Protest and Marginalized Urban Space. 1968 in West Berlin

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Introduction

Post-1945, Berlin's housing deficit of six million produced the slogan "a roof over one's head – nothing else matters."[1] The primary concern therefore, was in housing a large section of the city's population rather than with the architectural style of the new dwellings, as Helmut Geisert, architectural historian, states: "architecture, and still less architecture as art, was no topic in a city that was still aching with the scars of war and whose very survival was by no means certain."[2] As such, until the end of the 1970s, the policy in West Berlin was to build peripheral state-subsidised mass housing estates in order to accommodate high numbers of residents.[3] One such estate that has drawn the attention of architects, politicians and civilians alike is the controversial Märkisches Viertel, designed by thirty five architects, built between 1964-74 to house approximately 60 000 people. The development was remotely located on a former green-field site in the north of the city, jutting the Berlin Wall. A group of architecture students used this site as a case study to exemplify the myriad issues they saw within society, and set up a campaign group, *Aktion 507*, to articulate their concerns.

The urban planning projects condemned by students were located in marginalized urban spaces, in the vacant areas created by the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, with the developments often pushed up against the Wall itself. West Berlin was a marginalized city, surrounded by the Communist East and subject to a very specific set of rules deriving from its position as an occupied city; such as the fact that inhabitants were exempt from military service, unable to vote in West German elections, and had to carry temporary ID cards, rather than West German identification. The city was operating under unique circumstances which caused it to become the focus of tensions between the Soviet Block and the West. Therefore, although marginalized, the city and actions within its confines were afforded global significance. Architecture was strongly drawn into the numerous post-war debates about what constituted the "new Germany" and what image policy-makers wished to create of the country in the wake of fascism. Architectural historian Florian Urban states that the significance of the Märkisches Viertel development is that of a "symbolic battleground for a struggle over the values of the modern city."[4] Thus, using the students' concerns as a means to elucidate more complex issues, this article will demonstrate how marginal urban spaces became battlegrounds for fundamental questions about how society operated.

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1 Hubert Hoffmann, "Introduction", in *New German Architecture*, ed. Gerd Hatje et al. (London: Architectural Press, 1956), xv.

2 Helmut Geisert, "Eupalinos – Berlin", in *Josef Paul Kleihues: The Art of Urban Architecture,* ed. Josef Paul Kleihues, et al. (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003), 9.

3 Stephan Lanz, "Inclusion and Segregation in Berlin, the 'Social City'", in *Transnationalism and the German City,* ed. Jeffry M. Diefendorf et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 59.

4 Florian Urban, "The Märkisches Viertel in West Berlin," in *Architecture and the Welfare State,* ed. Mark Swenarton et al. (London: Routledge, 2015), 175.

Fig. 1: Map Showing Location of Satellite Settlements, West Berlin

Post-war Planning Policies

In keeping with the immediate post-war years, the planning concepts behind the design for the Märkisches Viertel were directly borrowed from the modernist principles. In the initial aftermath of the war, planners from both East and West Berlin considered the whole city in their proposals.[5] Yet, as the prospect of unification turned out to be improbable, plans began to focus on each half of the city as separate entities. In 1969, for example, East Berlin's General Development Plan removed West Berlin entirely, and maps of East Germany showed West Berlin as a void. Ideas about how to articulate the city were redefined based on the following principles: (1) the preference for a radically new city, (2) the advocacy of tenement demolition, (3) the promotion of the pre-industrial city which was believed to be the intrinsic essence of Berlin and (4) the belief that the pre-war metropolis was the model for the future.[6] The issue inherent in recreating the metropolitan life of the golden 1920s and the *Weltstadt* concept of pre-war cultural significance constituted inevitable connections to the National Socialist past; any desire for grandeur and global importance evoked immediate associations with National Socialist ideologies.[7] As such, there was a renewed interest in modernism as it had been publicly denounced under the National Socialists, alongside a new attention towards international architectural developments, particularly in Switzerland, Scandinavia and the USA.[8]

The concept of *Großsiedlungen* [large estates], which became the blueprint for West German planning, was based on the ideas of the Athens Charter and the *Deutscher Werkbund,[9]* in particular those of Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner.[10] Taut and Wagner propagated the garden city concept,

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5   Tommy Book, "The Urban Field of Berlin: Expansion–Isolation–Reconstruction," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography,* 77 (1995): 186.

6   Urban, "Recovering Essence through Demolition," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* 63 (2004): 354.

7   Ibid., 363.

8   Andreas Schätzke, "A Matter for the Polis: Cities, Architecture and the Public in Germany," in *Josef Paul Kleihues: The Art of Urban Architecture*, ed. Josef Paul Kleihues et al. (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003), 55. Though the National Socialists publicly condemned modernism, there is evidence that it was advocated for industrial and commercial constructions.

9   The *Deutscher Werkbund* [German Association of Craftsmen] was founded in 1907 to combine the work of architects, artists, designers and industrialists to promote modernism and industrial design by combining traditional crafts with mass production and included designs for everything from kettles and teaspoons to furniture and complete buildings. Notable architectural members include Peter Behrens, Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius.

