and eugenic orientation; however, a belief that the evils of urban workers were located in the Hinterhof was shared by both turn of the century observers and their postwar counterparts. This was perhaps the most important and influential legacy of these early urban theorists to the cultural assumptions of the Mietskaserne found in postwar West Germany. In 1968 Rolf Schwedler, Berlin’s Minister for Building and Construction, gave a speech at Notre Dame University on the current status of Berlin in international urban development. In his speech, he provided his audience with a cursory account of Berlin’s urban development. He pointed out that “after 1871, Berlin became the center of

73 Lees, “Berlin and Modern Urbanity,” 162.
74 Scientists and reformers in this period not only pathologized the urban poor but exoticized the supposed underbelly of the urban experience. See McElligott, The German Urban Experience; Peter Fritzsche, “Vagabond in the Fugitive City: Hans Ostwald, Imperial Berlin and the Grossstadt Dokumente,” Journal of Contemporary History 29, no. 3 (July 1994): 385-402.
a rapidly developing industry. This industry needed workers, the workers housing. Thus began the misery of the tenement. Their suffering [working-class families] provided the fuel for dangerous radicalism [Ihr Elend bot Nährstoffe für gefährlichen Radikalismus].

Here we see the continued discourse of the Berlin Hinterhof as a caldron of social instability. In Schwedler’s reference to the Mietskaserne and its associated “ills,” he reveals the cornerstone of postwar urban planning in West Berlin. It was based on the belief that the form of housing recognized as the “hallmark of proletarian Berlin” was fundamentally incongruent of with the vision of a “new” West Germany purportedly capable of providing adequate and affordable housing for all its citizens. As Brian Ladd has pointed out, the “image of the Mietskaserne embodie[d] a set of beliefs about the history and identity of Berlin.” This set of beliefs may have had its origins in the nineteenth century, but it continued to shape perceptions of the capital city for over a century. The remainder of this chapter will provide a sketch of the most important architectural alternatives to the Mietskaserne, and by extension approaches to the city’s physical form inspired by the idea of a “new” Berlin.

*Bringing light, air, and sun to the ‘city of stone’*

Late Wilhelminian social and housing reformers all recognized the need to alleviate the problems of Berlin’s overcrowded working-class districts. Irrespective of their individual or group motivations – be it bourgeois altruism, economic development, or biological considerations – all reformers advocated at the very least a stark reduction in

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77 Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin*, 100.
building density. Ideally, they aspired to a total eradication of the *Mietskaserne* and the construction of new dwellings that would guarantee light, air, and green spaces.

Anticipating this modernist principle of the 1920s that emphasized the value of the natural environment, progressive architects also strove to design better housing that would reflect the social responsibility of their profession to improve living standards for all. However, the extent to which architects and housing reformers of the Wilhelmine period could implement comprehensive reform was limited. Two interrelated reasons contributed to this restriction: firstly, the housing market was in the hands of private developers, and secondly, the generous dimensions of the lot coverage had been established by the 1853 Hobrecht Plan and ratified by the Prussian state with only minor amendments to limiting its measurements in the following decades.78

Long before the inter-war construction of the more famous housing estates (*Siedlungen*), turn of the century architects had focused on introducing reforms to the urban blocks already laid out in the Hobrecht Plan. Between 1900 and 1914, architects such as Albert Gessner, Paul Mebes, and Alfred Messel put their reform ideals into practice, albeit on a modest scale, by designing apartment complexes that reduced housing density.79 Their endeavors provided theoretical alternatives to the *Mietskaserne* for the next generation of architects rather than real, tangible alternatives for workers. A much larger percentage of improved housing for the masses would first be built during

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78 Both Michael Honhart and C. Edmund Clingan have pointed out that although the national government did little in the way of providing housing for the urban masses before the 1920s, individual states and cities did advocate public housing and some made interventions in the private market in order to take some responsibility for providing low-cost housing. See Michael Honhart, “Company Housing as Urban Planning in Germany, 1870-1940,” *Central European History* 23, no. 1 (March 1990): 3-21; C. Edmund Clingan, “More Construction, More Crisis: The Housing Problem of Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 5 (July, 2000): 630-44.

the Weimar Republic when the government prioritized the formation of a national housing program.

In the Berlin districts of Charlottenburg, Schoeneberg, Zehlendorf, Steglitz, Wedding and Friedrichshain, architects Gessner, Mebes, and Messel aimed to reduce high housing densities and to guaranteeing basic amenities that were sorely lacking in the working-class Mietskaserne. For example, Gessner’s apartment houses differed from the Mietskaserne in two distinct ways. To remedy the small, narrow, and dark courtyard enclosed on all four sides, Gessner grouped together the back courtyards of four apartment houses to form an expansive area whose primary function would be that of a garden courtyard.\(^8\) In another project of seven apartment houses Gessner made use of the street courtyard to expose the transverse wing of the apartment house to the street. His goal was to reverse the layout of the Mietskaserne so that the courtyard now faced the street to allow more natural light to enter the apartments of the cross wing. Gessner’s response to high residential density was to limit the number of apartments per floor to two. To counter the little sunlight that reached the lower level apartments in the Mietskaserne, he designed a light well, which would provide natural light to the main and secondary staircases, grouping the apartments around the large, open hallways brightened by the light well.\(^9\)

Drawing on functional principles of the nascent German Werkbund, Paul Mebes built five large apartment complexes between 1906 and 1912 in Schöneberg, Steglitz and

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Zehlendorf. Given that Mebes rejected the excessive ornamentation associated with historicism, his apartment complexes were distinguished by smooth lines only broken up by loggias or balconies and apartment complexes that filled the prescribed building lot with their irregular but clean geometric shapes comprised of three street courtyards that circumvented what reformist architects perceived as the monotony of the long row of tenement façades. Aesthetic concerns notwithstanding, the design of each apartment complex prioritized adequate sunlight and ventilation; all apartments were lit from two sides, and were equipped with modern amenities such as bathrooms and finished kitchens; however, Mebes’ reformed vision of the *Mietskaserne* were occupied largely by members of the lower middle class rather than the urban industrial worker, theoretically the target audience for such apartments.

Alfred Messel, internationally known for designing the grandiose Wertheim department store at Leipziger Platz, was commissioned by the cooperative Berliner Building and Savings Association to build workers’ housing in Wedding and Friedrichshain. Messel, like Gessner and Mebes, conformed to the basic ground layout of the *Mietskaserne*. Thus, like all architects at the time he worked within the confines of what the developer or property owner laid down for the dimensions of the dwelling. He too altered the building form to include larger and greener courtyards, paying attention to reducing density and providing better sanitation facilities, so that each apartment had an indoor toilet, a balcony and a kitchen. In contrast to the *Mietskaserne*, all units in the five-story apartment house were of similar quality and size and the back courtyards

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82 Mebes joined the Werkbund in 1912.
boasted a generous dimension of 30m x 40m.\textsuperscript{85} Despite these designs of modest structural reforms to new urban housing, little progress was made before the interwar period in implementing major changes to the overall housing conditions of the urban poor.\textsuperscript{86}

The ushering in of a democratic form of government in the wake of the German revolutions of 1918/1919 brought about the political changes needed to push through a comprehensive housing reform. Although the war years saw the first push towards implementing a state housing policy, radical changes in both policy and architectural design would first occur during the tumultuous years of the Weimar Republic. The new German government led by the Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, a member of Germany’s largest political party that claimed to represent the interests of the working classes, had to contend with an already catastrophic housing shortage made even worse by a construction standstill during the war. At war’s end, the total number of new apartments built between 1914 and 1918 fell below the average of rate of construction in just one year before the war. Alleviating the magnitude of this shortage, and the related political need to legitimate the new government by institutionalizing housing reform, became the driving force of Weimar state housing politics.\textsuperscript{87} The appreciation of greater state involvement in the provision of housing was formally implemented as a postwar social

policy and decent and affordable housing enshrined as a human right in the Weimar constitution.\textsuperscript{88}

The role of Weimar Berlin as the epicenter of German artistic creativity is well known; and included among its cultural riches were members of the architectural avant-garde.\textsuperscript{89} The sense of new possibilities that accompanied the downfall of the old order extended to the realms of housing and urban reform. Architects, builders, and socialist politicians combined and supported architectural innovation and social idealism. Indeed, the issue of urban reform was central to the vision of Martin Wagner, a committed member of the SPD and Berlin’s municipal city planner between 1925 and 1932. To address the housing shortage and introduce laws that would generate a radical shift in the property owners’ stronghold over the rental market, Wagner sought not only to bring “light, air and sun” to the masses, he also set out to redefine the juridical landlord-tenant relationship.

In 1920 Greater Berlin was formed after the administrative boundaries of the city were redrawn to include eight neighboring municipalities, 59 rural communities, and 27 farm districts.\textsuperscript{90} This consolidation enabled the possibility of a standardized urban development plan for the entire metropolitan area. In an effort to improve the inner city


\textsuperscript{89} The literature on Weimar art, culture, and politics is vast.

\textsuperscript{90} This was a long overdue consolidation of the entire settled area and economic activities of the city. The conservative imperial government had not been interested due to the threat of the Social Democratic Party’s success in the working-class areas of the outlying municipalities. The amalgamated municipalities included Charlottenburg, Lichtenberg, Neukölln, Schöneberg, Köpenick, Spandau, and Wilmersdorf. As Horst Matzerath has pointed out, the surrounding cities and towns had acquired an urban character since Berlin’s building regulations (Hobrecht Plan) were applied to the outlying areas as well. See Matzerath, “Berlin 1890-1940,” 297.
housing, the 1925 new zoning plan (*Bauordnung*) provided the legal underpinnings to a definitive shift in urban development, at least on paper. The new building law outlawed the construction of back buildings and courtyards, while fixing building forms and land uses to be implemented throughout the city.\(^9^1\) Concretely, the explicit goal was to hinder any further construction of the *Mietskaserne*, until this point Berlin’s exemplary urban form.

In light of a severe housing shortage and the miserable conditions of existing dwellings, the main objective of state-sponsored Weimar architecture was the construction of inexpensive, low-density housing. Housing reforms and design concepts formulated before the war -and to a small degree implemented- were now at the center of Weimar social policy. Yet the commencement of construction was largely delayed until 1924 by the dismal economic situation and deflation. To compensate, the government introduced legal measures, already presented and debated in parliament during the war, which would give tenants greater protection in economically volatile times. These measures included a law to protect tenants against eviction, a rent control act, and a housing shortage law. The result of all three measures meant a radical shift in the control of the housing market from a largely private one, where land or property owners had complete control in determining rental fees and rentals, to a state-regulated market.\(^9^2\)

Under a volatile succession of political leaderships and a still greater economic

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\(^9^1\) Horst Matzerath, “Berlin 1890-1940,” 306.

instability, the newly convened republican government would first turn its attention to the construction of large-scale national housing in the years between 1926 and 1932.  

Influenced by their Werkbund predecessors, the generation of architects who came to prominence in the interwar period believed that societal ills/social problems were caused by the built environment and subsequently could be amended by constructing new and improved forms of housing and city planning. Prewar Werkbund architectural and design trends such as the rejection of historicism, particularly, eclectic ornamentation, or the attempt to induce cultural and social reform through the redesign of everyday household objects informed modernist architectural thinkers in the Weimar Republic.  

According to art historian Frederic Schwartz, the political goal of the German Werkbund, a design reform organization of artists, industrialists and architects, was the “creation of a sphere of culture in which class played no visible role.” Extending this idea to housing and city planning after 1918, architects associated with the new architecture or New Building (Neues Bauen) responded to the class stratifications by designing housing, neighborhoods, and cities that strove to reflect an egalitarian society. In removing traces of class and class conflict in design and city planning, the modernist architects argued, new housing imparted bold proposals for social change.

Among the many architects that shared Martin Wagner’s vision for Berlin were modernist giants such as Bruno and Max Taut, Walter Gropius, Hugo Häring, Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hans Scharoun and Erich Mendelsohn. Breaking with

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93 Wolfgang Sonne, “Specific Intentions – General Realities: on the Relation between Urban Forms and Political Aspirations in Berlin during the Twentieth Century,” Planning Perspectives 19 (July 2004), 287. Larger, comprehensive urban planning projects in the Weimar period were hindered by the economic and political instability. Give numbers of housing complexes etc built in those years.
95 Schwartz, Werkbund, 40.
the construction methods and architectural styles of the nineteenth century, such as façade ornamentation that haphazardly combined different historical styles, these architects introduced and implemented the new techniques in architecture and engineering.\textsuperscript{96} Backed by government organizations, building trade unions, or large non-profit housing cooperatives (\textit{gemeinnützige Wohnungsbaugesellschaften}), these architects designed public housing projects, borrowing techniques of mass production from American technological advances.\textsuperscript{97} Using the idea of Fordist factory-scale mass production, Weimar architects hoped to combat Berlin’s desperate housing shortage with new forms of housing. They believed that decent housing could be made widely available by using non-traditional and inexpensive building materials whose components were factory produced, and thus not dependent on labor-intensive practices.

Weimar planning and construction was shaped by the attempt to move beyond the \textit{Mietskaserne}. Several low-rise housing estates were built between 1924 and 1932, the most famous of these being Bruno Taut’s Hufeisensiedlung in the Britz district of Berlin.\textsuperscript{98} Doing away with historicist ornamentation, the new housing estates used reinforced concrete, steel, and glass giving the building form an overall look of unity with

\textsuperscript{96} The literature on modernist architecture or the International Style is vast. Nowhere in Europe was this style more visible in the 1920s than in Berlin. See Kathleen James, ed., \textit{Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Walter Gropius, \textit{The New Architecture and the Bauhaus} (Boston: MIT Press, 1965); Magdalena Droste, \textit{Bauhaus, 1919-1933} (Berlin: Bauhaus Archive, 2002).

\textsuperscript{97} These housing cooperatives were supported by the local authorities and unions and were responsible for much of the public housing in the Weimar Republic. After 1918 these housing/building associations became the alternative to the private market. In addition to housing associations and self-administered cooperatives, Christian organizations and paternalistic-minded industries constructed large housing projects intent to provide decent workers’ housing. Michael Honhart credits the construction of AEG’s company housing between 1907 and 1914 as having first made the design of workers’ housing an attractive line of work for architects. Michael Honhart, “Company Housing As Urban Planning in Germany, 1870–1940,” \textit{Central European History} 23, no. 1 (March 1990): 3-21.

\textsuperscript{98} Other estates included: Die Weisse Stadt in Reineckendorf, Wohnstadt Carl Legien in Pankow, Onkel Tom Siedlung in Zehlendorf, Siemenstadt in Charlottenburg, and Siedlung Schillerpark in Wedding. The years between 1924 and 1930 were the only years in which building was not interrupted.
its straight lines, austere façade, and clean and sleek angles meant to express control and rationality in contrast to the chaos and disorder associated with Berlin’s tenements. This commitment to design newness and progressive politics, however, should not conceal the lingering anxieties or fears that the residents of these hated tenements, too, were disorderly, dangerous, and morally corrupt. The outward design of the new buildings, modernist architects believed, should reflect the inner structure or order, of the individual, the community and by extension society. In an extreme case of projecting order onto the residents of this new and improved housing, Bruno Taut applied inventive color schemes to both the exterior and interior of his buildings and attempted to restrict the color of plants or flowers residents could grow on their balconies, lest they disrupt the aesthetic unity with distasteful behavior.\textsuperscript{99} Taut was a firm believer that color reflected not only a sign of better times, but also contributed to a general sense of happiness.

In theory, the built environment of new housing, planned communities and a separation of urban functions were meant to reflect the socialist principles of Weimar social democracy. The new housing estates built on the then periphery of the dense inner city were deliberately built away from industrial or commercial centers to ensure physical distance from an allegedly pernicious mix of industry, housing, and recreation. Housing, the architects of Neues Bauen believed, represented a “machine for living” that should not deny human beings’ organic relationship to nature.\textsuperscript{100} As such, the new housing estates provided their residents with ample green space, e.g., lawns, garden plots, and small parks. Neues Bauen architects were convinced that their designs could meet the


\textsuperscript{100} Walter Gropius for example drew upon ideas that underscored the relationship between the moral and physical health of the individual and the building.
requirements for better housing and community life first proposed by turn of the century housing and social reformers. Each apartment had a bathroom, gas water heater, a loggia or balcony, central heating, and a fitted kitchen. The apartments, albeit small, were designed in such a way that they all had sufficient sunlight and air; each apartment had at least two windows on opposite sides of the room to allow for cross-ventilation.

In reality, the plans of Weimar architects and planners to address the needs of the masses, to design “new, affordable dwellings” using the latest developments in rationalization and scientific management, remained largely unrealized. In terms of redressing the colossal housing shortage, new dwellings comprised only 16 percent of the total housing stock in Berlin in the interwar period. Encumbered by the economic and political instability that hindered the rate of construction in the first years of the Republic, the state of housing for the working-class population remained as dire as it had been before the war. Ironically, the new dwellings built proved to be too costly for the average worker since that interwar tenant laws stabilized the rents in the prewar tenements, and workers had to factor in steep travel costs between the home and the factory. The housing estates instead attracted white-collar and skilled workers. These avant-garde architects and planners, despite their social commitment, failed to recognize the neighborhood structures and networks that most poor workers were unwilling to abandon, e.g., place of work, the pub, family and friends.

For German city planners, the physical destruction of German cities at the end of the war, a sight that prompted Bertolt Brecht to describe Berlin as that “heap of rubble next to Potsdam,” was seen as a welcome opportunity to finish off at long last the much

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101 210,000 new dwellings were built in the Weimar period, the high point 1922-3, 460.
hated blocks of tenements that lined the city’s streets. In 1945 Berlin was hit by allied bombs twenty-nine times, reducing the city’s prewar housing stock by 50 percent and leaving 80 million cubic meters of rubble on the streets. Planners and politicians viewed the physical ruins of German cities, above all in Berlin, as a “one-time chance to finally overcome the Mietskasernenstadt.” Perhaps more significantly, the opportunity to rebuild the bombed cities provided planners, architects, and politicians a means to distance not only themselves but also a “new” Germany from twelve years of National Socialism. Yet this longing for a decisive break is deceiving.

As attractive as the notion of a supposed “Stunde Null” seemed in 1950s West Germany, the physical renewal of German cities was in fact based on concepts of city planning that extended back to the mid-nineteenth century. Both the reformist ideals of the 1920s and the early twentieth century garden city movement had a decisive impact on the ways in which German architects and planners, many of them still active under the Nazis, envisioned the postwar city. And as architectural historians have pointed out, these prewar concepts had also continued circulating in discussions and formulation of planning texts after 1933, albeit under “Nazi guises.” Under Albert Speer, Hitler’s chief architect and armaments minister, a commission comprised of town planners was set up in 1943 to design plans for German cities already heavily damaged by Allied bombs. These individuals and their ideas had a decisive impact on postwar planning in

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102 von Beyme, Der Wiederaufbau, 85; Wolfgang Schäche and Wolfgang J. Streich, “Wiederaufbau oder Neubau? Über die legende der zerstörten Stadt,” in Stadtentwicklung nach 1945, ISR Diskussionsbeitrag 17, (Berlin: Institut für Stadt-und Regionalplanung der Technischen Universität, 1985); Florian Urban, “Recovering Essence Through Demolition: The “Organic” City in Postwar West Berlin,” Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 63, no. 3 (September 2004): 354-369. This was also the case in the larger European context. This take on the physical devastation of European cities as an opportunity was not unique to Germany.

West Germany. Indeed, three members of Speer’s Reconstruction Planning Task Force, Hans Reichow, Johannes Göderitz, Hubert Hoffmann, went on to belatedly publish their ideas formulated during the war in a 1957 book titled, The Structured and Dispersed City (Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt). The Nazi vilification of modernist architecture notwithstanding, these planners appointed by Speer to the task force, already practicing architects before the war, continued to apply modernist principles of functionalism and standardization to their Nazi-commissioned designs. Their book is widely recognized as the principal modernist text of postwar West German planning and redevelopment.

At war’s end Berlin politicians and planners faced the daunting task of contending with the city’s catastrophic housing shortage. Within weeks of the German capitulation in May 1945, the Soviet General Bersarin appointed Hans Scharoun as chief planning commissioner of a yet undivided Berlin. As the newly appointed city planner, Scharoun coauthored the first comprehensive reconstruction plan for Berlin, titled the Collective Plan (Kollektivplan). The plan adhered to the functionalist principles reflected in the Athens Charter whose guiding vision necessitated a separation of urban functions like commerce, housing, and industry. Officially presented to the public in the 1946

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105 Written by Johannes Göderitz, Hubert Hoffmann, and Roland Rainer, The Structured and Dispersed City influenced an entire generation of planners. It signalled the re-emergence of prewar modernist ideas. Two of the three were not Nazi Party members. On the whole, planners who worked in an official capacity before 1945 continued working in the newly founded West Germany. See Francesca Rogier, “The Monumentality of Rhetoric: The Will to Rebuild in Postwar Berlin,” in Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture, eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, et. al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 165-90; von Beyme, Wiederaufbau, 53.

106 Hans Scharoun began his career as an architect in the Weimar Republic. He was an early proponent of Weimar modernism. During the war he, like many other modern-thinking architects and planners, remained in Germany essentially unemployed (in ‘inner exile’). He designed both the Staatsbibliothek in West Berlin and the Berlin Philharmonic Hall.

107 At the 1932 meeting of the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architects) the urban doctrine that would influence postwar planning and urban renewal in Europe (both West and East) and North America
exhibition “Berlin Plant,” the Collective Plan proposed creating a “new” Berlin rather than a reconstructed one, that would be developed in linear strips along the rivers Spree and Havel. The aim was to achieve a balance between “buildings and nature, high and low, narrow and wide to create a vibrant yet orderly urban landscape (Stadtlandschaft).” An “orderly” urban landscape, that is, that would reflect the modernist planning principles separating urban functions. Both planning professionals and politicians alike, perceived Scharoun’s plan as too utopian and in the first set of postwar elections in West Berlin in 1946, Karl Bonatz replaced Scharoun as chief planner.

Bonatz, representing a more practical standpoint, proposed a modified version of an already existing plan. He drew upon ideas put forward in the Zehlendorf Plan, a plan designed by the office of an architect located in the Berlin district of Zehlendorf that had been unveiled at the same exhibition as Scharoun’s design. In effect, the Zehlendorf Plan depicted extensive demolition of existing buildings in the process of creating a comprehensive design that would prioritize traffic planning. Yet unlike Scharoun’s plan, the Zehlendorf Plan adhered to the basic layout of the historic city. However, until the currency reform in 1948, all plans for a thorough rebuilding of the city remained on paper.109

The official division of the city and creation of the two German states in 1949 halted any pressing need to implement a plan that considered the whole city. Although

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109 Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, “Architektur und Stadtplanung,” in Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, vol. 3, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), 145. The question of whether or not Berlin would remain the capital also plagued the debate over a city plan, see Diefendorf, In the Wake of War, 194.
these early plans to develop a coherent urban design for the entire city of Berlin had been cast aside by the late 1940s, this early spirit of building rather than reconstructing a new city hinted at subsequent practices of razing entire blocks and districts in West Berlin. By the next decade, the term “reconstruction” or “rebuilding” became synonymous with ridding the city of the *Mietkasernen* and the wholesale construction of new housing stock.\textsuperscript{110} Notably, these early plans had failed not only because of funding problems and the recent traumas of an official division, but mainly because they ignored everyday reality for the majority of Berliners. Incredibly, amid the debris and acute housing shortage, these early plans focused on further demolition. Not one of the plans prioritized the immediate reconstruction of the damaged, but salvageable housing stock.\textsuperscript{111} However, given the urban postwar context, workers were much more attracted to plans for building rather than destroying housing given the state of material misery in the cities.

Architectural historian Florian Urban has pointed to the discursive continuities in Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi planning conceptions that culminated in the postwar formulation of the West German urban design paradigm labeled the “organic city.”\textsuperscript{112} First formulated by Hans Reichow in his 1948 publication the *Organic Urban Design (Organische Stadtbaukunst)*, and further developed in his 1957 co-authored classic, this concept depicted the city “as a flowing landscape with abundant open space and greenery.”\textsuperscript{113} Reichow advanced a radical design of urban space with the explicit aim of aligning the city with its natural landscape. The “new” city would be organized in

\begin{itemize}
\item[113] Francesca Rogier, “The Monumentality of Rhetoric,” 166.
\end{itemize}
accordance with its surrounding environment, a concept that conceptualized the city as analogous to a living organism. In place of the existing “inorganic city,” the overcrowded, unhygienic, industrial city of the nineteenth century, the “organic city” was thought to be the foundation for a dignified life.114

By the mid 1950s, this urban concept of the “organic city” was not only a projected model for the “renewed” metropolis of Berlin, but also a blueprint for the reconstruction of West German cities in general.115 However, this concept did not go unchallenged by planners, architects and government authorities, for example, who advocated for historic preservation or more conservative approaches to reconstruction. Yet championed by the community of modernist architects and planners who had risen to prominence in the Weimar Republic, these advocates of an organic concept these exploited National Socialism’s famous contempt of modernism to further their own aesthetic cause in postwar West Germany. This postwar rehabilitation of modernist ideas in planning and design had much to do with the vilification of “Bolshevist” modern art and culture by the Nazis.116 In the early postwar years, proponents of modernist architecture, particularly those who had established themselves in the Weimar period, could point to an architectural or planning tradition that they believed was untainted by the recent Nazi past. This argument corresponded nicely to the emphasis on building anew and resonated broadly in the early years of the Federal Republic as the “new”

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115 Modernists/Traditionalists would define the planning paradigms of postwar West Germany and West Berlin. See Rosenfeld, Munich and Memory; Diefendorf, In the Wake of War; von Beyme, Der Wiederaufbau; Werner Durth and Niels Gutschow, Träume in Trümmer: Planungen zum Wiederaufbau zerstörter Städte in Deutschland 1945-1950 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993).
116 Betts, The Authority of Everyday Objects, 12. The older generation of modernists, such as Gropius, Wagner, Hilbersheimer, and van der Rohe after having established careers in the United States did not return to Germany at war’s end.
Germany reinvented itself. Not surprisingly, as scholars have noted, the more radical leftist elements of modernism’s interwar history received a whitewashing in this West German reworking.

**The promise of a “new” Berlin**

In the 1950s, two architectural competitions, the International Building Exhibition or Interbau and Hauptstadt Berlin, revealed West Berlin’s part in the Cold War propaganda machine. The city was used both as a testing ground and symbol for city remaking in the wake of World War Two. In 1951 the West Berlin Senate began formally discussing the idea of an International Building Exhibition, but it was not until 1953 that it became clear that the main focus of this exhibition would be the Hansaviertel, a heavily damaged area of the inner city bordering the Tiergarten (Berlin’s main park in the inner city).\(^{117}\) Scheduled for 1959, the *Hauptstadt Berlin* organizers solicited entries from international architects, who were all instructed to work entirely on the supposition that the city would soon retain its status as capital. In the volatile climate of the early Cold War, a divided Berlin quickly assumed its role as a stage for “competing ideological showcases.”\(^{118}\) A visible and thus important stage for ideological showcasing was urban planning and housing. Architecture and planning was seen as a means for both West and East Germany to embed their respective ideological values onto the built environment of Berlin as though it were, in fact, a single city.

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\(^{117}\) The idea of holding an international building exhibition in Berlin was already discussed in 1951. How this exhibition would look and where it would be located in the city however was not decided upon until 1953.

True to this early Cold War showcasing of respective ideologies, the 1955 joint announcement by the federal government and the city of West Berlin of a competition of ideas endorsed Berlin’s claim to its prewar status as national capital and Weltstadt. Originally conceived as a part of the Interbau, the Hauptstadt Berlin competition was held two years later, once the organizers had agreed that the competition would garner more international attention if the two planning events were held separately.\textsuperscript{119} Despite the reality, which was an occupied and divided Germany, politicians in 1950s West Berlin routinely demonstrated the city’s “political will” to recreate itself as capital and thus legitimate itself both to the GDR and to the Federal Republic. This sentiment was also clearly articulated in the early reconstruction plans for the city, which inevitably assumed that Berlin would soon regain its function as a unified capital.\textsuperscript{120}

The Hauptstadt competition was located in the old city center, an area of Berlin now with parts in both East and West Berlin. Over a hundred and fifty project ideas were submitted, many of the same architects having participated in the Interbau competition just a year earlier. The common element in every one of the submitted designs was a radical transformation of the prewar street pattern in the competition area.\textsuperscript{121} An implementation of any one of these plans would entail a flattening of all existing buildings; many partially damaged but over half left unscathed by the bombs. Given too that all of the submissions deliberately ignored the division of the city, the construction of the Wall just two years later in 1961 relegated the prize-winning proposals to a desk.

\textsuperscript{119} Carola Hein, et al., \textit{Hauptstadt Berlin: Internationaler städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58}, Catalogue of the Exhibit at Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Mann, 1990), 41.
\textsuperscript{120} See the latest general history of the Federal Republic, Eckart Conze, \textit{Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis die Gegenwart} (Munich: Siedler, 2009).
\textsuperscript{121} Urban, “Recovering Essence through Demolition,” 358; Kleihues, “From the Destruction to the Critical Reconstruction of the City,” 40.
drawer. While propagandists on both sides had clearly exploited the political division of Berlin before 1961, the construction of the Wall abruptly ended the traffic of goods and people between both sides and strengthened the importance of keeping West Berlin “alive.” This goal remained, in part, tied to planners and politicians’ visions of the “new” Berlin – a half city whose built environment should reflect a living and vibrant city, not a dying city bound to the past.

Nonetheless, what remained a significant element of the Hauptstadt competition was the weight it accorded to the principles of the “organic” city as formulated by Reichow. As mentioned earlier, these principles necessitated a complete destruction of the historic city with its rows of Mietskasernen and the continued destruction of recoverable housing for thousands of Berliners. This vision of the city as an assemblage of organic, loosely grouped neighborhood units, rezoned urban functions, and flowing greenery may have fit well with the idea of a new beginning, but more than anything else this clean break with the existing buildings and street plans revealed a top-down approach to planning that completely ignored the immediate needs of the city’s population.

As historians of material culture and urban design have shown, the initial prioritization of organic design in West Germany by modernists, be it of the city or everyday household goods, was central to the project of modernizing in a post-Nazi West Germany.¹²² Ironically, this specific understanding of the ideal urban landscape as

fundamental to both the physical and social reconstruction of Germany not only looked forward to a new, “cleansed” future, but also backwards, locating the “essence” of a city in a period preceding the industrial age.\textsuperscript{123} Put differently, the future of the city in the 1950s was rooted in a pre-industrial past that was paradoxically superior to the industrial city of the nineteenth century because of its ability to function in a more rational and healthy manner.\textsuperscript{124} Convinced of the moral and spiritual effect that the lived environment had on its residents, postwar organic planners demonized the sprawling, polluted, and overcrowded nineteenth-century city. Though not all modernist planners adhered to this quasi-mythical idea of a city’s “true, ultimately anti-urban essence,” the widespread consensus that the tenement city was single-handedly responsible for urban blight brought together powerful arguments in favor of flattening the remaining 70 percent of the prewar housing stock still intact.\textsuperscript{125}

Contemporary architects and government officials recognized these highly publicized plans to rebuild the Hansaviertel, as the “keystone of modern inner city reconstruction, a symbol of free, democratic building and [perhaps most significantly] a reply to the officially ordained pomp of Stalinallee.”\textsuperscript{126} The construction of Stalinallee, a major boulevard extending eastwards from Alexanderplatz, began in the early 1950s. East German officials touted the 2.3 km boulevard lined with wide, tree-lined streets and ornate, seven to ten story apartment blocks as representative of the finest in socialist

\textsuperscript{123} Urban, “Recovering Essence,” 364.
\textsuperscript{124} Diefendorf, \textit{In the Wake of War}, 190.
\textsuperscript{125} Urban, “Recovering Essence,” 361.
\textsuperscript{126} Kleihues, “From the Destruction to the Critical Reconstruction of the City,” 41.
In response to the “first socialist street,” West Berlin planners and politicians put forward the idea of sponsoring a housing project to counter East German claims to the city. And conveniently for West Berlin leaders this shining example of Stalinist architecture soon became associated with the repression of workers in the workers’ and farmers’ state. Plans to rebuild the formerly bourgeois, heavily bombed inner city neighborhood bordering the Tiergarten took on dimensions of major significance, as they were assigned the task of showcasing the urban character of a successful, modern and democratic Germany in contrast to the socialist GDR. Thus, the Interbau 1957 and its accompanying exhibition, “The City of Tomorrow” (Die Stadt von morgen) aimed to present a concrete alternative not only to the much-despised nineteenth-century city, but also as alternative to the postwar “socialist” city as well as establishing a vision of what could and should be done in German cities and beyond.

Central to the conception of the Interbau design competition was the promise of creating a “new” Berlin. Given the city’s waning political and economic significance in the context of escalating east-west tensions. West Berlin politicians pinned high hopes on the idea of an international building exhibition. Having “temporarily” lost its political function to Bonn in 1949 and tied to that was its former economic might, the Interbau provided West Berlin an opportunity to showcase the cutting edge of modernist architecture and town planning “in [direct] contrast to the false pageantry and pomp of the Stalinallee.” Moreover, by steering domestic and international attention to West

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129 The explicit political function of the Interbau distinguished it from the earlier building exhibitions in West Germany, e.g., Darmstadt 1950 and Hanover 1956. Senatsbaudirektor quoted in Sandra Wagner
Berlin, the emphasis on the remaking of a “democratic” city through the example of the Interbau so clearly enacted early Cold War propaganda practices.\textsuperscript{130} The Hansaviertel, a central area of the city located adjacent to the Tiergarten and almost visible from East Berlin, was as Mayor Otto Suhr suggested, “not ‘only’ an exhibition, because with the Hansaviertel a new residential district will emerge. That the new houses (Häuser) are being built at the edge of the Tiergarten has symbolic meaning. Every new house is a clear sign of the city’s will to the future.”\textsuperscript{131}

The 1953 competition was won by Berlin architects Gerhard Jobst and Willy Kreuer, who established the master urban development plan for the Hansaviertel. A year later an expert panel was formed whose job it was to comprise a list of local, national, and international architects who were then invited to participate in the design of the individual buildings in the Hansaviertel. From this list, 53 national and international architects were chosen to design and complete projects for the exhibition. The inclusion of renowned architectural giants such as Walter Gropius, Pierre Vago, Alvar Aalto, Max Taut, Oscar Niemeyer, Le Corbusier, and Arne Jacobson ensured international recognition. The 1 300 units built on twenty-five hectares of land in the Hansaviertel and designed by this selection of both established and up-and-coming architects served not only a political function as mentioned above, but also a practical one in providing much-

\textsuperscript{130} On consumption as a propaganda tool in the Cold War, see Katharine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., \textit{Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Greg Castillo, \textit{Cold War on the Home Front}; David Crew, ed., \textit{Consuming Germany in the Cold War} (Oxford: Berg, 2003). Until 1961, when the Wall was built, the border between East and West Berlin was relatively open. East Berliners also visited the Interbau exhibition.

needed (social) housing for Berliners. All this rhetorical emphasis on West German housing, however, had not solved the concrete dilemmas of West German working classes and poor, who were still unable to find affordable housing in Berlin.

The master development plan envisaged by Jobst and Kreuer for the Hansaviertel adhered to the modernist principles of an orderly, structured, low-density city formulated in the Athens Charter. In the same vein as proponents of modernist rebuilding across the Germany’s western sectors, Jobst and Kreuer depicted the “historical city” as epitomizing “disorder, overcrowding, gloominess, and chaos.”132 To counter these so-called “evils” of the nineteenth-century cityscape, Jobst and Kreuer accentuated green, open spaces, bestowing a feeling of “modern” living in a park-like setting, in their layout for the Hansaviertel. A diversity of building types, from single-dwelling houses to low-rise apartment blocks and sixteen-story high-rises, were positioned in relative isolation from one another and scattered amidst green space that should encourage the healthy pursuit of individual development within the nuclear family unit. The selected fifty-three architects from sixteen countries were each assigned to design one of the forty-eight individual buildings proposed in the master plan.

The individual buildings in the Hansaviertel were loosely dispersed to give the families the feeling of having their own space while still living in an urban community. (Figure 1.3) The high-rises were widely set in generous green spaces on the edge of the Tiergarten. For the architects and professional observers of the Interbau, the proposed projects were at the center of a transformative vision they believed was the key to the modernization of the traditional city. As Dr. Johanna Hofmann of the Deutscher

Werkbund Berlin remarked, “already from the outside [of the new buildings] one can see how people live on the inside. That wasn’t always the case, especially in the old Hansaviertel ... the façades of the front houses and concealed the inside and hid away the side wings and back wings with their narrow and sun-seeking courtyards and unhealthy living quarters.”

The Interbau exhibition lasted three months and in that time received over one million visitors. The noticeable presence of international architects and the range of difference in the design of each of the newly constructed buildings reflected West German claims to individuality and internationality to distance itself both from the recent Nazi past and the collective ideals attached to GDR socialism. Complementing the Hansaviertel was the special exhibit, “Die Stadt von morgen.” If, as Interbau advocates assumed, the Hansaviertel epitomized the ideal “living space (Wohnwelt) for the people of today,” then the main objective of the special exhibit was to provide a detailed and comprehensive model according to which German cities should be reconstructed.

According to the organizers of the special exhibit, postwar urban development as articulated in the “city of tomorrow” was a precondition for a establishing a “real democracy” in Germany. In its endeavor to “restore order to urban life,” the exhibit presented a blueprint for the “design and renewal” of Germany’s “outdated cities” that would speak to both professionals and laypersons. Invoking the concepts and vocabulary already familiar in postwar urban planning discourse, the all-German organizing committee subdivided the exhibit into five main categories or themes, all of which were

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133 Deutscher Werkbund Berlin Wohnen in unserer Zeit, introduction by Johanna Hofmann (Darmstadt: Beispiel, [1957]).
134 Ibid.
based on principles that supported a link between postwar planning and the ideal of an isolated home that would provide the primary site for the development of civility and morality.

The organizing committee, headed by two architects from Cologne, consulted with a team of sociologists, medical professionals, psychologists, union leaders, economists, and adult youth leaders to assist in the conceptualization of the five themes addressed in the exhibit: City and Humans, City and Health, City and Nature, City and Traffic, City and Land. Each theme occupied a corner in the exhibit’s pavilion, which was located at the entrance to the Tiergarten with a view overlooking the park. This location enabled visitors to take in the green surroundings while walking through the exhibit’s stations, with each of the five stations calling attention to the contrast between the “city of tomorrow” and the current state of Germany’s cities still burdened with the rubble of their nineteenth century urban decay.\footnote{Annette Maechtel and Kathrin Peters, eds., \textit{Die Stadt von Morgen: Beiträge zu einer Archäologie des Hansaviertels Berlin} (Cologne: König, 2008), 25. The five themes were laid out in the official “city of tomorrow” catalogue published by the Interbau GmbH.} Claiming that “our cities, built for an earlier age and for the conditions of life of the people of that time” were no longer functional, the exhibit extolled the ideals of a “healthy city,” one in which housing was not deprived of light, sun, air, and greenery.\footnote{\textit{Die Stadt von morgen}, 2.} Such rhetoric helped West Germans to redefine themselves through their homes and their cities by focusing inward on cultivating healthy, strong family bonds, developed in isolation. These families would in turn serve as isolated, civilized building blocks for a strong social fabric. This emphasis on a rational and hygienic city and the concomitant demonization of the “unhealthy”
nineteenth-century city with its mixed use and back courtyards constituted the central theme of the exhibit.

In fact, the Interbau and the special exhibit the “city of tomorrow” crystallized the turn of the century urban planning mindset that assumed a direct correlation between the city form, and with it the housing models, and the moral fabric of a society. Although German planners were not alone in their inclination to blame the breakdown of society on the nineteenth-century urban form and by extension on the urban dweller who had lost touch with his/her natural environment this belief held a particular credence in postwar West Berlin in helping to maintain the illusion of a “new start.” Thus, by providing an ordered and healthy city, not only the urban form itself, but the urban dweller and, in turn, German society would be redeemed. A 1957 article in the architectural journal Bauwelt captured these familiar themes in postwar discussions of the fundamental goals of urban planning. It is worth quoting at length:

In addition to the damage done to the cities during the War, the need for a wide ranging renovations has its origins in the economic developments of the industrial age and the irregular growth of the city (characterized by over-crowded housing and traffic congestion, which harms the physical and social health of the urban population and cuts them off from nature. The expansion of the city and the overcrowded housing takes away from people not only the connection to nature but also sun, light and air. The “rental barracks” with small courtyards without light or air that in the past century were greeted by workers as a form of rescue in times of need are now increasingly recognizing as a creeping poison that leads to both bodily and mental illness and also to undesirable social attitudes.

Here, the physical health and moral character of the urban dweller, specifically the ‘worker,’ and the architectural form and/or urban structure were thought to be negatively or positively interrelated. What is remarkable and at the same time disturbing about this

139 Lona Ottersky, “Zum Problem der Sanierung ’was wird aus unseren überalteten Stadtteilen?,” Bauwelt 19 (1957): 432.
quote is not just the manner in which it literally echoes late nineteenth-century anti-urban critiques of the city, but also how it privileges progress in the form of modern living conditions in the face of the social and material reality of millions of working-class Germans.

