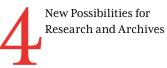# IRS AKTUELL
Newsletter for Research on Society and Space

Civic Knowledge and Urban History

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_Researching and Experiencing Urban Authenticity

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Content

Dear readers of IRS aktuell,

In 1992, the IRS was founded under the name "Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning". Its first location was Berlin. In 2022, we look back on 30 eventful years. In this issue of IRS aktuell, we dedicate four special pages to our 30th anniversary (from p.26).

The Wissenschaftsjahr (Science Year) 2022 also stands out. Under the title "Nachgefragt" ("Inquired"), its focus for the first time is not on a research topic but on the question of citizen participation in research. Citizen Science, i.e. the participation of citizens in scientific research, is being applied in more and more areas of research, also because it can open up completely new knowledge resources. Citizen Science is particularly known for its important contributions to environmental research. But citizens can also make important contributions in the fields of history and archives. For example, they can help to classify archived documents or contribute their experience and commitment to discourses on contemporary history. At the same time, this opening up of science confronts us with the challenge of communicating in an even more comprehensible way and proactively bringing the relevance of scientific work to the public.

This issue of IRS aktuell is dedicated to the activities of the IRS research focus on contemporary history and archives as well as its scholarly collections, which have taken major steps in both directions - citizen science and proactive communication – in recent years. These include, for example, the technically highly sophisticated digitalisation of our collection holdings on GDR building history and the "Stadtwende" research project on initiatives against old town decay in the GDR (p. 13) with its multimedia-based public relations work. An overview is provided by Harald Engler and Rita Gudermann starting on page 4. Julia Wigger, historian and doctoral student in the "Stadtwende" project, reports from page 8 on how she integrated contemporary witness interviews with participants into her research on old town initiatives – a method that is only gradually gaining acceptance in historical scholarship. Art historian Andreas Butter, on the other hand, has his eye on online communities. Starting on page 14, he shows how urban planning and urban history discourses are organised by enthusiasts on Facebook. Daniel Hadwiger reports from page 18 on the selective "authentication" of individual historical eras in urban planning. Various media products from the "Urban Authenticity" project draw attention to such historical-political stagings in urban space, such as an audio walk through Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg. Finally, starting on page 22, Rita Gudermann and Paul Perschke give an insight into the citizen science project "Citizen Archives", which not only wants to use citizen knowledge to describe collection archives, but is also developing a corresponding online tool for other special archives.

One more tip: The touring exhibition "Stadtwende" will be on display in various East German cities until July 2023. Details on page 13!

Now I wish you a stimulating read.

Yours, Oliver Ibert | Director of the IRS

New Possibilities for Research and Archives

Innovative forms of research and knowledge transfer, which are predominantly based on digital tools and methods, have played an important role for some time in the Research Area Contemporary History and Archives at the IRS. In this way, the historians are taking up new trends and methods of research that have been gaining momentum in the historical sciences and more generally in the humanities for several years. The key disciplinary concepts are "Citizen Science" in the context of research and "Public History" in the context of research communication. They are intended to contribute to integrating broader strata of society into the knowledge production of historical research and to return scientific findings and results to the interested public in a more targeted manner.

Involving citizens' knowledge in research and transfer activities is actually nothing new for the team of the Research Area Contemporary History and Archives. The Historical Research Centre of the IRS developed the format of the "Werkstattgespräche" (Workshop Talks) on the history of building and planning in the GDR and practised it for decades. With the Talks, the narrower circle of researchers could be opened up to non-scientific society through interventions by active members of the GDR planning scene as well as other committed and interested persons. In research in the narrower sense, work is also done with contemporary witnesses, for example (see p. 8). Relatively new, on the other hand, are the possibilities that arise from digital infrastructures, tools and media – for archiving, documentation, analysis and communication.
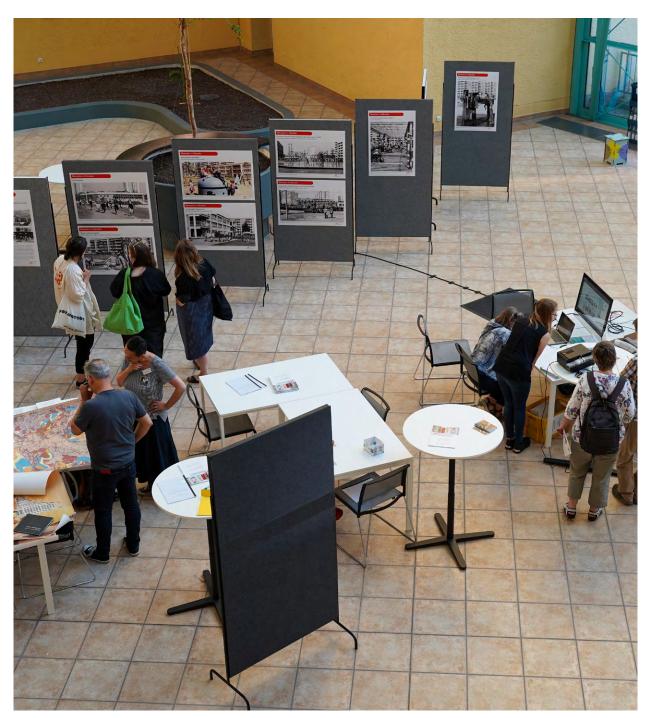
Appropriate approaches are currently being tested and implemented both in research and in the transfer of scientific results to society. In the IRS's spatial research, for example in the Research Area's Lead Project on the transformation in Berlin-Brandenburg after 1989/90, new approaches of deep mapping are being applied, which are intended to make visible extended dimensions of historical reality beyond conventional methodological approaches such as map and

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document analyses or interviews with eyewitnesses; showing, for example, overlapping realities of different actors or subjective perceptions. The latter can thus be integrated into research designs and presented on multimedia, temporally differentiated maps on widely accessible websites.