10 Urban, "Märkisches Viertel," 176.

Fig. 2: Oscar Niemeyer's Building, Hansaviertel, West Berlin, 1957-61

initiated in Britain by Ebenezer Howard at the turn of the twentieth century;[11] the aim was to reduce the contrast between the city centre and the rural periphery in order to create a higher living standard for its inhabitants.[12] This was to be achieved through lower density, greenery, color, and a sense of individuality and ownership, which would improve the quality of life for city-dwellers in the face of rapid industrialization. These ideas were aligned and combined with the Athens Charter, published in 1943 as a result of the CIAM conference in 1933[13] and spearheaded by functionalist advocates such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Siegfried Giedion. The principles outlined in the Charter were globally influential in the field of architecture in advocating the separation of the city into functional zones: "dwelling, work, recreation, and transportation."[14] After the war, these ideas were developed further through large, compact, high-density housing estates, such as the Märkisches Viertel, Gropiusstadt and Falkenhagener Feld, emerging in city peripheries, through which the promise of a new, better and more "modern" city was encapsulated.[15] As such, the design for the peripheral estates struggles to avoid any similarities with the nineteenth century *Mietskasernen*, and as such makes good use of color, incorporates community buildings and spaces and is particularly careful with orientation (cool kitchens and sunny living rooms).[16] For West Germany in particular, these spatial concepts of the Athens Charter were seen to "symbolise a new beginning, untethered to Germany's violent recent history."[17]

The Hansaviertel was the first of the large-scale post-war ensembles, built as the output of the 1957 *Internationale Bauausstellung* or *Interbau* [International Building Exhibition] to demonstrate that modernism was the urban design paradigm of post-war West Berlin. The development included individual buildings by international architects such as Oscar Niemeyer, Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, and Walter Gropius in a park-like setting and was intended to convey freedom, democracy, openness and a lack of hierarchy – all the high-points of western capitalism. The

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11 See Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965 [1902]).

12 Markus Jager, *Housing Estates in the Berlin Modern Style*, (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag Gmbh, 2007), 9-10.

13 CIAM is the acronym for the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* [International Congress of Modern Architecture] which was in existence 1928-59, and included the most internationally renowned architects of the time (such as Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Ernst May, El Lissitzky, Sigfried Gideon) and aimed to promote the principles of Modernism by organising conferences, events and publications.

14 Le Corbusier, *The Athens Charter* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), 95.

15 Brigitte Schultz, *Was Heisst hier Stadt?: 50 Jahre Stadtdiskurs am Beispiel der Stadbauwelt seit 1964* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013), 22.

16 Urban, "Märkisches Viertel," 187.

17 Naraelle Hohensee, "Influence of Critical Reconstruction," *intersections,* 11 (2010): 63.

functionalist aesthetic and the international style portrayed West Germany as a global, democratic and inclusive state, and relinquished connections to the stone, hierarchical, nationalistic and monumental architecture, definitively associated with the National Socialists. However, this declared distancing from the immediate past did not convince members of *Aktion 507*:

> "The supposedly value-free, germ-free functionalism was intended to drive away the evil ideological spirits of the NS-period – nobody suspected something similar from the ideological character of functionalism – and so architecture and urban forms were reduced to mere products of an objective set of technological and structural conditions … any profound sociological, psychological, medical, technological, or economic reflection was neglected."[18]

For critics, the desire to symbolise a new Germany through architecture also created an ideology, despite its publicly promoted agenda of non-dogmatic inclusivity. The aesthetics of these large satellite settlements were internationally recognisable and therefore assured the world that Germany was part of the democratic West. The focus on the decentralisation of the city was also presented in direct opposition to the totalitarian hierarchy of the National Socialist period. The critics considered that the policy makers' desire to emulate the international style and to build in marginal spaces has paved the way for demolitions of historic architecture in the city centre, while neglecting the needs of the tenants. It was this top-down approach to urban planning and the apparent disregard for its social implications that became the focus of *Aktion 507*'s criticism.

Aktion 507 and the Märkisches Viertel

Aktion 507 adhered to the theoretical basis of the global student movement, following the teachings of both the Frankfurt School and Marxism, which advocated the fusion of private and political spheres. A member of the movement, Reinhard Mohr, summarises that "now both the private and the personal should be highly political."[19] Since the sphere of urban planning directly linked the private and the political, *Aktion 507* set out to address the government's urban planning policies. The group established itself during the 1968 *Berliner Bauwochen* [Berlin Architecture Weeks]. The Festival allocated 18 000 Deutsche Marks for an exhibition aimed to showcase the urban planning designs of the new architectural generation. Yet, these architects proposed an exhibition of a different kind, one dedicated to the "critical analysis of the current construction activities", to which West Berlin's Minister of Construction Rolf Schwedler unexpectedly agreed.[20] Consequently, the group's exhibition, *Diagnose zum Bauen in West Berlin* [Diagnosis of Building in West Berlin], took place between 8-20 September 1968 at the West Berlin Technical University. Ingrid Krau, architect and member of *Aktion 507*, explains that the name *Diagnose* pointed to the group's thinking: "diagnosis as a pre-requisite for treatment, we were concerned with practical action, not aloof social criticism."[21] Therefore, *Aktion 507* aimed at combining theoretical critique with physical action; peripheral post-war urban developments became thus the catalyst for this methodology. In short, the exhibition and the accompanying manifesto simultaneously denounced the zoning of the city, the denial of the National Socialist past, the displacements of tenants into satellite settlements, and the destruction of nineteenth century *Mietskasernen*. Krau defined the authors' intent as follows:

> "we were elucidators, who believed in the power of technical and scientific progress, … we were rationalists, … we stood for direct democracy; … the common goal for all was the better public control of the structural development of urban areas."[22]

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18 Aktion 507, "Manifest," (West Berlin: Rump, 1968), 69. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

19 Reinhard Mohr, "Die Liebe zur Revolution", in *1968, Die Revolte,* ed. Daniel Cohn-Bendit et al. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2007), 32.

