

Infrastructural Critique. The Upside Down of the Bottom-Up: A Case Study of the IBA Berlin 84/87

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In 1980, the Berlin administration introduced the programme IBA 84/87 (Internationale Bauausstellung – International Building Exhibition), a development that was meant to shift architectural and urbanistic planning practices in a way that was as silent as it was substantial. Divided into the *IBA-Old*, which took care of neglected and dilapidated city structures, and the *IBA-New*, which dealt with the most contemporary forms of architecture at that time - it was the very dawn of what was to be called postmodernist architecture. In the following article, our concern is the IBA-Old, which aimed to indicate a new way of planning urban and architectural spaces that would both deny and radicalise modern planning strategies. In fact, it turned the urban planning process upside down by incorporating resistance to the redevelopment of whole districts into the body of administrative power. This resistance was fed by the harsh critique from both residents and anarchistic squatters occupying the historic building structures scheduled for demolition. Instead of continuing to battle with the protesters, the Berlin administration began to integrate them into the planning process. This had a double advantage: it brought an end to protests that had lasted for almost two decades, and it provided an easier and cheaper way of refurbishing the city than rebuilding from scratch.

In the following essay, we will try to separate some of the threads that interweave architecture and power – threads that became tighter and more insidious as administrative forces began to unite

opposing viewpoints to their cause. Our case study is the IBA 84/87, when the critique of the dominating practices of modern power inscribed itself into urban space and so lost its role as a counter-strategy.

Apparatuses of critique

To understand how this spatialised critique could be used for the purposes of existing power structures, we first have to clarify the history of power structures as a spatial phenomenon. Modern power structures are both the consequence of modern urbanism as a project of critique and the condition for it. These modern power structures were analysed during the 1970s by a circle of theoreticians around Michel Foucault. The structures were regarded as mechanisms for the reorganisation of life on the one hand, and of space on the other – later to be called ‘biopower’.

In the 1970s, Foucault and his colleagues turned their attention to the period between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth century in order to analyse, among other subjects, the constituents of the modern city alongside ‘population’ as a newly emerging term. Both were investigated as a problem of and a solution to the increasing demand to improve the circumstances of life,¹ and both implied a certain shift in the rationalities embodied by economic, biological and medical knowledge. These bodies of knowledge are a product of critical investigation, generating an *infrastructure of critique* that is both affirmative (since it stabilises the established structures of power) and transformative

(in that it provides alternatives to those structures). The apparatus of critique, however, is the infrastructure of modernism; it is a practice of defining and refining the relations of the infrastructure of critique in space. Thus, space becomes a key issue in that it represents the precondition for analytical science, interpreted as a reciprocity between collecting human data and the immediate environment.² This spatialisation of scientific knowledge effectuated spatialised control as a spatial technique for governing people. According to Foucault, space simultaneously emerged as one of the 'new' problems and one of the 'new' regulatory techniques.³ Space itself was considered as the principal presupposition of the modern sciences that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Foucault emphasises that the sciences themselves are basically spatialising practices.

These critical investigations on rationality and its implications with regard to spatial organisation also incorporate the notion of the *machine*: the healing machine of the human subject as the healing machine of urban space and vice versa – illustrated by Foucault and his colleagues in *Machines à guérir. Aux origines de l'hôpital moderne* (1976).⁴ The term *machine* allows us to investigate the relations between space and power by revealing the organisation of space itself as a mechanism of power inscribed in the human subject (like die casting moulds). As Foucault's example illustrates, the hospital as a machine in itself and in its urban context becomes a laboratory to transform space by scientific practices as much as a project for transforming society.⁵

The project of transformation that took place from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century was based on demographic developments brought about by the Industrial Revolution. As a reaction to contemporary understandings of hygiene and epidemiological knowledge, the transformation of urban space was a matter of regulating the circulation of

air, fluids, people, goods and capital. As a consequence, European cities were adjusted to provide fresh air, fresh water and an efficient disposal system for wastewater. New technologies such as electricity, gas conduits and transportation systems were installed in response to the growing urban population and scientific developments. All of these new urban resources were tantamount to a genuine capitalist infrastructure, necessitated and facilitated by the parallel, emerging ideology of liberalism, which held that things should develop naturally, free from influences that were regarded unnatural. Since the natural sciences claimed to reveal the secrets of nature, the state of things could supposedly be improved by providing the most natural environment; in other words, an environment of unimpeded circulation.