At the IRS, new possibilities for historical research are emerging through the digitalisation of the planning history holdings of the Scientific Collections, which has been accelerated for some time. The provision of a growing proportion of the archive in digital form is often the prerequisite for the presentation of the material on the web in the first place and thus for completely new approaches to historical analysis for broad circles. With the help of special funds from the state of Brandenburg, it was also possible to purchase new hardware and software for creating high-resolution image, sound and video recordings, for determining geodata in space and for simulating buildings and spaces and their development on the PC. In this way, individual buildings or entire city areas can be represented in three-dimensional perspective. If their development over time is also simulated, 4D representations are possible, as they have already been used in archaeology or architecture. The know-how accumulated in the Research Area around the neces-

Poster exhibition, analogue mapping and digital Citizen Science of the IRS at the Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften Berlin 2022

sary hardware and software can ultimately also be offered as a service to other interested institutions, such as the offices for the preservation of historical monuments.

Another new element is the integration of Citizen Science approaches into historical research, a concept that is also becoming more widespread in the historical sciences and for which there is now even a Green Paper. Both in the project "Stadterneuerung am Wendepunkt" (Urban Renewal at the Turning Point; see p. 8, p. 13), which investigated the struggle of citizens' groups against the decay of old towns in the GDR, and in the project "CitizenArchives" (see p. 22), online tools are being developed that make it easier for citizens to contribute their knowledge and documents on the respective topic or to help with the indexing of archival records. In the end, everyone involved benefits from this, not least the research community. What is decisive is that all these new technological tools and media, together with the digitalisation offensive in the archives, offer potential for truly innovative research, which without them would not be achievable at all or only with much more effort using conventional means.

In addition to research, the transfer of the knowledge gained to society is becoming increasingly important for research institutions and is – quite rightly – increasingly demanded by the funders of research such as ministries or foundations. New media and formats have also been increasingly used in this area recently. For some time now, these have included obligatory websites on individual research projects, but now – as in the "Stadtwende" project – they are provided with interactive map displays fed from deposited databases. Such interactive representations and tools allow users to conduct independent questions and knowledge queries through faceted searches of the presented content, which can not only

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be more interesting than static representations, but in turn enable new research activities.

But other products have also been advanced and tested recently. These include, for example, a podcast on the historical and current social significance of the demolished Palace of the Republic, audio walks on the "authentication" of the building heritage (see p. 18) as well as on the resistance of citizens' groups against the decay of the old city in East Berlin, or forums on social networks actively co-created by individual researchers of the Research Area, for example on the significance of the architectural Modernism of the GDR. All these formats are organised with the aim of connecting experts with lay people from the middle of society.

The advantages of the new media approaches are obvious: with digital tools and a participatory approach, research can be carried far more strongly into society; it thus becomes more democratic and supported by a broader social base, i.e. also by people from different social milieus. In particular, the new, technology-supported media and formats of addressing and imparting knowledge provide a lower threshold of access compared to traditional media, and thus the barriers to their reception are lower. This makes research more relevant for society as a whole, because more citizens can engage with topics that interest them. At the same time, however, the new approaches are also helpful for research, which thus is more likely to exit its self-imposed isolation in the famous ivory tower. With the help of digital technologies, new knowledge resources are opened up in the form of the participation of lay people, whose contributions have tended to be underestimated in research up to now.

The target group of the new mediation approaches are the citizens who finance research through their taxes

17th Workshop Talk on GDR Planning History at the IRS

For more than 25 years, the Werkstattgespräche (Workshop Talks) on the history of building and planning in the GDR have brought together important actors in this field of research. The conference sees itself as a place for the exchange of new methods, approaches and topics of research into the urban planning and architectural heritage of the GDR, as an international, intergenerational and interdisciplinary networking platform for researchers in this field, and as a discussion forum with contemporary witnesses who were active in GDR urban planning and architecture. The latter are considered important sources for reflecting on a history that has not yet been fully completed, so their participation and contributions to the discussion are expressly welcomed. In May 2022, the workshop discussion took place for the 17th time. The focus was on classic topics such as the "slab" and special building typologies such as sports facilities, buildings of the State Security Service and the playhouse in the former Karl-Marx-Stadt. Another focus of this workshop discussion was on analyses of strategies for dealing with historic city centres.

17.
W E R K S T A T T
G E S P R Ä C H
zur DDR-Planungsgeschichte
19. – 20. Mai 2022

To the detailed event report

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and are sometimes also very interested in individual topics. We especially direct our findings via these new formats to people who can provide important, previously undiscovered documents on the topic, with the help of which research can be conducted and which can additionally be made permanently available to the public and research via the archive. However, we are also interested in getting in touch with individuals, groups, local history societies, historical associations or such lay people who are interested in individual topics, buildings or towns or who can even provide material, photos or knowledge themselves on certain facts depicted in photos or documents. This in turn enriches research and the archive.

New approaches to historical research and knowledge transfer supported by digital media and technologies are thus by no means a substitute for established research methods and communication formats. The latter retain their justification. Rather, it is a matter of strategically integrating new approaches into previous research and communication

Further Reading

Hoppe-Hartmann, Thorsten (2018): Citizen Science – Ein neues Konzept für die Geschichtswissenschaft oder ein alter Hut? Blogbeitrag in: #historisierend – KARLS GESCHICHTE(N). geschichten.hypotheses.org

Vohland, Katrin u. a. (eds.) (2021): The Science of Citizen Science. Springer, Heidelberg. SpringerLink Open Access.

GEWISS-Konsortium (2016): Grünbuch Citizen Science Strategie 2020 für Deutschland. In: Bürger schaffen Wissen. Die Citizen-Science-Platt-form. www.buerger-schaffenwissen.de

designs in a meaningful way and thus addressing broader sections of the population and new groups of recipients to whom access has often not been so easy to find to date. ∎

The Struggle against Urban Decay in Contemporary Witness Interviews: A Short Research Report on Old Town Initiatives in the GDR

Working with eyewitnesses has a dubious reputation in historical research. For a long time, it was only considered a means of illustration. But personal recollection can also serve as a source of important insights – especially in combination with and in contrast to written sources. IRS historian Julia Wigger used this combination of methods in her research on old town initiatives in the GDR. Here she shows how the two types of sources complemented each other.

