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Architecture and the Collective: Structures and Processes of Architectural Work in the GDR

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ABSTRACT

In the 1950s, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) undertook a strict centralisation and collectivisation of the construction industry, including the entire field of architecture. As a result, architecture was practised almost exclusively within the framework of state-controlled enterprises, the units of which formed 'collectives' that structured professional cooperation. In line with the political and organisational significance of the collective, the aim was continuously to enhance the efficiency of the construction industry and to integrate into the socialist system a branch — namely, the architectural profession — that tended to be perceived as bourgeois and individualistic. Against this background, both the role of the architect within the collective and the best functioning of such units on a creative and economic level were subjects of constant discussion. Yet the system also allowed various possibilities for latitude. Facilitated by individual personalities and intersubjective processes, personal and creative possibilities existed within an otherwise highly regulated system. This article explores the three levels of the meaning and function of the collective — as a political, bureaucratic and social space — by addressing its historical origins and nature and by examining two case studies in which, notwithstanding official theory, individual architects were able to exercise a considerable degree of creative autonomy.

Even though it is well known that very few buildings, either past or present, are planned and executed by single individuals, the history of art and architecture still prioritises supposedly autonomous artistic personalities. In recent decades, however, there has been growing academic recognition of the ways in which the production of architecture is always integrated into social and societal contexts. In 1991, for example, Dana Cuff spoke of the 'social construction of architecture'.[1] The bureaucratic structures into which the production of architecture is usually integrated form part of this context. These structures condition the formulation of societal and legal frameworks that, depending on one's perspective, either regulate or co-shape working methods and the resulting buildings.

This article examines the relationship between architecture and bureaucratic structures using the example of the building system of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), formed in the aftermath of the second world war. In the 1950s, the GDR began systematically abolishing private architectural offices and transferring the work to state-owned architectural and planning collectives. This had a huge impact not only

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on working methods and processes, but also on built architecture and its reception up to the present day. The nationalisation of architecture should be understood against the background of political and social efforts to create a centrally controlled state and to shape the members of this state into socialist citizens. Both aspirations are reflected in the idea of the planning collective. Organising into collectives aimed both to achieve greater production efficiency and to enforce a centralised structure with immense political control. This politicisation of the bureaucratic sphere led not only to changes in decision-making processes in some instances but also, particularly after the collapse of the GDR, to a widespread rejection of the processes and expertise of the actors involved and the architecture they created.[2] In response, recent research has investigated the legal frameworks and organisational work processes involved, in order to gain a better understanding of the circumstances of architectural production in the GDR.[3] This article follows a similar path by focusing on the collective as an organisational unit, political ideal and lived reality.[4] By examining the multiple connotations of the collective, the fractures between the different spheres of the bureaucratic, the political and the social become clear. This article argues that only a consideration of all three aspects makes it possible to understand the architecture of that time.

The article consists of two parts. The first part examines the historical context of the idea of collective working in the GDR and then describes the organisation of architecture and building that the country adopted.[5] The second part focuses on two case studies, both in Berlin: the television tower entrance complex from the 1960s and 1970s; and the Marzahn civic centre from the 1980s. In different ways, they illustrate not just the complex interpenetration of the various political, bureaucratic and social levels involved, but also the personal and creative possibilities that existed within an otherwise highly regulated system.

THE IDEAL OF THE COLLECTIVE

The historian Lutz Niethammer traces the concept of the collective back to the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin who, at the 1869 congress of the International Workers' Association, proposed that the term 'communism', with its negative connotations, should be replaced by 'collectivism'.[6] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the term was being used in a politico-artistic context in Germany to designate new communal forms of work and life characterised by their critique of society and hierarchy.[7]

In architecture, these ideas became especially popular in the inter-war period and were discussed in avant-garde circles — notably at the Bauhaus, where Hannes Meyer introduced collective working methods. Meyer's unified ideal of collective architectural production combined social, political and technical aspects.[8] Building thus became a social task, the house an industrial product, and the architect an organiser of the technical processes of production. This 'new building theory' [*neue baulehre*], wrote Meyer in 1928, 'is [...] a strategy of balancing the cooperative forces and the individual forces within the community of a people [*Volk*]'. Building became 'a collective affair of fellow countrymen [*Volksgenossen*]'.[9]

Inspired by a mixture of social idealism and interest in the technological advances of an industrialised building system, Meyer, together with other architects such as Ernst

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May, later travelled to the Soviet Union to work in the architectural sector. Here the collective was regarded as a basic means of converging the interests of society, business and the individual through the process of joint work.[10] At the same time, collectives were a place to educate the socialist citizen. Particularly influential in this context were the ideas of the Soviet educational theorist and reformer Anton Makarenko, who in the 1930s introduced and promoted the concept of a collective based on a hierarchical social system. Defining the collective as 'a free group of labourers united by a unified goal [and] unified action', Makarenko's idea was that it should have 'leading organs, with discipline and responsibility'.[11] This was a fundamental departure from the egalitarian collectives of the architectural avant-garde: here we are dealing not with group members of equal status, but with 'leading organs' who guide collective cooperation. Thus, at the moment when collective ways of working were transformed into state-bureaucratic forms, the structures of the collectives fundamentally changed into highly hierarchical state-regimented groups.

