

Leisure landscapes

Sports- und Erholungszentrum and the GDR

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TU DELFT MSc History Thesis



Figure 1: Bathers enjoying the joys of late summer. (1981). Zimmerman, P. [Photograph]. 183-Z1002-409. Bundesarchiv

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Introduction

“Architecture is monstrous because each choice leads to a reduction in possibility” (Koolhaas, 1993: 334)¹. This thesis investigates the different intersections of architecture, control, and the leisure economy. The configuration of these intersections became increasingly evident in the 20th-century city as society shifted from the industrial workforce towards goods and services, and ultimately towards the “experience economy” as it was called by Pine and Gilmore (1994). This thesis looks at architecture for leisure and recreation in the German Democratic Republic to instantiate the statement: to design and spatialise leisure, an everyday practice of the people is to reduce the possibility of resistance. Furthermore, the research also inquires about the transnational trends of designing leisure spaces and how the GDR’s building practitioners employed and reformed these typically consumer-based strategies to fit the socialist political framework. In the 1970s, many recreation and leisure buildings similar to the SEZ, such as Palast der Republik, went up around the GDR to accommodate masses of working people conscripted to participate in the socialist vision for leisure in a society of production and labour. The SEZ was proposed to execute these goals for the GDR while adapting to international trends of leisure activities and entertainment space design. In the SEZ, state technocrats could narrate and script everyday free time activities of citizens by narrative design and organisation of everyday experiences. In other words, the spatialisation of leisure and recreation, by the design of its institutions, facilitated censorship and control of everyday life and this intrusion was concealed by the comforts, pleasures, and entertaining experiences offered and displayed through the transparent glass windows and open interior promenades.

The approach of this historical research categorises the fundamental elements of architecture and their cultural motives, belief systems, and evolutions. Therefore, this thesis looks at the principles underlying the GDR building practitioner’s didactic models, texts, and systems for social buildings, particularly leisure and recreation buildings using archival research. The first layer of research specifies the context in which this project was conceived – the city of Berlin and its political and cultural constituents; how this was inscribed into design principles; and how insofar the designers, architects, and policymakers envisioned the ideal cultural life of leisure, under socialism, by institutionalising culture with architecture as apparatus.

Specific objectives guiding the research were to establish: who were the stakeholders and contributors, what were the architectural intentions, how the intentions were executed in the design, and what were some of the activities and events that occurred within this prolific and enigmatic building. This information was collected in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Stadberzirkarchiv, the Landesarchiv Digital Image Archive, and digitalised footage from the GDR German Broadcasting Archive. The secondary research provided conceptual and analytical frameworks with which to interpret the historical facts of

the SEZ and collate its narrative within a wider discursive context of leisure spaces, themed public spaces, and totalised landscapes.

The first chapter covers the ideological frameworks for urban planning in the GDR during this period. A new planning agenda for the SED's building ministry was realised in the SED's 9th and 10th Party Congress in 1977. The SEZ was conceptualised as a quark of this new phase in the shaping of the socialist society. The program aimed for an enhanced focus on planning leisure and recreation facilities for the working people of the GDR. This chapter also describes specific and practical principles that were outlined by the Building Academy for the design of social buildings and their social functions, efficiencies, and capacities; and how these were applied in principle to the narrative and architecture of the SEZ.

The second chapter situates the SEZ within the wider context of Europe's modern architectural traditions by looking at the international influences and contributions made in the conceptualisation and construction of the building. The mediating tension between perspectives of transnationalism and German studies is crucial to this thesis because, despite the GDR's self-imposed cultural isolation, the planners sought international trends in the realisation of the SEZ concept and commissioned international designers to fulfil the project's aims. The fourth chapter looks at the period of reunification of Germany in the impact of its processes and transformations on the GDR's architectural residue; specifically recreational and leisure institutions and how they are remembered. The information is extracted from archival documents, speeches, and photographs provided by the

The SEZ's context within the period of Berlin's GDR era is understood as an acutely particular and unique context, rather than as conflated with the concept of the ordinary European city or even a typical post-soviet city. This method of interpretation is perceived by German academics as problematic because it overlooks the idiosyncrasies that influence the urban condition of Berlin. German critics find that when the city is analysed and compared as an ordinarily European city with ordinary symptomatic conditions like any other major European metropolis, interpretive frameworks (such as post-industrialisation, flows, and social inequality) can sully the productivity and originality of the study. Moreover, because English literature is more seminal because of its widescale accessibility, the accurate and nuanced German perspectives are overlooked². For this reason, I have leveraged research toward translated German literature. However, transnational³, and global trends were still integral frameworks in understanding the process of SEZ design and construction, so therefore these perspectives are recognised with cautionary reflexivity.



Figure 2: Crowds at the topping out ceremony.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter introduces the Sports- Und Erholungszentrum within it's the Social Party's prescriptive policy on the development of social institutions, and more specifically the recreation, sport, and leisure facilities. The architectural planning agendas of leisure institutions in the GDR operated on multiple dimensions and scales. The first dimensions are the definition of pedagogical functions of the institution within the building, serving as educational heritage, promoting a reframed ideal of "Bildung" or self-cultivation within the collective rather than its individualistic basis, and facilitating a productive working-class culture (Cupers, 2015).



Figure 3: Ausstellungswerbung: "So nutzen wir unsere Freizeit. 1972. 2009/111 (63): FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum. Retrieved from <https://nat.museum-digital.de/object/1274356>

1.1 Socialist Party Congress Resolutions for Leisure and Free-time

After the 1960s, Europe and the world saw new forms of recreation, leisure, and popular culture. The industrial age of the production economy was waning while goods and services grew steadily predominant. “The GDR is not a leisure-time society and never will be.” (Hanke & Vale, 1988, p. 167). For the socialist, leisure, and recreation is for the advancement of the individual personality within the collective. Leisure time and work time are mutually augmentative. Therefore, it is ‘cultural work’ to expand the potential of the working people to consciously spend their free time for its developmental benefits and results for labour productivity. Leisure time was a way to rejuvenate oneself to return to work. The GDR’s policy for leisure urged that workers and producers within the leisure and recreation sector were precise in their understanding of the socialist philosophy of leisure time so that the socialist vision for a society of work can be achieved. (Hanke & Vale, 1988; Prendel, 1974).

The precondition which brought about the growth of leisure as a preferred cultural activity in the GDR was what Hanke and Vale attributed to evolving “economy of time” (1988) or what Prendel called a “time budget” (1974) where workers enjoy more spendable work-free hours since the mass of post-war reconstruction efforts had subsided since the 1960s. Free time was perceived as a precious good relative to its scarcity in comparison with work hours, which solicited the need for rationalisation.



Figure 4: *Spreewerfer* by Hans Kies (1966) in Volkspark Friedrichshain in Berlin. [Photograph] Authors own.

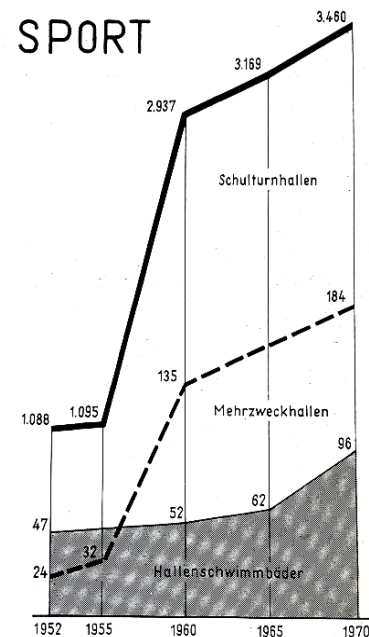


Figure 5: *Facilities for Recreation, Sport, and Tourism*. (Prendel, 1974. p. 56)

Propaganda promoted physical education as the predominant free-time activity so that the working bodies can prepare their physiques for military and manual work and protect the peace of the GDR.⁴ The Programm der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei (SEP) 8th Party Congress defined the main tasks for the progress and development socialist society. The main task of the Congress was to improve the material and cultural standard of living based on increasing efficiency, scientific and technical progress, and growth in labour productivity, as derived from the economic laws of socialism. Within these laws on the interrelation between economics and politics, politics reigns supreme, a politic that dictates that the satisfaction of cultural and material needs is the primary goal of socialist production. The organisation of the free time of working people was therefore an integral part of the development of socialism, and all levels of the state were tasked to create better conditions for these free-time activities.

