

## Urban Places in the 21st Century and the Concept of »Heimat«

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### Abstract

*Not only due to World War II but as well within the last 30 years cities changed their townscape rapidly. The reasons lie inter alia in the shopping malls being built increasingly in top locations meaning that branding and standardization are one of the preconditions towns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have to deal with. On the other side there is a growing awareness of historical structures providing – together with places, monuments, parks, but as well together with retail trades – a sense of feeling at home to the city dweller. Art works furthermore are able to create special landmarks within the city and, as communication is often intended by the artist, they can support this feeling. The concept of »Heimat« – that means much more than the English equivalent of feeling at home – is revised under the preconditions of urban development and incorporated in the context of the historical development of town structures and the role of monument preservation, as well as politics in Europe and especially in Germany.*

**Keywords:** *Urbanism, City development, Townshape, Heimat*

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The weekly newspaper »Die ZEIT« reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 about the planned demolition of parts of the historical market place at Altenburg that has survived World War II and GDR relatively undamaged until now. It is a setting containing medieval, baroque and buildings from the period of promotorism that is harmonically arranged around the central place of the small town. But now all of this should give way for a supermarket, an

“unbelievably cheap and brutal building that seems to come out of the same thinking which was responsible for the beggarly revisions of center cities in the late GDR.”

In the light of the restoration initiatives within the last decades at Altenburg this incident is at the same time a “cultural conflict with a national impact especially in times of economic crises.”<sup>1</sup> Altenburg as *pars*

*pro toto*? Because we can ask in general if the center cities are put to desk under the pressure of commercialism. Or, seen from another point of view: Have we taken leave of our senses to repeat all those mistakes that had been done in the Western part of Germany in the 1950s to 1970s and until the late 1980s (and that we do sometimes still now)? Is it so much easier to tear down buildings for the sake of immediate profit? Do we therefore loose the last remaining places in the city that have identity causing qualities? And what function do have urban places within this context if they would want to evoke feelings of identity and »Heimat«? Which role is occupied by art in this discussion?

Starting from a historical reflection of the different functions places obtained over the centuries this article will turn its attention towards the 20th century to inquire the possibilities for town development

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<sup>1</sup> Both quotes: Alexander Cammann, Häuserkampf in Thüringen. Altenburg möchte Teile seines großartigen

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historischen Marktplatzes abreißen. Für einen Supermarkt, in: Die ZEIT, Nr. 30 (22. Juli 2010), Feuilleton, 48.

in the 21st century, to analyze its qualities, and follow the question how it can again approach humans moving around in towns. Places as locations especially designed for the communication and interaction of people are the initial point of this analysis. In this respect this article is an appeal for more diversity and against the global urban triad of McDonald's, H&M, and Media Market, against the identical chain stores and discounter wheresoever, against Shopping Malls in best center locations that still eliminate historically grown structures – as seen with the example Altenburg. At the same time it is an appeal for art in the urban context to activate and re-urbanize city places, for a redefinition of the city considered from the perspective of the urban citizen who is using it. And at least, I would like to discuss the question how »Heimat« constitutes itself, which role different identities of cities take on - and at least: which significance the aspect of »Heimat« still has within our globalized world. As the German word »Heimat« is more complex than the English »country« or »home« I will use »Heimat« in a definition that is reduced on the aspect of localization.<sup>2</sup> »Heimat« seen in this context is only part of different fields of identification that can spend identity.

### 1. Historical setting:

#### Urban places and their functional change during the centuries

From a historical point of view the plaza in general has had several functions that changed within the towns' changes causing different constitutive criteria. Art works are integral parts of public open spaces since mankind builds them. But they, as well, underwent changes of function according to the places as well. The following chapter is meant as a classification of the ongoing development of the towns' social history, and within art history. But I do not want to write an anthology of artistic concepts for public open spaces, nor do I intend to give a full overview of the change of artistic demand for monuments and sculptures. It is more of a spotlight I will put on special aspects with an additional specification of the area covering only Germany as main aim of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. as well the definition on 14 f.

#### 1.1 The Plaza and its different functions

The ancient Greeks and the Romans alike used the agora and the forum as a meeting point, market place and for reunions. By being public spaces and being equipped with monuments and sculptures thereby they had been representatives for the polis itself where there had been no traffic circulation at all.<sup>3</sup> This changed during the Middle Ages when the urban places became busy locations where social intermix of political, economic and ecclesiastic interests took place.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, monuments and fountains were always combined with all different forms of power demonstration – which we already find at the antique Forum Romanum as mentioned before. But only in the Renaissance we find town planning again that correlates the architectural elements of a place. The Baroque is famous for giving shape to complex urban settings and to create ideal epitomizations. After this highlight of urban layout different functions compete again. This progress is combined with the creation of vast spaces for military parades and traffic junctions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. We find these places especially in France, where sculptures and architectural framework took successively a back seat. As Wolfgang Hartmann emphasizes, the general aim had been not to limit but to enlarge urban places. Hence, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century their prior intention to structure urban quarters and their public activities had been diminished because they became more and more a monument in themselves and thus a part within national self-expression.<sup>5</sup> They are no longer sites of quietness and gathering but they increasingly became the scene for the ever growing traffic.

Richard Sennett points out that the replacement of the multifunctional place because of the development towards a one-dimensional setting for monuments is combined with the displacement of func-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Hartmann. Platz und Skulptur. Urbane Plätze, in: Ausst.kat. Städtische Museen Heilronn/Museum Würth Künzelsau 1996, Andreas Pfeiffer, C. Sylvia Weber (Eds.): Plätze und Platzzeichen. Der Platz – Ein Thema der Kleinplastik seit Giacometti, Sigmaringen 1996 (2 vol.), vol. 1, 19-35.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Delfante, Architekturgeschichte der Stadt. Von Babylon bis Brasilia, Darmstadt 1999, esp. 47 ff. and 70 ff. For the definition cf. as well Paolo Favole, Plätze der Gegenwart, Frankfurt a. Main/New York 1995, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 23.



tions from the city square towards other areas within the town.<sup>6</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century we are able to observe the re-arrangement of city quarters and the creation of new places for special purposes. But at the same time the center city became neglected causing the atomization of the city.<sup>7</sup> In these times the concept of a place was logically synonymous on the one of the open space. In consequence the plaza was deprived of its functional correlation as vital city center used for inter-communication. These plazas have a tendency to musealization due to their representative character that again owes to the fact that they should not bring people together except for inauguration or commemoration parties. Thus I agree with Robert Musil who points out that “the most remarkable thing about memorials is that you do not notice them. There is nothing more invisible than memorials.”<sup>8</sup> Seen from this point of view the debate about the townshape and their places, that started only after World War II, is all the more important, especially because it was of no account for architects in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a forerunner of this debate Constantin Brancusi could be seen. At Tirgu-Jiu, Romania, Brancusi implemented an ensemble of sculptures in 1937/38 to commemorate the dead soldiers from 1916. It consists of a setting in landscape grounds and combines a street, three squares and a gateway. In walking along, pausing and visiting the Church St. Apostle situated on the »Street of Heroes« the visitor gets an idea of the intended close connection. With its layout it attaches to urban conditions and provides visual orientation due to lines of sight correlating the sculptures. This has presented a way for artists to come closer together with the subject of town planning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

