INTRODUCTION

REDEMPTIVE RECONSTRUCTION

CITIES INSIDE GERMANY'S INTERWAR BORDERS EMERGED FROM Nazism symbolically and physically leveled. *Symbolically*, a host of ideological outlooks and historical narratives were in ruins: an apparently cultured and educated society had embraced tyranny, the very notions of Enlightened civilization and modern progress had been contorted to serve unspeakable atrocities, and the German mission to "tame" the East had sanctioned savagery and yielded radical border shifts that ultimately pushed millions of Germans to the West. *Physically*, German cities had been battered and burned out by shelling, firebombing, and street fighting, wiping out centuries of complex historical growth. The question of *how* to rebuild from this twofold urban disaster was immediately compounded by the onset of the Cold War and trisection of prewar Germany by two principal frontiers: the Iron Curtain (between rival German successor states) and the Oder-Neisse border (which left a quarter of pre-1938 German territory largely under Polish rule) (see map 1).

Out of this shared context of symbolic and physical leveling, the ideologically antagonistic, incipient regimes of West Germany, East Germany, and Poland selectively reconstructed their cities with redemptive historical landmarks, set within an optimistic modern cityscape of the future. This effort to build a usable identity—which I call *redemptive reconstruction*—meant more than just the physical

act of *construction* across ravaged urban landscapes: cities whose prewar appearance reflected imperial, interwar, and Nazi-era styles were aesthetically reevaluated and reshaped through two intertwined and eminently modern trends. First, whether through restoring damaged monuments or crafting replicas based on landmarks that were gone, choice local edifices were resurrected as core sacred sites and ensembles to redeem local and national narratives. Second, these tokens of a reimagined past were staged against a brave new City of the Future, to be realized in projected triumphs of modern urban planning and architectural form that swept away even more architecture than that which had been irrevocably lost in the war. In essence—notwithstanding varied and competing internal schemes over successive phases of Cold War construction and demolition—all three cities took shape as *simplified architectural narratives*, whose historically layered complexities only survived in fragments where *redemptive reconstruction* had proved less vigorous, sometimes because local residents had taken action to save and appropriate them outside the official narrative. By tracing how this conversation between officials and engaged citizens evolved and sometimes differed between each city, this book applies architecture and urban planning to illustrate how larger questions of democracy, civic activism and identity, and memory politics took shape at the local level in ways that confirmed, confronted, and transcended state ideology in the shadow of Hitler.

The trifold postwar spaces of prewar Germany encompassed a vast canvas of cities, streets, and structures. To offer a more intimate narrative of reconstruction across Cold War borders, this book compares how three trading cities were remade under differing regimes: Frankfurt am Main in West Germany, Leipzig in East Germany, and Wrocław (formerly German Breslau) in western Poland. Across all three portions of former Germany, weeds grew at the same rate from the ruins. They testified to a shared starting point for reconstruction, even if upheaval from ongoing forced migrations, the sustained influence of former Nazi supporters, the prevalence of (adapted) nationalist mantras, and continued interest in interwar and wartime urban planning ideas hardly made 1945 a total rupture (the much debated "zero hour"). From their kindred architectural heritage, all three cities began with a similar potential and then split down separate yet parallel courses in which, stage by stage, they experienced many of the same needs, quandaries, choices, oversights, reactions, revolutions, repressions, and resolutions. Even though, by the 1960s, *redemptive reconstruction* had seemingly overcome the most intense leveling left after Nazism, each city continued to share in a mutual

story, as citizens in all three regions of the former Reich grappled with how to inhabit the future their leaders had forged from the broken past.