The political circumstances also changed. After Stalin took power in the Soviet Union in 1927, he carried out a forced collectivisation of the whole of society, from which the architectural sector was not excluded. So, while in the 1920s the political and social commitment of artists and architects in the Soviet Union was a voluntary one, in the 1930s the collective brigade system became the only way to work at all.[12] This loss of freedom also had an impact on the understanding of, and the working conditions within, the collective. What remained was the idea of efficiency and the constant question of how collective creative work should take place within a now bureaucratised structure. Yet the strong hierarchisation and increasing political pressure of the Soviet system also contributed to a certain alienation; Thomas Flierl, for example, attributes May's return from the Soviet Union not least to the establishment of this 'hierarchically structured class society'.[13] Repeatedly architects returned to Germany from the Soviet Union, such as Walter Schwagenscheidt and Werner Hebebrand in the late 1930s or Kurt Liebknecht and Gerhard Kosel after the second world war, bringing their experiences of collective working structures with them.

THE COLLECTIVE IN THE GDR

The systematic reorganisation and nationalisation of the building industry in the GDR (Soviet Occupied Zone, or SBZ, until 1949) must be seen in a political and national context. As early as 1946, the Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (German Economic Commission) was founded with the aim of developing a national economic plan to enable the transition to a state-directed economy. In addition to the creation of central management mechanisms, this involved the restriction of private property rights and free professions. In the restructuring of the construction industry, a crucial role was played by Kurt Liebknecht, one of the architects recently returned from the Soviet Union, who became head of the newly founded Institut für Bauwesen (Institute for Construction) in 1946.[14] Liebknecht not only advocated the nationalisation of private architectural offices, but also regarded municipal urban planning institutions as an expression of 'bourgeois-bureaucratic [...] self-administration', which should be replaced by 'collective of socialist work' in a centralised design office.[15]

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Nevertheless, in the immediate post-war period, structural changes in the construction sector were held back by a shortage of housing and skilled labour. Even though reconstruction in the SBZ was centrally organised by the German Economic Commission, the private sector continued to be involved in physical planning, especially in the large cities, until 1950. Only after the prohibition of new licences for private architectural offices that year did this situation fundamentally change.[16] Planning was now to take place primarily in Volkseigene Betriebe, or VEB (state-owned planning companies), the first of which had been founded in Stralsund (Mecklenburg) in 1948.[17] With the territorial reform of 1952, which established the administrative transfer of the individual federal states into a centralised system of districts, each district received a VEB, so that state-owned planning companies eventually carried out all state building projects from design to construction.

The various collectives were either project-based or organised according to professional expertise. Overall supervision of these VEBs lay with the Ministry for Construction — that is, directly with a central state agency. The technical supervision of the planning offices was initially the responsibility of the Institut für Städtebau und Hochbau (Institute for Urban Planning and Building Construction), founded in 1950, but the following year responsibility was transferred to the new Deutsche Bauakademie (German Building Academy), which was set up as the central creative and research building institution of the GDR. Initially, until 1953, this institution was also responsible for design work, but this quickly proved unfeasible because of the high volume of construction. Instead, so-called *Chefarchitekten* (chief architects) were appointed at district level, with the task of developing the conception and design of regional building projects for the VEBs.[18]

These processes were embedded within a strictly centralised, hierarchically structured power and decision-making apparatus, where the lower tiers were always dependent on instructions from higher-placed institutions.[19] The highest decision-making responsibility lay with the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or Socialist Unity Party), its central committee and the Ministry for Construction. District and local decision-makers, such as the respective city architects or chief architects, always acted under the control of these institutions. This system was cemented in 1958 with the 'Law on the Perfection and Simplification of the State Apparatus of the GDR', which consolidated the centralised and hierarchical organisation of the building industry and also established the Planungskommission (Planning Commission) as the central organ of the GDR's economic management.[20] This commission, which was directly attached to the Ministerrat (Council of Ministers), was responsible for drafting the annual plans for the economic development of the GDR and thus had a fundamental influence on the allocation of resources and the economic organisation of work processes.