And if we look on the development of art starting at this point, we can follow it into nature as land artists capture the formative strength of desert, ocean and secluded regions in general. The formative strength of nature is used deliberately as creative »partner« – that means in consequence that most of the art works that had been created in the 1960s have

already vanished and what is left of them are only the photographs.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, artists tried to win back territory within cities by connecting places with the function of the agora or forum. This development has to be seen in connection with the attempt to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life that started in the mid-1970s. Charles Moores 1979 *Piazza d'Italia* at New Orleans/USA is widely noticed as sensational sign of post-modern place formation. It is called a “festive composition”<sup>10</sup> consisting of an eclectic prospect with columns, architraves on a circular ground plan resembling a stage. In the following years artists created squares with artistic ambition in Germany as well, i.e. the temporary transmutation of urban places by Günther Uecker at Düsseldorf<sup>11</sup>, the attempt to new interpretations of places with the *Nanas* by Niki de Saint-Phalle<sup>12</sup>, kinetic fountain sculptures by Jean Tinguely, the happening-sculptures by Wolf Vostell<sup>13</sup>, or the vast alterations of places by Otto Herbert Hajek<sup>14</sup>, that can be found in Germany as well as at several other places around the globe. They all give evidence of the lust to put urban places on stage again and regenerate historical places.<sup>15</sup> And thus are

<sup>9</sup> Continuitive: Colette Garraud, *L'idee de nature dans l'art contemporain*, Paris 1994; Anne Hoormann, *Land-Art. Kunstprojekte zwischen Landschaft und öffentlichem Raum*, Berlin 1996; Irving Sandler, *American art of the 1960s*, New York 1988; Gilles A. Tiberghien, *Land Art*, Paris 1995, and Patrick Werkner, *Land Art USA. Von den Ursprüngen bis zu den Großraumprojekten in der Wüste*, München 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Knirsch, *Stadtplätze. Architektur und Freiraumplanung*, Leinfelden-Echterdingen 2004, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Dieter Honisch names four performances at urban places in Düsseldorf between 1961 and 1967 (cf.: Dieter Honisch, Uecker. Stuttgart 1983 [with a catalogue raisonné by Marion Haedecke], 184, 189, and 214).

<sup>12</sup> Exhibition catalog Sprengel Museum Hannover 2007/08. Stephan Lohr, Ludwig Zerull (Eds.): *Die 1960er Jahre in Hannover*. Hannover 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold, Karsten: *Wolf Vostell auf Straßen und Plätzen... durch die Galerien*, in: ZADIK, issue 14/2007, 11-33.

<sup>14</sup> Exhibition catalog Bonn 2000. Ibid. (Ed.): O. H. Hajek. *Eine Welt der Zeichen*. Köln 2000 [with a catalogue raisonné containing plastics, painting and art within urban spaces], cf. 256-267.

<sup>15</sup> Knirsch, cf. n. 41.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Sennett, *Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens*. Frankfurt a. Main 1977, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 334.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Musil, *Nachlass zu Lebzeiten*, in: *Sämtliche Erzählungen*. Reinbek b. Hamburg 1968, 324.

still prevailing tasks in view of the lasting encroachment in town structures after World War II.

If we turn our attention towards the actual situation we realize a growing »Disneyland-ism«. After a period of time where abstract art works in public spaces were confronted with public incomprehension it is now that we find art works there again. But now they have a certain purpose: to define the space and to increase the image. In this context Claudia Emmert and Ulrich Mellitzer pointed out the difference between “drop sculpture” that transformed into “site specific sculpture”. Their main aim is to visualize the specific situation of the location and to transform the city towards a vital narrative space.<sup>16</sup> That means that these sculptures have the intention to attain the city dweller and to activate his communication. Most of this kind of intentional art works had been created before the development started to take place that Emmert/Mellitzer describe and before radical commercialism overtook the cities.

### *1.2. Artificial place signatures: artistic composition of places in the 20th century*

Places can be defined as points of concentration: of human beings, of buildings and of functions. The inhabited space is intersected due to the functions it has to serve. Thereby a structure is created consisting of spaces and compounds. There the rights of each individual for a private location and of the general public for common and thus public spaces are well-balanced. Within the architectural context of towns places were significant only as historical quote until well after the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were treated as urbanistic side notes whereas a new perception of space and places was developed in the arts at the end of the 1950s/beginning of the 1960s. This artistic amplification had been motivated on the one side by the political setting and is on the other hand closely combined with the positivism of a new generation of artists after World War II who had experienced the war as children only. Hopes for a better future and euphoria shaped the artists, economy was prosperous and new technologies and

<sup>16</sup> Claudia Emmert/Ulrich Mellitzer, Vom Reiterstandbild zum Kommunikationszugpferd. Kunst als Abbild des Strukturwandels in unserer Gesellschaft, in: Sparkassen-Informatik (Ed.): Morse by Horse. Manual. Dellbrügge & de Moll. Drehscheibe Frankfurt, Frankfurt a. Main 2006, 40-51.

inventions provoked a positively motivated art – as we know it best in the pop art from Americas’ 1950s. If we compare the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries’ propensity of monuments with the public sculptures of today, which reflect the car-adapted cities of the 1960s and have thus a compensative function they are – as Jean-Christophe Ammann states properly –

“with few exceptions and without judging their quality helpless, like fallen from the sky, stumbling blocks” because their task is to beautify and gloss over in the same time.”<sup>17</sup>

The city planner Andreas Feldtkeller therefore names modern cities as “towns used for other purposes than intended”<sup>18</sup> and makes an argument for ending the destruction of the public space. The role of artists like Otto Herbert Hajek (Germany) or Charles Moore and Richard Serra (United States) is all the more important because among others they initiated the debate about the functions of public spaces and voted for a cooperation of city planners, conservators, architects, artists, and sociologists. But admittedly, Andreas Feldtkeller is of the opinion that “monumental art works [...] within open spaces refer to the banishment of the public from the city.”<sup>19</sup> This means that the public space in its traditional meaning does not exist anymore why artists are able to change places into art spaces.<sup>20</sup> The problem with these art spaces is for sure the profanation after a certain amount of watching. Its aesthetic value is evident and any further visitation and contemplation would be some sort of repeating – probably the spectator would be able to gain more aesthetic subtleties but this at the risk that its charm might wear off.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Christophe Ammann, Kunst im öffentlichen Raum, in: Anderes, Bernhard et al. (Eds.): Das Denkmal und die Zeit. Festschrift für Alfred A. Schmid. Luzern 1990, 298-310, cf. esp. 298.

<sup>18</sup> The title of his book even makes this argument visible (Andreas Feldtkeller, Die zweckentfremdete Stadt. Wider die Zerstörung des öffentlichen Raumes, Frankfurt a. Main/New York 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>20</sup> Continuously cf. Uwe Lewitzky, Kunst für alle? Kunst im öffentlichen Raum zwischen Partizipation, Intervention und Neuer Urbanität. Bielefeld 2005, 88 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Wulf Tassin: Freiraum und Verhalten. Soziologische Aspekte der Nutzung und Planung städtischer Freiräume. Eine Einführung. Wiesbaden 2004, 110.



Armin Zweite attracts notice to the social context within this discussion and tells us, that

“it is obvious that current art styles reflect phenomena characteristic for our time in total: the rapid growth of complexity and contingency which means that we are confronted permanently not only within our day-to-day life but in contemporary art as well with multiple signs, symbols, quotes, references and a magnitude of information and permanent change. The reduction of symbolic conciseness is a sign for this »new lack of transparency«”<sup>22</sup>.