20 "Städtebau West-Berlin: Slums verschoben", *Der Spiegel* (9 September 1968): 137.

21 Ingrid Krau, "Die Zeit der Diagnose," *Stadtbauwelt* 80 (1983): 341.
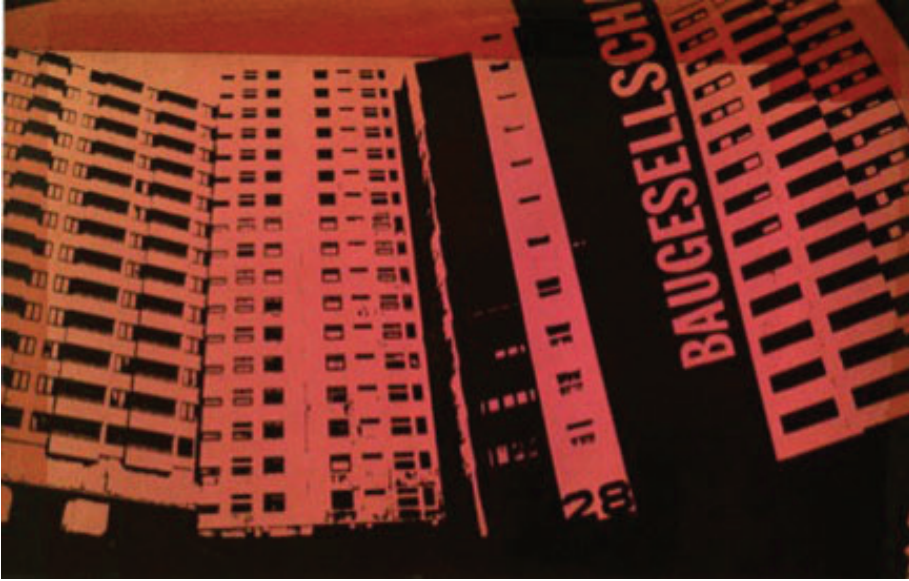
22 Ibid., 343.

Fig. 3: Back Cover of Aktion 507's Manifesto, 1968

Urban planning was therefore seen as a way to promote and disseminate the slogan "make the personal political". In contrast to the post-war generation, members of *Aktion 507* saw modernism rather than World War Two as the cause of the alienating urban environment. They also considered that the modernist high-rises that punctured many historic city districts were the expression of their parents' aspiration for wealth and their oblivion of the National Socialist past.[23] Harald Bodenschatz, social scientist and urban planner, observes that "in 1968 there was a radical shift … the model case for a better city became the subject of violent protests."[24] This is most evident when looking at the marginal satellite housing developments of the post-war period, and in particular at the Märkisches Viertel.

The Märkisches Viertel was the focus of the *Diagnose* exhibition, an example that the architect Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani has condemnrd as the most "canonical and repulsive high spot" of West German housing estates.[25] Planning began in 1962 under the direction of Walter Düttmann, Georg Heinrichs and Hans Christian Müller, and included works by both international and national architects such as Ernst Gisel (Switzerland), René Gagès (France), Oswald Matthias Ungers (Germany) and Shadrach Woods (USA). The intention was to build 17 000 dwellings for 60 000 people as well as twelve schools, fifteen day-care centres, four churches or community centres and an indoor swimming pool. The majority of residents were expected to be *Sanierungsopfer* [refurbishment victims] who had been displaced from the tenements in the inner city. Although of poor quality, the inner city tenements which housed the socially marginalized were in prime real estate locations; they became the focus of large scale demolitions. The replacement of the decaying *Mietskasernen* by modern, prefabricated housing in the city's outskirts was seen as a new, positive direction for social housing in West Germany. This is illustrated by the fact that the initial reaction to the concept for the Märkisches Viertel was

23 Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 295.

24 Harold Bodenschatz, "Kultobjekt," in *40 Jahre Märkisches Viertel: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer Grosssiedlung*, ed. Brigitte Jacob et al. (Berlin: Jovis, 2004), 20.

25 Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, "From Large Housing Estates on the Outskirts to Rebuilding the Inner City: Urban Development Debates in Germany 1960-1980," in *The Art of Urban Architecture,* ed. Josef Paul Kleihues, et al. (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003),69.