To implement the resolutions of the Party Congress, the secretariat of the SEP Central Committee ordered the construction of a new modern recreation centre in the capital of the GDR, Berlin. Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Trade made finances available to the Ministry of Construction (Gisske to Junker & Schalk, 1978)⁵. It was built in a strict timeline of two years in time for the 10th Party Congress and the 1981 June elections. Erich Honecker told the crowd in his speech on the SEZ Richtigfest (topping out ceremony) grandstand that building was a primary political concern in the interest of the working class and decisively influences the further formation of socialist society, strengthening of the economic power of the republic, and the continuation of the program of full employment national prosperity growth and stability. He saw that the state's disciplined intervention in construction and investments would prevent the waste of national wealth and working hours and in the name of socialist rationalisation and scientific progress (1980).⁶

The Congress maintained that socialism is not complete without continual redeveloping of social building design strategies to keep up with the multiplying forms of collective cultural activities. This mandated a systematic approach to designing new structures and facilities for the future. The new collective activities that were becoming more desirable were identified by the Building Academy as education, relaxing entertainment, active relaxation in the city and countryside, and the need for informal encounters and socialising. These intensified needs were theorised to be a result of the increasing urbanisation process and the associated separation of zones of use (Prendel, 1974) and longer travel distances from the districts to the countryside (Benthein, 1984), and the housing misery left behind by capitalism (Honecker, 1980)⁷. Alas, it was believed that this building would bring joy to the district and make the metropolis beautiful (Junker, 1980)⁸.

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Figure 8: Model of the SEZ design. (1978).
Ministerium für Bauwesen (DH 1/29130,
Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, 1972)



Figure 9: Honecker delivering the Richfest (topping
out ceremony) speech. (Ibid).



Figure 6: Gisske showing Honecker the macquette.
(Ibid).

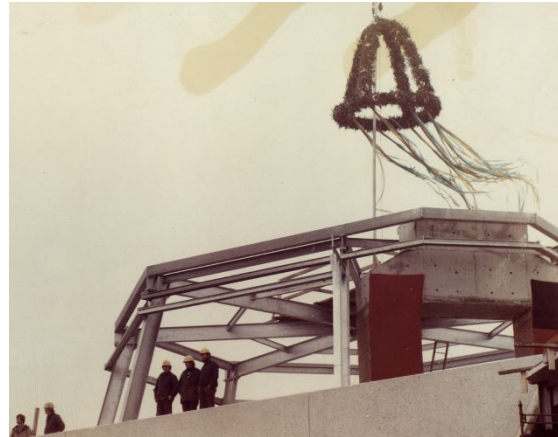


Figure 7: Topping out crown. Scrapbook von Kurt
Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ) [Photograph].
Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324.
20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin

1.2 State Planning of the Recreational Geography and Social Centre.

The 1970s planning recreation buildings of the GDR were social centres, and therein crucial constituents of the strategic urban network and rationalisation concept and were seen as fundamental assets to the development of the vision for the socialist society and city. East German geographer Bruno Benthien wrote in 1984 that the Capitalist system of market-oriented tourism and recreation had been replaced by the socialist system of recreation run by labour unions, publicly owned businesses, and state institutions, and reported it to be growing rapidly alongside the development of socialist society. He speculated that the growth in free time and populace buying power were two factors that helped redefine the recreational landscape. The *Landeskulturgesetz* (Law on the Use of Land) was established in 1970 to control where and how cultural practices took place and prevented the fragmented organization of leisure, which was seen as a problem for a socialist society. Planners and policymakers sought to shape the future landscape of East Germany towards optimal efficiency, promoting better time budgets and societal productivity (Prendel, 1974). The building type and its environmental determinants (urban accessibility, technical requirements, services, layouts) were rationalised in models and systems. Typical movement chains between work, after work, and weekends, and extramural education were modelled (Figure 10), determining the functional allocation of social centres. Prendel described that sports and recreation centres are social hubs, not merely buildings, but enclaves within the urban organism. The ideal neighbourhood would integrate work, living, and relaxation (Figure 13) in a tiered network of social centres (Figure 12) or clusters rationalised in a structural scheme according to the parameters of the urban layout or size of the city (Figure 11)(Figure 14).

The combination of multiple functions in one building was favoured not only for its spatial efficacy but also based on the notion that physical, mental, social, and mental activities are synchronous and are thus most advantageous when working adjacently. Secondly, containing different social activities encourages improved “urbanity” and solves the problem of alienation and social isolation that comes with city living. Thirdly, the rational planning network of leisure buildings within the residential zones will cut down traveling time, leaving more time in the day for leisure, personal growth, and community activities. The centres could include restaurants, beauty salons, sports medicine, leisure games halls, pools, gymnasium, courts, bowling alleys, saunas, and many other uses. Accommodating such an array of activities and quantity of people solicited the strategic design for deliveries, services, equipment, ancillary rooms, podiums, and grandstands. Modular systems and consistent materials were favoured for adaptability for future uses (Prendel, 1974). These principles were pivotal in the design of the SEZ building.

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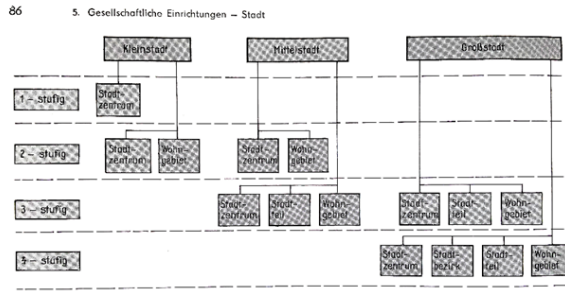


Figure 10: Establishment of the staged structure of the network of social institutions depending on the size of the city; Typical movement chains for determining the function assignment in the social center. (Prendel, 1974, p. 86; 138)

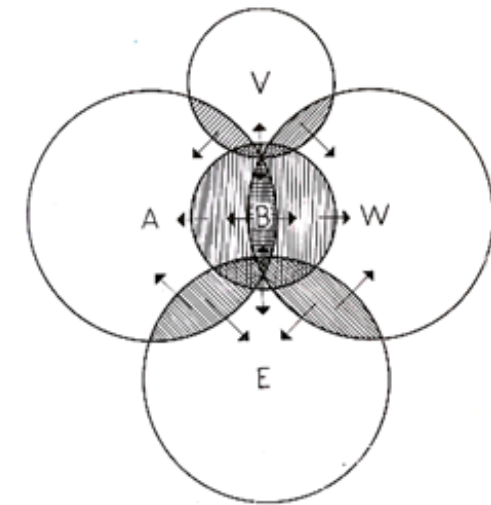
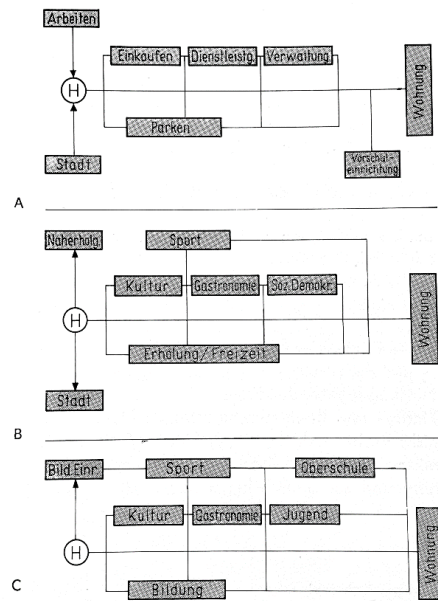


Figure 11: Preliminary integration scheme of the functional areas. A work; B; E recovery; W living. (Prendel, 1974, p)

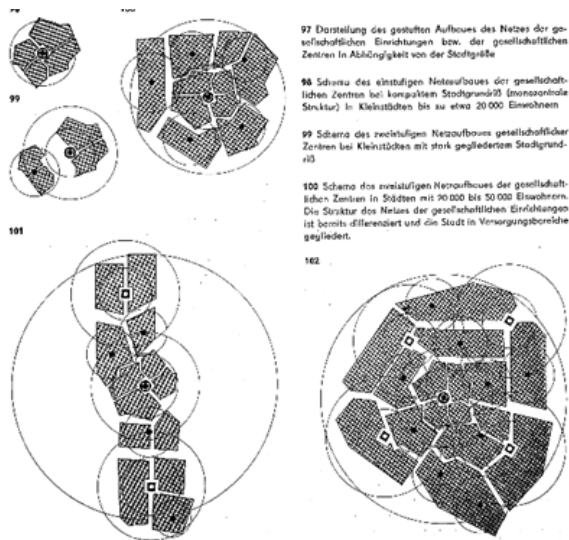


Figure 12: Diagrams of network structures of social centres with different urban layouts – strips or radial. (Ibid, p86)

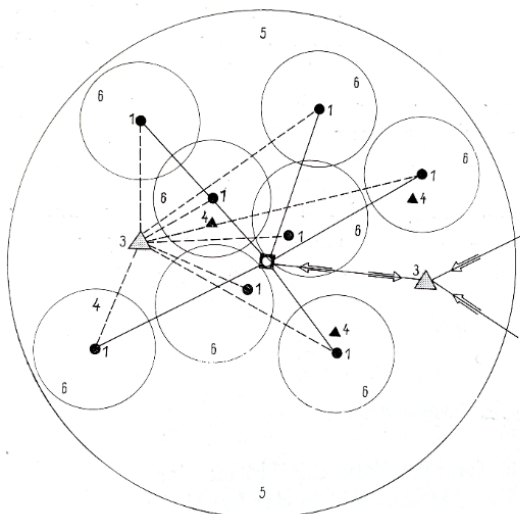


Figure 13: Structural scheme for the tiered network of social centres and its supply/catchment areas. (Ibid, p. 87)

