10 Berlin / Germany
Monumental Revision. A Capital between Ruin and Restoration

Die DDR hat's nie gegeben
East Germany never existed
(graffito on the rubble of the demolished Palace of the Republic, Berlin 2008)[1]

In Berlin, it feels like we have been arguing over the demolition of the GDR-era Palace of the Republic and the reconstruction of the old Hohenzollern *Stadtschloss* for a whole generation.[2] The structure of the latter is now standing, and its façades are nearing completion. Is it time to draw conclusions? Not yet: not until the concrete building is occupied and its new functions and uses have settled into their spatial patterns and relationships. But several observations on the consequences of this decision can already be made, and some are quite surprising. The structure, the volume of the royal palace has been restored. Eagles milled by computer-guided lasers now adorn the façades again. It looks Baroque, and yet also quite up-to-date (fig. 1). Is it imposing? In fact, it is surprisingly boring. And very large indeed.

The wing facing the River Spree, originally heterogeneous and asymmetrical, has not been reconstructed 'historically' but rather redone using modern forms, giving it a somewhat *fin-de-siècle* (20th) look (fig. 2). One surprise is the effect that the palace has from a distance. Unter den Linden, the grand old boulevard that previously led rather aimlessly towards the socialist Palace of the Republic – itself quite awkwardly positioned in the urban landscape – once again has perspective and direction. The effects of the *Stadtschloss* reconstruction had been a matter of much speculation as well as anticipation, and the recreation of its façade by Wilhelm von Boddien in 1993/94 made strikingly visible one of strongest arguments for proceeding with the project. What is surprising, however, is the prominence of the reconstructed building's new dome, which will soon

1 See below, figure 7.

2 Hennet, Berliner Schlossplatzdebatte, 2005; Flierl, Identitätssuche, 2008.

Figure 1: Reconstructed "Stadtschloss", with baroque … (Photo G. Vinken 2020)
Figure 2: … and 'timelessly modern' façades (Photo G. Vinken 2020)

be crowned by the monumental golden cross of the Hohenzollern king Friedrich Wilhelm IV once again.[3] On leaving the Bode-Museum, for instance, at the other end of Berlin's lengthy Museum Island, the dome of the palace is unexpectedly revealed; anyone walking around Berlin these days experiences again and again the emergence of new visual relationships and shifts in the balance of forms and spaces. Often this involves the re-emergence of connections and contexts that were relevant for the structuring and design of the Mitte district as Berlin's monumental urban centre in the 19th and 20th centuries.

By contrast, in the immediate vicinity of the rebuilt *Stadtschloss*, the Prussian mood never really manages to set in. The wound opened up by the demolition of the Palace of the Republic is still too fresh for many. Opposite the new palace's main front, a faded canvas façade printed with the lines of Schinkel's Bauakademie solicits for the reconstruction of that building as well. Although its structural volume is already outlined in the urban space, even the full-scale construction of a sample bay at its northeast corner – the one closest to the *Stadtschloss* – can contribute little, with its look of an off-the-shelf home improvement project, to the arguments for completing this undertaking. The Schinkelplatz, once occupied by East Germany's Foreign Ministry, was reconstructed in 2007/8; there, three gigantic monuments to Prussian heroes – only one of which (Thaer) is a copy – still wait for a 'suitable' setting to take shape around them (fig. 3).

3 Made possible thanks to a large, anonymous donation. On the surrounding controversy, see, for instance: Schulz, Humboldt Forum bekommt Kreuz, 2020.

Figure 3: Reconstructed Schinkelplatz with Friedrichswerder Church and canvas façade of the Bauakademie, left (Photo M. Brückels 2010)

It is possible to experience the provisional character of the Schlossplatz, the heterogeneity that swings between ambition and indifference, as charming – but it conceals a genuine scandal. The Friedrichswerder Church to the west of the Schlossplatz, also by Karl Friedrich Schinkel and reopened as the Schinkel Museum in the latter years of the GDR, was evacuated in 2012 and has been officially declared off-limits ever since, having possibly received a mortal wound during the excavation work undertaken in order to create a piece of deeply pseudo-Prussian investor architecture (the neighbouring *Kronprinzengärten*) that was unable to do without underground parking (fig. 4).[4] The profound contradictions evident here have often been remarked upon: a society that wants '*das Schloss*' back and is yet prepared to accept the loss of an original and surviving early example of Schinkel's brick architecture in order to do it.

