Heimat im Wartezimmer: Architecture, Identity, and Migration in a Socialist Model City

Holly Bushman
Yale University, holly.bushman@yale.edu

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Heimat im Wartezimmer:
Architecture, Identity, and Migration in a Socialist Model City

Holly M. Anderson Bushman
B.S. Bates College, 2016

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Yale School of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of: Master of Environmental Design

Yale University
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Keller Easterling
Principal Advisor and M.E.D. Program Chair

Elihu Rubin
Reader
Abstract:

Eisenhüttenstadt, the first “socialist model city” designed and constructed in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), provides an opportunity to scrutinize the relationship between state conceptions of architectural design and national identity in the early 1950s. Known as Stalinstadt until 1961, the community was founded in eastern Brandenburg in 1950 as housing for workers at the nearby ironworks Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost “J. W. Stalin.” While its original masterplan by the architect Kurt Leuch’s indicates the stylistic preferences of the ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany or SED), the city’s subsequent developments trace the changing economic and social conditions of the East German state, recording the slow decline of patriotic ideals and their replacement by an state of unfulfillment and indeterminacy, a condition that author and playwright Heiner Müller has referred to as a Wartezimmermentalität or “waiting room mentality” of the later GDR. In the contemporary moment Eisenhüttenstadt has suffered a sharp population decline following post-reunification economic restructuring, and is faced with failing infrastructure and rising unemployment. With increased support for the far-right political party Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD), coupled with the existence of a facility known as an Aufnahmeeinrichtung which houses individuals awaiting a decision on asylum applications, Eisenhüttenstadt today is a point of convergence for some of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary Europe. Over the course of its existence Eisenhüttenstadt has served as a setting for works of literature, drama, and other forms of creative production that record political and social transitions. This thesis traces parallels between Eisenhüttenstadt’s architecture, urbanism, and other types of media which, considered in concert, indicate a deeper societal shift from a socialist realist aesthetics of “Heimat” to an aesthetics of “Wartezimmer.” It argues that SED programs which mandated cultural production and East German identity had a profound effect on daily life in the GDR, and understands the legacy of those projects as rife for appropriation by groups such as the AfD in contemporary Eisenhüttenstadt.
Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction: Grosse Zeit, Vertan

---------------------------------------------------------- 1

1. Heimat and Identity in GDR Architecture and Literature

---------------------------------------------------------- 21

2. Eisenhüttenstadt in the 1960s and the Bitterfelder Weg

---------------------------------------------------------- 57

3. The New Town in the Age of New Subjectivity

---------------------------------------------------------- 71

Conclusion: The Heimat-Wartezimmer Continuum

---------------------------------------------------------- 103

Figures

---------------------------------------------------------- 116

Appendices

---------------------------------------------------------- 130

Bibliography

---------------------------------------------------------- 140
Figures

Figure 1.1. The village of Fürstenberg in the 1950s.

Figure 1.2. American prisoners-of-war at the Stalag III-B camp, likely taken in winter 1942. This image was captured by American POW Angelo Spinelli, who traded cigarettes with Nazi guards for a camera and film.

Figure 1.3. A Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth) brigade on the EKO construction site, 1950.

Figure 1.4. Unser Friedenswerk, the newsletter of the EKO Stahl union, from 23 June 1952.

Figure 1.5. Franz Ehrlich at work.

Figure 1.6. Franz Ehrlich’s “abbreviated” plan for Stalinstadt, which was dismissed for appearing too abstracted and therefore too similar to Western design.

Figure 1.7. Kurt Leucht’s 1952 master plan for Stalinstadt.

Figure 1.8. Floorplan of flat in second living complex, completed 1953. Leucht’s apartments were celebrated as “worker’s palaces.”

Figure 1.9. Loggias on an apartment building in the second living complex indicate the classical references in Leucht’s plan.

Figure 1.10. Facade in the third living complex which was inspired by the late 19th and early 20th century German “Heimatstil” architectural style, featuring reliefs depicting scenes from traditional folklore and faux half-timbering.

Figure 1.11. Bernhard Kretzschmar, “Blick auf Stalinstadt,” oil on canvas, 1955.

Figure 1.12. Promotional pamphlet for Eisenhüttenstadt’s 10-year anniversary celebration, which features a commemorative poem “The Live in Out City” dedicated to the Soviet prisoners-of-war whose remains were found in the mass grave near the EKO construction site and reburied at Platz des Gedenkens in central Eisenhüttenstadt.

Figure 2.1. The fourth living complex, photographed shortly after its completion, in 1960.

Figure 2.2. Map of Stalinstadt in 1960.

Figure 2.3. Rosenstraße, Eisenhüttenstadt. Part of the fifth living complex, 1959-1965.
Figure 2.4. The construction of the fifth living complex, featuring the use of cranes.

Figure 2.5. Prominent GDR authors at the first Bitterfeld convention, 1958. Note the unofficial motto of the convention and successive movement: “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel! Die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!” (*Take up your pen, buddy! The socialist national culture needs you!*).

Figure 3.1. Eisenhüttenstadt’s sixth living complex, pictured in November 2014.

Figure 3.2. Model of Eisenhüttenstadt from 1965, including the planned sixth and seventh living complexes.

Figure 3.2. Typical mittelganghaus floorplan.

Figure 3.3. Brigette Reimann in 1963.

Figure 4.1. A mother angrily grabs her son, who had been participating in neo-Nazi violence against foreign guest workers living in a hostel in Eisenhüttenstadt, 1991.

Figure 4.2. A graffitied swastika on the side of a building near the Eisenhüttenstadt train station.

Figure 4.3. Map of Brandenburg Landkreise showing political party majority in individual districts. Oder-Spree II, where Eisenhüttenstadt is located, shows an AfD majority.

Figure 4.4. AfD poster from the 2017 Bundestag elections. The text reads, “New Germans? We make them ourselves!”

Figure 4.5. The *Aufnahmeeinrichtung*, Eisenhüttenstadt’s asylum seeker accommodation facility.

Figure 4.6. Deutsches Rotes Kreuz donation bin near the Aufnahmeeinrichtung, Eisenhüttenstadt. The facility is visible in the background.

Figure 4.7. Jens Rötzsch, “Eisenhüttenstadt, Platz des Gedenkens,” 1999.
Introduction: Grosse Zeit, Vertan

Ich habe gewußt, daß Städte gebaut wurden
Ich bin nicht hingefahren,
Das gehört in die Statistik, dachte ich
Nicht in die Geschichte.

Was sind schon Städte, gebaut
Ohne die Weisheit des Volkes?

Great Times, Wasted

I knew that cities were being built
I haven’t been to any.
A matter for statistics, I thought
Not history.

What’s the point of cities, built
Without the people’s wisdom?

- Bertold Brecht

Bertolt Brecht wrote the poem above in the last years of his life, years spent living in the village of Buckow, Brandenburg, northeast of Berlin. By rights Buckow was an idyllic setting for the poet and playwright to work; from his historic house on the shore of the Schermützelsee Brecht could watch sailboats cross the lake, could walk among the reeds and cattails which lined the shore, and — perhaps conspicuously — could distance himself from the German Democratic Republic’s tumultuous politics he had once so fervently defended. Critics would later note a return to motifs of nature and

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the pastoral present in the “Buckow Elegies,” a collection of poems written between 1954 and Brecht’s death in 1956. The decidedly somber tone of those final works, underscored by the poet’s insistence on “Elegien” in the collection’s title, indicates a detached pessimism with which Brecht increasingly viewed the young GDR.

This is not a thesis about Bertolt Brecht, and it is only passingly concerned with the pastoral landscape of eastern Brandenburg. It is, however, deeply interested in the content of the poem above: the crafting of a new city built in the earliest years of the GDR, a community not 50 kilometers southeast of Brecht’s lakeside retreat. In contrast to the reeds and sailboats of Buckow, Stalinstadt (or Eisenhüttenstadt, as it has been known since 1961) represents the rapid push for *aufbau* (construction) in the 1950s; and later, the difficulty of sustaining the GDR as it aged and faced economic and social constraints. Brecht’s status as a voice of architectural and urban criticism in the early GDR was confirmed by his friend Hermann Henselmann, the most prominent architect of the era, who installed a quote by the playwright over the entry to his first building in socialist East Berlin, an excerpt from the song “Friedenslied”:

Friede in unserem Lande,
Friede in unserer Stadt,
daß sie den gut behause,
der sie gebauet hat.
Peace in our country,

Peace in our city,

That she is a good home,

To those who built her.

Here Brecht is evoked as a voice which bridged seemingly disparate aspects of East German culture, a presence which would retain influence through the GDR’s 40-year existence and into the contemporary moment. Curiously Brecht’s earlier musings on the planned cities of the GDR contradict his eventual pessimism; in his *Arbeitsjornale* the playwright had recorded praise for such urban projects as new means of organizing and experiencing the world. Yet what Brecht’s poem might serve to indicate is an understanding of the phenomenon of planned communities in the GDR as places which ultimately ignored the individual subject in a drive for “statistik,” for a lack of subjectivity cultivated in the overplanned and controlled urban environment.

Despite the jaded tone, at the time of Brecht’s writing the first “sozialistischen Stadt” in the GDR was still under construction. Brecht’s literary contemporaries, among them the well-known (both domestically and internationally) Anna Seghers and the lesser-known Karl Mundstock, had through various means puzzled over the construction of the young state: figuratively, in the case of Seghers’ 1949 *Die Toten bleiben jung*, and literally, as in Mundstock’s triumphant novel of construction and socialist devotion

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While Seghers’ career stood out as a singular success until Christa Wolf gained acclaim in the late 1960s, Mundstock is best known for works of Aufbauliteratur (roughly translated as ‘construction literature’), a genre which characterized the first decade of the GDR. While perhaps an obscure literary figure today, Mundstock’s *Helle Nächte* epitomizes the idealist attention to construction and the cultivation of a new national identity. His choice of setting, Stalinstadt, indicates the equally crucial role the architectural would play in the crafting of this new identity. Understanding the design and construction of Stalinstadt as the reification of that identity is the first aim of this thesis. Understanding the enduring implications of those constructed identities is the second, which permeates the entirety of this inquiry.

Stalinstadt, renamed Eisenhüttenstadt in 1961, was the first of four model cities planned and constructed in the GDR. The community was initially conceived as housing for workers employed at the nearby ironworks Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost “J.W. Stalin” (EKO), which itself was the first major industrial project undertaken in the young nation. Stalinstadt was officially the second large-scale prestige project to be realized on East German soil, the first being the construction of the Stalinallee (today Kal-Marx-Allee) development in the Berlin districts of Friedrichshain and Mitte which commenced in 1949.\(^4\) While the Stalinallee project initiated a conversation surrounding the development of an East German architectural style, the design and construction of Stalinstadt can be considered the first GDR undertaking to follow a rigorous aesthetic program, one borne of debates surrounding “formalismus” (the East German term for

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International-Style Modernism) and dictated by the 1950 *Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaues*, legislation which official mandated the GDR’s architectural and urban style. The original masterplan, designed by the Berlin-based architect Kurt Leucht, consisted of four large-scale “Wohnkomplexe,” or living complexes, intended to house a total 30,000 individuals and interspersed with civic buildings. Constructed on a previously undeveloped tract of sandy pine forest in northeastern Brandenburg, strategically located near the eastern terminus of the Oder-Spree Canal where it met the Oder River, the original Stalinstadt masterplan followed a vaguely classical, radical design scheme. Through the late 1950s and 60s destalinization, changes to SED foreign policy, and fluctuating economic conditions altered GDR relations with the Soviet Union, access to building resources, and increased demand for affordable, easily constructed housing. In the context of Eisenhüttenstadt these changes manifested in the construction of the sixth and seventh Wohnkomplexe, the final large-scale developments built prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

If its founding sought to encapsulate the idealism of the early GDR, contemporary Eisenhüttenstadt might exemplify the fallout of economic and social policies instituted as part of reunification procedures in the 1990s, coupled with the ongoing housing of asylum seekers who arrived in Germany en masse following what is commonly referred to as the 2015 European Refugee Crisis. Since the mid-1990s, when the Balkan Wars led to a continental (and eventually international) wave of migration, Eisenhüttenstadt has been home to a type of asylum seeker accommodation facility known as a *Aufnahmeeinrichtung* which houses individuals petitioning for political
asylum in Germany though awaiting a final decision on pending applications. As Chancellor Angela Merkel was faced with growing scrutiny over her refusal to set a “refugee cap” through the fall of 2015, the far-right political party Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) successfully exploited the crisis, integrating an anti-immigration message into its populist political agenda and purporting to represent the German middle-class.\(^5\) Recent election results suggest that the AfD is gaining support among Eisenhüttenstadt’s citizens: the September 2019 Brandenburg parliamentary vote saw the AfD gain 12 seats in the regional Bundestag, while in the administrative district within which Eisenhüttenstadt is located, the Landkreis Oder-Spree, the AfD won a majority for the first time since the party’s founding with over 30% of votes.\(^6\) The emergence of far-right conservatism, the presence of an asylum seeker population, and the flagging state of Eisenhüttenstadt’s architecture and infrastructure paint a complicated picture of contemporary life in the first model city, a place where early idealism has been seemingly replaced by a troubling landscape of decline and the unfulfilled promises of a united Germany.

Among the freighted teleologies projected onto cities in the former GDR, the tropes of demise and decline are perhaps most pervasive. Eisenhüttenstadt was the first of four model city projects devised and built by the GDR and the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands’s (Social Unity Party of German or SED, the single governing party in the GDR) apparatus of planners, architects, and engineers.


Construction on the second planned city of Hoyerswerda, a worker’s community for a nearby lignite processing plant, commenced in 1957, followed by the oil refinery town of Schwedt an der Oder in 1964 and the “chemical worker’s city” of Halle-Neustadt in 1967. With the exception of Schwedt an der Oder, which has retained the majority of its pre-1989 refining capacity and affiliated workforce, each of the East German model cities has seen its population more than halved since reunification. These “shrinking cities” are marked by empty apartments, as many have left in search of jobs elsewhere, or young people have left for university and never returned.

Yet the dissatisfaction that has driven many away from Eisenhüttenstadt since reunification might be traced to an earlier sentiment, one which extends to the socialist era and was similarly rooted in economic dissatisfaction. The 1970s saw the end of First Secretary Walter Ulbricht’s rule, and his replacement Erich Honecker implemented new social programs meant to improve quality of living. Despite these progressive and often expansive policies the decade saw the GDR enter what is sometimes referred to as “the long decline,” a period of economic instability initiated with the oil crisis of the 1973-74 and subsequent inflation and foreign trade tensions which would come to head in the summer and fall of 1989. With regards to East German architecture this manifested in a move to low-cost, prefabricated building materials, and a move away from the ornate living complexes of the 1950s toward a new aesthetic regime of homogenous, modest facades and interiors. This architectural banality was by the late 1970s nearly

8 Ibid. 142.
ubiquitous in East German cities, as were other implications of growing trade deficits and inflation. International goods became more difficult to attain (perhaps best epitomized in the 1977 Coffee Crisis), while construction timelines were stretched indefinitely and the once-regimented processes of daily life became increasingly irregular. This is described in a 1992 quote by the East German director and playwright Heiner Müller, who articulates the concept of the later GDR as Wartezimmer or “waiting room”:

“There would be an announcement: The train will arrive at 18.15 and depart at 18.20 - and it never did arrive at 18.15. Then came the next announcement: The train will arrive at 20.10. And so on. You went on sitting there in the waiting room, thinking, It’s bound to come at 20.15. That was the situation. Basically, a state of Messianic anticipation. There are constant announcements of the Messiah’s impending arrival, and you know perfectly well that he won’t be coming.”

While Müller goes on to discuss the implications this persistent sense of “waiting” has on the relationship between the individual and their surroundings (a discussion which, with regards to changing conception of architecture and material culture, will be taken up in the second chapter of this thesis), what is crucial here is an understanding of temporality in the GDR as that which was informed by a deep sense of indeterminacy.

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Slavoj Zizek reads Müller’s comments above as critical in discerning the “Messianic anticipation” of the socialist society,\textsuperscript{10} while literary critic Hunter Bivens has connected Müller’s conception of waiting space to the idea that, by the 1970s, the nation was trapped in a perpetual state of “unterwegs” or sense of being constantly en route toward a destination.\textsuperscript{11} In this thesis Müller’s framework is considered in the context of its antecedents, combining both Zizek and Biven’s notion of authority and arrival with the mythos of “Heimat” perpetuated in first decade of the GDR’s existence. Put simply, this thesis traces Eisenhüttenstadt through the Aufbau years, which emphasized a great socialist future built by laborers such at the very population of Eisenhüttenstadt, to the eventual replacing of that mythos by the gradual acceptance of the “waiting room” affect of the GDR’s final two decades. Eisenhüttenstadt, I argue, provides a critical case study in this transition. The city’s conception and construction are well-documented, and a close reading of the decisions which informed Stalinstadt’s founding and early architectural developments provide insight into the (often contentious) nature of design as a political apparatus. While the events which led to the construction of the first model city in the sandy pine forests of eastern Brandenburg occasionally read as dramatic (including the spurning of a Bauhaus-trained architect for an overly idealistic masterplan submission, the deep dysfunction of the construction process, and the often confounding new modes of living in the city's first housing developments), the early ideological valence of the EKO plant construction and the Stalinstadt project are perhaps best articulated in the literature of the 1950s GDR. If the cultivation of \textit{Heimat} was

\textsuperscript{10} Žižek 42-43.
propagated by party officials as a means of building a new East German identity, no cultural project defined and articulated a patriotic homeland like the novels of Karl Mundstock and Hanz Marchwitza. Drawing on the *Bildungsroman* genre of the 19th and early 20th century, authors of Aufbauliteratur like Mundstock and Marchwitza sought a means of describing the development -- in some cases, such as Mundstock’s 1952 novel *Helle Nächte*, quite literally a coming-of-age -- of the idealized proletariat citizen learning and embracing the tenets of German Socialism through industrial trials and tribulations. If the architecture of the 1950s served as a means of exhibiting new socialist values both domestically and abroad, the literature of the same period might be understood as a similarly multifaceted propaganda, both showcasing the potential East German future and providing a how-to manual for citizens of the new nation.

Given its ideologically charged position as the first socialist model city in the GDR, Stalinstadt was the consummate setting for novels such as Mundstock’s *Helle Nächte* and Marchwitza’s 1955 *Roheisen*. Both books envisioned the EKO construction site (and, eventually, functioning ironworks) as a training ground for the ideal proletariat. Both also featured characters whose experiences would have felt tragically familiar to many readers: *Umsielder*, or “resettlers,” were individuals who had been displaced by the atrocities of the Second World War and were drawn to the construction site as a means of survival. In this way Mundstock and Marchwitza traced early refugee narratives in the community, explicating the importance of the Umsiedler laborers to the East German cause and showcasing their fictional protagonists as they developed into earnest, collectively-minded socialists.
While the novels of the 1950s, known as *Aufbauteratur* (“construction literature”) paralleled Stalinstadt’s architecture as an specified means of defining an identity, the literary-architectural parallels of the later GDR articulate Müller’s concept of the Wartezimmer in profound ways. After destalinization and changing social norms of the 1960s led to a reassessment of GDR culture, authors and other cultural figures were encouraged to engage directly with laborers at plants such as the EKO by the formation of *Zirkel Schreibender Arbeiter* (“Writing Worker’s Groups” or ZSAs). Established literary figures acted as mentors for groups of workers at more than 300 factories, refineries, and other industrial sites across the GDR.\(^{12}\) Such groups would produce major GDR literary figures like Volker Braun and Angela Krauss, and would ultimately shift the focus of national literature from the idealized (and sometimes fantastic) depiction of Heimat to a more granular representation of the daily life of the East German proletariat. One author whose work was a galvanizing force in this shift was Brigette Reimann, whose 1961 novel *Ankunft im Alltags* (roughly “Arrival in the Everyday”) initiated the genre of *Ankunftsliteratur* (“arrival literature”). While ardently devoted to the socialist industrial cause, Reimann’s works exhibited a growing dissatisfaction with the state and its policies in the later 1960s and early 70s. Her final, unfinished novel, 1973’s *Franziska Linkerhand*, is set in the fictional model city of Neustadt and articulates both a literary critique of the state and a captivating portrait of architecture in the 1970s GDR.

