

BACK TO THE FUTURE – FORWARD TO THE PAST

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The year is 1978, and the location is Mainz – a somewhat provincial district capital on the Rhine with a 1000-year old cathedral in its centre. We see the fronts facing the cathedral on its northern side. Despite the city's antiquity there is not a single old house among them, as Mainz was badly bombed in February 1945 in an air raid that destroyed 80 percent of the city centre. Some of the houses rebuilt in the 1950s subscribe to a mildly traditional approach evoking the spirit of a German *Altstadt*, others to an equally lukewarm Modernist approach – par for the course for post-war reconstruction in Germany.



Fig. 1: Mainz, Market Square, 1978

Before World War II, town planners had struggled in many places to sanitize densely built-up town centres that went back to the middle ages and had often taken on a slum-like quality, although of course every old city centre also had its showcase main streets and squares, where official buildings were clustered and where the richer people lived and did their business. This was the "romantic" picture-postcard face of old German towns, a great source of the Germany's sense of identity.

But radical renewal of decaying city centres was difficult – even in the 1930s when, following the Nazis' rise to power, planners were allowed to act in rather more rigorous fashion than before. So callous as it may sound, a number of German town planners hailed the wholesale destruction of the ancient cores of German cities in the Bombers' war of 1942-5 as "a misfortune indeed, but also: what an opportunity!" (echoing, I believe, similar sentiments expressed by some of their British colleagues following the Blitz on British cities).

On the whole, however, what planners and architects actually did produce in the immediate post-war decades fell short of their promises. This was particularly true in towns governed by the Progressive faction, where historic street patterns were often obliterated and new buildings sprang up demonstrating their creators' belief in a bright new age unhampered by historic ties. The Traditionalist approach has withstood the test of time rather more successfully. In the cities of Münster and Freiburg it has produced results that are fully accepted even today, with tourists hardly realising that these city centres have only a handful of *bona fide* old buildings to show while the bulk stems from the 1950s. Yet apart from a few keynote buildings they do not consist of reconstructions: rather of new buildings sensitively designed to comply with the historic spirit of the place.

Mainz adhered to a middle way, with some daring new urban designs developed but not executed while the actual rebuilding – that in any case depended on private initiative – produced a rather staid and unexciting ensemble. As an architecture providing no more than the necessities, both in size and in decoration, it was typical of the struggle to get things going again.

By the late 1970s, a new mood made itself felt in Germany. One had, at last, overcome the restrictions, even poverty of the fifties and sixties, a time that was also perceived as a phase of humiliation following the defeat in World War II. Although or even because there was a phase starting in the mid-60s and all through the 70s during which Germans actively faced up to the responsibility for the Nazi crimes (at least in West-Germany – the GDR pretended the Nazi past was nothing to do with them), dare one say that on the whole there was then a certain unwillingness to be constantly reminded of the war and of the post-war years by the built environment? On the contrary, the environment was now expected to provide a fitting backdrop for this new-found confidence.

In Mainz this attitude fostered a complete makeover of the prominent Market Square frontages. In itself this might not be so very surprising as the 1950s buildings, a generation after their erection, were somewhat tired, both structurally and aesthetically: a state of affairs that is frequently taken as an invitation for demolition and replacement by a new Nine Days Wonder, by a building displaying the dazzling shape and shiny materials of the architectural style of the day.

But that is not what happened. No steel, glass and aluminium design replaced the modest 1950s houses, making the city fit for the 21st century. Instead of going forwards in time and trying out a new coat, the clock was made to run backwards. Within very few years, between 1980 and 1984, nearly the full spread of the square reappeared in historic guise, as a fairly faithful re-enactment of the pre-war situation, though not without compromises and amendments: the building that holds centre stage today, although a reconstruction of an historic building and even incorporating some authentic sandstone elements, originally stood in a completely different place in the town but, being more prestigious, seemed more appropriate for this important position than the two small and nondescript houses that had filled this spot until 1945.

The full front was finally completed in the 1990s (with only one house owner refusing to contribute his bit to the mummery), but there was a sequel from 2006 onwards. Three facades reconstructed two decades earlier, in fact the eastern half of the fronts, were demolished again, revealing the mid-70s concrete structures they had been camouflaging. But now, in 2009, they have already been "re-reconstructed", to coin a phrase: this new re-incarnation providing a mock-historic screen for a high-tech aluminium-clad mall designed by the Italian architect Massimiliano Fuksas.

