

Université de Montréal

Urban planning and identity: the evolution of Berlin's Nikolaiviertel

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RÉSUMÉ

Le quartier du Nikolaiviertel, situé au centre de Berlin, est considéré comme le lieu de naissance de la ville remontant au 13^e siècle. Malgré son charme médiéval, le quartier fut construit dans les années 1980. Ce dernier a été conçu comme moyen d'enraciner l'identité est-allemande dans le passé afin de se démarquer culturellement de ces voisins à l'ouest, et ce, à une époque de détente et de rapprochement entre la République démocratique allemande (RDA) et la République fédérale d'Allemagne (RFA). Depuis la construction du quartier, Berlin a connu une transformation exceptionnelle; elle est passée de ville scindée à la capitale d'un des pays les plus puissants au monde. La question se pose : quelle est l'importance de Nikolaiviertel, ce projet identitaire est-allemand, dans le Berlin réunifié d'aujourd'hui ? Ce projet part de l'hypothèse que le quartier est beaucoup plus important que laisse croire sa réputation de simple site touristique kitsch. En étudiant les rôles que joue le Nikolaiviertel dans la ville d'aujourd'hui, cette recherche démontre que le quartier est un important lieu identitaire au centre de la ville puisqu'il représente simultanément une multiplicité d'identités indissociables à Berlin, c'est-à-dire une identité locale berlinoise, une identité nationale est-allemande et une identité supranationale européenne.

Mots-clés : Nikolaiviertel, Berlin, Allemagne, RDA, urbanisme, identité urbaine, développement urbain, vieille ville.

ABSTRACT

The Nikolaiviertel neighborhood in the heart of Berlin is considered the birthplace of the city going back to the 13th century. Despite its medieval charm, the quarter was only built in the 1980s. It was conceived as a means of rooting the East German identity in the past to differentiate itself culturally from its western neighbor during a time of *détente* and rapprochement between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Berlin has changed enormously since the construction of the Nikolaiviertel: the once-divided city is now the reunified capital of one of the most powerful nations in the world. So how important is the Nikolaiviertel today, a neighborhood built to strengthen East Germany's identity? This study posits that the quarter is more important than its reputation as a simple kitsch tourist site suggests. By studying its roles in contemporary Berlin, this research shows that the Nikolaiviertel is significant for Berlin's place identity by manifesting a multiplicity of identities intrinsic to Berlin, i.e. a local Berliner identity, a national East German identity and a supranational European identity.

Key words: Nikolaiviertel, Berlin, Germany, GDR, urbanism, urban identity, urban planning, old town

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Nikolaiviertel im Herzen Berlins gilt als Geburtsort der Stadt aus dem 13. Jahrhundert. Trotz seines mittelalterlichen Charmes wurde das Viertel 1987 fertiggestellt. Es nutzte die Vergangenheit als Mittel zur Verwurzelung der ostdeutschen Identität, um sich in einer Zeit der Entspannung zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) kulturell von ihrem Nachbarn im Westen zu unterscheiden. Berlin hat sich seit dem Bau des Viertels viel verändert: Die einst geteilte Stadt ist nun die wiedervereinigte Hauptstadt einer der mächtigsten Nationen der Welt. So stellt sich die Frage: Wie wichtig ist das Nikolaiviertel, das als Übermittler einer neuen DDR-Identität konzipiert war, im heutigen Berlin? Diese Studie geht davon aus, dass das Viertel wichtiger ist, als sein Ruf als bloße kitschige Sehenswürdigkeit vermuten lässt. Durch die Untersuchung seiner Rolle im heutigen Berlin kommt diese Studie zu dem Schluss, dass das Nikolaiviertel für die Identität Berlins von Bedeutung ist, da es eine Vielzahl von inhärenten Identitäten aufweist: eine lokale Berliner Identität, eine nationale ostdeutsche Identität und eine supranationale europäische Identität.

Schlüsselwörter: Nikolaiviertel, Berlin, Deutschland, DDR, Städtebau, Stadtidentität, Stadtentwicklung, Altstadt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	3
CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH	15
METHODOLOGY	18
SECTION 1: PAST ROLES	20
1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AS AN INSTRUMENT TO EVOKE PATRIOTISM	20
1.1. THE HONECKER REGIME REDISCOVERS GERMAN HISTORY	20
1.2. EAST BERLIN GETS HISTORICIZED: THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY ..	21
1.3. A NEW EAST GERMAN IDENTITY ROOTED IN THE PAST	22
1.3.1. PATRIOTISM THROUGH CONTINUITY	22
1.3.2. PATRIOTISM THROUGH EAST GERMAN ACHIEVEMENTS	26
1.3.2.1. SOLVING THE HOUSING CRISIS	26
1.3.2.2. GREATER CONSUMPTION POSSIBILITIES	28
2. PROMOTING EAST BERLIN, CAPITAL OF THE GDR	30
2.1. TOURISM IN EAST BERLIN	30
2.2. STAGING THE PAST: THE HERITAGE UPPER HAND	32
2.3. BRANDING EAST BERLIN AS A CITY OF PEACE	34
2.4. EAST BERLIN, ATTRACTIVE IN ALL FIELDS	36
SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY ROLES	39
3. SHOWCASING THE NEW BERLIN	39
3.1 MARKETING BERLIN WITH DISTINCTIVENESS: LOCAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE TOURISM	39
3.1.1 TOURISM IN BERLIN: THEN AND NOW	40
3.1.2 HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE GERMAN CAPITAL	41
3.1.3 THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AND HERITAGE AS PRESENTED TO TOURISTS	42
3.1.4 AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES	44
3.1.5 TRAVEL GUIDES AND OFFICIAL BROCHURES: DIFFERENCES IN NARRATIVES	45
3.2 PROMOTING NORMALITY WITH A EUROPEAN IDENTITY	47
3.2.1 NORMALIZING THE NEW BERLIN	47
3.2.2 BERLIN, CITY OF DIVERSITY	49
3.2.3 COSMOPOLITANISM	52
3.2.4 A EUROPEAN CITY	53
3.2.4.1 THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT	55
3.2.4.2 CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE TRADITIONAL EUROPEAN MODEL	56
4. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL: AN EAST GERMAN <i>ERINNERUNGSORT</i>	61
4.1. REUNIFICATION AND PERCEIVED EFFACEMENT OF THE EAST	61
4.2. REMEMBERING EAST GERMANY	64
4.2.1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL: REPRESENTATION OF CHANGE	64
4.2.2. REMEMBERING THE ALLTAG	67
4.2.2.1. MUSEUMS	67
4.2.2.2 ARCHITECTURE	69
4.2.3. REMNANTS OF SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY	71

4.2.3.1. THIEME'S FRIEZE	71
4.2.3.2. COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES	73
4.3. NORMALIZATION AND REMEMBRANCE	76
5. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AS A MODEL FOR BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE	79
5.1. STATE OF BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE	79
5.1.1. DESTRUCTION	79
5.1.2. FINDING SOLUTIONS: PLANWERK INNENSTADT AND PLANWERK INNERE STADT	81
5.1.3. CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND PLANNING	83
5.2. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL IN TODAY'S MITTE	85
5.2.1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL'S RECEPTION	85
5.2.2. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL'S USE AS A MODEL FOR THE HISTORIC CORE	87
5.2.2.1. MOLKENMARKT/KLOSTERVIERTEL	88
5.2.2.2. BREITE STRASSE AND PETRIPLATZ	90
5.2.2.3. MARX-ENGELS-FORUM	91
5.2.2.4. THE <i>STADTDEBATTE</i> IS CRITICIZED AND ENTERS A NEW PHASE: THE <i>STADTWERKSTATT</i>	93
5.2.3. IDENTITY CREATION IN BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE	97
CONCLUSION	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106
APPENDIX I	i
Geographical location of the Nikolaiviertel in central Berlin	i
APPENDIX II	ii
Overview of main architectural movements in Berlin with selected representative projects (1920–2000)	ii
APPENDIX III	iii
Map of the Nikolaiviertel and selected architectural/decorative elements	iii
APPENDIX IV	iv
Redesigning the historic core: projects around the Nikolaiviertel	iv
APPENDIX V	v
Images of the Nikolaiviertel, its features and its surroundings	v

ABBREVIATIONS

BauGB	<i>Baugesetzbuch</i> (Germany's Federal Housing Code)
BEP	<i>Bereichsentwicklungsplanung</i> (Area Development Plan, district level master plan)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic, commonly known as East Germany
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Communist Party of Germany, now defunct)
IBA 87	<i>Internationale Bauausstellung 1987</i> (International Building Exhibition)
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> (Socialist Unity Party)
SenSW	<i>Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen</i> (Senate Administration for Urban Development and Housing)
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
WBM	<i>Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Berlin-Mitte</i> (Berlin-Mitte Housing Association, government-owned real estate agency)

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“Im Zuge der bevorstehenden 750-Jahr-Feier werden in Ost-Berlin umfangreiche Straßenausbesserungen durchgeführt. Im Stadtbild sieht man deshalb überall aufgerissene Straßen. Fragt ein Berliner den anderen: »Haben diese Bauarbeiten etwas mit der 750-Jahr-Feier zu tun?« – »Quatsch«, erhält er zur Antwort, »die SED will doch nur nachsehen, ob der Kommunismus bei uns endlich Wurzeln geschlagen hat.«”

(Anonymous, 1986. From Saure, Hans-Wilhelm, and Hans-Hermann Hertle. *Ausgelacht: DDR-Witze aus den Geheimakten des BND*. Berlin: Ch. Links, 2015.)

INTRODUCTION

A quick stroll through the Nikolaiviertel is enough to lose one's self in space and time; one is no longer in the modern German capital, Berlin. Winding cobbled stone streets, shops and restaurants give this central area of Berlin an old town feel. However, the neighborhood, situated in the district of Mitte, is a product of the 1980s.

The Nikolaiviertel radiates out from Berlin's oldest church, the Nikolaikirche. The neighborhood was constructed by the East German government and completed in 1987, just in time for the city's 750th anniversary. This small area just east of Berlin's city hall was built on a lot that stayed empty for most of the latter half of the 20th century. Considered the birthplace of the city, the Nikolaiviertel was badly damaged during the Second World War and was left untouched until the 1980s, when the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) decided to rebuild Berlin's old town.¹

The reconstructed historic neighborhood was designed by East German architect Günter Stahn and embodies changes in urban planning policies that took place in the GDR during the 1970s. These changes were seen as a way to mend a growing identity and legitimacy crisis. Before this time, there was still hope that a reunified Germany would effectively solve the German question. With the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, any such hopes faded away. It eventually became clear to the ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED)² that it had to create its own East German identity to strengthen its national sovereignty. The regime's quest for identity and legitimacy was exacerbated by the dissipation of tensions between East and West Germany caused in part by the politics of *Détente* and *Ostpolitik* of the 1970s. The East German government feared that closer diplomatic ties with the West would mean that East

¹ Brian Ladd, "Socialism on Display: East Berlin as a Capital," in *Berlin-Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation, and National Identities*, ed. Andreas Daum and Christof Mauch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139052412.

² Socialist Unity Party of Germany, sole ruling party of the GDR born from the (forced) merger of the German Socialist Party (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD)

Germans could be contaminated by western culture.³ To avoid this, the GDR needed to establish a distinctly East German identity to differentiate itself from the West.⁴

During this time, the communist government of East Germany, a regime that always dismissed certain aspects of history, started a campaign to reinterpret and appropriate the whole of German history as a source of legitimacy and identity. This re-evaluation manifested itself in many aspects including urban planning and architecture. The reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel was done in this context. This central district was thus built with the intent to generate an East German identity.⁵

Thirty years after the reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel, Berlin has changed considerably. The city on the Spree has become a world-class metropolis and the capital of a reunified Germany. It is also the capital of a country that has grown into an economic powerhouse on both the European and the international stage.⁶ In this context what does the Nikolaiviertel represent today, a neighborhood built to create an East German identity, and what roles does it play in the new Berlin of the 21st century? The goal of this master's thesis is to examine the Nikolaiviertel in its present-day context. Specifically, this study aims to establish the new roles of the district and compare them with its old ones. Elements of the Nikolaiviertel's place identity will then be abstracted from its functions. Their significance on Berlin's identity will finally be studied. In a broader context, this study aims at decoding a neighborhood to better understand our relationship with the built environment surrounding us.

This study posits that the importance of the often-overlooked Nikolaiviertel goes beyond its qualities as a tourist attraction and its associated economic benefits. Through its different roles and functions, the Nikolaiviertel plays or at least has the potential to play an important role for Berlin's contemporary identity.

³ Sigrid Meuschel, "Kulturnation oder Staatsnation? Zur Renaissance der Suche nach nationaler Identität in beiden deutschen Staaten," *Leviathan* 16, no. 3 (1988): 423-24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23983441>.

⁴ William J. V. Neill, *Urban Planning and Cultural Identity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 75. doi:10.1057/9780230524064.

⁵ Alan Nothnagle, "From Buchenwald to Bismarck: Historical Myth-Building in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989," *Central European History* 26, no. 1 (1993): 106-08. doi:10.1017/S000893890001997X.

⁶ Boris Grésillon, "Berlin sur la voie de la normalisation? Essai de psychogéographie," *Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, no. 3 (2017). doi:10.3917/all.221.0039.

This master's research is divided into five chapters each corresponding to one of the Nikolaiviertel's roles. The first section explores how the Nikolaiviertel was conceived and used by the East German government as a way to generate patriotism. The second chapter examines how the area was used to sell Berlin, capital of the GDR. Section three explores the neighborhood's role to market present-day Berlin. Section four analyzes the significance of the Nikolaiviertel for the memory of East Germany. Finally, the fifth chapter looks at the Nikolaiviertel in its greater context and examines its role or potential role as a model for the greater historic core.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To answer these questions, this study draws on theories relevant to identity-formation processes, more specifically place identity. This section will explore the different forms of identification (individual and collective) and how these processes relate to one another. We will then see how these processes manifest themselves in the creation of place identity. Furthermore, we will see how identities are incorporated in city marketing strategies.

The concept of identity can be a difficult one to grasp and has occupied many in the fields of psychology and sociology. Simply put, identity is “who we are, or who we are seen to be.”⁷ Thus, identity is how we view ourselves and how others view us. Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells defines identity as the way cultural attributes are used by individuals or collectives to form meaning.⁸ Cultural attributes are varied in form and include religion, language, sex, etc. Castells also makes a clear distinction between identity and role (father, worker, student, etc.). Roles are “defined by norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society.”⁹ On the other hand, identities are constructed by the individual as a source of meaning rather than imposed by institutions. However, there exists an interplay between identities and roles. Identities can be born out of institutions when the individual or

⁷ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 3. doi:10.4324/9781315887104.

⁸ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 6-7. doi:10.1002/9781444318234.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

collective assimilates a role and it becomes a source of meaning, thus, “some self-definitions can also coincide with social roles”.¹⁰

The definition of identity given above implies a two-way process involving the individual or group in question and the outsiders. The interactions between “us” and “them” include constant negotiations of similarities and differences. However, their respective significance for identity formation is contested. The anthropologist Fredrik Barth argues that differences play a greater role in identification. Studying the formation of ethnic groups, Barth theorizes that identities are negotiated on (symbolic) boundaries marked by differences. His model of identification includes “self-ascription and ascription by others”.¹¹ The objects being ascribed are cultural features. These features, which include language or dress as well as values, are used to mark differences. It is these differences that create boundaries between groups which, in turn, allows identity to form. For Barth, ethnic groups are not defined by a common culture, rather, common cultures are a consequence of ethnic group formation. Thus, for Barth, differences in collective identities produce similarities.¹² Others like English sociologist Stuart Hall echoes Barth’s views, explaining: “[identities] are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical naturally-constituted unity”.¹³

Sociologists such as Richard Jenkins argue that similarities are as important as differences in the creation of identity. For him, one cannot exist without the other: “If it were possible to assert one’s distinctive difference from others without simultaneously indicating those with whom one might have stuff in common, all one could actually do is communicate who or what one is not.”¹⁴ Thus, interactions between us and the other across boundaries, in this case, involves comparing what is similar and what is distinct, each of which is equally important.

No matter the views on the significance of differences and similarities, most scholars agree that the process of identity formation for the individual is analogous to that of the collectivity. For Barth, ethnic groups are a form of social organization between *individuals* who

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 13.

¹² Ibid., 11-12.

¹³ Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 4.

¹⁴ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 21.

are ascribed ethnic identities.¹⁵ Similarly, Jenkins considers all forms of identity formation, even for the individual, intrinsically social due to the interactions involved; the term “social identity” is, for him, a pleonasm. Thus, the social nature of identities implies a close link between the individual and the collectivity. According to Jenkins:

individual and collective identities can be understood using one model [...] identities are necessarily attributes of embodied individuals, they are equally necessarily collectively constituted, sometimes at a high level of abstraction. In identification, the *collective* and the *individual* occupy the same space.¹⁶

Some distinctions exist, however, between individual and collective identity formation. During individual identification, the person is at the same time object and subject of the process. That is to say, personal identification is a self-reflexive process; the individual ascribes identity markers to him- or herself. On the other hand, collective identification considers the social fabric as object only. The subject(s) are those who identify with the group (us, in-group), or don't (them, out-group). Even though this distinction exists, the processes involved are nevertheless analogous.¹⁷

Another important aspect of identity formation is its fluidity. The interactions between in-groups and out-groups are constant. Hall argues, much like Barth, that identity is a process and not a state; it is never completed. He sees identity construction as a discursive process. That is to say that it is always being negotiated. Although some elements of the discursive process are given, “including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it” (i.e. cultural features), identities are anything but definite.¹⁸ Barth's ethnic identity model also contains significant fluidity. For him, ethnic boundaries are maintained even though they exhibit porous qualities, i.e. members of groups can move in and out of them. For Barth, members change and boundaries persist; ascription to ethnic identities is not rigid.¹⁹ Even identities once considered

¹⁵ Barth, “Introduction,” 13-14.

¹⁶ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 46.

¹⁷ Ewald Werthmüller, *Räumliche Identität als Aufgabenfeld des Städte- und Regionenmarketing: ein Beitrag zur Fundierung des Placemarketing* (Berlin: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1994), 38-39. <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/183072>.

¹⁸ Hall and Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 2.

¹⁹ Barth, “Introduction.”

stable like gender and nationality are becoming less so, especially in postmodern societies. They are becoming more malleable than once thought.²⁰

The interplay between in-groups and out-groups brings about two forms of identification whose interactions are important to identity formation: internal and external identification. The internal form of identification corresponds to how the in-group sees itself. In this sense, internal identification is synonymous with self-image. Conversely, external identification relates to how others identify us, that is to say, our public image.²¹

On the level of the individual, internal identification is intimately intertwined with the concept of the self or the sense of self. Identities, collective or otherwise, have to be embodied which implies a certain cognitive work from the individual. According to Jenkins, “selfhood is constitutive of our sense of who and where we are”.²² For him, selfhood is our fundamental identity; it is our private experience. Selfhood is an identity that “differentiate individuals, as individuals, from each other” while other identities “position individuals alongside other similarly identified individuals within collectivities”.²³ Again, with all forms of identification, the self is in a constant state of formation marked by constant negotiations.

According to various models, external identification is considered as important as internal identity. Jenkins argues that individuals or groups may internalize external identities (outside categorization), thus becoming part of the self-identity. Assimilation of external identities can occur under different circumstances. External elements similar to our own are easily internalized and reinforce identities. Constant contact with other groups may eventually lead to “incremental and mutual shifts in identification.”²⁴ Furthermore, they may also be internalized

²⁰ Andreas Pott, “Identität und Raum. Perspektiven nach dem Cultural Turn,” in *Kulturelle Geographien. Zur Beschäftigung mit Raum und Ort nach dem Cultural Turn.*, ed. Christian Berndt and Robert Pütz (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2007). Cit. in: Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, “Positionen zum Wiederaufbau verlorener Bauten und Räume: ein Projekt des Forschungsprogramms “Experimenteller Wohnungs- und Städtebau” des Bundesministeriums für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung (BMVBS) und des Bundesinstituts für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung (BSR) im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (BBR),” in *Forschungen; 143*, ed. Uwe Altröck and Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung (Bonn: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, 2010), 60.

²¹ Richard Jenkins, “Categorization: Identity, Social Process and Epistemology,” *Current Sociology* 48, no. 3 (2000). doi:10.1177/0011392100048003003.

²² Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 69.

²³ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁴ Jenkins, “Categorization,” 21.

by coercive pressure under the guise of political legitimacy. Finally, external elements may also be imposed by force. Actors may also reject external categorization, in part or in whole. In this case, however, “the external definition *is* internalized, but paradoxically, as a focus of denial.”²⁵ In line with Jenkins’ model, psychologist Manuela Barreto asserts that external assimilation may occur for two reasons: either doing so will be beneficial to the individual in the group, or not doing so may be detrimental. This last one may lead to group exclusion.²⁶

Cultural features are the currency used during the identity-discursive process. These features include age, gender and nationality. Others include language, ethnicity, and history.²⁷ Cultural features or identity factors also comprise, in a broader sense, anything that a person is, possesses or has experienced.²⁸ Furthermore, culture provides concrete elements with which members of a given group can identify themselves and others.²⁹ Transforming culture into images and memories allows actors to distinguish themselves from one another. However, not all aspects of culture are used. In Barth’s description of identity-formation, only features that are considered significant to the group are incorporated into the identification process.³⁰

History is particularly significant to identity. According to Hall, the past is used as a resource to form identities. This allows identification to proceed by displaying a common origin. But because identification involves constant negotiations and therefore implies that identities are not the result of the process, but rather the process itself, the past is used “in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.”³¹ This definition evokes the concept of continuity: the past being used in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Manuela Barreto and Naomi Ellemers, “The Effects of Being Categorised: The Interplay Between Internal and External Social Identities,” *European Review of Social Psychology* 14, no. 1 (2003): 146. doi:10.1080/10463280340000045.

²⁷ Wolfgang Schmale, *Geschichte und Zukunft der europäischen Identität* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 41.

²⁸ Werthmüller, *Räumliche Identität*, 43.

²⁹ Gabriela B Christmann, “Stadtdiskurse und städtische Identität am Beispiel von Dresden: eine wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse,” in *Soziale Ungleichheit, kulturelle Unterschiede: Verhandlungen des 32. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in München*, ed. Karl-Siebert Rehberg and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS) (München: Campus Verlag, 2006), 601. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ss0ar-145102>.

³⁰ Barth, “Introduction,” 14.

³¹ Hall and Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 4.

the present and having significance for the future. For Jenkins, time and space are necessary for identification. Similar to differences, which cannot exist with similarities, space has no meaning without time. He explains:

Continuity posits a meaningful past and a possible future, and, particularly with respect to identification, is part of the sense of order and predictability upon which the human world depends. [...] The past is a particularly important resource upon which to draw in interpreting the here-and-now and forecasting the future.³²

As a resource, history can be manipulated in different ways to serve as an element of identification. The past can be molded because, like identity, it is malleable. Jenkins makes a distinction between history and memory. In his model, the individual experiences memory as an act of recollection. History, on the other hand, is associated with collectivities. He concedes that individuals have their own histories and is aware of collective memories. Yet, the malleability of these two reside in their imagined nature; history and memory are constructs. Jenkins does caution that *imagined* (in the sense of a cognitive process) does not equate *imaginary*.³³

Nationalism as a form of identity makes great use of history. National identities are built by picking and choosing elements of the past that fit a national narrative. In this case, a group can either accept its past or disregard it and create a new one. Different actors including governments and historians try hard to create a usable past.³⁴ The use of the past is predicated on the needs of the present. Furthermore, because the use of the past in identity formation is a human construct, key elements of national identities are based less on facts, but on an imaginary past. These include national myths and legends; they can pertain as much to events as to national figures or heroes. Thus, national identities are “typically constructed from an edited adoption and adjustment of images, symbols and myths of ethnic identity.”³⁵

³² Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 48.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Anselm L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks: The Search for Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 169. doi:10.4324/9781315124582.

³⁵ Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey, *Planning in Divided Cities: Collaborative Shaping of Contested Space* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK; Ames, Iowa: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 79. doi:10.1002/9781444393200.

In its simplest form, nationalism is the capacity to identify with the nation. Yet, the nation is a malleable concept that can take different shapes. In his study of German nationhood, the sociologist Rainer Lepsius distinguishes four types of nations: the folk nation, the cultural nation, the class nation and the nation of citizens. The first type is based on ethnic unity and is determined “by cultural characteristics, speech, religion, or by even more obscure criteria such as common historical fate”³⁶ often legitimized by laws of nature. Similarly, the cultural nation is founded on cultural similarity like language. In nineteenth-century Germany, the cultural nation was transpolitical: The German Confederation’s (*Deutscher Bund*) national identity was based on the German language and stretched far beyond the borders of what later became the German Empire. It included the Austrian Empire and German-speaking Switzerland. On the other hand, the class nation was based on “equality of class position” as was the case for the GDR. Finally, the nation of citizens or the civic nation is founded on equal rights and democracy irrespective of the different ethnic contained within it.³⁷

The malleability of the nation can be exemplified by the evolution of the East German constitution. The 1949 version aligns itself with the greater German ethnic nation: “*Deutschland ist eine unteilbare demokratische Republik; sie baut sich auf den deutschen Ländern auf.*”³⁸ In 1968, the phrasing shifted to emphasize that the GDR was a German nation of class: “*Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik ist ein sozialistischer Staat deutscher Nation.*”³⁹ Finally, the 1974 constitution went further to establish the GDR purely as a socialist nation by omitting the “German” qualifier thus distancing itself from the German ethnic nation: “*Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik ist ein sozialistischer Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern.*”⁴⁰

The East German government considered two types of nations: the bourgeois and the socialist nation. The first is based on capitalist modes of production and “*der Ausbeutung und*

³⁶ Rainer M. Lepsius, “The Nation and Nationalism in Germany.” *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (2004): 485. www.jstor.org/stable/40971711.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 493-96

³⁸ “Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 7. Oktober 1949.” <http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/verf49.htm>.

³⁹ “Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 9. April 1968.” <http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/verf68.htm>.

⁴⁰ “Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 9. April 1968 in der Fassung vom 7. Oktober 1974.” <http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/verf74.htm>.

Unterdrückung der Volksmassen, vor allem der Arbeiterklasse.”⁴¹ The second rests on social ownership of means of production. The socialist regime understood the changing nature of the nation as a series of historical developments starting with the *Volksnation* which led to the *Kulturnation* and finally the nation of class or the nation of workers. Additionally, the bourgeois nation was seen as fostering reactionary nationalism which stood in opposition to the socialist, progressive nation, both being incompatible with each other.⁴² Later definitions of the socialist nation would acknowledge its common origins with the capitalist German nation.⁴³ The changing definition of the socialist nation in the GDR explains its shifting (and sometimes paradoxical) relationship with certain historical events and figures incorporated in the East German national identity as we will see in chapter 1.

But why do we organize ourselves into groups be them as small as a circle of friends or as big as a nation? Identification is being able to distinguish between groups. This is a “prerequisite of social action.”⁴⁴ It is how we make sense of the world around us, be it on the individual level, the social level (families, friends, etc.) or the institutional level (nations, companies, etc.). Joining groups plays into our basic instincts of survival. We are more prone, for example, to share essential resources with other members of our own group with whom we have things in common. It is also a means of protection and deterrence from other groups or even members of the same group. This is assured by some groups being formed around common morals, values, customs, etc., which have an impact on behaviors.⁴⁵

Large groups of individuals like nations can be seen as organizations whose purpose includes “the co-ordination of the activities of a plurality of individuals [...] in collective pursuit of some specified purpose.”⁴⁶ The general goal of building national identities is creating cohesion within a large group by building a feeling of belonging; it is the feeling of being one people moving in the same direction. Again, the sense of continuity is essential to national

⁴¹ “Nation”, in: Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr, *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1969), 755.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 755-59.

⁴³ “Nation”, in: Waltraud Böhme, *Kleines politisches Wörterbuch*. 7 ed (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988), 658.

⁴⁴ Jenkins, “Categorization,” 8.

⁴⁵ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 6-15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

identity; it generates “a perceived integration of past and present in an envisaged future”.⁴⁷ Historically, national identity formation has taken two forms: ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism. This last one is based on political institutions and is primarily a top-down identity project. On the other hand, ethnic nationalism has more to do with culture, language, myths, etc., as elements of identity. In this case, a sense of belonging takes cultural cues as opposed to nation-state boundaries.⁴⁸

Identity formation makes great use of images and symbols as modes of representations to delineate different groups. They are encountered everywhere and can manifest themselves in less tangible ways, during cultural activities and festivities for example. They can also be more tangible like flags, monuments and anthems.⁴⁹ Cities also play an important role as objects of identity-representation. They have long been regarded as symbols of national identities and have been key for nation-building. Architecture, for example, was particularly useful:

State-led projects that attempted to embody, or more accurately to create, national identity often use architecture as a way of articulating the nation code. This codification of national identity meant modifying universal architectural styles to specific, or particular, national contexts.⁵⁰

On a smaller scale than nations, cities and neighborhoods can have identities as well. However, saying that cities have identities might not be the proper way of describing place identity. Yes, in a sense, places can have identities in a metaphorical way. This happens when we personify cities, when we consider them individuals or living things with their own identity factors. It is more precise to discuss place identity from a person’s perspective. Place identity involves human cognitive experiences associated with an area. In simpler terms, the individual or group ascribes meaning to a place with the help of memories, sensorial experiences and

⁴⁷ Antony Easthope, “The Peculiar Temporality of the National Narrative” (paper presented at the Time and Value Conference. Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster University, 1997), 4. Cit. in: Neill, *Urban Planning*, 19.

⁴⁸ Neill, *Urban Planning*, 18-19.

⁴⁹ A Kermani, N Charbgoon, and M Alalhesabi, “Developing a Model for the Relation Between Heritage and Place Identity,” *International Journal of Civil, Environmental, Structural, Construction and Architectural Engineering* 10, no. 3 (2016): 406. doi:10.5281/zenodo.1123697.