At its very core, however, modern urbanism is a project of critical analyses and a reaction to their results by means of contemporary techniques. The requirement is to modify a city's established guidelines to allow administrative planning for healthy living. The results interfere with the mechanisms of the disciplinary machine and the machine of control, which regulate the population via the human subject. In fact, urban politics provide a parallel process of adjusting the population by adjusting the city. Critique is the very infrastructure of the transformation of the population and the city in order to optimise and stabilise demographic developments and thus the modern state.

Berlin on its way down to bottom up

One of the most remarkable examples of these changing methods of governing population by reforming the techniques of urban planning can be found in West Berlin during the IBA 84/87 process, which lasted for two decades.

After World War II, West Berlin in particular was confronted with a massive lack of housing due to a general increase in migration into the city rather than

to the wartime destruction. Both sides of the Berlin Wall tried to cope by erecting mass housing districts on the fields on the outskirts of the city (such as the *Märkisches Viertel*). As they extended toward the inner city core, these urban developments increasingly affected the 'organic' urban morphology and with it, the residents themselves. From the perspective of West Berlin's authorities, the 'problem' lay with the so-called *Mietskasernen*. It was argued that these tenement houses failed to conform to any contemporary housing standard: they were too densely built, did not correspond to any zoning plan and, overall, were a hotbed for social misbehaviour and epitomised problems such as crime, immigration and unemployment.

In June 1971, the West German government passed a law providing for state-funded urban development that would privilege the funding of redevelopment areas within the cities. This law was later incorporated as *special urban planning legislation* into the national German *Baugesetzbuch* (Town and Country Planning Code),⁶ which enabled city councils to gain massive funding for inner-city redevelopment. However, this law did not determine clearly how this redevelopment should be carried out.

In West Berlin, the declared redevelopment areas were mainly situated within the districts of Wedding, Charlottenburg, Schöneberg and Kreuzberg (which later became the site of the IBA-Old). The enactment of new zoning plans and the declaration of redevelopment areas was followed by considerable neglect of the buildings located in those areas by both public and private owners. Residential buildings and nineteenth-century tenement housing blocks owned by public housing associations such as *Neue Heimat* or the GSW (both non-profit housing associations) were left to deteriorate.⁷ As a consequence, people moved out voluntarily, or were relocated or even evicted when construction work began or the infrastructure was cut off.⁸

In 1968, Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, the new Professor for Building Design at the Berlin Academy for Fine Arts (now Berlin University of the Arts), was commissioned to work on an urban renewal pilot project in the redevelopment area of Wedding.⁹ His architectural office was asked to redevelop three blocks which the authorities believed should be destroyed, given the poor state of their construction. After examining their supporting structure, Hämer declared that 80% of it was safe and the rest was retrievable.¹⁰ Despite the resistance of the housing developer and the planning authorities, he rejected the notion of irreparably dilapidated historic city buildings. He demonstrated that the expenditure required for refurbishing the old structure and renovating the apartments in line with modern standards would be lower than the actual cost of demolition and the ensuing construction of new buildings.¹¹

In the early 1970s, Hämer was commissioned for another pilot project for urban renewal, this time in Charlottenburg. On this occasion, he was supported by West Berlin's first tenant initiative, the *Klausenerplatz e.V.*¹² A long-standing, democratically participatory planning process supplemented the project's goal of renovation, and emphasised Hämer's critique of the politics of construction and urban renewal. The actions conducted both by this 'human force of nature' (as people later referred to him),¹³ and his office, qualify as 'spatialised criticism immanent to the paternalistic planning system'.