Sunny apartments with balconies and easy access to gardens and greenery would take the place of the “unhealthy and crowded” apartments with their depressing views onto dark courtyards. And residing in these new apartments would be the most important unit to the safekeeping of the “city of tomorrow,” the nuclear family. The Interbau organizers made it clear that the family, and specifically the small family as the privileged form in an urban setting, was the “Keimzelle” or basic unit of the West German state. In direct contrast to the lived environment and everyday reality of the poor and working-class in the old tenements, the Interbau envisaged a domestic harmony (Familienglücks) whose foundation was the traditional breakdown of gender roles within the family. Thus the postwar project of rehabilitating the moral character of West German society from within the family/domestic sphere was also reflected in the physical form of housing. This focus on the middle-class family, in fact, also led to remaking of working-class housing and urban design in postwar West Germany. This project entailed not only a disavowal of the nineteenth-century city, i.e., the tenement, but alongside it a blatant rejection of the social meaning of that space.

The design of the Hansaviertel and the vision presented in the special exhibit of what the “old” city could become prefigured the guiding concepts of early renewal and planning in postwar West Berlin. In preparation for the Interbau, all twenty of the

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140 Die Stadt von morgen, 6.
141 Wagner-Conzelmann, Interbau, 75.
existing buildings of the old Hansa neighborhood were torn down. Responding less to the
dire housing shortage than to “fixed cultural concept” of the *Mietskaserne* as the
embodiment of urban ills, the Interbau planners demolished housing for 741 persons and
22 businesses, not to mention disregarding the intact foundations of several buildings and
streets as well as the underground system lines. 142 The design proposals for the Interbau
and the Hauptstadt competition both necessitated vast open spaces. Equally significant as
I will discuss in the next chapter, West Berlin politicians and planners maintained the
illusion that “old Berlin” had been completely or irreparably destroyed in the war and in
the next decades embarked on large-scale projects of demolishing great portions of
Berlin’s tenement neighborhoods.

142 Harald Bodenschatz, “Das neue Hansaviertel: Die Antwort der Interbau 1957 auf die
Mietskasernenstadt,” *ARCH + 82* (1985), 70.
Figure 1.1: Mietskaserne (Source: http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1251)
Figure 1.2: A working-class family in a Mietskaserne in the southeastern corner of Kreuzberg (Source: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/denkmal/denkmale_in_berlin/de/weltkulturerbe/siedlungen/hintergrund.shtml)
Figure 1.3: Das Eternithaus designed for Interbau 1957 by the German architect Paul Baumgarten (Source: http://www.isarsteve.de/?paged=14)
Chapter Two

Between Demolition and Restoration: The Politics of Urban Renewal in West Berlin

The official 1950s vision of a “new” Berlin was first put into practice in the inner-city rebuilding projects of the 1960s and 70s. Intended to transform the cityscape, West Berlin’s urban renewal practices embodied the tabula rasa vision of postwar modernist planning. Yet, as the following chapters will show, this vision was far from universally accepted; it was, instead, a highly contested idea and practice. This chapter first outlines the city’s official renewal program for Kreuzberg, which was specifically intended to “replace the outdated [housing] with newer [housing] more in line with the times.” The second half of the chapter then turns to the first vocalization of experts’ opposition to such redevelopment plans. It argues that these early voices of dissent, and related proposals for alternative renewal practices, laid the intellectual groundwork for later grassroots protests that would produce a marked departure from the century-old negative understanding of Berlin’s Mietskaserne.

In West Berlin throughout the 1970s and 80s, housing was a highly charged and contentious issue. Thirty-five years after the end of the Second World War, the city yet again faced an acute housing shortage, albeit of a lesser degree than the catastrophic situation of the immediate postwar period. Between the early 1960s and the late 1970s,

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144 For more discussion on the years 1945 to 1949, see Michael Wildt, “Plurality of Taste: Food and Consumption in West Germany during the 1950s,” History Workshop Journal 39 (April 1995): 22-41; Steeg, Black Market, Cold War; Günther J. Tittel, Hunger und Politik: Die Ernährungskrise in der Bizone (1945-1949) (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990); von Beyme, Der Wiederaufbau; Clara Oberle,
West Berlin’s urban renewal agents pursued a politics of redevelopment largely shaped by the ideal of full clearance and rebuilding. Subsequently, they reduced the availability of affordable housing for the city’s low-income residents. The tenements in inner-city neighborhoods that had not been initially demolished to make way for new buildings in the immediate aftermath of the war had – by the late 1970s – fallen into disrepair after being officially designated part of a “renewal area in waiting.” Unscrupulous private or city-owned housing corporations in their role as renewal agents waited out the protracted renewal process in order to profit from federal subsidies for new building. The renewal process in Berlin, intended to provide every Berlin resident with adequate housing, in practice displaced thousands of low-income residents and allowed hundreds of intact buildings to dilapidate.

West Berlin’s 1963 urban renewal program set out to replace the extant built environment of the “stony city,” accordingly calling for new buildings rather than the preservation of existing housing stock. The reasons for this came out of a related set of local concerns and international trends. Not surprisingly, the decades-long condemnation of the densely populated tenement neighborhoods provided the cultural justification for advocates of modernist planning to demolish large quantities of mainly intact housing. Like their historical predecessors, postwar city officials and planners held the architectural form of the Mietskaserne directly responsible for the poverty and misery of

the working classes. This unchanged cultural assessment partly helps to explain what critics of official renewal policy called the “second destruction:” the government project of “loosening up” the inner city through a gradual flattening of tenement blocks in order to build modern, improved housing and inner-city freeways. Remarkably, the demolition of Berlin’s tenement districts, the main drive of renewal policy, equaled in scale the physical devastation of the city during the war.

The two largest of the renewal areas were located in the poor, traditionally working-class districts of Wedding and Kreuzberg. Berlin’s city officials slated the blocks around Brunnenstrasse in Weeding and Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg for demolition, areas that were to become the two largest redevelopment areas in all of West Germany. At the time, opposition to the practice of demolition and displacement was small and stemmed primarily from leftist students demanding change in society at large rather than from the tenants who were directly involved. This would remain the case until the early 1970s, when the socio-economic consequences of urban improvement in the housing estates on the city’s periphery became plainly visible. Already by the mid-1960s, however, dissenting voices in the field of architecture and planning emerged on the margins of the profession. The following two chapters focus on the period between the first critiques of planning practices in the early 1960s – most notably Wolf Jobst Siedler’s 

*Die gemordete Stadt (The Murdered City)* and Alexander Mitscherlich’s *Die Unwirtlichkeit der Städte (The Inhospitality of our Cities)* – and the emergence of a

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145 Building Senator for West Berlin Rolf Schwedler is a good example. See Schmidt, *Vom steinernen Berlin zum Freilichtmuseum der Stadterneuerung.*

decidedly more radical form of protest against urban renewal practices in Kreuzberg in
the early 1980s.

**Pave “Paradise” to Put up a Parking Lot?**

In 1963 Lord Mayor Willy Brandt (SPD) officially announced the city’s first
postwar urban renewal program for West Berlin’s inner city housing stock. The inner city
neighborhoods had been largely overlooked in the previous decade in favor of building
large, and more profitable construction projects on the open tracts of land on the
periphery of the city. Brandt’s address to West Berliners outlined the city’s policies for
the next four years. In it he spoke of the city’s “test and mission,” which linked the
project of rebuilding to the more amorphous task of rendering the “free half” of the city
the “capital in leadership, innovation and spirit (geistige Hauptstadt) of the German
people.” This standing could only be achieved, according to Brandt, by “upgrading
Berlin to one of Europe’s most modern and exemplary industrial centers,” which
necessitated a “metropolitan” approach to reconstruction since “our political goal should
and must be recognizable in the city landscape.” The city of Berlin’s immediate future
then was a smooth, rational city that would overwrite the densely built nineteenth-century
tenement districts.

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147 In the first years after the war, it was only possible to rid the city of rubble and start the partial
reconstruction of damaged buildings. After the Blockade ended and Marshall Plan funds could be
implemented, reconstruction on a larger scale started. See Armin Grünbacher, *Reconstruction and Cold
War in Germany: The Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, 1948-1961* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Axel
Schildt and Ulrich Herbert, eds., *Kriegsende in Europa. Vom deutschen Machtzerfall bis zur Stabilisierung
13.
Brandt’s announcement came on the heels of the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The East German government’s unsuccessful efforts to stem the flow of its citizens fleeing to the west resulted in the erection of a physical barrier. This left West Berlin with a shortage of cheap labor, above all in the construction business, for which the city then turned to labor recruitment from Southern Europe and North Africa to fulfill a demand for wage laborers. In terms of urban redevelopment, the new reality of a physical border separating the western sectors from the Soviet sector meant something specific and quite different for the everyday life of Berliners. For Kreuzberg’s pre-Wall population, those residing in the southeastern corner not only lost access to the former city center, but also to the closest recreation area (Treptow Park); they witnessed the almost overnight transformation of their neighborhood into an outlying corner of West Berlin, cut off from the commercial advantages of its pre-1961 central location.\(^{150}\) The Wall not only disrupted the everyday routine of all Berliners, especially residents of Kreuzberg who were surrounded by it on three sides; it signaled, on a daily basis, the end to the illusion of a unified Germany with Berlin as its capital, and by extension, the slow death of a wish for a coherent city silhouette.

Guided by a resolute aspiration to outdo the city’s socialist half, West Berlin politicians perceived the housing situation, both in terms of production and consumption, as a tool to further Cold War propaganda. As discussed in more detail in the previous

\(^{150}\) Viktor Augustin and Hartwig Berger, *Einwanderung und Alltagskultur: die Forster Straße in Berlin-Kreuzberg* (Berlin: Publica, 1984); Verein SO 36, *ausser man tut es! Kreuzberg abgeschrieben aufgestanden* (Berlin: Verlag Grenzenlos, 1983). See also Katherine Pence’s dissertation on the economic and commercial transactions between East and West Berliners before the Wall. “From Rations to Fashions: The Gendered Politics of East and West German Consumption,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1999). This loss was not specific to Kreuzberg only. The reality of the political division of the city and geographical reality of both the city and the neighborhood meant that the major industrial industries with their headquarters in pre-1945 Berlin no longer returned (economic loss), but the reality of the Wall made it that much worse in Kreuzberg.
chapter, the primary objective of planning and building activity until the early 1970s was to develop the open tracts of land on the outskirts of the city into new, modern neighborhoods organized around rows of high-rise apartment towers linked to the city by new freeways and an extension of existing subway lines. Some exceptions to this focus were the Hansa Viertel in Tiergarten and the Ernst Reuter Siedlung in Wedding given that both building projects were located in the inner city. Advocates of large-scale housing estates on the urban periphery, such as Märkisches Viertel and Gropiusstadt, fell back on the familiar motto of “light, air, and sun for residents of the Mietskaserne” to enact their reconstruction of a modern, world-class city. In an attempt to sort out the inner city “chaos” along functionalist lines, the 1963 plan outlined the eventual renewal of six inner-city districts with the highest concentration of “Altbau” or older housing stock: Wedding, Kreuzberg, Tiergarten, Neukölln, Charlottenburg, and Schöneberg.

Pursuing an ambitious program, the city’s Ministry of Building and Housing published a preliminary appraisal carried out by experts between 1959 and 1961 that proposed a sweeping urban renewal plan. The report estimated that 430,000 units of a total of 470,000 Altbau units were “in need of rehabilitation.” According to this assessment, 40,000 units were in good condition, another 180,000 were deemed capable of improvement, and 250,000 were ready for demolition. In other words, in 1963 half of

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151 See chapter one for a discussion of the significance of Interbau 1957.
152 The postwar design and practice of razing entire city blocks to make room for both new buildings and major thoroughfares was not a postwar idea. As homeless Berliners built make-shift shelters in the months after the war, city planners were already basing their postwar plans for the devastated city on further demolition of war damaged areas. Reconstruction plans were underway before the end of the war. See Benedikt Goebel, Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum modernen Stadtzentrum (Berlin: Braun Publishing, 2003); Bodenschatz, Platz frei für das neue Berlin!
153 The official definition of an Altbau is any residential building constructed before 1949. However, in this context of 1960s and 70s renewal, Altbau is most often used to describe the nineteenth-century Mietskaserne. Schwedler, Stadterneuerung in Berlin; Bodenschatz, Platz frei fuer das neue Berlin!
154 Schwedler, Stadterneuerung in Berlin, 2.
West Berlin’s housing stock was in need of either major improvements or was seriously dilapidated. In view of the dimension of this problem, the Ministry for Building and Housing limited its first urban renewal program to 56, 000 of the 430, 000 units. Of these 56, 000 units located in the six areas targeted for renewal 10, 000 were considered improvable. A total of 140, 000 residents and 7, 600 businesses were directly affected. The Ministry of Building and Housing projected ten to fifteen years to complete the first program. Berlin’s planning officials arrived at this completion rate after delegates visited American cities more experienced in urban renewal practices, such as Boston and New York City. Berlin’s housing experts came away from their U.S. visit with a projected number of 4, 000 units per year that could realistically be cleared.

The decision to slate a building for clearance was based on three main features: the age of the building, its unsanitary conditions (densely populated, poorly ventilated, coal heating, shared toilets located in the stairwell or in the courtyard), and the “unruly disorder” of a mixed use area and its related offenses (noise, fumes, objectionable odors). Of the 56, 000 units, 20, 000 were in buildings built before 1870 and the remaining 36, 000 units between 1870 and 1885. In its frequent publication Berlin Building Review (Berliner Baubilanz), the city’s Building and Housing Department declared its plan for “an extensive renovation [of the remaining portion of older units not targeted for clearance] to bring them up to today’s standards.” The Minister of Building and Housing Rolf Schwedler (SPD) faced an arduous task, but he was committed to fulfilling

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155 In 1945, 1/3 of West Berlin’s 980,000 apartment units had been destroyed. By 1963, 250,000 new units had been built. Der Senator für Bau-und Wohnungswesen, Auf dem halben Wege … von der Mietskaserne zum sozialen Wohnungsbau (Berlin: Druckhaus Tempelhof, 1957).
156 Schwedler, Stadtneuerung in Berlin, 3.
157 Rolf Schwedler, Berliner Baubilanz, Broschüre des Senator für Bau-und Wohnungswesen (Berlin, 1966), 27.
what he perceived as “a moral duty.” Renewal of the inner city, he maintained, is “an
obligation [we have] to every resident of this city that cannot be deferred.”158 Schwedler’s
tenure as housing minister lasted from 1955 to 1972, and in that time he did not bend
from his unwavering dedication to remedy the “unhygienic buildings of the past” inside
which Berlin’s residents are “forced to live in undignified circumstances.”159 Throughout
his term as minister, Schwedler focused repeatedly on the need to eliminate the transverse
and side wings that enclosed a narrow courtyard, the small factories behind the first or
second front wing, the stalls used to house and slaughter livestock, and the outdoor
toilets.

To accomplish Schwedler’s vision, West Berlin’s urban redevelopment project
relied largely on new construction. In addition to the satellite towns already built on the
periphery of the city, redevelopment between 1963 and 1975 for Berlin’s inner-city
neighborhoods involved razing entire blocks of older, largely low-rent housing for new
building (Kahlschlagsanierung). As was typical in other West German cities, proponents
of modern architecture held a commanding voice in the urban planning and
redevelopment of residential areas. Modernists set out to rebuild cities along planning
principles intended to reflect a break with the past, or a new beginning, one which would
in turn best accommodate a new, modern society.160 These postwar planners and
politicians drew on a familiar discourse of the nineteenth-century city (its tenements and
back courtyard factories) as “overcrowded and unhygienic,” a discourse that was

159 auf halbem Wege, 26.
160 For literature that specifically discusses postwar West Germany, see Rosenfeld, Munich and Memory;
grounded in a broader European discussions and critiques of the industrial city at the turn of the century.\footnote{Wir bauen die neue Stadt: Die städtebauliche Neugestaltung der Lüisenstadt im Bezirk Kreuzberg (Berlin: Bezirksamt Kreuzberg, [1956]).}

The anxiety about the fate of the West German city had a powerful hold over the minds of government authorities and planners. It was at this time, in particular, that the fruits of postwar modernist planning became evident in cities such as Munich, Hamburg, Köln, Mainz and Stuttgart. In 1971, the German Association of Cities (\textit{Deutscher Städtetag}) had taken up the theme “Save our cities now!” at their annual meeting. These earliest concerns, articulated by planning experts and city politicians, focused on the speed of urban sprawl, the migration of residents from the inner city to the suburbs, the separation of urban functions resulting in an inner-city landscape populated mainly by office buildings, and intensified traffic congestion and air pollution.\footnote{Deutsche Städtetag, \textit{Rettet unsere Städte jetzt! Vorträge, Aussprachen u. Ergebnisse d. 16. Hauptversammlung d. Deutschen Städtetages vom 25. bis 27. Mai 1971 in München} (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971); Han-Jochen Vogel, “Das unterirdische Grollen ist schon zu hören,” \textit{Der Spiegel}, June 19, 1972.} The opening paragraphs of the cover article on West German “Städteprobleme” in a 1971 \textit{Der Spiegel}, Germany’s largest weekly news magazine founded in 1947, pointed to what was perceived as one paradox of postwar urban development: “as more and more people move to the city, these cities in turn are becoming more inhumane \textit{[unmenschlich]}.”\footnote{\textit{Der Spiegel} was started as a printed venue to encourage democratic commitment and ease the transition from fascism to democracy in West Germany. “Länge mal Breite mal Geld,” \textit{Der Spiegel}, June 7, 1971.} The \textit{Spiegel} article openly criticized local politicians and sociologists who advocated the postwar approach to urban reconstruction with their reference to “two decades of West German urban development that was revealed, bit by bit, to be \textit{[sozialfeindlich].}”\footnote{“Länge mal Breite mal Geld.”}
Breathing new life into the modernist architectural traditions of the inter-war years, postwar planners and architects sought to remedy the perceived faults of the historic nineteenth-century city with their modernist visions of the “city of tomorrow.” Their condemnation of the historical city firmly placed them in a long tradition of European architects, urban planners, housing experts, and middle-class social reformers who despised what they saw as the embodiment of the urban ills of the industrial city—the nineteenth-century tenement. Through to the 1970s, this discourse had remained unchanged since the days when Heinrich Zille, the best-known chronicler of late nineteenth-century working-class life in Berlin, ominously declared that, “one can do away with people just as easily with an apartment as with an ax.”

As Rudy Koshar among others has pointed out, “for more than two decades after World War Two, reconstructed buildings and landscapes [whether new or restored] were the paradigmatic expressions of political community on both sides of the German-German border.” Political elites in West Germany capitalized on postwar rebuilding and urban renewal to project their vision of a democratic, modern Germany. In line with West Berlin’s ideologically charged status as the “outpost of the free world,” postwar city planning was meant to symbolize the best capitalism had to offer. Given the city’s political and ideological division, West Berlin’s inner-city neighborhoods, comprised of vast blocks of tenements, represented a crucial site of debate on reconstruction and planning. At stake was an attempt to define the identity of a “new” West Berlin, a West

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165 “Die Stadt von morgen”; plans that re-imagined the city in its potential place as not only capital of a unified Germany, but a capital with a cityscape that would display its democratic and capitalist commitment. These planners looked to leftist modernist architects like the Bauhaus movement of the 1920s and 1930s, where redesigning the city, and opening it up to light and fresh air, was tantamount to solving social problems.

166 This quote is attributed to Berlin illustrator and photographer Heinrich Zille (1858-1929).

167 Rudy Koshar, *From Traces to Monuments*, 11; see also Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*. 
Berlin increasingly perceived less as one part of a temporarily divided whole, and more as a complete and independent city.

In bombed out cities across West Germany, such as Frankfurt, Cologne, Munich, and Hamburg, debates ensued between advocates and opponents of reconstruction of destroyed or damaged historical landmarks and historic town centers. City officials, and the general public, discussed and debated the future of their cities between these two poles of new construction or traditional reconstruction. Historians have shown these debates have been crucial in revealing the ways in which experiences and memories of the recent Nazi past played a role in how West Germans rebuilt their cities.¹⁶⁸ Most notably in Munich, the main challenge to modernism came primarily from conservative Heimat (home or homeland) groups, who proved to be the driving force behind the preservation of the old city.¹⁶⁹ In Munich for example, historic preservationists won out and the historic city center was reconstructed as a replica of its former self, whereas in other cities, like in Frankfurt, city officials chose to reconstruct only select historic landmarks or churches. In terms of residential housing, West Berlin was certainly not unique in its readiness to tear down and rebuild.

**Locating Kreuzberg**

Embracing this modernist ethics of rebuilding in the forward to a 1956 promotion booklet for Kreuzberg’s early reconstruction phase (*Wiederaufbau*), the district’s SPD mayor (*Bezirksbürgermeister*) Willy Kressmann acknowledged each city dweller’s “right

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¹⁶⁹ Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*, 173. Munich also promoted the conservative *Wohnküche.*
to a modern residential quarter with its indispensable conveniences of schools, sport fields, and recreational venues.”

Kressmann was referring specifically to the rebuilding of the Luisenstadt, the historic Berlin district whose southern half lay in north central Kreuzberg; this area of the neighborhood was part of the reconstruction program in the late 1950s and early 60s dedicated to the construction of inner-city areas flattened by wartime bombs. Kressmann emphasized that the modernization of the built environment must be carried out “precisely in the densely populated areas of our district in which the housing stock was built in the so-called “Founding Years” (Gründerzeit).”

“Unfortunately,” he continued, “at this time we don’t have the means to knock down all of the outdated and unhygienic apartment houses to construct new, sound housing developments in their place.” However, to remind the Kreuzberg resident of what no longer complemented the vision of the modern, German city, the first half of the booklet outlined the “errors of the past to be fixed,” and it emphasized above all the absence of an “inner order” of the nineteenth-century city or in other words the nonexistent “separation [of urban life] according to function and character.”

The brochure featured a typical depiction of the nineteenth-century city to be radically amended. (Figure 2) The image showed a caricature of an urban street corner with arrows pointing out nine features of the “old” city that should be done away with. For instance, in this illustration a factory is located in the midst of dwellings, the school

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170 *Wir bauen die neue Stadt*, 3.
171 *Wir bauen die neue Stadt*, 3. The Gründerzeit or “Founding Era” typically refers to the economic boom that occurred in the years after German unification in 1871. A building boom accompanied economic growth and continued well beyond the economic slump in 1873. The building type was built in the four decades between German unification and the eve of World War One. In the southeastern section of Kreuzberg, the majority (70 percent) of tenements were built before 1900.
172 *Wir bauen die neue Stadt*, 3.
173 *Wir bauen die neue Stadt*, 7.
next to the apartment house, the dance hall next to the church, “unaesthetic” gables are visible on uneven buildings, and “garish” moulding adorns the building facades. To attain “order” out of supposed “disorder,” the plans for Kreuzberg envisaged a neighborhood that would provide “modern work places and humane apartments” for its citizens. This vision included the construction of affordable apartment blocks designed to ensure air, light and sun for every apartment, grassy courtyards to be enjoyed as open spaces for residents and as playgrounds for children. The 1956 booklet published by the Kreuzberg borough government further identified improvements for the neighborhood that everyone involved in the urban renewal debate would agree on: more green spaces, adequate schoolyards, and playgrounds. As this chapter will show, the questions of how, why, and where would prove to be divisive.

The Senate for Building and Housing’s thirteenth report on urban renewal two decades later gives evidence to the longevity and application of this planning ethic: “whereas in earlier times the artisan, the tradesman, and the businessman generally lived and worked in the same house, in today’s big cities this is only hardly ever the case. As cities developed, separation of work and living, of production and distribution brought with it an increase in traffic volume, especially in Berlin. For this reason, a ring motorway will surround Berlin.” Considered indispensable for the forward-looking, democratic neighborhood, functionalist urbanism deemed necessary the separation of living, work and leisure, each having clearly delineated functions connected by an easy

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174 *Wir bauen die neue Stadt*, 6.
access to a modern transportation system that also integrated local services and public utilities sites.\textsuperscript{176} The city’s first urban renewal plan reflected this vision of urbanity.

Urban Renewal Area Kreuzberg Kottbusser Tor (\textit{Sanierungsgebiet Kreuzberg Kottbusser Tor} or SKKT) with its 107 hectares divided into 11 renewal units was the second largest renewal area in the city after Urban Renewal Area Wedding-Brunnestrasse (SWB), with both areas also ranking as the two largest renewal projects in West Germany. The proposed plan for Kreuzberg targeted an area of the neighborhood with 37,000 residents in 17,000 apartments and over 2000 businesses that employed 16,000 people.\textsuperscript{177} Over the next decade, the Ministry for Building and Housing, together with the private and city-owned non-profit housing associations acting as the main urban renewal agents, proceeded to carry out large-scale demolitions around the Kottbusser Tor to replace older housing with new residential units. The city recognized Kreuzberg as the greatest challenge to its planning reform given its long tradition of residential and small industry sharing the same lots.\textsuperscript{178} Urban renewal agents were unwavering in their commitment to clear the blocks in and around the Kottbusser Tor in preparation for an expressway. The highway plan trumped another important yardstick used by the city to identify an area in need of rehabilitation: insufficient public amenities such as green spaces, playgrounds, or schools. Its very realization would, in fact, reduce the already sparse green spaces in the neighborhood by paving over Oranienplatz and Wassertorplatz.

\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Wir bauen die neue Stadt, 6; auf halbem Wege...}; Presse- und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, \textit{Bericht Bauen} (Berlin,1968).


\textsuperscript{178} This construction of small- to medium-sized manufactories in lots directly behind the Mietkaserne was unique to Kreuzberg. See Karl-Heinz Fiebig and Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, \textit{Kreuzberger Mischung: die innerstädtische Verflechtung von Architektur, Kultur und Gewerbe} (Berlin: Verlag Ästhetik und Kommunikation, 1984).
Here, the city regarded the construction of a “necessary expressway and other traffic plans” as fundamental to the “much needed restructuring of Kreuzberg.”

Kreuzberg, without a doubt, was a neighborhood in need of revitalization. Left unattended to until the 1970s, in the three decades since the end of the war the area’s older housing stock had been allowed to deteriorate. The façades of the uninterrupted rows of four-to-five story high tenements were colorless and crumbling. And inside these run-down buildings, the majority of Kreuzberg’s residents inhabited apartments that still had rudimentary plumbing, coal heating, and windows that faced into narrow, dingy, concrete courtyards. Frequent pipe bursts were not uncommon due to old water and sewage lines, and leaky façades and rooftops led to rotten wood and the problem of mould inside the apartments. Furthermore, the neighborhood contained the highest concentration of residential units that consisted of one room and a kitchen and the least amount of green spaces –whether in the form of public parks, squares, or tree-lined streets. With these conditions in mind, city planners and politicians were convinced that “total demolition with subsequent new construction obviously represents the best way of achieving the desired effect and eliminating the existing deficits.”

The postwar political partition of Berlin, and most significantly the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, had relegated the district of Kreuzberg to a peripheral position in the city’s geography. Before the physical division, the neighborhood enjoyed a central location with its northern edge bordering the historic city center (Mitte). Following the construction of the Wall, the entire northern and southeastern edge of the neighborhood now bordered East Berlin. Redevelopment plans for the neighborhood viewed this

180 Ibid., 3
peripheral position as a temporary one, as West Berlin city planners clung to the pretense of reunification. The political reluctance to recognize a permanent division of the city is best illustrated by the aforementioned plans for the construction of an inner-city freeway network authorized by both West and East Berlin in 1956. Strikingly, this plan was contingent on the vision of a “whole” city and ignored the physical division of the city after 1961. The highway that would run through the Kreuzberg Kottbusser Tor neighborhood foresaw over 70 percent destruction of the existing housing to accommodate two highway arteries meeting at Oranienplatz. Even with the improbability of a fully realized highway project after 1961, city officials continued to implement the original renewal plan for the neighborhood that included clearing buildings in preparation for the highway construction. That the division of the country and the city was provisional had become an increasingly untenable stance after the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin.

This agreement, signed by the ambassadors of France, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States, aimed to make communications and travel easier between the two halves of the city as well as between West Berlin and West Germany. In making the conditions of everyday life for West Berliners more tenable, it also paradoxically confirmed the permanence of the division. In other words, viewed more generally in political context of Ostpolitik, the agreement facilitated the formalization of the Cold War division. In practice, therefore, the key role that the city had played in early

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182 The official Autobahn plans for Kreuzberg were not actually shelved until the mid-1980s.
Cold War international politics declined considerably in the decade after the construction of the Wall, more than ever after official steps were taken to relax tensions between East and West. But, as Paul Steege has argued, the city still retained the cultural significance it had acquired during the Berlin Blockade as the symbolic capital of the Cold War, negotiating its odd location between the symbolic center of a global conflict, while being on the literal margins of Western domestic and international politics.\textsuperscript{184}

Thus urban renewal must be viewed in the context of this crossroads between the West Berlin’s literal marginalization in terms of domestic and international politics and providing the half city with the possibility to “modernize” itself in the hopes of someday regaining its former status as capital and world city. Of course, a renewal project of this magnitude did not happen overnight. Once the construction of the satellite cities had been completed, city officials gave their renewal agents the green light to start implementing similar objectives in the inner-city renewal areas. As of 1965, the first of the affected residents were given eviction notices and the relocation to the newly built housing estates on the outskirts of the city began. City officials gave residents “at the very earliest two years” notice before the demolition of entire neighborhood blocks was to take place.\textsuperscript{185}

That this greater need for housing should be met primarily by new construction directly served the interests of the construction business, private investors and city-owned non-profit housing associations. Given that the so-called “White Circle” (\textit{Weißer Kreis}) did not yet apply to West Berlin, it was fiscally more advantageous for urban renewal agents to demolish rent-controlled older housing and build newer housing for which they

\textsuperscript{184} For a compelling account of Berlin’s transformation to symbolic capital of the Cold War, see Steege, \textit{Black Market, Cold War}.

\textsuperscript{185} Erster Bericht über Stadterneuerung.
received major federal subsidies and tax exemptions.\textsuperscript{186} The term “\textit{Weißer Kreis}” was used to describe a city once the rent control of \textit{Altbauten} had been relaxed or lifted. Beginning in the early 1960s, the governing CDU started liberalizing rent control in all West German cities, with Hamburg and Munich being the last two West German cities to have their rent control lifted in 1975. West Berlin remained the exception due to its unique status and continuing efforts of West Berlin officials to entice new residents to the city.

By the early 1970s, neighborhood blocks designated by the city as “areas under examination” for redevelopment, for example the southeast corner of Kreuzberg, fell into disrepair while “waiting” for news of a change to their provisional status. As a result, the neighborhood underwent a massive population exchange in the 1960s and 70s. Those who could afford to do so, mainly upwardly mobile white working-class families were encouraged to relocate into new modern flats in the newly built public housing (\textit{Sozialwohnungen}) in the satellite towns on the outskirts of the city. The assumption of course was that these modern apartment units with their modern amenities – central heating, elevator in building, a modern bathroom equipped with a toilet inside the apartment instead of in the hallway– would far outweigh any of the inconveniences caused by the displacement or relocation of former residents of the working-class neighborhoods of Wedding and Kreuzberg.\textsuperscript{187} Between 1974 and 1977, 5000 residents living in two of the planning units of SKKT were forced to move.\textsuperscript{188} This practice of


\textsuperscript{188} Harald Bodenschatz, et al., \textit{Schluss mit der Zerstörung?: Stadterneuerung und städtische Opposition in West Berlin, Amsterdam, and London} (Giessen: Anabas, 1983); Franziska Eichstaedt-Bohlig, “Zerstörung...
displacement, and/or the threat of displacement, continued for over a decade, and one that ultimately buttressed the grievances of the tenant and citizen initiatives by the early 1970s.

Moreover, most obvious in areas like the south east corner of Kreuzberg, left for years by the city in stand-by mode, the dwellings became uninhabitable and derelict since their owners had no financial incentive to undertake even the most basic of renovations. Meanwhile, entire blocks of tenement houses were left vacant or partially vacant. From the perspective of the renewal agents, this intentional neglect served to diminish the quality of the housing stock to such an extent that the only remaining option was that the city would deem the building ripe for demolition. Only newer, higher standard housing could take its place, assuring the building’s owner generous tax benefits and federal subsidies. By the early 1970s, the poor condition and high density of Kreuzberg’s housing stock prompted city officials, planners and architects to characterize the neighborhood as the embodiment of the “slum” that urban renewal was meant to eradicate.

A steady decline in West Berlin’s population buttressed official renewal practices that were based on the premise of “improving the socio-economic structure” of the inner-city neighborhoods. The city had a clear interest in making the inner city “attractive” to entice new residents and new industry or investment from West Germany. But in reality these practices represented a continued displacement of existing residents in the redevelopment areas, the purchase of tenements not already owned or managed by private or city-owned renewal agents, and the destruction of 35, 000/55, 000 apartments

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to make way for 17,000/27,000 new apartments. The main shortcoming of the official plan for neighborhood rejuvenation was obvious to those directly affected. With the reduction or complete elimination of the housing stock that guaranteed low-income housing, those residents dependent on this form of housing would be displaced from their homes and neighborhoods. The rent prices in the newer social housing that replaced the nineteenth-century tenements were, in fact, more expensive than the housing it replaced due to construction costs and high interest rates.189

**Rumblings of Dissent**

This practice was not without controversy. Almost immediately, rumblings of dissent vis-à-vis the implementation of urban renewal plans for West Berlin’s inner city districts were audible. One of the first articulations of opposition in West Berlin came from journalist and architectural critic Wolf Jobst Siedler. His critique focused less on the social aspect of demolition and displacement, but rather on the assumed historic value of the nineteenth-century housing stock. Born in Berlin in 1926, Siedler is often accused of romanticizing the nineteenth-century tenement in his book, published in 1964, entitled *The Murdered City*. In it, Siedler accused city planners of the “collective murder” of Berlin’s historical urban qualities.190 His attack on modernist planning is recognized as one of the earliest, most sweeping indictments of the postwar functionalist approach to the city as laid down in the fourth congress of the CIAM in 1943. According to Siedler, modernist urban planning was guilty of extinguishing the urban character of the historical

189 Karapin, *Protest Politics in Germany*.
city, something that he believed to be part of cities from “Babylon up to imperial Berlin” and, moreover, something that created a particular atmosphere (Wohngefühl) that could not be replaced.¹⁹¹ In his book, Siedler juxtaposed images of the historical city with those of the new housing developments to highlight the losses associated with the “rational and modern” city that he saw as tailored to the needs of the automobile not the urban resident. The negation of the historical city, he warned, meant that the city in which one lived, walked, and worked, in whose public spaces “community life flourished,” was being replaced by the supposedly “healthy” yet “anonymous, and faceless cityscape.”¹⁹²

Siedler placed himself in direct opposition to those planners, politicians and housing reformers who upheld the distant hope that the division of the city was, in every regard, temporary. He instead urged them to recognize that the postwar period had come to an end. For Siedler, the “raison d’être of Berlin from the Blockade to Khrushchev’s ultimatum to the building of the Wall” in the postwar period should now shift. “Now is the time,” he argued, “for Berlin to come up with its own identity [Begriff].”¹⁹³ In the forward to the 1978 edition of his “The Murdered City,” Siedler himself made reference to the shift in accepted wisdom that had taken place since the early 1960s: “At the beginning of the 1960s there were many loud voices who wanted me barred from the Werkbund [a German association of artists, artisans, designers, and architects that sought to bring together good design and mass production]. However, at the end of the 1970s, some of the world’s top architects [Philip Johnson and James Stirling] now agree with my

¹⁹¹ Siedler, Die gemordete Stadt, 7.
¹⁹² Siedler, 9.
¹⁹³ Siedler, 197.
contention that modernist reconstruction did more to damage the face of German cities than the bombs.”

Siedler lamented above all else the loss of the intricacies of the nineteenth-century tenements—the courtyards, the façade ornamentation, the squares, streets, and trees—he felt were inextricably connected to the historical identity of the city. His book did not, however, take into consideration the realities of working-class life inside those very tenements. It would be yet another decade before critics of modern housing and clearance linked the fate of the historical city to its residents. Critics, both conservative and progressive alike, remained caught up in the abstractions of buildings and parks; the experiences and input of individual city dwellers were rarely considered. His critique of modern urban planning, and its main tenet of separating residential, commercial and industrial activities, set a tone of criticism and protest that was to dominate popular responses to city planning for the next two decades. Increasingly, challenges to urban renewal became more visible and, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, more radical in spirit and in action. Subsequent critiques would consider not only the architectural value and the form of the buildings, but also the everyday life that takes place in the back courtyards, the street and the neighborhood as a whole. As one squatter from Manteuffelstrasse put it a few years later, “Kreuzberg is not idyllic, the Hinterhof not romantic … but love from yesterday is tucked away in cracks, and there are remnants here of opportunity and good fortune.”

In the late 1960s, discussions and critiques inside the professional establishment dovetailed with the critiques of renewal practices across West Germany brewing in the

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194 Siedler, 8.
social sciences. Planners and architects advocating a change to the city’s renewal practices started to develop alternative models for the preservation of the nineteenth-century city that also called for resident participation in the renewal process. In the West Berlin context, one main contributor to this discussion was the mounting dissatisfaction with resident life in the new satellite towns such as Gropiusstadt and Märkisches Viertel. By the mid-1970s, residents and sociologists alike had delivered a sharp critique of the large-scale housing estates that highlighted the anonymity of the high-rise buildings and the lack of decent connections to the city center. Yet popular dissent remained limited in the inner-city renewal areas given that the information circulated on renewal plans for affected residents was vague and many of the initially displaced residents were eager to secure a modern apartment in a Neubau.

At this time, emerging alongside orthodox planning principles committed to modernist functionalism, two renegade architects made concrete attempts to preserve the existing structure. In their respective designs, both Josef Paul Kleihues and Hardt-Waltherr Hämer challenged the established routine of modernist planning that saw a new city form and divided urban functions by retaining traditional configurations of city blocks and public spaces: Kleihues in his 1967 plan for Ruhwald and Hämer in 1974/75 for the area around Klausenerplatz. Both projects were located in the historically bourgeois neighborhood of Charlottenburg. Hämer, in particular, was chiefly interested in developing a model of urban renewal for Block 118 around Klausener Platz that would, unlike the official practice, improve the social and structural condition for the current low-

income residents and not, as was the standard, upgrade the neighborhood to accommodate new, middle-class dwellers.\textsuperscript{198} As Kleihues later said of his 1967 initiative, “my concept was and is still, even now [in 1987], seen as a provocation against the established routine of modern urban development, which was in fact how it was meant.”\textsuperscript{199}

In turning to urban issues, German social scientists lamenting the loss of a public sphere produced new studies and argued for a more democratic city planning.\textsuperscript{200} Their work attracted the attention of SPD policymakers in Bonn who had started drafting a federal urban renewal law as part of their efforts to respond to the growing criticism of a top-down renewal program. The first national planning act (\textit{Städtebauförderungsgesetz} or StBauFG) was ratified in 1971 and its contents relied heavily on the “practical experiences and concepts” of the renewal process in West Berlin.\textsuperscript{201} It provided the legal basis for urban renewal in the Federal Republic and West Berlin and included three clauses that, in theory, codified an improvement in resident participation. In theory, the bill stipulated that for a neighborhood to be declared a “renewal area” certain “planning problems” were to be established and subsequently improved in a more transparent manner including ongoing resident participation and a public design debate. In reality, the act had no major bearing for the renewal processes already underway for almost a decade.

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{International Building Exposition Berlin 1987}.
\textsuperscript{200} For an analysis of the intellectual shifts in twentieth-century urban planning on both sides of the Atlantic, see Klemek, “Modernist Planning.”
\textsuperscript{201} Bodenschatz, \textit{Platz Frei für das neue Berlin}, 165.
Not long after the passage of the bill, West Germany entered a period of “stagflation” as a result of the oil crisis in the early 1970s. Public funds for new housing construction dwindled and, in response to the economic slump, the West Berlin Senate was forced to revise its first urban renewal program. Since its aims could no longer be realized, a second program was introduced in 1974 that “officially” ended the more expensive practice of wholesale clearance and new building. Instead, the amended program focused on modernization and renovation of the Altbau housing stock. An explicit emphasis on partial demolition (Entkernung) set apart the second urban renewal program from its predecessor and it encompassed a further 34,000 units in new renewal areas. Ten years after Willi Brandt’s announced the first plan for renovating the cityscape, only 5,000 new units had been built in the urban renewal areas while 8,000 units had been demolished. In that time, almost no federal or private funds were invested in even the most modest repair of the remaining units of the inner-city housing stock, creating a situation in which housing officials and renewal agents could justify further demolition given that these areas would “require an enormous effort to prevent the [existing] dwellings from turning into “slums” (vor dem Umkippen). One only had to take a look at Kreuzberg or Wedding, wrote Building Senator Ristock, to recognize “one of the greatest challenges [still] facing the city for the remainder of this century.”

Dissident voices in the architectural and planning professions as well as the grassroots opposition developing in the early 1970s contributed to this shift. In their critiques of the destruction of the nineteenth-century city to make way for modernist city

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planning, oppositional voices identified and made public the threat renewal posed both to 
the residents and to the very social fabric of Berlin’s older neighborhoods. In other 
words, they questioned the intent of a supposedly benevolent state housing program that 
promised its citizens newer, bigger, and brighter housing with modern-day amenities like 
an integrated kitchen, bathroom and an elevator. All features of urban living that 
politicians hoped would make the city more attractive.²⁰⁴ Scratching the surface of this 
seemingly progressive policy, opponents of modernist renewal revealed the implications 
of this policy for different social groups either located outside of or having no access to 
this increasingly middle-class reality.