The aim of the Planning Commission was to achieve maximum efficiency, including in construction. One way to do this, it was thought, was through the increased use of standardised building 'types', covering both entire buildings and components. To develop these types, in 1954 a design office was established in the Building Academy which in 1959 became the Institut für Typung (Institute for Standardisation). This institute reported directly to the Ministry — the highest level of the hierarchy — and was intended to serve as an interface between research and practice.[21] The use of building types was subsequently given a decisive role in the fulfilment of the seven-year

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Fig. 1. *Design model for the area around the Berlin television tower, showing the entrance building by Horst Bauer, from Joachim Näther, Peter Schweizer and Erwin Schulz, 'Der Aufbau des Alexanderplatzes'*, Deutsche Architektur, *12 (1964), p. 742*

plans laid down by the Planning Commission. But there still remained the challenge of increasing the efficiency of the collective working method.

In 1963, to achieve greater efficiency, the entire building process was overhauled with the adoption of the Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung, or NÖSPL (New Economic System of Planning and Management). To ensure a smooth and rapid construction process, the focus of planning was now on unconditional compliance with uniform construction time standards, as well as the standardisation of prices per square metre.[22] Collective work structures were also to be rendered more efficient, with new tasks no longer undertaken by individuals, but only by members of 'system-conscious professionally heterogeneous collectives'.[23] Efforts were also made to tie in with older narratives, for example (in the spirit of Hannes Meyer) by presenting the architect as a fundamental actor in the construction of a socialist society. Architecture thus became a 'service to the people'; this would not restrict the architect's creativity, but rather 'increase his social responsibility'.[24] Efficient work and use of resources would thus contribute to improving the living conditions of all. The Building Academy believed that the restructuring of the building industry within the framework of the NÖSPL would also lead to 'more effective forms of socialist collective work within the entire collective of building workers, as well as a genuine atmosphere of creative work and

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competitive high performance'.[25] In this sense, the collective organisation of work was seen to guarantee greater efficiency.

In 1971, *Deutsche Architektur* published an article by Johannes Jänike, which seems to set out the official thinking behind planning collectives and tried to link it to contemporary theories of improving efficiency through technology. Jänike was an expert on planning processes in the construction industry and also an early pioneer in computers. Referring directly to Karl Marx, Jänike argued that the 'potential capacity of a group [...] lies far above the arithmetical sum of the individual powers'.[26] He stressed the importance of good leadership in fostering collaborative group dynamics and a 'system consciousness' that 'causes the individual to understand himself as a key functional element in the group', while minimising his own individual importance.[27] Under no circumstances were the dynamics of the group to be left to themselves. The leadership of the collective was assigned special importance, even though this leadership did not necessarily have to correspond to artistic control. In terms of the different forms of collectives — employees with the same function and qualifications, or heterogeneous professional groups — Jänike considered the latter as particularly effective, not only in relation to the results achieved, but also on an educational level, since the different kinds of performed work remained more recognisable and thus 'system thinking can be developed quickly and individualism [...] reduced to a reasonable level'.[28] The goal remained the integration of the individual into the system and, in line with the centralist structure of the GDR, the leadership of the collective was located less on an artistic-creative level than on an organisational one.

In the 1970s, large Wohnungsbaukombinate, or WBK (housing construction combines), were established at district level. These brought together all the trades involved in the building process, with the aim of developing them further through a special focus on the industrialisation of construction and the linking of planning and building.[29] The combines thus played a central role in the GDR's housing construction programme, which was officially adopted in 1973 with the aim of eliminating the still existing housing shortage by 1990 and therefore doubling production in the construction sector. To improve the processes and especially the communication of the various actors involved, in 1978 the new category of *Komplexarchitekten*, comparable to project architects, was introduced, their role being to smooth the process from design to execution by leading the housing combines.[30]

Overall, the effect of the structures described was to diminish the importance of design in the production of architecture. The emphasis on plan fulfilment and standardised building types, especially in the housing sector, not only reduced the scope of design, but in some cases questioned its role altogether. In practice, this led to tensions and problems. The increasing orientation of architecture towards technical challenges was perceived as a devaluation of the architectural profession.[31] The role of chief architects was not so much to be artistically active, but rather to 'open up new creative potential [through] their leadership'.[32] Nevertheless, within the rigidly organised system opportunities for artistic self-expression still existed because of interpersonal and power constellations, and the different structures and procedures operating at the respective local levels. The system offered a framework, but individual tasks could be interpreted and expanded in different ways within the structure.[33] This is reflected both in the astonishing variety of institutional rules at the local level and in the constant discussions about the organisation of work processes in contemporary professional publications.