Nevertheless, the architect remains the expert and director of a planning process. Although democratically participatory, it does not necessarily hand over the responsibility to the residents. Critique, here, is no longer a force acting upon a system, but becomes a force acting *within* a system. This form of critique can be called *system-immanent criticism*.¹⁴

At about the same time that Hämer was attempting to establish a form of democratically participatory planning in Charlottenburg, another kind of critique emerged in another neglected part of the city. Surrounded on three sides by the Berlin Wall, the former inner city district of Berlin Kreuzberg suddenly became a neglected fringe district, yet one within its very centre. Declared an area of redevelopment in 1971, Kreuzberg, like Wedding, Charlottenburg and Schönefeld, became a potential residential area in need of being cleared of its old, shabby buildings (and social structures).¹⁵

But in Kreuzberg, the tenants' resistance and their strategies proved more persistent. A whole generation of young entrepreneurs, students, adolescents and dropouts, supported by a wide range of other residents (retirees, immigrants and the poor), refused to submit to urban development planning. They practised their critique as an action within the urban space, establishing spatialised alternatives to the contemporary planning doctrine. They squatted abandoned buildings, organised refurbishments and reused these buildings to establish their utopian ideas, economies, neighbourhoods and societies.

The resistance began in 1971, with loose groups of abandoned adolescents and rebellious students squatting the former Bathanien Hospital.¹⁶ A series of further squats in the late 1970s and early 1980s formed a citywide network and a new social movement emerged. The growing number of oppositional groups networking and acting within West Berlin prompted the administration to respond. It actively sought public relations in order to avert the Senate's plan for reconstruction and to appease the emerging opposition.

In 1977, two years before the IBA officially began, the Berlin Senate¹⁷ decided on a *Model for the co-operation of concerned inhabitants* to be initiated as a pilot scheme for conflict resolution.¹⁸ A significant result of this new participatory model

was the competition 'Strategies for Kreuzberg', which involved the association SO36 e.V. (named after Kreuzberg's postal code) as a representative of Kreuzberg's residents. It established a flow of information between the administration and the residents and, moreover, helped to develop suggestions for improvement.¹⁹ The SO36 e.V. was the first step toward the institutionalisation of urban opposition as a process of mediation. Instead of fighting for participation in the various decision-making processes, its aim was to involve the residents into actively designing the district as their own habitat.

Nevertheless, the attempts to self-organise in the wake of the squatting movement did not meet with much approval from the Berlin Senate. On the contrary, most of the occupants of the squatted houses were evicted and the buildings demolished shortly afterwards. Although squatters began to be criminalised by the authorities, they were still widely supported by the local residents, who agreed with their criticism of the Senate's politics and the new urban development, the large quantity of vacant housing despite the high number of residence seekers, and the ineffective renovation advisory board.²⁰

The upside down of bottom-up - infrastructural critique

In actual fact, in 1980 about 10,000 apartments (800-900 buildings) in West Berlin were vacant: they were either in the process of refurbishment or a change of ownership.²¹ By the end of 1981, around one hundred of these buildings were actively being squatted.²² The variety of the squatters' social backgrounds corresponded to the variety of uses the buildings were squatted for, ranging from communal centres, women's housing and kindergartens to cinemas and workshops. What these squatters had in common, however, was their real-life application of utopian ideas of alternative economies, societies, education, culture and politics.

In 1979, as the IBA approached, a socially established group of fifty people entered abandoned buildings to squat several apartments in Görlitzerstraße and Lübbenerstraße in the south-east of Kreuzberg.²³ They squatted these apartments in order to refurbish them within one night. By calling their action *Instandbesetzung*²⁴ they tried to counteract the administration's arguments (for example, that refurbishing dilapidated structures is time-consuming and cost-intensive) by proposing a different and more effective approach.²⁵ What Hardt-Walther Hämer proved through a rather tedious process, *Instandbesetzer* accomplished in broad public view and within a single night. Yielding to public pressure, the 'non-profit' owner association BEWOGÉ negotiated forty new lease contracts for vacant and squatted apartments.²⁶ *Instandbesetzer* was not only one of the first squatter groups but also one of the first movements to question the spatial politics of the authorities by implementing a spatialised critique.