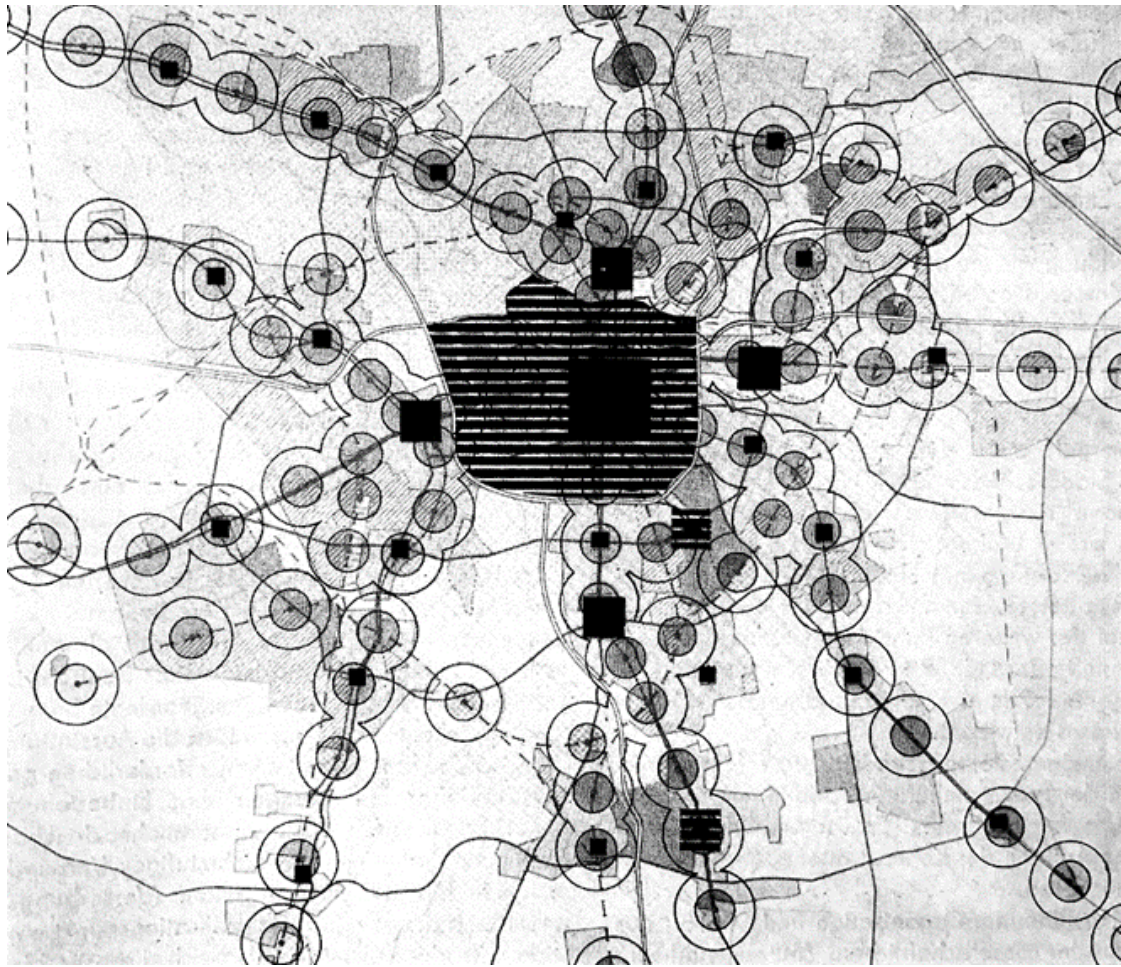


Figure 14: Excerpt from the general development plan for Leipzig as an example of the four-stage structure of the network of social centres. (Ibid, p. 87)

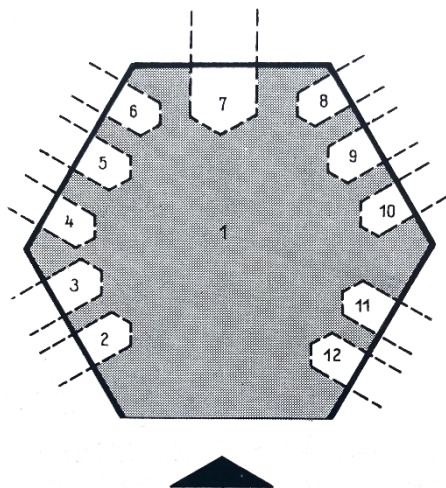
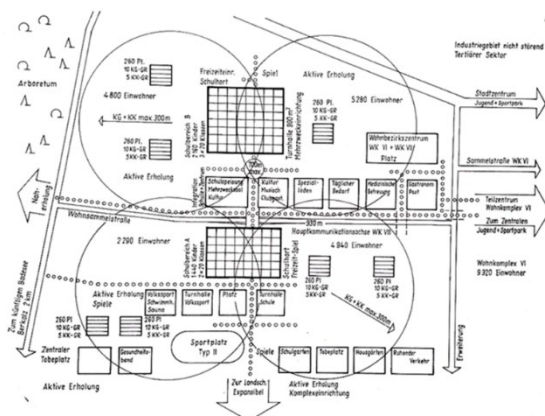


Figure 15: Example of an intercommunicative area as a forum and development space for different functions
 (1) intercommunicative room; (2) management, administration; (3) secondary functions; (4 to 6) club and circle areas; (7) multi purpose device; (8) gastronomy; (9) social rooms; (10) youth club; (11) Sport - Recreation; (12) Sale. (Ibid, p. 140)



153 Kommunikationsstruktur für das Wohngebiet VII Schwedt (Oder)

Figure 16: Communication structure for residential area and social buildings. (Ibid, p. 140)

1.3 Infrastructure and planning of The Sports- und Erholungszentrum

The concept of the Sports-und Erholungszentrum iterated the model of combining recreational activities into one zone. The SEZ was designed with the prospect of developing the Volkspark-Friedrichshain into a park site recreation centre. The location was identified for its accessibility to the densely populated proletarian working-class districts of Prenzlauerberg and Friedrichshain (Figure 19) and was planned on the S Bahn route from the newly established housing district of Marzahn (Ministerium für Bauwesen, 1979). The SEZ offered an ice rink, a roller-skating rink, a wave pool, gymnasiums, courts, saunas, restaurants, medical facilities, and many other comforts. It anticipated up to 18 000 visitors per day. With all the options for recreational activities housed in a triple-sectioned building, this amounted to a built area of five hectares. The size of the building amounted to the requirement for highly technical functional components and infrastructure. Provisions were made for the heating and cooling of the building using an energy exchange system – the ice rink refrigeration heat waste was reused to heat the pool for example. The designers Hochtief were also commissioned to design a customised admissions tariff/ticketing system. Swedish company ABV designed the heating canal system that cost up to 5 Million Deutsche Marks⁹(Figure 18).

The structural design was used for its lightweight, quick assembly, maintenance, and cost-effectiveness. The intention was for the building to blend into its surroundings and to achieve the aesthetic of exposed materiality to showcase elegant workmanship and quality. The façade was designed with multiple glass surfaces – the transparency was favourable for inviting passers-by in and for the visibility of all the available activities inside.¹⁰

In a socialist society, politics and ideology were strongly embedded in recreation and leisure spaces. This chapter has answered the questions of the SEZ's predefining context – the social, political, and cultural constituents through the assessment of primary records showing the SEP's policies, the Building Academy's design manuals for social buildings, and how these concepts were executed in the architecture of SEZ. The perusal of these records reiterated that the SEP rationalised socialist society with architecture. Because leisure and recreation were a growing preferred cultural activity amongst the working



1 K.(1982). Bild 183-1982-0814-033. [photograph]. Bundesarchiv.

Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1982-0814-033 / Fotograf(in): Schindler, Karl-Heinz

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population and free-time hours were a scarce and precious resource, this required radical planning for maximum efficiency. The response was to define the population's leisure and recreation practices by controlling its occupation of space, utilising the scientific and rational principles of architecture to dictate proper codes of spatial behaviour. The following chapter departs from reading the SEZ in terms of the GDR's specific socialist codes for leisure buildings and looks at the modalities of promotion and propaganda, staged experiences, themed design, and how these mechanisms operate in the SEZ.