⁵⁰ Gerard Delanty and Paul R. Jones, “European Identity and Architecture,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 4 (2002): 454. doi:10.1177/136843102760514009.

interpretation. Once this is done, a space becomes a place.⁵¹ In this case, a place is part of a person's identity in the sense that they feel an attachment with a city or a place. An individual may also incorporate a city's feature in their identity (be it their individual, social or group identity). A person's place identity, or simply place identity, can take two forms. The first is the identification *of* a place. Here, the focus is on how a city is perceived cognitively. The representation of place as perceived by the individual is what matters. The second process is the identification *with* a place. In this case, the focus is on the individual and their incorporation of certain aspects of a place in their identity, effectively feeling a connection or belonging to a city or place.⁵² Following these definitions, place identity, as with identity in general, implies discursive work. That is to say, it "is the result of a collective process based on interpretation and narrative rather than on purely design features."⁵³ Finally, it is important to note that the cognitive perception associated with identity *of* place is a requirement for the assimilation of place identity or identification *with* place.⁵⁴

Design features are, however, important as place identity can be created in various ways; because identity is subjective, its meaning can fluctuate between individuals. Generally speaking, place identity is generated from memories of a place, every-day experiences and images spread from media. For these images to be meaningful, or for these images to be cognitively created by individuals or groups, places usually need to possess certain qualities. These can include historical significance, functionality, symbolism, accessibility, aesthetics, biographical and marketable aspects. These do not guarantee that a place, city or building generates identifying factors, but they are seen as having great influence.⁵⁵

As with other forms of identity, place identity is subject to the formation of in- and out-groups and is influenced by the presence of similarities and differences. The use of spatial qualities like location, infrastructure and architecture, mixed with history and culture, are

⁵¹ Cliff Hague, "Planning and Place Identity," in *Place Identity, Participation and Planning*, ed. Cliff Hague and Paul Jenkins (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 4-9. doi:10.4324/9780203646755.

⁵² Werthmüller, *Räumliche Identität*, 52.

⁵³ Alexander Tölle, "Urban identity Policies in Berlin: From Critical Reconstruction to Reconstructing the Wall," *Cities* 27, no. 5 (2010): 348. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2010.04.005.

⁵⁴ Christian Ebert, *Identitätsorientiertes Stadtmarketing: Ein Beitrag zur Koordination und Steuerung des Stadtmarketing* (Berlin: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2004), 79-85. doi:10.3726/b13612.

⁵⁵ Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung. "Positionen zum Wiederaufbau," 292.

distinguishing elements of place identity. These are needed to help differentiate one place from another.⁵⁶

Due to their varying relationship with the city, in- and out-groups have differing perspectives of place identity and may use different features to assimilate a place. In-groups like residents identify with their area primarily through their everyday life and might do so without paying attention or thinking about their surroundings. For them, physical characteristics might not be so important; elements like work, school and other necessities could count as identification markers. Out-groups like tourists who spend considerably less time in a city compared to residents depend on published information and physical form for identification. Additionally, tourists visit an area for a specific reason and may, therefore, base their perception of place identity on more selective aspects.⁵⁷

As with individual and collective identities, differences are also a factor in place identity; the capacity to differentiate one city from another is a prized commodity for politicians and others. Creating or curating place identity with the help of town planning may give a city an advantage over another. This advantage takes the shape of greater investments, tourism and even greater cohesion within the inhabitants of a place. This can be achieved by “manipulation of the activities, feelings, meanings and fabric that combine into place identity.”⁵⁸

Place identity can be commodified by creating a favorable image of a city and presenting it to outsiders and inhabitants. In this case, cities and their identities are treated as brands. These brands are usually created by governments and marketing agencies by manipulating and managing place identity for it to become profitable. As such, place identity has become an integral part of a city’s marketing strategy.⁵⁹

As with the interplay between in- and out-groups with a person’s identity, place identity created through place marketing also exhibit such interactions. Marketing strategies can have an indirect effect on the in-group (the inhabitants of a city). How a city is perceived by external actors (external identification) using images and identities generated by agencies can be

⁵⁶ Marichela Sepe, *Planning and Place in the City: Mapping Place Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 20.

⁵⁷ Werthmöller, *Räumliche Identität*, 76-83.

⁵⁸ Hague, “Planning and Place Identity,” 8.

⁵⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2-3.

assimilated by the in-group. More than that, they can become new sources of internal identification: “the promotion of these attributes to visitors can also provide a new source of identity and civic pride among residents, city managers and entrepreneurs.”⁶⁰

To summarize, identity is the process (and not the end-state) of identifying who we are and who we are perceived to be by others. Cultural attributes, as varied as they are, are used to give meaning to our social lives. This translates to a sense of self, a sense of belonging or a sense of not belonging. Furthermore, the processes involved in individual and collective identity are analogous. Generally speaking, the processes involve interactions with the in-group, “us”, and the out-group, “them” at the boundary between the two. Interactions imply that identity formation is fluid; identities are constantly being negotiated and they change over time. What’s more, external categorization (how we are perceived) by the out-group can be important to identity formation. Individuals can incorporate how others view them in their own identities or reject them which, paradoxically, still becomes part of their self-identification. Groups can be seen as organizations of individuals who identify with a collectivity; they can be as big as nations. Members of this level of identification coalesce around civic or ethnic identities. The former includes identification with political institutions and values. The latter includes language, myths, history, etc. Cities can also be part of identities. In this case, place identity involves the discursive process which allows individuals to identify with a place. This process fundamentally requires a process of identification *of* place which is the cognitive perception of an area. Different actors such as politicians invoke place identities in order to benefit from them. Consequently, a favorable image may lead to greater tourism and investments. Often this is achieved by promoting the historical and cultural uniqueness of a place. As with other forms of identity formation, external identification of cities created or displayed by governments and agencies can affect internal identification.

⁶⁰ G. J. Ashworth and J. E. Tunbridge, *The Tourist-Historic City* (Chichester; Toronto: Wiley, 1990), 265.

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

This thesis analyzes the importance of the Nikolaiviertel on Berlin's identity and its potential as an identity-conferring architectural ensemble. Every city has its own identity and research could be done on any of them, so why Berlin and why its old town?

In general, capital cities are used to present a precise image of the nation; this is not to say that other cities aren't important for a given country. Non-capitals can be "centers of economic, intellectual, or social life in their nations".⁶¹ One only needs to look at New York or Toronto and their respective importance for the United States and Canada. However, capitals do play an important role in staging the nation-state. They often have representative functions for the state. With government buildings, national memorials and national cultural institutions; they are essential in defining national identity.⁶² The essence of a nation's identity is often condensed in capitals and used to showcase itself to outsiders. These cities often carry a greater symbolic load than any other. According to Neil, it is here "that relationships between urban planning, architecture and evolving conceptions of national identity is likely to be most direct and most closely under political influence."⁶³ Because of its function as Germany's capital, Berlin has always, as much now as in the past, been the focus of German national identity-formation. The importance of Berlin for Germany is such that much of the city's history is incorporated in the country's master narrative.⁶⁴

The Nikolaiviertel has been chosen as research subject because the significance of this area for Berlin's present-day identity has not been the focus of many studies so far. In terms of research on the Nikolaiviertel per se, most works focus primarily on the political history of its conception. They fall short of exploring its importance for Berlin's urban identity. When looking at the much-studied topic of Berlin-identity and town planning, the Nikolaiviertel is

⁶¹ Andreas W. Daum, "Capitals in Modern History: Inventing Urban Spaces for the Nation," in *Berlin-Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation, and National Identities*, ed. Andreas W. Daum and Christof Mauch (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13.

doi:10.1017/CBO9781139052412.

⁶² Ibid., 16-19.

⁶³ Neill, *Urban Planning*, 17.

⁶⁴ Stefanie Eisenhuth and Scott H. Krause, "Negotiating Cold War legacies: The discursive ambiguity of Berlin's memory sites," in *Cultural topographies of the new Berlin*, ed. Karin Bauer and Jennifer Ruth Hosek (New York: Berghahn, 2018), 144.

either never mentioned or if so, only briefly. What follows is a brief description of the current state of research focusing, firstly, on the studies of town planning in Berlin and its relationship with identity and, secondly, on research specifically about the Nikolaiviertel.

In regards to town planning and its impact on Berlin's identity, the book *Architecture, politics, and identity in divided Berlin*⁶⁵ by art historian Emily Pugh is an important study that compares urban developments in East and West Berlin during the time of division. Her research focuses on historical and political events that have shaped Berlin's cityscape on both sides of the Wall. In her work, the Nikolaiviertel is only briefly explored in a historical analysis of its conception mostly presented in the context of the 750th Berlin anniversary celebrated in 1987.

The 1987 celebration is used as a backdrop in many studies focusing on urban planning in the East German capital during the Honecker regime. These works' primary focal point is the political history and the study of planning policies that have taken place in the late existence of the GDR. Again, the Nikolaiviertel is only briefly mentioned in most of these studies. Dutch historian Krijn Thijs⁶⁶ in-depth study of the 1937 and 1987 birthday festivities offers great insight into the political and ideological competition between both Germanies during the preparations and execution of the celebrations. Every aspect of the 750th anniversary is touched upon in his book, even the historicizing of the center of East Berlin, the Nikolaiviertel being succinctly examined.

The study of the significance of the East German built-heritage for Berlin's present-day identity rarely mention the Nikolaiviertel and usually deals with Berlin's Stadtschloss (city palace) debates. Comprehensive studies on this topic, including works by Claire Colomb⁶⁷ and Costabile-Heming's,⁶⁸ focus on the architectural history of the city and come to the same conclusions: the GDR built-heritage is or was threatened during the process of reunification due, in part, to an apparent colonization of the East by the West.

⁶⁵ Emily Pugh, *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014). doi:10.2307/j.ctt7zwbqb.

⁶⁶ Krijn Thijs, *Drei Geschichten, eine Stadt: die Berliner Stadtjubiläen von 1937 und 1987* (Köln; Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2008). doi:10.14765/zzf.dok.1.4.v1.

⁶⁷ Claire Colomb, "Requiem for a Lost Palast. 'Revanchist Urban Planning' and 'Burdened Landscapes' of the German Democratic Republic in the New Berlin," *Planning Perspectives* 22, no. 3 (2007). doi:10.1080/02665430701379118.

⁶⁸ Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, "The Reconstructed City Palace and Humboldt Forum in Berlin: Restoring Architectural Identity or Distorting the Memory of Historic Spaces?," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25, no. 4 (2017). doi:10.1080/14782804.2017.1361816.

Studies concerning place identity in contemporary Berlin and the GDR built-heritage suggest a trend in this field of research. These topics are often tackled through the same usual suspects: the Stadtschloss, the Reichstag, the Alexanderplatz, etc. Berlin's old town is seldom the focal point thereof. Some works, however, have been published about the central Mitte district including the historic old town. These include works by historian Benedikt Goebel⁶⁹ and planner Harald Bodenschatz.⁷⁰ They examine the architectural history of the area and offer future perspectives on the development of the district. The Nikolaiviertel is only summarily explored in these studies.

Works with the Nikolaiviertel as main focus are centred on its history and barely mention the architectural ensemble in its contemporary context. The area's history has been thoroughly studied and published by its modern creators: Günter Stahn,⁷¹ architect of the Nikolaiviertel and Erhardt Gißke,⁷² Director General of Construction of the GDR (*Generalbaudirektor der DDR*). More recently, a seminal work on the area was published by Florian Urban,⁷³ in which he explores the renaissance of historicity in GDR architecture using many examples including the Nikolaiviertel. Urban paints a great picture of the political events that have led to the design and building of the neighborhood. It does not, however, present it in its present-day form.

This master's research project draws on existing scholarship and uses it as a starting point to analyze the Nikolaiviertel in its present-day setting. A study of the Nikolaiviertel and its effects on identity will be undertaken using the notions of place identity and the dimensions of architecture, history and politics presented in existing works. This research project aims to add a present-day component of the neighborhood to this field of research.

⁶⁹ Benedikt Goebel, *Mitte!: Modernisierung und Zerstörung des Berliner Stadtkerns von 1850 bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2018).

⁷⁰ Harald Bodenschatz, Hans-Joachim Engstfeld, and Carsten Seifert, *Berlin: Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Zentrum* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1995).

⁷¹ Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel am Marx-Engels-Forum: Ursprung, Gründungsort und Stadtkern Berlins: ein Beitrag zur Stadtentwicklung* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1986).

⁷² Erhardt Gißke, *Nikolaiviertel und Friedrichswerdersche Kirche. Aufbau und Rekonstruktion*, ed. Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin des Ministeriums für Bauwesen (Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR, 1988).

⁷³ Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009).

METHODOLOGY

To study the Nikolaiviertel's present-day roles and their effect on identity, discourses and narratives from original sources have been carefully analyzed. These materials include government documents, more specifically, inquiries, assessments, proceedings and regulations stemming from Berlin's House of Representatives, the *Abgeordnetenhaus*. Furthermore, reports, architectural surveys and plans from the city's Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing (*Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen*, SenSW) have also been analyzed. Sources also include published and drafts of political speeches. Newspaper articles have also been consulted. Additionally, published materials targeting tourists have been studied. These include guidebooks in three languages: German, French and English. They also include documents from Berlin's official tourism agency.

Sources were collected online thanks to the vast digitized GDR-collection of the Bundesarchiv. More recent government documents were accessed from various local government websites like the city of Berlin, the city's parliament and SenSW's websites. Other sources were gathered on-site at Berlin's Stadtmuseum archive, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and the Berlin collection of the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin.

These sources have been chosen because they are representative of distinct discourses generated by a host of different actors. Furthermore, sources must represent the internal and external nature of identification. For example, travel guides assure an external perspective of the Nikolaiviertel whilst brochures intended for tourists but published by Berlin's government give insight on the area's self-image marketed to the outside world. Government documents and architectural surveys depict the Nikolaiviertel's internal identification. The choice of sources also reflects the varied nature of actors who produce identity-discourses. They include politicians, journalists, planners, architects, travel writers, historians and marketing agencies.

The sources answer the basic questions asked while studying narratives and discourses on place identity. These seemingly simple questions are borrowed from art historian Arne Bugge Amundsen's model of analysis. His model is comprised of four questions: what? who? how? and why? The "what" constitutes the *content* of the narrative itself. The "who" corresponds to the *actors* creating the narratives (architects, planners, politicians, marketing agencies, etc.) The "how" is the *manner* in which the discourse is presented to the target groups

(in this case, the “how” represents the sources). And finally, the “why” correlates to the *intentions* behind the creation of place identity.⁷⁴

The study is divided into two main sections which correspond to two main time frames: pre- and post-*Wende*. The first section of the analysis is the period ranging from the mid-1970s to 1991. This coincides with the Nikolaiviertel’s planning and construction and its history until reunification. The second section explores the Nikolaiviertel’s contemporary roles and includes the period ranging from reunification to the present-day. Even though the study’s main focus is identity-formation in contemporary Berlin, it was deemed important to include a brief study of its old roles as a means to reinforce the analysis by establishing greater historical context and allowing for a comparative analysis.

⁷⁴ A. B. Amundsen, “Articulations of identity: A methodological essay and a report on Askim and Tidaholm,” *Østfold, NoordXXI* (2001). Cit. in Hague, “Planning and Place Identity,” 12-16.

SECTION 1: PAST ROLES

1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AS AN INSTRUMENT TO EVOKE PATRIOTISM

One of the Nikolaiviertel's initial roles at the time of its completion in 1987 was to provoke a sense of civic pride among East Germans. This led to an attempt to create an East German identity rooted in pride. Politicians, architects and town planners used many means to perpetuate this new identity to East Germans. Notably, Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987 gave the regime a platform to communicate their message. For the occasion, many speeches were given by politicians and numerous documents were published. When it comes to patriotism and pride, these communications contain two main narratives: historical continuity and socialist accomplishments. We will see that the regime based these claims on the rediscovery of history and the raising of living standards.

1.1. THE HONECKER REGIME REDISCOVERS GERMAN HISTORY

The reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel was initiated by an attempt from the regime to reinterpret its history. Before this point in time, the GDR had a wholly different relationship with its past. It had distanced itself from German history by taking a strong anti-fascist stance. Furthermore, it denounced and shunned everything that it considered reactionary. Consequently, many historical figures were now negatively depicted by the regime. The blacklisted included "feudal aristocrats, religious reactionaries, monopoly capitalists and fascist mercenaries"⁷⁵ like Frederick the Great and Bismarck. According to the government, these figures stood in stark opposition to the country's progressive ideology. For the regime, these reactionary figures led directly to the rise of national socialism. Coincidentally, all these figures were considered by the SED to belong to West Germany's heritage.⁷⁶

By the mid-1970s, the regime eased this narrative and approached history in a novel way due to its changing relations with West Germany. With the arrival of Honecker at the helm of the GDR in the 1970s, the regime found itself in a new situation on the international stage.

⁷⁵ Mike Dennis, *German Democratic Republic: Politics, Economics, and Society* (London; New York: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 3.

⁷⁶ Georg G. Iggers, "L'histoire sociale et l'historiographie est-allemande des années 1980," *Revue d'histoire*, no. 34 (1992). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4618994>.

At this time, the inter-German conflict was cooling down. This was in part due to Willy Brandt's GDR-friendly *Ostpolitik* and the ensuing détente. The rapprochement of the two countries enabled greater international recognition for the GDR. It is during this time that both East and West Germany gained recognition by the United Nations. Closer ties between both countries led to an ironic result: delimitation. By having closer relations with the West, the SED wanted to distance itself culturally from the FRG. The East was scared that East Germans would be exposed to the wonders of capitalism thus leading to disillusion with the socialist system. To avoid this, Honecker enacted a policy of *Abgrenzung* (delimitation, demarcation) with the West. One of his goals was to portray East Germany as the better of the two. To do so, he needed to reinterpret German history. German reunification, which was still a possibility at this point, was to be put on hold for the GDR to create a new identity distinct from West Germany's. This identity was to be built from the East's appropriation of history.⁷⁷ Paradoxically, East Germany had strived to distance itself from the German ethnic nation by describing itself as a socialist nation of class; by appropriating German history, it was seemingly returning to an ethnic German nation.

The GDR's reinterpretation of history was done by reevaluating and giving new value to reactionary elements of its past. It did so by creating two categories into which historical events were placed: *Erbe* and *Tradition*. *Erbe* (heritage, in the sense of inherited from the past) elements were those once considered reactionary. They were now incorporated in the East German historiography as less desirable events that were nevertheless handed down to them. In contrast, progressive events were considered *Tradition*. Historical figures that were once shunned by the regime were now regarded in a more positive way. Bismarck and Frederick the Great, among others, were now considered part of the East German "Walhalla".⁷⁸

1.2. EAST BERLIN GETS HISTORICIZED: THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY

A new East German identity rooted in the past also had an effect on East Berlin's townscape. Most architectural projects in East Berlin were hitherto designed under the credos of Modernism (the Fernsehturm and Palast der Republik are notable examples) which disregarded

⁷⁷ Nothnagle, "Myth-Building," 106-10.

⁷⁸ Ladd, "Socialism on display," 227-29.

history. However, the mid-1970s and 1980s brought about new projects that incorporated historical layers into them: neo-historicism. With this, architects and city planners were now reevaluating the past, just as politicians and historians had done. Some projects included the reconstruction of old, neglected neighborhoods. This was the case of the Nikolaiviertel.

Just like the rediscovery of history by East German politicians, historicizing East Berlin's townscape was meant to showcase the city and socialism as the better of the two competing ideologies. By giving their capital a historic feel, the East could claim historical continuity and, thus, legitimacy over the West. The East claimed it had a distinct advantage over the West in this regard: it was in possession of the city's birthplace, the Nikolaiviertel.⁷⁹

The reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel and the cultural competition between East and West over legitimacy culminated with the celebrations of the city's 750th birthday in 1987. The city's birthday was simultaneously, but independently, celebrated by both West and East Berlin. In the Soviet sector, the yearlong festivities were meant to consolidate the city's present and future with the past. In contrast, West Berlin was more focused on the present. This was exemplified by their tagline for the celebrations: "*Berlin, Stadt der Gegenwart*".⁸⁰ The East's program included many cultural events like exhibitions, concerts and even a "history parade" (*Geschichtsmarsch*) showcasing the 750 years of Berlin's history through the streets of the GDR's capital. In addition, the East's celebrations included an impressive construction program that involved historicist projects like the Nikolaiviertel.⁸¹

1.3. A NEW EAST GERMAN IDENTITY ROOTED IN THE PAST

1.3.1. PATRIOTISM THROUGH CONTINUITY

Internally, that is to say for East Germans, the Nikolaiviertel was built to instill patriotism based on pride in the past. This narrative can be found in publications like the *750 Jahre Berlin Thesen* published in 1986 in preparation for the city's birthday. It was edited by East German historian

⁷⁹ Krijn Thijs, "Politische Feierkonkurrenz im Jahre 1987. Die doppelte 750-Jahr-Feier in Ost -und West-Berlin," *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 49, no. 49-1 (2017): 75. doi:10.4000/allemande.523.

⁸⁰ Peter Jelavich, "The Berlin Jubilee: Which History to Celebrate," *German Politics & Society*, no. 12 (1987): 15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23734985>.

⁸¹ Thijs, *Drei Geschichten*, 197-277.

Ernst Diehl and commissioned by the *Komitee der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zum 750jährigen Bestehen von Berlin* (German Democratic Republic committee for the 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin). The document explains that a sense of pride can be found in Berlin's historical significance for the GDR and the world. It reads: "*Berlin hat eine lange und wechselvolle Geschichte, tief verwurzelt in der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes, auf vielfältige Weise verknüpft mit der Entwicklung in Europa und der Welt.*"⁸²

A recurrent theme in this narrative found in the *Thesen* and elsewhere is the idea of the GDR's historical roots and links with the past. A year prior to the publication of the *Thesen*, East German head of state, Erich Honecker, gave a speech to the 750th anniversary committee in charge of organizing the festivities of which he was chairman. A draft of his speech highlights the GDR's roots in German history. He also alludes to the regime's rediscovery of history as a source for its new identity. According to Honecker, "*Das Jubiläum Berlins weitet unseren Blick für die tiefe Verwurzelung unseres Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staates in der ganzen deutschen Geschichte, für unser sozialistisches Vaterland als rechtmäßigen Erben alles Großen, Bleibenden deutscher Vergangenheit.*"⁸³

To evoke patriotism and pride, the regime needed to "awaken" the East Germans' awareness of history. This could be done with the help of town planning. For Honecker, the city would allow the citizen to come face to face with history. In his speech to the Committee, he explains the city's role in generating patriotism: "*Die tiefe Verbundenheit mit der Geschichte Berlins, auch die tägliche Begegnung mit ihren uns überlieferten historischen Denkmälern und Zeugnissen, stärken die Liebe zu unserem Vaterland, zu seiner Hauptstadt.*"⁸⁴ With such comments, it is easy to see the importance of historicized architectural projects like the Nikolaiviertel for the SED and its quest to inspire a kind of patriotism fixed in the past. To borrow Honecker's expressions, the regime was to create a new "*Zeugnis*" of history with the Nikolaiviertel. This was echoed by the GDR's Building Academy (*Bauakademie der DDR*): "*Das Nikolaiviertel zeigt sich somit heute als Inbegriff und Zeugnis allen progressiven Denkens*

⁸² Ernst Diehl, ed. *750 Jahre Berlin: Thesen* (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1986), 5.

⁸³ BArch, DY 30/2569 (Büro Honecker). *Komitee zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin. Entwurf der Ansprache Erich Honeckers auf der konstituierenden Sitzung (14. Januar 1985)*, 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

und Handelns in 750 Jahren Stadtgeschichte, fortschrittlicher Traditionen und kulturellen Erbes sowie tiefer Bindungen der Berliner zum Gründungsort ihrer Stadt.”⁸⁵

This same narrative was used by the Nikolaiviertel’s architect, Günter Stahn. His views on architecture’s capacity to stimulate patriotism mirrored those held by the SED. In 1982, the architect published a book on the area surrounding the Nikolaikirche. In his work, he mentions the effect that architecture can have on its inhabitants. According to Stahn, some landmarks from the past and present are an essential part of the cityscape, “[Sie] prägen auf spezifische Weise unser Stadtbewusstsein, Geschichtsverständnis und Nationalgefühl”.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Stahn considered town planning a tool to depict historical continuity. He writes:

*Diesen Reichtum an materiellen und geistigen Werten im Blick auf Vergangenes und Künftiges haben wir vor allem zu überdenken, wenn Bau- und Raumgestaltung heute Ausdruck unseres positiven Verhältnisses zu den humanistischen Traditionen unserer Geschichte sein soll, zu der die Aufgabe unserer revolutionären Gegenwart in eine lebendige Beziehung gesetzt werden.*⁸⁷

Even before the completion of the Nikolaiviertel, the GDR regime wanted the area to be a representation of historical continuity. In 1977, the GDR government published its expectations for the future site of the Nikolaiviertel. It stated that the construction and design of the area “must have a meaningful connection to the historical past and with the socialist present and future.”⁸⁸ According to the document, this connection was to be established with the buildings themselves: “städtebauliche-architektonische Verbindung der Neubauten der

⁸⁵ Gißke, *Nikolaiviertel und Friedrichswerdersche Kirche*, 29.

⁸⁶ Günter Stahn, “Rund um die Berliner Nikolaikirche,” *Architektur der DDR* 4 (1982). Cit. in: Hans Stimmann, *Stadterneuerung in Ost-Berlin: vom “sozialistischen Neuaufbau” zur “komplexen Rekonstruktion”*: Überlick und Materialien (Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, 1987), 63.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Magistrat von Berlin, “Städtebauliche Zielsetzung für den Wohnkomplex Rathausstraße (Magistratsbeschluss 474/77),” (1977). Cit in: Planungsgruppe WERKSTADT, “Städtebauliches Gutachten zur Prüfung der Schutzwürdigkeit der städtebaulichen Eigenschaft als Voraussetzung für den Erlass der Verordnung gem. § 172 Abs. 1 Satz 1 Nr. 1 Baugesetzbuch (i. A. Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, Abteilung Stadtentwicklung, Gesundheit, Soziales. Fachbereich Stadtplanung),” (Berlin: Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, 2016).

*Rathaus- und Spandauer Straße*⁸⁹ mit dem historisch getreuen Wiederaufbau von Gebäuden rund um die Nikolaikirche”.⁹⁰

Historical continuity was not only depicted architecturally by the Nikolaiviertel but also symbolically. The Nikolaiviertel represents Berlin’s birthplace; by rebuilding it, the SED gave itself an architectural representation of its story’s beginning. It gave the regime a neighborhood it could point to and showcase to the West as its origins. It is precisely this that Honecker tried to convey in his speech to the Committee. In fact, his speech was an account of events that took place in the city since its first mention in 1237. Honecker’s continuity goes from Berlin, a small settlement on the Spree to Berlin, *Hauptstadt der DDR*. In the words of the statesman:

*Es ist von symbolischer Bedeutung, daß die Geschichte Berlins gerade dort ihren Ursprung nahm, wo sich heute das Zentrum der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik befindet. [...] gründeten um 1200 Kaufleute und Handwerker in einer Zeit der Blüte des Feudalismus die Schwesterstädte Cölln und Berlin, die dann zum Kern unserer Stadt wurde.*⁹¹

The regime’s narrative on the Nikolaiviertel and its pursuit of patriotism went beyond the *Thesen* and speeches, it was also aimed at East German students. In 1988, East Berlin’s Department of Education (*Abteilung Volksbildung*) published a teacher’s manual on the Nikolaiviertel: *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt: Material für Lehrer und Erzieher der Schulen zu Führungen und Exkursionen im Zentrum der Hauptstadt der DDR*. Just as Honecker’s speech or the *Thesen*, the teacher’s guide contained a detailed timeline of the founding of the city. It was to be used by teachers to help them convey important dates and facts to students during excursions in the new *Altstadt*.⁹² It was important to let the students know that Berlin’s “Wiege” (cradle) lay in their sector: “*Im historischen Stadtkern um die Nikolaikirche entstanden um 1200 die ersten Häuser, begann über Jahrhunderte die geschichtliche Entwicklung. Heute gehört er zum Zentrum der Hauptstadt der DDR.*”⁹³ Here

⁸⁹ Before being known as the Nikolaiviertel, the area was simply called the Rathausstraße area and Wohnkomplex Rathausstraße.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ BArch, *Ansprache auf der konstituierenden Sitzung*, 3.

⁹² Manfred Eckstein et al., *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt Berlin: Material für Lehrer und Erzieher der Schulen zu Führungen und Exkursionen im Zentrum der Hauptstadt der DDR*, 2 ed. (Berlin: Magistrat von Berlin, Abteilung Volksbildung, 1988).

⁹³ Ibid., 2.

again, the concept of historical continuity is evoked. Thus, with the help of guided tours of the Nikolaiviertel, a sense of national pride could be instilled in East German students.

1.3.2. PATRIOTISM THROUGH EAST GERMAN ACHIEVEMENTS

1.3.2.1. SOLVING THE HOUSING CRISIS

The regime also tried to stimulate patriotism by highlighting present and current socialist accomplishments. This narrative can be read in the teachers' guide. For the East German government, the act of rebuilding the Nikolaiviertel should be in itself a source of pride:

*[...] unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Leistungen von Bauschaffenden der Republik für die Gestaltung eines neuen sozialistischen Berlins, in dem Traditionen bewahrt und schöpferisch weiterentwickelt werden, soll das Material helfen, den Schülern den Stolz auf das Geleistete und die Verbundenheit mit ihrer Hauptstadt weiter auszuprägen.*⁹⁴

Inciting national pride by using socialist exploits like rebuilding the Nikolaiviertel was part of a greater strategy by the SED: the raising of East German living standards. The plan was to make East Germans proud to identify themselves with a new and improved GDR. The reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel and Berlin's 750th anniversary was an essential part of this plan. To raise living standards, Honecker's policy had two goals: alleviate the housing crisis and stimulate consumption.

