Politics and Space: Creating the Ideal Citizen through Politics of Dwelling in Red Vienna and Cold War Berlin

by

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Abstract

To wield direct influence on the everyday lives of citizens, new political elites have often professed a profound interest in shaping the politics of dwelling. In the 1920s, Vienna’s Social Democrats built 400 communal housing blocks equipped with public gardens, theaters, libraries, kindergartens, and sports facilities, hoping that these facilities would serve as loci for “growing into socialism”. In the 1950s, housing construction in Berlin became a site of the Cold War. East Berlin’s social realist “workers palaces” on Stalinallee were meant to serve as an ideal flourishing ground for the “new socialist men and women”. In contrast, West Berlin’s modernist Hansa-Viertel was designed to showcase an ideal dwelling culture and an urban environment that would cultivate individuality.

This dissertation examines three historically situated and ideologically distinct responses to the housing question: social democracy in Red Vienna, state socialism in East Berlin, and liberal capitalism in West Berlin. It illuminates how political promises of a radical new beginning were translated into spatial arrangements—the private scale of the apartment and the urban scale of the city—as well as how citizens appropriated the social, political, and economic norms inherent to the new spaces they inhabited. More specifically, the following analyses demonstrate the fact that inherited social, technological, and economic practices often subvert political visions of a radically different future. This was the case with pedagogy in Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten, instrumental reason in the form of Taylorism and Fordism in East and West Berlin’s mass housing, and gender relations in Red Vienna’s and East Berlin’s politics of dwelling. At the same time, this dissertation examines counter-spaces that emerged from the dialectics between political promises and actual
socio-spatial realities, counter-spaces that both reflect critically on past hegemonic “politics of dwelling” and that foreshadow alternative political imaginations that are still relevant today. Of particular interest are counter-hegemonic practices of dwelling that embody possibilities of emancipation—of experiencing oneself as subject instead of object of social transformation, justice—of emphasizing considerations of equality and recognition, and radical democracy—of questioning power relations and of forming alliances among disadvantaged groups to transform everyday life.
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1 Introduction

“Every society produces its own space” (Lefebvre 1991, 31). Moreover, any society or “social existence” that aspires to be real and to be reckoned with needs to produce its own space. Otherwise it would constitute “a strange entity, a very peculiar kind of abstraction unable to escape from the ideological or even the ‘cultural’ realm. It would fall to the level of folklore and sooner or later disappear altogether, thereby immediately losing its identity, its denomination and its feeble degree of reality” (53).

One way in which modern “social existences”, such as political movements, parties, and states have sought to produce their own space and, by doing so, enhance their legitimacy, is through the provision of (mass) housing. Since the end of the nineteenth -century, the “politics of dwelling” gained social and political pertinence. As a result of modernization, most importantly nineteenth -century industrialization and urbanization, housing has been increasingly linked to larger socio-political concerns, such as the development of productive forces, the position of the individual vis-à-vis society, gender relations, the organization of social security systems and, more generally, the demarcation of political visions and ideologies. To this day, how people live is often less the result of their immediate preferences and needs, than of complex socio-political processes shaped by political and economic developments. These developments include the structure of the labor force, social productivity, family structures, legal frameworks, innovations in technology, urban planning and architecture (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 59).

The increasing pertinence of the housing question as a result of modernization has been going hand in hand with a quantitative and a qualitative consideration (85). The quantitative consideration is driven by the question of how to provide adequate housing for the masses; the qualitative consideration is motivated by the question of how to facilitate and foster socio-political norms by means of urban and architectural design, housing policies, and dwelling culture. In response to these concerns, two main political camps crystallized in the nineteenth -century: bourgeois-reformist (liberal) and socialist-revolutionary; political camps that, in various manifestations, have been influencing debates on housing reform well into the twentieth and twenty-first -century.
Depicted in broad strokes, the bourgeois-reformist camp considers the market to be the most efficient provider of housing and seeks to solve problems pertaining to housing by selective social, moral, and hygienic interventions. It stipulates the nuclear family and its spatial equivalents, the self-enclosed, private apartment and, especially in the twentieth-century, the single-family home as the right environment for human flourishing. And by doing so, it also normalizes gender roles. Men are expected to engage in productive labor away from home, whereas women take care of the reproductive labor at home and, as homemakers, are responsible for cushioning the “family cell” against manifestations of social alienation (88).

By contrast, the socialist camp considers the housing question not as one that could be solved by selective intervention, but as a structural problem integral to capitalist relations of production that can only be tackled by abolishing capitalism. Instead of individualizing inhabitants, socialists have envisioned varied built environments for socializing individuals and some of their activities; built environments often informed by the hope that they would help to bring about “new socialist men and women.” Whereas, for instance, bourgeois reformers consider the nuclear family unit as a humanizing antidote to the alienating forces of society, socialists consider the home and the domestic work carried out at home as integral to society at large and argue, to different degrees, for the socialization of reproductive labor and housing more generally (89).

In this dissertation I will be examining historical materializations of both, socialist and liberal responses to the housing question in the twentieth-century: municipal housing in Red Vienna (1919-1934) and public housing in East as well as West Berlin in the early decades of the Cold War (1949-1970s). Through a historico-critical analysis, I seek to answer three main questions:

1. To what extent are political visions and ideologies–Austro-Marxism in Vienna, socialism in East Germany, and liberal capitalism in West Germany–being translated into urban and domestic space through public mass housing?

2. How do the socio-political norms that inform Red Vienna’s and Cold War Germany’s housing policies and “politics of dwelling” shape the everyday life of people who live in publicly subsidized mass housing?

3. How do inhabitants respond to, challenge, and transform the norms inherent to the publicly provided, urban, spatial arrangements to accommodate their own needs and desires? And how do these responses “from below” reflect on hegemonic politics of space?
Two common denominators link Red Vienna, East Berlin, and West Berlin, denominators that motivated my choice for studying these cases and their respective “productions of space”. All three cities faced major politico-economic crises that went hand in hand with a dire shortage of housing. Moreover, in all three cities political promises of radical new beginnings were to be redeemed, but also monumentalized spatially in the form of mass housing.

In Austria, the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire put Austria in a position of having to reinvent itself politically and economically. The end of WWI also marked the beginning of reparation payments that left little resources for tackling social issues, such as housing. Vienna in particular was plagued by a housing crisis due to war returnees in search of accommodation, but also due to a deeply entrenched history of economic liberalism that had, over decades, provided only piecemeal responses to the housing question. In Germany, it was the Allies’ victory over fascism that pressured the country into political redefinition. Reparation payments were extracted, especially from the Soviet controlled parts of the country, which made the reconstruction of cities where large parts of the housing stock was destroyed particularly challenging.

The post-war political and economic crises in Austria and Germany were accompanied by an acute shortage of housing, but also by social hopes for, and political promises of breaking with the past to usher in a new era and to rejuvenate society by reinventing the built urban environment. In their larger efforts to build and expand their political hegemonies, Vienna’s Social Democrats, East Germany’s socialists, and West Germany’s liberals paid special attention to the (re-)construction of mass housing because it was desperately needed, but also because it constituted a promising way to re-shape everyday life along new socio-political norms.

In Vienna in the 1920s, the democratically elected and newly empowered Social Democratic Workers Party of Austria (SDAP) stipulated housing as a right, introduced rent control, highly progressive taxes, and built 400 Gemeindebauten [communal housing blocks] equipped with public gardens, theatres, libraries, kindergartens, and sport facilities. The Social Democrats influenced by the theory of Austro-Marxism, pursued a “slow” and “democratic revolution” into socialism and considered the creation of an adequate, socialist living environment as a crucial step toward preparing for and facilitating the emergence of “new, socialist men.” By appropriating the city for the proletariat, a historically marginalized class, the Austro-Marxists carved out prominent proletarian counter-spaces right in the middle of the city and thereby challenged the socio-spatial
hegemony of economic liberalism and the patterns of segregation it had created. Ultimately, the Austro-Marxists failed to achieve the goal of socialism. Their experiment in urban reform failed to achieve the radical, revolutionary goals they envisaged. Nevertheless, the legacy of Red Vienna lingers up to this day, as the Gemeindebauten still have an equalizing effect on the city’s socio-spatial make-up.

A closer look at Red Vienna reveals the possibility of creating an astounding legacy under extremely adverse socio-economic conditions. Yet, equally important, it casts light on the dialectics between political promise and redemption, and between political pre-visions and actual practices of re-visions. For instance, given the concrete goal of socialism, one would assume that the Austro-Marxists had a clear vision of how to build for the socialist men and women to be. Yet instead of pre-visioning a socialist city and dwelling culture, the Austro-Marxists predominantly re-vised existing building and dwelling traditions. Instead of prefiguring new forms ex novo, Red Vienna’s architects worked with existing building and planning traditions, interwove old and new and thereby creatively altered the former. The resulting “moderately modernist” aesthetic mirror the Austro-Marxists’ political strategy: “the realistic adaptation of all [...] day-to-day struggles to the particular conditions of time and place, and a constant orientation of all partial struggles to the great goal of the seizure of power by the working class, and thereby to the great inspiring goal of socialism” (Bauer 1927/1978, 47).

Gradualism undergirded Red Vienna’s politics and aesthetic; continuity shaped its propagated dwelling culture. Despite the goal of socialism, the floor plans of the “workers’ palaces” mirrored bourgeois instead of socialist norms, such as privacy, the singling out of living as an independent activity, the nuclear family model, and a gendered division between productive and reproductive labor. To be sure, apartments were complemented with numerous communal, social, recreational, and educational facilitates directly located inside the municipal housing blocks; facilities whose purpose was to foster people’s socialization into and preparation for socialism. Yet the Austro-Marxists’ approach to socialization itself was reflective of a continuation of bourgeois legacies. Not revolutionary practice, but pedagogy was to buttress the cause of socialism, that is, education that favored theoretical over practical knowledge and that entrusted the task of emancipation to the learned “expert” and distrusted the unlearned worker’s own capacities. However, bourgeois pedagogy’s counterpart, “revolutionary practice” would have been part of the Austro-Marxists’ horizon. The Wild Settlers, a self-help movement initially closely affiliated with the Social Democrats
built their own homes, produced their own food co-operatively, and practiced socialization and emancipation “from below.” The settlers appropriated space and skills for themselves and by doing so, experienced themselves as capable of effecting social change. Instead of establishing a new legacy of emancipation, as would have been appropriate given the pre-vision of democratic socialism, Red Vienna’s politics of dwelling mirrored the difficulty of building a society anew. Although progressive in many respects, a considerable part of Red Vienna’s “poetry”, to paraphrase Marx, was taken from the past instead of the future (Marx 1852/1978, 597).

Similar to Vienna after 1918, the rapid provision of mass housing was also a dire necessity in Berlin after 1945. And, at the same time, it was a prominent site for demarcating the emerging Cold War and its respective dialectics between political promises and actual material practices. In the early 1950s, the East German socialists embarked on building their version of “workers’ palaces”. Berlin’s Frankfurter Allee was renamed Stalinallee and became the site of a showcase housing project. In line with the doctrine of socialist realism, workers’ housing was to be “national in its form”, i.e., steeped in architectural traditions workers would recognize as their own, and “democratic in its content”, i.e., committed to the principle of equal access to housing for everyone. Similar to municipal housing in Red Vienna, East German public housing was also expected to comprise numerous communal and social facilities to foster the inhabitants’ socialization.

It did not take long until West Germany responded with its showcase housing project. In the mid-1950s, West Berlin’s Hansa-Quarter was rebuilt as part of an international building exhibition, the Interbau 1957. In contrast to the Stalinallee, the Hansa-Quarter was built to embody a commitment to modernist architectural and planning principles, most importantly decentralization, prefabrication, and functionalism. The specific dwelling culture celebrated at the Interbau-exhibit was meant to be a clear antidote to socialism: the emphasis was not on socialization, but on individualization. Privacy and the nuclear family ranked high, as did the goal of re-reconciling man and nature—a reconciliation that would take the form of decentralized city landscapes in defiance of the socialists’ idealization of urban density.

Both the Karl-Marx-Allee and the Hansa-Quarter are historical spatial relics that serve as an entry point into understanding how different “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980, 131) had been trying to use space to entrench their respective ideal(ized) visions of social life. Ultimately, however, neither the East German nor the West German regime replicated their respective showcase housing
projects on a large scale, since they were too cost-intensive for mass-production. Ironically, the actual mass housing produced on both sides of the Wall from the mid-1950s onwards was strikingly similar concerning form. Nikita Khrushchev’s dictum of building housing “better, faster, and cheaper” led to a socialist re-orientation toward modernism and its underpinning logics of industrialization, prefabrication, and functionalism that were already deeply anchored in the post-WWII capitalist “West.”

In East Germany, this re-orientation ushered in the grand-scale production of Plattenbauten [concrete slab buildings], a building type which socialism is often erroneously equated with tout court. While similar in architectural form, mass housing in East and West Germany was different regarding scale and socio-political content. Since East Germany centralized its building industry, the Platte and its few variants emerged as the dominant form of mass housing. In West Germany, by contrast, the building industry remained decentralized, which led to a greater variety of building types. From a socio-political perspective, East Germany’s Platte realized the socialist promise of egalitarianism and created equal housing for equal people, whereas in West Germany mass housing gradually became a marker for class difference. The promise of democracy remained, in the realm of housing, unfulfilled on both sides of the Wall. The top-down administration of mass housing largely side-stepped peoples’ desire for co-determining their built environment. Moreover, the imperative of standardization to ensure efficient industrial-technological production outpaced the accommodation of tenants’ needs. This is true of East German but also West German mass housing. Despite the fact that West Germany embraced individuality as a core social and political norm, concerning social housing, “minimal apartments” for predefined “minimal needs” were the norm, a norm that left little room for the individual appropriation of space.

Cold War housing policies on both sides of the Wall ultimately ushered in economic and techno-scientific imperatives to produce highly standardized housing for the masses as quickly and cheaply as possible. Qualitative considerations were increasingly supplanted by quantitative ones. The aesthetic of modernism was implemented, yet it was, to a large extent, deprived of the emancipatory egalitarian and democratic aspirations that were undergirding it in the 1920s. Emancipatory and democratic aspirations were, however, part of both “Germanies’” horizon. Before the onset of the Cold War, the desire to transform society radically by transforming its environment was still coupled with the idea that for human progress to be possible, technology needs to be thoroughly reconciled with aesthetics and politics. After 1945, this vision was still embraced by Hans
Scharoun and his Planning Collective whom the Soviets initially entrusted with the task to work out a joint vision for Berlin’s reconstruction, a decision the Western Allies approved. Although Scharoun and his Collective’s Plan were ultimately rejected, I will examine it in more detail for two reasons: because it stands out as an alternative to the ultimate outpacing of human considerations by techno-scientific imperatives, and because the Collective Plan in conjunction with its ultimate dismissal shows that an aesthetic can be appropriated for emancipatory, as much as for dominating purposes.

Scharoun’s pre-Cold War vision of a city landscape constituted an architectural alternative to the respective paths of reconstruction East and West Germany would later choose. Architects envisioned counter-spaces, and so did inhabitants. In East Germany, a common and popular escape from the Platte was the allotment garden, a place that allowed for particularization and “fashioning of a shell for oneself” (Benjamin 2002, I4,5) detached from the diktats of instrumentality and “total administration” (Garcelon 1997, 322). In West Germany, grassroots democratic initiatives emerged against the abstracting logic implicit to state-enforced urbanism. At the level of dwelling, alternative forms of co-habitation that challenged the hegemony of bourgeois norms were experimented with. One example is communes whose purpose was not particularization, but socialization in defiance of the normalized nuclear family model and traditional gender roles. A closer look at popular counter-spaces reveals that, ironically, both “regimes of truth” produced, to a certain extent, the opposite of some of the norms they had sought to naturalize through politics of dwelling.

Against this backdrop, a key question needs to be asked: why is it worthwhile to study the political production of space in a historico-critical perspective, in particular, as could be argued, in a post-ideological age? As a matter of fact, Austro-Marxism is long past and so is the Cold War. To be sure, ideology qua explicit doctrine, qua articulated convictions about the nature of man, society and the universe and qua material existence in the form of institutions, rituals, and practices that give body to such doctrines seems to have lost traction. What seems to have also lost traction are conceptions of ideology as a homogeneous mechanism in place to guarantee social reproduction by ensuring the individuals’ compliance to a set of beliefs. Yet, as Slavoj Zizek argues, this does not yet mean that we live in a post-ideological age. “To follow”, as Zizek further explains,

“only utilitarian and/or hedonistic motivations – strictu sensu remains an ideological attitude: it involves a series of ideological presuppositions (on the relationship between
’values’ and ‘real life’, on personal freedom, etc.) that are necessary for the reproduction of existing social relations” (Zizek 1998/2008, 15).

Today many public institutions, such as municipalities and states, have withdrawn from investing in the housing sector. They typically also abstain from publicly discussing norms of citizenship in conjunction with “politics of dwelling.” However, these circumstances do not make housing any less ideological, if ideology is understood, as Zizek proposes, in a broader sense—a concept I will return to in the next paragraph. Instead, what such a withdrawal signifies is the de-politicization of the housing question. Yet depoliticization itself pertains to the reproduction of social relations, social relations in which the market, protected by political and legal frameworks, has been heaved into the position to shape norms of dwelling. In today’s post-industrial cities, including Vienna and Berlin, real estate has become (certainly to varying degrees) a site dominated by commodification and, inevitably, also a site of commodity fetishism and the “metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” the latter abounds to (Marx 1887, I, IV). Similar to the compliance to political norms, the compliance to economic imperatives, however depoliticized they might be, depends on social reproduction by means of everyday practices. Ideally, these practices are profoundly naturalized, if their social reproduction is to be secured and stable.

The larger goal of this dissertation on space and politics is to estrange us from the self-evidence of what has become accepted as status quo by opening up a historical perspective, one that also includes an account of the possible. In Benjaminian terms: This thesis pursues the innervation of human imagination by pointing to the ambiguity of space and spatial practices and by disclosing the possible in the past and present, thereby challenging “natural history” (Buck-Morss 1991, 68).

More concretely, the purpose of analyzing Red Vienna’s, East Germany’s, and West Germany’s responses to the housing question is neither to defend one against the other nor to excavate a “blueprint” for future action from past practices. Instead, the subsequent analyses seek to

(1) throw into relief past practices in Red Vienna and East Germany that differ from and/or reflect critically on today’s predominantly market-based approach to housing;

(2) trace the dominance of liberal capitalist norms after 1945 by taking a closer look at a micro-example of their emergence, the housing policies in post-WWII West Germany;

(3) delineate the contingency that is implicit to political practice (even under conditions of authoritarianism), a contingency or indeterminacy that results from differences between
vision and reality, normative ideals and historical circumstances, implementations from above and actual appropriations from below, the promise of a radically new beginning and the facticity of entanglement with the past.

Against this backdrop, what are the theses that underpin my analysis? In a nutshell, they are as follows:

(1) that urban spaces are never pre-given containers into which given human activities and built forms are simply interjected but, instead, they are always ideologically or politically constructed;

(2) that understanding the nature and effects of this construction and of how constructed limits are challenged requires attention to the lived experiences of individuals;

(3) that constructed urban spaces crucially shape the values, aspirations, and views of the possible on the part of individuals, but that, at the same time, individuals can and do challenge these constructions and sometimes even successfully transcend them;

(4) that existing social, technological, and economic imperatives and norms often subvert visions and promises of a radically different future;

(5) and that, nonetheless, the social, but also the technological and economic can never completely supplant or circumvent ideology.

The focus of this dissertation is to interrogate actual spatial practices. While predominantly empirical, my pursuit of a historical-critical analysis of space and politics is inspired by critical theorists, most importantly Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Walter Benjamin, but also Slavoj Zizek, Terry Eagleton, and Marshall Berman. Special emphasis is to be put on “inspired by” because I do not adopt Lefebvre’s, Foucault’s, or Benjamin’s take on space and politics/power as a model or blueprint for my own analyses. Instead, their theoretical contributions help me frame, in conceptual terms, some of the findings of my empirical work: the production of space, ideology, lived experience, disciplinary and bio-political-power, the relevance of the urban, and the relationship between history and present.
1.1 Space, Ideologies, and Everyday Life

“Subjects do not live by words alone, but are situated in a space in which they must either recognize themselves or loose themselves, a space which they must both enjoy and modify. In order to accede to this space, individuals [...] who are, paradoxically already within it, must pass a test” (Lefebvre 1991, 35).

Similar to language, space precedes and conditions us as subjects. To successfully act within and navigate our built environment, we have to decipher and appropriate its implicit codes and clues; we must “pass a test” and typically do so without second-guessing the “test criteria,” such as behaving differently in public than in private or seeking out places whose image has been shaped positively and avoiding those that have been discredited. The habits and rituals that inform everyday spatial practices produce and reproduce social norms, the signification of political power, and even ideology. Althusser elaborated on the materiality of ideology, suggesting that the primary focus of ideological production is less on knowing than on doing (Althusser 1994, 125ff). Everyday spatial practices are part of “doing ideology,” of normalizing perceptions of and behavior in a given environment. Pascal brings to the fore the relative lead of practice over knowledge regarding faith, a lead Althusser extends to ideology: “kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe” (127). Similarly, if, for instance, privacy or the nuclear family model is stipulated as a norm by housing policies, entrenched in the built environment by architecture, and “lived” on an everyday basis by tenants, chances are that this norm will be perceived as “natural” over time.

While space and its underlying norms shape and condition the subject’s perception, action, competence, performance or presence, the subject’s perception, action, competence, performance or presence simultaneously inform and condition space. Hence, what we are dealing with is a dual conditioning of space: As a materialization of social reality, space produces (and reproduces) social relations; at the same time, space itself is produced by social relations. A crucial caveat for Lefebvre is that although subjects are conditioning and being conditioned by space, they can also negate, transcend and challenge the norms implicit to the built environment (Lefebvre 1991, 57). Space qua materialized social reality always retains a degree of uncontrollable autonomy. This is to say that the significations of and inscriptions in space, regardless of how adamantly they are being entrenched and how “natural” they might have become, are always prone to be challenged and subverted. People in need of housing might deliberately disregard the liberal norm of private property and appropriate land or buildings illegally, and thereby (re-)insert themselves into an urban and social
fabric from which they had been excluded. Because there always remains a gap between knowledge and its objectification, there also always remains a gap between space as social reality and its signification (27). It is this gap between production and objectification (or normalization), from within which new, differential spaces emerge that challenge, transform, and even constitute alternatives to hegemonic space.

Space’s double role as a producer and product of social relations has been recognized as a powerful political tool. It has been appropriated by and instrumental to political power for purposes of representation, for instance, in the form of monuments; for purposes of discipline by using space to influence and control social behavior; and for purposes of emancipation by establishing counter spaces that defy, challenge or even transform hegemonic significations and usages of space.

The historical contexts I am studying, Red Vienna and Cold War Berlin, allow not only the study of how social space, but, more specifically, how political and even ideological space is produced. Acknowledging that the term ideology is a difficult and contested one, a term that could lend itself to conceptual scrutiny that would exceed the scope of this dissertation, I nonetheless employ the notion, since there is something particular about the term ideology that does not pertain to the more neutral notions of the social, political, and cultural. As mentioned above, ideology has to be thought together with lived reality. Therefore, the term can neither be reduced to illusory figments of the imagination, nor to mere propositions about the world, or the politically or epistemologically more neutral notion of culture. As a lived reality or practice, ideology is informed by political conflicts and political power struggles that involve the production of “signs and processes of political power” [my emphasis]. As such, as Terry Eagleton underlines, ideology is not coextensive with the general field of ‘culture’, but lights up this field from a particular angle” [emphasis added] (Eagleton 2007, 28-29).

The twentieth-century in particular was replete with attempts to light up the general field of culture or, as I would add, society from the particular angle of political power. The Austro-Marxists sought to transform culture and society to usher in socialism by democratic means. The East German socialists tried the impossible and sought to re-create society according to a plan. And West German liberals were committed to individual freedom and promoted it through a free market. What unites the three political projects is the modern desire to begin anew—to break with the past by radically transforming the present. As Marshall Berman explains, being modern means being confronted with
a paradox: We find ourselves “in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are” (Berman 1988, 15).

The desire to invent the world anew is a double-edged sword. Its effects are salutary if it propels the critical questioning of the status quo and a pre-visioning of alternative social constellations as long as the redemption of these pre-visions remains open to and respectful of difference and contingency. Conversely, its effects are detrimental if it leads to illusions of total control, social engineering or to a one-sided focus of techno-scientific rationality. Both effects, salutary and detrimental, shaped Red Vienna’s, East Germany’s, and West Germany’s pursuit of a new beginning, which is revealed by a closer look at not only the macro- but also the micro-political level, of which housing and politics of dwelling are a part. At the macro-level the Austro-Marxist and East German socialists envisioned a world beyond capitalism. As regards the vision’s redemption, their views differed: The Austro-Marxists counted on an ever-growing democratic movement, whereas the East German socialists heaved the authoritarian state into the position of redeeming socialism. West Germany’s vision was that of a free society and for such a society to boost its social legitimacy, the new, West German state was not to be based on historic right nor sovereignty, but on the free market. These three visions and desires for a radical new beginning shaped micro-politics, including housing policies and politics of dwelling.

For instance, the Austro-Marxists were committed to democracy and egalitarianism in principle. However, at the micro-political level of municipal housing, control, disciplining, and social engineering were employed to secure allegiance to the grand goal of democratic socialism. Strict house rules, the supervision of communal places by care takers, random visits of families by welfare workers, and the public emphasis on caring for the “body of the people” by “adequate” sexual reproduction or hygiene were the order of the day.

Similarly, East German socialists embraced socialist humanism. They, contradictorily, disregarded democracy, yet nonetheless sought to deepen the regime’s social legitimacy by, for instance, providing equal housing for equal people on a large scale. For this purpose, industrialization, prefabrication and standardization were developed to such an extent that qualitative considerations were ultimately supplanted by quantitative considerations. This led to urban forms that mirrored the radius of cranes rather than people’s needs and desires regarding housing.
Finally, in West Germany a new society was to emerge, one in which individual freedom was written large. In contrast to East Germany, in West Germany the market, not the state, was to secure the provision of housing in the long haul. Tenants who could not afford housing on the free market had to rely on social housing. Yet despite West Germany’s commitment to freedom and individuality in principle, the floor plans of social housing were, similar to the floor plans in East German mass housing, standardized to such an extent that individual appropriations of and self-expression through dwelling were hardly possible.

### 1.2 Lived Experience: Spatialized Rationalities and Counter-Spaces

To understand the nature and the effects of the ideological production of space and of how constructed limits are challenged requires attention to concrete practices and lived experiences of individuals. To come to such an understanding, social space ought to be the anchor point of analyses, or, as Lefebvre explains: “from the point of view of knowing [connaissance], social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society” (Lefebvre 1991, 31). For Lefebvre, la connaissance constitutes the antidote to le savoir, that is, abstract, reductive knowledge that pertains to, for instance, statist, urbanist or technocratic visions of enclosing the world (or the city) in a pre-devised system. By contrast, la connaissance neither presupposes abstract conceptual models nor aims to create them. Instead, it seeks to critique reality and knowledge by taking the “messiness” of social reality and social space as its starting point and aims to open up horizons that reflect critically on rationalistic, reductive, or disciplinary knowledge (Schmid 2005, 102; Lefebvre 1991, 404-405).

A similar but more concrete approach to lived experience and practice is adopted by Foucault. Without denying major differences between Lefebvre and Foucault, Foucault also anchors his analyses in practice and, more consistently than Lefebvre¹, Foucault decides against taking conceptual presuppositions or—as he puts it—universals as the starting point for a critical analysis. “Instead of deducing concrete phenomena from universals, or instead of starting with universals as an obligatory grid of intelligibility for certain concrete practices, I would like to start with these concrete practices and, as it were, pass these universals through the grid of these practices” (Foucault, 2008, 3).

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¹ Lefebvre sometimes takes the state as a quasi-given, for instance in his book The Production of Space (1991).
Some of the “concrete practices” Foucault scrutinizes concern the relationship between body and discipline as well as body and bio-politics. Disciplinary power, as Foucault explains, focuses on the individual body. It organizes the spatial distribution of individual bodies, their separation, alignment, serialization, and surveillance; it controls bodies for the sake of, for instance, increased productivity; and it economizes and rationalizes by means of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, and reports (Foucault, 2003a, 242). By contrast, bio-political power, while also applied to the body, focuses on the multiplicity of men. It is concerned with events that can occur in a living mass, such as epidemics, and tries to predict the probability of those events or at least to compensate for their effects (249).

Both forms of power can be observed in mass housing. Disciplinary power operates in and through space by predefining dwelling functions and bodily needs, such as eating, sleeping, and hygiene, and by allocating these functions and needs to certain spaces. For example, historically, working class kitchens were designed as live-in kitchens, i.e., kitchens that served the purposes of meal preparation and socialization. However, after 1945 modern, functional kitchens became the norm and were replicated on a large scale. These kitchens were tailored to the function of meal preparation only, and thereby extended the logics of the factory–rationality, efficiency, and discipline–to the kitchen. In contrast to the factory, where labor that had previously been carried out at home was socialized, the factory-like set up of the kitchen not only isolated instead of socialized women, but also “naturalized” them as the responsible ones for reproductive labor. This naturalization itself found its way into the kitchen. As I will show in the context of East German and West German housing policies, through industrial norms, standards, and types appliances and furniture were tailored to the size of “average women”.

In addition, bio-politics, power that affects the body in conjunction with considerations about the well-being of the population at large, has found its way into housing policies and politics of dwelling more generally. In all three cases I am studying, allocation policies were designed in such a way that preference was given to accommodating married couples and young families. Thus, for selecting future tenants, the criteria of need ranked second to the criteria of reproduction. A heightened concern for the “reproduction of the body of the people” informed medical and counseling facilities located in Red Vienna’s municipal housing blocks, facilities whose purpose was to instruct workers, women in particular, on issues of hygiene, procreation, and child rearing.
Against this backdrop, what is to be gained from Lefebvre’s *connaissance*, from knowledge that contends with the messiness of reality instead of abstracting from it, or, from Foucault’s “passing of universals through the grid of practices”, including micro-political ones affecting the body? For the context of this dissertation, three key insights are to be obtained. First, it allows us to see practices that are characteristic of a specific ideological production of space, of the lightening up of the field of society from a specific, political angle. Second, it illuminates practices and rationalities that cut across given regimes of truth, *despite* their proclaimed distinctness, such as Taylorism, the normalization of bourgeois dwelling culture or the nuclear family. Third, it allows us to see divergences from attempted hegemonizations, such as counter-spaces and practices that challenge dominant, spatialized norms. In short, while space is often ideologically produced, there are, at the same time, always limits to such a production, limits that result from the fact that social reality, also in its materialized form, retains a degree of uncontrollability and social contingency.

Lefebvre in particular accentuates the point of resistance and subversion, as has been mentioned above in the context of the production of space and will be developed below in the context of his conception of the urban. Foucault, by contrast, is better known for mapping out the details of disciplinary and bio-political micro-power than for framing critical, creative, or cunning circumventions of power. But, one could ask, is it not thinkable that some of the Panopticon’s inmates put up sheets to protect themselves against and to express disagreement with the exertion of the “present-absent” power over their body and mind? When Foucault acknowledges the possibility of critique and resistance, he describes it in spatial terms. There exists, he argues, spaces, that are in rapport with other spaces yet contradict them; “heterotopic spaces” that are

“real and effective spaces which are outlines in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter-arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned [...] (Foucault, 1997, 352).”

Red Vienna’s heterotopic space was the Wild Settlements. Whereas the Social Democrats appropriated space for workers and sought to educate them into socialism by means of, among others, politics of dwelling, the Wild Settlers, a self-help movement, appropriated space for themselves, provided for themselves by means of subsistence farming, and built their houses co-
operatively. By doing so, they also “built” skills for self-emancipation, emancipation through radical democratic practices instead of, as pursued by the Social Democrats, pedagogy. Heterotopic spaces also emerged in East and West Germany. In defiance of the abstraction implicit in socialist mass housing, allotment gardening emerged as one of the favorite past times of East Germans and with it, emerged make-shift homes and the revival of activities industrialization had devalued, such as craftsmanship, gardening, and farming. On a social scale, allotment gardens were popular places for encounters the Plattenbau did not provide space for, such as get-togethers of the extended family in defiance of the normalized nuclear family inscribed into floor plans and allocation policies. In West Germany, heterotopic spaces emerged that called into question the dominant housing policies and the socio-political norms that underpinned them. This took the form of grassroots democratic initiatives that called into question urban planning and architectural practices, the way the state supported tenants, the anti-democratic treatment of tenants by housing corporations, the lack of social and communal facilities. What also emerged were communes and with them, a critique of the hegemonized nuclear family model or the “naturalization” of gender roles.

1.3 The Urban: A Locus of Mediation

Why are urban spaces of particular interest for understanding the production of space and, more generally, the production and reproduction of society? In contrast to Marx, Lefebvre conceives of actual spaces of life, such as the city, not merely as super-structural phenomena of a given mode of production, but as spaces that lend themselves to potentially radical social transformations. To be certain, Marx’s focus on the economic also plays a role in Lefebvre’s analyses of space, yet he rejects the Marxian base-superstructure model. Whereas Marx focused on historical periods and class relations, as Frank Cunningham explains, Lefebvre directs his attention to what he thinks Marx ignored: the actual places and spaces of life, which—beginning with the industrial revolution—became mainly urban places. Lefebvre was interested in cities because the great majority of the world’s population lives in cities. Moreover, Lefebvre was intrigued by the complexity, dynamism, and ambiguity of urban spaces, spaces replete with possible futures to be acknowledged and actively pursued (Cunningham 2010, 274).

How is “the urban” to be understood then? According to Lefebvre, the urban is to be considered as the result of interconnected and respectively mediated levels, levels that shape everyday life: the global (G), the mixed (M), and the private (P). The global is the most general and abstract level, the
level of institutions, such as the state or higher-level entities that pursue political strategies (Lefebvre 2003, 78-79). The private, by contrast, is the seemingly unimportant level of dwellings, such as apartment buildings, private homes, and makeshift homes. Ideally, according to Lefebvre, level P is the level of “habiting”, a place where not only basic human needs, such as eating, sleeping, and reproduction, are fulfilled but also where relationships to the possible, imaginary, and spontaneous are entertained and lived. In reality, however, the loci of “habiting” have increasingly been replaced by “habitats”, that is, places where dwelling has been reduced to satisfying basic human functions, a development whose point of origin Lefebvre attributes to industrialization. Level M, finally, is the connecting level: the level of the city, of the urban ensemble, which mediates between the global and the private. Level M “holds some relationship to the site (the immediate surroundings) and the situation (distant surrounding, global conditions)”[ and] “provides the characteristic unity of the social ‘real’” (80-81).

Lefebvre’s account of the urban is relevant for my own analysis in so far as it casts into a conceptual relief how dwelling (the private) is never independent of “the global”, a term under which I subsume not only the state, but also social movements, such as the Austrian workers movement, and economic realities, such as the market. It also illuminates how, under conditions of continuous urbanization, it is predominantly the city, that mediates the two levels. For instance, in Red Vienna, “workers palaces” emerged in the middle of a city where workers had been marginalized. By building housing for the proletariat, the Social Democrats not only created housing, but also appropriated the city, the cultural, economic, and political center, and thereby re-wrote and challenged some of the city’s underlying rationalities, such as economic liberalism. Put differently, in the modern city, the private of the dwelling has the potential to contest the global and vice-versa. Finally, it is Lefebvre’s account of the urban as mediator and mediated, that helps us to conceptualize this possibility.

1.4 Space and Time

Urban spaces are not only interesting from the perspective of social mediation, but also from that of historic sedimentation of practices—a perspective underscored by Benjamin. Similar to Lefebvre, Benjamin also challenges Marx’s base-superstructure by putting urban material culture and urban experience center stage in his Arcades Project. Benjamin’s focus on the urban is driven by his
interest in “sedimented temporal conditions and relations” that stand at the conjunction of past and present, present and future, past and future (Roberts 2006, 62).

Benjamin’s particular interest was to discover “the crystal of the total event in the analysis of the small, particular moments” (Buck-Morss 1991, 70). For this to be possible, philosophical construction is needed. “In fragmentary images,” or as I would add, social artifacts, including housing, “the essences appear concretely, but it is the philosophical construction that, even if invisible, gives support and coherence to the whole” (77). Benjamin’s Arcades Project is replete with philosophically constructed total events whose anchor is firmly rooted in transient objects and forms of nineteenth-century urban culture, in “Ur-phenomena” of the present, such as the Paris Arcades.

At the time Benjamin explored the Paris Arcades, they were filled with second hand shops and marginal businesses. Upon their emergence, however, they were luxurious, iron and glass constructed cathedrals of commodity display and fetishism, and thus a micro-cosmos of capitalist relations of production. Even in their deteriorated state, the Arcades were not mere relics of a past long gone, but also a prefiguration of modern capitalist relations of production and its modern, spatial materialization, the shopping mall. Yet key to Benjamin’s historical constructions is not only the tracing of points of emergence of present social relations, but—equally important—the blasting of the “time of now” out of the continuum of history by pointing to unredeemed alternative histories, desires, and utopias (Benjamin 1968/2007, 261). In Benjamin’s analysis, one such alternative was Fourier’s phalanxes, the homes of a socialist egalitarian community. Inspired by the new technologies of iron and glass construction, Fourier based his architectural vision of the phalanxes on the Paris Arcades. In the case of the Arcades, glass and iron were used to create a city of luxurious and ostentatious consumption, a transitory city that was presented as the pinnacle of human fulfillment. In the case of Fourier’s phalanxes, by contrast, new technologies, such as glass and iron, were not meant to frame a fleeting city of displayed commodities in need of continuous re-invention, but a permanent city, a city in which the consumption of the fruits of production was the right of all instead of the privilege of the few.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of Benjamin’s historico-critical examinations of material culture can be summarized as follows:
“under the dominance of the ‘reproduction of the immediate’, historical materialism’s responsibility is always to the reiterative reworking of the past in the alienated present, insofar as the superseded futures of the past are embedded in the possibility of the revolutionary rupture of the present. Our experience of the past is the constant renewal of the ‘possible’ though the gateway of the ‘after’, rather than a dead continuum haunted by the dream of irrevocable difference” (Roberts 2006, 62).

By illuminating the interplay between space and politics through the lens of mass housing in a *historico-critical* perspective, my dissertation traces the emergence of urban and architectural forms that are still with us and contextualizes them within larger, often competing, political aspirations and promises. Moreover, it seeks to frame those “superseded futures of the past” that still bear the possibility of an emancipatory rupture of the present, most importantly the de-commodification of housing and marginal, yet existent experiments with radical democracy.
2 “Little Red Brick, Build the New World”: Public Housing and Socialist Counter-Culture in Red Vienna (1919-1934)

“Which type of man should we educate?” asked Otto Bauer, the leader of the SDAP and main theorist of Austro-Marxism, in a speech delivered to Viennese workers in 1928.

“[a] type of man who grows up in overcrowded apartments where everyone sleeps next to someone else, where everyone wishes to escape each other, where everyone is happy to not see others anymore, as they are so tightly locked up together; men who spend their leisure in inns, numbing themselves with beer and wine [...], men whose potential and natural talents are poisoned and destroyed by alcohol; or do we want to educate a type of man, who flourishes in sunlight and air, a type who perfects himself in tranquility which is essential to intellectual maturing, yet unavailable in overcrowded apartments; a type of man who flourishes whenever the objective condition for intellectual development and growth is provided, that is, a place that is no longer a mere bedding, but a real dwelling?” [my translation] (Bauer 1929/1976, 608)

Bauer’s question to the workers was rhetorical. The decision to educate and thus to provide for the second type of men, men who would flourish physically and intellectually, was made as early as in 1919, the year Vienna became the first European socialist metropolis. Instead of regarding access to decent housing as a privilege, the Social Democrats stipulated housing as a right (Bauer 1919/1976, 118-119).

Within a decade, 382 Gemeindebauten [municipal housing blocks] were constructed, equipped with communal facilities, such as kindergartens, libraries, theaters, cooperative stores, public gardens, sports facilities, social clubs, or polyclinics. Neue Menschen [New Men] (M. Adler, 1924) were expected to flourish in the new housing complexes, men and women surmised to actualize the promise of socialism. Whereas the private space of the apartments was to serve workers as loci for “self-perfection in tranquility”, the communal spaces of the housing complexes were meant to socialize them. Already under conditions of capitalism², the SDAP intended to furnish workers with a “foretaste of socialism” by means of public housing. Key to this undertaking was to break with prewar Christian Socialist and Liberal housing policies, policies that treated housing as commodity and produced socio-spatial patterns of segregation and marginalization. Essential to this enterprise

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² Housing was maybe the most important area of municipal reform in Red Vienna, but essential were also other areas, such as health care, childcare, education, and welfare.
was also that it afforded the socialists the possibility to delve into the innermost spheres of the private to win over workers’ “souls” (Linzer Programm 1926, 10) in order to gradually build a socialist counter-hegemony. Instead of supplanting capitalism with a “dictatorship of the proletariat”, the SDAP sought to abolish capitalism from within the democratic state. In light of the SDAPs’ and the Austro-Marxists’ pursuit of a “slow revolution”, education in all realms of everyday life was deemed crucial for the formation of a politically successful, proletarian counter-culture. The provision of public housing and the fostering of a socialist dwelling culture seemed to be two propitious levers for preparing workers for their historic mission to bring about socialism. [Illustrations 1, 2]

The purpose of the following analysis is to shed light on the relationship between the political promise of socialism and the “politics of dwelling” that was implemented to prepare workers for their historic task. For this goal, I will illuminate the norms that undergirded the Social Democratic housing program, more precisely, its policies, architectural practices, and the Wohnkultur [dwelling culture] it propagated. In the first section, I lay out the socio-political and urban conditions prior to the socialist building program, as the latter’s impact can only be fully understood against the backdrop of the social, political and urban fabric of the pre-socialist city. Democratization and universality had been inscribed into Vienna’s urban landscape by the newly empowered bourgeoisie in the form of political institutions of a constitutional state, such as the parliament, but also cultural institutions, such as museums and theaters since the mid-nineteenth-century. These institutions were meant to bring culture and democracy to all. However, the proletariat and its “urban home”, the industrial suburb, remained outside of the bourgeoisie’s democratic, universalist rationality, albeit being essential to the bourgeoisie’s economic success. It was not until the political empowerment of Social Democracy at the beginning of the twentieth-century that the proletariat would visibly call into question the entrenched separation of the political and cultural from the economic on the urban scale. By building “workers’ palaces” in the midst of the historically grown city, Gegenbauten [counter buildings] challenged entrenched patterns of exclusion and symbolized ostensive demands for inclusion.