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Just as Mundstock and Marchwitza’s works provide literary parallels to the architecture of the 1950s, Reimann’s *Franziska Linkerhand* offers powerful insight into changing conceptions of the built environment. Reimann’s eponymous heroine is a young architect who relocates to Neustadt following a difficult divorce, optimistic at the prospect of a new beginning and the opportunity to engage directly with the design and construction of a model city. Over the course of roughly a year Franziska loses faith in the power of architecture to reinforce socialist ideals, and eventually leaves the city disenchanted by the idealism she once prized. Her neighbors and colleagues, many aging Umsiedler themselves, exemplify dissatisfaction and disillusionment at the ongoing prospect of a socialist Heimat. The homogeneity of Neustadt’s Plattenbau apartments, coupled with a prevalent sense of banality and stagnation, reinforce Müller’s description of the later GDR as a waiting room while describing the ways in which such indeterminant temporality manifested in daily life. Reimann’s novel may be read as a paradigmatic work of GDR literary realism in the 1970s; it also can be understood as a subversive - though careful - work of architectural and social critique at a particularly fraught moment in the GDR’s history.

While set in a fictional community, *Franziska Linkerhand* can augment a reading of Eisenhüttenstadt in the last two decades of the GDR. Eisenhüttenstadt’s sixth and seventh living complexes were constructed out of prefabricated panels and resembled the homogenous developments described in Reimann’s novel. These developments stood in contrast to the existing city, from which they were distracted by the Oder-Spree Canal and a wide tract of undeveloped land. As historian Andreas Ludwig has
suggested, the location and architectural style of the two new developments essentially fragmented the city, distancing the new, low-cost housing from the ornamented central developments of the original city plan.\textsuperscript{13} While this distancing had immediate implications for its new residents in the 1970s and 80s, the “fractured” nature of the new Eisenhüttenstadt has had an effect on the contemporary community as well.

The economic crises which had permeated the 1970s amplified in the 1980s, and in concert with growing social scrutiny of the SED regime and events in the broader Eastern Bloc eventually destabilized the GDR to the point of political upheaval. As the majority of Eisenhüttenstadt’s workforce was employed in the EKO plant at the time of Mauerfall, it was from the factory that organization against the crumbling regime emerged. By late October 1989 citizens had begun to demonstrate against the SED government and to advocate for regime change, as recorded in the minutes of a “Dialog-Veranstaltung” (or “dialogue meeting,” one of many such public forums organized in the GDR in the fall of 1989). An EKO employee present at the meeting described the situation as follows:

“Die erste Demo in Eisenhüttenstadt fand noch mit relativ vielen Menschen statt. Aber das hat sich hier einfach nicht entwickelt. Die zweite Montagsdemo und die dritte waren schon fast eine Luftnummer. Man hat immer woanders hingesehen, aber hier war das organisatorisch nicht hinzukriegen. Es gab nur eine Mitteilung, Montagsdemo findet wieder statt. Na ja, gut, das hat jeder so genommen, hat sich

The first demonstration in Eisenhüttenstadt had a relatively large turnout. But that just didn't develop here. The second Monday Demonstration and the third were nearly a flop. One could always look (for participants) elsewhere, but organizationally you couldn't do that here. There was only one message, 'the Monday demonstration will take place again.' Oh well, everyone understood that, but preferred to sit in front of the television and marvel at what was going on in Leipzig and other cities.

While this reflection recounts the perhaps ambivalent response to a nation-wide groundswell in opposition to the SED party, it also indicates the pervasiveness of the "waiting room" mentality in Eisenhüttenstadt. "Monday Demonstrations" were named for the protests which had originated in Leipzig in September, and while demonstrations in such cities drew crowds of over 70,000 as the fall of 1989 progressed, Eisenhüttenstadt’s population remained largely unaffected by the momentous events unfolding around them, or at least content to witness the end of their nation from afar. If Eisenhüttenstadt’s citizens had acclimated to the waiting room affect of the 1970s and 80s, their response to what would come to be known as the Freundliche Revolution

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The fall of the Berlin Wall on the night of November 9, 1989 and the eventual end of the East German state, are picked up again in the final section of this thesis. Here, however, it is worth pausing to reflect on the frameworks this research makes use of, as they have informed my reading of works of literature as central to an understanding of life in the first model city. Here I draw on the classifications developed by Eli Rubin, a historian of East German material culture, in taxonomizing contemporary scholarship on the GDR. In the years after Reunification scholars were initially intrigued at the prospect of studying the “tabula rasa” presented by East Germany, and most early works scrutinized the relationship between the USSR and GDR as a means of understanding the latter as a Soviet puppet state or “protectorate,” to quote a 1992 study by historian Ernst Nolte. The 90s were marked by what Rubin refers to as “top-down” histories, or scholarship which assessed the Soviet Union, SED party, or Staatssicherheitsdienst (the State Security Agency, commonly referred to as the “Stasi”) as dictatorial or deeply fraught institutions which caused overwhelming harm to the average GDR citizen. Such rhetoric, particularly in the German scholarly context, served to reinforce Western

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17 Ibid., 3
notions of “triumph” over the East and implied a superiority in political and social systems between socialist and capitalist societies.

Such work was met with backlash, particularly thanks to scholars such as Andreas Ludwig (whose 2000 monograph on Eisenhüttenstadt’s founding and construction has been a critical text for this thesis), Mary Fulbrook, and Ina Merkel. Such works sought to counter narratives of totalitarianism and oppression by emphasizing experiences of daily life in the GDR, and in particular describing features of GDR society which resembled that of the capitalist West. As a compliment to this academic trend, the early 2000s saw the emergence of a pop culture phenomenon trend known as “Ostalgie,” or nostalgia for the East German state. Household items from the GDR were coveted by its former residents, while some particularly recognizable products (such as the Trabant or “Trabi” car, a cheaply-produced vehicle ubiquitous in East Germany; or the hen-shaped egg cup which was found in nearly every GDR kitchen in the 1970s and 80s) became informal symbols of the fallen state. Academic studies and the emergence of Ostalgie alike were attacked by conservative historians, who, in Rubin’s words, felt that “museums, show, products, and scholarly works focusing on so-called everyday life (were) escapist fantasies that allow the Left to deny the inhumane, illiberal, and even deadly crimes of the four decades of Soviet control over a part of Germany.”

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By the 2000s the divide between “totalitarianists” and “researchers of everyday life” was well-established. While the latter group, concerned with “bottom-up” research (in contrast with the early “top-down” studies), was considered more progressive, its tactics were refined over the following decade and subsequent studies of ethnography, cultural anthropology, and political history have augmented an understanding of the GDR as a society which should be read as distinct from its governing body and as maintaining a unique, dynamic culture which occasionally subverted state attempts at totalitarianism. This study situates itself in conversation with such works, and seeks to balance discussions of East German politics, industrial and economic histories, and daily life in order to articulate the changing experience of living in Eisenhüttenstadt’s built environment.

With the emergence of scholarship on East Germany -- and, indeed, European socialism writ large -- there came a renewed fascination in the “utopianism” inherent in the socialist project, a means of analysis with particular implications for the study of urban space and the built environment. In a 1995 article (which preceded her 2000 book on the same topic) Susan Buck-Morss describes the end of the Cold War as the foreclosure of the “dreamworlds” of the 20th century, ultimately connecting the seemingly disparate socialist and capitalist desires for utopian totality (to the former, this utopia was industrial; to the latter, it was consumerist). To Buck-Morss, writing over two decades ago, understanding the commonalities in motivation and method of these mass-mobilizing utopian projects was to help restructure the 21st century, an age of negotiating the post-dreamwork. Critically, Buck-Morss notes the ways in which
cultural production is not, as fallacious popular logic holds, an indication of political structure: “...cultural forms have shown themselves remarkably resilient, adaptable to the most diverse social and political purposes. The fact that these forms are used interchangeably by contemporary artists and image-makers implies that one of the casualties of the end of the Cold War is the structure of cultural discourse itself.”\footnote{21}

In her 2016 book *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* American historian Rosemary Wakeman scrutinizes utopianism in the context of the midcentury global model city phenomenon, to which Eisenhüttenstadt belonged. Comparing planned cities from the works of Constantinos Doxiadis to Fordlândia, Wakeman shows that cities which emerged out of vastly different political, economic, and social motivations can be collectively understood as projects of modernization.\footnote{22} While Buck-Morss’ theoretical study serves to underscore the malleability of politicized urban forms, Wakeman draws attention to the practical ways in which such communities -- from the capitalist constructs in the Brazilian rainforest to the paradigmatic socialist example of Soviet Magnitogorsk in the southern Ural Mountains -- undertook similar projects of ordering and administering daily life by novel, ideologically charged means. Here, expanding on Wakeman’s analysis, Eisenhüttenstadt is understood as a city which was developed as a means of statecraft, and should be considered not only in the context of the history of the German Democratic Republic but also in the history of midcentury modernization.

Given its teleological status as a symbol for a nation that no longer exists, and a way of life that appears largely outmoded, Eisenhüttenstadt would at first glance appear to provide a cautionary tale of the afterlife of European socialism, and physically manifest the structures which led to its downfall. Certainly a visit to contemporary Eisenhüttenstadt reinforces commonplace narratives of decline and degeneration in the former GDR: much of Eisenhüttenstadt’s seventh living complex has been destroyed, and demolition of the sixth is ongoing. On a visit to the city in July 2019 the sound of dynamite erupted sporadically across the otherwise silent city. The same afternoon, walking the four kilometers from the local train station to the city’s archive, I counted three graffitied swastikas. When I told acquaintances in Berlin that I was traveling regularly to Eisenhüttenstadt for research, I was met with baffled looks and occasional concern for my safety. One morning, confused by the text on my train ticket, I flagged down a railway employee to verify that I had paid the correct fare. Misunderstanding my (admittedly broken) German, she took my ticket, shaking her head.

“This is not correct,” she responded in English. “You’ve bought a ticket to Eisenhüttenstadt.”

On that particular day Eisenhüttenstadt was where I wanted to be, but to travel there by choice is itself a privilege. Eisenhüttenstadt’s large asylum seeker population waits indefinitely for decisions which determine their rights to remain in Germany, their movements restricted, their presence (if the AfD political posters scattered across the city are any indication) largely unwelcome. That the phenomenon of asylum exists in Eisenhüttenstadt is a searing reminder of the ways in which such humanitarian crises
often manifest in places like these, where myriad signifiers of urban blight often equate
to ample open and inexpensive housing. The individuals living in Eisenhüttenstadt’s
Aufnahmeeinrichtung are trapped in their own waiting rooms, the contemporary
inheritors of the affect of indeterminacy Heiner Müller described of a nation which no
longer exists, and yet remains legible in the vestiges of its attempt for legitimacy
through urban form.
1. Heimat and Identity in GDR Architecture and Literature

“What a scene! Your crane rising high! Below the blooming country, the golden fields, the dark forests. Mosaics of villages, towns ever more colorful, ever closer together and now connected to the blast furnaces and rolling mills and housing estates and sites of culture and leisure, the landscape shaped by man. Lord of creation, Christa surveyed from her perch. Below her the earth shrank to a globe which men modeled according to their desires; they redirected rivers, removed mountains, filled in valleys, turned deserts into gardens...”

A triumphant scene in Karl Mundstock’s 1952 novel Helle Nächte finds the protagonist, a young woman named Christa, deep in a patriotic dream. Christa surveys

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the nascent German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the top of a crane on the Eisenhüttenkombinat-Ost (EKO) ironworks construction site. She is a member of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth or FDJ), the official youth organization of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany or SED). As a member of a youth construction brigade Christa represents a ubiquitous experience shared by young adults in the early years of the GDR, yet her dream is allegorical for more than its youthful idealism. From high above the EKO construction site the young brigadier sees a nation in bloom: dark woods and golden fields give way to housing estates and schoolyards and, eventually, the triumphant blast furnaces of the ironworks, the first major industrial project undertaken by the GDR.

Christa’s dream suggests a national fixation on construction; not simply the process of building, but a deeper affinity for the structural realization of state ideals. In observing the landscape surrounding what was to become the EKO plant transition from wilderness to industrialized frontier, the young brigadier epitomizes a totalizing vision for the young nation, a nation whose early success in many ways hinged on its ability to develop industrial materials for postwar reconstruction. The crane, Christa’s omniscient perch, is at once a symbol of the promise of industry and an elevation above the Märkische landscape, a privileged vantage upon which the socialist vision - if only ever in a youthful dream - can be realized in toto.

Mundstock’s novel belongs to the genre of Aufbauliteratur, a literary style which emerged in the early 1950s as a means of relating the GDR’s emphasis on reconstruction
and industrial development in the period to the public. Such novels are perhaps best understood as propagandized accounts of nation-building, which is featured both metaphorically, as with the description of the development of the ideal GDR citizen (Christa’s checkered past and path to epitomizing the earnest socialist is a major plot arch of the 678-page novel) and literally, in the expansive descriptions of FDJ activities. At the core of Mundstock’s project and other works of Aufbauliteratur is an attempt at conveying the novelty of the GDR, an nationalist ethos galvanized by the potential of developing the German socialist state on the previously undeveloped expanses of eastern Brandenburg.

What Christa’s dream allowed her to presuppose, and what the imagination of men like Karl Mundstock projected, was a construction project that would develop into much more than the first ironworks on GDR soil. Shortly after the groundbreaking at the EKO site, a sandy expanse near the Oder River, a second large-scale development was ordained during the third meeting of the SED congress in July 1950. SED party officials determined the necessity of a planned city to house workers at the ironworks, and soon began soliciting plans for the “erste sozialistische Stadt” in the GDR. As Mundstock’s evocative language might suggest, the model city project, with its potential for the organization and refinement of the socialist citizen, was to become a large-scale showcase of East German architectural prowess and prestige. Between 1950 and 1953 plans were drawn - and redrawn - in observance of “Die Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaus” (*The Sixteen Principles of Urban Design*; see Appendix), a 1950 piece of

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legislation which dictated an official style for East German architecture and urbanism and sought to determine which aesthetic references and historical precedents were acceptable in the new regime.

Following a master plan designed by Kurt Leucht, Stalinstadt (renamed Eisenhüttenstadt in 1961) was touted as a major “prestige project,” a community designed to epitomize the ideals of the new nation while structuring -- literally and figuratively -- the lives of the new socialist citizen. A closer interpretation of the events which preceded Stalinstadt’s groundbreaking on February 7, 1951, indicate a complicated and occasionally convoluted planning process: just as Karl Mundstock drafted characters that epitomized, to the minds which dictated SED cultural policies in the 1950s, the idealized proletariat, so too does the design of Stalinstadt reflect the idealistic yet fraught design of a new identity.

The chapter understands Stalinstadt’s planning as a project of statecraft which parallels that of the literary impulse. Designing a city, as with writing a novel, was to the early GDR a creative undertaking, one which would ideally braid the tenets of German socialism with pragmatic attention to the necessity of construction and the cultivation of a new workforce. The decisions which led to Leucht’s selection -- a choice which reflected both the major influence of the Soviet Union on the GDR’s official architectural style, and the anxiety surrounding the definition and implementation of a new national building style -- will be discussed as events which are deeply charged with a desire to structure the new nation around this idealism. Here the architecture of Stalinstadt, elevated in status and visibility as the “first socialist city,” serves as both literary and
physical metaphor in multiple contexts for the construction of the new nation, and the
new proletariat. This metaphor is readily evoked in works of Aufbauliteratur by the likes
of Mundstock and Hans Marchwitza, among others; and in the experience of daily life in
the community as the imagined roles of laborer and citizen were realized. In effect the
GDR was attempting a *Betriebsroman* on the scale of nation-building.

In this chapter the early history of Stalinstadt is discussed alongside the social and
cultural implications of the project. Stalinstadt’s planning was the first large-scale project
carried out in the GDR after the ratification of the *Sechzehn Grundsätze*, and the effect of
that legislation on the eventual design of the city is closely scrutinized. Here it is argued
that, in keeping with a broader state project for the development of a thoroughly East
German *Heimat*, the architecture of Stalinstadt was an attempt at balancing a pre-existing
visual culture with the cultivation of a new, and inherently socialist, aesthetic identity. In
19th century German society the untranslatable notion of “Heimat” had played a
powerful role in collective conceptions of homeland and identity, and its emphasis on
pastoral ideals and tradition had made the concept rife for exploitation at the hands of the
Nazis.25

In order to understand the importance of aesthetics to the SED party in the first
decade of the GDR’s existence, and to consider the ways in which architecture was used
as a form of creative statecraft, attention is also given to the emergence of the genre of
*Aufbauliteratur*, which characterized GDR literature of the 1950s. The construction of
Stalinstadt, described in Hans Marchwitza’s *Roheisen* and Karl Mundstock’s *Helle*

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Nächte, is elevated to a project of almost mythological status; both novels feature ensembles rather than individual protagonists and describe the construction site as a stage for constructing and enacting the socialist imaginary. The tendencies of both novels are revisited in the chapter’s third section, in which the imagined proletariat is recast as the central -- yet abstracted -- figure to be serviced by Stalinstadt.

1.1 Early History: War’s End and the Umsiedler

Fürstenberg, a small shipbuilding village on the Oder River, was left largely undamaged at the end of World War II (Image 1.1). In January of 1945 the community was occupied by German troops as a “fortress,” an eastern outpost far enough from Berlin to exist on the military periphery yet close enough to the front to be of ostensible use in hindering the Red Army’s advance. As part of the defense SS troops demolished the bridge over the Oder on February 4, 1945. In advance of the Red Army Fürstenberg’s civilians were relocated, many south to the city of Guben, others west towards the villages in the Spreewald forests. Soviet troops overtook Furstenberg on April 24; the next day the Soviet commander appointed a new mayor. The immediate reorganization efforts — explicitly concerned with assessing war damage and repairing canal and road infrastructure — prompted an almost instant return to the village. Military documents suggest that only 48 civilians remained in the community after evacuation; by May 12, five days after German surrender, 1,200 individuals were recorded in Furstenberg.27

Documentation of the first weeks and months after German surrender sheds light on what Andreas Ludwig calls a “tedious new beginning”: Fürstenberg’s shipbuilding operations were resumed in the repairing of Soviet barges; the local glassworks, once a producer of lampshades for an international market, began to manufacture window panes for buildings damaged in the War; an armaments factory near the community was decommissioned and dismantled. Shortage was present in daily life. Rations were put in place almost immediately, and only available to adults involved in reparation projects. The war had caused agricultural operations along the Oder to cease, and the summer of 1945 was spent harvesting what was salvageable and repairing damaged farm buildings and machinery. The forested areas surrounding Fürstenberg were scavenged for food, though concerns of undetonated bombs and landmines made the practice untenable. As projects deemed to be collectively beneficial were pursued, individual needs were not prioritized. Vogelsang, a small village north of Fürstenberg, was almost completely destroyed and individuals allegedly lived in cellars through the summer of 1945.

Destruction and devastation in the closest major cities of Berlin and Dresden made life untenable in the weeks following German surrender. Ludwig suggests that the rapid population influx was due to the “possibility of an increased food supply” in the rural regions east of Berlin, an influx that promptly resulted in a housing shortage. Individuals displaced by the War eventually came to be referred to as the Umsidler, resettlers, though many arrived with very little in the way of personal belongings. In spite of their transient status, Umsiedler quickly found work in agricultural and infrastructural projects.

28 Ludwig 13-14.
In this way the resettlers, though unequipped for the self-sufficiency their title might suggest, began an uncertain project of renewal. The large number of displaced individuals living near Fürstenberg was a major factor in the SED government’s decision to locate the ironworks in the region. Most of prewar Germany’s metallurgical industry had existed in the West, and the construction of an ironworks facility was integral to the young nation’s economic independence and rebuilding efforts. Ludwig writes that Industry Minister Fritz Selbmann favored the area not for any geographic or strategic rationale, but for the opportunity to transition the local economy from agrarian to industrial and provide the ample Umsidler population with a more socially advantageous form of employment. On August 17, 1950 the official announcement of the Eisenhüttenkombinat-Ost (EKO) ironworks to be built several kilometers west of Fürstenberg brought with it the acknowledgement of the gravity of change coming to the region.