The first part of the regime's plan was to solve the East German housing crisis brought on by the worldwide economic instabilities of the 1970s. The then-new head of state, Erich Honecker, assuming office in 1971, attempted to solve this by developing a new housing plan published in 1973. The plan called for the construction of more than 3 million apartments by 1990.⁹⁵ However, the growing economic and oil crisis affecting the world and the GDR threatened his proposal. This made construction materials much more expensive; the regime was realizing that it could not build all the new apartments that the plan foresaw.⁹⁶ Under these

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 14.

⁹⁶ Brian Ladd, "Socialist Planning and the Rediscovery of the Old City in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 5 (2001). doi:10.1177/009614420102700502.

economic conditions, the GDR's old approach to town planning seemed unfeasible. Before this time, the regime made great use of the *tabula rasa* method or *Kahlschlagsanierung*. Instead of repairing or conserving old buildings, this modernist approach called for the demolition of vast areas to make way for modern, ahistorical developments.⁹⁷ This was now considered a great waste of resources. Consequently, the regime was forced to re-evaluate its old housing stock and integrate it into its housing plan. Historical buildings in East Germany were now considered a valuable asset. This marked an important turning point in GDR architecture, many calling it the postmodernist turn.⁹⁸ Honecker's new strategy included the reconstruction of hitherto ignored historical neighborhoods like the Nikolaiviertel. According to the East German head of state: "*Nirgendwo darf das Alter eines Gebäudes alleiniger Grund für seinen Abriß sein. Die Bausubstanz stellt ein gewaltiges materielles und kulturelles Volksvermögen dar, mit dem man pfleglich umgehen muß.*"⁹⁹ Honecker continues: "*Historische Gebäude am Platz der Akademie, im Gebiet Spittelmarkt-Rathausstraße werden wiederaufgebaut.*"¹⁰⁰

The postmodernist turn in East German town planning was more than political; it was a growing phenomenon among architects and planners in the GDR and around the world. In the case of East Germany, architects and planners took greater consideration of inhabitants' needs and living conditions. This was something that the drab modernist housing projects could hardly deliver. A new vision of architecture was gaining in popularity: architecture was to serve its citizens. It was thought that this would give them a greater sense of purpose and meaning as opposed to the monotony associated with earlier modernist projects. This could be done, it was theorized, by "integrating old quarters with new ones".¹⁰¹ Thus, it was now seen important to preserve and redevelop older inner-city neighborhoods.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Rolf J. Goebel, "Berlin's Architectural Citations: Reconstruction, Simulation, and the Problem of Historical Authenticity," *PMLA* 118, no. 5 (2003): 1287. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1261464>.

⁹⁸ Denis Bocquet and Pascale Laborier, *Sociologie de Berlin* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), 90.

⁹⁹ BArch, *DY 30/2192 (Büro Honecker). Reden von Erich Honecker auf Delegiertenkonferenzen und Parteiaktivtagungen der SED. Wohnungsbau in Berlin (15.02.1981)*, 40-41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

¹⁰¹ Emily Pugh, "The Dreamed-Of GDR: Public Space, Private Space, and National Identity in the Honecker Era," in *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 189. doi:10.2307/j.ctt7zwbqb.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

1.3.2.2. GREATER CONSUMPTION POSSIBILITIES

The second part of the regime's plan to raise living standards was to stimulate East German consumption. An important component of the government's plan was the creation of opportunities for East Germans to spend their money on leisure and entertainment. To do this, the government invested in the construction of entertainment districts and shopping areas like the Friederichstraße and, of course, the Nikolaiviertel. The Nikolaiviertel was conceived as the perfect place for leisure and consumption. This, according to the regime, was a path to internal contentment.¹⁰³

In its planning, the neighborhood was to be an entertainment center by aesthetic and material means. This was new for the GDR. Allowing a certain degree of consumerism, often seen as a purely capitalist activity, was now encouraged by the Honecker regime.¹⁰⁴ Honecker's enthusiasm *vis-à-vis* new consumerism possibilities in the heart of the capital can be heard during a speech on urban development in Berlin in 1985:

*Im Zentrum der Hauptstadt werden in den kommenden Jahren einige der interessantesten und anziehendsten Wohn- und Einkaufsgebiete, der schönsten Boulevards und Fußgängerzonen vollendet, welche Berlin überhaupt besitzt. [...] Im historischen Stadtkern am Marx-Engels-Forum errichten oder rekonstruieren wir rund um die Nikolaikirche viele Bürgerhäuser, das Ephraim-Palais, die "Gerichtslaube" und den "Nußbaum" in alter Schönheit. 350 Wohnungen, neue Geschäfte, Gaststätten und Cafés kommen hinzu.*¹⁰⁵

To sum up, these political narratives aimed at East German citizens and politicians, were used to create an identity based on patriotism and nationalism. The Nikolaiviertel played a central role in conveying this message. The rebuilt historic neighborhood was used to symbolize historic continuity and present-day accomplishments, elements for which citizens could be proud. The GDR's new internal identity was partly rooted in the new East German historiography. The Nikolaiviertel represented the birthplace of the most important city in East Germany, Berlin, Capital of the GDR. Such a discourse allowed the regime to differentiate

¹⁰³ Ladd, "Socialism on display," 229-31.

¹⁰⁴ Florian Urban, "Designing the Past in East Berlin Before and After the German Reunification," *Progress in Planning* 68, no. 1 (2007): 48. doi:10.1016/j.progress.2007.07.001.

¹⁰⁵ BArch, DY 30/2194 (Büro Honecker). *Zusammenarbeit mit Bezirks- und Kreisleitungen der SED. Städtebauliche Entwicklung in Berlin (09.02.1986)*, 22.

itself from West Berlin and it could, thus, claim to be *the* legitimate Berlin. Because its identity was based on continuity, it had to have a present-day component. This included the raising of living standards by solving the housing crisis and encouraging consumerism. The Nikolaiviertel thus stood at the border between past and present; its citizens could spend their money all the while being immersed in the city's history.

2. PROMOTING EAST BERLIN, CAPITAL OF THE GDR

The East German regime seized the opportunity presented to them by Berlin's 750th anniversary to sell an idealized image of Berlin to outsiders. The actors responsible, mostly politicians, attempted to woo tourists, foreign politicians and investors. This was done to solidify its external legitimacy and gain financially by stimulating foreign tourism. The regime's narratives surrounding the Nikolaiviertel and the 750th celebrations contain an undertone of superiority over the West. Indeed, the GDR's strategy concerning its external image was to compare itself to the West and show to outsiders that it was better. Even though this was not explicit in all materials, this time during which the festivities were planned were marked by an overall atmosphere of rivalry between both ideologies as described by the Nikolaiviertel's architect, Stahn: "[*Die 750-Feier*] war ein Wettbewerb zwischen Ost und West. Beide wollten vorne sein."¹⁰⁶ We will see in this section how the regime depicted East Berlin as an attractive city by claiming legitimate historical continuity over West Berlin. Furthermore, the regime made the city more attractive to visitors by developing its inner city. And finally, the SED's image of East Berlin was one of a politically, economically and culturally attractive place.

2.1. TOURISM IN EAST BERLIN

The importance of the Nikolaiviertel and the 750th anniversary for the GDR was made obvious by the fact that the regime spent substantial amounts of resources to shape its external image despite the economic crisis.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it was such a priority that the regime diverted enormous sums and laborers from all over the country to be used in East Berlin, often to the detriment of other important projects in other parts of the country.¹⁰⁸

Up to the mid-1970s, East Berlin did not have much to boast about when it came to tourism. As the capital of the German Democratic Republic, Berlin was a popular destination for business trips but not for tourism in general. Visitors to the city accounted for only 6% of

¹⁰⁶ Uwe Rada, "Berlins Disneyland lebt," *Die Tageszeitung* 2007. <http://www.taz.de/!5196520/>.

¹⁰⁷ Pugh, "Collapsing borders," 284.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 46-47.

total arrivals in the GDR, behind Dresden, Leipzig and Erfurt. Furthermore, the city only counted 13 recognized tourist attractions in 1977.¹⁰⁹ The SED government was much more preoccupied with the creation of housing on Berlin's periphery than developing its tourism industry by making its downtown attractive.

By the mid-1970, the regime was starting to pay greater attention to the city center; it slowly started to gain in significance for its potential role as a showcase for the outside world. With modern building projects like the Palast der Republik, the regime began developing the city center for domestic tourism. The Palast could be used simultaneously as a political and cultural hub for East Germans.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the city center saw a boom in neo-historical building projects including the Nikolaiviertel. This coincided with the global trend of embracing historical city layouts at the expense of modern town planning.¹¹¹ Creating a new old city center was to benefit the city's tourism: these projects all came with tourist-friendly amenities like hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.¹¹² According to the urban planning objectives for the development of the neighborhood published by the government in 1977, the Nikolaiviertel was specifically conceived to be an area made up of primarily tourist-orientated establishments with history as its main selling point:

*Dabei ist der Charakter der zu schaffenden Handels-, Kultur- und gastronomischen Einrichtungen stärker auf den nationalen und internationalen Tourismus auszurichten. Diese Einrichtungen sind vielfältiger und entsprechend der historischen Besonderheiten des Standortes auch intimer und berlintypischer zu gestalten.*¹¹³

The Eastern half of the city had a clear advantage over West Berlin when it came to historical sites. The ideological rivalry between the two meant that everything was used to try to assert superiority over the other including culture, architecture and history. East Berlin did just that to boost its status over the West. Most sites connected with the city's early history were

¹⁰⁹ Jana Richter, *Die Wechselwirkungen zwischen Tourismus und urbanem Raum: Funktionsprinzipien am Beispiel der räumlichen Entwicklung und der gegenwärtigen Ausprägung der Touristenmetropole Berlin* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2012), 181.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 188.

¹¹¹ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 112.

¹¹² Richter, *Wechselwirkungen zwischen Tourismus und urbanem Raum*, 191-92.

¹¹³ Magistrat von Berlin, "Städtebauliche Zielsetzung."

situated in the East, mostly concentrated in the *historische Mitte* (historic core). Berlin's first settlement on the Spree was on the socialist side as well as most historical areas dating from the *Gründerzeit*. The drive to rebuild those sites (like the Friederichstraße and Museuminsel) in the mid-1970s played well in the SED's hand. It effectively capitalized on the past to make its side more attractive to foreign visitors, politicians and investors. For example, state visits during the 750th anniversary were lead through the newly rebuild Nikolaiviertel.¹¹⁴

2.2. STAGING THE PAST: THE HERITAGE UPPER HAND

The Nikolaiviertel made East Berlin's inner city attractive by simulating historicity or staging the past. The neighborhood was indeed only a simulation. The Nikolaiviertel of the 1980s had little to do with the medieval town that once stood there. Other than the Nikolaikirche, almost no original buildings were rebuilt where they once stood. The houses constructed here were examples of townhouses typical for Berlin at the time.¹¹⁵ Some notable reconstructions like the Ephraim-Palais were rebuilt away from their original locations. It was rebuilt from its original stones which were stored in West Berlin after the war, but 20 meters from where it once stood.¹¹⁶ Another notable building, the Gerichtslaube (court loggia) never existed in the Nikolaiviertel. It was originally part of Berlin's first city hall, across the street. When Berlin's actual city hall was built in the late 19th century, the Gerichtslaube was taken to Babelsberg near the city of Potsdam, where it still sits to this day.¹¹⁷

Marketing Berlin using the new medieval old town was made possible by the creation of an historical "aura" (*Flair*) rather than authenticity. In the old town, this aura was to be seen and felt. On the one hand, this was ensured by the Nikolaiviertel's architecture and its collection of historic-looking buildings. On the other hand, it was to be experienced by visitors with the help of restaurants and bars. According to Günter Stahn: "*Uns ging es nicht um die Rekonstruktion der Berliner Altstadt, sondern um die Rekonstruktion eines städtischen Raums,*

¹¹⁴ Dominik Scholz, "Architektur und Geschichtspolitik: das Ost-Berliner Nikolaiviertel in den 1980er Jahren," *Berliner Debatte Initial*, no. 3 (2010): 135.

¹¹⁵ Ladd, *The ghosts of Berlin*, 45-47.

¹¹⁶ Gißke, *Nikolaiviertel und Friedrichswerdersche Kirche*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 114.

der das alte Berlin erlebbar macht.”¹¹⁸ The mix of open-air museum and *Kneipenmeile* made the Nikolaiviertel an instant success with tourists in the 1980s. It consequently became an important asset for the GDR’s tourism industry.¹¹⁹

The Nikolaiviertel’s physical form might not be authentic, but its location certainly was and the regime used this to bolster the city attractiveness. The SED claimed historical continuity by emphasizing the location’s significance as the city’s birthplace. By so doing, East Berlin presented itself as the only authentic Berlin. Continuity was furthermore accentuated by East Berlin’s status as capital city. The *Thesen* was an essential tool used by the regime to convey the message to West Berlin, West Germany and the world that East Berlin was *Das echte Berlin*.¹²⁰ The *Thesen* was much more than a document meant for an internal public. It was meant for the masses in East Germany and internationally. Before being published as a stand-alone brochure in 1986, it was printed in all East German newspapers as well as in historical and ideological journals. In addition, 63 600 copies were published in foreign languages.¹²¹ For Honecker, East Berlin’s status as capital of the GDR was not only a self-evident continuation of German history but a legal and legitimate one. He also considered its rise to *Hauptstadt der DDR* as the most important aspect of Berlin’s 750 years of history. According to Honecker:

*Mit vollem Recht können wir die nunmehr bereits 35-jährige Entwicklung Berlins als sozialistische Stadt, als Metropole unseres Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staates nicht nur als eine gesetzmäßige Fortsetzung, sondern als Höhepunkt der gesamten Berliner Geschichte.*¹²²

East Berlin’s legitimacy was also based on the idea that the city had become capital of East Germany, the first German nation created by the people in Berlin. Honecker proclaimed: “*Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik ist das erste deutsche Staatswesen, das unmittelbar in Berlin geschaffen wurde. Dieser sozialistische deutsche Staat entstand mitten im Volk.*”¹²³ Honecker was referring to the fact that previous incarnations of the German nation were never

¹¹⁸ TAZ: Berlins Disneyland lebt.

¹¹⁹ Richter, *Wechselwirkungen zwischen Tourismus und urbanem Raum*, 192-95.

¹²⁰ Scholz, “Architektur und Geschichtspolitik,” 137.

¹²¹ Thijs, *Drei Geschichten*, 256.

¹²² BArch, *Ansprache auf der konstituierenden Sitzung*, 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

formally proclaimed in Berlin. For example, the 1871 German Empire was proclaimed in Versailles and the Weimar Republic's constitution was enacted in the central German city of Weimar.¹²⁴

For the regime's identity, the present and the future were as important as the past. For the SED, the past was useless if it didn't serve a purpose for the socialist present. For this reason, past, present and future were considered indivisible.¹²⁵ The 750th anniversary was seen by Honecker as the perfect time to melt together all aspects of time: "*Die Feier wird die Berliner mit ihren Freunden aus den sozialistischen Bruderländern wie aus aller Welt zusammenführen im Rückblick auf die Geschichte und beim Voranschreiten in die Zukunft*".¹²⁶ To galvanize the idea of continuity, the East German government used a narrative focused on present socialist merits to sell the city. This is similar to the regime's attempt to evoke patriotism among East Germans. The present-day socialist Berlin was portrayed by the SED as a piece-loving, democratic and culturally rich metropolis as we will see later in this chapter.¹²⁷

2.3. BRANDING EAST BERLIN AS A CITY OF PEACE

During Berlin's 750th birthday, East Berlin was making itself attractive to the outside world by presenting itself as the *Stadt des Friedens* (city of peace) and the Nikolaiviertel played an important role in conveying this narrative. When approaching the neighborhood from the west, either by the Rathausbrücke or by the Spree, one is confronted with a giant dove adorning the side of a building. This sculpture was created by East German sculptor Gerhard Thieme and is a rendition of Picasso's Peace Dove. The sculpture is accompanied by the words "*Stadt des Friedens*" written underneath. This honorific title was given to East Berlin in 1979 by Romesch Chandra, president of the soviet-sponsored World Peace Council for the city's efforts for world peace.¹²⁸

The city's honorific title was fully exploited for Berlin's birthday. It found its way in all communications surrounding the celebrations. It was such an important boast for the regime

¹²⁴ Jelavich, "The Berlin Jubilee: Which History to Celebrate," 12.

¹²⁵ Scholz, "Architektur und Geschichtspolitik," 125.

¹²⁶ Diehl, *750 Jahre Berlin*, 12.

¹²⁷ Thijs, *Drei Geschichten*, 207-08.

¹²⁸ Eckstein et al., *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt Berlin*, 5.

that it made it the city's second official name after "*Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR.*"¹²⁹ During his speech for the 750th jubilee's official celebration at the Palast der Republik, Honecker declared: "*Berlin, die Stadt des Friedens, erwies sich als Ort der Begegnung, des Dialogs und der Zusammenarbeit.*"¹³⁰ For Honecker, the celebrations were "*einem Fest des Friedens und Völkerverständigung.*"¹³¹ His speech was followed by Beethoven's 9th Symphony, which the GDR leader, in the same vein, described as "*die unsterbliche Botschaft des Friedens, des Humanismus und der Völkerfreundschaft.*"¹³²

At first glance, it can be assumed that the official ceremony, the political high point of the celebrations, was mostly meant for an internal public,¹³³ but it also had a broader audience extending outside the GDR. However, international guests weren't invited to the *Festakt*, although some countries with whom the GDR had relations could be represented by their respective East German head of missions.¹³⁴ Honecker did want his message to be heard externally, especially in the West. To do so, he sent out an invitation to the governing mayor of West Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen. Under considerable pressure from the three other Western Powers present in West Berlin, Diepgen refused Honecker's invitation. Nevertheless, some politicians from West Berlin were present at the ceremony. These included members of the *Alternative Liste*, a political fraction in West Berlin's House of Representatives (*Abgeordneten Haus*).¹³⁵ Furthermore, external exposure of the ceremony was assured with the publishing in 1988 of the ceremony's proceedings, including Honecker's speech, by the government's own publishing house, Dietz Verlag.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Jelavich, "The Berlin Jubilee: Which History to Celebrate," 13.

¹³⁰ BArch, *Ansprache auf der konstituierenden Sitzung*, 1.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 17.

¹³³ Jens Schöne, *Stabilität und Niedergang: Ost-Berlin im Jahr 1987*, 6 ed., vol. 22 (Berlin: Berliner Landesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, 2012), 25, 33.

¹³⁴ Ilse Dorothee Pautsch et al., *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1987* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenburg, 2018).

¹³⁵ Thijs, *Drei Geschichten*, 184, 259.

¹³⁶ *750 Jahre Berlin : 1237 - 1987 ; Staatsakt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik am 23. Oktober 1987.* (1988). Berlin: Dietz Verlag.

2.4. EAST BERLIN, ATTRACTIVE IN ALL FIELDS

East Berlin's image conveyed by the regime went far beyond its posturing as a city of peace, it was sold as an economically attractive place. For Honecker, East Berlin was a center of democracy, a stable place economically and a cultural metropolis. Furthermore, it was portrayed as a place worth investing in due to its science and research sectors. According to Honecker while speaking to the 750th organizing committee: "*Das sozialistische Berlin ist eine Stadt hochentwickelter Wirtschaft, der Kultur und Bildung, der Wissenschaft und Technik.*"¹³⁷ All this was to make East Berlin more attractive than West Berlin. Even though this was not explicit in his speech, Honecker does compare East Berlin with other capitalist states:

*Wie grundlegend unterscheidet das unser sozialistisches Berlin doch vom Berlin der Vergangenheit, aber auch von den Großstädten in der heutigen kapitalistischen Welt, wo Massenarbeitslosigkeit wieder zu einer Dauererscheinung wurde und vielen sozialer Abstieg und neue Armut droht.*¹³⁸

As was the case with the official ceremony, the *Komitee* was primarily made up of East Germans, nevertheless, it had an external impact. Indeed, Honecker's narratives were very much intended for the West. The *Komitee*'s members pretty much all stemmed from the East German intelligentsia. The 169 member-strong Committee included intellectuals, members of the Politburo, politicians and artists among others. In addition to organizing the festivities, they were also tasked with the publication of the *Thesen*. The the *Komitee*'s official inauguration on the 7th February 1985 was very much indented as a piece of propaganda targeting the West; as a matter of fact, the western media were given full access to its inauguration.¹³⁹

Another selling point for the Honecker regime was East Berlin's cultural importance for the GDR and the world. The SED considered East Berlin the heart of East German culture. The city acted as a center for the arts attracting artists from all over. Socialist Berlin's cultural attractiveness was due to its reputation and influx of East German artists. All this was made very clear by the GDR leader during Berlin's birthday:

¹³⁷ BArch, *Ansprache auf der konstituierenden Sitzung*, 18.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Thijs, *Drei Geschichten*, 229.

*Das Berlin unserer Zeit ist der Sitz [...] herausragender sozialistischer Kultur- und Bildungsstätten. Hier wirkten Persönlichkeiten wie Bertolt Brecht, Theodor Drusch, Paul Dessau [...], die in unserem ganzen Lande und weit über seine Grenzen hinaus einen guten Klang besitzen und vom Reichtum und der Vielfalt sozialistischer Kultur und Wissenschaft künden. Verpflichtet der Pflege des kulturellen Erbes und unserer sozialistischen Nationalkultur arbeitet heute in Berlin ein großer Teil der Kunst- und Kulturschaffenden der DDR.*¹⁴⁰

Its cultural institutions also made the city attractive, many of which were newly reconstructed:

*Mit dem zum 35. Jahrestag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik [1984] wiedereröffneten Schauspielhaus als Konzertsaal, dem rekonstruierten Deutschen Theater, dem Köpenicker und Friederichsfelder Schloß sowie dem neuen Friederichstadtpalast [...] erhöhte sich die Anziehungskraft der Stadt als ein Zentrum sozialistischen Kultur- und Geisteslebens.*¹⁴¹

The Nikolaiviertel was also designed to strengthen East Berlin's reputation as East Germany's cultural hotspot. During the *Staatsakt*, which was held at the end of the year-long celebration, Honecker gave an account of East Berlin's new cultural landscape: "*Allein in den letzten Jahren wurden in Berlin bedeutenden Kultur- und Gesellschaftsbauten neu geschaffen bzw. rekonstruiert. Ich nenne hier: das Marx-Engels-Forum [...] das Nikolaiviertel mit Ephraim-Palais und Nikolaikirche*".¹⁴²

To summarize, the SED regime made great use of the 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin and the Nikolaiviertel to present an image of the city to the outside world based on its perceived superiority over the West. The government's discourse depicted a city that assumed its historical functions as capital, consequently allowing the regime to label East Berlin as the real, legitimate Berlin. Furthermore, the regime's narratives also allude to the city's attractiveness as a way to sell the city. According to them, the city's appeal lay in its status as "city of peace", in its political stability and in its significance for the arts and culture. Promoting

¹⁴⁰ BArch, *Ansprache auf der konstituierenden Sitzung*, 18.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² BArch, DY 30/2569 (Büro Honecker). *Komitee zum 750jährigen Bestehens von Berlin. Ansprache Erich Honecker auf dem Staatsakt anlässlich der 750-Jahr-Feier Berlins (23. Oktober 1987)*, 14.

Berlin to external groups meant bolstering the country's international legitimacy. It also meant creating greater economic possibilities for East Berlin by developing its tourism industry. The actors responsible for communicating these discourses were primarily politicians and historians using the 750th anniversary of the city and the Nikolaiviertel to do so. With the help of political speeches and publications, an identity shaped by historical continuity and appeal was transmitted to the targeted international politicians and tourists, including West Berliners and West Germans.

SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY ROLES

3. SHOWCASING THE NEW BERLIN

By creating a favorable image of East Berlin and focusing their narratives on the city's attractiveness, the East German government sought to stimulate its tourism industry and improve its international recognition. Thirty years after the fall of the Wall, this goal remains the same. As such, the Nikolaiviertel is being used to project a favorable image of reunified Berlin to the world. This shouldn't be a surprise; as a tourist attraction, the Nikolaiviertel's most obvious purpose is to market the new Berlin. The discourses surrounding it have barely changed; however, Berlin's international status has changed. Selling the city today with the help of the Nikolaiviertel is a dynamic process which makes use of two identities simultaneously: a local, Berliner identity and a supranational European identity. The local narrative is based on *distinctiveness* and *authenticity*. The primary actors involved are tourism agencies and travel guides. The European identity, on the other hand, is based on *similarity*. This identity is mostly conveyed by politicians, architects and town planners. Using its local identity, the Nikolaiviertel is an essential element for the city's tourism industry. On the other hand, its European identity is used to normalize Berlin's image.

3.1 MARKETING BERLIN WITH DISTINCTIVENESS: LOCAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE TOURISM

The Nikolaiviertel is used to portray an image of Berlin to tourists based on aspects that differentiate the city from others. This local, Berlin-typical identity is mostly seen in travel guides and brochures. The main narratives focus on the Nikolaiviertel's heritage and authenticity. Before exploring the importance of the Nikolaiviertel on Berlin's tourism industry, we must first explore the economic changes that have occurred in the German capital since reunification and their effect on tourism. Even though the area has retained its initial role, the context in which it operates is different from that of the pre-*Wende* era.

3.1.1 TOURISM IN BERLIN: THEN AND NOW

Although the East German government put great time and effort into invigorating East Berlin's tourism industry as discussed in the previous chapter, the socialist capital was never a popular destination. East Berlin was not alone, the same can be said of West Berlin.¹⁴³ Sure, East Berlin was popular for some West Germans who wanted to see the other side of the Wall. From West Berlin, they could travel with the right documents to East Berlin. This was difficult the other way around. It was also a popular destination for young communists from Eastern Europe who came to East Berlin to participate in organized socialist events. However, this was not significant for East Berlin's tourism.¹⁴⁴ Yet, the regime's efforts should not be overlooked. The city's actual status as top European destination is due, in part, to efforts made before reunification.¹⁴⁵

Today, Berlin enjoys a thriving tourism industry that has seen strong growth in the past decade.¹⁴⁶ During the 1990s, the reunified German capital has shifted its economic activities. Like most post-industrial nations in Europe, it favored the development of tertiary sectors like the service and tourism industry.¹⁴⁷ In 2017, the latter added 11 billion Euros in the city's coffers, making Berlin the third most visited city in Europe after Paris and London.¹⁴⁸ But what makes Berlin so attractive to tourists? According to a 2016 survey probing tourists on their motives behind their visit, the city's tourist attractions, its culture, architecture and history/tradition were the most popular answers.¹⁴⁹ Berlin's unique history has contributed massively to this surge; recent history seems to be the most appealing aspect for tourists in the capital. They mostly come to experience specific periods including the Golden Twenties, the

¹⁴³ Christian Tänzler and Valentine Meunier, "Le boom du tourisme-stop ou encore?," *Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, no. 3 (2017): 146. doi:10.3917/all.221.0145.

¹⁴⁴ Bocquet and Laborier, *Sociologie de Berlin*, 102.

¹⁴⁵ Richter, *Wechselwirkungen zwischen Tourismus und urbanem Raum*, 185.

¹⁴⁶ Karl Brenke and Valentine Meunier, "Berlin: métropole en pleine croissance ou capitale sociale?," *Allemagne d'aujourd'hui*, no. 3 (2017): 123. doi:10.3917/all.221.0118.

¹⁴⁷ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, "The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams," in *Cities and Visitors: Regulating People, Markets, and City Space*, ed. Lily M Hoffmann, Susan S Fainstein, and Dennis R Judd (Victoria, Australia: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 201. doi:10.1002/9780470773673.ch11.

¹⁴⁸ VisitBerlin, *Tourismuskonzept 2018+: Studie zum nachhaltigen und stadtverträglichen Tourismuskonzept* (Berlin: Senat von Berlin, 2017), 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

Nazi era and the Cold War.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Berlin's attractiveness depends on the city's heritage and memory culture, which have flourished since reunification. They have become an integral part of its economy. However, this is not unique to Berlin; marketing history for the benefit of international tourism is a trend observed in most European cities.¹⁵¹

3.1.2 HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE GERMAN CAPITAL

Heritage tourism, or cultural tourism, can be defined as tourism where the visitor is “inspired or motivated by cultural factors and interested in historic heritage and/or contemporary culture.”¹⁵² For a successful heritage tourism industry, marketing history plays an important role. In this sense, history is considered a resource, a commodity. Commodifying history includes taking elements of the past and interpreting them for present use. In other words, “heritage is the contemporary use of the past.”¹⁵³ Using this definition, heritage is essentially the commodification of history. In Europe, cities are the most important aspect of cultural tourism because they incorporate material and immaterial elements in their historical urban landscape.¹⁵⁴ Because of this, urban planning actively takes into account heritage tourism in planning processes. In this context, city centers have garnered more attention from politicians and planners as marketable places consolidating history and culture.¹⁵⁵ By transforming city centers into open-air museums and recreational areas, these cities can benefit economically from urban heritage tourism.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 252.

¹⁵¹ Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 109. doi:10.4324/9780203553336.

¹⁵² María García-Hernández, Manuel de la Calle-Vaquero, and Claudia Yubero, “Cultural Heritage and Urban Tourism: Historic City Centres Under Pressure,” *Sustainability* 9, no. 8 (2017): 2. doi:10.3390/su9081346.

¹⁵³ Brian Graham, Greg Ashworth, and John Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*, 2 ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2.

¹⁵⁴ García-Hernández, de la Calle-Vaquero, and Yubero, “Cultural Heritage and Urban Tourism: Historic City Centres Under Pressure.”

¹⁵⁵ A. G. J. Dietvorst, “Cultural Tourism and Time-space Behaviour,” in *Building a New Heritage*, ed. G. J. Ashworth and P. J. Larkham (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁵⁶ Katharina Brichetti, *Die Paradoxie des postmodernen Historismus: Stadtumbau und städtebauliche Denkmalpflege vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Berlin und Beirut* (Berlin: Schiler, 2009), 109-11.