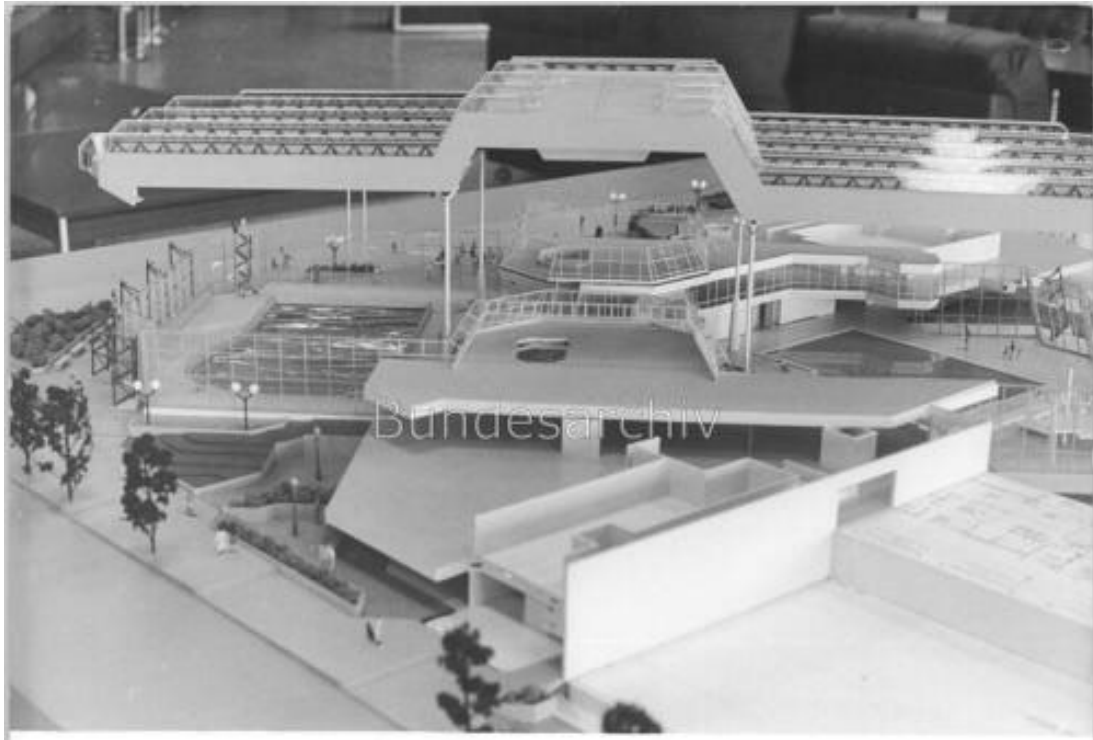


Figure 17: Model of SEZ. (1979). Stark, V. Bild 183-U0213-0041.[Photograph]. Bundesarchiv

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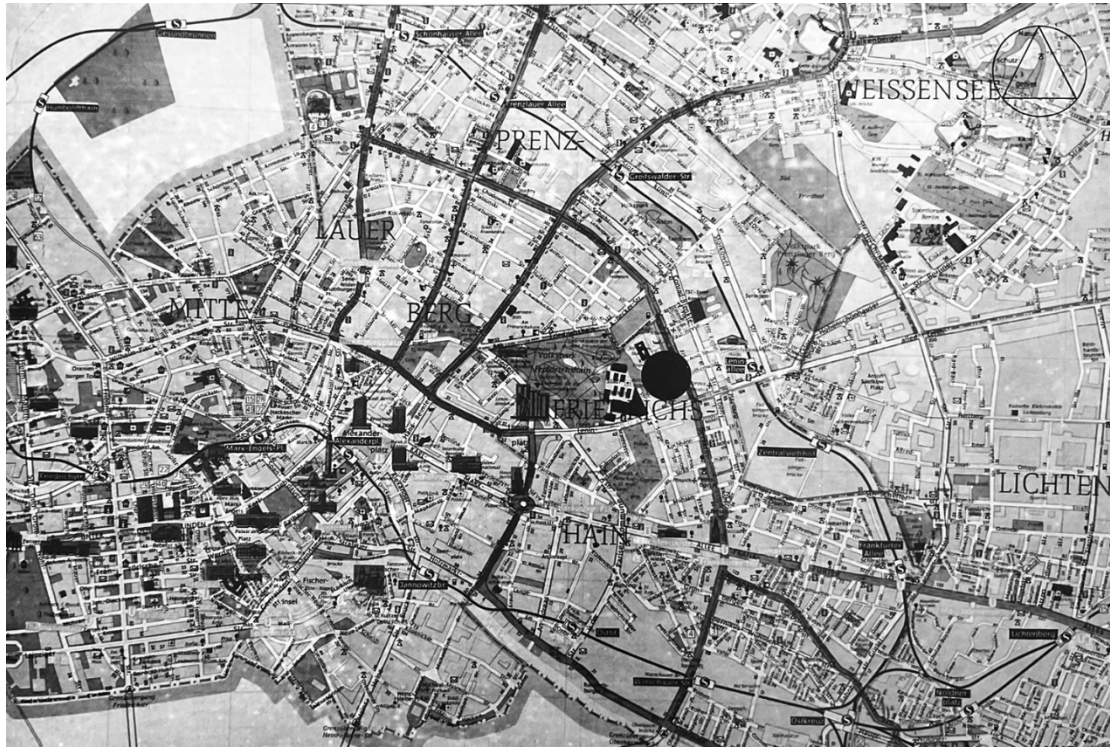


Figure 19: SEZ and densely populated neighbourhoods of Friedrichshagen and Prenzlauerberg. (1979). Ministerium für Bauwesen. Sport- und Erholungszentrum Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR (Zeichnungen, Skizzen). [book album] DH1 33374.

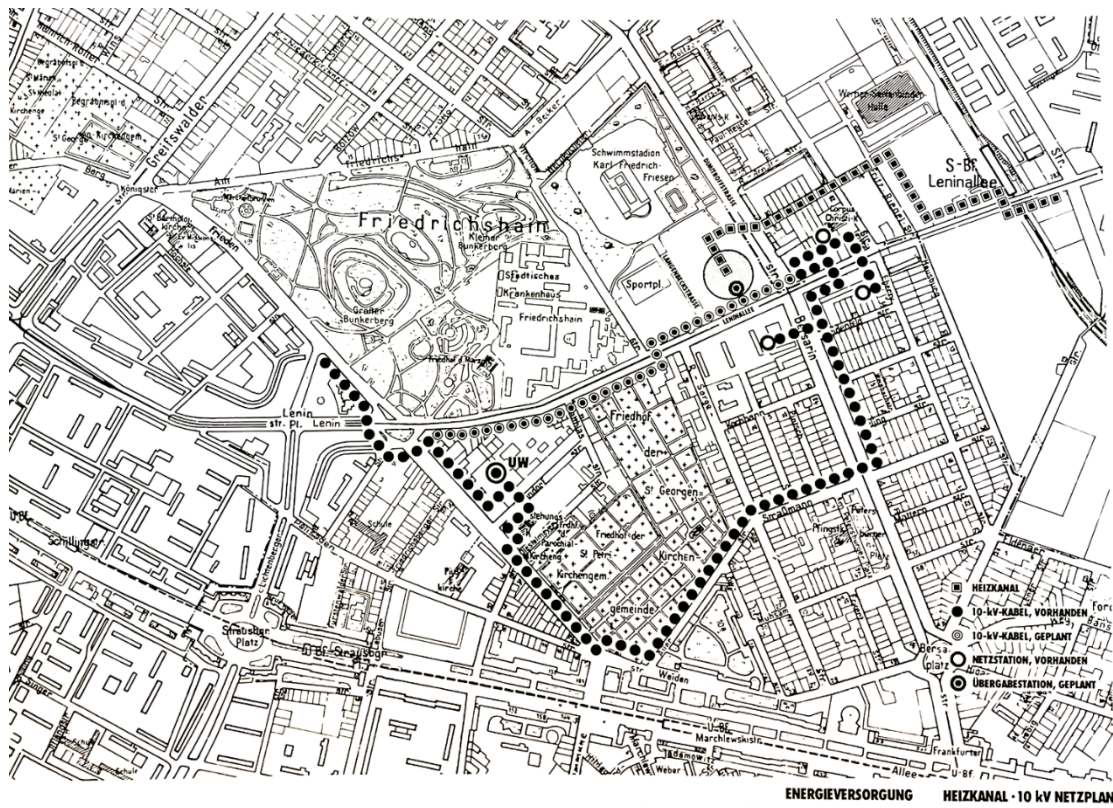


Figure 18: New heat canal infrastructure for the large volume of building in the SEZ complex. (Ibid)

Chapter 2

Introduction

The previous chapter focussed on SEZ within the context of socialism in the GDR and its design philosophies for social buildings, emphasizing that the building's inception was strongly entrenched in the socialist project. This chapter locates the project within the wider transnational approaches of leisure and entertainment architecture. Multifunctional cultural halls with similar qualities to SEZ were proliferating on both sides of divided Europe in the 1980s¹¹. Cupers argues that these shared traditions, despite the ideological divide, are beyond just the transnational exchange of architects across the Cold War divide, but more as a manifestation of modernity's totalising preoccupations with cultural institutionalisation through the modalities of architecture. "Stated intentions and architectural design reveal little about the role cultural halls played in people's everyday lives," (p.476) but examining these spaces "reveals how modern architecture articulated cultural politics in which participation was harnessed to bolster the intervention of the state in everyday life.". The architectural typology of the multifunctional cultural hall transcended the terms of ideological differences or certain political uses. (Cupers, 2015). Mitrasinovic shares Cuper's:

"The symbiosis of the political and economic power, and the convergence of governmental and corporate interest have created new bureaucratic bodies based on an ensemble of normative procedures that have since organized the techniques for both the production and consumption of themed specialised spaces. Once such techniques become deeply associated with the human practices they generate, so deeply associated that in fact we confuse the two - they tend to become autonomous and to function independently from the social system they serve ." (2006)

In this sense, themed design as a system for organising leisure spaces is likewise independent of the regime. Photographs, renders, and drawings of SEZ demonstrate elements of theming, and staged experiences as an attractive, persuasive, and perhaps coercive instrument to encourage participation in the activities of the building. There was much room for play, relaxation, and pure enjoyment. Described as "Ein Paradies für jeden Spreeathener" (Anders, 1980)¹², the SEZ can be described as themed architecture and experience design recodified in an antithetical context to commerce and consumption, instead within the overt control and totalising powers of the SEP. From the grand scale of the opening events and the many grand tours of the state ministers through the building, it was invariably a piece of state propaganda in an era of television, popular cultural crossings, and multiplying forms of entertainment. It was an index of the GDR's socialist vision for leisure and recreation buildings

as social centres, but also applied universally affective techniques of entertainment, leisure, and recreation architecture.