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Overall, the effects of the organisational structures on architectural production in the GDR are largely assessed as negative. This is understandable, especially with regard to the strong concentration on mass production and the simultaneous separation of planning and executive bodies. Then again, that confrontation with these structures — whether in terms of dealing with financial capacities, creative leeway or even hierarchies and decision-making processes — could also give rise to other forms of creativity was already emphasised by contemporaries. The journalist Eberhard Panitz wrote in 1969: 'So, the architect no longer sits down and designs a building out of a blue haze; he must precisely know the building elements that are available [and] use them in an artistically original, purposeful and highly economical way.'[34] This form of artistic challenge was by no means seen in an entirely positive light, as Panitz's article suggests. Nevertheless, recent research has pointed out that it was precisely in the seemingly hermetic system of the GDR — or because of it — that the role of personal networks increased.[35] The following case studies were chosen to illustrate these two aspects: the role of personal networks and the question of creative leeway. Even if the observations are transferable only to a limited extent — for example, to projects that were less prestigious, such as mass housing programmes — they provide insights into various working contexts within the GDR's building system.[36]

DEALS BEYOND THE SYSTEM: THE ENTRANCE COMPLEX OF THE BERLIN TELEVISION TOWER, 1968–72

The city of Berlin occupied a special position in the planning and building activities of the GDR. As the capital, and in direct opposition to and comparison with the western part of the city, it was an important site for the demonstration of socialist values and achievements, reflected in various representative buildings, especially in the centre of the city. One of these projects was the Berlin television tower, which was planned from 1954 as an 'urban dominant' in the centre of Berlin, located between Alexanderplatz and the Spree river. Planning for the entrance building to the tower and the surrounding area (largely destroyed during the second world war and not rebuilt because of the plans for a socialist city centre) began independently in the mid-1960s. The VEB Berlin-Projekt, founded in 1960 with about 1,000 employees, was responsible for this planning.[37] The VEB consisted of three divisions: social construction, housing construction and civil engineering. The department for social construction, which was subdivided into further areas including statics and construction, architecture, building technology, building physics and cost planning, was primarily responsible for the planning of the city centre. The VEB Berlin-Projekt was responsible only for project planning; execution was in the hands of the VEB Ingenieurhochbau Berlin, or IHB (Structural Engineering Company Berlin). The plans of the VEB Berlin-Projekt were thus initially examined in joint meetings with representatives of the VEB IHB, a step that was rationalised in 1967–68 by the merger of the two companies to form the VEB Bau- und Montagekombinat Ingenieurhochbau Berlin (VEB Berlin Building, Construction and Structural Engineering Combine). The various subdivisions of the VEBs were organised as collectives, segregated according to technical affiliation and expertise. No new collectives were formed for the various projects, but experts from

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Fig. 2. *Berlin television tower with the entrance building by Walter Herzog and Rolf Heider, 1968–72, view from the east, photograph by Peter Konrad of 1973 (Bundesarchiv)*

different departments were called in selectively under a fixed leadership. According to Rolf Heider, who was employed as an engineer and structural planner at the VEB, collegial cooperation was strongly dependent on the people involved, meaning it was quite possible to change departments within the structure, or to bypass predefined processes and hierarchies in order to address specific questions to certain contacts.[38]

Heider was heavily involved in the planning of the entrance building of the Berlin TV Tower and his retrospective account provides remarkable insight into the history of the project, especially the possibility for leeway and the role of the political dimension in the bureaucratic structures and processes of GDR planning. The first design for the entrance building was produced by the architect Horst Bauer, who worked for the VEB Berlin-Projekt and was previously involved in the second construction phase of today's Karl-Marx-Allee. Bauer's plan was for a two-storey, slightly off-centre ring building that

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Fig. 3. *View of the television tower with entrance building from the west, photograph of 1973, from Walter Herzog, Heinz Aust and Rolf Heider, 'Die Umbauung am Fernsehturm',* Deutsche Architektur, *22 (1973), p. 358*

would completely enclose the tower shaft (Fig. 1). While it is not possible to date this design precisely, it is seen in various plans for the city centre after 1964.[39] The Statics and Construction Department under the engineer Heribert Hetzer was responsible for developing the roof design. Hetzer delegated the task to Heider, who submitted two proposals, one a plate beam construction and the other a zigzag folded structure. Contact between the designing architect and the engineer was not envisaged at this point and did not come about.[40]