In today's Berlin, Mitte, specifically its historic core, is considered by local politicians and planners as the "political center, a place of high culture and tourism."¹⁵⁷ By tapping into the area's cultural and historical richness, Mitte has become an essential part of the city's heritage tourism. Its main draw includes its Prussian history and its World War Two and Cold War legacies. Even though Berlin's medieval past is less popular among tourists, the Nikolaiviertel is still considered a "tourist magnet"¹⁵⁸ by the city's government and marketing agencies, a "classic"¹⁵⁹ tourist attraction. It also plays an "important role for the city's history and tourism."¹⁶⁰

3.1.3 THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AND HERITAGE AS PRESENTED TO TOURISTS

What makes the Nikolaiviertel so popular is its heritage and its perceived sense of authenticity; this is an important part of the narrative used by the city to promote itself. The area's distinct history is invoked to set the neighborhood apart from others in the city and to distinguish itself from other cities. This local identity is conveyed in many ways including guidebooks, brochures and the Nikolaiviertel itself. The sense of the local is staged by portraying authentic history told by the neighborhood's buildings and historic figures and offering the visitors immersive experiences dominated by shopping and consumption. It is important to note that "authenticity" can be a problematic word. Here, it is used in the guise of constructivism, i.e. authenticity is subjective and determined by the tourists' experiences. This stands in contrast to an essentialist definition of authenticity where it is equated with something being real, a relic of the past.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803)," (Berlin: Senat von Berlin, 2011), 3. https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/planwerke/de/planwerk_innere_stadt/download/senat_planwerk_innere_stadt.pdf.

¹⁵⁸ Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt, Verkehr und Klimaschutz, "Schriftliche Anfrage zum Thema: Nächster Halt: Lebendige Stadtgeschichte – Die Einbindung des Nikolaiviertels in den ÖPNV (Drucksache 18/15665)," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt, Verkehr und Klimaschutz, 2018), 2.

¹⁵⁹ Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, "Schriftliche Anfrage zum Thema: Gegenwart und Zukunft des Nikolaiviertels als Tourismusstandort (Drucksache 18/15661)," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, 2018), 1.

¹⁶⁰ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Festsetzung des Bebauungsplans I-218 im Bezirk Mitte, Ortsteil Mitte," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2016), 13.

¹⁶¹ Y. Ram, P. Björk, and A. Weidenfeld, "Authenticity and Place Attachment of Major Visitor Attractions," *Tourism Management* 52 (2016): 110-11. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2015.06.010.

The most prevalent narrative surrounding the Nikolaiviertel's heritage found in almost all guide books and brochures produced by the city's official tourist board, VisitBerlin,¹⁶² is its role as birthplace. This narrative takes many shapes, but its message is the same: the Nikolaiviertel is Berlin's oldest area and its place of origin. For example, the *ADAC 2017* calls the Nikolaiviertel the “*Ältestes Bauensemble der Stadt [...] einst der Kern des alten Berlins.*”¹⁶³ Other descriptions revolve around key words like “*Ursprung*”, “historic core”, “medieval core”, “original settlement” and “medieval birthplace”. Such descriptions give visitors an urban visual cue to the city's historical beginnings. This narrative, having such a distinct characteristic, creates a place-specific local identity essential for Berlin's image and its external promotion.¹⁶⁴

Guidebooks further expand on the Nikolaiviertel's distinct history with the help of historical buildings and personalities. Usually, guidebooks explain the quarter's history through its most notable building, the Nikolaikirche. For example, the *ADAC* describes it as the “*älteste Pfarrkirche Berlins [...] das Gebäude war wiederholt Schauplatz wichtiger Ereignisse der Berliner Stadtgeschichte. Hier traten 1539 Rat und Stadt zum lutherischen Glauben über.*”¹⁶⁵ The Nikolaiviertel's Baroque Knoblauchhaus also makes an appearance in most guides. It is often described as the home of the famous Knoblauch family whose members include the architect Eduard Knoblauch, designer of Berlin's illustrious Neue Synagoge.¹⁶⁶ Other famous buildings include the Ephraim-Palais, residence to Frederick the Great's court jeweler and the Zum Nussbaum pub, Heinrich Ziller's favorite drinking spot.¹⁶⁷

Some guidebooks also mention the Nikolaiviertel's recent past as part of its unique heritage. The neighborhood's history during the 1980s is often mentioned, however, in considerably less detail than its pre-war past. Most guides point out the quarter's reconstruction

¹⁶² VisitBerlin is Berlin's official tourism agency run by the Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH and is in part financed by the State of Berlin.

¹⁶³ Ulrike Krause, *ADAC Reiseführer plus Berlin: Potsdam mit Sanssouci* (München: Travel House Media GmbH, 2017), 66. <http://d-nb.info/1120720672/04>.

¹⁶⁴ Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*, 204.

¹⁶⁵ Krause, *ADAC Reiseführer*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Małgorzata Omilanowska, *Berlin*, Eyewitness Travel Guides (London: DK Eyewitness Travel, 2017), 93.

¹⁶⁷ Paul Sullivan, *Berlin: The City's Best Restaurants, Bars, Shops and Hotels: Expert Itineraries for Day-trips and Weekends*, Third edition ed., Pocket Rough Guide (London: Rough Guides, 2016), 67.

in the 1980: “built in 1987 to commemorate the city’s 750th anniversary”,¹⁶⁸ “the area was destroyed during the war, then rebuilt for Berlin’s 750th birthday in 1987.”¹⁶⁹ That the area was built for the city’s birthday is the main point of this narrative; rarely, however, do they mention its link to the East German regime.

3.1.4 AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Another element of the Nikolaiviertel’s local identity portrayed in travel guides and brochures is (perceived) *authenticity*. Guides don’t shy away from mentioning that the Nikolaiviertel’s buildings might not be 100% authentic. However, they, more often than not, guarantee that the visitor’s subjective experience will be authentic. According to them, an authentic experience must include a visit to the neighborhood’s many restaurants or pubs. A feeling of authenticity is achieved by the consumption of heritage. By eating and drinking traditionally, tourists get to immerse themselves in the “*Alt-Berlin*” ambiance. The travel guides’ suggestions include eating “*deftige Berliner Kost*”,¹⁷⁰ “*regionalen Gerichten*”,¹⁷¹ or “heavy traditional German food”.¹⁷² This can be done in the Nikolaiviertel’s “*urigen Restaurants*”.¹⁷³ “Edible heritage”¹⁷⁴ strengthens place identity by allowing visitors to have a more meaningful experience. Furthermore, authentic foodstuffs increase a location’s distinctiveness because some products are only produced locally and are only available in certain places.¹⁷⁵

According to some guides, visitors can also have an authentic old-Berlin experience by buying authentic products from its many boutiques. For example, the brochure *Nikolaiviertel* –

¹⁶⁸ Paul Sullivan, *National Geographic Walking Berlin: The Best of the City* (Washington: Penguin Random House, 2015), 68.

¹⁶⁹ Rick Steves, *Rick Steves Berlin* (Berkeley: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2017), 44.

¹⁷⁰ VisitBerlin, *Berlin Welcome Card All Inclusive* (Berlin: Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, 2018), 49.

¹⁷¹ VisitBerlin, “Nikolaiviertel: Lebendige Stadtgeschichte,” Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, <https://www.visitberlin.de/de/nikolaiviertel>.

¹⁷² Sullivan, *Rough Guides*, 66.

¹⁷³ Birgit Nößler, Salomé Friedel, and Sabine Nöbel, *Berlin Mitte: Großstadtflair und Kiezleben*, ed. Bezirksamt Berlin Mitte (Berlin: Aperçu Verlag, 2017), 45.

¹⁷⁴ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 123.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Willkommen in der Altstadt published by the Nikolaiviertel e.V.¹⁷⁶ claims that shoppers can enjoy “entspannte Einkaufsatmosphäre in autofreien Gassen [...] Großketten werden Sie hier vergeblich suchen. Dafür bekommen Sie ein kulturelles Einkaufserlebnis.”¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, visitors can purchase products which are handmade, traditional and made in Berlin like clothing, art and jewelry. As with food consumption, cultural shopping emphasizes authenticity by offering an immersive experience. Moreover, the consumption of culture and heritage has a differentiation effect, which is an important aspect of the image of authenticity portrayed by the brochure quoted above. Here, the shopping experience is depicted as a contrast to other experiences in the city. The first contrasting point is the built environment: the shopping alleys of the old town are car-free. On the other hand, Berlin’s two main shopping districts, the Kurfürstendamm in the West and the Friedrichstraße in the East, are also some of the busiest streets in the city in terms of car-traffic. Secondly, the shops are local as opposed to the big international retail stores of the aforementioned shopping districts. The Nikolaiviertel thus offers a unique, authentic experience in an era of globalization, which tends to even-out differences and has a homogenizing effect on place identity.¹⁷⁸

3.1.5 TRAVEL GUIDES AND OFFICIAL BROCHURES: DIFFERENCES IN NARRATIVES

Interesting variations have been observed between the guidebooks and brochures analyzed; subtle differences exist in their narratives. An important factor for these differences seems to be the place of publication and the nature of the material (travel guides vs. marketing brochures). Differences were noticed in content (time period covered, details) and tone (sarcastic, critical vs. enthusiastic, praising).

All publications mention the Nikolaiviertel as Berlin’s birthplace; however, differences were observed in their depiction of recent history (1980s onwards) and its reconstruction. Travel guides published outside of Germany are more likely to mention that the Nikolaiviertel

¹⁷⁶ The Nikolaiviertel e. V. is a retailers’, restaurateurs’ and residents’ association for the Nikolaiviertel. Their mission includes promoting the neighborhood and maintaining its image as Berlin’s birthplace. The association is the quarters official political and media representation. They also organize and promote cultural events. (“Über uns: der Nikolaiviertel e.V.,” <http://berlin-nikolaiviertel.com/kontakt/ueber-uns/>.)

¹⁷⁷ *Nikolaiviertel: Willkommen in der Berliner Altstadt*, (Berlin: Nikolaiviertel e.V., 2013), 9.

¹⁷⁸ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 144-45.

was rebuilt for the 750th anniversary of the city by the East German government. On the other hand, around half of the German guides analyzed fail to mention the Nikolaiviertel's GDR origins. For their part, marketing brochures (these include material published by the city's tourism agency, VisitBerlin, by the local government and by the Nikolaiviertel e. V.) never mention the GDR or East Germany at all.

Marketing brochures tend to be much more positive in describing the area. This is self-evident; a positive tone is prescribed by the nature of the publication. The VisitBerlin website, for example, describes the Nikolaiviertel as "idyllic" and "charming".¹⁷⁹ Other brochures describe the neighborhood as an "*beschauliche Oase*".¹⁸⁰ Because of their economic interests, these publications have to portray the neighborhood in the best way possible. Furthermore, their economic goals focus the narratives toward cultural consumption over historical events.

In the same vein, German travel guides also tend to paint the neighborhood in a positive light. For those that aren't positive, they are usually neutral. The German *ADAC 2017* guide describes the Nikolaiviertel as "*eine Art stimmungsvolles Museum. [...] Heute genießen Besucher in den Gassen ein Stück Altberliner Milieu.*"¹⁸¹ The *InGuide Berlin* of the same year has an equally pleasant tone: "*schön anzusehen und hervorragend – geeignet für einen Stadtbummel.*"¹⁸² Some other German language guides like the Baedeker also make recommendations: "*Kaum ein Gebäude im Nikolaiviertel ist älter als 40 Jahre. Wer den Ursprung Berlins kennenlernen will, muss aber trotzdem hierher kommen.*"¹⁸³ In rare instances, German guides can also be more critical like the *Kiez für Kiez 2015*: "*Der Ort, an dem Berlin gegründet wurde, ist heute eine städtebauliche Skurrilität: Das Nikolaiviertel ist eine künstliche Altstadt, neu erbaut in den 80er-Jahren.*"¹⁸⁴

What seems to be an exception for German travel guides occur frequently in English and French guides; they are more critical or sarcastic. According to *Lonely Planet*, the quarter

¹⁷⁹ VisitBerlin, "Nikolaiviertel: Lebendige Stadtgeschichte".

¹⁸⁰ *Nikolaiviertel: Willkommen in der Berliner Altstadt*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Krause, *ADAC Reiseführer*, 66-67.

¹⁸² Paula Lorenz, *InGuide Berlin: Kompakt-Reiseführer* (München: Kunth Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 2017) <http://d-nb.info/1079486941/04>.

¹⁸³ Rasso Knoller, *Berlin, Potsdam*, 23 ed. (Ostfildern: Karl Baedeker, 2018).

¹⁸⁴ Julia Brodauf and Cordula Beyer, *Berlin - Kiez für Kiez: Spaziergänge durch die ganze Hauptstadt*, 4 ed., Via-Reise (Berlin: Via-Reise, 2015), 19. http://deposit.d-nb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?id=5124846&prov=M&dok_var=1&dok_ext=htm.

is home to expensive restaurants and is only worth a “quick look.”¹⁸⁵ Others describe the area as a mere reconstruction that is “not really convincing”¹⁸⁶ or “a little artificial.”¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, some travel writers consider it a place that has “not taken seed”¹⁸⁸ in the city, it as a “soulless, cut-rate Epcot vibe.”¹⁸⁹

3.2 PROMOTING NORMALITY WITH A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

The concept of continuity was built into the Nikolaiviertel in the 1980s; the concept carries over in today’s Nikolaiviertel. Selling East Berlin, capital of the GDR using the Nikolaiviertel was based both on the past and on the present. Marketing the new Berlin is no different. As we have just seen, the Nikolaiviertel’s local identity is primarily constructed from elements of the past. The neighborhood’s European identity binds the past with the present. This identity is based on similarities using European imagery. The Nikolaiviertel’s European identity created mostly by politicians and town planners is used to normalize Berlin’s image. This identity rests on two main elements: common values and urban planning.

3.2.1 NORMALIZING THE NEW BERLIN

Since the fall of the Wall, Berlin has changed dramatically. Once considered an anomaly, the city now enjoys the status of *Weltstadt* and is the capital of one of the world’s strongest economies. The city was considered by many to be an anomaly because of the Wall running through it and it being home to two opposing and competing ideologies. The eastern side was barely recognized as the capital of the GDR by West Berlin and West Germany. At the same time, the western side was largely considered a provincial town by West German politicians. Furthermore, West Berlin was also seen as an outlier because it wasn’t part of the Federal Republic. During the 1990s, reunified Berlin was still considered abnormal. Many West

¹⁸⁵ Andrea Schulte-Peevers, *Berlin*, 6 ed., Lonely Planet (Victoria: Lonely Planet, 2009), 95-101.

¹⁸⁶ Eve Gravayat, *Un Grand Week-end à Berlin* (Vanves: Hachette Tourisme, 2018).

¹⁸⁷ Jean-Paul Labourdette and Dominique Auzias, *Petit futé Berlin* (Paris: Nouvelle Édition de l’Université, 2018).

¹⁸⁸ Sullivan, *Rough Guides*, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Steves, *Rick Steves Berlin*, 44.

German politicians still viewed it as a *Provinzstadt*. This was due to Germany's capital still being Bonn.¹⁹⁰ During the new millennium, Berlin's position changed. The first step was to give Berlin its capital status back. This was no easy task. The contentious debates about the move from Bonn to Berlin, known as the *Hauptstadtdebatte*, ended in 1991 with a vote in the German Bundestag in Bonn. The decision was taken to move the government to Berlin after a tight vote; the Berlin side won by a mere 18 votes. By 1999, the federal government's move to Berlin was largely completed.¹⁹¹ The Berlin of today has regained its status as Germany's political and cultural capital. Economically, it has risen from poverty to become a city with a thriving service sector.¹⁹²

Instrumental to this was the creation of a narrative depicting the new Berlin as normal. The proponents of the capital's move saw a chance, by doing so, to normalize Berlin's image. According to them, Germany could become normal again with Berlin acting as a "normal" capital city.¹⁹³

Normalization also meant giving the city a face-lift to match its new functions. As was the case with the GDR regime and its re-interpretation of history, post-Wall Berlin underwent its own form of soul-searching. As Claire Colomb explains, "Part of the (primarily West) German political and intellectual elite endorsed a vision of historical 'justice', or historical 'normalization', based on the premise that German history was 'broken' by the National Socialist and GDR regimes."¹⁹⁴ These regimes had left their mark on the city's built environment. Thus, the city had to heal these scars by "fixing" its cityscape. In the new Berlin, this meant fixing the former East, specifically the Mitte district, the once center of the East German capital.

The normalizing process also affected city marketing. To present a favorable image of the new Berlin to tourists and investors, the city had to deal with some elements of its complicated history. For this reason, GDR imagery and its heritage were left out of official city marketing narratives (see section 4) in the 1990s. How to deal with the East German past was

¹⁹⁰ Grésillon, "Essai de psychogéographie," 46.

¹⁹¹ Bernd Stöver, *Geschichte Berlins* (München: CH Beck, 2010), 117-21.

¹⁹² Bocquet and Laborier, *Sociologie de Berlin*, 44.

¹⁹³ Florian Hertweck, *Der Berliner Architekturstreit: Architektur, Stadtbau, Geschichte und Identität in der Berliner Republik 1989 - 1999* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2010), 29-35, 103.

¹⁹⁴ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 213.

a very sensitive issue (and still is).¹⁹⁵ The absence of GDR imagery in city marketing discourses can still be seen today. This is certainly true when it comes to the information on the Nikolaiviertel contained in the brochures produced by Berlin's marketing agency VisitBerlin, as mentioned earlier. To reiterate, VisitBerlin's brief description of the Nikolaiviertel on its website and brochures never alludes to the area's GDR past. In this way, Berlin's city marketing agency can promote Berlin using the Nikolaiviertel as the city's old town rather than a relic of its socialist past.

3.2.2 BERLIN, CITY OF DIVERSITY

Normalization also meant the return of a very "normal" Berlin value: diversity. Throughout most of its existence, diversity in Berlin was assured by a steady stream of immigration. The French Huguenots, for example, made Berlin their new home following religious prosecution in France in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Migration and diversity were considered "normal" for Berlin: "*Als Stadt von internationalen Rang existiert Berlin nur Dank der Zuwanderung [...] Über lange Phasen der Berliner Geschichte war das der Normalfall.*"¹⁹⁶ Some, including Berlin's government, argue that this trend was halted by the national socialist regime of Nazi Germany and the socialist regime of the GDR. With reunification, things could take their normal course again.¹⁹⁷ Today, "*Berlin ist offen für Menschen aus aller Welt. Sie sind hier willkommen. Internationalität und Vielfalt sind eine große Chance für Berlin!*"¹⁹⁸

The diversity-narrative was reinforced in 2012 when the city celebrated its 775th anniversary. Just like the 1987 celebrations in East Berlin, the Nikolaiviertel played an important role in the festivities. For the 2012 edition, the city took the motto of *Stadt der Vielfalt* (city of diversity). The celebration was to be quite small compared to those of 1987. It was

¹⁹⁵ Häußermann and Colomb, "The New Berlin," 212.

¹⁹⁶ Sanem Kleff and Eberhard Seidel, *Stadt der Vielfalt: Das Entstehen des neuen Berlin durch Migration* (Berlin: Der Beauftragte des Senats von Berlin für Integration und Migration, 2009), 9.

¹⁹⁷ When compared with other major German cities, Berlin is far from being an exception in terms of migration. In fact, most (West) German major cities have a higher proportion of inhabitants with migratory backgrounds. Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018* – (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019), 42.

¹⁹⁸ Der Beauftragte des Senats von Berlin für Integration und Migration (Hrsg.), *Vielfalt fördern – Zusammenhalt stärken. Das Berliner Integrationskonzept*, Berlin 2007, Grußwort. Cit. in Kleff and Seidel, *Stadt der Vielfalt*, 12.

considered by the local government as a “halfway” celebration between the city’s 750th and 800th anniversaries in 2037.¹⁹⁹ It was nevertheless seen by the local government and the then-mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, as an important occasion to promote Berlin to the outside world. He explains: “*Selbstverständlich wird das 775. Stadtjubiläum auch eine besondere Rolle in der Außenwerbung Berlins im Jahr 2012 spielen.*”²⁰⁰

The few events planned that year included several exhibits focusing on the city’s founding and its migration history. For example, a giant interactive city map, the *Stadt der Vielfalt* exhibit, was installed on the then-empty grounds of the recently demolished Palast der Republik. The goal of the exhibit was to depict Berlin’s rich immigrant past by calling on visitors’ participation. Other exhibits like the *Berlin inszeniert Berlin Ausstellung* explored the city’s past birthday celebrations: the 1937 Nazi festivities and the 1987 divided jubilees. The 2012 edition culminated with the official ceremony held in the Nikolaiviertel in October.²⁰¹

The official ceremony held in the Nikolaikirche, whose guests stemmed from political, business and cultural circles,²⁰² was a great time to depict the new Berlin as a normal city and to show the world that it found its old self (from before 1933). This was done by comparing the 775th celebration with its two other birthdays and by following the narrative that both the Nazi and socialist regimes were breaks in normality, or “*Zerstörung der Vielfalt*” as Wowereit put it.²⁰³ According to the ceremony’s official program, Berlin can, for the first time, celebrate normally: “*Erstmals schaut die Stadt frei von ideologischem Zwang auf ihre Geschichte zurück. Berlin im Jahr 2012 ist eine wiedervereinigte, weltoffene und kulturell vielfältige europäische Metropole. Und das wird gefeiert!*”²⁰⁴ As mayor Wowereit explains to his guests, diversity was

¹⁹⁹ Klaus Wowereit, “Rede des Regierenden Bürgermeisters von Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, auf dem Festakt zum 775. Geburtstag Berlins am 28. Oktober 2012 in der Nikolaikirche,” (2012). <https://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/2012/pressemitteilung.54111.php>.

²⁰⁰ Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, “Plenarprotokoll. 6. Sitzung (Donnerstag, 12. Januar 2012),” (Berlin2012), 275.

²⁰¹ Senatskanzlei von Berlin, “Berichtsaufträge des Hauptausschusses aus seiner 8. Sitzung vom 21. März 2012 zum Haushaltsplan 2012/2013,” (Berlin: Senatskanzlei von Berlin, 2012), 4.

²⁰² Senatskanzlei von Berlin, “Pressmitteilung : Akkreditierungshinweis: Festakt zum Stadtjubiläum 775 Jahre Berlin,” (2012).

<https://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/2012/pressemitteilung.54097.php>.

²⁰³ Wowereit, “Rede zum 775. Geburtstag.”

²⁰⁴ “Festakt zum Stadtjubiläum 775 Jahre Berlin,” (2012): 2.

always a main feature of Berlin and the 775th anniversary is a great way to uncover this fact. He continues:

*Einer Besinnung auf die Ursprünge der Stadtgeschichte und auf die Vielfalt unserer Stadt, die Berlins Geschichte seit Jahrhunderten prägt [...] Vielfalt gehört zur DNA unserer Stadt. Und die Geschichte Berlins ist bis in unsere Tage immer wieder vom Ringen um einen angemessenen Umgang mit der Vielfalt geprägt.*²⁰⁵

The President of the Berlin's parliament, Ralf Wieland, also in attendance at the Nikolaikirche, echoed the same sentiments towards diversity in Berlin:

*Lassen wir uns bitte nicht verunsichern: Toleranz, Offenheit und ein ungebrochener Freiheitswille – das sind die hervorstechendsten Merkmale unserer Stadt. Das strahlt Berlin in die Welt hinaus. Das führt viele Menschen aus allen Richtungen und Kulturen zu uns. Und das macht Berlin so vital und so vielfältig, ja so „bunt“.*²⁰⁶

The Nikolaiviertel was more than a backdrop for speeches highlighting Berliner diversity; it was given as an historic example of a neighborhood where this value could thrive:

*die beiden Zuwanderer Moses Mendelssohn und Gotthold Ephraim Lessing im 18. Jahrhundert [...] Sie lebten im Karree zwischen Nikolaiviertel und Marienkirche, pflegten einen intensiven Austausch miteinander und wurden zu Wegbereitern der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose, die von Berlin ausging.*²⁰⁷

The celebrations and the political speeches had one goal: to portray Berlin's history on a timeline that went from *Stadt im Mittelalter* to *Stadt der Vielfalt*. With the official ceremony taking place in the Nikolaiviertel, this timeline comes full circle.²⁰⁸

Diversity, although not exclusive to Europe, can certainly be a characteristic of cities on the old continent. Cultural diversity in Europe is intimately associated with immigration.

²⁰⁵ Wowereit, "Rede zum 775. Geburtstag," 1-2.

²⁰⁶ Ralf Wieland, "Grußwort zum Festakt des 775. Jubiläums der Stadt Berlin," (Berlin: Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, 2012). <https://www.parlament-berlin.de/C1257B55002AD428/vwContentByKey/W29B6CDY961MMISDE>.

²⁰⁷ Wowereit, "Rede zum 775. Geburtstag."

²⁰⁸ Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, "775 Jahre Berliner Stadtjubiläum. In: Inhaltsprotokoll. Ausschuss für kulturelle Angelegenheiten. 2. Sitzung. 16. Januar 2012," (Berlin: Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, 2012), 7-15.

Different regions have had varying waves of immigration over different periods. Some waves are connected, for example, to certain European nations' colonial past (Pakistanis and Indians immigrating to the UK, for example). Increased mobility and freedom of movement also contributes to diversity in Europe. It is easier now, more than ever, for young people to travel to Europe to attend universities, for example. As such, European cities are "diverse places of linkages between cultures and different forms of exchanges."²⁰⁹ Official European discourse considers diversity an essential European value and part of European culture; the European Union even adopted the motto "Unity in Diversity" in 2000.²¹⁰

3.2.3 COSMOPOLITANISM

The program highlights another important element to the city's normality: cosmopolitanism (*Weltoffenheit*). Cosmopolitanism, or being open to the world, and diversity are closely related concepts; the former could not exist without the latter. In fact, an essential component of this ideology is an overall acceptance or openness to differences.²¹¹

The idea of Berlin as a cosmopolitan city is expressed in many discourses surrounding the 775th anniversary. During his speech to guests of the official ceremony, Klaus Wowereit qualifies Berlin as a "*weltoffene Metropole*". He continues by quoting the then new *Bundespräsident* Joachim Gauck, who, a few days earlier, delivered a speech marking his inaugural visit to Berlin: "*Joachim Gauck bekannte am Montag, dass es ein gutes Gefühl sei, in einer weltoffenen Hauptstadt eines offenen Landes zu sein.*"²¹² Speaking at the Nikolaikirche, the Nikolaiviertel serves as a stage upon which politicians can show how Berlin has changed in 775 years and how it has become cosmopolitan again. This is exemplified in the ceremony's program; Berlin and the Nikolaiviertel are "*die Siedlung, die heute Weltstadt ist.*"²¹³

²⁰⁹ Patrick Le Galès, *European Cities: Social Conflicts and Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). p. 144.

²¹⁰ Oriane Calligaro, "From 'European Cultural Heritage' to 'Cultural Diversity'? The Changing Core Values of European Cultural Policy," *Politique européenne* 45, no. 3 (2014): 63, 70. doi:10.3917/poeu.045.0060.

²¹¹ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, 190-91.

²¹² Wowereit, "Rede zum 775. Geburtstag."

²¹³ "Festakt zum Stadtjubiläum 775 Jahre Berlin," 4.

Cosmopolitanism, as with diversity, was normal to Berlin before the rise of national socialism in the 1930s. Berlin's rise to *Weltstadt* status started shortly after the formation of the German empire in 1871. The so-called Wilhelmine period of the late 19th century saw Berlin develop into a significant city for industry, finance and culture. This continued well into the Weimar period. The pre-World War Two Berlin was firmly established as a cosmopolitan city. This came to an end after Hitler came to power in Germany. By this point, the use of the term "*Weltstadt*" was banned from official discourse; Berlin was to be known as *Reichshauptstadt*.²¹⁴

Berlin's reputation as a *Weltstadt* continued to falter during the city's division, however only in the East. West Berlin was regaining its reputation as a cosmopolitan city, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. During this time West Berlin saw a considerable amount of foreign workers from Turkey, Greece, Spain among others immigrate under a government sponsored program. The government's immigration program was meant to solve labor shortages mostly caused by the construction of the Wall. Indeed, the Wall made it impossible for some 56,000 workers from East Berlin to reach their jobs in West Berlin overnight. On the other hand, East Berlin and the GDR was anything but cosmopolitan. East Berlin was home to some immigrants and foreign worker from other socialist states, but sparsely. In 1990, there were 180,000 immigrants in the GDR compared to 2.5 million in the FRG. Furthermore, West Berlin had almost double the number of foreigners as the whole of the GDR.²¹⁵ With the fall of the Wall, Berlin can now continue on the path it had taken before these disruptions. In 2019, Berlin counted around 758 000 foreigners accounting for around 20% of its total population.²¹⁶

3.2.4 A EUROPEAN CITY

The new Berlin is certainly a *Weltstadt* again, it is also a European metropolis, as mentioned in the official ceremony's program. Berlin's new, normal identity is strongly intertwined with the concept of the European city. Again, defining Berlin as European can be considered an attempt to cast it as normal.²¹⁷ The image of Berlin as a normal, European city is displayed by the

²¹⁴ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 47.

²¹⁵ Kleff and Seidel, *Stadt der Vielfalt*, 30.

²¹⁶ Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, *Statistischer Bericht: Einwohnerinnen und Einwohner im Land Berlin am 30. Juni 2019* (Berlin: Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2019), 4.

²¹⁷ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 145, 208-14.

Nikolaiviertel itself; the idea of the medieval *Altstadt* being intrinsically European. To make the link between the Nikolaiviertel and European identity, we need to take a look at post-Wall urban planning in Berlin.