As late as 1972, only half of the fixed amount of space needed to complete the 
redevelopment plans had been made available.²⁰⁵ Though the economic crisis of the early 
1970s compelled the federal government to reconsider its renewal policies in view of the 
immense costs of total clearance and new construction, it became clear to residents and 
citizens’ and tenant initiatives in renewal areas that the practice of clearance and new 
construction was to continue in West Berlin, albeit at a somewhat slower tempo.²⁰⁶ A set 
of additional plans for inner-city housing was introduced in the 1974 Second Urban 
Renewal Program that extended the redevelopment of the inner city to include 29 newly 
targeted renewal areas, mostly in Kreuzberg. In the newly added renewal areas, the city-
owned and private urban renewal agents continued to purposely allow sound buildings to 
fall into disrepair since new construction guaranteed heavy public subsidies. At the same

²⁰⁴ Berlin: Perspektiven der Stadtentwicklung (Berlin: Presse- und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, 
1975), 81.
²⁰⁵ Bodenschatz, Platz Frei, 39.
²⁰⁶ Four-Power Agreement of 1971, “normalized” life for West Berliners, also seen as a pivotal shift in 
West Berlin’s Cold War history, international concerns turn elsewhere, ideological immediacy of West 
Berlin as “Frontstadt” recedes and the city is perceived as “Stadt am Tropf.”
time, official discourse on urban renewal espoused the importance of renovation and modernization as a way to retain these “historically valuable properties.”

The result of this delinquent, yet common practice was the continued exodus of those residents who had the material means to relocate, which in effect bequeathed an entire section of Kreuzberg to the poor, the pensioners, and migrants. Once a building was selected for demolition, it often took years before city urban renewal agents could purchase tenement lots from private owners to carry out the renewal process. This delay in property acquisition meant that following steps in the renewal process, eviction and/or relocation of tenants, demolition and new construction, were also postponed. In the fifteen years that following the announcement of West Berlin’s urban renewal program, older units that could have been, in 1963, considered restorable were now fully dilapidated. The city continued to condemn entire residential blocks as “junk” (Schrott). Given that the renewal process could be, on average, delayed up to thirteen years, it quickly became clear to building owners (in many cases the “owner” was the city itself) that it was financially advantageous to neglect their responsibilities for standard maintenance and to intentionally ignore tenants’ requests for repairs.

Despite the new turn in the city’s redevelopment policies brought about mainly by economic factors, critics of urban reconstruction had already noted the that the city’s promises to provide its residents, both new and old, with more attractive and better housing had failed to materialize. In 1972, the city had not yet secured even 50 percent of the space needed to carry out its first renewal program. This left tens of thousands of poorer residents remaining in or moving to other parts of the designated renewal areas.

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because they could still afford the rents in a badly maintained, but affordable Altbau. The announcement of the city’s second program, then, did not change much on the ground for the majority of tenants left behind in the renewal areas. This was particularly obvious in Kreuzberg with a high proportion of the neighborhood’s residents dependent on modest to low-income housing: the working poor, the elderly with nominal pensions, and migrant families shut out of a discriminatory rental market. Thus, the problem of affordable housing in the late 1970s did not disappear with the declared shift to modernization and restoration. Instead, even the most basic level of Altbau renovation caused a minimum of 30 percent rent increase for residents.

In another part of the city, residents of Urban Renewal Area Charlottenburg Klausenerplatz (SCK) had formed a tenant organization in 1973, the Mieterinitiative Sanierungsgebiet Klausenerplatz e.V., to protest the policies of displacement and demolition. The group started attending district town meetings and began a letter-writing campaign to put pressure on the authorities to stop the displacement of local population. The official nod given to both citizen participation and restoration explains the city’s decision to respond and fund a pilot project for Block 118, an area that included 415 residential units. The Berlin based architect Hardt Waltherr Hämer won the competition. Hämer and his team set out to correct the official practices that failed to improve the housing situation for the existing residents, but instead constructed new housing or renovated old housing to attract new, white-collar residents. Disturbed by the practice of relocation and demolition, Hämer decided to take a new approach and consult with the
residents of Block 118. He discovered that, when asked, 84 percent of the residents preferred to stay in their homes despite the lack of modern amenities.208

Assisted by the local tenant groups to implement his design, Hämmer set out to convince local authorities and the larger planning profession it was economically more feasible to upgrade the existing housing stock without displacing residents, which in turn, would warrant only a modest rent increase following the renewal phase.209 His 1975 model project coined the term that would gain currency in urban planning circles throughout the 1980s for its emphasis on the organic urban fabric and the needs of existing residents, “urban renewal without displacement” (Stadterneuerung ohne Verdrängung).210 Emphasizing resident participation and the necessity of a democratic approach to planning, Hämmer’s example provided the model for large-scale “careful” urban renewal that, by 1984, dictated renewal practices in West Berlin.

Hämmer’s project challenged city officials and the principles of postwar urban planning with his suggestion that one could bring sun, light and air into the “dingy, stuffy courtyards” that were so despised and feared by generations of social reformers, political elite, and urban planners. In his view accomplishing this task did not necessitate the complete demolition of these renewal areas. Then again, as made clear by the architect Joachim Schlandt’s caustic synopsis of West Berlin renewal practices in the architectural and design journal ARCH+, the official objection to the tenement city was not driven by the negative cultural assessment attached to the Mietskaserne alone. The commitment to

209 Hämmer and Rosemann, 3.
new construction, as Schlandt has described, became central to the fiscal interests of a city whose economic growth rate had been effectively stifled by its geo-political location.²¹¹ In Schlandt’s assessment, if the SPD government had been serious about renewal for the sake of Berlin’s residents, the first renewal program would have launched a step-by-step renewal policy to first eliminate the most grievous structural conditions of the nineteenth-century housing stock. Instead, he argued, the authorities were more interested in boosting the housing and construction industry in a city already at a great economic disadvantage due to its special status and location. The large-scale housing estates started in the late 1950s and into the 1960s would never have reached full occupancy, Schlandt maintains, without the “calculated unconstrained decline of West Berlin’s older housing stock.”²¹²

Professional criticism, then was mounting, but it would be another couple of years before Hämér’s “model” alternative for rehabilitation and resident participation would engender a more general shift in renewal practices on the ground. His ideas, however, did receive international recognition in the context of the European Year of Architectural Heritage celebrated in 1975. Block 118 was chosen as West Berlin’s contribution for the Architectural Heritage Year given its location just blocks away from the former Charlottenburg Palace. Sponsored by the European Council, the 1975 event was meant to heighten a sense of architectural heritage among the 17 member states.²¹³ Hämér’s project helped to increase awareness among specialists regarding the value of the “inner city as a place to live.” Hämér’s model block project for the time being remained just that, a

²¹² Schlandt, 21.
²¹³ Koshar, Germany’s Transient Past, 323. Besides Berlin, Germany had 4 other model cities: Trier, Alsfeld, Xanten, and Rothenburg ob der Tauber.
narrowly conceived pilot project in the context of a European-wide affair dedicated to architectural heritage. Yet it was a professional watershed in the sense of signaling the issues around which progressive-minded professionals and tenant organizers would rally.

As Gavriel Rosenfeld has shown, conservative-leaning Heimat groups in Munich gave the members of historic preservationist movement a boost in their vocal attempts to “raise public consciousness about the need to save the city’s historic urban identity from modernity’s destructive aspects.”\(^{214}\) Protesters in Munich adhered to a traditionalist kind of antimodern thinking. According to Rosenfeld, Heimat groups embraced a conservative politics so that their efforts were characterized not by a broader critique of capitalism, as was the case in West Berlin, but rather by the desire to protect cultural identity and traditional values.\(^{215}\) In contrast, in West Berlin the growing effort to preserve the inner-city housing stock was shaped in no small part by New Left activists. A new generation of politically committed social scientists, urban planners, and architects either participated in or were inspired by the wave of student revolution and reform that swept the globe in the late 1960s and questioned established ideas and social mores. In this period of heightened political mobilization, student activists also began to directly challenge the top-down policies of urban renewal. Together with residents, they formed tenant groups and citizen initiatives in renewal sites to inform local residents of their legal rights, provide information about the renewal plans, and organize public relations work to publicize the on the ground results of city redevelopment.

\(^{214}\) Rosenfeld, Munich and Memory, 167.

Thus a much broader opposition to the planned and actual destruction of Mietskaserne in working-class neighborhoods grew steadily throughout the 1970s. Primarily concerned with the lives and futures of low-income tenants, tenant organizers saw in the city’s implementation of its renewal program an undemocratic and paternalistic intervention in the cityscape. One university-based research group at Berlin’s Free University undertook a research project to assess the actual extent of citizen participation in one of Kreuzberg’s renewal sites. The group’s report concluded that, in view of resident participation being inscribed in the 1971 federal StBauFG Law, those interviewed were poorly informed about the renewal process as well as their legal right to have a voice in that process. Clashing with the official rhetoric that affirmed a general improvement of housing standards for the residents of renewal sites, the report showed that interviewees were less than excited about the renewal policy of clearance and “hardly believed in the possibility of returning to their neighborhood after the period of relocation since they knew they could never afford the rents of the new social housing.”  

From the mid-70s onwards, a host of experts’ musings on the extensive shortcomings of the renewal process was appearing more regularly in both specialized journals and popular newspapers. In service of an increasingly vocal critique of the modernist planning tradition, a 1974 article in the Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt blamed the “bad luck” of postwar cities on the underlying concept of the CIAM’s Athens Charter. In it, the author stressed, lay the root of the “illness” plaguing contemporary cities, which was in turn rooted in the consensus of modernist planners and architects that

the “health” of urban residents and the modern city could only be secured by means of a strict separation of work, residential, commercial and leisure spaces. Further, the framing of the author’s scathing commentary exposed the kernel of a compelling critique that would be advanced by citizens’ initiatives and squatters just a few years later; that is, an appreciation of the historic mixed-use neighborhood in which street life, the workshops of Kreuzberg’s back courtyards and day-to-day consumption patterns of new and seasoned residents defined an urban order that proved ultimately impossible to transplant.

What was perhaps noteworthy about these early articulations of professional dissent from official redevelopment plans in West Berlin was that they occasioned a media campaign to raise awareness of the “inner city as place to live.” This campaign came in the form of an architectural/planning series titled “Berlin: Models for a City” in one of Berlin’s dailies. In interviews appearing in the Berliner Morgenpost each day for a period of two weeks in January 1977, Wolf Jobst Siedler, together with Josef Paul Kleihues were asked to invite prominent international architects, critics, politicians, and laypersons to have their say on the achievement of thirty years of reconstruction in West Berlin. By 1977, Siedler was already well known in architectural circles for his unyielding critique of what Berlin had become in the hands of modernist urban planners and municipal building agencies. And since 1973 Kleihues had held a chair in architectural design and theory at the University of Dortmund in West Germany, though he maintained his architectural affiliations with a firm in Berlin. As already mentioned,

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219 “Berlin: Modelle für eine Stadt,” Berliner Morgenpost, January 18, 1977,
Kleihues had established his oppositional stance to modernist renewal practices a few years before with his decision to rebuild along the lines of Berlin’s traditional block formation and street space.

The editorial introduction to the series carefully pointed first to the “successes” of the reconstruction (Wiederaufbau) period such as an increase in living comfort (500,000 new apartments built since 1949), improvements to city transportation networks, and the construction of new office buildings offering ample space. But the editorial then promptly turned to the task at hand: “to introduce concrete and feasible recommendations that will help come to terms with, as well as to remedy the worst sins of a violent, historically ignorant reconstruction period that has shown itself to have no future.”

Referring directly to official renewal practices since 1963, the editorial board asked, “where modernist planning left the historically grown city structures?” The board wondered whether “if, in these new residential neighborhoods, the liveability (Wohnlichkeit) [of the former living surroundings] was also transferable?”

According to Siedler and Kleihues, the series in the Morgenpost was not intended to present a far-reaching, comprehensive plan for inner city redevelopment, but instead to propose ideas for a more limited selection of boulevards and squares already damaged or destroyed as well as residential areas in need of revitalization. Showcasing a variety of opinions and positions on urban redevelopment for the inner city, Siedler and Kleihues used the publicity to openly pressure city officials to redirect the focus of a nascent plan to host another international building exhibition in the city. After turning its attention to the redevelopment of the inner city in the early 1970s, the West Berlin Senate expressed

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220 “Berlin: Modelle für eine Stadt.”
221 “Berlin: Modelle für eine Stadt.”
interest in once again showcasing sections of the inner city in need of rebuilding in the form of an international building exhibition. As in 1957, the area around the Tiergarten, West Berlin’s largest public park, was first suggested for the competition site.

Instead, Kleihues campaigned for an exhibition that would recognize the value in the “diversity of the cityscape,” which for him included the “sundry character of its streets and houses, its work, shopping, and leisure possibilities.” He favored a building exhibition that did not concentrate entirely on the areas close to the “new” city center of West Berlin, but rather an exhibition that would encompass several themes and city districts so that the whole population of the city could benefit from the improvements. A number of the articles in the series struck this tone again and again calling for a large-scale attempt to preserve the old cityscape and warning against a repeat of 1957 Interbau, which had resulted in a drastic remodeling of the competition area. What had begun in the 60s as a marginal and often ignored professional opinion was, by the late 1970s, a common stance articulated by a host of important planners, architects, and sociologists.

The belief that Berlin’s identity fed and continued to feed off the nineteenth-century tenement, the object of Werner Hegemann’s 1930 critique, distinguished this oppositional position from that of orthodox city planners and politicians. A contribution to the series by West Berlin’s new Building Commissioner Harry Ristock revealed his eagerness to appease the growing opposition to the city’s bulldozer. He conceded that the redevelopment policies of the early postwar years were carried out in haste, but without going too far he argued strongly for the supposed new 1974 shift in

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223 The details and significance of Interbau-Ausstellung/Hansaviertel to Berlin’s urban planning are discussed at length in chapter one.
224 Kleihues, “Programmvorschläge.”
urban renewal policy that was meant to strike a balance between preserving the old and building the new.²²⁵ Ristock agreed that a complete repeat of the last international building exhibition in Berlin, Interbau 1957 and its “bulldozer” approach should be avoided. Instead, the focus of another exhibition needed to include both new building and the modernization of older structures, which would indeed achieve a far-reaching balance in West Berlin’s inner-city renewal areas.²²⁶ In the 1978 publication of the Senate’s own Berliner Baubilanz, Ristock, at the risk of displeasing his critics, acknowledged that in “our efforts to improve the housing situation in the inner city, the task must be undertaken with great care in order to preserve the building fabric that can still be saved.”²²² In direct response to criticism from professionals and to demonstrate its commitment to a genuine shift in official policy, the Berlin Senate made a decision in 1978 to “save the damaged city” by supporting the proposal for a building exhibition scheduled for 1984, the International Building Exhibition ’84 or IBA.²²⁸

In the Senate’s written decision to host the exhibition, city officials once again articulated a discursive shift from the planning principles of clearance and new building: “the existing urban concepts no longer offer satisfactory answers to the legacy of industrialization (obsolete working-class tenements) or to the consequences of urban growth (urban sprawl, faceless housing developments, empty inner cities) […] Berlin must now find new ways to bring together old and newly built structures based on the layout of the historical [nineteenth-century] city in order to accommodate the changing

²²⁶ Ristock, 4.
²²² Berliner Baubilanz, 7.
needs of its citizens.”229 This attentiveness to the “changing needs” of the citizen, in part, explains the outright support and enthusiasm the city gave to an architectural competition that encouraged a preservation of the historical urban fabric. “An international building exhibition,” the Senate declared, “is all the more urgent for Berlin given the city’s particular hurdle when confronting the more general urban phenomenon of population loss.” “Unlike in other ‘world cities,’” continued the report, “in which residents only move to the outer suburbs but continue to work in the city, Berlin must tackle the question of a quality of urban life in a different way.”230 Thus the official endorsement of the IBA implicitly revealed the city’s political interests in strengthening its domestic and international image to attract new residents and industry by showcasing the city as a model for new approaches to urban planning and architectural design.

Models for a Neighborhood

By the early 1970s it was clear to critics of modernist renewal in Kreuzberg that the ostensible aim of the city’s urban renewal program—to fashion out of this “populous” borough “a new neighborhood” guaranteeing a “good and humane future” for its residents—translated in reality to displacement, demolition, and higher rents in the new “social housing.” Active tenant and grassroots community leaders working and living in the community regarded the official renewal practice as nothing less than duplicitous.231 The question thus became: for whom exactly was this “new neighborhood” intended? A 1973 statement by the district board of the Protestant Church (Evangelische Kirche)

229 Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, “Vorlage zur Beschlussfassung.”
230 Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, “Vorlage zur Beschlussfassung”.
articulated its main concern that “urban renewal isn’t living up to its promise of a planning practice that will provide Kreuzberg’s residents [German and migrant working-class and poor] with a better quality of life. Instead it only benefits the capitalist interests of housing associations and private owners and serves as a playground for planners and architects.”

As the 1970s progressed, the growing number of left-leaning urban planners, architects, and community and tenant organizers, understood Kreuzberg’s decaying buildings, its population make-up of the under-privileged (old people, immigrants, social “drop-outs” and the chronically unemployed), and the slow death of its social and economic infrastructure as the end result of “authoritarian” renewal policies. Instead of demolition, they argued for the preservation of the old housing stock despite, as one planner and architect described it, her own shock over the smell of damp mold coming from tenement basements and urine emanating from the shared toilets every time she visited renewal neighborhoods. The reasons given why some groups of planning and architectural professionals advocated for a preservation of these “shabby” buildings, even when their specialist training would have led them to argue otherwise, were those of left-leaning critics of extensive clearance and displacement who charged the city officials with deliberately favoring the practice of demolition and new building, despite continued assurances offered by the city that “wholesale clearance and new construction will generally not be accepted as the only possible and appropriate course of action.”

accurately, critics claimed that this renewal practice not only patently benefited the construction industry, but also “artificially” produced a housing shortage, which, in theory, would strengthen the demand for the newly built housing on the city’s outer limits.\textsuperscript{235}

In particular, professionals opposed to the modernist impulse of separating work and residential locations understood that uprooting the inner-city neighborhoods resulted in social dislocation due to the loss of a familiar landscape and community institutions. Moreover, city officials and planners argued that a vibrant neighborhood required flourishing local businesses and contacts, which they identified as deriving from the social, commercial and industrial space already knit into the urban fabric of the old blocks. The most vocal of the critics, much like Hämmer, started to place value on the participation of the residents and their visions of how their own back courtyards, green spaces, street corners, and play areas should look and be used. Ultimately, it was these defenders of the “old” neighborhood, as opposed to their historic preservationist allies, who drew attention to the complex web of social, commercial and cultural relations whose deep roots in the built environment came to characterize the neighborhood and shape the identity of its residents. Assigning meaning to Kreuzberg’s courtyard and streetfront cluster, one neighborhood pastor, echoing Jane Jacobs, regarded the neighborhood’s intersections and streets as “important sites of communication similar to the function of the plaza or market place.”\textsuperscript{236}


All this served as a leitmotif for the formal announcement of the design competition hosted by the Berlin Senate took place in 1979 with the establishment of a chartered commission, Bauausstellung Berlin GmbH, which was to carry out the redevelopment tasks in the competition areas. The selected theme for the IBA was, aptly, “the inner city as a place to live.” The IBA was divided into two parts, (one part was concerned with aspects of new building, while the other with redevelopment), that ostensibly overlapped in a few key understandings of an alternative approach to urban planning. Kleihues was appointed director of what was to be called the “IBA-New Building Section or IBA-Neubau” and Hämer of the “IBA-Old Building Section or IBA-Altbau.” Each director went about his task with a different set of guiding principles. Kleihues pursued his “critical reconstruction” approach to planning that he developed in the 1960s, an approach that set out to reconcile new construction with the historic scale and forms of the city. Drawing from his experience with his model project in Charlottenburg, Hämer developed a set of twelve principles he dubbed “careful urban renewal.” His principles promoted a preservation of the tenements and the historical street grid, called for resident feedback and participation (including shop owners) at every stage of the renewal process, and the implementation of physical improvements to the housing stock, as well greening interior courtyards and renovating house façades, with as little demolition as possible.

The IBA-Neubau included four specific sites (Tegel, Prager Platz, southern Tiergarten and southern Friedrichstadt in Kreuzberg), and dealt almost entirely with the rebuilding of a number of remaining empty lots dotted across the city. Alternatively, the IBA-Altbau supported the renovations of the older housing stock in designated areas of
Kreuzberg (Luisenstadt and SO 36). The original IBA timetable called for completion of the projects within five years. It soon became clear that the projected timeline would be impossible to meet given the scale of the exhibition both in terms of logistics and cost. Subsequently, the city set a new schedule for a 1987 completion date that would coincide with the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin.

Following in the tradition of previous building exhibitions (1910, 1931, and Hansaviertel in 1957), Kleihues invited architects from around the world to participate in the project that became, arguably, one of the most important architectural events of the decade.\(^{237}\) Furthermore, Kleihues and Hämer viewed the IBA not merely as a competition to showcase the latest architectural trends, but as an opportunity to put into practice an urban renewal concept with valuable social and cultural effects, namely, a “careful” or “gentle” approach to redevelopment that did not threaten displacement of residents or small businesses or destroy the nineteenth-century housing stock. They set out, in other words, to “mend the urban fabric” rather than completely transform it.\(^{238}\) Their hope was that the IBA principles developed and realized within the time frame of the competition would serve as yardsticks for future urban design not only in Berlin but also for other cities around the world. Indeed, now an antidote to the official “burn and build” approach of the 1960s and 70s, the Ministry of Building and Housing, not surprisingly, opted for “The Inner City as a Place to Live” as the theme of its 1980 *Berlin Bauwochen*.\(^{239}\)

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\(^{237}\) The directors of the IBA invited the most celebrated names in the international architectural profession including Rob Krier, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Daniel Libeskind, James Stirling, Aldo Rossi, Álvaro Siza to name just a few. Wallis Miller, “IBA’s ’Models for a City’: Housing and the Image of Cold-War Berlin,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 46, no. 4 (May 1993): 201.

\(^{238}\) Peter Blake, “Berlin’s IBA: A Critical Assessment,” *Architectural Record* (August 1993). PAGE #

However, during this same period, and despite the shift in official discourse since 1974, the practice of partial demolition and the “unavoidable flattening of 150 000 units” deemed “garbage” in 1978 by the Ministry of Building and Housing remained common practice.\textsuperscript{240} It was already widely established in planning, architectural, and social science circles by the late 1970s that the large-scale state interventions of demolition and new building reproduced social inequalities and reduced the urban landscape into functions that centered on the automobile. Defenders of low-cost housing maintained that the construction of new “social housing” unequivocally led to higher rents. In 1975, for example, the cost of an apartment in a \textit{Neubau} was double sometimes triple the price of a similarly sized apartment in an \textit{Altbau} (cost per square meter in a \textit{Neubau} 4.50 DM compared to 2.10 DM in an \textit{Altbau}).\textsuperscript{241} More significantly, the “revised” practice after 1974 of knocking down the back and side wings of tenements indisputably eliminated the main source of affordable housing for Kreuzberg’s low-income residents. In the words of Hämer, “people in disadvantaged areas have a right to available, near their homes, areas for sports, recreation and leisure-time activities as well as day-care centers and schools.”\textsuperscript{242} Calling for a stop to the trend of demolishing almost as many units as were rehabilitated, IBA set out to repair the nineteenth-century city.

With this knowledge in mind, the goal of the IBA-Altbau, was two-fold: first, preservation of the closely-knit mixture of light industry, trade and housing, thought to have shaped the character of older, working-class neighborhoods such as Kreuzberg and


\textsuperscript{241} Hardt Waltherr Hämer, ARCH +, Strategies for kreuzberg info [?] I’ll fix that.

more generally the city; second, to integrate residents into the design process. In this regard, the IBA came to represent more than just innovative examples of architecture and new housing; it reflected the Zeitgeist of the 1970s by including ideals of participatory democracy. Though the objective of including tenants in the design and renovation of their neighborhoods was an equally important facet of both IBA sections, it was more visible in the realization of the IBA-Altbau. Projects sponsored by the IBA-Altbau helped transform former sheds, stables, and small factories in the back courtyards of tenements into liveable outdoor spaces, play areas for children or workshops organized around cooperative principles.

Hämer’s team, for example, addressed the generally agreed concern with Kreuzberg’s inadequate infrastructure, i.e., lack of playground areas and green open spaces, by recommending that empty lots not be built up, as was the plan envisioned by the city, but instead transformed into “improvised play lots.” In Kreuzberg, IBA architects and planners offered expert guidance to self-help collectives and residents by organizing seminars on house renovations and co-designing both standard and green tenement restorations. Under the direction of the IBA-Altbau team, only 360 of the 1,600 new units intended by the city were built; in dramatic contrast, 7,000 rather than the intended 1,500 older units were co-renovated with the residents and according to their financial means; 370 courtyards were planted with flowerbeds and gardens, plans were

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243 The process of “alienation” which critical planners throughout the world viewed with concern as a problem robbing people of a sense of purpose and causing them to relinquish responsibility for their lives was reinforced by one-dimensional planning and building strategies.

244 Wallis Miller, “IBA’s ‘Models for a City’” 208.

developed for 27 daycares and 10 schools, 30 sections of streets and squares were rebuilt in part to reduce speed of traffic in the neighborhood.246

Though IBA was an independent planning authority, the city reserved the right to approve the building permits. This, at times, proved to be a bureaucratic hurdle for Hämer and his team to push through their objectives in the southeast corner of Kreuzberg, an area with a high migrant population. Since the goal of IBA-Alt was to both preserve the basic historic structures and to involve the local population, Hämer, in effect, defied the expectation of city planners and private developers that a successful renewal of the area would attract higher-income residents.247 Working together with the existing renters, the architects handled the modernization unit by unit after the architects and planners met with the residents and together drafted the renovation plans according to a democratic consensus. No families were displaced and few families voluntarily left Kreuzberg in this period.

By the late 1980s, the physical space of Kreuzberg came to symbolize alternative possibilities not only in terms of correcting the urban renewal policies of the postwar period, but also in regard to the politicization of everyday life through resident practices of communal living and cooperative modes of economic organizing. The neighborhood signaled a liveliness and political consciousness that extended far beyond matters directly related to housing or urban planning. The overlapping goals of the IBA-Altbau and its cooperation with already growing grassroots opposition to urban renewal practices in Kreuzberg will be the subject of the next chapter.

Figure 2: From the 1957 promotion brochure: *Wir bauen die neue Stadt: Die städtebauliche Neugestaltung d. Luisenstadt im Bezirk Kreuzberg*, Bezirksamt Kreuzberg, 1956, 6.
Chapter Three

In the Shadow of the Wall: The Neighborhood, Urban Space, and Everyday Life in Kreuzberg

In the days following the first of May 1987, the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg made national and international news, reinforcing an already popular rendering of the neighborhood as the volatile “cradle” of West Germany’s radical, left-alternative scene. Coming out on the streets to celebrate International Labor Day was nothing new for the residents of Kreuzberg, a traditionally working-class neighborhood; however, as the social make-up of Kreuzberg gradually changed during the decades of the Cold War, so too did the character of the yearly demonstrations. On that evening in 1987, the annual May Day demonstration escalated into a full-scale riot that peaked with the burning glow of parked cars, trashcans, and a local grocery chain in flames. According to press statements, both the city’s Christian Democrat mayor and the Senator for the Interior held “anti-Berliners” and “hooligans” responsible for the “bloody streetfight” and “pillaging” of local stores. (Figure 3.1)

Far from being simply one of many violent clashes arising out of a social or political demonstration in this West Berlin neighborhood, this demonstration-turned-riot on May 1, 1987 was to prove profoundly influential in terms of local identity formation.

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249 Reports and analyses of the May 1 riot could be read for weeks in newspapers and magazines, extending across the political spectrum from the sensationalist B.Z. to the left-alternative die tageszeitung.

This conflict between police and protestors established a pattern of conflict that is carried on to this day. Its mythical or legendary quality, clearly fed in large part by its annual repetition, prompts observers twenty years later to describe May Day as a “neatly choreographed dance” between police and a segment of the demonstrators. The annual protest has become a heavily ritualized event with each side playing out its assigned part with grim commitment and a sense of historical responsibility. Yet what has become increasingly evident in the repeated “rehearsals” of this event is increasing distance from the politics that framed the original, historical clash from the current myth that now surrounds it.

In accounts of the original protest, generally simplified by both contemporary observers as well as popular and academic interpretations, the political activism of the left-alternative scene in 1980s West Berlin is often reduced to the workings of a radical group of self-indulgent squatters, freaks, and dropouts who were looking for a free place to live and who, after 1987, were thought to have transformed into unruly gangs and outlaw communes throwing rocks and getting tear-gassed during annual May Day demonstrations. As a contributor for Germany’s leading left daily die tageszeitung wrote in 1990, something that had once been understood as political was thought to have morphed into something quite different:

Burning barricades, police with clubs, rocks being thrown, shattered glass. Not your everyday image of Berlin, but one that recurs at least once a year with increasing brutality… Ten years ago when exasperation and anger over the housing shortage, speculation and the city’s disastrous urban redevelopment were

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251 “May Day Déjà Vu.”
252 A striking example of this can be found in Jane Kramer’s The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany (New York: Random House, 1996). See also Clay Large, Berlin.
an invitation to take action on the streets around the Kottbusser Tor,\textsuperscript{253} no one imagined that a Kreuzberg “street-battle” would be reduced to a depoliticized ritual.\textsuperscript{254}

A consequence of this depoliticization, as suggested by the \textit{taz} contributor, was that this latest iteration of militancy illustrates an absence of historical memory of past political struggles. One argument of this chapter is that these assessments deliberately dilute the political and cultural potency inherent in attempts to define and occupy urban space, reducing such protests to apolitical violence rather than recognizing them as political activism. In fact, this brand of urban radicalism of 1980s West Berlin had its roots in long-standing, broad-based political and cultural struggle that had parallels in other Western European cities, all of which were attempts to give meaning to urban space: in other words, to have a say in what a place is and who can live there.

Indeed, what is deliberately erased from historical memory is the fact that the defense of the historical city by West Berlin’s vibrant left-alternative scene was the culmination of long-standing critiques of modernist urban renewal. Youth and alternative urban movements joined with unorthodox architects and urban planners, local citizens’ initiatives, and tenant organizers to reverse the course of official urban redevelopment and to offer viable alternatives for the restructuring of Berlin’s inner-city neighborhoods. These alliances explicitly and implicitly revealed the political nature of urban activism.\textsuperscript{255}

\begin{multicols}{2}
\textsuperscript{253} A subway station in Kreuzberg that was at the epicenter of a “street-battle” between police and demonstrators on Dec. 12, 1980.


\textsuperscript{255} The scene does not lend itself to easy categorization. In West Berlin the scene was made up of ecological and political groups of various grades of dogmatism, local grass roots organizations, punks, and a growing faction of militant autonomous groups (\textit{Autonomen}). During the 1970s, the main pulse of the alternative movement had moved, albeit briefly, from the politicized West Berlin of the 1960s to the West German provinces, where protests and attempts to potential sites of nuclear power stations by citizens’ initiatives, their supporters and sympathizers, revealed the strength of a growing ecological and anti-nuclear movement. By 1980/81, the perceived center of the alternative scene had returned to West Berlin, as the city became a hotbed of the squatting movement.
\end{multicols}
The cultural rediscovery of the “traditional” urban fabric, linked with the nineteenth-century city dovetailed with leftist anti-capitalist struggles centered on housing issues.

One explanation for the heightened tensions on May Day 1987 was a police raid, carried out early that same morning, on the Berlin office of the Census Boycott Initiative, which was located in the Mehringhof in Kreuzberg. A former typesetting factory, the Mehringhof had been bought in 1979 and transformed into a self-administered living and work space by a collection of six alternative projects, intended for specifically radical leftist and alternative social, cultural and political projects. The raid on the office of the West Berlin anti-census group was far from an unusual incident for left-wing political groups at the time. Indeed, the left-alternative scene saw the raid as yet another unjustified encroachment by the state on hard-won, politicized autonomous spaces. West Berliners’ struggle for self-defined, autonomous spaces has a long and contested history. The genealogy of these protests can be traced back to the early 1970s to the diverse strands of opposition to urban renewal as an idea and practice. As I discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, the dissident professionals and architects who had set the intellectual tone for resistance to modernist principles of postwar city planning were the first to argue that things could be done differently.

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256 A nationwide boycott campaign mobilized against the the national census (the first in the BRD in 17 years) sparking a major debate in West Germany around fears of a “surveillance state.” Evoking both the past (Nazi period) and present (the GDR), protesters distributed brochures that encouraged people to cut out the serial number on the census form. This was considered an illegal act punishable under law and the state responded by raiding initiative offices, seizing the “anti-census” forms, and criminalizing protestors.

257 Tensions between squatters and the police still ran high as the state attempted to brand leftist squats as terrorists. In Hamburg, the city had announced its plan to evict squats on Hafenstrasse, which led to clashes in the spring and summer of 1987. In response, squatters and their sympathizers in the city and elsewhere planned Tag X (Day X). On April 23 or Tag X, over 30 groups and civic initiatives held rallies and demonstrations across the city and as far away as West Berlin and Copenhagen to protest the impending evictions.

For the next two decades, tenant activists, community organizers, and squatters built on this legacy in their varied attempts to shape, define and put into practice alternative plans for the inner city. This chapter draws upon the recent work of urban historians and historical geographers who have persuasively argued that space, particularly the public space of the metropolis, functions as something more than a passive backdrop to the making of social and political identities. Scholars have shown that urban space itself is marked by daily interaction, conflict, and symbolic struggle, and that the city is fundamentally shaped and altered by these multi-layered political and cultural contests concerning the use and definition of urban space.259

The previous chapter examined the emergence of professional critiques that were opposed to modernist planning, critical assessments that contributed to both a broader appreciation of the nineteenth-century housing form and an acute awareness of the local populations suffering most from the city’s renewal practices. This chapter further analyzes these oppositional ideas by exploring the grassroots resistance to urban renewal that emerged alongside professional critiques of the 1970s in the form of tenant organizing, citizen initiatives, and squatting. It first situates the type of radical protest that has long marked the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg within the context of broader opposition to modernist urban renewal. It then seeks to show how “everyday” tactics of resistance by tenant and squatting activists challenged a top-down prescribed vision of urban space, and thus how these activists imprinted their own political and cultural values

and practices onto the city landscape by shaping and defining their neighborhoods and urban policy. Exploring these political and cultural cleavages in Kreuzberg compellingly reveals the fraught relationship between urbanity and identity in West Germany.

Thus, a longer examination of the historical development of urban renewal protest in Kreuzberg and related images of the neighborhood as a “ghetto” – in this case an alternative “ghetto” – challenge renditions of 1980s protest and its spatial expression in Kreuzberg that reduce these events to a one-dimensional, marginal episode in Berlin’s Cold War history. Furthermore, by calling attention to struggles around affordable housing and resident participation in neighborhood development, as well as the more radical demands for self-defined and self-administered spaces in late 1970s and 80s West Berlin, this chapter seeks to complicate the dominant account of Kreuzberg’s protest culture and its assumed “leftist” romanticism, which supposedly derived from largely fictionalized legacies of the nineteenth-century city and its working-class culture.260

The Creation of a Myth

In her memoir, *Das schöne Leben*, Berlin musician and journalist Christiane Rösinger, born in rural southwest Germany in 1961, describes the streets of Kreuzberg (Figure 3.2) in the mid 80s:

> Life was hard in Berlin. But also very beautiful. Everything was gray, filled with smoke, and destroyed, the buildings were full of bullet holes, in almost every street a plot of land lay dormant, a building missing. Decay and ruin was ubiquitous and the spruced up, clean Germany seemed really far away. The best though was that one didn’t always feel like an outsider. Normal Berliners lived in Tempelhof, Zehlendorf, or Friedenau, in Kreuzberg everyone was an outsider.

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draft dodgers, Turks, the artists and musicians, gays and lesbians, the alcoholics, and even the newly arrived students from well-off families.  

Rösinger’s recollection of Kreuzberg captures an image of the neighborhood as the spatial expression of both people and lifestyles located on the margins of West German society, an image that even today continues to define the reputation of the neighborhood. Rösinger not only places West Berlin on the margins of the “clean” Federal Republic, alluding to what many young Germans believed was a superficial effort on the part of West Germany to come to terms with the Nazi past, she further situates Kreuzberg on the margins of West Berlin. This 1980s characterization of Kreuzberg as an island inside an island points to a process of mythologizing that has long contributed to the neighborhood’s identity even after the fall of the Wall.

Rösinger’s depiction of Kreuzberg in the 1980s underscores one feature of Berlin’s unusual Cold War status, as an occupied city that attracted two generations of young men who moved to West Berlin to avoid military service. This appeal helps explain the disproportionate number of left-leaning or alternative youth who were relocating to Berlin at a time when the city was, in fact, experiencing a steady population decline. Already in the late 1970s, West Berlin’s left-alternative scene had started to concentrate in the run-down neighborhood close to the Wall. Parallel to the physical decay of Berlin’s nineteenth-century tenements, most obvious in working-class neighborhoods, there emerged a growing youth and alternative movement with its roots in New Left activism that claimed and defended low-cost housing and autonomous

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261 Christiane Rösinger, *Das schöne Leben* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2008), 63.
spaces. Activists mobilized their political protest around the physical occupation of the derelict turn-of-the century tenements scheduled for demolition.

These activists occupied vacant or partially vacant buildings that were scheduled to be demolished after urban renewal agents and municipal governments determined them to be inadequate housing since they did not meet the standards of modern housing. Grass-roots actors were also responding to the ushering in of austerity politics in view of the worldwide recession and, in turn, linked themes and concepts such as self-help, autonomy and self-organization to demands for low-rent housing and new approaches to urban development. Facing a bleak economic situation after 1973/74, many West German youth were confronted with a drastic cut in the number of available apprenticeships as well as access to inexpensive housing. Increasing numbers of politicized youth saw in the failure of the state to adequately provide them with the promised access to material means grounds a turn to “practical self-help” in the form of squatting.

By 1980, the militant defense of squats and self-administered ways of living by a segment of West Berlin urban activists vis-à-vis city authorities commanded the attention of the mainstream media as well as local and national politicians, as similar conflicts

broke out in other West German and western European urban centers.\textsuperscript{264} The heavy-handed response on the part of West Berlin’s police served to rally public sympathy and, by the spring of 1981, Kreuzberg was home to the largest display of protest in all of West Germany against the destruction of inner-city housing and the historic urban fabric. Squatters occupied buildings that owners had left empty or partially empty for years, eagerly anticipating the next, more profitable phase of postwar urban renewal. At the height of the wave of squatting, an estimated 180 squats dotted the city landscape, with the highest concentration in the southeast corner of the neighborhood—an area still known in popular parlance as SO 36 after its cold war postal code.

Contemporary depictions of Kreuzberg in the popular press fostered an identification of the neighborhood with two foci of West German public anxiety in the late 70s and 80s: radical leftist politics and migrants.\textsuperscript{265} This image of Kreuzberg as a neighborhood whose public face was dominated by bohemians, punks, anarchists, leftist intellectuals, the alternative scene, and migrants from Turkey, still captivates German cultural and political imagination more than two decades after the fall of the Wall. As Wolfgang Kil and Harry Silver argue, the neighborhood came to symbolize the “ghetto”

\textsuperscript{264} This impression of urban protest was picked up on by various mainstream European and North American newspapers and magazines. An article in the German national news weekly Der Spiegel (“Da packt dich irgendwann ‘ne Wut,” December 12, 1980) thought the protest in West Berlin to be propagated mainly by a “militant” wave of protesters, comprised mostly of “drop-out youths” who had already formed similar such communities in cities such as Zurich and Amsterdam. In fact, noted the same journalist, the formidable clashes in the West Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg between “street-fighters,” “hippie freaks,” and “Turkish youth” on the one side of the barricade and the city police on the other had reached violent new heights “not even seen in the wildest years of the APO.” Fred Bruning, “Europe’s Dead-End Kids,” Newsweek, April 27, 1981, 52-57.

\textsuperscript{265} Kreuzberg’s representation as an “ethnic” ghetto will be taken up in the next chapter. For Kreuzberg as “ethnic” ghetto, see Ayhan Kaya, \textit{Sicher in Kreuzberg: Constructing Diasporas: Turkish Hip-Hop Youth in Berlin} (Berlin: Transcript, 2001); Wolfgang Kil and Harry Silver, “From Kreuzberg to Marzahn: New Migrant Communities in Berlin,” \textit{German Politics and Society} 24, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 95-121; Jennifer Petzen, “Home or Home Like?: Turkish Queers Manage Space in Berlin,” \textit{Space and Culture} 7, no. 1 (February 2004): 20-32.
of West Berlin, and continues to be perceived as a symbolic site of political, cultural and ethnic difference in Germany. For the West German mainstream and conservative press, the militant form of protest linked to the new urban youth and alternative movements in their defense of inner city squats from forced eviction seemed to confirm Social Democrat Hans-Jochen Vogel’s 1972 warning that if housing and redevelopment politics did not change, the centers of West German cities would be transformed into “concrete jungles, in which violence, hate, decay, and ruin would prevail.” When Hans-Jochen Vogel made his prediction about the potential fate of West German cities, media representations of expanding urban decay and concomitant social problems singled out the West Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg as the worst example of this frightful development.

