"The Once and Future Site of the U.S. Embassy Berlin" A Discursive Analysis of Planning, Negotiation, and Reception

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“THE ONCE AND FUTURE SITE OF THE U.S. EMBASSY BERLIN”
A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING, NEGOTIATION, AND RECEPTION

by

ANDREW CHRISTOPHER MAURER

B.A., University of Colorado, Boulder, 2004

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A Discursive Analysis of Planning, Negotiation, and Reception

written by Andrew Christopher Maurer

has been approved for the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and

Literatures

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Prof. David Gross

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Abstract

Maurer, Andrew Christopher (M.A., Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures)

“The Once and Future Site of the U.S. Embassy Berlin”: A Discursive Analysis of Planning, Negotiation, and Reception

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Beverly M. Weber

This paper examines the discourse surrounding the planning, negotiation, and reception stages of the U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz in Berlin, which imbued the building with a highly politicized symbolic nature. Much more than simply a building, the architecture of the U.S. Embassy made a “statement,” which acquired meaning through the discursive formations of Berlin as a “global city,” the guiding doctrine of Berlin as “critically reconstructed,” and the United States’ security presence in post-Wall Berlin. This discourse focused not only on the present form of the building, but also on the site’s historical form and visions of the site’s future. Diverging interpretations of the U.S. Embassy along national lines, concerning the balance of security with transparency both in government and in public space, revealed and even helped shape a new relationship between the former guest—a “protective power” during the Cold War—and its host city of Berlin.
Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

On January 9, 1993, a bronze plate—an anchored atop a black granite base and inscribed with the phrase “The Once and Future Site of the U.S. Embassy Berlin”—was ceremoniously placed at Pariser Platz 2. Although this prominent Berlin address, located only meters from the Brandenburg Gate, was physically barren (a “prairie of history,” to use a local sobriquet) (Huyssen, 56), it was nevertheless highly charged, both historically and politically. Far from entering a void, the promised U.S. Embassy would instead enter the highly contested terrain of architectural discourse in Berlin. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the decision to restore the city’s capital status, a boom in architectural planning reignited an ongoing “Architects’ Debate” (Architektenstreit) between city planners, architects, and critics in deciding what form the “New Berlin” would take (Murray 3). Initially, the epithet of Berlin as a “global city” helped fuel the construction boom (Ward 239). However, under the authority of City Building Director Hans Stimmann, “critical reconstruction” became the dominant doctrine, emphasizing Berlin’s historical development and reconnecting Berlin with its late-eighteenth and nineteenth century pasts—in other words, reconnecting Berlin with its pre-Cold War, pre-national socialist, and even pre-Weimar modernist pasts (Murray 12).

Just as Germany was seeking to re-form a collective identity in post-Wall Berlin, the United States was seeking to embed itself within this “New Berlin.” With the Cold War coming to an end, many physical traces of the Allied legacy in Berlin were “slowly but surely disappearing” (Verheyen 100). Plans to move the U.S. Embassy back to Pariser Platz positioned U.S. government representation at the heart of the “New Berlin,” and
consequently, also in the midst of the ongoing Architects’ Debate. In doing so, U.S. Embassy plans expanded the discourse. No longer focusing on questions of German collective identity and historical representation or utopian “global city” visions, the planned construction of the U.S. Embassy generated transnational concerns. Negotiations between the host and guest nation over the “once and future site of the American Embassy” revealed the changing role of the former occupational and protective power in Berlin. Furthermore, increased U.S. security regulations, following the August 7, 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, shifted the weight of the discourse from matters of style to concerns of balancing security with transparency and openness, both in government (the U.S. Embassy building) and in public space (Pariser Platz).

Noticeably prolonged planning and negotiation phases, as well as an overwhelmingly critical representation in German media, differentiated the U.S. Embassy from its Pariser Platz neighbors. Although California-based architectural firm Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners (MRY) won the design competition for the U.S. Embassy in 1996, it had to reformulate the winning design to meet increased U.S. security regulations of 1998. This led to a six-year, politicized stalemate, during which the United States and Germany negotiated the details of security implications. Finally in 2004, a compromise was reached. In all, after the promissory plaque was placed at Pariser Platz, it would be another fifteen plus years (and another five U.S. ambassadors) until the official opening of U.S. Embassy on July 4, 2008. As the final building to be constructed on the square, the U.S. Embassy completed the Pariser Platz façade, yet the building’s representation in German media was far from celebratory, a contradiction central to this paper’s investigation. Diverging discourse along national lines, concerning the completed building, revealed the
constructive nature of representation. Through media representation, the U.S. Embassy's planning, negotiation, and reception became a testing ground for the post-Cold War relationship between the United States and Germany.

**Recent Scholarly Work on Berlin’s Urban Landscape**

The amount of recent scholarly work dealing with the urban landscape of post-Wall Berlin is extensive. This is undoubtedly due to Berlin’s unique history of having been the capital of over five different regimes within the past century and a half. This history has imprinted itself on Berlin’s urban landscape. Massive destruction caused by World War II (as well as post-War demolition and planning) has dramatically changed Berlin’s urban surface, creating a highly contested city center. Guiding this paper are two exemplary works, Brian Ladd’s *The Ghosts of Berlin*, and Andreas Huyssen’s *Present Pasts*, which provide excellent insight into the significance of buildings, ruins, and vacant lots in Berlin, as well as how to approach studying them. “Buildings matter,” as succinctly put by Ladd, “because they are symbols and repositories of memory” (Ladd 4). Elaborating on the particular situation facing post-Wall Berlin, Ladd observes that each “proposal for construction, demolition, preservation, or renovation ignites into a battle over symbols of Berlin and of Germany” (Ladd 235). Central to Ladd’s thesis is that the present urban landscape of Berlin is haunted by “ghosts” from distinct historical periods of its past. This “haunting” influences which types of architecture are built, as well as which types of architecture are purposely avoided. Clearly, selective historical representation embodied in architecture makes (re)construction highly politicized.

In a similar vein, Huyssen has written extensively on the nature of reading the city, where old and new intermingle in palimpsest form. Huyssen relates post-Wall Berlin to a
prism, “through which we can focus issues of contemporary urbanism and architecture, national identity and statehood, historical memory and forgetting” (49). Situating Berlin within the globalization discourse, Huyssen describes how future plans to “create the capital of the 21st century,” or Berlin’s “present futures,” have been complicated by a preoccupation with memory and historical representation, or so called “present pasts” (Huyssen 52, 11, 14).

Not only do these works provide information as to the importance of Berlin’s urban landscape, but they also exemplify how to approach its study. Two features stand out and will help guide my examination: an interdisciplinary approach and a multi-temporal focus. Architecture, and thus its study, is interconnected with other disciplines, such as history, politics, and urban planning. Undoubtedly, a comprehensive study of the U.S. Embassy’s construction needs to be interdisciplinary and focus not only on its current visual form, but also consider the site’s past as well as alternative visions of the site’s present and future. This is summed up well in what Huyssen calls an “urban imaginary,” whose “temporal reach may well put two different things in one place: memories of what was there before, imagined alternatives to what there is” (Huyssen 7).

While Berlin’s urban landscape has been well researched, an analysis of the particular constellation of discourse that formed as the United States attempted to embed itself within the urban landscape of the “New Berlin” is lacking. Although the embassy’s planning, construction, and reception have found media attention (in the form of rather short current event updates or feuilleton style editorials), scholarly work about the specifics of the new U.S. Embassy is scarce. This paper seeks to fill the gap by following in the interdisciplinary approach of urban landscape study, yet applying it specifically to the
U.S. Embassy’s construction and representation in the media. Divided into three main sections, this work will (1) locate the U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz within the more general, preexisting constellation of architectural discourse and historical context of Berlin, (2) examine the discourse generated by planning and negotiation phases of the U.S. Embassy, relying on primary texts from architects, city planners, government documents, politicians, and critics, and (3) analyze the representation of the U.S. Embassy in the German media. The conclusion will bring the history of the embassy up to date and consider future implications brought up in this study.

Throughout this study, representation will be an important concept. This investigation of the U.S. Embassy is informed by a poststructuralist approach to representation, in which meaning is neither universally recognizable (reflective approach) nor a one-way process (intentional approach). Rather, representation will be viewed as produced through the process of discourse between multiple voices. Less concerned with the “poetics,” or “how” of representation associated with Ferdinand de Saussure’s study of semiotics, this examination of the U.S. Embassy will rather focus on the “politics of representation,” or its “effects and consequences,” as associated with Michel Foucault’s concept of discursive formations (Hall 6). Here, discursive formations will be defined as “a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices.” They provide ways of talking about and regulate conduct associated with “a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society” (Hall 6). The U.S. Embassy is situated within discursive formations concerning Berlin as a “global city”, the city doctrine of “critical reconstruction,” and the United States’ role in post-Wall Berlin. The architecture of the embassy building itself can also be seen a part of the discourse. However, just as with any text, the statement made through
architecture can be interpreted in different ways. This study will examine how the knowledge produced by discursive formations concerning the U.S. Embassy connected with transnational power, regulated conduct, constructed identities and influenced the U.S. Embassy's reception (Hall 6). The discursive formations analyzed will be placed in their specific historical context.
I. PLACING THE U.S. EMBASSY IN CONTEXT

A building needs to be seen in its temporal, spatial, and social contexts for the “statements” it makes to the public to be understood. For example, as Ladd points out, the work of architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel is often celebrated by neoconservatives today as exemplifying traditional Prussian neoclassical architecture. However, in his own day, Schinkel “strove to shatter the uniformity of eighteenth century Berlin” (Ladd 233). In other words, Schinkel’s architecture, when placed in a different social and historical context, makes a much different statement.