2.1 International Research for GDR construction projects

In 1954 the GDR was granted full sovereignty and independence from the USSR and by the 1970s the aims of the Senate were focussed on the reprogramming of the GDR's form of socialism and gaining international status in the world economy. By the early 1960s, the GDR embraced the modernist movement, leaving behind the previous standard of socialist classicism that reigned in East Germany in the early 1950s mass housing projects (Pugh, 2015). The GDR aimed for improved diplomatic relations with the outside world but still practiced extreme censorship, surveillance, and self-imposed cultural isolation (Childs, 1977). By the 1970s, many Western countries recognised East Germany as an independent country, and it was accepted into the United Nations¹³.

The SEZ was adorned as an icon of socialist progress and its productive workforce but was also actively engaged with international architectural traditions of leisure spaces. East German architects, policymakers, and state officials were well acquainted with international design projects and European trends. It was common that members of the Institut für Kulturbauten were permitted to travel internationally for exhibitions and research (Cupers, 2015). In 1977, the project team travelled to visit leisure parks in Ruhregebiet, West Germany, for research. They concluded that these parks and centres offered suggestions for function, technology, and design; but it was reported that no property could be visited which fully corresponded to their ideas. In addition, it was observed that leisure buildings visited in the Ruhr area were exclusively on the outskirts of cities, embedded in park landscapes and green spaces because their zoning laws did not permit inner-city leisure parks, and thus identified that SEZ, an inner-city leisure centre was of unique potential. (Gisske, 1977).¹⁴¹⁵ (Figure 20; Figure 21). Three West German firms, Polensky and Zollner, Hochtief AG, and Beton- und Monierbau were negotiated with to participate in the study and draft ideas for the project. The Minister observed that the participation of West German companies demonstrated that the interest in SEZ was far-reaching and indicated willingness in principle to trade deals with the GDR. Hochtief AG was selected amongst the competitors for the suitability of the project scope to the skills of the East German labour force, the best incorporation of the site's neighbourhood and park landscape, and the most attractive water features.¹⁶¹⁷ The ministries maintained that the international literature brought in by the foreign firms and international studies only contained structural inspirations, but the mode of operation and pedagogical function of the building was to be distinctly socialist.¹⁸



Figure 20: Brochure of pool house features in Dortmund, West Germany included the preliminary research study report for SEZ. Topa Mare, (1976). [Pamphlet]. DH 1/32912 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde



Figure 21: Brochure of Kulturparks/Revier parks in Ruhrgebiet, West Germany included in the preliminary research study report for SEZ. SVR Essen, 1976. [Pamphlet]. DH 1/32912 Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde)

2.2 Securing the socialist vision for building leisure architecture.

The models prescribed by socialist planners and policymakers specified functional components, programmatic arrangements, distribution of the workforce, and the operative management of SEZ. The Institute for Leisure and Recreational Sports at the German University for Physical Culture in Leipzig determined the research methods for the design development and organisational structure of SEZ during construction. The institute were tasked to design the building organisation such as the range of sports, forms of care required, differentiated user groups, regulation of flow of visitors, functional models for the interaction between areas (admissions, changing rooms, sport activities, medical care, gastronomy), and the profiling of cadres¹⁹. Local study objects were identified as working examples, and international study objects, such as The Kristallpalast, London, were identified for their structural design insights. Between 1981 and 1985, they were responsible for the ongoing evaluation of the mass character development of physical culture and sport. The Sports and Recreation Centre reported and worked according to the perspective and annual plan approved

by the State Secretary for Physical Culture and Sports. The task was to run a variety of events such as workshops, forums, circles, debates, contributing to the development of Berlin as a political, economic, and intellectual cultural centre (Staatssekretariat für Körperkultur und Sport, 1979).²⁰

While the SEZ planners and policy makers were open to so-called Western or transnational influences, they nevertheless ardently defined it as a socialist project with all levels of the state committed to defining the aims and protocols of the building throughout the project timeline. The working methods of the Ministry of Physical Culture and Sport, and the Building Academy and the Ministry of Construction was saliently expressed in the backstage management of the building, coordination of the operation with the state, prioritisation of productivity, the workforce, and seeing the building as a symbol of national pride. From the documents I studied, it was difficult to find evidence of the perspective of the West German architect Klaus Tröger of Hochtief.²¹ But from the photographs of the exterior and interior spaces of SEZ, it is clear that leisure parks in the Western part of Germany and beyond had a distinctive influence on the SEZ's narrative of how free time and recreation were to be experienced.

2.2 Themed and Experience Design

This section explores how SEZ, as a leisure space, can be understood as a themed environment by looking at its observable qualities of material and narrativity in photographs, sketches, plans, and written accounts for the design rationale. The global history of leisure is firmly rooted in the standardisation of work practices in the early industrial economy in the 20th century. Economy and industry evolved from manufacturing/production; to goods and services; to the experience economy; a new form of commercial activity that revolves around leisure. The experience economy, as per Pine and Gilmore, is where work, fun, and leisure became economically projective through the designation of resources, curation of experiences, and the design of dramaturgical and photogenic encounters as an attracting mechanism (1994).

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In this light, these are the physical design features that exhibit the design strategies of themed leisure spaces in the SEZ, as per Pine and Gilmore's hypothesis.

1. The interior features – furniture design, colour choices, lighting design. The customised furniture was designed by Horst Heider. The colour of the aluminium windows was chosen to be 'friendly, bright and pleasant' and to build on the so-called leitmotif. Mosaic art lined the pool areas.
2. An engaging theme alters a guest's sense of reality. The SEZ had a thematic concept of the seasons – summer and winter in different parts of the building – whether in the solarium or the sauna.
3. Colour features of the building, logos, to fit the character of the enterprise shaping the experience. The logo was described by the artist as symbolically expressing movement, joy, light and sun, as the main elements of life, and the integral relationship of the centre to water. The circular elements and waves were supposedly reinforcing of the harmonious overall impression of the logo as a symbol of rest, relaxation, and leisure (Bothe, 1980).
4. Blurring of spaces between the activities, visibility, and connection. The glass façade invites the desire to enter and experience the building. The large Freizeitpromenade, and the diagonal section of the pool area created connections between the spaces.
5. Multiple places within a place strengthens the theme.



Scrapbook von Kurt Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ) [Photograph]. Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324. 20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin



Figure 22: Colours of the SEZ window façade and the Volkspark gardens. *Scrapbook von Kurt Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ)* [Photograph]. Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324. 20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin

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The planners of the SEZ had detailed scripts of how the social activities would operate in the building in the different compartments and at the same time, throughout the different seasons, assembled in a system through the spatial layout. The building was divided into three sections with the main facilities designed to be accessible for active and passive users. The central entrance from Leninallee²² and open passageways was intentional so that citizens could observe and experience the sports in the play and swimming halls. There was ample room in the building to accommodate educational and political events in the form of exhibition spaces, a library, and a club room some of which were open plan, to further encourage communal participation (Figure 28).