Fig. 4: The Märkisches Viertel, West Berlin, 1963-1974

positive. In his 1968 *New Directions in German Architecture*, architect Günther Feuerstein states that "at least it is possible to make out a meaningful forthright overall plan developed around an impressive centre with its own market place."[26] The coherence of the plan was due to an overall design conception for the area, whereby the maximum height of the buildings was dictated by the urban development brief; later, under the pressure of speculators, the originally stipulated maximum height of twelve storeys was increased up to twenty. The architect Georg Heinrichs, member of the Central Committee for Development, recalls the increase of density "against my will."[27] This alteration of the initial design had a direct impact on the public response, in that that the scale of the development had become one of its primary visual features, as well as the sense of anonymity and monotony it conveyed. Moreover, the social and transport infrastructure were overloaded. The concepts and ideas regarding social housing with panoramic windows, L-shaped living rooms and terraces had been reduced and scaled down to such "unreasonable measures" that, according to the newspaper *Der Spiegel*, social housing had become a caricature.[28] As indicated by the quote from *Der Spiegel*, once construction began and the first tenants moved in, the estate came to be heavily criticised by professionals, mass-media, and residents. For example, René Gagès' building, intended to be the longest residential building in Europe, was nicknamed by its inhabitants as the "*Lange Jammer*"[Long Misery].[29] This was also the first time when tenants were housed in such isolation from the rest of society, which made the criticism highly emotional and more defined.

Instead of offering a counter-ideal, the students at the Technical University were more interested in preparing and proposing solutions for "alternative projects in areas of social conflict" that

26 Günther Feuerstein, *New Directions in German Architecture* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), 70.

27 Georg Heinrichs, "Conversation between Georg Heinrichs and Eduard Kögel," 24 February 2014.

28 "Wohnungsbau: Es Bröckelt," in *Der Spiegel* (3 February 1969): 41.

29 Torsten Birne, "So Distant – Märkisches Viertel and Gropiusstadt: Housing Construction in West Berlin from 1960-1972," in *City of Architecture of the City: Berlin 1900-2000*, ed. Thorsten Scheer et al. (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000), 310; Krau, "Zeit der Diagnose," 345.

reflected their concept of democracy.[30] Thus, in the winter semester of 1968, students used findings of sociologists, psychologists and physicians as theoretical bases of various "co-ops", such as "experimental pre-school education", "juvenile prison", "day care centre at the Free University" and "reorganisation in the Kreuzberg district."[31] Through the exhibition and the manifesto, the students managed to transfer the debate regarding urban planning from the exclusive sphere of academics and professionals into the public realm. The key concept was that consultation with residents should be brought into the planning process; those affected should be involved in decisions that concerned them. In fact, a previous intention to reach a wider public had already occurred in the post-war years as demonstrated by the 1946 exhibition *Berlin plant* [Berlin is planning] and the Werkbund exhibition *Neues Wohnen: Deutsche Architektur seit 1945* [New Living: German Architecture since 1945]. Yet *Aktion 507* saw government-organized exhibitions as inadequate for fostering debate.[32] The *Diagnosis* exhibition also intended that the conclusions of the working groups be discussed with residents and members of the public. The events associated with the exhibition were meant to be places where inhabitants could voice their concerns and suggestions for the planning of the city. During the *Diagnose* exhibition, the urban planner Harald Bodenschatz, who studied in Berlin at the time, documented the first tenant demonstrations that took place in the Märkisches Viertel, interpreting *Aktion 507*'s function as an outlet for contemporaneous grievances.[33]

A large proportion of *Aktion 507*'s critical success can be credited to *Der Spiegel,* that took up the students' plight with fervour, thus reaching a far wider audience than the students could achieve alone. For example, the newspaper produced a thirteen-page report on the work of *Aktion 507* in 1968, when members of the group took a tape recorder and camera into the Märkisches Viertel and interviewed the displaced tenants. The newspaper documented the

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30 "Mit dem Latein am Ende: Spiegel-Serie über Krise und Zukunft der deutschen Hochschulen (Architekten)," *Der Spiegel* (8 September 1968): 84.

31 Ibid.

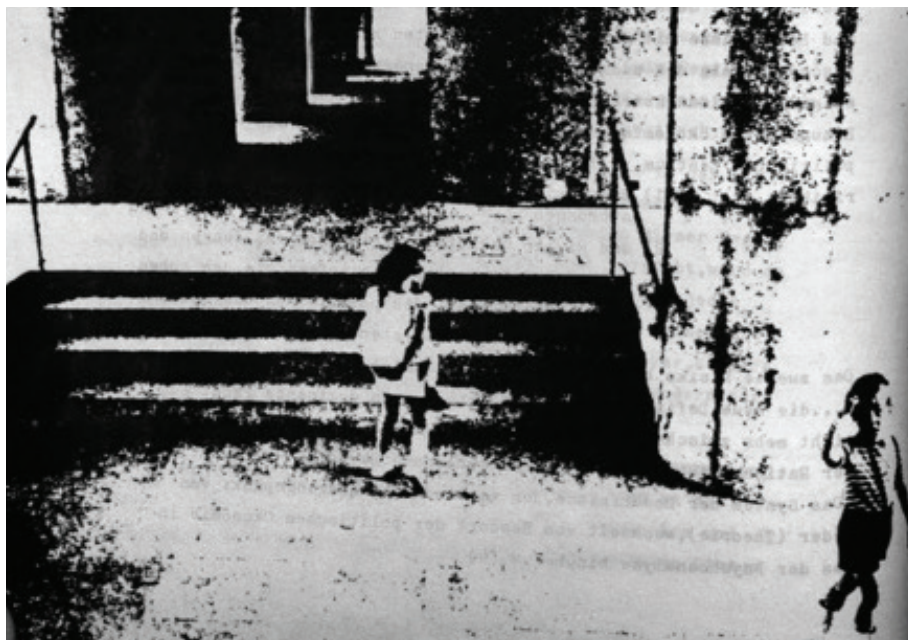32 Schätzke, "Matter for the Polis," 55.