**Strategies for Kreuzberg**

Around the same time as German social scientists began pointing out the social repercussions of Berlin’s renewal apparatus, a protestant pastor in Kreuzberg was witnessing firsthand the effects of the physical decline of the housing stock on the neighborhood’s population. Klaus Duntze had been living and working in the southeastern corner of Kreuzberg since 1966 when he was assigned as pastor of the Martha Congregation on the Glogauer Strasse. On his arrival to his new posting, Duntze

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267 Hans-Jochen Vogel, “Das unterirdische Großen ist schon zu hören,” *Der Spiegel*, June 19, 1972. SPD Hans-Jochen Vogel was mayor of Munich when he contributed this article to *Der Spiegel*; he was then Justice Minister of the Federal Republic before running relocating from Bonn to West Berlin where he was mayor during the early clashes between the city and the urban squatters.
was surprised by how gray the neighborhood looked with large-format adverts as the only things brightening the streets.268

Duntze’s earliest observations of Kreuzberg’s local social structures together with his work with neighborhood residents led to his conclusion that urban renewal was doing little to contribute to a new urbanism for the “little people,” but instead seemed to be a “huge setback for the democratization of the city.”269 Thus in 1971, just a few years into his tenure as a local pastor, Duntze’s community role as minister in an area already designated a “renewal area in waiting” compelled him to plainly address the social aspect of urban redevelopment, one which had all but been ignored in larger debates about the urban form of the neighborhood; he raised the question “whether functionalist urban renewal actually points to improved possibilities for affected residents or, in fact, the exact opposite?”270

Of his earliest contact with grassroots activity already underway on the neighborhood level, Duntze wrote that he quickly became skeptical of the tenant organizing in SKKT by student activists looking to “awaken a proletarian consciousness.” Either ignored or taken to task by local residents, the failure of this first tenant group to make any significant headway sent the message from the existing residents that “one can’t just come here and tell [the long-time residents of Kreuzberg]

268 Klaus Duntze, Der Geist der Städte baut: Planquadrat, Wohnbereich, Heimat (Stuttgart: Radius Verlag, 1972), 10.
269 Duntze, Der Geist der Städte baut, 45
what others think they [the residents] should hear.”

In 1972, Duntze took a sabbatical year from the Martha Congregation to publish a book in which he explores these issues of urban revitalization and participation while critically examining the principles of modernist urban planning from a sociological perspective with Berlin-Kreuzberg as his case study. In the face of Kreuzberg’s low standard of housing resulting from a lack of maintenance over decades with shared toilets located in stairwells, densely built courtyards without a smattering of green, and the fusion of industrial workshops and tenements, Duntze saw the advantages that this unloved urban spectacle offered to its existing residents. His view that the low rents, familiarity with neighbors, shopkeepers and the social interactions on the street and in the courtyard could not be separated from Kreuzberg’s built environment inspired him to advocate for resident participation as the driving force behind alternatives to renewal plans already in progress.

Ultimately, it was the failed community attempt to resist the closure of the Bethanien Hospital in Kreuzberg renewal area SKKT in 1970 that convinced Duntze to conclude that, “opposition and citizen participation can only work if a neighborhood is perceived as a high profile experiment in urban renewal.”

(Figure 3.3) To do so, Duntze realized he needed elite allies if his ideas were to enact a real shift in renewal policy for SO 36. He found one in municipal politician Gerd Wartenberg (SPD). Wartenberg, a former member of the socialist youth organization Die Falken, had written extensively on urban redevelopment before winning a seat in Berlin’s city parliament.

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the spring of 1977, with Wartenberg’s backing, Duntze initiated an unorthodox “competition of ideas.” In effect, this competition, which was called “Strategies for Kreuzberg,” extended the work of the Berliner Morgenpost series and Hämmer’s Block 118 model to legitimize Altbau preservation and resident participation in the planning process for an entire renewal area as discussed at length in the previous chapter.

Unwilling to ignore the displacement and disruption caused by the redevelopment plans for Kreuzberg, Duntze and Wartenberg proposed a planning contest that would be open to all (für jedermann), for which they solicited participatory solutions to “save th[is] neighborhood” located in squarely in the “shadow of economic, social, and political developments.” To increase the likelihood of a successful competition, the organizers of the “Strategies for Kreuzberg” opted for restricting the scope of the competition to several blocks to the north and south of the former Görlitzer Bahnhof, located in the southeastern corner of Kreuzberg with the north section of the area bordered by the Spree, to the east and south by the Landwehr canal, and to the west of the competition area by the Manteuffelstrasse, Skalitzer and Mariannenstrasse. Eager to gain more publicity and official support, the “Strategies” team appealed to the organizers of the 1977 annual convention of the Protestant Church (Kirchentag) scheduled to take place in West Berlin. Convention organizers designated the “Strategies” competition a “special project” of the national convention. Not to be outdone by the Church, Building Commissioner Ristock is said to have given his full support of the project after

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remarking, “that there is something going on there, shouldn’t be left to the Churche, because that would make the Senate look like a fool in Kreuzberg.”

This corner of Kreuzberg, with the highest density of nineteenth-century tenements built before 1885 earmarked for demolition, displayed the marks of a neighborhood left in stand-by mode. Facing a social and physical landscape of crumbling tenements, emptying storefronts, a migrant and poor population being shuffled from one dilapidated housing unit to the next by negligent landlords, and a chronic shortage of open space, Duntze and others were determined to show that revitalizing the infrastructure of this inner-city district could be achieved by respecting and strengthening the existing social and physical composition of the neighborhood rather than at its expense. They vehemently argued for an approach to renewal that went beyond relating planning principles to the interests of residents, but rather included these same residents or communities in the actual planning process. Thus, they felt that limiting the competition to a few blocks, rather than advocating designs for the entire district or city, would stimulate a “smoother living together at the neighborhood level” as well as a “local identification with the area.”

The tenements, despite their basic amenities like shared toilets, coal heating, and rudimentary baths and kitchens, remained attractive to a cohort of low-income residents that included immigrant workers and their families, the elderly, the poor, a mix of both Old and New Left activists, and growing numbers of youth seeking an alternative to the “conformist” and “oppressive” life in the West German provinces. Kreuzberg’s

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275 Ristock quoted in Duntze, “Ein Stadtteil hilft sich selbst,” 301.
277 Strategien für Kreuzberg, 3.
population by the 1970s, as Klaus Duntze put it, could be broadly broken down into four main categories that he labeled the four “A’s”: the poor (Arme), “foreigners” (Ausländer), the elderly (Alte), and drop-outs (Aussiege). Low rents in Kreuzberg, particularly in the southeastern corner, were attributed to rent control of housing units built before 1949. As was openly documented in the early 1970s by critics of wholesale clearance, the dilapidation of the older buildings, especially those built between 1871 and 1885, was a result of intentional neglect. Socially-minded planners and architects argued that the poor structural conditions of these buildings, proof in fact used by urban renewal agents to justify demolition, was a direct outcome of the failure of apartment owners to provide even the most basic maintenance of the housing stock.

A 1974 report published by the Berlin Senate detailing municipal objectives over a fifteen year period upheld the new official shift in policy by writing that “efforts must be reinforced to rectify the substandard quality of living in the inner city neighborhoods; therefore it is essential to help every citizen find [decent] housing, to guarantee affordable rent, and to extend their rights as tenants.” At the same time, federal urban renewal subsidies continued to specify the construction of newer housing, units that were promoted as “social housing” for West Berlin’s population. Paradoxically, none of the former residents remaining in the renewal areas would be able to afford rents in the new housing built by city-owned and private housing corporations. These renewal agents

279 This was a regular issue addressed in the local Kreuzberg magazine Südost Express. See also, Bodenschätzer, Schluss mit der Zerstörung; Renate Mulhak, “Die Instandbesetzungskonflikt in Berlin,” in Großstadt und Neue Soziale Bewegungen, eds. Peter Grottian and Willfried Nelles (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1983), 205-252; Volker Heise, “Der Weg bis zur “behutsamen Stadterneuerung” im Osten Kreuzbergs: das Sanierungsgebiet Kottbusser Tor und das “Strategiegebiet SO 36,” in Stadterneuerung in Berlin Sanierung und Zerstörung vor und neben der IBA (Berlin: Verlag Ästhetik und Kommunikation, 1984), 38-43.
280 Presse und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, Perspektiven der Stadtentwicklung (Berlin, 1974), 81.
were, by law, able to demand higher rents for the new units since rent control no longer applied to *Neubau*.

The “Strategies for Kreuzberg” competition as envisioned by its initiators set out to make a case for improving both private conditions for residents and satisfying social needs in the community without resorting to demolition, a difference in approach marked specifically by participatory methods of co-planning and co-managing, rather than a top-down policy to neighborhood redevelopment.281 As the coordinators of “Strategies” hoped, the active input from residents in choosing the winning proposals and participating in their implementation would engender an exemplary model of redevelopment both locally and nationally that acknowledged and met the various needs of a neighborhood as defined by its own population.282 The project committee or “citizens’ jury” consisted of thirty-four members, one-third drawn from the Senate and Kreuzberg’s district administration (*Bezirksamt*) and the remaining two-thirds from the community. Announced as a formal cooperation between the Berlin Senate for Building and Construction and the Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg (West Berlin), representatives from both official bodies made the committee recommendations for the “Strategies for Kreuzberg.”283

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282 *Strategien für Kreuzberg*, 4.

283 As discussed in the previous chapter, with financial resources in short supply, the Berlin Senate Committee for Housing and Construction recognized the fiscal advantages of a modification to the existing policy of relocation, full clearance and new construction; therefore, in March 1977 the Berlin Senate announced it would back the creation of a “Strategies for Kreuzberg” commission that included a mélange of landlords, residents, renewal officials, district officials, tenant organizations, and the local church circuit. The official shift to partial demolition had been introduced in 1974; however, the neglect of the buildings and slow forced vacancy due to the postponement of demolition continued but now involving both those...
Each of the 34 jury members came from one of the following categories: representatives from social groups, which included local businesses, tenants, migrants, youth, landlords; community role models drawn from neighborhood social workers, Turkish schoolteachers, local work council, community workers; interest groups, such as citizens’ initiatives, local not-for-profit associations, the local Protestant and Catholic churches, local mosques, and social welfare organizations; and public administrative units and representatives from the Kreuzberg district administration. The committee’s main task was to receive, evaluate and assess the submissions (129 in all) within a two-month period. The jurors chose eleven winning submissions whose proposals presented self-help ideas for housing renovation, designs for street and courtyard use, a plan to turn the abandoned grounds of the former Görlitzer Bahnhof into a park, storefront information and counseling offices for locals, and educational and training programs to address the problem of high unemployment among local youths.

The “Strategies” campaign to include residents in the “collaboration” (mitwirken), “participation” (mitentscheiden), “thinking along with” (mitdenken), and “working together” (mitarbeiten) in the planning process before any official decisions took place was consistent with similar aims promoted by Hämer on a smaller scale just a few years before. Taking Hämer’s ideas one step further, Dunzte and the “Strategies” team insisted on the importance of preserving and restoring the interior courtyards, with their side and back wings or small factories and handicraft workshops that still employed a percentage of the local population. Duntze, for example, grounded his defense of the old urban

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284 Strategien für Kreuzberg, 5.
285 Strategien für Kreuzberg, 4.
fabric so evident in Kreuzberg not simply in terms of its sound architectural merits, but in the “presence of a past that is for us far from over.” This “past,” he continued, “reveals itself in the informal social system of neighborhood life still intrinsically linked to the famed Kreuzberg Mix.”286 The “past” Duntze evoked here was not, at least directly, the most immediate German past, i.e., the Nazi past, but rather one that located the southeastern corner of Kreuzberg in a long working-class tradition whose politics, sociability and culture marked the built landscape.287 Yet this part of Kreuzberg was particularly controversial and seen by proponents of urban renewal as the perfect example of the soulless and history-less moloch of the urban space. Contradicting this view, Duntze argued that this area remained a paradigmatic and historically crucial space for the emergence of the classic Berlin cityscape, as it was conceptualized in the nineteenth-century Kreuzberg Mix.

**The Return of the Kreuzberg Mix**

The area around the former Görlitzer Bahnhof where the competition site was located, and as Duntze himself discovered, had contributed significantly to the formation of this particular “Mix” of housing and work with tenements and industrial workshops built up alongside each other. More concretely, the urban development of the neighborhood was influenced by the train station’s function as major freight depot for raw materials arriving from the southeast, e.g., lignite or brown coal from Bohemia,

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286 “Experiment der Selbsterneuerung oder Feigenblatt? Interview [with Klaus Duntze].” *ARCH +*, 34 (June 1977), 16.

287 For a discussion of this see Chapter Four in Rudy Koshar’s *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory*. One could place Duntze in this 1970s/80s context of (leftist) understandings of Heimat as seen in their interest in the preservation of historical architecture.
wheat from Austria.288 Opening in 1867 at the zenith of German urbanization and industrialization, the train station became a hub for both goods and people arriving to the big city from the east. The train station’s proximity to the industrial areas being built up along the Spree influenced the decision of newcomers disembarking on its platforms to make this area their home. A smaller-scale sphere of production, largely trades and craft, began to flourish in the back courtyards of these large tenements built up around the Görlitzer Bahnhof.289

As discussed in Chapter One, this nineteenth-century mix of housing and work managed to endure, albeit in an ever weakened form, through two world wars, inflation, the division of the city, and the steady transition to a post-industrial society; in this neighborhood, however, it remained a defining feature, one that the initiators of the “Strategies” felt should be defended since the industrial workshops and small factories still in operation employed local residents who could live close to their workplaces and the buildings already emptied out offered large enough spaces for trade, artist, or housing collectives.290 Although the Bahnhof itself was only moderately damaged during the war, it fell into disuse after East Berlin officials suspended train service going east in the 1950s. The city of West Berlin began tearing down the unused train station in the early 1960s.

290 Kreuzberger Mischung, 155.
For local opponents of urban renewal, Kreuzberg’s mix of spheres (private and public), of the new and old (industrial trades and alternative collectives) provided one important solution for a revitalization of Kreuzberg. Defenders of the Mix (old and new residents alike) perceived it as the neighborhood’s “source of vitality” and to bolster their claim, they felt one only had to look to “all places where small trade and industry has been destroyed or depleted by urban renewal practices, where the urban functions of living and working have been segregated, urban life has been lost [...] these factory floors in the tenement courtyards offer space that could be used in a multitude of ways to regenerate Kreuzberg.” Through the “Strategies” community work, opposition to urban renewal increasingly meant more than only ensuring affordable housing. It was as much about culturally and socially reviving an informal network of communication that relied on the small corner shops (Tante Emma Läden) and pubs, back courtyards and storefront meeting places as it was about raising the issue of affordable housing for low-income residents.

In part because of considerable media attention given to the “Strategies” contest, the Bezirksamt Kreuzberg sponsored an exhibition in 1979 detailing the “pronounced diversity of the[se] possibilities for neighborhood rejuvenation” for the public. Following a comprehensive summary of the “Strategies for Kreuzberg,” the exhibition catalogue introduced the eleven projects born out of the “Strategies” community work. Vacant factories were in the process of being renovated to accommodate decentralized or consensus-based adult education centers (Volkshochschulen), youth self-help and

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apprenticeship programs for unemployed and under privileged youth to then live in once restored, and artists’ centers. The catalogue proposed ways in which a “vibrant” street life could be maintained, one whose street fronts (Erdgeschosszone) was thought to be of utmost importance for an accessible, people-friendly city. To safeguard their ideas on how to improve an urban community, the “Strategies” commission founded a registered non-profit association (e.V.) in 1978. This step help ensured continued funding and local government support in the implementation of the remaining eight projects working on lowering the cost of rent for “Tante Emma” stores, planting garden or flower beds on streets with wider sidewalks, developing ways to minimize speed of traffic, transforming the ruins of the Görlitzer Bahnhof into a neighborhood park, setting up information centers specifically targeting the neighborhood’s migrant population, opening decentralized youth and recreational locales. Additionally, seven neighborhood centers had already opened in the competition area to continue their work of providing residents with information on the various steps of redevelopment.

By 1979 calls for a preservation of the housing stock that had dovetailed with the demands for low-income housing and tenant participation in designing neighborhood spaces had not altogether rendered the wrecking ball immobile. Not only did local tenant and community activists still see Kreuzberg’s built environment at risk of demolition, they were becoming increasingly radicalized by the continued practices of public and private building owners, in the face of an official shift to modernization, allowing tenements by design to fall into disrepair which, in effect, slated them for clearance. One neighborhood newspaper conveyed this concern in one of its 1978 issues with a cover

293 Strategien für Kreuzberg, 10; Volker von Tiedemann, Bürgerbeteiligung bei der Stadterneuerung: Beispiel Strategien für Kreuzberg (Bonn-Bad Godesberg : Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen u. Städtebau, 1980).
image of a recently flattened building lot displaying a crane in the one corner and in the foreground a bulldozer moving debris. The question accompanying the cover image asked, “Kreuzberg is not yet lost, right?” (noch ist Kreuzberg nicht verloren, oder?)

This ongoing concern with a reality that “a large quantity of the existing housing is to be torn down and on a smaller scale refurbished” did not cease with the Senate’s support of the “Strategies” competition. The following account given by Berlin’s City Building and Planning Senator Harry Ristock exposes what remained a “balanced” approach to “upgrading” inner city neighborhoods:

… The quality of life in the back and side wings (Hinterhäuser und Seitenflügel), where formerly the little man, the worker, the small businessman, and the domestic helper lived, was at times catastrophic. There was no light, no greenery and small and medium sized walls separated each courtyard from each other. It was nothing but “junk” (“Schrot”) and a public indictment. The situation is still not over and here lies the great task of urban renewal. Renewal is one of the most important of our political tasks.

Voicing opposition to the city’s further removal of back and side wings and the related concern that Kreuzberg would become a “Gründerzeit Museum” with just a few tenements left to exhibit as relics of days gone by, activists continued to make the point that official redevelopment practices were of no use to those residents living in the “here and now.”

Within weeks after the “Strategies” competition got underway, Kreuzberg’s activists were given even more reason to distrust city renewal officials. At the same time as the Berlin Senate declared its support of a “competition of ideas” that advocated a

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295 Ibid.
rehabilitation of Kreuzberg through “careful” renewal, a bulldozer arrived on the site of a nineteenth-century pumping station and former fire hall in anticipation of demolition and new construction. Surprised and dismayed by the official proposal to raze the site and build a new school with an adjoining sports and daycare center, tenant and community activists were determined to save the pumping station and the adjacent fire hall on Reichenberger Strasse from the wrecking ball. Particularly infuriating for the “Strategies” initiators was that the Reichenberger Strasse was located squarely in the competition grid, a competition whose very objective was to promote a new, contemporary use of older buildings according to the needs and wishes of the residents. A citizens’ initiative (Bürgerinitiative Feuerwache/Pumpwerk) proposed a model for a social and cultural center, which would service the needs of the neighborhood by providing a communication and social center. Several other initiatives were also involved in the plans to design a new use for the center; these included a theater group, feminist group, addiction councilors, a seniors’ group” and a youth group. Activists from these thirteen different groups “illegally” occupied the fire hall and started renovations for the “Stadtteilzentrum” to demonstrate what they perceived as the only way to defend their vision of the neighborhood against the divergent interests of the city urban renewal agents.298

A flare up ensued with one side arguing for an end to demolition plans for Kreuzberg until all alternatives had been evaluated and residents included in the decision-making process, while the other side maintained that the demolition “was in direct

298 *ausser man tut es… Kreuzberg abgeschrieben, aufgestanden*, 36.
accordance with the wishes and needs of the neighborhood’s population.”

Rather than honor its intended commitment to resident participation, the city’s decision to tear down the fire hall and pumping station sent an unambiguous message to Kreuzberg’s residents who in turn voiced reservations about the efficacy of the “Strategies” competition. Further examples of resident interests at odds with the city’s “actual” plans soon followed. On the Waldemar Strasse directly on the Mariannenplatz, a street located in the SKKT urban renewal area, a former factory (Maschinenfabrik Prakmagebaude) had been selected in 1975 as “worthy of historic preservation” under the auspices of the European Year of Architectural Heritage and thus thought to be out of harm's way. In 1978, one of the “Strategies” funded projects, Ausbildungswerk Kreuzberg, a self-help project conceived to couple “careful” or “small-scale” renewal with youth job training schemes, submitted a proposal to the city for a redevelopment option in the former factory. Ignoring the project’s application, the city’s urban renewal agent instead moved forward with demolition with the tacit approval of the Bezirksamt Kreuzberg. The Ministry for Building and Housing argued that the demolition was carried out only because no candidates expressed an interest in the building. One local community paper commented on this breach between the city and neighborhood organizers by proclaiming on its cover title, “Attention! You are now leaving the democratic sector of Kreuzberg!” This heading played on the sector signs alerting residents that they were leaving one occupied sector and entering another. The significance of these examples

299 Building Commissioner Ristock quoted in Der Abend, June 14, 1977.
301 SüdOst Express June 6, 1979.
more generally was that they served as a litmus test for political support of the “Strategies” objectives and a sincere shift in urban renewal policy.

**Self-Help and “Rehab” Squatting**

Over the course of two years disillusionment and anger on the part of “Strategies” participants and supporters grew after each forcible eviction in Kreuzberg. One group started meeting informally in a bar once a week to discuss and organize specifically around the eradication of the things “[they] love[d] about Kreuzberg –the small shops, the pubs, the backyard workshops.” At first they called themselves *Stammtisch* SO 36 indicating their informal yet regular meetings around a table in the same bar week after week. Later the group formally changed its name to BI SO 36, short for *Bürgerinitiative* SO36 (citizen’s initiative SO36). However, as was the case with *Verein* SO 36, born directly out of the “Strategies” competition, the Berlin Senate did not officially back the BI SO 36, which in turn made it that much easier for the group to consider more confrontational ways to bring the issue of failed renewal practices to public attention. 304

The Senate’s lip service to the “Strategies” organizers and participants combined with the calculated deterioration and subsequent vacancy of thousands of apartment houses convinced BI SO 36 that conventional tactics failed to generate any significant change in renewal policy. Tensions grew in Kreuzberg’s southeast corner as the BI SO 36 tried, without success, to force one city-owned housing corporation, BeWoGe (*Berliner...* 303

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304 Bernd Laurisch, *Kein Abriss unter dieser Nummer: 2 Jahre Instandbesetzung in der Cuvrystrasse in Berlin-Kreuzberg* (Giessen: Anabas, 1981). The BI SO 36 published the neighborhood magazine the Sued-Ost Express, which would become an important organ for informing Kreuzberg residents of their tenant rights, for publicizing housing/construction scandals and for pressuring the city’s urban renewal agents to explain their intentions behind overwhelming vacancies and the deliberate deterioration of the tenements.
Wohn-und Geschäftshaus), to rent out the 300 vacant apartments in forty-six of their tenements in Kreuzberg alone. By end of the year 1978, the BI SO 36 had resolved to take more dramatic measures to exert pressure on city officials to sufficiently address the severity of the increasing shortage of affordable and decent housing.

Frustrated by the high number of vacant apartments despite months of a publicity campaign urging the building owners and the city to change their policy, the BI viewed the situation as hopeless. This sense of desperation led to the group to take matters into their own hands. In February of 1979 members of the BI SO 36 squatted two apartments in two different buildings managed by the BeWoGe in the southeast corner of SO 36.305 These calculated token squats were meant to raise public awareness to the failed renewal policies and, in the act of literally “occupying” the tenements, the activists hoped to deliver a message to government officials that conventional methods until that point had failed to convey. Under the motto, “it’s better to ‘rehab’ squat than to own and destroy,” (lieber instand(be)setzen als kaputtbesitzen) this act of squatting added a new vocabulary to the more than ten-year struggle by citizens’ initiatives, community organizers and tenant organizations to hinder the deliberate decay of structurally sound and habitable dwellings, whose demolition only added to the already acute housing shortage of affordable units.

305 The squatters’ movement in West Germany mushroomed shortly before the second peak of the economic crisis of the 70s with 1.7 million unemployed and, for the first time in West German postwar history, a negative economic growth rate. The problems of housing and youth unemployment furthered a sense of pessimism and hopelessness about the future among youth of the late 1970s and 80s. Laurisch, Kein Abriss unter diese Nummer; Rainer Autzen, et al., Stadterneuerung in Berlin, 42; Mulhak, “Der Instandbesetzungs konflikt in Berlin,” 208; Margit Mayer, “Social Movements in European Cities: Transitions from the 1970s to the 1990s,” in Cities in Contemporary Europe, eds. Arnaldo Bangnasco and Patrick Le Gales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 131-152.
A new term was coined by the actions of these first squats, *Instand(setzung* or “rehab” squatting, a term that was a play on the verb, *instandsetzen*, meaning to rehabilitate or to repair. For years, citizens’ groups and tenant organizations had advocated for a new planning paradigm, one that would rehabilitate (*instandbesetzen*) the existing housing stock at low costs using methods of direct action by “those most immediately affected who should [now] take things into their own hands and stop waiting for the politicians and bureaucrats to act.”

Other squats of apartments owned by the same corporation quickly followed. Not wanting their acts of squatting to be misconstrued by the public as “just a way to help find accommodation,” the BI SO36 made it clear that their primary focus was to “initiate a movement [that] can agree on a common line of approach [...] and is prepared to take the risks involved to ‘rehab’ squat.”

While these “spontaneous,” yet self-conscious acts to bring broader public attention to the issue at hand were successful in forcing the BeWoGe to negotiate new leases for forty apartments, these early token squats fell short of engendering any significant change in official renewal policy. They did succeed, however, in setting off a much larger wave of squatting in West Berlin and across West Germany that, by the end of 1981, defined itself as part of a larger urban protest movement and a force to be reckoned with on the local and national political landscape. And from the beginning, the squatters’ movement in West Germany shared similar aims with other squatting scenes that were emerging across Europe around the same time. Squatters in West Berlin, and

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other West German cities, drew inspiration from other urban movements in Amsterdam, Zurich, and London, and understood themselves as one part of a larger unofficial network of urban activists.

Frustration escalated over the summer and early fall of 1980 when it became obvious to the first “rehab” squatters that the SPD government was making no serious efforts to address the housing shortage or induce a major reform in its politics of demolition. Instead, city-owned and private housing management companies bricked up windows of vacant tenements, unexplained fires started in tenement basements or roof tops of buildings with vacancies, and the city government continued to give free rein to the U.S. Army to practice close combat maneuvers in Kreuzberg’s renewal areas. As a direct response, others in Kreuzberg followed the BI SO 36’s example and, by the fall of 1980, there were 21 “rehab” squats in Kreuzberg. Already in March of 1980, “rehab” squatters from the by then nine squats in Kreuzberg formed a squatters’ council (Besetzerrat K36) intended as a forum to exchange information and experiences, but also to agree on a plan of action vis-à-vis the local government and house owners.308 Indeed, the formation of a squatters’ council had, as one squatter from the Mariannenstrasse put it, a “psychological value” for the burgeoning squatters’ scene. Accordingly, in the case of a forced eviction by the city, “it is totally clear that the [targeted] squat is not alone and that we form a united front.”309 However, as the movement grew, the reality of this united front would fragment as political cleavages divided the scene between those squats

308 Ibid.
willing to negotiate leases with the city and those who viewed this method of securing the squat as selling out.

The first “rehab” squatters registered their discontent with failed government housing policies with a cry to “repair our neighborhood (Kiez) on our own and now!” and vocalized a two-pronged objective: to restore, by means of self-help, the vacant or partially vacant tenements left to decay by their owners, and to put into practice new, self-organized forms of collective living and work. Eager to secure space and demonstrate that these tenements could be cheaply restored, occupants of 14 of the 21 squats in Kreuzberg were willing to negotiate leases with the city. By the late 1970s in West Berlin close to 80,000 people were either actively seeking an affordable apartment or had their names on a waiting list for the next available spot in low-income housing. As critics of Berlin’s renewal policies had been pointing out for years, the scandal lay in the fact that, at the very same time, over 10,000 apartments in Berlin’s urban renewal areas were deliberately kept vacant while they awaited demolition so owners could erect more profitable new buildings subsidized by the federal government as so-called social housing.310

This upsurge in public criticism of the city’s renewal politics coincided with the exposure of the so-called the Garski Affair, which, by January 1981, would contribute to the resignation of the Mayor Stobbe (SPD), along with his finance and economic ministers. The biggest finance scandal in West Berlin’s history, the Garski Affair exposed the corrupt business dealings of the West Berlin Senate and the construction industry. In 1978, the city backed a line of credit for architect and contractor Dietrich Garski at the

310 Both official and unofficial numbers differ here. They range from 40,000 as the lowest to 80,000 as the highest estimate.
Bank of Berlin for over 112 million DM, despite his company not having the proper 
financial documentation for a loan of that dimension. By 1980, payments were looming, 
the contracting project in Saudi Arabia had fallen through, and Garski went underground. 
The city, or rather the West Berlin taxpayer, was left to pick up the bill. 

With the SPD government facing an internal, and public, crisis, and public 
sympathy with the “rehab” squatters’ method of protest on the increase, a violent police 
eviction of a just squatted building close to the Kottbusser Tor subway station on 
December 12, 1980 took Kreuzberg by surprise. In view of the slow government 
response to protest actions around squatting and the small concessions already made with 
the first “rehab” squats, the December eviction incited indignation and anger that resulted 
in a four-day clash between police and protestors. This heightened level of anger and 
militancy combined with a city government distracted by a change in its leadership and a 
call for new elections created favorable conditions for an explosion of squatting in West 
Berlin. During the short tenure of former Minister of Justice Hans-Jochen Vogel (SPD), 
who replaced Stobbe as mayor in January of 1981, and the elections in May of that same 
year, protestors and squatters responded to repressive police actions and the on-going 
crisis in renewal policies by squatting over 165 buildings. Taking advantage of the 
weakened position of the Senate, squats in Kreuzberg tenements occurred almost daily 
throughout the spring of 1981. With its center in Kreuzberg and the eastern part of the 
neighboring district of Schöneberg, the city’s squatters’ movement was, by far, the 
largest in West Germany. And as the movement grew, so too did the varied political 

311 Karapin, Protest Politics in Germany, 95; Bodenschatz, Schluss mit der Zerstörung?, 312; Arlette 
Moser, Wolfgang Albrecht, Peter Ott, eds., Instandbesetzungen in Kreuzberg. Friede den Besetzern, Kampf 
312 Karapin, Protest Politics in Germany, 65; Mayer and Katz, “Gimme Shelter.”
standpoints of those who squatted ranging from “rehab” squatters willing to negotiate leases to more radical or militant squatters framing their protest in terms of a Häuserkampf or urban warfare.

**The Squats and Everyday Life**

By 1980, the nineteenth-century tenements in Kreuzberg were far more than a set of buildings that particular groups felt should be preserved or protected from destruction. Rather, the entire space of Kreuzberg, including its tenements, became an intensely charged not to mention highly contentious political and cultural space. Claims made to that space, definitions of the city, neighborhood, home, citizenship, and of productive work in a changing capitalist system were not only made on the neighborhood’s streets and literally on its buildings, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Five, but also inside those buildings and in their back courtyards.

In questioning official renewal policies, squatters created an infrastructure for the left-alternative scene that would provide the space both to practice non-normative lifestyles and to meet, socialize, and organize politically. The second, undoubtedly more militant drive of squatting activity and resistance followed the first “rehab” squats and connected the fight for affordable housing and the preservation of the old housing stock and its neighborhood milieu to a larger political agenda. More broadly, this agenda included struggles against West German austerity measures, nuclear rearmament, ecological degradation, consumer capitalism, and U.S. imperialism. Ultimately, all squatters shared the desire to carve out self-organized spaces (*Freiräume*) that would offer alternatives to dominant conceptions of the home, family, and work. They
established, and defended, new configurations of physical spaces in which they could
“lead a different kind of life than the one we [were] being told to live.”313 But just how
did this other life look like inside the squat? The remainder of this chapter will describe
how, in their spatial arrangements and in their everyday lives, squatters’ challenged and
sometimes confirmed dominant West German notions of domesticity.

Bringing into play the cultural significance attached to middle-class notions of
home and the interior design of domestic spaces, one unnamed squatter wondered what
the popular West German home magazine Schöner Wohnen would make of her domestic
abode.314 In order to inspire the creativity of the reader, the magazine often depicted new
interior design and decorating ideas by using before and after pictures of any given
changes to a home’s interior. The unidentified squatter remarked that, “what we could
show in our home, the magazine would [certainly] not constitute as beautiful living.
Nothing is for sale. Perfection, uniformity, and order are missing from top to bottom. Out
of essentially ruins, and with little means but a lot of imagination, [we] are making the
spaces liveable.”315 However, this process of making the space inside the apartments
“liveable” was a daunting task considering the degree of dilapidation squatters faced once
they entered the tenement.

The tenements squatted were either completely or partially vacant and had been
left unattended for years by their owners even though some residents remained and were
still paying rent. Before actually squatting, some groups met over a period of several
weeks in order to get to know each other better, check out the situation and discuss how

313 Volkhard Brandes and Bernhard Schön, eds., Wer sind die Instandbesetzer: Selbstzeugnisse,
315 Ibid.
they wanted to proceed. For one Kreuzberg squatter a central issue to establish at the outset was that “everyone [in the group] was willing engage in political work, which [in this case] meant a readiness to interfere with ownership and property rights.” The city’s politics of demolition and displacement, seen as privileging the interests of business and private property over the housing needs of low-income residents, only strengthened the squatters’ belief that their property transgressions were justified. Slogans along the lines of “The Senate only talks about housing politics, we take action!” (Der Senat redet von Wohnungspolitik, Wir machen sie!) or “Clear the jails, not the houses! (Räumt die Knäste, nicht die Häuser!) made clear the early goals of the squatters’ movement.

Once a group identified and entered a vacant or partially vacant tenement, a fairly easy undertaking in the southeast corner of Kreuzberg in the early 1980s, their first priority was to “remove any life threatening dangers.” This task included clearing out falling debris, identifying dry rot and mold and then removing the affected wood from inside the apartments. The next thing squatters did was look for rooms or whole apartments that were in reasonably decent shape. Even then, as one squatter recalled, “we still had to clear out garbage piled meters high.” Having secured a minimum standard of comfort in one or two rooms, the group then turned to removing the debris from the other apartments and the courtyard. This was followed by a focus on other more immediate, structural problems that resulted from the owner’s neglect such as fixing or replacing old and exposed electrical wiring, broken or damaged windows, rusty pipes, and poor plumbing. After this, squatters started working on the floors, fixing loose roof

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316 Besetzung: Weil das Wünschen nicht geholfen hat, 47.
317 Slogans culled from various flyers and images of graffito.
318 Laurisch, Kein Abriss unter diese Nummer, 88.
tiles or repairing damaged roofs. If a group squatted in the fall or winter months, winterizing the building as fast and as best they could was a key concern, primarily to prevent water and gas pipes from freezing, and, subsequently bursting. For most squats, it would take weeks, or sometimes months of almost daily meetings and basic repair work before a group could turn to the design and renovation of the space that best reflected the group’s house concept.319 (Figure 3.4)

Squatting a partially vacant house meant that other tenants still lived there. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the two social groups overrepresented in Kreuzberg’s renewal areas in the late 1970s were the elderly with working-class backgrounds and young migrant families, mostly from Turkey. Squatters made establishing immediate contact with the remaining tenants in the building a first priority, above all to ensure that the elderly Germans would not be startled and phone the police. According to squatters’ own reports, they felt welcomed at best and tolerated at worst by the remaining “legal” tenants.320 The inaugural issue of the Instandbesetzerpost, one of the scene’s many mouthpieces, recounted a first meeting between a group of Kreuzberg squatters and their mostly “foreign” neighbors: “[the neighbors] were all really happy that we came … some of [our] Turkish fellow residents would rather hang out at our place than at home. Besides, now we are all making a big effort to learn Turkish.”321 Though not a central theme in literature produced by the squatters (flyers, published interviews, squatter newspapers), accounts of neighborly interactions such as inviting one another over for tea or dinner, helping out the “legal” tenants with repair or maintenance work, carrying bags

of groceries up a few flights of stairs for the single elderly neighbor, or playing soccer in the courtyard with the younger generation of neighbors were common.

In Kreuzberg, a low-income neighborhood deliberately left to decay, squatters drew upon ideas already circulated and put into practice by active neighborhood tenant groups in the late 1970s to frame their agenda of “living their lives in ways otherwise not possible.” As with the “Strategies” objectives, squatters laid emphasis on principles of self-help and resident self-administration. Squatters took action against the (still) glaring lack of social services available to Kreuzberg residents such as a sufficient number of pre-schools, parks, outdoor playgrounds and sport venues. Parallel to their initial renovation work inside the tenements, groups of squatters addressed this lack in their designs for the back courtyards, street front spaces, and factory floors of the squats. Not only satisfied with exchanging pleasantries with their neighbors in the stairwell, building entrance, or in the courtyard, squatters also created social spaces intended to address the needs of the existing residents, provide an improved infrastructure, and foster better neighborly encounters. “Our house concept,” one squatter said in the first months of squatting activity in Kreuzberg, “is designed to help shape and maintain the living environment to best serve all neighborhood residents.”

Experiments in cooperative modes of living, working, and organizing became the primary avenue for squatters’ to address the social repercussions of urban restructuring. Whether or not the local residents sympathized with this particular approach to social and

economic changes, most at least recognized the benefit to the neighborhood as a whole. Inside the squat of one partially empty tenement, the “new” tenants used the ground floor space both in the front and back of the tenement to open an alternative daycare (Kinderladen), they also set up a driving school collective, lay out a garden in the courtyard, and, together with the “legal” tenants, planted indoor greenery. Over half of all the squats offered such a collective, self-managed space. (Figure 3.5) This space was not meant to only benefit the creation of a left-alternative infrastructure, but was also created with the intention to service the larger neighborhood community. For instance, members of several squats initiated projects for a children’s petting farm (Kinderbauernhof), one of Kreuzberg’s women-only squats opened up a daycare, handiwork spaces, a café, a fitness area, and a Turkish bath, all women-only spaces, and a squat in the Waldemar Strasse close to the Wall started a naturopathic health care project that offered free holistic treatment and advice for the neighborhood’s residents.

Larger squat projects, such as the Kerngehäuse in the Cuvry Strasse or the Regenbogenfabrik in the Lausitzer Strasse, had the space to promote an even more elaborate example of a living and work collective. (Figures 3.6 and 3.7) These two squats, occupying a former factory for toy sewing machines and a set of buildings that comprised the storage area of a former steam saw mill respectively, offered a whole range of projects based on the idea of revitalizing the Kreuzberg Mix of living and working in close proximity. Their 1980s re-imagining of the historic mixed use of space

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was based on collectivist ideals of direct democracy and self-help. Residents of these two squats applied these values and organizing strategies to both their living and work spaces, which included: a taxi collective, carpentry workshops, a food coop, a printing press, a language school, a movie theater, a bike repair shop, and a daycare. In establishing a community-focused infrastructure, squatters also rejected the established practices of modernist renewal, which, in its efficient design of buildings and neighborhoods, necessitated the separation of urban functions. One squatter from the Kerngehäuse summed up this position when he insisted that, “our goal is to do away with the spatial separation of living and work areas as well as to work collectively, and equally, without a boss.”

Setting up these projects, renovating the squats, and taking on the landscape design of the tenement and street block interiors meant that a particular set of handiwork skills and building materials were required. For most groups, after the first step of getting the “junk out and people in,” a long and difficult road of time and labor intensive work began. In contrast to the student movement of the late 1960s, of the youth drawn to the city in the late 70s and early 80s, and its left-alternative scene, most came not with the explicit intention to study, but rather, sought out a place where “there was punk, the big city, wild youth […] where buildings were squatted and street fights were fought.”

Many arrived with practical skills learned either at home, from a completed apprenticeship in a trade, or from some months of attending vocational school. Others started apprenticeships once in Berlin or gained some knowledge on the job.

327 Hannes Kowatsch, F. W. Mueller’s Toy Sewing Machines and the “Kerngehäuse”: The Story of a Berlin-Kreuzberg Craft Center (Berlin, 2000), 144.
329 Rösinger, Das schöne Leben, 56
To help ease the restoration work that was pivotal to “rehab” squatting, one of the first projects set up by a squat in the Manteuffelstrasse in February of 1980 was the Bauhof or building yard. Inexpensive, yet good quality material and the practical know-how were vital in order for squatters to demonstrate their point that the restoration of run-down tenements could be achieved economically. For squatters and their allies, the affordable refurbishment of tenements stood in stark contrast to the city’s plans for the urban renewal areas, which, in effect, would raise the rents for those in need of affordable “social” housing. The Bauhof took on the role of coordinating and supplying other squats with building materials, either recycled or donated new, and became a space where qualified tradespersons could offer workshops or answer more complicated renovation questions. Other squats would pool their financial donations together with a collection of the group’s private savings and bought building material in bulk quantities to cut costs. The principle of self-reliance that guided their renovation work was inextricably tied to a larger struggle to, as one squatter put it, “find our place in this society that is shaped by competition, pressures to perform, consumer frenzy, and isolation.” Indeed, this meant securing a space in which people could explore alternatives, a space “where at least an attempt to live communally and better [was] possible.”

Squatters’ assertions of autonomy and informal organization notwithstanding, in actual practice, these concepts were, ultimately, far from conflict-free. Given the range of experiences, handiwork skills, not to mention veiled gender expectations, already heated negotiations over the division of labor, who was responsible for what tasks and when,

were compounded by the fact that in addition to renovation work most squatters also had casual full-time jobs. For the interpersonal dynamics of many squats, this “double burden,” as one squatter called it, of evenings and entire weekends spent renovating while also earning money or attending school, generated “an enormous amount of stress that could only be dealt with inside the group.” But more often than not, it was the women squatters in mixed houses who drew attention to one central paradox in their male comrades’ calls to “live differently than their parents.” For one incensed woman squatter it just “wasn’t enough to throw down a pot of spaghetti once a week with the noodles so overcooked that they got stuck in your throat, or to play with kids only when they are not crying and have clean diapers.”

She put forward her own explanation for the “division of labor inside the squats” with a reference to the symbolic beginnings of the second-wave women’s movement in West Germany by concluding that, “clearly not enough tomatoes had been thrown and too many women have stayed by men’s sides.”