However, this predetermined structural separation of fields could be circumvented on an interpersonal level and this is apparently what happened. Heider was approached informally by two members of the VEB's architecture department, namely Manfred Prasser, the general project manager for Berlin city centre (and a party member of the SED), and Heinz Aust, the head of the architecture department. Since he was known in the company for his willingness to work closely and unbureaucratically with planning architects, they asked him to participate in a counter-design for the building.[41] Work on the design was initially to be kept secret, as the aim was to push it through at the highest political level. In order to replace Bauer's accepted design, for which foundations had already been started, it was necessary to bypass the intermediate levels of the hierarchy while developing a sound and convincing design. Heider's seemingly fantastical tale is supported by the limited contemporary sources that are available: the new plans appeared as if out of nowhere in 1968 and immediately and unquestioningly displaced the original design. Whatever prompted Prasser and Aust, both senior officials in the VEB, to initiate

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this significant change of plans, it was only possible to achieve it by directly addressing the decisive political levels. The centralised and hierarchically organised construction system of the GDR, where the highest management and decision-making authority lay at the political level, made it possible to change plans at short notice.

What followed was a close collaboration between Heider as engineer and Walter Herzog, a young architect recently arrived in Berlin from Dresden, who was responsible for the new design.[42] In plan, Herzog's was shaped like an aeroplane enclosing the TV tower, its sculptural form mediating between the circular base of the tower and the other buildings on the site (Figs 2 and 3). For the roof Heider developed the idea of a zigzag folding structure, allowing the cantilevered elements to support themselves. Together they developed a hexagonal grid as the basis of the building, which in later planning stages was extended to the adjacent plaza designed by the landscape architects Hubert Matthes and Erhard Stefke (Fig. 4).[43] On the east side, facing Alexanderplatz station, was the entrance building for the lifts to the tower restaurant. Pointing towards the open space on the west (Spree) side were the two 'wings', with the exhibition hall in one and restaurants and associated facilities in the other. The wings channelled the viewer's line of sight directly towards the rising tower shaft. At its base, a wide flight of steps led up to a gallery, with additional concrete staircases to the side.

When the design was sufficiently advanced, Prasser initiated a meeting with all those involved in the planning stage. This took place in the office of the chief architect of Berlin, Joachim Näther, who was responsible for all construction in the city. Those present included Wilfried Eichelkraut, the principal director of the VEB IHB (the body responsible for implementation of the project), and Hermann Wern, from the Construction Department of Berlin City Council (the main planning authority). The most important participant, however, was Paul Verner who, as a member of the politburo of the central committee of the SED and also as first secretary of the SED in Berlin, had the authority to make political decisions. Heider recounted that, following Herzog's presentation of the new project, Verner voted in its favour and the new design was adopted.[44] After the decision, the project could be progressed through the usual official structures. No separate temporary collective was set up for the project, as was usually the case. Instead, the various actors — including Herzog and Heider — remained in their respective departments, as did the project staff assigned to them. Close coordination between architect and engineer continued, but this seems to have been more of a personal decision than a structural requirement. The eastern part of the building containing the entrance to the elevators of the TV tower was completed on schedule in 1969 and inaugurated by Walter Ulbricht in the presence of political dignitaries including Verner and Herzog as the architect.[45] But other professionals involved in the construction, including Heider, were not part of the official event. So, even at the time, there was a rupture between the actual (or intended) structures of collective planning and the presentation and reception of a work as belonging to one author.

The example of the planning process of the entrance building of the Berlin TV tower in the VEB Berlin-Projekt provides an insight into the structures and working methods of the planning VEBs. On the one hand, the project is an example of the hierarchical way in which a VEB was organised and structured in the 1960s. It highlights the problems of inefficiency caused by the separation of planning and construction departments. On the

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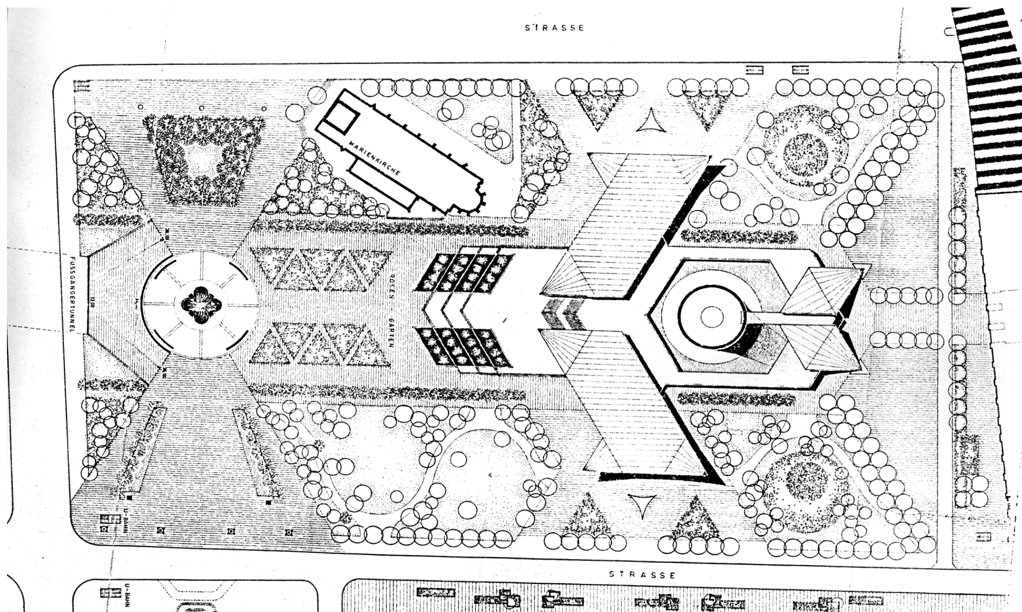