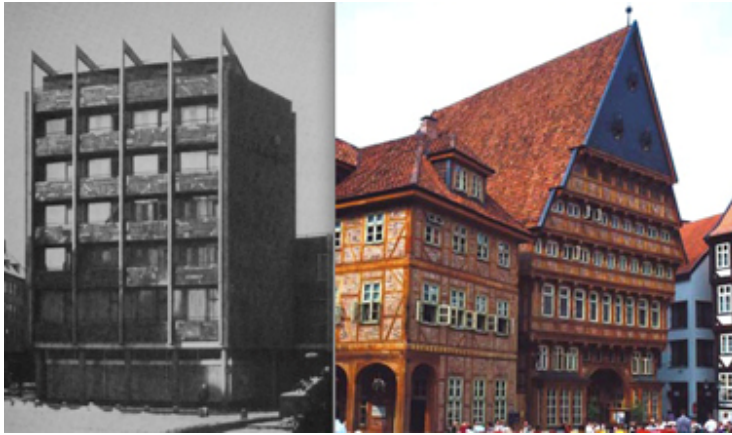


Fig. 2: Mainz, Market Square, 2008

Curious as this case may be, it is not at all unique. Let me briefly present a few more examples in which modernist buildings of the 1950s to 70s were, or will be, demolished to be replaced not by contemporary creations but by the ghosts of some earlier structures that had seemed to have disappeared forever.

Until its destruction on March 22nd, 1945, the *Knochenhauer Amtshaus* (Butchers' Guild Hall) in Hildesheim was generally hailed as one of the finest and most impressive achievements of north German timber frame architecture of the 16th century. The air raid left not even a proper ruin, only a smoldering heap of wood ash. All through the 1950s, the city officials pondered on what to do with this site, torn between demands for reconstruction on one hand and for a way forward on the other. Following a competition in 1960 however, the architect Dieter Oesterlen was commissioned to execute his design for an hotel, "Rose", which was opened in 1964.

It probably hadn't even needed a new coat of paint before plans were afoot to demolish it and replace it with a copy of the *Knochenhauer Amtshaus*. The drive towards a radical turn in urban planning, towards recovering the lost character of the city centre, started in 1979. In 1986, the Hotel Rose and all its 1960s neighbourhood was demolished, and by 1990 the *Knochenhauer Amtshaus* could be admired again as the centrepiece of Hildesheim's rebuilt central square.



Figs 4 and 5: Hildesheim, the Hotel Rose, built in 1964 and its successor, the Knochenhauer Amtshaus, reconstructed in the 1980s

Another city that had been redefined by Modernist rebuilding after the war is of course Dresden, where the leaders of Communist East Germany had decreed that no attempt should be made to preserve old street patterns, let alone building structures in the devastated city centre, apart from the most prominent and symbolic places such as the Castle, the Zwinger Museum, the Cathedral and the Opera. In the case of the ruin of the Frauenkirche, initially earmarked for total annihilation, the authorities finally gave in to the public sentiment (that demanded reconstruction) in so far as the ruin remained largely untouched, having been redefined as an anti-war monument. After German reunification in 1990, an immediate and impressive public movement led to the reconstruction of the ruined church, completed in 2007.

The reconstruction of the Frauenkirche received enormous acclaim, perhaps more than it really deserved, but in its wake there sailed the recreation of an ever-expanding quarter of mock-historic buildings, ostensibly to provide a backdrop or framework for the reconstructed ruin. This tide of new buildings with a thin veneer of historic exteriors is now threatening to engulf the *Kulturpalast*, a multifunctional hall for cultural events opened in 1969 whose architecture and expressive, even propagandist, decoration make it a most significant, though not necessarily sympathetic highlight of GDR architecture and urban planning. For some years the triumphalist frieze of murals adorning its facades had to be covered up as being too strong for the public stomach and demands that at least parts of it should be pulled down continue – in which case there can be no doubt that it would be replaced by more mock-historic facades hiding modern apartment and office blocks.