Out of a host of possible Central European candidates, I chose Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław because of their shared historical and architectural heritage. Throughout the Middle Ages, each city had grown wealthy as a trading metropole on the Via Regia that crossed from Krakow to the Rhine. However, none could boast a significant local prince (such as in Munich, Dresden, or Stettin), nor were any of the cities significant players in the Hanseatic League (as were Lübeck, Rostock, or Danzig). From this corresponding early architectural foundation, all three trading cities became regional powerhouses inside united Germany after 1871, prospered amid the industrial revolution, and benefited from growing universities and famed exhibition grounds. The Weimar-era proliferation of modern structures significantly altered the historic medieval core of each city, as all three were home to leading proponents of modernist principles. Simultaneously, strong reaction from local professionals and enthusiasts spurred intense debate throughout the interwar period about the need to preserve or even "restore" each threatened old town's premodern appearance. By the 1930s, each city's population was approximately the same size: about 550,000 in Frankfurt, over 700,000 in Leipzig, and about 620,000 in Breslau. This proportion roughly remains today, although due to forced migration and shifting Cold War–era fortunes discussed in this book, Frankfurt now numbers about 750,000, Leipzig 600,000, and Wrocław 640,000. Each city was also home to a considerable Jewish population: Frankfurt had Germany's second-largest Jewish community after Berlin, Breslau the third-largest, and Leipzig the sixth-largest.[1] In comparison to centers like Nuremberg or Berlin, each city was only marginally touched by Nazi aesthetic ideals during the twelve-year Third Reich. Each then suffered heavy damage during the war (about 60–70 percent). This was especially devastating in each historic center, where on the whole any visitor would have found the surviving architectural substance almost interchangeable at the very moment when each city's fate was tied to a different regime.

Comparative *local-level* analysis—with its close access to sources about specific sites and human stories—forms the backbone for this book. And it is fleshed out in each chapter's opening assessment of *state-level* mechanisms and patterns, informed by comparative *transnational* dimensions between each state's objectives, and contextualized by *global* conversations, as throughout the Cold War world

ongoing debates about modernism, preservationism, and civic life informed how each state and its local communities wrestled with the problem of how to rebuild after Hitler.

Urban Planning and Ideology

The human soul is shaped by its built surroundings. Long-standing acceptance of this maxim made the political and social stakes in reconstruction immediately clear in all three regions, regardless of which aesthetic preferences one espoused. To justify his excoriation of preceding historicist architecture as cultural decay, modernist Hermann Dirksmöller preached in early 1946 to construction volunteers in Giessen: "The overdone and tasteless urban architecture of the past fifty years can no longer be given any space, because architecture is an inexorable mirror" of public character.[2] When he later assailed West German modernist monotony, philosopher Alexander Mitscherlich agreed that "the person will become what the city makes of him, and vice versa."[3] Building on this notion that architecture and planning determine the outlook of a local population, each regime and its planners infused reconstruction with ideological rhetoric that colored how they rebuilt from the same ruins left in Hitler's wake.

When considering ideology, however, this book proceeds on the sober foundation that buildings themselves are material objects absent any *inherent* meaning apart from that which human beings give them. One political cadre's cherished landmark can become the next one's abomination or junk already forgotten. Although the transition to new regimes after World War II obviously added a new layer to how officials perceived key landmarks in the cities they inherited after Nazism, the comparison of Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław reveals that a turn in ideological attribution could just as easily occur over time under the very same regime (such as during a generational shift)..

Having framed *ideology* as ascribed rather than inherent, this book examines it as something that manifested itself in "events" over the course of each city's postwar history, often coalescing around certain sacred sites or ensembles ascribed symbolic importance by political and planning elites, engaged citizens, or successive generations. As Iain MacKenzie observes, these ephemeral moments can prompt shifts in ideological meaning, as "the ideological itself changes relative to the idea-event conjunction in question."[4] Most discrete urban objects never obtained the mark of ideological significance, but were demolished, built, or renovated on the basis of practical urban planning needs, egotistical objectives, aesthetic presumptions, or the

desire to stand with the winning faction. While ideologically charged landmarks disproportionately populate this book's pages, my findings also highlight how the demolition of whole streetscapes of objects—that had never gained ideological standing in and of themselves—could inspire the cumulative perception of ideologically motivated tyranny against a broader sense of urban "history" or "character" opponents sought to save. Finally, people often *remembered* demolitions as ideological, typically in the midst of some "event" (an anniversary, a change in political fortunes, or a freak accident) that unearthed past importance in hues shaded by the politics of memory. Few buildings were thus imbued with ideological importance, but all buildings contributed to the overall outcome of a simplified urban landscape, whose mix of rebranded "old" and big "new" architecture projected an official story that overwrote historical complexity and sometimes provoked public opposition.[5]