4 See Friedrichswerdersche Kirche, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 6 February 2016. By 2020, the danger had been averted, and the museum is set to open again following a costly renovation.

Figure 4: Menaced by new neighbours, empty and closed to visitors for safety reasons. Schinkel's Friedrichswerder Church (Photo K. Kleist-Heinrich 2015)

Ambivalent Attempts at Healing

Yet the second and larger surprise that the resurrected palace holds in store is waiting in the Lustgarten. There, another iconic building by Schinkel, the Altes Museum, again has an architectural complement, and it is now possible once again to experience spatially the self-confidence with which this neo-Grecian marvel referred to its royal neighbour. Here it becomes clear just how permanently the reconstruction of the *Stadtschloss* is changing the character and relationships of space in central Berlin. After the demolition of the original palace, the erection of the Palace of the Republic and many other interventions, the overall feeling here was one of disharmony. The fractured history of the city, the violent exploitation of its spaces and architectures was always evident here; the imposing cityscape of the pre-war years could only be grasped in fragments. Through the cubic volume of the palace's incomplete structure, we are already experiencing a restitution of the space-defining effects generated by Berlin's central monuments, such as Schlüter's Zeughaus or indeed the Altes Museum; an increase in visual power, a calming and also a monumentalization.[5]

Yet the ambivalence of this attempt at spatial healing – 'healing' was always a central part of the case for rebuilding the palace – is also especially evident here. It takes the form of yet another monument that forces itself into the field of vision with renewed force. From a perspective in middle of the Lustgarten, it suddenly becomes very clear who the real winner here is: Berlin Cathedral. As a result of the reconstruction, the Cathedral is now flanked by two lower buildings – palace and museum – of similar proportions (fig. 5).

5 Vinken, Räume des Denkmals, 2020 and the essay on The Spaces of the Monument in this volume (Chapter 4).

Figure 5: Magnificence restored. Berlin's "Stadtschloss" with the Cathedral and "Lustgarten" (Mockup photomontage: Franco Stella 2019)

Since, furthermore, the Cathedral's dome is now engaged in an intense dialogue with the dome of the Palace, this preeminent symbol of Wilhelmine power and pomp is now restored to its intended position of spatial dominance. Yet this is a winner that virtually no-one had reckoned with at the start of the reconstruction debate between the Prussia-enthusiasts and the enemies of the Palace – a debate that ultimately had to be decided in the Bundestag. What then has been restored in the centre of Berlin? Whose heritage – what kind of heritage – are we talking about? What narratives are being (re-)established?

The Cathedral of the Hohenzollerns

Berlin Cathedral has had a varied history.[6] Since the founding of the Empire, calls had grown for a suitably grand church that would be the equal of the world's other great Christian houses of worship. In order to build the new cathedral, a project personally supported by Kaiser Wilhelm II, Schinkel's old cathedral, an almost modest component of the Lustgarten ensemble, had to give way. Built after lengthy preliminaries from 1894–1905 according to plans drawn up by Julius Raschdorf, Berlin's new cathedral, which was also to contain the tombs of the Hohenzollerns, is a symbol of the fusion of Protestantism and German Empire – with the head of the latter, the King of Prussia, also functioning as the head and highest representative of the Protestant Church.[7] It is no coincidence that this architectural expression of power, which echoes the forms of the Renaissance and the high Baroque, makes reference to St Peter's in Rome, and

6 On the history of its construction and alteration, see: Besier, Zur Geschichte des Wiederaufbaus, 1993 and Schröder, Baugestalt und Raumprogramm, 2002.

7 Wolf, Monarchen als religiöse Repräsentanten, 2004.

does so in a way that can be read as an attempt to outdo the latter: This central church of German Protestantism stood for the merging of nation, religion and empire – an empire in which, since the *Kulturkampf* conflict between the Catholic Church and the Prussian state in the 1870s, Catholics were often made to feel like second-class citizens.[8] The solidarity between the Protestant state church and the state, which was acting in an increasingly aggressive manner both internally (toward socialists and 'ultramontanes') and externally (in the form of nationalism and colonialism) achieved its highest form in the so-called 'German Christians' (*Deutsche Christen*) of the Third Reich, with their 1933 campaign slogan "*ein Volk, ein Reich, eine Kirche*" (One People, One Empire, One Church). In these years the Cathedral served as the backdrop for National Socialist propaganda, such as grand weddings for the new leaders.[9] There is a certain dark humour to the fact that it was the Humboldt Forum – this forcibly democratized copy of the Hohenzollern palace – that enabled this monument to Prussian nationalism to once again exert its strong spatial influence in the centre of Berlin.