33 Bodenschatz, "Kultobjekt," 22.

Fig. 5: Images of The Märkishes Viertel, West Berlin, 1960s

results: the displaced residents described the Märkisches Viertel as "dead" and "brutal."[34] In an interview from September 1968, a resident states that "all is so dead and empty", that they have become immune to violence, that child benefit is being used to pay the rent (much higher than in their previous homes), and that the lack of sound proofing in the flats "makes me ill."[35] The development is referred to as a "grey hell", which is too expensive to live in: "We could spend less with dirt … the gentlemen architects should look at the mess here again!."[36] Alcoholism was also seen as a result of the new living conditions, as was the descent into criminality with a teenager in the Märkisches Viertel stating that: "either you become a square here, or you become a criminal."[37] The negative social implications of these estates seemed to be intensified by their location in marginalized urban spaces. Often, residents were moved from city centre tenements into the new estates before social infrastructure was complete, such as the schools, shops and community centers. The large scale of the development also meant that the provisions were not adequate for the amount of inhabitants, which added to the negative portrayal of the district. The implication of having poor connections to the city centre was, and still is, a big issue in the area. Today, residents are still lobbying for a metro station that would give both a physical and psychological connection to the wider city. The first inhabitants were of a lower social standing, as the areas in the city centre where they had previously lived were in the worst state of upkeep and offered the greatest commercial potential for the policy makers, as *Aktion 507* would remark. The implication was that the inhabitants were often socially disadvantaged and their relocation from the city centre into a development lacking opportunities or connections to the wider city only exacerbated the problem. Equally the social ties and community networks which were strong in the old neighbourhoods lost their validity within the scale and density of the Märkisches Viertel.

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34 "Latein am Ende," 74.

35 "Die Hölle is det hier: West-Berlins "Märkisches Viertel" im Urteil seiner Bewohner," *Der Spiegel* 37 (9 September 1968): 138.

36 Ibid.

37 "Bröckelt," 41.

Critical Analysis of Urban Planning

Beginning with the 1960s, there was an increasing articulation of concern regarding the "growing uneasiness about the built environment", which was discussed emotionally both by the daily press and academics, causing it to become an intensely debated issue.[38] Two prominent critics of the housing policy in West Germany were Hans Paul Bahrdt (town planner) with his book *Die moderne Großstadt: Soziologische Überlegungen zum Städtebau* [The Modern City: Sociological Reflections on Urban Design, 1961], and Alexander Mitscherlich (sociologist) author of *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte: Anstiftung zum Unfrieden* [The Inhospitably of Our Cities: A Deliberate Provocation, 1965].[39] Bahrdt advocated urbanity through density, while Mitscherlich blamed modernist planning policies of zoning and decentralization for creating inhospitable urban environments. Bahrdt's and Mitscherlich's harsh critique of the urban policies was quickly absorbed by *Aktion 507*, particularly in reference to the policy of removing workers from tenements and replacing the tenements with office buildings.[40] The students believed that architectural design and urban planning should reflect the society for which they were built and take note of the current social situation; both were absent in contemporary planning: the "alienation of work and increases in regression cannot be eliminated through spatial configuration."[41] The blaming of society's ills on tenements did not hold sway with *Aktion 507* who rather saw the physical destruction of social ties as indicative of the government's disregard for particularly disadvantaged people, accentuated by the arrogance to believe that policy makers knew what was best for the city's residents.

The students were not alone in condemning the loss of the nineteenth century urban fabric; books such as Ernst Heinrich's *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 1964 [Berlin and its Buildings] and Goerd Peschken's *Technologische Ästhetik in Schinkels Architektur,* [Technological Aesthetics in Schinkel's Architecture] (1968) were indicative of this counter-current by demonstrating the significance of the nineteenth century for the architectural identity of the city.[42] The implication was a desire for individuality and a connection to the intrinsic elements of a building in a given context, rather than a constant construction of the same elements in loosely varying forms. Aldo Rossi's *L'architecttura della città* [Architecture of the City] (1966) was also highly influential in its critique of the modernist dogma. Rossi's argument was that form is adaptable and connects to the "soul of the city" and so architectural design must be continuously linked to the existing fabric.[43] Thus the zoning of the city, the relocation of the inhabitants to peripheral housing estates and the destruction of historic buildings caused a disjuncture between the nature of the city and its form; it created a break in its historic trajectory. This manifesto was widely read by the new generation of architects and provided a basis for the development of an anti-modern sentiment.[44] Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) was also transnationally influential in lamenting the reduction of the complexity, intricacy and vitality of city life to functions.[45] Architect and member of *Aktion 507*, Jan Rave recalls the significance of Jacobs' text:

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38 Schätzke, "Matter for the Polis," 56.

39 See both Hans Paul Bahrdt, *Die Moderne Großstadt: Soziologische Uberlegungen zum Stadtebau* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1961); Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte: Anstiftung zum Unfrieden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972).

40 J. G. Hajdu, "Phases in the Post-War German Urban Experience," *The Town Planning Review* 50 (1979): 275.

41 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 47.