Such feats of architectural narrative were attained in all three cities by top-down decision-making processes, which held sway regardless of ideological gloss. Despite official claims of adhesion to democratic, egalitarian, peace-seeking, or reconfigured national ideals that were supposed to contrast with Nazi fascist authoritarianism, each city's reconstruction took shape at the behest of paternalistic politicians and planners anxious to promote their city's above-average ambition to seize a leading economic, cultural, and sometimes even political role in its nascent postwar successor state. Although to varying extents a directive from the central government (rarely the occupying powers) might channel high-profile decisions (above all in Leipzig, often in Wrocław, and seldom in Frankfurt), most plans emerged and were debated among elites at the local level. Each city's reconstruction was also marked by a lack of transparency, disregard for property ownership, selective memory, and an obsession with building a modern future punctuated by reconstructed façades that spoke to a usable past.[6] Across central Frankfurt, expropriations proceeded with relative ease, new traffic routes were carved through neighborhoods, and all around the cleared ruins of the medieval old town, the economic heart of the Federal Republic sprouted up overnight: the ostensible bastion of Western capitalist affluence and democracy. At least on paper, Leipzig was just as ambitious: though early plans to remake the urban core around a Johann Sebastian Bach mausoleum foundered, sketched plans for the future promised socialist prosperity. Finally, after the flight and expulsion of Breslau's over 600,000 Germans at the end of the war, Wrocław reconstructed a "medieval Polish" center to embody an ambitious national mythology: its liberation from

a 700-year German "occupation" and "return" as an integral and heroic contributor to the eternalized Polish nation.

Despite each administration's pretense of centralized efficiency and ideological coherence, constantly shifting political tides prompted successive waves of demolition and altered reconstruction aesthetics, undermining the essence of both gradual historical architectural development and a unified architectural narrative across each city's core. As Katherine Lebow observes in Poland's Nowa Huta industrial showpiece, the centralized chaos that overcame communist planning was hardly distinguishable from trends in free market systems; here too "a great deal of what was ultimately built" was "unplanned, while much of what was planned remained unbuilt."[7] Of course, ideology impressed meaning on the resulting constellation of what was kept or built. And financial disparities imposed very different strictures on the extent to which each state could realize its grandiose schemes. But "lack of resources" (like ideology) need not determine every outcome. Capitalist speculation and stinginess in Frankfurt, state-induced scarcity in Leipzig, and aftereffects of ethnic cleansing in Wrocław often yielded the same neglect of undervalued prewar landmarks, just as each reigning power structure tended to muster the means for prestige projects when it most suited a winning faction's imperatives. At great expense, Polish Wrocław restored its Prussian-era opera house right after the war, while "wealthy" Frankfurt consigned its opera house to three decades of rotting limbo, and Leipzig tore down its opera house for a costly replacement that, due to centralized chaos, took ten years to build. When political will was present, any project could take priority. And notwithstanding much rhetoric and the occasional gesture, officials often saw public desires as irrelevant.

Beneath all this bureaucratic chaos, a seamless trend of modernist convictions infused air, light, and gardens into the "inhumane" historical core and forged clean lines on rationalized streetscapes. Across the delegitimized cityscapes of the former Reich, modernism appealed to both supporters *and* victims of Nazism as a progressive language through which to construct a better future. Even decoration-encrusted architecture before 1960—whether Stalinist arcades in Leipzig and Wrocław or gabled glass and steel with mosaics in Frankfurt—relied on a diverse array of modernist principles. Almost like a religion, modernism imputed moral imperatives for how one crafted the postwar city. Architects and planners in each German city regularly lectured recalcitrant citizens for failing to appreciate how modernism could save them from aesthetic sentimentalities Hitler would have wanted—a mythology that overlooked modernist

collaboration with Nazism.[8] Although modernists meant for their architecture to reach the masses and "promote the development of a unified society," Kathleen James-Chakraborty observes, this attempt "to reach a larger public did not necessarily entail or represent the empowerment of that public."[9] Blinded by their own good intentions (and power), aesthetic evangelists in each German city interpreted public protest as a sign they had to proselytize with yet more modernist tracts. And so they lost track of the very people they claimed to serve and produced cities soon assailed for the very "inhumanity" they had claimed that modernism was certain to overcome.[10]