It would be rash to assume that this approach – losing signal architecture from the 1960s and 70s and replacing it with anodyne but superficially pleasing mock-historic buildings – is restricted to East German cities trying to get rid of horrors imposed on them by their Communist rulers. The very same spirit is visible in Frankfurt, the financial centre of West Germany whose skyline is dominated by the soaring steel-and-glass towers of the big banks. In a similar spirit, though slightly to a less extravagant scale, the city built its administrative centre in the early 1970s. Squat yet still dominating the buildings of the city centre, the twin towers of the *Technisches Rathaus* form a typical example of the architectural production of the time: commissioned by technocrats, created by architects who looked towards a future that would be unburdened by a past that was perceived as cramped and constricting and that certainly, to them, held no attractions, offered no inspiration to engage with what might have been called the Spirit of the Place. A generation after its erection, this building is now doomed to demolition and it has been decided that the city will, in

its dead, recreate a version of the timber frame architecture that perished under the bombs of World War II – much as they started in the 1980s when they recreated the timber frame fronts of the central square of Frankfurt, the *Römer*.

The most prominent example by far for the phenomenon I am concerned with is of course the long and intense struggle over the Palace of the Hohenzollern kings in the centre of Berlin, the *Stadtschloss*. Parts of it were late-medieval, but most was 17th and 18th century, crowned by a cupola added in the 19th century. Some of the best architects of Prussia had contributed to it, notably the renowned Schlüter, and yet, on the exterior, it was conspicuous for its bulk rather than its elegance. More successful was the interior, to which practically each new monarch had added his own up-to-date contribution, forming an ensemble of rooms dating from the 16th to the late 19th century, and there was the rather attractive architecture of the courtyards.

Having shrugged off most of the bombs hurled at it in the war, the massive structure of the Palace was soon back in business, housing administrative offices and hosting, among other things, an exhibition in 1948 in which the architect Hans Scharoun, acting at the time as the city's chief planner, displayed to the Berliners his visions for a rebirth of their city. But although quite a few repairs had been carried out already, the Communist rulers denounced the *Schloss* as a symbol of feudal oppression and militarism and decided that it was to be razed to the ground. Demolition proceeded at once; in spite of many protests, the Palace was dynamited in 1950. A number of sculptural details was salvaged, and one projecting bay, the *Portal IV* from the north facade, was actually re-used nearly a decade later in a new location immediately adjoining: as the entrance to the *Staatsratsgebäude*, the residence of the GDR's head of government (not to be confused with the Secretary General of the Communist Party who was the real dictator). This prominent re-use had nothing to do with the Hohenzollern connotations of the architectural elements but solely with the fact that, after the *Kaiser's* abdication in 1918, the Socialist politician Karl Liebknecht had proclaimed the new – hopefully Socialist – Republic from this balcony.

Used at first as a space for vast political rallies, the site was intended to be filled with a Stalinist *Kulturpalast* skyscraper of the type known from Moscow, Warsaw and – later – Bucharest. But it took two decades before any decision was reached and implemented, producing, in 1976, the *Palace of the Republic* presented by my colleague Anke Kuhmann in another contribution to this conference. This large building had many functions. Mostly a multi-purpose venue for all kinds of events – from big, televised shows to the annual meeting of the GDR's puppet parliament – it also housed a number of restaurants and was therefore frequented by East Berliners who had little opportunity to spend a nice night out anywhere else in their capital. But in a phase when the GDR, under their new leader Erich Honecker, tried to be accepted internationally as a modern industrial society and a potential economic partner, in a phase when it tried to make the rest of the world forget the Berlin Wall and the oppressive rule by which it governed, the glittering Modernist Palace of the Republic had an important role to play as a symbol of this new state and society.

Following German re-unification, the days of the Palace were numbered. Its infestation with asbestos provided a welcome reason to close it down firmly. Another aspect that told against it was that, needless to say, it had never been meant to pay its own way: there was simply no way this place could ever make as much money as it cost to keep it going. (That its opposite number in West Berlin, the *Internationales Congress Centrum (ICC)* opened in 1979, had exactly the same problems of asbestos and economic unfeasibility, yet was rid of the asbestos at great cost and is kept running even though it is a constant drain on the city's scant finances, remains a bone of contention for East Berliners who suspect that the arguments for closing down the Palace fall into the category of good reasons as opposed to true reasons).