The contemporary witness as the natural enemy of the historian – this more or less serious bon mot appears sooner or later when working with contemporary witnesses in historical research projects. There is no denying the methodological challenges in dealing with self-conducted interviews: Many studies have appeared on the relationship between individual memory and societal remembrance in the humanities and social sciences. Among other things, the fluidity and inadequacies of memory have been pointed out. Scholars have also repeatedly emphasised the subjectivity of oral reports. Researchers have also reflected on the importance of the person conducting the interview, which should not be underestimated. The setting, the manner and the way the questions are asked have an immense influence on the answers that are formulated. In addition, the use of eyewitnesses for the sole purpose of providing evidence or authenticity has often been criticised. Yet despite all the methodological challenges, a large number of research projects have now impressively demonstrated the added value of working with eyewitnesses, also for research on GDR history. Particularly when it comes to everyday and social history, it is not always possible to find (complete) written records on the issues at stake.

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Focus on the Urban Population

It is therefore hardly surprising that the joint research project "Urban Renewal at the Turning Point" ("Stadtwende" - for details on the project, see p. 13) also aimed to include contemporary witnesses from the very beginning. Since 2019, I have been focusing on the urban population in the collaborative project, which deals with the handling of historical building fabric in the GDR and East Germany. My task in the project is to ask how citizens reacted to progressive decay and planned demolitions. I am also writing my dissertation on this topic, which is in the field of historical studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and is supervised by Christoph Bernhardt and Heike Wieters.

One of the starting theses was that decay and vacancy not only provoked anger and migration to the new development areas, but also led to a social activation. In order to examine this, I focus on the so-called old town initiatives. Similar to peace, environmental or women's groups, the old town initiatives were an organised form of engagement that began to emerge in the mid-1980s. Citizens joined together in groups to work for the historical building fabric. To do this,

Securing the timber-framed house Alter Markt 31 in Halle (Saale), 1985

Photo: Peter Girke, kindly provided by Arbeitskreis Innenstadt e.V., Association for the Preservation of Historical Monuments and Urban Development Halle

Work on the city graveyard, Halle, 1983. Photo: Ralf Moritz via AKI Halle

it was soon clear that interviews would be another important building block for my doctorate. The interviews I conducted did not follow the traditional oral history approach, i.e. letting people tell their life stories, but were supported by a previously prepared guideline that was used in an adapted form for each interview. The questions to the interviewees were directed at their commitment to the historic building fabric. I was also interested in how the actors assessed their commitment retrospectively or what significance they attributed to the 1989/90 caesura. In some cases, the interviewees also gave me written materials from private collections, which were then returned or – after consultation – handed over to relevant archives.

More than just Vivid Anecdotes

Conducting the interviews was the most entertaining part of the process. The transcription and evaluation of the interviews, which usually lasted about one and a half hours, turned out to be time-consuming but at the same time necessary work. Only in this way is it possible for me to relate the interviews to each other, but also to written sources and the research literature, and to classify them.

Among other things, the interviews give personal impressions of how the interviewees perceived life with and in the historic building fabric. Mr W. from the Saxon town of Pirna, for example, recalled:

"Well, it was obvious in the 1970s and then very strongly in the 1980s that the houses were really deteriorating in the last decade of the GDR era. I myself lived in the old town at that time and improvised with craftsmen, friends and acquaintances. So we repaired gutters ourselves. We also closed up holes with roofing felt. [...] So we were forced, if we wanted to stay in the old town, to save a lot of

they picked up the tools and carried out repairs themselves, they wrote petitions or organised exhibitions. Often they integrated themselves into state structures such as the Kulturbund or the local housing district committees in order to avoid criminalisation. My research interest in the Old Town initiatives is strongly oriented towards social history and less towards architectural history. The focus is on questions about the emergence, composition, practices and development of the groups beyond the social upheaval of 1989/90.

It was already known at the beginning of the project that there was an important and extensive corpus of sources in the Archive of the GDR Opposition of the Robert Havemann Society that documented the work of the old town Initiatives in detail. The corpus was created by IBIS, the Information and Advisory Institute for Civic Urban Renewal, and documented the activities of the old town initiatives since 1990. In addition, I assumed that I would find further written records in the state archives as well as in the city museums and archives. Nevertheless,

The evaluation of the interviews must not stop at using descriptions that impressively underline what has already been proven in scientific research with sober figures. It is also about taking the interviews seriously as a source and deriving new insights from them.

things through repairs and improvisation. However, one house after the other was closed down, bricked up, nailed shut, and it was a gruesome sight to walk through the town on a gloomy November day in the mid-1980s."

The quotation vividly illustrates the condition of the old towns. However, the evaluation of the interviews must not stop at using descriptions that impressively underline what has already been proven in scientific research with sober figures. It is also a matter of taking the interviews seriously as a source and deriving new insights from them.

A concrete example can show the added value of the interviews particularly well. For example, I am dealing with the question of when supra-regional contacts existed between the Old Town initiatives. However, this can hardly be answered from the written sources alone. This is because supra-regional meetings are only documented in detail from 1990 onwards. In the interviews conducted – and also in the background discussions that were not recorded or transcribed – an event at the Academy of Arts of the GDR was mentioned again and again, which called for saving the old towns on 11 December 1989. Only very brief references to this event can be found both in the contemporary press and in the literature. Details about the content or participants, which would have allowed conclusions about the size and significance, are completely missing. Without the advice of my interlocutors, I would probably have underestimated the significance of this event. In addition, a folder with the collected materials from the event turned up at one of the witnesses' homes. This collection of material, together with the interviews conducted, made it possible to reconstruct the speakers and their contributions and to identify the event as an important milestone in the supra-regional networking of the old town ini-

Work in the Solbad Wittekind, Halle, 1989. Photo: AKI Halle

The interviews provide information about the motivation and self-image of the activists, for which there are hardly any references in the written sources. But they also open up a view for details, they point out connections that are not written down and give new suggestions for research in the archives.

tiatives. A classification that would not have been possible solely on the basis of the available written sources and existing literature.