Alongside the motives and methods of paternalistic planners, this book explores the extent to which residents of each post-Nazi city appropriated their remade surroundings.[11] Granting that opportunities for expression were unequal across the Iron Curtain, Frankfurters and Leipzigers increasingly rejected an aesthetic outcome that failed to suit their own vision of a usable past and future. Official claims that modernism symbolized "democratic transparency" failed to convince residents alienated by what they saw as "dictatorial" aggression by a remote and corrupt bureaucracy against cherished landmarks.[12] In contrast, uprooted Wrocławians generally welcomed historical façade production, eternalized national meanings, and embraced fresh modern districts as a means to appropriate a city where they lacked prewar memories. And they celebrated apocryphal additions to official rhetoric, such as that Wrocław was successor to Lwów, a formerly Polish city where some of them had resided before Stalin annexed it to the Soviet Union as "Lviv" at the end of the war. Outcomes differed as each political system exhibited its character: protesters in Frankfurt succeeded in overturning SPD (Social Democratic Party) tyranny even though historical structures still often fell prey to capitalist speculation; protesters in Leipzig proved powerless against SED (Socialist Unity Party) tyranny and were further disillusioned; Wrocławians adopted their city in ways that paralleled, even intertwined with official party narratives. Regardless of outcomes, each city's residents strove to take possession of their surroundings and make their city home.[13]

"Public response" is, of course, a challenge to gauge. In most historical contexts, people are generally passive as long as they do not feel personally affected by policies, allowing authorities to strengthen themselves or retain their aura of strength at the expense of oppositional minorities. Barring some universal cataclysm that affects most everyone, only a resolute minority intervenes and takes risks, however small, to stop a perceived injustice. It is this engaged public that opposed planning measures in each German city that were seen

as inhumane, antidemocratic, and even culturally barbaric. Drawing on indefatigable local civic pride, they contested an urban outcome they saw as toxic to a usable past, livable present, and viable future. By contrast, Wrocławians generally got their bearings in a foreign city through a comparably harmonious conversation with spatial meanings devised from above. To get at this trifold discourse, the coming pages focus on specific sites, whose deeply contested nature yielded substantial documentary evidence in archives, newspapers, architectural journals, guidebooks, local histories, reminiscences, and personal memories. Whether official ascriptions of meaning met with public protest or embrace, the intensity of discussions around recurring symbolic pressure points made them targets for analysis.

Reconstruction as Amnesia?
Modernism, Memory, and the Search for Authenticity

As cities were assuming their postwar shape across the former Reich in 1965, Alexander Mitscherlich asserted that modern planning and aesthetics were themselves a form of forgetting that had contributed to cold, inhumane, and distinctly "inhospitable" cityscapes. "At present, that which newly comes into being has nothing in common with long-proven forms," he lamented. "The high-grade, integrated old city has been functionally dissolved. The inhospitableness spreading out over new urban regions is oppressive."[14] Photography student Arne Schmitt's 2012 exhibition of the brutality and hopelessness of gray and crumbling West German modernist marvels gave an even grimmer conclusion: the imposition of modernist dogmas had been a *penance* for sins of the past, a bleak anonymity only rarely populated by "traces of authenticity" (*Reste des Authentischen*) like Frankfurt's Goethehaus, besieged by the towering dullness of neighboring modern structures.[15] In his controversial 1999 assessment of wartime destruction, W. G. Sebald went so far as to allege that West Germans supported a rapid modernist reconstruction that "liquidated" history, creating "a new, faceless reality, pointing the population exclusively towards the future and enjoining on it silence about the past."[16] Sebald's interpretation of modernism as amnesia reechoed a chorus of discontent across scholarly and popular literature, squarely blaming modernist excess for exacerbating a West German failure to confront the Nazi past.[17] For a range of observers, humanity's creation of coldly anonymous modern cities was wiping out memory and stranding populations without history or identity. The "authentic" city of the past had been replaced by faceless sameness.[18]

Notwithstanding such mobilizing concern that modernism was yielding *cities without history*, one must remember that modernism itself was a historical style, whose diverse practitioners had infused fresh *layers of historical meaning* over the very same spaces. Andreas Huyssen has used the metaphor of a palimpsest—a scroll whose earlier inscriptions can be deciphered by penetrating later layers—to articulate how, "after the waning of modernist fantasies about *creatio ex nihilo* and of the desire of the purity of new beginnings, we have come to read cities and buildings as palimpsests of space." When read as a palimpsest, a single monument or building can contain "memories of what was there before, imagined alternatives to what there is."[19] James-Chakraborty adds that modernism itself had already possessed this layered quality before 1945, and thereafter served to infuse reconstruction with such historical purposes as celebrating a German democratic tradition or mourning wartime destruction. "Very much against the grain of its own rhetoric," she observes, postwar modernism "became a historical style," whose "pairing with an earlier historicism placed it in a dialectical relationship with exactly the architecture it had supposedly overthrown."[20] Modernists purposefully inscribed their buildings into urban history. By the same token, the reactive search for historical authenticity was in itself deeply modern.