In 1992 a new pressure group proclaimed that they wanted the *Schloss* back, and they underscored this with an impressive and highly effective action in 1993/4, erecting a full-scale model of the demolished Royal Palace in the shape of painted canvas on scaffolding effectively elbowing the Palace of the Republic out of the way. Thanks to this full-scale model, everybody could now visualize what it would mean to have the Palace back in the very heart of the city of

Berlin, providing a vantage point for the boulevard Unter den Linden and a focus to the World Heritage ensemble of the Museum Island.



Fig. 6: Berlin: the Palace of the Republic (left) competing with a full scale model of the Royal Palace, 1993-4

To cut a long story short, the Palace of the Republic succumbed at last after an agonizingly long process of dismantling and demolition, a process paralleled by the development of a scheme for the rebuilding of the Royal Palace as the *Humboldtforum*. More by accident than by design, the last bits of rubble had only just been cleared from the site as the international competition for the Schloss design came to a conclusion in December 2008, with the Italian architect Franco Stella winning the first prize.

More examples could be named of places where Modernist buildings have been or are to be swept aside to make way for the forms of long-gone buildings conjured out of thin air, with reconstructions often based on little more than a few photographs and plans. What legitimacy is there for these activities, what concepts, ideals and principles are guiding those who pursue these acts of "Forward into the Past"? What are the reasons for this new Historicism that is frequently understood as an act of Conservation? Is it predominantly pro-History or contra-Modernism? What does this tendency say about the popular perception of History and Conservation? And how should the discipline of Conservation react to the challenge of being presented with a whole new set of brand-new "historic" buildings?

One thing is certain: there is some compelling quality in what may be termed Shadow Architecture. Shadow Architecture refers to buildings that have no physical existence, having been destroyed or – in some cases – never been built, and yet are present in the minds of people, sometimes as a vague idea or an ideal (such as Solomon's Temple that has been an inspiration for Freemasons for many centuries) sometimes as an ill-defined shape in one's mental map (such as the Berlin Wall that retains a dark presence in many people's minds) but more often as a nearly tangible object that one wishes fervently to take physical form again, preferably in its original location, thus filling a void that is often more imagined than real but causing strong sentiments and desires nevertheless.

The Barcelona Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe comes to mind as an example for a building that acquired such an iconic quality that its reconstruction was virtually unavoidable, being carried out at last in the 1980s. The *Knochenhauer Amtshaus* in Hildesheim is another such example, as is the Royal Palace in Berlin: clearly defined, highly significant buildings that were of undoubted aesthetic and historic significance and provided people with a sense of identity.

In the cases of Frankfurt and Dresden, the respective movements towards reconstruction are not concerned with iconic individual monuments of this league. The recreations to be effected there will probably be even further removed from their respective historical precedents than what was built at the Market Square in Mainz: the public will be perfectly happy with an imprecise, even fuzzy image of the pre-war situation – within some rough parameters (timber frame or baroque, respectively) anything will do. This loose approach does, of course, not fall within the concept of Shadow Architecture which demands a more faithful recreation of a lost image.

I already mentioned another phenomenon which provides a motivation for returning buildings and sites to some earlier, ideal state: the prosperous German society of the 1980s had outgrown the

modest architecture of post-war reconstruction and it wished to exchange those shabby old garments for something more gaudy and festive. During the early years of post-war reconstruction, architects and patrons (particularly institutions of the state and church) had often made a point that the destructive effects of the war, but also the poverty and hardship of the post-war years, should find form as a visible and tangible element of repaired and rebuilt monuments as well as of new architecture erected in war-devastated cities.

A particularly successful example of the former can be seen in the rebuilding of the *Alte Pinakothek* in Munich, the museum for old master paintings built in the 1820s after designs by the architect Leo von Klenze. The building had suffered a direct hit that had left a triangular gap in the building. The architect Hans Döllgast filled the breach with a reduced version of the original design, re-using salvaged bricks that contrasted with the fine ashlar of the original. Using extremely slender steel posts, the appearance of the load-bearing structure emphasized the dire material situation of the times. A similar approach may be seen in the rehabilitation work of the church of St Michael in Munich, one of the earliest Baroque churches north of the Alps echoing the church of Il Gesù in Rome. Its vaulted stuccoed ceiling, destroyed by bombs, was reconstructed, but rather than re-establishing the decorative detail, only a simplified geometrical version of the original was given.