Take Contradictions Seriously

But it is not always easy to integrate narratives with the findings from written records. For example, the search for contemporary witnesses who could tell me something about the work at the Round Table of Citizens' Initiatives in the Ministry of Construction or the supra-regional meetings of the Old Town Initiatives organised by IBIS in the early 1990s proved difficult. Yet both the Round Table at the Ministry of Construction and the IBIS meetings are well documented in the written records. With the help of attendance lists, I was even able to keep track of who had taken part. However, many of those who were contacted could not remember having been there, or they remembered it only very vaguely and in retrospect attributed a subordinate importance to the events for their engagement. This was in contradiction to the importance of these supra-

Rykestraße in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg 1987

regional meetings that I had assumed, since they were well and extensively documented in the IBIS inventory and proved the diversity of the topics discussed as well as the initially large participation of numerous old town initiatives. However, non-remembrance must also be taken seriously. On the one hand, this can be interpreted against the background of the many parallel changes and developments in 1989/90. At the same time, the non-remembrance must also be seen against the background of the further development of the old town initiatives. Already at the beginning of the 1990s, many old town initiatives stopped their work again or focused their commitment more on their own city. The number of participants in the supra-regional IBIS meetings also declined. It is therefore not surprising that in retrospect the supra-regional networking is not considered to have played a major role, as it has not been able to establish itself in the present. At the same time, it cannot be concluded from these personal assessments that the supra-regional departure was not successful or not important.

The examples given here are examples of how I use the self-conducted interviews in my dissertation. I regard them as sources that stand alongside the written records, and just as these must be subjected to careful source criticism. With this approach, the interviews provide me with information about the motivation and self-image of the activists, for example, about which there are hardly any references in the written sources. But the interviews also open my eyes to details, they repeatedly point out connections that have not been written down and give me new ideas for my research in the archives.

Oral history is so beautiful because it comes with so many problems, as the Austrian historian Albert Lichtblau once put it at an event. That is certainly another of those half-joking sentences, but I would agree with him: The methodological challenges are complex, the time required is immense, but the added value for research should not be underestimated and the resulting encounters are definitely worth the work. ∎

Urban Renewal at the Turning Point

Since the beginning of 2019, the collaborative project "Urban Renewal at the Turning Point – the Significance of Citizens' Initiatives against Old Town Decay for the Peaceful Revolution in the GDR" ("Stadtwende") has been running. It is the first project dedicated to the comprehensive historical study of citizens' groups that opposed the decay of the old towns, which was condoned by the GDR leadership. The project network, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), brings together historians from Technische Universität Kaiserslautern, where the network management and coordination is also based, the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Universität Kassel and the IRS. The project runs from the beginning of 2019 until the end of 2022.

The project aims to contribute to research on social movements as well as on the functioning of the GDR's institutional system. It also addresses the question of the extent to which the aforementioned citizens' groups, together with other reform forces within GDR institutions, for example in urban planning offices, contributed to the peaceful revolution of 1989 and the demise of the GDR. The citizens' groups also had an impact beyond the end of the GDR, as some of their protagonists ended up in influential positions such as city planning offices and parliaments after the fall of communism.

The ▶ stadtwende.de project is intensively seeking exchange with the public. The project website stadtwende.de is a central component of the project's digital public relations work. It documents the work of the citizens' groups with photos, films, documents, interview excerpts, texts, open access publications and other background information. The website also offers an interactive map visualisation in connection with a database that links places, civic groups, institutions, people, etc. and presents them including background information.

Travelling Exhibition

In addition to the website, the joint project 2021 has created a travelling exhibition that can be seen at various locations of the urban turnaround. The exhibition combines the research results of the project with contemporary documents from the exhibition cities and the voices of the contemporary witnesses there. It outlines the GDR's urban renewal and urban development policy, but also focuses on the people involved, in addition to looking at contemporary history and building policy.

- Erfurt 4 September 2022 to 7 October 2022
- Schwerin 18 October 2022 to 27 November 2022
- Potsdam 9 December 2022 to 12 February 2023
- Dessau 16 February 2023 to 25 May 2023
- Berlin March 2023 to May 2023
- Weimar June 2023 to July 2023

▶ stadtwende.de/forschungsprojekt/wanderausstellung

Project Volume

In September 2022, Christoph Links Verlag published the project volume "Stadtwende: Bürgerengagement und Altstadterneuerung in der DDR und Ostdeutschland". The volume brings together historical and planning analyses of the multifaceted connections between urban renewal, social awakening and German unity.

Urban Heritage Groups on Facebook: Virtual Spaces for Civic Discourse

The social network Facebook has been an integral part of millions of people's everyday lives for almost 20 years. Compared to Twitter or Instagram, the platform is less focused on real-time news and offers space for immersion instead. Although Facebook has been criticised for its handling of private data and its insufficient commitment against hate and misinformation, the platform can make valuable contributions, especially in the debate about architectural and urban historical heritage. Facebook groups on architecture and building history are useful for both historical research and public debate.

In spring 2023, after four years of research, the joint project "Urban Turnaround" (see p. 13) will come to an end. In it, civic mobilisation against decay took on a key role, a self-empowerment that preceded the upheaval of 1989 and made it a practical reality in many places, for example by taking over houses. At that time, many people would have been happy to have a platform for the exchange of information and opinions like the online forums offer today. However, experience from contemporary dictatorships shows that even if the technology had been available in principle, it would have been difficult and risky to circulate critical contributions back then.