The second section throws into relief the Austro-Marxist theory of a “slow revolution” and provides an account of why gradually growing into socialism was preferred to a “dictatorship of the proletariat”. I will outline the main strategies the SDAP adopted to achieve socialism democratically: the continuous expansion of the electorate, the “municipalization” and democratization of basic
goods, and industry, the intellectual preparation of the SDAP’s basis, the workers. These strategies, as I will explain, found their way into Red Vienna’s housing policies and shaped them in fundamental ways. Two key policies made housing construction on the scale the Social Democrats had envisaged possible: rent control and the Breitner Wohnbausteuer [housing construction tax].

In parts three and four, I will examine the norms and ideals that underpinned the design of the housing blocks and the apartments as well as the dwelling culture the SDAP sought to foster in the communal spaces of the housing developments and private space of the apartment. Informed by the stipulation of housing as a right instead of a privilege, and by a “moderate modernist” architecture that pursued a strategy of creatively altering existing spaces instead of radically inventing new ones, Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten were undoubtedly a symbol of remarkable “politics of place making” for a social class whose presence, needs, and desires had historically been hidden behind prettified facades and/or relegated to the city’s fringes. Yet, at the same time, both, the “moderate modernist” architecture and the “proletarian counter culture” fostered within the housing developments embodied continuity, namely that of existing practices of domination and disregard of workers’ needs and desires instead of a critical reversal thereof.

In important respects, Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten were informed by, to paraphrase Marx, the poetry from the past instead of the future, not least because both, the SDAP’s political elite and the theorists of Austro-Marxism, largely sidestepped the important question of who is educating the educator. By continuing the hegemonic equation of education with a pedagogy that was built on a gap between the knowledgeable (the expert and transmitter of knowledge) and the ignorant (the worker and passive recipient of knowledge), the socialist elite, ironically, also continued a history of doubt concerning the workers’ own capacity to act as agents of social change. The SDAP neither involved the workers in the construction or design of housing nor in its formulation of a socialist dwelling culture. Instead of facilitating “revolutionary practice”, the Austro-Marxists continued the bourgeois legacy of spreading knowledge “from the summits to the most modest levels of intelligence” (Rancière 1991, 17), and hoped that socialism would trickle down in its wake.

The alternative strategy toward the reform of consciousness would have been “revolutionary practice”–that is, education that privileges praxis over theory and aims at strengthening the workers’ own capacities and their trust therein. As I will show, this alternative, radical democratic approach would have existed within the SDAP’s own educational horizon. Otto Neurath, member of the SDAP
and head of the Austrian Settlers Association, a self-help movement, was a proponent of directly involving workers in carving out physical and political counter-spaces. Neurath was convinced that once workers had understood their own working and living conditions, once they have had the experience and knowledge of solving problems themselves, they would also emancipate themselves. For him, it was clear that praxis, not pedagogy, would lead to socialism. Against this backdrop, it is my argument that whereas the Austro-Marxist experiment in municipal socialism left an impressive social legacy in regard to housing, a legacy that to this day has been having a redistributive effect on housing policies, its political legacy was one of reform rather than of radical democratic politics. Red Vienna’s municipal housing constituted a counter-space within a city, which until the empowerment of Social Democracy, had been shaped by economic liberalism. Yet within Red Vienna, the Wild Settlements, influenced by Neurath’s take on education, represented a counter-space, one that pointed to the possibility and practice of radical democratic politics.

2.1 Writing and Re-Writing Urban Space: From the Ringstrassen Era to Red Vienna

“Little red bricks” were to “build the new world”, as suggested by a Viennese workers’ song (Nussbaum 2007, 51). Yet what was the old world the new world was to supplant? As a result of late, but rapid industrialization, the population of Vienna and conurbation quadrupled in the nineteenth-century, from 440,000 in 1840 to two million in 1910. Unskilled or semi-skilled laborers left the crisis-ridden, agricultural hinterland of Bohemia, Moravia, and Galicia for the metropolis in search of new sources of livelihood in fields of industry, commerce, and domestic service (Lichtenberger 1993, 69-71), (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 25). Most of the immigrants settled on the city’s fringes, an area once shaped by viticulture and small trades that was quickly overhauled by the modern city’s own logic and needs: the functional differentiation of urban space expressed, among others, by rectilinear suburbs (Lichtenberger 1993, 63), (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 24).

Vienna’s rapid increase in population remained unmatched by the increase in housing. Between 1830 and 1850, the population grew by forty percent. In the same period, the housing stock increased by only ten percent. As a result of this lingering imbalance, overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, exorbitant rents, the permanent threat of eviction, and the possibility or reality of
homelessness shaped proletarian everyday life (Lichtenberger 1993, 74). Some of those who could not secure a roof over their head made public spaces their home, risking the police, who would relocate them to stables and municipal prisons (Maderthaner and Musner 2008, 32) or drop them off in the “open field” of the metropolis’ far periphery (Lichtenberger 1993, 63). Others would subject themselves to a double form of exploitation as producers and consumers. As revealed by a famous, under-cover reportage from 1888 by the founder of the SDAP, Victor Adler, the workers at the Wienerberger brick factory not only worked eighteen or more hours per day for a poor wage, but also spent the latter on overprized, dismal habitats provided by their employer (V. Adler 1888/1989).

The great majority of workers, however, lived in suburban tenement housing, the so-called Zinsburgen [rent-bearing palaces], that is, sub-standard housing for which landlords charged disproportionally high rents. Whereas the housing’s exterior, its historicist facades, suggested a socio-aesthetic unity between the bourgeois center and the proletarian periphery, the housing’s interior, spoke a different language: one of social marginalization and exploitation. In the words of Max Winter, an important figure in the emerging field of social reportage at that time, the apartments inside the “palaces of usury” were little more than “narrow, overcrowded dungeons”, “air-deprived holes that force people and children out into the hallway, the staircase or the courtyard”, since there was neither space for privacy nor for play (Winter 1982, 94-95). [Illustration 3]

The prototypical building type in working class districts was the so-called Bassena-house, whose long, dark gangways provided access to ten or twenty Kleinstwohnungen [smallest apartments], shared toilets, and a communal water faucet, the Bassena. The gangways also served as air shafts for kitchens whose windows opened into the buildings’ interior instead of the courtyard or the street. Despite the apartments’ limited space—a standard apartment consisted of a kitchen, a room, and sometimes of a Kabinett, which was an additional, small room—over fifty percent of the tenants sublet to subtenants who contributed to the rent. Due to the lack of rent control, the rent was, when calculated per square meter, often higher than that for luxury apartments in the prestigious Ringstrasse (Gulick 1948, 410). [Illustration 4]

The structural reasons for the housing misery were mainly rooted in pre-WWI economic liberalism, initially pursued by the Liberals and later continued by the Christian Socialists. From the 1860s to the 1890s, economic liberalism was implemented by Vienna’s newly empowered upper-middle class
who, in defiance of the Viennese court’s conservatism, understood themselves as the redeemer of economic, but also political and cultural modernity. This self-understanding as modernizer and harbinger of a new, universalist rationality was manifest, among others, in the Ringstrasse’s “buildings of splendor”, such as the university, parliament, and the museums. Encircling the Viennese court, the Ringstrasse and its buildings symbolically challenged the authority of the nobility, yet also entrenched a new frontier: a frontier between the “winners” of modernization, the upper-middle class of the inner city, and its “losers”, the lower-middle class of the inner suburbs and the proletariat of the outer suburbs.¹

At the municipal level, the liberal bourgeoisie’s political focus was predominantly on the provision of technical infrastructure, which was essential to the unfolding of industrial capitalism. Vienna did not undergo a spatial make-over as radical as the Parisian one, a make-over directed by Baron Haussmann who demolished the historically grown city and replaced it with a clearly legible, rational urban form. Instead, Vienna’s modernizers put more emphasis on overhauling the city to facilitate economic growth than to accommodate all urban dwellers’ social needs. Considering the city as an urban body whose “respiratory” and “circulatory” functions were in need of (technical) attuning to ensure the organism’s health, the city was increasingly split up into functionally divergent zones, such as residential, industrial, and mixed-use zones, to be nourished by “arteries” of technical infrastructure, such as streets, canalization, gas and water. The latter reached out into the city’s periphery, overlaying it with an orthogonal grid system regardless of local topography (Blau 2001, 214).

Vienna’s second building ordinance of 1859 stipulated the “uniformity of the grid” as fundamental tenet for planning the expanding city. This was much to the dismay of Vienna’s famous city builder, Camillo Sitte (1843-1903). Sitte was a proponent of organic city building and an outspoken critic of modern city planning, whose formulaic uniformity in the form of the grid he equated with torturing the human genius to death and suffocating “all joyful sense of life” (Schorske 1981, 63). The success of the grid went hand in hand with a legal innovation brought about by the bourgeoisie: the introduction of private property and thus the independence of land and its use from both the state and the aristocracy. By means of the grid, land could be parceled up and its use could be maximized
regardless of topography, which made it particularly attractive for private investment and speculation (Maderthaner, 2006, 183-184, 189). Accordingly, the checkerboard of the industrial suburb was no less a reflection of the hegemony of profit, than the before discussed interior layout of proletarian housing. One such checkerboard is the Viennese workers district Favoriten, whose underlying modern logic of abstraction Max Winter described as follows:

“Favoriten is a town unto itself. Someone took a sheet of drawing paper, ruler and pencil, and drew horizontal and vertical lines. He started from Favorita, now known as Theresianum, colonized with his pencil the bare country road that ran toward Himberg, tore down the poplars on the right and left side, filled in the ditches, and made buildings, factories, and tenement blocks arise on their banks. The blocks were hatched in red on the plan but were sober grayish-brown buildings in reality. [...] No monuments decorate them, no ornamental fountain gladdens the eye; even the sole public buildings, the schools, are gloomy like everything else. This raw brick of a factory with its ridiculously even line of windrows – four stories one above the other – is the only variation in the picture. Everything covered with smoke and dust, everywhere the roar of industry. Nowhere is there light of place to relax. Everything bleak, everything gloomy, all gray on gray – that is Favoriten” (Winter 1901).

Ironically but also tellingly, the pencil that “colonized” the country for the sake of economic modernization belonged to Sicardsburg van der Nuell, a planner and architect less known for his work in proletarian Favoriten than in the bourgeois Ringstrasse (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 35). In Favoriten, van der Nuell created an urban fabric that abstracted from its inhabitants’ history and needs. In the Ringstrasse, he materialized history, namely that of the bourgeoisie by inscribing their newly found identity into the urban landscape. Whereas the Ringstrasse’s monumentalism bore testimony to the bourgeoisie’s hard-won freedom to express their vision of history, displayed by the historicist facades and buildings that freely cited styles from different epochs, the proletarian rectilinear suburbs reflected the fact that the bourgeoisie’s appropriation of history and its triumphant procession of democratization, universal law, and culture came with its own particular aporia: the disregard of the history of those whom economic modernization had subjected to urban life, the industrial proletariat. As the historians of Vienna’s fin-de-siècle proletarian counter-culture, Lutz Musner and Wolfgang Maderthaner, put it:

“[...] the anti-hierarchical theme in bourgeois discourse is not only a rejection of the feudal culture of the nobility, but at the same time a devaluation of popular culture, which is denounced as ‘low, ‘vulgar’ and ‘impure’. The bourgeois ‘purifies’ himself in this explanatory model, unaware, as it were, of the historical contingency of his origin, of the

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4 The building ordinance of 1859 (as well as previous and subsequent versions) allow that 85 percent to the lot are built up, which resulted in a desperate lack of green spaces (Gulick 1948, 410).
socially polymorphous, of the sensual, erotic components of popular culture” (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 60).

For the proletariat, it would take a few more decades until they themselves would be in a position to reclaim history and build their own Gegenbauten [counter buildings] in the name of democratization and universality. Until then, a physical frontier between city and suburb remained entrenched. “Where”, as Carl Schorske writes in his book on Viennese modernism, “a Baroque planner would have sought to join suburb and city–to organize vast vistas oriented toward the central, monumental features–the plan adopted in 1859, with few exceptions, suppressed the vistas in favor of stress on the circular flow” (Schorske 1981, 32).

In 1873 the bourgeoisie’s saluting of economic modernization, techno-scientific progress and rationalistic individualism got tainted by a massive credit crunch. From within the cracks caused by the crisis two political contenders emerged, one orientated toward a pre-modern past, Christian Socialism, and the other one oriented toward a modern future, Social Democracy. Despite being ideological opponents, the Christian Socialists and the Social Democrats shared one common denominator: the reliance on mass instead of elite politics, which was gradually made possible through several stages of electoral reform.

From 1897 to 1919, the Christian Socialists took the political reins into their hands after successfully mobilizing their political clientele of shopkeepers, trades- and craftsmen, and civil servants who were severely affected by the economic crisis. Whereas the liberal upper-middle class of the Ringstrassen Era pushed for an encompassing modernization that included the economic no less than the cultural and political realm, the Christian Socialists mobilized their lower-middle class clientele by means of cultural pre-modern romanticism and political conservatism, while simultaneously and contradictorily, continuing important aspects of the inherited laissez-faire capitalism. More specifically, spearheaded by the populist and anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger, Vienna’s Christian Socialists promised to heal the pains caused by modernization by returning to Christian patriarchal values and an economy based on Staende [corporations] instead of finance and industry. Although Lueger especially presented himself as an outspoken critic of economic liberalism, he and his party continued many of its legacies. Similar to the liberal bourgeoisie, the Christian Socialists focused on the provision of technical, rather than on the much needed social infrastructure, such as housing. Moreover, they continued to finance municipal projects predominantly by credit and thereby exacerbated already enormous municipal debts. Finally, they
generated the majority of the municipal tax income, 75 percent, by taxing basic consumption and rent, a tax system that heavily and negatively impacted lower social strata (Maderthaner, 2006, 228).

The Christian Socialists ambivalent balancing of their critique of modernity and their celebration of tradition was best embodied by their municipal showcase project, the Stadtbahnen [city railways]. Whereas the Stadtbahnen’s architecture suggests deep roots in Vienna’s urban traditions, its financing was informed by principles of modern economic liberalism and its construction was based on the latest innovations of technology and engineering (Maderthaner, 2006, 225-226).

Similar to the Ringstrasse, the Stadtbahnen also re-entrenched spatial patterns of social segregation. As mentioned before, the former symbolically challenged the inner city palaces of the nobility by encircling them with buildings representative of liberalism’s cultural, economic, and political achievements. Yet, simultaneously, it also re-drew a dividing line between the inner city and the suburbs: the inner suburbs for the lower middle class and the outer suburbs for the proletariat. Similarly, the Stadtbahnen, while connecting the inner suburbs with one another, also re-created socio-spatial division: between the lower-middle class inner suburbs and the proletarian outer suburbs (Maderthaner, 2006, 226).

To be sure, the Christian Socialists were well aware of the dire need of investment in social infrastructure, such as housing. In 1894, the liberal reformer Eugen Philippovich published a study on the Viennese proletariat's housing conditions that became widely known. Replicating the existing widespread suspicion toward proletarian culture, Philippovich not only noted that working class housing was “missing everything, which we are used to consider as the basis for a healthy bourgeois life”, but also warned that ignoring these conditions would ultimately lead to social regress in the form of “barbarism, bestiality and rowdyism” (Philippovich 1894). The Christian Socialists, however, were rather unmoved by the report. Since workers were neither part of their core clientele nor represented a political threat since they were deprived of the right to vote5, the conservatives had few incentives to substantially alter the workers’ poor housing conditions. Accordingly, the few investments in housing that were made during the Christian Socialist era were, same as in the liberal one, typically driven by considerations of charity instead of justice (Weihsmann 1985, 98).

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5In fact, the Christian socialists had no interest in empowering workers politically through electoral reform as doing so would have weakened the political influence of the lower middle class, the Christian socialist core clientele.
It was not until the Social Democrats had transformed Vienna into their political stronghold in 1919 that the city would be appropriated by and for the “Fourth Estate”. The counter-buildings that challenged both, the Ringstrasse’s “buildings of splendor” and the Stadtbahn’s negotiation of tradition and modernity, were the Gemeindebauten. Initially through an ephemeral “culture of resistance” (John 1996, 239) in the form of anarcho-syndicalist strikes, riots, or mass demonstrations whose object of appropriation was the street itself, Vienna’s proletariat repeatedly and sometimes violently claimed the city for itself by intentionally trespassing the boundaries between center and periphery. In 1919, the year the proletariat empowered the Social Democrats to take the reins over municipal politics into their hands, ephemeral politics of place making subsided to lasting politics of place making. Public housing equipped with a public infrastructure was destined to serve as a field of experimentation for the redemption of history’s ultimate rationality: the realization of socialism. Whereas Marx insisted that as long as capitalism dominates, workers are bound to remain deprived of a “dwelling in the light”, a dwelling they can look upon as their own home (Marx 1844/1978a, 94, 100), his (unorthodox) Austrian followers deemed that having access to a decent home already under conditions of capitalism is crucial for initiating socialism. Put differently, for the Austro-Marxists, alleviating the housing misery prior to the revolution meant preparing the ground for the revolution. As Johan F. Hartle explains by drawing on Gramsci’s “war of position”, a defensive war whose goal was to hold one’s position and to gradually expand it as long as an offensive “war of maneuver” was likely to jeopardize, instead of secure, a new hegemony (Gramsci 2008, 234):

“With the erection of proletarian “positions”, the displaced layers of bourgeois ideology (as a marginalized real) returned in Red Vienna like a shock. Their answer to neurotic repression is confrontation. In this structure, the trench war of the politics of architecture became a symbol and realization of that which was still outstanding: The overcoming of the class conflict inherent in bourgeois modes of representation (Hartle 2012). [Illustrations 5, 6]

In his book, Weg zum Sozialismus [Path toward Socialism] published in 1919, Otto Bauer sketched a policy strategy for making public housing a cornerstone of the Austro-Marxist “war of position”. According to Bauer, the tasks of the state regarding housing were as follows: to grant municipalities the right to expropriate land and tenement houses; to furnish citizens with the right to housing, a right enforceable against municipalities; to regulate rent in such a way that it does not exceed the municipality’s cost price for housing; to reform tenancy law and, as part of this reform, to
strengthen the tenants’ protection against eviction; and to strengthen tenant autonomy (Bauer 1919/1976, 117-121).

The fact that Bauer left the decision regarding the time and circumstances of socialization to municipalities was indicative of the SDAP’s attempt to walk the line between socialism and reformism: on the one hand, Bauer stipulated housing as a fundamental right, a stipulation that pointed toward a socialist society; on the other hand, he made the decision for socialization a municipal one and one of circumstances, which indicated a gradualist instead of revolutionary reform of liberal capitalism. The theory behind this meandering between socialism and reformism will be thrown into sharper relief in the next section, which will be followed by exploring its translation into the SDAP’s “politics of dwelling” in detail.

2.2 For a “Slow Revolution”: On the Austro-Marxists’ Concept of Democratic Socialism and its Influence on Housing Policies

Austro-Marxism is best understood as a theory for practice. It is, as Bauer explained, an “intellectual force that maintains unity” by bringing together “the capacity for realistic adaptation of all our day-to-day struggles to the particular conditions of time and place, and a constant orientation of all partial struggles to the great goal of the seizure of power by the working class, and thereby to the great inspiring goal of socialism [...]” (Bauer 1927/1978, 47). Influenced by the teachings of Carl Gruenberg, who taught in Vienna before becoming the first director of Frankfurt’s Institute of Social Research, the Austro-Marxists—most prominently Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Karl Renner and Rudolf Hilferding—are proponents of a materialist conception of history “whose object is not abstraction, but the given concrete world in its process of development and change” (Bottomore and Goode 1978, 9-10). Although the Austro-Marxists’ scientific work was rather diverse in focus⁶, it was united

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⁶See T.B. Bottomore and Patrick Goode’s introduction in their edited book Austro-Marxism (Bottomore and Goode 1978, 1-44) or Anson Rabinbach’s Vom Roten Wien zum Buergerkrieg (Rabinbach 1989, 39-46). Otto Bauer was the SDAP’s main theoretician as well as prominent leader of the SDAP. Max Adler was dedicated to clarify and vindicate the theoretical foundations of Marxism and was influenced by Ernst Mach’s positivism as well as neo-Kantianism. Adler’s goal was the pursuit of Marxism as a critique of knowledge applied to the science of society, the demonstration of an “inner intellectual kinship” between critical idealism and Marxism as a social science. Adler, similar to Otto Bauer, belonged to the left-wing of the SDAP who held fast to the idea of a socialist revolution.
by two common concerns: the pursuit of Marxism as a social science and the reconciliation of theory and practice. In contrast to Gruenberg's students at the Frankfurt School, the Austro-Marxists were deeply enmeshed in everyday politics through their affiliation with the SDAP, a mass party that had united Austria's workers movement since its inception in 1888/1889 by Victor Adler. As is implicit to Bauer’s definition of Austro-Marxism, the goal of this particular strand of Marxism was not only to understand the laws of history, but equally important, to alter them. For this purpose, Vienna served the Austro-Marxists’ as their laboratory and democratic socialism was the object of their experiment.

Despite the SDAP’s strong political position in 1919, the year it emerged as the strongest party not only in Vienna, but also at the federal level, the SDAP deferred a fundamental overhaul of capitalism to an unspecified time in the future. Similar to the Communists, the SDAP understood itself not as one political party among many, but as a unique redeemer of a historical truth, the implementation of socialism. However, the SDAP abstained from revolutionary politics, influenced by Austro-Marxism, decided for “politics of hineinwachsen” [politics of growing into socialism], that is, politics of a “planned organizing activity, proceeding step by step toward a clearly conceived goal” (Bauer 1919/1978, 150). Instead of considering the replacement of the bourgeois state with a temporary “dictatorship of the proletariat” as the only promising path toward socialism, the Austro-Marxists opted for a “slow revolution”: the creation of a socialist counter-hegemony that would abolish capitalism gradually and from within the existing liberal-democratic institutions. Max Adler:

“Social Democracy cannot be reduced to its political character. It is considerably more than, as one might assume at first sight, one party among many. Social Democracy is the conscious society in the midst of its own becoming already within the state, a society which transitions from its merely natural form to its conscious, planned existence, that seeks to supplant any merely given and contradictory community with a community of law that guarantees solidarity” [my translation] (M. Adler 1924, 92).

Karl Renner focused on the relationship between law and the economy. Rejecting Kelsen’s pure theory of law, Renner showed how legal forms change their function in response to changes in the economic structure and society at large. Similar to Hilferding (see below), Renner argued for the “state penetration of the economy”, that is, for the extension of the state’s welfare functions and the rational organization of the economy under public ownership. Renner and Hilferding belonged to the reformist wing of the SDAP, conceiving of the “state penetration of the economy” as revolutionary in itself.

Rudolf Hilferding challenged the Austrian marginalist school founded by Carl Menger. (The most well-known offspring of this school are Friedrich Hayek and von Mises). Hilferding rejected Menger’s conception of economics as science of human action that is built on a rational model instead of an empirical basis. Hilferding argued for a state-controlled, centrally planned economy instead.
To be sure, in the early years of the Austro-Marxist project, the choice for politics of *hineinwachsen* was less a reflection of a timid concession to reformism than one of a strong commitment to bringing about socialism by peaceful and democratic means. First, the SDAP feared that a “dictatorship of the proletariat” would lead to economic sanctions by the anti-socialist *Entente* powers, sanctions that would further undermine the country’s already utterly difficult economic standing and thereby increase the likelihood of a capitalist counter-revolution (Bauer 1924/1978, 163). Second, since the SDAP's inception, the party believed that in the long run, democratic constitutionalism would be the appropriate institutional setting for the proletariat's political empowerment. Democratic constitutionalism was also defended because, as Bauer argued (before twentieth -century history would prove his point), a dictatorship of the proletariat would run the risk of turning into a “bureaucratic dictatorship” spearheaded by a “caste” of soviets who suggested to speak and administer in the name of the people, while, de facto, circumventing the latter's immediate control (Bauer 1936/1978, 203). Third, the party was also opposed to a revolutionary overhaul because it deemed its basis, the workers, lacking of the maturity necessary for securing the long-term success of socialism, a concern that left, as will be shown below, its traces in Vienna's *Gemeindebauten* and its underlying policies. “Our party,” said Bauer’s assessment,

“comprises the most diverse proletarian strata, strata that display highly diverging levels of cultural development and degrees of class consciousness. Our party has the duty to accept the proletarians the way capitalism has educated them: with all the ignorance and lack of culture the capitalist social order has condemned them to; with all the vices of the oppressed capitalism has bred them with [emphasis added]. Yet due to the proletarian movement, the praxis of the proletarian class struggle, a continuously growing part of the proletariat is striving to overcome the lack of culture they used to live with” [my translation] (Bauer 1927/1976, 497).

To be sure, despite the SDAP’s preference for a gradual and peaceful revolution, it did not entirely discard the possibility of a dictatorship of the proletariat and thus the use of force. To assuage the increasing tension between the party’s radical and reformist wings, the so-called *Linzer Programm* of 1926 approved the use of “defensive violence” (Rabinbach 1989, 53). The defense of violence was considered to be legitimate in case the opposition decided to violently resist the systemic changes the SDAP was determined to undertake once it had achieved one of its main political objectives: the *absolute* majority in parliament (Linzer Programm 1926, 11-12). The objective itself was laid out by Bauer in 1924: “If we succeed in diverting only 320,000 voters from the bourgeois parties and in winning them for our party, then we shall obtain the absolute majority in parliament, then we shall govern Austria” [my translation] (Bauer 1924/1976, 960).
For a socialist hegemony to emerge by democratic means, the SDAP pursued three main strategies: the continuous expansion of the party's electorate to gradually secure the party's dominance in parliament, a precondition for the social revolution “from within” (965); the gradual socialization and democratization of industry and, more generally, the economy (Linzer Programm 1926, 15); and the spiritual and intellectual preparation of the workers for their historic mission to bring about socialism (M. Adler 1924), an aspect I will develop on in the context of politics of dwelling. Special emphasis was put on the “reform of consciousness”. As Adler explained, ideology was not to be conceived of as “insignificant or unreal”, but as “one of the most powerful and fateful reality of history” (M. Adler 1930/1978, 260). For a radical change to be possible and, once achieved, lasting, one “must first and foremost break through that intellectual state of affairs in which the revolutionary class still thinks the thoughts of the old classes [...]” (M. Adler 1928/1978, 143).

Adler concerned himself with the “intellectual preparation” for socialism; Bauer, with preparatory legislative and administrative work. According to Bauer, the revolution consists of two momenta: “[t]he political revolution [...], the work of one great hour [...], that abolishes political oppression, but allows economic exploitation to continue” and the “social revolution, [...] the outcome of the old, but well-considered activity of many years.” According to Bauer, the social revolution “can neither be accomplished in street battles nor in civil war”, but only through “creative legislative and administrative work” (Bauer 1919/1978, 151). To be sure, despite the SDAP’s unprecedented political success in 1919, it was still far from the “quick” political revolution Bauer had hoped for. Since the SDAP had not managed to secure an absolute majority in 1919, the party entered into an internally contested coalition with the Christian Socialists, a coalition that ended shortly after it had begun. Bauer believed in a Gleichgewicht der Klassen [an equilibrium between classes], that is, in a political constellation in which neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat were expected to be in full control of the state but dependent on one another and required to make mutual concessions (Bauer 1923/1976, 743-751). The rationale for the latter was anchored in Bauer’s specific understanding of the post-WWI-, central European state. According to him, the state neither was shaped by class interests, as suggested by Lenin, nor was a neutral institution, as implied by nineteenth -century liberals. Instead, Bauer conceived of it as the outcome of a complex and intricate compromise between different classes. Therefore, socialism could only be achieved in the long run due to the proletariat’s ever growing institutional, cultural, and numeric presence. The socialist housing complexes, community facilities, clubs, co-operatives, pedagogical institutions as
well as the party’s paramilitary organization, the Schutzbund, were ultimately expected to serve as a bulwark against the hegemony of the right at the federal level. It was the SDAP’s hope that the sheer presence of a continuously growing workers movement would deter the conservative forces from making purely partisan decisions and from preventing its power over the bourgeois state against the Social Democrats, a hope that was ultimately proven as illusory (Rabinbach 1989, 50-51).

One of the first crucial “creative legislative and administrative” steps the SDAP took to anchor its hegemony at the municipal level was housing reform. The strategies that undergirded the socialists' general vision of politics of hineinwachsen also shaped their housing policies. First, to gradually expand the party's electorate, they introduced rent control that was designed in such a way that it would not only protect workers from exorbitant rents, but—in their pursuit to expand their electorate—also the, typically conservative, lower middle class. Second, to move step closer to the ideal of a right to housing (a right that, on the long run, the socialist state was expected to grant all its citizens (Bauer 1919/1976, 117-121), Vienna’s SDAP socialized, or rather “municipalized”, vast areas of land, parts of the existing housing stock and construction industry to boost the public provision of housing. Finally, to ensure that the SDAP’s affiliates would receive an adequate social, intellectual, and cultural preparation for socialism, the municipal housing blocks were designed as spaces of socialization and education, as spaces that would afford their inhabitants and users with a foretaste of socialism.

If the introduction of universal suffrage in 1918 was one of the Social Democrats’ greatest victories in the period between the party's founding in 1888/1889 and the end of WWI, the introduction of the Federal Rent Control Act in 1922 was one of Labor's key achievements during the First Republic (1919–1934). The right to vote enfranchised workers politically; rent control reversed the power relations between landlords and tenants, power relations that fueled competing political camps and, on the urban scale, socio-spatial segregation. Favoring the interests of tenants over those of landlords, the new law curbed land speculation, protected tenants against arbitrary notice and rent increases, and redefined how rent was to be calculated. Rent was no longer to be conceived of as one fixed sum stipulated by the landlord or the free market, but as the sum of four different components: net rent, maintenance costs, administrative and operative costs, and a proportional share in taxes. Of these components, only the net rent was fixed, namely at fifty percent of the prewar rent. As a result of high inflation after 1919, de facto net rent ended up to constitute only a miniscule fraction of the prewar rent: 1/28,800. The extremely low net rent basically amounted to
the “confiscation” of the landlords' net income (Gulick 1948, 442-444). Moreover, land speculation and private construction became largely unprofitable. Consequently, the price of land dropped, in some cases drastically, to about four percent of the prewar price (Gulick 1948, 445). These developments put the city in an advantageous financial situation, a situation that allowed the municipality to acquire the necessary land and industry to realize its comprehensive public housing program. By 1928, the municipality owned approximately one-quarter of the total area of Greater Vienna (Blau 1999, 141).

Although, as the Social Democrats’ contemporary Friedrich von Hayek correctly stated, rent control initially further decreased instead of increased the housing stock since low rents made investing in housing unattractive (von Hayek 1930/2001), the Social Democrats decided to break with any legacy of economic liberalism. In contrast to Hayek, who conceived of the post-WWI housing crisis to be a temporary problem to be adjusted on the free market by price movements (ibid.), the Social Democrats conceived of it as a chronic problem that had plagued the lower social strata throughout the Liberal and Christian Socialist eras. According to the Austro-Marxists, not the market but politics was to provide and secure sufficient, adequate housing.

Rent control helped the city to “municipalize” land, yet given the depleted budget the Social Democrats inherited from their political predecessors, it was still lacking the required funds for constructing the Gemeindebauten. Thus, before the communal dwellings could become reality, another “creative legislative and administrative” step needed to be taken: the overhaul of the tax system and, more specifically, the introduction of the Wohnbausteuer [housing construction tax]. Entrusted with the task to create an “inflation proof” revenue system, Hugo Breitner and his Social Democratic associates revised the inherited tax system and, in pursuit of a radical redistribution of existing wealth, decided to shift the main burden of taxation onto the rich and well-to-do by introducing taxes on property, business, as well as luxury items and services, such as cars, horses, dogs, amusement, exquisite food, and servants (Gulick 1948, 357, 362-366). One key component of the general overhaul was the introduction of the housing construction tax whose purpose was to generate direct funds, namely about forty percent of the total funds needed for the construction of public housing. (The remaining funds came from other municipal and federal resources).

Introduced in 1923, the highly progressive housing construction tax was calculated on the basis of the yearly rent for apartments and commercial spaces. Over forty percent of the total funds
generated by the so-called “Breitner tax” came from taxing rental properties whose yearly rent amounted to more than 10,000 crowns. There were typically luxury apartments and prime commercial spaces, which constituted only 0.5 percent of the city’s total rental stock. The yearly rent for the great majority of the city’s rental units, eighty-six percent, amounted to about 1,200 crowns. The tenants of these units were typically working- or lower-middle class. Despite representing the great majority of tenants, the funds generated by taxing them amounted to only twenty-four percent of the total funds created by the new tax (Danneberg 1929, 65-68). Put simply, the construction of public housing was largely financed by the wealthy. Unsurprisingly, the liberals and the conservatives were appalled by the new tax and equated it with “tax sadism” and “housing bolshevism” (Maimann 1981, 68). The socialists, by contrast, sought to make sure that the tax would be publicly remembered long past its introduction. Accordingly, a publicly visible inscription can be found on every Gemeindebau, an inscription that reads: “Built from the funds of the Housing Construction Tax.” [Illustrations 7, 8]

In 1923, the first five-year construction program was finally inaugurated: 25,000 apartments were built and finished one year ahead of schedule. The first building program was followed by a second one in 1927, ushering in the erection of additional 30,000 public housing units. In conjunction with the housing built before 1923, the SDAP created a total of 64,000 apartments during the period of Red Vienna (Danneberg 1929, 27-29). By 1934, the city government was Vienna’s biggest landlord, furnishing low-cost housing for eleven percent of the total population (Maderthaner, 2006, 381). Before the introduction of rent control, the average rent amounted to about twenty-five percent of a workers’ average wage; after rent control was introduced, it equaled to as little as two percent of a medium wage (Danneberg 1929, 59). To ensure that rents would be low in the long run, the cost spent on housing was non-recoverable, that is, the Gemeindebauten were built on fonds perdus (Danneberg 1929, 61-63).

The Social Democrats transformed the municipality into the largest landlord, but also the largest employer. To curb unemployment in addition to reducing the housing shortage, the city created jobs for 30,000 people, predominantly in the “municipalized” construction industry (Gulick 1948, 401). Accordingly, large parts of the taxes collected for housing construction were re-invested in the local economy in the form of public expenditures. Consequently and ironically, these expenditures sustained rather than abolished existing capitalist relations of production. Instead of transforming the latter into socialist ones, the Social Democrats sought, at least in the medium term, to render
capitalism more “humane” by reigning in instead of expanding Taylorist rationalization and industrialization. As the historian Thomas Hughes explains with regard to Taylor:

“Taylor’s fundamental concept and guiding principle was to design a system of production involving both men and machines that would be as efficient as a well-designed, well-oiled machine. He said, ‘in the past, the man has been first; in the future the system must be first,’ a remark that did not sit well then with workers and their trade-union leaders and that today still rankles those who feel oppressed by technology” (Hughes 1989, 188).

For the Social Democrats, in contrast to Taylor, man was first. Thus, in defiance of the father of rationalization as well as in contrast to the widespread modernist movement of the 1920s, a movement that sought to appropriate rationalization for egalitarian purposes, the Viennese Social Democrats reconfigured production as labor-intensive and sought to capitalize, on instead of replace, the manual skills of workers, craftsmen, and artists (Gulick 1948, 447; Blau 1999, 146).

Considerations of securing dignified labor and curbing unemployment played a role in the Social Democrats’ decision against rationalizing the economy; and so did the fear of an anti-socialist backlash in response to the possibility that a radical economic restructuring might usher in a temporary shortage of goods. To avert such a scenario, Bauer stipulated “[t]he task of socialism” to be one of a instituting a “more just distribution of goods, without doing harm to the production of goods” (Bauer 1919/1978, 148-149). A “just distribution of goods” already under conditions of capitalism was expected to provide workers with a foretaste of socialism. Maybe in anticipation of the risk that foretasting might lessen the taste for the end goal of socialism, the Austro-Marxists’ complemented their medium -term strategy of redistribution with the strategy of education, education on the “cultural ideal of a higher form of societal organization” (Bauer 1928, 280). Unsurprisingly, the pedagogical strategy to anchor the long -term perspective of socialism in people’s minds and souls found its way into and shaped the “everydayness” of dwelling.

2.3 Building for the “New Men”

In the communal housing blocks the “socialist principles of solidarity” were expected to turn into a “vivid reality” (Braunthal 1948, 494). Yet what were the principles underlying the Gemeindebauten’s architecture and related “politics of dwelling”? Given the Social Democrats’ official celebration of public housing as a site of a socialist counter-culture, one would assume that the SDAP had a well-defined concept of what socialist housing should look like and a concrete program for the concept’s
realization. However, in lieu of a programmatic conceptual vision, one is left with, on the one hand, a vague manifesto for the “new socialist men” (M. Adler, 1924) and, on the other hand, rather general guidelines as to how to create a “socialist” built environment. The general guidelines, laid out by the city, were mainly informed by repudiating existing building practices and housing conditions. Courtyards within building blocks were not to be merely for private, but also for public use. Apartments were not to be cut off from daylight and fresh air, which was often the case in traditional tenement housing for space-saving and profit-maximizing reasons. More generally, the new socialist dwellings were not be sites of diseases, but places of physical well-being and decompression. Therefore, apartment units were to be complemented with communal recreational and educational facilities (Blau 1999, 176-177). Apart from the city’s stipulation of these general guidelines, it was largely up to the commissioned architects to shape the Gemeindebauten and their vicinity and by doing so, to develop a “new cultural standard of living” (Gemeinderats-Sitzung 1923).

Given that the 400 communal housing blocks were designed and built by 200 architects committed to different styles, it is hard to imagine how the Gemeindebauten could have represented anything other than mere stylistic eclecticism. The fact that the municipality abstained from defining an architectural vision for the housing program prima facie was subject to much criticism, even from within the SDAP’s own rows. The prominent economist, philosopher, and member of the Vienna Circle, Otto Neurath expressed one of these critiques. In 1925, he sought to convince representatives of the municipality to commit to a Gesamtarchitekturplan [general architectural plan], a plan that would replace the already ongoing piecemeal building activities within the given urban structure. According to Neurath, the urban form of the immanent “new age” ought to replace the urban form of the past. In his opinion, the “spirit of calm objectivity” in the form of clear lines and surfaces was destined to supplant the hegemonic aesthetic of the ornamental and decorative. Although Neurath confirmed that a truly proletarian aesthetic can only emanate after the proletariats’ full empowerment (Neurath 1926b, 26), that is, after the realization of “a new social and economic order that redefines men’s feeling, thinking, longing” (Neurath 1926a, 62), he was convinced that any new proletarian aesthetic would seek its inspiration from modern technology and rationalization instead of “petty bourgeois, feudal, or monarchic” traditions (63).

The reason for Neurath’s conviction that the proletariat would ultimately be drawn to functionalism and rationalism was rooted in his optimistic perspective on history and technology (Neurath 1926b). Neurath believed socialism to be informed by industrial and technical centralization, tendencies that
are already immanent to capitalism (Pfoser 1982). Since these tendencies shaped workers’ consciousness in fundamental ways, workers would, once they were politically empowered, appropriate the axioms undergirding large scale industries, such as rational organization, and transpose them to the private sphere. In other words, instead of being dominated by industrial-capitalist functionalism, emancipated workers would have successfully appropriated the industrial-capitalism’s “normative power of facticity” (Hoesl and Pirhofer 1982, 158) and thereby gradually obtained the “goal of happiness” [Gluecksziel] (Neurath 1926b, 51). To be sure, Neurath was enthusiastic about rationalization, yet he did not embrace it blindly. On the contrary, he stressed the importance of always carefully and systematically evaluating the extent to which rationalization would be beneficial or harmful to the workers’ physical and psychological well-being. Any decision on rationalization had to be based on the findings of such evaluations (Pfoser 1982).

On the urban scale, Neurath wanted to see the workers’ appropriation of modernization reflected at the aesthetic level in the form of a Generalarchitekturplan [general architectural plan]. A “brainchild of art”, the general architectural plan for Red Vienna was to complement the city’s existing Generalregulierungsplan [general development plan], a “brainchild of engineering”. Whereas the latter represented the metropolis only in two dimensions, by outlining its technical and social infrastructure, such as streets, canalization, electrification, or zoning, the former also envisioned the city aesthetically, as a three-dimensional “cultural, political, and aesthetic unity” informed by rationalism and functionalism (Neurath 1923).

The municipality, however, remained unconvinced of Neurath’s commitments to capitalize on the social potential implicit to economic and technological modernization and to represent it aesthetically by adopting a Maschinenaesthetik [machine aesthetic] for the city at large. Thus, instead of entrusting city building to affiliates of modernism, such as Neurath, who sought to break with traditional aesthetics in search of a new aesthetic language inspired by technological innovation, the municipality chose architects who, as the architectural historian Friedrich Achleitner put it, drew on the vocabulary of the old to think new thoughts (Achleitner 1996, 71). In short, in place of post-WWI- “radical modernism” as envisaged, among others, by Otto Neurath, Otto Wagner’s nineteenth-century legacy of “moderate modernism” was to shape Red Vienna in general and the Gemeindebauten in particular, an aesthetic legacy that coincided in many regards with the Austro-Marxists’ political legacy.
Almost all of Red Vienna's architects were trained in Otto Wagner's school of architecture and were thus heavily influenced by his principles of city planning and building. For Wagner, striking a balance between modern urban life, locality, and history was key to urban planning and design. However, in contrast to his contemporary Camillo Sitte (1843-1903), a radical critic of modernity, Otto Wagner (1841-1918) was forward-looking and was committed to build for modern men. Yet, in distinction to the modernists of the 1920s, Wagner did not seek to invent new forms ex novo, but, instead, to gradually stake them out by creatively working with given local, material, and financial parameters. A key question he encouraged his students always to ask themselves before embarking on a new architectural project was:

“How will this solution relate to modern men, to the assignment, to the genius loci, the climatic conditions, the materials at hand, and the financial means? Only thus can you hope to elicit true appreciation, and only then will the works of architecture that today are met for the most part with incomprehension or a certain tentativeness become generally understandable, original, and even popular” (O. Wagner 1988, 160).

Similar to Neurath, Wagner was also a critic of the one-sidedness of the development plan, which he considered a reduction of the modern metropolis to a conglomerate of different economic and infrastructural functions squeezed into a rational grid system. In 1892/1893, Wagner proposed an alternative development plan, one that recognized the city not merely as an economic entity, but also as a cultural and architectonic one. Yet, in contrast to what modernists, such as Neurath would suggest in the 1920s, Wagner’s alternative development plan was committed to paying attention to “the poetry of the past” (Marx 1852/1978, 597) and not only to that of the future, that is, to custom, use, and habit.