In this context I would like to quote Richard Serra who said about sculpture in general in 1980 already it has “the potential to create its own place and space and work against the places and spaces where it had been created.” So he is interested especially in those art works where the artist is the creator of an “anti-environment capturing its own place, creating its own situation or separating or declaring its own space.”<sup>23</sup>

However the question arises if and how the stated profanation caused by frequent viewing goes together with the artists’ aim to reflect the own position within society. If art works in public places are suited for dulling the passers-by, if they even need a thorough knowledge of the artists’ intentions to understand them, art works achieve the opposite of what they intend to achieve. So, if art works in public spaces are not only just objects neither for delight nor for use but objects with a function and able to value the significance of the place they create an artificial space. In conquering public spaces art works compete with monuments, fountains and sculptures. Following Villem Flusser art works have to be

“responsible basic commodities of intellectual meaning with apt possibilities to dialogue, inter-subjectivity and communication [...] that are combined with certain functions in a way that both spheres are transparently superimposed.”<sup>24</sup>

This means that the usability is an important criterion for art works in public spaces. The context super-

imposes a meaning for the art work and enables its usability for the passers-by.

It may seem to be an unnecessary luxury to implement art in public spaces. Let us remind of the fact that no building ever is created that should not deal with the adjacent space. This bearing in mind, art might seem to be an unnecessary luxury. But as we know no building is erected that should not deal with the surroundings, art can contribute to the urban functions. In integrating art for the creation of central urban places they can be viewed not only functional but aesthetically as well. Especially abstract art contributes to the education of the passers-by because it becomes a projection screen, asking the passers-by to reflect their own position and supports the disposition of the habitat within the modern town surrounding. Artists like Siah Armajani already recognized art in public spaces to belong to towns:

“It is meant for cities as it comes from the cities. [...] The characteristics of modern urbanity are the meetings of people. [...] Public space always is political and thus publicly displayed art has invariably something to do with politics as well. To create a social place only makes sense with converting the passers-by into users [...] who become an important part of its content because space is no internal experience.”<sup>25</sup>

Seen as such, public art works fulfill a significant urban and social function as “stumbling block”. They can help to constitute a plaza, where the city dweller is able to reflect himself and his role within the town structure. Living in a more and more globalized world it seems to be a desideratum for the old European town. As Dieter Hassenpflug points out, it should furthermore be put on the “red list for endangered space-species”, as a counterbalance for the “modern expeditions to the infinitude of »faster«, »bigger«, »further«, and »smaller«.”<sup>26</sup> This means that art works situated within the public space alter it into a place where individual and collective culture can be experienced.

<sup>22</sup> Armin Zweite, Kunst am Bau, in: Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen (Ed.): Kunst am Bau. Die Projekte des Bundes in Berlin, Tübingen/Berlin 2002, 8–9, esp.8.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Serra, quoted from: Brandon Taylor, Kunst heute, Köln 1995, 136.

<sup>24</sup> Villem Flusser, quoted from: Jean-Christophe Ammann, cf. n. 17, quote: 301.

<sup>25</sup> Siah Armajani, Kunst im öffentlichen Raum und die Stadt, in: Florian Matzner, Public Art. Kunst im öffentlichen Raum. Ein Handbuch, Ostfildern-Ruit <sup>2</sup>2004 (= Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Bildenden Künste München, 71–76, quote: 75.

<sup>26</sup> Dieter Hassenpflug, Die Theatralisierung des öffentlichen Raumes, in: Selle, Klaus (Hrsg.): Was ist los mit den öffentlichen Räumen? Analysen, Positionen, Konzepte. Aachen/Dortmund/Hannover <sup>2</sup>2003, 127–134, quote: 129.





## 2. Competition in public open spaces:

### Branding and standardization

#### as a sign for globalization?

Let us turn away now from the appraisal to the present. We can state that there are quite a lot of possibilities for individuality, for an individual urban design and especially for the plaza in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Art in the public open space participates quite a lot concerning this individualism. But on the other hand we recognize that the traditional layout and design of center cities compete with several modern mechanisms. Towns sell their most valuable property to investors who put up buildings that are not surpassable in arbitrariness, places are being used for sales promotion, a unification (or even better: a depletion) of goods to buy caused by chain stores that push aside retail trade – in walking around center cities and noticing this kind of development we may ask: *quo vadis* European city? We already are able to experience the results of the changes stated above in visiting the USA (but even in France e.g. this process is already visible). But we may not forget that the ideas originally came from Germany and Austria.<sup>27</sup> Even US-American cities with history like Philadelphia show only small »islands« where we are reminded of the place's history via traditional buildings. But most part of the city is covered by urban canyons containing faceless streets and replaceable office buildings, and meccas of consumerism in the outer green belt. There you can get lost within their dazzling offers on display – but on the other hand the consumer can grow tired of the sheer amount. Do we want such a scenario for Germany, for Europe as well? Or has the European town still good chances in the 21<sup>st</sup> century just because of its much older tradition – even though discussions about its future oscillate between the characteristics “myth”<sup>28</sup>, “run down model of worldwide urban development”<sup>29</sup>, and “reason why Europe is recognized as

<sup>27</sup> Hassenpflug continues „In the perspective of the fordistic modernization the European town is a kind of moor that has to be drained. It is a source of irritation; it is too theatrical, too slow, too obstinate, too pluralistic, and too demanding. We cannot afford it.” Ibid, esp. 129.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Werner Rietdorf (Ed.), *Auslaufmodell Europäische Stadt? Neue Herausforderungen und Fragestellungen am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2001.

historical unit.”<sup>30</sup> Seen from a European Union-point of view towns are “multi-cultural by definition which means that they generate Europe not by regional coexistence but by interlock locally.”<sup>31</sup> That means that towns have a significant structural function based on the complex reciprocal relationship of local and European level. Strange enough EU-politics did not notice this function and the relevance of the towns in general for a long time. This could be in connection with Europe being associated with “de-territorialization, [...] traffic and mobility” but not with a special affiliation. In this respect it is “really not able to localize it”.<sup>32</sup>

A »site« accounts for culture and is associated in this context with the attributes “mobility, future, motion”.<sup>33</sup> City marketing contains Europe, i.e. by making an application for the title of European Capital of Culture (or while the town obtains the title), or by naming urban places, streets, bridges, and even stores. At present there is no way to predict the emergence of »the European town« that is due to the merging of the European countries, or if diversity – town planning included – will be significant for Europe's future appearance. Thus I rather will reconsider actual problems and outline the chances for the European town and for urban open spaces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cities. Finally, I will discuss the results with regard to developing a sense of »Heimat« by living in a specific town.

#### 2.1. The pretty town – utopia or option?

Siegfried Kracauer stated in the 1930s:

“We can distinguish between two townscapes: one is shaped deliberately, the other not intentional. The first comes from an artistic point that can be rehearsed in the composition of places, building blocks, perspective effects

<sup>30</sup> Leonardo Benevolo, *Die Stadt in der Europäischen Geschichte*, München 1993, 13; Walter Siebel follows Benevolo in this respect (Walter Siebel (Ed.), *Die europäische Stadt*, Frankfurt a. Main 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Jöhler, Reinhard: *Europäische Orte. Territorialisierungsprozesse im »neuen Europa«*, in: Binder, Beate/Göttisch, Silke/Kaschuba, Wolfgang/Vanja, Konrad (Hrsg.): *Ort. Arbeit. Körper. Ethnografie Europäischer Modernen*. 34. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, Berlin 2003. Münster et al. 2005 (= Schriftenreihe Museum Europäischer Kulturen, vol. 3), 33–44, quote: 34.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 38.



of a specific view, and it normally is highlighted with stars in guide books. The second one comes into existence without being planned before. They are highly fortuitous and cannot be called to account as they arise from differing interests. The face of such a town can be characterized as encounter of bulks of buildings and uniform streets of houses that never had been of interest for anybody. It is not shaped like nature and is comparable with the countryside in asserting itself...<sup>34</sup>

Following this statement Kracauer turns towards the backside of the towns of his time, towards the ugly and randomly grown within following a trend as several other authors state similar conditions.