Today, Facebook groups articulate different perspectives on heritage conservation, urban history and urban design. On the one hand, they enrich the political discourse and on the other hand, they can also form a starting point for the concept of Citizen Science. In addition to forums that deal with questions of the cityscape and its aesthetics on a very broad level, there are those with a thematically more sharply defined focus. In the ones presented here, the author of the article is reading and sometimes commenting.

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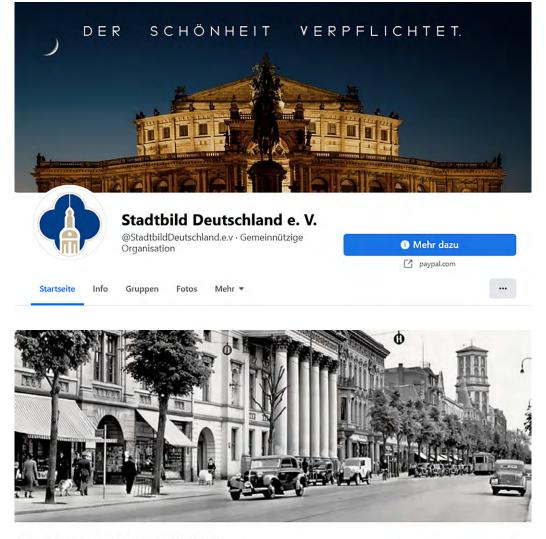
GDR Architecture as a Building Heritage Worth Preserving

Among the groups that take a friendly approach to the architectural testimonies of socialism in East Germany, three loosely connected forums stand out. They share the claim of bringing together the centre of society and the professional world, whereby the focal points vary, but the topics and actors overlap. All of them are concerned with making the design qualities and potential of GDR architecture visible, as well as with possible interventions in the face of imminent demolitions. Current publications and events are also announced. "Ostmodern.org, the Network for Post-War Modern Architecture" has over 2,600 followers. The forum grew out of an association formed in Dresden in 2006 for the preservation of "significant buildings, building-related works of art, open space designs and urban ensembles" from the GDR era. The aim is to found as many regional groups as possible in order to work locally in the interest of preservation.

The "FG OSTMODERN" (OSTMODERN Research Group) is somewhat broader in content, but smaller in number with just under 1,400 members. It sees itself as "a platform for networking all activists who deal with the topics of urban development, architecture and architecture-related art in the GDR". The

ostmodern.org

2.424 „Gefällt mir"-Angaben · 2.603 Follower

Beiträge   Info   Fotos   Videos   ...

Stadtbild Deutschland e. V.

@StadtbildDeutschland.e.v · Gemeinnützige
Organisation

🛈 Mehr dazu

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Startseite   Info   Gruppen   Fotos   Mehr ▾   ...

Dessau im Wandel der Zeit

🔒 Private Gruppe · 3.179 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten   ˅

Info   Diskussion

spectrum ranges from contributions from research contexts to ambitious lay interest to nostalgia. The "Philokartie" series by Ben Kaden and Louis Volkmann, an annotated presentation of architectural postcards, received a strong response here: it was not only the GDR buildings, ensembles and works of art in public space immortalised on them that captivated, but also the concise explanations of motifs, authorships and history of use.

This genre of a mass-distributed visual document hinted at a perspective that gave Kaden, as a library scholar, the idea of interweaving the field of lay research in the online public sphere with the recording of pictorial evidence by professionals in the archives. To this end, he developed a conceptual study in coordination with the Scientific Collections of the IRS to tap into the wealth of knowledge of the residents – a future practice that should benefit the differentiated evaluation of the peasant heritage (see also p. 22). More sustained efforts will be needed to make such interaction fruitful. Finally, reference should be made to the group "Magistrale und Komplex – Städtebau, Kunst, Architektur im (Post)Sozialismus" (Magistrale and Complex – Urbanism, Art, Architecture in (Post) Socialism), which, with just under 190 members, is once again more strongly oriented towards a scientific community interested in the topic. Here the perspective expands in an interdisciplinary fashion beyond the borders of the GDR.

The Pre-Modern Urban Ideal

As a counterpart to the previous groups and with reference to the whole of Germany, the page "Stadtbild Deutschland e. V. – neue klassische Architektur & Rekonstruktion" (Cityscape Germany – New Classical Architecture & Recon-

Today, Facebook groups articulate different perspectives on heritage conservation, urban history and urban design. On the one hand, they enrich the political discourse and on the other hand, they can also form a starting point for the concept of Citizen Science.

struction) represents perspective critical towards modernity, which has a great impact on the current building scene. The postings are currently followed by over 2,300 interested people. By seeing themselves as committed to "urban repair and building culture, reconstruction and new classical architecture", the examples of conservative urban architecture shown (often presented by the designing offices themselves), which are often surrounded by a discreetly elitist aura, are placed in the line of tradition of the socially committed movement of the 1970s. Almost unanimously, post-war modernism is seen as "soulless" and "failed". Instead, closed spatial solutions based on the pre-war state and historically appealing new building façades appear as exemplary. The ideal is considered to be the most exact possible reconstruction of existing buildings or at least their suggestion.

As in the cases of the Neumarkt in Dresden and the Garnisonkirche in Potsdam, buildings of GDR modernism are seen here as a particularly unpleasant obstacle to a cityscape full of character. The mention of Ulrich Müther's shell buildings in a survey of appreciative modern architecture that seems almost dissident at this point is an original exception. However, the façade of the Dresden Semper Opera, rebuilt in the late GDR era, appears on the header under the group's motto "Committed to Beauty". Probably under the impression of the expert debate on "right-wing spaces" (in urban reconstruction), the administrators in 2020 made it clear that there was no place for extremism in the group, indeed that any politicisation of the discussion was to be refrained from. Wherever impressive testimonies of historical buildings are found, and especially when their decay is deplored – as in the case of many half-timbered houses in

the town of Alsfeld in the state of Hesse – a consensus is reached with otherwise reconstruction-sceptical fence-sitters of this forum.