What exactly is a European city and what does it compare to? Urban planning in cities on the old continent usually stand in opposition to American and Asian cities. There are many key elements that characterize European cities. In general, they are more compact and are made-up of mixed-use urban areas, combining residential and commercial zones. On the other hand, American cities tend to be more dispersed and divisions between urban zones are firmer, i.e. residential areas stand apart from commercial zones. Furthermore, European urban planning makes greater use of public spaces like parks and squares for social interactions. Conversely, urban life in American cities mostly occur in semi-private spaces like malls. History is also another key feature that helps us differentiate between types of cities. European cities are older and historical layers are visible in their planning. In contrast, American cities are more recent and show greater disregard for historical layers.²¹⁸

In European cities, historical layers manifest themselves in many ways. Most cities are built around clearly demarcated city centers, which still bear marks of their roman or medieval origins. Even if historical buildings have disappeared through demolition or destruction, European old towns can still be recognized by their winding roads, historical street names or ring roads, which often replaced old city walls.²¹⁹ Thus old towns are an important feature of European cities. They have even become ideals of German and European localities.²²⁰

Of course, this is a generalization. This not to say that American cities don't incorporate some of these characteristics in their town planning or vice versa. And it is not to say that some trends in European urban planning aren't inspired by other styles that don't match up perfectly with the traditional European model. In fact, many elements typical of American cities have

²¹⁸ Virag Molnar, "The Cultural Production of Locality: Reclaiming the 'European City' in Post-Wall Berlin," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 287. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00894.x.

²¹⁹ Hartmut Kaelble, "Die Besonderheiten der europäischen Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert," *Leviathan* 29, no. 2 (2001): 263-66. doi:10.1007/s11578-001-0016-8.

²²⁰ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity* (Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 283.

made their way into the European planning of the 20th century like highways, giant shopping centers, and skyscrapers.²²¹

3.2.4.1 THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT

Differences between styles were blurred during the mid-20th century with the popularization of the modernist and international style²²² (see appendix II for an overview of main architectural movements in Berlin). The destruction of the Second World War offered planners a chance to rethink European cities. Modernist planners wanted to distance themselves from the cramped cities of the 19th century. They took inspiration from the Athens Charter published by Le Corbusier in the 1930s in which he proposed that the city's functions (living, work, transport, and recreation) be kept apart.²²³ Instead of the dark and stuffy *Mietskaserne* of the Wilhemine era, they wanted to integrate natural light and air into their design. This led to the creation of satellite towns on city outskirts and large living areas separated from commercial and industrial zones; the antithesis of the traditional European city.²²⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, modernism took hold of Europe and Germany, regardless of socialist or capitalist ideology. In Berlin, modernist examples include the Hansaviertel in the West. It was completed in the 1950s and included projects from star architects like Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Oscar Niemeyer. On the Eastern side, the socialist build their model socialist city like Marzahn out of prefabricated concrete slabs or *Plattenbau*.²²⁵

As mentioned in chapter 1, disillusion with modernism followed its boom in the mid-20th century. The end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s was marked by a push against this style. The satellite towns had failed to create the intended living utopias of a new society. Thanks to modernism, European inner cities were now more car-friendly than people-friendly. The functional city ideology of modernism was crumbling. A new European vision based on

²²¹ Kaelble, "Die Besonderheiten der europäischen Stadt," 263.

²²² Hartmut Häußermann, "Die europäische Stadt," *ibid.*: 249-52. doi:10.1007/s11578-001-0015-9.

²²³ Bundesministerium für Verkehr, "Positionen zum Wiederaufbau," 306-07.

²²⁴ Kaelble, "Die Besonderheiten der europäischen Stadt," 271-73.

²²⁵ David Sanson, "Berlin," in *Histoire, promenades, anthologie et dictionnaire* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2014), 880-81, 931-32.

traditional design was created to counter modernism. It focused on the multifunctional and the inner city.²²⁶

3.2.4.2 CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE TRADITIONAL EUROPEAN MODEL

During the 1970s and 1980s in West Berlin, plans were being made to return to a European-style city exacerbated by new social pressures. The legitimacy of the modernist *tabula rasa* method was questioned by academics and experts. West Berliners themselves also started to question this approach. They considered the demolition of old buildings for the construction of new expensive ones as destroying the social fabric. This approach made affordable housing in the inner city impossible. Under these circumstances, an international building exposition was organized, the *Internationale Bauausstellung 1987* (IBA 87, International Building Exhibition) with the main goal of rehabilitating West Berlin's inner city.²²⁷

The IBA was divided into two sections: the *Neubau* and *Altbau*. Both sections were based on the same principle: greater attention should be paid to the old housing stock and historical urban fabric. This echoed what was happening in East Berlin at the same time (see chapter 1) without there being any official exchanges across the Wall. In fact, many involved with the IBA voluntarily ignored the urban transformations in the East.²²⁸

Two urban planning concepts grew out of the IBA: *Behutsame Stadterneuerung* (careful urban renewal, associated with IBA-Altbau), and *Kritische Rekonstruktion* (critical reconstruction, associated with IBA-Neubau). In general, careful urban renewal called for greater co-operation between planners, residents and small businesses while at the same time respecting the historic city layout. According to the method, demolition should be avoided when redeveloping existing historic neighborhoods.²²⁹

²²⁶ Kaelble, "Die Besonderheiten der europäischen Stadt," 273.

²²⁷ Harald Bodenschatz, *Learning from IBA - die IBA 1987 in Berlin*, ed. Harald Bodenschatz and Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2010), 10-15.

²²⁸ Denis Bocquet, "Hans Stimmann et l'urbanisme berlinois (1970-2006): un tournant conservateur de la reconstruction critique?," *Città e Storia* 5, no. 2 (2010): 471-76. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00589639>.

²²⁹ Bodenschatz, *Learning from IBA*, 15-22.

Critical reconstruction, invented by German architect Josef Paul Kleihues, was created to rehabilitate the historic city. This was to be done by respecting a neighborhood's historic layout by orientating new structures along its historic disposition. Specifically, city block construction (*Randblockbebauung*) typical of 19th century Berlin was to be conserved or restored. Rehabilitation also meant better living quality in the inner city. To achieve this, planners should incorporate greenery, parks and gardens in city planning.²³⁰ Effectively, critical reconstruction called for a return to traditional European town planning. It was meant to strengthen Berlin's European identity and turn it into a normal European city.²³¹

After the fall of the Wall, critical reconstruction made its way into Berlin's urban planning strategy. In 1999, the re-unified local government adopted planning guidelines aimed at the inner city, the *Planwerk Innenstadt*. The goal of *Planwerk* was to architecturally unify the once divided Berlin. It was to bring together both sides of Berlin with one common, normal European identity. The city's two centers, the Zoologischer Garten area in the West and Mitte in the East, were to be linked by this common framework.²³²

Critical reconstruction formed the backbone of the government's *Planwerk Innenstadt*. Many instructions stipulated by the *Planwerk* mirrored those of the IBA-1987 and the new building policies of the GDR. According to *Planwerk*: "*Bei den Planungen für die Innenstadtbereiche sollen Abrisse weitgehend vermieden werden.*"²³³ Furthermore, new developments would have to consider and incorporate the past in their design. "Critical" attention was to be paid to all layers of Berlin's history according to the new framework.²³⁴

The *Planwerk* was more than just integrating historical layers in new designs. Generally, it was created to strengthen Berlin's European identity by favoring a European design model. The European model of the *Planwerk* included the re-urbanization of the city center and the creation of mix-used areas. In fact, the *Planwerk* was conceived to undo modernist planning:

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Elke Heckner, "Berlin Remake: Building Memory and the Politics of Capital Identity," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 77, no. 4 (2002): 313. doi:10.1080/00168890209597874.

²³² Brichetti, *Paradoxie*, 179-80.

²³³ Senat von Berlin, "Amtsblatt für Berlin: Planwerk Innenstadt," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Inneres, 1999), 3131.

²³⁴ Ibid.

*Die Charta von Athen ist nicht länger das Leitbild der Entwicklung der europäischen Stadt. Vielmehr geht es heute darum, Nutzungsmischung und Nutzungsvielfalt in der Innenstadt wieder herzustellen, die Verbindung von Leben, Arbeiten und Wohnen zu stärken und vor allem sozial gemischte Strukturen der Wohnbevölkerung zu stabilisieren oder gar wieder herzustellen.*²³⁵

These elements belong, according to the Berlin government, to a “*Leitbild der europäischen Stadt*”.²³⁶ As a result, Berlin would become its normal European self by returning to planning traditions from before 1933, which some regard as the starting point of Berlin’s abnormality.²³⁷

Where does the Nikolaiviertel fit in with this push towards a European city? It is easy to see parallels between the credos of the IBA 1987, critical reconstruction and the socialist planning reform of the 1980s, under which the Nikolaiviertel was reconstructed. Indeed, the Nikolaiviertel was built under the Eastern regime’s ideology of “*komplexer Rekonstruktion*” which was analogous to the West’s critical reconstruction.²³⁸ The East German authorities had wanted that “*Altes und Neues müssen unter sinnvoller Nutzung und Ausgestaltung des Vorhandenen organisch miteinander verbunden werden*”.²³⁹ The *Planwerk* called for essentially the same thing: “*die durch Nachkriegsentwicklungen verschütteten Spuren und verlorengegangenen Bauten des historischen Stadtbildes in Verbindung mit Neubebauungen unter Berücksichtigung heutiger Ansprüche an Lebensqualität weitgehend wieder aufgenommen werden.*”²⁴⁰ Because these two visions are so similar, the reconstruction of the Nikolaiviertel is considered by some as a form of critical reconstruction. “*Dieser Stadtteil war,*” the town planner Harald Bodenschatz notes, “*könnte man mit westlichen Wörtern sagen, eine klassische kritische Rekonstruktion, denn es war keine exakte Kopie des historischen Stadtgrundrisses.*”²⁴¹ Because the Nikolaiviertel is a “critical,” historical interpretation rather

²³⁵ Ibid., 3132.

²³⁶ Ibid., 3133.

²³⁷ Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 213.

²³⁸ Bricchetti, *Paradoxie*, 170.

²³⁹ “XII. SED-Bezirksdelegiertenkonferenz der Hauptstadt: Zur weiteren Entwicklung der Hauptstadt der DDR, Berlin,” *Berliner Zeitung* 1976. Cit. in Stimmann, *Stadterneuerung in Ost-Berlin: vom “sozialistischen Neuaufbau” zur “komplexen Rekonstruktion”*: *Überlick und Materialien*, 29.

²⁴⁰ Senat von Berlin, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3131.

²⁴¹ Bodenschatz, *Learning from IBA*, 26. p.26.

than an exact replica, it fits into the IBA-Neubau's idea of critical reconstruction. As such, the Nikolaiviertel serves to portray a European image of Berlin as per the goals of *Planwerk* and critical reconstruction.

The Nikolaiviertel today embodies the essence of the European city. If one considers the European model as standing in opposition to the car-friendly, American model, then the pedestrian-only Nikolaiviertel is European. If European planning is meant to allow mixed-use spaces focused around public squares and gardens, then the Nikolaiviertel with its shops, cafés and apartments certainly fits this description.

Bodenschatz also describes the European model as one that “*orientiert sich auf eine Stadt, die ihre Geschichte in der Zukunft bewahrt.*”²⁴² Conserving the past in the future, i.e. continuity, was built into the Nikolaiviertel. Its architect, Stahn, uses the same narrative when talking about his creation. According to him, the Nikolaiviertel was to be used as “*Zeugnis humanistischer Tradition der Geschichte zu bewahren und sie in eine lebendige Beziehung zu den Aufgaben der Gegenwart zu stellen.*”²⁴³ This idea of making use of history in town planning is also the backbone of the post-Wall *Planwerk* and its critical reconstruction. The Nikolaiviertel, thus, fits well into the push to create a European identity using town planning.

Today, the Nikolaiviertel acts as a marker for visitors (and residents); it allows them to identify the neighborhood and Berlin as a European city. The capacity of the city center to be used as a beacon by its own residents and visitors (even those who will never visit the city) is typical, as Bodenschatz argues, of European cities.²⁴⁴ In contrast, identification in American cities seldom occurs in the center, often called central business districts, which are usually reserved for commercial purposes as opposed to the cultural and residential life of European city centers.²⁴⁵

To summarize, the Nikolaiviertel is used to promote reunified Berlin to potential tourists and investors. To do so, narratives focus on the city being at the same time authentic and normal. The narrative of authenticity as portrayed in travel guides and marketing brochures contains

²⁴² Bodenschatz, Engstfeld, and Seifert, *Auf der Suche*, 164.

²⁴³ Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel*, 9.

²⁴⁴ Bodenschatz, Engstfeld, and Seifert, *Auf der Suche*, 166.

²⁴⁵ Häußermann, “Die europäische Stadt,” 249.

two aspects: authentic history and authentic experiences. Differences in narratives do exist depending on the nature of the document. Authenticity is associated with the area's local identity and allows Berlin to market itself by setting itself apart through distinct, area-specific heritage.

Berlin can brand itself as a normal, European city as well using the Nikolaiviertel. The neighborhood was used to celebrate Berlin's 775th anniversary in 2012. Politicians at the ceremony portrayed the city as having found its old self after a period of abnormality which started in the 1930s and ended after reunification. Berlin's normalcy, according to politicians, includes diversity and cosmopolitanism. The city portrays itself as a European city as well using the Nikolaiviertel's morphology. The area has a traditional European form if we use a general definition of the traditional European city which includes historical layers, mixed-use developments and pedestrian-friendly zones. Considering its urban planning history, the Nikolaiviertel was built in the same context as other planning concepts of the 1980s like the critical reconstruction of West Berlin which called for a return to a European form, something post-war modernism could not offer.

4. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL: AN EAST GERMAN *ERINNERUNGSORT*

We have seen that the European city stands opposite other models like the American city. It also stands in contrast with the East German socialist city; their perceived incompatibility was made obvious during reunification. Uniting both parts of the city has been seen by some in the East as a form of western colonialization. This was said of politics, culture and urban planning. In fact, some considered the adoption of the *Planwerk* guidelines as an attack on the East German city citing the lack of East Germans in its creation and the destruction of many East Berlin landmarks. In a time when the East German built heritage seems to be disappearing, the Nikolaiviertel remains in the heart of the city as a piece of the GDR legacy. In contemporary Berlin, media and political discourse portray the Nikolaiviertel as a form of *redemptive architecture* of late East German planning culture; the neighborhood is described as a symbol for the GDR postmodernist turn. These narratives were magnified in recent years when the Nikolaiviertel was declared a listed monument. Furthermore, the Nikolaiviertel can be considered an *Erinnerungsort* for the *socialist Alltag*. This is achieved in two ways. First, the Nikolaiviertel houses many museums with exhibits on East Berlin and life in East Germany. Second, architectural elements including plaques, ornaments and the *Plattenbau* style act as a form of remembrance of everyday life in East Berlin. In a less obvious way, *socialist ideology* is conveyed by the Nikolaiviertel's architecture. These are leftovers of the Nikolaiviertel's initial role to foster East German patriotism (chapter 1).

4.1. REUNIFICATION AND PERCEIVED EFFACEMENT OF THE EAST

German reunification was considered by some East and West Germans as a form of colonialization by the West as the absorption of the GDR into the Federal Republic was made abruptly. This shock transition was difficult for some East Germans; their political system and values were quickly replaced by Western ones.²⁴⁶ Many in the East realized that the two

²⁴⁶ Neill, *Urban Planning*, 73-78.

German identities could not coexist in the new Germany; reunification meant that, officially, East German identity had to make way for the western one.²⁴⁷

Concretely, eastern institutions were reformed to fit the western model. These institutions and businesses were transformed by replacing East German bosses with West Germans often done by legal proceedings. This resulted in a lack of East German representation in high-level positions in political entities and other institutions even 30 years after reunification.²⁴⁸

East German media illustrate such a transformation. Broadcasters and newspapers were effectively taken over by the bigger West German national media outlets. The smaller, regional newspapers experienced this same fate; after reunification, most were taken over by West Germans. This led to East Germany's image and identity being tarnished by its own media. Consequently, the East German experience during reunification was now told through a western perspective.²⁴⁹ East Germans were often portrayed negatively:

*Die Ostdeutschen erschienen dabei als nicht so modern und stilsicher, nicht so souverän, flexibel und initiativreich wie die Westdeutschen. Stattdessen wurden sie als bieder, initiativlos, illiberal und staatsfixiert, als der Demokratie fernstehend, durch die Diktatur psychisch beschädigt, als zu wenig welterfahren und tendenziell fremdenfeindlich dargestellt.*²⁵⁰

Urban planning in the eastern parts of reunified Berlin was also said to have been westernized; the *Planwerk Innenstadt*'s implementation in the late 1990s was criticized by both westerners and easterners. Because of its return to a traditional European model based on a Wilhelmine image of the city (see chapter 3), many felt it ignored other periods of Berlin's history and other architectural styles, leaving some to call the plan a "neo-Prussian building

²⁴⁷ Emily Pugh, "Constructing the Capital of the Berlin Republic," in *Architecture, Politics and Identity in Divided Berlin* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 329-39. doi:10.2307/j.ctt7zwbqb.

²⁴⁸ Thomas Ahbe, "Competing Master Narratives: Geschichtspolitik and Identity Discourse in Three German Societies," in *The GDR Remembered. Representations of the East German State since 1989*, ed. Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester; Suffolk: Camden House, 2011), 231-32.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Thomas Ahbe, "Ostalgie. Ein besonderes Phänomen der ostdeutschen Transformationsgesellschaft," *Costellazioni*, no. 3 (2017): 24.

programme (sic)".²⁵¹ Some western planners saw the plan as a way of dismissing Berlin's postwar modernist heritage while some intellectuals saw it as another attempt for the West to take over the East.²⁵²

The most common critique of *Planwerk* was its lack of consideration for eastern planners and architecture. For instance, planners from the East were left out of the conception phase; many were overlooked and discredited by the West. East Berlin planners were sidelined for many reasons, one of them being that their planning methods were considered questionable; their western counterparts viewed GDR planning negatively and found it destructive.²⁵³

Ironically, many East Berliners said the same thing of the *Planwerk* and critical reconstruction; it was destructive vis-à-vis the East Berlin built environment. Specifically, modernist architecture in East Berlin was downgraded to a mere mistake in town planning. Consequently, the 1990s were marked by the dismantling of many modernist GDR buildings even those protected under *Denkmalschutz*. As such, some considered the *Planwerk* as an attempt to erase the traces of socialism in Berlin.²⁵⁴ Hardest hit was Mitte as it served as the political and cultural showpiece of the GDR. The East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, several popular restaurants like the Alextreff and the Ahornblatt and, most notably, the East German parliament, the Palast der Republik, have all disappeared from Berlin's landscape.²⁵⁵

Socialist buildings in East Berlin were not the only things destroyed during reunification, GDR heritage overall was affected. Small socialist iconography disappeared from streets without fanfare or consultation. They included plaques and emblems like the state's hammer-and-compass emblem. Some political monuments were disposed of after lengthy discussions with local governments and district administrators like the 19-meter-high Lenin monument in Friedrichshain. However, a few were left on display. The spared monuments were those

²⁵¹ Owen Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism: A History Through Buildings* (UK: Penguin Books, 2016), 343.

²⁵² Hans Stimmann, *Berlino, Berlin, 1940-1953-1989-2000-2010 : Physiognomie einer Großstadt = fisionomia di una grande città = Physiognomy of a Metropolis* (Milano: Skira, 2000), 30.

²⁵³ Simone Hain, "Struggle for the Inner City—A Plan Becomes a Declaration of War," in *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion*, ed. William J. V. Neill and Hans Uve Schwedler (England: Palgrave, 2001), 76-82. doi:10.1057/9780230524064.

²⁵⁴ Molnar, "The Cultural Production of Locality," 292-94.

²⁵⁵ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 122.

depicting ordinary workers or memorials to victims of national socialism. Some notable examples include the statue of Ernst Thälmann, an influential communist politician of the 1920s and a GDR national hero, and the statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in Mitte.²⁵⁶

Street names were also a contentious issue in the 1990s. A commission was set up to decide the fate of East Berlin's socialist street names. This led to an amendment of Berlin's *Straßengesetz* (Road Law) which called for either an *Umbenennung* (change to a new name) or a *Rückbenennung* (return to a previous name) for streets named during 1945-1989. The above-mentioned Lenin monument, for example, was on Leninplatz which was renamed in 1992 to Platz der Vereinten Nationen. Again, these changes drew ire from East Berliners. As with the westernization of institutions and town planning, East Germans considered the changes an attack from the West on East German identity.²⁵⁷

Other elements of the East German built heritage have escaped demolition. Some buildings survived the initial rush to rid the eastern half of the city of "politically contaminated" landmarks. Some of them are now part of Berlin's new image. To do so, their meaning had to be reinterpreted. The Fernsehturm, once the symbol marking East Berlin's center and designed to showcase the GDR's technological advancements, has become an icon of reunified Berlin. Others include the imposing Stalinallee (now Karl-Marx-Allee), the GDR's attempt at building a soviet-style "magistrale"²⁵⁸, which has been entered on the city's protected monuments list for its distinct architecture.²⁵⁹

4.2. REMEMBERING EAST GERMANY

4.2.1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL: REPRESENTATION OF CHANGE

In media and political discourse, the Nikolaiviertel symbolizes change in the GDR, especially in its building policies. This narrative intensified in 2016 when steps were taken to add the

²⁵⁶ Neill, *Urban Planning*, 84-89.

²⁵⁷ Dirk Verheyen, "What's in a Name? Street Name Politics and Urban Identity in Berlin," *German Politics & Society* 15, no. 3 (44) (1997): 53-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23737422>.

²⁵⁸ A "magistrale" is a big boulevard used for ceremonial purposes like military parades built in large socialist cities. Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism: A History Through Buildings*, 37-38.

²⁵⁹ Allan Cochrane, "Breaking Down the Walls of Heartache: Reflections on the Ordinary Spaces of Division and Unification in Berlin," in *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday*, ed. Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 228.

doi:10.1057/9781137316882_12.

Nikolaiviertel as an architectural ensemble²⁶⁰ on the city's list of protected monuments. The move to protect the Nikolaiviertel started after the *Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Mitte* real estate company (WBM), which owns most buildings in the area, planned to close up the Nikolaiviertel's shopping arcades with windows. This would give greater surface area for businesses. The WBM's proposal was opposed by Mitte's district government, business owners and residents alike. According to business owners, the arcades are both practical, providing shade and rain cover, and integral to the Nikolaiviertel's design.²⁶¹ For Mitte's administration, closing up the arcades would destroy the neighborhood's look and feel. For them, the Nikolaiviertel is an important part of East German design and should not be modified in any way:

*Im Vergleich zu anderen Bauten des industriellen Wohnungsbaus der DDR ist hier eine relativ starke Differenzierung in der Gestaltung durch Details und zusätzliche Elemente erkennbar. Das Gebiet soll in seinem städtebaulichen Erscheinungsbild und strukturellen Aufbau erhalten bleiben.*²⁶²

To stop the *Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Mitte*, Mitte's district parliament decided that the Nikolaiviertel should become a protected monument thus legally prohibiting any structural modifications. To do so, it needed approval from Berlin's *Landesdenkmalamt* (State Monument Authority).²⁶³ An architectural survey was to be conducted to evaluate the Nikolaiviertel's worthiness to become a protected monument stipulated under Germany's *Baugesetzbuch* (BauGB, Federal Building Code).

In November 2016, under contract from Mitte's *Abteilung Stadtentwicklung, Gesundheit, Soziales* (Department of Urban Development, Health and Social Affairs), the WERKSTADT planning group published their findings on the Nikolaiviertel. Echoing

²⁶⁰ Before this, some individual buildings like the Nikolaikirche were protected but not the neighborhood as a whole.

²⁶¹ Uwe Aulich, "Denkmalschutz in Berlin: Bürger sammeln Unterschriften für die Arkaden im Nikolaiviertel," *Berliner Zeitung* 2015. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/denkmalschutz-in-berlin-buerger-sammeln-unterschriften-fuer-die-arkaden-im-nikolaiviertel-23398480>.

²⁶² Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, "Bezirksamtsvorlage Nr. 1413. Abteilung Stadtentwicklung, Bauen, Wirtschaft und Ordnung," (Berlin2 015), 3.

²⁶³ Aulich, "Denkmalschutz."

politicians' views the report concludes that the Nikolaiviertel is a manifestation of the GDR's new approach to urban planning. The report explains:

*Die Lage des wieder entstandenen Nikolaiviertels [...] markiert durch seine Gestalt und Nutzung die Absicht der späten DDR-Gesellschaft, einen historischen Ort zurückzugewinnen und ihn gleichzeitig als attraktiven Wohnort zu definieren. Dieses Konzept ist ein Beispiel des Wandels in den Positionen zur Stadtentwicklung und zur Funktion von Stadtzentren unter gesellschaftspolitischen und materiell-technischen Bedingungen in der DDR.*²⁶⁴

In 2018 the Nikolaiviertel as an ensemble was added to Berlin's list of protected monuments. News of the Nikolaiviertel's status made the rounds of the city's local media. Their narratives were in line with those from politicians and the WERKSTADT survey: the area represents change from the GDR's prior destructive urban planning practices. This change, the *Berliner Zeitung* argued, attempted to undo past planning mistakes: "*Statt vernachlässigte oder vom Krieg zerstörte Häuser abzureißen, wurden etliche historische Bauten aus dem 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert rekonstruiert.*"²⁶⁵ This new building policy is marked by greater attention to history in urban planning, as Daniel Buchholz, member of Berlin's parliament, explains in the *Berliner Zeitung*: "*Es geht um den Erhalt der teilweise originalen Bausubstanz, aber auch das Erlebnis eines historischen Viertels.*"²⁶⁶ The Nikolaiviertel's merit as a protected monument also includes the modern techniques used by Stahn typical of the GDR: "*Das Nikolaiviertel gilt nun mal als ein Kronjuwel der realsozialistischen Plattenbaukunst, ein in Beton gegossenes Denkmal seiner Zeit, als auch in Ost-Berlin der Respekt vor der alten Architektur, dem historischen Stadtbild wieder wuchs.*"²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Planungsgruppe WERKSTADT, "Städtebauliches Gutachten zur Prüfung der Schutzwürdigkeit der städtebaulichen Eignart als Voraussetzung für den Erlass der Verordnung gem. § 172 Abs. 1 Satz 1 Nr. 1 Baugesetzbuch (i. A. Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, Abteilung Stadtentwicklung, Gesundheit, Soziales. Fachbereich Stadtplanung)," 3.

²⁶⁵ "Historische Bauten: Nikolaiviertel unter Denkmalschutz gestellt," *Berliner Zeitung* 2018. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/historische-bauten-nikolaiviertel-unter-denkmalschutz-gestellt-29515560>.

²⁶⁶ Christian Gehrke, "Die Wiege Berlins: Senat stellt Nikolaiviertel unter Denkmalschutz," *ibid.* <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/die-wiege-berlins-senat-stellt-nikolaiviertel-unter-denkmalschutz-29459900>.

²⁶⁷ Andreas Conrad, "Das Nikolaiviertel kommt unter Dekmalschutz," *Der Tagesspiegel* 2018. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/sehnsucht-nach-alt-berlin-das-nikolaiviertel-kommt-unter-denkmalschutz/20829880.html>.

4.2.2. REMEMBERING THE ALLTAG

4.2.2.1. MUSEUMS

In addition to being a monument to the East German architectural turn, the Nikolaiviertel is also used to commemorate the everyday life (*Alltag*) of East Germans. This is done through the area's many museums covering various themes. One can visit the Zille Museum and discover the life of the famous German illustrator or visit the Hanf Museum and learn everything about the cannabis plant. Others, operated by the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin (Stadtmuseum Berlin Foundation), focuses more on "Berlin culture and history, ranging from pre- and early to contemporary history."²⁶⁸ Its museums in the Nikolaiviertel include the Knoblauchhaus, the Nikolaikirche and the Ephraim-Palais. It also operates the Märkisches Museum situated south-east of the Nikolaiviertel in Berlin's Luisenstadt which displays permanent exhibits on the city's history since its founding.

The Ephraim-Palais Museum is particularly important for East German remembrance as it hosts many temporary exhibits on the ex-socialist state. In 2019, the Stadtmuseum Berlin and the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam (Center for Contemporary History Potsdam, ZZF) launched their exhibition *Ost-Berlin: Die halbe Hauptstadt* (East Berlin: Half the Capital). It tells the story of ordinary East Berliners and their everyday life. Visitors can immerse themselves in the life, work, leisure time and shopping habits of East Berliners. The collection also shows how East Berlin was used by the regime as a societal stage especially during the 750th jubilee. According to the curators, *Ost-Berlin* offers a look into the many, and often contradictory, realities of life in East Berlin. Their goal was to depict the East German *Alltag* objectively: "The exhibition looks past both the nostalgia of East Germans and the aloof distance of West Germans".²⁶⁹

To tell this story, the exhibition makes use of different relics. The Stadtmuseum's collection mixes everyday objects, printed documents, photographs, posters, film and audio recordings. Some original objects include a green paybox (*Zahlbox*) found in East Berlin trams accompanied by a film projection of a tram journey to the city center. Also on display are

²⁶⁸ Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, "Homepage," <https://www.en.stadtmuseum.de>.

²⁶⁹ Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, "Ost-Berlin. Die halbe Hauptstadt. About the Exhibition," <https://ost.berlin/exhibition>.

signboards used in the Palast der Republik guiding visitors to the *Imbiss* or the *Großer Saal* and a photo panorama of the *Protokollstrecke* consisting of original pictures taken along Greifswalder Straße depicting the route taken by top politicians traveling from their homes in Wandlitz to their offices in the city center. To strengthen the theme of the *Alltag* and to make the collection more intimate, the exhibit includes a collection called “*Mein Ost-Berlin*”. It showcases personal items sent by East Berliners thus incorporating personal stories to the collection. Members of the public and Stadtmuseum staff are invited to bring a personal object that, for them, holds memories of East Berlin. In this way, the East Berlin *Alltag* is recounted through curated objects, personal testimonies and real experiences.²⁷⁰

In parallel to the exhibition, the Stadtmuseum has organized a comprehensive program to further explore life in East Berlin (*Begleitprogramm*). It includes activities like guided tours through eastern parts of the city like the Siedlung Ernst-Thälmann-Park. They also include expert workshops and panel discussions on subjects like East German architecture or the Punk-Scene in East Berlin. Visitors are also invited to guided tours of the Nikolaiviertel and discussions exploring the neighborhood’s role as a monument to the GDR.²⁷¹

The exhibition puts a strong focus on the *Alltag* and sets aside other topics that one would typically find in similar museums like the repression by the SED apparatus. The museum’s approach in commemorating the GDR *Alltag* calls upon a way of remembrance seldom used Berlin’s official memorial landscape: the memory of adaptability (*Arrangementgedächtnis*). This form of remembrance, as defined by historian Martin Sabrow, centers on the everyday lives of those who lived in East Germany. It considers the normal aspects of life within the SED apparatus. It also recalls achievements made by its populace under difficult circumstances. In other words, it is the memory of normality in a not so normal society and how East Germans have adapted and copped with the socialist regime.²⁷²

According to Sabrow, there are two other modes of GDR-remembrance in contemporary Germany: the memory of progress (*Fortschrittsgedächtnis*) and the memory of the dictatorship (*Diktaturgedächtnis*). The former is less popular and pins the two German states head to head.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, *Begleitprogramm: Berlin. Die halbe Hauptstadt* (Berlin: Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, 2019).