At the same time artists start to recover this side of towns and to make them subject of their art works thus setting an impressive monument for the modern town. Thinking of the Futurists, they broached the issue of velocity, intoxication and decay at first. The National Socialists ended this "rampant imagination of the pretty town"<sup>35</sup> by attribute these fantasies with the adjectives »not Aryan« or »Jewish« combined with their imaginations of megalomaniacal town reconstruction.<sup>36</sup> Oversized parade grounds were used to show national socialist German-ness, wide trails were conceived in the name of air raid protection, and buildings with architectural quotes referring to the limitless power of baroque sovereigns were constructed.

"With the help of megalomaniacal, anonymous voids that require a particular staging and mankind as raw material the Nazis annihilated the special understanding of towns. The erstwhile flaneur is put in file and the mass is played to the gallery. [...] The prettiness of the town has to move aside for the prettiness of the mass spectacle."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Sigfried Kracauer, *Aus dem Fenster gesehen*, quoted from: Karl Riha, (Ed.), *Stadtleben*. Darmstadt-Neuwied 1983, 80 f.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Rolf Werner, *In Schönheit untergehen oder traumhaft hingesagte Bilder entziffern*, in: Alexander J. Schmidt, Reinhard Jammers (Eds.), *Die schöne Stadt*, Essen 2008, 22–28, here: 24.

<sup>36</sup> Continuative cf. Frank-Bertholt Raith, *Der Heroische Stil: Studien zur Architektur am Ende der Weimarer Republik*, Berlin 1997, esp. 76 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Werner cf. n. 35, here: 25.

*Risks and side effects within: The »Charta of Athens«*  
The modernization of town structures allowing for the ever growing traffic was a subject for discussion already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The National Socialists' *Arbeitsstab Speer* met regularly for roundtable discussions i.e. about possible widening of whole streets of houses to remedy the predicted problems. Additionally, experiences of bomb war were asking for wide streets and a loosened construction to make towns safe. Already in 1943 the magazine *Bauwelt* points out that these ideas had been developed not only in Germany but in England and the United States as well.<sup>38</sup> This is one of the reasons why the ideas of loosened building density were continually followed by town planners after World War II. The implemented logic said that if these analogies could be drawn the ideas were above suspicion of being fascist or national socialist.

Furthermore town planners in the era of rebuilding could invoke Le Corbusiers' *Charta of Athens*. Adopted in 1933 at the CIAM-congress at Athens it was published in German in 1957, it advocated for a decentralization of urban functions and for the creation of livable environments for living and working. In this, it follows the assumption of the founding manifest of CIAM at La Sarraz in 1928: "Town planning is the organization of all functions of collective life. It never can be governed by aesthetical considerations but only by functional requirements."<sup>39</sup> The *Charta of Athens* is to be seen as alternative draft of the crowded towns that increased its number of inhabitants because of industrialization. Most city dwellers lived therefore in desperate conditions. The concept of a structured low-density, green-space city with a separation of the main urbanistic functions living, working, recreation and mobility goes back to these ideas. Traffic in the so-called "vehicle-friendly town"<sup>40</sup> is assigned to link the different functions. Especially in the 1950s and 1960s the *Charta of Athens*

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Bauwelt* issue 9–10/1943.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted after Gerd Albers, *Zur Entwicklung der Stadtplanung in Europa*. Begegnungen, Einflüsse, Verflechtungen, Braunschweig et al. 1997 (= *Bauwelt-Fundamente*, vol. 117), 193.

<sup>40</sup> The term »vehicle-friendly town« was marked by the architect Reichow who fought deliberately for separated functions under the primacy of the car (cf. Hans Bernhard Reichow, *Die autogerechte Stadt – Ein Weg aus dem Verkehrs-Chaos*, Ravensburg 1959).

became the ideal concept of the era of rebuilding because allegedly it seemed to be unharmed by the national socialist times. It was seen as expression of modernist building and affected town planning of the first two decades after World War II.<sup>41</sup> Even though the *Charta of Athens* was not published in sufficient translations to have significant impact in itself already in the 1920s, there had been many well-known architects reconsidering the plights within the major cities and put in proposals for solution, like *Plan Voisin* (1925) for the reorganization of Paris by Le Corbusier, the draft with rows of houses for Frankfurt-Westhausen (1929–1931) by Ernst May, or Cornelis van Eesteren's *General Plan for Enlargement* (1935) for the South of Amsterdam.<sup>42</sup> This situation abetted the evolution of urban places into "anti-spaces, left alone as nobody felt responsible for them" because town planners had the vision of a "democratic urban landscape".<sup>43</sup> This vision contained the idea of open spaces with low-maintenance, which admittedly came into discredit shortly after. Last but not least our perception was affected by Alexander Mitscherlich. He gave distinction to the sentence of the "inhospitality of our towns"<sup>44</sup>, that still comes into mind when thinking about the overall architectural concepts of reconstruction after World War II. These ideas are the reason for the reconstruction phase which is not yet terminated but towns are again in alteration.

One possibility to provide artists with assignments and at the same time to do something against the noted inhospitality was »Kunst am Bau« (art within architecture). This concept came into disuse at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But in the meanwhile it is called back in combination with a parole for a relaxed relationship between city and art, which should be seen as "a symbiosis and not as a forced marriage."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Continuative cf. Klaus v. Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau. Architektur und Städtebaupolitik in beiden deutschen Staaten*, München 1987.

<sup>42</sup> Albers, cf. n. 39, 200 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Werner, cf. n. 35, esp. 25 f., quote: *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte*. Anstiftung zum Unfrieden, Frankfurt a. Main 1965.

<sup>45</sup> Hans-Joachim Manske, Rose Pfister, Preface, in: Florian Matzner, Hans-Joachim Manske, Rose Pfister, (Eds.): *No Art = No City! Stadtutopien in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2003, 6–13, here: 6.

### *Hunger for Beauty*

But we may ask if this concept of a symbiotic cooperation of town and art really works within the towns getting more global, uniform and exchangeable. Did it ever work or is it only fiction? And we may ask furthermore if art is able to add some identity and in that to add a feeling for »Heimat«, for being at home. Or is it only an alibi and the artist is stylized as "savior in a functional solitude"<sup>46</sup> while we state the »McDonaldization« of public open spaces?

Studies already tell us that prettiness and good design are good for towns as well because of an existing »design dividend« which towns can and should exploit.<sup>47</sup> Well designed office buildings are able to augment efficiency, well designed schools bring students to learn more efficiently, and a town with pretty places and parks averts crimes and supports the identification of its inhabitants and their feeling of being at home. The question is if the inherent beauty of our surroundings makes us feel happier, makes us more untroubled, more laborious? "Is prettiness responsible for becoming more intelligent?"<sup>48</sup> I do not believe that we are able to build a »pretty town« on a drawing table but we can ensure that houses streets and places are planned with a maximum of and a sense for aesthetical knowledge. Thus we enable the contemporary town to become pretty – which seems to be a desideratum as "prettiness is subcutaneously effective as we desire and search for it wherever we can [...]"<sup>49</sup>

Looks like a good precondition for towns in future, doesn't it? The towns' prettiness constitutes itself in a grown townscape combining old and new parts; it contains monuments and sculptures, plazas used by the city dweller, it is a harmonic architecture allowing for a specific urban character of the area to distinguish from other towns. They again present a grown townscape of their own, in its own character, and with its regional or local distinctive features. But

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. C.A.B.E., *Buildings and Spaces. Why design matters*. 2006, or C.A.B.E. *The Value of Good Design. How buildings and spaces create economic and social value*. 2002, both available for download under [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk) (last retrieved on 28.02.2011).