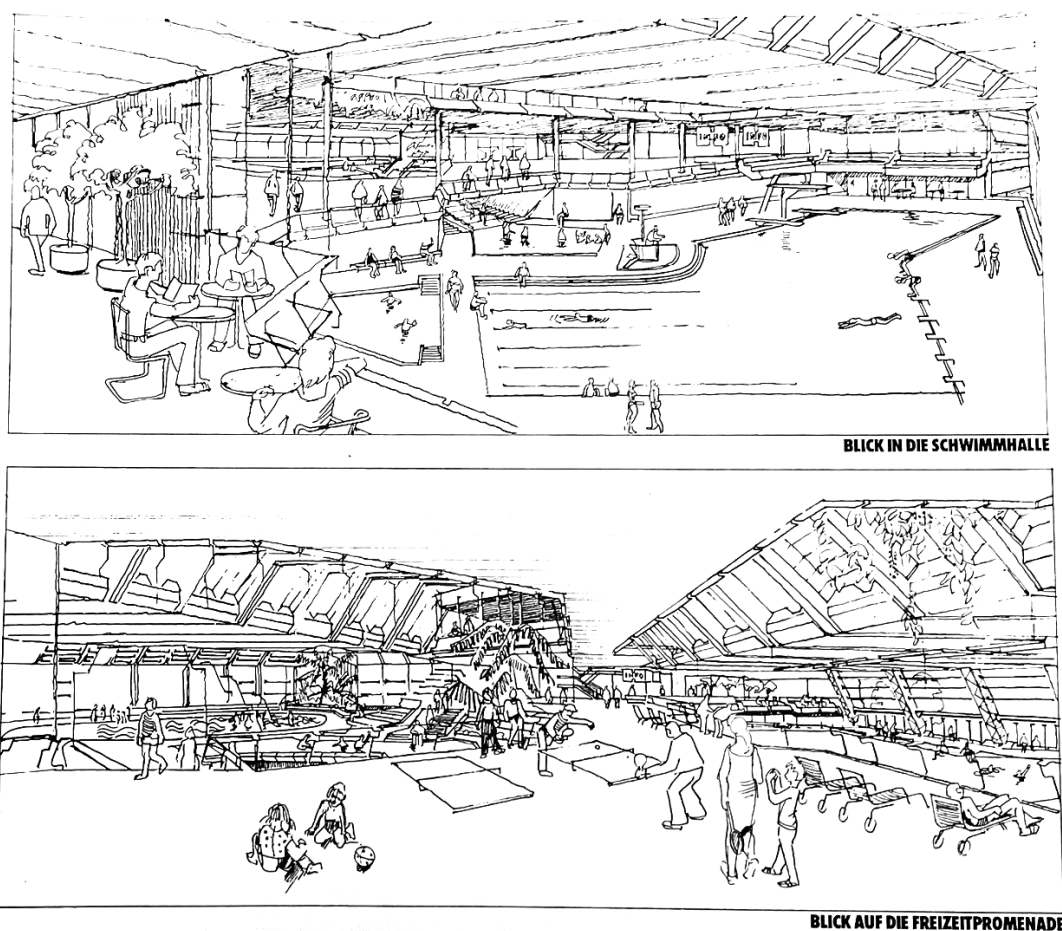


Figure 23: Sketch renders. Ministerium für Bauwesen. Sport- und Erholungszentrum Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR (Zeichnungen, Skizzen). [book album] DH1 33374. Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde

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Figure 24: Sketch render of the views across the pool hall. (Ibid)



Figure 25: Sketch Render of exterior streetfront and the transparent façade to the interior (Ibid)

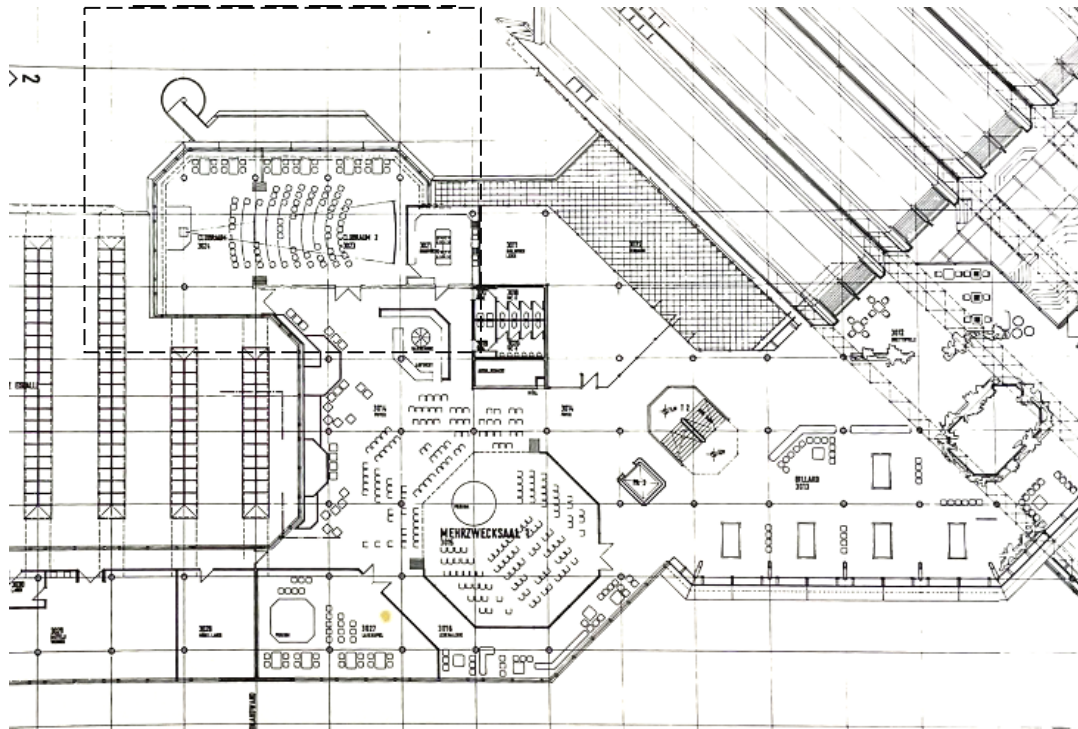


Figure 28: Portion of floor plan showing the multipurpose club rooms and open foyer spaces for events. (Ibid).

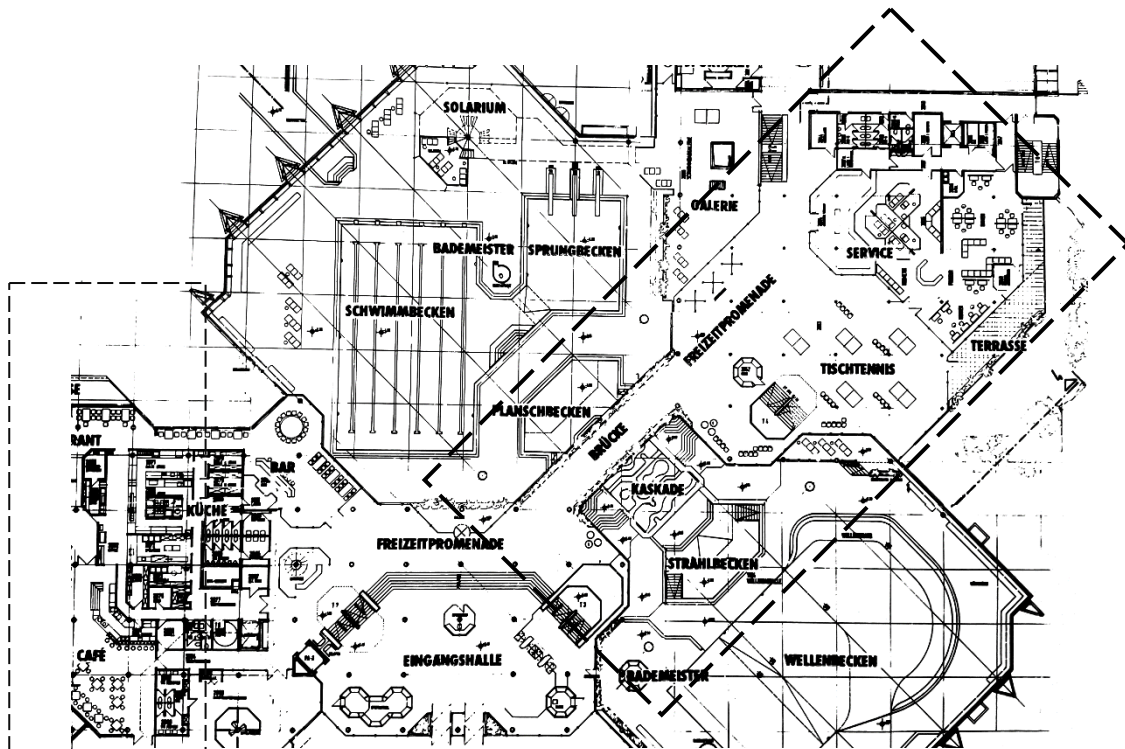


Figure 26: Portion of floor plan showing interconnectivity of spaces, with the Freizeitpromenade and the open kitchen cafe. (Ibid).

On top of the physical and education activities, the SEZ offered spaces for comfort and relaxation with its sunbathing lawns, seating areas, sauna, and solarium (Figure 31) (Figure 32)²³. The layout would allow parents to engage in cultural activities while their children play in the sports garden in sight. The proximity of the pool to the eating café meant that swimmers could enjoy their food and beverage in their swimwear at the bar servery. In themed design, it is common to design an intermediate “backstage” zone between the back- and front of house. In other words, there is a space for a staged and visible presentation of services (Figure 29). This is also seen in the SEZ, with intermediate zones between an enclosed back kitchen, open bar style servery, and the seating (Figure 34). These experiences offered in the building were enhanced by its visible architectural qualities of openness and fluidity, selective use of colour, lighting, transparency, and customised furnishings. The design of the interrelated functions and activities for visual display, the narrative of space, are relatable to the concept theming and staging experiences, and contributed to the establishment of this as centre for rest, relaxation, and leisure.