Fig. 4. *Design for the area surrounding the Berlin television tower, plan by Hubert Matthes and Erhard Stefke, 1973 (Leibniz-Institut für Raumbezogene Sozialforschung, Matthes advance bequest)*

other hand, the project demonstrates how, at times, these structures could be set aside. Evidently, there was leeway within the official functioning of these structures, which in turn had a fundamental influence on the work of those involved, as well as on the construction. This was primarily because most of the rules of the GDR's construction industry referred to general structures and hierarchies rather than processes at the executive level. A special feature of the structure of the GDR building industry was direct access to the political level, even at the design stage. As a result, it was possible to interpret and shape cooperation between the trades in different ways according to the context. The collective as a working space thus became a purely formal structure, within which possibilities for informal cooperation grew in relevance.

DEALING WITHIN THE SYSTEM: THE BERLIN-MARZAHN CIVIC CENTRE, 1979–88

The second case study is also a project by VEB IHB — the civic centre of the Marzahn housing estate. Planning of the estate began in 1973 with the decision by the politburo of the central committee of the SED, in the context of the housing construction programme, to build around 35,000 new flats on a site roughly 13 km east of the city centre in Berlin.[46] The plan, which envisaged three construction areas on a site of around 560 hectares, was primarily the work of the Büro für Stadtebau (Office for Urban Development) in the Berlin magistrate's office, working in cooperation with the Building Academy. From 1976, the architect Heinz Graffunder, who had previously been responsible for the Palace of the Republic project, took over construction

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planning as the main architect at the Office for Urban Development.[47] The VEB Wohnungsbaukombinat Berlin (Berlin Housing Combine) was responsible for further planning and execution of the residential buildings.

However, this did not include the centre of the new district, for which there was an invited competition in 1979, won by Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut.[48] The reason for this was probably the high demands placed on the district as a prestige project of the GDR's housing programme.[49] As Eisentraut later put it (1988), the new housing estates were intended to foster 'good conditions for the development of a socialist way of life', from which he derived the obligation for the architects to achieve the highest standards.[50] This argument, presented in the magazine *Architektur der DDR* — a politically controlled organ — gave Eisentraut grounds to circumvent the bureaucratic structures of the GDR's building apparatus and extend existing rules for type-building and efficiency as far as possible.

Before moving to VEB IHB, Eisentraut had worked with Graffunder on the construction of the Palace of the Republic and had good contacts in higher planning circles. After his move to the VEB as a *Komplexarchitekt*, he and his collective took part in the competition for the development of the centre of Marzahn. Emerging as the winner, the collective was entrusted with further development of the designs and project management. It was only because the VEB, which was responsible for the management of the project, was also the winner of the competition that the entire design process from concept to realisation was in the hands of a single body. Eisentraut emphasised that this continuity within the work process was particularly positive for the development of the project.[51]

When the project was published in *Architektur der DDR* in 1988, just under thirty individuals in the planning collective at VEB IHB were credited. Their professional affiliations show that the collective brought together various professional fields, such as horticulture, technology, construction management, civil engineering and production management, as well as architecture. Cooperation with other collectives is also mentioned, including a collective for construction and statics and another for unspecified 'special trades'.[52] Overall management, however, lay with the *Komplexarchitekt* (that is, Eisentraut), whose role was to increase the efficiency of construction tasks through uniform management. At the same time, the aesthetic problems of standardised building, which were criticised as bland and monotonous by the contemporary public, were to be alleviated in part by the remit of the *Komplexarchitekt* to synthesise 'creative and technical-organisational activity'.[53] The *Komplexarchitekt* was thus supposed to serve a hinge function between urban design and construction — that is, between two processes that had hitherto been carried out within different administrative structures and by different companies. In this regard, the situation was very different from what Eisentraut had experienced at the Graffunder-collective:

> The state offices for urban planning made beautiful plans, but the building combine said: 'You only get 18 matchboxes [...]', then the plan went back to the office and, after appropriate adjustment […], there was no further development.[54]

With the Marzahn centre, in contrast, because within the building combine the *Komplexarchitekt* was also responsible for construction, it was possible for the architect to develop designed projects further. For this reason, the community buildings created

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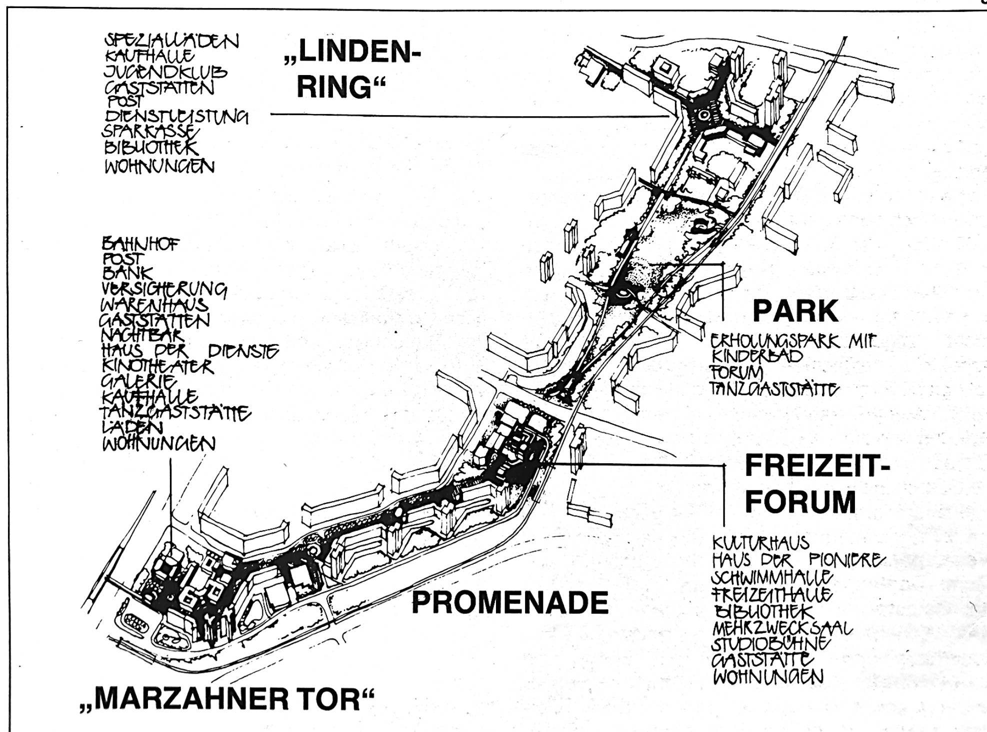

Fig. 5. *Design for the civic centre of Berlin-Marzahn by Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut and collective, schematic perspective,* c. *1983, from Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut, 'Ein neuer Stadtbezirk erhält seinen Mittelpunkt',* Architektur der DDR, *12 (1988), p. 9*

for Marzahn, although built using industrial construction methods, are characterised by a rather high form of conscious, individual design.

The centre was built between 1983, when the Berlin magistrate decided to implement the final urban architectural planning concept, and 1990, with the Marzahner Promenade as its centrepiece. This was planned as a car-free area divided into five different zones for different uses (Fig. 5).[55] In the south-west was the Marzahner Tor around the railway station, with post office, gallery, department store, cinema and other facilities, leading to the Marzahner Promenade, a green pedestrian space flanked by residential blocks, running to the Freizeitforum (Leisure Forum), comprising the library, indoor swimming pool and studio theatre along with the Kulturhaus (House of Culture) containing an event hall and various club rooms. Beyond this, to the north-east, was the park, complete with children's pool, and finally the Lindenring (Lime Tree Ring) with more shops, restaurants and a youth club. Overall, the planned facilities embodied the idea of a superordinate urban structure linking into the residential sub-centres with their social infrastructure of kindergartens and schools. Whereas the collective had planned these sub-centres as required, using so-called *Wiederverwertungsprojekte* ('re-use projects': site-independent