²⁷² Martin Sabrow, “Die DDR erinnern,” in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (München: C. H. Beck, 2009), 16-20.

Its adherents, ex-GDR elites and some left-wing activists, not only justify the socialist past and trivialize harsher aspects of the regime but also make moral judgments on contemporary issues based on East German ideologies, thus attempting to legitimize the GDR. On the other hand, *Diktaturgedächtnis* focuses on the victims and the oppressors of the SED regime. It is the most prevalent form of public memory in Berlin and is preferred by German politicians.²⁷³

4.2.2.2 ARCHITECTURE

Some aspects of the Nikolaiviertel's architecture like the prefabricated style (*Plattenbau*) can also be used as a form of East German *Alltag* remembrance, if in a more inconspicuous way than museum exhibitions. Alongside its reconstructed historical buildings, the Nikolaiviertel contains 800 apartments for some 2000 residents almost all built using prefabricated concrete slabs typical of post-war modernism in Germany.²⁷⁴ Today, prefab slab construction has become part of the East German heritage and part of the *Ostalgie* phenomenon.²⁷⁵

The *Plattenbau* style was part of everyday life in East Germany and in East Berlin due to its wide use by the GDR regime. The SED preferred this style for economic and practical reasons. Prefabricated slabs were a solution to the economic and housing crisis of the mid-1970s; the regime could build new apartments with fewer materials and fewer workers both of which were scarce. Many East Germans preferred moving into the *Plattenbau* apartments of new housing areas (*Neubaugebiete*) of the city's outer districts as they were more modern compared to the neglected *Altbauggebiete* of the inner cities.²⁷⁶

The *Plattenbauten* are now part of the East German culture of remembrance even if they were not always remembered fondly back then. With their rise in popularity in the 1960s, they were considered symbols of modernity and advancement. This changed in the mid-1970s and

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 11-12.

²⁷⁵ Adelheid Von Saldern, "Die Platte," in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (München: C. H. Beck, 2009), 310.

²⁷⁶ As mentioned earlier, the inner-city *Altbauggebiete* were eventually modernized in the late 1970s and integrated in Honecker's new housing plan (*Wohnungsbauprogramm*). Pugh, "Collapsing borders," 288-92.

1980s when politicians and East Germans began paying more attention to historical parts of their cities; at this point, the prefab buildings were considered gray and boring.²⁷⁷

Today, the *Plattenbauten* are again praised, although not by all. The style's negative image of the 1980s carried over to today. However, the growing negativity surrounding these giant gray symbols of monotony, scarcity and political intrusion, created counter-reactions mostly from their residents. For them, they represented a place away from the regime's politics; they were places of respite from the SED apparatus. Nostalgically, they also symbolized an industrial society, social equality and an ordered *Wohnalltag* (everyday living).²⁷⁸

Wanderers of the Nikolaiviertel might come across an unassuming plaque on one of its prefabricated apartment complex, the *Goldene Hausnummer* (golden house number). It bears testimony to the everyday life in the *Plattenbauten*. The plate is adorned with the *Berliner Bär* and a house number; it was given out by the regime once a year during a ceremony. The winning *Hausgemeinschaft* (housing community) was given this honor for exceptional care of their apartments and gardens. Moreover, winners were chosen because they exemplified the ideals of the socialist household. Additionally, winners also needed to have a successful and active communal life within the block, or "*geistig-kulturell*" living.²⁷⁹ Cooperation between tenants of the *Plattenbauten* was essential for these awards. Famous East German handball player Peter Kretzschmar recalls in the book *Anders als erwartet*, published by his son Stefan Kretzschmar, how colorful life was in the prefab blocks and how they managed to win a *Goldene Hausnummer*. For him living in a *Plattenbau* was synonymous with living in a close-knit community. Block residents would get together once a month for a *Hausfest*. He remembers the *Goldene Hausnummer* as being an incentive in the creation of such a harmonious communal life.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Von Saldern, "Die Platte," 301-08.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 310-11.

²⁷⁹ Julia Günther and Frank Nestmann, "Quo vadis, Hausgemeinschaft? Zum Wandel nachbarschaftlicher Beziehungen in den östlichen Bundesländern," *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie (GIO)* 31, no. 3 (2000): 324-25. doi:10.1007/s11612-000-0028-x.

²⁸⁰ Peter Kretzschmar, "Kindheit in der Straßen der Besten," in *Anders als erwartet*, ed. Stefan Kretzschmar, Sandra Beckedahl, and Sven Beckedahl (München: Knauer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009), 28-29.

The Nikolaiviertel as a *Plattenbau* neighborhood, albeit a different looking one considering its historic-looking style, and all other *Plattenbauten* in the context of East German collective memory is also part of *Arrangementgedächtnis*. As monuments to the *Alltag*, they represent the attempts made by its local population to lead normal lives whilst making the best out of the SED regime. Again, this narrative stands opposed to the most popular, official discourses in the collective memory of the GDR, that of repression by the SED dictatorship.²⁸¹

4.2.3. REMNANTS OF SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY

4.2.3.1. THIEME'S FRIEZE

The regime's socialist ideologies were also an integral part of East Germans' everyday life experiences. The interplay between *Alltag* and ideology is exemplified by some of the Nikolaiviertel's decorative elements like the frieze created by sculptor Gerhard Thieme. It is a passive form of remembrance conveying SED ideologies; its symbolism is not obvious to the layperson. For example, a detailed description of the frieze and its meaning is not given by travel guides or the Nikolaiviertel's own *historischer Pfad*.²⁸²

The frieze (see Appendix III and V) sits on the arcades along Poststraße and continues around the corner on Rathausstraße; it depicts Berlin's history from the middle ages to 1987. The concrete relief is made of 12 sections, the first of which starts near the Gerichtslaube and depicts the twin cities, Berlin and Cölln²⁸³ in the 13th and 14th centuries as important centers for trade. The next few sections recount events from the 15th to the 19th century including the Thirty Years' War, the arrival of the French Huguenots and the revolution of 1848/49. Historical figures are also depicted: German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Prussian star architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, physician and anthropologist Rudolf Virchow and composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Ahbe, "Master Narratives," 239-40.

²⁸² The *historischer Pfad*, or historic trail, is a series of 19 information plaques placed around the neighborhood. It was created by the Nikolaiviertel e.V. and explains the history of the Nikolaiviertel one station at a time.

²⁸³ Berlin and Cölln were independent settlements on either side of the river Spree. Cölln was situated on the Spreeinsel (Spree Island) and Berlin was on the eastern bank of the island.

²⁸⁴ Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel*, 50-51.

The events of the 20th century represent the crux of the frieze; Thieme has devoted six of the 12 panels to this era. Its importance was further accentuated by the installation of an inconspicuous plaque underneath the artwork, hidden from view. It is a small-scale replica of the 6-panel relief including a description of the events portrayed.

This section depicts East Berlin's transformation into the capital of the GDR. It encompasses historical events from 1919 to 1987. The main themes are the rise of socialism, the atrocities of fascism and the achievements of the socialist people of East Berlin. The first panel shows the foundation of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and Ernst Thälmann, chairman of the KPD, giving a speech in front of a hammer and sickle. A depiction of *Blutmai* follows, showing the events that led to a dozen communists being killed during 1st – 3rd Mai 1929 demonstrations in the streets of Weimar Berlin.

The second panel (1933-1945) shows the rise and demise of fascism. Included are the Reichstag fire, the Nazi book burning of 1933 and the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. The SED's anti-fascist rhetoric is also an integral part of the artwork: "*Tod den Nazis*" and "*Nieder mit der Nazi-Tyranei*" is inscribed on the relief.

The next section of the relief praises the implementation of socialism in East Germany by illustrating soviet soldiers handing bread to the starving of the war-torn city, the union of the KPD and SPD to form the SED and the founding of East Germany symbolized by the unraveling of the new East German flag. The artwork continues with the accomplishments of East Berliners in the fields of culture, sport and technology. The frieze shows the construction of Schönefeld airport and Alexanderplatz, and workers assembling a *Plattenbau* during the construction of Marzahn. We also see the East Germans at the 1968 Mexico Olympics and the communist youth attending the 1973 *X. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten* (World Festival of Youth and Students) in East Berlin. The last panel shows East Berliners gathering around a wreath inscribed with the dates "1237-1987" standing in front of a rebuilt East Berlin with Nikolaikirche, Fernsehturm and Berliner Dom marking the city's 750th jubilee.

Thieme's selection of events and use of symbolism makes the 12-panel long frieze and the Nikolaiviertel a bearer of the SED ideology in today's Berlin. For the Nikolaiviertel's architect, Günter Stahn, the relief was meant to symbolize the idea of progress and the hope

for a better, socialist future.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, the events portrayed and their ordering correspond with the East regime's interpretation of history, that is, a Marxist-Leninist linear historiography marked by "predetermined progress driven by the struggle of the classes under different modes of production."²⁸⁶ The relief reads like a sequence of events showing the people overcoming absolutism, feudalism and fascism (which was a direct result of capitalism, according to socialist interpretations) which then led to the creation of East Germany. It is important to note the importance of East Berlin's historiography for the SED as it is used as a stand-in for the entire history of the GDR.²⁸⁷ Moreover, the frieze is an artistic rendition of the SED's reinterpretation of history that started in the mid-1970s (see chapter 1), some *Erbe* elements, like the construction of the Stadtschloss²⁸⁸, and *Tradition* aspects of the GDR historiography both make an appearance in the carefully selected scenes. The relief omits certain stains on East Berlin's history, like, ironically, the destruction of the royal palace to make way for the Palast der Republik, or the construction of the Wall.²⁸⁹ All this, however, might be lost on tourists and visitors who wander the Nikolaiviertel and whose gaze from below fail to notice all the symbolism of Thieme's work.

4.2.3.2. COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

Other features like a handful of commemorative plaques also inconspicuously hint at the SED ideology, especially the antifascist narrative, the East German-Soviet friendship discourse and the anti-West sentiments which were all part of its official identity. These bronze plaques can be found on or around the Nikolaiviertel's most famous buildings: the Nikolaikirche, the Ephraim-Palais, the Gerichtslaube, the Knoblauchhaus and the *Zum Nußbaum* restaurant. Each plaque gives a brief historical overview of the buildings using wording typical of the SED regime. Again, as with the frieze, the choice of events included or excluded from the plaques corresponds to the official discourses of the East German government.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 15.

²⁸⁷ Scholz, "Architektur und Geschichtspolitik," 131.

²⁸⁸ The Stadtschloss is described as the Renaissanceschloss by Stahn and Berlin's *Magistrat* perhaps to distance themselves from its autocratic function and to focus solely on its architectural form. See Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel*, 51., Eckstein et al., *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt Berlin*, 15.

²⁸⁹ Scholz, "Architektur und Geschichtspolitik," 131.

The SED's anti-fascist ideology manifests itself on a couple of plaques primarily through its choice of words and the events it commemorates. The restaurant *Zum Nußbaum* has a plaque on its outside wall which describes the Second World War as a fascist one: “*Bis zur Zerstörung im faschistischen Weltkrieg 1943 älteste Gaststätte Berlins.*” This terminology is typical of the regime and goes back to its *Gründungsmythos* which sees the German socialist state born out of antifascist traditions. As part of the myth, the regime downplayed the role of East Germany in World War Two. Rather, it considered itself a victim of fascism and liberators along with soviet soldiers. Anti-fascism is a term widely used by the East German government in order to legitimize not only itself as a state, but also some of its policies like the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In state parlance, it was officially designated the *antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (anti-fascist protection barrier).²⁹⁰

Bürgertum (bourgeoisie) is another term found on plaques that references the regime's ideology and its *Gründungsmythos*. According to the East German government, bourgeois society played an important role in the Nikolaiviertel. As such, many buildings are representative of the bourgeois lifestyle. The Gerichtslaube, for example, is described by its plaque as a “*Zeugnis frühbürgerlicher Rechtsprechung*”. Another example includes the reconstructed home of the Knoblauch family, the Knoblauchhaus. The 18th-century house is “*Zeugnis bürgerlicher Wohnkultur*”. Evoking the bourgeoisie is typical of SED and socialist ideology in general. Class distinction is the core tenant of socialism, as such, the SED has always compared the bourgeoisie with the working class.²⁹¹ In the SED's reinterpretation of history, the bourgeois class played an important role in uniting the German people, which would eventually lead to the creation of an “*Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat*”. The SED mentions, for example, the rise of the bourgeois power in a feudal society during the middle ages or the humanist traditions of the bourgeoisie as important steps in the formation of the East German state.²⁹² Again, the bourgeoisie is an essential step towards socialism according to a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history. In its sequential interpretation, “no formation could appear

²⁹⁰ Nothnagle, “Myth-Building,” 100.

²⁹¹ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 141.

²⁹² Eckstein et al., *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt Berlin*, 9.

before the preceding one had developed to its inevitable final state.”²⁹³ In this view, the bourgeoisie was an essential precursor to socialism.²⁹⁴

Another element of the SED’s founding myth that can be seen around the neighborhood is the German-Soviet friendship. An example of this can be seen in front of the Knoblauchhaus. Here, the regime has put effort into selecting and omitting events to create a favorable image of the Soviet Union. Of importance is the regime’s representation of architect Eduard Knoblauch: “*Eduard Knoblauch, Architekt für den Bau der Russischen Botschaft und der jüdischen Synagoge, begründete den Berliner Architektenverein*”. The regime’s choice of achievements and the order in which they appear is made to depict the close ties between the Soviet Union and Germany. The SED decided to celebrate Eduard Knoblauch primarily as the architect of the Russian embassy, although he had in fact designed an early building in the 1840s, and less of the Jewish Synagogue. This implies certain importance of the former. This order is also present in other documents like the teacher’s manual published by the East Berlin Magistrate (chapter 1): “*Erbauer der russischen Botschaft Unter den Linden, der Synagoge in der Oranienburger Straße, des Etablissements Kroll vor dem Brandenburger Tor*”.²⁹⁵

The embassy in question was renovated by Knoblauch in the 1840s after the palace that stood here was purchased by Tsar Nicholas I. The embassy disappeared from Berlin’s cityscape in 1944 when it was destroyed during the war. Its replacement, which was under construction two years before East Germany’s creation,²⁹⁶ was completed in 1953. His role as “architect of the Russian embassy” seemed important for the SED regime, however, today it has been largely forgotten. There is no mention of this in his own exhibit in the Knoblauchhaus. The placards installed by the Stadtmuseum describe the architect’s work as consisting of the design of the Neue Synagoge and his designs for the bourgeois class and nobles of Prussia’s capital; no mention of the Russian embassy.²⁹⁷ Even the *historischer Pfad*’s panel near the

²⁹³ Sirkka Ahonen, “A Transformation of History: The Official Representations of History in East Germany and Estonia, 1986-1991,” *Culture & Psychology* 3, no. 1 (1997): 45.

doi:10.1177/1354067x9700300103.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Eckstein et al., *Das Nikolaiviertel unserer Hauptstadt Berlin*, 18.

²⁹⁶ Paul Stangl, *Risen from Ruins: The Cultural Politics of Rebuilding East Berlin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 109.

²⁹⁷ Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, “Wovon lebten die Knoblauchs? Seidenhändler, Bierbrauer und Architekten/Entrée (sic)/Eduard Knoblauch (1801–1865). Permanent Exhibition, Knoblauchhaus Museum.”

Knoblauchhaus only describes him as “*der Planer der Neuen Synagoge in der Oranienburger Straße, der Krolloper sowie Mitbegründer des Berliner Architektenvereins.*”

The regime’s decision of remembering Knoblauch first as an architect of a destroyed building before all else might sound banal. However, the ordering and wording were well thought out. The SED used carefully selected terminology in its official discourses to create a bipolar world (socialism vs. capitalism, reactionary vs. progressive, etc.) to disseminate its ideologies.²⁹⁸ In this sense, the regime’s word ordering signals its intentions to link Knoblauch with Russia as an expression of friendship with the Soviets.

The Soviet-friendship narrative was in part used to explain the Soviet occupation of East Germany, it also contributed to anti-West sentiments which can also be seen around the neighborhood.²⁹⁹ The Nikolaiviertel’s center-piece, the Nikolaikirche, suffered from, according to the inscription, “*Zerstörung durch angloamerikanische Bomber*”. This plaque situated next to the church’s front door is willfully inaccurate and distorts the facts. Indeed, the Nikolaikirche’s roof was destroyed by American bombs, but the church’s inside was destroyed by Soviet artillery; an inconvenient fact left out by the SED regime.³⁰⁰

4.3. NORMALIZATION AND REMEMBRANCE

These aspects of East German identity found in and around the Nikolaiviertel, i.e. *change*, the *Alltag* and *socialist ideologies*, serve two contemporary functions: normalization and remembrance. As we have seen in the previous section, normalizing Berlin’s image is a task primarily undertaken by politicians. The same can be said of the political and public discourses relative to the Nikolaiviertel’s new listed status; the image of the GDR is normalized by describing the neighborhood as form of urban redemption. The discourse depicts East Germany (or at least its urban development) as a country that lost its way by destroying its built heritage with the construction of dreary prefab high rises, or “*Betontristesse*” as one journalist puts it.³⁰¹ The regime found its way again by building the Nikolaiviertel and other

²⁹⁸ Wolfgang Bergsdorf, “Politischer Sprachgebrauch und totalitäre Herrschaft,” *German Studies Review* 17 (1994): 30-35. www.jstor.org/stable/40574994.

²⁹⁹ Nothnagle, “Myth-Building,” 103.

³⁰⁰ Scholz, “Architektur und Geschichtspolitik,” 134.

³⁰¹ Rada, “Berlins Disneyland lebt.”

neo-historicist projects, thus giving East Berliners' an attractive historic core which was hitherto missing. What's more, the memory of East Berlin is normalized by remembering the *normal* aspects of life in the GDR. This is achieved, as we have seen, by exhibitions in the quarter's many museums.

Remembrance of the *Alltag* in East Berlin also serves to expose aspects of East Germany's history often neglected by official and popular discourse. The everyday life in East Berlin and in the GDR, especially the East Germans' private life at home, is a subject ignored in GDR historiography. Privacy was an important part of life in the GDR considering the omnipresence of state surveillance. For this reason, privacy and the *Alltag* in East Germany is often seen as an oxymoron and not studied per se. However, private life in the *Platte* was part of the everyday life of East Germans and was recognized as such by the state. This is particularly true in the later years of the regime when the SED promised its citizens an improved material life.³⁰²

Even if private life was part of the everyday, the party's ideology was never far away; the Nikolaiviertel allows its visitors to see the efforts of the regime to imbue East German society with its philosophies. The Nikolaiviertel and its socialist-forward ornamentations and plaques serve as a reminder at the attempts made by the regime to convey the successes of the German socialist state to its citizens. Today however, these relics and their meanings have largely been forgotten or are gazed at with indifference.³⁰³

The Nikolaiviertel, in sum, continues to be used as an East German *Erinnerungsort* in a city where traces of the GDR have been actively removed. In contemporary Berlin, the East German identity as described by politicians, journalists and museum curators includes aspects of *change*, the *Alltag*, and *socialist ideology*. The narrative of change has been particularly strong during the process of enlisting the Nikolaiviertel as a protected monument. Change is reflected in its design which sets aside the perceived destructiveness of East German modernism for a return to urban planning that incorporates the historic urban fabric. This narrative depicts the Nikolaiviertel as a form of redemptive architecture or a correction of past

³⁰² Paul Betts, "Alltag und Privatheit," in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (München: C. H. Beck, 2009), 314-25.

³⁰³ Martin Sabrow, "Sozialismus," *ibid.*, 204.

mistakes in urban planning. The area's many museums are also instrumental in remembering East Germany, especially the state-owned Ephraim-Palais. In a recent temporary exhibition, memories of East Berlin have been presented to visitors using the everyday experiences of its citizens thus presenting a normal image of the city. In a more covert manner, the architecture of the Nikolaiviertel can also be seen as a form of *Alltag*-remembrance. This is achieved by the *Plattenbauten*' use as objects of memory for some East Germans. In an even more low-key fashion, some of the quarter's decorative features, including a multi-paneled frieze and commemorative plaques, serve as reminders of the SED's attempts to use the city as a means to transmit its ideology. Today, the meaning behind these decorative elements have largely fallen into obscurity.

5. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL AS A MODEL FOR BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE

This chapter situates the Nikolaiviertel in its specific geographical context, its place in Berlin's historic Mitte. In an ever-changing urban landscape, the Nikolaiviertel is a fixture of the historic core; currently, it is the only area not subject to major redesigns (see appendix IV). All areas surrounding the Nikolaiviertel find themselves in various planning stages; they include public and expert consultations, design, planning and implementation. As such, the Nikolaiviertel can (and is, in some cases) be used as a model for the future development of the city's new historic Mitte. It does so on a morphological (design) and abstract level (identity). This chapter explores the current state of Berlin's historic center and the ongoing debate on its redesign. Additionally, we will compare the Nikolaiviertel's form and function to the demands made by politicians, experts, and residents. We will finally study the quarter's use or possible use as a planning model for the various projects in its vicinity.

5.1. STATE OF BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE

5.1.1. DESTRUCTION

Many experts and politicians believe that Berlin's historic center finds itself in a poor state; it is considered destroyed and fragmented. This is in part due to its history which is marked by several phases of destruction. Hans Stimmann, Berlin's *Senatsbaudirektor* (Senate Building Director, from 1991–1996 and 1999–2006) and *Staatssekretär für Planung* (State Secretary for Planning, from 1996–1999) and creator of the *Planwerk Innenstadt*, distinguishes three phases of destruction: destruction during the war, destruction during the division and destruction by new urban developments in the years following reunification. However, Stimmann suggests that Mitte's dire state has more to do with town planning than by war; this led him to quote the German author Ernst Jünger: “Our cities have been more severely damaged by architects than by bombs. The worst a bomb can do is damage a building's substance and raze it to the ground, but the architect destroys its essence from the ground upwards.”³⁰⁴ The War, however, brought

³⁰⁴Ernst Jünger, *Autor und Autorschaft* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984). Cit. in: Stimmann, *Berlino, Berlin, 1940-1953-1989-2000-2010 : Physiognomie einer Großstadt = fisionomia di una grande città = Physiognomy of a Metropolis*, 51.

massive destruction to the historic Mitte: 74% of Alt-Berlin's (excluding Alt-Cölln) buildings were destroyed. In 1990, Only 9% of the prewar buildings remained.³⁰⁵

The historic core was not spared by the SED regime in the years following the War. East German urban planning of the pre-postmodernist turn era disregarded the historic center. In the 1950s, the regime was determined to transform Berlin into a modern, socialist capital based on the monumentalism style of Moscow.³⁰⁶ This meant building wide boulevards for parades at the expense of the inherited historic urban fabric. By the 1960s, the regime (and most modernist planners around the world) considered the car the future, and the center of Berlin was redesigned to accommodate that future. As a result, Mitte was paved over with big, multilane thoroughfares; the “*autogerechte*” city (car-oriented city) was born.³⁰⁷

According to critics, urban planning projects in the heyday of reunification also contributed to Mitte's destruction. This included, as mentioned earlier, the demolition of many East German modernist buildings. Additionally, the dissolution of East Germany led to a planning vacuum in the city. East German plans for the city were abandoned without any replacement leading to a building frenzy propelled by private investment. Consequently, Mitte had no general concept thus leaving the center fragmented.³⁰⁸ As a response, the *Planwerk Innenstadt* was adopted in 1999 by the Berlin Senate³⁰⁹ to quell these destructive, isolated projects.

³⁰⁵ Felix Escher, *Die Mitte Berlins: Geschichte einer Doppelstadt* (Berlin: Elsengold Verlag, 2017), 157-58.

³⁰⁶ In 1950, the East German government adopted the “*Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaus*” (Sixteen Principles of Urban Design) as a planning model for the city. It was adopted after a delegation of East German planners visited Moscow to familiarize themselves with soviet urban design. See Karin Lenhart, *Berliner Metropoly: Stadtentwicklungspolitik im Berliner Bezirk Mitte nach der Wende* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 2001), 48-51.

³⁰⁷ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 96-97.

³⁰⁸ Bodenschatz, Engstfeld, and Seifert, *Auf der Suche*, 5.

³⁰⁹ Berlin has three levels of local government: The *Abgeordnetenhaus* (House of Representatives) is the elected legislative branch which elects the *Regierender Bürgermeister* (Governing Mayor). The Governing Mayor is the head of Berlin's executive branch, the Senate, which is composed of different ministries (*Senatsverwaltungen*) each headed by a senator. The third level of government consists of the city's 12 boroughs. Each borough is made up of a council (*Bezirksamt*) elected by an assembly (*Bezirksverordnetenversammlung*). Borough governments are not independent entities but are subordinate to the Senate. Gisa Weszkalnys, *Berlin, Alexanderplatz: Transforming Place in a Unified Germany* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 26.

5.1.2. FINDING SOLUTIONS: PLANWERK INNENSTADT AND PLANWERK INNERE STADT

However, the *Planwerk Innenstadt* was not without its problems. The *Planwerk* faced much criticism after its implementation. To reiterate, the *Planwerk* was criticized mostly from the East (see chapter 4). They lamented the lack of East German planners in devising the guidelines; they saw this as another form of colonialization from the West during reunification. Moreover, the creation of the masterplan was considered undemocratic; most experts, specialists and monument conservators were excluded from the process. This led critics including borough politicians feeling as though the *Planwerk* was imposed on them. What's more, they considered that the guidelines didn't address all the complicated issues surrounding urban planning in Berlin's historic core like growing gentrification and ensuing displacement of the lower classes.³¹⁰ According to them, the *Planwerk* simplified these issues into a simple matter of dealing with the historic urban form.³¹¹

Nearly a decade after its implementation, the master plan was revised and modernized; the new plan, the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* was adopted in 2011. The modifications took into account the criticism faced by the original *Planwerk* by expanding its geographical scope, the old *Planwerk* applied only to the historic center, City-West and the former "death-strip". With the new plan, most of the city within the boundaries of the ring were included.³¹² Furthermore, dialogue and participation were now to be integral to the plan: "*Vorgesehen ist, hierüber eine offene Diskussion mit der Stadtöffentlichkeit zu führen und dazu Kommunikationsstrukturen zu nutzen, die Beteiligung und Einfluss der Zivilgesellschaft frühzeitig sichern.*"³¹³ Additionally, the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* was created to be more flexible than its predecessor. For instance, critical reconstruction, the backbone of the initial *Planwerk*, is less prominent in the new plan. Instead of favoring a unified planning strategy, the 2011 version acknowledges that differences

³¹⁰ Bocquet, "Hans Stimmann et l'urbanisme berlinois (1970-2006): un tournant conservateur de la reconstruction critique?," 479.

³¹¹ Aljoscha Hofmann et al., "Beyond Planwerk Innenstadt," in *Berlin plant: Plädoyer für ein Planwerk Innenstadt Berlin 2.0*, ed. Harald Bodenschatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 226-27.

³¹² Berlin's ring is formed by the circular *Ringbahn*, a 37,5 km S-Bahn separating the inner city from its periphery. Sanson, "Berlin," 990-91.

³¹³ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803)," 2.

exist between each area of the city. The old *Planwerk* was conceived around a guiding image of the European city, a “*Leitbild der europäischen Stadt*.”³¹⁴ Conversely, the *Planwerk Innerer Stadt* opposed such a global planning model: “*Eine Beschränkung auf eine Leitidee greift vor dem Hintergrund des künftigen Betrachtungsraums des Planwerks Innere Stadt zu kurz*.”³¹⁵ Essentially, city planning was to be influenced by each sector’s specificities and potentialities. In this sense, the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* was designed as a monitoring instrument rather than a rigid planning strategy.³¹⁶

Even though the new *Planwerk* is a modified version of the old one, its principles were left intact; the goals of the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* were directly taken from its predecessor. They include densifying the inner city and making it a better place for living and working. It also foresees improvements for public spaces and green areas. Furthermore, the plan prescribes greater access to public transportation while reorganizing major thoroughfares cutting through the area which aren’t beneficial for the inner city in its current configuration. It also stipulates a reformulation of the city’s morphology to create an inner city that promotes identification.³¹⁷

If the above-mentioned goals sound vague, the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* is more detailed when it comes to specific areas like the historic Mitte. The plan recognizes the urban diversity of the historic core. In this respect, each sector like the modern Alexanderplatz or the neoclassical Museuminsel must consider planning strategies accordingly. Considering the historical significance of the area, most strategies in the plan include incorporating the past in some form or another. Depending on the zone, the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* suggests strategies like staging traces of the past, displaying archeological finds or critical reconstruction. According to the guidelines, old and new should stand together in an authentic way.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Senat von Berlin, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3133.

³¹⁵ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, “Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803),” 11.

³¹⁶ Regula Lüscher, “Vom Planwerk Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt - Weiterentwicklung 2010,” in *Berlin plant: Plädoyer für ein Planwerk Innenstadt Berlin 2.0*, ed. Harald Bodenschatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 246.