City-Based Forums: The Example of Dessau

Those interested in the processes within a local framework will find themselves in forums on the cultural and architectural history of individual cities. Sometimes – but not always – they are focused on specific eras. Many of the posters build on an in-depth knowledge of their home region. In quick succession, visual finds from private collections, internet auctions or publications appear (which does not always make the question of rights easy). The Facebook group "Dessau Through the Ages" is particularly interesting as an example.

The Mulde city in the former small state of Anhalt, princely residence, centre of the "Garden Kingdom" around 1800, Junkers' and Bauhaus city was a centre of the Garden City movement since the 1920s. During National Socialism, Dessau became the capital of the Gau and a production site for Zyklon B. 85 % of Dessau's centre was destroyed in the Second World War, rebuilt under socialist rule and comprehensively de-industrialised after the fall of communism. Thus Dessau combines the heights and abysses of German history like few other places. The wealth of historical testimonies, contrasted by the demolition of the remaining historical substance in the years before and after reunification, creates a collective memory that provides material for lively discussions. Younger people and newcomers in particular learn more about their place of residence for the first time. The fact that many current problems of urban development and thus of the economy and politics

Müther-Tower in Binz

Online forums are an invaluable resource for research because they activate knowledge resources. At the same time, as places of broad participation in social discourse, they are a communicative bridge to people from different milieus with their life situations and narratives. The benefit of meeting at eye level lies on both sides.

come up requires skill on the part of the administrators in moderating without prematurely excluding. As a station of the "Stadtwende" exhibition, Dessau-Roßlau, as it was renamed after a merger, has its own module dedicated to the loss of the old town and to citizens' groups in the GDR. Valuable contacts were made for this via the online platform.

For us as researchers – and especially in the "Stadtwende" project - these online forums are an invaluable source through their activation of knowledge resources. At the same time, as places of broad participation in social discourse, they are a communicative bridge to people from different milieus with their life situations and narratives. The benefit of the encounter at eye level lies on both sides – with lay people and in the scientific community. While the groups discussed in the first two sections are largely fixed in their basic orientation (which does not affect their validity for the time being), controversies about the value of certain building stocks, for example, can become more apparent in the Dessau Forum. Knowing this helps to correctly assess the gain in knowledge to be expected in each case. ∎

How Notions of Authenticity Shape the Treatment of Urban Building Heritage

Which parts of a city's building stock are considered authentic, meaningful and worthy of preservation says a lot about the currently valid values and discursive negotiations of an urban society. The project "Urban Authenticity" explores how the building heritage of European cities was "authenticated" in this way from the 1970s onwards. Through visual and auditory online media, it makes the processes tangible for the general public – for example, with an audio walk through Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

Buildings are the dress of a city. They provide orientation, create identity and give urban space a certain atmosphere. Recent debates about the creation of the Humboldt Forum in the reconstructed Berlin Palace, the threatened demolition of the GDR Sports and Recreation Centre (SEZ) in Berlin or the reconstruction of the Potsdam Garnisonkirche (Garrison Church) show how different the ideas of an urban society are about what a city centre should look like and which architectural styles, epochs and layers of time should be represented. In the joint project "Urban Authenticity: Creating, Contesting, and Visualising the Built Heritage in European Cities since the 1970s" (UrbAuth), several research institutions are jointly investigating how certain parts of the built heritage in European urban societies have been "authenticated" and thus given value since the 1970s – through public debates and through the practices of citizens' initiatives, city administrations and other actors. The question of urban authenticity is explored on the basis of four case studies: Szczecin (Poland), Potsdam (GDR), Nuremberg (Federal Republic of Germany) and Marseille (France). All sub-projects are developing a website on authentication processes with a focus on the Berlin-Brandenburg region.

The question of authenticity as an apparently "real", "pure" and "true" property of things has become an important public discourse in recent decades. Authenticity is understood
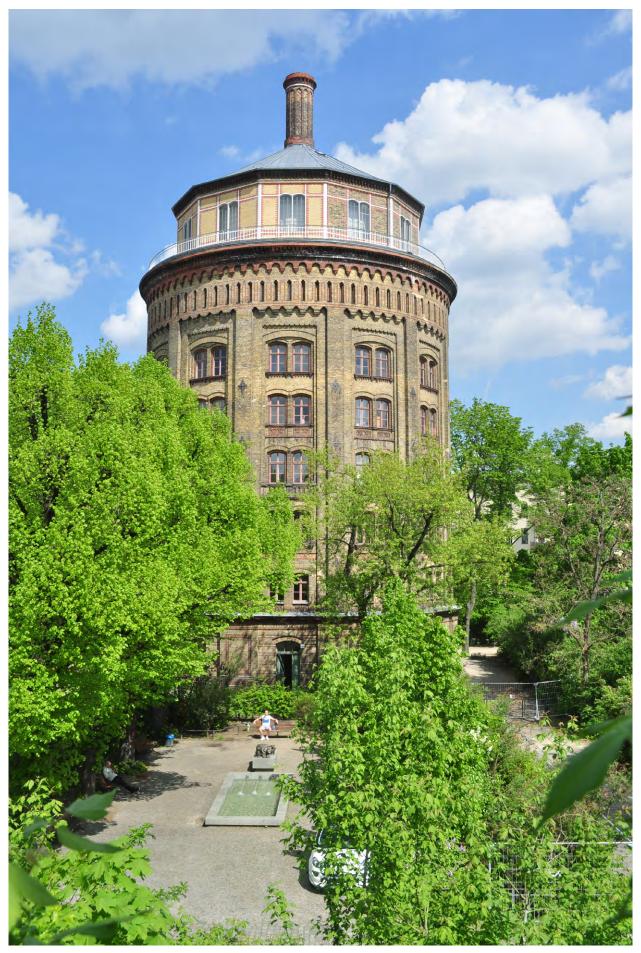
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as discourses and practices that classify certain objects as significant and identify them as worthy of preservation within the framework of a scientific, heritage conservation, but also urban society canon of values. What is perceived as authentic is considered authentic – regardless of whether a building, as in Berlin's central quarter of Nikolaiviertel, has actually stood immovably on the same spot for centuries (Knoblauchhaus), has been artificially recreated as a historical mock-up (Tavern "Zum Nußbaum") or has been moved to a new location (Ephraim-Palais). Authentication processes therefore reflect discourses in urban societies. They include the demolition of controversial sites, the staging of landmarks, the reconstruction of demolished sites, the disinterested letting them fall into disrepair or the deliberate staging of a historical building with stains and cracks. At the heart of the matter is the question of how a city should look and which building heritage is valued, ignored or disputed in a particular era.