Although Wagner's development plan was never realized, it was revealing of his architectural outlook, which his students later adopted for Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten. For him, the two most important tasks of city building were the meticulous realization of function and the latter’s consecration by art (O. Wagner 1911, 2). Despite Wagner's emphasis on time and place, he did not lose sight of the city in its totality. In fact, the expanding metropolis, the Grossstadt, was the architectonic unit he was most interested in, a unit he envisioned as a cluster of interrelated wards of 100,000 to 150,000 inhabitants, each ward with its own civic structures, amenities, as well as places and buildings informed by local conditions and history. Yet, while constituting unique spatial units, the individual wards were connected to one another by a grid that connected them to a thoroughly rationalized entity: the continuously, growing, modern metropolis (O. Wagner 1911).
Despite the fact that Wagner’s concept of the polycentric metropolis was never realized, important aspects of it found their way into the design of the Gemeindebauten. It was Wagner’s students who took the metropolis as their model, interweaving the multiform, multipurpose spaces of the “new” Vienna with those of the old, to recast it as a “Grossstadt of the proletariat” (Blau 1999, 166-173; 238-249). [Illustration 9]

By entrusting the task of constructing Red Vienna’s public housing to architects influenced by Wagner's commitment to the Grossstadt, the municipality opted against an alternative urban vision that existed in Vienna since 1915: the garden city movement propelled by the Wild Settlers. Whereas, historically, settlement movements typically subscribed to bourgeois, picturesque, anti-urban values, the Viennese movement was an anti-picturesque, co-operative, self-help movement that was inextricably bound to the cultivation of food and the construction of make-shift housing (Blau 1999, 14). Due to the catastrophic living conditions during and in the immediate aftermath of WWI, urban dwellers left the city to squat on and live off public land. By 1918, 6.5 million square meters had been turned into arable land and more than 100,000 people lived in makeshift shelters (ibid, 90). Politically, the settlers had close ties to the Social Democrats who actively supported them until 1923, the year the first mass housing program was launched, by dedicating 30 percent of all fiscal means for housing to the construction of settlements (Hochhaeusl 2011, 30-31). [Illustration 10]

Ultimately, the city withdrew its funding for settlements and concentrated on the construction of inner-city housing instead. In contrast to what one might suspect, the decision for building housing in the Grossstadt [metropolis] instead of the Gartenstadt [garden city] was driven less by ideological concerns, than by legal and financial ones. First, the funds created by the housing construction tax were legally bound for re-investment in inner city housing. Second, the municipality did not dispose over the land needed for developing settlements on a grander scale, as the green girdle surrounding Vienna belonged to the province of Lower Austria. Third, the construction costs for suburban settlements were considerable higher than for inner -city Gemeindebauten, since the former also necessitated the provision of additional infrastructure, such as streets or canalization (Korthals Altes and Faludi 1995, 216-221), (Gulick 1948, 490).

Yet by deciding against the settlement movement for reasons that might have been financially and legally sound, the SDAP also decided against a political experiment, that is, an experiment in radical
democracy and socialization “from below”. The socio-economic theory that undergirded the settlement movement was influenced by English guild socialism, which conceived of settlers not only as consumers, but also as producers (Blau 1999, 97). One of the movement’s key figures was again Otto Neurath who, in 1920, became the Chief Secretary of the *Austrian Settlement and Allotment Garden Association*, a governing body that, in 1922, counted 50,000 members and oversaw 230 affiliated clubs (Hochhaeusl 2011, 28). Having been involved in the attempt to establish the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919, Neurath was committed to grassroots democratic initiatives. He considered workers' self-organization, their participation and co-operation in housing construction, and administration as essential for their socialization, a form of socialization informed by immediate practical experience instead of expert-imparted knowledge (Neurath 1928, 320-321; Pfoser 1982).

During Neurath’s leadership, the settlement movement pursued three overlapping strategies: an economic, a political, and an educational one. On the economic level, the settlers established a *Gemeinwirtschaft* [communal or co-operative economy] that revolved around collective ownership, shared infrastructure, and the contribution to the building process by unpaid labor. The communal economy’s implementation went hand in hand with political efforts to strengthen the settlers’ fiscal, judicial, and legislative power at the municipal level. While seeking a certain degree of autonomy from the city, the settlers also worked closely together with it to draw, for instance, on existing infrastructure. On the educational plane, the settlement association organized classes in agriculture, horticulture, vegetables and fruit growing, cooking, canning, and the keeping of small animals. It also provided lectures on architectural and urban topics, such as the construction of settlements or the emergence of garden cities. Since many settlers were unemployed workers and had a distinctly industrial and urban background, the offered classes aimed at equipping workers with the skills necessary to create a livelihood co-operatively, and, at the same time, to empower themselves (Hochhaeusl 2011, 28-32).

Neurath was at the helm of the settlers’ association and he was also the founder of the settlers’ school. Given his quest for “humanizing” knowledge (22), Neurath invented pictorial statistics. He hoped that by translating statistical information into a visual language consisting of self-explanatory signs and symbols, he would enable all people to “participate in a common culture”, and thereby help to eliminate “the canyon between educated and uneducated” (Neurath 1937, 25). Neurath was minutely aware of the fact that historically, statistics were an instrument of domination. More often
than not, they were used to study and exploit the working class by, for instance, evaluating the advantages to be gained from rationalization. In order to end the workers’ subjection to the statistical meta-form of knowledge, Neurath’s goal, inspired by Marx’s *A Workers’ Inquiry* (1880), was to create a visual language that would allow the uneducated to use statistics for their own advantage: to better understand their own working and living conditions and, consequently, to identify possible solutions to their own problems (Neurath 1979, 293-294; Pircher 1982, 164-165).

In 1923, the settlement association organized the “Viennese Small Garden-, Settlement-, and Housing Exhibition”, which put pictorial statistics, pamphlets, and even entire houses on display. The exhibit demarcated a new position on urbanism, one that incorporated the perspective and history of people who had so far been mere objects instead of subjects, let alone agents of urbanization. The exhibit also demonstrated a new way of *depicting* urbanism by using socio-political maps informed by graphic rules and graphic vocabulary, maps whose goal was to ensure that the visitor, regardless of his educational background, would find “reflected *his* problems, *his* past, *his* future – *himself*” [emphasis added] (Neurath 1933, 463). With both the settlement association and the settlement school, Neurath sought to overcome the workers’ subjection to urbanization and the abstracting, “colonizing” knowledge that pertained to it. His “method of emancipation” put the *experience* of emancipation center stage, an experience to be made in *enabling praxis*, such as house building, subsistence farming and, more generally, the co-operative organization of everyday life. In addition to enabling praxis, Neurath sought to democratize knowledge, statistical knowledge especially, by developing pictorial symbols to be understood universally, and by developing socio-political maps in which people would recognize themselves and which emphasized the interconnectedness of the particular and the general, the local, and the global.

Despite the fact that Neurath and his ideas were respected within the SDAP, they did not become hegemonic. The SDAP opted for a different strategy to prepare for socialism. Although in 1919, Bauer still deemed self-organization, self-administration, and self-government to be essential for bringing about democratic socialism (Bauer 1919/1976, 118-131), the SDAP’s policies would soon reveal a proclivity for traditional pedagogy and centralized administration. The SDAP’s choice for “socialization from above” went hand in hand with a choice for the “*Grossstadt* of the proletariat”
[metropolis of the proletariat] and its component parts, the Red Hof and the Gemeindebau-Wien apartment type.

What shape did the metropolis opted for the proletariat take? In contrast to Neurath’s vision of a general architectural plan that would prefigure the new socialist order and in contrast to the settlement movement’s pursuit of suburbanization, Red Vienna’s large-scale housing programs neither entailed a radical aesthetic re-envisioning of the existing city nor an encompassing pursuit of suburbanization. Instead, the Gemeindebauten were inserted in the existing urban fabric. To be sure, despite being inserted into the built status quo, they nonetheless altered and problematized existing socio-spatial patterns, as Eve Blau demonstrates convincingly and extensively in her seminal book, *The Architecture of Red Vienna. 1919-1934* (1999).

In the absence of both a new socialist architectural plan and new socialist planning and building regulations, Red Vienna’s public housing had to be brought in line with existing regulations, which typically originated in the nineteenth-century and reflected the interests of private developers and speculators. Thus, to engrave Red Vienna’s signature and, more generally, the proletariat’s presence and importance into the urban landscape, it was up to the creativity of the entrusted architects to figure out “how to build against the existing building ordinances while safely remaining within them” (172). A closer look at the four main building types that were adopted—the perimeter block, the “infill”, the residential quarter and the superblock—reveals that the Wagner-inspired architects did indeed find ways to mark the beginning of a New Vienna. “Intricately interwoven with the historical spaces of Old Vienna, the spaces of the New Vienna not only call into question the traditional socio-spatial relationships they describe but also generate a discursive space in the city that is tangible, public and perpetually unresolved” (339).

The most common building type was the Block- und Randverbauung [perimeter block building]. Whereas the existing urban grid determined the boundaries of the lot, Red Vienna’s architects decided to build the housing complexes along the lot’s outer margins to transform its center into public and communal spaces in the form of parks, playgrounds, and paddle pools. In defiance of the logic of profit maximization, which resulted in buildings that covered up to eighty-five percent of the land, the Gemeindebauten only consumed up to fifty percent of the available space to ensure that the courtyards, whose use was, historically speaking, the prerogative of landlords, would be big enough to serve recreational and communal purposes. Apart from creating spaces of socialization,
the building block’s vast communal spaces also served the purpose of providing the apartments with daylight and fresh air, essentials that inhabitants of traditional proletarian tenement housing were often deprived of (Weihsmann 1985, 126-128). [see, for instance, illustration 2]

The *Lueckenverbauung* [infill-building] was another building type that was adopted, one that was the most literal spatial embodiment of the Austro-Marxists’ “politics of growing” into socialism. Since the municipality owned more “gaps” in between buildings than free-standing, large lots and, since it did not dispose of effective expropriation laws that would have provided the city with access to larger lots, about fifty percent of Red Vienna’s municipal housing took the form of “infills”. Because the inherited building ordinances prescribed that any new buildings had to blend in with their surrounding in terms of height and use, the city and its architects sought to be creative and to nonetheless visually demarcate a difference between public and private housing. For this purpose, two strategies were adopted. Wherever possible, the city gradually and over time purchased adjacent tenement housing to provide architects with additional space to be transformed into communal and public space. If this strategy was not possible, it commissioned architects and craftsmen to decorate the Gemeindebauten’s facades with Kunst-am-Bau [art on the building], that is, with art whose purpose was to foreground the municipal housing’s public function (Weihsmann 1985, 126). [Illustration 12]

If the infill-buildings symbolized the SDAP’s pursuit of gradually growing into socialism, the size of Red Vienna’s residential quarters and superblocks embodied the SDAP’s yearning for politics of scale. Residential quarters were built in working class districts with poor local infrastructure. Along with public housing, new social, cultural, and commercial hubs were created, which transformed entire areas once designated as industrial zones into multifunctional urban quarters. Instead of inserting itself into the city center, the residential quarters created socialized urban islands on the city’s industrial fringes (Blau 1999, 282). The superblock, by contrast, operated not on the outskirts of the old city, but in the city’s heart. It typically spanned several city blocks, bridged or incorporated streets, accommodated parks and communal facilities, and housed hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. Similar to the residential quarter, the superblock reversed the hegemonic differentiation of functions prescribed since the nineteenth -century not by altering existing planning principles but by using architecture *strategically* to create an environment in which social functions that had been torn apart, functions such as dwelling, work, leisure, and circulation, would be re-integrated (298). The most famous superblock is the *Karl-Marx-Hof*—Red Vienna’s
flagship. “Long after we are gone, these stones will speak for us”, so were the words of Karl Seitz, Vienna’s mayor from 1923 to 1934, at the block’s opening ceremony in October 1930. The Karl-Marx-Hof was built on unused city land in between a bourgeois residential area and an industrial area. It accommodated 5,500 people in 1,325 apartments and was equipped with two central laundries, two bathhouses, two kindergartens, a youth center, dental clinic, health insurance office, polyclinic clinic, pharmacy, post office, several physicians, coffee shops, clubs, and twenty-five stores—all within a total area of 35.5 acres. The building itself covered only 18.4 percent of land; the rest was used for extensive gardens and parks (Nussbaum 2007, 51-52). [Illustrations 13, 14]

Red Vienna’s superblock in particular seems to bear key similarities to the mass housing the utopian socialist Charles Fourier had envisioned for the inhabitants of his ideal community called “Harmony”. Similar to Red Vienna’s superblock, the housing of the Harmonians, the phalanxes, were to be designed as large, multi-purpose edifices equipped with numerous communal facilities, such as dining halls, libraries, study rooms, places of worship, observatories, and gathering places for children (Fourier 1971, 144). Yet despite certain similarities in design, it is also important to note key differences between Fourier’s phalanxes and Red Vienna’s municipal housing blocks. First, Fourier designed the phalanxes as economically self-sufficient communities located on the countryside, whereas Red Vienna’s housing blocks were designed as loci of dwelling and socialization, and thus as loci of reproduction instead of production. Furthermore, Fourier’s ideal Harmonians were reflective of a social mix: capitalists, workers, and peasants were to live and produce in community. In Red Vienna, by contrast, municipal housing was built for one social class: the proletariat. Accordingly, despite similarities in design, the Red Hof was informed by previsions of utopian socialism and more by re-visions and socialist adaptations of Viennese building traditions; traditions in which the Hof, the rectangular building block with a courtyard in its center, has had a long and entrenched history (Blau 1999, 228). [Illustration 15]

To recall Bauer’s definition, Austro-Marxism is to be understood as a “realistic adaptation of day-to-day struggles to the particular conditions of time and place” without losing sight of the “great inspiring goal of socialism” (Bauer 1927/1978, 47). Against this backdrop, the Gemeindebauten’s “moderate modernism” could be read as the architectural equivalent to the Austro-Marxist politics of growing into socialism by taking given conditions and parameters as a starting point. While informed by existing traditions, the Rote Hof [Red Hof] nonetheless emerged as an innovative model type. As underscored by Blau, the integration of public spaces (such as streets, courtyards, civic
institutions), semi-public spaces (communal spaces), and private space (apartments), as well as the reconciliation of different spatial uses and functions (such as dwelling, recreation, play, communication, cultural and political organization, education, consumption, and circulation) were markers that clearly differentiated Red Vienna's *Volkswohnpalaeste* [people’s palaces] from Black Vienna's *Zinsburgen* [rent-bearing fortresses] (Blau 1999, 218-227).

In a city that, in the 1920s, was still largely shaped by Black Vienna and its embrace of economic liberalism, Red Vienna’s housing blocks did indeed open up a discursive counter-space. However, since the inhabitants of the Social Democratic “people’s palaces” were neither involved in deciding upon the municipal housing’s parameters nor consulted concerning their needs, the *Gemeindebauten* embodied an appropriation of the city for the proletariat by the party and its architects, rather than an appropriation of the city by the proletariat for the proletariat. Without doubt, the SDAP had a proclivity for socializing workers into socialism “from above” instead of encouraging socialization “from below”, a penchant that can also be observed in the fostered dwelling culture.

### 2.4 Toward a Socialist Dwelling Culture?

The emergence of the Red Hof as Red Vienna’s model type building was coupled with the crystallization of the *Gemeinde-Wien*-type apartment. Similar to the Red Hof, the building guidelines for the new apartments were mainly informed by re-visions of existing sub-standard living conditions in proletarian tenement housing instead of pre-visions of what progressive dwelling could look like. Rooms were to be lit and ventilated directly instead of indirectly; each apartment was to be equipped with its own instead of shared access to running water and washrooms; apartments were to be furnished with electricity, gas, tiled floors in the kitchen, and hardwood floors in the other rooms (Blau 1999, 176-177; Gulick 1948, 450).

Also hardly reflective of a “new socialist age” was the gradually hegemonized dwelling culture. Instead of challenging dominant bourgeois dwelling traditions, the *Gemeindebau-Wien*-type apartment further normalized many of them. As sociologist Rainer Sieder notes: the SDAP’s political elite largely rendered bourgeois domestic culture, the culture the elite itself was socialized into, the *conditio sine qua non* of dignified human dwelling (Sieder 1988, 418).
One important feature of bourgeois dwelling culture was privacy. The semi-privacy of the proletarian dwelling, a dwelling that typically accommodated extended families and that was not strictly divided from the dwelling of neighbors, was increasingly superseded by the privacy that characterized dwellings of the bourgeois, nuclear family. This Wendung nach Innen [turn toward the interior] (416) entailed, among others, the abolition of the semi-private gangways that connected apartments in traditional tenement housing and the creation of hallways inside the apartments. Both innovations had the effect of pushing living areas further back into the interior of the dwelling. By dispensing with the gangways, the city officials and architects not only eliminated the inconveniences of sharing water and toilets, and being exposed to neighbors’ noise and their kitchen smells, but in the process, they also abolished a place that was crucial for the formation of informal practices of mutual support and solidarity, especially among women. Oral histories from the 1980s show that, without romanticizing the difficult and precarious living conditions in traditional tenement housing, certain elements of it, facilitated by an architecture that fostered semi-privacy over privacy, were remembered positively: the support of neighbors and family members regarding household chores and child-rearing; the informal, narrative, and “egalitarian” exchange of information and knowledge on issues such as health, birthing, child-rearing, housework, and the labor market instead of the formal information provided by city appointed “experts”; and a degree of protection against domestic violence due to the apartments’ semi-privacy, which increased the social pressure on potential perpetrators (271-274, 418, 423).

Although, generally speaking, the municipality paid little attention to existing proletarian needs and desires, in its first housing program (1923), it accommodated the proletariat’s preference for multifunctional Wohnkuechen [live-in kitchens], kitchens that served not only the purpose of cooking, but also that of living, dwelling, and socializing. As one observer noted in the SDAP’s periodical, Arbeiter-Zeitung, in 1924: “Whatever time the Viennese worker has during the day, [it] is spent in the kitchen, and if there is no dining table available to sit at, [he] will perch on a coal box or bench” (Fuchs 1924). Yet by the time the second building program was launched in 1927, traditional proletarian dwelling culture had again been largely sidestepped. In an attempt to “Westernize” the Viennese dwellings, that is, in an effort to make them more akin to their modernist German counterparts, a commitment to rationalization had also finally found its way into the Viennese working class kitchen. [Illustration 16]
As a matter of fact, by 1927 the proletarian Wohnkueche was largely replaced by Margarete Schuette-Lihotsky’s Arbeitsekueche [work kitchen], a functional kitchen informed by Taylorist time and motion studies, one that no longer served social or recreational purposes, but solely that of (presumably) time- and labor-saving cooking (Blau 1999, 198-199). The task of meal preparation, which in traditional working class housing was shared among several (female) family members and neighbors, became a task to be fulfilled in private and solitude by women. [Illustration 17]

In contrast to the factory, where rationalization led to, at least, a degree of socialization, since work that had previously been carried out in the semi-privacy of a workshop or home was moved into a factory setting that involved fellow workers, in the kitchen, rationalization did not lead to socialization, instead it led to isolation. That said, the possibility of socializing or professionalizing cooking was not only within the SDAP’s theoretical horizon, as Bauer’s quote below reveals, but it was experimented with in practice. In 1925, the municipality funded the expansion of the one-kitchen house Heimhof, tenement housing for professional, middle-class women. At the Heimhof, cooking, cleaning, and laundry washing were taken care of by professional, paid house staff. Certainly, the service costs at the Heimhof were too high and unaffordable for the average working class family. However, instead of outright discarding the one-kitchen house as a financially unsound option, the Social Democrats could have experimented with it to explore the possibilities of tailoring this model of socialization to working class needs and desires (Gruber 1991, 51-52). The SDAP decided against doing so, and thereby decided that reproductive labor was of lesser concern for the party than productive labor, despite the interconnectedness of the two.

“For the self-perfection and intellectual maturing of workers to be possible”, to recall Bauer’s quote cited at the beginning of this chapter, the “mere bedding” of traditional tenement housing had to be replaced by the “real dwelling” of the Gemeindebauten (Bauer 1929/1976, 608). For the “real dwelling” to qualify as such, it was important that it would no longer be merely a place dominated by reproductive labor, as was the case in proletarian housing, but a place where dwelling itself could become an activity, namely one of recreation and cultivation, as was the case in bourgeois housing (Sieder 1988, 418). Yet for dwellings to become sites of leisure and education for men and women, reproductive labor had to be taken care of at a societal instead of individual level. In his 1919 book, The Path toward Socialism, Bauer openly embraced the socialization of domestic labor in the form of communal laundry facilities, shared play and study rooms for children or central kitchens [my emphasis] (Bauer 1919/1976, 120). Contradictorily, in the same text Bauer argued that the
socialization of domestic work is of particular import for the regeneration and “civilization” of the male worker:

“Whereas today, the worker has to spend his leisure in a room that serves as a kitchen, washroom, and play-room for children simultaneously; whereas today, he time and again flees from the uncomfortable home to the inn; in his [new] home, he will not only have his own apartment, but also a reading-, play-, and entertainment-room, in which he can comfortably spend his leisure-time” [my translation], (Bauer 1919/1976, 120).

Since proletarian women were hardly in the position to “flee the uncomfortable home” because they were naturalized into being the primary caretakers and since traditionally “inns” were male refuges for after-work decompression, Bauer’s quote uncovers that securing the replenishment and cultivation of the male work force was of greater importance than that of the female one. As is revealed by a closer look at Austro-Marxist politics of dwelling, regarding women, the SDAP pursued the goals of disciplining women, among others, by means of education, rather than the goal of emancipating them. Against this backdrop, the SDAP’s decision against socializing or professionalizing reproductive labor amounted to a decision for re-entrenching traditional gender roles, spatially, in the apartment. Similarly, the specific set-up of communal laundry facilities and municipal counseling services within the housing blocks reflected the party’s implicit politics of disciplining women into being their “natural selves” as well-organized homemakers and well-informed mothers and spouses.

Cooking was to remain an individualized affair in the Gemeindebauten. However, the municipality equipped the housing blocks with modern, communal laundry facilities and stepped up its support for child-rearing to reduce, so the party’s goal, the burden of reproductive labor. Depicted as emancipating, oral histories conducted in the 1980s with first female tenants showed that both innovations were in fact often experienced as constraining instead of emancipating. In the Waschkuechen [laundry kitchens], women were supervised by a city-appointed, male Waschmeister [laundry foreman] who oversaw that women would adjust their work-rhythm to a predetermined washing schedule and the pace of the available machines so as to not forfeit their right to use the communal facilities. Meant to be a relief, the communal laundry facilities were remembered by many women as sites of stress and hazing (Pirhofer and Sieder 1982, 354-355). [Illustration 18]

In terms of child-support, the municipal policies seemed to be less focused on ensuring the compatibility of (female) economic independence and parenting, than on stepping up the standards
for the latter. The SDAP conceived of traditional practices of parenting in proletarian families as largely insufficient, practices that made “husbands often only know the dark sides of family life [my emphasis]”, leading to their escape into inns (Bauer 1919/1976, 120). To better the conditions of family life and parenting, the SDAP introduced Mutter- und Eheberatungsstellen [counseling services for mothering and marriage] typically directly located in the Gemeindebauten. As revealed by the very name of the counseling services, their main target group was women who were to be instructed by specialists of hygiene and pedagogy.

“The more we take care of our youth, the less we have to take care of the old”, so said Julius Tandler, Red Vienna’s city councilor at the Department for Welfare and Public Health”. “What we spend on the welfare of pregnant women and newborns, we will save on prisons and asylums [my translation]”. To avoid “short-sighted humanism”, unproductive demographic expenses had to be eliminated by means of sterilization if necessary (quoted in Maimann 1981, 79). Thus, taking care of the health of oneself and one’s family was not merely a matter of individual well-being, but one of social responsibility: the health of the entire Bevoelkerungskoerper [population body] was at stake (Tandler 1928, 14). To ensure that the transmitted knowledge on health and hygiene was applied at home, Fuersorgerinnen [welfare workers], housing inspectors, and teachers were entitled to report “un-orderly families” to the city. In extreme cases, the Department for Welfare and Public Health intervened and separated children from their families to accommodate them temporarily or permanently in municipal foster homes (Gruber 1991, 71-73). [Illustration 19]

The care for the “population body” also informed the municipalities’ allocation policies. The apartments were allocated based on a point system, which took criteria such as overcrowding, disability, residence, and citizenship into account, as well as marital status, pregnancy, and the number of children. Although the SDAP had promised to provide accommodation for the homeless and disabled in particular, its actual allocation praxis gave preference to young families. First, because they constituted the most important demographic stratum for bringing about the “new men”. Second, because it was an effective way to de-normalize the extended and normalize the nuclear family model (Gruber 1991, 61-62).

Against this backdrop, it becomes evident that the “turn toward the interior” that shaped the floor plan of the Gemeindebau-Wien-type-apartment was coupled with an entrenchment of bourgeois family norms and gender roles as well as, ironically and contradictorily, the re-subjugation of
workers to forms of knowledge liberal reformers had already subjugated them to. As Lutz Musner explains in regard to liberal reform:

“In the course of urban modernization, the suburbs were re-formed and overlaid in writing. This process took the form not only of systematized regulation in work and education, or of advertisements for products of mass consumption that were becoming available; rather, the “suburb” in its totality was depicted as a world outside of bourgeois rationality [emphasis added] and urban order. The precondition for this was the wide application of forms of knowledge derived from social statistics, medicine, epidemiology, evolutionary biology, and law enforcement, which made modernity historically possible, bringing the social transformations of the nineteenth century into the iron structure of reason. These fields of knowledge produced an instrumental narrative designed to create the conditions for the ‘colonization’ of the suburbs and their comprehensive ordering, when necessary deploying police and military means” (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 20).

Since, for liberal reformers, working class culture was deemed outside of bourgeois rationality, a rationality equated with universal reason tout court, subjection in the form of colonization and for the purpose of economic modernization seemed to be legitimate. For the Social Democrats, by contrast, emancipation in the name of socialist humanism was the goal, and the appropriate strategy to achieve this goal seemed to be the integration of the proletariat into bourgeois rationality. Their hope was to empower workers’ by exposing them to and providing them with access to the bourgeoisie’s written culture and science-derived knowledge. [Illustration 20] Yet the transmission of knowledge to the “ignorant” was not equal with their emancipation. On the contrary, as revealed by oral histories cited above, workers often perceived the latter as dominating and disciplining. In their quest for workers’ emancipation, the Social Democrats prolonged, in important respects, the inherited legacy of subjugation by reforming workers’ life through urban design or social policies. Accordingly, the “episteme of bourgeois suspicion” (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 60) toward the proletariat that undergirded liberal reform was, to a certain degree, also implicit to Social Democratic politics of dwelling. One further example thereof is the Social Democratic discussions of and on the aesthetic of the proletariat.

Since in the new apartments the activity of dwelling was assumed to transcend that of social reproduction, questions of taste became pertinent. Numerous architects and pedagogical reformers were displeased with the proletariat’s proclivity for sentimental knickknacks, embellishments, and ornaments. One of them was Richard Wagner, a newspaper editor and educator who openly expressed his disgust with the “junk amassed in proletarian dwellings”, junk that makes the
inhabitant “tread on eggshells to not hurt oneself” in one of the Social Democrats’ main periodicals on pedagogy. According to Wagner, “the pictures of saints and royalty, the postcards and artistically vulgar reproductions, and, particularly, the homemade antimacassars used to prettify the furniture” were clear materializations of an “education to submissiveness” (R. Wagner 1926, 114). To countervail the latter, Anna Bloch, another pedagogical reformer, suggested to systematically anchoring fine art in proletarian homes: not by putting up canonic paintings on walls but by storing them in dust free folders. “[E]ach proletarian household should own a collection of artistic paintings to be kept in folders as dust free as possible” to ensure that they are available whenever the proletarian is need of emotional edification. On such occasions, these treasures should be retrieved and pondered at in a quiet corner of the apartment (Bloch 1928).

Workers’ had a penchant for sentimental knick knack and kitsch. Numerous socialist reformers, however, wanted to see this penchant gradually supplanted by a new proletarian aesthetic, an aesthetic informed by rationalism and functionalism. An austere, uncluttered interior, unburdened by history and memory was presented as an aesthetic ideal, and ideal that was, in addition, often coupled with the pseudo-feminist argument 7 that rationalism and functionalism would automatically lessen the burden of household chores (Taut 1926), (Schuster and Schacherl, 1926).

Otto Neurath belonged to the proponents of a rationalist and functionalist dwelling culture. In line with other socialist reformers, he was critical of the proletariat’s love for the sentimental, which, for Neurath, clearly mirrored a “lack of class consciousness”–an uncritical embrace of the capitalists' obsession with appearance and possession. According to Neurath, in a truly socialist society, both had to be gradually overcome (Neurath 1926a, 62). However, in contrast to most reformers within the SDAP, Neurath did not consider the implementation of a new, proletarian aesthetic to be a matter of pedagogy. Instead, a new proletarian aesthetic was only likely to emanate on the basis of an encompassing social transformation that involves the active and creative participation of workers’ in shaping all fields of social life. Only if the organized proletariat were actively and practically involved in the construction of a proletarian counter-culture, an involvement that would encompass the construction of housing and the building of furniture, would workers experience their own capacities and with them, self-empowerment and -emancipation. Neurath:

7 I refer to this claim as “pseudo-feminist” because neither Taut nor Schuster nor Schacherl sought to actually evaluate whether a minimalist interior would indeed lessen the burden of home-making. Historically speaking, the rationalization of home-making often stepped up the standards for home-making and, by doing so, the time spent on reproductive work, instead of reducing it(see, for instance, Ingeborg Beer, Architektur fuer den Alltag, 1994).
“The internal transformation of things and men” [...] will only fully unfold where proletarian majorities or proletarian co-operatives are builders and where the organized working class has control over the production of furniture or influences the latter in decisive ways. Only on a social basis, a new form of life, a new experience of art can emerge. From art education alone, especially from an introduction to art history, hardly anything essential can be derived for the formation of a proletarian way of life as long as the proletariat has not yet become mature for the conscious creation of the present” [my translation] (Neurath 1928, 320-321).

Neurath decidedly abstained from interpreting the proletariat's reluctance toward adopting a functionalist aesthetic as “cultural backwardness” and, by doing so, abstained from uncritically assuming a distance between the knowledgeable and the ignorant, a distance many of his fellow reformers had reiterated. In fact, in an attempt to make sense of why the Maschinenästhetik, an aesthetic he himself had hailed as that of the future, had difficulties warming the hearts of the proletariat, he conceded that modern rationality itself might be the problem, since, from a worker’s perspective, it is this type of rationality that not only increases efficiency and thus production, but also unemployment and hence precariousness (Neurath 1926b, 52-53).

The architect Josef Frank, another socialist proponent of rationalism and functionalism, struck a similar self-critical chord. Frank noted that the call for abolishing sentimentality was typically put forth by men and women who were scientifically or artistically engaged, in other words, by men and women whose everyday professional activities were emotionally rewarding. Frank concluded that, given their situation, creative men might have no need to extend sentimentality into their domestic sphere. Yet for industrial workers the situation was fundamentally different. Because their work was usually deprived of pathos and sentimentality, it was understandable that they would yearn for the accommodation of both in their domestic sphere (Frank 1927, 49).

As Susan Buck Morss argues, “[u]nder conditions of modern technology, the aesthetic system undergoes a dialectical reversal. The human sensorium changes from a mode of being 'in touch' with reality into a means of blocking out reality” (Buck-Morss 1992, 22). To protect the human sensorium, an escape into a phantasmagoria, that is, into an “appearance of reality that tricks the senses through technical manipulation”, has frequently proven to be attractive. Historically and as noted by Red Vienna’s reformers, concerning the domestic sphere, working class phantasmagoria were typically informed by petty-bourgeois ideals. “By furnishings that provided a phantasmagoria of textures, tones, and sensual pleasures that immersed the home-dweller in [...] a privatized
fantasy world,” workers created for themselves an environment that functioned as a protective shield for their senses and sensibilities (Buck-Morss 1991, 104).

Among Red Vienna’s reformers, a deeper and sympathetic understanding of the working class’ aesthetic predilections was largely missing. The hegemonic position was one that depreciated existing working class culture and that, conjointly construed workers as objects of reform instead of agents of change. Despite the fact that this depreciating position was criticized within the SDAP’s own ranks—Neurath and Frank were two cases in point—in general, the party did not divert from its steered course of top-down socialization. Top-down socialization informed the aesthetic of politics of dwelling, but also the organization and administration of municipal housing.

Although in 1919, Bauer emphasized the importance of tenants' self-organization and administration for the development of economic democracy, tenant autonomy was never put into practice. To be sure, tenants’ associations did exist and their membership was large, yet their function was limited to a merely advisory role: they neither had a stake in drafting housing policies nor in managing the housing complexes (Gruber 1991, 64). As observed by Philipp Vas, a critic of Austro-Marxist housing policies:

“In these dwellings the tenant lives under healthful conditions, he lives cheaply, he saves time and work, in short, as tenement houses they are ideal – the dream of many housing reformer is realized. But solicitude has gone too far. Individual needs cannot be satisfied. Literally, every nail driven in the wall is controlled by the city government. Every individual rule may be approved, but all the rules taken together tend to destroy the satisfaction of living in a building where everything is done mechanically and the bureaucracy, because no rents are charged, is in a position to exercise the most minute control in every part of every dwelling (Vas 1928, 91).

Given that socialism was the goal of the Austro-Marxists’ slow revolution, why was so little immediate political power given to the expected redeemers of the promise of socialism, the workers? As Max Adler explained, “[t]he burden of future democracy does not rest on politics, but on pedagogy” (M. Adler 1922, 185). One reason for the SDAP’s choice of pedagogy over politics was the concern that political action, especially if uncoordinated, could provoke the opposition, lead to a civil war, and thereby jeopardize the party’s long term goal of obtaining socialism by democratic means (Rabinbach 1989, 55-60). Another reason for this choice was the fact that the party elite assumed its basis to be lacking the necessary maturity for bringing about and sustaining socialism,
an assumption coupled with an idealist notion of education that deemed insights into the laws of morality to be the \textit{conditio sine qua non} for social transformation. Max Adler:

“‘To know in order to live’ – with this phrase science assumes control of humanity’s moral and social spirit, in whose ever-growing strength the full force of reality lives more powerfully than in the development of the intellect. The teleological relation, which could not have any significance in constituting the domain of scientific knowledge, becomes a practical act in the consciousness of the real individual [...] in so far as he develops science for his own end, in order to shape the world in his own image. If man constitutes the laws of nature, in the theoretical domain, precisely by rigorously excluding all teleological conceptions – because it is only the necessary forms of thought operative in the regularities of his cognition which establish the rigorous order that science then reproduces as the regularity of nature – so in the practical realm, to the extent that he creates an external validity for the regularities of the will, as they are express in the moral law, he becomes the new creator and transformer of the terrestrial world. The leap from the realm of natural necessity into the realm of freedom is only accomplished by the practical action which deliberately \textit{subordinates the comprehended [my emphasis] regularities of nature to man’s own self-imposed goals}” (M. Adler 1904/1978, 77-78).

Leaving the question of the relationship between freedom and necessity aside, Adler introduced a gap between knowing and living, between the comprehension of the laws of morality and their implementation in action, a gap that also involved a temporal component: a component that, in the name of “growing into socialism” and progress, lent itself to pedagogical reform without an endpoint. Adler’s intellectual adversary was, once again, Neurath, whose philosophical hero was not Kant, but Epicure. Influenced by the latter’s materialism, Neurath was convinced that realizing socialism was neither a matter of morality nor of pedagogy, but solely a matter of social action and (conscious and unconscious) dynamics (Pfoser 1982). Yet, as it turned out, not Neurath’s rationale for praxis but Adler’s \textit{theoretical} rationale for the primacy of knowing over doing was backed up by Bauer’s \textit{socio-political} outlook and, more generally, the SDAP’s politics. In this context, revisiting one of Bauer’s quotes is helpful:

“Our party comprises the most diverse proletarian strata, strata that display highly diverging levels of cultural development and degrees of class consciousness. Our party has the duty to accept the proletarians the way capitalism has educated them: with all the ignorance and lack of culture the capitalist social order has condemned them to; with all the vices of the oppressed capitalism has bred them with. Yet due to the proletarian movement, the praxis of the proletarian class struggle, a continuously growing part of the proletariat is striving to overcome the lack of culture they used to live with. With growing success, an intellectually vibrant and increasingly cultured elite emerges out of the bosom of the proletariat - workers who spend their leisure aspiring to higher knowledge, seeking pleasure in real art, and who develop a new culture filled with the spirit of socialism from within the workers’ organizations” (Bauer 1927/1976, 497).
As noted by Bauer, the main pathway out of the workers’ alleged immaturity and lack of culture was the proletarian class struggle. Yet the class struggle Bauer envisaged was less informed by “revolutionizing practice”, practice that stressed “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and human activity” (Marx 1845/1978, 144)⁸, than by the idealist notion of Bildung, education built on a distance between theory and practice, between the educator and the ignorant. In the context of Red Vienna’ housing policies, experts in the fields of medicine, hygiene, child rearing, art, and architecture were to encourage workers to aspire to “higher knowledge” and to seek pleasure in “real art” (Gruber 1991, 87-96). If necessary, encouragement was to give way to discipline. Thus, instead of asking the question of “who is educating the educator” (ibid.), in important respects, the Austro-Marxists opted for the traditional pedagogue and sought to alter social circumstances by spreading knowledge “from above”. With regard to the working class, Adler stressed the importance of breaking the “intellectual state of affairs in which the revolutionary class still thinks the thoughts of the old classes […]” (M. Adler 1928/1978, 143). Yet concerning the Social Democratic elite, the Social Democrats refrained from breaking the intellectual state of affairs in which the elite itself was still thinking the thoughts of the old classes.

The Social Democratic elite, influenced by the theory of Austro-Marxism, predominantly determined the content and direction of the socialist strategy. The basis had little influence on the chosen political and educational direction. Despite this situation, workers largely supported the decisions made by their party’s leaders. They legitimized the steered course with their votes, with loyal party membership, and membership in the manifold cultural organizations. From 1919 to 1927, the SDAP’s Viennese electorate increased from 54 percent to 60 percent (Holtmann 1996, 126, 127). Even in 1932, the year the National Socialists won half of the seats of the Christian Socialists, the SDAP remained the strongest party in city hall securing, 59 percent of the votes (Frei 1984, 59). In Vienna in particular, party membership was particularly attractive. In the period from 1919 to 1929, it doubled at the federal level, yet quintupled at the municipal level (Holtmann 1996, 127). Similarly, involvement with the party’s numerous cultural and social organizations was particularly popular in Vienna. By the early 1930s, the SDAP’s loose network of more than forty cultural organizations

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⁸Karl Marx: “The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice” (Marx 1845/1978, 144).
registered an aggregate of some 400,000 members, noteworthy for a city of less than two million (Gruber 1991, 81).

There is no doubt that the SDAP greatly enhanced workers’ quality of life by introducing social legislation and municipal institutions that provided for people from “cradle to grave”. Yet in contrast to the party’s expectation, the provided *foretaste* of socialism under capitalism did not elicit the expected appetite for “real” socialism. In fact, the vast majority of the SDAP’s members showed little interest in a socialist revolution. When faced with, on the one hand, the severe economic crisis of the late 1920s and, on the other hand, the SDAP’s increasing political paralysis due to a strengthened conservative and fascist opposition, many workers opted to leave the SDAP instead of standing up for it and its goal of ousting capitalism (Holtmann 1996, 162-163). Ultimately, and much to the dismay of Bauer, *Interessenssozialismus* [interest-driven socialism], socialism that aimed at “quality of life improvements” trumped *Gesinnungssozialismus* [conviction-driven socialism], that is, socialism that pursued the realization of the “cultural ideal of higher form of societal organization” (Bauer 1928, 280). In times of crisis, higher cultural ideals seemed to have little traction.

July 15, 1927, marked the beginning the end for the Austro-Marxist experiment with democratic socialism. In response to an acquittal of members of the conservative paramilitary group *Heimwehr*, who had killed a child and a member of the SDAP’s paramilitary organization, members of the socialist paramilitary group *Schutzbund* took to the street to protest against the state’s move toward *Klassenjustiz* [class-based judiciary]. During those protests, the seat of the judiciary, the *Justizpalast*, was set on fire, followed by violent and fatal confrontations between Social Democrats and the police. The long-term impact of the events of July 15, 1927, on the Austro-Marxist experiment was fundamental. Most importantly, the events revealed “the illusion of democratism” (Max Adler), that is, the illusion that socialism could be brought about gradually and peacefully *within* a liberal, democratic state (Rabinbach 1989, 53). Without doubt, since their inception, the Social Democrats had created an impressive “bulwark” of Social Democratic organizations. Yet the turmoil in 1927 painfully disclosed a major flaw of the SDAP’s political strategy: the Social Democrats had confounded the widespread popular support for the party and its social and cultural institutions with the party's actual political power and effectiveness. As Bauer remarked self-critically in 1936:

“If the working class had hoped to achieve a socialist order of society by utilizing democracy, it must now recognize that it has first to fight for its own dominance to build
up a socialist social order before a complete and lasting democracy will be possible” (Bauer 1938/1978, 186).

As a result of the Christian Socialists’ increasingly successful pursuit of introducing an anti-democratic, corporatist state, from 1927 onwards, the SDAP found itself in a position in which its fight for socialism became secondary to its fight for democracy. In March 1933, the Christian Socialists finally catapulted themselves into a position of ruling by decree under the aegis of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, preparing the path for Austro-Fascism. The SDAP’s last major attempt to resist the reactionary forces in Vienna was in February 1934. Using the Gemeindebauten as barricades, members of the Schutzbund fought the Christian Socialist Heimwehr. Yet it did not take long until the “Red Fortresses” fell and with them, the Austro-Marxist experiment with municipal socialism. [Illustration 21]

What are the lessons that can be drawn from the preceding analyses of Red Vienna’s housing program? The great success of Red Vienna’s 400 communal housing blocks lies, I would argue, in their embodiment of “politics of place making”, that is, politics that were driven by considerations of social justice and the demand for the recognition of a class that had been the backbone of Vienna’s modernization, yet deprived of the latter’s fruits. By appropriating spaces and cultural markers of the imperial as well as the liberal city, the Gemeindebauten not only symbolized the proletariat’s political enfranchisement, but they also generated important dialectical spaces between Old and New Vienna (Blau 1999, 15). As a result of municipal socialism, fundamental political questions were projected onto the urban: whether housing is a right or a commodity; how to draw the line between private and public space; who has access to the scientific, cultural, and educational achievements of modernization and what is to be made of these achievements.