Yet Berlin Cathedral, as it stands before us today, has even more to tell. A ruin after the war, for many years it was merely preserved from complete collapse, and renovation only began in 1975. At the same time, the nearly untouched apse at the north end of the church, known as the *Denkmalskirche*, was demolished for ideological reasons, because it was considered the 'hall of honour of the Hohenzollerns'. This caesura in the history of the building is particularly evident in the dome, which has been radically simplified and possesses a remodelled crown. The Cathedral's congregation and the Monument Authority of the city of Berlin are to be thanked for this, as in 2008, when the restored dome needed renovation, loud calls for the dome to be rebuilt in its entire Wilhelmine glory, boosted by the general sense of renewal and restoration, were rejected on the grounds that the Cathedral was a listed building.[10]

Meanwhile, the interior tells a different and simpler story, as the Cathedral has been restored to create a seamless whole – the result of a series of costly campaigns driven by the zeal for a historical 'completeness' that was not disheartened by the loss of much of its interior decoration and furnishings. For instance, seven of the eight dome mosaics needed to be entirely remade using the surviving drawings.[11] In a similar way, All Saints' Church in Wittenberg (also a central location for nationalist conservatives' evocation of the unity of throne and altar) was subject to an uncritical and unreflecting restoration as part of the celebrations marking the 2017 anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation.[12] In line with this pattern, Munich's *Haus der Kunst* is now also to be largely restored to its 'original' condition. It is a monumental structure by Hitler's favourite architect, Paul Ludwig Troost, and a "manifestation of the National Socialist views of art and the world […], a party slogan made of stone."[13] What drives those responsible to

8 Borutta, Antikatholizismus, 2010, 412.
9 Website Berliner Dom, Drittes Reich.
10 Hein/Pletl, Streit um die Kuppel, 2008.
11 Schnitzler, Restaurierung des Berliner Doms, 2013.
12 Reichelt, Erlebnisraum Lutherstadt Wittenberg, 2013, particularly 61–77.
13 Görl, Was vom Wahnsinn blieb, 2016, 36.

repeat word for word, to retrace letter by letter the aesthetic of dominance expressed at these sites?

Standing in Berlin's Lustgarten, it becomes clear that our debates over architectural monuments remain fixated on the values of the 19th century, namely authenticity and aesthetics. When we focus on the documentary character of built heritage, we draw attention to the layered nature of historical evidence and to an authenticity that is ideally grounded in materiality. When, on the other hand, our focus is the monument, then our lines of argument are guided by artistic value, visual power, integrity. The key questions of heritage politics are only marginally glimpsed: Who is trying to achieve what with these deletions, reinterpretations, restagings? What kinds of memory-work are being carried out or obstructed here? Which narratives are being established, and which suppressed? The question of justice or, put in political terms, the question of power, is suspended in this conception of cultural heritage; meanwhile, in contexts such as the postcolonial debates taking place internationally, race, class and gender have long been recognized as central questions in the struggle for identity and heritage.[14] For a moment, all this was present in Berlin as well: in the struggle over the two palaces – the socialist Palace of the Republic and the *Stadtschloss* – which was debated and finally decided in Germany's national parliament. The Berlin debates also taught us that these questions cannot be answered in isolation with regard to a single structure. In reconstructing the Palace, did we even consider whether we wanted to restore the Cathedral's place as the dominant symbolic building in central Berlin? But the resulting shifts in signification certainly cut deep. Before the rebuilding of the Palace, this Cathedral, which was saved in almost miraculous fashion from the destruction of the war and from ideologically motivated neglect, was another building entirely. It stood there with its war wounds, fire-blackened, its simplified dome and its somewhat ill-fitting neo-Art-Deco crown, next to the overbearing mirrored façades of the pompous Palace of the (socialist) Republic: two entirely unequal brothers, yet both in a certain sense unfortunate. That was a different story altogether (fig. 6).