This is not to say, however, that architecture cannot exude an immediate authority or have an affective component in its interaction with human beings. Still, this authority can be interpreted in different ways. We need only look as far as the Berlin Wall to see this. Although the concrete wall, topped with barbed wire and surrounded by guard shacks and a “no-man’s land” definitely restricted mobility and exuded authority, interpretations of the wall differed. The East’s “Anti-Fascist Protection Wall,” patrolled with guard dogs and military to retain its own citizens, was referred to in the West as the “Wall of Shame” and often covered in colorful lampooning graffiti in protest of the wall. Clearly, the interpretation of the Berlin Wall was socially constructed.

This is also the case with the U.S. Embassy. The U.S. Embassy is a building, representing the U.S. government in its host city of Berlin, and sheltering the people working and interacting with the government. This building is situated in a certain place, is made of certain materials, takes a certain form, and is covered with a certain façade. These are the signifiers, which must then be interpreted, through, for example, the discursive formation of a “global city,” the discursive formation of “critical reconstruction” or the
discursive formation of “U.S. security presence.” Through discourse, the building’s characteristics are made to speak. However, just as any passage in literature, a building can produce multiple meanings and interpretations in various audiences. Conscious of the fact that “the social perception of architecture does not occur in a vacuum but in a cultural context shaped by history” (Rosenfeld 125), the following section will attempt to highlight the historical context and social discourse of Berlin architecture into the 1990s and early 2000s, which helped various actors construct meaning out of the “statements” made by the U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz.

**Germany, Politics, and Architecture**

Even before there was a Germany, there were cultural debates as to what type of architecture best represented “German” identity. The kings of Prussia tended to take a liking to neoclassicism. However many architects and intellectuals debated its virtues, and tended to see romantic neogothic architecture as more representative of “authentic” German culture (Strom 136). When German unification came in 1871, under the Prussian Hohenzollerns, architecture became nationalized, and the architecture in the newly founded nation’s capital became representative of the nation.

During the Weimar Republic, architecture became explicitly politicized, with the emergence of the modernist movement, which openly associated politics and architecture, in the belief that “modern, democratic people in modern industrial society should build rational, modern structures, using new materials that made buildings lighter and more flexible” (Strom 136-137). However, the first modernist movement, best represented by the Bauhaus, was soon impeded by the Nazi takeover. The militaristic Nazi regime found its interests to be better represented by a monumental neoclassical style. Preferred
architectural style seemed to coincide with each regime change in Germany. Following the Second World War, this would also be the case, as a second wave of modernism overtook Germany.

Returning to Germany from the United States, this second wave of modernism was much more commercialized in form than the first. Nonetheless, it gained large acceptance in post-War Germany, in part because it represented a break with a difficult past, in the spirit of the *Stunde null*. West German architects consciously avoided historically inspired architecture, such as neoclassicism, which became “taboo” because of its (mis)use in the monumental neoclassical architecture characteristic of many Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer designs.¹ Instead, the modernist “international style” based on a decentralized city plan, with divided city functions (housing, shopping, etc.), came to dominate Berlin architecture.

“The Architects’ Debate” and the Emergence of Postmodernist Architecture

The specific “Berlin Architecture Debate,” which erupted in the mid 1990s, was actually the third flare-up of a broader Architects’ Debate stretching back to the late 1970s and coinciding with the emergence of postmodern architecture in the Federal Republic of Germany (Rosenfeld 194). An overview of this broader Architects’ Debate, waged between “modernists” and “postmodernists,” will help contextualize its revival in the 1990s in Berlin.² Postmodernism manifested itself in architecture as “a move away from modern architecture’s claim to universal validity” placing emphasis instead on “pluralism” (Welsch

¹ East Berlin experienced a brief resurgence of neoclassical inspired architecture from around 1950 to 1955 under Ulbricht (out of a rejection of modernism’s formalism and cosmopolitanism). This is visible in the former Stalinallee, now Karl-Marx-Straße and parts of Frankfurter Allee, and is highly praised by many contemporary postmodern architects. However after Khrushchev’s insistence on efficient architecture, East Germany basically returned to an “international style” (Ladd: 182-186).

² This section is indebted to Gavriel Rosenfeld’s “The Architects’ Debate.”
As in literature, this pluralism was marked by “double coding,” which meant using two or more architectural languages simultaneously: “traditional and modern, elite and popular, international and regional” (Welsch 36). For example, neoclassical and modern elements juxtaposed could create a “complexity and contradiction in architecture” to which the title of U.S. architect Robert Venturi’s seminal work alludes. Because of its unique history, a double coding of historically inspired and modernist elements made postmodernist architecture controversial in the Federal Republic; it seemed to awaken ghosts of an uncomfortable German past.

Similar to the more widely known Historians’ Dispute (Historikerstreit) of the 1980s, the Architects’ Debate was heavily influenced by questions of how to deal with memories of National Socialism in Germany. In the Historians’ Dispute, German historians and others concerned themselves with whether the Nazi past should be “normalized” or keep its exceptional status in German consciousness (Rosenfeld 189). In other words, up for dispute was how the Third Reich fit into the overall span of German history. In comparison, the Architects’ Debate was more specialized, but undoubtedly just as politically and symbolically significant. Architects, city planners, politicians and others debated how architectural styles (mis)used during the Third Reich should influence “present and future architectural development of the Federal Republic” (Rosenfeld 189).

Sparking the first phase of the Architect’s Debate in 1977, British architect James Stirling’s Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart became the first postmodern building to be commissioned by the Federal Republic of Germany (Rosenfeld 190). Even at first glance,

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3 Postmodernism will be defined as a “manifestation” or a “variation” of Modernism, which “freed itself of some of the restraints of Modernism,” yet “remained true to other precepts” (Welsch 36).
one is immediately struck by the national art gallery’s double coding: Monumental travertine and sandstone covered walls transition smoothly into asymmetrical curves of glass, framed with bright-green covered steel. While statues lining the monumental rotunda courtyard allow one’s mind to drift back to the neoclassicism of Schinkel’s Altes Museum, bold primary and secondary colored steel beams, curving atop the massive exterior walls, confidently anchor the museum’s visitors in a more contemporary time. Raw concrete columns seem to be used more as adornment than for structural integrity, in front of the modern glass and steel office entrance, contrasting historical form with modern form and materials.

Modernists promptly attacked the neoclassical aspects of Stirling’s design, accusing postmodernism of violating a “strict taboo” in Germany by resurrecting a “fascist” style (Rosenfeld 193). For example, Frei Otto, a collaborator of prominent modern architect Günter Behnisch in creating Munich’s modern 1972 Olympic complex, attacked the Neue Staatsgalerie as “brutalistic,” “a kind of fortress architecture” and “a demonstration of power” (Rosenfeld 193). Central to the postmodern attack was the presumption that certain types of government produced certain kinds of architecture (194). Without a doubt, as a national gallery, the public building was linked to its government. In contrast to the monumental stone elements of the Neue Staatsgalerie, many modernists promoted the use of only modern materials, such as “glass, steel and concrete ... arranged in asymmetrical compositions” attempting to reach a “lightness and transparency” characteristic of “democratic” architecture (Rosenfeld 192). Behnisch made this point clear in 1981: “[W]hat happens inside, must be transparent for those who see the final product. It can’t be that one has the impression that secret powers rule within. [...] Our form’s function must
be apparent” (Behnisch, 775). At the heart of the above-mentioned comments lies the balance between state power and democracy. Very similar discourse would reemerge in the 1990s and 2000s concerning both Berlin’s new federal government headquarters on the Spree River and the U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz.

Initially, postmodernists, led by European rationalist architects Aldo Rossi, and Oswald Mathias Unger, responded to the charges of fascism by simply denying them. They insisted that there was no “fascist” style and promoted instead an “architecture of memory,” which adopted “universally recurring” forms (Rosenfeld 192). They broke with the modernist maxim coined by Louis Sullivan “form follows function” and asserted the autonomy of form and function (and thus of political systems and aesthetics). However in the 1980s, postmodernist Victor Lampugnani and Leon Kier, among others, escalated the debate by hurling the “fascist” label back at their attackers (the modernists) and marking what Rosenfeld sees as the second stage in the Architects’ debate (194). In order to legitimate their use of historically inspired architectural elements, various postmodernists attempted to transfer the blame for the Holocaust to modernism, industry, and technology. Some even attempted to rehabilitate Nazi architects, even Albert Speer (Rosenfeld 205). While at times trivializing grave crimes against humanity, the postmodernist view did much to normalize architectural forms that were forbidden in post-War Germany. By the

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5 Over twenty years later, it would appear that Behnisch had stayed true to this claim. His plans for the Akademie der Künste on Pariser Platz would be the only façade to be completed in glass and steel, which he insisted upon because the museum was the only public building on the square.
1990s postmodernist architecture had become a formidable architectural movement on par with modernist architecture.6

This brings us up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Reunification of Germany, the desirable vacant space opened up by the wall in the city center, and demand for developing the nation’s capital sparked the third phase of the architectural debate, the “Berlin Architecture Debate.” Modernists envisioned a “New Berlin” and promoted visions of a global and modern capital city. “Critical Reconstructionists” looked to the past for inspiration, to secure the “historical development” of the city and rescue the city’s “authentic” Prussian character.