The land that was to become the EKO construction site was not, however, tabula rasa. Nor was it a backwater wholly unrecognized by the Nazi party, overlooked as mediocre farmland. During WWII the undeveloped area west of Fürstenburg became the site of the Nazi prisoner-of-war camp Stalag III B (Figure 1.2). The camp was designed to accommodate up to 10,000 prisoners, and its strategic location on the Oder-Spree Canal speaks to the ostensible valuation of the region to the Wehrmacht. When war was officially declared against the Soviet Union in 1941 the camp was expanded considerably. Camp prisoners from ten different nations were forced to work in a variety of industrial and agricultural settings in the surrounding region, in many cases
contributing directly to the German armaments industry. Mass graves were discovered after the war, which led to the recognition of the area that was to become Eisenhüttenstadt as imbued with a somber, near-religious valence, eventually memorialized architecturally though the construction of a monument in the center of the community.

In a discussion on the derivation of GDR identity the Stalag III-B presents a fascinating - and almost contradictory - narrative. As a POW camp which held a large number of Allied and in particular American captives the camp received considerable attention, both as a point of visibility during the war and a site of collective memory in the postwar era. What was obfuscated, however, was the mistreatment of the Soviet captives retained at Stalag III-B. While members of the armed forces from the Western belligerents were able to receive Red Cross aid packages, Soviets were reportedly exploited, often malnourished and forced to perform disproportionately greuling labor. When the two mass graves were excavated in 1948 the bodies of a total of 4,109 prisoners were discovered. As Axel Drieschner and Barbara Schulz write in an essay on the camp, the Soviets quickly claimed each body as one of their own, utilizing the mass casualties as evidence of their large-scale sacrifice. However, at least twenty of the bodies found in the graves were German Jewish individuals forced to work at the Degussa armaments factory in nearby Fürstenburg. In addition, a Typhoid epidemic had claimed dozens of lives at the camp in the winter of 1941/42. It is likely that most of these bodies were also buried in the mass graves, though their nationality is unknown.
Soviet occupiers demolished much of the Stalag III-B camp facilities in 1947 and 1948, though the officer’s quarters were left standing as they were stone, and therefore much harder to knock down than the wooden prisoners’ barracks. As Andreas Ludwig suggests, a major population influx to the area came on the heels of German surrender: as refugees swept west ahead of the Red Army, individuals were forced out of heavily-bombed cities such as Berlin and Dresden. Referred to as the *Umsiedler* ("Resettlers") in the GDR, these individuals sought shelter and subsistence farming in the Märkische countryside. The sizable population of largely unemployed Umsiedler was a major factor in the SED party’s decision to locate an ironworks on the Oder-Spree Canal. What is important to note here is the possibilities for housing available to the Umsiedler: through the summer of 1946, many individuals were living in cellar holes or sleeping without a permanent shelter. The Stalag barracks would have provided an obvious refuge for desperate individuals, a situation the Soviets were likely eager to avoid.

Architectural historian Ruth May writes that the location of the ironworks was determined from an array of factors: the existing (though damaged) infrastructures of the canal and railroad, the opportunity to invigorate an economically backwards region, the large population of Umsidler already in the area. With the signing of the Treaty of Zgorzelec on June 6, 1950 the GDR and Poland agreed on the specifics of the *Oder-Neiße Friedensgrenze* (Oder-Neisse Peace Border) and brokered a tenuous economic agreement. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), an economic organization formed by the Soviet Union in response to the Marshall
Agreement, further normalized the previously strained relations between the two nations.

A formal ceremony initiating work on the ironworks site took place August 18, six years to the day after the murder of KPD leader Ernst Thälmann. Selbmann noted the murder in a speech given at the event, a reference which underscored the politicized nature of the proceedings. The EKO project, the first major industrial undertaking of the GDR government, was deemed a “work of people and of peace,” an implicit nod to the moral superiority of German socialism over its capitalist counterpart. Such politically charged messaging was far from novel; the opportunistic, ambitious positioning Selbmann employed at the EKO groundbreaking ceremony was part of a broader evangelism, an idealistic dictate which would underscore all aspects of the design and construction of Stalinstadt.

About 1000 tons of ammunition and undetonated explosives were found in the clearing of the EKO site, which impeded the early construction process. The impediment might have been fortuitous, however, as formal plans for the blast furnaces were not completed until November, and the Umsiedler employed at the site were unskilled laborers with little to no formal construction training. Predictably this lack of order caused difficulties: in addition to the hazardous construction site widespread shortages included tools and building materials, goods that workers were expected to provide. One of the project’s earliest undertakings, the construction of a road connecting the EKO site

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30 Ludwig 30
31 Ludwig 31
to the village of Fürstenberg, was completed using concrete salvaged from the ruins of
nearby buildings. Ludwig notes the “special role” played by women and youth brigades
in the Eisenhüttenkominat construction. Women were central to the construction of
Werkstraße, which connected what remained of the armaments factory, a major source of
scrap material, with the EKO building site.

Youth labor brigades were critical to the EKO project. Ludwig writes that the
ironworks was referred to as a “construction site of the youth,\textsuperscript{32}, whose organization and
administrative structure was a welcome addition to the previously unordered building
site. Summer youth labor, often organized under the umbrella of the Free German Youth
(FDJ) party, was a major boon to the early East German economy as well as a ubiquitous
social experience (Figure 1.3).\textsuperscript{33} While the involvement of the youth brigades buoyed the
project through the summer of 1951, unskilled Umsidler continued to flock to the
construction site seeking employment and housing. In the summer of 1951 about 8,200
individuals were recorded as employed at the EKO site. Most lived in the vicinity of the
project, and temporary barracks were constructed near the entrance to the site. In
December of the same year, when around 4,500 workers were recorded, housing was
noted to be a more critical factor. Any unoccupied housing in Fürstenberg was quickly
claimed, and many additional workers were forced to commute from the larger
communities of Frankfurt on der Oder or Guben via the menial public transportation
network in the region.

\textsuperscript{32} Ludwig
\textsuperscript{33} McDougall, Alan. \textit{Youth Politics in East Germany: The Free German Youth Movement, 1946-1968.}
Many individuals hired private operators for the commute, while others used the inconsistent rail network. Commuting via train was unreliable in part because the transport of goods was prioritized over the transport of people; and Fürstenburg’s train station was not particularly convenient to the EKO site. In an attempt to address the housing shortage a “barrack town”34 of about 1000 beds was constructed near the construction site. Some workers even resorted to lodging in the surviving buildings of the Stalag III B camp. Most of the buildings left standing after the War were barracks for security officers.

With the creation of makeshift barracks facilities came additional entrepreneurship: a snack bar and a provisional department store (a branch of a business which originated on Alexanderplatz in Berlin) commenced operation near the Stalag IIIB barracks. A hairdresser and a cinema were also constructed near the barracks, enticingly modern developments in contrast to Fürstenberg’s scant infrastructure. While a future-oriented “branding” can be read in these initiatives, the publication of the company newsletter Unser Friedenswerk (“Our Peace Work”) in March 1951 was a blatant statement of the ideals which informed the project’s direction and development (Figure 1.4).

1.2 The Sechzehn Grundsätze, Heimat, and the Stalinstadt Masterplan

The first residential buildings constructed in the area that would become Stalinstadt were intended as an affordable, efficient means to an end. In capitalizing on

34 Ludwig 26.
the opportunity to develop the EKO plant as a project of industrial integrity the decision
to build the GDR’s first model city was to be a case study in the *Sechzehn Grundsätze
des Städtebaus* ("The Sixteen Principles of Urban Design, Appendix I), a list of directives
for new development in the GDR. The *Sechzehn Grundsätze* were conceived to align
with the Stalinist design mandates of the Soviet Union and borrowed heavily from
research gathered by a group of architects and planners on a 1950 study trip to Moscow,
as well as exemplifying an aesthetic vision for an East German *Heimat*. Christoph
Bernhardt, scholar of GDR urbanism and director of research at the Leibniz Institut für
Raumbezogene Sozialforschung, writes that the design ideology which informed the
writing of the *Sechzehn Grundsätze* was positioned in opposition to Le Corbusier’s 1933
Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) Charter of Athens, which
reflected a Western planning trend away from the compact urban locus. Bertolt Brecht
himself would endorse an anti-formalist architecture for the GDR, though raised concern
that the new GDR style would only be successful if it could produce simultaneously
“ugly and beautiful things.” Writing to his friend and prominent architect Hermann
Henselmann in 1955, Brecht reflected on the new ideal:

> “Anfechtbar das lineare Grundkonzept unseres Bauens. Die Harmonie hängt nicht
> von der Regularität ab. Wo blieben die Höfe, die krummen Straßen, die
> Überraschung der plötzlich sich öffnenden Sicht, das Spezifische eines Blocks,
> das ihn dem Gedächtnis einprägt und durch die Jahre hin anziehend macht? Wir

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35 Bernhardt, Christoph. “Planning Urbanization and Urban Growth in the Socialist Period: The Case of
lassen unsere Kinder in der Geometrie aufwachsen, in Einheitsstallungen. Das Zufall (und der "von außen" kommende Zwang, sich gerade hier einzurichten, das Beste aus einer Zwangslage zu machen usw.) des anarchischen Bauens der Vergangenheit hat Häßliches und Schönes hervorgebracht. Wie setzen wir sein Schönes planmäßig?"

(The basic linear concept of our construction is contestable. The harmony does not depend on the regularity. Where were the courtyards, the crooked streets, the surprise of the suddenly opening view, the specificity of a block that memorized it and made it attractive through the years? We let our children grow up in geometry, in uniform stables. The coincidence (and the "outside" compulsion to settle down here, to make the best of a predicament, etc.) of the anarchic building of the past has produced ugly and beautiful things. How do we set his beauty as planned?)

As Bernhardt suggests, the Sechzehn Grundsätze emphasized the relationship between a center of activity in urban space and a developed residential area in the immediate vicinity. Where Western European urban planners had suggested an “end to the traditional compact city,” East German design was to reintegrate the city center into urban life, while constructing buildings which eschewed the look of Western “formalismus” (the East German term for International-Style Modernism). The

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reorientation of the central complex as focal point was accepted by the East German architects, planners, and politicians who endorsed the *Principles* as paradigmatic, a return to the radial city as an organization of urbanism par excellence. The nexus of urban life, once the marketplace or church, was replaced in the new model for urbanism by government buildings such as the city hall and (in approved design for Stalinstadt) the Palace of Culture.

The campaign against “formalism” was led by Kurt Liebknecht, nephew of the famous Spartacist Karl Liebknecht and head of the *Deutsche Bauakademie* (DBA, the East German architectural association). Liebknecht’s diatribe against formalism hinged on the belief that it was both unnatural and hostile to the people, and indicative of cosmopolitanism; ultimately, a capitalist conception. Given Liebknecht’s position at the DBA, and a sense of urgency surrounding the perceived threat posed by West German culture, the SED adopted an official design policy in 1953 which regulated architectural and artistic style in the GDR.

Liebknecht’s framing of formalism as “cosmopolitan,” or even imperialist, is somewhat rational considered in the context of the 1948 Marshall Plan, which included the promotion of modernist aesthetic styles such as abstract expressionism. The Bauhaus, celebrated in West Germany for its innovative approach to social housing and mass production, was in the East German consciousness tied to the United States, which had additionally helped to fund the Ulm Institute of Design, seen by some as a West

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German successor to the Bauhaus. The US was home to a large number of Bauhaus emigres including Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Marcel Breuer. To Liebknecht and SED party officials combating such propagandizing necessarily bordered on a populist rationale: as Helmut R. Wagner writes in a 1957 essay on Soviet influence on East German society, the official design ethos became “national in form and socialist in content.” To assert dominance the GDR looked to its past. Heinz Hirdina writes that official documentation suggested the most desirable referents were Rococo, baroque, renaissance, and Chippendale artistic and architectural styles. The “authenticity” of the GDR was proclaimed by Walter Ulbricht at the Moscow All Unions Building Conference in 1954, who suggested that the United States’ influence on West German architecture was a clear sign that the FGR was an “American protectorate.”

The *Sechzehn Grundsätze* were not, however, wholly informed by Soviet design principles. While the approved building styles can be interpreted as reactionary against Western modernism, the SED regime had a deeper agenda which made the cultivation of a thoroughly East German aesthetic critical to the success of the new state. *Heimat*, a concept of German identity and placemaking, had long informed popular conceptions of “homeland.” GDR political and cultural leaders saw the cultivation of a thoroughly socialist Heimat identity as crucial in promoting the ideals of the new nation, and sought to develop expressions of Heimat in cultural projects such as architecture and literature.

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41 Hirdina 43
The construct of Heimat dates to the 19th century, when German Romanticism (in parallel with increased industrialization and widespread migration from rural to urban communities) sought to capture an affective experience of “homeland.” Historian Christina Applegate has argued that the concept served as a means of mediating the transition from local to national identity following German Unification in 1871. The term is in essence untranslatable, its meaning deeply rooted in German history, tradition, and experience. As historian Jan Palmowski suggests, the concept remained relevant even as momentous changes took place within the German Lands in the 19th century, and was inherently open to broad conceptions of identity, able to “accommodate the transformations of modernity and the political changes of the twentieth century… it allowed individuals to experience these challenges through the traditions of the locality, the familiar and communal relations that defined it, and the physical environment expressed in landscape, monuments, and buildings.” In essence, as Applegate articulates, Heimat is a means of relating the “local world with the larger, more impersonal national one.”

Palmowski claims that the East German state sought to capitalize on Heimat as a means of constructing legitimacy. Combined with the strict enforcement of anti-fascism, political and cultural leaders envisioned a socialist future which claimed a unique national identity, one as informed by its anti-capitalist ideology as it was by a seemingly

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45 Palmowski 4.
46 Applegate 115
apolitical German heritage. Immediately contradiction are apparent in the East German conception of “Heimat”: leaders were immediately faced with dismantling what remained of the Nazi legacy while selecting references which were legible to its new populous. The malleability of the concept, and its emphasis on a distinct and often idealized German identity, concerned leaders that its message might slip dangerously close to the ethnonationalism of the Nazis, who had themselves exploited Heimat. Yet developing an East German understanding of Heimat was seen as a crucial tool in mobilizing the masses to adhere to the socialist project. East Germans, likely unsure of their identities in the new nation, (and many of them Umsiedler personally grappling with the devastation of war) needed motivation to support the East German state, and the integration of Heimat with a collectivist message was determined to be a means of instilling socialist values in the GDR citizen.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to rigorously interrogate historic interpretations of “Heimat” and their relevance to German society, it is here that a major critique of the early GDR might be brought into consideration: in the realm of architecture, that of its unfortunate aesthetic similarities to Nazi design; and more broadly, a return to modes of mimetic representation previously promoted by National Socialist leaders. This has led to much scholarly debate on the nature of “totalitarian design” in both the GDR and the Eastern Bloc. Boris Groys has written that such politicized artistic projects were ultimately concerned with representing a “collective

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47 Boa and Palfreyman 10.
48 Palmowski 24-25
unconscious,”⁴⁹ a return to mimesis largely abandoned by preceding avant-garde projects.

What I want to suggest here is that *Heimat*, as a malleable concept utilized by both Nazis and communists, can help parse the seemingly illogical decision on the part of the SED to endorse an aesthetics which seemed to revert to the deeply fraught modes of representation of the recent past.

The “formalismus” debate found an arena in the planning stages of the Stalinstadt project. With the passing of the September 1950 Reconstruction Act the *Sechzehn Grundsätze* became legally binding. Projects such as Hermann Henselmann’s Weberwiese Building in Berlin realized the political objectives of the Grundsätze, and reinforced a desire for a design style which emphasized “national heritage.” Exactly which “national heritage” was to be celebrated was dubious. Certainly an anti-bourgeois commitment to form was the main priority; this manifested in an outward rejection of the Classicism favored by National Socialism. Brian Ladd writes that the designs of the early GDR building projects were something of an “amalgam of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Josef Stalin,”⁵⁰ a style which was solidified in the first “prestige project” of Berlin’s Stalinallee (renamed Karl-Marx-Allee in 1961).

Yet the rejection of allegedly cosmopolitan modernism developed at the Bauhaus presented challenges for the GDR architects who had found in the new regime an opportunity to actualize the school’s egalitarian ideology. Architects including Richard Paulick, Edmund Collein, and Franz Ehrlich (Figure 1.4) had studied at the Bauhaus and

remained in the GDR after its establishment, and were initially influential figures in early-GDR design circles.\textsuperscript{51} Ehrlich, in particular, embodied a prototypical GDR designer: imprisoned by the Nazis at Buchenwald for his communist activism, he was forced to design the infamous “Jedem das Seine” entrance gate for the camp. The Nazis recognized Ehrlich’s skill, and eventually gave him a paid position at the camp as an architect and interior designer, which allowed him to allegedly helped the resistance by passing off SS construction documents.\textsuperscript{52}

After the end of the War Ehrlich remained in Dresden to work on the early reconstruction efforts, eventually gaining influence in the GDR design industry. In 1950 he was promoted to technical director of the Design Office of Industrial Construction, and in 1955 was named head architect of the Ministry for Foreign Trade. In October 1950 Ehrlich was the first architect asked to design a preliminary plan for the Stalinstadt residential project. According to urban historian Ruth May, whose 1999 book Planstadt Stalinstadt remains among the only scholarly texts written on the city, Ehrlich’s plan is notable because it “tells of the ‘old’ communist-cosmopolitan spirit ‘to plan life and the world.’”\textsuperscript{53} A later Ministry of Reconstruction memorandum would note that Ehrlich’s plan was “worthless” and “did not agree with the Sixteen Principles of Urban Development.”\textsuperscript{54} Ehrlich’s original plan located the city north of the EKO site in the

\textsuperscript{51} May (2003) 55.
\textsuperscript{53} May (2003) 59.
Bushman 42

woods near Ziltendorf. The city was to sit near the bank of a lake, likely the Großer Politzer See, and be serviced by an East-West highway (Figure 1.5).

Ehrlich’s design is a minimalist abstraction, more concerned with the city’s potential for generative growth than the consolidated order of Kurt Leucht’s eventually realized plan. It was conceived as a “self-contained design in which only the the town wall seems to be missing.”\(^{55}\) The main element of contradiction apparent in Ehrlich’s design is the lack of distinction in city elements: May writes that the plan offended the “spirit of the Sixteen Principles of Urban Development” through its “abbreviated” planning model. While elements of socialist urbanism – the stadium, the central plaza, the regimented residential and commercial districts – were not clarified to the satisfaction of the oversight committee, Ehrlich did emphasize the projected implications of the “supply model” integrated into the design. This involved rigorous financial calculations regarding all aspects of the building process: raw materials and construction services, finishing and furnishing, and labor costs were predetermined, as were social metrics such as housing demand, required commercial commodities, and costs associated with potential cultural necessities such as theaters and community centers.\(^{56}\)

Ehrlich’s proposed plan was an exercise in socialist central planning which extended beyond architectural form. His major flaw, then, was less aesthetic or imprecise than a function of the regime’s complicated relationship with Bauhaus-era modernism: Leucht, whose designs were significantly influenced by the 1950 visit to Moscow which inspired the Sixteen Principles, adopted an approach to urban design that was “less

\(^{55}\) May (2003) 60.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.
theoretical than associative and pictorial.”\textsuperscript{57} Thus May concludes that Ehrlich’s plan was one which prioritized the urban form as “content” while Leucht was successful in designing a city which aligned with the stylistic directives of Stalinism while treating the conservatism as a “form.”\textsuperscript{58} That many Bauhaus and Neues Bauen architects emigrated to the West before or immediately following the end of the War was of considerable embarrassment to the GDR regime, which saw the intellectual capital loss as potentially devastating in the planning of projects of the early 1950s.