For many residents of devastated post-Nazi cities, the best way to recapture an "authentic" past was façade reconstruction. This was a thoroughly presentist project, David Lowenthal observes. The reconstruction of choice landmarks was meant to "make history conform with memory" and "make the past intelligible in light of present circumstances."[21] Speaking at a West German planning conference in 1986, the architect Cord Meckseper agreed that, because replicas reflect contemporary values and aesthetics, their legitimacy rests, not in a "real" restoration of history, but in how they "symbolize" history, much as a statue of Schiller represents but fails to embody the essence of the historic personage.[22] Taken from this vantage point, historical reconstructions in Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław meant to resurrect lost monuments as testaments to a lost past that never was. Like modernism, they were creations that served the present for the sake of a better future.[23]

Small wonder that modernist apologists often turned the critique of "erasure" back on historical reconstructions: such fabrication was fundamentally "inauthentic," because the prewar city was irretrievable.[24] Although prevalent amid the 1980s turn to historical façade replication, this argument had already dominated in the late 1940s. As will be discussed in chapter 2, modernists passionately opposed

rebuilding Goethe's birthplace in Frankfurt after the war had reduced it to ashes. Leading architect Alfred Wolters rhetorically wondered in 1947: "Should we get to work rebuilding what was destroyed? Can we do that? Are we allowed to do that? Should we try to rebuild a destroyed Romanesque church, a destroyed Renaissance house, yes an entire destroyed old town? As they were? Do we want to replace destroyed fountains, monuments, and buildings through faithful copies in the vague hope that their loss will thus be wiped away, that their lost beauty will be recovered?" Any such attempt, he concluded, would lack genuineness (*Echtheit*), both aesthetically and ethically. All historical reproductions would be "repellent, unbearable, laughable, demoralizing, and pernicious falsifications." Especially in the case of Goethe's childhood home, "what is dead should stay dead, however painful that may be."[25]

Should postwar authorities ban reproductions in Wrocław, Leipzig, or Frankfurt as falsification? Or was reproduction justified, even necessary, to grant an aura of "historyness" to urban cores otherwise lost to modernist anonymity?[26] The stakes were high, since as Wolfgang Sonne observes, urban monuments reinforce individual memory and communal identity.[27] Cityscapes function as "reservoirs of collective memory," Rudolf Jaworski adds, in which architectural monuments convey shared memories.[28] The absence of such monuments could threaten an urban community with forgetfulness. But their restoration could expunge the realities of wartime destruction and foster false nostalgia for a golden past that had never existed. As this substantially intractable dilemma implies, *selective memory* was simply inherent in any approach to reconstruction.[29] Whether one chose to preserve a specific monument or destroy it, to "resurrect" history with a façade or put up a sleek modernist tower to showcase a better future, architectural decisions forged tendentious reference points for individual memory and communal urban identity.[30]

This story of selective memory, reconstructed identities, and the search for urban authenticity functioned in parallel form in Wrocław, even though its "collective memory" had been expelled along with its former German inhabitants, and its cityscape was meant to be de-Germanized.[31] Much recent scholarship has uncovered distinctive facets in how the Polish mythology of "Recovered Territories" (*ziemie odzyskane*) was embedded as "evidence" in postwar urban reconstruction.[32] In his authoritative monograph on how Breslau became Wrocław, Gregor Thum explores how architecture played a crucial role for Wrocław's new residents, who felt stranded and unable to feel at home in a "foreign city."[33] Piotr Kuroczyński adds that their process

of "taking possession" or "adoption" can be defined as "the mental overcoming of foreignness" by refashioning "space for the purpose of the collective formation of meanings and identity."[34] For Zbigniew Mazur, such appropriation came at a dreadful cost. "By undervaluing German and overestimating Polish and Slavic cultural achievements," he contends, Polish settlers suffered "spiritual impoverishment."[35] Desperate to justify their seizure of someone else's property, they became amenable to paternalistic myths that erased history.[36]

Despite their differing contexts after the Nazi catastrophe, emerging local identities shared the need for a redemptive national story in urban planning. Wrocławians took part in the *selective adoption* processes simultaneously under way in Frankfurt and Leipzig. Wrocław's politicians and planners likewise weighed the benefits of both modernism and façade reconstruction and accepted the pragmatic necessity of restoring Fascist-era structures. Even if the national mood and aesthetic outcome differed, Wrocław's campaign to forge a "Polish" city closely paralleled efforts in both Leipzig and Frankfurt to salvage a "good German" identity.