"Urban Authenticity" Online: See, Hear and Walk the Heritage

The Urban Authenticity project makes its research public not only through specialist publications, but also on the internet. The diversity of discussions about building heritage, especially with a view to Berlin-Brandenburg, can be seen and heard online. For example, the Brandenburg Museum Association

Historic water tower at the Wasserturmplatz in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg

Garnisonkirche Potsdam, 1920

Rechenzentrum Potsdam

is showing 27 objects on urban authenticity in Brandenburg in an online exhibition. An interactive website with a map and a thematic presentation of authentication processes in the Berlin-Brandenburg region with further examples from Germany, Poland and France is currently being planned. Its publication is planned for the End of 2022. Two audio walks have also been published on the Guidemate portal (https://guidemate.com) and are available free of charge in the web browser or in the Guidemate app. Users can walk through a district along predefined routes and receive background information on the buildings they encounter along the way, just like an audio guide in a museum.

Original, real, authentic?
A search for traces in
Berlin–Prenzlauer Berg

The German-language audio walk "Original, echt, authentisch? Eine Spurensuche in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg" (Original, real, authentic? A search for traces in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg) describes what was considered authentic for Prenzlauer Berg or is still considered authentic for the neighbour-

What would today's Prenzlauer Berg be summed up in a sound? The rolling of prams, the music in Mauerpark or the sound of the underground train in Eberswalder Straße station?

hood on the basis of six different locations in history from the 19th century to the present. Different facets of authentication become clear during the one-and-a-half-hour neighbourhood tour from Mauerpark to Wasserturmplatz: in Oderberger Strasse, attention is drawn to the role of citizens' initiatives in the GDR for the redevelopment of old buildings, in Kastanienallee 77 to the role of squatters and artists since the 1990s, and in Oderberger Strasse 2 to the gentrification process over the last 30 years. The station on Husemann-straße points to the numerous projects for historical reconstruction in the GDR in the 1980s and the so-called "Judengang" to the history of the Jewish population between exclusion and assimilation. The last station, the water tower, shows the development from an industrial site and early concentration camp during the Nazi era to its current use as a green space. It becomes clear that there are very different facets of authentication and associations with Prenzlauer Berg. What is Prenzlauer Berg: a "Bionade-Biedermeier" trendy neighbourhood, a working-class district, a district for artists and opposition figures, or a middle-class district? What would today's Prenzlauer Berg be

summed up in one sound? The rolling of prams, the music in Mauerpark or the sound of the underground in the Eberswalder Straße station?

The IRS researchers Julia Wigger, Daniel Hadwiger and Małgorzata Popiołek-Roßkamp developed the audio walk in cooperation with the association Audiokombinat, the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF) and with financial support from the Leibniz Research Network "Historical Authenticity". The exchange with Leibniz institutes producing other audio walks on historical authenticity in Berlin, Potsdam, Marburg, Frankfurt a. M. and Leipzig as well as the professional support by Audiokombinat facilitated the production in this new format considerably. ■

Geliebt, umstritten, verloren, wiederentdeckt.
Online exhibition on urban authenticity in Brandenburg

▶ themator.museum-digital.de

The joint project "Urban Authenticity: Creating, Contesting, and Visualising the Built Heritage in European Cities since the 1970s" is funded by the Leibniz Association and runs from 2020 to 2024. It is coordinated by Christoph Bernhardt at the IRS. In addition to the IRS, the Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF), the Institute of Contemporary History Munich-Berlin (IfZ), the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe (HI) in Marburg and the Brandenburg Museum Association are involved.

Listen in
– German language –

„Echt authentisch? Ein Hörspaziergang durch Potsdams Mitte"
The audio walk, created by historians from the ZZF Potsdam, leads to 15 stations in Potsdam's city centre – to buildings, squares and streets that are often touted as authentic.

Audiowalk
„Original, echt, authentisch? Eine Spurensuche in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg"
The audio walk, created by historians from the IRS, leads to various sites of history in Prenzlauer Berg, to supposedly authentic places. Along the way are Mauerpark and Oderberger Straße, Kastanienallee and the former entrance to the Jewish cemetery, as well as Husemannstraße and the water tower.

On the Way to the Participatory Archive: Digitalisation and Citizen Science in the IRS Scientific Collections

Citizen Science is finding its way into more and more areas of research, including archival work. The IRS Scientific Collections have not only made great strides in recent years in providing technical infrastructures for the digitalisation of their holdings. They are also leading the way in public participation in the indexing of holdings, developing solutions for many other specialised archives in the process.

Citizens identify insects, analyse baby sounds and document the orbit of stars. And with their commitment, they are advancing the sciences a great deal. The so-called Citizen Sciences have produced a diverse repertoire of projects in recent years. The natural sciences in particular have become pioneers of a promising social development. On the Zooniverse portal for Citizen Science projects hosted by Oxford University, researchers from all over the world can upload their data and share it for processing.