It may be seen as typical that, in the early 80s, this asceticism and display of wounds suffered in the war was no longer appreciated. In both cases there were strong moves towards complete reconstruction of the lost form and fabric. This was successful in the case of St Michael's where further restoration work went a long way towards recreating the impression of the original stucco, but the political pressure by the Bavarian government to recreate Klenze's designs of the *Alte Pinakothek* failed since Döllgast's interpretation could be seen, and was valued, as a creative act and a significant new layer of the building and not just an improvisation or half-measure *faute de mieux*.

A similar motivation seems to have been at work in the market square of Mainz whose 1950s buildings had, by 1980, lost what little lustre they might ever have possessed. And, needless to say, there was no-one around to speak up for them or to detect any qualities in them that would argue for their preservation. But even so, why did one not go forward in time, why did one not try and find a new solution, commissioning contemporary architects to come up with something that would fit the prominent historic location without resorting to pastiche?

It seems that prosperity brought forth a desire for cosiness. In 1965, the sociologist Alexander Mitscherlich declared, in a best-selling book, our cities to be uninhabitable. It confirmed society's deep mistrust of the Modern as well as the new nostalgia for the past that made itself felt in the 1970s. The European Heritage Year of 1975 played its important part: advertisements in Germany showed a row of late 19th-century apartment houses, one of which was wiped out with rough black brush strokes, and the sombre slogan: *Haus für Haus stirbt dein zuhause* (House after house your neighbourhood is dying). Both Mitscherlich and the Heritage Year slogan struck a deep chord, they helped to set a train in motion that led, on the one hand, to the reconstructions we have seen but on the other hand also gave enormous impetus to the expansion of the Conservation authorities in Germany from the late 1970s onwards.

Not that the Traditionalist forces were victorious in all cities. At about the same time when Mainz recreated a version of the historic frontages facing the Cathedral, the equally historic city of Ulm held a public vote on two alternative approaches for its cathedral square: should it be rebuilt in a mock-historic style or should the Cathedral be contrasted with a cultural centre designed by the American architect Richard Meier? In a hotly contested vote, Meier won – not least, perhaps, because his approach was supported by the State Conservation Authority, to the consternation of those advocating the "historic" approach.

In the case of Berlin, many or all the various lines of conflict familiar from other places converge to produce a highly charged mixture of mind-sets and motivations. Like the biblical scapegoat (3 Mose 16, 20ff.), the Palace of the Republic was burdened with all the sins anybody could find to heap on it, then dispatched into oblivion. Being asbestos-ridden and economically unfeasible was just for starters, nobody ever took that seriously. Far more noxious than the asbestos was of

course the infestation with the spirit of the German Democratic Republic, of Communist East Germany – for this was the showcase building that represented the GDR's pathetic hope to be perceived as a state and an economy that had to be taken seriously, even though in reality it had taken all their strength to produce this building and to make it work. Not that the GDR lacked competent architects and engineers but the industrial infrastructure they had to work with was so inefficient that they had to overcome huge problems in actually producing a building like the Palace and make it work. Indeed, in the case of several other high-profile building projects of the 1970s and 80s, such as the prestigious International Trade Centre and some 5-star-hotels, the GDR government was reduced to having them built by a Japanese building consortium that erected and provided them, down to the last tea-towel, without employing a single East German workman or using a single object manufactured in East Germany as they felt that doing so would jeopardise the standards of quality to which they had been pledged.

Like the biblical scapegoat, it did not avail the Palace that it was really quite guiltless. It was after all not a prison of the State Security, the dreaded *Stasi*, nor was it a place where the people's oppressors plotted their sinister policies. On the contrary, it was an – for East Berlin and the GDR – unusually brightly lit place of entertainment, and even the annual session of the *Volkskammer*, the People's Chamber or parliament, might be seen as just another of the shows which took place here regularly, equally hilarious perhaps though nobody was seen to laugh. In a city that – in the words of historian Brian Ladd – "groans under the burden of its history", the Palace of the Republic was a flyweight. But yes, it did represent the GDR, and the graffiti on one of the last chunks of concrete to be removed from the site pointed out what the destruction and replacement seemed to be all about: "*Die DDR hat es nie gegeben*" – "The GDR never existed". To achieve this impression was certainly a motivation for the demolition, obliterating physical proof according to one of the Party's rules in Orwell's 1984: "Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past".