In the course of the next two years, the district of Kreuzberg was witness to a troubled time of urban riots and housing conflicts. At the peak of the squatter movement in 1981, the political climate changed and so did the direction of the IBA. In 1982, Josef Paul Kleihues and Hardt-Walther Hämer became directors of planning for the IBA-New and IBA-Old respectively, replacing Oswald Mathias Ungers and Thomas Sievert after a long period of organisational struggle.²⁷ At the same time, the international political shift from left to right reached West Berlin.²⁸ After elections in that same year, the Christian Democrats enforced an alternative approach to the 'squatter problem'. Squatters who were willing to co-operate with the Senate in order to become legal were defined as the 'good' squatters, whereas the radical groups of the former united squatter network were labelled as criminals, an obstacle to the 'positive' participatory process, and subsequently evicted en bloc.²⁹ The decision by some of the squatter groups, such as

Instandbesetzer (together with tenant initiatives and other associations) to cooperate with the Senate not only dispersed the new social movement but also made the IBA 84/87 into what it is known as today: a gentle, urban renewal movement that preserved, stabilised and refined the existing social and functional urban structures.

Hämer became a key figure in the IBA work of incorporating the squatter movement into the urban development process. Enabled by the Christian Democratic Senate, the left-liberal architect sought the cooperation of SO36 e.V. and *Instandbesetzer*. The IBA was responsible for renovating in total about 10,000 apartments³⁰ in a self-organised construction and participatory process. Hämer and his IBA team were inspired by the squatter movement and its self-managed 'urban repairs', a few of which were even realized in cooperation with the IBA.

The spatialised criticism practised by the squatter movement can thus be qualified as a form of *system-immanent critique* of the entire hierarchical political structure and its paternalistic urban planning strategies. Hämer opened the doors to the institutionalisation of the squatters' *participatory urban development process*. The twelve principles for a 'gentle urban renewal', devised via the IBA, later became the basis for the official urban planning programme supported by the Berlin Senate.

In the main, this process is based on the concept of *Autogestion*. The French term originates from the libertarian theory of organisation, meaning a self-managing-and-taking-charge of situations by organising into small groups to actively change and improve unsatisfying situations on behalf of individual interests. *Autogestion* is a critical tool that aims to detect weaknesses in the state and the existing society, and at the same time operates to provide an (illegal) alternative to the existing power structures of the state. Henri Lefebvre explains

that the stability of the state is based on what he calls 'strong points' in between which there are to be found 'zones of weakness or even lacunae. This is where things happen. Initiatives and social forces act on and intervene in these lacunae, occupying and transforming them into strong points or, on the contrary, into 'something other than what has a stable existence'.³¹ The squatter movement employs these weak zones as their stage of action as well as for their spatialised criticism.

Spatial criticism as spatialised critique is both system-immanent and self-critical, and therefore a genuine consequence of the historical genesis of modern power structures. Translated into the historical development of Berlin urbanism from the 1960s to the 1980s – as in the case of the IBA 84/87 – spatial organisation changed from being controlled by a regulative and hierarchical system into being controlled by a self-regulating system based on critical action and reaction (*Autogestion*), carried out by its individual members in the form of a critique, which can be qualified as infrastructural, whereas formerly, spatial control had been enforced by a hierarchical system, an administrative body, in fact. After the shift in administrative techniques, spatial control was established by every individual subject and element within the city, linked by the urban 'apparatus' of critique. The notion of 'apparatus' 'is the system of relations that can be established between these elements', characterised by Foucault as 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions; in short: as much the said as the unsaid, these are the elements of the apparatus'.³² Regarding the modern apparatus of critique, *self-criticism becomes a self-controlling infrastructural critique*.

So the key issue is how to participate critically in the processes of governing without being exploited

in the stabilisation of the status quo. This question is becoming increasingly relevant since governing, and reacting to governmental power, are part of the same process. Being affirmatively critical, in other words, is impossible without being affirmative toward the established structures of power. Given the actual, so-called neoliberal order of the world, these are matters that cannot be underestimated. The interesting question, therefore, is how can we participate critically in the processes of creatively configuring the shape of the world by knowing the construction of its infrastructural framework?