**The Wall Falls into Opportunity**

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and coinciding with a reclaimed capital city status in 1991, Berlin became the site of one of the most massive construction projects in history. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been invested in the (re)construction of Berlin since 1990 (Till 44). Ironically, destruction caused by World War II, and protection from development as a “death strip” during the Cold War, created architectural opportunity—as open space. The stretch of land between Leipziger Platz and the Brandenburg Gate, once “a mined no-man’s-land framed by the wall,” became a “wide stretch of dirt, grass, and remnants of former pavement under a big sky” (Huyssen 56). How to treat this emerging openness was up for debate. Daniel Libeskind, the architect of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, suggested embracing the open space around Potzdamer Platz as just that, open space:

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6 Although Rosenfeld’s account provides an excellent overview of how architects used the label of “fascist” to compete for architectural power in Germany, many did not resort to this mudslinging. Furthermore, although for simplicity’s sake the architects have been labeled as either “modernist” or “postmodernist”, this blurs the lines between the ideological diversity of architects, many of whom refused the label of “modernist” or “postmodernist.”
I suggest a wilderness, one kilometer long, within which everything can stay as it is. The street simply ends in the bushes. Wonderful. After all, this area is the result of today’s divine natural law: nobody wanted it, nobody planned it, and yet it is firmly implanted in all our minds. (Huyssen 65)²

However, others, especially city planners and marketers, saw the open space as an opportunity to draw investment in real estate. And this investment was sorely needed: because of its highly subsidized status during the Cold War, Berlin’s local economy had in effect fallen asleep, only to “wake up” after reunification with “an economic structure rooted in the 1960s” (Strom 91). A cessation of subsidies in the West and GDR production in the East meant that Berlin had to face difficult economic restructuring challenges at the same time it sought to become a global and capital city (Ward 245). Local officials became anxious to attract new investment (Strom 91). Further complicating matters, the open space for investment was within Berlin’s new center and thus loaded with symbolic value as to what the “New Berlin” would become. Regardless of the outcome, to reach either an “open” global or a “united” national vision, Berlin faced huge economic challenges. To attract investment, Berlin needed a new image—a break with its recent Cold War and fascist pasts.

**Global City Visions**

It seems only natural that, after emerging from a painfully divided Cold War history experienced in a heavily bordered city, Berliners would be attracted to its opposite: visions of openness and unification. These two visions hint at the interesting path globalization would take in Germany. While, on the one hand, cultivating its image as the capital city of a

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² Libeskind’s unrealized proposal is included here to point out that there were often many thought provoking designs that did not find their way into being, partially as a result of critical reconstruction’s dominance in the Architects’ Debate.
united Federal Republic of Germany, city boosters also hyped Berlin’s open “global city” image: “unfettered, borderless global cityness, hankering after an electronic-age equivalent of the world-city label” of Berlin in the 1920s (Ward 240). However, as Ward reminds us, a global city, as defined by Sassen (1991), actually works covertly against the nation-state (Ward 241). Thus, Berlin’s path to globalization was a particular one, hoping to reach a global city status yet also gain more local recognition as a national symbol of unified Germany. These competing forces, between global and national, would soon become central to the architectural debate in Berlin: Should Berlin adopt an international globalized style, or seek a historically influenced “German” style? Let us first examine Berlin’s “global city” image.

Although Berlin of the 1990s lacked adequate infrastructure to claim global city status, images representing Berlin on route to becoming a “global city” may have provided the initial steps towards its material transformation (Ward 242). Boosters of the new city image included city officials, real estate developers, planners, and marketers (Till 31). Many of their interests were pooled together in the public-private Partner für Berlin (Partners for Berlin). According to its website (2011), Partner für Berlin’s purpose is to promote the city as a brand: “We provide investors on-site support, help Berlin-based companies tap foreign markets, and make the city a strong brand. Active both locally and internationally, we are engaged in local, European and international networks.” (Partner für Berlin). During late 1990s, the city image being promoted in local and international markets by Partner für Berlin was one of a New Berlin: “DAS NEUE Berlin.”

Partner für Berlin recognized the importance of focusing on the positive: instead of loathing in Berlin’s lagging infrastructure, it celebrated Berlin’s “becoming.” This was
evident in a new slogan that accompanied Partner für Berlin’s advertisements plastered throughout the city: “Berlin wird—Berlin becomes” (Huyssen 54). During summers of the late 1990s, tours put the city’s transformation itself on display for locals and visitors. Under the title “Schaustelle Berlin” (Showcase City: a conflation of the German words “Baustelle,” construction site, and “Schau,” show), tourists could visit prominent construction sites and see the “behind the scenes” reality of Berlin’s becoming (Till 33). Newly completed buildings could also be visited in tours under the program “Berlin—offene Stadt, Berlin—open city” (Huyssen 84). In effect, these sightseeing tours seemed to take the form of architectural “site-seeing” tours. Clearly, by placing emphasis on becoming something altogether different, an open and becoming city, these city slogans and tours sought a break with the divided Cold War past and were an important part of visualizing the New Berlin. Boosters also promoted the new image of Berlin through exhibitions of hundreds of models and sketches submitted by architects for different sites, many of them including virtual reality shows (Till 31).

Berlin’s obsession with renewed self-representation was not a new phenomenon at the turn of the millennium (Ward 246). The city has a long history of representing the city as new: the modern Bauhaus movement of the 1920s, Hitler’s Germania, new visions of East and West as “showcases” for competing political ideologies during the Cold War (Till: 39-41). However, unique to the late 1990s and early 2000s was New Berlin’s abundant use of televisual space. With the aid of computer drafting software, Berlin entered into the virtual realm, in which the city image became infinitely repeatable. Even historical borders disappeared: 20th century models as well as 360-degree, panoramic, real-time images of the city were available (Ward 248). These virtual images undoubtedly broadened New
Berlin’s audience. Focusing not only on the built landscape of present Berlin, but also on unrealized projections of its past and future, Partner für Berlin had succeeded in distancing Berlin’s image from its actual economic and political context. Promotion of the “global city” image campaign continued—even increased—after the short-lived speculative real estate boom in Berlin had turned to bust in the mid 1990s (Ward 244, 246). In the “City of Bits,” (Ward 242), a dematerialized virtual city liberated itself from its actual infrastructural limitations.

Recent trends seem to show that rather than leading to a decentralization and disappearance of the city center, an increase in communication technology (and increase in the mobility of information) has actually turned city centers themselves into “communication hubs” (Huyssen 60, Ward 242-243). Furthermore, the physical shape of city centers themselves are becoming highly influenced by images communicated through new media. Huyssen describes this transformation well:

> Indeed, the city as center is far from becoming obsolete. But as city center, the city is increasingly affected and structured by our culture of media images. In the move from the city as regional or national center of production to the city as international center of communications, media, and services, the very image of the city itself becomes central to its success in a globally competitive world (60).

Bringing this discussion back to Berlin at the turn of the millennium, one can easily see how the city itself was “affected and structured” by the city’s projected image. Berlin’s city center transformed from an open field into commercial and governmental headquarters, in the hope of becoming a global city. The commercial transformation is evident in Potsdamer Platz. However, more applicable to this study is how the new city image affected government buildings materializing in the city center.
The Capital City

Incandescent beams of light reflect and refract, generating a warm glow, before breaking free, blazing through the hundreds of clear glass panels comprising Berlin’s new dome atop the Reichstag, to illuminate a dark blue-black Berlin sky. Rising behind the dome, yellow-gold construction cranes reach into the night. In the foreground, a radiant bronze quadriga triumphantly rides in suspended animation, atop the Brandenburg Gate. Underneath this image, one can read its caption: “21. Mai 1999: DER COUNTDOWN LÄUFT” (the countdown has begun). Appearing in 1998, Partner für Berlin promoted this image to celebrate the reopening of the Reichstag. With the countdown, the opening of the Reichstag seems to have been celebrated as if it were the New Year’s Eve of the New Berlin—whose logo could be seen at the bottom right of the ad in red: “DAS NEUE Berlin.” Celebrating the Reichstag’s opening in this way codified a break with the recent Cold War past, in other words: out with old division, in with new unity—Prost Neu Berlin!

Figure 1: “21. Mai 1999: DER COUNTDOWN LÄUFT”
Partner für Berlin, Imagekampagne 1997-1998
(c) Berlin Partner GmbH
However, upon closer examination, the quadriga’s prominent role in the foreground atop the Brandenburg Gate (one of Berlin’s oldest national symbols) belies the image’s slogan “DAS NEUE Berlin.” The quadriga’s inclusion in the New Berlin image illustrates the highly complicated nature of representation and memory in Berlin. Originally mounted atop the Brandenburg Gate in 1793, the quadriga turned into a symbol of division during the Cold War, only to transform into a symbol of unification after the Wall’s fall. If the Wall were likened to a zipper, signifying both division and unity, as Ladd suggests (29-30), Partner für Berlin, seemed to be using the quadriga as the pull-tab, bringing both East and West Germany together to create a united platform, upon which construction cranes could build the New Berlin.

The decision to move the capital back to Berlin brought the symbolic nature of architecture to the fore. In deciding the form the New Berlin would take, issues of visibility and invisibility became central to the architectural debate concerning Berlin’s urban landscape (Huyssen 79). While Berlin wanted to show its power as a capital city, it was still haunted by ghosts of its fascist past. “Expressing government power without pomposity” became the goal (Wise, “Expressing”). Certain styles were avoided, such as neoclassicism because of its misuse as Nazi-architecture—following in the spirit of the post-Holocaust maxim of “Never Again” (Wise, “Expressing”). As Strom humorously points out, many older generation Germans claimed “to hear military marching as soon as they see a design with more than three columns in a row” (145). Nevertheless, the federal government also wanted new buildings to represent unified Germany as a powerful nation in Europe. In other words, it wanted to break with the functional, yet quite boring, style of its capital
government buildings in Bonn, which were quickly constructed for the provisional capital, and sought to exude a non-authoritarian, non-fascist atmosphere.

Government officials and architects looked to the image of the New Berlin to circumnavigate Berlin's complicated memories of the past. The new government buildings—housing the Bundestag, the Bundesrat, and the Chancellery—were planned consistent with the image of the New Berlin. In a brilliant and symbolic gesture, architects Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank designed the new government headquarters along the ribbon-like weave of the Spree River. This east-west axis served to both cancel out Albert Speer's grand north-south oriented Germania, as well as symbolically reconnect East and West Germany (Wise, “Expressing”). Schultes and Frank utilized twentieth-century materials, “smooth concrete and glass,” striving for “a playful, euphoric architecture that Mr. Schultes said ‘does not look like so-called fat Germany’” (Wise, “Expressing”). To avoid allusions to a tainted neoclassical German style, the architects made their columns “irregularly shaped and asymmetrically placed” looking more “like rippling panels than traditional pillars...[adding] depth and a play of light and shadow to the facade, while also providing fresh iconography for a liberal democratic state” (Wise, “Expressing). The ribbon-like curve could also be seen as an anti-militaristic statement for some modernists, like Günter Behnisch, who insisted that a “straight axis, in any era [...] tended to encourage the militaristic activity of marching” (Rosenfeld 195).