14 Readers in search of enlightenment are directed to the texts selected for the most recent English-language anthology on Cultural Heritage: Smith, Cultural Heritage, 2007; above all the texts by Stuart Hall, David C. Harvey, Joe Littler/Roshi Naidoo, Sharon Sullyvan and Dolores Hayden.

Figure 6: Fading memories. Participants in the Whitsun meeting of the state youth organisation FDJ, with Palace of the Republic and Cathedral, 1979 (Photo R. Kaufhold)

From Monument to Heritage

The revaluations and transformations of Berlin's monumental centre that I have sketched here, and which came about as a direct result of the reconstruction of the Hohenzollern palace, raise fundamental questions regarding the conservation of historic monuments. Yet the conceptual apparatus of architectural conservation is in no position to deal effectively with the questions thus raised, not even by means of the detour via 'urban conservation'. In contrast to the concept of architectural monument (*Baudenkmal*, *monument historique*) which has been established in Europe since the 19th century, the notion of cultural heritage has the advantage of being deeply rooted in fundamental human cultural practices, in processes of cultural transmission and adoption that are common to all cultures – albeit to varying degrees. These days, the fact that heritage has been (and continues to be) leveraged to generate racist and nationalist ideologies of exclusion is less important than the notion of a worldwide 'human heritage', as has been exploited with particular success by UNESCO. Already in the French Revolution, however, which created the *monument historique* out of the bankrupt mass of the *Ancien Régime*, processes of adoption and reinterpretation were supplied with ammunition not only by the idea of national greatness, but also by a vision of humanity's common cultural heritage.

Figure 7: "East Germany never existed". Graffito on the rubble of the demolished Palace of the Republic. In the background, the cathedral (Photo: Arno Burgi 2008)

The concept of architectural heritage (*Denkmal* in German), as fascinatingly as it oscillates between commemoration and documentation,[15] appears in the meantime to have become bogged down in fruitless debates between substance and image, memory and history, in terms of both its analytical power and its ability to build connections with international discourses.[16] The turn towards the production of memory, towards identity politics and narratives of identity, to post-national and transcultural identities, to performance and performativity, encoding and decoding, mapping and remapping: all of this appears to get short shrift in the very German debate over commemoration and documentation – and this turn was taken firmly in the name of the concept of 'heritage'.[17] And this although the decisive reorientation was the brainchild of a German-speaking author, namely the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl, who emphatically shifted the terms of the debate over values in conservation theory towards the pole of reception.[18] A frequently overlooked consequence of this move from an object-oriented understanding of monuments to one based on reception and appropriation is that the field of architectural conservation has been able to profit from inclusion in the broader and more general field of heritage – and I hesitate to write 'cultural heritage', as this concerns far more than culture, which is in any case extremely difficult to distinguish from other inheritable objects. In the philosophical tradition, heritage and inheritance are intimately connected with the concept of work.[19] For Hegel, it is the work of the mind which ensures that that which is transmitted no longer remains bound to the past: "To receive this inheritance is also to enter upon its use […] that which is received is changed [by the work of the mind], and the material worked upon is both enriched

15 For further discussion, see Euler-Rolle, Am Anfang war das Auge, 2010.

16 Vinken, Pranger von Bahia, 2015 and the essay on Salvador da Bahia in this volume (Chapter 15).

17 The 2007 anthology by Smith that I mentioned above, Cultural Heritage, covers all these terms, while, significantly, Alois Riegl is the sole representative of the German *Denkmal* tradition.

18 Euler-Rolle, Stimmungswert, 2005.

19 Willer, Kulturelles Erbe, 2013, 161–162, 165–166.

and preserved at the same time".[20] The social aspect, and also the question of power ("who has the right to speak?" and "whose heritage is it?"), can be better articulated using a definition of heritage of this kind.

The near ruin of Berlin's last Schinkel church says more about power relations in Berlin than we would like to admit. And Berlin's damaged centre: has it now been healed by means of this moderately reactionary Prussian stage-setting? Has it been repaired by the reinterpretation of a deeply ideological architecture of representation – the Berlin Cathedral – as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its rehabilitation to a position of absolute (and unanswered?) spatial dominance? By adopting the concept of heritage, it becomes easier to understand all that we have lost with the Palace of the Republic (fig. 7): the manifestation of ruptures, of losses, of violence and salvation in the centre of Berlin – and, to a certain extent, the Cathedral as well.

20 Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1892 (1817), Introduction, 3.