In stark contrast to the abstraction of Ehrlich’s plan, Kurt Leucht devised a design for the city which alleged to build a community where “das politische Leben und das nationale Bewußtsein des Volkes zum Ausdruck”\textsuperscript{59} \textit{(the political life and the national consciousness of the people are expressed)}. In his 1957 book \textit{Die erste neue Stadt in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Planungsgrundlagen und -ergebnisse von Stalinstadt} Leucht describes in typically expressive language the process of design and the intended characteristics of the city, a community “von der Industrie für die industrie gebaut”\textsuperscript{60} \textit{(built by industry and for industry)}. His decision to bound the community by the Diehlo hills to the south and the canal to the east underscores the grounding of the project as a thoroughly new city, intentionally separated from the existing development in Fürstenberg by several kilometers. No indication of Fürstenberg is made in the planning documents, though a major road was included in the initial designs to connect Stalinstadt with the existing village as well as the village of Schönfließ to the north. Yet despite the

\textsuperscript{57} May 61
\textsuperscript{58} ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} ibid.
design as an isolated new community, references to established architectural traditions permeate the project. May, citing Thomas Topfstedt, describes the city plan as “baroque,” designed in a radial system that expands south and west from a focal point; however the EKO plant stands in place of a castle as “point de vue.”\textsuperscript{61}\ The community expands outward from the central locus of EKO factory gate and administrative complex, transitioning quickly into four Wohnkomplexe (residential complexes) which each included its own nursery school, primary school, and social facilities (Figure 1.6).\textsuperscript{62}

Of particular importance to Leucht’s plan was the quality of the apartment complexes. Referred to as “worker’s palaces,” the apartment buildings directly reflect the classicism permeating Stalinstadt’s master plan (Figure 1.7). May notes that “socialism was not expected to herald any rapid collectivization of society within the residential complex,” though elements of each residential complex reinforce a communal ethos. Wohnkomplexe were arranged around a wide pedestrian street, flanked by the school and nursery buildings. The organization of residential space around these community facilities is read as a “socialist achievement,” a prioritization of community reiterated in each Wohnkomplex. Leucht was tasked with designing a living center which would not only exemplify the “surplus” and benevolence of the socialist project, but also with displaying a new system of property management. That all elements of life, including shopping and leisure facilities, were integrated into the Wohnkomplex plans reflected a broader conception of the central planning model. As May notes, the plan relates “programmatically” to the surrounding landscape as well as the EKO plant; the original

\textsuperscript{61} May 63

Stalinstadt design extends in a near quarter circle out from the gate to the ironworks. The town’s center, directly south of the gate, was designed as a large square surrounded by the main public buildings: the Kulturhaus (House of Culture), Haus der Partei (regional party headquarters) and Rathaus (City Hall), while the Kaufhaus (main shopping building) and the local hotel were adjacent, each on opposite sides of the intersection of Leninallee and Straße der Republik.

The idealized Stalinstadt citizen was the *arbeiter*, the worker, and his immediate family. In the development of a new East German citizen ideas of the nuclear family as paradigmatic were seen in multiple facets of postwar reconstruction, notably the architectural attention to the familial dwelling. In the same vein nurseries, schools, and ample park spaces with playground equipment were readily present in Leucht’s Wohnkomplex. With regards to the *Sechzehn Grundsätze* Stalinstadt’s central buildings clearly reference classical design: Leucht writes that the Friedrich-Wolf-Theater on Leninallee was meant to evoke a Greek temple,\(^{63}\) while the “Aktivist” restaurant featured a loggia and intricately decorated interior staircase.\(^{64}\) Such motifs are present in the four central Wohnkomplexe, which are oriented around the main plaza, each with similar aesthetic referents yet notably characterized by nuanced differences (Figure 1.8). Also of note is the third living complex, which was designed with reference to “Heimatstil” architecture of the late 18th and early 20th century (Figure 1.9).

A central meeting place in Leucht’s plan is the Platz des Gedenkens, a monument to the 4,109 Soviet bodies purported to have been found in the Stalag III-B’s mass grave.

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\(^{63}\) May 69

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
on the EKO site. This monument was included in Stalinstadt’s design from the project’s initiation. Scrutinizing its placement in central Stalinstadt provides insight into the dictated relationship between the narrative of “Soviet liberation” and daily life in the community (Figure 1.8).

The Platz des Gedenkens in Eisenhüttenstadt remains a peculiar monument: a tall obelisk, topped with a bronze star, sits at the end of a wide plaza. While the Platz was the site of regular events memorializing Soviet sacrifice in the early years of the community, and in later years a regular meeting place during demonstrations and public holidays, the site currently appears unfrequented. Contrasting the wide emptiness of the site with the imposing monument - a clear reminder of Soviet influence - one is left to puzzle over its existence. That remains of 4,109 individuals lie buried beneath the cracked and overgrown paving stones would seem to justify the existence of the monument. Yet the freighted concepts of “sacrifice” permeate a contemporary understanding of the site. It is perhaps the only remaining structure in Eisenhüttenstadt which glorifies Soviet intervention, even asserting Soviet prominence over German: the obelisk bears an inscription which reads, “Sleep quietly loyal combatants your memory will not fade for centuries 1941 - 1945,” and, on the opposite side, “Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the fight for the freedom and independence of our homeland.” On the front and back of the obelisk this message is written in Russian, while the sides bear the German translation.
1.3 Literature and Stalinstadt: Karl Munstock, Hans Marchwitza, and the Writing of Industrial Heimat

While the condition of GDR architecture in the 1950s underscores the importance of identity and visibility to the SED, this objective is also visible in the literature of the same period. Indeed, literature underwent its own “Formalismus-Debatte” following the publication of an anonymous 1951 article in the Berlin newspaper Tägliche Rundschau critiquing Western artistic and literary trends. What followed was, much like ongoing reactions to purportedly “Bauhaus” aesthetics, an intentional move toward the development of a literature which distinguished itself from Western counterparts. Socialist realism, the predominant style of literature in the Soviet Union since 1934, was quickly endorsed as the GDR’s answer to the Western, capitalist experimentation. In the GDR, as with other Eastern Bloc nations, the Hungarian philosopher and theorist Georg Lukács was considered an authority on cultural projection, and his endorsement of socialist realism as a natural and laudable extension of existing literary trends under which many authors had begun their careers.65

Given the emerging popularity of socialist realist literature, it is not a coincidence that Stalinstadt was a popular setting in works of Aufbauliteratur, or “construction literature,” the literary genre which emerged in the 1950s alongside the national push for reconstruction and industrial development. Aufbauliteratur was the East German equivalent to preexisting modes of Soviet socialist realism, its narratives focusing on the role of the proletariat in constructing the new nation and rejecting outmoded capitalist

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ideals of labor and industry. The GDR’s adoption of a de facto official literary style was not without criticism from some of its most outspoken cultural voices: while Lukács’ support for the genre was well-documented, Bertolt Brecht himself (perhaps extending their prewar debate on expressionism\textsuperscript{66}) decried prescriptive socialist realist narratives.\textsuperscript{67} Here two prominent works of Aufbauliteratur, Karl Mundstock’s 1952 \textit{Helle Nächte} (“Bright Nights”) and Hans Marchwitz’s 1955 \textit{Roheisen} (“Pig Iron”), are examined as evidence of the impulse to construct an industrial Heimat in literature.

Put simply, Aufbauliteratur was the GDR’s answer to the \textit{Bildungsroman}, or coming-of-age novel, which in the German-speaking lands had been particularly popular at the start of the 20th century. Aufbauliteratur was, as its name suggests, deeply interested in the trope of “construction” as a means of symbolizing the development of the new nation, yet the theme of personal development is nearly ubiquitous in works of the era as well. David Clarke, a historian of modern German literature, notes that other common characteristics in works of Aufbauliteratur are a large (sometimes confusingly so, as with both Mundstock and Marchwitz’s novels) cast of characters, one or more central female figures around whom the development of identity is focused, and a subplot which concerns the dynamic between workers and bureaucrats.\textsuperscript{68} In such novels the construction site serves as an emotionally charged stage for the interpersonal drama and political tensions, and this metaphorical character is a clear concession to the State interest in constructing a Heimat of the proletariat. In keeping with realist ambitions,

\textsuperscript{67} Conacher 58.
\textsuperscript{68} Clarke 132.
novels of Aufbau literatur tended to trace recent events, explicating events that indeed took place on the EKO site. These often dramatized trials and trials and tribulations would be recognizable to the novels’ contemporary audience, who were, of course, endowed with the knowledge of the eventual success of the fraught construction process. A contemporary critique of such novels by the German literary scholar Peter Zimmermann holds that the main difficulty of Aufbau literatur was its overly structured narratives and ambitious conceptions of development. Zimmermann writes that

“...das Dilemma der Aufbau literatur [...] war vorprogrammiert: Sie sollte die ökonomischen und politischen Defizite – von der mangelhaften Versorgungslage bis hin zum Mangel an sozialistischer Demokratie – durch ideelle Mobilisierung wettmachen und ein politisches Bewusstsein erzeugen, für das es keine hinreichende materielle Basis gab”

(The dilemma of the construction literature [...] was preprogrammed: it was intended to make up for the economic and political deficits - from the poor supply situation to the lack of socialist democracy - through ideal mobilization and generate a political awareness for which there was no sufficient material basis).

Zimmermann goes on to point out a major tension that authors such as Mundstock and Marchwitza needed to navigate: in imbuing the construction site with a metaphorical authority which undercut that of the state, they were wading into dangerous territory in
endowing too much agency to the GDR’s workers themselves. In Stalinstadt, such dissent would emerge with the architecture of the new city as its catalyst: the weekly newsletter of the EKO “Unser Friedenswerk” (Our Work for Peace) published occasional criticism of the under-construction living complexes, questioning Leucht’s design decisions and critiquing their apparently barracks-like qualities. (Image) The GDR had only one official architect critic, Bruno Flierl, and his reaction to the masterplan had been, predictably, glowing acclaim.

Marchwitza’s Roheisen records the development of the EKO and the eventual planning and construction of Stalinstadt, beginning with the first Five-Year Plan at the third meeting of the SED party congress in July 1950 and tracing the construction process through the major clearing efforts through the end of that year, the initial blast furnace construction, and the subsequent technical difficulties which delayed further construction. The novel ends triumphantly, with the May 1952 visit of First Secretary Walter Ulbricht to the construction site and an optimistic perspective on the future.69

While the novel features an ensemble cast, centered around the Hoff family, several characters epitomize Aufbau-era tropes: patriarch Christian Hoff is a seasoned labored adapting to the new socialist work ethos; son Stefan initially defected to West German but returned to work on the EKO site, ultimately invested in the proletarian ideal; daughter Margret represents female independence and agency on the construction site and breaks with her family’s more conservative, traditional ideals in eventually earning a position as a crane operator and then a university scholarship. Marchwitza’s

69 Marchwitza 521.
characterization of the ensemble as “true protagonist.” a common feature of Aufbauliteratur also present, suggests that the proletariat broadly conceived is the true protagonist: while Margret’s storyline is given significant attention, and a second female character, Martha Karge, also features heavily, their storylines are braided with those of myriad others.

Mundstock’s novel Helle Nacht makes use of similar themes, though its narrative more closely traces the personal triumphs and tribulations of its (similarly large) cast. The storyline follows the experience of four young members of a youth brigade on the EKO construction site, tracing their individual histories and developments. Each falls into a different role on the jobsite: Jürgen, trained as a carpenter before the War, is quickly slotted into manual work; his friend Günther, privileged and well-educated, acts as a teacher and becomes an SED official; Gerda, an Umsiedler traumatized by her experiences at the end of the War, who is often depicted as sexually promiscuous and becomes more conservative through her relationship with the chaste Günther; and Christa, once a racketeer’s assistant who tries to hide her checkered past and is eventually elected leader of the youth brigade.

Each eventually undergoes some form of transformation, becoming refined socialist citizens. Christa, arguably the central character of the ensemble, is featured in a pivotal moment which sees the brigadiers attempting to repair a broken train track in the rain. Described from Christa’s perspective, the scene shows the often discouraging nature of construction labor and serves to glorify the collective efforts of the workers, knee-deep

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70 Fischer
in a bog, to complete the seemingly impossible task. Too weak to be of much physical help, Christa has an epiphany as to how the wet ground can be dried out. Her seemingly innovative ideas are initially dismissed by the aloof project engineers (yet another example of the anti-socialist attitudes displayed by individuals with power in *Helle Nächte*), but the young brigadier comes to be recognized as an unusually gifted mind.\(^71\) As Mundstock is careful to underscore, Christa’s singular strokes of genius are not indicative of individual superiority, but rather a collectively-minded gift: “Wieviel leichter hätten es doch die Kumpels!”\(^72\) (How much easier this would make it for the buddies!).

Contrasting with Marchwitza’s *Roheisen*, Mundstock scrutinizes the daily lives and interpersonal dramas of his protagonists, recording each with the help of a character meant to illustrate the GDR’s creative workers: the poet Schureck, employed at the EKO site to record daily goings-on of the construction process. Schureck’s inclusion in the ensemble cast is interesting for several reasons, namely that his character might point to a self-reflexivity on Mundstock’s part. The poet struggles to understand the socialist ambition as one rooted in a celebration of labor, and occasionally clashes with workers on the construction site: “Du kennst noch nicht die Sprache und Art unserer Arbeiter, sonst hättest du die von die ehrlich gemeinten Erkenntnisse auch richtig ausgedrückt… Das Positive ist zu kurz gekommen, der neue Mensch ist noch nicht stark genug da”\(^73\) *(You do not know yet the language and ways of our workers, otherwise you would have*...)

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\(^71\) Marchwitza 261.
\(^72\) Mundstock 288.
\(^73\) Mundstock 588-589. Here the narration is an omnipotent third-party observer, who addresses Schureck casually (“Du”) as a means of critiquing his perspective.
correctly expressed the honesty of their knowledge ... The positives will come to you shortly, though the new person is not yet strong enough). Schureck’s character is also portrayed as increasingly alcoholic, which, contrasting with the Brigadier Christa’s own struggle with alcoholism, indicates the rehabilitative potential of labor versus the precarious nature of creative production in the new society.

Despite its ambitious objectives, Aufbauliteratur was not without criticism. Mundstock’s *Helle Nächte* was critiqued as emphasizing the personal lives of its characters while forgoing much documentation of the experiences of construction and labor such novels purported to depict. In a revised edition Mundstock found a rather bizarre means of addressing such criticism, concluding the novel with a conversation between the poet Schureck and an invented, unnamed author. The fictionalized Munstock defends his decision to focus on interpersonal drama, asserting that in doing so, he stays true to the mission of the socialist project: “Und wenn… wie am Schluß der gleiche ist wie zuvor, kein besser Kerl, kein neuer Mensch, damm möge das Buch lieber zugeschlagen bleiben” (*And if ... in the end the reader is the same as before, not a better guy, not new person, then the book should not be read*).74

1.4 The Persistence of Heimat

Both *Roheisen* and *Helle Nächte* also suggest a relationship to the concept of *Heimat* underscored in Stalinstadt’s bureaucratic planning process and prescriptive architecture. For the characters in Marchwitza’s novel the construction site constitutes a

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74 Mundstock 638.
setting for the cultivation of a new identity, both a literal and metaphorical staging of the collective ideal, all set against the backdrop of the Märkische landscape. In evocative descriptions such as the passage quoted at the opening of this chapter, during which Christa surveys the Brandenburg landscape from the top of a construction crane, the environment surrounding the EKO is romanticized in a clear extension to preexisting tropes of the Heimat ideal. Here a dynamic of East German Heimat emerges which would inform later conceptions of Stalinstadt: in constructing the ironworks and city on a site which, through works of Aufbauliteratur and the discourse surrounding the community’s founding, the city was purported to be existing on a sort of East German hinterland, a trope which likely borrowed heavily from the concept of the American Western. Despite its use as farmland prior to the onset of the Second World War, the Märkische was portrayed as a new frontier. What would endure from this constructed isolation of the Stalinstadt project was a sense of what Hunter Bivens has called a “nomadic provisionality of East German subjectivity.”

Large-scale industrial projects such as the EKO, the Schwarze Pumpe coal works near the model city of Hoyerswerda, and the Schwedt oil refinery in the far northeast of Brandenburg shared a quality of isolation from the GDR’s major urban areas of Berlin and Leipzig. Biven describes this provisionality as experienced through the constant migration of the GDR proletariat from one industrial site to another. Indeed, Hans Marchwitza attempted to articulate this migratory affect in a later unfinished work, which Biven suggests was unsuccessful precisely because its protagonist, the character Hein Leder from Roheisen, is ultimately

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unable to cultivate a sense of Heimat within a lifestyle of transience. Bivens, quoting the anonymous narrator of this unnamed later project, understands the ideology of the socialist drive for construction as one which inherently postpones the completion of its greater mission: “...nein, lieber Hein, deine schöne Stalinstadt war nicht schon die ganze neue Welt, hier graben wir noch immer an ihrem unermesslichen Fundament”\(^{76}\) (...no, dear Hein, your Stalinstadt was not an entire new world; here we are still digging for its immense foundation).

To return to the use of Stalinstadt as the metaphorically charged setting for early cultivations of identity, Bernhard Kretzschmar’s 1955 painting Blick auf Stalinstadt (Figure 1.9) epitomizes the Heimat tradition as it emerged in the 1950s visual arts. In its panoramic scene of opulence, Christa’s totalizing vision is realized: the Märkische landscape has been tamed, its horizon appears bright. While the left of the canvas is dominated by an expanse of industrial buildings, the right sees the city quite literally encroaching into the scene, its buildings stretching out toward a central road which cuts through the verdant farmland. Here the pastoral Heimat exists in harmony with the industrial future foretold by Aufbauliteratur, and with the new socialist way of living and dwelling exemplified by the bright, modern city of Stalinstadt. Through this image, the GDR vision for the Heimat ideal is laid bare: a sensorial experience of patriotism, enacted through work, life, and a celebration of the grandeur and beauty of the new nation. As Palmowski notes, the conspicuous difficulty for the crafting of an East German Heimat was that the state could call on “no landscape, no memorial… that

\(^{76}\) Bivens 148, quoting from Marchwitz’s “Schwarze Pumpe” manuscripts.
constituted a popularly accepted lieu de mémoire\textsuperscript{77} for the GDR.” Stalinstadt’s Platz des Gedenkens might have provided a place for the performance of collective memory, but citizens would have been reminded by the Russian text carved into the stone that the memory it was meant to evoke was not that of a primal scene, but that of a different nation’s sacrifice. A future of monuments to the proud East German state, shrines to its glorious realization of socialism, were yet to be built. Waiting for their arrival proved fatal (Figure 1.10).

\textsuperscript{77} Palmowski 64
2. “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel! Die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!”:

Eisenhüttenstadt in the 1960s and the Bitterfelder Weg

“The city… basked in the hot sun after long weeks of rain; its breath, coming faster than usual, puffed up through hundreds of factory chimneys into the clear sky… The unaccustomed brilliance struck people as incongruous and almost unbearable in those uneasy days. But the earth was still firm and would bear them as long as it remained beneath them… A shadow had fallen over the city; now it was warm and alive again, bearing and burying life, giving and taking it away… We learned to sleep soundly again and to live our lives to the full, as if there were an abundance of this strange substance - life - as if it would never be used up.”\footnote{78}

So opens Christa Wolf’s 1963 novel Der geteilte Himmel (“The Divided Heaven”), perhaps the best-known work of literature to emerge from the GDR. Indeed, the passage above is lifted directly from Joan Becker’s 1976 English translation of the novel, among the only works of East German literature to be read widely in Western Europe and the English-speaking world. The 1960s were a pivotal time in the GDR, a decade of transition which saw modes of cultural production shift from the socialist realist style to more liberal, experimental modes of representation. Architecture and literature alike saw monumental changes in this period -- sometimes referred to as the “Golden Age of the GDR”\footnote{79} thanks to the nation’s relative economic prosperity and


\footnote{79} See “Introduction: The People’s Paradox” in Fulbrook, Mary. *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005; and “From Centrally Planned Economy
social liberalization -- though the true implications of those changes would not become clear until the 1970s.