³¹⁷ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, “Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803),” 2.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

5.1.3. CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND PLANNING

Dialogue and participation play an important role in the new *Planwerk*. Before being adopted in 2011, a series of workshops and discussions, “Beyond Planwerk”, were organized by the Think Berlin initiative consisting of academics from Berlin’s Technische Universität in cooperation with Berlin’s SenSW. Its goal was to revive discussions and debates on urban planning in the city. Expert discussions were designed to be more constructive than those of the past decade. According to the workshop’s creators, these last debates were more focused on drumming up controversy. Inclusivity played a major role in the new discussions to curtail the elitist reputation of the old *Planwerk*; alongside professors and researchers, students, the public and politicians attended the talks.³¹⁹ According to the *Planwerk Innere Stadt*, the results of these workshops and other discussions with investors, property owners, city users and other concerned parties were included in the plan. Additionally, the new masterplan was meant to be dynamic in the sense that it will be continuously revised by means of public forums, architectural competitions and expert evaluations.³²⁰

Many elements of the new *Planwerk* echoes demands made by many expert and citizen initiatives, some members of which attended the *Beyond Planwerk* workshop. The Bürgerforum Berlin e.V. is arguably one of the biggest urbanism association in the city. Created in 2000, it brings together eleven groups and institutions including historical, architectural and religious associations.³²¹ The Bürgerforum also comprises a specialty subgroup of experts on urban planning: the Planungsgruppe Stadtkern. It is made up of architects, urban planners, urban historians and publicists who actively participate in debates and who regularly publish on the subject.³²²

³¹⁹ Aljoscha Hofmann et al., *Beyond Planwerk Innenstadt: neue Ideen - strategische Entwicklung weiterdenken! Workshop 28./29. Januar 2010 am Center for Metropolitan Studies an der TU Berlin. Dokumentation* (Berlin 2010), 7. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:kobv:109-opus-96926>.

³²⁰ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, “Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803),” 15-16.

³²¹ Partner associations include the Architekten- und Ingenieur-Verein zu Berlin e.V., created by E. Knoblauch.

³²² Planungsgruppe Stadtkern, “Berliner Mitte: Zukunftsaufgaben,” (2015). http://planungsgruppe-stadtkern.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Berliner-Mitte_Zukunftsaufgaben_2015-01_s.pdf.

Members of the Planungsgruppe Stadtkern like city planner and social scientist, Harald Bodenschatz, urban researcher, Benedikt Goebel and co-authors of the first *Planwerk*, Bernd Albers and Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm,³²³ are interested in the urban development of Berlin's historic Mitte. More specifically, they demand that the historic center be reclaimed and restored for the people. They have gone so far as publishing a charter for the city's center, the *Charta für die Mitte von Berlin*.³²⁴ The group and their charter were born out of the perceived destruction of Berlin's Mitte as mentioned above. To salvage the historic core from decades of destructive planning, which, according to them, emptied the center of its urban character and identity, efforts have to be made to reurbanize the area. For the group, Berlin's center should be a place fit for urban life. It should not be strictly for commercial use; urban living should dictate future planning, not its festivalization or commercialization.³²⁵

To bring urban life back to Mitte, the Planning Group's charter sets out several objectives. The *entire* historic center should be considered as a whole during planning; isolated projects should be avoided. This goal addresses mistakes made in the 1990s when many isolated building projects were planned thus creating a fragmented center. "*Der Plan für die Innenstadt darf kein Puzzle sein.*", Bernd Albers argued.³²⁶ The center should be made pedestrian-friendly and their needs to be a balance between new buildings, public squares and green zones. Mixed-use spaces need to be prioritized; living spaces should coexist with cultural amenities. Furthermore, history should play a greater role in the historic center. The city's rich and sometimes difficult past needs to be integrated into the city. *All* of Berlin's past must be remembered, not just the *Gründerzeit* and Weimar Berlin. This also includes its medieval period, its national socialist past and the GDR. What remained of the past should be highlighted, designs need to be inspired by the historical urban fabric. The charter states that such planning does not equate backwards-looking planning: "*Eine solche historische*

³²³ The actors and critics involved in Berlin's urban planning form a complex network of relations. For greater insight: George J. A. Murray, "City Building and the Rhetoric of "Readability": Architectural Debates in the New Berlin," *City & Community* 7, no. 1 (2008). doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2007.00238.x.

³²⁴ Planungsgruppe Stadtkern, *Charta für die Mitte von Berlin: Aufruf der Planungsgruppe Stadtkern im Bürgerforum Berlin e.V.* (2014).

³²⁵ Ibid. Cit. in: Goebel, *Mitte!*, 153-57.

³²⁶ Bernd Albers, "Vom Humboldt-Forum zum Stadtkern 2030. Straßen und Plätze, Parzellen und Monumente," in *Berliner Altstadt. Neue Orte und Plätze rund um das Schloss*, ed. Hans Stimmann and Bernd Albers (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2014), 203.

*Vergewisserung ist keineswegs rückwärts orientiert, sondern richtet sich im Gegenteil in die Zukunft.*³²⁷

The new *Planwerk* and the charter make the same general demands for Berlin's historic Mitte. Their overall objective is to reurbanize the area and make it more livable. This includes greater participation and discussions, diminishing car traffic, densifying the neighborhood and favoring mix-use designs. Mitte's historical layers should not be ignored and planning needs to consider the urban layout of the past.

5.2. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL IN TODAY'S MITTE

5.2.1. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL'S RECEPTION

How do the new *Planwerk's* requirements and the demands made by citizens' initiatives compare with the Nikolaiviertel's and Stahn's planning concept and how do experts and politicians view the neighborhood? First, the Nikolaiviertel is a mixed-use neighborhood. It blends living space with shops, restaurants and culture with its many museums and its church. Additionally, the area is pedestrian-friendly; the Nikolaiviertel is closed to traffic.³²⁸ In terms of historical consideration, the medieval layout was carefully integrated into Stahn's design. According to the architect, the Nikolaiviertel was not conceived to be a modern replica of a medieval town, but rather reflect the city's rich and varied past. Furthermore, Stahn's design aimed to take into account "*die Aufgaben der Gegenwart hinsichtlich heutigen Geschichtsverständnisses und zukunftsorientierten Planen und Bauen.*"³²⁹ The Nikolaiviertel, according to its designer, is reflexive as opposed to retrospective. Based on these features, the area's design coincides with the basic guidelines of the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* and the demands made by citizens' initiatives as stated earlier.

However, the Nikolaiviertel's conception differs from the participatory model specified in the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* and the Planungsgruppe. The construction of the Nikolaiviertel was a top-down concept. Nevertheless, Stahn's historicism "reflected the desires of large parts of the East German population at the time."³³⁰

³²⁷ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 154.

³²⁸ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 101.

³²⁹ Günter Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1991), 58.

³³⁰ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 106.

What is the planning community's opinions on the Nikolaiviertel? The Planungsgruppe's members and those involved in planning discussions for the new *Planwerk* are neutral when it comes to the neighborhood. However, they do acknowledge that its design has some advantages including its popularity. Harald Bodenschatz is aware that the Nikolaiviertel is not well accepted by everyone in the city: "*trotz einigem Naserümpfen aus Fachkreisen – [wurde das Nikolaiviertel] sofort ein touristischer Magnet und ist es heute noch.*"³³¹ He also praises Günter Stahn for adopting a mixed-use concept: "*Rathauspassage wie Nikolaiviertel beherbergen - wenn auch in baulich sehr verschiedener Form - eine bunte Funktionsmischung von Wohnen, Einkaufen und Gastronomie.*"³³² Regarding the integration of the past, Bodenschatz describes the Nikolaiviertel as an unhistorical place filled with historical references. Finally, he maintains that the quarter has not become a central place in the city despite its popularity. This is Mitte's main deficiency; it lacks a central point of convergence.³³³

Benedikt Goebel, without sharing his opinion on the Nikolaiviertel, raises questions about the neighborhood's integration into Mitte's landscape. For him, buildings and monuments belonging to the *Nachkriegsmoderne* (postwar modernism) like the Nikolaiviertel³³⁴ have to be evaluated in terms of their historical and conceptual importance before Mitte's next wave of construction begins.³³⁵ For the Nikolaiviertel, this was accomplished in 2018 when it received protected monument status from Berlin's government (see chapter 5).

³³¹ Richter, *Wechselwirkungen zwischen Tourismus und urbanem Raum*, 192.

³³² Bodenschatz, Engstfeld, and Seifert, *Auf der Suche*, 64.

³³³ Franziska Nentwig and Harald Bodenschatz, *Berlins vergessene Mitte : [Ausstellung Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin / Ephraim-Palais 21. Oktober 2010 - 27. März 2011]* (Bönen: Kettler, 2012), 46.

³³⁴ Is the Nikolaiviertel modern or postmodern? Most would consider the Nikolaiviertel postmodern as is the case in this research. Stahn, however, never saw his project as postmodern. In fact, he had strong opinions against the movement. The term postmodern had a negative connotation in East German planning circles. See Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 107, 236.

³³⁵ Benedikt Goebel, "Planung für eine im Kern moderne Stadt. Was die Berliner Stadtplanung aus der Geschichte des Stadtkerns lernen kann," in *Alte Mitte - Neue Mitte?: Positionen zum historischen Zentrum von Berlin* ed. Historische Kommission zu Berlin e.V. (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts Verlag, 2012), 153.

5.2.2. THE NIKOLAIVIERTEL'S USE AS A MODEL FOR THE HISTORIC CORE

Goebel also questions the Nikolaiviertel's possible use as a model for the historic center; in this case, we can decipher his personal opinions. If the new medieval quarter is to be used as an example, is it for its modern features or its neo-historicity? He also questions if half-hearted attempts at integrating history and shoddiness should lead to model-like neighborhoods. He asks if *“eine ernsthaftere Orientierung an der Geschichte, als sie im postmodernen Nikolaiviertel praktiziert wurde, sowie eine deutlich hochwertigere Bauausführung zu Quartieren führen könnten, deren Qualität und Vorbildhaftigkeit auch in ferner Zukunft unbestritten ist.”*³³⁶

Goebel's questions on the role of the Nikolaiviertel as a model for future Berlin's old town have seemingly been answered; the Nikolaiviertel's influence (in form and function) can be found in the plans to reinvigorate Mitte and will be discussed below.

The push to reclaim the historic center is slowly materializing. The historic Mitte is entering an ambitious phase of transformation which was already planned in the 1999 version of the *Planwerk*. Even though the *Planwerk Innenstadt* was berated, some projects were able to find traction.³³⁷ These include areas of Berlin's *Altstadt* largely destroyed by the War and socialist planning like the Breite Straße, Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel and Spittelmarkt, all of which surround the Nikolaiviertel. Plans for these sectors are meant to reurbanize and strengthen the historic inner city, as per the guidelines of the *Planwerk* mentioned earlier.³³⁸ This is a great step forward according to the Planungsgruppe Stadtkern's spokesperson, Benedikt Goebel. However, there is still a problem. According to him, these projects are still isolated from each other. To realize its full potential, these projects need to be joined together in a common vision for Berlin's Mitte.³³⁹ The group's solution is to establish a planning moratorium.³⁴⁰ However, the city's plans are still going ahead.

³³⁶ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 113.

³³⁷ Lüscher, “Vom Planwerk Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt - Weiterentwicklung 2010,” 243.

³³⁸ Senat von Berlin, “Planwerk Innenstadt,” 3134.

³³⁹ Goebel, *Mitte!*, 138-41.

³⁴⁰ Planungsgruppe Stadtkern, *Charta für die Mitte von Berlin: Aufruf der Planungsgruppe Stadtkern im Bürgerforum Berlin e.V.*

5.2.2.1. MOLKENMARKT/KLOSTERVIERTEL

The Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel is situated east of the Nikolaiviertel and, along with this last one, was part of Berlin's first settlement. In the middle ages, the area north of the Mühlendammbrücke turned into a market, the Olde Markt. Its name was later changed to Molkenmarkt, probably because of the milk being sold here.³⁴¹ To its east, a neighborhood sprawled around the Klosterstraße, borrowing its name from the Franciscan cloister built in 1250, the ruins of which are still visible today. Nothing much remains of the old Klosterviertel: no traces of the historic urban layout, monuments or old buildings. Today, busy roads and parking lots dominate the area. According to SenSW, the historic significance of the neighborhood is lost.³⁴²

The area is currently in its implementation phase and it takes some cues from Stahn's Nikolaiviertel. SenSW plans to build a mixed-use neighborhood inspired by the historical urban layout thus emphasizing its historic significance.³⁴³ In its design, the SenSW explains that the Klosterviertel's revitalization is inspired by the Nikolaiviertel's achievements: *“Die Neubebauung des Klosterviertels knüpft an die Rekonstruktion des gegenüberliegenden Nikolaiviertels an. Bereits Anfang der 1980er Jahre wurde hier ein Beitrag zur Wiederbelebung eines wichtigen Teils Alt-Berlin umgesetzt.”*³⁴⁴ Government documents now refer to the Nikolaiviertel as an example of how a mixed-use concept can be beneficial to urban life: *“Die Erdgeschosszonen der angrenzenden Gebäuden bieten sich für öffentlichkeitswirksame Nutzungen wie kleine Ladengeschäfte, Cafés und Restaurants an und können [...] zu einer Belebung des Quartiers – ähnlich wie im Nikolaiviertel – beitragen.”*³⁴⁵

In addition to its mixed-use design, the Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel has great tourism potential; according to SenSW, the Nikolaiviertel is an example of a neighborhood that makes

³⁴¹ Sanson, “Berlin,” 499.

³⁴² Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, “Molkenmarkt und Klosterviertel: Neue Quartiere in Alt-Berlin,” (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung. Kommunikation, 2006), 4.

³⁴³ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, “Projektblätter: Molkenmarkt,” (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2018).

³⁴⁴ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, “Molkenmarkt und Klosterviertel,” (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2008), 2.

³⁴⁵ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, “Verordnung über die Festsetzung des Bebauungsplans 1-14 im Bezirk Mitte, Ortsteil Mitte,” (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2016), 296.

good use of history to benefit tourism and the Klosterviertel could do the same. To do so, the area needs to showcase its past, especially its significance for Berlin's early history. Like the Nikolaiviertel, the Klosterviertel is also the city's *Keimzelle*. Early traces of the past are still visible like the above-mentioned ruins of the Klosterkirche and remnants of the medieval *Stadtmauer*. Today, these historical features are isolated without any urban context. The government maintains that the Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel cannot fulfill its function as a historic place and, consequently, as a tourist destination in its current form, unlike the Nikolaiviertel:

*In seiner Funktion als Keimzelle der Stadt und aufgrund der erhaltenen authentischen historischen Spuren verschiedener Phasen der Stadtgeschichte kommt dem Klosterviertel auch eine wichtige touristische Bedeutung zu. Im Gegensatz zum angrenzenden Nikolaiviertel kann es diese Rolle bisher aber kaum ausfüllen.*³⁴⁶

The future Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel will also take some architectural inspiration from its neighbor. According to SenSW, buildings will not be higher than four stories to fit with Stahn's design: "*Die Gebäudehöhen sollen sich in diesem Abschnitt an dem gegenüberliegenden Nikolaiviertel mit seiner Kleinteiligen und niedrigen Bebauung orientieren.*"³⁴⁷ As with the Nikolaiviertel, the plans explicitly reject the idea of rebuilding an exact copy of what once stood here. It is to be inspired by the past while at the same time meeting the demands of a modern city.³⁴⁸ This echoes Stahn's sentiments about his own project. Indeed, Stahn never intended the Nikolaiviertel to be an exact replica of a medieval town, but rather a neighborhood inspired by the collective memory of the past and suitable for the needs of the present.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 76.

³⁴⁸ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, "Molkenmarkt und Klosterviertel," 2.

³⁴⁹ Stahn, *Das Nikolaiviertel*, 9.

5.2.2.2. BREITE STRASSE AND PETRIPLATZ

Another section of Berlin's historical center facing redesign is the Breite Straße and Petriplatz located on the Spreeinsel; here, again, its development plans reference the Nikolaiviertel. This part of the historic core is the founding place of the old city of Cölln, settled a few years before Berlin on the opposite bank of the Spree. The two settlements were independent entities until their official merger in 1432 taking the name of Berlin. This area of town was popular for its fish market, its city hall and the Petrikirche. After Berlin became the royal residence of the Brandenburg Electorate a palace was built in the middle of the island, the Berliner Stadtschloss. Cölln was eventually transformed into a palace-neighborhood. Consequently, the area, especially the Breite Straße, became an elegant part of town. Traces of the historic character of the palace-neighborhood can be seen in the late-renaissance style Ribbeck-Haus and Alter Marstall (Old Stables) which now houses Berlin's Zentral- und Landesbibliothek. As with the Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel, not much remains of this past as much was destroyed during the 1960s to make way for roads.³⁵⁰

The design goals for this historic neighborhood are the same as those for the Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel: revitalize the area by mixing living spaces, gastronomy, small businesses and culture. Additionally, "archeological windows" will be created to accentuate the quarter's historical significance.³⁵¹ An archeological visitor's center will be built at the Petriplatz showcasing artifacts found in Alt-Cölln.³⁵² By doing so, Berlin hopes that the area will be comparable with the Nikolaiviertel: a neighborhood important for tourism and city history. According to government documents, this can only be achieved by incorporating the area's rich history in its conception and rediscovering its function as *Keimzelle*. Until then, "*Im Gegensatz zum nahen Nikolaiviertel kann es diese Rolle bisher aber kaum ausfüllen.*"³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, "Begründung zum Bebauungsplan I-218," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2016), 12.

³⁵¹ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, "Projektblätter: Breite Straße," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2018).

³⁵² Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, "Projektblätter: Petriplatz," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2018).

³⁵³ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, "Bebauungsplan I-218," 13.

5.2.2.3. MARX-ENGELS-FORUM

Finally, the green space north of the Nikolaiviertel, the Marx-Engels-Forum, is being considered for development by Berlin's Department of Urban Development, which has seen more public interest than the other zones mentioned above. The Marx-Engels-Forum is part of a bigger strip of land affectionately named "*Raum zwischen Fernsehturm und Spree*". Similar to the Molkenmarkt/Klosterviertel, Breite Straße and Petriplatz, the area between the river and the Fernsehturm was initially slated to be reconstructed according to first drafts of the *Planwerk Innenstadt*. After some criticism, the plan was scrapped in its final 1999 version.³⁵⁴ In 2015, the government of Berlin invited its citizens to discuss the future of the Fernsehturm-Spree zone. The public debates (*Stadtdebatte*), called "*Alte Mitte – Neue Liebe*", attracted 10 000 participants from Berlin and beyond. The nine-month-long process included expert colloquiums, public workshops and online discussions, among others.³⁵⁵

The results of the debates were adopted by the *Abgeordnetenhaus* in June 2016 as the *Bürgerleitlinien für die Berliner Mitte* (Citizens' Guidelines for Berlin's Mitte). The guidelines were summarized in 10 points. The participants rejected the idea of a critical reconstruction by private means. They also rejected the status quo, i.e. urban desolation. Specifically, participants decided that the Fernsehturm-Spree zone, or *Freiraum*, should remain public and accessible to all. Furthermore, the area should accentuate and grant greater importance to the Spree. History should also be made more visible through various methods. For them, this part of the center has to showcase its multi-layered history from the medieval ages to socialist Berlin and the reunified city. The participants suggested using information plaques, temporary exhibits and light displays to do so. Again, the past should not be remembered by reconstructing historic buildings. Doing so, they argue, would efface traces of the GDR. Finally, the area should be a creative place used for culture with minimum car traffic.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ Harald Bodenschatz and Benedikt Goebel, "Berlin - Stadt ohne Altstadt," in *Berlins Vergessene Mitte: Stadtkern 1840-2010*, ed. Dominik Bartmann and Franziska Netwig (Böhen: Druckverlag Kettler, 2010), 33.

³⁵⁵ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Bürgerleitlinien für die Berliner Mitte: Ergebnis der Stadtdebatte "Alte Mitte – Neue Liebe?": Fassung nach Senatsbeschluss vom 22. März 2016," (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2016), 4. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:kobv:109-1-8219040>.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6, 10-11.

Not explicitly considered as such by the local government, the Nikolaiviertel could certainly serve as a model for the Fernsehturm-Spree corridor, albeit more in function than in form. For example, the results of the debate showed that the participants wanted greater access to the Spree; point 8 of the *Bürgerleitlinien* reads: “*In der Berliner Mitte wird die Nähe zum Wasser spürbar. Das Spreeufer wird für den Aufenthalt geöffnet*”.³⁵⁷ The Nikolaiviertel achieves this by opening up its western square towards the water, thus acting as a gateway to Berlin’s river. This might seem trivial, but at the time of its construction, this was quite novel for Berlin. According to Harald Bodenschatz, Stahn’s design was one of the first in the city’s center to make use of the Spree.³⁵⁸

As mentioned earlier, participants also agreed on the cultural importance of the area; again, the Nikolaiviertel can also be used as inspiration. According to point 4, “*Die Berliner Mitte ist ein Ort der Kultur und Kreativität. Vielfältige, auch experimentelle Kunstformen ermöglichen abwechslungsreiche Erlebnisse und einen inspirierenden Aufenthalt*.”³⁵⁹ For them, Mitte is a place to enjoy a variety of cultural events like concerts, theatre and markets – all of which should be accessible and free for all. This is similar to the approach taken by the Nikolaiviertel. Culturally, save its museums, the quarter is used as a backdrop for many open-air events and festivals. Notable examples include weekly concerts in the Nikolaikirche, the annual *Fête de la musique* and the *Nikolai-Festspiele*, a 2-day event that usually includes theatre, markets and music.

Some aspects of the Nikolaiviertel’s integration of the past correspond to suggestions made by the debate’s participants. Having rejected the idea of a critically reconstructed neighborhood, their ideas on making history visible include “*Informationstafeln, archäologische Fenster, im Pflaster, Lichtinstallationen, Freiluftausstellungen oder Bodenplatten*”.³⁶⁰ Apart from its neo-historicist architecture, visitors of the Nikolaiviertel experience history through various means. As we have seen throughout this study, this is

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 22.

³⁵⁸ Harald Bodenschatz, “Es gab 1989/90 keine Stunde Null im Städtebau,” in *Berlin plant: Plädoyer für ein Planwerk Innenstadt Berlin 2.0*, ed. Harald Bodenschatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 86.

³⁵⁹ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, “Bürgerleitlinien für die Berliner Mitte: Ergebnis der Stadtdebatte “Alte Mitte – Neue Liebe?”: Fassung nach Senatsbeschluss vom 22. März 2016,” 14.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

primarily achieved through exhibits, information boards like the *Historischer Pfad*, plaques, cultural events and museums.

How will all these neighboring projects affect the Nikolaiviertel? As one art historian and architecture critic suggests, the new plans for Berlin's historic Mitte could effectively release the neighborhood from isolation by giving it context. Stahn's *Viertel* could be freed from its reputation as an odd remnant of GDR architecture and an open-air museum to become a fairly normal Berliner *Kiez*.³⁶¹

5.2.2.4. THE *STADTDEBATTE* IS CRITICIZED AND ENTERS A NEW PHASE: THE *STADTWERKSTATT*

Many, including the *Planungsgruppe Stadtkern*, criticized the debate's methodology. In a letter to Berlin's senate, Goebel and Bodenschatz complained that the process locked out experts from discussions. Furthermore, they criticized the unstructured nature of the debate. They concluded that the results were vague, not representative and not professionally justified.³⁶² It is, however, important to note that, despite his criticism, Goebel played an active role in the debates. He was one of a dozen curators summoned by the government to oversee the discussions which also included members of Think Berlin. They were brought to guarantee

*eine hohe Qualität des Beteiligungsprozesses mit einer breiten Einbindung der Bürgerinnen und Bürger, der maßgeblichen Berliner Institutionen in der Berliner Mitte und der Gesamtstadt, Verwaltungen und der Politikerinnen und Politiker, den Einsatzes zielführender und innovativer Beteiligungsformate, die faire und ergebnisoffene Diskussion von grundlegenden Alternativen und die Transparenz des Dialogprozesses.*³⁶³

Other expert groups like the Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung – taking its name from the famed East German architect behind the Stalinallee and the Fernsehturm – were also critical of

³⁶¹ Nikolaus Bernau, *Architekturführer Nikolaiviertel Berlin*, Die neuen Architekturführer (Berlin: Stadtwandel Verlag, 2009), 63.

³⁶² Benedikt Goebel and Harald Bodenschatz, "Stellungnahme für die 76. Sitzung am 25. Mai 2016," (Berlin: Planungsgruppe Stadtkern, 2016).

³⁶³ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Bürgerleitlinien und die Prozessempfehlung 2016 für die Berliner Mitte (Drucksache 17/2811)," (Berlin: Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin, 2016), 7.

the debates' results. Managed under trusteeship from the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, a political think tank affiliated with Die Linke, the group promotes discussions on architecture and social and urban development. Some of their members are also active in the Planungsgruppe Stadtkern like Harald Bodenschatz. Other members include Katrin Lompscher (Die Linke), ex-member of the SED and, since December 2016, heads Berlin's SenSW. Before becoming senator, Lompscher penned many articles on urban planning in Berlin's center which were published in the foundation's own publication (it often appears as a supplement in the daily *Neues Deutschland*).³⁶⁴ In a September 2016 piece, she expressed, along with her coauthors, the group's position on the *Alte Mitte – Neue Liebe* debates. They argued that the roles of the appointed curators like Goebel were not clearly defined. Consequently, the group demanded the creation of a permanent *Beteiligungsgremium* (participation committee) with coherent and transparent functions. The foundation also took issue with the narrow area of interest of the debates, i.e. the space between the Alexanderplatz and the river Spree. For them, the area needed to be expanded to include most of the historic Mitte to avoid isolated projects and a fragmented city center.³⁶⁵

After considering similar demands made by participants of the debates and other critics, Berlin's Senate expanded the debates' planning area in August 2017 following a proposition by the new Senator for Urban Planning and Living, Katrin Lompscher.³⁶⁶ The area now encompasses the entire historic Mitte. The Senate's goal is to unite all public projects in the area – 30 in all – being planned by different government entities like the SenSW, the *Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt und Verkehr* (Senate's Administration for the Environment and Transport, SenUV), and the *Landesdenkmalamt*. These projects include the Molkenmark/Klosterviertel, Petriplatz, Breite Straße and the Nikolaiviertel.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ *Neues Deutschland* was once the party newspaper of the SED. It is now a left-leaning daily newspaper.

³⁶⁵ Katrin Lompscher, Klause Brake, and Thomas Flierl, "Wie weiter in der Berliner Mitte," *Henselmann: Beiträge zu Wohnungsbau und Stadtentwicklung in Berlin* (2016): 8-9.

³⁶⁶ Senatskanzlei von Berlin, "Senat beschließt Neuausrichtung der Stadtdebatte Berliner Mitte. Pressemitteilung vom 15.08.2017," (Berlin, 2017).

<https://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/2017/pressemitteilung.621627.php>.

³⁶⁷ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen, "Übersicht der Projekte in der Berliner Mitte," (Berlin, 2018).

In 2018, the *Stadtdebatte* entered its implementation phase under the name of *Stadtwerkstatt* after several rounds of discussion. According to senator Lompscher, “*Man kann nicht unendlich debattieren.*”³⁶⁸ The *Stadtdebatte* has moved out of its dialogue phase into its participative planning phase. With this move, changes were brought to its format to address the above-mentioned critiques.

In addition to expanding the geographical scope of the *Stadtdebatte*, changes were also made to its structure. The platform remains a place where residents and experts exchange ideas but its framework was better defined. To address the issue of the ill-defined purpose of the curators as expressed in Lompscher’s article, a *Begleitkreis* (advisory board) was created to act as a bridge between the citizens and the *Stadtdebatte*. It prepares and submits residents’ ideas to the forum and then ensures a follow-up. The advisory board is made up of representatives from Mitte’s *Ausschuss für Stadtentwicklung der Bezirksverordnetenversammlung* (district assembly’s Committee for Urban Development) and members from the Senate’s *Ausschuss für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen* (Committee for Urban Development and Housing). The board also includes members of several citizens’ and experts’ groups including the *Planungsgruppe Stadtkern*, the *Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung* and *Think Berlin*. Residents are also among its board members. These residents had to have participated in the initial 2015 discussions. As such, they are considered ambassadors of the initial debates (*Dialogbotschafter*).³⁶⁹

To better coordinate the various projects, a *Koordinationskreis* (coordination board) was formed. Its goal is to facilitate cooperation and communication between all the different actors of a given project while also assisting in development and planning. The board is composed of representatives from several departments from Mitte’s district administration (*Bezirksamt*) and Berlin’s Senate. It also includes other governmental organizations like the *Stadtmuseum Berlin*, the city’s tourism board and the *WBM*, just to name a few. The choice of members sitting on the board depends on the nature of the project.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Maritta Adam-Tkalec, “Krawall in der Stadtwerkstatt: Was soll nur aus der Alten Mitte werden?,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 2018. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/krawall-in-der-stadtwerkstatt-was-soll-nur-aus-der-alten-mitte-werden--31134018>.

³⁶⁹ “Begleitgremien der Stadtwerkstatt,” <https://www.berlin.de/stadtwerkstatt/die-stadtwerkstatt/begleitgremien/>.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that the Nikolaiviertel was one of a few areas in the historic core not subject to redesign. However, the *Stadtwerkstatt* counts it among its many projects. According to the government, the quarter as a public space needs to be defined or reevaluated (*Qualifizierung des öffentlichen Raums*)³⁷¹ echoing arguments made by Benedikt Goebel earlier.

This was completed in 2019 through an architectural survey contracted by SenSW to define Mitte's public space. This evaluation differs from the 2016 conservation survey (chapter 5) which successfully demonstrated the quarter's conformity with the criteria to become a listed monument according to Germany's BauGB. The 2019 study was tasked with identifying and classifying public spaces in Berlin's center and recommending design changes to improve urban life. According to the document, defining Mitte's various forms and functions was needed to fulfill the 10 *Bürgerleitlinien*.³⁷²

The survey was based on the premise that Berlin's center is scattered, heterogeneous and lacking a clear identity leading to confusion and disorientation. For Mitte to live up to its full potential as the heart of the city, this needs to be resolved thus reflecting critiques made by several associations as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The study set out to identify distinct zones in the area according to function, atmosphere and structure. Public spaces were placed in three categories: places of identification, places of movement and places of leisure. These zones were then analyzed and their respective identities were established. Each sector was given strengths and weaknesses. Afterwards, recommendations were made to strengthen each of their identities based on an ideal, overarching image (based on the 10 *Bürgerleitlinien*) for the area. The end goal is to strengthen these identities, relieve them of their isolation and stitch them together to create a "*Flickenteppich*" (patchwork rug) resulting in a coherent identity for Berlin's historic center.³⁷³

The survey labeled the Nikolaiviertel an important place for identity and leisure. Its strengths include its distinct atmosphere created by its narrow streets and its concentration of

³⁷¹ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen, "Übersicht der Projekte in der Berliner Mitte."