But even so: why trash the Palace when there were plenty of other high-profile buildings representing the GDR: the monstrous Stalinist apartment blocks flanking a boulevard fit for vast military parades of ten tanks abreast, originally known as *Stalinallee* but hastily renamed in 1961 when the street's patron fell from official grace? Or the residences of either the head of government or the Party chief – the former now housing a prestigious school of business and the latter the Foreign Office? Or, speaking of a dark past, what of the Nazi buildings that remain in Berlin such as Göring's Air Ministry now housing the Ministry of Finance? Why were they not razed to the ground as unbearable due to their contamination by dictatorship and mass murderers, why can they be re-used by the institutions of a democratic state, beautifully restored to their original architectural details?

The answer is obvious: they are not Modernist buildings. They are all more or less classical, and clearly this can cover a multitude of sins. This is of course pure conjecture, but there can be little doubt that the Palace of the Republic would not have been touched had the initial GDR plans of a Stalinist Culture Palace in the mould of the Warsaw example been implemented. People would now love it and feel that it fit the similarly classical neighbourhood of Schinkel's Altes Museum and the late 19th-century Cathedral which is ugly as sin but thoroughly accepted.

The Palace of the Republic was part of a trio of GDR state buildings placed to frame what was called a Forum. Of the three, the unashamedly Modernist GDR Foreign Ministry was demolished out of hand, without anything resembling a serious discussion of its merits. The late-50s *Staatsratsgebäude* on the other hand scraped by, was even seen fit to house the Federal Chancellor for several years before his new residence next to the *Reichstag* was completed. It was accepted by virtue of the traditional craftsmanship and materials that grace its interiors, but more so because of its conservatively structured facade. This facade structure was dictated by its baroque centrepiece, the *Portal IV* transplanted from the demolished *Schloss*, an element that ennobles the building in the public perception and even renders it inviolate – ironically so since this also raises a difficult question. If the whole *Schloss* is reconstructed, what will happen to the segment of facade that was physically transferred to the *Staatsratsgebäude* and thus preserved? Should it be ripped out of its new place and returned to the original location? Should a (carefully designed) gap in the reconstructed facade point to the fact that this part was moved elsewhere?

Or will, as seems inevitable, the *Schloss* facades be reconstructed in their complete form, with the section of facade on the neighbouring building authentic in fabric yet in the wrong place: a solution embarrassing for the supporters of reconstruction but a perpetual source of hilarity and ridicule for their opponents?

The Palace's Modernist character would have made it a prime target for demolition in any case, but it might have escaped this doom as a concession to the fond memories East Berliners have of it. But the final straw that broke its back, so to speak, was that it occupied the wrong place. For Westerners – and needless to say, those battling for the rebuilding of the Royal Palace came from West Berlin and West Germany – the ghost of the Palace of the Prussian Kings was more tangible, more vibrantly alive and beckoning than the Place of the Republic as it stood there locked-up and dead, its gaudy lights switched off and its white marble and copper-coloured plate glass dulled by neglect. The historic buildings we like best are the ones we have built ourselves, as a leading German conservator shrewdly observed in the 1980s. Even Michael Petzet, former President of ICOMOS International, occasionally confesses to a somewhat guilty delight in reconstruction, a delight no doubt intensified by the knowledge that the action holds an element of sin.

So why should one be surprised that the idea of reconstructing the Royal Palace has found countless followers, not least the present Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and her predecessor Gerhard Schröder – and of course the majority of the Federal parliament who in the year 2000 gave the green light for a reconstruction, ignoring the fact that no clear concept existed at the time what the huge architectural volume should be used for? It has since been decided that the vast Ethnographical collections, currently far away from the city centre in Dahlem, are to fill most of the space, sharing the building with a specialized library, with some space left over for events. But, as critics have pointed out, in spite of the undisputed quality of the Ethnographical collections it seems somewhat odd to recreate a Baroque palace at the price of about 1 billion Euros and then fill it with South Sea boats.