<sup>48</sup> Alexander J. Schmidt, *Die schöne Stadt*. Preface, in: Schmidt/Jammers, cf. n. 35, 6–8, here: 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.





some authors deny a combination of this “hunger for beauty”<sup>50</sup> and an aesthetical substance because nowadays modern aesthetic and art are not automatically equate. Moreover we live in a period of »aesthetization of our environment« where from the own appearance to architecture the pursuit of an ever growing aesthetical experience is one of the prime motives of western conducts of modern life.<sup>51</sup> In other words: if everything in our near and far away vicinity is aesthetically motivated beauty is of little value.

Conveyed on urban development we again see the results from the 1970s (and even if it sounds paradoxical: its obsession on mobility) to influence our view on towns today. As mentioned before, in these years artists started to fight against this development and asked for an earlier involvement where plazas and buildings were constructed. In acting like this, they made an expedient contribution to the modern appearance of towns and the role of the city dweller within. However, only a few artists had an appropriate training to be significantly involved in the complex development proposals.

“Where overall color and special concepts could be realized we recognize that the artists’ contribution was only a helpless attempt to beautification in a mistaken town planning.”<sup>52</sup>

Caused by increasingly abstract art works they were more and more rejected as they additionally showed plainly the mistakes of an inhuman planning because of the try for aesthetization.

As a result of these efforts for urban development which mostly had failed the perception seems to have dawned that historical structures of public open spaces have a value in themselves. Next to that an increasing number of artists went in the public open with their art works. Not only, because they disrelished the museum as a location for art works as the museum itself was seen to be old-fashioned but because they wanted to confront people outside the

boundaries of museum walls with art works as well. Encounter, communication and discourse are frequently used in this context to emphasize the interaction with the spectator, especially with the passers-by, and therefore point out the social aspect of contemporary art.

“Art in the public open space – even where it is not presumed to be there – acquires itself active towards the course of life of mankind and constrains the people to interact with their surroundings.”<sup>53</sup>

The chance for cities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century lies exactly in the growing awareness of the specific characteristics of each town and its construction. If the city dweller becomes aware of it he should stand up for its individuality. But on the other hand town councils set precedents at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for decades to come that resulted already in changed structures. The phenomena of the shopping mall – as we get to know it in German towns more and more (and there not only in the green belt but in the center cities as well) – provides comprehensive justifications for the uniformity as mentioned above. Therefore they shall be subject of the following chapter that is dedicated to the aspect of mediation of feeling at home (mediation of »Heimat«) via specific characteristics of the towns.

## 2.2. *Shopping Malls – an American Phenomenon?*

In 1956 the first shopping mall, the Southdale Center, had been built in Minneapolis. The architect and Jewish immigrant from Vienna, Victor Gruen is referred to be the »father of the shopping center«.<sup>54</sup> Primarily, his intention was to build a communication center for the town and thus creating more urbanity by counteracting urban sprawl. They should represent “the type of a modern market place in the North American towns’ mire of develop-

<sup>50</sup> Kaspar Maase, Hunger nach Schönheit. Überlegungen zur Ästhetik des Alltags, in: Binder/Götttsch et al. 2005, cf. n. 31, 283–290.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>52</sup> Beate Mielsch, Die historischen Hintergründe der »Kunst-am-Bau«-Regelung, in: Volker Plagemann, (Ed.), Kunst im öffentlichen Raum. Anstöße der 80er Jahre, Köln 1989, 21–44, 43.

<sup>53</sup> Ausst.kat. Weingarten 1990. Otto Herbert Hajek, Bildhauersymposium Weingarten, in: Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe (Ed.), Bildhauer-Symposium Weingarten. Klasse Prof. O.H. Hajek, Stuttgart 1990, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Gerd Kühn names the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City (1920) and Shoppers World near Boston (1951) as first shopping center (cf. Gerd Kühn, Innerstädtische Einkaufszentren: Entwicklungen – Strukturen – Perspektiven, in: Walter Brune, Rolf Junker, Holger Pump-Uhlmann (Eds.), Angriff auf die City, Düsseldorf 2006, 17–27, here: 18).

ments<sup>55</sup> with their multifunctional character. For Gruen the concept of the shopping mall was connected with far reaching ideas for city planning. But subsequently only the economic aspect became accepted – that might be a valid demand in the United States with their tendency to spaciousness and the long distances. But if we adopt these principles for Europe where we still have a city infrastructure that is affected by retail industry (though World War II destroyed a lot of center cities thoroughly and directly opposed tendencies become visible) it would be “a corporate sin of a cultural heritage that often is thousands of years old.” Haemorrhage of city centers and a decline of retail sales are already visible changes, and the shopping malls being built increasingly in top locations are one of the reasons. It is quite curious that especially the building of shopping malls in top locations follows the purpose to gain in attractiveness. But they only are attractive for the shopping malls’ operating company that is responsible for the elimination of the retail industry and for the impoverishment of the range of goods. So shopping malls are the exact opposite of what they stand for: They do not stand for more urbanity, for a consolidation of the town. The special European element of this trend is that commercial centers are relocated in the center cities, thus creating there illusory worlds. If we have a closer look on the buildings itself that house shopping malls we recognize their sheer size and – provided they are located in the center city – that the facades give the illusion of several adjacent houses thus diminishing the extend of it. They may imitate diverse architectural styles like the CentrO at Oberhausen, landmarked facades might be incorporated as we know it from the former intimate theater at Karlsruhe or it might be a functional architecture where the architects loosened up the big bulk of the building within its structure. How the architects deal with the loosening up of these big-sized buildings is interesting, but even more interesting is the fact that these malls adapted the towns’ architecture in occupying the center cities. By imitating urban architecture they promise a junction to urban landscape and (like in Oberhausen) they suggest being in Spain, Italy or at any other beauty spot around the world as the surrounding architecture is too dull to be copied.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Brune, Einführung, oder: Troja lässt grüßen, in: Brune/Junker/Pump-Uhlmann, cf. n. 54, 7–9, here: 8.

So the big-sized, flat-roofed commercial buildings in the open countryside where the goods were on display in identical boxes were transformed into Disney-like illusory worlds to blend in the townscape revealing that architecture is that part of the arts that is closest to economy. Therefore the practical constraint of capitalistic economic activity penetrates architecture straightforward.<sup>56</sup>

On the one hand we have illusory worlds that provide the visitor and the (potential) buyer with experiences outside his daily reality, and on the other hand we have the attempt of companies to communicate the aura of the brand – in my opinion they are two sides of a medal that refers either to the mass of buyers or to the well off consumer. Especially Prada and their commission to Rem Koolhaas for the flagship-stores at New York (the »Epicenter«) and Seoul with the »transformer«-architecture<sup>57</sup> make clear that behind a brand there is much more than clothing, or consumer goods in general: exclusivity, refinement, art or the like shall merge with the porter of the brand. Thus it is quite suitable for Prada that the *New York Times* called their store at SoHo a “museum show on indefinite display.”<sup>58</sup> At the same time it becomes obvious that the borderlines between art and consume blur as it was the contribution of star architects like Rem Koolhaas or Zaha Hadid (who invented a mobile museum for Chanel in 2008<sup>59</sup>). They had been recruited by the companies, and with their name they provide security for the investment and moreover for the prestige of the brand.<sup>60</sup> No matter whether it is the upper or the lower ending of the consumers’ scale, they have one thing in common: They will change towns.