Notes

1. In his article 'La politique de la santé au XVIIIe siècle', Foucault argues that a changing understanding of medicine and medical practices leads to a new form of what he calls 'medico-administrative knowledge [*savoir 'medico-administratif'*] (p. 14), which invents new health politics. These politics are a question of risk-management, and a consequence of economic necessity since the reorganisation of charity institutions in the 17th and 18th centuries. Furthermore, a crucial purpose is the preservation of labour power and military force. These properties of a population are the result of collected data, leading to statistics that make the need for intervention visible and are a technique of control. Michel Foucault, 'La politique de la santé au XVIIIe siècle', in Michel Foucault et al., *Les Machines à guérir. Aux origines de l'hôpital moderne* (Bruxelles/Liège: Pierre Mardaga, 1979), pp. 7-18.
2. For instance, scientific research about the outbreak of epidemics that results from the relationship between population and space becomes the basis for epidemic control methods as interventions within the urban space (establishing infrastructure, reducing urban density, inserting planning guidelines and rules).
3. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78*, trans. by Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 27.
4. Michel Foucault et al., *Les Machines à guérir. Aux*

- origins de l'hôpital moderne.*
5. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Biopolitics and the Emergence of Modern Architecture* (New York: The Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), pp. 30-36.
 6. Anonymous author, 'Flächensanierung', Wikipedia, 2013, <<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flächensanierung>> [accessed 18 August 2013].
 7. Andreas Suttner, *Beton brennt. Hausbesetzer und Selbstverwaltung im Berlin, Wien und Zürich der 80er* (Berlin-Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2011), p. 112.
 8. Sabine Rosenblatt, 'Die "Legalos" von Kreuzberg', in *Hausbesetzer. wofür die kämpfen. wie sie leben und wie sie leben wollen*, ed. by Stefan Aust and Sabine Rosenblatt, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1981).
 9. Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, interviewed in 2008 by young artists from Berlin University of the Arts, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, <<http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-geschichte/68er-bewegung/52075/hardt-waltherr-haemer>> [accessed 08 August 2013].
 10. Ibid.
 11. Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, Jürgen Rosemann, Alfredo Grazoli and Urs Kohlbrenner, *Kostenanalyse der Modellmodernisierung von Altbauten* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, 1976).
 12. Suttner, *Beton brennt*, p. 112.
 13. Gerd Conradt, *Menschen und Steine. Fünf Geschichten zur behutsamen Stadterneuerung 1973-1984-1998*, Documentary, Germany, 1998 (DVD: ZDF, 1998).
 14. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).
 15. Suttner, *Beton brennt*, p. 111.
 16. Ibid., p. 115.
 17. Most influential to the political formation of the IBA were the governing parties of the West Berlin Senate (the Social Democratic Party and the Free Democracy Party) and the Director of Urban Planning (Harry Ristock), who remained until the political transition in 1981. See Estefania Briglia, Katja Schober and Nina Stache, 'Die Entstehung der IBA', *F-IBA*, <<http://f-iba.de/die-entstehung-der-iba/>> [accessed 10 October 2013]
 18. Suttner, *Beton brennt*, p. 113.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Sabine Rosenblatt, 'Die "Legalos" von Kreuzberg', p. 28.
 21. Suttner, *Beton brennt*, p. 121.
 22. Ibid., p. 137.
 23. Ibid., p. 122.
 24. Instandbesetzung' consists of 'Instand' (maintenance) and 'Besetzung' (squatting), a play on words between 'squatting to maintain' and 'repair'. Most of the movement's activists worked within the political system as representatives of alternative political parties, in the construction senate, as social workers, within tenant initiatives, or as scientists - in short, they were representatives of the educated bourgeoisie with left-wing or anarchistic ideologies. Ibid., p. 116.
 25. Ibid., p. 118.
 26. Ibid., p. 122.
 27. *Estefania Briglia, Katja Schober and Nina Stache*, 'Die Entstehung der IBA'.
 28. Suttner, *Beton brennt*, p. 135.
 29. Ibid., p. 173.
 30. Hardt-Waltherr Hämer, interviewed by Gerd Conradt in *Menschen und Steine. Fünf Geschichten zur behutsamen Stadterneuerung 1973-1984-1998*.
 31. Henri Lefebvre, 'Theoretical Problems of Autogestion', in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays of Henri Lefebvre*, ed. by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 144.
 32. Michel Foucault, 'The Game of Michel Foucault', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 194-95. Quotes from Hervé Dumez and Alain Jeunemaître, in 'Michel Callon, Michel Foucault and the "dispositive". When economics fails to be performative: A case study', *Le Libellio d'AGEIS*, 4, 6 (2010), p. 30.

Biographies

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