Regardless of gender arrangements, negotiating differences and managing group conflict were part and parcel of squatters’ experiments in alternative forms of working and living. This reality stood in stark contrast to a conservative, if not benign, clichéd stereotype of collective living arrangements as utopian “models of harmony and sharing.” The idea of political living collectives, or Wohngemeinschaften or WG, had its roots in the student movement of the late 60s and early 70s, and embodied the rejection of bourgeois domesticity centered on the nuclear family. However, the

334 Sigrid Rüger, frustrated by sexism and ignorance of women’s issues in the New Left, broke up a podium discussion by throwing a tomato at Hans-Jürgen Krahl, a leading SDS figure, during his speech at the organization’s annual meeting in Frankfurt. For more, see Helke Sander, Margit Pützmann, and Marlene Streeruwitz, Wie weit flog die Tomate?: Eine 68erinnen-Gala der Reflexion (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 1999).
335 Large, Berlin, 495.
squatters’ movement took this idea of a collective living to a new dimension. One squatter made the point that, “[we] are a group of 35 people and although most [of us] lived in a WG before, this form of living together is new to everyone.”336 These large communal living arrangements were intimately tied to alternative economic and consumption practices and a voice in shaping the neighborhood. For Kreuzberg squatters the spatial intersection of housing and work realized in converted former factory buildings or in tenements represented “[their] way of opposing bourgeois lifestyles [...] since an integral part of achieving our larger political goals/work is organizing our own needs.”337

Exactly how groups organized their everyday lives inside the house differed from squat to squat. This variation too depended on any given group’s political motivations for squatting in the first place, whether the protest stemmed from failed government policies and efforts to “save” the neighborhood or from a militant expression of protest against a rigid culture of social conformity. On a more basic level, for many West German youth life inside the squat was “the first time in [their] lives that [they’d] found a real home.”338 Yet despite varying political statements or social emphases for squatting, the interior design scheme that appealed to all squats was one that maximized the common spaces, especially the kitchen, to facilitate social interaction. To realize this, squats tore down walls between two or three smaller units on the same floor to make a common space or kitchen that could accommodate up to 30 or 40 people.339 Or alternatively, inside one

338 Was wird in den besetzten Häusern gemacht?
339 Anke Borcherding, Oronienstraße 198 in Berlin-Kreuzberg: Ein Wohn- und Beschäftigungsprojekt im Block 104 - Sanierungsgebiet Kottbusser Tor. STATTBau Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH
apartment, walls between existing rooms were torn down to create a larger common space.

In the same vein, one squat assigned collective projects and service-oriented workshops to the first floor of the tenement, renovated seven apartments for bedrooms and designated the top floor for the common room and communal kitchen. In another squat, the group arranged themselves into smaller groups of five and from the original two or three smaller apartments on each floor they renovated one bigger apartment for each of the five WGs. Each apartment had its own bathroom and kitchen and the squat designated the entire third floor as common space for the whole house; this space was used for regular group meetings (Plena), parties, films and theater performances. Another squat created its communal kitchen and dining room to accommodate forty people by consolidating three rooms on the first floor of the front house. Each squat had its own distinct way of realizing both its vision of a communal living arrangement and the modification of the original layout of the tenement to establish the common spaces as the squat’s focal point.

This diversity of arrangements also extended to household responsibilities and finances. In one Schöneberg squat depicted in a special feature on squatting in Die Zeit Magazin, squatters did not feel it necessary to stick to a fixed plan for kitchen duty, instead “everybody just knows when it’s his/her turn.” And although this system admittedly meant many late nights spent cleaning and doing dishes, one squatter underscored that he had never known a community like the one in his squat.340 Depending on its size, other squats introduced more structure. In one squat in SO 36, each person

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contributed 60 German marks (DM) every ten days to the common pot; for building materials each person was expected to throw in another 30 DM per month. To save on other expenses, this same squat pooled resources with a few other squats in the neighborhood to buy coal, vegetables, fruit and other foodstuffs in bulk. Some squats had a fixed cooking plan, others not. Irrespective of these different arrangements, the main decision-making platform was the house plenum. All house initiatives, ideas, and above all problems or conflicts had to be discussed before any major decision was made. Staying true to the principles of transparency and non-hierarchical decision making in a self-administered house or collective, the plenum required, not surprisingly according to one member of the all-woman “Chocolate Factory” squat, “a lot of time, energy, and endurance.”

But for those who adhered to the ideals of collective self-management, other aspects of self-managed living offset the long hours at a weekly plenum. For many squatters, the shared kitchens with tables large enough to seat two-dozen people and on which “bread rolls, cheese, tobacco [were] piled up and the coffee [was] never enough” were ideal spaces for spontaneous political discussions with other house occupants, visitors and friends from other squats or from West Germany. These spaces also facilitated debates and discussion about the movement’s “hopes, differences, commonalities and frustrations” as well a place to discuss broader political issues around “prison politics, nuclear energy, nuclear rearmament and NATO policies.” The large kitchens could also easily accommodate the rotating neighborhood kitchen or Kiezküche.

nights for which every squat in the block was in charge of cooking one day a month for its neighbors.

In visual depictions of a shared kitchen inside a squat, one sees a least ten people sitting around a table cluttered with coffee mugs, newspapers and leaflets, and a large pot or casserole dish at the center of the table for the taking. Some squats placed a long second-hand sofa against one wall of the kitchen alongside the table to ensure more sitting room, some sat on chairs, some stood. At first glance it becomes clear that the space of the kitchen and its role as a central space inside the squat willfully turns on its head the postwar notion of the “ideal dwelling” with its small, efficient modern kitchen, a well-ordered arrangement of the rooms and the everyday household objects that adorned its shelves and walls. In West Germany, the kitchen functioned as a space normally associated with the nuclear family, but above all else with the wife and mother. The emergence of the family and home as one central arena of West German politics and the bulwark of a postwar recovery was particularly powerful in the early construction of a German identity that was to be firmly anti-communist and anti-Nazi.344

Perceived as a distinct space to be protected from the public and thus political sphere, the home, more specifically the kitchen, played a vital function in constructing women’s roles in the new democratic and consumerist West German society.345 Thus the association with the domestic kitchen as an exclusively feminine sphere, one in which women both literally and symbolically nourished the “nation,” remained potent despite a

gradual liberalization of conservative domestic and gender mores in the wake of a post-1968 feminist and gay and lesbian movements. Cooking and eating collectively as was the everyday practice inside the squat, albeit in an arguably private space, directly challenged the presumed West German value placed on the kitchen and by extension the home-cooked meal for the nuclear family as an embodiment of a healthy, middle-class existence. As Alice Weinreb has persuasively argued, the political importance of the home-cooked meal in West Germany not only helped to redefine gender relations but also exposed the class implications of the perception of collective or communal eating as a slippery slope to communism.  

Infusing a new political and cultural understanding into domestic space, communal living and working inside the squat furthered a sense of a community that squatters cultivated as an alternative to the “organized inhumanity of the concrete block” –that is, the standardized blocks of modernist housing. For one squatter this domestic arrangement was an everyday reminder that “one could do more together” than when “sitting alone vegetating away in one-room apartment.” Another squatter asked, “Who in this city doesn’t know the tortuous loneliness and the emptiness of everyday life?” And as yet another squatter put it, “most of us moved [into the squat] because we wanted to break out of the [standard] pattern of either living in isolation in a one-room apartment or as a couple.” Together these statements reveal a sentiment shared by all segments of Kreuzberg’s left-alternative scene. While some squatters were first motivated to squat as

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a protest against the destruction of affordable housing, others squatted as a form of protest against a society in transformation not able to meet their lifestyle politics. Broadly speaking, both standpoints promoted the creation of alternative and communal spaces that can be understood as one response to a growing sense of alienation from the state. The potent symbol of this disaffection in the late 70s and early 80s was the mid-rise modernist residential building. For squatters, the pre-fab, modernist “concrete block” thus became an apt metaphor for the isolation and loneliness they felt was imposed upon them by the state.

Tenant activists initially squatted as a statement against the city’s renewal politics. The events, however, in Kreuzberg following the December 12 conflict galvanized a new wave of squatting and militant protest as West Berlin joined Zurich and Amsterdam as yet another locus of urban unrest. As the West Berlin movement grew in numbers and subsequently diverged in political standpoints, a left-alternative infrastructure blossomed in Kreuzberg. Whatever the intentions of individual squatters, the squatters’ movement of the early 1980s had firmly fixed the neighborhood’s reputation as an iconic space of radical protest. The movement created and defended spaces and places in which to live and work, and in the process sustained both a reality and a myth of radical political and social possibilities. The following chapter explores the limitations to these left-alternative ideals of community and neighborhood at a time when Kreuzberg became the focus of public debates on leftist radicalism, but also as a “Turkish ghetto.” It is to those issues that Chapter Four will turn.
Figure 3.1: Remains of the Bölle supermarket in Kreuzberg after the May 1 riot in 1987. Source: http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/
Figure 3.2: Urban Renewal Area Kreuzberg-Kottbusser Tor. Source: 
http://www.sanierung-berlin.de/sankot/Gebiet/gebiet.html
Figure 3.3: Kreuzberg Mietskaserne in the 1980s. Photo in Jürgen Henschel, *der Fotograf der Wahrheit Bilder aus Kreuzberg 1967-1988* (Berlin, 2006), 75.
Figure 3.4: Inside a neglected Mietskaserne (1980s). Source: http://einstages.spiegel.de/external/ShowAuthorAlbumBackground/a18743/l5/l0/f.html#featuredEntry
Figure 3.5: Block 89 in Kreuzberg near Oranienstrasse. Source: http://www.umbruchbildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1329f.htm
Figure 3.6: Renovated courtyard of the Rainbow Factory (Regenbogenfabrik).
Source: http://www.hausprojekte-solidarfonds.de
Figure 3.7: Courtyard of the Rainbow Factory shortly after it was squatted. Source: http://www.regenbogenfabrik.de/
Chapter Four

Kreuzberg is in Germany: The Making of an Urban “Ghetto”

In 1990, the question of whether the capital of a reunified Germany should remain in Bonn or return to its pre-Cold War location in Berlin sparked a vigorous national debate that ended with a close vote in favor of the historic capital. In arguing his case against Berlin, then premier of Bavaria Max Streibl declared that “Kreuzberg as capital (eine Hauptstadt Kreuzberg) is certainly the last thing we could wish for.”

Streibl’s self-assured allusion to Kreuzberg, a district of the city bordered by the Spree and East Berlin, positioned spatially and metaphorically on the margins of the FRG, and traditionally associated with the working class and migrant laborers, reveals the neighborhood’s cultural and political importance as a locus of West German anxieties. Streibl could assume that his reference would resonate broadly for a West German audience given that since the early 1970s Kreuzberg had been continually constructed in both the mainstream media and the popular imagination as home to two distinct yet related categories of threat: the “foreigner” (generally the working-class migrant from Turkey) and the radical leftist.

Whereas the last two chapters outlined an alternative set of policies and visions of the inner-city neighborhood that developed in opposition to a top-down urban renewal apparatus, this chapter examines the limitations to visions of social inclusion and community that were articulated in these oppositional discourses. It points to the underlying racialized and ethnicized assumptions that were embedded in these debates,

and argues that depictions of migrants in mainstream media and political discourse had profound implications for the ways in which subversive and rhetorically alternative progressive groups in Kreuzberg imagined their neighborhood space.

This chapter will first look at how a stigmatizing picture of the neighborhood as a “Turkish ghetto” coincided with developments in German migration policy in the 1970s. Indeed, as the visibility of working-class immigrants grew, a number of municipal governments, including that of West Berlin, passed discriminatory laws and regulations intended to address the “foreigner problem.”351 Complementing these laws, the mainstream media regularly carried fear-provoking references to U.S. urban ghettos laden with obvious racial overtones. Official ambivalence vis-à-vis permanent immigration as well as outright hostility to the socio-spatial organization of Kreuzberg were reflected in rehabilitation policies, which unfairly disadvantaged migrants from Turkey while simultaneously depicting the residential patterns of these same migrants as part of the problem that urban renewal practices were meant to remedy.

The remainder of the chapter explores this societal ambivalence surrounding the pejorative characterization of Kreuzberg as a migrant ghetto in the context of the political activism of Kreuzberg’s second most visible group: the loose network of left-alternative activists and organizations. In their opposition to official housing politics – and to the established order more generally – activists in Kreuzberg attempted to open up spaces for alternative social relationships, at times outright rejecting framing concepts such as the nation-state, imperialism, and the capitalist system. Given the left’s symbolic identification with revolutionary movements in South Africa and Central America and

351 In addition to West Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt.
leftists use of anti-imperialist and anti-racist rhetoric and images, it may seem surprising that issues such as structural racism and the exploitation of migrants in the movement’s struggle to reclaim Kreuzberg were absent. This fact deserves some sustained attention. Literally occupying the same physical space in a neighborhood synonymous with public fears around immigration and heterogeneity, Kreuzberg’s activists in the 1980s reproduced instead of challenged static images of migrants from Turkey, often drawing upon the same vocabulary and stereotypes as that used in mainstream public debate. This unintentional blind spot had consequences. Not recognizing class- and race-based oppression as a problem prevented radical left and progressive activists from mounting a sustained critique of what it meant to be German.

Postwar Migration to West Germany

For the FRG, the decades of the 1950s and 1960s saw a massive increase in demands for wage labor as its postwar economy gained strength. In West Germany and West Berlin, labor migrants from eight Mediterranean countries were deliberately recruited in order to satisfy this labor shortage; in West Berlin, the numbers of recruited workers increased dramatically after the construction of the Wall in 1961 brought to a halt the daily influx of workers from East to West. In light of the unprecedented population movements at war’s end and in the first years after the Second World War, the category of “foreigner” was a highly contested one in occupied Germany.  

352 For more on earlier waves of migration to Germany and reliance on foreign labor, see Klaus J. Bade, ed., Auswanderer - Wanderarbeiter - Gastarbeiter: Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts (Ostfildern: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1984); Klaus J. Bade, ed., Population, Labor and Migration in 19th and 20th Century Germany (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987); Christoph Kleßmann, Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet: 1870–1945 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); Herbert, Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland; Konrad Jarausch and
relationship between labor and foreigners in the postwar FRG was highly complex, as there were many populations of recently arrived men and women who were perceived, often simultaneously, as potential and necessary workers and as potential economic, and even racial threats. Germany from the late 1940s and early 1950s was home to many groups of people conceived of in various ways as “foreign,” all of which must be distinguished from one another.

It is first important to distinguish between individuals grouped under the category displaced persons or DPs at the end of the war. This category included survivors of concentration camps, forced laborers persecuted by the Nazi regime and forced to work in Germany, and prisoners of war. Millions of DPs were quickly repatriated, but many others, such as Jewish DPs, spent up to five years in the western zone of occupation until decisions were made to emigrate. Thus, Germany became the unwilling host of its former victims and, as Atina Grossmann has recently argued, “perceptions and self-perceptions of Jewish DPs as survivors, victims and villains” reveal the “contradictory and ambivalent” way in which contemporaries viewed the presence of this category of “foreigners” in postwar Germany.353

A second category of “foreigner” included ethnic German refugees and expellees from the east. Arriving in occupied Germany in the millions, the expellees encountered a resentful local population who saw them as competition for scarce resources and jobs. While expellees did initially experience economic and social marginalization, they were accorded equal political rights by the new West German state seeing as they were ethnic

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Germans. Importantly, a generation later, the grandchildren of those same expellees, whose parents had been young children at the time of expulsion, experienced none of the social, cultural, and economic discrimination given their parents or grandparents’ place of birth. Ironically, however, the new West German state instrumentalized the expellee experience to help bolster memories of collective German suffering and victimhood at the hands of the Red Army. Consequently, these collective memories were woven into a national narrative in the founding years of the Federal Republic in turn producing a dual narrative of perpetrator/victim that became central to a nascent West German identity.

Beginning in the 1960s, it was migrant laborers who came to define the category “foreign.” For the mostly unskilled and semi-skilled men and women recruited by the state, the German term “Gastarbeiter” or “guest worker” explicitly verbalized the official view that their time spent in Germany would be a temporary one. Initially, a bilateral treaty was signed with Italy whose weak postwar economy prompted a government

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356 Yet as Karen Schönwälder, Anne von Oswald and Barbara Sonnenberger have pointed out in their chapter “Einwanderungsland Deutschland: A New Look at its Post-war History,” in *European Encounters: Migrants, Migration, and European Societies since 1945*, eds. Karen Schönwälder, Rainer Ohlinger, and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), West Germany didn’t practice a “guestworker” policy if this assumes the existence and implementation of a strategy aimed at short-term employment and prevention of permanent settlement and family reunion. As Ulrich Herbert among others has pointed out, there is a long tradition of labor importation in modern German history. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland*. 
policy to export its surplus workers. In addition to an agreement in 1955 with Italy, the country that provided the bulk of workers in the first five years of the “guest worker” program, treaties were also signed with Spain and Greece in 1960; Turkey in 1961; Morocco in 1963; Portugal in 1964; Tunisia in 1965; and Yugoslavia in 1968. Between 1969 and 1971 recruitment from Turkey reached its peak, so that by the early 1970s an increasing number of migrant workers coming from Turkey shifted the ethnic composition of workers arriving, and those choosing to remain, in West Germany. As of the early 1970s, it was above all the “guest worker” from Turkey who came to represent the threat of the “foreigner” who had overstayed his/her welcome. This became even more obvious in 1973 once the FRG declared that its economy no longer needed a migrant labor force given the anticipated rise in unemployment due to the global recession; the paradox inherent in the term “guest worker,” and the misplaced belief that flows of migrant workers could be turned “on and off like a faucet,” became evident.

357 In 1955 the West German government initiated a program of labor recruitment to fill a much needed labor shortage. Given the convergence of such factors as the rapid growth in the West German economy, the postwar re-domestication of German women, the wartime losses of able-bodied working men, and the interruption of skilled and non-skilled workers coming from the East with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Federal Republic began to recruit millions of “foreigners” to support its thriving economic development.

358 Migrant workers who arrived in these early years were young men and a moderate fraction of young women who, if married, had left their families behind with hopes of eventually relocating them to Germany; of course, the ideal “guest worker” profile favored both men and women who were young and healthy, single, and without children. The percentage of women recruited under the “guestworker” policy was 23 percent in 1965 and 30 percent by 1973. As was the case with men and women migrant workers, they were recruited for the jobs Germans often refused. See Esra Erdem and Monika Mattes, “Gendered Policies - Gendered Patterns,” in European Encounters, 170.

359 The political and economic situation in Turkey by the late 1960s and early 1970s led to an overwhelming response by those seeking better employment opportunities.

360 A fundamental difference that set apart migrant workers from southern Europe from those workers arriving from non-EC countries was that the former group had the freedom of movement to work and reside anywhere inside the borders of the European Community.

Immigrant experiences in Germany and Germans’ relationships to immigrants have not, however, been dictated exclusively by national policy and top-down decisions. In fact, immigrants themselves resisted these assignments by postwar West German governments as “temporary” and “non-integrated” members of German society. Since the 1970s, migrants have engaged in a series of struggles to alter these definitions, as well as attempts to develop strategies to deal with and defy political exclusion and ethnic chauvinism. In the context of West Germany’s efforts to atone for the Holocaust, it may seem surprising that, officially, West Germany did not encourage or want immigrants. Instead, the FRG, like its political predecessors continued to define, and defend, an ethnocultural understanding of a “German” identity and political citizenship. It was not until 1999 under a Social Democrat/Green government that the 1913 citizenship law was modified. Since the 1980s scholars and activists have written about postwar migration emphasizing the active role of immigrants as autonomous agents. More recent historical studies on postwar migration extend this work and show the ways in which migrants operated as active forces in the migration regime and integration process and how everyday interactions between migrants and governmental institutions expose a complex process of both “being made” and “self-making.”

Impassioned debates on questions of immigration and integration in West Germany coincided, not coincidentally, with a growing fear of the “migrant ghetto,” a

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construction of urban space as defined by large enclaves of foreign families (including children) speaking their own language, eating their own food, posing a threat to the German nation both by not being German themselves and by threatening, through high birth rates, to outpopulate Germans. This panic was intimately bound to the perceived acceleration of family reunions that continued to take place after the government labor recruitment program was discontinued in 1973, which officially gestured toward the permanent presence of those ambivalently and discursively constructed as short-term “guests.” Without question, by the early 1980s, West Germany had become a “receiving society” that refused to officially acknowledge itself as a country of immigration.363 Elected into power in 1982, the CDU government under Helmut Kohl pursued hard line anti-immigrant proposals promising to “reduce the flow of foreigners living in Germany.”364

At a time in postwar history when western societies were confronted by major socio-economic cleavages, Kreuzberg, with its mix of migrants, punks, squatters, and disaffected working-class youth, became a symbol of the anxieties and challenges facing West German society.365 The concerns ranged from high youth unemployment and questions of immigration to the decline of the welfare state and a deindustrializing economy. By being displaced onto this one section of the city of West Berlin, these concerns melded together, as worries over excessive racial mixing, increasing violence among German youth, and the degeneration of traditional German values seemed to be

epitomized in the ethnically and politically marginal cityscape of Kreuzberg. Moreover, in the aftermath of the generational crises of the late 1960s, West Germany entered a turbulent decade marked by further domestic conflicts in 1977 with the German Autumn, which culminated with the Red Army Faction’s kidnapping and murder of German industrialist and former Nazi Hanns-Martin Schleyer. The state’s reponse to political violence on the left produced a general atmosphere of anxiety and resulted in the continued repression of various articulations of leftist dissent. Ultimately these various fears were projected onto Kreuzberg, a place that had, by the early 1980s, represented most clearly all of these fears.

The resultant climate of anxiety at this historical moment focused on a so-called “crisis in the city.” Politicians, government agencies and mass media perceived the “invasion,” as Der Spiegel called it, of migrant workers from Turkey and their families, living in close quarters along with leftists of various stripes, as a volatile combination that commentators discursively characterized as disadvantaged, derelict, and dangerous.

Mainstream newspapers and magazines like Spiegel framed this presence of a high proportion of immigrants in certain urban neighborhoods in terms of “a rise in crime and

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367 Since these debates emerged full-force in popular discourse (ghetto/ethnic enclaves) in the early 1970s, Kreuzberg’s population has been/remained ethnically diverse, with no one minority nationality making up more than 10 percent of the district’s population (according to Schoenwalder). Although Kreuzberg is constructed as a “Turkish” space by dominant discourse, and while not ideal, I also use the term “Turkish” but mean from Turkey and not “of Turkish origin” as there are a number of social and religious cleavages among immigrants who arrived in the Federal Republic from Turkey and who made their home in Kreuzberg. This points to another problem generated by German discourse on issues of multiculturalism and integration: terms are conflated: “Ausländer” in public discourse today equals “Muslim” equals “Turkish” equals “Arab.” There is no recognition of diversity among so-called “foreigners.”
social decay similar to that of Harlem.”\textsuperscript{368} This was the image evoked more than a decade later by Streibl in his plea to keep Germany’s capital out of Berlin. At the same time, however, Kreuzberg’s residents attached their own cultural and political meanings to the neighborhood, ones that allowed ethnic diversity to be constructed as positive and that saw alternative living models as paths toward a modernization and liberalization of a “conservative” FRG.\textsuperscript{369}

\textit{The Making of “Little Istanbul”}

As laid out in the previous chapters, the mid-1970s marked a shift in official urban renewal policy, at least in theory, from demolition and new construction to rehabilitation and modernization. Beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was migrant workers and their families who moved into these substandard housing units, often the only units available to them on the housing market, out of a combination of economic necessity and structural discrimination.\textsuperscript{370} The decreasing quality of apartments in the area meant that Kreuzberg, with its densely concentrated population, saw a tremendous flux in demographics as those social groups who could afford to move into newly built social housing (“respectable” German residents) left the neighborhood, while others (migrants and alternative or leftist German youth) took their places as “temporary”


renters until the renewal process began. This cycle in turn created a paradox. Renewal agents and private owners rented substandard apartments to migrants who were shut out of the rental housing market, and therefore only able to find ill-equipped apartments in poor condition.

The obvious result of this discriminatory practice was that a disproportionate number of migrants resided in working-class inner city districts like Kreuzberg and they were held responsible for the “decline” of the neighborhood. Their presence literally “marked” the neighborhood as a blighted area.\footnote{This practice was not specific to West Berlin, but occurring across Western Europe and North America.} Though poor housing quality in Kreuzberg was in fact largely due to the deliberate negligence of the city-owned housing corporations, West German public officials had transformed Kreuzberg by the early 1970s into the paradigmatic example of the urgent need to push through renewal policies ostensibly aimed at improving both housing and the socio-economic structure of inner-city neighborhoods.\footnote{To those opposing modernist renewal policies, the neighborhood embodied the failure of Cold War planning to recognize the historic value of inner city neighborhoods, while at the same time criticizing the limited room left in the official decision-making process for public participation. The protest focused on the fact that decisions regarding where and how people should live on Berlin were made in Bonn, with little attention/interest in the desires and needs of specific populations.} A brochure distributed as part of a series by the Ministry for Building, Urban Affairs, and Spatial Development provides one example of how urban repair was connected to addressing the apparent “problem” of neighborhoods with a high percentage of “foreigners.” Speaking to the innovative approach to neighborhood rehabilitation as advanced by the 1977 “Strategies for Kreuzberg” competition, the authors of the report remarked that “under the circumstances of having such a high
Turkish population, the search for new forms of urban renewal in Kreuzberg is of special importance.373

Parallel to the discursive shift in renewal politics from demolition to modernization and the sign of a more visible critique of urban planning practices, the official policy of labor recruitment came to an abrupt end.374 In the years following the official end to recruitment initiatives in 1973, the percentage of migrants from Turkey continued to outnumber other foreign nationalities as these other numbers started to decrease, while at the same time recruited workers campaigned for their families to join them in Germany. Immigrants constituted a little over 11 percent of the total population in West Berlin and of that percentage migrants from Turkey comprised the greatest numbers of the immigrant population. The district of Kreuzberg had the highest percentage of immigrants in any residential neighborhood in West Berlin and in West Germany with 23 percent, but in certain parts of the neighborhood, such as SO 36 or the area around Kottbusser Tor, over 50 percent of the population.375

In 1978, when the city council announced its backing of a building exhibition to confirm its commitment to modernization and rehabilitation of the inner-city housing stock, the city’s official preamble to the IBA’s objectives made reference to what it considered today’s concerns facing urban planning in the city; “the scientific engagement with the problems of inner city development, such as migration outward [either to other West Berlin districts or to West Germany], and the replacement by guest workers […],

373 Tiedemann, Bürgerbeteiligung bei der Stadterneuerung Beispiel: Kreuzberg.
374 Recession in the early 1970s combined with the global oil crisis in 1973 led to the first sustained peak of unemployment in since the early 1950s. As the numbers of German unemployed soared, the public called for a halt to “foreign” labor recruitment.
has led to a different understanding of urban development after the [most recent] stage of dividing the city into functional zones (Entflechtung).

By pointing to the modernist renewal practice, the city was responding directly to critiques put forward by opponents of its postwar policies; at the same time the official discourse readily designates the residential concentration of migrants in inner-city districts to one the “problems” that demanded attention. Significantly, the Senate could refer to the phenomenon of outward migration of a certain socio-economic group of German residents from the inner-city districts simply by using the term Abwanderung, meaning exodus or migration, without having to give any further explanation. In a different section of the report, the Senate connected the creation of a so-called minority enclave and the demise of the neighborhood more explicitly. In a relatively novel discussion of the tenement block as a part of the historical legacy of the city, the Senate pointed to the indicators of tenement dilapidation, the renewal of which had become “an issue of our generation.”

According to housing officials, these symptoms of “decay” that served to “threaten the inner city” included “unhealthy apartments, dark courtyards, empty units, closed stores, unsafe streets, and the concentration of socially underprivileged groups and foreigners.”

After 1973, an additional factor that supposedly contributed to the imminent death of the West German inner city entered professional discourse and public debate. Articulated in similar ways by politicians, housing associations and the media, the discourse on the emergence of slums in West German cities in the years following the

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376 Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, “Vorlage zum Beschluss der Internationale Bauausstellung,” 1978. Additionally, the use of the word Entflechtung or disentanglement could be read as neutral if not positive connotation to describe the modernist policies of the 1960s, policies that the preliminary IBA guidelines of the Senate were meant to remedy.

377 Ibid.

378 Ibid.
official halt to recruitment or Anwerbestopp shifted qualitatively to include the threatening image of the “ethnic ghetto.” West Berlin’s inner-city neighborhoods fed into West German fears about the number of immigrants from Turkey and the focus on how to regulate or control this population. In the context of an economic recession and fears of a changing social situation, this perceived threat of the slum dovetailed with the now public concern over ways to “control” the “flood of guest workers.” As scholars have shown, historical and contemporary depictions of slums reveal a racialized construction of the physical space inhabited by the disadvantaged and minorities. White, middle-class notions of what “proper” homes and neighborhoods constituted are projected onto these communities, a critique which masked the underlying structural causes of decline in inner city neighborhoods.

This period of economic recession and uncertainty corresponded to a historical moment in postwar German history in which questions of race and ethnicity and “Germaness” moved discussions on the “guest worker” question to the foreground of official and public discourse. As Rita Chin has demonstrated, at the same time that West Germany’s labor policies shifted, so too did the category of the “guest worker” from being someone wholly advantageous, albeit exclusively in an economic sense, to becoming a looming menace vis-à-vis the German public. While the West German

381 Historical treatments of immigrant/guest workers are wanting in several respects. See Chin, The Guest Worker Question; Herbert, Geschichte der Auslanderpolitik in Deutschland; Karen Schonwelder, Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralitat: politische Entscheidungen und offentliche Debatten in Grossbritannien und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren (Essen: Klartext-Verlag,
state actively pursued migrant laborers and opened its doors to asylum seekers and refugees, these de facto new immigrants, once inside the country, were legally and culturally defined as outsiders. Thus, despite a constitutional framework that allowed relaxed entry into the Federal Republic, the postwar identity of West Germany was explicitly founded on a set of political and cultural principles, understood as immutable, that declared the country “not a nation of immigration.” 382 This narrowly defined political and cultural framework continuously assigned immigrants to an outsider status, one that was based on differences in appearance, dress, food, language and religion. 383

The Senate’s fourteenth report on urban renewal published in 1978 explicitly conflates the urban planning ills, in other words, the structural qualities of the nineteenth-century tenements, with the spatial concentration of an ethnic minority.

The results of a recently completed investigation of this section of Kreuzberg have shown that the extensive urban planning ills [städtbaulichen Misständen] contribute to this neighborhood around the Wrangelstrasse as having the worst living conditions. In addition to these structural urban ills, the current demographic trend is a crucial reason for a much-needed renewal of the area, since there is an increase in foreign residents who replace the steady loss of the German population. 384

As urban historians and sociologists have noted, the concept of urban decline and the looming image of the slum, long associated in the German consciousness with the city of

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2001); Brett Klopp, German Multiculturalism: Immigrant Integration and the Transformation of Citizenship (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002).
382 As Christian Joppke has noted, “Germany is not alone in not defining itself as nation of immigrants, it is the only country that has not become tired of repeating it,” Immigration and the Nation-State: The United States, Germany, and Great Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62.
Berlin, reemerged after postwar economic prosperity had slowly ground to a halt. In the 1970s, the West German media conflated any residential clustering of migrants groups in urban centers, but above all in Kreuzberg, with the negative depiction of the slum. Once these areas had been labeled “areas under renewal investigation” and the properties subsequently neglected by owners, the apartments became an attractive low-cost housing option for immigrant workers and their families, who found they did not have to compete with Germans for affordable housing or fear discrimination by landlords. This image of a neighborhood in decline strengthened the case for demolition and legal regulations for the forced dispersal of migrants from Turkey.

The perceived temporariness of these housing units made migrants particularly attractive tenants for landlords who saw them as an easy clientele to occupy the apartments on a temporary basis –often leasing at an excessive price– before the razing of the area was to begin. In contrast, German renters might lay a longer claim to the apartments and, more significantly, might also be more informed of their legal rights. This preference further supported the view that migrants were a temporary phenomenon in German society. This readiness to overlook the long-term social implications of a labor recruitment program meant that urban renewal discourse in West Berlin remained couched in a rhetoric that favored the short-term over the permanent. The decade between 1970 and 1980 saw an increase in migrant families from Turkey moving from substandard apartments to the next areas inside Kreuzberg earmarked for demolition.

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This practice in turn led one critical observer to label migrants the “new *Trockenwohner,*” drawing a parallel to the era of nineteenth-century building speculation and the related exploitation of the most vulnerable of the working classes seeking affordable housing.

Due to their vulnerable legal status, migrants were unable to rely on proper government channels to demand improved housing. But, when asked, migrants repeatedly remarked on the role discrimination played in preventing them from securing adequate housing. One letter from a Turkish-speaking resident of Kreuzberg sent to the Berlin daily paper the *B.Z.* disrupts the commonly held assumption that migrants’ social choices and economic decisions best explained the substandard housing conditions in which they lived. “We are a family of five, in West Berlin since 1971, living in a 3-room apartment” wrote Kreuzberg resident Tayyare Kizgin in his 1976 letter to the *B.Z.*, “only one of the three rooms is heatable. The one room we can heat (13 square meters), we use as both a living room and the children’s bedroom. My constant efforts to find another apartment have failed either because we’re foreigners (Turkish) or because the apartment was financially unaffordable.”

This enduring popular conceptualization of migrant workers as, exclusively, temporary workers, overlooked the challenges and struggles of immigrant families to achieve a degree of security in German society. For example, for the first generation of workers, housing in the barrack or dormitory (*Wohnheim*) was dependent on an individual’s labor contract, and one was expected to leave the premise when the labor

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contract expired or was terminated.389 Coupled with the work contract, dormitory accommodations facilitated state processes of exclusion. In this way, the state had spatial control over labor migrants in addition to denying or hindering social developments such as family reunions and marriages. Just a few years later, when migrants began actively participating in the rental market, they faced legal and social discriminatory practices. One man, who came to West Berlin in 1971, lived in a Wohnheim for his first year in Germany. His wife followed him in 1972 and his two children in 1974. Living in a one-room apartment with 2 adults and 2 children, this one family’s search for an affordable and adequately sized apartment reflects the situation for many migrant families in the 1970s and early 1980s. According to this man, “when we find an apartment to let, we go and put our name on the list. But we never get the apartment. We’ve been looking for ages now. We keep trying. The landlords just don’t rent to foreigners.”390

A 1979 information report on renewal and modernization published by city housing officials and directed specifically at Kreuzberg residents reveals the attachment to an illusion of an interim stay: “Those who can afford it move to a nicer neighborhood; those left behind, stay mainly because of the low rents, and consist of families on a limited income and the elderly. At the same time […] there is an increase in the numbers of residents in the renewal areas under investigation staying only temporarily, for

389 Stephan Lanz, Berlin aufgemischt, abendländlich, multikulturell, kosmopolitisch? Die politische Konstruktion einer Einwanderungsstadt (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2007), 64.
example, students and foreigners.”391 The reality, however, defied this assumption. By the early 70s housing was an integral part of migrants’ daily struggles. Men saved up to bring over wives, parents, and children. Moreover, the FRG also recruited female workers, leading to an increase of marriages among migrants already living in Germany.392 Marriages inside Germany and the acceleration of family reunions in the early 70s continued to expose a reality that was in direct opposition to the “ideal” migrant labourer meant to be seen as “a transitional, mobile figure not permanently rooted in West German society.”393

Residential patterns of ethnic minorities, in particular migrants from Turkey, served as a barometer for the shifts in West German debates on the “foreigner’s” so-called ability to integrate.304 Housing played a role in constructing the ways in which Germans thought about and feared the “foreigner.” Thus when living in the barracks, the migrants appeared less threatening than when those same migrants moved into rental properties, places where “their way of living” could no longer be regulated and monitored in the same way. What later became available to migrant families was a confined rental market of small, badly maintained apartments with inadequate facilities in the Mietskasernen slated for eventual demolition. This restriction of choice for rental housing in turn produced residential segregation and unequal access to public services. Speaking to this obvious form of inequality, one Turkish man pointed to the no-win situation for tenants from Turkey: “The Turks live mainly in old condemned apartment houses. The

392 See Erdem, “Migrant Women and Economic Justice.”
393 Chin, The Guest Worker Question, 5.
394 Lanz, Berlin aufgemischt, abendländlich, multikulturell, kosmopolitisch, 65.
landlords let the foreigners move in and then let the houses rot and then tell us that the house has to be torn down. We are left empty-handed. One the one hand, we lost our apartment, on the other hand we won’t get another apartment because we supposedly are at fault for wrecking the place.”

West Berlin’s new social housing, with its lure of modern amenities such as central heating, inside toilets and shower, and elevators, was not a feasible economic option for Kreuzberg’s poor German residents. For Kreuzberg’s migrant population, it was a near impossibility. Only 10 percent of all publicly funded new or renovated units could be rented out to “foreigners.” This reality was lost upon one employee of a city-owned renewal agent who declared in the reputable West German daily the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) that “most people will gladly pay more for an apartment; an old pensioner is happy to no longer have to drag coal up four flights of stairs.” “And for the Turks,” he continued, “well, we’ll refer them to housing management X for cheap apartments in a tenement since they [housing management X] have a translator.” In the article’s text the name of the housing management was not mentioned, but referred to with an anonymous “X.” The piece described the redevelopment practice in one of Kreuzberg’s renewal areas, and while somewhat critical of the practice of full clearance, it articulated a dominant position on the supposed decay of West German urban centers. While intending to present a neutral picture of urban planning politics, the article drew upon an assumed connection between a high concentration of “foreigners,” i.e., residents from Turkey, and the slumming and decay of Kreuzberg.

The opening paragraphs of the 1973 FAZ article, for instance, highlighted three characteristics of a nineteenth-century tenement that, according to architects and urban planners at the time, marked a neighborhood’s demise: if the hallway reeked of old potatoes, if there were more Turkish than German names on the mailboxes, and if remainders of the original façade of the building were still visible. As the article’s author is quick to point out, this was not meant as a “socially derogatory judgment,” but rather as a plain “rule of thumb” to identify dilapidation. According to the architects, the foul potato stench indicated decay, the Turkish names confirmed that the apartments were no longer rentable to German tenants, and remnants of the original façade revealed that the apartment house had not been thoroughly repaired since it was built eighty to a hundred years earlier. Ultimately, I would argue, this claim to represent a neutral assessment of the causes of dilapidation was representative of German professional and public opinion, and it served to mask or displace the underlying racist assumptions and German fears of cultural “hybridity.”

No doubt unintentionally, the above quote from the FAZ pointed to a discursive split of Kreuzberg’s residents into two main categories: elderly working-class Germans with a limited income –many of whom had lived there for decades if not generations– and younger migrants from Turkey, both single men and women, and increasingly those with young families, who were deliberately cast as temporary residents. This imagined division of Kreuzberg’s population, as suggested in the FAZ quote, was reflected in the

398 Rahms, “Fünf Blocks in der Luisenstadt.”
physical planning of the neighborhood in that a certain ideal of integration guided the renewal principles for Kreuzberg. The representation of this division began to take hold during the late 1960s and early 1970s as Kreuzberg developed an increasingly atypical demographic landscape. At this time, Kreuzberg had not yet become the end point for youth looking for an alternative to the social conformity of West German towns and countryside.

*Kreuzberg’s Twentieth-Century “Trockenwohner”*

The intersection of integration policies and urban renewal in the 1970s played a pivotal role in recasting Kreuzberg as a symbol of German fears of the foreigner and his or her possible threat to a mythical German culture or pure German identity.400 The original official attitude toward postwar “guest workers” shifted in this period to a fear of “overforeignization” as the number of migrants choosing to permanently settle in the FRG increased. The lead story in a 1973 issue of Der Spiegel clearly points to this shift. Departing from earlier approval of a source of cheap labor, mainstream discourse started identifying these same migrants as a source of urban trouble, chaos, and decline.401 Perpetuating German stereotypes, the magazine cover shows a family of eight (3 adults and 5 children) in an open window of a run-down old building with the caption, “Ghettos

400 El-Tayeb, “‘Blood is a Very Special Juice.’”
in Germany: One Million Turks.” The lead story, “The Turks are coming: Save yourself if you can,” describes the “flood” of migrants “overpowering” West German cities. Furthermore, to underscore the magnitude of the situation, the magazine relies on examples and descriptions drawn from the district of Kreuzberg.

The article opens by evoking the image of the “real” or “authentic” German Kreuzberg corner pub (Eckkneipe), assuming all West Germans would instinctively know what that looked like. Evoking a community of shared experience, language, and ethnic identity, the article mourns the passing of this supposed “true” Berlin, read ethnically German, neighborhood. Instead of the “Berliner Kindl and hamburger patties,” a visitor to the neighborhood now discovers the disturbing new flavors of “sweet, syrupy coffee,” “meat rotating on a skewer,” and “oriental melodies” floating from the juke box.402 “So complete a change in the resident population” cautioned Der Spiegel, “has not been seen to the same degree in any other German city like it has in Kreuzberg.”403 At this historical juncture, this discourse at once claims the neighborhood as German while simultaneously seeing it as “foreign,” setting up the idea of two co-existing, authentic, and homogenous cultures.404

The article expressed a widespread fear that German cultural values and vision of community were in danger of being destroyed or rendered irrelevant by a steady influx of foreigners. By reminding its readers that the Eckkneipe in Kreuzberg was once the “real Kreuzberg,” the Spiegel article places Kreuzberg firmly in a German tradition, more specifically a German working-class tradition. The Eckkneipe in Kreuzberg is perceived

402 “Die Türken kommen -rette sich, wer kann.”
403 “Die Türken kommen -rette sich, wer kann.”
404 On this idea as represented in film, see Deniz Göktürk, “Turkish Delight – German Fright: Migrant Identities in Transnational Cinema,” in Mediated Identities, eds. Deniz Derman, Karen Ross and Nevena Dakovic (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2001), 131-149
here as an extension of a decent German working-class ritual of men socializing at the corner pub after a day’s work. Historically, this would not have been a popular evocation for the majority of middle-class West Germans. Paradoxically, this image of working-class sociability only became nostalgic at the very moment that the nation feared a “foreign invasion.”