“If the imperative of consumer capitalism is »Lead us into temptation!« the flagship stores of Rem Koolhaas are its cathedrals – but the shopping malls are the parish churches

<sup>56</sup> Robert Misik, *Das Kult-Buch. Glanz und Elend der Kommerzkultur*, Bonn 2007, esp. 59.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. <http://prada-transformer.com> [last retrieved on 11.02.2011].

<sup>58</sup> Herbert Muschamp, *Critic’s Notebook. Forget the Shoes, Prada’s New Store Stocks Ideas*, in: *New York Times*, 16.12.2001 (cf.: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) [last retrieved on 7.02.2011]).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. [www.chanel-mobileart.com](http://www.chanel-mobileart.com) (last retrieved on 11.02.2011).

<sup>60</sup> Continuative cf. Georg Franck, *Mentaler Kapitalismus. Eine politische Ökonomie des Geistes*, München 2005, 80.



proselytizing this religion to all four corners of the world.”<sup>61</sup>

Malls formerly reserved for shopping only mutated to so called »Urban Entertainment Centers (UEC)« within the last years where all space had been filled with gastronomy, fitness centers and movie theaters to ensure a longer stay within. Some of them even provide their own training center or kindergarten and thus are organized on the principle of “social life connected to the imperative of »to buy«.”<sup>62</sup> But if social life more and more takes place in these indoor paradises of consumer culture, if these UECs took over the characteristics of the former center city – do we still need the old European town with its grown structure and its specific architecture, its places, streets and buildings? Do we still need the diverse range of products provided by these structures and especially by the retail trades? Besides, if we focus on city image campaigns soliciting tourists and investors at a time it becomes apparent that the towns themselves sell their characteristics as »brands«, that a certain local flair and a hint of sub culture is inevitable as they are anticipated but that it has to be suitable to the urban brand image. The initial point had been the shopping mall and that is conferred to the whole town. The “sedated events and their checkability”<sup>63</sup> become a value in itself, and towns are committed to it to present a clean, pretty, and proper image where everything that interferes with it is eliminated radically. But where will »the town« end if the street is growing into an open air mall? What happens with its inhabitant, the visitors, and passers-by that are socialized like that? Is it still possible to evolve a feeling of being at home (a feeling of »Heimat«) within an environment that is thoroughly styled? Do we still need it at all?

### 3. »Heimat« in uniform worlds

The Swiss art historian and advocate for the Modern Movement, Siegfried Giedion, developed a concept of urban experience combining place and time already in the 1940s. He was of the opinion that mankind would lose all his benchmarks because of his constant mobility, and that he would stroll through

urban landscape like moving in a cubistic art piece.<sup>64</sup> But we may not forget that Giedion belongs to a generation being constantly confronted with concentrated urban structures where living and working, recreation and production, life and death took place in confined spaces. In the view of this reality (and not in the view of our renovated, modernized and embellished quarters of old buildings) the functional detachment from the Moloch town, stinking, crowded, and overflowing with mobility at a time seemed to be a relief. In the meanwhile we know that the construct of functional detachment failed especially in these towns that had been reconstructed following the principles of the »car-friendly city«. But the particular of architecture is that we are still surrounded by the buildings from the reconstruction era after World War II so we cannot just close the book and ignore the results. Furthermore, even 60 years after World War II this kind of architecture is responsible for our perspective concerning urbanity. It still guides us and gives you a feeling for foreignness or of a home.

#### 3.1. »Heimat« within the city?

In German, »Heimat« is defined as the “landscape or form of housing schemes consistently experienced in its geographic setting. Humankind has to be linked strongly to it by birth, tradition or way of life as it was responsible for his personality and is the place where his first significant social relationships had been established. [...]”<sup>65</sup> Two aspects are relevant for this analysis: First, the experienced landscape and second, the correlation with it due to specific circumstances. It is quite clear that the urban landscape underwent intense transformations and that artificial worlds overtake reality. Thus I would like to have a closer look on the moments creating homeland solidarity. Of interest is furthermore the role that architecture and especially the architecture of urban open places plays in this context as space shaping quality. Camillo Sitte was among the first to ask such questions of the aesthetical impact of urban development in the Industrial Age in his book »Der

<sup>61</sup> Misik, cf. n. 56, 64.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>64</sup> Siegfried Giedion, *Raum, Zeit, Architektur. Die Entstehung einer neuen Tradition* (1941), Zürich/München 1978, 484 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted following dtv-Lexikon in 24 volumes, Gütersloh/München 2009, vol. 9, 208 f.



Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen« published in 1889.<sup>66</sup> Sitte especially pointed out that atmosphere should be created by architecture. Urban space should be turned into realms of experience for the city dweller meaning that it should be disclosed and realized via activities of daily life in situ.<sup>67</sup> As towns are inhabited by people, we cannot reduce them to development codes nor to infrastructural necessities like traffic routing. So these questions of perception as brought into discussion by Sitte are still virulent.

Peter Eisenman brings in the term »affective space« containing experience as a mixture from sound, motion and light, which is thus diffuse with respect to its measurability and quantifiability.<sup>68</sup> This space is the opposite of the space that is aligned to the most effective degree of consumption capacity utilization that we got to know before in the form of shopping malls and flagship stores. Exceeding architecture that we can understand intellectually as geometrical figures and comprehend its functions the affective space is constituted by the personal experience of the urban landscape which is “a significant factor for the experience and the »construction« of space due to its affectivity.”<sup>69</sup>

#### *Urban experiences*

To experience space we have to move, and in towns this movement is directed by the routing and configuration of streets and roads, by buildings and their general outline. Therefore to feel at home we have to take into account not only the social environment and the size of the town, but the possibilities to move, agitate and exercise within. The street is completely indifferent towards its users, it is more important that it is used to reach the intended place. The only exception of this is the promenade – but for its use there is the need for a society being able to

leisurely wanton self-expression.<sup>70</sup> But this period seems to have ended around 1900.

With regard to these considerations I disagree with Hermann Schmit who postulated the promenade as the only way for a leisurely stroll. Because shopping malls are planned especially as promenades – even though they are not primarily meant for self-expression but for the consumer goods on display, even though the »disinterested benevolence« in combination with maundering has changed into a sauntering that is aligned with potential consumption.

There is it again, the towns’ problem at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: its relative uniformity that prevent us from individual experiences and situations when striding through an individual urban space. Even though these places are reserved especially for the city dweller we cannot feel at home because mankind develops a culture of living and a homelike feeling if he is able to establish a relationship to and between places. In doing so, he constitutes emotional spaces. “The cobweb of feelings that intertwines living spaces and urban landscapes is not solely the product of *one’s own* life.”<sup>71</sup> As things, places and spaces are charged with feelings man is experiencing atmosphere: “In aesthetizations emotional relatedness to places convey.” In this way we have come full circle to the foregone conclusions as mentioned initially that are claimed for art works in urban open spaces especially by artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At these places emotionally evoke the user, passers-by – in short: the city dweller – a feeling of »Heimat« originates. Thus, art works in urban public spaces can support the bringing about a sense of identity. Via identification (or even via serious engagement) with the art work man can get a feeling of occupying a place, to feel at home there.