42 Geisert, "Eupalinos," 13.

43 Michael Hesse, "Rediscovering Architecture and the City", in *City of Architecture of the City: Berlin 1900-2000,* ed. Thorsten Scheer et al. (Berlin: Nicolai, 2000), 322.

44 Hohensee, "Influence of Critical Reconstruction," 63.

45 See Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

Fig. 6: Walter Gropius' Building, Gropiusstadt, West Berlin, 1962-1974

"at the end of our degree course we saw ourselves at the beginning of a new epoch of architectural history in Berlin. The urban planning debate was dominated by Jane Jacobs' book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. The film we shot for the 1966 Bauwochen, '*Stadterneuerung Berlin—Beispiel Wedding*' [Urban renewal in Berlin – the example of Wedding] was very influenced by our rediscovery of the qualities of the city and its streets as a living space".[46]

In 1968, Feuerstein commented on this critique by the younger German architects and believed that "from these critical attitudes there will ultimately emerge a completely new conception of the sociological role of architecture".[47] *Aktion 507* linked the literature referenced here, from Italy, America and from within Germany itself, in the field of sociology as well as architecture and urban planning, with the theories of the Frankfurt School. Works such as Theodor Adorno's *Functionalism Today* (1965) and Ernst Bloch's *Bildung, Ingenieurform, Ornament* [Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament] (1957) questioned the destruction of the old city fabric in that it caused the city to lose its identity and prevented the inhabitants to find their place within the trajectory of history.[48] The sociological and psychological basis for this counter-current was a direct influence on the belief carried by the student movement, that the lived environment fundamentally impacts one's life. Krau recalls the feeling that "the former doctrine knew nothing of the social dimensions that moved building masses and continue to move them … there was such a strong social communicative power in the study of architecture."[49]

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46 Jan Rave and Rolf Rave, *Werkbericht 1966-73* (Berlin: W. Hildebrand, 1974) quoted in Andreas Salgo, "The Dawn of the Postmodern: Critical Activism in the 1960s and the Change of Urbanist Paradigm," in *45+: Post-War Modern Architecture in Europe,* ed. Stephanie Herold et al. (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der Technischen Universität, 2012), 84.

47 Feuerstein, *German Architecture*, 83.

48 See Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today", in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 6-20 and Ernst Bloch "Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament", in ibid., 41-8.

49 Krau, "Zeit der Diagnose," 340.

Social Implications of *Großsiedlungen*

This condemnation of the negative social impact of top-down urban planning led the critics to coin the new social housing policy "*Wohnste sozial, haste die Qual*" [social housing, hasten the agony]. *Aktion 507* saw their purpose as providing support for the views of the residents and argued that the architectural community was "absorbed by the fascination of the gigantic order of volumes" which negated both individuality and community within the estate.[50] The students defined this "ideology of spaciousness" as consisting of "large, autonomous forms in worthless variations in socially unmediated places."[51] As the areas selected for development were largely greenfield sites, the policy makers had free reign in designing the new developments considered to encompass the strongest ideals about the future of Germany; consequently, the planners set out their best intentions for social housing. Although *Aktion 507*'s condemnation of these developments was criticised by Schwedler for being *unsachliche* [un-objective], their ideas were recognised as the beginning of an open critique of the *Großsieldung* concept.[52] The students specified the issues in relation to Falkenhagener Feld, a similar development in the district of Spandau in the far north-west of the city: rent increases, long commutes, lack of information, lack of participation of the affected inhabitants, inadequate methods of planning, and careless allocation of public funds.[53] In relation to the Märkisches Viertel, *Aktion 507* considered that certain architects showed a complete disconnection with reality, unreflective of the struggle for existence.[54] One of the architects involved in the Märkishes Viertel, Herbert Stranz, demonstrates this disjunction between intention and reality, in his comment that "individualism of single apartments in the arrangement, accented by graduation and colour: That is democracy."[55] These satellite-housing districts therefore became a battleground for debates not only about architectural style, but also about the role of the architect in providing for the needs of residents.

Aktion 507 believed that the role that the architect played was linked to the totalitarian rule and to the continuation of the pre-war bourgeois modes of existence where masses are dominated by the few. One of the *Diagnose* working groups, "Social Psychology and Politics", "saw form as an expression of the creation of contained authoritarian rule over people" and the poster for the *Diagnose* exhibition has strong anti-National Socialist undertones with architects, speculators, the Senate, and construction companies locked into a "swastika-like" relationship that exerted a "totalitarian rule over the city."[56] The students believed that post-war society was built upon the same mechanisms of political indifference and the continuation of old modes of existence such as the "leader-ideal."[57] *Aktion 507*'s manifesto directly references Adorno's work *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) and Wilhelm Reich's *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* [The Mass Psychology of Fascism] (1933), both of which attempted to explain the rise of fascism from a psychological standpoint, both in reference to the National Socialists and to the hierarchical operations of society as a whole.[58] The conclusion was that the mechanisms of repression in society were charged with ultimate culpability for the rise of National Socialism and that they were still perpetuated in the post-war years. For *Aktion 507*, the hierarchical planning process demonstrated the same repressive instruments of control that were questioned by members of the Frankfurt School. For these students and the Marxist intellectuals, decisions were made by those with invested interests who wanted to allow current issues within society to continue, as it

50 Helga Fassbinder, "Gegen-Planung: Das Büro für Stadtsanierung und Soziale Arbeit in Berlin-Kreuzberg," *Stadtbauwelt* 80 (1983): 350.