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8 This was limited, nevertheless, to the new buildings constructed at the newly created government complex along the Spreebogen (the arc along the Spree River). A number of federal ministries had to take up residence in “haunted” buildings used by Nazi and GDR governments, which despite their history, proved to be hard to relegate to demolition (Ladd 226).
In keeping with New Berlin’s democratic image, security went underground—literally. In 1996, the building commission of the Bundestag requested a 100 million-mark tunnel system between the Reichstag and surrounding buildings, so that workers would not have to meet anyone who had not passed through a special security gate on their way from one building to the next (“Breite Katakombe” 72). Even the post received a renovated tunnel system—a “Printed Matter Walkway”—expanding the length of old tunnels to sixty meters, so that documents could make it to their destinations securely. These measures were partially in response to the Secretary of the Interior’s description of a disruptive potential of anarchists. He reported that an estimated 2,500 “Autonomen” (anarchists) were active in the metropolitan area, of which 1,000 were available at a moment’s notice and ready to do violence (“Breite Katakombe” 75). Nonetheless, in comparison to other buildings, such as the Finanzministerium, which is surrounded by a large steel fence (for simplicity’s sake), at the new government headquarters on the Spreebogen there was an attempt to keep up an aura of openness. True, there were a few glass and steel security fences constructed, but the effort was made to create places for the public space in front of important buildings, such as before the Reichstag and Bundeskanzleramt. In essence, these could be seen as an exhibition of the federal government’s openness. Yet, although people are allowed to pass through the open space, it must be noted that the government did institute a “Bannmeile,” or “politics free zone” in front of the parliament and other federal buildings (originally instituted in 1920 and 1955). This is now called the “befriedigte Bezirk,” which bans people from protesting and demonstrating in front of the parliament.

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9 Bringing up connotations to Orwellian “Double Speak”, the “Bannmeile” is now called the “befriedigte Bezirk.” A misdemeanor, not a felony, now awaits lawbreakers in this zone.
Therefore, while it may appear open and free, there are still certain security precautions that have been taken in response to the disruptive potential of terrorists and to ensure the security of government workers in the New Berlin. The same aura of openness, which the German government headquarters hoped to achieve through transparent security measures, would be more complicated for the Americans at Pariser Platz. The U.S. Embassy would not have the liberty of retreating behind open space, or of creating such a modern and “transparent” form of building with curved smooth concrete and expansive glass façades. The location of the embassy on Pariser Platz was much more vulnerable and open, and also required to follow “critical reconstruction” guidelines, including a stone façade, which affected its “democratic” image.

“Critical Reconstruction”

In contrast to the image of a modern, cosmopolitan global and capital city, “critical reconstruction” posited an image of Berlin reconnected to its pre-Cold War and even pre-modernist pasts. According to Hans Stimmann, city building director (1991-1996), there was no need for a New Berlin. “We do not have to reinvent the city,” declared Stimmann upon taking his post in 1991. Instead, Stimmann promoted a “return [Rückbesinnung] to the European city building tradition” (“Heimatkunde für Neuteutonia” 48).

Instead of the “radical restructuring” favored by modernists, or the “slavish historicism” advocated by conservatives, critical reconstruction was supposed to represent a “Third Way” (Strom 140, Murray 3). This included a historically inspired city structure interpreted with contemporary architecture. Critical reconstruction’s impact on individual buildings is hard to generalize; although it provided guidelines for reconstruction, various
architects interpreted these guidelines. In this sense, critical reconstruction could function like post-modernist architecture, allowing for pluralism and a double coding between Berlin’s historical city “footprint” and contemporary architecture, creating a dialectical “third way.” As Huyssen wittily points out: “In their antimodernism, the conservatives themselves have gone postmodern” (62). Here, a return to Welsh’s interpretation of pluralism in postmodernist architecture is insightful. Challenging modernist architecture’s universal validity did not automatically lead to an architecture of complexity (as seen in Stirling’s Neue Staatsgalerie), where “in one and the same building, several paradigms are articulated—and not mixed together so that none can be recognized but clearly displayed with all their contrasts and contradictions” (Welsch 34). Instead, a turn away from modernist architecture could also manifest itself as a “potpourri style” in which “anything goes,” or in a “one way street to the past” traditional style (34).

Pariser Platz provides good examples of various interpretations of critical reconstruction guidelines. Modernist Günter Behnisch’s Akademie der Künste broke the material (stone) guidelines in its glass front façade. When viewed against the whole of the square, this provides for a double coding. Deconstructivist Frank Gehry’s DZ Bank created an interesting interior-exterior contradiction: an exterior closely following critical reconstructionist guidelines, with an interior dominated by a massive abstract glass and steel structure. Neorationalist Paul Kleihues’ Haus Sommer and Haus Liebermann can be seen as highly historically influenced. Hotel Adlon was most historically influenced, becoming almost a replica (with one extra floor) of its pre-War historical predecessor. In these buildings we can see a “one way street to the past.” Finally, Moore Ruble Yudell’s U.S.

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10 These guidelines will be explained in detail in Section II, “Inspired by the 19th Century.”
Embassy challenged the maximum opening size restrictions with a slit in the Pariser Platz façade, and tried to combine “transparent security” with a critical reconstructionist stone façade. In an examination of these buildings, it becomes evident that most of the non-historically based constructions had to either hide elements that diverged from the historically influenced architecture, like the playful postmodernist influences on the inside of Gehry’s DZ Bank, or challenge the guidelines, requiring special permission to diverge from the historically based guidelines—such as Behnisch’s modernist glass façade, or MRY’s postmodernist opening. Thus, while allowing for contemporary architecture, historically based architecture caused less resistance to critical reconstruction guidelines.

In the position of city building director, Stimmann could expand his influence from individual building plans to a master plan, which he entitled “Plannwerk Innenstadt.” In its effect on the overall city structure, critical reconstruction revealed its highly conservative tone. Whereas specific buildings could include contemporary architecture, the form of city plan could not. The city “footprint” was based on historical analysis of the street plan before modernist influence. Stimmann viewed modernist city planning as destructive: It had “consciously declared war on the surviving texture of the city. [Modernists] replaced the density of the old city with spatial disintegration” (Till 45). Historical aerial photography and city plans were analysed to rediscover what Stimmann called the historical “texture of the city” (Till 47). As a guide to recreating this historical texture, “black plans” were created, which were black and white maps showing Berlin’s historical “footprint” at specific moments of history, for example 1940, 1953, and 1993. When placed next to each other, they reveal a disappearing texture of the city, not only through destruction during the Second World War, but also by modernist planning. Here
Stimmann’s selective use of history becomes evident. Modernist construction does not even show up on the plans, and appears white, blending into the voids caused by destruction from the Second World War. In place of modernist decentralized designs, Stimmann advocated a centred European city, with height restrictions on buildings, and requirements for dense, diverse-use city planning. As Huyssen points out, “[t]he hidden object of Stimmann’s moralizing protest is Weimar Berlin,” which “defined its modernity as quintessentially ‘American’” (62). To critical reconstructionists, only the buildings with a pre-Cold War history fit into the “permanent gene structure of the city” (Till 46). This has led to much criticism. For example Daniel Libeskind stated, “Berlin doesn’t stand for one history but for many, including the history of people who have been wiped out. This is a concerted attempt to write a revisionist history of the city in keeping with the new mood in Germany since reunification” (Neill 93).

Whereas the emergence of postmodernist architecture in West Germany during the late 1970s and 1980s made its biggest impact by refuting the link between politics and aesthetics, (and thus liberating architects from modernist maxims and “taboos” about historically inspired architectural styles), the institutionalization of “critical reconstruction” in the 1990s subsequently warped postmodernism’s liberating forces into authoritarian guidelines, proving that politics and aesthetics were indeed still closely intertwined in Berlin. After the particular strand of postmodernists (neo-rationalists) opened the door for historically inspired architecture in Berlin, neo-traditionalists such as Hans Stimmann were able to turn anti-modernist feelings into city guidelines for reconstruction.
II. PLANNING AND NEGOTIATION PHASES

Although the U.S. Embassy would be met with increasing criticism following its 1998 security regulations, the original planning stages (1991-1998) were received rather positively in Berlin. This is undoubtedly because the U.S. Embassy had something to offer both global city visions and critical reconstruction planning. Visions of the future and memories of the past not only answered questions as to why the embassy should be built in the first place, but also where it would be located, and as a result what form it would take. However, increased U.S. security regulations of 1998 disrupted both visions of a New Berlin and historically inspired critical reconstruction guidelines. Berlin politicians met suggested U.S. security measures with great resistance, leading to a political standoff, in which Berlin stood up to its former protective power.

Into the 21st Century

Why did the United States need a new embassy in the first place? In essence, it already had two centers for dealing with embassy related matters: the former “U.S. mission to East Berlin” in the eastern section of Berlin Mitte on Neustädtischen Kirchstraße and the former “U.S. Mission to Berlin” in the western suburb of Dahlem, the former headquarters of U.S. military operations, located about a dozen kilometers from Pariser Platz. Yet in this division, even the U.S. embassy seemed to be a relic of a divided city. Obviously, combining these two centers into one larger embassy would help create a break with the Cold War past as well as give the United States a more visible presence in Berlin’s emerging center.

The proposal to build a new embassy in Berlin’s emerging city center seemed to satisfy politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. For Americans, it represented a continued
partnership with Germany and as a result, also a base within the growing European Union. For the Berliners, it acted like a “Thank You” to their former power, and supported a strong united German image. International government representation and partnership were attractive, especially since Germany seemed to be taking two detours on its way towards globalization: first becoming the capital of a strong federal nation, and then becoming a strong national leader in Europe. The embassy would become the newest U.S. consulate in Europe, and as a result, reinforce Germany’s role as a leader on the continent. Concerning economics, it would also not hurt to receive foreign investment in the city center, as the German economy was struggling. As the following section will show, both U.S. and Berlin politicians evoked memories of a special historical relationship to project visions of a continued, if newly defined, partnership.