But Citizen Science has also found its way into historical research. Small museums with a strong regional focus in particular ask their users to come to the archives for help with indexing. And so one can sometimes observe citizens there deciphering Sütterlin texts, cleaning insect boxes and holding almost faded glass slides up to the light to describe their contents. In doing so, they help solve one of the most common problems of small archives: For these are often in possession of great collections, sometimes even have quite good equipment in scanners and computers. But they lack the staff to index the holdings, i.e. to describe the contents of their boxes and cabinets, cupboards and drawers and to provide them with computer-readable metadata. And so valuable treasures slumber in the archives, and it will mostly be years before the public even learns that they exist.

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The scientific collections of the IRS with their unique holdings on the building and planning history of the GDR are a prototype of these small archives: their collection of the holdings of the former Institute for Urban Planning and Architecture (ISA) of the GDR Building Academy, the Association of Architects of the GDR and a large number of estates of the leading heads of GDR architecture and planning is unparalleled. With the help of special funding by the Leibniz Association, the possibility has been created since 2020 to digitise the holdings and present them online. Hardware and software for managing the holdings and describing their contents was purchased for this purpose, thus creating the basis for a modern digital infrastructure. However, personnel funds for the actual digitalisation and indexing work always flow only sporadically, often within the framework of third-party funded projects. Staff is often only hired for a limited period of time and at the end of the projects, a large part of the accumulated knowledge is lost when staff members leave.

In view of a call for proposals from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), which solicited cooperation from science and business for the benefit of the common good, the idea arose to set up a third-party funded project together with the company Programmfabrik, manufacturer of the digital asset management system Easydb that was

purchased. The goal: to bring together the know-how of IT experts, archivists and scientists in order to make citizen knowledge usable for the indexing of the collections. This is how the project "Development of a Citizen Science and Semantic Web-based Procedure for Digitising and Indexing the Holdings of Small Archives" or "CitizenArchives" for short, came into being, led by Rita Gudermann and Paul Perschke.

The conditions were promising, as the Scientific Collections of the IRS can draw on a lively circle of interested people. For years, the research focus Contemporary History and Archives at the IRS has been organising so-called Workshop Talks and bringing together contemporary witnesses and scholars at lectures and over coffee. The bond between the bequeather and the researcher is close, the conversations are intense and sometimes conflict-laden. It often becomes clear that contemporary witnesses often know the records of individual institutions better than those working in the archives, especially in the case of a collection that is still being built up. When it comes to evaluating the archival documents and placing them in the larger context, however, opinions can diverge.

So why not involve these very interested people in describing the collections? Perhaps they would even be willing to add to the collections by uploading their own photos and other materials? For this idea to work, however, the existing user interfaces had to be adapted, because citizens are not really enthusiastic about deeply nested categories and complex fields for metadata, as offered by professional cataloguing software and as they delight the hearts of archive staff. Therefore, it was considered to provide the latter with a specially secured access to the software, in which already digitised holdings are recorded. The entries of the participants were to be collected in
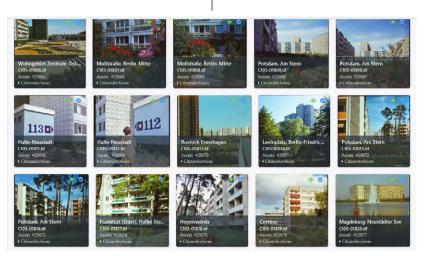
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separate metadata fields. The images to be described now appear on an easier-to-use interface, and the fields for entering data have been greatly reduced. It will also be possible to upload new images.

Whether this idea worked was first tested among family and friends and then at the Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften (Long Night of the Sciences) in Berlin with the help of a simple user interface of the existing database infrastructure. Although not quite as well attended as in previous years due to the pandemic, queues formed at the PC set up at this event. Visitors who grew up in the GDR in particular were delighted to rediscover the streets and buildings of their childhood and youth. Initial insights into the users and their preferences were also gained during the Lange Nacht: It became apparent that older people liked to use the offer in the company of their children. Access by district offered the best access to the material for most people. And data entry, it quickly became clear, worked best with the help of free fields in which information of all kinds could be entered. These findings are now being refined with the help of further test interfaces and test users.

However, such an approach should not remain completely without control. For who can guarantee that the

Screenshot of the Easydb user interface

Test run of the Easydb user interface at the Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften Berlin 2002

Citizen Scientists do not make mistakes when describing the material, that their memory does not deceive them, that they do not perhaps even deliberately embellish or even provide misrepresentations? The solution to this serious problem was included in the project proposal. There will be staggered editing rights for different users. The data entered will also be checked individually by an online editorial team. And finally, semantic web technologies will be used that can use language analysis to draw conclusions about the correctness of entries and flag suspicious contributions for further review. This also brings artificial intelligence technology into citizen science. Before this technology can come into play, however, there must first be a sufficiently large number of real user entries.

In the future, these new functions will be integrated into the Easydb software in the form of open-source plug-ins and will thus be available to other cultural institutions. In addition, the company Programmfabrik is preparing an open-source solution into which archives that do not use the Easydb software can also upload their images for description by citizens. So an infrastructure is being developed that can

be used in the long term not only for the "CitizenArchives" project, but also for the classic indexing of archive holdings by employees. In the long term, there should also be an integration of the "CitizenArchives" interface into the portal of the IRS research focus with the scientific collections, which is currently being created and will enable online access to the extensive holdings for the first time.

The expected scientific and archival added value is great: the time saved in indexing the archival records is only one factor. The transfer of knowledge that the citizens provide through their work should not be underestimated. Entirely new bodies of knowledge, vocabularies and perspectives are opened up for the description of the holdings. Community building is also an important factor, because the joint work on making the archives available binds people together. To ensure that the whole thing is on a solid footing, scientific support for the project has been provided. The first promising results give hope that larger holdings of the scientific collections will soon be accessible to the public. Thus, the project aims not only at working with, but ultimately above all for the citizens. ∎

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The IRS is member of the Leibniz Association.

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