In Eisenhüttenstadt the 1960s were a decade of transition. Beginning with the 1961 renaming of the community from “Stalinstadt” to “Eisenhüttenstadt,” citizens adapted to new norms and fell into the routines of socialist life that were to ossify into the “long decline” of the 1970s and 80s.\(^{80}\) This section seeks to trace those transitions, as subdued as they might appear when considered against the monumental projects of the 1950s, as the antecedent of the last two decades of the GDR’s existence. In the passage above, a literary expression of urban space sheds light on changing contemplations of the built environment. Like earlier works of Aufbauliteratur, Wolf drew on tropes of brigadier labor and female empowerment, though the novel diverged from prior norms by addressing new, previously anathema, themes of Western defection and dissatisfaction. The 1960s also marked the emergence of trends in architecture and urbanism which moved away from the aesthetics of Heimat and increasingly toward what Hunter Bivens has called a “stifling loss of affect.”\(^{81}\)

Galvanizing these transitions was an attempt on the part of the SED party to better integrate industrial progress with creative production, as outlined in the vision for a new literary tradition put forth at the 1959 First Bitterfeld Conference. This event, and its implications for GDR cultural of the 1960s and early 70s, is a fascinating case study in

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\(^{80}\) Berghoff and Balibar 10.

state-mandated creativity, a “movement” (as it would come to be called) which instituted a national policy of increased realism in literature while continuing the Aufbau tradition of works concerned above all with depictions of the proletariat and the construction of the socialist state. The First Bitterfeld Conference and its resulting changes to the GDR literary scene envisioned a means of integrating cultural production into the national project of Aufbau, a means of devising a “Herzstück der Volkskunstbewegung”\textsuperscript{82} (centerpiece of the people’s art movement) which had been previously enacted through means such as the Sechzehn Gründsatze. Indeed, the unofficial motto of the movement was “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel! Die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!” (Take up your pen, buddy! The socialist national culture needs you!), which indicated the patriotism purported to be at the core of the new literature. In his 2018 book Of Writers and Workers: The Movement of Writing Workers in East Germany literary scholar William J. Waltz suggests that the movement has been vastly understudied, considered previously as another means of political propaganda and largely forgotten in academic discussions of East German literature until recently. As Waltz argues, the Bitterfelder Weg movement has significant influence on the careers of well-known GDR literary figures such as Christa Wolf and Volker Braun, and provided an early outlet for “anti-bureaucratic dynamics”\textsuperscript{83} embedded in GDR cultural projects, a form of subversion that would gain prominence in the 1970s and 80s.

\textsuperscript{82} Hannes Maassen was the first to use this term in 1960 referring to the objectives of the Bitterfelder Weg movement. Quoted in William J. Waltz. Of Writers and Worker: The Movement of Writing Workers in East Germany. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018: 2.

\textsuperscript{83} Peter Zimmermann, from Industrieliteratur der DDR: Vom Helden der Arbeit zum Planer und Leiter, quoted in Waltz 3
While the previous chapter was concerned with the descriptions of an idealized Heimat as the construct informed the development of early GDR architecture and literature, and the next is interested in examples of works of, as will be shown, the gradual loss of the Heimat mythos, this section serves to describe the Bitterfelder Weg as a hinge between two seemingly disparate movements in East German literature, while describing the 1960s as a moment that contemporaneously defined the last two decades of GDR architecture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Eisenhüttenstadt played a role in Bitterfelder Weg conceptions of labor and industry. As a means of understanding the ways in which social dynamics in the community began to shift in the 1960s, and evoke the new sense of socialist livelihood which emerged in the same decade, the history of the city and of the Bitterfelder Weg are described in tandem.

2.1 Eisenhüttenstadt in the 1960s: Living in the Built Utopia

Scholarship on Eisenhüttenstadt is primarily concerned with the Aufbau period, the first decade of the city’s existence. The wealth of source material on the planning and construction of Stalinstadt, and the prevalence of the community as a setting for novels of Aufbauliteratur, underscore the utopianist sentiment which still informs conceptions of the “erste sozialiste Wohnstadt” in the GDR: a prestige project which gestured toward the socialist ideological tenet of future-oriented design, and the collective crafting of a thoroughly socialist Heimat. In short, Eisenhüttenstadt’s early years are regarded as a period of planning and construction which showcases the idealism at the core of the socialist project. As the GDR’s economic situation began to change, social policies and
infrastructure projects changed living conditions across the young nation, and the death of Josef Stalin led to a period of reform known colloquially as the “Khrushchev Thaw” years across the Warsaw Pact state, the 1960s in Eisenhüttenstadt followed a markedly different course than that of the preceding decade. While the 1970s are explored in the following chapter as a period which saw a reprisal of the literary - architectural parallels (albeit through a new means of scrutiny which saw the emergence new modes of social and architectural critique), the task of this interlude is the describe the 1960s in Eisenhüttenstadt, a decade marked (almost conspicuously) by a lack of construction.

While Eisenhüttenstadt’s urban landscape remained largely unchanged, the decade is sometimes referred to as the “Golden Age” of the GDR, a period which saw relative economic stability, an expansion of social welfare policies, and the easing of earlier restrictions ranging from the *Sechzehn Grundsätze* to personal forms of expression.

As the 1950s drew to a close Stalinstadt was considered a desirable place to live, a community where the GDR citizen could live affordably in a newly renovated flat alongside similarly-minded young professionals. The completion of the fourth living complex in 1958 was described in a popular magazine as a place one might come for a visit and find themselves relocating: “Am besten, Sie kommen kurzerhand einmal her und schauen sich bei uns um. Wenn Sie sich hier aber eine Wohnung nach Ihrem Geschmack aussuchen dürfen, so bin ich ziemlich sicher, daß Sie im (gerade fertiggestellten) vierten Wohnkomplex haltmachen und sagen: ‘Hier bleiben wir!’ (At best, you can come and take a look around. But if you do choose an apartment that suits your tastes, you will likely stop in the (newly completed) fourth living complex and say,
‘We’ll stay here!’**84 Affordability was a major draw to the community, as was the potential to live in a new dwelling. (Figure 2.1)

At first glance the years following the construction of the fourth living complex might seem static. Kurt Leucht’s original plan had included the central developments, with a fifth development proposed to the south of the second and third. As the 1950s drew to a close Stalinstadt was promoted as a desirable, affordable community where the GDR citizen could live in a new flat alongside similarly-minded young professionals.**85 The completion of the fourth living complex (Figure 2.1) in 1958 was described in a popular magazine as a place one might come for a visit and find themselves relocating: “Am besten, Sie kommen kurzerhand einmal her und schauen sich bei uns um. Wenn Sie sich hier aber eine Wohnung nach Ihrem Geschmack aussuchen dürfen, so bin ich ziemlich sicher, daß Sie im (gerade fertiggestellten) vierten Wohnkomplex haltmachen und sagen: ‘Hier bleiben wir!’”**86 Affordability was a major draw to the community, as was the potential to live in a newly built apartment, still a luxury to many in the GDR.

The fifth living complex might be considered more of an expansion of the central four developments than a stand-alone Wohnkomplex. The buildings which constitute the fifth living complex were constructed between 1959 and 1965. In Leucht’s original plan the area between the core community and the Diehlo Hills was envisioned as an overflow space of sorts, a designation which proved necessary as Eisenhüttenstadt’s population grew from approximately 22,000 in 1959 to approx. 39,000 in 1965. Unlike each of the

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85 Ludwig (1999) 75.
86 Uebel 435
other developments which constitute Eisenhüttenstadt’s residential architecture prior to 1989, the fifth development did not correspond to a major expansion of the EKO plant. Population growth of the 1960s was due largely to the relocation of the families of EKO employees to the community, along with the expansion of ancillary businesses and facilities such as the city hospital, an industrial bakery and slaughterhouse, and local schools. The apartments which were constructed as part of this development were the first in the community, and among the first in the GDR, to use plattenbau construction techniques, namely the use of cranes as essential machinery. The rather sporadic nature of the fifth living complex’s development was due in part to a lack of specified architectural plans for the Wohnkomplex, alongside the development of such new building technologies in the GDR which had previously been eschewed as too similar to Western “formalismus.” (Figure 2.2)

In 1958 Herbert Härtel succeeded Willi Stamm as chief architect, and oversaw the construction of the fifth complex. In a collection of interviews with individuals who were involved in various social projects in the GDR, Australian journalist Peter Molloy quotes Härtel as hesitant, yet optimistic, about Eisenhüttenstadt’s fast-approaching future:

“...We climbed up the Diehloer Höhe and we then looked over the city from above and saw that it was dominated by a relative monotony: all buildings had flat roofs, they were all yellow-green. There was a certain similarity of forms. It’s true that the architecture left great spaces for details and subtleness. It also lacked greenery… my wife was horrified when she first visited me in Stalinstadt, despite
the fact that she came from Chemnitz and so wasn’t used to anything special. She doubted whether we would ever feel at home here and raise our daughter. But eventually she got used to it. Unfortunately, good building was limited to a few social constructions only. In the 1970s and 80s, remarkable things were built in the GDR, but they were limited to the centers of certain cities.” 87

In a 1995 interview with Härtel, Ruth May quotes the architect as stating that his direction, particularly with regard to the fifth development, was influenced by the West German model of a “car-friendly town.” 88 This inspiration is telling, as it suggests that, by the early 1960s, East German architecture has begun to draw on its Western counterpart in subtle ways, even if such motivation was at the time far from explicitly stated.

The 1960s also marked another, less subtle change in the GDR’s cultural history: destalinization, which had tentatively begun in 1953 immediately following Stalin’s death, was slow to take hold until Nikita Kruschev’s 1956 “Secret Speech” (officially titled “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences”). While intended for a state audience, transcripts of the speech were delivered to Warsaw Pact governments and were eventually leaked to Western media. The content of the speech was largely revelatory in its candid airing of many of Stalin’s atrocities, and also described Kruschev’s intention to reverse much of the Stalist cult of personality ingrained in Soviet (and Warsaw Pact) culture. What followed was a period of revision, which in the GDR peaked in the early

88 May (2003) 69
1960s: national anthem lyrics were altered to no longer reference Stalin, statues of the deceased dictator were removed in Moscow and abroad, and facilities and infrastructure projects dedicated to him were renamed, including the EKO plant (from the original name “Eisenhüttenkombinat-Ost J. Stalin” to simply “Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost”) and, of course, the city itself.

Eisenhüttenstadt’s residential development paralleled the increasing workforce at the EKO plant. Just as the first four living complexes were constructed to house the workers employed in the initial blast furnace operation, the completion of a cold rolling mill facility in 1964 led to the creation of nearly 8,000 new jobs, bringing the total workforce to about 32,000 employees. This expansion was the impetus for the creation of the sixth living complex, while the seventh living complex was planned following the addition of a converter steel mill in 1979. Construction was set to begin on an eighth living complex in the summer of 1989, but rising political tensions halted its development indefinitely.

A curious corollary to the industry-driven expansion of Eisenhüttenstadt’s four core complexes is the development of the fifth, which was the first to draw heavily on new building technologies. While Leucht had allocated space in the initial plan for the construction of a fifth complex directly south of the second, his team had not drafted specific plans for its residential buildings. Plattenbau building techniques had been developed in the GDR since 1961, when destalinization allowed for architectural technologies which mirrored the “modernist” aesthetics championed in western Europe.
The architectural design incorporated into WK V was not a standardized plattenbau in the sense that its buildings were meant to be replicated en masse, but its construction was the first in Eisenhüttenstadt to require assembly cranes. Unlike subsequent developments the fifth complex was not constructed in correlation with an expansion of the EKO. The decision to construct the complex was motivated less by a predicted increase in Eisenhüttenstadt’s population than a pre-planned expansion of the original developments, though its existence presents an insight into the transition towards prefabricated construction and changing architectural aesthetics. (Figure 2.3)

2.2 The Bitterfelder Weg

The First Bitterfeld Conference was convened in April 1959 in Bitterfeld, a small town with a major chemical plant 40 kilometers north of Leipzig. The main objective of the conference was to establish a means of bridging the perceived gap between the intellectual writers and artists who were seen as responsible for much the GDR’s cultural production (such as Karl Mundstock, Hans Marchwitza, and, perhaps most prominently in the literature of the1950s GDR, Anna Seghars) and the workers who constituted the workforce at plants such as the Elektrochemisches Kombinat in Bitterfeld and the EKO in Eisenhüttenstadt. What followed from the conference was the formation of Zirkel Schreibender Arbeiter or “Writing Worker’s Circles,” which were groups of laborers (primarily at heavy industrial sites like the EKO or the Schwartzes Pump lignite refinery near Hoyerswerda) which were mentored by an established writer such as Christa Wolf

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87 Ludwig
88 Waltz 57
(at the vehicle construction plant Waggonbau-Ammendorf in Halle) and Brigette Reimann (at the Schwartzes Pump in Hoyerswerda). While the implications of these groups in the GDR literature of the 1970s and beyond will be discussed at length in the following chapter, it serves to note here that the structure of these organizations was a project of the 1960s directly concerned with steering the nature of GDR culture in a direction that suited party-approved notions of literature while attempting to better involve the proletariat - the very individuals upon whom the socialist vision of future relied - in the crafting of such cultural projects. (Figure 2.4)

The Bitterfelder Weg indicates that, beginning in the 1960s, East German literature was directly co-opted into the project of design and exposition to which architecture had belonged since the 1950 drafting of the Sechzehn Grundsätze. In the following chapter, the attempted appropriation of literature\(^{92}\) will be further discussed as a failed project, insofar as its members eventually rejected its tenets and the ambitious goals for production were ultimately not met. Yet in the years immediately after its creation, years which would prove to be formative in the career of the author Brigette

\(^{92}\) Here my language is chosen carefully, and demands some explanation. In claiming that the SED was “appropriating literature,” I want to suggest that, just as attempts had previously been made to plan a city, the corraling of a cultural project like literature was a deliberate, and perhaps short-sighted, move. However, I want to be careful to emphasize that the structure of literature by the formation of ZSA groups and the state’s endorsement of specific themes and subject matter, was not propagandistic in the way that preceding Stalinist tendencies had been. While a discussion of the nuances of literary propaganda, and the defense of my claim that the Bitterfelder Weg literature cannot be considered wholly propagandistic, truly deserves a chapter in and of itself, I point to the various architectural and artistic projects of the Marshall Plan as similar projects in the West - notably, however, many of the Marshall Plan-funded cultural projects, such as urban plans designed by Constantinos Doxiados, or the exporting of American Abstract Expressionist painting to Western European museums, were explicitly concerned with broadcasting an image of Modernism to a global audience, whereas the Bitterfelder Weg’s cultural production had the primary objective of defining a new means of endemic expression.
Reimann (whose 1973 novel *Franziska Linkerhand* is discussed at length in the following chapter) and epitomize the cultural projects of the 1960s GDR.

With regards to Eisenhüttenstadt, the Bitterfelder Weg found some critique in the workers at the EKO plant in the spring of 1961. Following in the model of the workforce of two industrial plants, workers at the EKO allegedly wrote a letter to the Freie Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Union or FDGB) asserting the importance of integrating literature and industry:

“...Wir wünschen aber keineswegs, die Menschen nur bei der Arbeit gestaltet zu sehen. Wir arbeiten, um besser leben zu können. Und dieses sozialistische Leben in der Familie, beim Sport, in Urlaub und wo es auch sein mag, möchten wir gern aufgeschrieben sehen... Wie in vielen Betrieben unserer Republik, so greifen auch in unserem Kombinat immer mehr Arbeiter zur Feder... Wir rechten die Bitte an Ihren Kongreß, daß er für alle Schriftsteller der Orientierung gibt, damit sie noch stärker zur Entwicklung der schreibenden Arbeiter beitragen.”

(..*However, we by no means wish to see people described as only at work. We work in order to live better. And we would like to see our socialist life in family, during sports, on vacation and wherever it is written down. As with many plants in the Republic, more workers in our Combine are reaching for their pens ... We* 

93 Quoted in Waltz 19-21.
ask the Congress to give all writers an orientation so that they may contribute even more to the development of writing workers.

The reason this letter is “alleged” is that, as with the preceding letters to the FDGB drafted by workers in Nachterstedt and the Wismut mining operations in the Ore Mountains, it is highly likely that the FDGB was in fact involved in the drafting of the letter, in essence publishing the document in their newspaper Tribüne as a means of rallying public support for the Bitterfelder Weg’s project and the convening of ZSA groups at plants such as the EKO.

Yet new modes of expression came to the city regardless of the FDGB’s machinations. In Stalinstadt the transition from Aufbau to Ankunft was evidenced in the production “Stalinstädter Oper in 5 Bildern,” which premiered at the Friedrich-Wolf-Theater in June 1961. Composed by the prominent composer Jean Kurt Forest, the opera followed tropes similar to that of the novels by Mundstock and Marchwitz: difficulties arise on the EKO construction site, as laborers initially doubt the potential of the project, which in turn can be understood as a metaphor for the potential of the young nation. An emotional climax sees two young workers imaging their future dwellings on the land south of the construction site, waxing poetic about their future comfort and prosperity.

While the opera would appear to fit into the mold created by Helle Nacht and Roheisen, a crucial difference is its year of production: in 1961, much of its original
audience would have lived in one of the comfortable apartments anticipated by the protagonists. Perhaps surprisingly, a rehearsal performance for EKO employees was met with harsh criticism: Forest was shocked that, rather than celebrating the trope of the plant “rising from the Markische sand,” workers were generally offended by its plot. This disapproval marks an interesting tension between the idealistic composer and his subject-cum-audience: where Forest saw the emphasis of the construction myth to be important, even crucial to the success of his production, workers felt that the overdramatizing of workplace disputes and complications was disingenuous and ultimately unsuccessful. The 1961 celebration of Stalinstadt’s 10th anniversary also presented an opportunity for self-reflexivity - albeit best articulated by Karl Mundstock himself, who revisited the community to partake in the festivities and wrote a rather skeptical review of what he witnessed: “...legendär verklärt aber steht vor unseren Meistern die Zeit des schweren, schönen Anfangs, da sie den Grundstein legen halfen für die neuen Hochöfen... für die neue Republik, die neuen Menschen. Worüber sie damals fluchten, davon schwärmen sie heute...Sie sprechen es nicht aus, aber es klingt in jedem ihrer Worte mit: was waren wir für Kerle!”94 (...the city is) legendarily transfigured but before the time before, of our fathers, was the difficult, beautiful beginning, since it was them who laid the foundation for the new blast furnace ... for the new republic, the new people. What they complained about back then, they rave about today ... They don't say it, but it sounds like they’re saying, we were better men back then!).

3. The New Town in the Age of New Subjectivity

“For a few days, Franziska sense, when she came through the block in the evenings that she was coming home -- as though that night something had changed in her relationship to the the house, perhaps even to the city, this labyrinth of concrete, anonymous streets and living silos for a planned and statistically ascertainable quantity of dwellers with the planned, studied needs, the city that had meant nothing more than the photocopy of its construction plan.”

Brigette Reimann’s 1973 novel Franziska Linkerhand follows the life of a young, ambitious architect as she relocates from Berlin to the fictional model city of Neustadt. Looking to distance herself from a bourgeois upbringing and leave behind the memory of a tumultuous marriage, Franziska envisions life as an architect in Neustadt to be an ideal

means of serving GDR society: by drafting plans for a thoroughly modern, thoroughly socialist community she will engage directly with the laborers who continue to construct the East German state, shaping their daily lives in a city engineered to suit their every need. What Franziska finds in Neustadt is not the proletarian paradise she envisions; rather, the young architect is faced with a community locked in a perpetual state of anticipation, an empty and deeply uninteresting urban environment which can be understood as a symbol for a broader social condition of banality which emerged in the 1970s GDR.

In the scene quote above, Franziska has just witnessed a neighbor give birth in her Plattenbau (prefabricated panel building) apartment. Struck with emotion, Franziska reconsiders her surroundings, if only for a short period: the homogenous blocs which constitute Neustadt’s urban landscape are imbued with humanity. The monotony of prefabricated housing estates is in essence responsible for the birth scene: an ambulance dispatched to take the young woman to the local hospital had become lost in the labyrinthine living complex, unable to locate the correct apartment building. Reimann’s fusing of humor, obscurity, and urban banality serve to describe the experience of dwelling in the 1970s GDR, an experience deeply color by both the legacy of past “Heimat”-imbued projects of defining a national identity and the complicated economic and social conditions of the present day.