As President Clinton’s “Address to the People of Berlin” in 1994 made clear, the United States wanted to position itself within the New Berlin—the capital of a unified Germany—and sought to expand its power throughout Europe via Germany, and then into a limitless future:

Within a few years, an American president will visit a Berlin that is again the seat of your government. And I pledge to you today a new American embassy will also stand in Berlin. (Applause.) […] But in our own time, you, courageous Berliners, have again made the Brandenburg [Gate] what its builders meant it to be, a gateway. (Applause.) Now, together, we can walk through that gateway to our destiny, to a Europe united, united in peace, united in freedom, united in progress for the first time in history. Nothing will stop us. All things are possible. “Nichts wird uns aufhalten. Alles ist möglich. Berlin ist frei.” (Applause.) Berlin is free. (Applause.)

Ironically, the United States had already provided the first demolition work of the old building site by helping bomb Pariser Platz to pieces in World War II.
Switching into German, Clinton used a powerful rhetorical technique, evoking Kennedy’s infamous sentence in German. Clinton tied this history to visions of a limitless future, which seemed to correlate with the limitless representation of Berlin’s “becoming” image. Together, the U.S. and Germany would walk through the Brandenburg Gate to a common destiny. Clinton’s speech demonstrates, that the United States’ post-Cold War approach included widening their influence in Europe through Berlin.

The Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, spoke at the opening of the Allied Museum in Dahlem (1994), confirming Berlin’s intention to continue its partnership with the United States:

[The museum ] is a sign of our gratitude and more than just a museum of a receding past: it is a symbol of the victory of freedom and is one of the foundations for a friendship which we will maintain and strengthen [...] We will always gratefully commemorate this chapter of history and these achievements, not only in the museums and monuments, but also through the lively exchange in a newly constructed partnership for security, properly redefined with new traditions, and above all in personal relations. (Verheyen 107).

Diepgen’s statement emphasized gratitude for a historical relationship, commemorating the Cold War past to project a future partnership with the United States. The term “newly constructed partnership” seems to hint at the importance of a break with Cold War power relations. In using the rather vague but significant terms “properly redefined with new traditions” to describe the partnership, Diepgen seems to suggest that Berlin no longer needed the United States as a protective or security force. “New traditions” most likely involved a more confident Berlin and a less security involved United States. However, this

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12 In Clinton’s German phrase “Berlin ist frei” we can see allusions to Reagan’s “Es gibt nur ein Berlin” (1987) and Kennedy’s “Ich bin ein Berliner” (1963). Together, the three phrases show the special relationship between the U.S. and Berlin, and reinforce U.S. support for a “free” and united Berlin.
“newly constructed partnership for security” would prove harder than anticipated to realize in Berlin, as complicated negotiations concerning the U.S. Embassy confirmed.

As Christoph Stözl, director of the German Historical Museum, remarked, the Allied Museum, created in Dahlem (in former U.S. military headquarters), was a “museum of gratitude” (Verheyen 107). Partner für Berlin’s image for the New Berlin in 1987-1988 picked up on this theme. However, gratitude for the past did not necessarily mean a continuation of historical power relations. Till’s observation into the psychology of the New Berlin, that “every ‘new’ finds legitimation through what it excludes” (55), caused a predicament for the United States. As a former occupational and “protective” power, its most involved history in a divided Cold War Berlin took place during a time period the “New Berlin” was consciously trying to free itself from.

An examination of the image campaign created by Partner für Berlin (1997-1998) helps illustrate how city boosters thought the United States could fit into “DAS NEUE Berlin.” The motto of the campaign, written in English, was obviously catered towards the United States (and Great Britain and France); running across the center of the image, the motto reads: “THANK YOU: No new Berlin without you,” in reference to the Berlin Airlift. Red, white, and blue provide the basic color scheme of the image. The quadriga glows as a symbol of German unification. Construction cranes, symbolizing the new, cast silhouettes across the dark blue sky. In the center of the image, we see a departure from red, white, and blue into turquois and then green.\footnote{This departure from Allied colors is evident in the representation of Germany’s historical symbol of unification, the quadriga, and a symbol for commercial power, the Debis Tower.} Almost matching the quadriga’s turquois color, the green cube atop the Debis Tower, then owned by Daimler-Chrysler, at Potsdamer Platz.
shines like an economic beacon in the center of the image. Interesting to note: at this time, German company Daimler had merged with the American Chrysler in hopes of creating a powerful transatlantic automobile alliance. Thus, the U.S. presence in the New Berlin was represented more as a business partnership than a security one.

In the same advertisement, juxtaposed with the New Berlin image, a famous black and white photograph of an Allied “Candy Bomber” used during the airlift seems to relegate the U.S. security presence in Germany to the past. With its lack of color, the Allied aircraft appears to be flying the Allied protective security presence away from the colorful New Berlin, and into history; perhaps to the newly created Allied museum in Dahlem, located over a dozen kilometers from Pariser Platz. In Berlin’s commemoration and gratitude for the past, the United States security presence could be relegated to history. Not yet completed, because of a transnational debate over security regulations, the “future U.S.
Embassy Berlin” at Pariser Platz remains just outside of the photograph’s view, overlooked in its zoom towards Potsdamer Platz, the aspiring new commercial center of Berlin.

**Inspired by the 19th Century**

Although Clinton had promised Berliners that a “new American embassy […] would stand in Berlin” (Clinton), this new embassy would find itself limited in creative expression. By choosing a central position in the city, Pariser Platz, the U.S. Embassy fell under the doctrine of critical reconstruction. When it came to building in the center of Post-Wall Berlin, not all things were possible. Plans for the U.S. Embassy were greatly influenced by the doctrine of critical reconstruction, which reached out to a specific Berlin past—most importantly here, a pre-Cold War, and pre-Weimar modernist past.

For the “critical reconstructionists” the fact that the U.S. had a prior presence on Pariser Platz likely increased the legitimacy of its claim for central space within the city. The Blücher Palace was bought by the U.S. in 1930. Returning Pariser Platz to its pre-WWII location could be seen as a return to normalcy: the Cold War Allies—the U.S., France, and Great Britain—were returning their embassies to pre-Cold War sites. An overriding theme of the regulations, which are described below, shows an emphasis on unity—parts coming together to make a whole based on the rules and regulations of city planning. This is a major theme in Stimmann’s implementation of the doctrine of critical reconstruction. Because of the Cold War history of division (and the perceived fracture brought about by modernist architecture’s disregard for the historic city plan), critical reconstruction seeks wholeness in the 1990s, and the key is provided by the past. This past, however, is so
distant that its practical implementation in a struggling economy required using contemporary architecture inspired by pre-Weimar architecture.

“Critical Reconstruction” Guidelines

Except for the Brandenburg Gate (and a few halls of the Academy of Arts) no remnants of the pre-war buildings on Pariser Platz remained. Thus, the first step to “critically reconstructing” Pariser Platz necessitated a detailed historical analysis of the spatial form (Raumgestalt) of the square, its individual pre-war buildings, and the greater whole created by their interaction. Bruno Flierl and Walter Rolfes were commissioned to recommend spatial and material regulations for new construction, based on their historical analysis.

The result, entitled “Gutachten zur Gestaltung der Gebäude am Pariser Platz” (1993), included recommended spatial and surface-material guidelines for the square. The goal was stated as follows: “The Pariser Platz should be reconstructed in its prewar spatial form as an enclosed square: structured in parcels, partly with new uses, and in new contemporary architecture.” Vertically, because Flierl and Rolfes based their analysis on the historical buildings’ palazzo influenced style, new construction was to be divided into three zones: lower (5.70 m high), middle (16.70 m = the height of the Brandenburg Gate) and upper (30 m—as seen from the opposite side of the square). The eave height was set at 20 meters. Horizontally, based on the palazzo style, all new construction should be symmetrical, with nearly same-sized entrances, and total openings (window and doors) of the façades should not exceed 30%. All entrances should be smaller than 70 square meters,

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14 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of works cited in German are my own.
so as not to compete with the gateway function of the Brandenburg Gate. Concerning materials, “matte mineral surfaces and a coloring between light ocher-yellow and brown” were advised. Mirrored glass was to be avoided to ensure the enclosed atmosphere of the square.

Several themes emerge as guiding principles throughout Flierl and Rolfes’ analysis. First, the importance of the historic “Raumgestalt” of the square: the sum of its parts was greater than the individual buildings in themselves. To achieve this in contemporary architecture, regulations were necessary. According to Flierl and Rolfes, these suggested regulations should not be seen as an “interference” or “intervention” into the “creativity of individual parts” but rather as guidelines to reach a desired whole: “not a corset, but consensus for form” (Flierl and Rolfes). Secondly, because the Brandenburg Gate was the only structure that remained, Flierl and Rolfes decided that the gate should be the measure of all the other buildings. Regulations should be based on the historical proportions of the individual buildings in relationship to the Gate. Thirdly, although calling for contemporary architecture, the image and form of the buildings should be based on the historical form that dominated the square: the palazzo.

In suggesting vertical dimensions (based on the historical buildings, divided into three zones) and material guidelines and color specifications, these regulations showed their restrictiveness of contemporary architecture. Not only were the guidelines calling for a return to the street plan of the past, but they also influenced the image of the buildings. Basically, Flierl and Rolfes’ guidelines called for stone or plaster-covered cubes colored ocher-yellow or gray. This form, it may be noted, could essentially resemble a multitude of
blandly colored square buildings—including offices, or prisons, a resemblance that would be exploited by embassy critiques throughout its construction and upon its completion. Nonetheless, Flierl and Rolfes’ plan was based on the historical form of the Palazzo: “touching rows of Palazzi” (Flierl and Rolfes).