There can be little doubt that designing a new building for the Ethnographical collections and various other important cultural institutions on the Museum Island would be an extremely interesting task for contemporary architects. But that is not and never has been the point. As the discussion over the years, conducted with much emotion, even venom, has made abundantly clear, there is a western-dominated pressure group who want their Palace back whatever the cost, never mind what to put in it.

I think the purpose of the rebuilt Royal Palace is the symbolic defeat of the Modern Age and its disquieting character, at the same time putting on a pedestal the monumental symbol of a glorified Paradise Lost. The glamour of the Prussian monarchy, so carefully and successfully polished and displayed in the palaces and landscape gardens of Potsdam, is to be conjured back to its centre, to the place where its heart was ripped out by the Communists who did know exactly where to hit, in 1950. But it is not so much a movement *pro* as a movement *anti* – no one really wants to return to the 19th and 18th century or even know too much about it, but they do long for a simpler, homier world than the frightening globalized world we live in, with incomprehensible and invisible powers at work everywhere.

For in its roots, this anti-Modernist movement is not a dispute over aesthetic matters, people only seem to believe that it is. Rather, the visual characteristics are taken to represent a particular mindset, and it is this which is really in the sights of the Traditionalist. This mindset can however appear in different guises. Even a generation before any Modernist architecture appeared, the Traditionalist attitude was directed at Innovation as such, against any deviation from what was felt to be right and proper, from anything one was used to. This attitude takes shape in a cartoon commenting on the dispute over rebuilding the ruin of Heidelberg Castle around 1900. It shows the venerable and romantic castle, focus of sentimental glorification by generations of Germans singing "I lost my heart in Heidelberg", radiantly illuminated by new-fangled electrical lights and rebuilt to house "The Berlitz School of Languages", "Salem Alakum Cigars", the "Grand Café du Château" and the dress shop of "Sally Blütenzweig": polyglot harbingers of Globalization *avant le*

mot, the cartoon expressing an attitude that is anti-Internationalist, anti-Capitalist and, a self-evident component of this nauseous mélange, anti-Semitic.

So this urge to defend the old ways of life and of building against overpowering influences from abroad was initially directed against Historicist architecture. In the eyes of the Traditionalists, the architecture of Historicism broke and defiled the rules of what was proper, in fact the time-honoured rules of *convenance* as defined in Baroque architectural theory but of course reaching back as far as Vitruvius. Breaking all sense of proper scale – and, even worse, using the decorative elements of every era that ever existed such as columns, pediments, traceries – department stores and apartment houses arrogated to themselves architectural symbols of dignity they were not entitled to, blatantly proclaiming an anarchical free-for-all that could only be seen as threatening the very basis of a decent-minded society in which everybody ought to know their station and behave accordingly. Modernist architecture, introduced a generation later, was just more of the same in a different coat. It was Internationalist, it could be connected to Jews, it broke away from tradition and thus put itself outside the unwritten laws of what was proper. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* hints at the disturbing groundswell accompanying this style even today when it observes, only half in joke, on the long-running TV thriller series *Tatort* ("Crime Scene"): "In *Tatort*, the wicked always live in Modernist glass boxes. Those who dwell in timber frame houses only ever kill in self-defence." No wonder that Historicist and Modernist architecture alike were subjected to the policy of *Entschandlung* (De-Di sfigurement) by which Traditionalists tried to purge German cities from what they saw as architectural atrocities, particularly after the Nazis came to power in 1933 (a policy discussed in greater detail in Anke Blümm's contribution to this conference).

So the backward-looking tendency in architecture, the bias towards replacing Modernist buildings with recreations of some seemingly more appropriate earlier situation that can be observed during the last 3 decades or so, cannot be understood without this long-standing scepticism against anything that deviates from righteousness, not only in architecture. As any widespread knowledge about architectural theory and tradition, of which people were far more aware a century ago, has long faded, this enmity against the improper has turned into an instinctive rather than a reasoned position.