To be sure, the Social Democrats did not simply project these questions onto the urban fabric, they also sought to answer them. One of their answers was the municipal housing program. First, the introduction of the Federal Rent Control Act and the Breitner taxes, set an end to the free-market housing policies of the Liberal and Christian Socialist era. Second, the creation of vast courtyards and parks for public use inside building blocks abdicated the principle of profit maximization. Third, the provision of cultural, educational, and medical facilities in the housing complexes called into question the bourgeoisie’s monopoly on culture and knowledge.
Particularly the appropriation of bourgeois culture for the masses is to be seen in a critical light. It implied the failure to thoroughly question and evaluate the conditions of production and the signification of liberal culture and science. While repeatedly evoking the emergence of a new “socialist language” or the flourishing of “new men” instilled by the “spirit of socialism”, the SDAP largely abstained from defining the socialist content of these evocations. Bourgeois domestic culture as well as pedagogical idealism informed the “politics of dwelling” implemented at the Gemeindebauten, norms the Social Democrats appropriated for workers for the sake of their emancipation, without, however, taking into account that for the proletariat these norms also embodied domination in the form of, for instance, a profound disregard for working class culture, desires and needs. It can be argued that Bauer’s and Adler’s repeated emphasis on the reform of consciousness as an essential step toward breaking with inherited traditions, the type of reform the SDAP finally adopted, compromised the method of reform their intellectual forefather had in mind: “the ruthless criticism of everything existing” to obtain a clearer picture of the meaning of one’s own actions (Marx 1844/1978b, 13). Against this backdrop, it can be concluded that the SDAP largely re-entrenched the existing division between professional intellectuals, the educators, and the non-intellectual workers, the ignorant. Given the Social Democratic elite's reluctance toward supporting workers' self-organization and spontaneous praxis, it curtailed the formation of “organic intellectuals”, intellectuals who could have directed the aspirations of their own class and thus advanced, if one follows Gramsci, the emergence of a socialist hegemony (Gramsci 2008, 6-7).

Without defending the SDAP's continuation of existing power- and class relations, one might nonetheless try to make sense of it. It is clear that the Social Democrats' vision of the reform of consciousness as well as their vision of a social revolution clearly differed from those of Marx who stated that proletarian revolutions,

“have to [...] criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weakness and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic before them, recoil ever and anew from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: Hic Rhodus, hic salta!” (Marx 1852/1978, 597-598).

In light of Marx's criteria for a social revolution, most importantly, the criteria of permanent (self-) critique, it is obvious that the SDAP’s experiment with democratic socialism fell short of Marx's
The notion of a revolution. The fact that the SDAP’s elite eschewed the critique of itself is perhaps not only a sign of ideological weakness and political indecisiveness, but also a sign that points to the utterly difficult historical and political circumstances the Austro-Marxist experiment was embedded in. While it is true that the SDAP’s invocation of socialism was, to a large extent, rhetorical and reflective of a form of radicalism that was predominantly verbal, it is also true that rhetoric was used as a tool to cover up the lack of a socialist program, as the architectural critic Manfredo Tafuri insinuates (Tafuri 1980, 7-8, 94, 119-139). On a more positive note, it can be argued that the SDAP’s rhetoric was an important tool to keep a divided workers’ movement united by repeatedly “interpellating” workers as the subjects of a higher mission (despite the latter’s vagueness). Furthermore, verbal radicalism served as a means to demonstrate unity and decisiveness to the SDAP’s political opponents, the reactionary and fascist forces that were keen on identifying chasms within the workers movement to widen them. To be sure, as has already been mentioned above, what the Social Democratic elite did overlook or underestimate is that neither verbal radicalism nor a bulwark of social and cultural organization can supplant politics. Although the Gemeindebauten turned out to be symbols of an urban reform that failed to achieve its initial, radical, revolutionary goals, their undergirding legacy of decommodifying housing, i.e., of stipulating housing as a right instead of a privilege, is still impressive, not least because, to this day, the Gemeindebauten have an important re-distributive effect on Vienna’s housing stock.

In the preceding analyses, Red Vienna’s production of space in response to a dire social and economic crisis after the end of WWI that went hand in hand with the promise of a radical new political beginning was thrown into sharper relief. Among others, the promise of a new beginning found its way into mass housing. “New men” were expected to flourish in Red Vienna’s municipal housing, housing that, since its inception, aimed at more than being a mere dwelling. As part of the Austro-Marxist experiment with municipal socialism, housing was destined to be a germinating site for a new society. Similar to Vienna, in Berlin after WWII, the rapid provision of mass housing was a dire necessity, and at the same time, a promising locus for spatially and symbolically demarcating a new, social and political beginning. However, due to the onset of the Cold War, urban reconstruction in general, and the provision of mass housing in particular, got increasingly drawn into ideological battles between state socialism and liberal capitalism and their respective dialectics between political promises and actual material practices—the focus of the subsequent analyses.
Illustration 1: Opening ceremony at a municipal housing block. The banner on the building reads: Hoch das Rote Wien [Cheers for Red Vienna].

Illustration 2: Wading pool in the courtyard of a municipal housing block.
Illustration 3: „Life in the Zinsburgen [Rent bearing palaces]."
Illustration 4: Old Viennese workers’ housing with shared Bassena [Water Faucet].
Illustration 5: Ringstrasse of the Proletariat.

Illustration 6: Das Neue Wien [Vienna of Today, 1931. Map showing new municipal buildings and facilities.]
Illustration 7: Housing Tax Isotype [International System of Typographic Picture Education].

Illustration 8: „Matteoti Hof. Built by the City of Vienna from the Proceeds of the Housing Tax from 1926 to 1927”. 
Illustration 9: Site plan for projected XXII municipal district in Vienna by Otto Wagner, an example for his vision of the expandable Grossstadt [metropolis].
Illustration 10 Source: Co-operative Settlement Rosenhuegel, Vienna.
Illustration 11: Isotypes developed for pictorial statistics by Otto Neurath.


Illustration 17: Model cooking niche by Margarete Schuette-Lihotzky, photo 1922.
Illustration 18: Communal laundry facilities at the Sandleiten-Hof, 1928.
Illustration 19: „No Viennese child shall be born on newspaper“. Advertisement for the Saeuglingspaket, a gift package for newborns from the city distributed by welfare workers.
Illustration 20: Library in the Sandleitenhof. Inscription reads: “Books enslaved us, books will again liberate us.”
Illustration 21: „The Fall of the Red Fort“ (left) and damages at the Karl-Marx Hof as a result of the civil war in 1934 (right).
3 Post-WWII Berlin: From Great Berlin to the Divided City

Post-WWII discourse on reconstruction was infused by the hope that overhauling the urban environment would contribute to a rejuvenation of society at large. This applied to Germany’s West no less than to its East. Since both East and West Germany claimed Berlin as their respective capital up to the late 1950s, the city increasingly turned into a stage for two competing political rationales: state socialism and liberal capitalism. Particularly in the first decades of the Cold War, the questions about the reconstruction of the city in general and that of housing in particular had been put center stage in the ideological battle. Building for the “new man” and, to a lesser extent, for the “new woman” became a site of Systemkonkurrenz [system competition. Although initially the plans for Berlin's reconstruction resulted from joint efforts between the Western Allies and the Soviets, they were soon put into the dustbin of history and replaced by competing visions of a “proper dwelling”. The widespread desire for a radically new beginning was turned into political capital, which left material traces not only on the urban scale, the city, but also on the private one, the apartment.

The main thrusts of the subsequent analyses of “politics of dwelling” in East and West Berlin are the following: (1) to delineate the gradual narrowing of the desires for and possibilities of a radical new beginning after 1945 to a constraining logic of techno-scientific modernization, a logic that shaped urban reconstruction no less than mass housing in East as well as West Germany; (2) to account for the different policies that were undergirding mass housing on both sides of the Wall, mass housing that was increasingly similar in form, yet different with regard to its underlying policies and the socio-political legacies it had left; (3) to throw into relief spatial appropriations “from below”, that is, counter spaces carved out by inhabitants that point to shortcomings of or even alternatives to state-provided or -subsidized mass housing.

The widespread popular desires for and the subsequent political promises of a radical new beginning after 1945, a beginning typically connoted with putting human progress center stage regarding politics no less than aesthetics, technology, and the economy, increasingly evaporated and were supplanted by a narrow techno-scientific vision of modernity, that is, modernization. This gradual reduction of humanistic aspirations to considerations of techno-scientific and economic rationality shaped, as I will show, urban reconstruction and mass housing on both sides of the Wall and became particularly prevalent after the onset of the Cold War.
Before the beginning of the Cold War, however, an alternative vision of urban and social reconstruction dominated public discussions, one that still sought to transform society in an encompassing instead of one-sided way. Shortly after 1945, the Soviets entrusted, with the approval of the Western Allies, the modernist and politically untainted architect Hans Scharoun with the task to work out a plan for Berlin’s reconstruction. Part of Scharoun and his Collective’s Plan was the dissolution of the industrial city into a city landscape in which nature and technology would be reconciled to facilitate the emergence of a new, democratic, and egalitarian society. As heirs of the modernist movement of the 1920s and close affiliates of the New Building, Scharoun and his Collective still pursued the idea that for human progress to be possible, the aesthetic, political, and technological is in need of reconciliation. Cold War politics set an end to the latter, ushering in the hegemony of economic and techno-scientific imperatives of modernization. Yet, as Margaret Kohn succinctly puts it, because “[e]ven an unsuccessful movement may reveal democratic possibilities”, I outline Scharoun’s failed vision of Berlin’s reconstruction to show that an alternative to the ultimately chosen path of techno-scientific modernization did exist (Kohn 2003, 10).

Once the Cold War had begun, “the logic of urbanism”, i.e., a state-administered, technocratic rationality was increasingly applied to the two “half cities”, a logic that affected urban reconstruction as much as the provision of mass housing. “Urbanism”, as Lefebvre explains, “claims to be a system [that] pretends to embrace, enclose, possess a new totality. It wants to be the modern philosophy of the city, justified by (liberal [or, as I would add, socialist]) humanism while justifying a (technocratic) utopia” (Lefebvre 2003, 153).

At the level of the urban, the seeds for this technocratic utopia were, as I will show, already present in both the socialists’ and liberals’ respective idealized visions of urban reconstruction: the Sixteen Principles of City Planning adopted by the East German regime and the Charter of Athens appropriated by the West German one. Despite the fact that the Sixteen Principles and the Charter of Athens proposed radically different urban forms, it will be demonstrated that both idealized urban visions already contained elements which foreshadowed the technocratic societal rejuvenation they would ultimately usher in: the furthering of industrialization and, conjointly, economic and technological efficiency; the reliance on experts with regard to devising and building the new city.
In the case of East Germany, the regime’s increasing one-sided orientation toward industrialization was initially concealed behind the aesthetic forms of socialist realism and its veneration of national traditions of representation and monumentality. As Walter Benjamin suggests, upon the invention of new technologies and instruments of production, it typically takes time until aesthetic forms that adequately express the new laws that undergird new technologies are found. One striking example of this gap between technical innovation and adequate aesthetic expression is the locomotive: before the invention of its modern form, it had been constructed after the model of a horse, with two feet alternately rising off the ground (Benjamin 2002, F2a,5). Socialist realism, however, represented an inversion of Benjamin’s succinct observation. It deliberately concealed technological innovation behind traditional forms, yet not because an adequate aesthetic language to express the new had not yet been found, but because it pursued a political purpose: the actualization of Stalin’s doctrine of “building socialism in one country”. For the sake of nation-building, Stalin ordained the excavation (or re-invention) of national aesthetic traditions, an ordinance that, in the early years of the Cold War, heavily shaped East German city building, including the design of mass housing.

By contrast, in West Germany the dominant aesthetic language of the early 1950s was that of modernist functionalism. Yet, as mentioned in the context of Scharoun, West German modernism in the mid-1950s was already largely deprived of the political aspirations that had pertained to modernism of the 1920s, i.e., the embrace of new technologies and their potentials, such as mass production to accommodate and satisfy human needs and desires on an egalitarian basis. Instead, modernist city building in the 1950s, including the construction of mass housing, was mainly guided by the principle of building as quickly, efficiently, and cheaply as possible.

At the level of the city, but also at the level of housing, the post-WWII impetus of one-sided modernization left prominent material traces. Whereas East Germany initially prided itself on the ability to accommodate its people in socialist realist “workers palaces”, such as the model housing built on Stalinallee, de-Stalinization and the reality of a permanent economy of shortage led to the realization that palaces were not replicable en masse. Accordingly, from the mid-1950s onwards, in East Germany the dictum of building cheaply and efficiently became hegemonic as well and paved the way for what East Germany in particular and socialism in general is often identified with, the Plattenbau. That is, industrially prefabricated concrete slab buildings consisting of standardized apartments in which space is tailored to predetermined human functions, such as eating, dwelling, sleeping, and hygiene. Although often conceived as a form of housing and dwelling that was unique
to state socialism, I will demonstrate that the *Plattenbau* and its underlying rationale of prefabrication had also shaped West German mass housing. In fact, the *Plattenbau* was not a necessary, but rather a historically contingent result of state socialism. I will argue that, on the one hand, the *Platte* was an outcome of the relative lead of Taylorist and Fordist practices over socialist theory, i.e., of practices that had actually originated in capitalism, and, on the other hand, it was the consequence of a political, and thus historically contingent, decision for centralizing the entire building industry. Consequently, whereas the extensive scale on which the *Platte* was produced can be described as being unique to state socialism, its *form* cannot. Accordingly, the undergirding housing policies, not form, constituted the main difference between East and West German mass housing—another key aspect to be sketched below and elaborated on in subsequent analyses.

Similar to Red Vienna, in East Germany housing was also stipulated as a right and was thus de-commodified. Hence, although East German mass housing undoubtedly neglected individual desire and difference, its underlying de-differentiation and abstraction also contained a positive component: the reduction of social inequality. By contrast, in West Berlin, housing was publicly subsidized, but only for a limited time. The long term goal of post-WWII West German housing policies was the integration of social housing into the free market. Part of this re-integration was the increasing individualization of the need for housing by a subsidy system that subsidized subjects (people in need of housing) instead of objects (housing itself). As I will argue, West German housing policies can be considered as an example of a gradual hegemonization of the free market, and, more specifically, of the development of what Foucault calls ‘neo-liberal governmentality’. According to Foucault, neo-liberal governmentality no longer concerns itself with the excavation of a free space for the market within a given society, a major concern of economic liberalism in the nineteenth century, but with projecting the formal principles of a market economy onto the “general art of government” (Foucault, 2008, 131), i.e., the art of regulating society at large (146).

Despite the fact that in the case of both East and West German mass housing the possibilities of creative and individual spatial appropriations were severely hampered given the apartments’ and immediate neighborhood’s high degree of standardization and rationalization, people nonetheless found ways to “make a home for themselves”. Thus, the third thrust of the subsequent analyses is to delineate how the normativity inscribed into the spaces of mass housing on both sides of the Wall was challenged. Heterotopia *did* emerge in East as well as West Germany, that is, counter-spaces which, while in rapport with the dominant spatial environment, contradicted, suspended,
neutralized, and inverted the norms inherent to hegemonic space (Foucault, 1997, 352). These counter-spaces allow us to see the shortcomings of abstract space and, equally important, people’s creativity concerning the coming to terms with the spatially inscribed curtailments of their needs and desires.

In East Germany, as I will show, one popular counter-space to the Platte was the garden colony. Largely detached from the diktats of instrumentality and “total administration”, the allotment gardens and the garden colonies’ makeshift homes catered to needs and desires the Plattenbau -apartment and -settlement had left unfulfilled. They nourished people physically and emotionally by (re-)connecting them with a less controlled environment where they could engage in practices the state had rendered secondary given its emphasis on industrialization, such as subsistence gardening and craftsmanship. The garden colonies were also sites where the state-sanctioned hegemonization of the heterosexual, nuclear family got subverted, a norm inscribed, among others, into the floor plans of the Platte and the state’s housing allocation policies. Among others, they were used as loci for gatherings of the extended, instead of nuclear, family, and as places for living relationships that were considered as “unlawful”, such as homosexual ones.

In West Germany, mass housing itself became an experimental field for heterotopia in the late 1960s, more specifically for extra-parliamentary opposition and radical democratic initiatives that challenged the logic of urbanism. One such site of democratic experimentation was Berlin’s Maerkische Viertel, a large suburban social housing estate where tenants, in concert with politicized students, mobilized against poor housing conditions, the lack of social infrastructure, overpriced rents and anti-democratic housing authorities. It was, in particular, the students' hope that the basic-democratic initiatives in the Maerkische Viertel would usher in a widely shared desire for a socialist overhaul of capitalism, a hope that ultimately proved to be vain.

A similar desire motivated other affiliates of the West German extra-parliamentary opposition to experiment with alternatives to the post-WWII normalization of the nuclear family model, private property, and consumerism, norms that also found their way into West German mass housing and their underlying policies. The Kommune 1 was West Berlin’s most famous commune in which free love, the abolition of private property, and, more generally, the boundaries of the possible were experimented with. What the West German basic-democratic initiatives in the field of housing had in common with the East German allotment gardens is that both bore testimony to the desire to call
into question the socio-political norms East and West Germany had sought to naturalize through politics of dwelling. Furthermore, the subsequent analyses will show that, ironically, West German counter-spaces to mass housing often envisioned and idealized socialism as an alternative, whereas in East Germany’s allotment gardens individualization ranked high.

Before embarking on a detailed account of the so far only sketched “politics of dwelling” in post-WWII Berlin and, more generally, Germany, a brief historical account of the immediate post-WWII years is needed to provide an adequate historical backdrop for the emergence of the Cold War and its impact on Berlin. Whereas, politically speaking, Red Vienna emerged like a phoenix from the ashes of WWI due to the electorate’s overwhelming support for the SDAP and its program of municipal socialism, Berlin’s political future after WWII was ridden with uncertainties. Initially under the sole aegis of the Soviets who had defeated the Germans after the sixteen-day Battle of Berlin on April 30, 1945, from July on, the Soviets shared the city’s territory with the Americans and the British and, from August, with the French. Meeting the stipulations of the London Protocol from 1944, the capital was divided into four sectors and governed by the Alliierte Kommandatur [Allied Headquarters] that gave directives to the city administration of Great Berlin. In the two months of their sole authority over Great Berlin, the Soviets restructured the city’s political and cultural landscape according to their image: German antifascists were appointed as district -mayors and Comintern officials were recruited to set up the city’s administration, to boost reconstruction, and to rejuvenate the cultural landscape. Among the recruited were Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck, and Johannes Becher, all of whom would later become key figures of the East German Republic (Reiche 1989, 43).

The Western Allies largely accepted the Soviets’ administrative restructuring of Berlin, which went hand in hand with de-nazification and the re-institution of politically untainted figures. Yet the economic path the Americans pushed for soon became a major point of contention. In June 1947, George Marshall, the US Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared to students at Harvard University that the United States will do anything to foster the re-constitution of healthy economic relations in the world, without which political stability and peace could not be secured (Benz 1989, 28-30). By the end of 1949, a loan system that pursued two main goals was set up: first, to enable Germans and, more generally Europeans, to purchase essential goods and commodities from the then only
available supplier, the United States; second, to boost the reconstruction of infrastructure, such as railroads, the electrical grid, and the coal industry. The loans did come with strings attached, strings the Soviets, unsurprisingly, fundamentally disagreed with: the recipients had to accept market capitalism, relatively free trade, and multilateral decision making, i.e., limits to national sovereignty (Diefendorf 2009, 379).

The Western Allies’ orientation toward a market economy contributed to a gradual but steady sealing of the gulf between “West” and “East”, and so did the British and US Bizone’s preparations for founding an independent, constitutionally entrenched West German state and for currency reform. The latter was launched in 1948 and included, against the will of the Soviets, the Western sectors of Berlin. To mark their disagreement with the Western Allies’ economic and political decisions, in June 1948 the Soviets cut off all access routes to Berlin’s Western sectors, barring the already underserved urban population from further access to basic goods and necessary supplies for reconstruction. The so-called Berlin blockade lasted for almost a year. Its negative impact on the population was cushioned by the US-organized Airlift carrying supplies to what would later be called West Berlin (Benz 1989, 29).

While the Western Allies prepared the transition to a market economy and the founding of a provisional West German state, the Soviets established a centrally planned economy and a centralized state that maintained price regulations, regulated wages, and introduced national production plans. At the Third Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party in 1950, the SED decided to transform national enterprises into Volkseigene Betriebe [People-Owned-Enterprises] to boost industrial productivity, introduce work quotas, and move toward centralized state planning. The First Five Year Plan (1951–1955) entrenched the direction chosen in 1950 and paved the way for the “Construction of Socialism”, a policy adopted by the SED in 1952 whose intention was to make systematic use of the “economic laws of socialism” and its core components, nationalization, and centralization (Buck 2004, 131-134).

In October 1949 the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was established, which, similar to the Free Republic of Germany (FRG), understood itself as a provisional government only, since in 1949 both sides were still expecting that the “two Germanies” would soon be reunified with Berlin as the country’s capital. In the meantime, however, Berlin emerged as a divided city with two distinct city administrations: thirty-seven percent of Berlin’s post-WWII population of about three million ended
up living in East Berlin, a “half city” which covered about forty-six -percent of Berlin’s total area (Reiche 1989, 42). Hopes for a re-unified Germany and Berlin lingered until the late 1950s, that is, until the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 would ultimately signal a deathblow to these hopes, at least for the next 38 years. With the onset of the Cold War, a death blow was also signaled to a radical and, in fact, joint re-visioning of Berlin as Great Berlin, namely that of Hans Scharoun and his Planning collective. It is this joint vision and its underlying logic I will begin my analyses with, a vision that serves as a critical foil to the later hegemonized logic of urbanization and industrialization that would affect urban reconstruction no less than housing construction on both sides of the Wall.

3.1 Tabula Rasa for Great-Berlin? Nature and Utopia: 1945 to 1949

The year 1945 has often been referred to as the Stunde Null [Zero Hour], a period in time that is imagined as having severed all strings with the past in order to open the horizon toward a radically different future. Citizens as well as urban planners, architects and civic leaders were desperate for a new beginning and hoped to turn catastrophe into opportunity. Since war destruction was, more or less, equal with urban destruction, the desire to not only simply rebuild cities, but to reform and improve them and their inhabitants, dominated post-WWII debates and phantasies on urban renewal. [Illustrations 22- 23]

Without doubt, the destroyed German cities were places of despair. In Berlin, half of its overall housing stock was in ruins; thousands of people lived in makeshift homes and fed themselves on the yield of urban land. In addition, 500,000 displaced persons poured into the capital per month in search of a new home, which put already dismal housing conditions under additional pressure (Reiche 1989, 37). At the same time, the “landscapes of ruins” were repeatedly perceived as history’s justified reckoning with a civilization that had transgressed too many “no -trespass” boundaries. Karl Scheffler, a painter and art critic, suggested to conceive of the Allied bombing as “history's auto-correction” (Scheffler 1947, 79), a drastic assessment that was by no means a singular one. In fact, the post-WWII discourses on urban and social renewal were dominated by a Zivilisationskritik [critique of civilization] whose vanishing point was reconciliation with nature, a reconciliation that was informed by the desire to leave behind the excessive industrialization and technologization that had informed WWII. The metaphor of “free nature” presiding over human-caused destructions was prominent after 1945–prominent and perceived as liberating. As the author Max Frisch put it: “And all of a sudden one can imagine how it continues to grow, how a
jungle covers our cities, a silence of thistle and moss, a soil without history accompanied by the twitter of birds, by spring, summer and fall, the breath of years no longer counted” [my translation] (Frisch 1965, 35).

A key component of the discourse on “history’s auto-corrections” was the destruction of the much loathed nineteenth -century metropolis [Illustration 24]. Its density, pace, crowds, commercial activities, and living conditions had been considered anathema by numerous reactionary as well as progressive architects, planners, and social reformers after the metropolis’ emergence in the wake of industrialization and particularly after 1945. Thus, Scheffler's opinion of the bombing as “history’s auto-correction” was less about making a teleological point than about capturing a position that was widespread among planners and architects in post-War Germany: despite all the despair and tragedy, the massive destruction of urban centers, such as Berlin, opened the gateways to urban reconstruction on an unprecedented scale (Glaser 1989, 11-15). The planners' and architects' anticipation of and excitement about the possibility of a thorough urban overhaul was accompanied by the political elites' and social reformers' hope that society could be rejuvenated if only Babylon, the “city of chaos”, was finally replaced by Jerusalem, the “city of order”.

On the reactionary side, the post-WWII critique of the modern metropolis harked back to, among others, Oswald Spengler’s famous pre-war diagnosis of the modern city as root cause for and locus of the decline of culture, a diagnosis expressed in his book, The Decline of the West (1928). In Spengler’s view, the metropolis marks the “end of organic growth and the beginning of an inorganic and therefore unrestrained process of massing without limit”. Its inhabitants are intellectual nomads, “petrified historic beings” whose dwellings are

“mere premises which have been fashioned, not by blood but by requirements, not by feeling but by the spirit of commercial enterprise. So long as the hearth has a pious meaning as the actual and genuine centre of a family, the old relation to the land is not wholly extinct. But when that too follows the rest into oblivion, and the mass of tenants and bed-occupiers in the sea of houses leads a vagrant existence from shelter to shelter [...] then the intellectual nomad is completely developed” (Spengler 1928, 100).

By 1945, the hearth had undoubtedly lost its alleged pious meaning as the center of the family. Those who had been naturalized into working the hearth, women, were forced to break with “nature” and to take to rubble clearing instead. In the immediate post-WWII years, the so-called Truemmerfrauen [rubble women] concentrated on “street-clearing” instead of home-making and thus prepared the path for urban reconstruction (Reiche 1989, 39) [Illustration 23]. After the rubble
was cleared, political incentives were laid to encourage women to return to their “natural selves” as keepers of the hearth not in the agrarian sense Spengler had envisaged, but in the industrial setting Ford had devised. This was particularly true of West Germany.

One of Spengler’s closest acolytes was Hans Sedlmayr, whose book, Verlust der Mitte [Loss of the Middle] published in 1951, influenced West German planning debates well into the late 1950s. According to Sedlmayr, modern man is shaped by “total dysfunction”. His relation to God, to himself, to others, and to nature is upside down. A state of Bodenlosigkeit [abysm] marks the human condition. Claude Ledoux’s drawing of a spherical house, a house in the form of a globe instead of a cube, is, according to Sedlmayr, an illustration of how man and his creations are out of touch with the earth [Illustration 25]. As evinced by the phenomenon of parks, man’s relationship to nature “has become passive and sentimental”: he no longer conceives of himself as the “crown of creation”, as the master and center of nature. Instead, man transforms himself into something cold and brutal as reflected in the works of engineers. “Fathomless architecture” (Sedlmayr 1951, 170), which, for Sedlmayr, was equal with modernist architecture, constitutes the epitome of man’s dysfunction. Echoing, but also reinforcing the post-WII zeitgeist, the conservative author was convinced that ultimately “[i]norganic, mechanic thinking will be refuted by the earth itself” (244), that “the culture of earth” will re-gain momentum and gradually reconstitute natural relations, the basis of any “higher culture [...] that reconciles art with the sacred and that sets an end to dreams of man’s autonomy” (247).

Thinkers of “extreme reaction” (Adorno 1950, 124), such as Spengler and Sedlmayr, construed the nineteenth-century metropolis as a Moloch that was ridden with moral, social, and political decay, a social construct that was to be rolled back and replaced by “natural”, more “humane forms” of living. After 1945, this perception of the metropolis was particularly echoed by the German settler movement. To be certain, in the immediate aftermath of 1945, given the dire food and housing shortage, settlements were supported by all political and social camps. Gradually, however, the post-WWII settlement movement became closely affiliated with the conservative and Catholic camps that lobbied for the normalization of settlements and smallholdings as the “ideal form” for re-rooting the family and “crisis-proofing uprooted men” (Harlander 1992, 21-22). According to the conservative critics of the metropolis, the unpropertied “men of the mass”, meaning the inhabitants of traditional tenement housing or of modern “dwelling machines”, would be particularly seducible and prone to sympathize with left- or right-wing radicalism (22). The only remedy against the
dangers of extremism and “massification”, the assumption went, would be the privately-owned, single family home, a home built on land that would be big enough to facilitate subsistence farming. Only if the family was re-established as “fruitful cell of life” of society, would the healing of the wounds of modernization be certain (Katholischer Siedlungsdienst e.V. 1956, 7). Yet much to the dismay of the proponents of settlements and small-holdings who wanted the private and suburban single family home to emerge as the only form of dwelling worth of public funding and the title of “social housing” (Harlander 1992, 26), West German social housing ended up taking a different shape.

In contrast with the conservative responses to the destruction of the nineteenth-century metropolis, the 1946 exhibit Berlin plant–erster Bericht [Berlin is Planning–First Report] by Hans Scharoun and his Planning Collective provided a different answer to the question of how to reconfigure post-WWII urban everyday life. Appointed by the Soviets in 1945 as the Director of the Department of City Building and Housing for Greater Berlin, the politically untarnished, modernist architect and former Ring⁹ member Hans Scharoun (1893-1972) was entrusted with the task of developing a plan for building a new, democratic city. In 1946, he and his “planning collective” presented their plans for public scrutiny and debate in the ruins of Berlin’s City Castle.

For Scharoun, “the mechanical decentralization” (Scharoun 1946/1974, 158) as he paraphrased the bombing of Germany’s cities, represented an unprecedented and, in a way, exciting possibility to reconstruct life along new aesthetic and socio-political lines. Yet in stark contrast to the anti-modern, conservative “nature fetishism” embodied by reactionary social critics, political leaders, and representatives of the settlement movement, Scharoun’s appeal to nature was radically modern. It was informed by the hope of finally bringing about a new architectonic order that would go hand in hand with a new social order. Similar to the Austro-Marxists’ promise of building for the “new (socialist) man”, Scharoun also envisioned a radical social overhaul. The Neue Stadt [New City] and the Neue Wohnung [New Dwelling] were meant to be stepping stones toward a new society:

“We need a new living space for the new man, for the new society: we need dwellings that establish external and internal order, dwellings that are [...] a form image [Gestaltbild] of our possibilities and intentions of life and that help to shape both. They

⁹ The Ring was an architectural collective founded in Berlin in 1926 whose goal was the promotion of modernist architecture. Its founding members are Mies van der Rohe and Hugo Haering. Scharoun was a student of the latter. Van der Rohe and Haering increasingly represented two different streams within modernist architecture: a rationalist one represented van der Rohe and an organicist one represented by Haering and later also by Scharoun.
[the dwellings] challenge the thinking of dwellers, yet they will also support them in acting upon their intentions” [my translation] (Scharoun 1949/1974, 188).

Scharoun and his Planning Collective proposed to erase most of what was left of Berlin in order to re-create the city as a Stadtlandschaft [city landscape], an organic entity consisting of “equal elements, which themselves comprised smaller equal elements”, such as the apartment, i.e., smallest architectural unit [Illustration 26]. One goal of the plan was the equalization of dwelling conditions. Each city district, delimited by four traffic arteries, was to accommodate about 80,000 inhabitants. The districts themselves were to be subdivided into smaller units, “dwelling cells” that that were to accommodate about 5,000 inhabitants each (Scharoun 1946). These dwelling cells (or, as they were also called, neighborhoods) were expected to serve as anchor points for people’s experiential horizon:

“The smallest units are to be designed and shaped to mirror the unity of life, the ‘life fabric’ [Lebensbau]. Apart from apartment buildings and single family homes […], these units have to also provide accommodations for singles, accommodations that are to be connected with guest houses […]. Moreover, [the dwelling cell] ought to be equipped with a cultural and social center (to be shared by several dwelling cells), hospital, kindergarten, children’s home, cinema, theater, library, research institute […]. The education system is to be present in the dwelling cell through an elementary school and in the city district through a high school. All the available social, cultural, and educational facilities are to make use of the green space located in between the dwelling areas. […] In this way the new city will emanate organically from social necessities and constitute a Leistungsform [performance form]” [my translation] (ibid.).

Whereas mixed use was a key characteristic of “Old Berlin”, Scharoun’s new metropolis was to be organized according to four urban functions: dwelling, working, recreation, and circulation. Embedded in green space and bounded by streets, a traffic system that made the automobile indispensable, the dwelling cells and districts were meant to be located in the proximity of industrial and farming cells, but nonetheless separated from them to ensure maximal health and hygiene, and to minimize commuter traffic. The Collective Plan proposed neither an encompassing reuse of still existing infrastructure nor a far-reaching reconstruction of Berlin’s architectural heritage. The Museum Island, the boulevard Unter den Linden, the Brandenburg Gate, and the Charlottenburg Palace were among the few historical sites that the plan proposed to reconstruct and to equip with additional recreational and representative facilities to architecturally demarcate the City, i.e., a center that was expected to serve as Germany’s “display window” (Geist and Kürvers 1980, 3:235-236). Thus, instead of being attuned to the historically grown city, the city landscape was predominantly adjusted to local geography, such as the glacial valley of the Spree. Non-organic, that
is, socially and historically constructed specificities and localisms were to be blasted in order to re-build the urban environment and urban life based on natural laws.

Although Scharoun’s appeal to nature and organicism was informed by the idea that natural laws would be an essential source of inspiration for constructing a well-ordered society, the thrust of his appeal was not an authoritarian one that would have heaved the architect into the position of a chosen figure endowed with the task of reconfiguring the world according to his or her interpretation of natural laws. Instead, Scharoun’s plea for organicism was critical and differentiated, a plea that distanced itself from the dominance of instrumental reason, abstraction and fragmentation that had shaped the modern metropolis. At the same time, Scharoun refrained from dismissing modernity in its entirety and from sympathizing with pre-modern romanticism. Scharoun:

“The notion of ‘being at home’ is insufficient to counter the discontinuity of the modern society. Science and the perfection of technology create tensions that also interfere with the relationship that art entertains with science. This interference can only be changed if we make use not only of the external but also inner essence of the scientific-technological. Technology and science can contribute to Gestaltfindung [the finding of form] if art refrains from imposing Gestaltzwang [the constraint to form]” [my translation] (Scharoun 1954/1974, 229).

For Scharoun, natural laws and organic forms served as sources of inspiration for future-oriented instead of reactionary social imaginations, as sources of inspiration instead of prescriptions. Accordingly, he and his Planning Collective resuscitated the modernist architects’ self-understanding as “social condensators” (Kopp 1978, 211), as midwives of change—a self-understanding that was particularly prevalent in the 1920s. Scharoun was fully aware that in order to be effective midwives of social transformation, visions of a new society had to take into account actually existing social processes and realities.

Committed to democratic principles, Scharoun was opposed to implementing the New City by decree. “[T]o avoid that [the New City] turns into a mold that acts against its inhabitants”, it must be continuously shaped and informed by the “culture of its inhabitants” (Scharoun 1946/1974, 160). Moreover, it must be responsive to peoples’ “manifold desires, insights, hopes, and fulfillments” (Scharoun 1954/1974, 232). Scharoun’s commitment to democratic practices was also evinced by his rejection to consider practicability as the most important criteria for evaluating urban plans. For him, the purpose of the Collective Plan for Berlin’s reconstruction was to initiate and involve the
public in a debate on urban reconstruction instead of presenting citizens with a ready-made plan that was to be implemented. Similarly, although the Collective Plan considered working, dwelling, recreation, and circulation as key urban functions, Scharoun and his Planning Collective treated these functions as social constructs subject to change instead of permanent objective norms (Scharoun 1946/1974, 160-161; Kirschenmann and Syring 1993, 178). Against this backdrop, it could be argued that what applies to democracy as a political form also applied to Scharoun’s vision of urban form: an inescapable necessity to be open for and to come to terms with the provisional and transformative.

Political progressiveness and, in addition, economic radicalism are implicit to the Collective Plan. The proposed Stadtlandschaft largely disregards existing property relations and seeks their radical revision. As mentioned above, Scharoun also deemed the nineteenth -century metropolis to be an urban form in need of overhaul. Yet in distinction to the conservative critics of the big city, Scharoun did not believe that merely limiting the modern metropolis’ growth by dissolving it into small towns would constitute a sufficient remedy for over-densification, social alienation, and poor living conditions (Scharoun 1954/1974, 228-229). For him, the “true solution” to the problems caused by the modern metropolis lay in the radical rethinking of building and land policies on which it was built (Scharoun 1946). In other words, Scharoun believed that as long as inherited economic and political practices are continued, the social problems caused by the modern metropolis cannot be solved. Thus, the declared goal of the Planning Collective was to redefine the economic basis of the city by building the New City on economic policies that aimed at a balanced relationship between the “fabric of the economy” [Wirtschaftsbau] and the “fabric of life” [Lebensbau] (Scharoun 1946/1974, 161). As Scharoun puts it, “[i]t has always been the case that institutions, once devised by men, weigh down on them as if these institutions were of a higher, inescapable order, as if it were impossible to change them.” Despite this fact it is nonetheless necessary and possible to carry out a “re-evaluation of values” based on the insight “that justice that has become injustice cannot be eternalized” [my translation] (166).

What Scharoun’s post-WWII utopianism stood for was a brief revival of the modernist belief that was so dominant in architectural practices of the 1920s. It was the belief in the possibility of a fundamental makeover that would usher in “new men” and “new women” who would no longer be mere objects of modernization, i.e., technological, industrial, and scientific innovation, but its subjects. The new urban dwellers would have a firm grip on the modern world and its
contradictions. They would make themselves at home in it and come to terms with modernity’s simultaneous promises of radical transformation and threats of destroying everything in existence (Berman 1988, 5, 15). Implicitly acknowledging that cities are a collective product, a product through which human beings produce and reproduce themselves (Harvey 2000, 159), Scharoun’s post-WWII spatial utopia was an exploration of human possibilities that burst narrow considerations of feasibility and practicability. Moreover, despite acknowledging the actual and potentially devastating effects of modernity, Scharoun distanced himself from romantic yearnings of a pre-modern past. The Collective Plan was decidedly future-oriented. It sought to reconcile natural science and technology, aesthetics, and politics to the advantage of the “viability and vitality of all humans” instead of certain “interest groups” (Scharoun 1946/1974, 166). Although the plan was utopian in the sense that it proposed an urban form that was a radical pre-vision of a democratic city, Scharoun’s utopianism did not lose itself in imaginative play but took existing social, cultural, and technological conditions into account. At the same time, the plan pointed toward possible trajectories for human development. Given this negotiation between reality and possibility, Scharoun’s utopianism is best understood as, what David Harvey calls, “dialectical utopianism” (Harvey 2000, 196). The plan held fast to the modern promise of emancipation, to the possibility of progressive Menschenbildung [the formation of men] that takes actually existing needs and desires of men as the starting point for future designs of human dwellings (Scharoun 1946/1974, 166). Simultaneously, it sought to push the boundaries of what was possible architecturally, socially, and politically.

In the immediate post-WWII years, Scharoun was still hopeful to successfully straddle the aporetic condition Adorno ascribes to architecture:

“Because architecture is in fact both, autonomous and purpose-oriented, it cannot simply negate men as they are. And yet it must do precisely that if it is to remain autonomous. If it would bypass mankind tel quel, then it would be accommodating itself to what would be a questionable anthropology and even ontology” (Adorno 1965/1997, 16).

The specificity of Scharoun’s hopefulness concerning emancipatory, socially transformative architecture and city building resembles the Austro-Marxists’ political project, a project that was also driven by a continuous negotiation between the real and the possible. To recall Otto Bauer’s words, Austro-Marxism was to be understood as “intellectual force that maintains unity” by bringing together “the capacity for realistic adaptation of all our day-to-day struggles to the particular conditions of time and place, and constant orientation of all partial struggles to [...] the great
inspiring goal of socialism” (Bauer 1905-6/1978, 47). To employ imaginative capacity to transcend the present was key to Scharoun’s aesthetic vision as it was to the Austro-Marxists’ politics. The “figure of the architect” shapes both, i.e., the figure of a person, a collective or a movement that, aware of its agency and imaginative capacities, does not only preserve but also construct and reconstitute the world through its everyday practices. As Marx explained in Capital, “what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process we get a result that existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realizes a purpose […]” (Marx 1887, VII, I).

What both Scharoun’s Planning Collective and the Austro-Marxists hoped to foster was, however vaguely defined, the emergence of “new men and women” who would finally succeed in putting modernity’s innovations to human and not merely instrumental use. For this to be possible, it was necessary to go beyond preserving the socio-economic status quo, to transcend capitalist social relations. Against this backdrop, the figure of the architect serves as a metaphor for any attempt that seeks to “give material form to the longing and desires of individuals and collectives” while, simultaneously, opening up spaces “for new possibilities, for future forms of social life” (Harvey 2000, 200).

Within the wider post-WWII climate, Scharoun’s position was the position of an outlier instead of the mainstream. Despite the fact that the desire for a new beginning was widespread after 1945, the wish for a new beginning after 1945 was markedly different from that of the modernist avant-garde of the 1920s, of which Scharoun was a heir. As mentioned above, the reason for throwing into sharper relief the specificity of the emancipatory dimension of the Collective Plan is to underscore that radical democratic aspirations and dialectical utopianism did exist before the onset of the Cold War. The pertinence of “the figure of the architect”, the symbol of a continuous and creative engagement with both the present and the possible was increasingly lost in West and East Germany. Nonetheless, it serves as a crucial vantage point for reflecting critically on the emerging post-WWII capitalist and socialist hegemonies. To call into memory Scharoun’s and his Planning Collective’s aesthetic vision means to call into memory the fact that alternatives to the Cold War social realities did exist, however hypothetical and provisional they might have been.
That the Collective Plan would remain a utopia was already made clear to Scharoun in 1946, when American officers who visited the Berlin plant-exhibit told the architect that in the Western Zones, existing private property relations the Collective Plan sought to overhaul would remain sacrosanct (Kirschenmann and Syring 1993, 177). A phalanx of critics of the Collective Plan was also soon to be formed in the Soviet sector. The reason was not the question of property—in fact, the first housing program of the German Communist Party had already announced the abolition of all obstacles resulting from “private arbitrariness” for the sake of “public interest” (Hoscislawski 1991, 49)—but the question of aesthetic. Despite the fact that the Soviets were initially welcoming of representatives of the New Building due to their typically left-leaning political worldview, the New Building's aesthetic of formalism was, with the onset of Stalinization, construed as an antidote to Stalin's vision socialist realist aesthetic. At the level of urban planning, socialist realism meant a return to the dense, historically grown city. At the level of architecture, it entailed a re-orientation along historicist lines in search of national pathos, beauty, and totality.

To be sure, Red Vienna’s architecture was also indebted to the past and critical of the radical overhaul of traditional architectural practices proposed by the modernists. Yet in contrast to East German socialist realism, Red Vienna’s “reluctant modernism” was not motivated by the (perceived) need to re-construct national history and distinctiveness but by a hesitation to extend the logic of the factory into workers housing, a logic that was assumed to further alienate workers. It was not nation-building, but gradualism that underpinned Austro-Marxist architecture no less than politics. By contrast, in East Germany Stalin’s doctrine of socialist realism exemplified how aesthetic could fall victim to partisan politics: as soon as the division between East and West was officially entrenched in 1949, East German cultural policies were aligned with the policies of the Soviet “big brother” who, under Stalin, equated modernism with anti-humanism.