This book thus contests claims that Polish choices in replication, preservation, or demolition were necessarily more "national" than those in German cities.[37] Of course, the Polish narrative was more triumphal and imposed on spaces inherited from a rival national group; Wrocław's new authorities and inhabitants thus expended considerable energy on urban markers identified as Polish. But Germans in Frankfurt and Leipzig also generated reified national narratives that glorified usable symbols like Goethe or Bach and revaluated objects perceived as proof of German democratic or humanist traditions. By the same token, Józef Piłsudski was as burdened in communist Poland as Paul von Hindenburg in either Germany.[38] It is also questionable to claim that East German symbolic reconstructions were "spirited if not always equivalent" to icons like Frankfurt's Goethehaus or the Cologne cathedral in West Germany.[39] Whether in Frankfurt, Leipzig, or Wrocław, national symbolism reemerged with startling vigor to alter and embed urban spaces with eternalized and homogenized meanings.

Of course, buildings never "speak" for themselves; nationalism is a constructed, ever inventive phenomenon. Style is thus always *adaptable*, and only "inherently national" in the eyes of the beholder. Contrary to national interpretations, severe Neoclassicism in Hitler's Berlin often resembled that in FDR's Washington.[40] Just as neo-Gothic arches implied a medieval German heritage during the Kaiserreich, in postwar Poland the same Gothic arches could imply ancient Polish roots in Wrocław, Renaissance attic gables could gesture to Krakow,

and Baroque flourishes could signify a universally Polish style, even as similar structures were razed as too "German" or "Prussian."[41]

As a homogenizing force, *redemptive reconstruction*—whether as an act of "national salvage" for Germans or "national triumph" for Poles—was by nature intolerant of nonconforming landmarks, notably those tied to the Jewish heritage. As Michael Meng observes: "Germans and Poles made deliberate choices about what to rebuild and preserve from the rubble of the war. In selecting what was culturally valuable, they were also making choices about what was not. In the 1950s and 1960s, they rarely perceived Jewish sites to be part of the national or local heritage worthy of maintaining. Jewish sites also reflected a deeply discomforting, abject past that few Germans and Poles wished to encounter in the early postwar decades."[42]

Lest other architectural traces vie with "one's own" national victim narrative, "normalcy" had to be established by sidelining evidence of prewar diversity. Of course, given the sheer extent of Jewish contributions to each prewar cityscape, this absence could never be absolute. And as this book's conclusion reveals, conscientious individuals advocated throughout the postwar era to restore or commemorate Jewish sites in each city. Nonetheless, until the last years of the Cold War, architectural tokens from each city's Jewish past failed to register outside isolated gestures.

As a result, they seldom appear in the coming chapters, which feature those sites that sparked greatest attention from politicians, planners, and the populace. While each postwar city's *redemptive reconstruction* narrative inscribed a new palimpsest layer over earlier (more complex) meanings, monuments to the Jewish heritage were like burn marks poking through to highlight pre-Nazi layers marred by the ugly reality of loss. They testified to prewar complexities that failed to serve simplified postwar narratives.

Perhaps because evidence of old complexities like the Jewish heritage were so stark in the immediate postwar symbolic and physical ruins, officials and residents rushed to reimagine *local identity* as a redemptive inflection for national mythmaking. As Alon Confino observes in the West German context, local homeland (*Heimat*) identities offered "rhetorical possibilities to talk about nationhood without breaking taboos."[43] This was already prefigured in 1943, when Hans Erich Nossack stood in the smoking ruins of Hamburg and yearned for his old vista of the *Katherinenkirche* from his office window; there was no nostalgia here for the *national* meaning of the fallen Hanseatic metropolis, only wistful yearning for lost *local* vantage points he now idealized and mourned.[44] Trauma at the loss of local landmarks in

Frankfurt's old town and on Leipzig's Karl Marx Square through the 1960s churned up protest against modernism's faceless uniformity for undermining *local* (not national) character. And despite the absence of local memory in Wrocław, residents readily invested choice landmarks with local importance in a revised national narrative, giving rise to a local Wrocławian identity. Debates about finding local symbolism thus took place against a reworked national backdrop replete with *absences*—a selective process fully compatible with architectural modernism. Even Fried Lübbecke, the stalwart "Old Town Father" and defender of Heimat in Frankfurt, generally liked the comforts of a modern city and advocated for old-looking façades in a restricted historical zone. He never campaigned for a perfect replica of the prewar city that might have included, for instance, reconstructed synagogues and the Judengasse.