#### *Urbanity: reconstruction or deconstruction?*

For approximately 30 years another trend is noticeable and is thus a bit older than the one creating artificial worlds engulfing center cities. Especially after 1970 the European towns enforced their efforts for

<sup>66</sup> Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*. Reprint der 4. Auflage von 1909, Basel/Boston/Berlin 2002.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Eisenman, *Die Entfaltung des Ereignisses*, in: Peter Eisenman, *Aura und Exzess. Zur Überwindung der Metaphysik der Architektur*, Wien 1995, 193–201, esp. 195 ff.

<sup>69</sup> Thorsten Bürklin, *Sitte »reloaded«*. *Wohnen in der Stadt, die es nicht mehr gibt*, in: Jürgen Hasse, (Ed.): *Die Stadt als Wohnraum*, Freiburg/München 2008 (= *Neue Phänomenologie*, vol. 12), 149–167, quote: 157.

<sup>70</sup> Hermann Schmit: *Heimisch sein*, in: Hasse, cf. n. 69, 25–39, here: 33.

<sup>71</sup> Jürgen Hasse, *Schöner wohnen? Zur Bedeutung von Ästhetisierungen im Stadtraum*, in: Hasse, cf. n. 69, 109–132, quote: 109.



reconstruction. Simultaneously, for the first time the urban preservation of monuments took the whole ensemble in account that was supported by the passing of statutes following the German Year of Preservation 1975.<sup>72</sup> These efforts resulted in the German Association of Cities and Towns' annual conference in 1985 statement that it "had called early the attention on the endangerments of an economically and technocratically falsely planned town and showed ways how to alter them into humane towns."<sup>73</sup> The »humane town« is characterized by its citizens. They perceive »town« as much more than only an accumulation of buildings and streets but want to feel comfortable there – this is what lies behind the word »Heimat« as a word containing emotions as well. This is why the president of the German Association of Cities and Towns, Günter Samtlebe, demands for a town planning

“that gives leeway to emotions as we only feel comfortable within a lively city, not a designed one. Only the towns', the urban districts', the residential streets' uniqueness provides for identification and thus for the feeling of being at home.”<sup>74</sup>

From today's point of view these comments on the individual town almost sound romantic as we just create uniform commercialized and not human cities by making a detour via commerce.

I am pretty sure that we are beyond the 1970s when new quarters had been created by cleaning up the area to suit its planned utilization ignoring historically grown structures and old buildings at the same time. These commendable efforts for the preservation of historical building ensembles yield peculiar results in the meantime. It becomes obvious that the criteria of monument preservation are frequently imprecise.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, if a building or a building ensemble is to be preserved is quite often a question of interpretation. In combination with the non-existence of criteria for architecture that had been built after 1950 especially younger buildings of

high quality are sacrificed for another urban redevelopment. Above all the loss of influence of monument preservation (if it ever has had it) becomes apparent with highly prestigious objects: If monuments conservationists are not allowed to criticize a building project, if the politics give simultaneously order to redeem the entry as »monument of particular importance« (Germany's official record of historical monuments, § 12) to be able to demolish a listed monument it has more to do with short-term promises of attractive returns than with a long-term town planning.<sup>76</sup> Quite apart from the horrific damage that is done to the prestige of monument preservation by such instructions *per order de mufti*.

Even though the role of monument preservation and of politics (as well as their credibility) is very unfortunate the 1985 parole »town of its inhabitants« takes a new concept of democracy as well as a new public awareness for the individuality of each townscape and its specific value into consideration. Moreover, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it becomes obvious that opposing conceptions – the picturesque, historical grown town with its ability for tourist marketing and a modernized city that is aligned with consume and sophisticated living in center city areas – induce a complex constellation of different factors.

In addition there are the towns' efforts to influence the townscape image with the help of spectacular avant-garde architecture. Frequently enough they refer back to deconstruction and fulfill the implicit purpose to be published in comprehensive surveys as new urban building canon.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand they provoke unease and protests as they are no longer singular anti-architectures but take part in the creating of a specific image. A town that »claims to be something«, that wants to be modern and contemporary is in the need of a building planned by Ghery, Hadid, Liebeskind, or any other star architect. Thus I would agree with Heike Delitz that the conflict between deconstruction and reconstruction provides

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Gottfried Kiesow, Einführung in die Denkmalpflege, Darmstadt 31995, esp. 31 ff.

<sup>73</sup> Günter Samtlebe, Die Stadt: Heimat ihrer Bürger, in: Deutscher Städtetag (Ed.): Die Stadt: Heimat ihrer Bürger, Stuttgart et al. 1985, 31–39, quote: 33.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Even though Kiesow lists several criteria the imprecision must be stated (Kiesow, cf. n. 72, 115f.).

<sup>76</sup> Such has occurred for the demolition of the North wing of the Stuttgart main station. On the other hand there is an ongoing discussion about the reconstruction of Berlin castle.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. i.e. Philipp Jodido, Architecture now!, Köln 2001 ff. (until 2010 there had been published seven volumes in total), or Peter Gössel, Gabriele Leuthäuser, Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts, Köln 1990.





valuable insights in the contemporary society from sociology of architecture point of view.<sup>78</sup> For the same reason Alexander J. Schmidt pleads for binding commitments for town planning and architecture, for standards that “are not violated continually by short-lived fashions and cronyisms”,<sup>79</sup> that factor these outstanding buildings into the underlying concept of the town, that is driven more by visions than by parliamentary terms. Eventually it seems that center cities have one major locational advantage with their aura that is provided by “homeopathic doses of urbanity”.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.2. Constructing »Heimat«<sup>81</sup>

In the context of the discussion about the possibility to construct »Heimat« by architecture we cannot deny the fact that calling »Heimat« and »town« collectively is a relatively new phenomenon as »Heimat« was still discredited in the 1970s owing to the national socialist dictatorship. Moreover in respect to the departure into outer space, and in the view to new spatial dimensions that had to be made accessible such a down-to-earth reasoning seemed to be obsolete. Therefore the architect Arno Lederer goes as far as to state that the architect is not able to build up »Heimat« as “»Heimat« only can be linked with constructing”<sup>82</sup> and is therefore an utopist vision. A utopia however that we aspirate as we have a feeling of »Heimat« in feeling its absence – so we get a feeling of it in feeling homesick. While agreeing with the concept of »Heimat« being thoroughly related to a location it is a place not in itself but as one that it is not.<sup>83</sup> To summarize: architecture cannot make a contribution to the concept of »Heimat« as »Heimat« is mostly connected to its absence even though it is place obtained.

<sup>78</sup> Heike Delitz, *Gebaute Gesellschaft. Architektur als Medium des Sozialen*, Frankfurt a. Main 2010 (Diss. Dresden 2009), 301.

<sup>79</sup> J. Alexander Schmidt, *Die schöne Stadt*. Preface, in: Schmidt/Jammers, cf. n. 35, 6–10, quote: 10.

<sup>80</sup> Misik, cf. n. 56, 74.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Stadt Ulm, *FB Stadtentwicklung, Bau und Umwelt/Architektenkammer Baden-Württemberg* (Eds.), *Heimat bauen*, Ulm 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Arno Lederer, *Heimat bauen*, in: Stadt Ulm 2009, *ibid.*, 13–23, quote: 16.

<sup>83</sup> Bernhard Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, Frankfurt a. Main 2000, 32 f., quote: 33.