This emphasis on tradition in turn constructed a mythic past for this neighborhood in a time when notions of German cultural purity appeared to be threatened by immigrants, while in fact ignoring the reality of Kreuzberg’s history as a conflicted site of working-class opposition, poverty, immigration, and violent altercations between the radical right and the radical left. Though only one of several of Berlin’s historic working-class districts, Kreuzberg had the highest density of nineteenth-century tenements that were deemed the “hallmark of proletarian Berlin,” and built to accommodate workers during the period of rapid industrialization. After almost a century of being marked as a troubled working-class district, Kreuzberg in the 1970s and 80s underwent a transition in public discourse from a marginal to an “outcast space.” For the middle-class sensibilities of 1970s West Germany, both the historical memory

407 This term is borrowed from Sean Purdy whose dissertation is a study on the area of Regent Park in downtown Toronto and how its image transformed from one of “hope” to an area of the city synonymous with “decline.” Sean Purdy, “From Place of Hope to Outcast Space: Territorial Regulation and Tenant Resistance in Regent Park Housing Project, 1945-2000,” (PhD diss., Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, 2003).
and reality of a communist threat was minimal in comparison to the fear of this “foreign” invasion.\(^{408}\)

In this debate, urban spaces were particularly important, both because foreigners tended to settle there, and because urban spaces had historically been sites of cultural deviation and difference.\(^{409}\) In this article, *Der Spiegel* creates an image of the “German city” that in fact evokes imagery of a “*Heimat*” traditionally associated with the *Dorf*, or village. This article suggests multiple aspects of German fear toward workers from Turkey in Kreuzberg, evoking the idea of a lost homeland overrun by foreign influences in order to reclaim as German a neighborhood historically known to attract migrants. What becomes apparent at this juncture is that discussions of urban decline in 1970s West Germany became racialized and fixated on the image of the rural “foreigner.” This stands in stark contrast to historical connections made between the metropolis and modernity as synonymous with chaos, degradation, and decline.\(^{410}\) Unlike the construction of Berlin in the 1920s as embodying the societal changes linked to modernity, the “urban crisis” now came in the form of a steady “invasion” of “foreigners” from the “shores of the Bosporus

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\(^{408}\) Eric Weitz, “The Ever-Present Other: Communism and the Making of West Germany,” in *Miracle Years*, 219-232.


and the highlands of Anatolia,” for whom the “gap between traditional living conditions at home and life in a developed industrial society has never been so great.”

While Berlin as the urban metropole of Germany had traditionally been evoked as a symbol of decline, this marked the moment in the 1970s when in fact the city became a marker of modernity, health, education and progressive democracy, all values placed in opposition to foreign workers marked as “rural” (read backwards) by German media. As stated bluntly in Der Spiegel, “no other country of origin [of migrant workers] has such a high illiteracy rate as Turkey.”

This rural/urban dichotomy serves to position the urban landscape as positive space that was then in danger of being “tainted” by foreigners from the hinterlands of a “primitive” country. In fact, it is only in the face of this perceived Turkish invasion that an example of urban, working-class Berlin is granted an authentic and romantic “German-ness.” This discourse of primitive shepherd turned factory worker juxtaposed with the idealized image of the German urban worker discursively weakened any possibility of solidarity and understanding between working-class migrants and their working-class German neighbors. Furthermore, it cast working-class migrants as firmly outside the bounds of an identificatory process with the historical working-class heritage associated with Kreuzberg.

In response to the so-called “Turkish ghetto,” in effect produced by discrimination in the housing market, a majority of the West Berlin Senate, which consisted of Social Democrats and their coalition partners the Free Democrats (FDP) announced its decision in 1974 to restrict migrant worker access to neighborhoods with a high “foreigner” quota.

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411 “Die Türken kommen -rette sich, wer kann.”
412 “Die Türken kommen -rette sich, wer kann.”
413 Compare Chin, The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany; Stehle, “Narrating the Ghetto, Narrating Europe”; Aras Ören, Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstrasse? (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1973).
with the intended goal of “easing integration into society.” A direct intrusion into the everyday lives of immigrants, the state passed a set of discriminatory laws with the specific intent to regulate both newcomers and migrants looking to move to or within the city. Starting in 1975, immigrants arriving from Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia, or nationals of those countries already living in West Berlin were barred from moving into three of the city’s twelve boroughs: Kreuzberg, Wedding, and Tiergarten. Applied to those three districts where the total percentage of foreigners had reached fifteen percent, the ban on entry and settlement or Zugangssperre denied underprivileged immigrants the right of movement. Authorities granted migrants arriving in West Berlin a residence permit only when they could provide proof of residence outside of these three districts. Non-German nationals from EEC (predecessor of EU) countries, such as Italy, and those either married to a German passport holder or someone holding permanent residency were exempted from this regulation.

A second discriminatory regulation required migrants to verify occupancy in a legally “conforming” apartment (Nachweispflicht vorhandenen ausreichenden Wohnraums) in a non-banned district. To get an extension of the residence permit, the application for permanent residency, or to receive permission to bring in family members to West Germany or West Berlin, migrants had to prove, in accordance with the Berlin Alien’s Act, that their apartments corresponded to the “normal requirements” of a German worker or employee’s apartment. The federal Housing Supervision Law determined what criteria fell under the category “normal.” This law, intended in fact to

415 This policy also applied in the district of Wilhelmsburg in Hamburg.
416 The Council of European Communities admitted Greece to the EEC in 1979.
protect tenants from negligent landlords, stipulated that minimum standards of upkeep and care be fulfilled. In addition, it fixed a minimum amount of space in any given apartment for adults and children, nine and six square meters respectively. The law deemed the apartment uninhabitable if the minimum standards were not fulfilled and does not offer a replacement apartment for the former tenants. Authorities pointed the finger at migrant families, discriminated against on the rental market and therefore left with no other option but to rent apartments too small to meet their needs, for overcrowded conditions, which resulted in an eviction at best and deportation at worst.

These policies set out to explicitly manage urban space and movement from above, though they were introduced as a benevolent directive, and had a consensus among all political parties as an appropriate method of integration.\footnote{Arin, “Migrant Labor Population in Berlin,” 210.} It targeted all “foreigners” but affected migrant workers from Turkey and their families most significantly since this group constituted more than half of West Berlin’s immigrant population. From an official perspective, this restriction on migrants’ right to move about freely was proposed as a solution to the emergence of urban “ghettos” that deterred “proper” integration. The assumption was that a concentration of foreigners, on the scale observed in Kreuzberg, would allow for a retreat into the comforts of one’s own culture and, therefore only encourage unwillingness to adapt to the language, culture, and values of the receiving society. This may seem like a slightly ironic stance considering the belief that German culture was something fixed and inextricable from ethnicity.\footnote{See El-Tayeb, “Blood Is a Very Special Juice;” Stefan Berger, \textit{Inventing the Nation: Germany} (London: Edward Arnold, 2004).} At the same
time, this concern over migrants avoiding integration was coupled with the belief that a high minority concentration in an urban center only fostered crime, violence and decay.

By invoking the racialized image of the “ghetto,” the administration of urban space to control or assist desegregation can be read as a response by policy makers to German anxiety concerning ethnic difference, while at the time framing the policy as though the government was doing the immigrant community a favor. By linking an ethnic minority to a particular place or neighborhood, namely Kreuzberg, public officials gave the impression that there was a specific problem to be dealt with. Policy makers drew the conclusion that if only this part of the city could be managed, then so too could the question of integration of “foreigners” into mainstream “German” society. Imposing such restrictions on minorities that curtailed their rights to move freely was not of course new. The historian Ulrich Herbert has pointed to similar restrictions placed on Eastern European Jews (or the Ostjuden) at the end of World War One.\textsuperscript{419}

West Berlin officials justified direct interference with settlement patterns by arguing that social services in these neighborhoods were overtaxed. Buttressing this line of argument, a 1974 Der Spiegel article only needed to call attention to Kreuzberg’s day nurseries and playschools remarking that “they had in their care more foreign than German babies” for Kreuzberg’s district mayor Günther Abendroth to conclude, “we are suffocating.”\textsuperscript{420} The mayor’s attitude signified a tendency in official attitudes that increasingly viewed the “ethnic clustering or ghettoization” in West German cities as dangerous or problematic.\textsuperscript{421} Abendroth’s quote is telling for two reasons. Firstly, his

\textsuperscript{419} Herbert, Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland, 102.

\textsuperscript{420} “Gettos: Stopp für Türken.”

\textsuperscript{421} “Gettos: Stopp für Türken.”
stress on “foreign” offspring implies a fear of reproduction, more specifically a fear of an ethnic “other” ultimately outnumbering “real” Germans, that is, white and ethnic Germans. The implications of this fear cannot be underestimated in the symbolic power it had in deterring politicians and policymakers from any serious consideration of an immigration policy, which would have entailed permanent settlement and political inclusion. Scholars on this topic have pointed to the legacy of a deeply ethnocultural understanding of a German identity that prevented an understanding of a population “not white and still German.” The implicit desire that any “guest worker” who settled permanently in the Federal Republic would need to blend without a trace into German society (just as the Poles of an earlier era), would dominate the public debates on questions of immigration and integration well into the late 1990s.

Secondly, in Abendroth’s evocation of a German “we,” he set up an us versus them or native versus foreign dichotomy. In doing so, the district mayor presents the very space of Kreuzberg as an essentially “German” place, a literal and symbolic space that represented “real Germanness,” a vigilantly defended concept he perceived as being consumed by exotic food, dress and language. The description of the “foreign” evoked a fear of the invasion of German bodies with unfamiliar, even poisonous substances. In this vein, a visitor to Kreuzberg apparently could be misled by the “colorful fruit and vegetable stands” and the “butcher shops with eviscerated mutton and the kebab shops.” This seemingly “pastoral idyll,” according to Der Spiegel, operated merely as “nice

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422 This point has been explored at length in Uli Linke’s chapter on “Blood, Race, Nation,” in German Bodies: Race and Representation After Hitler (New York: Routledge, 1999).
decoration” to a neighborhood that was, in fact, in a state of “communal agony (kommunale Agonie).”425 The image presented here is one of a neighborhood on its deathbed. On the surface, the assumed features of rural Turkey may have seemed innocuous, even enjoyable to the casual observer strolling through Kreuzberg, yet according to the Spiegel, for the neighborhood’s German residents the sentiment of being “overrun” was understood as nothing short of a catastrophe.

Just four years later, Günther Abendroth, now no longer the district mayor, held a seat on the SPD district steering committee on the “foreigner question” (Auszänderfragen im Kreisvorstand der SPD-Kreis Kreuzberg). Reflecting the larger societal and political reality by the mid-1970s, this committee reflected how the main political parties in West Germany made steps towards adopting a framework in which to more effectively discuss or debate the “foreigner question.”426 Diverging from a more conservative line of argumentation on this issue, the SPD promoted a “co-existence of multiple cultures grounded in empathy and tolerance and viewed the interaction and exchange between these cultures as a prerequisite for successful integration.”427 This position however clearly had its limitations. “Integration,” wrote Abendroth in an issue of the city’s urban renewal bulletin (Sanierungs-Zeitung) intended for residents in renewal areas, “should not stand for Germanization of them [Auszänder], instead it should encourage a co-habitation that ensures equal rights and cultural autonomy.”428 Yet in the very next sentence he wrote that, “the children of foreigners need the chance to receive an

425 “Gettos: Stopp für Türken.”
426 Chin, The Guest Worker Question, 99.
427 Chin, The Guest Worker Question, 99.
education and in order to be employable here in the future [West Berlin]; this education however will help them to keep all options open in case they decide to return to their home (Heimat).”

This position, in short, encapsulates the tension found in public debates on integration. German authorities proposed short-term measures to improve the situation of immigrants and supported integration measures (particularly for their German-born children), but in doing so no political party explicitly rejected the long-held official idea of an eventual return to the “foreigner’s Heimat.”

Similar ambivalent views graced the pages of the Hamburg-based liberal weekly Die Zeit. The paper’s contribution to public discourse on the integration of “foreigners” offered a pessimistic picture of “two worlds colliding, whose reconciliation or mutual integration remains a pipe dream.” In the longer term, it was argued in one editorial, “mentality and cultural background” would continue to get in the way of integration since the “feudal structures of the patriarchal Anatolian world have been saved [in the move] to the Federal Republic.”

Mainstream and conservative discourse repeatedly assigned this culturally marginal position to migrants from Turkey. This image of the “large Turkish family” from Anatolia, as if all migrants from Turkey came from Anatolia, at the Kreuzberg weekly market with “the head of the family, the father, at the front, with the rest of the family in tow” or the depictions of “black-haired, dark-eyed children playing in apartment house entrances” produced and reinforced notions of “foreignness” and incompatibility with German “culture.”

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431 “Das Dorf reicht bis nach Kreuzberg.”
Mainstream cultural representations of Kreuzberg in this moment of economic uncertainty reveal the widespread German image of “Turks” as proponents of a retrograde religion, culturally backwards, poor, having many children, and dressed in loud colors. This fantasy of a socio-economic, culturally homogenous underclass contributed to the popular belief in West Germany that migrants from Turkey inhabited a social, cultural and political space clearly outside the boundaries of a German, and more broadly European identity. Functioning as stark reminders of ethnic difference, these pervasive stereotypes supported the exclusion of West Germany’s de facto immigrants whose eastern, Islamic customs and values were seen as antithetical to a western, Christian Europe. As scholars have demonstrated, the negative image of the “Turk” has had a long history in European discourse with Turkey, and the Ottoman Empire before, functioning historically as Europe’s “Other.”

A widespread understanding of both German and Turkish cultural homogeneity accentuated the fear that German culture and society would be damaged or diluted via an acceptance of non-European ethnic minorities. Additionally, broader European stereotypes of Turkey allowed for German officials to pursue racist policies without conjuring up fears of Nazism. Having to prove its integration with the West and its commitment to a democratic political order, West Germany had opened its doors to millions of refugees and initiated a program of foreign labor recruitment. Nevertheless, in

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433 Klaus Eder and Willfried Spohn, eds., Collective Memory and European Identity: The Effects of Integration and Enlargement (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Maria Todorova, Imagining the Balkans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal, and Ipek Tureli, eds., Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe? (London: Routledge, 2010). More recently, opponents of Turkey’s bid to join the EU have evoked the menacing image of the Ottoman Turks driven from the gates of Vienna in 1683 by the defenders of Christian Europe.
the context of post-Holocaust Federal Republic, definitions of “Germanness” remained rooted in nineteenth-century understandings of a culturally homogenous “Volk.”

Thus, the image of the “ethnic ghetto” loomed large as the cultural and spatial presence of new immigrants challenged West Germany’s official version of itself as a non-immigration country. As historians have effectively demonstrated, the normalization of West German public life and the creation of a West German identity in the 1950s were rooted in a narrow definition of citizenship. As it became evident to both foreign workers and West German policy makers that the intended temporary stay was turning into a permanent one, the Federal Republic’s liberal residency laws clashed sharply with its own image of itself as a culturally homogenous society.

Between the late 1960s and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the neighborhood’s image in public discourse oscillated between fears of it as an “ethnic ghetto” to Kreuzberg as the embodiment of left-wing radical politics. In both scholarly and popular accounts, representations of the “legendary island of the foreign, the ‘Other,’ and the poor,” it is not uncommon to have discussions of Kreuzberg alternate between these two categories at any given time. Contemporary observers of post-Wall Kreuzberg have further contributed to a perpetuation of this division, the creation of what the mainstream media now refers to as “parallel societies.” As Berlin-based German writer Peter Schneider recently reflected, “There is a new wall rising in the city of Berlin. To cross this wall you

436 Kil and Silver, “From Kreuzberg to Marzahn.”  
have to go to the city's central and northern districts – to Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Wedding – and you will find yourself in a world unknown to the majority of Berliners.”

Schneider situates the existence of “parallel societies” in a discussion of a post-9/11 world, when “for many German residents in Neukölln and Kreuzberg, th[is] was the first time they stopped to wonder who their neighbors really were.”

Evoking the image of the wall, albeit a new and invisible one, supposedly separating German residents of Kreuzberg from those perceived to be their non-German neighbors, Schneider reminded his reader of both the “foreignness” attached to the space of Kreuzberg and the long-held belief that its populations lived not together, but beside each other. Seen by scare-mongers as both a hotbed of political radicalism and the embodiment of ethnic difference and incompatibility, by focusing on either a) “leftist” Kreuzberg or b) “Turkish” Kreuzberg, popular and scholarly discourse on the neighborhood has denied its complexity and rendered unimaginable the possibility of alliances, interconnectedness, or mutual overlap between these two categories.

Moreover, depictions and discussions of Kreuzberg as a district consisting mainly of two distinct subcultures, one political and one ethnic, rarely address the inequality between the two subcultures and the subsequent unequal access to political decision-making and models of participation. The remainder of this chapter considers the prevailing perceptions of difference found in the ambivalent treatment of migrants from Turkey by their leftist neighbors.

439 Schneider, “The New Berlin Wall.”
440 For examples of accounts of 1980s Kreuzberg as a place of radical and alternative politics see Lang, Mythos Kreuzberg. For discussions of Kreuzberg as “ethnic ghetto” see Daniel Levy and Yaffa Weiss, eds., Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
The Schimanski Effect

On the local level, the leftist activism in Kreuzberg that mobilized itself in opposition to state housing and renewal policies also had important implications for the migrant families living in the neighborhood. Whether directly or indirectly, all of Kreuzberg’s residents benefited in some way from the work of tenant organizing, “illegal” squatting, and the more institutionalized objectives of IBA-Alt that addressed issues of affordable housing, slum landlords, and decrepit housing conditions.

Nonetheless, for a group of people incredibly engaged in and committed to social and political change, activists in Kreuzberg failed to see the ways in which they too, in their everyday political practices, reinforced a division and privilege between the majority and a disenfranchised minority perceived as “outside” or not belonging to German society and culture. A shortcoming of the squatters’ movement, the more radical elements repeatedly calling on activists to “resist forms of imperialist aggression” and to “smash state structures,” was to recognize how the category of “race” or a process of racialization functioned to uphold the very structures they rejected. Instead, large number of activists accepted ethno-racial difference as a “given” rather than as a culturally created category thus leaving any change up to a gradual socio-political development rather than a political struggle to which the following example illustrates.

For some in Germany, it might be hard to imagine that in another generation or two, their “Turkish-sounding” last names, particularly if they operate or are visible in high profile positions, might not have warranted, as it in fact does still warrant a

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comment or a discussion of their supposed “foreignness” in German public culture. By this, I mean, would mainstream perceptions of such difference have dulled over time so that the name, formerly marked as “migrant,” would have seamlessly integrated into German society and culture? I have had many stimulating conversations on the topic of Kreuzberg with P.H., an activist friend and archivist of radical left movements living in the neighborhood. P.H. once described to me his theory of integration, a theory he called the “Schimanski effect.” Reflecting upon his experiences with race relations in Kreuzberg since moving to the neighborhood in 1979, P.H. insists that, within a few generations, Germans with a minority or migrant background will be embraced as full members of German society to the extent that their Turkish-sounding last names will no longer be called into question, much like their historical predecessors from Poland.

In P.H.’s example, “Schimanski” refers to Detective Horst Schimanski, a popular detective on the long-running crime show series Tatort (Scene of the Crime). The public broadcaster ARD, a consortium founded in 1950 made up of several regional broadcasters, introduced Tatort in 1970. The well-established series has since aired every Sunday evening on German television. A unique aspect of this television series is that each regional network produces its own episodes, and these are set in a major city or town in the given region. Each network’s Tatort also stars its own pair of detectives, and over the past four decades the more popular detectives have been elevated to the role of cultural icons. One such inspector, arguably the most popular detective in the four-

decade history of Tatort, is Horst Schimanski, a fictional detective in Duisburg, a city in the Ruhr region of Germany.

The Ruhr region is Germany’s most densely populated area and historically the heart of Germany’s industrial production in coal and steel. In the late nineteenth century, the region’s high industrial output stimulated a wave of migration that included tens of thousands of Polish migrants seeking better economic opportunities in the Ruhr area’s developing industrial urban centers. In 1981, the producers of WDR (West German Broadcasting) introduced the fictional detective Horst Schimanski (played by Götz George) to Tatort viewers, his character signaling a break from the conventions of previous depictions of “correct and proper” detectives on German television. To counter this familiar representation, the producers of the series emphasized Schimanski’s working-class background, his rough around the edges behavior and language, and his willingness to bend the rules when it came to defending the “little guy.” Above all else, it was Schimanski’s proletarian, not his Polish, roots that disrupted his critics’ middle-class ideas of West German law enforcement as both decent and respectable.

Historians have demonstrated the long-standing negative attitudes and prejudices Germans have against their “inferior” Slavic neighbors to the east. And it is well known that anti-Polish policy characterized the state’s official attitude to economic

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migrants in the decades leading up to World War One. However, P.H.’s point in creating this analogy between the fictional Polish-German detective and Berlin’s migrants from Turkey is that, a hundred years after the first waves of Polish migration, the process of cultural assimilation of the nineteenth-century Ruhr Poles is so complete that the “German-ness” of a television character with a Polish last name is never questioned. The same process of integration, he trusts, will inevitably happen to Kreuzberg’s Turkish Germans. His example relies on the knowledge of a reluctant assimilation of these nineteenth-century “foreigners” by the state and the resistance to this practice of assimilation on the part of the Poles themselves. His argumentation relies on such factors of historical difference in Polish-German relations that included the status of Poles as Germany’s age-old enemy, the resistance of Poles to Imperial efforts of “Germanization,” and moments when ethnic and linguistic difference were employed to exclude new immigrants from full participation in the public sphere.

What is significantly absent in his example is that Polish migrants have shared, and still do share, a number of important similarities with their German neighbors that make a blanket comparison with migrants from Turkey qualitatively difficult, not to mention historically naïve. These migrants, much like the ethnic German war refugees who arrived post-1945 in great numbers from Eastern Europe, were white, Christian and,

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however maligned, could draw upon a European tradition. Turkey, in contrast, has been imagined and characterized as historically, politically, and culturally “different.” It is this characterization of Turkey as difference incarnate, its historical role as Europe’s “Other,” to which P.H. is idealistic. Although he is quick to acknowledge systemic discrimination, his optimism relies on the belief in a teleological historical process of integration that precluded a deep-rooted engagement with the complex ways in which ethno-racial difference has been and still is historically constructed in both the political realm and in everyday practices.450

By the early 1980s, public debates on immigration and the role of millions of “foreigners” in German society had acquired a new dimension. Helmut Kohl’s center-right government had pushed the debate to the right by proposing a policy that actively supported the return of West German’s de facto immigrants from Turkey to their country of origin. The debate exposed a racist and nationalist discourse circulating not only in places where it was expected, like on the far right, but one that also found support among conservative politicians and public intellectuals. The 1982 Heidelberg Manifesto, written and signed by a number of respectable university professors, best illustrates this troubling development of framing anti-immigrant sentiments in mainly biological terms. The manifesto warned against “the infiltration of the German people [Volk] through an influx of millions of foreigners and their families, the infiltration [Überfremdung] of our language, our culture, and our national traditions by foreign influences.”451

This opinion was a marginal one and did invariably provoke sharp public criticism. However, it represents the most extreme version of a much more widespread

450 See the introduction to After the Nazi Racial State.
view that migrants, particularly those who were not white or Christian although they could potentially become citizens, would always be Ausländer or “foreigners.” The more liberal version of the debate denounced the biological line of argumentation and, instead, promoted a multicultural model in which homogenous cultural entities would live harmoniously alongside each other. And on the other end of the political spectrum, leftist groups, too, voiced some opposition to forms of state-sanctioned racism. However, in this period of heightened concern with the “foreigner problem,” the presence of such questions could be found at the margins of radical leftist activism. As scholars and public intellectuals have pointed out, this debate, at its core, was ultimately about German national self-understanding.\footnote{Berger, Germany; Senocak, Atlas of a Tropical Germany; Chin, The Guestworker Question; Jeffrey M. Peck, ed., Multiculturalism in Transit: a German-American Exchange (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998); Mandel, Cosmopolitan Anxieties.} In what follows I will provide instances in which the politics and rhetoric of the squatters’ movement fell short of redefining both the nature of the immigration debate and the static image of the “foreigner.”

**Considering National Culture in the Political Margins**

One might expect that in the context of a conservative backlash against immigrants the left in Kreuzberg would have taken a strong oppositional position to both official state policies and mainstream opinion. Certain elements of the squatters’ movement active in Kreuzberg were ostensibly internationalist in their orientation, positioning their groups in solidarity with struggles in Central America that opposed imperialist and racist politics. (Figure 4.1) Others kept their political struggles local through a continued focus on their defense of squatted places and spaces in which to live and work. Yet despite variations in currents of thought and action in the Kreuzberg
squatters’ scene, all elements articulated either directly or indirectly a critique of the prevailing world order and particularly U.S. hegemony in the West. Within this highly politicized culture, however, the question of enforced residential segregation and systemic discrimination against West Germany’s ethno-racial minorities remains curiously absent from their demands for a new social and political order. Instead, the ways in which German leftists depicted their migrant neighbors reveal a wide array of emotions ranging from well-meaning paternalism to passive indifference to outright hostility. In other words, the everyday political practices of Kreuzberg’s activists – inside the squats, in the neighborhoods, or at demonstrations organized against U.S.-led imperialist and racist politics– were at best a slightly differentiated version of mainstream discourses on migrants from Turkey. The remainder of this chapter investigates this spectrum of emotions on the part of leftist activists in Kreuzberg vis-à-vis their neighbors from Turkey.

In 1980 the left-leaning city magazine Zitty ran a cover story that posed the question, “Is a neighborhood dying?,” asking if Kreuzberg would remain Kreuzberg or become a “Turkish ghetto.” Founded in 1977 and modeled after the London weekly listings magazine Time Out, the magazine evoked an image of a Kreuzberg that was on its last legs. The lead article showed an image of a run down, dilapidated neighborhood and pointed the finger at migrants from Turkey for Kreuzberg’s sad condition. The article reported that, “despite government funds of 14 million DM dedicated to the foreigner question, a city district ceases to exist when it becomes overrun by foreigners. Turks out? Why not. At least some of them.” According to the authors of the article, the nineteenth-century tenements had been “left to decay by the Turks, [and] signal[ed] the readiness of
such buildings to be demolished.”\textsuperscript{453} Once again, the threat of removal of low-income housing, whether actual or perceived, was not linked to the failures of postwar housing policies, but instead to the migrant population – whose mere presence in Kreuzberg was blamed for having eroded the already substandard housing stock.

The article invited its West Berlin readers to reflect on the current state of affairs in parts of their city:

Tourists from West Germany and from other West Berlin districts love the colorful street scenes, the exotic smells. One takes pictures of Turkish kids in grubby clothes in front of a crumbling tenement. A romanticized glimpse from a worm’s eye view? […] Meanwhile the neighborhood is entering its 11\textsuperscript{th} hour. The ruling is pending: Kreuzberg – Berlin’s Turkish ghetto or a West Berlin district?”\textsuperscript{454}

The fear that Kreuzberg would become a separate “Turkish” city-within-a-city, rather than part of a coherent, albeit divided, city reflects tremendous discomfort, now on the left as well as on the right, with the perceived loss of a “German” neighborhood. Coupled with this unease is the authors’ inability to imagine a functioning multi-ethnic neighborhood. This tendency to render the shifting character of West German urban centers in terms of either “German” or “ethnic” undermined the possibility of political alliances that might confront the issues of poverty, inadequate housing, and discriminatory practices that faced Kreuzberg’s population. This sentiment in \textit{Zitty} also echoed a larger sense of West German anxiety over West Berlin specifically, already within a Cold War context an isolated city within a city. This anxiety was tied to the dilemma of wanting an authentic and whole West Berlin at same time that it not even a

\textsuperscript{453} Renate Bookhagen and Rainer Bielig, “Kreuzberg SO 36 ,Sterbt ein Stadtteil,” \textit{Zitty} 8, 1980.
\textsuperscript{454} Bookhagen and Bielig, “Kreuzberg SO 36 ,Sterbt ein Stadtteil.”
real “whole” city. The city that, since the Berlin Blockade, had “proved that Germany [still] lives”\textsuperscript{455} now had likely “enemies” not only externally, i.e., its communist neighbors, but internally as well, i.e., its Turkish neighbors.

One of Kreuzberg’s tenant activist groups, Verein SO 36, found the inflammatory tone of the Zitty article clearly objectionable. The group’s main news organ, the \textit{Südost Express}, printed a response to the \textit{Zitty} that underscored the group’s distress at the representation of Kreuzberg and, especially, of its migrant residents:

The \textit{Zitty} title page chilled us to the bone. Thankfully there were many other SO 36 residents who were also outraged. But this is not the only recent example in which growing xenophobia has reared its ugly head. In public discussions foreigners are placed on the same level as bums and crackpots on the street and comments have been heard suggesting forced deportations. What kind of an attitude leads to such a statement! And what kind of politics makes no decisive steps towards integration in fear of losing the support of German voters? Are we Germans in the process of cultivating a new master race?\textsuperscript{456}

Officially active in neighborhood renewal politics for over five years, Verein SO 36 included a variety of community and tenant activists, all long-time defenders of affordable housing. The group’s local newspaper offered tenant advice, provided a forum for residents to voice their concerns, publicized the misconduct of urban renewal agents and owners of tenements operating in Kreuzberg, and advocated alternative plans and visions for an affordable revitalization of the neighborhood. Notably, the paper regularly dedicated a section of the paper to highlighting the concerns of the neighborhood’s “foreigners.” For the editorial members of the Südost Express and their neighborhood allies, acknowledging migrants from Turkey as active members of neighborhood life was

\textsuperscript{455} President of the Bundestag Rainer Barzel, quoted in Karl Heinz Krüger, “Ich lerne langsam, dich zu hassen,” \textit{Der Spiegel} 33, 1983, 36.

\textsuperscript{456} \textit{Südost Express} 5, May, 1980.
the exception rather than the norm. This inclusionary approach can be explained by the group’s commitment to improving tenant rights as well as participation in both the earlier “Strategies for Kreuzberg” competition and the IBA-Alt, both of which sought to include migrant residents in the participatory renewal process.

In the tradition of the 1960s student activists, who deliberately used allusions to Nazi racial policy in their critiques of West German society and politics, the editorial staff of Südost Express expressed their alarm at the resurfacing of racist sentiments in post-Holocaust Germany. Such sentiments, they argued, called to mind the extremes of German nationalism and racism that had culminated in Nazi Germany’s extermination of Jews and other “foreign bodies.” Historians of postwar West Germany, such as Heide Fehrenbach, Atina Grossmann, Geoff Eley, and Rita Chin in their book After the Nazi Racial State, have made it clear that there is no simple link between Nazi racism and the Nazified vocabulary frequently used in West German public debates. Nonetheless, racist ideologies unmistakably informed postwar West German notions of belonging across the political spectrum.

Of course the neighborhood press in Kreuzberg differed from its local and West German liberal and conservative counterparts in important ways, in that it recognized to some degree the institutional structures that defined and circumscribed the everyday lives of Kreuzberg’s immigrants. The Südost Express, for example, called for ways to directly confront contemporary resentments against “foreigners” and declared that “SO 36 has to be a district in which foreigners and Germans can learn to live together, with each other,

457 Chin, Eley, Fehrenbach, and Grossmann, After the Nazi Racial State.
458 While acknowledging that notions of national belonging shift over time, the political and public discussions in Germany on citizenship and the concept of multiculturalism have, for at least the last two to three decades, focused almost exclusively on the idea of who or what is “German.” See Senocak, Atlas of a Tropical Germany; Karakayali, Gespenster der Migration.
not against each other,” and in order for that to happen “foreigners must live here with
equal rights, that means they deserve the right to vote like any citizen of a democratic
country; they need the right to be human.” Such a plea advocating political
participation for West Berlin’s migrants from non-EEC countries was rare in the early
1980s. Implicit, however, in this well-intended discourse of dialogue was a tendency to
view migrants primarily as victims. These local efforts in Kreuzberg to bring neighbors
into contact with each other envisioned a more diverse German body politic, but in doing
so they relied on a familiar conceptual framework of two homogeneous and culturally
distinct groups, the Germans and the “Turks.”

In the context of promoting tolerance and finding common ground, the Südost
Express called for a neighborhood forum in which both groups (German and Turkish)
would have a space to discuss and share their daily impressions with each other. In
particular, Kreuzberg residents having had “good examples and experiences of living
together” were encouraged to attend in order to pass on and develop these “promising
beginnings.” Calling upon the neighborhood’s residents to find ways to bridge their
cultural differences, the Südost Express reinforced explicitly a “Turkish” and a
“German” identity. The magazine consistently portrayed migrants from Turkey as passive
victims even as it advocated the right of migrants to vote locally. The Südost Express was
not alone in conceiving of migrants as culturally distinct. Echoing policy makers,

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459 “Alle Jahre wieder…,” Südost Express 1, 1980; see also “Kommunales Wahlrecht für Ausländer,”
Südost Express 2, 1979.
Kreuzberg’s tenant and community activists placed more weight on promoting harmonious social relations than on access to political channels.462

By referring to the additional problems faced by “foreigners” in the urban renewal areas such as language difficulties, inability to find suitable apartments to house large-sized families, fear of authorities (housing and law enforcement), and not knowing or having the language skills to understand and exercise their rights, the articles in the *Südost Express* did challenge the oft-repeated claim by housing authorities and landlords that “the foreigners are [simply] not interested in paying more rent.”463 As discussed earlier in this chapter, for urban renewal agents and landlords, migrants from Turkey in Kreuzberg served as expedient tenants who would occupy apartments that they believed no (white) German would ever rent. Official notions that migrants, particularly migrants from Turkey, were a temporary phenomenon (‘Guest Workers’) tacitly supported such illicit and discriminatory rental practices. Equally, this official notion also relied on the patently untrue assumption that migrants from Turkey themselves always expressed an interest in returning “home.” These notions served to undergird the reasoning behind the regular leasing of rundown, dingy one and half room apartments with limited amenities to migrant families of four or five.

In fact, as historian Karen Schönwälder has demonstrated, by the early 1960s it was already clear in the papers of the Labor Ministry that many so-called “guest workers” were there to stay.464 Yet despite voices in industry, trade unions, and the church calling for more permanent integration policies, the common assumption that “guest workers”

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463 *Südost Express*, 1979, 2.
464 Schönwälder, von Oswald, and Sonnenberger, “Einwanderungsland Deutschland.”
were a transient population in West Germany could be found across the political spectrum. The narrative amongst migrants themselves also shifted. As the rate of family reunification steadily increased in the decade following the recruitment stop in 1973, suitable housing for their families became a central priority for migrants from Turkey. Yet landlords refused to rent out the apartments in the front buildings that would accommodate larger families. Instead, they rented the smaller one- to two-room apartments located in the back courtyard buildings and side wings to migrant families of four, five or six. Landlords and housing management companies justified these rental practices on the assumption that migrants were driven entirely by the desire to save money in order to eventually finance their triumphant return to Turkey. Housing officials, however, had not only a financial, but a social and ideological interest in accepting this idea of eventual return ‘home,’ living as they did within a society that did not acknowledge its status as an immigrant-receiving country until the late 1990s.

The monthly Kiez Depesche (Neighborhood Dispatch), another neighborhood newspaper “establish[ed] to inform the broad range of [Kreuzberg] residents negatively affected by the urban renewal practices,” also recognized and addressed Kreuzberg’s minority population. The paper’s self-described “informal and open” editorial collective was comprised of residents living in renewal blocks 73 and 76, the streets between Kottbusser Tor and Mariannen Platz. Unlike the Südost Express the paper did not explicitly endorse the political participation of migrants or offer even a modest critique of

465 The 1979 public statement by SPD politician Peter Kühn was the exception rather than the rule. His article in Die Zeit argued for a recognition that West Germany’s immigrants were there to stay and proposed more progressive citizenship policies. Peter Kühn, “Zustände wie in Amerika?” Die Zeit 45, November 2, 1979.
466 Jeffry Jurgens, “Plotting Immigration: Diasporic Identity Formulation Among Immigrants from Turkey in Berlin,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2005); Hunn, Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück.
467 “Die Besetzer, die Punks und wir,” Kiez Depesche 2, December, 1982
the state’s foreigner’s politics (*Ausländerpolitik*). The paper did, however, implicitly offer a model of neighborhood cooperation by publishing a part of its paper in Turkish and occasionally featured translated articles from the Turkish section in the subsequent edition. In the paper’s first issue in October of 1982, the collective introduced the paper’s Turkish section by noting that they had heard voices declaring the Turkish section “redundant, implying that Turkish migrants were not the magazine’s main audience. The editorial collective’s response to this sentiment was to state simply that, “nonetheless, over half of the residents in this area are Turkish.”468 And the editor of the Turkish-language section, who introduced himself to the readers in the fourth edition, declared his goal to help make Kreuzberg a place where “we can all get along better no matter what nationality.”469 This emphasizes the ways in which language was tied to this vision of “getting along.” By including texts written in Turkish, not only was the newspaper actively seeking and affirming its readership of those migrants who could not or did not want to read German, it was also implicitly suggesting that a multi-lingual community was imaginable.

An affirmative and multi-ethnic vision of the neighborhood surfaced in more ambiguous fashion in the *Kiez Depesche* when compared to the *Südost Express*. The *Kiez Depesche* addressed the common pattern of “Germans and foreigners liv[ing] side by side” without any substantive contact or interaction. To counter this, the *Südost Express* encouraged seniors to reach out to their Turkish neighbors and offer babysitting or after school services such as helping migrant children with their homework. The idea behind the appeal to seniors was that these older German residents “play an important role in

468 “Wer wir sind.” *Kiez Depesche* 1, 1982, 2.
469 “Wer wir sind.” 3.
improving neighborhood relations since they have more time than regular working folks and often sit alone in their apartments.”

Additionally, there were, the paper claimed, “foreign families in the neighborhood with scores of children who can’t afford daycare given that they send money back to home country to support relatives and these children have parents who don’t speak sufficient German to help their children with homework [therefore] it would be a great help if one or the other German Oma or Opa would be interested in looking after [their neighbors’] children after school.”

The paper subtly and not so subtly reminded its readers that the “future of SO 36 lay not in superficial everyday negotiations between German and foreigners, but in finding ways to learn how to best get along and to assert common interests for improved living situations.” While acknowledging that these approaches “will not do wonders and sweep away mutual prejudices,” they were nonetheless advocated as “small steps to better communication and understanding.” Indeed, we see here that discursive spaces for a more positive understanding of ethnic difference did open up in this period, as grassroots politics pursued a well-meaning approach to intercultural understanding. However, locally based groups stopped short of making arguments for a greater inclusion of more and different forms of oppression as principally experienced by poor immigrants Kreuzberg’s tenant activists and community organizers made efforts to emphasize shared socioeconomic status and location between “Turks” and Germans in a space marked as marginal, but their approach to bridging those differences had one major limitation.

470 “Liebe Senioren!,” Südost Express, 3, 1978
471 “Liebe Senioren!”
472 Südost Express 6, 1980, 3.
473 Südost Express 6, 1980, 3.
These left-alternative groups active in the neighborhood failed to recognize that the burden of official renewal practices fell disproportionately on migrants from Turkey.

The neighborhood activists working for the Kiez Depesche did not directly call for residents to combat discriminatory housing measures or did it encourage amicable ways to live and work together, but the magazine did provide a venue for Kreuzberg’s migrant residents from Turkey to speak for themselves. The division of the paper into two parts, one German and one Turkish, signaled to residents of Kreuzberg that the contents of each issue concerned not just one resident population, but everyone in the neighborhood. Moreover, the pieces from the Turkish section that appeared in translation gave German-speaking readers insight into both the shared and specific concerns of their Turkish neighbors. This fact, at first glance, might seem trivial; however, seeing as both government policies in 1980s West Germany and public debate cast migrants as passive clients of a benevolent state apparatus, having a voice in neighborhood politics to address specific concerns should not be underestimated.

Perhaps most importantly, a selection of the *Kiez Depesche* articles challenged the passive position assigned to migrants from Turkey by both local government authorities and left-alternative activists. In one issue, the paper reported extensively on an altercation between residents of Kottbusser Strasse 8, home to the German-Turkish association *Verein Autonomes Wohnen*, and the city-owned housing corporation that managed the building. The tone of the report suggests a more complex picture of neighborhood relations than what was typically the case. The residents of the house were a mixed group of German and migrant women from Turkey who had squatted the building two years before. The group was motivated by both a material need for adequate and affordable
housing and concern with the general problem of limited availability of housing for single women with children. In the spring of 1983, they managed to negotiate a lease with the housing corporation to secure their legal status in the building. Not unlike other legalized squats, the residents of Kottbusser Strasse 8 appropriated the built landscape, i.e., the physical building itself, to display their politics. In this particular example, the residents had hung banners outside their windows declaring solidarity with political prisoners in Turkey who were engaged in a hunger strike to protest government torture and mistreatment of detainees. In the Kiez Depesche report, the reader is told that the housing corporation demanded that the banners be removed, but the reasons behind this request were left unmentioned.\textsuperscript{474} Residents of the building, organized in the form of a house committee, refused the request to take down the banners, insisting on their right to freedom of expression.