Flierl and Rolfes’ set of guidelines were the third commissioned by the Berlin’s building department of the government. Previous guidelines had not called for such historically influenced regulations of the individual buildings themselves, rather just for the city structure. Although also calling for contemporary architecture and a historically based form of the square, suggested guidelines prepared by Flierl and Rolfes’ were more influenced by historical form. Dieter Hoffmann Axthelm’s suggested guidelines, for example, argued against historically influenced façades and materials: “The level on which the reconstruction of Berlin’s historical center is to be accomplished is not that of historical images (historical buildings, façades), it is in the city structure. The visible, the architecture, must therefore not be historical, but contemporary” (Hamm). Hildebrand Machleidt, Walter Stepp and Wolfgang Schäche also argued against the “historicizing” of the architecture and called for contemporary “architectural language” (Hamm).

Nonetheless, under Stimmann’s supervision, the government decided to use Flierl and Rolfes’ draft as guidelines for devising the development plan I-200 (1995, revised in 1996). Most of Flierl and Rolfes’ recommendations were followed; only a few specifics were changed. This included contradictorily allowing for an increased maximum opening volume from thirty to fifty percent of the façade, yet restricting the largest opening in size from seventy to forty cubic meters. Changes also allowed for another floor, with a maximum height of twenty meters above the eave height, set by the Brandenburg Gate. This latter
change has been condemned by some critics as leading to poorly proportioned buildings (Hamm).

Because of its insistence on form and structure and image, the following images are provided to help illustrate the process. Figure 3, created by Flierl and Rolfes, shows the vertical and horizontal measurements of Pariser Platz 2, with the Gate as a measuring guide. Figure 4 juxtaposes Flierl and Rolfes’ historical study with plans for the new construction, including façades. The only two buildings requiring special allowances were the Akademie der Künste by Behnisch because of its full glass and metal façade (Fig. 4: second building from the left in the bottom row) and Moore Ruble Yudell’s U.S. Embassy (Fig. 4: to the left of the Brandenburg Gate).

Figure 3: “Pariser Platz 2”
Gestaltungsregeln. “Analyse.” Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung
**Moore Ruble Yudell’s Initial Design**

Using an aerial photograph from the 1930s, Stimmann himself led hopeful American architects on a tour of Pariser Platz on April 5, 1995. In the pages of his journal, architect John Ruble wrote about his experience with the *Senatsbaudirektor*: “As he outlined the basic aims of his department—to reconstruct the historic plan using contemporary architecture—Stimmann seemed not to realize that he was preaching to the choir. But while Americans there accepted implicitly the value of a historic city plan, the issue was deeply divisive for Berliners” (Koffka 177). As is evident in his statement, Ruble showed that he and his firm were dedicated to following critical reconstruction guidelines. Another statement towards the conclusion of his dairy entry confirms the architects’ consensus in recreating the “Raumgestalt” of the square:

We made a decision that day of the tour that the embassy's symbolic message—the dynamic pluralist American democracy, the presence of a vigilant world power—would all find expression within its place as part of the larger whole. Indeed, the political point of the building on the Pariser Platz site is to declare our alliance in the rebirth of Berlin as a democratic capital (Koffka 177).
To represent the dynamic pluralist democracy, MRY sought inspiration in the Enlightenment era in the United States. This choice was well justified: it was the period in which the Brandenburg Gate was built and also when the United States of America was founded. The entrance alluded to rotunda designs by Thomas Jefferson. Inscribed in the rotunda entrance, one can read the opening lines of the constitution. Original designs also included “the Lodge” in the inner courtyard of the building. This was intended to be a dining and conference center. According to Ruble, the courtyard and lodge’s “form and scale” were meant to “recall both the iconic importance of the American house and the great federal nature of our natural parks” (Koffka 187). The embassy also followed in the tradition of including an impressive collection of artwork, including Gee’s Bend Quilters, “a community of quilters who grew up in the former slave district of their ancestors;” two large star motif paintings by Sol Lewitt; and a famous relic of the Berlin Wall (U.S. Mission Germany 1).

However, the embassy seems to have concealed much of this representation of “dynamic pluralist democracy” on the inside. On the exterior, the building sought out Enlightenment era and contemporary architectural citations. This design left out references to the United States’ history as a Cold War power, fitting in well with the New Berlin image, as well as tying it to the historical period of the Brandenburg Gate. In order to fit in with its surroundings, the façade and form of the building kept in line with critical reconstruction guidelines. The only point of discussion was the planned opening, which Stimmann thought detracted from the Brandenburg Gate’s function as sole gateway to the square. MRY meant this opening to “dramatically split” the “simple stone façade,” providing for an entrance “light and glassy between the stone walls,” bringing “a wash of light into the otherwise
shadowy northwest wall, and light[ing] the flag as it swoops out at a jaunty angle over the sidewalk” (Yudell 140). To form a “dialogue” with its surroundings, MRY designed a “lantern” on the top floor of the embassy, which was supposed to create a dialogue with the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, and Potsdamer Platz in the evening Berlin sky. Because of its corner location, the Embassy had three open sides: on Pariser Platz, along the Tiergarten, and in front of the Holocaust memorial. Instead of a unified aesthetic, MRY opted for three different façades to speak to the different surroundings. As described by Ruble, the building was “an assemblage of many parts” (Wise, “The Ugly American”).

An international jury, including architects from Great Britain and former Berlin Mayor Klaus Schütz, chose MRY’s design. Only the second design competition in embassy building history, it showed that the U.S. was taking the project seriously. It fact, it is probably partly due to the guidelines that architecture firm MRY won the design competition. Their design fit into the whole better than Venturi’s, which included blue and red stripes along the façade, and also would have included a large video screen, projecting images from the United States, like baseball games and concerts (Wise). Plans for the MRY design were finalized in 1996 and construction was planned in the near future.

**Security Changes**

Then came the attacks on U.S. embassies in Eastern Africa (1988), which led to increased security regulations, and MRY’s competition winning design took on a much different form. From the aerial perspective, the building’s ground plan went from being a full figure 8 to a letter C. A whole wing of offices, originally bordering Frank Gehry’s Deutsche Zentral-Genossenschaftsbank (DZ) Bank were eliminated, ruining hopes of uniting all embassy functions under one roof. The lodge was scrapped for a “Berlin Totem”
sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly. A parking garage turned into a very secure foundation, including a three-foot thick concrete base. Instead of meeting up flat with Josef Paul Kleiheus’ Haus Sommer, the embassy was now set back further from the street. In all, these changes show a “pulling back” from its surroundings, caused both by the demanded security zone and a reduction of U.S. funding from 180 million to 130 million.

The negotiation stages of the security measures revealed the German government’s use of the historical form of Parizer Platz to reject U.S. security intervention on German soil. Initially the U.S. requested a thirty-meter security zone around the building and guard shacks to be manned by U.S. personnel on German-owned public space. Berlin Senator of City Development Peter Streider quickly denied these two requests. First of all, the thirty-meter security zone would have required moving two streets close to the embassy, Ebertstraße and Behrenstraße. This would have interfered with the historical form and historical street plan around the square. Berlin was only willing to give the U.S. twenty-two meters. Secondly, concerning U.S. security presence on German soil, Streider remarked “It is unthinkable that the Americans practice sovereign rights [Hoheitsrechte] in public space; guardhouses further contradict the required form guidelines [Gestaltungssatzung]” (Lessen). Furthermore, the mayor’s speaker expressed, “we simply cannot allow the United States to help itself to a slice of the Tiergarten” (Lessen).

In remembering the incident, Ambassador Kornblum remarked, “It was seen as some kind of imperialistic demand to move the street a few feet” (Wise, “The Ugly American”). In fact, the standoff reached “comical proportions” when Berlin Mayor Diepgen

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15 This statement is interesting, considering that the two structures flanking the Brandenburg Gate were originally guardhouses for the city gate themselves. Therefore, guardhouses were not necessarily a historically new phenomenon to Pariser Platz.
saw Ambassador Kornblum entering a McDonald’s and remarked that perhaps the United States should just build a McDonald’s on Pariser Platz instead (Cohen). Kornblum countered this comment on a visit to Bavaria, when he mentioned that maybe the United States should build the Embassy at Neuschwanstein—it was definitely secure, and the Bavarians had always been true to the Americans (Cohen). In these jokes, the conflict reached a low point, in which politicians turned away from cooperation, seeking gain instead in public humiliation of their rivals, and revealing the underlying power struggle between the U.S. and Berlin.

Finally in 2002 a security compromise was found. Colin Powell reduced the required security zone to twenty-five meters, while adding height to the security fences. The U.S. gave up the request for guard shacks and U.S. controlled security checkpoints in German public space; Berlin was willing to allow the needed three meters to reach a compromise, by slightly diverting Ebertstraße. Seventeen meters of the security zone were to be located on German soil, and reducing the size of the United States Embassy would create the other eight meters.

MRY hoped to balance security with transparency in their implementation of security guidelines. Even in 1996, balancing security with other aspects was seen as a one of Yudell’s aims: to “combine respect for classical tradition and for security needs with forward-looking, contemporary sense of design” (Kinzer). After the building’s completion, Ruble stated that he thought security measures were included at Pariser Platz without causing much disruption to the historical city plan: “Pariser Platz has been completely redesigned to address the security issue in a way that is not visible...It looks like it’s part of the city” (Hickley). In Ruble’s mind, the security measures were almost invisible. This
coincides with a popular U.S. trend in security following the 9/11 terrorist attacks called “transparent security”:

Security need not be obtrusive, obvious, or restrictive to be effective. Installing concrete barriers in front of buildings may discourage vehicular bomb threats, but will not necessarily ensure greater security within buildings unless other elements are addressed. Transparent security, not visible to the public eye, can be achieved through informed planning, design, and facility operations (Nadel 1.8).