³⁷² Gruppe F Landschaftsarchitekten and Yellow z, "Typisierung des öffentlichen Raumes in der Berliner Mitte (Beauftragung: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen, Referat II A)," (Berlin, 2019), 7.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 10, 16-19.

small shops, businesses and restaurants. Additionally, its popularity among tourists is considered a strong asset. Its primary flaw is its poor accessibility. The survey concludes that the Nikolaiviertel is cut-off from the city by imposing and impassable thoroughfares like the Mühlendamm and the Spandauer Straße. Another flaw includes the quarter's building materials qualified as being poor. In particular, its street-level public spaces are deemed neglected and heterogeneous; its pedestrian zones lack a unifying design.

The study suggests strengthening the quarter's role as "*lebendiger Anziehungspunkt für Berliner und Besucher mit einem interessanten Mix aus konventionellen und experimentellen Gastronomie-, und Einzelhandelsangeboten in den Erdgeschosslagen.*"³⁷⁴ Aesthetically, the quality of the public space, i.e. the materials and infrastructure, needs to be improved. The study also recommends standardizing the design of its pedestrian spaces by creating rules on the use of different features like benches, lighting, trees and road surfaces. All in all, the report considers these measures to be of mid-level priority as opposed to more pressing projects like redesigning the busy streets surrounding the Nikolaiviertel as well as the Klosterviertel and Marx-Engels-Forum.³⁷⁵

To implement these recommendations, the Nikolaiviertel was added in 2019 to the *Städtebauförderung* (Urban Development Funding) program stemming from Germany's federal government. It offers subsidies in partnership with the *Länders* and local governments to help fund urban renewal projects that would otherwise be impossible without federal assistance. The Nikolaiviertel was added to the *Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz* (Protection of Urban Historical Monuments) component of the funding scheme which aims to conserve and develop historic sites.³⁷⁶

5.2.3. IDENTITY CREATION IN BERLIN'S HISTORIC MITTE

No matter the ideas and plans put forth by politicians, architects, planners and citizens for Berlin's new historic Mitte, one goal spans them all: identity creation. Criticism of post-

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 148.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, "Städtebauförderung 2019. Informationen zu den Förderprogrammen," (Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, 2019), 7, 26.

reunification urban planning has also targeted the various attempts at *identitätsstiftender Städtebau*, or identity-creating urban planning and its apparent failures. Identity creation in the early 1990s, i.e. before *Planwerk*, was characterized by attempts at finding a new identity for Berlin from scratch. Parallels can be drawn with the approach at identity formation in the divided Berlin of the 1950s and 1960s exemplified by the modernist city. According to Stimmann, postwar modernism could not be a viable source for urban identity. The international style like that of the new Potsdamer Platz should not be used either; one critic described it as a “*bildloser Typus entnationalisierter Airport-Architektur, die sich überall auf dem Globus aufstellen läßt: Virtuelle Welten, die autistisch aus das Stadtumfeld verzichten.*”³⁷⁷ Stimmann created *Planwerk* in part to overcome the lack of identity in the designs of the past decades. For him, identity was not to be created but re-established and strengthened by a critical consideration of history and tradition.³⁷⁸ Ultimately, this meant restoring Mitte’s European look and consolidating its European identity by utilizing the city’s pre-1930s past (see chapter 4).

Planwerk Innenstadt’s identity scheme focused on *one* identity at the demise of others in Berlin’s Mitte. Its definition of identity was too narrow according to critics. Its goal was to give the reunified city a common identity based on a common past. In so doing, East and West Berlin could merge – at least architecturally – and move towards a common future. A common past meant that 40 years of GDR history had to be ignored. This was seen as “identity creation by forgetting”³⁷⁹ by some and as destructive, especially in regards to the East, by others.³⁸⁰

New urban planning strategies like the *Planwerk Innere Stadt* and the *Bürgerleitlinien* have hinted at a new approach to place identity for Berlin’s historic Mitte. Past attempts have shown that identity creation/strengthening based on *one* selective, even arbitrary, image is bound to be contentious or destructive. The strategy shift in recent planning discussions acknowledges that a place’s identity is complex and multi-layered and may even contain aspects

³⁷⁷ Jürgen Neffe, “Daimler Town gegen Sony Center,” *Der Spiegel*, no. 39 (1998): 225.

³⁷⁸ Stimmann, *Berlino, Berlin, 1940-1953-1989-2000-2010 : Physiognomie einer Großstadt = fisionomia di una grande città = Physiognomy of a Metropolis*, 17-18, 111.

³⁷⁹ Neill, *Urban Planning*, 73.

³⁸⁰ Katrin Lompscher, “Berliner Stadtentwicklung und DIE LINKE,” in *Linke Metropolenpolitik: Erfahrungen und Perspektiven am Beispiel Berlin*, ed. Andrej Holm, Klaus Lederer, and Matthias Naumann (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2011), 65.

that might be conflicting with one another.³⁸¹ They suggest working with *identities* rather than *identity*. In this sense, the city, or in this case Mitte, can no longer be seen as one entity but rather as a fractal subject with multiple identities.³⁸²

Creating plans based on Mitte's fragmented identities is, however, not entirely novel but has been hitherto ignored by the SenSW. In the 1990s, the two different views on identity creation (single vs. multiple) came head-to-head. At this time, the district of Mitte was creating its own urban development plan, the *Bereichsentwicklungsplanung* (Area Development Plan) parallel to the *Planwerk Innenstadt*.³⁸³ Such plans are non-binding masterplans drawn-up by district-level governments.

Mitte's *Bereichsentwicklungsplanung* generated much discord between district politicians and the city due to differences in its approach to place identity; the *Planwerk Innenstadt* sought to impose *one* identity for Mitte, whereas the district's *Planung* considered the area as a diverse collage of identities. The *Bereichsentwicklungsplanung* was meant to strengthen them and link them together. In other words, the plan accepted the fractured nature of Mitte and this was to be the basis of future plans. Some critics judged this approach to be more pragmatic than the homogenizing effect of the *Planwerk Innenstadt*.³⁸⁴ The incompatibility of these two plans led Berlin's senate to use its powers of intervention over its districts to quell opposition and strike down aspects of the *Bereichsentwicklungsplanung*.³⁸⁵

Key ideas of this plan have now been widely accepted by politicians, architects, planners and residents. Berliners know that Mitte's history is diverse and multi-layered as demonstrated during the *Alte Mitte – Neue Liebe* debate. Identity's close relationship with continuity and history suggests that Berliners want their city center to display multiple identities by their willingness to display all layers of the past. Additionally, the new *Planwerk* refers to Berlin's multi-layered identities as a mosaic. Others have compared it to a patchwork rug, as we have

³⁸¹ Katia Pizzi, *The Cultural Identities of European Cities*, ed. Godela Weiss-Sussex (Oxford: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2011), 160.

³⁸² Peter Weichhart, *Raumbezogene Identität: Bausteine zu einer Theorie räumlich-sozialer Kognition und Identifikation* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 45.

³⁸³ Ulrike Steglich, "Heterogenität oder „eine Mitte“?" *Bauwelt* 1-2 (1997): 4.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ Ulrike Steglich, "„Das ist doch abartig“: Ein Rückblick auf die Planwerk-Debatte," in *Berlin plant: Plädoyer für ein Planwerk Innenstadt Berlin 2.0*, ed. Harald Bodenschatz (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 65.

seen earlier. It is the stated goal of the new guidelines to bind the different tesserae of Berlin's identity-mosaic instead of prescribing one: "*Es ist Aufgabe der Stadtplanung, diese prägnanten Teilräume als Mosaiksteine eines Gesamtbildes zusammenzufügen. Hierzu dient das Planwerk Innere Stadt.*"³⁸⁶

There is a place in the historic core which could be considered a microcosm of Mitte's multiple personalities: the Nikolaiviertel. The quarter is an example of many identities co-existing in one place. As we have seen throughout this study, the Nikolaiviertel today balances three main identities conferred by different actors and displayed by different means. It has a local identity mostly marked by historic continuity accentuated by its representation as the city's birthplace. Its local identity is also based on perceived cultural authenticity (not to be confused with architectural authenticity) propagated through consumerism. It also displays a European identity manifesting itself through common European values such as diversity and cosmopolitanism. It is also typified by the idea of the *Altstadt*. Finally, its identity-mosaic also includes an East German identity which is characterized by change/redemption, normality and (hidden) socialist ideology. As such, Berlin's Nikolaiviertel exemplifies how different identities can form a layered whole, similar to the new demands for the historic core. This multiplicity must be seen as a strength for the city. Describing the city as a palimpsest, author Andreas Huyssen considers Berlin's multi-layered character "a richness of traces and memories, restorations and new constructions that will mark the city as lived space."³⁸⁷

In sum, Berlin's historic center is buzzing with activity in an effort to redesign the area; in the middle of it all stands the Nikolaiviertel. Projects in various stages of development surround Stahn's medieval old town. Most of these plans date from the 1990s; they were included in Berlin's initial planning guidelines, the *Planwerk Innenstadt*. After some criticism and changing realities, the *Planwerk* was updated but kept its main tenants thus becoming the

³⁸⁶ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Weiterentwicklung des Planwerks Innenstadt zum Planwerk Innere Stadt (Drucksache 16/3803)," 12.

³⁸⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), 84. http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&doc_number=009899052&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA.

Planwerk Innere Stadt. This version was to be less prescriptive than its predecessor by focusing more on area-specific planning and local potential.

Expert and citizens' initiatives have been particularly active in recent urban development processes in the Berlin of the 2010s. Some have actively participated in the creation of workshops and public debates on the future of Berlin's historic Mitte. Their goal: reclaiming the historic core. This is to be achieved by reurbanizing the center by exploiting key potentialities: *Lebendigkeit, Vielfalt, Vielschichtigkeit* (liveliness, diversity, complexity).

In various degrees, the Nikolaiviertel is used by the government as a model in form and function for the center. Its incorporation of the historical urban layout and its openness to Berlin's river are some examples of elements included in other projects like the Klosterviertel and Breite Straße which directly references the Nikolaiviertel's design. The neighborhood's significance for tourism and its mixed-use design are also cited as examples by local politicians and planners.

These plans are ultimately designed to affect place identity. Approaches in identity creation have changed from the 1990s to today. The early years of reunification were marked by attempts to create a brand-new identity for Berlin. This shifted in the late 1990s with efforts made to strengthen an already existing, common East-West identity; this effectively meant going back to a prewar European identity. Today, actors are considering an approach favoring multiple identities. We can look at the Nikolaiviertel as an example of multiple identities coexisting in one place as it exhibits traits of a local, European and East German identity.

CONCLUSION

The Nikolaiviertel, in the heart of the German capital, represents the city's birthplace. It was rebuilt in the 1980s by the East German government using the building techniques of the time with a neo-historicist style. Today, public opinion on Berlin's new old town are varied, but most will agree that the neighborhood is, above all, just a tourist attraction. The goal of this research was to show that the Nikolaiviertel's significance for the city goes beyond its importance for the tourist industry. More specifically, this study examined the quarter's various roles and its significance for the city's urban identity. This was achieved by studying the narratives produced by different actors; sources included newspaper articles, government documents, political speeches, architectural surveys, guide books and marketing brochures. Five roles were identified, each with their own attributes. During its construction, the Nikolaiviertel played a role in stimulating patriotism. It was also used to market East Berlin to the outside world. The quarter's marketing function has carried over to today as it is an integral part of the city's tourism industry. What's more, the old town also serves as an East German *Erinnerungsort*. Finally, the Nikolaiviertel is, to various degrees, used as an urban planning model for the redevelopment of Berlin's historic Mitte in a recent push to densify the city's core.

At the time of division, the East German government made use of the new Nikolaiviertel in two different ways: first to inspire national sentiments among its citizens and, second, to sell the East German capital. The SED saw in the quarter historical continuity which could help the party foster patriotism. After all, the rebuilt area was the city's birthplace which gave them an upper hand in the competition between both halves of the city. The neighborhood was also meant to symbolize the achievements made by the German socialist nation. In fact, the construction of the old town was part of the regime's attempt to bolster content among East Germans. In particular, the SED made efforts to raise living standards and give East Germans greater consumption possibilities. The Nikolaiviertel could do both by offering inner-city apartments mixed with shopping, restaurants and bars.

In a sense, the Nikolaiviertel was used to sell the GDR to its citizens. It was also used to strengthen its external legitimacy by creating a favorable image of itself for West Germans and international visitors. This strategy was the underlying purpose of the 750th anniversary of

Berlin in 1987, the year in which the old town was unveiled. Using the newly built neighborhood as a backdrop for many events including the official ceremony, the SED attempted to portray itself as the most attractive of the Berlins. According to them, East Berlin was the only true Berlin because it was the location of the city's birth. Furthermore, by demonstrating that East Berlin retained its historic function as capital it could claim legitimacy based on continuity. Additionally, The GDR government used the occasion to portray East Berlin, and by extension the GDR, as peace-loving, technologically advanced and culturally rich.

The quarter has kept this function in today's Berlin. However, instead of wanting to depict itself as a socialist utopia, the city wants to paint itself as a post-industrial European metropolis. It does so primarily to boost its tertiary sector economy (cultural, entertainment and tourism sectors) and to improve its image. To do so, the narratives surrounding the Nikolaiviertel focus on a local and European identity. The local identity, mostly found in travel guides and marketing brochures, is predicated on a form of authenticity. The feeling of authenticity is generated by emphasizing area-specific history told through buildings and historic personalities. Likewise, authenticity is created by the commodification of history so that visitors can experience heritage.

The Nikolaiviertel has been employed in public discourse to normalize the city's image and to make Berlin more marketable. It has done so by promoting a European identity. Politicians have tried to distance themselves from the city's troubled past by evoking perceived European values. Their discourses, especially those expressed in 2012 during Berlin's 775th birthday, portrays the city as one which lost its way in the 1930s. Today, Berlin has found its normal self by returning to pre-1930s values like diversity and cosmopolitanism. What's more, the old town's morphology allows the city to represent itself as a European city as the Nikolaiviertel exemplifies traditional European urban planning. This, again, normalizes the city's image by referencing a pre-1930s urban form.

In addition to being used to market the city to outsiders, the Nikolaiviertel also serves as a place of East German remembrance, and in so doing, manifests an East German identity. It does so in a time when the socialist built heritage is disappearing from Berlin's center. According to the local government, the quarter's architectural form represents a GDR-regime trying to undo its past mistakes in terms of urban planning. This discourse came to light recently

when the Nikolaiviertel was added to the city's protected monuments list. The neighborhood is also used to commemorate the everyday life in East Berlin. The most obvious example of this can be found in museum exhibits curated by the *Stadtmuseum* foundation like the *Ost-Berlin* exhibition. This exhibit showcases the everyday life of East Berliners from their perspective with the help of their active participation. This type of remembrance (*Arrangementgedächtnis*) is seldom used in Berlin; remembering the regime usually focuses on the oppressed-oppressor aspect of the SED dictatorship.

In a more discreet fashion, the quarter's architecture can also be considered an object of remembrance of the East German *Alltag*. Under its neo-historicist facade, the Nikolaiviertel is mostly made of prefabricated concrete slabs typical of East German urban design. Because of their ubiquity in East German cities, they have entered the collective memory of life in the GDR for some. The everyday life in the GDR also included constant indoctrination from the ruling party; traces of this reality can be seen around the neighborhood. Thieme's frieze and a handful of commemorative plaques installed by the regime are reminders of the SED's ideologies' omnipresence in the public sphere. However, today they are largely overlooked.

Finally, the Nikolaiviertel is a model for many projects in its vicinity in a time where politicians, planners and citizens alike strive to reclaim Berlin's historic center. The demands made by engaged citizens and experts for Mitte and the plans already drawn up for certain areas like the Klosterviertel, Molkenmarkt and Breite Straße are similar to Stahn's design. So much so that many of the Nikolaiviertel's elements like its mix-use concept, its pedestrian-friendly streets and its use of the past have been explicitly cited in government documents on the redesign of the historic core.

In addition, the quarter can also serve as an example or cautionary tale in terms of place identity. The approach to identity creation has changed in recent times. In the 1990s, the city was more inclined to reinvent itself, that is, to create a new identity from scratch (much like the post-war modernist movement). Berlin's Urban Development Administration is now more inclined to integrate existing identities by releasing them of their isolation. The new approach foresees a cohesive network of multiple identities resembling a mosaic or a patchwork rug. The city's vision for the historic Mitte is akin to the Nikolaiviertel's many identities coexisting in one place. The note of caution given by the quarter resides in the problematic attempts to ascribe

one identity to one place. This study has shown that, by digging deeper, a host of other identities surface to create a complex web of meaning.

The dynamic and fluid nature of identities suggests that the Nikolaiviertel's roles and identities will inevitably change over time. It will be interesting to see how these will transform in the context of a new historic Mitte. If the city succeeds in consolidating Mitte's multiplicity of identities, how will this affect Stahn's neighborhood, will it bring it out of its isolation?

This research's main focus was identity *of* place; the emotional, human aspect of place identity was put aside. Thus, to paint a whole picture of the Nikolaiviertel and its importance on identity, it would be necessary to switch perspectives and investigate how people identify *with* Berlin's new old town.

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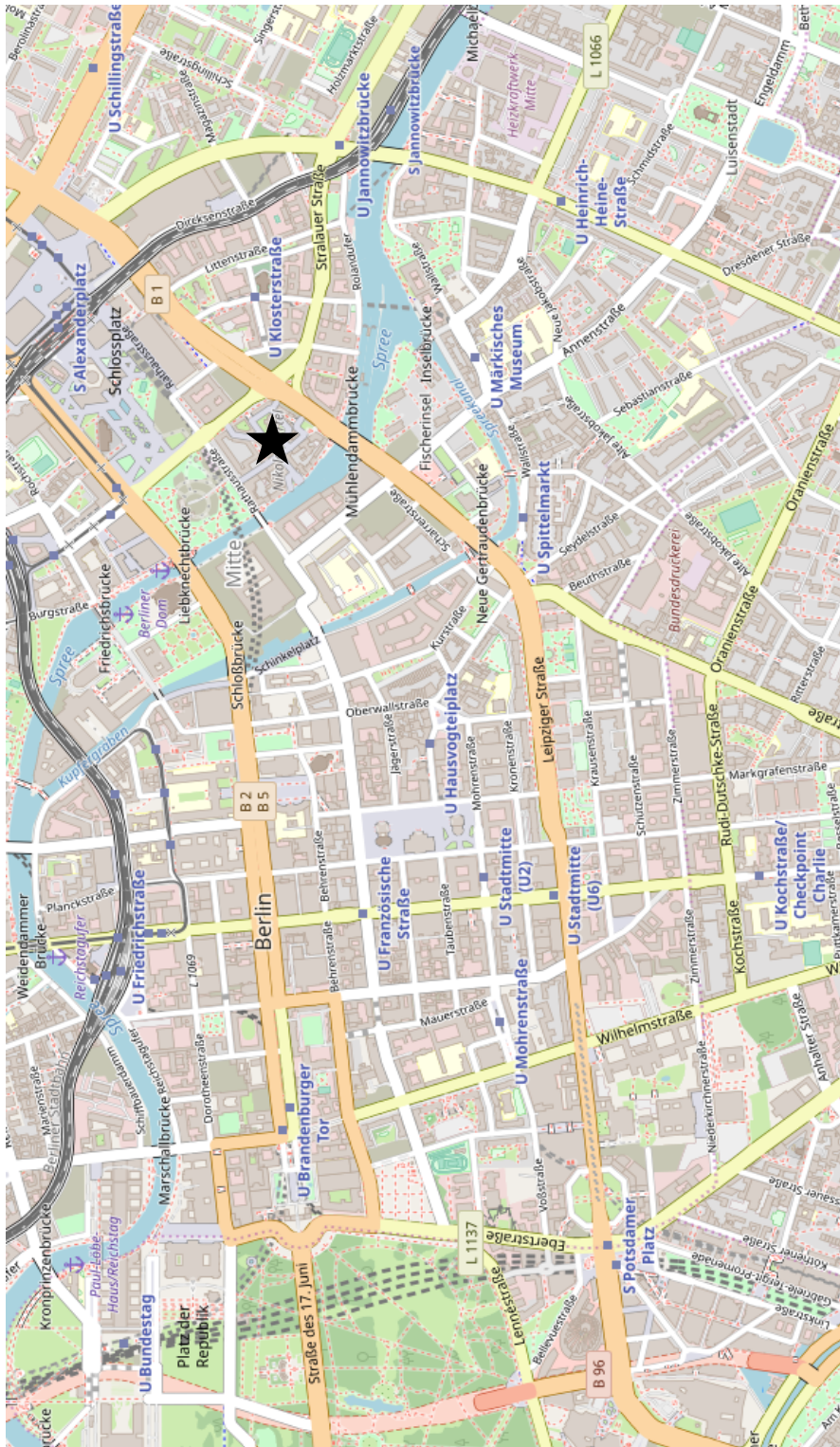
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APPENDIX I

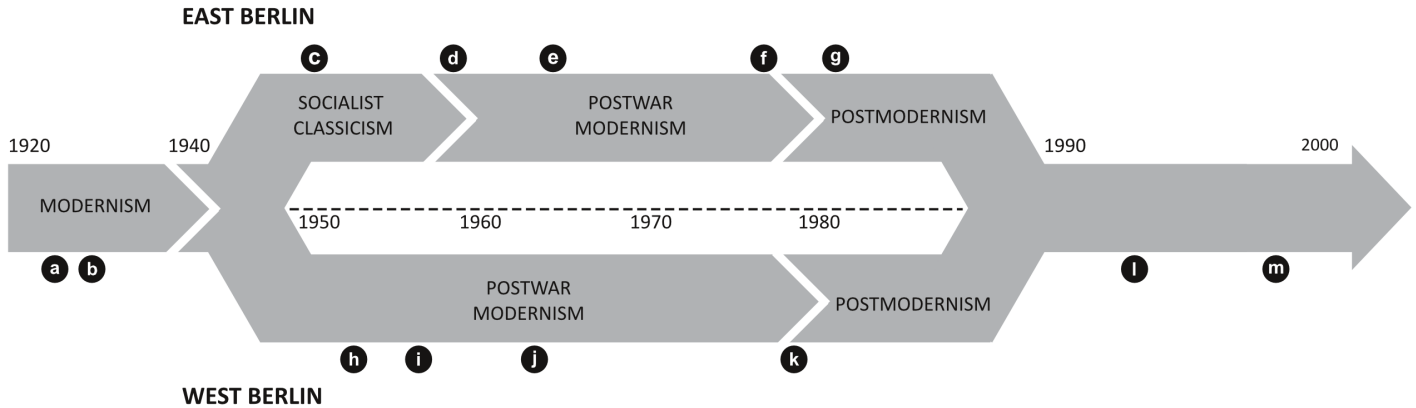
Geographical location of the Nikolaiviertel in central Berlin



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APPENDIX II

Overview of main architectural movements in Berlin with selected representative projects (1920–2000)



- a** Hufeisensiedlung (Taut, Wagner; 1925-31)
- b** Siemensstadt (Bartning, Forbat, Gropius, Häring, Henning, Scharoun; 1929-32)
- c** Karl-Marx-Allee (Henselmann, Paulick, Hartmann, Leucht, Hopp, Souradny; 1951-60)
- d** Karl-Marx-Allee, 2. Bauabschnitt (Collein, Dutschke, Kaiser, Bauer, Deutschmann; 1959-65)
- e** Fernsehturm (Dieter, Franke, Ahrendt, Herzog, Aust; 1965-69)
- f** Großsiedlung Marzahn (Korn, Schweizer, Graffunder; 1977-90)
- g** Nikolaiviertel (Stahn; 1980-87)
- h** Interbau 57 / Hansaviertel (Gropius, Taut, Le Corbusier, Niemayer et al.; 1953-57)
- i** Kulturforum (Scharoun, Wisniewski; 1956-64; 1966-85)
- j** Märkisches Viertel (Düttmann, Heinrich, Müller; 1963-75)
- k** IBA87 (Rossi, Koolhaas, Kleihues, Schultes et al.; 1978-87)
- l** Potsdamer Platz (Hilmer, Sattler, Jahn, Piano, Grassi; 1994-2000)
- m** Planwerk Innenstadt (1999)

Graphic by Mathieu Robinson. Source: Wörner, Martin, and Wolfgang Schäche. *Architekturführer Berlin*. 7 ed. Berlin: Reimer, 2013.

APPENDIX III

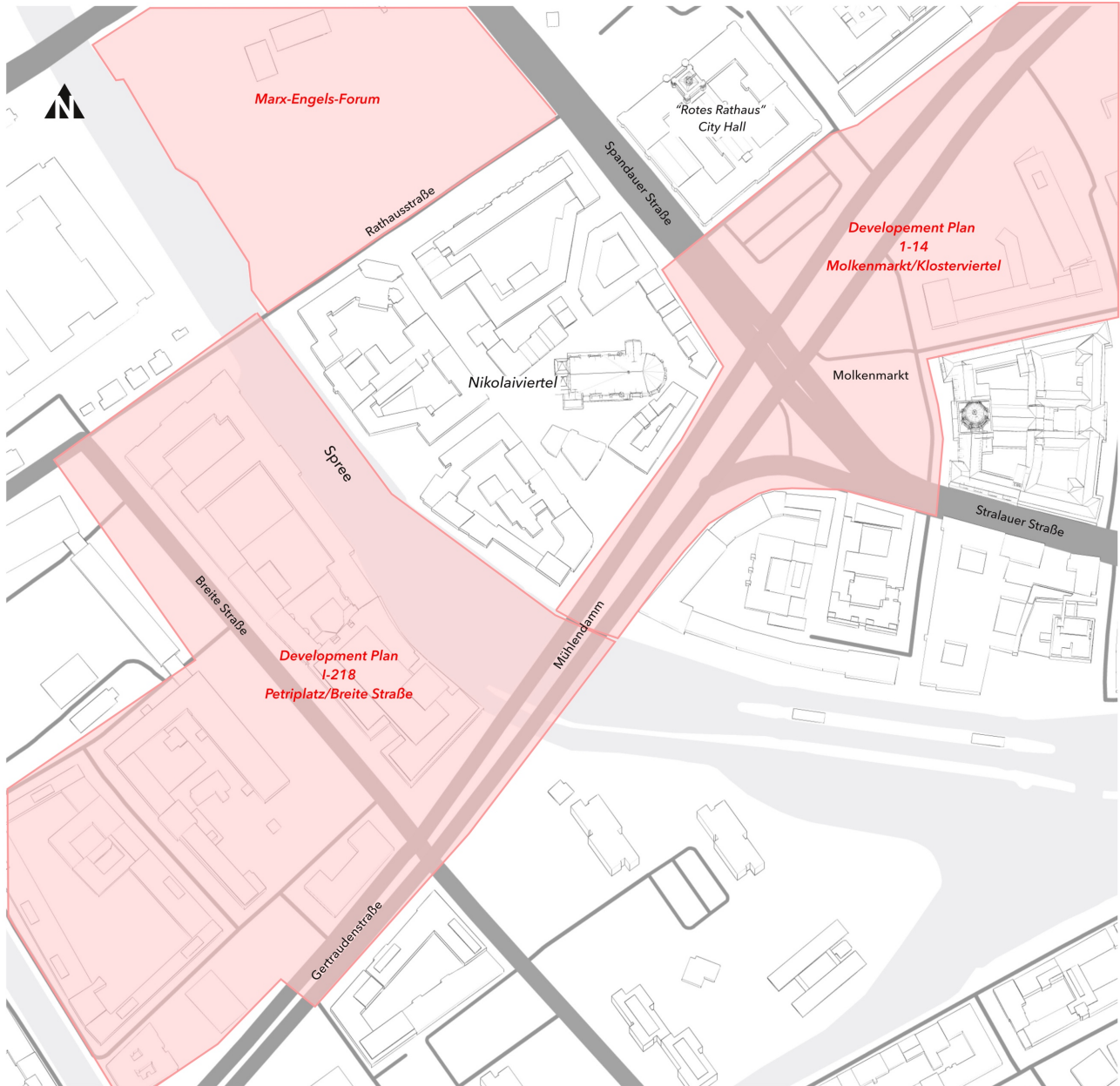
Map of the Nikolaiviertel and selected architectural/decorative elements



Graphic by Mathieu Robinson. Modified from an original map courtesy of Google Maps (Map data © 2019 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (© 2019), Google) and Sanzzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0)).

APPENDIX IV

Redesigning the historic core: projects around the Nikolaiviertel



Graphic by Mathieu Robinson. Modified from an original courtesy of Google Maps (Map data © 2019 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (© 2019), Google) and Sanzzy Maps (CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0)). Source: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen. "Übersicht der Projekte in der Berliner Mitte." Berlin, 2018.

APPENDIX V

Images of the Nikolaiviertel, its features and its surroundings
(all images by Mathieu Robinson)



Image 1: The Nikolaikirche stands behind prefabricated slab buildings and the statue of St. George and the Dragon (August Kiss)



Image 2: Poststraße with Knoblauchhaus in pink



Image 3: The Nikolaiviertel from the Spree



Image 4: The *auto-gerechte* city: the Nikolaiviertel form Grunerstraße



Image 5: Thieme's frieze: rebuilding Alexanderplatz



Image 6: Thieme's frieze: cosmonauts and *Plattenbauten*



Image 7: *Berlin, Stadt des Friedens* from Gerhard Thieme for the city's 750th anniversary



Image 8: GDR-era *Goldene Hausnummer* award