Comparing Memory-Laden Spaces over Time

At the heart of its comparative methodology, this book assesses discrete memory-laden sites in each city at historical intervals after 1945. Its overarching conclusion is that reconstruction debates and outcomes in Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław could have more in common than domestic cases within each successor state's borders. One need only consider the wild aesthetic differences and levels of public dissatisfaction in Kassel versus Würzburg (West Germany), Karl-Marx-Stadt versus Dresden (East Germany), or Szczecin versus Gdańsk (both in Poland's "Recovered Territories"). In like manner, an alternate tale of "three cities after Hitler" may well have found similar affinities in engagement and aesthetic outcomes in Würzburg, Dresden, and Gdańsk (whose cores featured greater historical scale and preservation) or Kassel, Karl-Marx-Stadt, and Szczecin (which experienced greater high-modernist tabulae rasae). This finding builds on Jeffry Diefendorf's masterful exposition of regional differences in financing, planning, and aesthetics across West German cities, where local administrations under the same state exhibited profound variation in how they sought to "balance the desire to reconstruct the past with the desire to build truly modern cities."[45]

With few exceptions, Cold War hubris usually colored comparative East–West assessments. As a matter of course, East German rhetoric (for instance by *Deutsche Architektur* editor Gerhard Krenz) assailed West German modernism as "escapist fantasies from the cultural decay of the capitalist city, from the lack of planning in urban development, from the bondage of power exerted by banks

and monopolies over building space." Whereas West Germans were building "the city made for cars" (*die autogerechte Stadt*), East Germans were building "the city made for people" (*die menschengerechte Stadt*). Krenz concluded: "We don't concern ourselves with abstract utopian schemes, but rather with concrete cities that offer all people the ideal conditions for the development of their character."[46] Coming from the other direction, West Berlin geographer Frank Werner imagined that East Germany gave greater attention to mass apartment complexes and rally grounds, and so concluded that East German architecture was comparatively rigid, pragmatist, and repressive.[47] In 1986, Peter Schöller went so far as to assert that "reconstruction and unnecessary or even forced destruction were in sharper contrast in the East. The architecture and the gardens of the Dresden Zwinger are renowned as symbols of artful restoration, but the destruction of feudal and royal mansions in Berlin and Potsdam, to name only a few, was mandated to make room for the new Socialist representation in the downtown areas. Such propagandistic appeal did not exist in the West," he concluded, where "more was saved and more was rescued" thanks to greater investment and "more civic initiative and more conservationist concern."[48] In fact, West Germany achieved more housing more quickly for more people (helping to inspire the later East German prefab housing campaign), and it is hardly tenable to argue that the East failed more drastically when it came to saving the preexisting built heritage. Civic activism teemed to save East German monuments, while West Germans cleared historic centers like Kassel and Stuttgart. What East Germany left to rot, West Germany often razed to build new.

Comparative assessments of bipolar architecture and planning have typically left out Poland.[49] An artful exception was Klaus von Beyme's tour de force across West and East German cities, which afforded at least a few pages to lost eastern urban areas in western Poland and Soviet Kaliningrad. The versatile political scientist himself fled from Breslau at age ten and passed through Dresden amid the firebombing before reaching the West. In his analysis of authoritarian planning methods in both states, he was intrigued by "how entirely different political objectives and economic conditions could still allow for so many similarities in the politics of urban reconstruction as came into being between the two German states."[50] For von Beyme, architectural trends in both states ran parallel: prewar feuds between modernists and traditionalists gave way to "tempered modernism" that largely neglected inner cities and disregarded popular desire for reconstruction of prewar landmarks.[51]

This groundbreaking work inspired largely congruous German-German comparative treatments by Jörn Düwel and Niels Gutschow and edited volumes wherein leading specialists have compared findings on specific cities.[52] In perhaps the most intimate three-way comparative analysis, Michael Meng has explored how in West Germany, East Germany, and Poland synagogues emerged as an abject past no one wanted in their new future.[53] Meng delimited his architectural analysis to five cities with focus on key synagogues, whose story he traced through postwar shifts in politics and memory. The coming chapters likewise compare recurring contested sites in specific cities. These include "sacred sites" central to each state's ideological narrative, such as Goethe's childhood home and the Paulskirche in Frankfurt; venues for Bach veneration in Leipzig; and medieval reconstructions across Wrocław's historic core. Meanwhile, university campuses, fairgrounds, historic districts, opera houses, and (above all) central squares recurred as spaces on which politicians, planners, and the public projected diverse images of the past and future at each chronological stage.