An example of this would be solid flowerbeds located in front of the U.S. and French embassies on Pariser Platz, used to be aesthetically pleasing but also reduce car bomb threats, or trees used to cover ominous looking steel security fences, or security cameras embedded in lampposts. “Transparent security” was desirable because it fulfilled the need to be accountable as an architect and also allowed for a more aesthetically pleasing result. However, as the reception of the embassy would soon show, much of the attempts to make the security invisible were futile. For one, the foliage did not have time to grow. Additionally, Berliners were primed to look for the security measures because of press coverage of the negotiation and building phases, as well as a long history dealing with transparent security in Berlin, as the Stasi files can attest. The implementation of these “transparent security” measures would soon become a pivotal issue in revealing diverging interpretations of the U.S. Embassy architecture.
III. RECEPTION OF THE COMPLETED EMBASSY


Although it would have been hard to tell from the celebratory atmosphere of the ceremony, the highly secured U.S. embassy was already under attack—in the German media. Far from celebratory, the majority of German newspaper and magazine articles covering the U.S. Embassy’s completion took a critical tone. The criticisms focused on aesthetic and security concerns. In their wake, several articles defending the U.S. Embassy or explaining the controversy itself appeared, mostly from American or U.S. targeted media. This outburst of discourse concerning the embassy, confirmed that the embassy’s meaning was not set in stone as construction finished; rather, it was still open to interpretation. Through discourse, the meaning of the U.S. embassy was (re)constructed. If we follow Huyssen’s lead, in comparing Berlin to “a city-text,” then the text’s chapter on the U.S. Embassy corresponds with the whole: “frantically being written and rewritten” (49). The vision the United States and its architects had hoped to project often did not correspond

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16 President George W. Bush was not invited, and was instead invited to meet with Merkel in June in Meseberg (Bauer).
with the German media’s reception of the building. Through media analysis, this divergence of interpretation becomes evident.

**Criticism**

In examining the German media representation of the U.S. Embassy an overriding theme seems to emerge: the United States had sacrificed aesthetics and quality architecture in its excessive preoccupation with security. Initially criticizing the architecture’s aesthetics, including the appearance of security measures, several articles show a tendency to use the building’s appearance as a springboard for other criticisms. For example, they would transfer to U.S. foreign policy, culture, and politics.

In discussing the U.S. Embassy’s security measures, journalists were not lacking in their use of simile and metaphor; the harshest criticisms of U.S. security in German newspapers and magazine articles took a figurative turn. Upon entering the realm of the figurative, the building’s specific physical characteristics triggered what Huyssen calls the “urban imaginary” (Huyssen 7). Spatially remote images—such as a New Jersey office building or a former San Francisco prison—and temporally distant images—like a medieval castle—competed for the same space at Pariser Platz. Here, Paul de Man’s “The Epistemology of Metaphor” is informative:

> It is indeed not a question of ontology, of things as they are, but of authority, of things as they are decreed to be [...] We have no way of defining, of policing, the boundaries that separate the name of one entity from the name of the other; tropes are not just travellers, they tend to be smugglers [...] What makes matters worse is that there is no way of finding out whether they do so with criminal intent or not (de Man 18-19).

17 Using de Man’s philosophical work as support, I am taking the cue of Eric Jarosinski’s “Building on a Metaphor: Democracy, Transparency and the Berlin Reichstag,” which focuses on the metaphor of transparency embodied in the Reichstag.
Like de Man, I am not interested here in policing the meanings of the metaphors used, but rather in exploring what they suggest about the embassy’s interpretation, and how the various images brought about by the buildings reception compete for power in the construction of meaning. In describing the U.S. Embassy through metaphor and visions, both Germans and U.S. Americans blurred the lines between the actual building, and what they “decreed” the building to be, often “smuggling” in visions suited to advancing their own political aims.

The Stern article from July 3, places its metaphor in the title: “US Botschaft: Alcatraz hinter Sandstein-Fassaden” (Kaspar). With this image, the embassy becomes a prison. Undoubtedly, both prisons and embassies are secure buildings. However, using this comparison brings with it a connotative meaning. Prisons are filled with cells, and inhabited by criminals. Not only is this metaphor rousing images of security, but also connotations of criminals behind its sandstone façades. It is almost as if guilt could be placed on the workers, who become ambassadors of a criminal regime. Later in the article we find the windows described as “Fenster[...] schmal wie Schießscharten” (Kaspar). Here the connotation is one of defense and battle, a building with windows small enough to provide protection, yet also big enough to use lethal force against those on the outside, in this case, against those in the public space of Pariser Platz.

In the Berliner Zeitung, the U.S. embassy became “a fortress, a maximum security prison made of reinforced steel and bulletproof glass that can withstand exploding trucks and rocket fire” (Smith)18. Here the juxtaposition of fortress with a maximum-security prison blurs the lines between inclusion and exclusion, in effect turning insiders to

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18 As cited in Smith’s Spiegel Online article.
outsiders: the United States is imprisoning itself in its own fortress. In describing the rotunda of the embassy, the Tageszeitung makes the same reference: “Eine Rotunde, die jedoch an einen gefängnisartigen Hinterhof erinnert” (Lautenschläger). Similarly, the Süddeckutsche Zeitung likens the embassy to Fort Knox: “Die Botschaft erstreckt sich wie eine postmoderne, cremefarbene Trutzburg den Tiergarten entlang, umgeben von einem hohen Zaun. Es ist ein Fort Knox am Brandenburger Tor” (Grassmann). Fort Knox, the gold bullion depository, is after all located on a U.S. military base and the connection to the U.S. military in Berlin is easy to make. Apparently the U.S. “transparent security” was “seen through” and American security presence in the center of Berlin was criticized. As the concluding allusion from the Stern article seems to attest, Pariser Platz visitors would be affected by U.S. security: “Welcome, aber: Big Brother is watching you” (Kaspar). This reference compares the United States to the Orwellian fascist state in 1984, and questions the compatibility of security cameras and democratic government. Here the issue is state power.

Next, one of the most often cited metaphors can be found in in the title of the Tageszeitung article of May 22: “The Embassy-Bunker of the United States” (Lautenschläger). This bunker metaphor also appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine: “Hier zeigt sich Amerika als vollkommen undurchdringliche, erratische Bunkerexistenz” (Maak). The bunker metaphor connotes images of war, and a shift away from the famous German NS bunkers of Berlin, to the United States’ “bunker existence” in the global War on Terrorism. More creative than just the castle metaphor, the Frankfurter Allgemeine combines security with prefabrication (read: cheapness), “sie ist die Ritterburg, die man sich im Baumarkt zusammenbasteln kann” (Maak). Whether intentional or not, these
allusions to similar looking and highly secured buildings carry connotations further than aesthetics alone. They bring with them value judgments of American culture and politics.

Some of the figurative language took an abstract form. Bernau’s article in the *Berliner Zeitung*, for example, states: “Der Bau sieht aus wie die Bestätigung aller linken und rechten deutschen Vorurteile über das machthungrige kulturfeindliche, nur reiche, aber vulgäre Amerika.” This final example shows, without a doubt, that the embassy’s aesthetics could be used as support for anti-American feelings. This discussion of metaphors is not fully inclusive, but these selections definitely show how figurative language used to describe the U.S. Embassy’s security aspects opened the door to other criticisms of American culture and U.S. politics. The metaphors bring up mental images far different than those evocative of a global or critically reconstructed city. In contrast, the U.S. government’s competition guidelines called for designs that created a “public face that portrays an open, accessible government while accommodating security measures in an unobtrusive manner” (Wise, “The Ugly American”). However, the representation of the U.S. embassy in German media shows that security and openness were not so easy to balance. Furthermore, the perceived success of this balancing was influenced by political aims. By criticizing U.S. security presence, Berliners were able to displace and challenge a display of U.S. power in Berlin.

The security aspects of the embassy were not the only grounds for criticism; the German media also criticized the embassy on aesthetics alone. For example, the architectural critic Gerwin Zohlen called the exterior “merkwürdig uninspiriert” and “erstaunlich lieblos ausgeführt,” basically labeling it an outdated version of 1980s postmodernism (“US-Botschaft sieht...”). To sum up his views, Zohlen suggested that
Berliners nickname the building the “Pancake,” because of its stretched out and boring architecture, which looks like in should be in the Midwest, not Berlin: “Es passt nicht in eine Innenstadt des Alten Europa. (“US-Botschaft sieht...”). From the Frankfurter Allgemeine, “Amerika reißt ein Stück aus seiner Mitte, knallt eine durchschnittliche Provinzverwaltungszentrale aus New Jersey an den Pariser Platz, die den Deutschen zeigt, wie große Teile von Amerika halt gerade aussehen; schlecht verarbeitet, verängstigt, nostalgisch, heruntergekommen” (Maak). Interesting in these criticisms is the connection between place and aesthetics. The U.S. Embassy’s architecture was perceived as out of place at its prominent address in a historical European city. The façade that MRY thought showed respect for its host nation, by following critical reconstruction guidelines was criticized for its blandness, and compared to images that displaced the building, rather than embedding it within the New Berlin.

Often aesthetic critiques led into criticism of the U.S. government. The U.S. embassy seemed to be used as a three-dimensional projection screen for attacks on the U.S. foreign policy. According to the Tageszeitung, the relationship between the embassy building and its foreign policy was obvious: “Der Bau ist ein simples Beispiel von amerikanischer Sicherheitsarchitektur nach 9/11 geworden” (Lautenschläger). The Frankfurter Allgemeine also connects the building with U.S. politics, saying that it looks as if one is “gerade auf dem Weg in die Green Zone von Bagdad.” The article mentions an observation of a passerby, who quipped that the top floor of the embassy could be the place of a “Wellness- und Waterboardingbereich,” because of its lack of windows (Maak). In this article, the author seems to praise the Clinton years, and connects them to better-perceived buildings, which were opened during his presidency, such as Frank Gehry’s DZ-Bank. The great sculpture
within Gehry’s bank gave the author the feel that Bill Clinton himself could be up there playing the saxophone. In this nostalgia for the Clinton-era and condemnation for the Bush era, however, one should not forget, that that the design of the U.S. Embassy is partially the result of security regulations passed in 1998, during Clinton’s presidency. If anything, the building could be considered a response to the perils of globalization and a conservative reaction on the part of the Clinton regime. The terrorist attacks of November 11, 2001 had no real effect on the embassy building’s plans. However, the length of the negotiation phases meant that the building’s reception would take place during President Bush’s second term. In that time, the relationship between the U.S. and America had been tested by Germany’s withdrawal of support for the invasion of Iraq. This disagreement seems to have influenced the German reception of the U.S. Embassy more than the 9/11 terrorist attacks influenced U.S. building plans.