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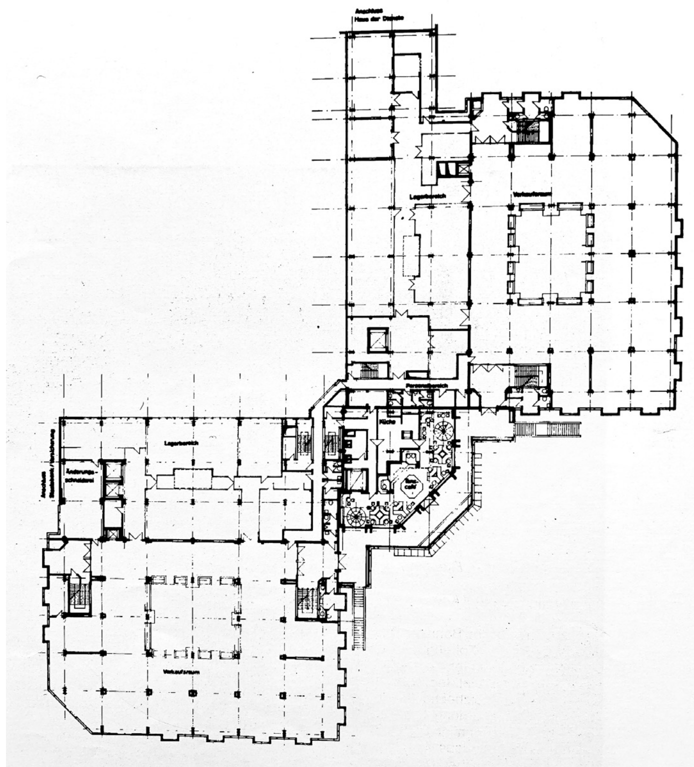

Fig. 6. *Ground-floor plan of Marzahn department store by Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut and collective,* c. *1988, from Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut, 'Ein neuer Stadtbezirk erhält seinen Mittelpunkt',* Architektur der DDR, *12 (1988), p. 14*

pre-designed buildings), for the main centre it sought more individual solutions to give this area a clear identity and make it a focal point for the community. With this in mind, the aim was to find more individual, site-specific solutions, while at the same time recognising the need for cost reduction and increased efficiency.[56]

Eisentraut was an accomplished writer and skilled in justifying his way of working, particularly by drawing on common arguments for greater efficiency. His main initial problem, however, was one of design and organisation, as he explained at a conference in 1987 after his first project successes in Marzahn:

> We have a situation where the houses that are built are not normally designed for the site, but are products that architects work out at some point in their office, without knowing where they will actually be located.[57]

Eisentraut believed that this fragmentation of the planning process led not only to a lack of quality in the final construction, but also wasted resources in the process. Instead, he argued for more efficient organisational structures to allow the unified management of planning and implementation, from preparatory and project-planning measures to urban planning and individual designs, including open spaces and civil engineering.

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Fig. 7. *Marzahner Tor, department store by Wolf-Rüdiger Eisentraut and collective, 1988, view from the west, photograph by Thomas Lehmann of 1990 (Bundesarchiv)*

Such a focus on a cohesive ensemble as the overall goal, he argued, would also lead to greater efficiency through concentrated and continuous construction.[58]

It certainly suited Eisentraut that he could draw on the argument made a decade earlier for the introduction of *Komplexarchitekten*. Yet Eisentraut and his collective went far beyond what Ihlenfeld had had in mind when he spoke of the *Komplexarchitekt* as 'compiling a catalogue of feasible design variants' on the basis of existing types.[59] Instead they projected independent solutions for different buildings. The department store at Marzahner Tor, for example, was designed as a three-part building complex in which the individual shops were grouped in two wings around a top-lit atrium. A restaurant block formed the hinge between the two wings while, on the exterior, two-storey bay windows broke up the façade (Figs 6 and 7). The implementation and legitimation of this construction method were evidently quite a challenge. Eisentraut emphasised the building's claim to be both formative for the urban space and of high experiential character.[60] At the same time, however, he claimed that the form of 'unique design' practised there 'is not to be equated with individual projecting [*Projektierung*] […] since the designs and projects were created in a very disciplined way on the basis of available industrial construction methods'.[61] The constant emphasis on the principal consideration of the system and on efficient and cost-effective construction was thus used by Eisentraut to justify the buildings as 'successful architecture'.

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CONCLUSION

Although the two case studies paint a vivid picture of work processes in the GDR, their differences also highlight the difficulty of drawing a general conclusion about collective planning structures in the GDR. On the one hand, this is due to the constant institutional changes that characterised the GDR's construction industry in its continual striving for greater efficiency. On the other hand, it shows not only that state regulations were interpreted differently at the local level, but that there were often no precise regulations for implementation of the different rules. Even the demand for efficiency, closely connected with the idea of the collective since the inter-war period and running as a red thread through the architectural discourses of the GDR, thus proves to be a framework open to interpretation. This may seem surprising in a system such as the GDR's, which was not politically concerned with freedom. But in fact it shows that it was precisely their knowledge of existing bureaucratic structures which allowed those involved to interpret them effectively, opening up possibilities for design and action not by rejecting such structures, but by dealing with them creatively.

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BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

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