This chapter has two aims: first, to understand the transition from original design ethos which informed Eisenhüttenstadt’s early Wohnkomplexe to the prefabricated Plattenbau-style living complexes constructed in conjunction with the initiation of a 1973
piece of legislation known as the Wohnungsbauprogramm. Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, an economic historian whose research has comparatively analyzed Eisenhüttenstadt alongside socialist planned cities such as Nowa Huta in Poland and Ostrava-Poruba in Czechoslovakia, has written that it is impossible to understand urban and social histories without attention to the industrial fluctuations and economic conditions which had profound effects on daily life in those communities. With this in mind, an overview of Erich Honecker’s wide-ranging economic reforms as they pertained to the East German steel industry and, in particular, the dynamics of the EKO plant are understood as they relate to the transition in Eisenhüttenstadt’s architecture.

Yet the experience of daily life in the two final developments constructed in Eisenhüttenstadt relies on a broader accumulation of source material. Interviews conducted in the years after the fall of the Wall by Cortina Gentner and others contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the changing economic situation in the Märkische affected individuals in the industrial communities of the former GDR, as the very fabric of daily life was upended by momentous changes in professional and social roles. Equally telling is the way in which popular literature of the 1970s such as Reimann’s *Franziska Linkerhand* reflected a more nuanced understanding of life in the GDR’s model communities. Here that work, published as the Wohnungsbauprogramm was first realized, is understood as a literary example of the affectual experience of space

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in what Eli Rubin refers to as radically new orderings of the built environment. As Gentner and others have noted, reunification brought with it the realization that the once-desirable plattenbau in many ways fell short of prefabricated West German counterparts. The shift from desirability to denigration is a phenomenon which has consumed much of the GDR’s later architecture, and this chapter argues that such a shift has deeper implications in understanding contemporary conceptions of the GDR: it may represent an epistemological shift in deeper understandings of Heimat, concurrent with renegotiated identities and social relations of the Wende period. Here the Plattenbau are understood in the context of Eisenhüttenstadt as a case study of fast, inexpensive construction, (and, eventually, fast destruction) which perhaps traces a narrative of the community’s changing architectural landscape.

Reimann’s novel is particularly relevant to this inquiry as it represents a momentous transition in GDR literature, both in its new scrutiny of the spaces which comprise the socialist Heimat, and in its privileged ability to exact architectural and social criticism. While authors such as Reimann were able to pass off ideas which did not reinforce state goals under the guise of “fiction,” the 1970s saw other works of passive critique gain prominence in popular culture. Once touted as a darling of the Bitterfeld Weg literary movement of the 1950s, Reimann’s works had long integrated themes of labor and proletarian identity, most prominently in the 1961 novel Ankunft im Alltag. In Franziska Linkerhand, new concepts of identity and experience of daily life arise which

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can be explicitly tethered to the experience of living in a Wohnungsbau-era Plattenbau
development.

While Neustadt is decidedly not Eisenhüttenstadt, Reimann’s treatment of
planned urban space provides a revealing lens through which an affectual experience of
space in the latter can be understood. In addition to Reimann’s work, which stands out as
a piece of literature both incisive and ubiquitously popular, works by Werner Bräunig and
Heiner Muller contemporaneously contemplate recent architecture as a means of
understanding changing interpretations of subjectivity in the GDR.

3.1 The Wohnungsbauprogramm, Erich Honecker, and new town subjectivity

The Wohnungsbauprogramm, the most ambitious and expansive housing
initiative of the German Democratic Republic, was established at the 10th meeting of the
SED congress on October 2, 1973. Massive in scope and vision, the program sought to
house nine million citizens in three million new dwellings by the year 1990. With the
new initiative came a new demand for architectural plans which could be mass-produced
and economically constructed. The project was budgeted to cost 200 billion marks, and
while approximately two million apartments were completed before the fall of the Berlin
Wall in 1989, most scholars agree that the funding would have been insufficient to
complete the proposed dwellings.99

Erich Honecker championed the Wohnungsbauprogramm as a progressive,
egalitarian solution to East Germany’s long-standing housing crisis. As Joachim Palutzki

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99 Hannemann, Christine. *Die Platte: Industrialisierter Wohnungsbau in der DDR*. Braunschweig:
Friedrich Vieweg & Sohn, 1996, 94.
has shown, prestige projects such as Eisenhüttenstadt were preferred by Walter Ulbricht’s administration over basic needs like the ubiquity of aging or damaged housing stock in the GDR following the end of the War. As the previous chapter has shown, Kurt Liebnecht’s leadership at the Deutsche Bauakademie rejected the aesthetics and social principles of mass-production as being inherently “formulist,” or western, instead seeking to cultivate a unique East German architectural identity which was both historically referential and divorced from the concepts of mass-production initiated at the Bauhaus. Honecker’s concept of “actually existing socialism,” an interventionist approach to the oversight of the previous administration, sought to reframe expectations of productivity and quality of living in order to better manage and administer their planned economies. “Actually existing socialism” was the motivating sentiment behind the Wohnungsbauprogramm, an investment in a long-desired necessity which, if successfully orchestrated, would spur social and economic productivity and reinforce the central tenets of the soviet state.

Ulbricht’s regime had been marked by an economic system which favored short term planning with specified objectives. While the First Five-Year plan had outlined the development of an industrial sector and emphasized postwar reconstruction [see chapter 1], the 1956 initiation of the Second Five-Year Plan turned attention toward increasing production in its newly constructed factories and collectivizing agriculture. While construction continued on Eisenhüttenstadt’s first four living complexes through 1958, the change in economic objectives suggest that architectural development was no longer a

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governmental priority, and a fifth living complex, located directly south of the fourth, was not designed until 1960.\textsuperscript{101} In broader terms, the Second Five-Year Plan faltered due in large to the GDR’s flagging economic situation. Nationalizing privately-held businesses proved costly, and an increase in migration to the West had serious implications for several industries, namely farming. The Second Five-Year Plan was replaced by the Seven-Year Plan of 1958, which sought increased independence from Western (mainly FGR) markets and aimed to match the West German GDP by 1961.\textsuperscript{102} Despite recalibrated efforts, the GDR was still suffering significant losses to its workforce as individuals emigrated en masse through the early 1960s. Despite the Ulbricht administration’s insistence on centralization and nationalization growth consistently fell short of predetermined benchmarks, which contributed to the decline in Ulbricht’s reputation both domestically and within the Eastern Bloc.

Christine Hannemann has connected the emergence of the Wohnungsbauprogramm, and its most common new building styles, to concepts of housing estates which emerged in the 19th century.\textsuperscript{103} Indeed, Rubin and others also note the historical precedents for a project like the Wohnungsbauprogramm; two prominent examples are Martin Wagner’s organization of the modernist housing projects in Berlin in the 1920s, and Albert Speer’s plans for the development of a major housing project in the east and south of Germania as part of the 1938 General Plan for Berlin. While these precedents provide insight into a lineage of the German approach to large-scale housing

\textsuperscript{101} Ludwig 53
\textsuperscript{102} Berghoff, Hartmut and Uta Andrea Balibar, ed. \textit{The East German Economy, 1945-2010}. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013: 177.
\textsuperscript{103} Hannemann 96.
as a means of social intervention, a discussion of the formal and aesthetic connection between such projects is beyond the scope of this thesis. What is worth recording, however, is the decisive difference between East and West German dwelling types the Wohnungsbauprogramm would reinforce. Rubin notes that, at the time of the Wohnungsbauprogramm’s inception, only about 0.5 percent of the total West German population lived in large-scale housing developments of over 25,000 residents. In undertaking a housing program of such magnitude, the GDR stood to surpass its presumed rival by creating a massive, glaring example of socialist efficiency and efficacy. At the end of 1987 there were over 6.9 million apartments in the GDR, which corresponds to an average of 419 apartments per 1,000 inhabitants, and when contrasted with West German statistics (414 apartments for 1,000 individuals), the Wohnungsbauprogramm was, at least by one metric, successful in matching up to its greatest competitor.\textsuperscript{104}

3.2. Eisenhüttenstadt in the 1970s

While the design of WK V might be described as simply striving for continuity when considered in the context of the planning history of Eisenhüttenstadt, the sixth complex represents the radical shifts that marks destalinization in the architecture of the GDR (Figure 3.1). This is most clearly evidenced in the embracing of plattenbau design, though more latent changes in the sixth and seventh living complexes indicate a reversal of the dogmatic principles prescribed by the \textit{Sechzehn Grundsätze}. For the first time in

\textsuperscript{104} Gentner 23
Eisenhüttenstadt apartments over four stories tall were constructed, and the population density in the sixth complex was significantly higher than that of any of its predecessors. Critically, the sixth and seventh living complexes were distanced from the five existing developments: while the fifth development was in essence an addition to the core complexes, the sixth and seventh were separated by the Oder-Spree Canal and a wide tract of undeveloped greenspace (Figure 3.2).

The shift toward plattenbau-style design in the 1970s and 80s is often discussed in the context of the political transition from Walter Ulbricht’s leadership to the administration of Erich Honecker. While Honecker enacted the pivotal Wohnungsbauprogramm, his administration is broadly seen as one which preferred an integration of social and economic policies and initiated the detente of the 1970s. Serving first as Party Security Secretary, Honecker was influential in the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. He was then promoted to Second Secretary and served under Ulbricht until a dispute over economic reforms in the 1970s. Honecker was seen by the Soviet government as better aligned with the policies of its then-leader Leonid Brezhnev. After Ulbricht was effectively ousted in May 1971, ostensibly retiring for “health reasons,” Honecker was sworn in as First Secretary. The reforms enacted by his administration led to increased communication and relaxed tensions with western Europe, including the 1972 Grundlagenvertrag der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Basic Treaty of Relations

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Between West and East Germany), the GDR’s joining the UN in 1973, and traveled to West Germany in an official state visit in 1987.\textsuperscript{106}

However, it would be overly simplistic to discuss the sixth and seventh living complexes as architectural metaphors for the relative liberalism of the Honecker years, even if their Modernist facades indicate the reversal of the \textit{Sechzehn Grundsätze}.

Honecker’s administration also saw the expansion of the State Security Administration, colloquially known as the Stasi, East Germany’s secret police force. Stasi activities under Honecker have been well-documented by scholars such as Gary Bruce and Jens Gieseke, and the effects of increased Stasi surveillance on domestic spaces and architectural design in the 1970s has only recently been researched by the likes of Eli Rubin and Ermine Seda Kayim. In the context of Eisenhüttenstadt, the compilation of documentation regarding Stasi influence in the community is ongoing. Based on publicly available information provided by the Frankfurt-Oder chapter of the Stasi Records Agency, Stasi activities in Eisenhüttenstadt focused surveillance on the EKO facilities, German and Soviet military personnel affiliated with the community, reconnaissance on Polish communities directly across the Oder, and records on individuals directly under observation.\textsuperscript{107} \textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{107} Surveillance in Eisenhüttenstadt is of interest for several reasons. As Eli Rubin (2016) has suggested and Ermine Seda Kaymin’s research continues to investigate, Stasi influence in architectural design was pronounced and led to the development of apartment complexes uniquely optimized for surveillance.

\textsuperscript{108} Information on the archival holdings of Stasi material pertaining to Eisenhüttenstadt can be found at: “Bestände und Teilbestände der ehemaligen Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Frankfurt,” \textit{Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik}, accessed 1 April 2020 from https://www.bstu.de/archiv/standorte/frankfurt-oder/bestaende-und-teilbestaende-der-bezirksverwaltung-frankfurt/.
From a contemporary perspective, then, Eisenhüttenstadt’s architecture of the 1970s and 80s represents a duality in GDR political and social structure: the liberalizing implicit in embracing a Western construction technique and gradually pursuing trade and investment with the west, and the increase in surveillance and the restraints Stasi observation led to on daily life. Jan Palmowski argues that the Honecker era’s widespread top-down changes led to a reconceptualization of “Heimat” in the domestic and social spheres. Indeed, Honecker addressed the changing conceptions of socialist society at the Eighth Party Congress on 15-19 June 1971: at the same congress meeting which officially endorsed the Wohnungsbauprogramm, the First Secretary called for increased attention to “the people’s material and cultural standard of living,” and saw the renewed cultivation of a “national cultural” to be a critical means of cultivating a unified East German identity. While cultural mandates of the early GDR such as the Sechzehn Grundsätze had specified which historical referents and modes of stylistic expression were acceptable contributions to such an identity, Honecker’s relative liberalism meant a reversal of such policies insofar as their replacements equated with a socialist vision of the future.

To describe specifically what cultural policies came out of the Eighth Party Congress would be a difficult and convoluted task, namely since the language of the changed policies was itself convoluted and bureaucratic. A new emphasis on the individual, the “complexity of life under socialism,” and the earnest development of the socialist future were discussed in a speech by SED Cultural Committee chair

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Hans-Joachim Hoffmann.\textsuperscript{110} Perhaps the most striking shift in state cultural conceptions to come out of the Eighth Convention was a new recognition of individual hobbies and private experience as a critical component of the socialist experience. Ideals of heritage and “heimat” had been important in the early GDR, and had obvious implications on the early architectural prestige projects: Leucht’s inclusion of the third Wohnkomplex, with its clear “Heimatstil” references, showcased \textit{Sechzehn Grundsätze}-era sanctioned interpretations of homeland and its affiliated mythologizing. New principles were more broadly accepting of German cultural traditions and forms, eschewing prior concern with “formalism” and its implied connection to western imperialism.

Kurt Hager, the Cultural Sciences Chair at the Politbüro, was quoted observing the implications of the Honecker administration’s new policies in 1975: “The German Democratic Republic has a particularly rich endowment of cultural treasures of many epochs and peoples… it is an urgent political priority to ensure more than ever before that the knowledge, respect, and love of this cultural wealth will become a deep fountain of socialist heimat-connectedness and proletarian internationalism.”\textsuperscript{111} Connecting the GDR conception of \textit{heimat} with a global socialist ideology was seen as a new priority, not simply to assert a network of cultural dominance, but as a foreign policy tactic predicated on strengthening and fortifying the nation’s economy. While the GDR had been since its inception the self-declared inheritors of the Marxist cultural tradition, other cultural forms were newly integrated into a national identity: Romanticism, including the works of Caspar David Friedrich and Phillip Otto Runge, were cited as progenitors to the

\textsuperscript{110} Rubin (2016) 29.
contemporary GDR artistic tradition, while local history museums and cultural
organizations flourished in the 1970s. Cultural policies of the 1950s had limited
exhibitions of local histories which contradicted the explicit socialist agenda, namely
those which discussed National Socialist activity within the contemporary borders of the
GDR beyond the vague, propagandistic language of the SED.\textsuperscript{112}

The sixth living complex was the first opportunity to showcase the new
architectural technologies in Eisenhüttenstadt, and in turn would be an important moment
for reflection on architectural development in the GDR: just as the first model city had
provided a showcase for the new, endemic style of architecture delineated in the
\textit{Sechzehn Grundsätze}, the new plattenbau apartments would provide a means of
scouring the transition of the community into a thoroughly modern place to live, an
innovative place which represented the soon-to-be ubiquitous socialist future. With this in
mind, the sixth complex was planned to be a novel and innovative undertaking: with a
capacity of 10,000 individuals the entire complex would be massive in scale compared to
the preceding developments, which each had a capacity of 3,000 to 5,000. Its uniform
facades, a combination of P2 and Q3A buildings, represented a new experience of
modernity that was soon to become ubiquitous in the GDR.\textsuperscript{113}

The construction of the sixth living complex in a previously undeveloped area
separated from the defined center of Eisenhüttenstadt had significant implications for the
future of the community. Contemporary analysis suggests that the location of the new
development was meant to bridge the existing village of Fürstenberg, a small settlement

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Rubin (2016) 51.
\end{footnotes}
on the Oder River, with the new town of Eisenhüttenstadt: the new plattenbau were constructed on what can be described as a man-made peninsula created by a curve in the Oder-Spree Canal emptying into the Oder. A small “island” to the west of the peninsula created by a fork in the canal was designated as green space in Leucht’s original plan; this recreational space was retained as the sixth complex was developed, which would have theoretically created a buffer between the large new construction site and the existing residences. In reality this location served to distance the sixth (and eventually seventh) complexes from the unified center of the existing community, another means of radically divorcing the existing urbanism from the new, uniform living complex.

Unlike the construction of previous developments, temporary barracks from the housing of workers were not built. Rather, the first accommodation to be completed in the sixth development was a Mittelganghaus or “central aisle house,” a plattenbau type which was proposed by the architect Josef Kaiser in 1963 and refined by a team of architects including Klaus Deutschmann, Ernst Wallis, and Peter Brandt in 1965 (Figure 3.2).¹¹⁴ The Mittelganghaus apartments in Eisenhüttenstadt were eight stories tall and were designed to comfortably house 300 individuals in a combination of one- and two-bedroom flats. For this reason the building type was ideal for accommodating construction and other temporary workers or residents. The building was used in a similar capacity until it was demolished in 1998.¹¹⁵

Eisenhüttenstadt’s seventh living complex was built east of the sixth and south-west of the existing village of Fürstenberg, effectively connecting the model city

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¹¹⁴ The website “Jeder M2 Du” has compiled a publically-accessible resource on plattenbau types. See: https://www.jeder-qm-du.de/ueber-die-platte/detail/mittelganghaus/.

¹¹⁵ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVP8R2_iTX4.
with the Prussian village, though the tracts of undeveloped land between each developed area remain striking. Contemporary Eisenhüttenstadt is itself a dispersed collection of developments: as Fürstenberg was incorporated into the city of Eisenhüttenstadt following destalinization in the 1960s, the community today reads, traveling east to west, as the “old town” of Fürstenberg, what remains of the two developments of the 1970s and 80s, and the original city center designed in the 1950s. Leucht’s initial plan for a compact, modern city was effectively undone by the construction of the 1970s; the merger of Eisenhüttenstadt with the smaller, older villages around its fringes meant that the novelty of the project was abandoned in favor of a new administrative structure. For this reason Eisenhüttenstadt is today a relatively easy target for the critics of socialist urban and community planning, as its neighborhoods indicate a deeper disjunction within the GDR’s planning and administrative structures.

3.3. *Franziska Linkerhand* and Literary Subjectivity

Brigette Reimann’s 1974 novel *Franziska Linkerhand* signals a new means of architectural scrutiny, a mode of criticism thinly veiled by its position as a work of fiction (Figure 3.3). A prominent figure in GDR literature given her involvement in the Bitterfelder Weg, Reimann candidly – though cautiously – criticized the regime while remaining relevant to a contemporary audience. *Linkerhand*, published posthumously after Reimann’s premature death in 1973 at the age of 39, is set in a fictional model city called Neustadt. In a shift from the *ankunft* literary trend of the 1960s, which emphasized tropes of nation-building and proletarian identity with a deep interest in realism in daily
life, the novel scrutinizes different aspects of the everyday in the GDR, preferencing individual subjectivity against a homogenized, regimented architectural backdrop.

While *Franziska Linkerhand* draws heavily on autobiographical experience, namely Reimann’s time spent living in Hoyerswerda (the second model city constructed in the GDR), the abstracted elements of socialist architecture and design make the work a compelling portrait of planned communities such as Eisenhüttenstadt. Written at a crucial moment in the GDR’s architectural and social history, as Erich Honecker’s administration enacted the most extensive housing program of the nation’s 41-year existence, *Linkerhand* records a societal transition marked by skepticism and eventual disillusionment with the GDR’s policies and practices. Reimann’s heroine is a young architect who, after earning a degree and ending a tumultuous marriage in Berlin, retreats to Neustadt to immerse herself in the proletarian dream. Similar to Mundstock’s Christa, Franziska suffers her share of tribulations, including failed love affairs in the new city, recurring childhood memories which border on traumatic, and a tense workplace environment. Yet in stark contrast to *Helle Nächte*, which sees its protagonist ultimately embody the idealized proletariat, Reimann’s Linkerhand ultimately leaves Neustadt, disillusioned with the socialist city.