**Defenders and Explainers**

While much of the German media coverage manifested itself in the form of harsh criticism for the U.S. Embassy, a significant response defended the embassy and attempted to explain the criticism itself. Defenders of the embassy included Gary Smith, head of the American Academy in Berlin, who stated that the criticism was “ridiculous”: “It isn’t the most avant-garde of structures, but I’m glad the US chose discretion over pomposity. It is a subtle solution to a very difficult space” (Marquand). Former U.S. Ambassador to Berlin Kornblum stated, “If they didn’t know there had been a debate concerning security, nobody would call it a fortress. A lot of this criticism is from people wanting to tell you how much they hate George Bush” (Hickley). Condoleezza Rice is quoted by the *Berliner Zeitung* as having stated, “[w]as für eine großartige Botschaft” (Paul). Several articles even included
fairly long interviews with U.S. Ambassador William Timken. When pressed on the fortress look of the building, Timken drew a comparison with the German Embassy in Washington, and reiterated that one could get closer to the U.S. Embassy, and even touch it. Most important for Timken was the fact that the U.S. had built their embassy in the center of Berlin, as a sign of partnership: “Wir hätten ja mitten im Wald bauen können. Aber wir wollten ein Teil Deutschlands sein” (Leszczynski).

The Newsweek article seems to sum up the defender and explainer perspective quite well: “Sadly, German critics have chosen to ridicule the security mandate, and have misread the building as a reflection of current U.S. foreign policy when it stands for the very opposite—an affirmative expression of the trust and mutual respect that makes diplomacy possible” (“The Rows on Embassy Rows”). However, important to note is that these defenders and explainers were mostly from the U.S., which seems to suggest a divergence along national lines in the construction of meaning of the embassy.

Why did security of the US Embassy set off so much criticism in Berlin? It could be argued that security is a normal part of embassies in an age of global terrorism. However, the U.S. Embassy’s location in the center of Berlin caused it to clash with preexisting global city and critical reconstruction visions. As already examined, the discourse concerning Berlin as becoming a global city had created a city image that was often free of infrastructural limitations. The security fences and anti-ram bollards hinted at the negative side of globalization, and represented limitations to a cosmopolitan image. Furthermore, the embassy would become a limited access building, the inside of which the majority of Berliners and visitors would never see. Even in construction phases, the U.S. Embassy was rather concealed, and photography was restricted. This provided a stark contrast to the
“open city” image promoted by Partner für Berlin, in which construction sites transformed into sightseeing tours.

Concerning critical reconstruction visions, the U.S. Embassy's high emphasis on security was seen as being incompatible with good architecture. The subtitle of a Stimmann article concerning the U.S. Embassy seems to confirm this critical reconstructionist view of the embassy: "Die neue US-Botschaft beweist: Hohe Sicherheitsstandards sind mit städtischer Architektur unvereinbar" (Stimmann). High security measures disrupted the historical Raumgestalt, or collective spatial form of the square formed by the individual buildings. Instead of allowing the building to fit in with its surrounding Pariser Platz neighbors, security concerns “displaced” the building. Critical reconstruction guidelines made creating an aura of transparency difficult, much more so than it had been for Germans at their new federal government headquarters.

In its defense of the historical form of the square, Berlin was able to show a new self-confidence. In negotiation stages of U.S. security measures, a change in the role the United States played in the public space of Berlin became evident. As the German center turned from a void into a symbol of unification, the days when the U.S. was seen a protective security power have became a thing of the past. German media’s heavy criticism of U.S. security measures on German soil acted as a way of reinforcing a new relationship, in which Germany sought ultimate responsibility for security within its national borders.
Conclusion: After the Reception

Since 2008, the press concerning the United States Embassy has calmed. Thankfully, no car bombs have tested the security measures of the building. Instead the only real attacks to have been waged on the embassy were the type that could not be stopped by bulletproof glass, concrete bollards, or security checks. They were criticism concerning the security preoccupations of the relatively modest (read: dull) completed U.S. Embassy at Pariser Platz from the German media. Unfortunately the embassy’s design, changed so much by world politics and reactions to globalization, did not weather these criticisms well, and instead seemed to provoke them.

Utopian global and critical reconstructionist visions—which did so much to promote the embassy’s return to Pariser Platz and greatly influenced its completed form—could not be turned to for guidance in answering the central issue facing the United States Embassy after the 1998 bombings in Eastern Africa. Insight concerning how to balance security and openness in public space in the 21st century could not be found in selective 19th century based street plans provided by critical reconstruction, nor in utopian global city visions promoted by city marketers and politicians.

In fact, resistance to transnational cooperation may have helped Germany exhibit its emergence from power relations lingering from the Cold War. Because of its emphasis on Pariser Platz’ historical form, including historic street plans and historic forested areas, Berlin had powerful justification for denying U.S. requests to reroute city streets to reduce the embassy’s vulnerability. Berlin was able to take a stand against U.S. intervention in German public space. This marked a change in power relations, which eventually led to a
compromise, from which the award winning U.S. Embassy plans had to be drastically changed. The embassy seemed to implode on itself because of security concerns, a fact that German media was more than ready to exploit, partially in response to disagreements on national foreign policy. By viewing U.S. security concerns as overanxious and out of place, the German media was able to distance its own utopian global visions for Berlin from the “reactionary” global security concerns of the U.S., and as a result, “displace” the U.S. Embassy rather than embed it wholeheartedly within the New Berlin.

Perhaps the criticisms of U.S. security concerns were more closely interwoven with the redevelopment of a federal government headquarters in Berlin than would first appear. As Foucault reminds us, “critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future, [...] it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate” (Foucault 25). Just as Berlin was deciding how to govern Germany from its new federal headquarters along the Spree River, the U.S. government provided them with an example of a governing “other” in the U.S. Embassy on Pariser Platz 2. According to Foucault, the question of how to govern and the “search for the ways to govern” is closely identified with the “perpetual question” of “how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles [...] not by them” (Foucault 28). In the German media reception of the U.S. Embassy these specifics become more focused: not to govern like the U.S., not by fortress looking structures in the name of security, not to be governed by the United States.

German media criticism of U.S. security measures could be seen as part of developing a more general critique of government. As Ulrich Beck’s “The Terrorist Threat” argues: globalization is bringing about modern threats that affect the world as a whole, and often strike without reverence for national affiliation (Beck 41). Global warming, global
financial crises, global terrorism—these global threats demand transnational cooperation, in which cooperation is not put on political grid-lock because of an argument over a few meters of sidewalk space. Perhaps the reception of the U.S. Embassy in the German media could be seen as a relatively good transnational check to American foreign policy and security measures, which may have been overanxious. As transparent in form as they may be, security measures have an effect on people who encounter them. Security measures can, in themselves, create an atmosphere of fear in public space.

However, lacking in much of the German media reception of the completed embassy was the fact that German federal government also had to deal with such security concerns. As German plans for a new federal government headquarters also attested, security concerns were not only an issue facing the United States. Yet, somehow, the underground security measures beneath Germany’s federal headquarters seemed to be more “transparent” than the U.S. security measures; German steel fences seemed less visible than U.S. ones. Thus, the discourse remained quite divided along national lines. The full advantages from a globalized critique of security measures were not fulfilled, not yet a part of a self-reflexive transnational “critical attitude” concerning the “arts of governing” (Foucault 28).

Interestingly enough, since 2008, a change in the U.S. government has led to an improved image of the U.S. in Berlin. This became evident in exhibits held at the museum “The Kennedys,” which is located at Pariser Platz 4a, on the opposite corner of the square from the U.S. Embassy. Operated by Camera Work, “The Kennedys,” opened on November 11, 2006, includes a permanent exhibit of Kennedy photographs. Der Spiegel describes the museum as “Camelot comes to Berlin,” and suggests that the museum “may remind
Germans and Americans of a better era in trans-Atlantic relations” (Moore). Since the completion of the U.S. Embassy, the museum has partnered up with its Pariser Platz neighbor on several occasions. For example, an ongoing partnership is the “U.S. Embassy Literature Series,” which takes place at the museum. President Obama has been the feature of several exhibits at The Kennedys, including “Obama’s People,” which featured images of his administration in 2008. In 2009, the museum linked President Obama with President Kennedy in “President Barack Obama – On the Tracks of the Kennedys.” This exhibit highlighted the parallels between the 35th and 44th president.

This linking of Obama with Kennedy in Berlin is intriguing, as it connects the current U.S. government with its Cold War predecessor in Berlin. These allusions to the Cold War past were exactly what “critical reconstruction” guidelines and visions of Berlin as a “global city” purposely avoided. “Architectural citations” (Goebel 1268) in the U.S. Embassy building to this Cold War past were also resisted. Thus, the partnership between the U.S. Embassy and The Kennedys museum at Pariser Platz reveals an interesting transformation of the U.S. image and presence at Pariser Platz, one that seems more open to remembering a special Cold War relationship between the U.S. government and Berlin, and in doing so, embeds the U.S. presence at Pariser Platz much more than the initial reception of the completed U.S. Embassy. If, as has been suggested, the U.S. Embassy truly acts as a projection screen for Berliners’ representation of the United States, it will be interesting to follow how the discourse concerning the U.S. presence at Pariser Platz continues to change as the future unfolds.20

19 www.thekennedys.de

Bibliography