For the residents of Kottbusser Strasse 8 the dispute initially revolved around the freedom to express their political views. As the dispute swelled, another matter revealed itself to be of central importance: the everyday practices and political cooperation between the German and “foreign” women residing in the apartment house. A spokesperson for the house committee underlined this other, political dimension to the conflict: “In view of the existing xenophobic politics of the government, it is more necessary than ever that Germans and foreigners align together. The public should know that foreigners are not apolitical, isolated individuals but that they follow the sociopolitical developments in Germany with great alarm […] Foreigners are included in a democratic movement against conservatism. Our project provides a concrete

Here, in accentuating the significance of this unique project in the Kottbusser Strasse, the residents confronted the dominant understandings of social relations based on ethnicity and race that were found not only in mainstream German discourse, but also in leftist circles. This example illustrated, as did others in the Kiez Depesche, the political agency of “foreigners” in a social and political context in which notions of timid or acquiescent “guestworkers” still dominated public discourse.  

Neighborhood endeavors to raise awareness of the structural constraints faced by Kreuzberg’s immigrants were invariably embedded in a discourse that emphasized how two culturally distinct entities could ‘get along.’ This narrative did not complicate mainstream notions of German identity that were, and still are, based on an assumed dichotomy between “German” and “foreigners.” For instance, the Südost Express frequently argued that “mutual distrust and incomprehension” derived primarily from language difficulties, competition for work, and a general lack of understanding of a different or “foreign” way of life. Given the nationalist meta-narrative of Germany as a non-immigration country in the face of everyday realities that revealed otherwise, a discussion regularly framed as one of mutual misgivings, of an “us” and a “them,” proved ineffectual. Even if reciprocal mistrust did indeed characterize everyday interactions, analyses by the autonomous left failed to take into full account migrants’ unequal political status and, in turn, did not adequately question the social and political privileges automatically accorded to white, ethnic Germans.

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475 Kiez Depesche, 5, 1983
476 Bojadzijev’s published dissertation, Die windige Internationale, addresses the history of resistance by migrants in Germany. See also, Serhat Karakayali, Gespenste der Migration.
477 Südost Express, 3, 1982.
The left’s tendency to presuppose an analogous status to the one occupied by their migrant neighbors vis-à-vis state power is most obvious in the political tracts, newspapers, and political posters of the more radical wing of the squatters’ scene. Race, in other words, or more accurately the existence of racism, is completely ignored. Like other critics of urban renewal in Kreuzberg, the squatter scene had been instrumental in generating publicity around the issues of affordable housing and corrupt renewal practices. Another goal of the more radical and militant wings of the squatting movement claimed self-managed autonomous spaces that served, among other things, as platforms for political organizing. In the international political climate of the early 1980s, the radical left firmly opposed what they saw as a militarist and capitalist West German state existing in partnership with an imperialist U.S. administration. Given their oppositional political stance, not to mention a lifestyle culturally and socially on the margins of West Germany society, it is perhaps not surprising that the squatters’ scene perceived itself as a target of state repression and acts of private discrimination. These suspicions were not unfounded and are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. But more important for this discussion is the way in which this self-perception helps to explain the limits to radical political discourse and organizing in relation to race and ethnicity.

The West Berlin squatters’ scene generated a high volume of flyers, newspapers, and magazines that circulated throughout the left-alternative scene both in West Berlin and beyond. Among the vast number of pages, one rarely finds any mention of the migrant population residing in Kreuzberg. Again, this may not be surprising given that the scene’s immediate interest lay in disseminating information on the status of the squats, both new and old, addressing issues that divided the scene, as well as providing
information on upcoming political demonstrations or events. In fact, in the few instances when migrants are mentioned at all, these references unabashedly reinforced popular stereotypes of Turks in Germany. In one issue of the Besetzerpost, a mouthpiece of the squatters’ scene, the editorial collective compared Kreuzberg to a cat with nine lives and asked, “How many times in the last decades has Kreuzberg felt the heat? Who all has tried to give the neighborhood its fatal blow?”

It summed up the answer with the following words: “Like a cat, our neighborhood has survived all the strokes of fate thrown at it: wartime bombing, the division of the city and its consequences for [area] residents, the flood of Turks, speculators’ evil deeds, and clear-cut renewal.” The inclusion of the “flood of Turks” within a list of ‘evils’ ranging from physical destruction to exploitative practices reflects a remarkably hostile perception toward the Turkish population – it also employs vocabulary ironically drawn from mainstream and conservative discourse viewing minorities as outsiders threatening to overwhelm German society and culture.

Reading further, one finds a more detailed depiction of each “blow” suffered. Once the wall went up, the neighborhood, according the article, emptied out. But then came the “the economic miracle to give us the third blow: the ‘Kanaken Keule’ – and Kreuzberg became ‘Little Istanbul’ with some streets, now loud and colorful thanks to the Turkish kiddies, almost entirely Turkish.” Following this listing of “serious” blows to the life of the neighborhood, the article declared that, “none of these things could take Kreuzberg down. On the contrary, [the neighborhood] has resisted what those from above

try to threaten us with.”481 Two points are worth noting here. Firstly, the article draws upon common perceptions of the ways in which migrants from Turkey have altered or changed a “German” cityscape by calling attention to the “raucous Turkish kiddies” and the “loud colors” visible in the neighborhood’s streets and squares. Secondly, there is a firm sense of “we” in the article’s depiction of Kreuzberg’s heroic struggle to resist “changes from above,” that is, those imposed by the state. In this instance, the ‘we vs. them’ refers to the squatters and the state, with Kreuzberg portrayed as the “Gallic island resisting the Roman occupation.”482 In this contemporary reenactment of the fictional story in the Asterix comic, the migrants in Kreuzberg do not play a significant role in the struggle.483 In fact, they are ironically cast as tools in the struggle of the oppressor, allied with the German state.

This position is again evident in an article in a newspaper paper for the radical/autonomous left based in West Berlin, Radikal. In it, the anonymous authors appropriate the historical meaning of the term ghetto as a way to initiate a debate on the potential pitfalls of a “ghettoized existence.” They opened the piece by evoking the following references:

The Warsaw ghetto, the Jews’ failed uprising, ghetto uprising in Algiers, ghetto slums in American cities, foreigners – the so-called guest worker ghettos in the BRD; actually ghettos are nothing new, the first in the Middle Ages when Jews tried to sequester themselves from the rest of the population or were sequestered –

483 For an analysis of this fantasy in the context of film, see Barbara Mennel, “Political Nostalgia and Local Memory: The Kreuzberg of the 1980s in Contemporary German Film,” The Germanic Review 82, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 54-77.
but that’s actually not the issue here. We’re in Kreuzberg and this is about our ghetto!\footnote{484} By connecting “their” ghetto to other historical and contemporary forms of ghettos, the authors fail to acknowledge both the widely disparate experiences of the inhabitants of these different “ghettos,” and, even more importantly, the aspect of forced segregation, particularly with reference to the Nazi period. The authors do not differentiate between free choice and limitations or restrictions: “After the Turks began to create their own ghetto in Kreuzberg in the 1960s and 70s, the drop-outs, the squatters, and the alternatives then came along. While the student movement felt at home in bourgeois Charlottenburg, the new movement settled down in close physical contact (\textit{in Tuchfühlung}) to the Turks in the most run-down part of the Berlin.”\footnote{485}

Rather than addressing the underlying structures in place that restricted migrants’ housing choices and opportunities, the article emphasizes the potential of the ghetto as a space of resistance and militancy. Unlike in American cities or Nazi-created ghettos, the authors claimed that this powerful site of resistance would be driven not by oppressed and persecuted religious or racial minorities but by politically oppressed white, leftist Germans. The article posits, “as long as the ghettos remain ghettos, could our Kreuzberg become a new Morazan?”\footnote{486} This likeness of Kreuzberg to the El Salvadoran district known as the stronghold of guerilla resistance and for a 1981 anti-guerilla massacre by the Salvadoran armed forces reveals the limitations the radical left inability to discern its own relationship to subordination and privilege inside the space of Kreuzberg.

\footnote{484}{“Babylon must Burn!,” \textit{Radikal}, 106, 1982, 20.}
\footnote{485}{“Babylon must Burn!,” 19.}
\footnote{486}{“Babylon must Burn!,” 19. Morazan refers to the center of the El Salvadoran guerilla resistance and the 1981 massacre of resistors by state militia.}
Further examples drawn from political posters produced and distributed by the autonomous left make clear this limitation. The posters reflect the political sensibilities of the international solidarity movement and the anti-imperialists, both of whom found their home in Kreuzberg’s squats and political centers. The former supported international solidarity and social justice movements such as the peace movement, anti-apartheid movement, and anti-imperialist politics. In the early 1980s, the main focus of the solidarity movement was the U.S. intervention in Central America. The anti-imperialists shared similar politics with those active in the solidarity movement, but differed in their embrace of a more militant approach to toppling imperialist political entities. This movement aligned itself closely with the Red Army Fraction (RAF) and political prisoners of liberation movements, in particular with Palestinians and Turkish Kurds. Identifying with militant struggles outside of West Germany, these anti-imperialists saw themselves as part of a global revolutionary force. One 1987 poster expressed both solidarity with an imprisoned RAF member at the same time as it called for solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle. The bottom of the poster read: “Not one centimeter for the imperialists, zionists, and fascists – unity to the revolutionary forces world-wide!”

Posters in support of the Central American solidarity movement are graced with images of smiling El Salvadoran or Nicaraguan peasants or farmers with weapons and fists raised high. The posters announce the dates of organized demonstrations and provide

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the bank information of the respective solidarity committee in order to raise money for
material aid. (Figure 4.2) One poster publicizing the 1982 anti-Reagan demonstration in
West Berlin asks: “The question is what we to do in view of the fact that US-imperialism
is still the main enemy of humanity!” Another poster from 1984 declares “No
intervention in Nicaragua!” and provides a more extensive summary of the current
situation on the bottom third of the poster. The last line of the summary affirms that, “the
best form of practical solidarity is still to follow up on our battles with determination
against war preparations against the war preparations and imperialist politics here [in
West Berlin]. They will not pass!”489 These visual representations and the hyperbolic
texts and slogans accompanying the images romanticize a –most often– masculine
revolutionary subject, revealing far more about the self-perception of West German
solidarity movements than the reality of Central American guerilla fighters. This
identification with an anti-imperialist struggle locates the (white, male) German activist –
in a similar position of resistance, but one aimed against the United States via the West
German state.

The combined effect of this solidarity and identification with anti-imperialist
struggles, for which, in most cases, there were no significant demographic or cultural ties,
was that the issue of race (and to a lesser extent gender) was eclipsed by a more
developed analysis of class. An examination of the posters and slogans of the
autonomous left reveals that a discourse of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism in the
1980s did not intersect productively with a discourse on anti-racism. And when a
connection between racism and imperialism was offered, it was often made in an

489 Ibid., 90
international rather than a domestic context. One explanation for this glaring limitation on the part of Kreuzberg’s squatters was that they did indeed face repeated confrontations with police during forced evictions, demonstrations, blockades and riots, particularly in the peak phase of protests in 1982. This constant threat of a violent altercation or eviction increased the left’s own sense of “persecution” as I will continue to show in the next chapter. Given that the autonomous left’s own experience with discrimination was what collectively defined the movement, it was difficult to consider other more insidious sources of oppression and inequality in German society.

Kreuzberg’s radical white activists and squatters repeatedly cast their struggles against an unjust system within a wider, more global framework of interconnected oppressive practices on the part of intertwined state actors. Squatters made links between what they perceived as “the belligerent and plundering politics against peoples of the so-called Third World and American efforts to crush resistance” and the city of Berlin’s “attrition warfare” against squatters, a conflict made visible through forced evictions, early morning searches, the intimidating presence of police vans on neighborhood side streets, night-time provocations, and the increasingly harsh sentences under Paragraph 129a.490 In order to confront state actions both locally and abroad, squatters organized campaign days, demonstrations political events, discussions, street festivals, and formed neighborhood councils and solidarity committees for those they saw as their beleaguered brethren in other parts of the world.

In demonstrating antipathy towards the German state specifically, and U.S. foreign policies more generally, there was a curious lack of awareness in squatters’

articulations of social and political justice. Those vehemently opposed to forms of state injustices, remarkably paid little attention to their politically disenfranchised neighbors. Squatters’ political demands rarely addressed the tenuous housing and residency status of migrants in Kreuzberg or the official housing discrimination undeniably visible in Kreuzberg in the late 1970s and early 80s. In light of the hostile political climate in West Germany in the 1980s in respect to the “foreigner question,” the oppositional character of the left-alternative scene overlooked any efforts to create a multi-ethnic political agenda or political community. Moreover, in rejecting outright all things “German,” a sentiment aptly captured in the punk song “Germany must die so that we can live,”491 radical activists ironically reified a notion of a pure national identity.492 For them, Germanness was real, absolute and unchanging in their eyes, a notion that had little value or resonance amongst migrant workers in West Berlin struggling to acquire a voice in political discussions that concerned them directly (such as housing and other access to public services).493 This tension between the leftist rhetoric and political practices on the ground in terms of incorporating an anti-racist agenda has, to this day, still not been adequately resolved.

491 Joseph Scheer and Jan Espert, Deutschland, Deutschland, alles ist vorbei: alternatives Leben oder Anarchie?: die neue Jugendrevolte am Beispiel der Berliner "Scene" (Munich: Bernard & Graefe, 1982). The punk band Slime from Hamburg wrote the song in 1981.
Figure 4.1: Solidarity with FMLN. Source: [http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1330q.htm](http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1330q.htm)
Figure 4.2: 1980s Solidarity Poster FMLN. Photo in *hoch die kampf dem. 20 Jahre Plakate autonomer Bewegungen*, 1999, 96.
Chapter Five

“Squatting is just the beginning”: Redefining the Cold War Capital

Since its designation as the capital of the newly unified German Empire in 1871, the city of Berlin has been redefined and remade by no less than five different political regimes. Even after the western-half of the city lost its official designation as capital of Germany to Bonn in 1949, Berlin soon came to be identified not only with Germany’s postwar “fate,” but more so as a potent symbol of an ideologically divided world.494 This story is well known. Berlin’s unique geo-political status in the early, volatile years of the Cold War helped establish future references to the partitioned city that evoked images of a global conflict between East and West, of communist aggression and of western freedom and democracy.495

The flash point years between the Berlin Airlift in 1948-1949 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 would secure the rhetorical celebration of West Berlin as a front-line city until the fall of communism in 1989. The Soviet blockade of Berlin’s western sectors and the American and British decision to airlift supplies to West Berliners settled the question of continued U.S. involvement in the occupied city. For the duration of the Cold War, that the Berliners owed their freedom to the valiant efforts of the Western Alliance, especially the United States, was fervently maintained. However, over the course of the 1980s, this dominant, albeit clichéd, narrative and its related

495 For a detailed discussion of how Berlin became the symbolic capital of the Cold War see Steege, Black Market, Cold War; Large, Berlin.
heavy-handed rhetoric was contested as struggles between a new, leftist movement and a conservative West German government began to revolve around contestations over the definition of Berlin on the global stage. In particular, there was tension over the real and the ideal form of Berlin’s relationship to the United States. Both protestors and government leaders at the local and national level saw this issue to be of particular importance, culturally, politically and economically. Both sides perceived the space of West Berlin as crucial for gauging the complex and shifting relations between the United States and the Federal Republic toward the end of the Cold War era. \(\text{Figure 5.1}\)

In the early 1980s, a general atmosphere of dissent focusing on nuclear energy, disarmament, and NATO policies was burgeoning across Western Europe. In the Federal Republic, after several years of relative quiet following the well-publicized leftist radicalism of the early to mid-70s, 1982 saw a new cycle of mass protest that took to the streets to challenge both global and local politics. In response to this unwelcome challenge to their power, political leaders branded these forms of leftist dissent as

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insignificant and its participants as politically and symbolically marginal. Faced directly with these challenges, West Berlin politicians would accomplish this by positioning protesters’ actions and discourse in direct opposition to the supposed values that had defined the city since the Berlin Airlift. By the late 1980s, the mainstream and boulevard press routinely characterized protestors in Kreuzberg in much the same way that then Mayor Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) described them after the May Day riot in 1987: “a clique of anti-Berliners joined together to violently disturb and destroy.”

This language and imagery, in its assignment of anti-government agendas and anti-Berlin aims on the part of the demonstrators, was typical of the time. In fact, Diepgen’s statement encapsulates the official attitude of West Berlin’s politicians, sustained throughout the 1980s, toward moderate to militant manifestations of leftist political protest in the divided city. This rhetorical construction first figured widely just a few years earlier when other, equally unruly demonstrations by leftists in West Berlin undermined the city’s iconic image that owed its very survival to its postwar relationship with the United States. At this time, then Mayor Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU) made attempts to smooth over wide differences in opinion vis-à-vis the Ronald Reagan’s 1982 presidential visit to West Berlin by claiming that:

On the occasion of the American President’s welcome visit to this city some unwelcome guests will be traveling to Berlin to take the opportunity to abuse the right of freedom through violence. These visitors, the majority of whom are not Berliners and who aren’t familiar with the city, are out to damage the issue of

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497 By political establishment I mean here members of parliament from all three major parties, the ruling CDU and its coalition partner the FDP as well as the SPD. The Green Party was the main exception, particularly in the context of West Berlin (The Alternative List). The West Berlin Communist Party (SEW) too was a supporter of the city’s radical, left-alternative scene.

freedom and the related right to peacefully demonstrate right here in Berlin because they are aware of the symbolic meaning Berlin has for freedom.  

Significantly, this vision of the meaning of Berlin still dominated the rhetoric of West Germany’s politicians decades after such defining events as the Airlift, the Freedom Bell gift, and John F. Kennedy’s visit in 1963. West Berlin’s political leader cultivated this image, seeing it as a way to link ideology and economics. By continually fashioning Berlin as a city “saved” by the U.S., this rhetoric allowed West Berliners, and ultimately West Germans at large, to both justify their “special relationship” and to mitigate discord with the United States.

Previous chapters examined the ways in which various social actors resisted or opposed state and local planning. Focusing primarily on questions of design and decision making related to the built environment, these actors contested authorities’ plans and visions of Berlin’s residential buildings, streets, and neighborhoods. Yet the terrain of contestation was not only framed in material terms (as in access to quality housing), but also symbolically. This chapter takes up the latter in more detail and explores the political


500 The Berlin Airlift refers to the decision on the part of the Western Allies to airlift necessary supplies and foodstuffs to the population of Berlin after the Soviets blocked access to the western sectors of the city in 1948-49. It is recognized as the first major Cold War crisis. See Steege, Black Market, Cold War; Richard Collier, Bridge Across the Sky: The Berlin Blockade and the Airlift 1948-1949 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978); Uwe Förster, Auftrag Lufbrücke: Der Himmel über Berlin 1948-1949 (Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 1998). The Freedom Bell is a replica of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. The idea for the gift was inspired by a grassroots campaign and General Lucius D. Clay presented the gift in 1950 to the city of West Berlin. See David E. Barclay, “Beyond Cold War Mythmaking: Ernst Reuter and the United States,” in Germany and America: Essays in Honor of Gerald R. Kleinfeld, ed. Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Daum, Kennedy in Berlin; Gary B. Nash, The Liberty Bell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). President John F. Kennedy’s visited West Berlin in 1963 where he gave his now famous “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech. See Daum, Kennedy in Berlin; Andreas Daum has argued persuasively of the propagandistic purpose of all three events in the context of Cold War Europe.

501 See Daum, Kennedy in Berlin. Michael Geyer in his article, “America in Germany: Power and the Pursuit of Americanization,” emphasizes the element of security that the United States guaranteed West Germany as “one of the single most important reason why Germans came to like Americans and accept their presence;” in Trommler and Shore, eds., The German-American Encounter, 132.
symbolism of West Berlin in the 1980s. The left-alternative scene, concentrated in the district of Kreuzberg, rejected a definition of the city that was couched explicitly in relation to an older model of postwar Berlin. Leftists most visibly critiqued this well-worn meaning attached to the city’s western half during two U.S. state visits to West Berlin in the early years of the Reagan administration—a visit by Secretary of State Alexander Haig in September 1981, and a visit by President Reagan in June 1982. (Figure 5.2)

Both visits inspired hefty controversy among West Germans and Berliners and resulted in widely covered conflicts between protesters and the city government. In the context of uneasy transatlantic relations between the US and West Germany, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which political leaders continued to rely on Berlin as central to their casting of West Germany as a “reliable friend” with respect to the Western Alliance and Reagan’s America. By exploring the highly publicized contestations over the definition of Berlin in relation to America during these two explosive moments, this chapter argues for the importance of the interrelationship between urban space and the evocative power of historically symbolic imagery.

Situating West Berlin

On June 11, 1982 U.S. President Ronald Reagan visited West Berlin after a summit meeting of the NATO Council in Bonn one day before. To the embarrassment of the party leaders, hundreds of thousands of peace and antinuclear demonstrators took to the streets of Bonn and West Berlin to protest Reagan’s foreign and defense policies
concerning rearmament and NATO’s security strategies. The belligerent tone of the new Reagan administration, demonstrated by the president’s explicit commitment to the military build-up already begun under President Jimmy Carter, and the implementation of NATO’s 1979 double-track decision to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles (INF) in several western European countries, had sparked an upsurge in antinuclear and peace protests across the continent. Barely into the first year of Reagan’s first term as president, both Americans and West Germans perceived his administration as marking an important shift in the international power dynamics of the Cold War, and especially, of the complex relations between these two countries. Divergent interests between the Federal Republic and the United States regarding military strategy and foreign policy, such as détente and arms control, widened with a second period of intense rivalry between the superpowers depicted most clearly by Ronald Reagan’s confrontational anticommunist rhetoric.

In terms of West German and American relations, the new Reagan administration embodied an already visible estrangement between the two countries. This was a moment when the threat of nuclear war (augmented by anxieties that it would take place on German soil) seemed closer than it had in decades. Peace activists had been

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502 The numbers reported in the German press on the day after the respective demonstrations were: Bonn over 300,000 estimated, and 100,000 in West Berlin on 10 June and between 2000 and 3000 on June 11. I do not argue here that West Berlin was the center of the peace movement in the 1980s, but rather for the sake of better understanding German-American relations, it is West Berlin’s protest movements and alternative scene that interests me.


organizing throughout the 1970s in response to West German defense policies, but small protests grew into mass demonstrations in response to the bellicose rhetoric of the Reagan presidency and the related concern that the American president could quite possibly instigate a third world war. The salience of the peace protests in West Berlin, and more generally in West Germany, owed much to the country’s vulnerable geo-strategic position in Cold War Europe.

The growth of the peace movement in the early 1980s presented a domestic problem for Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (SPD), who, in the face of increased opposition within his own party and by protest groups, was confronted with the task of defending his support for INF deployment. Schmidt saw the modernization of intermediate-range nuclear forces as crucial to European security, yet this vision clashed with Reagan’s arms-control policy and his desire to restore American military superiority believed by Reagan to be weakened during the era of détente. Schmidt’s efforts to maintain a delicate balance between a strong alliance with the West (i.e., United States) while endorsing an open policy of détente contributed to the rift between West Germany and an American administration intent on abandoning this policy. Despite diverging interests between the transatlantic partners, there was no doubt that a strong commitment to the alliance was a clear priority of the Schmidt government. Nonetheless, West German and American relations reached a low point in the early 1980s as the Schmidt government continued to assert West German interests independently of, and often in direct conflict with the United States.

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By the latter years of the Cold War, American presidential visits to West Berlin, or more specifically the Berlin Wall, had established themselves as ritualized acts; they both drew upon the historical importance of positive German-American relations, and recreated it for TV cameras, reporters, and crowds of enthusiastic onlookers.\textsuperscript{506} In 1982, confronted with Reagan’s confrontational global politics, the massive protests of a sizeable number of West Berliners, and specifically how they were staged, offered an explicit challenge to this traditionally positive history; in doing so, these protests reflected the growing cracks in the long-cherished model of positive West German-American relations, challenging a central narrative of postwar Europe and United States. Ultimately these challenges, which were rekindled in the relatively small context of West Berlin local politics, were to continue throughout the 1980s, and they went on to redefine the meaning of the autonomous German left, as well as the contours of the German-American “partnership”.

The peace marches of 1982 were but one element in a wave of protests between 1979 and 1983 that confronted both West German and American political leaders. This wave of peace and anti-nuclear protests, in fact, surpassed in sheer numbers of participants the protest activities of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{507} An undeniable element of anti-American rhetoric, long a mainstay of German protests both on the left and right, became clearly

\textsuperscript{506} It is perhaps worth mentioning here that in the popular discourse it is Reagan’s second visit to West Berlin in 1987 that is most often referenced. This is due largely to Reagan’s speech at the Brandenburg Gate in which he stated, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

\textsuperscript{507} Sociologist Ruud Koopmans’ work confirms that new social movements (NSM) in West Germany were concentrated in two periods – one in the late 1960s and another in the 1980s. His analysis shows that at least quantitatively the protests in the early 1980s surpassed those of the late 1960s. For literature on the West German peace movement of the 1980s see Joyce Marie Mushaben, “Grassroots and Gewaltfreie Aktionen: A Study of Mass Mobilization Strategies in the West German Peace Movement,” \textit{Journal of Peace Research} 23, no. 2 (June 1986): 141-54; Alice Holmes Cooper, “Public-Good Movements and the Dimensions of Political Process,” Postwar German Peace Movements, in \textit{Comparative Political Studies} 29, no. 3 (June 1996): 267-89.
visible during the protest activism of this period, and indeed assumed a greater role in West German protest culture than it had in previous decades. Although this general trend was also true of other protest movements elsewhere in Europe at the time, the intimate involvement of the US in West German politics, culture, and society since 1945 bestowed a more complicated meaning to anti-American sentiments in West German protest movements. The anti-Reagan demonstrations in West Berlin in 1981 and 1982 took place against this backdrop of fraught German-American relations, during a time when the U.S. first began to develop concerns over West Germany’s commitment to the security of the Atlantic Alliance.

The fact that more general American concerns over Germany focused on Berlin was neither novel nor a surprise. The special symbolic power of Berlin was not unique to the Cold War period, as Berlin enjoyed iconic status nationally and internationally during Imperial, Weimar and Nazi Germany, when the erstwhile capital held a central place in the political, cultural, and social debates that have shaped our understanding not only of Germany itself, but of the nature of European modernity. As we have seen, as the “world’s greatest tenement city,” Berlin was emblematic of the social extremes of the nineteenth-century industrial capital. In the early twentieth century, it became a symbol of modernity as the home of modern architecture. Most vividly in 1945, the city marked the global ambitions and then absolute defeat of Nazi Germany. However, in the period between 1945 and 1989, West German politicians, with the backing of the Western

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508 American and West German relations are often characterized as a long love-hate relationship rooted in Germany’s conflicted relationship to modernization tracing at least to the late 19th century and being particularly strong during the Weimar and of course then the Nazi years. These tensions intensified after 1945 in the wake of American occupation and economic policy. For studies that demonstrate the complexities of the German-American encounter in the postwar period see Poiger, Jazz, Rock, and Rebels; Höhn, GIs and Fräuleins.
alliance, constituted the social identity of the city’s western half as the “better” Berlin, in opposition to their unfortunate brothers and sisters in the city’s eastern half.

As social and cultural historians have demonstrated, Adenauer’s path to political respectability for the new, democratic state of West Germany included an active consumer culture, for which the idea of a “good capitalist” was linked to everyday practices of consumption. West Berlin represented the symbol of the Cold War; a divided city, with its western section embedded deep inside of the Soviet sphere, it represented both the threat of communism and the vital importance of western capitalism as a counter-balance and bulwark. Berlin ultimately came to embody the political and moral superiority of the West. Already in the immediate postwar period, the Berlin Blockade with its infamous Airlift and the subsequent Marshall Plan had succeeded in displaying to an avidly watching world American economic, moral and political superiority over the Soviets, and at the same time, of course, capturing the devotion of West Berliners.

After surrendering its political status as the capital of Germany to the little-known “provincial capital” of Bonn, and losing its economic vitality as a result of the division, Berlin’s symbolic power became all the more crucial to the dynamic process of reinventing an identity for the western half of the city. The image of West Berlin that was projected to the world in the first decades of the Cold War was one built on the idea of the city as an outpost of western democracy in a divided Europe, a site that served as grounds for the U.S. to continue investing in the city. In the process of creating a “new” Berlin in postwar Europe, America, as Andreas Daum has argued, clung to a perception

509 Moeller, ed., West Germany under Construction; Schissler, The Miracle Years.
of the city as a place that mirrored specific historical myths and political visions of the United States.  

According to Daum, the dissonance between how Americans imagined the city, and Berliners’ perception of themselves and their city, grew steadily wider throughout the Cold War, reaching new heights during the anti-Vietnam student protests of the 1960s. As is now well-documented, the mid- to late- 1960s saw the first fractures in the idealized view of America that West German youth had grown up with. The expectations of a benevolent and morally credible America clashed with the reality of the Civil Rights Movement and U.S. military strategy in Vietnam. Yet as Mary Nolan notes in her analysis of anti-Americanism and Americanization in Germany, the protests against the Vietnam War led by West German students did not mark a definitive worsening of German-American relations. Instead, she argues, the political anti-Americanism of the ‘68ers found little resonance in broader discourse, remaining essentially a fringe phenomenon. In the early 1980s, this had changed. The appeal and reach of the peace movement to a broader West German public played a role in this shift. The palpable rift between the West German public and the United States in the early

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1980s points to a transformative phase in the ever more conflicted relationship between the two countries.\(^{515}\)

To be sure, the loaded symbolism that defined the character of West Berlin did not possess equal intensity throughout the four Cold War decades. The 1961 construction of the Wall refocused tremendous international attention on the city, which gained an international symbolic value only matched in importance by the 1948 Airlift. This wave of renewed obsession with Berlin waned however, and the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement, which marked an international acceptance of the division of Berlin, settled the issue of Berlin ever again becoming the flashpoint of any future East/West conflict. For the West, both the FRG and the U.S., the agreement also marked a gradual decrease in popular and political interest in West Berlin, as its status was no longer tensely ambiguous. In a practical sense, the agreement also “normalized” the lives of West Berliners, as access in and out of the city, as well as more casual dealings vis-à-vis daily amenities became easier.\(^{516}\) In the domain of politics, throughout the course of the 1970s and early 80s Berlin was gradually transformed from a site of heightened political tensions on an international scale to a city that, at least politically, commanded little attention.\(^{517}\)

\textit{Kreuzberg: A Cradle of Protest}

It is at first glance ironic, then, that from the 1960s through to the fall of the Wall the increasingly depoliticized West Berlin became a refuge for \textit{Andersdenkende} – those


\(^{516}\) Wolfgang Ribbe, \textit{Geschichte Berlins}.

\(^{517}\) By politically I mean here the city’s centrality in diplomatic relations; in national politics it certainly remained present in the minds of West Germans as subsidies continued to flow into the city to keep it alive.
who sought an escape from the perceived social, political, and cultural conformity of the West German provinces. The anti-NATO and anti-Reagan demonstrations I focus on in this chapter drew a broad segment of their support from this left-alternative milieu or “scene.” As I have discussed at length in earlier chapters, this “scene” does not lend itself to easy classification. It was comprised of ecological and political groups of various grades of dogmatism, local grassroots organizations, punks, and a growing faction of radical autonomous groups. Moreover, unlike the composition of the APO and student movement of the 1960s, there was a distinct shift away from the university as the locus of, and recruiting pool for political protest as discussed in Chapter Three.\footnote{Participants came from working to lower to middle class families, but many came to Berlin either to do or after their vocational training (Ausbildung). Many kept their from typical middle class professions and when then on the margins of these profession working for political projects/collectives. AG Grauwacke, Autonome in Bewegung: aus den ersten 23 Jahren (Berlin: Assoziation A, 2008), 40.}

In the late 1970s resident and activist claims to the neighborhood, and by extension claims to “their” definition of the city, began to manifest itself politically through the physical occupation of empty apartments and buildings. The forms of protest action taken in the 1980s that displayed outrage over the city’s mismanaged redevelopment policies dovetailed with a struggle not only over an evident material need, i.e., affordable housing, but also for the right to organize and define one’s own living and work environment, i.e., self-administration over self-organized spaces (Freiräume). As the squatter movement radicalized, the squats, and the expansion of the alternative infrastructure they helped make possible, became important sites for the intersection of local struggles and a radical critique of political issues that transcended regional and national boundaries. Perhaps more significantly, the squats represented places where
one’s politics and civic identity were lived out, shaped, and literally displayed within the urban landscape.

It was during the 1970s that the main pulse of the “scene” had moved, albeit briefly, from the politicized West Berlin of the 1960s to the West German provinces. It was here, in the rural and sparsely populated countryside of Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Bavaria, and Baden-Württemberg, that militant protests and attempts to block the sites (or potential sites) of nuclear power stations led to the emergence of alternative camps “occupying” sites in Wyhl, Brokdorf, and Gorleben. By 1980 however, a new phase of Berlin protest, thanks to the city’s function as a center of the squatting movement, acquired a particularly spatial aspect as West Berlin became once again a hub of alternative protest.519 Throughout this decade, the way in which space was occupied revealed a struggle of opposing visions and the political remaking of urban space.

The early 1980s signaled the emergence of a new generation of leftists who were eager to show that their antipathy towards NATO’s missile policies extended beyond just the policies of a particular administration, and represented a larger systemic critique of the Federal Republic, the West and capitalism. Going back to the 1960s, the extra-parliamentary left in Germany and throughout much of the world began linking the United States with the excesses of market capitalism and consumerism. West German 68ers joined students around the globe in opposing U.S. capitalism and imperialism in addition to holding critical views of American foreign policies. What differed in the early 1980s was that protest visibly opposed not only American foreign policies and the

519 Dieter Rucht points to two factors, continuity over time and the extraordinary size of West Berlin’s protest scene, as way to explain the perception of the city as the “capital” of the West German leftist and alternative movements in his discussion of the anti-Reagan and anti-IMF campaigns in his article, with Jürgen Gerhards, “Mesomobilization: Organizing and Framing in Two Protest Campaigns in West Germany,” The American Journal of Sociology 98, No. 3 (November, 1992): 570.
American military presence in West Germany and West Berlin, but also American culture and society as a model to be emulated.\(^{520}\)

To be sure, demonstrations against nuclear armament and Reagan’s foreign policies was certainly not unique to the political agenda of activists in West Berlin; in the week leading up to the planned June 10 and 11 demonstrations in Bonn and Berlin, the Federal Congress of Autonomous Peace Initiatives (\textit{Bundeskongreß autonome Friedensinitiativen} or BAF) organized an anti-NATO week that took place in towns and cities across the Federal Republic.\(^{521}\) However, unlike in Bonn and numerous other sites of protest in West Germany, the character and intensity of the anti-NATO and Reagan protests in Berlin was unequivocally linked to the struggle around and definition of urban space and the defense of those spaces that had radicalized the movement in the months before Haig and Reagan’s visits to the city.

In an editorial piece in the \textit{taz} former Kommune I member Dieter Kunzelmann declared just days after the demonstration in Berlin on June 11 that the image of “a harmonious Berlin on the day of Reagan’s visit can now no longer be reproduced despite the many efforts to do so such as police violence, the position taken by the [mainstream] media, and the jubilant Berliners carted off to the official reception.”\(^{522}\) For Kunzelmann,

\(^{520}\) On the formal and informal networks of collaboration between activists in the 1960s, especially between West Germans and Americans, see for example, Martin Klimke, “The ‘Other’ Alliance: Global Protest and Student Unrest in West Germany and the U.S. 1962-1972,” (PhD diss., Heidelberg University, 2005); Schmidtke, \textit{Der Aufbruch der jungen Intelligenz}. For studies on the relationship between youth and consumer cultures in the 1960s and 1970s, see Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., \textit{Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980} (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).


\(^{522}\) Dieter Kunzelmann, “Nur die allerdümmmsten …,” \textit{die tageszeitung}, June 14, 1982. In 1982 Kunzelmann, former member of West Berlin’s most well known 1960s commune, was a member of West Berlin’s Green Party, the Alternative List.
the demonstrations in Berlin metaphorically broke the “bubble” of what he described as the supposed political “consensus of West Berliners with the warmongers in the Pentagon.” In the aftermath of the anti-Reagan demonstration, Kunzelmann was not alone in his assessment of the heightened political situation as a continuum that linked the state’s “harassment” (e.g., protest banners torn down from squatted houses, political stickers confiscated, the right to demonstrate restricted; all perceived by the left-alternative scene as justified acts of protest) to the very recent official responses to the squatters’ defense of the squats.

In the months immediately preceding Haig’s visit, the large squatter movement took on ever more radical forms in response to the repressive tactics of the newly formed CDU Senate elected in May 1981. The main hard-liner in the CDU-led government under Weizsäcker was the Interior Minister, Heinrich Lummer. For many of the city’s squatters and their sympathizers, Lummer’s penchant for large-scale forced evictions over talks at the negotiating table led squatters to conclude that, “instead of pursuing a change in housing policies, the CDU is planning a civil war.” Hard-hitting measures intensified under the CDU-led Senate that included severe prison sentences for first-time offenders arrested at either demonstrations or in clashes with the police during forced evictions. The hard-line faction in the CDU emphasized internal security. Concretely, this meant increasing threats of eviction and the criminalization of squatters and demonstrators under Paragraph 129 (supporting or forming a terrorist organization). The squatting movement entered a new phase of confrontation.

523 Kunzelmann, “Nur die allerdümmsten . . .”
Around the same time, the broader public sympathy and outcry over mismanaged renewal policies that had followed the spate of “rehab” squats in 1979 and 1980 dwindled as the squatter movement grew in size and its methods of resistance became more militant. It would be accurate to say that the conservative and boulevard press had no small part to play in this development of waning public support. Until the end of 1980, public sympathizers had also included politicians in the Berlin Senate who sided with the “rehab” squatters. Most notably, SPD representative Walter Momper, who, ironically, as Lord Mayor of the newly unified city in 1990 gave the orders to evict 13 squats in the former East Berlin district of Friedrichshain.\(^525\) After the first major conflict between squatters and the police on December 12, 1980, the boulevard press made its way through the familiar round of name-calling. The \textit{B.Z.} cautioned the public to “distance yourselves from the criminals!” \textit{Der Abend} reported that the “hooligans and rabble-rousers are out to ruin our city!” \(^526\) At the movement’s apex in the spring and summer of 1981 with close to 165 squats, the press produced weekly reports that depicted demonstrators and squatters as “terrorists, criminals, anarchists, and subversive elements” who were out to “ruin our city!” \(^527\)

That summer the escalation in evictions, searches, and further arrests under Paragraph 129a inspired a new wave of sympathizers ranging from public intellectuals, writers, professors, high school teachers, filmmakers, journalists, Lutheran pastors, and left-wing organizations who vocalized their support of the movement at demonstrations with participants numbering in the tens of thousands. As the threat of evictions worsened,


\(^{527}\) Ibid.
sympathizers organized “godparent” groups declaring their sponsorship of individual squats in Kreuzberg and Schöneberg. This was done largely with the goal of “talking to all parties concerned in order to ward off any further intensification of the political climate.” In addition to their roles as political interlocutors, 43 godparents temporarily moved into nine squats in July of 1981 following an announcement by the Senate that it would soon evict residents of these nine buildings. These godparents hoped that their acts of solidarity would encourage a “peaceful solution” and prevent, as Free University theology professor Helmut Gollwitzer cynically observed, “[Interior Minister] Lummer from taking advantage of the summer to systematically evict squats, since [he thinks that] all potential sympathizers would be vacationing in Crete.” In doing his part to show support, Günther Grass, godfather to a squat on Bülowstrasse, threatened to “never read in Berlin again” if the CDU government evicted his sponsored squat.

In response to the impending evictions that summer, a group of Kreuzberg squatters made an announcement of their own, a TUWAT or “Do Something” congress to open on August 25, 1981. In the words of the anonymous TUWAT organizers:

TUWAT means a spectacle. A congress, a festival as a symbol for the battle that unites us. Located in Berlin, the divided arse of nations. Berlin, the place that reveals Cold War politics in its purest form. A battle that is conducted against us. The Berlin government has declared war on us. Nine squats, that mean more to us than just a place to live, are going to be evicted. The government wants to destroy our living space (Lebensraum) and community networks. We’ll use this chance to show those who still believe that they can do to us what they please what we really think […] Do something (TUWAT) against organized inhumanity!

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529 Interview with Gollwitz in Die Zeit, July 31, 1981.
TUWAT organizers urged “squatters, anti-nuclear power activists, anti-imperialists, feminists, anarchists, punks, hippies, gays and lesbians, anti-militarists, socialists, and anti-fascists” from all around Europe to join them in West Berlin. This colorful appeal for the TUWAT congress earned the attention of the Berlin’s President of the German Police Union, Egon Franke, who suggested to the city’s Interior Minister and Police President that they ban a planned demonstration on August 11 given the “terrorists’ announcement under the heading of TUWAT to bring the city a “troubled autumn” (einen heissen Herbst).” Taking it step further, Franke told Der Spiegel that after the TUWAT declaration, “it has to be clear to everyone now that the situation is no longer just about a housing shortage, but rather about the end of democratic life in Berlin.”

The TUWAT congress, as it turned out, was not the watershed event of the year as anticipated by both the organizers and police officials. Instead, talks between the mayor and numerous groups seeking a peaceful solution to the squatters’ movement, such as the former Evangelical Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg Kurt Scharf, SPD and AL politicians, and “godparent” groups continued until late August. Despite arguments from one “godparent” group, the Initiative Against the Escalation of Violence, that “police violence may well suppress social conflicts, but it can’t resolve them,” it was becoming clear to all involved that the CDU was no longer interested in returning to the negotiating table. It was during this volatile civic situation that U.S. Secretary of State Haig arrived in the West Berlin on September 13, 1981.