In Marchwitza and Mundstocks’ novels the construction of Stalinstadt is a metaphor for the construction of the citizen and, in turn, the construction of a national identity. In Reimann’s, Neustadt serves as a harsh and isolating backdrop, a homogenized space which conflicts with Franziska’s sense of autonomy and ostracizes

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the subject from a generative role in socialist daily life. In an early scene, still optimistic about the new community and hoping to engage earnestly with its proletarian residents, Fransizka waxes poetic about the new citizens as inheritors of the bourgeois conceptions of urban space:

“...suchte nach den Gesichtern überm Bauzaun, die Neugier einander ähnlich machte, Familienfotoköpfen mit einem verwandten Zug, dem gemütvollen und intoleranten Stolz einer Stadt, deren Bürger zwei Jahrhunderte lang ihren Stolz auf Schloß, Dom und Rathaus vererbt haben wie andernorts ihre Tafeltücher und silbernen Löffel; einer Stadt, der Barock übervertraut ist wie Brot und Bier und das Leben zwischen Denkmälern, unter Kupferdächern, Grünschan, Patina, die anmutig sind wie die spielerisch nachgeahmten Tempelruinen und Säulenschätze im ehemals fürstlichen Park, in der mythologischen Landschaft hügelan…”117

(... looked for the faces above the building fence that made curiosity similar, heads in a family photo which looked similar, the cozy and intolerant pride of a city whose citizens have inherited their pride from the castle, cathedral and town hall for two centuries, like their tablecloths and their silver spoons; a city that is as familiar and baroque as bread and beer and life between monuments, under oxidized copper roofs, patina, as graceful as the playfully imitation of temple

117 Reimann (1973) 272
ruins and column shafts in the old princely parks, in the mythological landscape of hills ...

Immediately present is Reimann’s attention to historic precedents attached by the Sechzehn Grundsätze, at once dismissive and nostalgic. In evoking depoliticized (yet disparaged) symbols of the city - the cathedral, the palace, monuments, even the evocative greenery copper of roofs - Franziska allows herself to romanticize the Neustadt citizen as one who somehow cultivates Heimat in a community devoid of the emotionally charged characteristics of bourgeois life. As Franziska adapts to life in Neustadt, namely her work as an architect in the community planning office under the supervision of the head contractor Schafheutlin, her own bourgeois history becomes apparent.

Despite this early idealism, Franziska Linkerhand is ultimately a novel which depicts the dissolution of socialist life into discontent and disillusionment, mediated by the homogenous character of 1970s architecture. Its disposition marks both a shift from Reimann’s earlier works of “ankunftsliteratur,” and a transition in the GDR’s literary scene writ large. Emerging on the GDR literary scene with the 1961 novel Ankunft im Alltag, Reimann’s work actually inaugurated a new movement in GDR literature: following Aufbautliteratur, the Bitterfelder Weg was characterized by a movement known as Ankunftsliteratur, its name taken directly from Reimann’s novel. The trope of frontier cultivated in the work of Karl Mundstock and Hans Marchwitza was replaced by Bitterfeld-era works which, still imbued with the optimism of the early GDR, had come
to emphasize narratives of labor and industry while purporting to offer a more realistic depiction of socialist labor and life.

As an author who rose to prominence during the Bitterfelder Weg, Brigette Reimann belonged to a guild that included Christa Wolf, Volker Braun, Angela Krauss, and Peter Hacks. Reimann and Hacks both mentored members of worker’s guilds in various heavy industrial sites in the GDR who sought to develop writing skills. These groups were called “circles of writing workers” (Zirkel schreibender Arbeiter, ZSA) and would have a significant influence on the later generation of GDR literature: prominent authors such as Krauss and Braun began their careers as members of a ZSA.  

As a ZSA mentor, Reimann spent significant time on the Schwarze Pumpe coal refinery and lived in nearby Hoyerswerda. Much of her literary observations on life in Hoyerswerda were recorded in letters to Hermann Henselmann, architect of Berlin’s Stalinallee and an important voice in GDR architecture and architectural theory.  

In addition to this correspondence Reimann recorded impressions of life in Hoyerswerda in her journals, which were published in 1998. To Reimann in the 1960s as to her protagonist in Franziska Linkerhand, the model city serves a less a realized location of Heimat than a temporary place of inorganic community: “Die Kohle geht zuende, vielleicht ist Hoy in zwanzig Jahren eine Geisterstadt wie die verlassenen Goldgräber-Siedlungen.”

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119 Henselmann is introduced in chapter 1, and his contributions to GDR architecture and design are noted there as well.
121 Reimann (1998) 212.
is running out, maybe in twenty years Hoy will be a ghost town like the abandoned gold mining settlements).

Temporality works to reinforce the most poignant critiques in the novel, though the trope of impermanance extends beyond Reimann’s own musings. In a 1992 interview organized as part of the opening of Documenta VII in Kassel, Heiner Müller referd to the later GDR as a “waiting room”:

“There would be an announcement: the train will arrive at 18:15 and will depart at 18:20, and it never did arrive at 18:15. Then came the next announcement: the train will come at 20:10. And so on. You went on sitting there in the waiting room, thinking, it’s bound to come at 20:15. That was the situation. Basically, it’s a state of Messianic anticipation.”

What Müller refers to as a “waiting room mentality” of the later GDR applies to Reimann’s novel: a sense of perpetual uncertainty with regards to the realization of promised social programs permeates the urban landscape and the experiences of daily life. The “waiting room” is clearly described in Cortina Gentner’s 2007 study of life in Brandenburg’s Wohnungsbauprogramm-era developments in Eisenhüttenstadt (along with the city of Guben, 20 kilometers south of Eisenhüttenstadt) where individuals promised housing in the sixth or seventh living complexes describe waiting for the completion of the new residences and the indefinite time frame on which construction

\[1^{22}\] Zizek 41-42.
took place.\textsuperscript{123} In Neustadt, here considered a literary stand-in for Eisenhüttenstadt, the concept of \textit{waiting} also colors daily life and renders aspects of the community banal. Franziska is housed in a temporary dormitory as she waits for a permanent apartment:

"Ein verrücktes Haus, und lauter verrückte Leute, oder Einsame, oder Vagabunden, oder diese schüchternen und hochmütigen Einzelgänger, oder diese Leute, die warten. Ich hatte es satt, in einem Wartesaal zu wohnen. Ich dachte, ich habe dieses provisorische Leben satt, dass all die Jahre provisorischen Lebens in meiner Stadt fortsetzt (eine Kündigung, ein Abschied hat nichts geändert)...\textsuperscript{124} (A crazy house, and lots of crazy people, or lonely people, or vagabonds, or these shy and pretentious loners, or these people who are waiting. I was fed up with living in a waiting room. I thought I was fed up with this provisional life that continued all the years of provisional life in my city (a foreclosure, a farewell didn't change anything)). Waiting and anticipating are central themes of Reimann’s novel, which sees the uncertainty of Neustadt’s urbanism as a force which eventually flattens experiences of daily life in the community.

Such uncertain temporality is reflected in \textit{Franziska Linkerhand} in the unusual or “verrücktes” behaviour of residents: the practice of seemingly fruitless pursuits, performed as markers of the monotonous passage of time, serves to signal a sort of coping mechanism: “...eines Tages werden Computer das fernere Schicksal der Stadt errechnen, also das Schicksal ihrer Bewohner, ihre künftige Behausung, ihre neuen Berufe, Chemiearbeiter statt Bergmann zum Beispiel; trotzdem richten sie sich ein wie für die Ewigkeit, zeugen Kinder und pflanzen Bäume, und sie machen Gärten as öden

\textsuperscript{123} Gentner 28.
\textsuperscript{124} Reimann 466.
Rasenflächen: sie machen sich eine Heimat.”\textsuperscript{125} (... one day computers will calculate the fate of the city from a distance, i.e. the fate of its inhabitants, their future homes, their new jobs, for example, they’ll be chemical workers instead of miners; yet they furnish themselves as if for eternity, father children and plant trees, and they make gardens out of barren lawns: they make themselves a home).

That Neustadt can be understood as a place of such absurdity and impermanence seems implicit in Frankzika’s appraisal of space. Her neighbors and colleagues are trapped in cycles that are mundane and barely tenable, such as the pub owner Frau Hellwig; or Jazwauk, another architect whom Franziska eventually befriends. In the case of the former, Reimann draws on tropes of small-town dissatisfaction to instill a sense of stasis; with regards to the latter, a preoccupation with Western Modernism provides insight into the subversive reactions to the GDR’s stringent design protocol. While visiting Jazwauk’s apartment, Franziska notices his (largely contraband) compilation of Western furniture and artwork which contradicted the anti-bourgeois ideology their very careers emphasized:

“Ein glücklicher Mensch. Wenn er jemals, früher, an sich gezweifelt, über seine Existenz geprübelt, träumen von düsterer Großartigkeit nachgehangen hatte, dann war das jetzt vergessen. Das Leben selbst hatte ihn bestätigt. Die Welt streute Freude in die Hände derjenigen, die sie rechtzeitig hinzustrecken verstanden. Er hatte eine Wohnung im Appartmenthaus in der Bezirkshauptstadt,

\textsuperscript{125} Reimann 517.
(A happy person. If ever he had doubted himself before, pondered his existence, pursued visions of grandeur, that was now forgotten. Life itself had taken him. The world spread joy into the hands of those who knew how to settle into it in time. He had an apartment in the building in the central district, a sports car with 50 horsepower under the hood, beige leather armchairs, a few reproductions of Braque paintings, a kerosene lamp...)

Despite the seemingly antithetical materialism of Jazauk’s possessions, his preoccupation with Western design is not simply evidence of an aspirational desire for the aesthetic signifiers of midcentury Modernism: through the ironic description of his apartment Reimann indicates a sense of resignation, or perhaps withdrawal, in Jazuak’s character. Insulated in his private space by totems of the West, the character’s self-congratulatory compilation of objects provides a counterpoint to Fransizka’s devotion to the state-mandated conception of design.

While the 1960s presented a relative “thaw” in the GDR’s aesthetic culture, interior decor and design were still informed by an overarching ideology which sought to depict an idealized - if not sterilized - conception of Heimat. Certainly destalinization in the early 1960s had an impact on the GDR’s changing aesthetic scripts, but the loosening

126 Reimann 194
of design restrictions was colored by a wider set of influences. Warsaw Pact states had been encouraged to invest in the energy, chemical, and technological sectors by the Soviets since the early 1960s, when the Space Race and other Khrushchev-era programs increased attention toward scientific projects as a means of exemplifying socialist prestige. In the GDR this led to in particular a strengthening of the chemical industry, which as Eli Rubin shows in his 2008 book *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic*, meant a new range of synthetic materials such as plastics and polyesters were suddenly available.\(^{127}\) With regards to architecture, new building technologies and materials meant architects and designers had a novel opportunity to design quickly and inexpensively. Plattenbau design emerged in this period as an innovative means of mass-housing, while the undecorated, minimal facades of such new structures were clearly antithetical to the design principles outlined in the *Sechzehn Grundsätze*.

Franziska’s own bourgeois upbringing and student experience in an architecture school in Berlin largely constitute the first section of the novel. The Western influences in Franziska’s practice are often braided with examples of her privilege and disconnect from Neustadt’s proletariat; in one humorous moment, she tacks up a quote by Lewis Mumford (intentionally misattributed to Marx) on the wall of her new office: “Die Stadt ist die kostbarste Erfindung der Zivilisation, die als Vermittlerin von Kultur nur hinter der Sprache zurücksteht.”\(^{128}\) (The city is the most precious invention of civilization, second only to language as a mediator of culture.)

\(^{127}\) Rubin 10
\(^{128}\) Reimann 337
Despite its seemingly antagonistic regard to plattenbau architecture, *Franziska Linkerhand* does not express hostility toward that which the Deutsches Bauakademie had in the 1950s deemed explicitly threatening to socialist life: the traditional styles branded bourgeois, or the “functionalist” modernism championed by the inheritors of the Bauhaus legacy. Such changing attitudes - an architectural detente, as it were, which very nearly coincided with *Ostpolitik* relations between the FRG and GDR of the late 1960s - signal broader structural changes in the bureaucratic management of GDR architecture and an economically-motivated decision to finally embrace modernist, modular, and prefabricated building techniques and aesthetics. How this change manifested in Eisenhüttenstadt is evident by simply distinguishing the facades of the sixth and seventh living complexes from the original developments designed as part of Leucht’s original plan.

3.4 *Living in Eisenhüttenstadt*

*Franziska Linkerhand’s* explication of a new means of subjectivity in the city have echoes in the ethnographic work of Cortina Gentner, whose interviews with individuals living in the new plattenbau of the sixth and seventh living complexes show the ways in which the new affective experience of the 1970s came to the model city. As a counterpoint to Reimann’s Franziska, the individuals interviewed lacked the privilege of returning to the more culturally lives in Berlin. Describing their lives in the plattenbau in
hindsight, many conceded that, while boring and at times bleak, life in the model city was reasonably comfortable.

Gentner first describes the situation of a young couple who moved into Eisenhüttenstadt’s sixth living complex in 1978, upon the completion of a Mittelganghaus-style building. Frau W., an employee at Eisenhüttenstadt’s hospital, had lived in a worker’s hostel while waiting for additional housing to become available. It is unclear where her partner, Herr I., lived before the couple was able to move into their new apartment on Glogower Ring, though it was not uncommon for married couples to live with members of their respective families while awaiting a place of their own to be completed as part of the Wohnungsbauprogramm. Frau W. describes the importance of consistent heating and sanitary living conditions as particularly enticing aspects of life in the newly constructed apartment. The couple’s experience is one that was shared by many young people in the GDR, whose generation would most directly experience the novelty of the large-scale plattenbau after long periods of waiting for housing stock to be completed.

Frau W.’s father came to the village of Schönfließ as an Umsiedler in the months following German surrender in the Second World War. Originally from a village in what is today Poland, he was forced to move west following the expulsion of Germans from land newly allocated as Polish territory. He first settled in Fürstenberg prior to the construction of the EKO, and was hired onto a construction brigade in 1950. In this way Frau W.’s experience in 1970s Eisenhüttenstadt can be understood as that of a child of an Umsiedler, or alternately, the first generation of GDR citizen to grow up in the model
city. In many ways the interviews conducted by Gentner in the early 2000s reinforce Brigitta Riemann’s description of life in the GDR’s newest developments. Frau W. in particular described the unfortunate living conditions at the hostel as dirty and crowded, and occasionally alienating as she did not personally know many of her fellow tenants.\textsuperscript{129}

In contrast, the move into the sixth living complex marked a clear upgrade in accommodation. Moving from a seven-storey “Bullenkloster” dormitory to a three-story apartment building was, as Frau W. reports, a significant change in pace of life. In addition, Frau W. describes the homogeneity of life in the Mittelganghaus as an equalizer:

“Zu DDR-Zeiten hatte man doch so 'ne Einheitswohnung. Da wusste man genau: Jeder har die gleiche Küche, hat auch das gleiche Bad und so. Früher war's eben doch relativ egal, weil man wusste eben, jeder hatte fast die gleiche Anbauwand. Und da konnte man nicht sagen: 'Äh, was hast Du denn für 'ne Anbauwand', wenn man selber so 'ne hatte. Aber jetzt sind eben doch die Unterschiede doch ziemlich groß geworden.”\textsuperscript{130}

(In GDR times you just had such a flat. And you knew exactly: everyone has the same kitchen, everyone has the same bathroom, and so on. In the past, it didn't really matter because you knew everyone had almost the same wall unit. And you

\textsuperscript{129} Gentner 122
\textsuperscript{130} Gentner 123
Bushman 99

couldn't say: 'Uh, what kind of wall do you have if you had one yourself. But now
the differences have become pretty big.)

Reflecting on GDR apartments from a post-reunification housing perspective, Frau W.
hints at a possible sense of nostalgia for apartment blocks. There were, however, points
of tension between her and her new property managers, who found her personal choices
curious:

"Vielleicht ist es doch 'n bisschen komisch, aber unsere damalige
Wohnungsverwalterin kam damals in unsere Wohnung und hat gesagt: 'Oh, sieht
ja gar nicht so schlecht aus.' Und da habe ich mich gewundert, was das eigentlich
soll. Und im Nachhinein hab ich dann eben auch erfahren, dass sie 'ne Wohnung
immer mit Dreck verbindet, und das sieht nicht immer so schön aus. Und da war
sie eben ganz erstaunt, dass wir eben in 'ner Wohnung helle Möbel haben, glaubt
sie, dass es schmutzig wird..."

(Maybe it's a bit strange, but our apartment manager at the time came into our
apartment and said: 'Oh, it doesn't look too bad.' And then I wondered what that
was all about. And in retrospect, I also found out that she always connects an
apartment like ours with dirt, and that doesn't always look so nice. And then she
was amazed that we just have bright furniture in an apartment, which she
expected to become totally dirty...)

131 Gentner 125
Here the managers’ assumption that the apartment will fall into disrepair may be a passing comment on the typical state of Wohnungsbauprogramm apartments, but it also serves to suggest a deeper antagonism between new residents and their dwellings. In later conversations Frau W. reports that she became bewildered by the litter she would see on her street, and described the area near the apartment complex as a popular gathering place for young people to stand outside and drink in the warmer months. As she suggests, this behaviour continued after reunification, and at the time the interviews were conducted Frau W. still reported frequent littering in her area.

Another Eisenhüttenstadt resident, Frau C., was skeptical of her youth and young adulthood in Eisenhüttenstadt. Her comments on the banality of living in the community resonate with Franziska’s understanding of Neustadt. Describing her impression on the city in the 1970s as “...einer Stadt, wo kein Quell mehr ist, der Arbeit gibt, das ist nun mal der Lebensimpuls” (...a city that was no longer a source, where work gave nothing, and there was no impulse for life), Frau C. reported fantasizing regularly about escaping to the West. Her main reason for doing so was her rebellious nature, which eventually found an outlet when she joined a group of other young adults who were avid fans of the GDR’s rising punk scene. In comments that echo the architect Jazwauk, Frau C. describes music as a form of survival:

“Ich habe später immer behauptet, daß ich Eisenhüttenstadt nur mit Hilfe der Stadtbibliothek und des Radios überlebt habe. Also wollte ich Eisenhüttenstadt
verlassen, es hat meinen Vorstellungen von diffuser Sehnsucht oder Bewegung
nicht entsprochen. Ich habe mir auch schwer vorstellen können, mit 19 Kinder zu
bekommen und zu heiraten. Ich hab mir meine Freunde danach ausgesucht, daß
sie möglichst unangepaßt waren.”

(I always claimed later that I only survived Eisenhüttenstadt with the help of the
city library and the radio. I wanted to leave Eisenhüttenstadt, it did not meet my
ideas of diffuse longing or movement. I also had a hard time imagining having 19
children and getting married. Like me, the friends I chose were also unadjusted.)

Her description of Eisenhüttenstadt as a small town also reinforces notions of banality
present in Reimann’s novel. A community of people sharing the same routines, same
outlets, and same social circles clearly wore on the young Frau C., who describes the
stifling elements of city life:

“Es war nervig. Daß jeder jeden kannte, spielte natürlich ein Rolle. Daß die Mama
von dem und dem dich gesehen hat und mit wem du da irgendwie rumgezogen
bist. Wenn man immer das Gefühl hat, jeder sieht alles, was du machst, ob du nun
in das einzige Kaufhaus der Stadt rennst oder ob du tanzen gehst... das war nervig,
also die Kleinheit war ein große Beschränkheit.”
(It was annoying. That everyone knew everyone played a role, of course. That someone’s mom inevitably saw you and who you were with. You always had the feeling that everyone saw everything you were doing, whether you ran into the only department store in the city or whether you went dancing... it was annoying, so the smallness was a big limitation.)

Frau C.’s disenchantment with life in the city might be written off as youthful angst, but it was an angst that indicates the true sense of disaffection present in East German cities. As Frau C. notes, the two places in the GDR that were considered desirable places to live were Berlin and Leipzig, as they had large student populations and (particularly in the case of Berlin) greater access to Western products and media.