In West Germany modernist aesthetic continued to dominate the urban and architectural landscapes for decades to come. Yet also there, the legacy of modernism was largely purged from its initial political and social radicalism. Modernism was adopted to suit and complement, instead of challenge, the re-entrenched social relations. As Tafuri explains, many modernist architects who wished to re-establish a socio-political and -economic equilibrium by means of replicating organic structures, were often blind to “improbability, multifunctionality, multiplicity, and the lack of organic structure”, i.e., integral elements of the modern capitalist city (Tafuri 1976, 124). While this blindness was not true of Scharoun and his Collective’s modernist plans, it is true of much of the
modernist architecture that emerged after 1945 in West Germany, an architecture that was firmly aligned with capitalist social relations. More generally, in the post-WWII years, utopian explorations of and experimentations with democratic and social emancipation were gradually but surely curbed by rather narrow considerations of industrial, technological, and economic modernization on both sides of, what was to become, the Berlin Wall. Increasingly locked into the Cold War, the two states focused on distinguishing themselves by technological innovation and industrial production. This pursuit of modernization instituted liberal capitalism in the West and authoritarian socialism in the East. Whereas the former sought to legitimize itself by consumerism, which was part of West Germany’s “economic miracle”, the latter sought to legitimize itself by guaranteeing basic social securities. Both strategies of legitimation found their way into mass housing.

Ultimately, only a fraction of the Collective Plan ended up being built in the Eastern part of the city. In December 1949, the ground was broken for the construction of the first dwelling cell. Yet not long after the construction began, the undertaking again came to a standstill. The only part of the Collective Plan that was realized consists of two Laubenganghaeuser designed by Ludmilla Herzenstein. The Laubenganghaeuser were meant to be part of a dwelling cell infused by egalitarian, anti-authoritarian, and social-pedagogical principles. Located at the Frankfurter Allee, a boulevard that was soon to be renamed Stalinallee and transformed into the Magistrale des Ostens [Magistrale of the East], Herzenstein’s apartment buildings—despite their novelty—quickly turned into a fossil of a past urbanism. To cover up the material traces left by East Germany’s ideological transition from modernist to socialist realist architecture, fast-growing trees were planted in front of them, poplars, which—until this day—suggest to the quick passerby socialist realist, monumental unity [Illustration 27].

Illustration 25: Claude-Nicolas Ledoux “Spheric House” (House of the forestry guard in château de Maupertuis. Project), 1789.
Illustration 26: Hans Scharoun and his Planning Collective’s proposed Stadtlandschaft [City Landscape], 1946. A radical alternative to the nineteenth-century industrial city.

Illustration 27: The Laubenganghäuser designed by the architect Ludmilla Herzenstein in the modernist tradition and constructed between 1949-1950.
3.2 East Berlin: Constructing Socialism

3.2.1 From the City Landscape back to the Beautiful German City

In the spring of 1950, delegates of the Ministry of Reconstruction travelled to the Soviet Union to study urban reconstruction. Among them were Lothar Boltz, head of the Ministry of Reconstruction, and Kurt Liebknecht, nephew of Karl Liebknecht, affiliate of Mies van der Rohe, and—after his return from his exile in the Soviet Union—head of the German Building Academy [Deutsche Bauakademie]. The Sixteen Principles of Urban Design were announced after the delegates homecoming, principles that broke radically with modernist architecture and city planning, such as that of Scharoun and his Collective. Based on Stalin’s and Kaganovitch’s urban visions for Moscow’s reconstruction, the Sixteen Principles announced the return to architecture indebted to history, monumentality, and national traditions (Kopp 1978, 193-205). The principles were expected to usher in a truly “socialist way of life”, a life to be looked upon in awe by the West through the GDR’s chosen “display-window of socialism”, the “workers palaces” on Stalinallee [Illustration 28].

The East German delegates’ “study trip to Moscow” is shrouded in legends, many of which suggest that East German socialists were merely inspired and not commanded by the Soviets to make a radical turn away from modernism. Yet, as shown by the architectural historian Simone Hain, who draws on a collection of original documents on the study trip to Moscow, the alleged autonomy of East Germany concerning architectural orientation amounts to little more than a myth. The sudden dismissal of modernism in favor of socialist realism was clearly the result of an ideologically loaded “top down” decision by the Soviets, which the East Germans had to implement (Hain, 1992, 2558; 1996a, 65-68).

Similar to the divine city, which needed the profane city as a counterpart for its own contours to be visible, the socialist city was defined by its difference from the modernist city. The modernist was formalized by the Charter of Athens (1943) as follows: as a city of centrality and architectonic unity instead of functional division (Principles VI, IX); density instead of decentralization (Principles XII, XIII); community instead of individualism (Principles I, II, X), walkability instead of auto-mobility (Principles VI, VIII), singularity instead of schematic repeatability (Principle XIV). Whereas many modernists sought to dissolve the historically grown, industrial city and with it, its social, political and economic shortcomings, to pave the way for a radical reconstruction of urban and social life,
the Sixteen Principles ordained the reverse: the re-appreciation of the industrial metropolis’ as the most developed form of human settlement (Principle I) (Bolz 1951/1980) [Illustrations 29, 30].

Apart from the positive re-evaluation of the historically grown city, the Sixteen Principles had, first and foremost, an ideological purpose inscribed into them. In line with Stalin’s doctrine and policy of “socialism in one country”, the Sixteen Principles defined the crucial task of the city builder to be that of adequately representing the physiognomy of the “socialist nation’s political life and consciousness” (Principle I). According to Stalin and his acolytes, the design of Moscow’s subway stations in the 1930s was an exemplary accomplishment of this task (Kopp 1978, 210). Accordingly, the main function of socialist architecture and city building was no longer to experiment with new forms, as was suggested by the modernist as well as constructivist avant-garde of the 1920s and early 1930s. Instead, under Stalin architecture was to identify and resuscitate “progressive national traditions” (Principle X), which citizens would identify with (Principle IX) (45-46).

The new aesthetic doctrine of socialist realism proclaimed to be “democratic in its content” and “national in its form” (Principle XIV) (51). It was meant to constitute a clear antidote to formalism’s alleged “play with forms that was lacking in content”, constructivism’s alleged one-sided, technical-organizational orientation, and cosmopolitanism’s alleged neglect of history and “national life” (40-43). What becomes obvious is that, ironically, the socialists were the ones who re-tapped the myth of Heimat, not least to legitimize Stalin’s “nationalization” of socialism’s historic claim to universality. This re-tapping constitutes one example of the less clear-cut severing of the ties to Germany’s fascist history than the official socialist rhetoric had suggested [Illustrations 29, 30, 31].

At the Fifth Congress of the Central Committee of the SED in 1951, the “war” against formalism was finally officially declared: modernism was equated to the uprooting and destruction of national culture and consciousness due to its rejection of traditional forms of expression and modernism’s commitment to formalism was reduced to American-inspired anti-humanism and capitalist

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10 Also “Western” architects and planners would turn to a re-evaluation of the historically grown city. But they did so not before the end of the 1970s, when the Charter of Athens had ultimately lost its traction (Bodenschatz 1987, 186-256).

11 J.V. Stalin: “What is meant by the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country? It means the possibility of solving the contradictions between the proletariat and the peasantry by means of the internal forces of our country, the possibility of the proletariat seizing power and using that power to build a complete socialist society in our country, with the sympathy and the support of the proletarians of other countries, but without the preliminary victory of the proletarian revolution in other countries” (J. Stalin 1954).

imperialism (Hain 1996b, 79). While modernism had actually aimed at liberating the human sensorium and with it, phantasy and imagination, by severing the strings attached to traditional artistic expression, such as grand narrations, mimesis, and representation, Stalin and his East-German followers re-established what the modernists’ had sought to burst. Instead of experimenting with radically new tastes and forms of expression, they re-stipulated gesundes Volksempfinden [the people’s healthy sentiment] and the representation thereof as the main tasks of art in general and architecture in particular (86). Susan Buck-Morss explains the turn from modernist to Stalinist aesthetic by drawing on Vladimir Papernyi’s Kultur dva (1985) as follows: a “culture of monumentality” began to supplant a “culture of mobility”. The “culture of mobility”, which Papernyi also refers to as “Culture One”, is characterized by having freed itself from human immobility for the sake of constant motion and creative tempo, “because only the very idea of movement has a great potential for development”. By contrast, “the culture of monumentality”, “Culture Two”, is shaped by a repudiation of movement, change, and cosmopolitanism, characteristics which, from the perspective of Stalinist aesthetic, betrayed the motherland. As Buck-Morss explains poetically and succinctly: against the backdrop of Culture Two, “even the monument to space flight appears unrelentingly grounded. No matter how high the pedestal or how soaring its shape, the cosmonaut seems to struggle against gravity in vain” (Buck-Morss 2002, 121-122).

The “modernism- (and formalism-) versus socialist realism-debate” was one variant and manifestation of a larger debate on the “semantics of socialism” (Hain 1996b, 80). What was at stake in this debate was, on the one hand, the question of how to socialize the “new socialist man and woman” by means of everyday urban life and dwelling, and, on the other hand, the question of how to draw a clear line between the “East” and “West” in the realm of aesthetic. Once it became clear that the future of Germany would be a divided one, art and culture became were drawn into the Cold War. Given the increasing Soviet influence on East German politics, including cultural policies, architects who continued to identify themselves with modernism found themselves maligned as traitors of socialist humanism and accomplices of capitalism. They typically had the choice of either leaving the country or of aligning them to Stalin’s vision of socialist realism. Hans Scharoun, among others, decided not to give up his commitment to modernism and left East Germany for West Germany. By contrast, other architects who had been influenced by the Bauhaus, such as the chief designers of the Stalinallee Hermann Henselmann, Richard Paulick, and Edward
Collein, decided to stay in East Germany and to adjust their artistic and creative practices to Stalin’s aesthetic doctrine (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 113-114; Hain 1996a, 86-88).

Initially, however, the so-called “formalism debate” was ideologically neutral. In 1938, Georg Lukacs published an essay titled “Realism in the Balance” in which he defended realist literary forms that aimed at representing social reality in its totality against modernist literary forms that focused on the subjective and the immediate (Lukacs 1938/2001). In contrast to Stalin, Lukacs’ appropriation of socialist realism was not driven by disagreeing with the modernists’ rejection of traditional, classical forms of expression. Instead, what Lukacs was concerned with was the modernists’ strong emphasis on the particular, the subjective, and the immediate, which, according to him, undermined a fundamental tenet of Marxism: to understand capitalism as a totality of social relations. Whereas many modernists sought to develop a radically new aesthetic language, a language that would be unconstrained by reification and political instrumentalization, Lukacs argued that such an undertaking was impossible since aesthetic expression could never be independent of social reality. According to him, artistic expression that aimed at exploring and depicting experience as autonomous from social reality affirmed rather than challenged capitalist social relations to which illusions of autonomy (in the realm of art, but also in other realms, such as education and law) were integral. Instead of seeking to sever ties to social reality, art should focus on showing how the subjective and immediate, how “appearance” and the “essence” of social totality are interwoven.

It was Stalin who appropriated the formalism debate for political purposes by interlacing his de facto politics of “socialism in one country” with aesthetic arguments that foregrounded the importance of national distinction. In 1950, Stalin published several articles in the leading Soviet newspaper Pravda. Soon thereafter, these articles appeared in a collection titled “Marxism and Problems of Linguistics” in which Stalin engaged with the Soviet Marr-School and their proposal to introduce a new, universal language. Whereas the linguists of the Marr-School argued that revolutionizing language was central to revolutionizing society, since, according to their analysis, language was part of the superstructure and was thus reflective of class interests, Stalin radically dismissed the idea of a universal language. In Stalin’s view, language was to be considered as “a means of intercourse” that “always was and remains the single language of a society” [emphasis added], a means that is shared by a specific society’s members. Consequently, for Stalin the “’class character’ of language-formula” was to be dismissed as “erroneous and non-Marxist” (J. V. Stalin...
1950). His vanishing point was not the future but the past, notably nineteenth-century nationalism and the unity myths attached to it (Hain 1996b, 85).

Stalin’s turn toward socialist realism—a turn toward de-differentiation and de-pluralization—found its echo in East German cultural politics. In a speech delivered to the East German Volkskammer [people’s chamber] in October 1951, Ulbricht declared that from that point on, true socialist architecture was to embody totality, beauty, and national traditions, traditions that reminded people of their struggles for national liberation. In the socialist realist city that was to emerge, the abstract “cubes and holes” of the Bauhaus were to be supplanted with a Gesamtkunstwerk [total art work] that would re-unite all “progressive” national forms of aesthetic expression (Ulbricht 1951/1991, 143-145). Ulbricht’s political dictum was translated into architectural practice in the form of East Germany’s “display window”, the Stalinallee. Hermann Henselmann, the housing project’s chief architect, conceived of his task as a city builder and of the Stalinallee as a model housing project as follows:

“To express the ideas of socialism by means of architectural images that draw on popular symbols of people’s social life and, simultaneously, to take the unity of urban and artistic concepts as a starting point, a unity the Stalinallee is a part of. The core idea behind these buildings is that the creative power of man is able to raise victory above rubble, war, and misery. It is this idea that should become effective by means of a pathos that strengthens the belief in one’s own capacities and that awakens one’s will to act” [my translation] (Henselmann 1952/1991, 68).

To be sure, socialist realism was implemented from above. Yet, as Hain shows, the implementation fell on fertile ground in East Germany. After WWII in particular, heroic attempts to rescue social totality in the form of art (including architecture) and politics did resonate with the masses. After 1945, people were desperate for a better future and, more specifically, desperate for the reconstitution of respect for one’s self and one’s country. For the great majority of people, transcending the sober post-WWII reality by means of founding a “new society” based on tradition and the protective shell of the collective was considerably more attractive than—as suggested by many modernists—inventing society from scratch through more individualized struggles for liberation (Hain 1996b, 88-94). Put more crudely, even after 1945 Germans still kept a sweet spot for the romantic idea of establishing a society in which body, soul, and mind would be in perfect harmony.
Apart from deep rooted resentment in the “German psyche” against modernism’s bursting of traditions, modernism itself suffered from an unresolved tension. As Hain explains, the modernist avant-garde “was lacking the precondition for its political and symbolic realization through mass movements, namely, unambiguousness with regard to ethnic, social, and regional matters” (98). After 1945, unambiguousness was precisely what people were yearning for, which explains the disinterest in radical political experiments. As a result of this disinterest, modernism was increasingly reduced to mere modernization. According to Kanishka Goonewardena, modernization is best depicted in the form of the following formula: “Modernization = Modernism – Revolution (Goonewardena 2009, 210-212). Modernization, understood as narrowly conceived, technoscientific innovation, ended up dominating Germany’s post-WWII years, ultimately in both “Germanies”. As will be discussed in detail below, one manifestation of modernization in East Germany was the Plattenbau-settlement, i.e., a highly standardized, functional, prefabricated living environment.

Ironically, the logic of modernization was in part already prefigured by the Sixteen Principles, which had actually promised the redemption of a humanist city, a city where human social, material, and cultural needs would finally be fulfilled. In obvious contradiction to the claim that “the “individual countenance” of the historically grown city had to be preserved, the third principle stipulated that “cities in themselves” would not exist, since they were always built “by the industry for the industry” (39) [emphasis added]. In line with this principle, the East German government put considerably more resources into the (re-)construction or expansion of cities located near one of the areas earmarked for industrialization in the First Five Year Plan (1951-1955) than into the reconstruction of other cities. Berlin, because it was the capital, was an exception to this rule (Buck 2004, 140; 148-149). Cities like Hoyerswerda, Magdeburg, Chemnitz, Dessau, Rostock, and Eisenhuettenstadt were boosted as industrial towns. Accordingly, their physiognomy was shaped less by local traditions and by inhabitants’ needs, as Principles I and IX had proclaimed, than by the imperative to provide inexpensive apartments for the expected influx of workers as quickly as possible.

Another tension implicit to the Sixteen Principles was that while Principle XIV promised a democratic city, Principle III put social experts into identifying the human needs based on which the socialist city was to be built—a tension that prefigured the lack of democracy that is inherent to a one-sided focus on modernization. Certainly, Principle X also stated that ultimately, the final decision on how and what to build would always be made by the citizen’s most “direct representatives”—“the
democratically elected” government and the Volkskammer [parliament] (Principle III) (39-40). However, since free elections never took place in East Germany, city building remained firmly in the hand of government-appointed “social experts”. The SED stipulated a convergence between the will of the people and with the will of the government. East German realpolitik showed a different picture: popular consent was hardly a precondition for political decision-making. Accordingly, the tale of a perfect unity between government and the people would have to be retold repeatedly to increase its credibility. Yet, as shown by East German history in general and the 1953 popular uprisings in particular, uprisings that originated on Stalinallee and that will be discussed in more detail below, repetition does not forcibly move a tale closer to its credibility. This is particularly true if the gap between the promise of material plenty and the social reality of deprivation remains as wide open as it was the case in East Germany. Before discussing the revolt of June 1953, a revolt against the regime’s steered course of “building socialism”, I will cast light on how socialism was in fact “built”–built in the double sense of creating a physical environment and anchoring a new regime’s legitimacy–at East Germany’s showcase housing project, the Stalinallee. The construction of socialism on Stalinallee serves as a micro-example of both the promise of a socialist egalitarian society and the difficulty of realizing the promise by democratic means.

3.2.2 Building Socialism and Socialists: In Between Construction and Transgression

In September 1950, the National Reconstruction Law [Aufbaugesetz] was passed (Aufbaugesetz 1950). It anchored the Sixteen Principles (§ 7), determined the cities where the reconstruction efforts were to be focused (§ 2), and equipped the state with an extensive right to expropriate (§ 14). The new law also provided the basis for a large-scale mobilization campaign, the National Reconstruction Work [Nationales Aufbauwerk], launched in January 1951 by the National Front (§ 3), (Buck 2004, 142-145). The National Reconstruction Work (re-)introduced public competitions modeled after the Russian Stakhanov movement13 as well as Taylorist work methods in order to increase productivity at construction sites and in workplaces. The SED hoped to countervail the limited economic output that had resulted from, among others, ongoing structural reforms, such as expropriation, nationalization, and high taxation on private industry (Kopstein 1997, 22-24).

13 In 1935, a miner in the Soviet Union, Alexey Stakhanov, was coronated as a socialist “model worker” due to his (alleged) “above-average productivity”. By “showcasing” outstanding workers, Stalin hoped to achieve two purposes: to increase worker productivity and to underline the superiority of the socialist economic system.
On November 25, 1951, the party released a nation-wide appeal in the socialist daily *Neues Deutschland* to volunteer for rebuilding the capital of Germany “more beautifully and generously” than it had ever been before (*Neues Deutschland* 1951, November 25). The provision of housing in Berlin’s *Stalinallee* was the National Reconstruction Work’s first focus. The choice for linking the mobilization campaign to housing construction instead of other social domains was driven not only by humanitarian considerations (as suggested by the official rhetoric), but also by strategic concerns. For one, mobilizing people to volunteer for something they were in dire need of was promising. Moreover, mass participation in housing construction and, more generally, the reconstruction of the capital was meant to demonstrate to the West the socialist regime’s popular support and its responsiveness to the needs of people.

Yet before the actual construction of the *Magistrale des Ostens* [*Magistrale of the East*] could begin, the rubble had to be cleared. Secret estimates by the authorities suggested that if Berlin’s rubble were to be removed by traditional means, it would take up to five years before any of the intended reconstructions could resume (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 128). To speed up the process, the availability of labor and material (such as means of transport, tools, fuel, and work equipment) was necessary. As announced in the *Neues Deutschland* on November 25, 1951:

“All enterprises in Berlin and the German Democratic Republic contribute to the reconstruction by introducing competitions for above target production as well as savings of material. Their help is of decisive significance because all enterprises are directly or indirectly connected to the requisition of material for reconstruction. Only if scrap metal is collected by the inhabitants of Berlin above target, founded by steel workers above target, milled by the millers above target, transported by the rail-workers above target, will we have modern high rises at the end” [my translation] (*Neues Deutschland* 1951, November 25).

The rhetoric employed to motivate people to participate in the National Reconstruction Work suggested that the redemption of the promise of socialism would be imminent: all that was allegedly needed for socialism’s full advent (and thus the advent of an encompassing satisfaction of human needs) was another thrust in the form of a collective commitment to above target productivity. The impending major leap forward in human history was depicted as being primarily dependent on a final manifestation of a shared understanding of progress, an understanding that was presented as already lying dormant and thus only in need of being woken up. As the SED put it: “As soon as the people [Volk] starts to speak its own language, to speak the language of progress, any cultural feat [Kulturtat] is possible” (ibid.). But to secure “above target” productivity and the
necessary “cultural feats” before the full emergence of a shared understanding of progress, the party had to resort to other means: “shock work” in the form of socialist competitions and the re-introduction of Taylorist work discipline.

On January 2, 1952, in the midst of the coldest winter of the century, the stage was set for a “collective action for the capital and the state”. At 5 p.m. the bells for the first major collective undertaking in rubble clearing sounded and 45,000 volunteers started their shifts on Stalinallee. Floodlights lit up the rubble clearance sites, loudspeakers amplified songs composed for the purpose, and party-appointed poets and painters documented the operations and their heroes. Among the first voluntary reconstruction workers were high-ranking officials, among them the SED Secretary General Walter Ulbricht, East Germany’s premier minister Otto Grotewohl, and East Berlin’s mayor Friedrich Ebert, all of whom sought to demonstrate unity between the governing and the governed (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 172). [Illustration 33]

Inspired by Soviet-style, socialist competitions, the Committee for the National Reconstruction Work together with the SED’s mass organizations, organized competitive rubble clearance and reconstruction operations, especially on weekends and holidays. They encouraged local construction businesses to outperform one another in clearing construction sites, adults to top one another’s number of voluntary shifts worked, and children to compete with one another in “building their own future” (171-178). “Activists” were expected to emerge from these competitions, outstanding volunteers whose performance would exceed existing work norms. The possibility of obtaining one of the emerging apartments on Stalinallee was among the “material lures” that were expected to entice people to outperform one another in the capital’s and, more generally, the nation’s reconstruction (129-130). [Illustration 34]

What is to be made of the incentives for “shock work”? As Buck-Morss explains in the context of socialist competitions in the Soviet Union after which the East German ones was modeled:

“The collective thrust of the shock workers gave a shock as the agents of historical change, ‘bringing the time of socialism closer’. Their image was superhuman, rather than machine-like and nonhuman. They produced the shock of modernity rather than parrying its effects. At the same time, they bore the brunt of the attack on their own bodies, as shock work entailed physical sacrifice and exhaustion for the sake of the collective goal” (Buck-Morss 2002, 111).
Shock workers broke work norms by exerting their bodies above-average. Taylorist scientific managers set work norms by dissecting and calculating the workers’ body movements. In East Germany, both methods of disciplining labor were employed: shock work to make up for the initial post-WWII material and technological shortages; and Taylorism for stepping up the efficiency of the re-construction process.

Concerning Taylorism, a commended and much admired model by the East German elite was the two-, three-, and five-man masonry system, a system put into practice in Moscow by a team of workers heralded by the activist Schawulgin. As described by one of the East German delegates to Moscow:

“Schawulgin’s team of five consists of two men and three women. Schawulgin himself works closely with a woman. She prepares the bricks for the outer brick row, spreads the mortar with a shovel—mortar the mason re-distributes with his ladle before finally laying the bricks. Schawulgin concentrates exclusively on the exterior brick row [...] he only performs tasks that require skill [...]. The second, less skilled mason, also teams up with a woman and lays the interior brick row. The third woman, the last “man” in the team, lays the bricks in between the outer and interior row” [my translation] (Pisternik 1950, 180).

Schawulgin’s work method was soon experimented with on Stalinallee, whose construction sites fulfilled the double-purpose of displaying an above-average socialist work ethic and a commitment to Taylorist efficiency. Apart from increasing efficiency, Taylorism was also a promising path toward expanding the workforce by bringing in (unskilled) female labor. Without doubt, the SED considered the integration of women into the workforce as essential step toward women’s emancipation. Yet, as Heike Schmidt shows, instrumental reasons, such as increased economic output, weighed often more than the realization of the socialist principle of gender equality (Schmidt 2007, 95-103). In fact, the above description of the Schawulgin method itself highlights gender inequality: skilled labor was to remain in male hands, unskilled labor in female hands.

Since Taylorism was actually an invention of American capitalism, why was it that attractive to socialists? As Jeffrey Kopstein suggests, socialists no less than capitalists saw in Taylorism the possibility of producing social harmony by means of producing material bounty (Kopstein 1997, 30-31). While the East and West German political elite’s vision of a causal connection between high productivity, material bounty, and a conflict-free society might have converged, their respective success in putting this vision into practice was starkly different. In post-war West Germany, Taylorist mass production would soon be complemented with Fordism ushering in the Deutsche
Wirtschaftswunder [German Economic Miracle]. Mass consumption was at the core of Fordism and, accordingly, to West German economics, leading to a society of relative affluence and political stability. By contrast, in East Germany, increased productivity did not bring about the promised material bounty, at least not as quickly and never to the same extent as it did in West Germany. Citizens who were dissatisfied with the standard of living provided by the Plan had, according to the Politbuero, only one option: “[I]f they wanted to buy more, they had to produce more [...]” (Vorlage fuer das Politbuero 1961).

“The way we work today, we will live tomorrow” was an often repeated slogan in East Germany during the 1950s (Merkel 1996, 9). Workers, however, became increasingly frustrated with the lingering disjuncture between the promise of a future with material plenty and the reality of deprived present. In fact, sacrificing the present for a future that seems to be continuously moving further into the distance foregrounded the disciplinary aspect of shock work and Taylorism. The resulting frustration, one could argue, puts the finger on a problem that seems to be inherent to the socialist ideal: the collision between the promise of a perfectly harmonized society with a reality of contingency and plurality, a collision that unavoidably undercuts even the most rational forms of social organization, such as the Plan. Given the utopian character of the regulative ideal of a society beyond social antagonisms, that is, given the impossibility to supersede contingency and plurality, which is, as Zizek argues, a “condition humaine” (Zizek 1998/2008, xxvii), clinging to the ideal of a perfectly harmonized society unavoidably locks people into a reality that is determined by an infinite, unrelenting, and ultimately disappointing catch-up process.

The construction sites of the Stalinallee’s workers’ palaces were meant to stage and embody the birth of a perfect socialist society but increasingly became fermenting grounds for civil unrest and social antagonism. As Foucault correctly noted, historically speaking, the dream of a perfect society was usually accompanied by the dream of a military society:

“Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility” (Foucault, 1977/1995, 169).

The SED certainly dreamt both of a perfect society and of a military one. Both dreams were staged on Stalinallee. On the one hand, “workers’ palaces” were built because in a socialist society, workers
were not to live in rental barracks. On the other hand, at the “palaces’ so called “youth construction sites”, youth would not only be trained in building methods, but also in motor sports and shooting, since many of them would later move on to the Kasernierte Volkspolizei [Baracked People’s Police], the military branch of the police. Those young men who did become police, were released pompously into their new duties. At roofing ceremonies, a merited construction worker would hand over weapons to the young men – a public orchestration of the, by the regime much sought-after, perfect harmony between workers and the executive (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 187-188).

“Progressive forms of training [...] to automatic docility” were undoubtedly underlying the SED’s orchestrated coupling of Taylorist building and military practices. Whereas the Stalinallee was meant to serve as a monument to the common worker and the superiority of socialist humanism, it, at the same time, became the locus of popular protests against the dream of a perfect society, protests the East German regime responded to with Soviet tanks. [Illustration 35]

3.2.2.1 June 1953: From Politics of Monumentalization “from above” to Politics of Transgression “from below”

On June 16, 1953, construction workers the Stalinallee’s block 40 walked off their jobs in protest against an increase of the productivity quota by ten percent. This increase was paired with price hikes for food, health care, and public transportation and amounted to a monthly wage cut of about thirty percent (Beier and Koebele 1993; Kopstein 1996, 412). The SED’s decision to step up work norms and prices was a response to inflationary pressures of increased defense spending and declining agricultural and industrial output. While the party suggested that higher productivity was dependent on an enhanced “socialist work ethic”, workers were fully aware that the root causes of the limited economic output and the low standard of living were predominantly structural and political: the result of a chronic shortage of material and technology combined with a command economy whose planning was often at odds with the available human and material resources (ibid., 29-35), (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 199-200). [Illustration 36]

Workers from all over the city and country quickly joined the protesters on Stalinallee. The demonstration’s peak was on June 17, 1953. A general strike took place in East Berlin and all over East Germany, a strike that was supported by over a million in the capital alone (Deutsches Bundesarchiv 2013). In a frenzy to ward off the possibility of a coup, the SED adopted a dual strategy of disciplining and appeasing. On the disciplining side, the SED drew on its preparations for the possibility of show-trials that were in effect since 1950, preparations for the eventuality of needing
to streamline society. The 1953 revolt seemed to be an adequate occasion for enacting a public purge against those alleged “fascist and capitalist agitators” who dared to sabotage the “planned construction of socialism” (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 200), (Buck 2004, 146). Apart from disciplining, appeasement was also a chosen strategy. It included measures such as the lowering of work norms, prices, and taxes, as well as the public display of the government’s commitment to elevate the standard of living by, among others, taking more concrete steps toward realizing the promised socialist dwelling culture.

In the exhibition titled *Besser Leben – schöener Wohnen* [Living Better, Dwelling More Beautifully], the German Academy for Building [Deutsche Bauakademie] and the Ministry for Light Industry displayed thirty showrooms in Berlin, showrooms that were designed according to socialist realist principles. In an attempt to publicly and ostensibly demonstrate the government's commitment to care about public opinion, the exhibit’s organizers encouraged visitors to participate in a study whose purpose was to identify citizens’ needs and expectations (Deutsche Bauakademie and Ministerium fuer Leichtindustrie 1954, 75).

3.2.2.2 “Living Better, Dwelling More Beautifully”: Toward a Socialist Dwelling Culture?

“The care for men”, as Liebknecht stressed in the aftermath of June 1953, and in the context of the exhibit “Living Better, Dwelling More Beautifully” can never be adequately expressed by the attempt to constantly create something new, to radically break away from the past. Instead, argues Liebknecht, it is expressed by creating the “practical-useful” and the “aesthetic-artistic” on the basis of “the humanism of classicism, the modesty of *Biedermeier*, and the comfort of *Chippendale*” (Liebknecht 1954, 13, 21, 58).

The 1953 uprisings foregrounded the hiatus that divided the state’s proclaimed ideal care for its citizens from social reality. Yet this hiatus’ contours were clearly visible even before 1953. In the realm of housing, the fact that the cultural standards the GDR was upholding by rhetoric were often starkly at odds with the built environment was surprisingly openly expressed by one of the GDR’s most influential architects and affiliate of the Ministry of Reconstruction, Hans Gericke. In an assessment of the *Stalinallee* written in 1952, Gericke remarked critically that the intense efforts put into the design and construction of the *Stalinallee’s* representative front were out of sync with the housing project’s interior, the apartments, as well as the development of dwelling complexes’ social and communal infrastructure. Gericke also criticized the general poor building quality, a
consequence he attributed to the insufficient development of building norms and types and to
“artificial” deadlines, such as Stalin’s birthday, deadlines that were politically willed yet unadjusted
to the actual availability of material and human resources (Gericke 1955, 54-59).

In contrast to architecture of mere representation, Gericke wanted to see the GDR build
aesthetically pleasing quality housing in quantity (58). “The apartment—the layout of its rooms, its
artistic design, its technical equipment, and its workmanship—is an indicator for a people’s economic
and cultural quality of life”, argued the architect (39-40). Ironically, similar to the dwelling culture
propagated by the Austro-Marxists, there was little specifically “socialist” about East Germany’s
endorsed dwelling culture. In East Germany, as in Vienna, the floor plans of the “workers’ palaces”
mirrored rather than challenged bourgeois dwelling norms, such as privacy, representation, and the
“spatialization” of dwelling as an independent activity in the form of living rooms (Haeussermann
and Siebel 1996, 16-19). Instead of shaping a new dwelling culture in fundamental ways, East
Germany continued bourgeois legacies and sought to democratize them by means of mass
production.

The concept of art as epigonism informed the Stalinallee’s facades no less than the ideal socialist
apartment’s interior. Given the post-1953 promise to improve people’s standard of living the
Council of Ministers instructed the German Academy for Building and diverse ministries with the
following tasks: to carry out scientific research on traditional national designs of furniture, lighting,
and textiles, to select the best designs, to adjust them to the workers’ needs, and to accelerate the
mass-production of furniture (Deutsche Bauakademie and Ministerium fuer Leichtindustrie 1954,
106, 108-110). In contrast to modernists who had stipulated the “measurement of men” as the
“correct measurement” (Stam 1929/1984)—men understood as modern men who sit, lie, walk, eat
and wash themselves differently from the men in the past (Schuster, 1926-27/1984), (Wichert
1928/1984), the socialists held fast to socialist realism. Socialist realist interior design was to be
functional, yet nonetheless shaped by tradition in order to adequately accommodate the eye in
need of rest. To achieve this purpose, the resuscitation of bourgeois aesthetics of neo-classicism,
Chippendale, and Biedermeier was considered to be an appropriate lever.

Less obviously, bourgeois norms of dwelling were also to be found in floor plans and their
descriptions. The criteria of representation and privacy feature prominently in both. In the brochure
that accompanied the “Living Better, Dwelling More Beautifully”-exhibit, the importance of
representative and interstitial spaces, such as the lobby, the apartment's entrance hall, and the living room, was underlined (Deutsche Bauakademie and Ministerium fuer Leichtindustrie 1954). As Liebknecht explained, lobbies were also to be built in workers’ housing, since they constituted an important “intermediary” space between the “higher social significance of the socialist street” and the semi-privacy of the socialist dwelling. As a space of transition, the lobby was conceived of as a space of representation, wherefore it was to be equipped with, ideally mass-produced, marble and stone, tiles, stucco, paint, ornate staircase railings, sculptures, and paintings. Similar importance was given to the apartment’s entrance hall. Besides connecting the semi-public space of the building with the private or personal space of the apartment, the entrance hall was to render the visitor with a good first impression of the apartment while simultaneously protecting him or her from the intimate smells and noises of the apartment’s “guts”—the kitchen and the bathroom. As the “largest and most social dwelling space”, the Academy of Building proposed to equip the living room, the “center of composition”, with mass-produced hardwood floors, lusters, solid wooden doors, painted walls decorated with stucco, and paintings (Liebknecht 1954, 53-58). [Illustration 37]

Despite the fact that the socialists retained numerous features of bourgeois dwelling culture, the de facto modest size of the workers palaces’ apartments revealed the necessity to strike a balance between the goal of mass access to bourgeois dwelling and the economic imperative of cost-effectiveness. The average size of the apartments built from 1951 to 1955 was 42 square meters. Due to limited space, multiple dwelling functions were attributed to the living room, which was not the case in traditional bourgeois dwellings. Besides serving the purpose of dwelling, the living rooms in workers palaces had to also serve the purposes of sleeping, eating, and working if necessary (8-9). [Illustration 38]

Cost-effectiveness was also one of the reasons for ultimately eliminating an important feature of traditional working-class culture in East Germany no less than in Red Vienna: the live-in kitchen, i.e., a kitchen used not only for meal-preparation but also for socialization, mentioned previously in the context of Red Vienna. Under the banners of hygiene, efficiency, and women’s integration into the work force, the live-in kitchen had to gradually give way to the (allegedly) “space-, labor-, and time-saving” functional eat-in kitchen. [Illustrations 39, 40] As Marlene Grotewohl suggested in an article from 1952: “[T]he utmost rationalization and mechanization of domestic work [is essential to] winning over the female labor force for the great reconstruction work of our country [...]” [my translation] (Grotewohl 1952, 98). Grotewohl envisaged cooking to remain a “female task”, yet
wanted to render it and other household chores more efficient. Her motivation had less to do with emancipation than with increasing national productivity:

“Every work hour saved in the single household means freeing additional resources for society. In other words, using the time saved on unskilled labor for skilled labor, constitutes a considerable gain for the national economy. [...] For this reason, efforts to create shared laundry and heating facilities as well as demands for organized grocery shopping, dressmaking, automated garbage removal, the purchase of prepared foods, and socially organized house cleaning have to be vigorously supported, popularized, and, above all, realized” [my translation] (99).

The reduction of labor shortage by integrating women into the workforce was certainly a strong motivation for the GDR’s commitment to rationalize and, in part, socialize domestic work. That said, the East German constitution of 1949 went clearly beyond merely instrumental reasons for gender equality. The articles seven, eighteen, thirty, and thirty-five underscored women's right to equality, the free choice of education and profession, equal wage, and the compatibility of productive and reproductive labor (Verfassung DDR 1949)). Although in practice reproductive labor was socialized to a lesser degree than the constitution had foreseen and never recognized as productive labor14, gender equality in East Germany was nonetheless considerably further advanced than in post-war West Germany, where the ideal of the docile housewife and reliable consumer would reign supreme well into the late 1960s (Hund 1987), (Kleinschmidt 2008, 131-162).

As to family norms, a closer look at the workers’ housing floor plans and the socialist allocation policies reveals that East German socialist relations of production did not entail the gradual withering away of the bourgeois family as envisaged by Friedrich Engels (Engels 1884/1962, Sect. II). Communitarian forms of co-habitation never supplanted the monogamous, nuclear family model. The “average” one- to two-bedroom apartment was tailored to the “average” two-generational family of four (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 238). Moreover, the regime’s allocation policies

14 While the socialists extended the bourgeois image of women by integrating them into the workforce, they did not parallel this extension by an equally extended image of men, men who would actively participate in child rearing and the household (Harth 2010, 133). The socialists left male roles unchallenged and by doing so, they also continued the devaluation of domestic work, a devaluation also rooted in the bourgeois tradition and its distinction between wage labor and unpaid reproductive labor. The widespread perceived inferiority of reproductive labor is expressed, among others, in floor plans. The small, functional kitchens of the “worker’s palaces” would be trumped by even smaller, standardized kitchens in the Plattenbau-apartments, the dominant form of housing from the mid-1950s onwards. The so-called “mini-kitchen” neither had day light, nor ventilation. The “ratio-kitchen”, which pertained to the “ratio-apartment type”, was squeezed into the space previous apartment types had allocated to bathrooms. Both the mini- and the ratio-kitchen were of such a size, that only one person could work in it: typically, of course, a woman (Harth 2010, 138). Thus, the combination of continued traditional male gender roles and poorly developed follow-on facilities on the one hand, and the full integration of women into the labor force on the other hand, considerably stepped up the pressure on and work load of women.
increasingly favored married couples over other applicants for public housing. This was the result of a gradual shift in focus from politics of emancipation to politics of demography, i.e., politics whose main concern was to ensure the socialist nation’s biological reproduction (Schmidt 2007, 161-162).

Despite the fact that the East German state largely continued the hegemony of the nuclear family model and thereby bourgeois dwelling norms by means of architecture, urban design, and housing policies, it is important to underscore that the regime did seek to alter some of the features of the bourgeois dwelling tradition. As Habermas explained, in the bourgeois tradition, the family was relegated to the private sphere, a sphere free from both the anonymous laws of the market and the political directives of the court. Consequently, the family was considered the locus of the “private autonomy of the intimate”, a space in which family members were able to explore what it means to be human. In theory, argues Habermas, both genders were at liberty to “humanize their soul and spirit” in the intimate sphere of the private. In practice, however, this humanization in the realm of the private was the prerogative of men. Since economic autonomy was a precondition for private autonomy, a precondition met by bourgeois men but not by bourgeois women due to their exclusion from the market, the possibility to humanize one’s soul and spirit in the private sphere was clearly a male privilege (Habermas 1962/1990, 112-114).

Since women were actively integrated into the labor force in East Germany, they did meet what Habermas extrapolated as a precondition for “private autonomy”: economic independence. Moreover, in East Germany “humanization” was not meant to be restricted to the private sphere, and its spatial correspondent, the apartment or the family home, as was the case in traditional bourgeois dwelling culture. Instead, in line with core socialist tenets, East Germany extended the sphere of “humanization” by complementing the apartment with social spaces, such as locales of mass organizations and recreational, social, and cultural facilities, spaces that were meant to constitute an integral part of any socialist dwelling complex. Accordingly, similar to Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten, East Germany’s dwelling complexes were to serve, at least in theory, as loci for humanization in the form of socialization instead of individuation.

As mentioned previously, in practice East German housing units were not always complemented with the planned political, social, cultural, and recreational facilities. In fact, with the exception of daycare facilities, which were essential to bringing women into the work force, the provision of social spaces was neglected in comparison to the numeric increase of apartment units. Financial and
material constraints were one reason for the neglect as was the lingering need for additional housing units.

Social and communal space fell victim to East Germany’s economy of shortage, and so did, ultimately, socialist realist architecture. At the Allunion’s Conference in December 1954, Stalin’s successor, Nikita Khrushchev fulminated against Stalin's architectural excesses and proclaimed that the architects’ “addiction to ornamentation” and the craftsmen's “tinkering” [Handwerkelei] were to be replaced by standardization and typification. Khrushchev's imperative was to “to build better, cheaper, and faster” in order to solve the housing question (Chruschtschow 1955). The Soviet Union's “brother states”, including East Germany, were expected to align their housing policies accordingly. Thus, at a building conference in 1955 Walter Ulbricht officially ushered in East Germany’s revised architectural orientation and a ministerial decision that elevated the industrialization of housing construction to the rank of law (Nicolaus and Obeth 1997, 264-272). This reorientation from socialist realism to modernist functionalism after Stalin's death, the so-called “great turn in the construction industry”, heralded the era of Plattenbauten [concrete slab buildings] which East German socialism’s in general and its public housing policies in particular are typically connoted with. As previously mentioned, similar to West Germany’s adoption of modernism in the 1950s, East Germany’s return to modernism in the same decade was deprived of modernism’s encompassing social-political aspirations: the reconciliation of aesthetics, technology, and politics for the sake of human progress instead of one-sided, techno-scientific progress. In fact, East Germany’s aesthetic reorientation marked the beginning of “total industrialization”, including the total industrialization of the housing question. Accordingly, socialist humanist considerations on the issue of dwelling were increasingly supplanted by considerations of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and technological feasibility, as will be shown in greater detail in the next section.