The left-alternative squatters’ scene utilized the two U.S. state visits to frame their defense of the squats in a larger context that not only questioned the existing world

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533 “Einzug auf zeit in Besetzte Häuser,” 1.
system, but also the values upon which the city’s official representation was based. In attempts to embarrass city officials during the visits, squatters evoked a specific language familiar to a West Berlin audience. In one flyer, distributed after the last tenant was evicted from a tenement in Schöneberg, squatters in the neighborhood called on Berliners to “Look upon this city! People only interested in money and profit are destroying an intact residential area without taking any care for the residents or their needs.” Others placards located strategically in Kreuzberg read, “Attention! You are now leaving the democratic sector of Kreuzberg (Achtung! Hier verlassen sie den demokratischen Sektor Kreuzbergs).” Defending their self-administered centers and squats from a city government they perceived as hostile, the left-alternative scene “welcomed” not with open arms but with loud displays of open animosity. Secretary of State Haig and President Reagan to the city in which “the Cold War is felt in its purest form,” albeit a war that the left-alternative scene felt was “being waged against [them].”

The Proxy Visit: The Secretary of State in West Berlin

Before the demonstrations in West Berlin that greeted Ronald Reagan’s Berlin visit in 1982 –his first visit overseas since taking office in January 1981– Reagan’s Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, paid a visit to the city on September 13 and 14, 1981. This visit was a crucial predecessor to the presidential visit the following year. It triggered an immense outpouring of hostility from left-alternative protest groups toward American policies. During his four-day trip to Europe, Haig met in Bonn with West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dieter Genscher (FDP), and then, on September 14, he

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536 Haig signed The Golden Book of West Berlin at the City Hall in the name of President Reagan.
addressed the Berlin Press Association in West Berlin. In his speech to the Press Association, Haig defended a military buildup in response to the East-West conflict by suggesting that there was evidence to show that the Soviet Union and its allies were employing illegal chemical weapons in Southeast Asia.\(^537\) Haig went on to reassure western European governments of the Reagan administration’s commitment to an arms reduction with a plea for an East-West military balance, and furthermore warned that without this precondition there could be no policy of détente.\(^538\) Despite direct appeals by the West German government (the SPD and its coalition partner the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the youth wings of both parties, in concert with the West Berlin’s Green Party the Alternative List, the Protestant Students’ Association of the Free University and Abroad, the Socialist Unity Part of West Berlin, and the Youth Initiative against Rearmament, along with a remarkable fifty-two other organizations, successfully organized a demonstration on the day of Haig’s visit.\(^539\)

The demonstration caused a great degree of embarrassment for West German and West Berlin political leaders. Raised with a deep belief in the affection that linked Berlin with the USA, the leaders of the established parties were disturbed by the atmosphere of anti-American sentiment and feared that the protests would send the wrong message not only to the Reagan administration but to the American public at large.\(^540\)

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\(^537\) “Haig in European Trip Stresses Soviet Threat; Focus on Western Alliance,” *World News Digest*, September 18, 1981.

\(^538\) “Genscher und Haig bekräftigen gemeinsame Bündnispolitik,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 15, 1981.

\(^539\) “Demonstration, Sonntag, 13.9.1981,” flyer, Papiertiger Archive and Library, Berlin. At least fifty other organizations ranging from the feminist magazine *Courage*, the West Berlin Homosexual Action Group to the Berlin Tenant’s Association supported the demonstration.

official pleas for order and restraint, the protest organizers mobilized under the general slogan, “there is nothing more important than peace!” turning on its head an alleged comment by Haig in which he declared “there are more important things than peace.”\textsuperscript{541} Protest groups rallied participants by characterizing the Reagan administration as promoting a reactionary politics, one that was “deluded by its superpower status and as a result, show[ed] ruthlessness vis-à-vis anyone who dare[d] to stand in the way of Washington’s interests.”\textsuperscript{542} In the same flyer, distributed in the days before the demonstration, the organizers explained their decision to protest Haig’s presence in the city:

A man whose country only knows war as something that happens in other places is trying to obscure the fact that our country could become a battlefield for the second time this century. This man is a provocation to us all! And we must show him this by taking to the streets.\textsuperscript{543}

At a historical moment when the security of West German citizens seemed, for many, to be at risk, Secretary of State Haig acutely symbolized U.S. foreign and defense policies. Those opposed to U.S. policy held the expectation that Haig would try to defend the U.S.’s position on rearment by framing these issues as a defense strategy. In contrast, WBAL, one of the group’s organizing the protest, claimed German superiority by dint of WWII in expressing its opposition to Haig’s visit in a full-page editorial in West Berlin’s daily \textit{Der Tagesspiegel} titled, “Do something for security in Berlin and elsewhere –Rid Europe of nuclear arms!”\textsuperscript{542} The Alternative List promoted the stance that Germany, and in particular Berlin was the “symbol of East-West confrontation in Europe” and was the

\textsuperscript{541} “Ruling Parties’ Youth Wings Plan to Protest Haig’s West Berlin Visit,”\textit{New York Times}, September 9, 1981


\textsuperscript{543} “Es gibt nichts wichtigeres als den Frieden, Mister Haig!”
most important starting point of the peace movement. Only here in embattled Berlin would signs of any willingness to disarm be as urgent but also the most believable.544

On the day of the demonstration, West Berliners gathered in front of city hall in the West Berlin neighborhood of Schöneberg, where John F. Kennedy had delivered the first and more memorable of his two West Berlin speeches almost twenty years earlier, in order to receive U.S. Secretary of State Haig.545 As he gave his speech, a demonstration involving between 40,000 and 60,000 participants marched through the neighborhood carrying homemade placards with anti-Haig/USA slogans painted on them.

Contemporary observers noted that the demonstration was the largest protest in West Berlin since the anti-Vietnam protests in the late 1960s.546 Violence broke out after several hundred of the protesters exited the demonstration and moved their demonstration closer to the City Hall. In part due to the 1979 assassination attempt on Haig in Brussels in his role as commander of NATO and concurrent attacks on U.S. military bases in southern Germany, the police deployment in the city was significant. Haig never glimpsed the protest or the riot, yet later once he had been briefed on the afternoon’s events he defended the demonstrators’ right to protest. Just as the announcement of a planned protest had stirred public debate in the days leading to Haig’s visit, the actual day, and especially the brawl between police and radical protestors, was to generate even more heated discussion.

In the days after the visit, SPD executive director Peter Glotz responded in *Die Zeit* to a criticism by the West German daily the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ).* The *FAZ* editorial had accused the SPD of undermining the integrity of the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*) by not banning the demonstration outright; “the whole thing is an alarming piece of today’s reality. The rule of law has degenerated to such an extent that it is incapable of confronting threatening mass violence initiated by political extremists.”\(^{547}\) In an evocation of Nazism, Glotz responded by warning against the danger of restricting the freedom of assembly in the name of protecting the rule of law. Further he noted that, “this city cannot simply stand by and watch as the right to demonstrate is smashed to bits.”\(^{548}\) He did not however throw his support wholeheartedly behind the organizers of the demonstration. In his rebuke of the Young Socialists and Young Democrats, Glotz criticized the organizers for losing their political perspective in their commitment to the protest:

> Of all places to demonstrate against the Americans, those who demonstrate in Berlin has to reckon with and take into account the inevitable support of the Moscow-loyal West Berlin Communist Party and a violent crowd of “professional demonstrators.” With these two groups supporting the demonstration, even the most honest of motivations cannot be held free from blame. A demonstration [against the U.S. in Berlin] might win over a part of the younger generation, but will damage wider public sympathy and/or support from all others.\(^{549}\)

Glotz divides West Berlin leftists into two disparate groups: communists loyal to Moscow, and German leftists, some of whom he clearly believed were well intentioned but naïve. Glotz frowned upon this naïveté and the failure of the Young Socialists and Young Democrats to discern both the symbolism and the danger of protesting in West

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\(^{547}\) Quoted in “Ein Lehrstück für die Deutschen,” *Die Zeit*, September, 1981.

\(^{548}\) Quoted in “Ein Lehrstück für die Deutschen.”

\(^{549}\) Quoted in “Ein Lehrstück für die Deutschen.”
Berlin. Glotz argued that that precisely in West Berlin—a city in a sense created and maintained by the Americans—the implications of such a protest were profound. His fear pointed to the unraveling of a symbolic thread held dearly by state officials. His editorial pointed to the tensions inside the city and the widening schism he saw between a substantial population of left-leaning alternatives, a militant autonomous movement, and communist party members on the one side, and political leaders intent on maintaining a status quo relationship with the Americans on the other.

The tensions surrounding the question of West Berlin-American relations were evident in political discourse of the time. The new Christian Democrat mayor Richard von Weizsäcker confirmed a strong identification with America and a support of continued U.S. presence in West Berlin in an interview he gave in Die Welt in July 1981, one month after the mayoral election and just two months before Haig’s visit. Weizsäcker’s remarks in the interview clearly articulate the symbolic role he assigned to West Berlin in European, and even more so in international politics. In response to the question of whether or not he believed that Berlin was still the pressure point between East and West, Weizsäcker replied that the city of West Berlin was no longer a place where the East would exert its military muscle to put pressure on the West; however, he added that Berlin was still a vitally important symbol. The mayor insisted proudly that in fact the very importance and multiple meanings of Berlin were present in the heads of both the East and West.\footnote{Die Welt, July 7, 1981.} In addition to asserting America’s importance for West Berlin, Weizsäcker reminded readers of West Berlin’s importance for the Federal Republic at large. In fact, Weizsäcker grounded his confidence in West Berlin’s political centrality to
the rest of West Germany in West Berlin’s role as a unique indicator of German-American relations. He insisted that West Berlin’s special status as an occupied city meant that,

one is aware of things more quickly here [in Berlin] more so than in Bonn as to the kind of effect the actions of Germans or Europeans have on America. Berliners live with the Americans on a daily basis. To be sure, living in Berlin one cannot easily forget what the Americans have done for this city and one can also not lose sight of the fact that the freedom we gained and now enjoy would be impossible without the protection of the Allied powers.\(^{551}\)

According to Weizsäcker, an examination of Berlin is quite explicitly the only way to approach the question of German-American relations. Again, Weizsäcker’s emphasis on West Berlin’s special relationship to the Americans is grounded historically and implies the belief that any critique of the U.S. administration can only be read as a direct insult to one’s “neighbor” (the U.S. presence in West Berlin); as a result, within the walls of West Berlin there was no space, both literally and figuratively, for anti-American protestors. (Figure 5.3)

The fact that Haig’s visit moved 50 000 people to demonstrate against American defense policies, and that the protest ultimately escalated into a street fight between the police and a segment of the protestors, prompted an immediate apology by a deeply embarrassed Weizsäcker. Dismissing the tens of thousands of protesters as not representing the “true face” of the city, the mayor declared West Berlin’s deep-seated commitment to the Alliance, and publicly invited Reagan to pay a visit to the city in order to get a glimpse of West Berlin’s loyalty and to hear the “true voice” of the Germans. Yet as Die Zeit’s correspondent in Washington Michael Naumann aptly noted in an opinion

\(^{551}\) Die Welt, July 7, 1981.
piece four days after Haig’s visit, both the audience and city had changed over the past decade. Gone were the days of the city welcoming early Cold War rhetoric that boldly positioned western democratic ideals against Soviet communism, the sort of rhetoric that had so endeared John F. Kennedy to the hearts of Berliners nearly two decades earlier.552

The debates that surrounded the Haig visit, and both the official and unofficial reception he received in West Berlin, are significant for two reasons. On the one hand, the Haig visit would become a reference point for Reagan’s visit to West Berlin months later, one used both by the left and the establishment in their respective narratives of the events that followed. On the other hand, Haig, in addition to Bonn and Berlin’s political elite, called upon early Cold War rhetoric in order to evoke an older tradition of mutual affection, an obvious attempt to temper emerging differences between the two countries on questions of policy. This appeal to emotional symbols, however, while it reinforced a particular and traditional image of West Berlin, was now being met with less and less acceptance on the ground level.

Beginning at least with the Berlin Blockade and lasting throughout the Cold War period, continual acts of (re)-constructing Berlin evoked (or manipulated) a specific mythology of Berlin that served West Germans and Americans alike. This shared understanding of the meaning and history of West Berlin served as a stage onto which a carefully crafted image of German-American friendship could be projected and acted out. This relationship literally shaped the space of Berlin as well; the flow of American dollars, as well as West German funds, rebuilt a new, capitalist democratic Berlin out of the rubble of the western half of the former capital of Nazi Germany.

By the 1980s, however, both Germany and the USA had changed, and this old, postwar model of relations no longer reflected reality, even though it remained decidedly meaningful for some. West Germany of 1980 was Europe’s strongest economy, a confident player in global politics, and a country with a sizable military force. America as well had changed. From the original agenda of Marshall-funds driven reconstruction of West Germany as a key recipient of American overproduction and an important player in the establishment of the USA as a global super power, the priorities had changed by the 1980s. The patriotic confidence about America’s leading role in the world during the Reagan years followed a decade marked by a period of low confidence in the American political ethos resulting from an economic downturn, a political crisis and the loss of credibility at home and abroad. The years of the Reagan administration, on the other hand, countered this political atmosphere by pursuing a hard line policy of anti-communism to instill a sense of optimism and the belief that a new golden age for America was on the horizon. These changes were to come to a head in the events leading up to and during President Reagan’s 1982 visit to West Berlin.

Once President Reagan’s state visit to West Berlin was made public (in addition to his attendance at the NATO summit in Bonn), a broad spectrum of antinuclear and anti-Reagan protest groups started to mobilize in West Berlin in the weeks leading up to the visit. In a city that continued to be metaphorically defined by early Cold War events, the Berliners who gathered to show President Reagan that he was not welcome did not simply reject the policies of a specific American administration; they also proposed a

553 That is, Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, and an economic /energy crunch.
radical reformulation of a city whose laurels had rested on its ritualistic ties to the United States. The discourse of local peace and anti-Reagan protests was part of a larger dialogue concerning American rearmament that extended beyond West Germany’s borders.  

President Reagan’s Visit to the “Occupied” City

The visits by Secretary of State Haig and President Reagan signaled a new phase in the development in German-American relations after 1945. As I have suggested, these two official visits, most notably Ronald Reagan’s, marked the moment when it became apparent to both the American and German political elite that the long cherished Cold War framework for defining the city as pro-American no longer resonated with a growing number of West Berlin’s residents (i.e., no longer evoked the same sense of loyalty on the part of the West Berliners). Even before Reagan set foot on German soil, the West German political establishment trumpeted the president’s planned trips to Bonn and West Berlin as a “signal” of the still strong German-American partnership.  

556 The FAZ reported in 2002, shortly before President George W. Bush’s visit to Berlin, that according to representatives of the American Embassy in Berlin, in the last five and a half decades Berlin has held the rank of the foreign city most frequently visited by U.S. Presidents. This regularity comes as no surprise in light of the historical relationship between Americans and “their” city, a relationship that many deem as “special” even seventeen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. See article in the FAZ in which Berliner Gesine Schwan (now President of Viadrina European University in Frankfurt/Oder and then political science professor at the Free University in Berlin as well as member of the SPD’s Commission of Basic Values from which she was removed in 1984 for her critique of Ostpolitik) defends her initiative in 1982 to post an advert in the newspaper with signatures of like-minded university professors in which they spoke on behalf of all Berliners by emphasizing their gratitude to the Americans for securing the existence of West Berlin and underscored they know who their friends are, despite not always being of the same opinion.”Noch mal abdrucken! 1982 wurde Ronald Reagan mit einer Zeitungsanzeige begrüsst: Eine Initiative von Gesine Schwan,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, May 22, 2002. See also, New York Times, “Bin ich noch ein Berliner?,” February 26, 1982.
remained unclear until three months before the visit whether or not Reagan would ultimately bypass West Germany altogether during this first, brief European tour. Apparently, Germany’s significance to the USA was more obvious to the Germans than to the Americans. The prospect of his not visiting the Federal Republic however proved entirely unacceptable to a West German leadership that was keen on reaffirming its commitment to the Western Alliance for domestic as much as international reasons.

In the face of Chancellor Schmidt’s deep regrets at the prospect of Reagan passing over a German visit, Secretary of State Haig immediately moved to make new arrangements to relocate the planned NATO meeting from Brussels to Bonn. It was only after talks between West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Reagan took place in Washington in March, however, that the official announcement was made that Reagan would also visit West Berlin. Genscher was in Washington to discuss West Germany’s plan to build a natural gas pipeline Siberia to Western Europe. The unwillingness of West German politicians to pay heed to Washington’s misgivings about negotiations with the Russians caused a degree of tension between the two countries. Despite opposing positions over the pipeline construction plans in Siberia, Genscher left the meeting with the “reaffirmed view that the U.S., like the Federal Republic, are aware of the vital importance this relationship has for the efficiency of the Western alliance.” To this end, Genscher made his message clear in the weeks leading up to the much-

558 The relevance of this visit was that in was one confrontation in a series of decisions in Bonn to negotiate with the Russians and therefore put the Western Alliance, especially the U.S. at unease about where Bonn stood. See “How West Germans See Détente,” Financial Times, June 17, 1982.
anticipated Reagan visit; this visit was no ordinary one, but rather a chance to
demonstrate West German solidarity with America.\footnote{Das andere Deutschland," 39.}

In \textit{Die Zeit'}s coverage of the meeting, its Washington correspondent cited
Reagan’s decision to visit West Berlin as one of the more concrete results of Genscher’s
visit in Washington. In general the editorial reflects the belief on the part of the
mainstream media and Bonn’s leaders that it was vital for Reagan “to see first hand the
German reality (\textit{deutsche Wirklichkeit}) at the confrontation point between East and West
i.e., Berlin.”\footnote{Schwer zu überzeugen. Ist der Widerstand gegen Erdgasgeschäft überwunden?," \textit{Die Zeit}, 11, 1982. It
was an absurd paradox that Haig would apparently see the “real face” of West Berlin, which adores the
USA, but in reality the entire population will be moved from the streets. So in effect, he would not see
anyone.\footnote{Schwer zu überzeugen."}} And of course, the reporter assures us, in order to ensure absolute security,
the American President would be led through emptied streets in West Berlin so that he
would be protected from the harassment of demonstrators.\footnote{Der Senat informiert. “Der amerikanische Präsident besucht am 11. Juni Berlin. Darüber freuen wir uns
von Herzen,” in B Rep 002, Nr 26441, Landesarchiv, Berlin. With memories of Haig’s
visit still fresh, this promise was realized with the largest police deployment in West
Berlin’s history. The editorial hinges on the widely held view that only a visit to West
Berlin could salvage German-American relations. After the White House formally
announced the visit, Richard von Weizsäcker called on West Berliners to welcome “the
freely elected President of the American people” on June 11 by underlining that “the
Berliners do no forget those friends who stand by them in difficult times” and because of
this obligation “Reagan should feel that he is warmly welcomed here.” In line with the
mayor’s official sentiment, West Berlin’s Senator for Federal Affairs Norbert Blüm
added that, “for Berliners a demonstration in favor of the USA also means a
\footnote{Schwer zu überzeugen."}
demonstration for the freedom of their city.” With these statements both men evoked
the historical ties between Germans and Americans, harking back to the Airlift of 1948-49, when the Soviets closed off West Berlin from West Germany, and then to 1961, when
East Germany divided the city with the Berlin Wall. Weizsäcker’s appeal to the
citizens of West Berlin drew attention to their supposed astuteness; “they know who
protects their freedom.” His rhetoric asked the people of West Berlin to identify their
own lived memories with the city as a whole, to remember the literal and metaphoric
protection from the Soviet threat that Americans had provided since the Blockade.

The repetition of this well-worn Cold War rhetoric reminding West Berliners of
the debt they owe to American generosity was designed to mask what was for the
seasoned politicians from the major parties in West Berlin and Bonn, a worrisome
development: A new generation of West Berliners, both born and imported, who were
attempting to redefine the relationship between America and West Berlin. Weizsäcker in
Berlin and Chancellor Schmidt in Bonn drew on what they believed to be the strength of
the memory of early Cold War images to counter this trend. Yet at the most basic level,
members of this generation of Germans simply did not possess memories of American
good will (e.g., the chocolate and the chewing gum distributed by smiling GIs to hungry
children) but instead were part of a different global generation with very different
reactions to the U.S. and with war itself. Not the children of the postwar years of
suffering, these youth had come of age in a world that was defined by the debacle of the

Vietnam War and the horrors of the aftermath of Hiroshima, events that rendered impossible any uncritically positive attitude toward the United States.

Once President Reagan’s state visit to West Berlin was made public (in addition to his attendance at the NATO summit in Bonn), a broad spectrum of antinuclear and anti-Reagan protest groups started to mobilize in West Berlin in the weeks leading up to the visit. In a city that continued to be metaphorically defined by early Cold War events, the Berliners who gathered to show President Reagan that he was not welcome did not simply reject the policies of a specific American administration; they also proposed a radical reformulation of a city whose laurels had rested on its ritualistic ties to the United States. Unsurprisingly, as soon as the official announcement had been made that Reagan would visit the city, a passionate response emerged on the left, one intended to make obvious to the American president that his presence in the city was not welcome. For the larger protest scene in West Berlin, Reagan embodied the danger of a new round of NATO rearmament—something peace and anti-nuclear activists feared could lead to a nuclear war on the European continent. Reagan’s own belligerent rhetoric, as well as the administration’s policy towards Latin America (i.e., Nicaragua and El Salvador) augmented these fears.\(^{567}\) The more radical wing of the left-alternative scene, many of whom were self-defined squatters, called for a demonstration because they feared that “if this city once gets its frontline character back again (Frontstädcharakter), the paddy wagons at the side of the road will be a daily occurrence on the Kudamm and the cops

\(^{567}\) Reagan’s support of military dictatorships in Central America revealed to the protestors his attitude towards forms of political dissent when it directly involved U.S. interests, and generally U.S. hegemony around the world.
will declare open season on every one of us (particularly at Kotti) [the area around Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg].”

Although antipathy towards Reagan’s foreign and defense policies was a common sentiment more generally among peace activists and the Greens, its manifestation took a particularly militant form in the left-alternative scene in West Berlin. Here, in the city that had once loved the U.S. above all else, a younger generation of Germans gathered together to express an outright rejection of the United States. As anti-Americanism reached new heights in West Germany, nowhere in the Federal Republic was anti-Americanism to be as eminently visible as in West Berlin. It is of course not a surprise that these political shifts and tensions expressed themselves within the walled-in city of West Berlin. The perception of West Berlin as a place that was central to how one understood West Germany’s relationship to America fed both conservative and leftist discourse at the time. There emerged a passionate struggle to claim Berlin, with official discourse insistently clinging to a vision of the city as closely tied to America while the alternate discourse of the left-alternative movement promoted a vision of the city that rejected “American” values.

The housing struggles had helped to transform the cityscape of Berlin into a canvas to make political protest visible. These squatters continued this tradition leading up to Reagan’s visit, as whole sections of the city were adorned with anti-Reagan slogans draped out of apartment windows and balconies, nailed to rooftops, spray painted on apartment façades and on public edifices, most notably on the Berlin Wall itself. The police and the Public Attorney’s Office were kept busy in the weeks before the visit.

removing banners and painting over slogans on walls that included, “Reagan’s specialists, murders and fascists (Reagans Spezialisten, Mörder und Faschisten)”, “The American sector ends here (Hier endet der amerikanische Sektor)”, “Yanks go home,” “On June 11 Reagan (rain) will fall (Am 11. Juni fällt Reagan )”, and “Berlin stinks when Reagan winks (Ganz Berlin stinkt, wenn Reagan winkt).” The predictable reaction of the West Berlin authorities to these very public displays of anti-Reaganism escalated into what the alternative media came to term the rag war (Lappenkrieg), named in honor of the protest banners swaying off of balconies and out of windows and made from old or tattered bed linens.570

The heart of this anti-Reagan campaign was found in the two West Berlin districts where the squatting movement was its strongest, Kreuzberg and Schöneberg, although banners were also displayed on apartments in the neighborhoods not “occupied” by squatters. This overlap was no coincidence in view of the then solid reputation of both neighborhoods as centers of alternative and sub-cultural life. The police systematically moved through these neighborhoods to confiscate banners and to paint over slogans found on the façades of apartment houses. After the first round of raids resulted in the confiscation of 15 banners with “offensive” and “punishable” content and several arrests on the grounds of insulting a foreign state official, the Squatters’ Council (Besezerrat) organized a response on May 24. Just two weeks before the visit the Council encouraged West Berliners to drape their balconies, windows, or rooftops with anti-Reagan banners

in order to show solidarity with those arrested and to demonstrate their right to freedom of expression. The Council argued for this act of solidarity by noting that “it is impossible to insult the desk murderers in the White House and therefore now more than ever on Friday at 2:00 PM hang banners on all walls, out of all windows and apartments.”

This political spectacle on Berlin’s streets and buildings had turned into a game of cat and mouse after the first round of raids by city police, who, according to the residents of the houses targeted, had entered squatted buildings and confiscated the “offensive” banners without a search warrant. This went on for the two weeks leading up to Reagan’s visit; by the fifteenth day of the “war”, Berlin’s interior minister warily declared that 616 banners had been confiscated for “safe-keeping” and 752 violations of Section 103 of the Penal Code had been registered (insulting a foreign head of state). This strategy to literally clean up the city in preparation for Reagan’s visit included both random and calculated police measures. Diligent police officers also made countless visits to newspaper stands and stores that sold the left-intellectual magazine Konkret. The magazine’s June 1982 issue contained removable stickers for its customers that read, “Reagon go home.” According to the Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel, police officers started singling out cars and random pedestrians with anti-Reagan stickers or T-shirts and forced individuals to immediately remove the object of insult.

These busy weeks prior to Reagan’s arrival illustrated above all the public reclaiming of the city by a vigorous protest culture, one that had been cultivated in West Berlin since the student protests of the sixties. The *Lappenkrieg* literally projected a message onto the face of the city, and this message was a resounding rejection of how the city had and still was being officially defined. While city officials trumpeted their vision of Berlin as a bastion of American support, a Kreuzberg squatter magazine declared ironically that June 11 “turns out to be a key-date for the Berliner power mongers … The main thing is there should only be ONE opinion: Hurray, the head of the occupiers is coming!!” What was specifically at stake for the alternative scene was a redefinition of the relationship “their” city had with the United States. This would not just find its expression in a two-hour demo or 10-hour brawl with the police, but rather in the spectacularly visible rejection of the rhetoric applied by politicians to describe the city. This visual claiming of the city represented a physical assertion of the right to articulate the terms defining the role of West Berlin in German-American relations. To put it another way, the *Lappenkrieg* suggested an important shift in discourse; the ritualistic Cold War rhetoric conjuring up a formidable city of resistance to the Soviet menace was rejected once and for all. During the *Lappenkreig*, the alternative scene used West Berlin not as a positive, but a negative site to define the relationship between Germany and the United States. These voices had been virtually absent from the public radar up to now; in the context of the Haig and Reagan visits, however, they thrust themselves literally onto every corner of the city.

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Up to the day of the actual visit, it was still unclear whether or not Reagan would actually land in West Berlin or if he would just view the city from a helicopter. The decision was never disclosed to the general public, a desired consequence of which was that Reagan’s convoy drove through empty streets on its way to the obligatory visit to the Berlin Wall, and finally to Schloss Charlottenburg. In the park, 25 000 invited visitors were carefully inspected before being allowed to enter the grounds. Even in this context of a forceful manipulation of public space to conform to an official vision, in his first post-visit remarks Mayor Weizsäcker maintained the façade: “The Berlin population warmly welcomed the American President not just at the official reception at Schloss Charlottenburg, but also during his drive through Kreuzberg.”

The high security measures were taken in fear of an attack on Reagan; this fear had of course been compounded by the experience of the Haig visit, which still echoed loudly in the memories of both the political elite and the alternative scene. In a pre-emptive response to the already planned anti-Reagan demonstrations, the Berlin Senate announced two weeks before the visit a prohibition of any demonstration on the actual day of Reagan’s visit. This ruling followed on the heels of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt’s statement to SPD party members that any expressed interest in participating in an anti-Reagan demonstration, be it in Bonn or West Berlin, would be grounds for expulsion from the party. In order to avoid any conflict, the organizers of the West Berlin demonstration, the Protestant Students’ Association (ESG), accordingly planned their

577 These visitors were recruited from associations, administrative bodies, and companies, but in fact it was not until after Mayor Weizsäcker announced that public servants would be rewarded with a paid day off that the numbers of accepted invitations soared. Informationsblatt B Rep 002, Nr 26441, Betr-Besuch des amerikanischen Präsidenten, Landesarchiv, Berlin.
579 Das andere Deutschland,” 31.
protest for June 10, one day before the official visit. However, the more radical opponents of Reagan’s presence (autonomous groups and the Alternative List) decided to go through with their original plan to demonstrate on June 11, legal or not. The co-organizers of the Haig demonstration, the Young Democrats, joined the autonomous groups, squatter councils and the Alternative List in going ahead with the plans to on June 11. Both camps were intent on demonstrating, albeit under slightly different mottos; the ESG singling out a demonstration for peace and disarmament, while the protest planned on the day of Reagan’s visit was explicitly anti-NATO, anti-imperialist, and anti-Reagan. Moreover its participants rejected what they perceived as an outright “manipulation of flag-waving Berliners to legitimate warmongering.”

Given the obsessive attention to the planned demonstrations, it was not surprising that President Reagan expressed an interest in the brouhaha surrounding his visit. The West German daily the Frankfurter Rundschau quoted Reagan from a broadcasted TV interview out of Washington as saying that he is “curious about whether or not these people [demonstrators] know what I really stand for.” To underscore his commitment to peace, Reagan then evoked the symbolism of West Berlin as a place where “a lot is at stake in the conflict between East and West. Importantly, for the peace that Reagan was offering was protection from a communist threat – he did not realize that this threat was no longer meaningful for these protestors– for whom American bombs seemed both more frightening and more plausible. These “people” to whom he referred however were mainly concerned with disrupting what they perceived would be a “Reagan and Schmidt

583 “US-Präsident Ronald Reagan ist “neugierig” auf Proteste,” Frankfurter Rundschau June 3, 1982,
propaganda show.” This “show” referred to both heads of state the using the symbolic power of West Berlin to accentuate the celebrated German-American friendship, a friendship the demonstrators were no longer interested in being a part of.\textsuperscript{584}

The demonstrations proceeded as anticipated by both the politicians and the radical left; the first demonstration on June 10 with relative calm, and the second on June 11 ending in a street brawl complete with a riot control squad. Given the point of departure, the conclusion reached by West Berlin politicians was that Reagan’s visit was a success. Weizsäcker confirmed this view in his assessment of the visit, and stated that the success of Reagan’s visit to Europe rested on the President’s recognition of Berlin’s unique role for the effectiveness of the Alliance.\textsuperscript{585} Consistent with the official tone already set during the Haig visit, Weizsäcker insisted on the visit’s favorable outcome in spite of “the despicable damage carried out by a violent minority.”\textsuperscript{586} Once again he drew a sharp line between demonstrators and “ordinary” Berliners:

Neither were they [demonstrators] able to eclipse the image of Berlin because everyone knows that the majority of them, having traveled from the whole of the federal territory and even from abroad, were professional violent perpetrators who were determined to destroy. They chose Berlin for their appearance precisely because Berlin has special symbolic power. The devastation that they wrought strongly agitated Berliners. The necessary conclusions are to be drawn from the sequence of events. But it is worth noting that the plan to offset a decisive blow to freedom in Berlin has failed.\textsuperscript{587}

The character of the discussion on the left post-Reagan’s visit not surprisingly took quite a different tone. The \textit{taz} referred to the street fights as the worst the city had witnessed since June 17, 1953 (significant since this was GDR Stalinist conflict), noting that despite

\textsuperscript{586} Landespressedienst/Aktuelles der Woche VII Nr. 24/16. Juni 1982, B Rep 002, Nr 26441, Landesarchiv, Berlin
\textsuperscript{587} Ibid.
his official intentions, President Reagan did not bring “peace,” but rather riots, to West Berlin. In addition, the left criticized the city’s politicians and the conservative media for discrediting demonstrators’ critiques by labeling all protestors as violent left-wing extremists, and thus in one broad sweep shutting down a space for legal, if militant, protest. (Figures 5.4 and 5.5)

Protestors countered proposals to a vision of a capitalist, individualistic urban German public sphere with claims that ranged from offering alternatives to capitalist norms of production and distribution, to autonomous youth and social to centers, to militant calls to resist the “new round of rearmament of the western military powers.”

Following the anti-Reagan demonstration, mayor Richard Weizsäcker responded to these concrete and amorphous claims when he declared that “we will not let the despicable damage done by a rowdy minority detract from the success of [Reagan’s] visit.” Trying to dismiss the protests against an American head of state, Weizsäcker denied validity of the demonstrations, recasting the protestors’ alternative visions as opposed to the democratic deployment of the freedom of expression. In response to Weizsäcker’s effort to reject the protestors’ opposition to the dominant definition of the city, the left-alternative daily the taz dedicated a four-page spread to the demonstration and its aftermath. The editorial stance of the paper, rejecting the official casting of the protestors as being an “anti-Berlin force” located metaphorically as well as literally on the margins of the city proclaimed: “women and squatters, anarchists and non-conformists, peace

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588 “Wir sind alle Berliner,” die tageszeitung, June 12, 1982. June 17, 1953 refers to the workers’ uprising in East Berlin that subsequently spread to cities and towns across East Germany. The first expression of outward dissatisfaction with the socialist system.
589 Autonomen in Bewegung, 71.
activists and left-leaning mentors, those beaten on the streets and the street fighter . . . We too are Berliners [emphasis mine].”

This proclamation challenged a supposed Cold War truism of the special relationship between the U.S. and the Federal Republic—a model that simultaneously showed the non-threatening dependent position of the FRG and the country’s economic and cultural power. The Haig and Reagan visits brought to a head a struggle of two visions of West Berlin and revealed serious fissures in the decade-long crafting of West Berlin as a desired site of pro-Americanism. This myth of West Berlin still had symbolic power through the postwar decades and into the 1980s and in crucial moments of discord, whether in German-American relations or in the city’s domestic politics, the political leadership invoked this symbolism to bolster a sense of consensus and harmony by reassuring Washington of West Germany’s ongoing gratitude.

Though the city had lost its frontline status as a key site of the Cold War and battlefield between west and east in the decade after the Wall was built, its political leaders continued to draw upon the symbolic language that traced back to the occupation years where the western zones of occupation were integrated into the Atlantic Alliance. Central as this imagery had been for reconstruction, by the late 1970s and 1980s the official image of the city was in need of being (re)-created or (re)-defined in the face of radically different realities of daily life in West Berlin and West Germany at large. The antinuclear protest movement, whose participants and sympathizers ranged in the hundreds of thousands across West Germany, were people whose daily lives contradicted the old imagery. Protests in Berlin were fueled (in part and obviously more so than in the

rest of West Germany) by the city government’s inability to offer an image of the city that matched with residents’ own experiences. Rather than responding to this need, city officials obstinately continued to fall back upon this early Cold War rhetoric in moments of crisis, emphasizing America’s role in establishing a “free and democratic” West Berlin.

The two protests in 1981 and 1982 against the visits of U.S. Secretary of State Haig and President Reagan respectively provided an occasion for the sizeable autonomous left scene in West Berlin to offer an alternative definition of the city. In both instances, protesting NATO policies, nuclear weapons, and U.S. imperialism, peace demonstrators numbering in the hundreds of thousands not only questioned larger foreign policy and security issues, but activists in Berlin rejected the dominant representation of West Berlin as symbolically defined through its relationship and history with America.  

Since the end of the Second World War, politicians in West Berlin and the FRG at large had relied upon this real and imagined connection between development of Berlin and the U.S. as a symbol of the new, non-Nazi and democratic nature of the country. In the context of the June 1982 Reagan visit, the left-alternative scene spurned this official representation of the city and, in the process, laid claims to both the literal and symbolic space of the city. Thus their protests were not only critical but also constructive, offering a counter-model of German urban life.

Figure 5.1: Grafitti in West Berlin 1980s. Source: http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/willkomm1.html
Figure 5.2: anti-NATO graffitti. Source: http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1330d.htm
Figure 5.3: anti-Haig Demonstration 1981. Source: http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1330o.htm
Figure 5.4: anti-Reagan demonstration 1982. Source:
http://einstages.spiegel.de/external/ShowAuthorAlbumBackground/a18743/l5/l0/F.html#featuredEntry
Figure 5.5: anti-Reagan demonstration 1982. Source: http://www.umbruch-bildarchiv.de/bildarchiv/foto1/berlin1982/pages/1330o.htm
Conclusion: Kreuzberg as an Urban Experiment

When the two German states reunified on October 3, 1990, the district of Kreuzberg found itself located in the center of the “new” Federal Republic’s largest city and capital. Its reputation as an ethnic and left-alternative “ghetto” remained a concern for political and business leaders as the “New” Berlin began to reinvent itself in the wake of political and economic restructuring. A 1980 article in the West Berlin SPD weekly newspaper, the *Berliner Stimme*, titled, “Problems in Kreuzberg” situated the neighborhood at the intersection of two “pressing social problems.” The first source of trouble, as the newspaper defined it, were the bitter, and often violent conflicts between ultra-national Turkish fascists and left-wing groups from Turkey (Kurds and Turks alike); the second problem threatening the neighborhood, according to the Stimme, was the new buzzword on the streets, “urban warfare” or Häuserkampf. “Kreuzberg,” the *Stimme* prophesied, “most certainly cannot survive in the long-term with these problems festering there.” As the comment implicitly suggested, these new residents of the neighborhood should be kept in check for fear that the neighborhood might someday implode.

Thirty years later in the winter of 2010, *Die Zeit* published a feature article on the controversy in Kreuzberg over the luxury apartment building with a car loft recently completed on the Reichenberger Strasse. The article presented two opposing points of view. On the one side the 43-year-old investor convinced his project could only bring good things to the neighborhood. The investor, Johannes Kauka, claims that a socio-

593 *Berliner Stimme*, September 6, 1980.
economic mix (*Durchmischung*) is always positive since it lowers the unemployment rate, raises the average income of the neighborhood, and increases the number of youth attending Gymnasium. And “why,” asks Kauka, “can’t people who earn € 500,000 a year also enjoy the beauty along the canal that runs through Kreuzberg?” Berlin’s SPD Senator for Urban Development (Ingeborg Junge-Reyer) likes the car loft idea. In a city encumbered by debt, her support of the project is market-driven. “The city,” after all, has to sell its virtues to “attract investors so new jobs will be created.” For the counter-argument, *Die Zeit* interviewed a 43-year-old *Autonomer* or radical autonomous leftist who feels threatened by the post-Wende gentrification of a neighborhood that was once the embodiment of all things alternative and marginal. Now, once again, the neighborhood lies in close proximity to the (new) city center. Sebastian Wenger, as he is called in the article, is disappointed in the general unwillingness of leftists in Kreuzberg to use violence against the luxury townhouses and condos slowly filling the empty spaces of the inner-city neighborhoods (particularly the former voids between Kreuzberg and Mitte along where the Wall ran).

Years of creeping gentrification notwithstanding, there are not many fancy, expensive cars in Kreuzberg to warrant such amenities. In fact, there are not many cars at all in Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg is still one of the most densely populated and poorest districts in the city. Most people walk or bike, and the average net income per household is € 800 a month. But those are precisely the reasons why the luxury apartment building has a car loft. How, exactly, are the new residents of the Reichenberger Strasse meant to

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595 Ibid., 15.
596 Ibid.
597 Ibid.
positively contribute to the existing neighborhood social and economic structure? As urban scholars have pointed out, historically there is little evidence that such upmarket housing promotes social mixing. Neither the Berlin Senate nor the seemingly benevolent private investor has presented a convincing argument to this question that many are asking. Instead, the more radical constituents of those who oppose the project have routinely showed their antipathy with paint balls, eggs, and exploding gas containers—at least until Berlin’s Senator of the Interior (Körting) guaranteed Kauka police dogs and personnel to prevent any future attacks.

These two assessments of Kreuzberg, its past and its present, are set in two very different local and global contexts, one in a still politically divided Germany and Europe, and the other in an increasingly globalizing postunification city. At the same time, what connects the two accounts is that they both discuss and define Kreuzberg, directly or indirectly, in relation to Berlin’s public profile and its future. A part of that past and future is the city’s housing politics. For Kreuzberg’s low-income populations, migrant and non-migrant alike, the neighborhood’s legacy of squatting as a housing strategy had meant the institutionalization of “cautious urban renewal” (behutsame Stadterneuerung). Instead of a market-driven approach to rehabilitating the urban fabric, “cautious urban renewal” set out to improve the older housing stock without displacing the existing residents or increasing the rents.

In short, this social planning approach privileged the housing demands of a lower and middle-income population. This urban policy was in effect in Kreuzberg until 2002, when the city officially concluded the neighborhood’s 39-year existence as an urban

renewal area (*Sanierungsgebiet*). One of the earliest and most significant challenges to the politics and culture of urban renewal was centered on the consumption and access to affordable housing for all residents, not only for the benefit of the professional classes, homeowners, real estate vendors, and investors. My research shows that in political and social debates on questions ranging from modernist urban renewal to immigration policy and integration, to the relationship between political dissent and violence, a host of public fears and anxieties in public and political discourse were projected onto the district of Kreuzberg. Accompanying this belief was the assumption that if these issues could be solved here, they could be solved anywhere. Kreuzberg thus came to serve as a barometer to gauge the either the success or failure of migrants,’ specifically Muslim migrants,’ integration into German society or the state’s success at stemming the leftist radicalism of those unwilling to politically and socially conform. Change is inevitable. But is the end of social planning and affordable inner-city housing, too, inevitable? The renewal experience of the 1980s still holds promise as an alternative model. Governments and urban policymakers in the “New Berlin” now have an opportunity to step back from a market-driven approach and reassess its postunification urban policies in their attempts to address the growing social inequalities.
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