51 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 36.

52 Bodenschatz, "Kultobjekt," 21.

53 Thomas Schröder, "Aus der Arbeit der Aktion 507," *Arch Plus* 5 (1969): 77-8.

54 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 41.

55 "Slums verschoben," 137.

56 Krau, "Zeit der Diagnose," 344 and Urban, "Märkisches Viertel," 276.

57 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 32.

58 See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950), and Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (London: Souvenir, 1972).

was they who benefited from the current status quo. The student movement wanted to create an entirely new society free from what they identified as embedded corruption. In West Berlin this was epitomized by architecture, as built form was seen as a way of forging a new identity for the post-war country and, as such, it was the product of the dominant thought processes. In this way fundamental questions about the nature of society became embroiled in the marginal housing estates. Even in reference to the profession of architecture, the image of the individual genius was being eschewed and replaced with social responsibility. As Bodenschatz notes, the situation in the Märkisches Viertel, with its "intolerable defects in social infrastructure, especially in schools and kindergartens, and rent increases", made the area especially attractive for the students who wanted to overcome the isolation of the university by direct work in the city districts.[59] The students wanted to demonstrate how society could be fundamentally altered by transforming the role of the architect from an omniscient master builder, to a facilitator and a public consultant.

The Importance of Vitality

Reflective of Jacobs' critique, one of the main issues was the loss of the vitality that the inhabitants had experienced in their old neighbourhoods. The forced transfer of residents from working class areas in the city centre, such as the districts of Wedding, Kreuzberg or Moabit, became the focus of intense debates about social practices. For example, in Wassertorstraße, Kreuzberg, graffiti on a tenement block asked "*Sanierung für wen?*" [Rehabilitation for whom?], as those who had been resettled felt more disadvantaged than before.[60] *Aktion 507* summarised the events as follows: "the slums of Wedding have been moved to the Märkisches Viertel"; they questioned whether the problems inherent in the neighbourhood had been solved, or whether they had merely been moved to a more marginal setting and intensified by this very relocation.[61] A local pastor reported that there was teenage prostitution in the elevators of the high-rises, and that the body of a murdered man lay undetected in the bath of a skyscraper for three weeks.[62] The reputation of the peripheral housing estates were also intensified by autobiographical novels such as *Wir Kinder von Bahnhof Zoo*, [We, Children from the Zoo Station] 1979, by Chistiane F., which documented the social issues in the neighbourhood, such as drug use, prostitution, and lack of opportunity.[63]

Governmental confidence in the success of the development was therefore short-lived due to this criticism from multiple fields including *Aktion 507*, mass-media, literature and academics. This led Construction Minister Schwedler to commission sociologists at Berlin Technical University to conduct a study of the 13 000 residents at Gropiusstadt to ask questions such as "where do you buy a daily [newspaper]?" and "how often do you have visitors?"[64] One of those involved in conducting the survey, economics graduate Rainer Höttler, concluded that the development lacks "all those community-promoting structures that characterise a well-established community" and is instead a "bleak dormitory town without life", like Harlow (London), Vällingby (Sweden) or Bremen's Neue Vahr.[65] The position of the developments at the margins of the walled city caused the estates to become enclaves whithout thoroughfare, simply end destinations for their inhabitants. *Der Spiegel* reports that the residents are frightened by the wasteland that surrounded them and as such, "displaced old forms of urban coexistence": the adults visit a pub at the edge of a nearby allotment settlement, the teenagers join *Moped* gangs in the suburbs and the children play in ditches and on spoil heaps.[66] The lack of vitality which is only organically created in cities over long periods of time, caused the areas not only to become desolate with increases of antisocial

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59 Bodenschatz, "Kultobjekt," 20.

60 "Slums verschoben," 138.

61 Ibid.

62 "Bröckelt," 41.

63 Christiane F., *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Hamburg: Gruner und Jahr, 1979).

64 "Gropius-Stadt: Gettos im grünen," in *Der Spiegel* (4 September 1967): 116.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

behavior but also gave the areas a negative reputation, which further perpetuated the problems. The lack of infrastructure and sense of community triggered the residents' nostalgia for the chaos and personal contact of the inner city. For example, Höttler reported that a retired couple made an hour-long journey by suburban rail to their old grocer in Wedding once a week, "even if they only have to buy greens and sour cream."[67] This indicated to *Aktion 507* that the basic needs of residents were not being met and that

> "To organise these areas can no longer be the task of the architect, but instead everyone should be able to create their own home according to their own ideas and desires for their family."[68]

Aktion 507 alleged that the architects of the Märkisches Viertel had taken no notice of the fact that "society has meanwhile developed as a purely economic system of control" and that "the architects have played a significant part in disenfranchising the very same individual for whom they allegedly fight."[69] Thus, restoring the vitality of the old neighbourhoods that allowed for differences and expressions of individuality had to be encouraged. In advocating a change from top-down to bottom-up planning, *Aktion 507* argued that post-war modernist ideals were fading favouring a paradigm shift towards individual agency.[70] The students declared that "the task of urban planning must be to grasp existing conflicts which are not yet spatially localized" and gave the following examples of what needed to be done: (1) The isolation of workers and students from each other and from the city should be reversed and "such an experiment would be a paradigm for living"; (2) The abolition of the separation of bureaucracy and praxis, which they believed would lead to the dissolution of bureaucracy; (3) The relocation of universities into the city or into working class areas.[71] Behind these demands stood the will to reintegrate all sections of society with the intention of increasing vitality in order to engender a change through critical reflection and praxis – to restore agency to the community and to the individual.