3.2.3 From the Workers’ Palace back to the Dwelling Machine

In the early years of the GDR’s existence when socialist realism was still the official aesthetic doctrine, socialists had already experimented with an utterly audacious instantiation of total industrialization: the housing -construction machine designed by Ernst Neufert. Neufert was a student of modernism under the aegis of Walter Gropius and, during the years of Fascism, an appointee of Albert Speer. Neufert’s housing-construction machine was devised as a mobile factory. Moving forward like a train on tracks, the machine was designed to “drop” five-story row houses at
any desired length. It was “fed” with construction material in the front, material that was to be “digested” in the machine’s interior through a pulsing procedure facilitated through a highly specialized crew of workers. The end product was row housing consisting units of ten apartments each, units that could be produced within only a week and all year round, since Neufert’s machine’s weather-proof casing was designed to render the construction industry finally independent of seasonal changes (Voigt 1999, 29). [Illustration 41]

The socialists’ experiment with the housing-construction machine was abandoned soon after it had begun due to a high number of fatalities among workers (Hain 1996a, 107). Nonetheless the experiment, a techno-scientific pastoral that sought to solve social problems by technological means, bore testimony to a fundamental tension that was undergirding East German socialism since its inception: between the socialist ideal of putting human needs and desires center stage and the socialist reality of rationalizing and standardizing needs and desires to accelerate industrialization.

As long as the aesthetic doctrine of socialist realism was hegemonic, the East German regime made deliberate efforts to hide new technologies behind traditional aesthetic forms. For instance, the ideal socialist realist interior décor was, in line with bourgeois dwellings, to entail marble, stucco, and tiles. For cost-saving reasons, however, the décor was to be mass-produced on the basis of cheap raw material (Liebknecht 1954, 103-110). After the “great turn” in the construction industry, the reproduction of historicist forms was left behind and functionalism was resuscitated. The resuscitation did, however, not entail the development of aesthetic forms that would finally be in sync with and reflective of new technologies, as the modernists had suggested, but, as the socialists hoped, to speed up the production process and to save costs. “Workers’ palaces” had to give way to mass-produced concrete slab buildings, the Plattenbauten 15, which were tailored to the predetermined, minimal human functions of sleeping, eating, dwelling, and hygiene. [Illustration 42]

Although East Germany had already experimented with prefabrication and standardization in the early 1950s, the emergence of the mass-produced Platte as a hall mark of socialism took until the early 1970s. The latter coincides with the empowerment of Erich Honecker as General Secretary of the SED in 1971 who declared solving the housing question as a state doctrine. Consequently, in October 1973, the SED’s central committee passed a housing program that foresaw the construction

15 The term Plattenbau or, in short, Platte denotes a specific industrial building technique and building type, which is informed by certain technical, organizational, aesthetic and sociological norms, norms this section will develop on. In East Germany, most Plattenbauten were designed for housing purposes (Richter 2006, 5).
of at least 100,000 new public housing units per year, amounting to a total of 2.8 to 3 million apartments by 1990 (Buck 2004, 325). By 1990, 2.2 million new housing units were built throughout East Germany, of which 1.5 units were Plattenbau-apartments, typically located in large-scale, suburban housing settlements. In East Berlin and in East Germany, every second and fourth household lived in a Plattenbau respectively (Liebscher 2009, 7).

The new form of housing was expected to accommodate “developed socialist personalities” and to mirror a “class society of a new type” (Honecker), a society in which university professors would live next to factory workers and plant managers next to poets. Although East German socialists had initially dismissed the modernist dream of Mies van Rohe or Walter Gropius as an effigy of capitalism’s “inhumanity”–the technoid dream of solving the housing question by means of industrial rationalization–the SED was ultimately and ironically the political force that came closest to normalizing the modernist “dwelling machine”. Apartments in East Germany's most common Plattenbau-type, the WBS70, were standardized to such an extent that they could be built and assembled in as little as eighteen hours. [Illustration 43, 44]

The Platte is undoubtedly a symbol of state socialism; it is less clear, however, to what extent it is unique to it. Neither industrialization, nor rationalization, nor socialism necessarily implied the Platte as its respective consequence. In fact, industrialization and rationalization were considerably further advanced in the United States than in Europe before and certainly after 1945 (Hughes 1989). Moreover, an explicit decision against industrial rationalization was within the range of socialist options. For instance, the Austro-Marxist administration of Red Vienna (1919-1934) also declared housing as a right, yet consciously decided against the extension of the industrial logic into private space in its construction of municipal worker’s housing, as they saw in it–as mentioned in the second chapter–an extension of the logic of alienation.

One explanation for why the Platte instead of other building types materialized as socialism's chiffre is that existing dominant industrial practices of the time, Taylorism and Fordism, outpaced socialist theory. Although fundamental discussions about the nature and direction of the techno-scientific revolution the Platte was a product of, did take place, their impact on actual building practices was limited. As the urban sociologist Christine Hannemann explains, “The GDR’s construction industry is

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16 In Berlin Marzahn, a model WBS 70 apartment can be visited, which I did during my research trip in 2010. The information that the apartment was built and assembled within eighteen hours is from the tour I got at the Plattenbau-Museumswohnung.
[... a great example of the relative lead of practice over theory [...] Since no binding practical conclusions could be drawn from typically politically explosive, meta-theoretical debates [on the future of housing], construction practitioners could apply their professional ideologemes even more audaciously” [my translation] (Hannemann 1996, 108). The ideologemes invoked were strikingly similar to capitalist ones: scientific labor management, rationalization, and automatization.

One of the practitioners and driving forces behind East Germany’s techno-scientific revolution was Gerhard Kosel, a committed socialist, student of Bruno Taut, and émigré to the Soviet Union where he worked as an architect from 1933 to 1954. Upon his return to Germany, the Ministry of Reconstruction entrusted Kosel with the task to develop the industrialization and rationalization of the construction industry based on his experience in the Soviet Union (Hannemann 1996, 70-71). In his pursuit of the rationalization, centralization, and “scientification” [Verwissenschaftlichung] of the construction industry, Kosel took issue with one of Marxism-Leninism’s fundamental principles: to consider science as part of the unproductive superstructure. Kosel, in contrast, fervently made the case for recognizing not only manual and industrial labor but also scientific work as a “productive force”. He was convinced that the housing question could only be effectively solved if production, technology, and science were closely intertwined. For this to be possible, science had to be socialized by the state (Kosel 1957, 5-7). The state’s greatest task, according to Kosel, was to bring about “encyclopaedically educated workers” who were versed in all fields of natural science and steeped in practical experience. Only a highly educated and experienced workforce would be “well equipped for and adaptable to the industrial economy’s constantly changing challenges and conditions” (139-142). Moreover, in Kosel’s view, production, technology, science, and—as already suggested by Henry Ford—leisure, had to be closely intertwined as they constituted the sine qua non for increased productivity and efficiency. The expected reward for increased productivity and efficiency was human self-realization. For the latter to be possible, the automatic factory had to supplant the mechanic factory, and automatons had to replace experts (135). According to Kosel, centralization, including the centralization of the construction industry, was the prerequisite for automatization—a perspective the East Germany state adopted gradually, especially after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 61).

Kosel’s position exemplifies how Taylorist principles of management and Fordist principles of social politics re-appeared in Marxist clothes in East Germany. The emphasis on the importance of scientific innovation for the production process, the deconstruction of the production process and
its rational and more efficient reconstruction, the centralization of management and oversight, the decision for industrial labor against craftsmanship, the creation of a flexible labor force, and the promise of increased leisure were all hallmarks of Taylorism and/or Fordism that found their way into socialism.

Yet why did Marx in particular and socialist texts in general play a lesser role in determining certain economic practices than did Taylor and Ford? Certainly, Marx’s celebration of industrialization and the full unfolding of the productive forces in his Communist Manifesto found its equivalent in the GDR’s initial dominant focus on heavy industrialization. Moreover, Marx's argument that the transition from the “principle of the subjective division of labor” to “the objective division of labour” (Marx 1887, XV, I) is the precondition for class consciousness was echoed by East German proponents of “deep” industrialization, centralization, and standardization, such as Kosel. Nonetheless, in many regards practices and policies that underpinned capitalism had a stronger impact on actual socialist practice than socialist theory.

However, the socialist re-fashioning of practices that were closely connected with capitalism had less to do with a willful or opportune distortion of truth than with a fundamental dilemma all real socialist experiments faced: the limited availability of socialist practices to rely on or fall back to. This situation led to the appropriation of already established practices, including their contradictions. In Foucault's terminology, one of the core problems of state socialism was the lack of a “socialist governmentality”, i.e., the lack of a socialist rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty. Typically, argues Foucault, socialism “has been connected up to liberal governmentality, and then socialism and its forms of rationality function as counter-weights, as a corrective, and a palliative to internal dangers. [...] We have seen it function [...] within governmentality that [...] fall more under [...] the police state, that is to say, a hyper-administrative state in which there is, so to speak, a fusion, a continuity, the constitution of a sort of massive bloc between governmentality and administration.” [...] “if there is a real socialist governmentality, then it is not hidden within socialism and its texts. It cannot be deduced from them. It must be invented” (Foucault, 2008, 91-93).

Although I disagree with the absolutist nature of Foucault’s claim because I do think that state socialism did develop elements of a truly socialist governmentality, such as the constitutionally anchored right to housing, Foucault’s point touches on something crucial: the legacy of inherited
governmental practices, ideas, and rationalities that cuts a across the political and ideological spectrum.

Kosel belonged to the practitioners who sought to anchor a socialist governmentality in the housing sector—not by inventing it *ex nihilo* but by appropriating practices entrenched in capitalist regimes for socialist purposes. Yet by doing so, some of these practices’ fundamental contradictions—contradictions from a socialist perspective—were appropriated as well. For instance, the type of knowledge Kosel wanted to “encyclopedify” was very specific: the productive, positive knowledge of applied, natural science, i.e., knowledge that was quintessential to the techno-scientific revolution. Ultimately, Kosel’s proposed encyclopedia was an encyclopedia of “best practices” that evolved from narrowly defined techno-scientific parameters whose goals were to enhance productivity and to increase leisure. By contrast, Marx’s endorsement of an “all-round development of the individual” pursued neither increased productivity, nor leisure but social conditions under which labor would no longer serve as a means to life (or livelihood), but as “life’s prime want” (Marx 1875/1978, 531). Against the backdrop of Marx, the East German trajectory of educating citizens to step up production and to expand leisure constituted an extension of capitalist relations of production rather than their overhaul. Marx’s vision of social conditions that rendered labor “life’s prime want” clearly went beyond the promise of leisure’s and its underpinning rationales, the regeneration of labor and, under Fordist conditions, mass consumption. Moreover, in East Germany, Marx’s ideal of differential egalitarianism captured in the precept “[f]rom each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (ibid.) was replaced by abstract egalitarianism, embodied by a highly standardized and functionalist living environment. In short, Marx’s materialist history of need pointed to the possibility of liberating desire. East German socialism promised to redeem the liberation of desire, yet entangled itself with practices which socialist theory had criticized and had sought to supersede.

Against this backdrop, it should have become clear that the relative lead of existing practices over socialist theory is an important explanation for why the *Platte* emerged as symbol of socialism. It is, however, not the only explanation. An equally weighty factor for the *Platte’s* hegemony as a building form is the East German political elite’s decision for centralization. Public housing is one manifestation of the East German government decision to catapult the state into the position of a technologically oriented planner and social engineer. The national plan determined the number of new units to be produced as well as the availability and redistribution of material resources and
labor. Regional and local plans were developed to implement the national plan, without having much impact on what was decided at the national level (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 96). Although land was never nationalized to the same degree as it was in the Soviet Union, the East German state had easy access to it: by the equivalent of eminent domain, the state could take away land from private owners for state purposes, such as the construction of public housing (88-89).

The Ministry of Building was the central state institution that oversaw the planning and financing of new housing development as well as the production of material at the state-owned building concerns [Baukombinate]. It also administered the standardization of building materials and building types–a degree of standardization unprecedented in liberal capitalist regimes. Due to the standardization of entire buildings, art in the form of architecture, and traditional skills in the form of trades were increasingly supplanted by centrally planned, civil, and industrial engineering. Equally important, the standardization of building types led to the normalization of suburban settlements.

Certainly, already in the 1920s, industrial building was coupled with decentralized, suburban settlements, which was in part a technological necessity and in part a question of land availability. Yet in the GDR, the rigidity of industrial building in the form of building types and the centralized construction industry took urban decentralization to another level. In fact, often the emergence of suburban settlements was less driven by planning than by the spatial requirements of highly industrialized construction sites, requirements determined by crane runways, the operating range of hoists, storage for concrete slabs, and access routes for trucks (Hain 1996a, 108; Topfstedt 1988, 18). Accordingly, in contrast to early decentralized urban forms, such as the garden cities of the 1920s, the suburbs that emerged with the Platte were less imbued by the desire to reconstitute a harmonious balance between city and nature than by, what the East German architect Bruno Flierl called, Kranideologie [crane ideology] (Flierl 1993). Correspondingly, the green space in between the Platten was not conceived of as city landscape but as “in-between-green” that was seen more as a waste product of technological modernization than a space for human replenishment.

Whereas in East Germany eighty percent of the newly built housing was prefabricated and highly standardized (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 97), in West Germany, a greater variety of dwelling forms existed due to the decentralized nature of the mainly private construction industry. However, as will be shown below, in the realm of social housing, i.e., publicly funded housing, economic and industrial-technological imperatives dominated as well. Although in West Germany the state
refrained from standardizing entire buildings, the *Deutsche Industrienormen* [German Industrial Norms] also heavily intervened in the organization of floor plans. For instance, floor space was matched with the measurement of standardized furniture and installations, with pre-determined dwelling functions, and the “normal” family model, that is, the nuclear family. Consequently, the possibilities of individual appropriation and co-habiting in forms that differed from the nuclear family model were severely hampered in West German social housing (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 155, 48). Hence, fundamental elements of the dwelling for the “existence minimum” were normalized on both sides of the Wall, as was the functionalist suburban settlement, which in West Germany was less the result of technological necessity than of the hegemony of modernist planning ideals—something I will develop on in more detail below (Hanauske 1995, 369). As Lefebvre argues, with post-WWII urbanism, be it socialist or capitalist, “needs are only retained, received, and classified on the basis of economic imperatives, of social norms and 'values'. [Although] “the classification and the denomination of needs [...] have a contingent character, [they] are, paradoxically, institutions.” Apart from “functionalizable' needs” [there are, however,] “desires that straddle the needs inscribed in things”, desires I will develop on after taking a closer look at the Platte’s legacies (Lefebvre 2003, 69).

3.2.3.1 Interpreting the Platte: A Legacy of Creative Destruction

The industrial, functionalist *Plattenbau*-settlements can be read as a micro-embodiment of what Marshall Berman calls a “Faustian model of development”, which

“aims less for immediate profits than for long-range development of productive forces, which it believes will produce the best results for everyone in the end. Instead of letting entrepreneurs and workers waste themselves in piecemeal and fragmentary and competitive activities, it will strive to integrate them all. It will create a historically new synthesis of private and public power, symbolized by the union of Mephistopheles, the private freebooter and predator who executes much of the dirty work, and Faust, the public planner who conceives and directs the work as a whole. It will open up an exciting and ambitious world-historical role for the modern intellectual—Saint-Simon called this figure ‘the organizer’—I have favoured 'the developer'—who can bring material, technical and spiritual resources together, and transform them into new structures of social life” (Berman 1988, 74).

Against the backdrop of Berman’s definition, I argue that the East German state assumed all three roles. By supporting scientists and technologists who narrowed the political, cultural, and economic possibilities of modernity to a specific form of techno-scientific modernization it played the role of the freebooter. By devising five- and seven-year Plans on which all development depended, the
state assumed the role of Faust, the planner who directs the work as a whole. And, finally, by pooling all available resources to redeem the promise of the “new socialist man” the state put itself into the position of the developer.

Faust ends up destroying the old and hospitable couple, Baucis and Philomen, and their peasant way of life in order to be able to reclaim land from the sea and to build dikes and dams for the presumed long-term benefit of the masses. Similarly, the East German state destroyed, supplanted, and ignored existing or envisioned forms of dwelling as well as traditional modes of building based on craftsmanship and architecture in the hope to bring history to a better, socialist end through centralization and rationalization. For this purpose, the state silenced those who disagreed with its equating of human progress and techno-scientific progress, it exploited nature for the sake of heavy industrialization, and it limited the possibilities of “poetics of dwelling” by rendering prosaic forms of dwelling the norm.

Against the backdrop of the fact that often, abstract reason in the form of economic and techno-scientific imperatives has rendered concerns for the human secondary, the following question emerges: Has the promise of modern political projects to reconcile techno-scientific progress with human progress itself become void? In 1947, Horkheimer and Adorno provided an unequivocally clear answer to this question. “Abstraction, the tool of Enlightenment”, as they put it,

“stands in the same relationship to its objects as fate, whose concept it eradicates: as liquidation. Under the levelling rule of abstraction, which makes everything in nature repeatable, and of industry, for which abstraction prepared the way, the liberated finally itself become the 'herd' (Trupp), which Hegel identified as the outcome of Enlightenment” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947/2002, 9).

When adopting Horkheimer and Adorno’s negative assessment of Enlightenment reason to the East German context, one can certainly argue that the monotonous aesthetic of the Platte and Plattenbau-settlement represented a prototypical micro-example of the Trupp’s “condition of possibility”: people's emancipation from the housing misery was accompanied by the “liquidation” or, less strongly, abstraction from difference and particularity. To be sure, the discussed social norms implicit to the rigid building types and urban forms, severely hampered people’s ability to accommodate their own needs and desires in their living environment. Standardized housing and neighborhoods incapacitated individual expression and disadvantaged social relationships that
differed from the relationship normalized by the *Plattenbau*-apartment’s floorplan and by allocation policies, the two-generational, nuclear family (Hannemann 2005, 113-116, 175-182; Kahl 2003, 69).

However, while abstraction is reductive by definition and potentially destructive in practice, often it is—simultaneously and paradoxically—also creative. Thus, although East German mass housing undoubtedly neglected desire and difference, at the same time, it embodied the state’s commitment to render housing a right, and with this right, a commitment to de-commodify the basic need for shelter and the principle of social equality. In other words, the “creative” dimension of the *Platte*’s implicit logic of abstraction was the reduction of social inequality. Whereas under liberal capitalist conditions the quality, size, and location of housing typically depended and reflected on the tenant’s socio-economic standing, East German mass housing—while not eliminating social inequality completely

17—nonetheless considerably reduced it (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 171-174). Moreover, “de-differentiated” housing conditions had not only an equalizing effect on class-, but also on gender relations due to the fact that *Plattenbau*-settlements was usually complemented with childcare facilities. As mentioned previously, although the provision social and cultural facilities ranked second to the quantitative increase of housing units, childcare was provided due the state’s interest in integrating women into the workforce. As a result, the combination of childcare and affordable housing allowed East German women to achieve a certain degree of economic independence (Harth 2010, 136-39).

More generally, from the perspective of the emancipation of women, I argue that East Germany’s combination of housing and gender policy was more progressive than its West German counterpart, despite numerous shortcomings. In the 1950s, the West German conservative government began to reduce housing policy to *family* policy, a reduction that entailed the normalization of the single-family home and its depiction as the only form of dwelling that would be truly family-friendly (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 147). As is well known, the normalization of the single-family home went hand in hand with a gendered division of labor, a division between the male breadwinner and the female care-giver. To be sure, in East Germany as in West Germany reproductive labor remained in women’s hands. However, East German women were at least economically relatively

17 *De jure*, privileges were abolished. *De facto*, however, privileges continued to exist in regard to, for instance, allocation policies (apart from social need, merit was a criteria for obtaining a newly built apartment) and access to high end housing. In fact (and ironically), many members of the political elite lived in mansions located in upscale suburbs.
independent. The availability of affordable housing and childcare were essential to this independence (Harth 2010, 138-139).

In sum, the Platte’s legacy is both “destructive” and “creative”. It is destructive regarding the Platte’s underpinning “liquidating abstractions” in the form of a built environment shaped by techno-scientific imperatives instead of human considerations. At the same time, it is creative because the Platte embodies a critical perspective on liberal capitalism’s “emancipation of civil society from politics” (Marx 1843/1978, 45). To recall a point made by Margaret Kohn:

“Even an unsuccessful movement [or, as one might add in the context of East Germany, unsuccessful politics] may reveal democratic possibilities. Its disappointment does not necessarily invalidate the dream. For if we doubt that history has an underlying internal logic developing toward greater good and progress, then success or failure should not be the ultimate arbiter of normative validity” (Kohn 2003, 10).

East Germany’s constitutionally anchored right to housing and its underlying principle of egalitarianism called into question the logic of the market, its de-politicization of the need for housing, and the “liquidating abstractions” that shape capitalism, for instance, in the form of spatial segregation along socio-economic lines. Moreover, it provided a critical perspective on the West German welfare state. As is well known, article twenty of the West German Basic Law from 1949 defines Germany as a social state, yet only in principle (Grundgesetz 1949). Accordingly, the extent to which the state interferes with the market is highly dependent on the given political, economic, and ideological climate. This dependency, as I will show in greater detail below, informed West German housing policies in a major way. Whereas public investment in housing was generally agreed upon right after 1945, by the mid-1950s the West German government decided to slowly but steadily withdraw from the housing sector, a decision that was accompanied by a shift from the public subsidization of housing to the subsidization of individuals in need of housing (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 153-157).

However, before I elaborate on the political production of space in West Germany, I will illuminate an important counter-space that East Germans carved out for themselves, a space of appropriation “from below” that defied the “liquidating abstractions” implicit to East German mass housing: the garden colony.
3.2.4 The Allotment Garden as the Platte’s Antidote?

In the early years of the GDR, the relationship between the garden colonists and the SED-led state was fraught. Given the German garden movement’s conservative and reformist history\(^{18}\) and its political volatility\(^{19}\), the government under Walter Ulbricht (1950-1971) assumed that the popularity of the settlements would fade, once the economic situation, including the food supply, had improved. However, the garden colonies remained popular well past the post-WWII food shortage. Accordingly, Ulbricht decided to resort to punitive measures in order to eradicate what he deemed to be petty-bourgeois and individualizing “birthmarks of capitalism”. Expropriation, the centralization of the initially decentralized settler organizations, and sudden, poorly announced land use laws were some of the measures Ulbricht’s government resorted to (Dietrich 2003, 28, 76-84). Notwithstanding the adverse political climate, garden colonies survived. By the late 1950s, Ulbricht changed his punitive stance to a more accommodating one, a turn that, after the 1953 uprisings, was part of a general political re-orientation toward better accommodating the needs and desires of the people.

After the Fifth Party Congress of the SED in 1958, the garden colonies were no longer referred to as “birthmarks of capitalism”, but, on the contrary, as integral element of the transition from capitalism to socialism. “Important social tasks” were allocated to the politically diverse, yet centralized garden allotment association, the VKSK\(^{20}\), such as the “political-ideological education” of gardeners, and the strengthening of the gardeners’ efforts to complement the Plan’s—not always reliable—food supplies with fresh, local produce (28-29; 126-135). In other words, as long as the initially disapproved of “fragmentary knowledge” of the gardeners and settlers could be rendered socially productive and integrated into the “total knowledge of socialism”—at least rhetorically—the garden colonies were officially regarded as acceptable.

\(^{18}\) The history of the East German allotment gardeners is rooted in 19th century bourgeois, reformist traditions. To those traditions belonged the Lebensreform [reform of life], a social movement that propagated a back-to-nature life style, bourgeois reform movements that sought to care for and depoliticize the working class or the Garden City movement that actively sought to better the workers’ living conditions, without, however, generally questioning capitalist relations of production (Dietrich 2003, 25-27).

\(^{19}\) By the beginning of the 20th century, a considerable part of the German garden settlement organizations were affiliated with or even operated by the Social Democrats who, in contrast to the Communists, entertained a rather pragmatic relationship with the “gardening” segment of labor. By the 1930s, the National Socialists brought the garden movement into National Socialists lines – without facing much resistance from the movement (Dietrich 2003, 26-27).

\(^{20}\) The abbreviation VKSK stands for Verband der Kleingärtner, Siedler und Kleintierzüchter, that is, association of allotment gardeners, settlers, and small animal breeders.
In contrast to Ulbricht’s initial hesitant stance toward the garden movement, Honnecker embraced the garden colonies as an appropriate environment for socialist citizens, an environment in which citizens were engaged in “meaningful recreational activities”, such as working the land and thereby tending to their social, physical, and mental well-being (29; 221-234). Honnecker’s acceptance of the garden colonies went hand in hand with his commitment to Fordism. Given the promise of continuously increasing leisure time, “meaningful recreational activities” had to be provided. Given the promise of increasing people's quality of life, economic policies had to be coupled with social policies. [Illustration 45]

Despite Honecker’s support for garden colonies and the fact that the state provided the land for them, the state, interestingly, largely refrained from regulating and interfering with how the garden lots were used and appropriated\(^\text{21}\). One reason for the limited interferences was administrative: in contrast to new housing construction, the garden colonies were not subject to the Ministry of Building, but the Ministry of Agriculture whose regulations concerning land use and development were loose and whose competence concerning building regulations was limited. Another reason was that Honecker concentrated his political attention and economic resources on the construction of new housing, given his promise to solve the housing question by 1990. Finally, Honecker was well aware of the citizens’ dissatisfaction with the quality of life in East Germany. To increase the state’s social legitimacy, providing recreational spaces, such as the garden plots, was important as was refraining from over-regulating their use (249-259).

3.2.4.1 The Garden as Bucolic Utopia?

What rendered the garden settlements that popular throughout the GDR’s existence? Surely, they did not escape the logic of the industrial-urban, but extended it into the rural in the form of materialized leisure that had little to do with traditional rural life. Lefebvre explains this extension as follows:

> [...] the traditional unit typical of peasant life, namely the village, has been transformed. Absorbed or obliterated by larger units, it has become an integral part of industrial production and consumption. [...] The urban fabric grows, extends its borders, corrodes

\(^{21}\) This applied also to the allocation policies. In order to obtain a garden plot, membership in the settlers’ organization VKSK was necessary. Although the state gradually attributed social and political tasks to the initially decentralized VKSK, membership in the organization was less driven by the members’ interest in these tasks than their interest in obtaining a garden plot. In fact, most members were unfamiliar with the political statutes of the VKSK (Dietrich 2003, 21).
the residue of agrarian life. This expression, “urban fabric,” does not narrowly define the built world of cities but all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country. In this sense, a vacation home, a highway, [or] a supermarket in the countryside are all part of the urban fabric” (Lefebvre 2003, 3-4).

Certainly, the East German garden colonies were, in many respects, an extension of the industrial-urban life: gardening was pursued as a hobby rather than as a necessity; the cottage was used as a second instead of a primary home; the time lived at the cottage was compressed into weekends, holidays and vacation, in short, a “type” of time that emerged with industrial-urban life (4).

Nonetheless the rural and natural did serve as a vanishing point for the needs and desires that functional urban spaces did not cater to. One literary example of this is Sarah Kirsch’s autobiographic text Allerleihrauh [Cinderella], in which she captures the experience of living in a newly built urban settlement in the metaphor of an egg that “when dropped from a high-rise, never reaches the ground, but simply disappears” (Gremler 2007, 123). The metaphor of an endless fall conveys a sense of loss of control that Kirsch anchors in (but does not reduce to) the life world of the Platte. For her, escaping the city is equal to escaping the state. Kirsch’s utopia is a farmhouse in Mecklenburg, a rural place remote from Berlin in which a myriad of positive memories of summers well spent have their roots. One day, however, a fire destroys the bucolic idyll ruthlessly and with it, the utopian dream of a place outside of the demands of society (125).

Kirsch’s perspective was not a merely fictitious or personal but widely shared. While moving into new public housing was popular not only because of the housing shortage but also because of the modern amenities unavailable in old, inner city housing, the monotony of the built environment was a common object of criticism (Topfstedt 1988, 16-18) (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 86-87) (Kahl 2003). A common object of criticism was also the lack of possibilities to participate in the decision-making process that left people at the mercy of the often arbitrarily acting communal housing authorities that oversaw allocation, collected rents, organized exchanges, and took care of maintenance and repair (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 94-95).

As Marc Garcelon put it, one of the ironic paradoxes of sustained Soviet-style party rule was,

“that the subordination of particular interests and the individuals’ life course to the diktat of ‘total administration’ did not result in a harmonized society striving in union to realize the ‘vanguard’s’ blueprint of the general will, but rather in the pervasiveness of particularistic orientations and the near obliteration of civic orientations” (Garcelon 1997, 322).
The garden colony, as a popular retreat from the city into nature (or imaginations thereof), was one site where particularization was lived. Dwelling, according to Benjamin, can be understood as “fashioning of a shell” for oneself, as creating a frenetically topical, “indwelt” space that is detached from any form of instrumentality (Benjamin 2002, H2,1; H2, 7; I4,5). To be certain, “shells” were fashioned in the garden colonies. A closer look at the specific life world of allotment gardeners will reveal some of the particularizations that were at stake.

3.2.4.2 Appropriated Space: The Allotment Garden as a Site of Embodied Critique

The interior of the garden sheds, make-shift homes, and cottages, where weekends and summers were spent, often looked like museums of family histories. They were *omnium gatherums*, places filled with old pictures, documents, furniture, and plates, reflective of a frenetic personal topicality the *Plattenbau* -apartment left little room for due to its limited size, fixed layout, and design. Yet family history was not only “preserved” at the cottages (in the form of knick-knacks), but also re-lived. Family arrangements the state had de-normalized, such as the extended family, were often re-constituted in the garden colonies. They were, for instance, an important locus for the bonding between the first and third generations. Against the backdrop of the state’s concerted effort to normalize the nuclear family and to socialize children from an early age, the fact that parents often preferred their children to spend their summer vacation with their grandparents at the cottage instead of at public childcare facilities illustrates a critical thrust against the state (Dietrich 2003, 11; 16-20).

The gardens themselves were landscapes of different needs and aesthetic tastes (13-14). On the one hand, they supplied people with fresh fruit and vegetable the collectivized farms produced insufficiently. On the other hand, they served as experimental ground for aesthetic expression that took, among others, the form of miniature trains, tunnels, viaducts, and mass-produced gnomes–an aesthetic one might readily dismiss as kitsch that fetishizes the transitory and reproducible and that is indifferent to the original, permanent, and rational. Yet, if one refrains from a hasty rejection of kitsch to return to the original meaning of aesthetics, the fruit, vegetable, and paraphernalia filled gardens might disclose more than mere worship of mass culture. *Aisthetikos* is the ancient Greek word for that which is “perceptive by feeling” (Buck-Morss 1992, 6). The original meaning of the term aesthetics thus goes beyond the narrower sense of art as beautiful semblance of the rational. Instead, it comprises a wider meaning of art, one that refers to cognition attained not by abstraction but by tasting, touching, hearing, seeing, and smelling, by, what Susan Buck-Morss calls, the
“corporeal sensorium”. The most immediate purpose of aesthetics understood as “perception by feeling” is to satisfy instinctual needs, such as the need for warmth, nourishment, safety, sociability. These needs retain an “uncivilized and uncivilizable trace, a core of resistance to cultural domestication” that surfaces especially when people experience “culture” as stifling “nature” (ibid.).

Without doubt, in East Germany, culture was often experienced as stifling nature, wherefore the retreat to the garden signified more than mere “agro-romanticism”. It was a form of “embodied critique”, a form of, to use Eagleton, “inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical” (Eagleton 1990, 13). The East German state had elevated the modern narcissist fairy tale of the *homo autotelsus* to the fairy tale of *societas autotelsus* (an elevation undertaken by other modern political enterprises, such as National Socialism), which suggests, at least in the fairy tale’s *mythic* dimension, that a new society can be created miraculously out of its own substance. What is thereby forgotten, as Buck-Morss points out, is the fairy tale’s wisdom: that the consequences of such an undertaking can be disastrous (Buck-Morss 1992, 7-8).

Retreating to the garden was one form to come to terms with, while not “disastrous”, certainly constraining spatial creations of the abstracting state, the functionalist, standardized, and typically suburban housing developments. The allotment gardens catered to needs and desires, the *Plattenbau*-apartment and -settlement left unfulfilled. They nourished people physically and emotionally by (re-)connecting them with a less controlled natural environment where they could engage in practices and re-employ skills the state had rendered secondary given its emphasis on industrial modernization, such as subsistence gardening and the construction of makeshift homes. There are emotional rewards to craftsmanship, a term with which Richard Sennett designates all those activities that relate people to a tangible world in a non-instrumental way. Yet too often, as Sennett explains further, modern society stands in the way of the taking pride in one’s work and of gaining satisfaction from “doing things well for their own sake”:

“At different moments in Western history practical activity has been demeaned, divorced from supposedly higher pursuits. Technical skill has been removed from imagination, tangible reality doubted by religion, pride in one's work treated as a luxury. If the craftsman is special because he or she is an engaged human being, still the craftsman's aspirations and trials hold up a mirror to these larger past and present” (Sennett 2008, 21).

Although practical activity was highly regarded in East Germany, centralized industrial modernization *did* remove technical skill (including the individual decision-making that is typically
involved in training one’s skills) from imagination. It continued and even exacerbated (due to centralization) some of the narrow confines that also characterize capitalist production: the reduction of work to wage labor, the increased division of labor due to rationalization, and the emphasis on productivity over workmanship.

Given this backdrop, the allotment garden did provide possibilities that the stricter controlled urban environment did not: to engage in non-instrumental activities and to employ one’s corporeal sensorium to satisfy needs and desires by aesthetic expression, to connect with extended family, and to have social relationships and lifestyles that the stricter controlled urban environment had made difficult. Yet how unique was the life world of garden colonies to the East German context?

To be sure, in many ways the practices of particularization in East German garden colonies resembled those in West German ones, not least because of their shared roots in anti-urban and anti-industrial social movement. The importance of appearance (and the desire for recognition) attached to the cottages and gardens, the decoration of gardens with products of mass culture, the intensive use and the thus often utilitarian approach to nature was common on both sides of the Wall (Kropp 2011). Although some of the practices were undoubtedly similar, the degree to which they were an extension or a subversion of a given dominant politico-economic logic depends on the larger social context in which they emerged.

In light of the tight regulations of the urban built environment in East Germany, especially in new housing developments where a considerable part of the East German population lived, the garden colonies did represent “another space”, a heterotopia that called into question dominant space. Put differently, it would be reductive to argue that the resemblance or even the mimicry of practices entrenched in the West was a mere expression of a yearning for identity with the resembled and mimicked, such as life in the West. Nature served as a vanishing point for the discontents of East German urban dwellers. Similarly, everyday life in the “West” served as a vanishing point for people who were frustrated with everyday life in the “East”. That said, there is an obvious gap between wish-image and reality: yearning for nature does not yet mean enjoying rural life; similarly, yearning for liberal capitalism does not yet mean living a fulfilled life under conditions of liberal capitalism.

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22 It should be added that this possibility was more available to men than to women whose activities at the cottages often remained dominated by reproductive work (Dietrich 2003, 18-19).
What is of interest from the perspective of critique is the construction of a vanishing point from which one distances oneself from a given reality. Freud’s concept of displacement, when transposed from an individual level of dream-work to a political level, will help to clarify this point.

For Freud, displacement meant the transference of “physical intensities” that are attached to one idea (or practice or comportment) to another one that is emotionally less charged. In the realm of dreams, displacement typically means three things: that the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious, that dream-displacement results from a type of censorship that is exercised by one psychical agency in the mind over another, and that a transference and displacement of psychical intensities occurs in the process of dream-formation (Freud 1976, 417-18, 650-51). When adopting (and thereby to a certain extent unavoidably distorting) the concept of displacement to the East German context, it is possible to draw parallels between the process of dream-formation and the process of devising a new socialist society. If one does so, it can further be argued that it is within this latter process, the formation of the dream of a new society, in which censorship occurs. Censorship, as Freud showed, evokes the appearance of distorted versions of the actual dream-wish. In the East German context, manifestations of a distorted “socialist dream wish” was people’s withdrawal from the urban environment to nature, their focus on re-collecting family histories in defiance of the normalization of the nuclear family, their clinging to (“non-socialist”) kitsch commodities, and people’s pursuit of individuation through dwelling, which was in tension with the state’s emphasis on socialization.

Following David Harvey, spatial vanishing points, i.e., “heterotopia, allow us to see how ‘otherness’, alterity, and alternatives [to hegemonic space] might be explored not as mere figments of the imagination, but through contact with social processes that already exist.” However, at the same time, these explorations leave us clue-less as to what a spatio-temporal utopianism might look like and as to how potential alternatives might be redeemed (Harvey 2000, 184-185). The garden colonies were sites where particularization and individualization occurred, in relative terms to the Plattenbau-apartment and -settlement. While they reveal needs and desires whose pertinence was heightened against the backdrop of the rigidity and dominance of the Plattenbau, they did not yet point toward an alternative, politically emancipatory space. However, the garden colonies did point toward the fact that in any social reality, including spatial reality, there is always a dimension of indeterminacy. As Zizek put it following Lacan, there is always a “surplus of the Real”, such as people’s self-accommodation of needs and desires, “over every symbolization”, such as the East
German state’s provision of built environments for the “developed socialist personality” (Zizek 1998/2008, vvx).

In the particular context of East Germany, the indeterminacy Zizek underscored manifested itself, among others, in the form of the heterotopic space of the garden colony, which reflected critically on the dominant space of the Platte. However, in the larger context of “both Germanies”, the Platte itself serves as a backdrop against which some of the seemingly less visible and harder to pinpoint “liquidating abstractions” of West German housing policies became visible, most importantly its underlying social stratification and stigmatization of need, “liquidating abstractions” that went hand in hand with West Germany’s decision for re-commodifying housing.

Given the onset of the Cold War in the early 1950s, West Berlin was similarly important to showcase the future of the “liberal West’s” urban reconstruction program in general and the housing program in particular as East Berlin was to the “socialist East”. Hence before elaborating on the details of West Germany’s housing policies, I will elaborate on its showcase housing project, the Hansa Quarter, which was conceived of as response to East Germany’s showcase housing project, the Stalinallee.
Illustration 28: Scene with model of Stalinallee from the DEFA film “The new flat” with the architects E. Collein and H. Hopp.

Illustration 32: Socialist realist design of Strausberger Platz, Stalinallee by the architect Hermann Henselmann, 1952.
Illustration 33: Walter Ulbricht at a rubble clearance site.
Illustration 35: Berlin, Potsdamer Platz, tanks attack protestors, 1953.
Illustration 36: Demonstrating bricklayers from the construction site Stalinallee in front of the East German “House of Ministries” (Leipziger Straße), 1953.
Illustration 38: Proposed small apartment for the Stalinallee, section B of construction site by the Planning Collective Hartmann. Apartment consists of hallway, living/dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.
Illustration 39: Floor plan of an ideal, functional work-kitchen with a total surface area of 4.65 square meter. On the left side: space for dishes, pots, and work surface. On the right side: stove and sink.
Illustration 40: Emphasis on a strict spatial division between the functions of meal preparation and dining.
Illustration 41: Ernst Neufert's Hausbaumaschine [Housing Construction Maschine].
Illustration 43: Berlin-Marzahn, Housing Development. The great majority of Marzahn’s Plattenbauten are of the type WBS 70. Photographer: Hubert Link, 1986.
Illustration 44: Three-Room Apartment in the Plattenbau-Type WBS 70. Dimensions are in meter.
3.3 West Berlin: Constructing a Liberal Society

The Sixteen Principles of Town Planning and their materialization in the East German “showcase housing project”, the Stalinallee, set an abrupt end to post-WWII experiments with the aesthetic of modernism and ushered in a return to “national traditions” in the form of socialist realism. By contrast, west of the wall, which in 1949 was already an ideological but not yet a physical construct, modernism continued to dominate West German urban planning and architecture. After 1945, modernism was, however, largely stripped of its politically radical thrust, the questioning of capitalism. In fact, West German modernist city building was based on the acceptance and embrace of liberal capitalism, to be showcased, among others, in the realm of housing.

Despite a delay of several years due to the East Germany’s Berlin blockade (1948-1949) which triggered an economic crisis and caused political uncertainty, in 1955 West Germany finally embarked on constructing a “showcase housing project” in Berlin, the Hansa Viertel [Hansa Quarter]. Propagandistically stylized as the West’s “display window of freedom”, the Hansa Quarter was meant to serve as the Stalinallee’s antidote (Wagner-Conzelmann 2007, 9). Built within the framework of West Germany’s most important post-WWII building exhibition, the Interbau 57, the Hansa Quarter was designed as a model housing project located in a model urban form, a city landscape. The purpose of both was to showcase West Germany’s response to East Germany’s reconstruction efforts. The building exhibit itself turned out to be a huge success. Over the course of only three months, it attracted 1.37 million visitors from West as well as East Germany (ibid.).

Despite the Interbau 57’s success, the actual urban form that emerged in the Hansa Quarter was in fact less a reflection of a clearly delineated and programmatic urban vision than that of an eclectic collection of different architectural forms. Designed by elite figures of modernism, among them Walter Gropius, Max Taut, Egon Eiermann, Oskar Niemeyer, and Alvar Aalto, 1,300 social housing units were constructed on an area of 25 hectares in the middle of the “half city” (ibid.). The lack of a clear, programmatic vision that was undergirding the actually built Hansa Quarter was due to a tension between two conflicting goals. The more narrow goal of the Hansa Quarter’s reconstruction, which asked for plans that were practicable and realizable within the given topographic parameters was at odds with the larger goal of the exhibit of presenting a more general, programmatic vision for West German reconstruction. To counter the Hansa Quarter’s lack of an overarching programmatic vision, the organizers of the Interbau 57 -exhibit decided to shift the programmatic
focus away from the actually built form to a special exhibition titled *die stadt von morgen* [the city of tomorrow], an exhibit that was meant to fundamentally challenge the ideal socialist city as formulated by the Sixteen Principles. [Illustrations 46, 47, 48]

3.3.1 The “City of Tomorrow” as the “City of Yesterday”? The Normalization of the Functional, Decentralized City after 1945

Of particular influence for the exhibit “the city of tomorrow” and, more generally, post-WWII reconstruction was the Charter of Athens (1943), the formalized version of the discussions held at the Fourth International Congress for Modern Architecture (CIAM) in 1933 (Le Corbusier 1973). The Charter’s most important tenets were: the rejection of the nineteenth-century industrial city, an urban form that was equated with “the ruin of mankind”; the emphasis on decentralization and adaption to local geography and topography; a celebration of organicism, a conception of the city as an organism consisting of “living cells” that are to be rationally ordered into “habitation units” or neighborhoods of a predetermined ideal size; and, finally, the stipulation of functionalism, most importantly, the carving up of urban life and space according to the functions of habitation, work, leisure, and traffic (ibid.)