Although the Traditionalist approach has been pursued most aggressively by exponents who belonged to the political right, it does in fact cut across political factions. The GDR provides a case in point. Not only was there the period during the early 50s when "National Building Tradition" was the officially approved approach in architecture; even more telling, during the 1980s the GDR did not only rediscover the qualities of the older architecture they had denounced as Feudalist for decades but even produced their own example of a mock-historic urban scenario in Berlin. This was the Nikolaiviertel right in heart of what had been the medieval centre. Only the ruin of the Gothic church of St Nicholas had survived but this became the focus around which a quarter of quaint little streets with attractive nooks and corners, high-gabled inns and well proportioned classical facades was conjured out of thin air, mostly semi-fictitious but superficially convincing facades grafted onto buildings produced from prefabricated concrete elements. In dramatic contrast to the ubiquitous mass-produced concrete blocks dominating every single community in the GDR, this unlikely quarter provided some means of escaping, not of course from the GDR – the Berlin Wall saw to that – but at least for a temporary time out: through the looking glass into a picturesque little parallel world.

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What does all this mean for the discipline of Architectural Conservation? Should the discipline of Conservation not be delighted with the set of brand-new "historic buildings" it is being presented with? On the whole, I think not. Whilst there is an obvious affinity of Conservationists towards the Traditionalists' position, the latter should really be shunned like false friends. The history of Conservation is full of examples where the desire to recover – or even create – an allegedly ideal state has led to deplorable tampering with historic buildings and huge loss of significant fabric: as witness the works of James Wyatt (who left indelible traces on countless English cathedrals), Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (who rebuilt Carcassonne and Pierrefonds) and Karl Schäfer

(whose restoration started the dispute on Heidelberg Castle). Of course, in leaving their stamp, all these architects not only destroyed much of what was there but always created something new that often could only be appreciated generations later. Thus, Viollet-le-Duc's idealistic reconstruction at Carcassonne even made it onto the World Heritage list, not as a medieval fortification of course but as an achievement of the 19th century.

And so it may happen to those rather weird reconstructions undertaken in our own time. Although it would be too much to expect them to become World Heritage they will certainly be seen as documents of their own time, albeit representing only a facet of the 21st century's approach to historic fabric. They will be seen in contrast to other forms of engaging with the built past and with the material witnesses of history, some of them in their immediate neighbourhood. Thus, while the reconstruction of the Royal Palace is going ahead, the *Neues Museum* is being opened to the public a stone's throw away. Rebuilt and restored by the British architects David Chipperfield and Julian Harrap, the *Neues Museum* approach recognizes that a building or monument is not a static thing, not simply the embodiment of a design idea, but accepts its protean character. Grave wounds inflicted by the war are not healed and glossed over as if nothing had happened, missing elements are recreated in contemporary shape, and the visitor can trust that what looks old actually *is* old. When the finished but still empty building was first opened to the public for a sneak preview, a heated debate was overheard between two elderly gentlemen: the first was incensed about the fragmentary character left by the restoration and the unashamedly new additions but the other said: "don't get excited, you'll get the *Schloss* over there while we get this."

But although a certain pluralism is not a bad thing, mirroring the variety of human thought and sentiment, it should not take the shape of a *laissez-faire* approach to Conservation matters. Conservators may be, and should be, generous and open-minded in approaching the contentious buildings and monuments of earlier battles, accepting them as documents of a past age: it would be ludicrous and irresponsible to remove or destroy any works by Wyatt, Viollet-le-Duc or Schäfer on the basis of a fundamental disagreement with their approach 100 or even 200 years ago. But in actual present-day debate, Conservators have the clear duty to defend the existing fabric against any attempt to replace it with fictitious recreations. They are not necessarily required to admire a Modernist building – we are all children of our own time and our tastes are biased accordingly – but their professional competence and conscience should lead them to assess its merits on its own terms and act accordingly, defending it against the thoughtless assumption of its worthlessness.

In doing so, Conservation invariably finds itself in the role of Hercules at the Crossroads, poised between – to refer to David Lowenthal – Heritage and History: facing the choice between the easy and seductive path of pandering for the public taste and creating an easily digestible version of the past, and the rough and thankless road of defending what history has produced, particularly at the unloved and vulnerable stage when these creations are just about a generation old.