Developments after Mass Housing

Clearly, during the post-war years, the need for dwellings was more important than style, and yet, as architectural critic Paul Hans Peters wrote in *Baumeister,* cities became "faceless", "finished" and "sterile" due to the subscription to a prescribed form, which created a "monotony of subject."[72] In 1969, *Der Spiegel* questioned whether this should continue given that the post-war emergency was over. It was feared that the developers' inability to halt the trend would lead to a "German urban landscape dominated for decades to come by the architectural sins of the fifties and sixties."[73] By the late 1960s, the ideals of modernism had therefore lost their appeal, and the following years saw the impact of the criticism from *Aktion* 507, the residents of the satellite towns, the media and others on urban planning. From the early 1970s, marginal housing estates were no longer planned and those already under construction were downscaled; the capacity of Märkisches Viertel itself was reduced from 60 000 to 30 000 inhabitants.[74] There was a general drive to bring back residents to city centres, to pedestrianize shopping centres and to encourage pavement artists, all pointing to the desire to create a diverse urban life and a different image of the city. In 1977, the editors of the *Berliner Morgenpost* asked "where is the evidence of an image for the city?," highlighting the correlation between West Berlin's loss of identity and the lack of cohesive architectural character.[75] Thus, the new political intention was to create a city image of culture and variety through the return of residents to the city centre, and the agenda became the reversal

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67 Ibid., 116-8.

68 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 49.

69 Ibid., 46.

70 Geisert, "Eupalinos," 9.

71 Aktion 507, "Manifest," 47.

72 "Bröckelt," 41-2.

73 Ibid., 44.

74 Fassbinder, "Gegen-Planung," 352.

75 Urban, "Märkisches Viertel," 191.

of the functional zoning of the city. The proliferation of slogans such as "Cities are for People" or *"Schaffe eine menschliche Stadt"* [create a human city] exemplifies this step away from concepts inherent in the satellite housing estates of the 1960s.[76]

Even before the Märkisches Viertel, other urban developments began to show this reaction against peripheral mass housing and functional zoning. For example, in 1963, the architects Josef Paul Kleihues and Hans Heinrich Moldenschardt designed a pedestrian street for Gropiusstadt, which – according to Helmut Geisert – lead to "the critical reconstruction of the city."[77] Within the decade, the 1974 Berlin's Second Urban Renewal Programme advocated a policy shift from complete demolition to "coring", in which only the buildings in the middle of tenement blocks were removed and those remaining were renovated.[78] In 1982, in the "Principles of Careful Urban Renewal" policy, tenement demolition was completely outlawed,[79] thus showing that the heated debates regarding the development of both peripheral and central urban spaces had triggered a change in public policy. Students' denunciation of the relocation of the socially marginalized to physically marginalized residential areas drew attention to those affected by urban renewal; as a result, consultations with residents were included in future planning processes.[80] Despite the fact that by the 1980s, 69% of the Märkisches Viertel residents were either "pleased" or "very pleased" with their residential situation,[81] the place continues to be contested. Furthermore, one should emphasize again the significance of the initial reaction to the development of this the estate in instigating intense debates about the future of the city and of the country.

Concluding Remarks

In West Berlin, marginal urban spaces became places where the ideals for the "new Germany" were embodied within urban planning policies and architectural design. The large-scale destruction during the war gave planners and policy makers an opportunity to fundamentally question how a new architectural paradigm for the city could profoundly alter the lives of its inhabitants. At the same time, planners sought to avoid any visual connection with the monumental stone architecture of the National Socialist period and its symbolism. The demolition of tenements allowed international modern architecture to be erected both in the city centre as well as in the marginalized spaces of the city. For many critics – students, academics, intellectuals, the press, and the public – this visual demonstration of the "new Germany" brought up basic questions both about the beneficiaries of the new policies and their exclusion from such decisions. For *Aktion 507*, in particular, and the new generation of architects, in general, those in positions of power did not act in the best interests of their citizens. This critique became a prominent feature of the image of the city in the following decades by means of squatters' movements, green movements and other groups advocating individual agency in Berlin's urban spaces. The marginal location of West Berlin within West Germany and the marginal location of the satellite housing estates provided fertile ground for the most intense debates regarding the fundamental principles of the whole society.

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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Fig. 3: Back cover of Aktion 507's Manifesto, 1968. Aktion 507, "Manifest," (West Berlin: Rump, 1968), 166.
Fig. 5: Images of The Märkisches Viertel, West Berlin, 1960s. Aktion 507, "Manifest," (West Berlin: Rump, 1968), 34.

76 Hajdu, "Post-War German Urban Experience," 279.

77 Siegfried Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), 53. Cited in Geisert, "Eupalinos," 21.

78 Ibid., 20.

79 Krau, "Zeit der Diagnose," 342.

80 Schätzke, "Matter for the Polis," 59.

81 Urban, "Märkisches Viertel," 192.

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Heinrichs, Georg. "Conversation between Georg Heinrichs and Eduard Kögel." 24 February 2014.

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