In preparation for the “city of tomorrow” exhibit, the so called *Bauherren-Gespraeche* [Builders’ Talks] were held from 1955 to 1956, talks to which the exhibit’s organizers, Karl Kuehn and Karl Otto, summoned city planners, architects, landscape architects, and designers who shared the organizers’ commitment to the decentralized, green city (Erstes Arbeitsgespraech, n.d.; Zweites Arbeitsgespraech 1956). Although several of the principles of the Charter of Athens were challenged at these talks, the planning principles presented at the “city of tomorrow” exhibit in 1957 mirrored rather than critically appropriated the Charter’s legacy:

1. “The city of tomorrow” was expected to unite urban density and rural vastness, urban life and rural tranquility.
2. It would render nature, instead of industry, the basis of urban planning. Verdant areas and local topography were meant to serve as a structuring skeleton.
3. Based on this skeleton, the functions of work, dwelling, recreation and circulation were to be spatially arranged in a meaningful and economical way.
4. The “city of tomorrow” was to be designed as an agglomeration of manageable urban units, units in which inhabitants would be able to live both in community and in independence.
Family cells—considered as loci of intimacy and retreat—were to be united and complemented with social facilities to form neighborhoods, the ideal environment for educating people about “real democracy” and “responsibility for one’s fellow human beings”.

5. In contrast to the modern metropolis in which, as was suggested, the family was threatened by moral erosion (not least because women seized to serve as “the family’s backbone” due to their integration into the labor force), the “city of tomorrow” would put the family (and with it, traditional gender roles), back into its “natural place” to put life back in order.

6. Moreover, the “city of tomorrow” was to be a city that offered meaningful leisure activities. Given the assumption that automation and nuclear energy were about to considerably increase leisure time, the danger to waste the time gained in a passive and futile way was to be averted by encouraging people to engage in (interestingly) pre-industrial activities, such as farming, gardening, and crafts.

7. In terms of traffic, the future city would not only separate the different types of traffic, but also reduce it by rationally re-arranging areas of work, dwelling, and leisure to limit commutes.

8. Finally, the “city of tomorrow” was to constitute the basis for healthy living—a life that would be in sync with “biological laws”—by providing ample green space for active use (Die Stadt von Morgen 1957).

The purpose of the “city of tomorrow”-exhibition was to inform the public about the future of urban planning and to elicit its consent for it. To achieve the latter, visualized and often moralizing opposites were employed. By contrasting symbols of innocence (children) with images of decay and chaos (urban ruins), by promising a city that would nurture instead of deprive future generations, the exhibit’s organizers hoped to morally engage the public. Moreover, it was the organizer’s plan to actively engage the public with questions of city building and to encourage it to participate in the planning process (Otto 1959). In practice, not much became of the proclaimed democratization of urban planning. In contrast to the democratic dimension that was underlying Scharoun’s Collective Plan, the actual plans displayed at the “city of tomorrow”-exhibit largely sidestepped participation and operated under the assumption that people would agree to the proposed. Accordingly, the planning of West Germany’s city of tomorrow was not, as initially and propagandistically promised, radically different from the top-down implementation of the Sixteen Principles of City Building in
East Germany. “Tomorrow”, the “city of tomorrow”-exhibition contradictorily concluded, “the city planner has the time, money and power of a general [my emphasis]! Whether this is the case, depends on you. You are the builder of your city!” (Wagner-Conzelmann 2007, 125) As a contrivance of an all-powerful city planner, a specialist, who (purportedly) would have access to the secret of how to produce a new society by producing a new space, West Germany’s ideal “new city”, a city that promised democratization, was compromised from its inception. [Illustration 49]

What is revealed by the exhibit’s authoritarian underpinnings is the logic of urbanism. As a state-administered, technocratic rationality that is applied to the city, the logic of urbanism was not only to dominate East German, but also West German, reconstruction. As Lefebvre remarks critically, “[l]ike classical philosophy”, urbanism “claims to be a system” [that] “pretends to embrace, enclose, possess a new totality. It wants to be the modern philosophy of the city, justified by (liberal [or, as I would add, socialist]) humanism while justifying a (technocratic) utopia” (Lefebvre 2003, 153). The seeds for West Germany’s technocratic utopia were already sown in the discussions at the CIAM in the 1930s. Its outcome, the Charter of Athens which informed the planning principles of the “city of tomorrow”, suggested that the general “disregard of the principles of contemporary urbanism”, principles stipulated by “qualified technical specialists”—specialists in the art of building, health, and social organization—would be the main “cause of the anarchy that prevails in the organization of cities and in the equipment of industries” (Le Corbusier 1973, 94, 104-105). Yet why did the seeds for authoritarian urbanism fall on fertile ground again in post-WWII Germany? The fact that they did is striking in two ways: first, because of the obviously disastrous effects of the National Socialists’ pursuit of not only a nationalistic but also a technological utopia (Herf 1984); second, because of the widespread post-WWII desire for a new, democratic beginning, which the Interbau 57 promised to give expression to.

Certainly, the various visions, plans, and models of “building democracy” spatially were part and parcel of the Cold War. Hence, the showcasing of competing visions was often more important than sincerity regarding political promises. The desire for a new democratic beginning, however, was not merely showcased, but very much present and real in the post-WWII German society. Despite its reality, it was, once more, trumped by an expert-driven, technocratic approach to city building. As already Marx observed, straddling the gap between one’s entanglement with the past and one’s yearning for a radically different future is a difficult undertaking. More often than not, as he explained, the new is lost in the guise of the old upon attempts to break with history (Marx
This applies to West German urbanism, which prided itself to be innovative and democratic, yet wound up to be technocratic in practice. That the poetry of the future is easily eclipsed by the poetry of the past is also revealed by a closer look at post-WWII-, West German ideals concerning to architecture and city building.

Akin to East Germany, where the socialists unearthed past aesthetics of totality, beauty, and national traditions to sanctify the “new society” by way of a socialist realist, urban Gesamtkunstwerk [total work of art], in West Germany, the proclaimed “city of tomorrow” emanated as an idealized version of the “city of yesterday”. For one, the exhibition re-proposed modernist planning maxims and models, which had already been subjected to major criticism by the mid-1950s\(^{23}\) (Wagner-Conzelmann 2007) [Illustrations 50-53]. Second, the exhibit, ironically, coupled modernist planning principles with romantisms of the distant past, depicted as a life of order, wholeness and, human scale to be replicated by creating manageable neighborhoods with housing based on traditional family models as well as spaces for “meaningful” leisure activities that were equated with pre-industrial forms of occupation (Wagner-Conzelmann 2007, 128) [Illustration 54]. Thus both, the East German ideal “socialist city” and the West German ideal “city of tomorrow” drew their poetry from the past rather than the future. While the former took to “national traditions” to re-invent its ideal urban form, the latter stuck to the conservative appropriation of organic city planning.

While organicist analogies have a long history in art and design, the particular concepts of nature underpinning them have changed over time. Often, these changes went hand in hand with political changes. The specific “nature fetishism” in West German planning harked back to biologic concepts that emerged in the nineteenth-century. These concepts were appropriated by architects and planners affiliated with the Garden City Movement of the 1920s and carried on by their students into the years of fascism and post-war reconstruction (Sohn 2007); (Durth and Gutschow, 1993). As is well known, the garden city movement, a movement that originated in Great Britain in the nineteenth-century, criticized the industrial city and its “condition of possibility”: unrestrained capitalism. The latter was made responsible for causing dire living conditions for the urban masses. In pursuit of a fundamental reform of life, the movement suggested to dissolve the metropolis in

\(^{23}\) Already by the mid-1950s, numerous of the positions of the Charter of Athens, positions the “city of tomorrow” -exhibit largely adopted, have already undergone thorough criticism even, such as its idealization of decentralization, its conception of neighborhoods, and its underlying functional division. (Wagner-Conzelmann 2007, 130-131), (Mitscherlich 1965)
favor of decentralized urban forms. This dissolution was expected to serve as the basis for self-sufficient communities of production typically modeled on medieval guilds and their emphasis on craftsmanship. Architecture and planning were considered as the midwives of a society, in which city and nature would be re-balanced. Since critique of the modern metropolis was widespread among the political right as much as the political left, the idea of the garden city appealed to both. Proponents of the *Rassenhygiene* [racial hygiene] considered the garden city as an ideal “breeding ground” for a new, superior type of man. Proponents of the New Building, that is, left leaning supporters deemed the garden city as the ideal urban form for a society in which art, technology, and nature would finally be reconciled (Durth, 1989, 222-223, 225).

As Elke Sohn shows in her genealogy of organicist planning in Germany, the concept of nature as a foundation for the garden city ideal was taken from monism. Derived from natural science, monism holds that all existing things are, fundamentally, composed of one substance, as well as that a universal, unified set of laws underlies nature (Sohn 2007, 515). Particularly influential for monism was the work of the biologist Raoul Heinrich Francé (1874-1943) who was widely published and positively received in Germany. Francé suggested conceiving of natural organisms as autonomously active and autonomously regulated “living things”. Given their autonomy, natural organisms are not to be understood as divine creations, but as products of causality and mechanical evolutionary laws, laws that regulate even the smallest units of organic life (516-517). Moreover, according to Francé, intelligence would increase proportionally with an organism’s complexity and with a greater division of tasks between the its component parts. The biologist himself drew a parallel between the life world of plants and that of citizens, a parallel planners committed to organic city planning would later capitalize on:

“All the plants or animals perceived by our shared experience are communities, associations of cells, groups of citizens joining together to form guilds capable of performing more advanced tasks, as organs, than would be possible for the weak individual; they offer each other mutual aid and experience the same blessing of harmony as those pile-village dwellers who swore mutual peace, supporting each other and organizing themselves into small towns. Both arrived at a multiplication of their qualities. In the cell state, wonderful, advanced capabilities emerged [...]” (Francé 1907, 13).

The concept of the autonomous cell as well as the idea that every form in nature emerges in response to functional interests that are shaped by absolute economy, energy-saving, and harmony influenced planners and architects. From Francé, it was a relatively small step to Lamarck and environmental determinism: the idea that the conditions under which men live crucially affect the
development of their characteristics. Accordingly, healthy food, hygiene, light, and fresh air were believed to have an impact on people’s physical health as well as their mental, moral, and civic disposition (517-518).

“Healing of the world”, according to organicist planners, required the recognition of natural or cosmological law. Yet, to truly prevent humankind from dancing the “dance of death” (Franché) recognition alone would not suffice. It had to be followed by implementation—a task organicist architects and planners took on, conceiving of themselves either as “creative geniuses” (Scharoun), “experts” (Le Corbusier), or “generals” (“the city of tomorrow”) who would redeem nature’s prescriptions on the urban scale. Given the dependency of architecture and planning on given economic and socio-political conditions, the redemption of natural law also entailed the prescription of, or adaption to, dominant political “worldviews”.

Whereas the norms and ideas undergirding the planning models presented at the “city of tomorrow”-exhibition were similar in form to Scharoun’s city landscape, they no longer shared Scharoun’s radical political “pre-vision”. Instead, they were instantiations of political “re-vision”. For instance, Hubert Hoffman’s planning model was a condensation of the principles that underpinned the book, Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt [The structured and decentralized city], co-authored by Hoffmann. The book, written during the war and published in 1957, became a must-read for urban planners in the late 1950s [Illustration 55]. In this book, Hoffmann and his co-authors, Johannes Goederitz and Roland Rainer, continued the Fascist discourse of biologism and Lamarckianism. “Town planning”, as suggested by Hoffmann, Goederitz, and Rainer, had to carry out a crucially important task. Besides repairing the physical destruction caused by the two world wars, it also had “to repair destructions of the Volkskoerper [body of the people].” Accordingly, “priority should be given to those solutions that are apt to counteract any heavy loss of the people [Volk] through creating a healthy and efficient Stadtkoerper [urban bodies]” (Goederitz, Rainer and Hoffmann 1957, 91). Moreover, as the authors suggested, “there are good reasons to consider a vivid relation between men and nature, between landscape and soil, and the health and development of vitality”. Moreover, referring to statistics from 1939, the authors claimed that people who owned and cultivated their own land would have a higher birth rate (34-35).
The excavation of various roots of the “city of tomorrow” brings to light a problem that seems to have plagued architecture and city planning: both are bounded by political and economic constraints. As noted by Adorno, the fact that

“the great architects from Loos to Le Corbusier and Scharoun were able to realize only a small portion of their work in stone and concrete cannot be explained solely by the reactions of unreasonable contractors and administrators [...]. This fact is conditioned by a social antagonism over which the greatest architecture has no power: the same society which developed human productive energies to unimaginable proportions has changed them to conditions of production, imposed upon them; the people who in reality constitute the productive energies become deformed according to the measure of their working conditions. This fundamental contradiction is most clearly visible in architecture. … Because architecture is in fact both, autonomous and purpose-oriented, it cannot simply negate men as they are. And yet it must do precisely that if it is to remain autonomous” (Adorno 1965/1997, 16).

On a conceptual level, the organicist city was meant to be independent of social constraints. It represented a universal type that was understood as organic anatomy or as original form. It was up to the architect, the “creative genius” or “general”, to bestow upon the city its individual form. Ideally, the organic city was only adapted to landscape and local topography. In reality, it was dependent on historical circumstances, socio-economic conditions, and political demands. Often, as it turns out, historical, socio-economic, and political contingencies have informed the actual city to a larger extent than ideals of urban form. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that organicist planning ideals lent themselves to radically different socio-political appropriations. The city landscape, for instance, was attractive to the left-leaning modernists of the Bauhaus, to the reactionary modernists of the Fascist era, to East German socialists (after Stalin), as well as to West German liberals. These different appropriations were united by first, a deep fascination with techno-scientific modernization, most importantly rationalization, and second, by the firm belief in the possibility of recreating society as a “conflict-free and uniform Solidargemeinschaft” [a community based on the principle of mutual solidarity] (Ronneberger 1999, 432) through techno-scientific innovation and social management. Concerning the ideal of a Solidargemeinschaft, Francé’s biotechné prefigures biopolitics, the “regularization of life” (Foucault, 2003a, 249) pursued by “progressives” and “conservatives” alike. Any rational recreation of society entailed drawing on “scientific” knowledge of “men as a species”, be it in the form of biology, medicine, hygiene, demography, reproduction, or the urban milieu (242-245). Hence, regardless of the specific shape the organic city would take in different political settings, it usually implied a technological redesign
of the urban “organism”. Given the lingering dominance of Taylorism and Fordism in the twentieth-century, the attempted recreation of the organic by technology led to a common typology of urban dwellings across different political spectra, particularly in regard to mass housing. Informed by industrial norms, standards, and types, post-WWII mass housing looked similar regardless of the specific political contexts (Hannemann 1999, 405). As already discussed in the previous chapter, the form of mass housing in East Germany was not radically different from the form of mass housing in West Germany. In East Germany, the functional city and its organicist underpinnings, the recreation of a well-ordered urban body by means of technology, complemented the SED’s decision for rapid industrialization. In West Germany, the legacy and dominance of the decentralized, functional, organicist city was particularly well-suited to the post-WWII Fordist typology of dwelling. This typology was informed by four main principles: the public subsidization of mass housing for the urban population; the Taylorization of mass production; the expansion of state influence on building norms and the construction industry; and the normalization of the nuclear family model (Hannemann 1999, 406). However, exploring the typology of mass housing in West Germany in more detail, a typology that resembled that of East German mass housing, I will illuminate West German housing policies, policies that differed considerably from that of East Germany.

3.3.2 West German Social Housing Policies: Toward a Neo-liberal Governmentality

Whereas the history of housing policy in the GDR is marked by the pursuit of eliminating private property and private building initiatives in favor of public ownership [Volkseigentum], centralist housing construction, and administration, the history of West German housing policy is infused with the goal of gradually eliminating collective initiatives in favor of privately owned and market-oriented housing (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 145). In the GDR, three major legal mechanisms secured the hegemonization of public ownership. First, the First Reconstruction Law of 1950 equipped the state with an extensive right to expropriate and establish public control over urban development. Second, the constitution of 1968 stipulated housing as a right. And third, Honecker’s promise to solve the housing question by 1990 led to an encompassing housing construction program, a program that prioritized the quantitative provision of housing units over qualitative considerations of city building (Marcuse and Schumann 1992, 61-64). In West Germany, the Erste and Zweite Wohnbaugesetz [First and Second Housing Construction Law] of 1950 and 1956 determined the course of post-WWII housing policy well into the 1970s. Three main and lasting innovations went hand in hand with these laws. First, they foresaw the provision of social housing as
opposed to *public* housing\textsuperscript{24}, that is, housing that was publicly subsidized yet, in contrast to public housing, transformable into private property once the company, co-operative or private builder who built the housing had paid back the public subsidies. Second, the laws actively supported individual home-ownership. And third, they ushered in a gradual shift from the public support of affordable housing (the subsidization of *objects*) to an individualized, case-by-case support of subjects by means of housing allowance or subsidies (the subsidization of *subjects*) (Erstes Wohnungsbaugesetz 1951; Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 146-147).

Although in the immediate aftermath of the war, it was generally agreed upon that housing should not be re-commodified, a consensus informed by memories of the poor housing conditions in the 1930s, the post-WWII housing policies ultimately led to the re-commodification of housing. To be sure, in the immediate aftermath of 1945, housing was strictly regulated by rent control, tenant protection, and state-administered re-distribution. However, the increasing post-WWII dominance of the regulative ideal of a liberal market economy gradually introduced the de-regulation of the housing sector. Despite the fact that most state subsidies went into the construction of social housing up to the 1970s due to the dearth of dwellings in urban areas, individual homeownership was instituted as a regulative ideal from the 1950s onwards, an ideal that went hand in hand with the ideal of a free market economy.

Although the logic of individual home-ownership is obviously compatible with the logic of a liberal market economy, the hegemonization of home-ownership is not forcibly an intrinsic feature of it. For instance, up to this day, the great majority of Amsterdam’s inhabitants live in social housing despite liberal capitalist conditions (Fainstein 2010, 143). In the West German case, the post-WWII trend toward home-ownership is, on the one hand, an expression of lingering anti-urban sentiments that were shared across the political spectrum. On the other hand, it mirrors West Germany’s gradual re-orientation of a welfare economy along neo-liberal lines. It is this re-orientation, this section will focus on.

\textsuperscript{24} It is important to note that in Germany, there is an important semantic difference between *social* housing and *public* housing, though in everyday discourse, the two terms are used interchangeably. After 1945, social housing was housing built with state funds. Yet, as mentioned above, once these funds were paid back, the housing became the exclusive property of the company, co-operative, or private builder who built the housing. Public housing, by contrast, be it not-for-profit housing built in the Weimar republic or state housing built in East Germany, would remain public. Legally speaking, it could not be transformed into private property.
The First Housing Construction Law of 1950 distinguished between three types of housing: publicly subsidized social housing, tax-advantaged housing, and freely financed housing (Erstes Wohnungsbaugesetz 1951). Freely financed housing was purely market based and thus exempt from state regulations concerning rent and design (§§ 23, 27). Tax-advantaged housing, by contrast, did demand compliance to rent control and building norms, such as maximum apartment sizes (ibid.). Finally, social housing was to cover the needs of “wide social strata” (§ 1, ¶ 1) (and thus never primarily only those of the poor). Social housing was supported by the state in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans (§ 3, ¶ 1), loans that served as a temporary substitute for the post-WWII lack of private capital. Drawing on these loans obliged the builder to comply with state-defined rent regulation, eligibility criteria for tenants (§14, 17), and—an aspect that will be discussed in more detail below—industrial norms for the design and equipment of social housing units (§ 6); (Hanauske 1995, 40-41). Although social housing also emerged in the form of family homes and smallholdings, its predominant building form was the high rise (Erstes Wohnungsbaugesetz 1951, § 16, ¶ 1).

Similar to the mass housing programs in East Germany, West German social housing programs also set targets. The first housing construction law obliged the feds, Laender, and municipalities to build 1.8 million social housing units within six years (§1, ¶1), a number that was increased to two million in 1953 (Hanauske 1995, 40). In contrast to housing in East Germany (and Red Vienna), the public subsidies in West Germany, including the stipulations attached to them, never directly affected the status of housing as a commodity. For one, West Germany refrained from socializing the building industry. Private builders, not-for-profit co-operatives, and public builders (such as municipalities) had equal access to public subsidies (Erstes Wohnungsbaugesetz (13.12.1951) 1951, § 21) and were equally obliged to pay them back. Second, since housing was not stipulated as a right, being eligible for social housing did not mean being legally entitled to it, as was the case in East Germany (Hanauske 1995, 42-43). In West Germany, social housing mainly served a “subsidiary function”. The state compensated for temporary private funding shortfalls, shortfalls that slowed down the provision of new, market-based housing.

This subsidiary function of social housing was further emphasized by an amendment to the First Housing Construction Law in 1953 as well as by the Second Housing Construction Law of 1956. Both additions clearly blazed the trail for the dominance of private property, be it in the form of single-family homes, smallholdings, or tenant-owned apartments. Reflective of the values and criticisms of
Paul Luecke, who served as Konrad Adenauer’s deeply conservative Minister of Housing Development, the 1953 amendment foresaw an enhanced support for private property to “protect families” and to defy the dangers of “massification” [Vermassung] and collectivization (Hanauske 1995, 48). The course set by the 1953 amendment was continued by the Second Housing Construction Law of 1956 whose declared two goals were “to eliminate the housing shortage, eminently the shortage that affects low-income people, and, simultaneously, to reconnect wide social strata with the land by creating private property, particularly in the form of single-family homes”. Single-family homes were expected to encourage people’s “will to save [Sparwille] and to take initiative [Tatkraft]” (Zweites Wohnungsbaugesetz 1956, §1, ¶2), [my translation].

Unsurprisingly, what went in hand in hand with these goals was a continuous increase of public funds and incentives for privately-owned, single-family housing.

The 1956 housing law marked key changes for social housing that foreshadowed the government’s commitment to a liberalized housing market. First, the new law stipulated that builders had to dispose of a certain, state-determined equity in order to be at all eligible for public subsidies (§ 34, ¶ 1). Second, the Kostenmiete [cost-based rent] was introduced (§ 34, ¶ 1) (Hanauske 1995, 53), rent that covered all current and variable costs, including the costs implied in taking up public capital unless a tenant applied, on an individual basis, for a rent reduction on current and variable costs (§ 73). Whereas the Richtsatzmiete was a highly regulated form of rent that sought to secure relatively equal access to relatively equal housing, the introduction of cost-based rent signaled a gradual adaptation of rents to market conditions. Third, the state increasingly withdrew from providing public loans and decided to subsidize builders for taking up private loans instead (§ 42). The private capital market was gradually re-established as the main financial source for housing construction (Hanauske 1995, 55-56).

Most social housing units built up to 1970s were rental units. Typically, they were located in highly standardized, high rises located in suburban settlements—a planning decision the West German government, similar to the East German one, deemed to be particularly cost-effective. By the mid-1970s, the post-WWII housing shortage was considered overcome. As Hanauske put it, the West German “economic miracle” was matched by a “housing miracle”. The number of housing units in 1950 (10 million) was more than doubled by 1975 (23 million) and matched the number of households in need of housing (Hanauske 1995, 68-70).
Yet how did West German housing policies and their three main features—the provisional as opposed to permanent character of social housing, the normalization of homeownership, and the state’s decision for subsidizing subjects instead of objects—fit into the larger picture of West German social reform after 1945? Put differently, how was the “housing miracle” linked to West Germany’s post-WWII socio-political reconfiguration as a liberal market economy? To answer this question, it is important to throw into sharper relief the afore mentioned strong role the market economy played in re-constituting West Germany’s political sovereignty in particular and vision of society in general. This reconfiguration occurred during the Adenauer era, yet left traces beyond this era, as will be shown in the context of housing. As Foucault suggested and, as a closer look at West German post-WWII housing policies confirms, the course for neo-liberalism was already set in the 1950s instead of, as is generally assumed, in the 1970s.

For the “economic miracle” to be possible, which the “housing miracle” was a facet of, the abolishment of the controlled economy [Zwangswirtschaft] was deemed necessary early on. The controlled economy was introduced by the National Socialists in the form of price stops, rent control, and a state-directed allocation of dwellings, measures that were continued in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Particularly the conservatives who dominated West Germany’s political landscape until the mid-1960s sought to eliminate economic regulations. According to the conservatives, the edifices of the “new Germany” were not to be built on the foundations of the “old Germany”, foundations shaped by a totalitarian state’s grip on every nook and cranny of society, but on the foundations of a free market economy whose very principles were expected to not only inform, but also to reform, the state and society (Foucault, 2008, 118). Thus, the main concern of the new “liberal governmentality” that emerges in West Germany after 1945 was no longer the excavation of a free space for the market within an already given and delimited political society, a major concern of economic liberalism in the nineteenth-century, but the projection of the formal principles of a market economy onto the “general art of government” (131), the art of regulating society at large (146).

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25 Foucault explained his study of “governmentality” as follows: “I would like to try to determine the way in which the domain of the practice of government, with its different objects, general rules, and overall objectives, was established so as to govern in the best possible ways. In short, we could call this the study of the rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty” (Foucault, 2008, 2).
This chosen course was already prefigured at the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Party Congress of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in August 1948:

“With the politico-economic turn from a controlled to a market economy we took more than economic measures in the narrow sense. Instead, we established \textit{a new basis and beginning for our socio-economic and social life} [emphasis added]. We had to renounce intolerance, which led from intellectual bondage to tyranny to totalitarianism. We had to reorient ourselves toward an order which, by means of voluntary commitment and a sense of responsibility, aspires to unity in a meaningful and organic way” [my translation], (Erhard 1957, 23).

This distinctiveness of post-WWII West German liberalism was conditioned in two ways. First, the state’s legitimacy could not be re-established on a juridical basis because there was a lack of collective will in a country that was both divided and occupied. Second, the state could not be established on historical rights, given the country’s recent past of fascist totalitarianism (Foucault, 2008, 82). As a result, Ludwig Erhard, the conservative master mind of the West German \textit{Wirtschaftswunder} [economic miracle] and Minister of Economics under Konrad Adenauer, pushed for making the economy itself the basis of a legitimate state and society. As stated in a speech held in Frankfurt in April 1948: “We must free the economy from state controls. [...] “We must avoid both anarchy and the termite state,” [because] “only a state that establishes both the freedom and responsibility of the citizens can legitimately speak in the name of the people” (Erhard 1948/1981).

According to Erhard, competition was the best protection against “anarchy and the termite state”, and the best guarantee for a \textit{freiheitliche Gesellschaftsordnung} [liberal social order] (Erhard 1957, 9).

What made the remodeling of the West German economy as a liberal one as well as the remodeling of the entire West German society and state according to principles of economic liberalism that attractive after 1945? Foucault provided two convincing reasons. First, in contrast to historic right (right based on history and/or tradition), the origin of the institutional framework of economic liberalism is, from a political and social perspective, unimportant. Second, the function of economic liberalism is not to exercise sovereignty, as is the case with juridical power, but to guarantee freedom in the economic realm. And precisely because the function of economic liberalism is not a sovereign exercise of power (be it power based on historical or juridical right), but the establishment of freedom, any number of individuals can freely agree to play the game of economic freedom. If they decide to do so, they implicitly give consent to any (state) decision that is made to guarantee economic freedom and to secure whatever makes economic freedom possible. Hence,
the institution of economic freedom itself functions “as a siphon, as it were, as a point of attraction for the formation of political sovereignty” (Foucault, 2008, 82-83).

That the principles of consumption and competition were to become the basis of the West German society, that the non-state space of economic freedom, development, and growth, was to constitute public law and, more generally, Gesellschaftspolitik [societal policy], was clearly expressed by Erhard. In Wohlstand fuer Alle [Prosperity for All] (1957), a book in which Erhard summarized his politico-economic outlook, he stated that a citizen’s freedom means, first and foremost, “to consume [...] according to one’s individual financial possibilities, personal desires, and beliefs.” Citizens have a “democratic, basic right to consumption” [that] “must find its logical complement in the freedom of the entrepreneur to produce and sell whatever he deems to be necessary and commercially promising depending on the market’s conditions and people’s expression of needs.” The “freedom of consumption and the freedom of economic enterprise have to be perceived by each citizen’s consciousness as inviolable basic rights” [my translation], (Erhard 1957, 14). The foundation for this expansion of the “catalogue of basic human rights” by the right to free consumption and the right to free production and trade was, according to Erhard, competition. If the latter is compromised, the rights to consumption, production, and trade are compromised as well and so is the possibility of prosperity (8).

Whereas a traditional welfare economy typically pursues the objective of relatively equal access to consumer goods by means of redistribution, West Germany’s social-market economy took a different course: a course rooted in the idea that competition, economic development, and growth were necessary to solve the “social question”. “Prosperity through the expansion of the GDP, instead of prosperity through the redistribution of the GDP” (10) was a leitmotiv of West German liberalism. Essential to Erhard’s policies of economic expansion was the limitation of artfremder Staatsfunktionen, functions “foreign to the species of the state”, such as politics of planning, price control, and tax-based public revenues (12).

Foucault carved out three major distinctions between a traditional welfare economy and a “neo-liberal” one.26 First, social policies in a traditional welfare economy are meant to have an equalizing

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26 Foucault refers to the German post-WWII economy as a neo-liberal one and sometimes also as an ordo-liberal, that is, he uses the terms of neo-liberalism and ordo-liberalism interchangeably. In contrast to common understandings of neo-liberalism as non-interventionist, Foucault argues that neo-liberalism, at
effect on unrestrained economic processes that are considered to be the source of inequality. By contrast, neo-liberal social policies give ample space to differentiation and thus to a degree of inequality to protect the free market. The social democratic orientation of Red Vienna, including its respective housing policies, would fall into the first category; West Germany’s housing policies, as will be shown below, into the second one.

A differentiation for economic reasons was inscribed into the First Housing Construction Law, a law that divides the housing sector into three: social, tax-advantaged, and market-based housing. Although only the market-based housing was fully compatible with the idea of a free market, both social housing and tax-advantaged housing had a market-based differentiation inscribed into them as a regulative ideal. As mentioned above, social housing and tax-advantaged housing were only subject to rent control and other social regulations throughout the duration of state loans or tax-benefits. Moreover, since the First Housing Construction Law eliminated the special status of the socially oriented, not-for-profit housing corporations, since the law made them compete with the for-profit industries, the construction industry itself was streamlined according to market principles (see also Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 152). Finally, economic differentiation was also the goal of the Zweite Foerderungsweg [Second Path of Promotion] introduced in 1965, which subsidized middle-income tenants by means of tax breaks. The target group was people whose income was too high to be eligible for social housing. It also meant to create an incentive for people living in social housing to transition into homeownership or market-based rental units (Hanauske 1995, 64-65). By contrast, in welfare economies, such as that of Red Vienna, housing policies were introduced as a counterweight to the free market. Any housing built from or subsidized by public funds was considered to be a public good that would cater to people in need of housing and that would secure them with a permanent, instead of a temporary, right to dwelling.

Second, the major instrument of social policy in a traditional welfare economy is the socialization of certain elements of consumption and income. By contrast, neo-liberal social policy pursues the privatization of risk: the task of the economy and its underlying policies is to ensure that every individual disposes of sufficient income to be able to insure him- or herself against existing risks, least the German variant of it, is highly interventionist (see references to Foucault in the main text below) – and so is ordo-liberalism.

27 As already mentioned before, it is important to stress that especially in Berlin social housing was the most common form of housing built until the 1970s. Nonetheless, is this is the point I would like to underscore, its re-commodification was foreseen as early as in the 1950s.
either as an individual or through mutual benefit organizations. In a neo-liberal economy, as Foucault put it, “individual social policy” gradually replaces “socialist social policy”. For the latter to be possible, economic growth is deemed essential. Foucault’s argument is reflected in post-WWII West German housing policies in which the state only assumed a “subsidiary function” until the recovery of the private financial market. Moreover, West German housing policies reflect the individualization of risk because they constitute the end of policies of de-commodification. Instead of subsidizing objects (the public provision of housing), subjects were subsidized in the form of housing allowances and tax-breaks. At the same time, the Second Housing Construction Law actively fostered and sought to normalize privately owned housing, a law that was embedded in a discourse dominated by conservative family norms and the idea of taking responsibility for oneself by creating or acquiring private property (Zweites Wohnungsbaugesetz 1956, §1, §2, §36)

Third, in a traditional welfare economy increases in economic growth are typically matched by increases in social compensation. In a neo-liberal regime strong economic growth does not forcibly result in more compensation, but in enhanced support for individuals. The goal of the latter is to achieve a level of income that would allow individuals to afford insurance, access to private property, and individual or familial capitalization, i.e., material means with which risks are to be warded off individually (Foucault, 2008, 142-145). Foucault’s observation is reflected in Erhard’s dictum “prosperity through expanding the GDP, instead of prosperity through redistributing the GDP” (Erhard 1957, 10) as well as his conviction that “social problems” are best to be solved by a continuous increase of nominal incomes coupled with a steady decrease of prices (47). Also this third component of the neo-liberal welfare regime found its way into shaping the “housing miracle”. The First Housing Construction Law foresaw the privatization of social housing in the long run, a privatization based on the assumption that as soon as the capital markets recovered and economic growth took off, the market instead of the state would provide sufficient housing. As mentioned before, the commitment to privatizing social housing went hand in hand with the individualization of the responsibility of securing adequate housing and, more generally, the individualization of social securities. Accordingly, the privately owned single-family home was normalized not only as the ideal dwelling for a nuclear family but also the ideal means for providing for one’s own social security. The latter was supported by tax advantages (Zweites Wohnungsbaugesetz 1956, §92, §95), public loans (§ 45), and state top-ups for private savings destined building one’s own home (§88). In addition, in contrast to a traditional welfare economy the growth of the West German economy was
not matched by a steady increase of social housing, but, as already pointed out, a shift from subsidizing housing to subsidizing tenants. As also already mentioned, this shift was based on the assumption that, in principle, the main responsibility of securing adequate housing lay with the individual instead of the public.

The most important, and, as I argue, most convincing thrust of Foucault’s analysis of post-WWII German liberalism is its difference from pre-WWII liberalism. Its goal was not to carve out space for economic freedom within an already existing state but to build the state and its legitimacy on the non-state space of economic freedom, more precisely, on the idea that economic growth and development would produce political sovereignty. To be certain, as Foucault himself conceded, the phenomenon that the economy produces legitimacy for the political system that is its guarantor is not unique in history. Had, for instance, the highly interventionist Austro-Marxist policies not produced the results they promised, the creation of a wide-ranging public infrastructure, it is hard to imagine that their legitimacy and wide-spread public support would have lasted as long as they did. On the other hand, to mention an example of failed legitimacy: because East German economic policies largely failed to produce the economic outcomes the state had promised, the state’s legitimacy was severely hampered. Hence, in the case of East Germany, it was not only the regime’s authoritarianism that caused public discontent, but also the poor standard of living it afforded its citizens. Although economic success and political legitimacy are to a certain extent always linked, Foucault was right in stipulating that there was nonetheless something unique about West-German liberalism and its interweaving of the economic and the political. Thus, when Erhard, the architect of the West German “economic miracle” suggested that “[i]n the middle of the twentieth -century [...] the recognition of each government and state is dependent on the success or lack of success of its economic policies” (Erhard 1957, 17), more was at stake than the mere assertion that political success is highly dependent on economic prosperity. What was at stake is the beginning of neo-liberalism, that is, the interlacing of formal principles of a market economy and the art of government (Foucault, 2008, 131). Typically, neo-liberalism is associated with the roll-back of the state in the 1970s. However, Foucault made a convincing case that the seeds for neo-liberalism were sown already in the immediate post-WWII years. This case is reflected in post-WWII housing policies. Despite the fact that in West Berlin, where economic developments often differed from the developments in West Germany more generally, social housing was the predominant building form
well into the 1970s, the federal housing policies passed in the 1950s clearly blazed the trail for the re-commodification of housing as a long-term political goal also in the half-city.

Apart from tracing the emergence of West German neo-liberalism through the lens of housing policies, the preceding analysis hopes to demonstrate that the seemingly neutral economic realm also entrenched and hegemonized socio-political norms and assumptions that were necessary for the reproduction of social relations. West Germany abstained from East Germany’s overt political (re-)construction of a “New Man” by mass events, such as the public orchestration of workers at the Stallinallee’s construction sites. More neutral and tacit methods for normalizing certain social relations were chosen, such as the (re-)construction of the citizen as homo economicus. West Germany’s political reinvention was, however, far from being non-interventionist (as was the case with, for instance, laissez-faire liberalism). Neo-liberalism, as Foucault underscored, is a “positive liberalism” informed by “vigilance, activity, and intervention” (Foucault, 2008, 132, 133). The West German housing policies discussed above serve as an example of “positive liberalism” and so does the following facet of these housing policies that the subsequent analysis will focus on: the rationalization of space by means of industrial norms. This rationalization shaped especially social housing and went hand in hand with the standardization of the post-WWII dwelling culture. Given the emphasis West German liberalism put on individuality, it is curious that the space provided by West German social housing programs was similarly rigid and constricting in regard to individual appropriation as the space provided by East German housing programs whose main underlying rationale was not individualism but egalitarianism.

3.3.3 Standardized Dwelling, Normalized Living

In post-WWII West Germany, building researchers were entrusted with the task of defining the bottom line for apartment sizes and equipment for mass housing, a bottom line that was likely to be accepted by future inhabitants (Hafner 1993, 130). To achieve a certain level of quality of life, the researchers’ goal was to render space as efficient as possible. For this purpose, industrial norms were developed to define and standardize the use and functions of dwelling spaces. The two norms that shaped West German social housing in a long-lasting way were the Deutsche Industrienormen [German Industrial Norm] DIN 18011 “Stellflaechen fuer Moebel und Oefen im Sozialen Wohnungsba” [Utility Space for Furniture and Furnaces in Social Housing] (1951) and DIN 18022 Kueche und Bad im Wohnungsba [Kitchen and Bathroom in Social Housing] (1957).
The DIN 18011 differentiates between utility space \([Stellflaechen]\), movement space \([Bewegungsflaechen]\), and interspace \([Abstandsflaechen]\) (Deutscher Normenausschuss 1953, 14-16). Its goal was to optimize space by prescribing the use of highly standardized, often in-built furniture and by tailoring it to predetermined functions, such as sleeping, eating, hygiene, and dwelling (Hafner 1993, 131). Similarly prescriptive was the DIN 18022. It stipulated that the single-household kitchen was to be the functional kitchen, which, also in West Germany, was assumed to be particularly cost-, space-, and time-saving given its scientific-managerial setup and its functional limitation to meal-preparation. A space of approximately six square meters was considered to be sufficient for cooking for a family of four to six (135). Using the kitchen for activities other than preparing meals, such as eating, dwelling, socializing, or tending to children was made impossible. As mentioned in the context of the \(Platte\), although the functional kitchen was meant to contribute to the emancipation of women by rendering the kitchen as efficient as possible, it contributed to their isolation and domination. For one, rationalizing the household increased isolation because it sidestepped the socialization of reproductive labor (Beer 1994, 102-106;113-119). Second, it re-entrenched hegemonic gender norms and thus practices of domination, not least because the measurements of the kitchen’s furniture were tailored to none other than to the average, \textit{female} body, as shown by Kerstin Doerhofer’s analysis of gender and building norms (Doerhofer 1999) [Illustrations 56-58].

For a builder to be eligible for public funds for social housing, the prescribed German Industrial Norms had to be implemented. Thus, though the West German liberal state, as opposed to the East German regime, left the actual construction of social housing to the private and not-for-profit sector, it nonetheless heavily intervened in the social signification of space and dwelling. Certainly, in the immediate aftermath of WWII, one of the main purposes of the industrial norms, norms that were passed in conjunction with the Housing Construction Laws, was to secure a minimal standard of living\(^{28}\). Yet both the norms’ lingering importance even in times of economic prosperity as well as the fact that these norms were applied to social housing in particular, bears testimony to the fact that ultimately, the minimum was normalized \textit{only} for those who could not afford housing on the free market. The functional, three-room apartment—two bedrooms, one living room, and a kitchen—emerged as the “normal dwelling” for the “normal nuclear family” and would shape mass housing in

\(^{28}\) The First Housing Construction Law stipulated that apartment should not be smaller than 32 and not bigger than 65 square meters (§ 17, ¶1). The Second Housing Construction Law stipulated that 85 square meter ist he maximum for publicly supported rental units (§ 39). The latter also determined a minimum standard for the apartment’s facilities: a hallway, storage space, outlets for appliances, etc. (§ 40).
particular, and West German dwelling culture in general, well into the second half of the twentieth-century (Hafner 1993, 128).

To be sure, since the inception of rationalization increasing cost-effectiveness was one of the motivations for carving up space according to norms and functions. Yet, as was already known since the New Building’s push for standardized mass housing in the 1920s, rationalization did not in fact always lower housing construction costs, as proclaimed by its proponents (Kaehler 1988, 553), (Beer 1994, 122). Often the reverse was true. Due to the high costs involved with both major restructurings of industry (e.g., from small to large scale) and the development of peripheral land, housing costs were often driven up instead of down. In the context of West Germany, as Hafner explains, the main significance of rationalization and industrialization was the increased quantitative output of housing units and the relative improvement in the quality of life in comparison to pre-WWII housing conditions despite continuously increasing production costs (Hafner 1993, 273).

If standardization and rationalization did not forcibly guarantee cost-effectiveness, why were they nonetheless similarly prevalent in West German social housing and East German public housing? As mentioned in the context of East Germany’s Plattenbauten, the answer lies in the increasingly hegemonic equation of modernization with Taylor’s rationalization based on a quasi-scientific analysis of activities and processes along the vectors of time and motion, and Ford’s coupling of rationalized mass production with redistribution in the form of mass consumption. This equation left its mark not only on the reproduction of labor, but also on the reproduction of everyday life and society more generally regardless of the society’s specific political outlook. In other words, although Taylorist and Fordist rationalities were ultimately accepted as pinnacles of modernization on both sides of the Wall, these rationalities were utilized to legitimize different political projects.

The West German liberal state drew on and normalized economic parameters for the reproduction of society shaped by Taylorist rationalization and Fordist mass consumption, yet entrusted the market—instead of the state—with redeeming the two rationalities’ promises of material plenty. By contrast, the East German state not only adopted rationalization and mass consumption for its economic framework but also rendered itself the framework’s redeemer in the form of, for instance, socializing and centralizing the construction industry. Both political models pursued the dream of a conflict-free society and both considered Taylorism and Fordism essential for the dream’s realization. In particular, Ford’s vision of a “spiral of prosperity” was attractive to different
political camps (Fehl 1995, 21). The components of this spiral were, as Fehl puts it in litany –form: “standardization–mass–production–increased productivity–decreased unit and product cost–increased wages–increased consuming power–increased leisure–increased demand–expansion of mass production” (20).

Given the hegemonic conception of modernization as equal to rationalization and mass consumption, Taylorist and Fordist ideas spilled over into fields that were not directly related to the consumer goods industry, such as architecture and planning. This spillover happened even before the onset of the Cold War. The industrial norms and floor plans implemented in post-WWII liberal Germany were largely a continuation of the industrial norms and floor plans the National Socialists, especially the German Labour Front spearheaded by Robert Ley, had developed. Ley’s work as well as Gustav Wolf and Karl Ludwig’s book, Vom Grundriss der Volkswohnung, prepared during the war and published in the 1950s, were key references for the layout and design of post-WWII West German social housing (Hafner 1993, 131). To be certain, the rationalization undergirding the National Socialists’ vision of Volkswohnungen itself drew on a precedent. It harked back to the work of the modernists of the 1920s who embraced rationalization not for voelkische aspirations but for social-emancipatory goals (Mumford 2000, 27-43; 104-116).