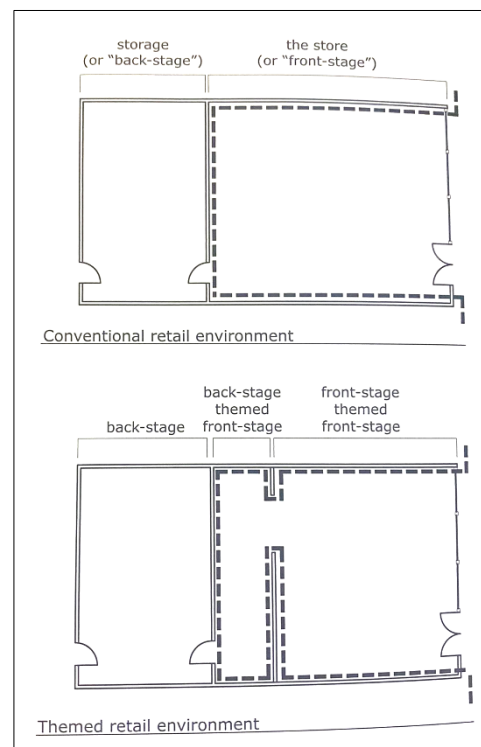


Figure 29: A space accessible to guests which appears to be behind-the-scenes or 'backstage' is carved out of the front-stage space, giving visitors the impression they have entered a restricted domain. (Lonsway, 2011)

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Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-Z0318-032 / Fotograf(in): Link, Hubert

Figure 30: Cascading pool and 'freizeitpromenade' above enhancing the open quality of the building. (1981). Link, H. [Photograph]. 183-Z0318-032. Bundesarchiv



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1987-0706-018 / Fotograf(in): Oberst, Klaus

Figure 31: Sunbathers outside the SEZ. (1987). Colonel Klaus. [Photograph]. Bild 183-1987-0706-018. Bundesarchiv



Figure 33: Swimmers eating ice cream at the bar. Scrapbook von Kurt Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ) [Photograph]. Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324. 20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0111-014 / Fotograf(in): Link, Hubert

Figure 34: "Berlin: Sports and Recreation Center (SEZ) - After extensive swimming and splashing around, the ice cream in the "Wellentreff" tastes particularly good, especially since the inside temperatures mean that it's cold and wet outside. Since the building opened in 1981, around 27 million visitors have come to the capital's sports palace. The swimming pool offers space for 900 swimmers in the wet element at the same time." (1990). Hubert, L. [Photograph]. Bild 183-1990-0111-014. Bundesarchiv



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1982-0202-026 / Fotograf(in): Reiche, Hartmut

Figure 32: "In the solarium of the swimming area, the "artificial sun" shines about seven times more brightly." (1982). Hartmut, R. Bild 183-1982-0202-026. Bundesarchiv



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1987-1122-005 / Fotograf(in): Uhlemann, Thomas

Figure 35: "Fairytale in the SEZ- Under this motto entertainment, shows and wonderful stories were offered in all "experience areas" in the sports and recreation center on 21.11.87. There was fun in and on the water in the large swimming pool." (1987). Uhlemann, T. [Photograph]. Bild 183-1987-1122-005. Bundesarchiv

2.3 Messages and place-promotion

“The symbiosis of the political and economic power, and the convergence of governmental and corporate interest have created new bureaucratic bodies based on an ensemble of normative procedures that have since organized the techniques for both the production and consumption of theme parks as well as other specialised spaces.” (Mitrasinovic, 2006). The GDR models shared this value of striving towards efficient leisure spaces and similarly saw its potential for making free time supplementary to work and productivity. For example, American theme park designers use mathematical modelling techniques such as the Entertainment Capacity Unit to improve the efficiency of park operations (Vogel, 1994 in Lonsway, 2011).²⁴ Lonsway stands by Butsch’s (1991) assertion that to understand leisure and the ‘every day’ is to understand how hegemony operates. “The architecture of the experience economy is the architecture of persuasion” (2009; p1) and “succeeds not because it inscribes controlling scripts onto spatial environments, but because it insinuates itself into the everyday narrative practices of people.” (p109). He also refers to Frenchman’s claim (2001, p. 61) that narrative space requires legibility and didacticism to convey messages about events, context, and associations. It is not about what spaces mean to people, but how they speak to convey messages. Lonsway sees this didacticism that Frenchman refers to as “a direct echo of

avocational education” (p. 118). An obvious example of a building or place’s ‘messages’ is what is communicated by place-promotional activities using media. Place promotional techniques are used to construct or de-construct stereotypes, or a re-imaging process, to showcase the growth of physical development spearheaded by flagship projects through media to achieve a conscious overall impression of harmony and balance (Gold, 1994). This is similar to the pamphlet (Figure 21) collected from the Ruhrgebiet park study, which conveyed a message of a landscape promising to overturn the symptoms of the post-industrial city. The Western contexts that Lonsway (2011), Butsch (1991), Frenchman (1991), and Gold (1994) describe are embedded in the idea of hegemony; where cultural leadership is achieved through views and meanings articulated through dialogical negotiations relations between the dominant class and its opposing groups and values (Gold, 1994). In the GDR regime of domination and censorship, cultural leadership articulated and manipulated the worldview of the masses. The GDR indeed sought to control the narrative of leisure and recreation in everyday life as playing a role in the progression of socialism. The SEZ was built for this exact reason, to enrich the sporting and cultural life in the capital and contribute to physical culture and sports gaining a firm place in the lives of its citizens (Gisske, 1979).²⁵

During the final years of the SEP’s leadership, the SEZ maintained a steady flow of visitors. The photographs give evidence that SEZ was enjoyed by many people who used the diverse facilities, attended its events, and participated in the socialist vision for leisure. In fact, in the first two months of its opening, one million visitors were counted, and according to Historian Dirk Moldt (2017), within five years almost the entire GDR population had visited the centre. This shows that it had a firm place in the leisure activities of many East Berlin people.

2.4 Promotion Of Entertainment And Leisure-Based Temporary Use Sector

After reunification, many properties previously funded by the SEP were sold off by the Senate of Berlin to private buyers. This was promulgated by economic crises and market speculations (Bernt, Grell, B., & Holm, A. (2014). The SEZ, like many other cultural institutions in East Berlin, would have attracted less visitors because many East Germans were more curious about cultural activities in the West and were assimilating to West German Culture and environmental factors (Lenhardt, 2018)²⁶; meaning that cultural institutions in the East became superfluous. With the liberation of East Berlin and the GDR from the socialist regime, and the subsequent privatisation of state-owned properties, the machinic network of social systems and narratives for everyday life designed by the East German practitioners were irrelevant to a free-market society.

The SEZ was sold by the Senate on the loosely defined clause that the new owner maintained the structure as is and reopens the pool to the public population. Its vast size and quantity of equipment made maintenance and cleaning difficult and thus was financially unsustainable and so for the last two decades has been partially operational on a temporary-use basis. Today it is nestled behind barricaded fences in the historic Volkspark Friedrichshain, with only pasted advertisement posters and peeling plaster visible from the outside. This socialist icon, a bulwark against the commodification of entertainment, is today mostly used as a literal billboard surface for commercials (Figure 38, Figure 39).

Gold and Ward (1994) discussed the promotional activities of cities facing post-industrial future as turning dereliction into heritage to construct an image of a creative city.²⁷ Many disused spaces in Berlin have been used for daily leisure and entertainment-based uses in the form of temporary occupations, or *Zwischcennutzung* as it was since coined. The manner of occupation or appropriation of disused spaces was historically a “grassroots” subculture and was since acknowledged by the Senate of Berlin as an asset and unique selling point for Berlin’s city marketing. The Department of Urban Development conducted a study that formed the basis of policy to coordinate temporary uses for leisure, sport, entertainment, cultural, ecological, and social purposes. mechanism exploiting subculture to enhance the city’s promotional image as a creative city.²⁸ This movement led to a proliferation of techno-clubs, inner city flea markets and beach bars since the 2000’s (Colomb, 2012). Figure 36 and Figure 37 show the beach bar addition on the SEZ property. Colomb’s view on the states policy on temporary use for entertainment spaces adds a retrospective insight to the themes discussed in this chapter which describes SEZ in terms of narratives, theming, and place promotion as overarching themes of this chapter. It reiterates the omniscience of staging spaces, promotional imagery, and the intervention of state authorities on the spatial practices of every day, in this case, and entertainment leisure activities, and its contingency in the contemporary city of Berlin.