Chronological Chapter Layout

To offer coherence for what could become a disorienting amalgam of monuments and movements, this book's comparative analysis follows a roughly chronological progression over the course of six chapters, each of which shares the same structural format. After opening with context on how all three states in turn addressed architecture, planning, and memory in a given epoch, each chapter assesses developments on resonant sites in all three cities, before concluding with a close comparative vignette on a specific theme. The overarching trend can be summed up as follows. Chapter 1 (before 1945) contextualizes prewar architectural ensembles and assesses shared wartime destruction. Chapter 2 (1945–1949) examines isolated symbolic projects at "sacred sites" that were intended to lay the basis for a new urban identity. By chapter 3 (early 1950s), this process had spread to encompass distinctive "miracle" ensembles, in which each city had apparently "overcome" its traumatic losses and achieved a brave new identity. Chapter 4 (late 1950s–1970s) reveals how modernist utopias swept across inner cities to prove that a better future was fully at hand. Chapter 5 (1960s–1980s) investigates the struggle for appropriation amid this systematized modern cityscape: while public contestation in each German city reopened the question of whether the past had been overcome at all, Wrocławians embraced a past

they helped to generate. Building on the ever more established and contested narratives about *redemptive reconstruction* in chapters 4 and 5, chapter 6 traces the shift by the 1980s toward a new synthesis, whose multifaceted architectural language meant to fuse history into a more "human" version of a redemptive urban future. Finally, the conclusion features each city's post-Holocaust quandary of how to treat vestiges from its considerable Jewish heritage. Despite relative silence from officialdom and the populace in all three cities, dedicated individuals campaigned through each successive epoch to affix the Jewish past as an integral part of the postwar urban narrative.

At each chronological stage, close comparison informs apparent exceptionalities. Although neither Frankfurt nor Leipzig shared the particular disorientation wrought by Wrocław's complete population exchange, chapter 2 exhibits how all three cities struggled to forge a usable national architecture. Although decorative Stalinist productions were made possible by political circumstances unique to the Eastern Bloc, chapter 3 reveals how Frankfurt architects of the time similarly sought to merge modernism with tradition. Although old-looking façades suffused Polish cities far more than German ones, chapter 4 demonstrates how Wrocław was just as smitten with modernist aesthetics as Frankfurt and Leipzig. Although Wrocławians did not protest architectural decisions to nearly the same extent as residents in either German city, chapter 5 highlights the same need by residents in all three cities to appropriate their postwar surroundings. And although by chapter 6 Leipzig's cityscape was largely rotten (while Frankfurters and Wrocławians never questioned whether their cities were fundamentally salvageable), urban patriots in all three cities decried perceived modernist mistakes and sought synthesis between history and modernism that redeemed long-maligned prewar historicism.

Despite mutually antagonistic ideological rhetoric and differing possibilities for expression, each city ultimately confronted a succession of kindred architectural quandaries, whose comparison upends diverse presumptions about politics, protest, and legacies. To this day, one hears nostalgic comments that, if only Leipzig had remained under American occupation (as it was for a handful of weeks in 1945), much of its architectural heritage might have been saved. Throughout the Cold War, expellees in West Germany often yearned that, if only Wrocław had remained German Breslau, its streetscapes still would have appeared as they remembered them. Notwithstanding economic and ideological differences under each state, I consider it just as likely that West German planners would have knocked down Leipzig's

Gewandhaus or Wrocław's Prussian palace to suit the cult of modernism and narratives about a fresh start. This is not to paint each power structure as identical (as surely they were not), but rather to change the contextual basis for assigning blame for much of what was "lost" from urban landscapes across the former Reich. Other regions can also lament the devastation wrought by the modernist wrecking ball, but *redemptive reconstruction* in Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław was additionally burdened by physical and ideological ruins left by Hitler, World War II, and German compliance, collaboration, and enthusiasm for Nazism. This is why the former architectural heritage became so especially problematic in all three cityscapes: the ruins had to be reassembled into simplified urban narratives that offered redemptive local and national storylines after the Nazi catastrophe.