Is this the succinct termination of this reflection? Are we in charge of the construction of a place called »Heimat« by our behavior, our social social connections, our memories and our longings? By no means! Even Lederer, who notes that »Heimat« is extremely evasive, is of the opinion that the question what constitutes »Heimat« is a contemporary architects’ fundamental question. Because he has not only one customer the appearance of architecture sets up public spaces that belong to everybody. This is why architects should construct in respect of continuity and responsibility and why the question should be arisen how architecture could be positively connected with the place that it ensures to be memorized as well as to be able to act as projection screen for the feeling of being at home. This can take place independently of built architecture in a large housing estate and in rural areas alike, in the »Plattenbau« (building made of prefabricated concrete panels built in the former GDR at low cost) as well as in the timber-framed house. So “undesirable developments do not take place because of architecture” Hartmut Häusermann, a German sociologist and urban researcher points out after interviewing a large number of people that had grown up in »Plattenbau« housing estates.<sup>84</sup>

## 4. Consequences

A few days ago I was at Stuttgart University as an expert when students of architecture presented their designs. For most of them it had been their first major design but even though it became obvious that (against the previously communicated guideline) the overwhelming majority masked out the future buildings’ surroundings so that they seemed to have been fallen from the sky like UFOs. Although Construction history is part of the core subjects of architectural schooling at universities it becomes evident that it is considered only as a *nice to have*. The architects-to-be do not consider connections to town planning, to current directions of architecture, to the integration of sociological questions etc. as a necessity for their self-conception. The 1993 publication »Die Stadt als Heimat« (Town as Place to feel at Home) presents the results of a remarkable training course held already in 1979 at the Institute for Lo-

<sup>84</sup> Hartmut Häusermann, *Städte oder Heimat?*, in: Stadt Ulm 2009, cf. n. 81, 25–39, quote: 35.



cal, Regional and National Planning at the FIT Zurich with the title »Town of the Authors« in combination with further obtained outcomes. Already discussed aspects had been the creation of illusory worlds, mobility in its ambivalence between practicability and its potential for destruction, and the identification with the environments caused by social relationships followed by the demand for a “human, sensual to be experienced town”. Furthermore, »Heimat« as indispensable condition for day-to-day life and the possibility of feeling at home within a town had been stated then. I agree with this opinion. As my inventory of today’s changing town had been partly bleak and – despite longtime considerations with urban development – towns have chosen another way to cope with the visible changes already I plea for a conscious shift towards existing structures. This should provide a *human* architecture and not only a consumer- and market economy-oriented architecture appropriate for the prevailing town image. It is a big question what will happen with »Heimat« if everyone’s memory will face increasing conformity because of the trend for standardization in architecture – that should be built for the city dweller and not only for the investor or to reorganize the cities’ budget. I can see big chances for architecture and am of the same opinion as Alexander J. Schmidt, Professor for Town Planning at Duisburg University, who advocates for binding agreements founded on sociological, architectural, historical town studies that might consider market economy criteria as well – assuredly as one among many other criteria – and should extend over the legislative period and latest fashion trends.

As a final aspect concerning market economy I would like to point out the increasing vacancy of living quarters which is not reasonable economically, socio-politically and ecologically. The reasons for de-urbanizations lie (in Germany especially in the parts of the former GDR) in the decreasing fertility level but also in an increasing migration rate caused by non-existing jobs. However, it resulted in reflections about the towns’ future development not only in the eastern part of Germany as it is seen as a “key task of current urban development in Germany”<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Stefanie Rößler, *Freiräume in schrumpfenden Städten. Chancen und Grenzen der Freiraumplanung im Stadtbau*, Berlin 2010 (Diss. Leipzig 2009), 26. Continuatively to

since shrinkage is no longer an exception. The 2007 »Leipzig Charta zur nachhaltigen Stadt« (Leipzig Charta for a Sustainable City)<sup>86</sup> is a distinct commitment for the European town, its grown structures, and additionally for a sustainable development and urban planning policy.<sup>87</sup> But even though the processes of shrinkage are apparent and thus are subject of theoretical, urbanistic and socio-political debates this issue cannot be settled satisfactorily and conclusively yet especially as expansion and shrinkage had always been an element of town development.<sup>88</sup>

In the meanwhile sustainability had been perceived as an important element of future urban development. In this respect these efforts are being accompanied by a subsequent re-densification of the outskirts that are reflected in the Mission Statements of the »Town of short Journeys« or of the »Compact and Diverse Town«.<sup>89</sup> The ongoing debate about sustainability caused a change in the perception of buildings slated for demolition: had they formerly been seen only as waste and rubbish their options for recycling and re-using are recognized as well. On this account component markets<sup>90</sup> had been built up across the whole country where interior fittings like sinks, entrance doors, windows, staircases, timber,

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the aspect of shrinkage in Germany cf. *Ibid*, 33 ff. and Silke Weidner, *Stadtentwicklung unter Schrumpfungsbedingungen – Leitfaden zur Erfassung dieses veränderten Entwicklungsmodus von Stadt und zum Umgang damit in der Stadtentwicklungsplanung*, Norderstedt 2005 (Diss. Leipzig 2004), esp. 16 ff.

<sup>86</sup> The Charta was passed during the German Presidency. For the Charta’s text cf. [www.eu2007.de/de/News/download\\_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf](http://www.eu2007.de/de/News/download_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf) (last retrieved on 25.02.2011).

<sup>87</sup> Continuatively cf. Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung/Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (Eds.), *Auf dem Weg zu einer nationalen Stadtentwicklungspolitik*. Memorandum, Berlin/Bonn 2007.

<sup>88</sup> Gerd Albers, *Städtebau und Utopie im 20. Jahrhundert*, in: Philipp Oswald (Ed.): *Schrumpfende Städte*. Vol. 2: *Handlungskonzepte*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2005, 62-67.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Kuder, *Nicht ohne: Leitbilder in Städtebau und Planung*. Von der Funktionstrennung zur Nutzungsmischung, Berlin 2004 (= Edition Stadt und Region, vol. 10), 178 ff. For a summary of the wide range of urban mission statements cf. Rößler 2010 (cf. n. 85), 201 ff.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. i.e. [www.bauteilboerse-bremen.de/](http://www.bauteilboerse-bremen.de/).



roofing tiles and much more are waiting for its re-utilization.

In comparison to the early years after World War II the world has become smaller and one speaks about the global village as we act more globally. But the construct of Europe as a union of individual countries is of great importance within. All the more important are the specific characteristics of a town or a landscape. Especially because we got more global the diversity should be emphasized, and not the process itself should be questioned. I am sure that individuality can be created by developing criteria for urban planning, with visions for a town that ensures identity and a feeling of being at home but under difficult conditions as the town councils set a different course already. The first positive signs which, despite everything, give us hope are the raised dissatisfaction facing the scheduled demolition at Altenburg and the protest marches for individual townscapes. It shows a grown awareness of the city dweller for the towns' individuality who intends to participate in shaping it as it is part of the intermediation of »Heimat« (the feeling of being at home). Art as a landmark, as element that may create identification could provide a substantial contribution. At the very beginning of an essay about the history of Architectural Sociology Bernhard Schäfers quotes Tadao Ando with the following sentence: "Architecture is only perfect if it also is conveyed by the person who experiences it."<sup>91</sup> It is an encouraging sign if even architects mention architecture and the human being alongside!

### About the Author

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<sup>91</sup> Tadao Ando, quoted after: Bernhard Schäfers, Architektursoziologie. Geschichte einer Disziplin, in: Joachim Fischer, Heike Delitz (Eds.): Die Architektur der Gesellschaft. Theorien für die Architektursoziologie, Bielefeld 2009, 365-384, quote: 365.