As shown by this brief sketch of planning history, Taylor’s rationalization of industry and Ford’s mass production for mass consumption found its way into the planning, production, and architecture of housing by analogy. Human needs were assumed to be similar and to be satisfied by technological means. In the realm of planning and architecture, this assumption typically resulted in uniform and schematic built environments. The “dwelling ration” was to be distributed according to pseudo-scientifically determined human needs (Kaehler 1988, 55). “[F]loor plans and, more generally, town planning were to be scientifically developed and devised in such a way as to best possibly maximize the ‘leisure ration’ to secure reproduction and to discipline workers’ conduct for the sake of enhanced productivity” [my translation] (Fehl 1995, 24). This was the case on both sides of the Wall: at the level of urban form and at the level of dwelling.

On the urban scale, the “dwelling cell” or “neighborhood” was to secure social reproduction in West Germany. In East Germany, this task was attributed to the “socialist dwelling complex”. The dwelling cell emphasized individuality; the socialist dwelling complex stressed socialization. Despite differing conceptions of social reproduction, the commonality between both urban forms is the fact that they
were infused by the ideal of a functional and spatial separation of needs and activities. Whereas in Red Vienna’s municipal housing child care, swimming pools, shops, restaurants, poly clinics, party locals, and laundry facilities were integrated in the social housing unit, in West and East German mass housing alike, housing units, social, and communal facilities were spatially separated.

Concerning the level of dwelling, the degree of standardization was certainly considerably higher in East German public housing than in West German social housing, as mentioned in the context of East Germany’s *Platte*. The West German state prescribed industrial norms for building parts and floor plans, yet refrained from prescribing apartment and building types as was the case in East Germany (Geist and Kürvers 1980, 3: 469-487; 510-516). Furthermore, because West Germany did not put the state, but the market into the position of the developer, the building forms and floor plans were not as uniform as they were in East Germany.

Despite these differences, West German mass housing shared important features with East German mass housing. First, both regimes sought to secure social cohesion by expanding people’s share in scientific-technological progress. Key to this pursuit was to provide “healthy” and “hygienic” dwellings for the masses (however minimal the equipment of these dwellings might have been) as well as access to a certain dwelling culture through consumption (which worked better in West Germany than in East Germany). Second, both states entrenched the nuclear family as the “normal family” and therefore tailored the standard dwelling in mass housing to the “smallest cell of society”. By doing so, the legacy of a key element of bourgeois dwelling culture, the gender divide, was perpetuated. Although the roles attributed to the family in general and women in particular were different in West and East Germany—West Germany normalized the role of women as housewives whereas East Germany pursued the integration of women into the labor force—neither state fundamentally challenged inherited spatialized gender norms. Whereas the logic of the modern factory was expanded into the domestic space in the form of, for instance, the functional kitchen, the thrust of modernization stopped short of questioning gender norms. In other words, at the rationalized shop floor history was overhauled; by contrast, in the rationalized dwelling history remained the same: the space of reproductive labor was to be preserved as a “female space” (Hannemann 1999, 424-425).

Since the guarantee of individuality and freedom was essential to the West German political project, why did it hardly translate into the realm of dwelling? As Christine Hannemann puts it, in contrast to
other social spheres, modernization, regarding mass housing, did not lead to an increased differentiation of the “ways of life” but to their standardization. A “reduced modernity” was the result (425). However, alternatives to a “reduced modernity” existed. Already in the 1920s, modernist architects, including Mies van der Rohe and Hans Scharoun, experimented with floor plans that gave ample space to individual appropriation, experiments that were motivated by the idea to redeem the modern promise of freedom and autonomy (Kaehler 1988, 553). Even at the Interbau 57 “free floor plans” were introduced, i.e., floor plans that were not carved up along predetermined functions and measurements (Deutscher Werkbund Berlin 1958, 64-65). [Illustration 59] Although leaving it up to inhabitants to decide on how to appropriate space was not necessarily more expensive, the fact that free floor plans did not become hegemonic had less to do with cost effectiveness than with the prevalence of Taylorist and Fordist rationalities and their equation with modernization and progress tout court (Kaehler 1988, 553-554). Historically, the appropriation of space for purposes of self-realization and self-representation was a prerogative of the bourgeoisie. East Germany sought to overcome this prerogative in the name of equality by building need-based mass housing for everyone. By contrast, in West Germany spatial appropriation remained the privilege of those who were not economically dependent on social housing. Yet, as will be shown in the next section this prerogative did not go unchallenged.

3.3.4 Appropriated City, Appropriated Dwelling. Two Cases in Point: The Maerkische Viertel and the Kommune 1

3.3.4.1 The Maerkische Viertel: Wither Abstract Space

One example of a highly standardized living environment is the Maerkische Viertel (MV), a social housing estate of about 17,000 apartments located in 18-storey -high rises built from 1964 to 1974 by the GeSoBau, the Gesellschaft für sozialen Wohnungsbau [Society for the Construction of Social Housing]. The Maerkische Viertel by far exceeded the scale of the Hansa Quarter or, more generally, the scale of mass housing in the 1950s. Whereas the city landscapes of the 1950s were typically planned as an agglomeration of neighborhoods of no more than 5,000 inhabitants, the Maerkische Viertel was built for 50,000 tenants. When viewed from above, the residential development mirrors an organic physiognomy consisting of individually designed building forms (Wilde 1990, 73). Yet what presents itself as harmonious organicism “from above”, from the modern plane perspective, was not forcibly experienced as such “from below”. Despite a certain degree of architectonic plurality, the carving up of urban and private space according to predetermined functions
dominated everyday life in the MV. As Wilde put it, the exemplary modernist suburb can be seen as an expression of an “ideology of growth and progress” that brought predictability to center stage and that considered “any increase in effectiveness and rationalization as contributive to the future’s salvation” (44) [Illustrations 60-62].

The *Maerkische Viertel* is a concrete example of the fact that progress was narrowed down to a techno-scientific notion not only in East but also in West Germany. However, the hegemonization of techno-scientific modernization did not go unchallenged. In East Berlin, allotment gardens were an expression of how people appropriated space for their own purposes, purposes that were often radically different from the ones inscribed into the state-created urban and domestic spaces. In West Berlin, the logic inherent to mass housing was challenged in the form of grassroots democratic initiatives. As a matter of fact, the *Maerkische Viertel* was a hotbed for West Germany’s extra-parliamentary opposition in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although public officials celebrated it as an epitome of progressive modern mass housing, the MV increasingly became a fermenting ground for political unrest. The APO organized self-help initiatives and forms of protest on issues such as rent increases; the lack of community facilities, and social spaces (daycares, schools, children and youth centers); the lack of democratic accountability of the housing corporations; as well as the, sometimes forced, relocation of socially vulnerable people from inner city housing to suburban mass housing, relocations that resulted from urban renewal.

Built on the premises of a former wild settlement, which, prior to its clearing was decried as a “green slum”, the West German construction of new, suburban neighborhoods, was driven by three factors: labor drain, inner city rent increase, and urban renewal. The political and economic isolation of West Berlin in 1961 had a severe negative impact on the availability of labor. Since many worked in the Western parts of the city but lived in the Eastern districts, the sealing off of West Berlin ushered in a labor shortage. To counteract the shortage, West Berlin’s senate decided to provide mass housing quickly to settle workers in the West (Autorengruppe "Maerkische Viertel Zeitung" 1974, 27).

Moreover, the construction of large-scale social housing projects was made necessary because of the expansion of the so-called “white circles”, that is, urban areas where rent control, and thus the political intervention in the supply and demand of housing, was abolished. The latter was the result of the *Luecke-Plan*, a plan that, similar to the First and Second Housing Construction Law, pursued
the deregulation of the housing market (Haeussermann and Siebel 1996, 158). The Luecke Plan was not nearly as successful in West Berlin as elsewhere in West Germany, where rents were largely subject to the free market by the end of the 1960s. Nonetheless, also in West Berlin, the plan led to a rent increase and, subsequently, to a heightened demand for social housing.

Apart from measures to attract labor and to deregulate the housing market, inner city urban renewal stepped up the need for affordable housing. In West Berlin, urban renewal was not primarily driven by capital investment as was the case in other West German cities, but by concerns for housing quality. The post-WWII consensus that the historically grown industrial city’s consequence was social disorder and decay, fed the momentum for inner city clear cutting in the 1960s. “Sun, light and air” were to be brought to “Old Berlin” by reducing density and mixed use, and to thereby, so was the hope, improve the “socio-economic structure” of working class areas (Bodenschatz 1987, 30). A study commissioned by the senate in 1961 found 430,000 apartments built before WWI to be either condemned or in need of rehabilitation (30). Although rehabilitation would have been an option in many cases, the city’s First Urban Renewal Program (1961) stipulated clear cutting as the most effective strategy. The reduction of inner city housing was then matched by an expansion of suburban mass housing.

As the urban historian Harald Bodenschatz explains, the city’s decision for clear cutting had advantages mainly for the construction industry. First, it afforded the industry with the possibility and space to implement its rationalized prefabrication methods. Second, it created a steady and secure market for the housing industry, since the destruction of inner city housing was coupled with the construction of suburban mass housing. One effect of the housing corporations’ relatively secure financial status was that they acted in the interest of profit rather than in the interest of tenants (31-32).

The housing corporations’ lack of democratic accountability, the brutalist architecture of suburban mass housing, the arbitrary mix of inhabitants from different neighborhoods, the relatively high cost of living in social housing, and the lack of social infrastructure in suburban settlements were some of the grounds on which forms of protest emerged in Berlin’s Maerkische Viertel [Illustration 62].

One of the first explicit critiques of post-WWII mass housing was expressed by the “Diagnose - Exhibition” in 1968. Organized by affiliates of the Technical University Berlin, the exhibit compared the intentions of the architects and builders of the Maerkische Viertel with the inhabitants’ actual
experience of the built environment. The exhibition showed a clear disconnect between ideational intentions and the reality of everyday life. Whereas the builders and architects thought that they would accommodate people’s needs by building according to the latest standards of hygiene and by implementing a plurality of housing types, many inhabitants considered the housing “prison-like”, complained about the urban environment’s monotony, the high cost of living, and the stigmatization due to individualized housing subsidies (Beck, Boehnke and Vinnai 1975, 32-37) [Illustration 63].

The exhibit was followed by numerous protests and self-help initiatives. Many of them were initiated by students who thought of the MV and its housing conditions as paradigmatic for capitalism’s shortcomings. In response to leafleting, a first major assembly of about 300 to 400 inhabitants took place in July 1968, an assembly to which planners, architects, and politicians were invited, and subsequently pressured to account for the lack of social infrastructure (Wilde 1990, 38-39). Furthermore, a local district newspaper was introduced, the MV-Zeitung. Its declared goals were to serve as a platform for inhabitants to educate themselves on and organize themselves around housing and rent issues, as well as to foster and re-establish social networks among inhabitants which were destroyed by urban renewal and people’s relocation into the suburbs [Illustration 64]. To counter the lack of social infrastructure, a makeshift, self-help infrastructure emerged. Adventure playgrounds were established, playgrounds consisting of objects whose use and function was not predetermined, but left open for children’s creative appropriation. Parent-children groups were founded in response to the lack of daycares, self-help initiatives that allowed women to reintegrate themselves into the labor market. Often to the dismay of working class parents, the parent-children groups also experimented with anti-authoritarian education. Empty spaces, such as a factory building squatters intended to transform into a center for children and youth, were illegally appropriated. Working groups on rent and housing emerged and so did forms of protests against evictions and rent increases, such as the Handtuch-Aktion [towel action]. In the case of the Handtuch-Aktion, 3,000 inhabitants expressed their frustration about one of the housing corporations’ twenty percent rent hike by hanging their towels and linens outside of their windows and balconies despite the corporations’ attempts to intimidate tenants by registering those who joined the action (Beck, Boehncke and Vinnai 1975, 160-161).

The grassroots democratic initiatives in the MV undoubtedly highlighted key shortcomings of post-WWII housing policies and their materialization in the form of social housing: mass housing’s rigid
design and architecture, including its inscribed disregard for tenants' needs and desires; the undemocratic structures of the housing corporations; the re-commodification of housing; and the individualization of the housing problem by a subsidy system that supported subjects (tenants in need) instead of objects (affordable housing). The initiatives also brought to light that tenants, including economically disadvantaged tenants, were not merely passive subjects, but agents who readily challenged the norms implicit in spatial arrangements to make a home for themselves.

What the initiatives also reveal, however, is a certain disconnect between the goal of the mainly student-led APO—the overhaul of capitalism—and the goal of the majority of tenants—the improvement of immediate living conditions. Ulrike Meinhof's assumption, as formulated in her *Preliminary Strategy Paper MV*, that once the proletariat are impoverished enough, they will radicalize and join the students in unfolding Berlin’s class wars, proved to be faulty (Meinhof 1990). In fact, financially destitute and socially marginalized tenants engaged in anarchic acts of destruction of the built environment and violence against students rather than in acts of solidarity (Wilde 1990, 114-115; 120-121). The APO's attempts to politicize and mobilize MV tenants were welcome only insofar as they helped tenants to self-organize. What most tenants did not approve of was the students' and, more generally, the APO's endeavor to implant a specific worldview, not least because this often implied that tenants were again treated as immature objects of transformation rather than as autonomous subjects capable of self-help and change. As one of the tenants put it: “Workers know that students are being educated to ultimately be part of the apparatus of oppression that workers are exposed to on an everyday basis. Therefore, workers have developed distrust toward intellectuals, because they believe and feel that they are being studied only to then be better exploited” [my translation] (119). Similarly, tenant members of the working group “Renting and Dwelling” complained that by assuming the role of a translator between inhabitants and bureaucrats, students de-emotionalized the tenants’ language, rendered it more objective and reasonable, and thereby adjusted it to the language of the bureaucrats that many tenants had experienced as objectifying and alienating (124). On a more theoretical plane, it could be argued that despite the APO pursued the goal of emancipation, it effectively exposed tenants’ to “enforced stultification”. Stultification, according to Jacques Rancière, is based on the order of explication, the “myth of pedagogy” that divides the world into “knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid” (Rancière 1991, 6). While an explicator’s concern and intention might be noble and well meaning,
such as to enlighten and politically educate the ignorant, it nonetheless defeats the purpose of emancipation. “Enforced stultification” demonstrates to the ignorant once more that he or she cannot understand certain things by him- or herself, a demonstration that perpetuates rather than remedies inequality. As Rancière puts it:

“[Explication] brings halt to the movement of reason and destroys its confidence in itself because it breaks the world of intelligence into two— the groping animal and the learned little man/common sense and science. Perfections of the ways of making things understood, the great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress toward stultification. What is being incorporated/acquired: a “new type of intelligence”, namely that of the master’s explications” (8).

Accounts of tenants involved in the grassroots democratic initiatives in the MV show that they were fully aware of the fact that they were not being treated as equals by the APO (Beck, Boehncke and Vinnai 1975). Here, despite the fact that the extra-parliamentary opposition aimed at strengthening and amplifying the voices of tenants in relation to political authorities and the housing corporations, the movement also utilized tenants’ needs and desires for its own radical political pursuits, pursuits most tenants were disinterested in. What is brought to light by a closer look at the MV’s grassroots initiatives is the fact that often the goal of emancipation and actual practices of domination are tightly interwoven. The APO considered education in the form of explication, the explication of capitalism’s shortfalls and socialism’s necessity, as a prerequisite for their political action. Thereby, the gap between the allegedly knowledgeable and the allegedly ignorant was re-entrenched. Yet, as suggested by Rancière, for emancipation to be truly possible, the most important step is to empower people to “leave the swamp of self-contempt” behind by showing them their own power to understand (Rancière 1991, 102). It is precisely the bolstering of the belief in one’s own capabilities and capacities, a belief that takes the “equality of intelligence” as its starting point, which opens the pathways for emancipation (46).

To be sure, the self-help initiatives in the MV aimed to brace the tenants’ position. Yet by framing the initiatives in the master narrative of socialism, the tenants’ experiments with their own capacities were not free. Instead, they were limited by the constraints of a predetermined political goal. It is this constraint the inhabitants of the MV decided against during the elections in March 1971. Given the high degree of basic democratic activity, it was expected that the Socialist Unity Party of West Berlin (SEW), a party closely affiliated with the East German SED, would achieve
considerable gains. Against all expectations, the SEW secured only three percent of the votes in the MV, whereas ninety-five percent of the votes went to the major parties (Wilde 1990, 124).

### 3.3.4.2 Kommune 1: From the Existence Minimum to the Existence Maximum

The forms of protest and numerous self-help initiatives in the Maerkische Viertel are examples of how people questioned the norms implicit in the built environment of West German mass housing. These experiments in grassroots democracy on the urban scale have their corollary on the personal/private scale. In 1967, West Germany’s most (in-)famous commune was founded in an apartment in inner city West Berlin by members who had close ties to the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund [SDS], a student organization that played a key role in West-Germany’s extra-parliamentary opposition. The Kommune 1’s declared goal was nothing less than the “revolutionizing of everyday life”, the breaking free of the narrow constraints of the so-called bourgeois society. Among the strategies to achieve this goal were: the abolition of the private sphere by abolishing private property and by introducing “general sexuality” in defiance of the institution of marriage; the disregard of state order; the tackling of the housing problem and, more generally, problems of subsistence by illegally appropriating uninhabited housing and consumer goods (Langhans and Teufel, 1968/1977). Actually “lived praxis” in the form of experiments with alternative forms of dwelling and subversive political action were part and parcel of life in the commune. As the commune’s founder, Dieter Kunzelmann, put it in his essay titled Notizen zur Gruendung revolutionaerer Kommunen in den Metropolen [Notes on the founding of revolutionary communes in metropolises]:

> “In order to go beyond the complacent closure of the seemingly natural belief in progress, a belief that only helps to consolidate the momentary violence, radical utopia and radical praxis are necessary. The commune is a call for action [...]” [my translation] (ibid.).

The implemented forms of action, actions that sought to bring about “the man of the 21st century” (ibid.), affected the personal and political level and sought to overcome the dichotomy between the two. Aiming at revolutionizing themselves, the members of the commune created a living arrangement in which private property and traditional relationships were annulled. Critical of the hegemonic nuclear family model and the gendered roles that were ascribed to them spatially in the

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29 This book is a collage of original texts and documents. It does not contain page numbers.
private sphere, the communards shared rooms, raised children conjointly, and transformed parts of their apartment into community spaces. As Christa Ritter, one of the commune’s members, explained retrospectively about living in the commune: “The mechanisms, the reflexes which thereby surfaced, seemed to be a cage that conflicted with real life” (Langhans and Ritter, 2008, 8).

Throughout its existence, the K1’s [short for Kommune 1] living arrangements and philosophy attracted much media attention, particularly West Germany’s boulevard press, including the Spiegel and the Stern. Much media attention was also attracted to the communards’ “subversive political actions”, such as the distribution of leaflets that celebrated the arson of shopping centers or the so called “pudding assassinations” of high ranking political officials (see Langhans and Teufel, Klau mich 1968/1977) (Langhans and Ritter, K1. Das Bilderbuch der Kommune 2008) [Illustrations 65-66].

In search of “real life”, the communards sought to defy “everydayness” and forms of objectification. Inspired by Herbert Marcuse, they claimed a “natural right” to resistance, the right to employ extra-legal means to break free from the perceived repressiveness of a society of “total administration” (Langhans and Teufel, 1968/1977). The actions were informed by the Situationists International (SI), a revolutionary organization of avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and political theorists that was active from the 1950s to the 1970s. The founder of the K1, Dieter Kunzelmann, had ties to the organization due to his previous involvement with the Gruppe Spur, a group of German avant-garde artists affiliated with the SI. For the Situationists,

“[a] revolutionary action within culture cannot have as its aim to be the expression or analysis of life, but its expansion. [...] Revolution does not only lie in the question of knowing what level of production heavy industry is attaining and who will be its master. Along with the exploitation of man, the passions, compensations, and habits that were its products must also wither away. Now, we must define desires appropriate to today’s potentialities. Even at the height of struggle between present-day society and the forces that will destroy it, we must already find the initial components of a higher construction of the environment and of new conditions of behavior—the latter through experimentation and propaganda. All the rest belongs to the past and is its servant” (Debord 1957/2004, 42).

It was also the communards’ goal to construct elements of a new society by creating new environments and behaviors from existing ones. Experimentation belonged to the pursuit of this goal, and so did propaganda. The implemented alternative forms of living and the conjoint “political happenings” were meant to be ostentatiously and sensationally displayed in order to shock the predominantly conservative West German society. And, in light of the media coverage, shock they did. The Situationists called for resisting the passivity, divisiveness, and alienation instilled by late
capitalism’s society of spectacle’ by means of frightening “terrorist” passion (Vorbereitende Probleme zur Konstruktion einer Situation 1966/1976, 17). It is to this call Berlin’s communards responded to. However, the Situationists also stipulated that whenever interventions are being developed attention needs to be paid to the “material setting of life” as much as to the behaviors this setting conditions (Debord 1957/2004, 44). Concerning Debord’s specification of radical interventions, it can be argued that the Kommune 1 was more focused on ostentatiously displaying radical behavior than on consistently reflecting on their behavior’s entanglement with actual material conditions.

The K1’s perhaps most important intervention in post-WWII West Germany history was its radical questioning of the public-private divide. By explicitly and implicitly politicizing and redefining the intimate, the commune called into question what post-WWII policies, including housing policies, sought to normalize: heterosexuality, monogamy, the nuclear family, the demarcation of a woman’s sphere (i.e., the household), and the ascription of reproductive labor to this sphere. The K1 politicized the private and its spatial dimension: the dwelling. In contrast to the logic of Fordism, the communards appropriated the dwelling in such a way that it would no longer serve the functions of reproduction of docile labor and consumption, but that it would constitute a place for personal exploration, experimentation, and political agitation. The K1 understood themselves as a micro-laboratory for a different society, a micro-laboratory in which dwelling itself was to become a field of cultural-revolutionary intervention. Whereas post-WWII mass housing was oriented along the lines of a “minimum existence” [Existenzminimum], the communards sought to experiment with and to explore the possibilities of the opposite: a spatialized “maximum existence” [Existenzmaximum].
Illustration 46: Official brochure of the Interbau 57-exhibit.
Illustration 47: Above: Historical Hansa-Quarter consisting of 162 privately owned, plots. Below: Reconstructed Hansa Quarter, consisting of 20 plots for high rises and about 40 plots for single family homes.
Illustration 48: Final model of Hansa Quarter.
Illustration 49: „Tomorrow, the city builder has the time, money, and power of a general.”

Drawing at the “city of tomorrow” exhibition.
Illustration 50: Planning model of city landscape for 200,000 inhabitants by Prof. E. Kuehn, Aachen. Presented at the “city of tomorrow” exhibition. Housing units (white squares), industry, commerce, agriculture and cultural facilities were to be rationally arranged with expansive green space in between the different “functions”.
Illustration 51: Model for urban renewal of Berlin-Moabit, a densely built working class district, proposed by Prof. H. Hoffmann and Prof. W. Rossow presented at the “city of tomorrow”-exhibit.

Illustration 52: Trabant city close to a metropolis. Model presented at the “city of tomorrow”-exhibit. Designed by Prof. H. Mattern and Merete Mattern.
Illustration 53: “Dwelling cells” at the “city of tomorrow” - exhibit designed by Prof. Wils Ebert. Decentralized dwelling cells were planned for no more than 200 inhabitants per hectare and meant to be the antidote to the dense socialist dwelling complex.
Illustration 54: Diorama of the future city landscape with large areas for farming right in the city shown at the “city of tomorrow”-exhibit.
Illustration 55: Cover page of the book „Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt“ (1957) edited by Johannes Göderitz, Roland Rainer, Hubert Hoffmann, a book that was authoritative for organicist urban planning in the 1950s.
Illustration 56: “Man as the Measure of all Things”. Proportions and dimensions of the human body according to building dimensions (BOL 1943) based on Ernst Neufert’s Bauordnungslehre [Architect’s Data]. Neufert’s method of standardization shaped the industrialization of building in fundamental and lasting ways in Germany and internationally.
Illustration 57: Ernst Neufert’s gendered approach to standardization and building norms.
Illustration 58: Ernst Neufert’s gendered approach to standardization and building norms.

Illustration 59: „Transformable living“, free floor plan by Hilde Westroem, shown at the “city of tomorrow” -exhibition, 1957.
Illustration 60: Roofing ceremony for 5,277 apartments, Berlin-Maerkisches Viertel, September 13, 1968.

Illustration 64: Cartoon published by the Maerkische Viertel Zeitung, Nr. 6, 1970. The Gesobau was one of the housing corporations that built and administered social housing in the Maerkische Viertel.
Illustration 65: Kommune 1. Living together.
Illustration 66: Kommune 1. Making the private public.
4 Conclusion

In this dissertation on “politics of dwelling” I sought to illuminate the relationship between politics and space by taking a closer look at macro-politics, such as housing policies, and at micro-politics, such as the design of urban and private space and its relationship to explicit and implicit social and political norms. The “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980, 131) I investigated, Red Vienna’s municipal socialism (1919-1934), East German socialism, and West German liberalism, had, among others, two common denominators. First, all three political projects considered the provision of mass housing not only as a dire necessity, but also as a propitious lever for anchoring their respective vision of an ideal society. Second, all three political projects were informed by the modern belief in the possibility to transform men and women by transforming their environment, that is, the belief in bringing about new forms of social life by altering spaces of everyday life, such as the city, the neighborhood, and housing. “New men” and, as I showed, to a lesser extent “new women”, were expected to flourish in the publicly provided or -subsidized mass housing–new men and women who were expected to emanate as the harbingers of new socio-political beginnings.

The two socialist projects I shed light on, municipal socialism in Red Vienna and state socialism in East Germany, were informed by a strong belief in the possibility of the emergence of socialist humanism and operated under the assumption that, sooner or later, the only legitimate and rational end goal, socialism, would find popular acceptance. The de-commodification of housing, the architecture and design of housing, as well as the planning of neighborhoods along communitarian lines were deemed promising paths toward preparing people for the “new age”. By contrast, the West German regime decidedly refrained from basing the “new society” it sought to create on humanistic definitions of “new men and women”, not least because of Germany’s history of fascism and its fatal appropriation of humanism. As Michel Foucault correctly observed, humanistic definitions have “always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics” and often, humanism has served “to color and justify the conceptions of man to which it is, after all, obliged to take recourse” (Foucault, 2003b, 52).

Instead of humanism, West Germany took recourse to a seemingly more neutral ground on which to build a new, legitimate society: economic freedom. As I illustrated, housing policies can be considered as a micro-example of West Germany’s gradual hegemonization of the free market, a
micro-example that illustrates a larger societal development: the hegemonization of “neo-liberal
governmentality”, i.e., a governmentality that concerns itself with projecting the formal principles of
a market economy onto the art of regulating society at large (131, 146).

Radical new beginnings were promised after WWI and WWII and, in the realm of housing, radical
new beginnings did emerge. As I demonstrated, in 1923, the SDAP launched its first housing
program financed by a highly progressive tax system, the Breitner housing construction tax that
broke with the legacy of nineteenth -century economic liberalism. By the end of Red Vienna in 1934,
400 municipal housing blocks had been built, equipped with a wide range of communal social,
cultural, political, and medical facilities. To this day, Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten symbolize the
Social Democrats’ appropriation of the city for the working class, a class that had spatially been
relegated to the city’s fringes and socially driven into precariousness in the first decades of
industrialization.

In post-WWII Germany new beginnings were also clearly and visibly demarcated. In the winter of
1951, East Germany embarked on the construction of its showcase housing project, Berlin’s
Stalinallee. In place of the heavily destroyed nineteenth -century industrial city, a socialist city was
to emerge. One of the core components of the ideal socialist city were dwelling complexes, i.e.,
mass housing in the form of “workers’ palaces” that were to be complemented with a rich
communal infrastructure to ensure the urban dwellers’ politically adequate socialization. Similarly,
in 1957, West Germany spatialized its commitment to liberalism in the form of a showcase housing
project, the Hansa Quarter. Located in the middle of West Berlin, the Hansa Quarter was designed
as a modernist, functionally differentiated, decentralized city landscape, in which high rises with
different apartment types were as present as single-family homes to provide inhabitants with choice
and space for individualization. To this day, the Stalinallee and the Hansa Quarter symbolize the
desire for a radical new beginning. At the same time, they demarcate the beginning of the Cold War.
Ultimately, as I demonstrated, neither the Stalinallee’s socialist workers palaces nor the Hansa
Quarter’s individualizing dwellings were replicated en masse, since both projects proved to be too
costly for mass production. Ironically, the building form for mass housing that became hegemonic
on both sides of the Wall despite the Cold War from the mid-1950s onwards was strikingly similar:
the modernist, functional, prefabricated high-rise, typically located at the city’s fringes. However, as I
tied to show, while similar in form, the socio-political “content” of East and West German mass
housing was different. In East Germany, mass housing was informed by the ideal of providing equal
housing for equal people. By contrast, in West Germany, social housing increasingly turned into the accommodation of those who could not afford market prices.

New beginnings did emerge in Vienna after WWI and Berlin after WWII. At the same time, the new beginnings in the form of dwellings were, in important respects, shaped by the poetry of the past instead of the future, as had been promised. This is particularly true of the adopted architectural practices, family and gender norms, and educational strategies. By illuminating how promises of the new were compromised if not subverted by practices of the old, I sought to foreground the inescapable dialectics between promise and practice, between envisioning new modes of everyday life and actual practices of revising existing ones. The aporetic condition that Adorno ascribes to architecture, that is, the fact that architecture is always both “autonomous and purpose-oriented” (Adorno 1965/1997, 16) also applies to the political projects I examined.

All three were decidedly modern projects that sought to break with the past in order to pave the way for a new, rejuvenated society. At the same time, all three political projects inherited legacies and had to work within the framework of existing conditions, needs, and desires. By doing so, the poetry of the past sometimes supplanted that of the future and thereby continued the legacy of inherited norms, practices, and rationalities. Such continuities were, however, not forcibly the result of deliberate, conscious political decisions. Instead, often they were simply the consequence of deeply entrenched and/or utterly adaptable rationalities, such as Taylorism and Fordism, that appealed to different political regimes, which points to the limits of the possibilities of radically new, political beginnings.

One field of observation for the dialectics between promise and practice is architecture. In Red Vienna, Austro-Marxists proclaimed the emergence of a new dwelling culture, yet abstained from defining it. Consequently, inherited architectural traditions ended up shaping the Gemeindebauten, architectural traditions that were informed by the “moderate modernism” of Otto Wagner. In line with the Austro-Marxist gradualist politics of growing into socialism, the city’s spatial makeover was also guided by gradualism: instead of inventing new forms ex novo, the architects of municipal housing interwove the new with the old, operated within given local and architectural parameters and altered them gradually, instead of radically. In East Germany, the promised political new beginning went, ironically, hand in hand with the excavation and/or re-invention of national traditions at the architectural scale. The reason for the aesthetic re-orientation toward the past was
Stalin’s doctrine of “socialism in one country” and the conjoint politics of nation-building, a doctrine that also affected East German politics. In West German architecture, the Weimar legacy of modernism was continued, and with it its commitment to functionalism and Taylorist (and later Fordist) rationalization. Yet in contrast to the modernism of the 1920s, modernism after 1945 was largely deprived of the movement’s initial, radical aspirations: to make human beings the subjects instead of objects of science, technology, and the economy by appropriating new technologies and their potentialities for human instead of techno-scientific progress. This is true of mass housing in West Germany, and, after Stalin’s death in 1953 and the beginning of de-Stalinization, also true of mass housing in East Germany. Socialist realist “workers’ palaces” were increasingly supplanted by quickly built, functional, pre-fabricated Plattenbauten [concrete slab buildings], a building type that is often erroneously equated with socialism tout court. As I argued, regarding form, the Platte was not unique to socialism: similar forms also dominated West German mass housing. Ultimately, on both sides of the Wall, the logic of modernization—rapid industrialization and an equation of progress with techno-scientific innovation—outpaced the modernist ideal of reconciling techno-scientific innovation with aesthetics and politics. Equally important, modernization also outpaced the East German promise socialist humanism as well as the West German promise of individual freedom. Ultimately, the principles of Taylorism and Fordism that are undergirding mass housing on both sides of the Wall subverted the socialist ideal of socialist humanism, no less than the liberal principle of individuality. On both sides of the Wall, mass housing was standardized to such an extent that creative spatial appropriations were hardly possible.

Apart from architectural practices, inherited family and gender norms often trumped critical revisions or re-inventions of these norms. This applies to West German liberal politics of dwelling and to socialist politics of dwelling, whether Austro-Marxist or East German socialist. In West Germany in the 1950s, the politically dominant conservatives re-defined the family as society’s most important cell, in line with inherited Catholic Social teachings, and accommodated it accordingly. The single-family home was stipulated as the nuclear family’s ideal home. Since this ideal was out of reach for the masses, social housing was another option. By means of allocation policies preference was given to the demographically most promising part of the population over others who were in need of housing: small families and young couples. The two-generational, nuclear family was also hegemonized by floor plans, floor plans that allocated space to the functions of eating, sleeping, hygiene and living for the ideal of family of four.
Floor plans not only normalized the nuclear family model, they also normalized gender roles. As I demonstrated, industrial norms, the norms that were undergirding the rationalization of the production process on both sides of the Wall, not only tailored certain spaces to predetermined human functions and needs, such as eating, sleeping, hygiene, and living, but also to the female body. The latter is particularly true of the kitchen, a space that was increasingly reduced to a functional, single-purpose space—a work kitchen. The fact that the kitchen was conceived of as a work space, instead of a social space in the form of a live-in kitchen, points to a depreciation of reproductive work by relegating it to the smallest space possible. It also points to the isolation of women. Whereas industrialization typically led to the socialization of productive labor, that is, workers no longer produced things in the semi-privacy of the home but in the social setting of a factory, the rationalization of reproductive labor ushered in isolation instead of socialization. Given the dominance of the conservatives in West Germany, the feminization of reproductive work is less surprising in West Germany than it is in East Germany and Red Vienna, two socialist projects that had actually prided themselves on the goal to actively contribute to women’s emancipation. Hence the obvious question: Why did even socialist “politics of dwelling” continue the legacy of inherited gender norms?

While a thorough answer to this question requires further research, I would like to provide the following provisional arguments. The Austrian workers’ movement was predominantly a male movement: at its foreground stood the recognition of productive instead of reproductive labor. This situation was similar in East Germany where the state focused on heavy industrialization, a domain that was historically dominated by a male labor force and its interests. Moreover, from a socio-economic perspective it could be argued that given the surplus of labor in post-WWI Vienna, the SDAP had little interest in socializing domestic labor since this would have set women free for other forms of employment. East Germany, by contrast, was plagued by a labor shortage. Women were re-integrated into the labor force. Yet due to a chronic economy of shortage and the financial constraints in East Germany, an encompassing socialization of reproductive labor (socialization that would have gone beyond the provision of public childcare) also ranked second to other forms of social investment. The reason why I threw the gender aspect into sharper relief is that it shows that, notwithstanding core political principles, such as the socialist principle of women’s emancipation, economic imperatives often trumped political visions or convictions and shaped everyday practices in fundamental and lasting ways.
Architecture, family norms, and gender relations were often informed by the poetry of the past instead of the future, and so were some of the educational strategies that were implemented to establish a certain dwelling culture. All three regimes of truth held fast to the ideal of democracy. Moreover, Red Vienna and East Germany emphasized the importance of egalitarianism and workers’ emancipation, whereas West Germany sought to anchor the principle of individuality. Yet, as has been shown, at the micro-political level of educating inhabitants on a specific dwelling culture these ideals were often compromised rather than implemented. In the case of Red Vienna’s politics of dwelling, radical democratic practices, such as self-help movements, were outweighed by expert-driven pedagogy. Among others, workers were deemed too immature for taking things in their own hands. Hence, despite the fact that Red Vienna’s Gemeindebauten fundamentally challenged the bourgeoisie’s inscriptions and significations of urban space, Red Vienna’s educational strategies adopted in the realm of dwelling, continued instead of overhauled an “episteme of bourgeois suspicion”, suspicion regarding workers’ capacities and capabilities (Maderthaner and Musner, 2008, 60). By opting for education from above to bring about a socialist dwelling culture, the SDAP weakened instead of strengthened the workers’ potential for self-emancipation and their commitment to democratic practices. In East and West Germany, it was less an episteme of bourgeois suspicion that undermined the regimes professed democratic, emancipatory or individualizing aspirations than the logic of urbanism: a state-administered, technocratic rationality applied to the city that “claims to be a system” and suggests to be justified by putting man first while actually justifying a (technocratic) utopia” (Lefebvre 2003, 153). In East Germany, the state heaved itself into the position of a powerful developer that sought to overhaul everyday life along socialist lines and, certain of the rightfulness of its path, without paying much attention to citizens’ needs and desires, to locality, and difference. Whereas in West Germany, the design and provision of housing was by far less centralized than in East Germany, the logic of urbanism, and with it, the orientation toward a technocratic utopia also undergirded West German politics. Despite the commitment to democracy and individuality, in West Germany as well, citizens had little influence on the design of mass housing, its locus, its infrastructure, its rent, its administration, and its undergirding policies, such as allocation policies. Moreover, industrialization normalized dwelling culture to such an extent on both sides of the Wall, that individual appropriations was hardly possible. Whereas, as can be argued, curtailing individual expression did not contradict socialism’s commitment to egalitarianism—equal apartments for equal people—the high degree of standardization did contradict the liberal promise of individuality. In West Germany, self-expression
through housing remained the prerogative of the wealthy, although, as had already been shown in the inter-war period, “free floor plans”, i.e., floor plans that did not prescribe functions and uses but gave ample space to individual expression and appropriation, would not have been more costly than standardized floor plans.

To estrange us from the self-evidence of the present by opening up a historical perspective was one goal of this dissertation on space and politics. Equally important to the preceding analyses was the excavation of the possibilities and practices of transcendence, i.e., utopias or heterotopias “that make visible […] dreams and the fact that they cannot be fulfilled in the dominant order” (Kohn 2009).

To be sure, in all three regimes of truth dreams that could not be realized in the given order existed. These dreams bear testimony to people’s creativity in two regards: in circumventing hegemonic norms and practices by carving out counter-spaces that reflect critically on normalized spaces and in sketching utopias that point to alternative forms of everyday life. Red Vienna’s counter-space was the Wild Settlements, a democratic, co-operative self-help movement that pursued a version of “revolutionary practice” (Marx 1845/1978, 144) in which workers experienced themselves as capable of finding solutions to their own problems and as effective in bringing about change. The notion of emancipation that was undergirding the Wild Settlements was radically different from the notion of emancipation that was underlying Red Vienna’s politics of dwelling. In the case of the former, workers’ experienced themselves as effective agents; in the case of the latter, tenants were treated as passive recipients of knowledge. As I argued, the “myth of pedagogy” that divides the world into “knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid” (Rancière 1991, 6) was perpetuated in the municipal housing blocks but blasted in the Wild Settlements in order to point to alternative paths toward democratic socialism.

In East Germany, settlements, sometimes even wild ones, were also a popular antidote to the dominant Plattenbau. In contrast to the Viennese settlements, the East German ones were less informed by the idea of self-help than by the desire to escape the logics of authoritarianism, industrialization, and urbanism that had shaped everyday life. Accordingly, East German allotment gardens embodied rather a retreat into a bucolic utopia than an open embrace of revolutionary praxis. That said, the bucolic utopia itself reflected critically on the dominant spatial order. It
represented a form of coming to terms with the constraining spatial creations of the abstracting state, the thoroughly functionalist, standardized, and typically suburban Plattenbau-settlements. As such, the allotment gardens catered to needs and desires that mass housing had left unfulfilled. As I proposed, the East German settlements are best understood as “embodied critique”, as spaces that nourished people physically as well as emotionally by (re-)connecting them with a less controlled, natural environment. In the garden colonies, people could engage in practices the state had rendered secondary, given its emphasis on industrial modernization, such as subsistence gardening and manual skills needed to build and maintain the cottages and the garden colonies’ communal facilities.

Also West German housing policies and their underlying norms evoked forms of protest, self-help initiatives, and counter-spaces. The extra-parliamentary opposition [APO], in conjunction with tenants of social housing, organized protests and initiatives on issues such as unforeseen rent increases, the absence of sufficient community facilities and social spaces, the housing corporation’s lack of democratic accountability, and the re-location of socially vulnerable tenants from inner city districts to the suburbs due to urban renewal. In addition, alternative forms of co-habitation were experimented with, such as communes that questioned the hegemonic norms of private property and marriage, and contested gendered and authoritarian practices of child rearing. Yet West Germany’s APO wanted to be more than a counter-movement. It sought to highlight a political alternative to liberalism: democratic socialism. Ironically, by staking out an alternative to capitalism and urbanism, its respective subscription to socialist humanism was informed by an aporia the extra-parliamentary movement itself had sought to overcome: the employment of authoritarianism in case of disagreement with the APO’s respective vision of socialist humanism. Ultimately, the movement lost touch with the basis, such as the tenants of Berlin’s Maerkische Viertel, a satellite city consisting of social housing, which the APO sought to mobilize for its political vision.

What became of Red Vienna’s municipal housing today? What about East Germany’s Plattenbauten or West Germany’s social housing? The next chapter will have to begin with answering these questions, a chapter that illuminates the dialectics between past politics of dwelling and the present “uneven development” of neoliberalism in Vienna and Berlin. In Vienna, municipal housing is still widespread and attractive to tenants. To this day, one quarter of Vienna’s overall population lives in municipal housing (Wohnservice Wien Ges.m.b.H. 2013). In Berlin, by contrast, social housing has been undergoing steady privatization since Germany’s reunification (Kraetke and Borst 2000, 165).
Vienna abstained from selling its municipal housing stock en bloc. However, neoliberalism and with it, the economization of the individual, also found its way into Viennese politics of dwelling. For instance, tenants of municipal housing are no longer addressed by the city as political, but primarily as economic subjects. Today’s “new man and woman” are construed as customers rather than as citizens (http://www.wienerwohnen.at/ueber-uns.html). Against the backdrop of the economization of tenants in Vienna and the privatization of social housing in Berlin, the question of who has a right to the city is again pertinent. According to Lefebvre, this question does not only ask for a legal right to the city, but for a social and political right as well: a right to participate in, appropriate, co-determinate, and shape urban life and its spatial manifestations, a form of life that has become dominant in the twenty-first-century (Lefebvre 2007, 158).
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