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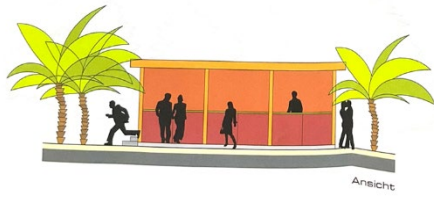


Figure 36: Design for the new beach bar on the SEZ property. (2000). BG – Nr – 490/00 Heffer. [Photograph] Stadtbezirkarchiv Friedrichshain Kreuzberg.



Figure 37: The abandoned beach bar on the SEZ property, 2023. Author's own

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Figure 38: Underwear commercial at the entrance of the SEZ (2000). BG – Nr – 490/00 Heffer. [Photograph] Stadtbezirkarchiv Friedrichshain Kreuzberg.



Figure 39: It is an ironic sight to see a McDonalds advert, an archetype of consumerism, now standing at the boarded up entrance of SEZ. 2023. [Photograph] Author's own.

Conclusion

The construction of the German Democratic Republic's social buildings as participatory palaces of pleasure, comfort, self-cultivation, and community was a smokescreen for the regime's oppressiveness and totalitarianism in the late 1970s. This thesis looks at SEZ through a lens of themed design and experience architecture as a conceptual framework to understand how hegemony and domination operates in public spaces. It also looks at the building visions of the latter years of the GDR and concludes that leisure, as an everyday practice, was institutionalised and spatialised to control the population; and the visual tricks and tools of narrative experience design had an illusory effect on people to participate in relaxation, rest, and leisure in a surveyed environment. Since reunification, the operation of leisure in some ways has transformed from totalitarian domination towards hegemonic negotiations between state and citizen of how in between spaces are used. Understanding the history of the city in terms of its promotional imagery, staging practices, and experience design sheds light on the underlying principles of city-marketing that have historically shaped the city landscape. The Sports- und Erholungszentrum is an example of the complexities and simultaneity of architecture: that the practices are multivalent and multidimensional even in a totalitarian regime. It also an unfolding example of the pervasiveness of liminality that comes with radical economic transformations. This study deconstructs, from a historical perspective, the underlying principles of the hybrid forms of public spaces that have emerged in urban landscapes.

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Notes

² For a detailed reading of this problem of Anglocentricism in academia see Latham, A. (2006); Cochrane, A. (2006); Bernt, Grell, B., & Holm, A. (2014). 9

³ See Pence, Zimmerman. (2012) for an article on the tensions and challenges for the transnational turn in German Studies. "In a very basic way, transnational approaches preserve the global scale of comparative history against the microscopic tendencies of some of the cultural studies of the 1990s - while embracing the attention to local peculiarity, thick description, and reading against the grain that are characteristic of cultural studies." (P 496)

⁵ Prof. Dr. Ing. Gisske, E., (1979). Bereich Außenwirtschaft und Internationale Zusammenarbeit: Abteilung Außenwirtschaft und Kooperation mit Sonderbeauftragten für Export bzw. Abteilung. Inlandexportvorhaben. [Gisske, E to Junker, W; Dr Schalk]. DH1 29235. Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde

⁶ Ministerium für Bauwesen, (1978). Bereich Schwerpunkt- und Sonderbauvorhaben: Sport- und Erholungszentrum in Berlin, 1977 – 1980. [book draft]. DH1/29130.. Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde

⁷ Ministerium für Bauwesen. (1979). *Bereich Schwerpunkt- und Sonderbauvorhaben: Sport- und Erholungszentrum in Berlin, 1977 – 1980*. [book draft]. DH1/29130.. Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde

⁸ Anders, W. (1980). *Scrapbook von Kurt Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ)* [written speech]. Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324. 20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin

⁹ Ministerium für Bauwesen. (1979). Sport- und Erholungszentrum Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR (Zeichnungen, Skizzen). [book album] DH1 33374.

¹⁰ Ministerium für Bauwesen, (1978). *Bereich Schwerpunkt- und Sonderbauvorhaben: Sport- und Erholungszentrum in Berlin, 1977 – 1980*. [book draft, photos, letters]. DH1/29130. Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde

¹¹ Cupers (2015) refers to the Stadhalle in Chemnitz and the Maison pour Tous of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines just outside of Paris. This project was government-funded and was also touted as a "participatory machine for making community" (p 464). Interestingly the morphological features of Stadhalle and Maison pour Tous were of a similar hexagonal grid structure to the SEZ and other cultural halls in the GDR.

¹² Wolfgang, A. (1980). *Scrapbook von Kurt Bothe: Sport- und Freizeitzentrum (SEZ)* [written speech]. Sammlung Heimatmuseum Friedrichshain. 2010/324. 20/38. FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin

¹³ In December 1972 the GDR was recognised by Sweden as its own independent economy, and during the 1970s they embraced concepts of socialism.

¹⁴ Ministerium für Bauwesen. (1977). Sport- und Erholungszentrum: Reiseberichte über die Besichtigung von Freizeitzentren im Ruhrgebiet und Gespräche mit westdeutschen Konzernen 1977. [correspondence]. DH 1 32912. Bundesarchive Berlin Lichterfelde.

¹⁵ They also realised the leisure centres in the Ruhr area were collaboratively constructed with other capitalist counties, and therefore that the Ruhr example imitates trends in other capitalist countries.

¹⁶ Ministerium für Bauwesen. (1977). Sport- und Erholungszentrum: Reiseberichte über die Besichtigung von Freizeitzentren im Ruhrgebiet und Gespräche mit westdeutschen Konzernen 1977. [correspondence]. DH 1 32912 Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde

¹⁷ The report stated that the committee had difficulty agreeing on the competitor's building concept because none fully corresponded to the socialist ideas and programme.

¹⁸ Staatssekretariat für Körperkultur und Sport. (1979). *Aufbau und Arbeitsweise des Sport- und Erholungszentrums Berlin (SEZ)*. [typescript]. DR 5/1583, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde

¹⁹ The records of the SEZ organisational committee applications show the resumes of applicants contained information on prior labour party affiliations and positions, as well as familial ties and estranged relatives who had disappeared to the West. Staatssekretariat für Körperkultur und Sport. (1979). *Aufbau und Arbeitsweise des Sport- und Erholungszentrums Berlin (SEZ)*. [typescript]. DR 5/1583, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde

²⁰Staatssekretariat für Körperkultur und Sport. (1979). *Aufbau und Arbeitsweise des Sport- und Erholungszentrums Berlin* (SEZ). [typescript]. DR 5/1583, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde

²¹ The stakeholders planned for a book about the SEZ to be published, which they intended to be similar to the book on Palast der Republik. Attached to the draft was a letter correspondence between Gisske and Junker where they discussed the omission of West Berlin and Stockholm next to the names of Klaus Tröger of Hochtief and Jan Ysörstedt of ABV Stockholm. On the contents page typed draft, their names were crossed out in pen.

²² Leninallee was renamed to Landsbergerallee after reunification, but I refer to the former in reference to this research being contained to the timeframe.

²³ Ministerium für Bauwesen. *Verfügung 2/79 v. 3. Jan. 1979 Errichtung eines SEZ in Berlin*; [correspondence] DH 1 32912

²⁴ Lonsway tests the technique in the theme park as an extreme narrative space containing the most legible and dense examples of his arguments.

²⁵ Prof. Dr. Ing. Gisske, E., (1979). Bereich Außenwirtschaft und Internationale Zusammenarbeit: Abteilung Außenwirtschaft und Kooperation mit Sonderbeauftragten für Export bzw. Abteilung. Inlandexportvorhaben. [Gisske, E to Junker, W; Dr Schalk]. DH1 29235. Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde

²⁶ Lenhardt's study tracks the change in East German's time use following the major political and institutional changes that came with the reunification of 1990. This provides an overview of empirical data which gives insight to the impacts that leisure time allocation has on the use of buildings. It also shows data that the average incomes of East Germans increased after the adoption of the West German labor unions. West German transfer payments were made to East Germany. Twenty percent of this was dedicated to labor market funds – in the form of unemployment insurance. However, in the following years productivity decreased in the former GDR and unemployment rates increased to 15% in 1992. But already in 1980 the productivity in East Germany was one third of its west German counterpart (despite a 1% unemployment rate), and by 1994 this had improved to 50% of the West German level, therefore productivity was increasing at a slower rate than wages. Lenhardt investigates internal effects (job loss) and external effects (assimilation to West German culture and environmental factors). The crucial finding of this paper for the purposes of my study is that East Germans decreased market and non-market related time-use towards additional leisure time after 1990. While this change was driven by market changes, it is largely effected by the novel exposure to environment and culture. The monthly wage of workers between 18 and 54 increased by 83% between 1990 and 1996, which poses a causal role between wages and time allocation.

²⁷ For creative city debates in Berlin see Jakob, D. (2010) *Constructing the creative neighborhood: Hopes and limitations of creative city policies in Berlin*. *City, Culture and Society* 4.1, 193-196. and Färber, A. (2008) *Flourishing cultural production in economic wasteland: three ways of making sense of a cultural economy in Berlin at the beginning of the twenty first century*. In Heßler, M. and Zimmermann, C. (eds.) *Creative Urban Milieus. Historical Perspectives on Culture, Economy, and the City*. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt a.M/New York.