The most pressing critique of Eisenhüttenstadt’s urbanism which emerged in the 1970s is the lack of continuity. Divided from the central four living complexes by a man-made island in the Oder-Spree Canal, the sixth and seventh developments were from their conception sequestered from the original nexus of the city. As many young people like Frau W. and Frau C. moved into the new apartments, the distancing of the two major sections of the city from each other did not incentivize the newly accommodated residents to travel to the historic center. Rather, two distinct spaces of socialization emerged, a phenomenon that would essentially divide the city between residents who lived in the older, more comfortable buildings and the newer plattenbau. In his autobiography Heiner Müller describes the fragmentation of cities -- affectively, as described in the oppressive urban environment of Franziska’s Neustadt, as well as
literally, in the case of Eisenhüttenstadt -- as a means of eroding proletarian spaces in the GDR. Müller connects this destruction as a State attempt to expunge the last vestiges of fascism from within its borders, but the erasure of social space can be traced to a broader loss of affect in the 1970s GDR, spurred by economic desperation. The side effect of the homogeneity of plattenbau was not simply the fragmentation of the city. A sense of Heimat, of belonging to a deeper understanding of homeland and culture, was similarly evacuated.
Conclusion: Eisenhüttenstadt Today; or, what remains of the the Heimant - Waiting Room continuum

The history of Eisenhüttenstadt is the history of East Germany, and the history of East Germany is the history of Germany. This statement is at once a tautology and a half-truth. As Mary Fulbrook has pointed out, the FRG state existed in a sort of mourning for its lost Eastern counterpart, while the GDR’s relationship with the West was primarily competitive, and occasionally antagonistic. In the contemporary moment, scholarship of the “totalitarianists” assert that it is difficult to mourn the loss of the antagonistic other. In a well-publicized 1999 hearing on how the newly reunited Germany would deal with the East German notion of cultural heritage, historian Andreas Ludwig, then director of the Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR (Documentation Center for the Everyday Life of the GDR or DOK) was verbally assaulted by fellow historian Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk. Upset by the DOK’s curated display of toys, appliances, furniture, kitchenware, military uniforms, and other forms of East German material culture on display, Kowalczuk took issue with the existence of a museum which purported to showcase GDR history yet did not assert the totalitarian and dictatorial nature of the East German state. 

Located in Eisenhüttenstadt since its founding in 1995, the DOK remains a reminder of East German history, although its message and mission remains contested.

The collection began as a sort of depot of the Eisenhüttenstadt City Museum, and was eventually granted independent status as a “Documentation Center” in 1996, when its holdings were moved into a former nursery school in the 2nd living complex. Funding came from the city of Eisenhüttenstadt until 2012, when widespread budget cuts forced a change in the museum’s funding structure from public to private enterprise, but has been under the administration of the Federal State of Brandenburg since 2016.  

That the center was founded and remains in Eisenhüttenstadt speaks immediately to the role the community played in the post-1989 renegotiation of East German identity and culture. Its collections, colorful homegoods and delicately arranged military and SED paraphernalia, seem curated to appeal to those who suffer from “Ostalgie,” or the phenomenon of nostalgia for East German material culture which emerged in the 1990s.  

Kowalczyk’s early tirade laid bare the multifaceted challenges such collections face: not only does the DOK inherit the difficult task of exhibiting markers of daily life in a country that no longer exists, but it also must walk a tenuous line between being conceived as socialist propaganda and alienating those who come to the collection as a means of engaging with a lost history. Put another way, the DOK’s message must be carefully crafted, yet as debates between historians of the “totalitarianist” camp and more liberal researchers indicate, it is impossible to remain apolitical when explicating the history of the GDR.

This thesis has argued that the charged nature of GDR architecture and design in the contemporary moment is, in part, borne out of state projects like the *Sechzehn Grundsätze* and Bitterfelder Weg which sought to politicize identity and cultural projects. Considered in the context of these antecedents, the harsh debates surrounding material culture of the GDR are of little surprise: where some feel that such objects legitimize a major component of their identity, others are only able to understand the DOK’s collection as fused with a legacy of propaganda and totalitarianism. These debates extend to the GDR’s architecture and literature as well, though the contested nature of GDR architecture is difficult to redress: as much of the GDR has suffered economic recession since reunification, the widespread reconstruction of housing which is not teleologically charged with such notions of socialist decline are not financially feasible.

Jan Palmowski shows that, rather than devise a national sense of identity and belonging, East Germans' relationship to Heimat was frequently expressed as an awareness of regional alliances and local traditions. In places such as eastern Brandenburg, identity had arguably never been singular or well-defined. Technically north of the historic borders of Prussian Silesia, many prewar Fürstenberg residents spoke the Silesian language. In Eisenhüttenstadt, subtle reminders of Silesian heritage emerged during the GDR, such as the selling of particular types of bread and sausage in the supermarket on Leninallee. Yet for obvious reasons, the celebration of Silesian heritage as a precursor to Eisenhüttenstadt’s was never officially or unofficially pursued. As a city made up primarily of individuals who had migrated from other parts of the GDR, most

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136 Palmowski 223
could or would not share in the enthusiasm, plus Eisenhüttenstadt was not located within
the historic region and had little claim to its traditions beyond proximity. To refer back to
the metaphors of “frontier” brought forth in the first chapter, locating a new community
in a region deemed “tabula rasa” had proved to create a vacuum of identity.
Eisenhüttenstadters today are not, in a sense, able to engage with the prewar legacy of
Heimat in the same way as their former compatriots across the GDR. The “Heimat” ethos
in Eisenhüttenstadt was the ethos of construction, the ideologically charged projects of
construction and industry which informed Karl Mundstock and Hans Marchwitza’s works
of Aufbauliteratur. When the relevance of that legacy was truncated by the fall of the
Berlin Wall, the question of identity in Eisenhüttenstadt became increasingly dubious.

In conversations with both Eisenhüttenstadt residents and historians of GDR
culture, I have been told that the legacy of the first model city has damaged the reputation
of its citizens within broader German society. Gone are the days of the proud “I am from
Stalinstadt!” pamphlets and frequent visits from national leadership. In one such
conversation, an individual told me that he avoids driving to Berlin if he can help it,
because he presumes that the regional code on his car’s license plate (“LOS” for
Landkreise Oder-Spree) draws bemused looks from city residents, who judge the driver
from the industrial backwater. In another conversation, I was told that the American
phenomenon of “truck culture” was arriving in the community in force: to paraphrase
what that speaker told me, Eisenhüttenstadt residents had embraced the stereotypes of
rural working-class Americans for precisely the same reasons as in the places of their
origin. If certain material or cultural proclivities were derided by the mainstream, they
could in fact become cherished and recognized symbols of identity. This might explain why the American Confederate flag bumper sticker I noticed on a truck in Eisenhüttenstadt.

To avoid a pop-sociology reading of contemporary culture in Eisenhüttenstadt, and to prevent the anecdotes listed above (in spite of their fascinating implications for contemporary German culture, a rigorous understanding of the phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis) these occurrences are demonstrated not to prove the existence of some deeper phenomenon, but to simply exhibit the complexity of identity and culture in the contemporary city. A second, more complicated conceptualization of contemporary Eisenhüttenstadt is the rise in support for right-wing political parties in the region. Since reunification the rise of neo-Nazism in areas of the former GDR have been well-documented, and Eisenhüttenstadt today has recently seen an increase in support for the far-right Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) party. Precisely what that means for the future of the community and those like it remains unclear, but more difficult still are a means of understanding how xenophobic, populist rhetoric found a foothold in the first model city.

Far-right action in the former GDR has been watched closely since a fall 1991 series of riots in Hoyerswerda, which targeted asylum seekers and guest workers and sparked a national debate on post-reunification xenophobia. The violence was part of a region-wide string of neo-Nazi attacks throughout the fall, as the nation was preparing to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Reunification. In Eisenhüttenstadt skinheads

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attacked a Bullenkloster (perhaps the same dormitory building that Frau W. had lived in while waiting for an apartment in the sixth living complex) which at the time was housing a group of foreign guest workers. In a photograph published in the local newspaper Märkische Oderzeitung, a mother is shown dragging her neo-Nazi son away from the site of the attack, suggesting a sharp political tension between generations, and perhaps offering insight into who was most susceptible to the far-right message. (Figure 4.1)

In a 2000 speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the EKO steelworks, then-chancellor Gerhard Schröder condemned the threat of far-right violence in the region, taken by most as a caution against occasional outbreaks of violence which had marked the decade since reunification:

“We cannot and must not tolerate the fact that in our country people are chased through the streets, beaten up or even murdered because of their language, religion, or the color of their skin. State and society must take clear and vigorous measures against this... Far-right orgies of violence, xenophobic excesses and attacks on minorities are damaging to our country. They threaten peace within our country, and they also mar Germany’s image abroad.”138

Articulating the contemporary influence of far-right hate groups on Eisenhüttenstadt is difficult, particularly because very little substantive information has been compiled.

Certainly popular rhetoric holds that the areas east of Berlin are a hotbed for neo-Nazi activity; this was reinforced by the 2004 documentary No Exit by the filmmaker Franziska Tenner, which followed several neo-Nazi groups in eastern Brandenburg and recorded their meetings. Gerhard Braunthal, a specialist in German politics, states in his 2009 book Right-Wing Extremism in Contemporary Germany that this film might have actually discouraged the groups’ attempts at recruiting new members in the region.\(^\text{139}\) In my own visits to the Eisenhüttenstadt I have noticed numerous graffitied swastikas (Figure 4.2). While I resist reading into the presence of such vandalism, I understand their presence as intended to terrorize and alienate individuals who are not in Eisenhüttenstadt by choice.

The same could be said of the recent rise in popularity of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party in eastern Brandenburg remains troubling. Initially perceived to be a fringe group similar to the anti-immigration Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (“Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident” or PEGIDA), the AfD has gained political legitimacy through their election into the Bundestag and regional governments such as the Brandenburg parliament. Originally founded in opposition to German responses to the 2013 Eurozone crisis, the AfD’s platform became increasingly xenophobic and anti-immigrant following the 2015 European Refugee Crisis.

The benevolence of Germany’s migration policy in the fall of 2015 was referred to as a “Willkommenskultur” or “welcoming culture,” a framework which encouraged

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widespread civic engagement and domestic humanitarian action. Oliver Nachtwey, a sociologist at the University of Basel and author of the 2018 book *Germany’s Hidden Crisis: Social Decline in the Heart of Europe* suggests that this outpouring of support would influence Chancellor Angela Merkel’s decision to not set a cap on the number of refugees allowed into Germany until the fall of 2017.\textsuperscript{140}\textsuperscript{141} Nachtwey goes on to describe the political fallout from Merkel’s decision: members of her governing Christian Democratic Union party slowly wavered in their support for a liberal refugee policy, while the far-right Alternativ für Deutschland party (AfD) quickly absorbed those wary of increased migration. To Nachtwey, the rise in AfD’s popularity in regions of the former GDR was due in large to the population of individuals had “spent years living under the regime of economic and political austerity.”\textsuperscript{142}

The rise of the AfD and other far-right groups in the former GDR is a contemporary phenomenon which demands significant scrutiny, certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet the prevalence of right-wing conservatism in the region is tangible, particularly in the nearly three years since the September 2019 parliamentary elections which saw the AfD party win seats in the Bundestag for the first time. In 2019 Brandenburg held elections for its state government, which saw the AfD win nearly a quarter of Eisenhüttenstadt’s votes, and very nearly became the most popular of the eight parties on the ballot. In a community home to the largest accommodation center for


\textsuperscript{142} Nachtwey 227.
arrival seekers in Brandenburg, those results suggest an enduring tension surrounding asylum (Figure 4.3).

There are myriad proposed rationales for why the AfD has gained popularity in the former GDR. The struggling economic condition of the region, rising unemployment, and (as Caroline Pearce and Gerad Brauthal have noted) questions surrounding the effectiveness of the GDR’s denazification policies are all possible explanations. 

Extending an investigation into the role of Heimat and late-GDR temporality, it is here suggested that the transition traced through this thesis, the desire for the recognition of homeland and the state of perpetually waiting for the realization of state promises, might inform an investigation into AfD effectiveness. In AfD political rhetoric, the idealization of the German citizen is a consistent means of stigmatizing immigrants. In a series of advertisements ahead of the 2017 Bundestag elections, the party did not refrain from proliferating that which was criticized as veering dangerously close to National Socialist messaging. In one notable ad, a young pregnant woman is pictured with the caption “‘New Germans? We make them ourselves!’” (New Germans? We make them ourselves!) (Figure 4.4). To a former GDR citizen, still waiting for the realization of the promised future -- first the bright future of socialist industrialism, then the future of a prosperous reunited Germany -- perhaps the AfD’s message resonates. Perhaps growing up in a

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143 For more on denazification in the GDR, see Caroline Pearce. Contemporary Germany and the Nazi Legacy: Rembrance, Politics, and the Dialectic of Normality. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008. Here it the contentious relationship between the Nazi legacy and the contemporary AfD party is noted, which remains hotly contested in German social and political discourse. This debate recently came to the fore following the 2019 regional parliamentary elections in several eastern states. For more in English on this conversation, see Katrin Bennhold and Melissa Eddy, “‘Hitler or Höcke?’ Germany’s Far-Right Party Radicalizes.” The New York Times 26 October 2019, accessed April 12 2020 from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/26/world/europe/afd-election-east-germany-hoecke.html.
generation pining for an underdeveloped Heimat, but stuck indefinitely in a waiting room mentality, makes the AfD’s xenophobic message appealing.

Lest we forget, the former GDR citizen is not the only one waiting in Eisenhüttenstadt.

Eisenhüttenstadt’s asylum seeker arrival center is located on Poststraße, directly across from buildings constructed as part of the fifth living complex in late 1950s (Figure 4.5). To a casual passer-by, the yellow building would appear from the street to be a banal administrative facility. Indeed, the only indication that it houses a population of asylum seekers is a pair of red Deutsches Rotes Kreuz bins set near what appeared to be an entrance checkpoint. (Figure 4.6). In Eisenhüttenstadt asylum seekers are kept sequestered out of the public eye. Their presence in the community is nearly phantasmic: the red donation box, for example, is a physical sign of their arrival, an element of the urban landscape which acts as a stand-in for the physical appearance of the individual.

The arrival center is a former barracks of the Volkspolizei-Bereitschaften, the paramilitary branch of the East German secret police. Throughout its history and prehistory, Eisenhüttenstadt has seen such structures repurposed for various politicized means: first the Stalag III-B officer’s quarters, used by Umsiedler on the EKO construction site; then the Bullenkloster dormitory building, used by foreign guest workers (and, for a brief period in 2015, overflow housing for asylum seekers); now a former paramilitary barracks, used today as an asylum facility. Franziska Linkerhand made heavy use of the motif of provisionality in Neustadt’s architecture. In Eisenhüttenstadt provisionality continues to inform urban space.
If the AfD has managed to appropriate the Heimat construct as a way of delivering a searing political message, perhaps contemporary German architecture has used the framework to different ends. Titled *Making Heimat: Germany, Arrival Country*, the German Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale showcased ways in which various German “arrival cities” (drawing on a concept introduced by Doug Saunders in his 2010 book *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World*) were accommodating new refugees and asylum seekers. The pavilion was curated by the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main and examined an array of issues related to the recent mass migration into the country, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “European Refugee Crisis.” Using Heimat as a framework through which these purported “new Germans” could negotiate their own identities, the pavilion exhibited architectural projects in ten “arrival cities” across Germany which were designed and constructed as new housing facilities for refugees and asylum seekers. While largely omitting a discussion of the Dublin protocol and asylum application process in Germany, the exhibition sought to transmit the “friendly, open attitude” of the majority of Germans toward migrants while simultaneously showcasing the ways in which architecture could alleviate broader sociopolitical ills.\(^{144}\) Central to this understanding of Heimat was a conspicuous understanding of architecture, one with implications for the ways in which this thesis has considered GDR architecture.

If a 2017 essay by exhibition curators Peter Caachola Schmal, Anna Scheuermann, and Oliver Elser which introduced a catalogue of the projects included in

the exhibition can be understood as summarizing the project, the objective of the German pavilion and its afterlife as a traveling exhibit in 2017 was to showcase “innovative concepts for accommodation of asylum seekers” which “prove that architecture and urban planning can make significant contributions to integration.”¹⁴⁵ All of the projects included in the collection are new or newly renovated facilities. With the exception of projects located in Berlin, only two of the fifty-seven accommodations featured were located in communities in the former GDR. It likely goes without saying that the Aufnahmeeinrichtung in Eisenhüttenstadt was not included in the portfolio or exhibition.

My favorite image of Eisenhüttenstadt was taken by the photographer Jens Rötzsch in 1999 (Figure 4.7). In it, an older woman walks a black dog across Platz des Gedenkens. Out-of-focus, she appears to be squinting at the camera. It is a winter day, or so the dirty snow covering the paving stones would suggest; though in the background the row of pines which obscure the facades of plattenbau are bare. I love this image because, despite Eisenhüttenstadt’s enigmatic history, the scene appears familiar, almost immediate. I can feel the humidity of the day in late winter, can sense spring coming on in the air. Familiar, too, is the cold plastic of the handle of her dog’s leash, the pull of her dog as it urgently sniffs the snow, the motion of moving across a park that I myself have stood in only a half-dozen or so times. Has she spent her entire life in Eisenhüttenstadt? Does she know that she walks over the reburied remains of Soviet soldiers? Does she recognize friends in the plattenbau behind the trees? The thin line of a leash that tethers

woman to animal moves the viewer through this space, and draws together more than just dog and master.
Figures:

Figure 1.1: Fürstenberg in the mid-1950s. From Colditz, Heinz and Martin Lücke. Stalinstadt: Neues Leben - Neue Menschen. Berlin: Kongress Verlag, 1958.

Figure 1.2: American prisoners-of-war at the Stalag III-B camp, likely taken in winter 1942. This image was captured by American POW Angelo Spinelli, who traded cigarette with Nazi guards for a camera and film. Yale University Manuscripts and Archives MS 1632.
Figure 1.3: A Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth) brigade on the EKO construction site, 1950. Staatsmuseum Eisenhüttenstadt.

Figure 1.4: Unser Friedenswerk, the newsletter of the EKO Stahl union, from 23 June 1952. Staatsarchiv Eisenhüttenstadt.

Figure 1.6: Franz Ehrlich’s “abbreviated” plan for Stalinstadt. Printed in Ruth May. “Planned city Stalinstadt: a manifesto of the early German Democratic Republic.” *Planning Perspectives* 18 (2003), 60.
Figure 1.7: Kurt Leucht’s master plan for Stalinstadt. Leucht, Kurt W. *Die Erste New Stadt in der DDR*. Berlin: VEB Verlag Technik, 1957.

Figure 1.8: Floorplan of flat in second living complex, completed 1953. From Leucht, Kurt W. *Die Erste New Stadt in der DDR*. Berlin: VEB Verlag Technik, 1957, 63.
Figure 1.9: Loggias on an apartment building in the second living complex indicate the classical references in Leucht’s plan. From Leucht, Kurt W. *Die Erste New Stadt in der DDR*. Berlin: VEB Verlag Technik, 1957, 63.

Figure 1.10: Facade in the third living complex, featuring “Heimat” motifs and faux half-timbering. Image taken July 2019 by the author.
Figure 1.11: Bernhard Kretzschmar, “Blick auf Stalinstadt,” oil on canvas, 1955. Museum Junge Kunst Frankfurt (Oder).

Figure 1.12: Promotional pamphlet for Eisenhüttenstadt’s 10-year anniversary celebration, which features a commemorative poem “The Live in Out City” dedicated to the Soviet prisoners-of-war whose remains were found in the mass grave near the EKO construction site and reburied at Platz des Gedenkens in central Eisenhüttenstadt. Drieschner, Axel and Barbara Schultz. “Das Stalag III B in der Geschichte und Erinnerung Eisenhüttenstads.” in Stalag III B Frankfurt (Oder). Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2006, 18.
Figure 2.1: The fourth living complex in 1960. Staatsarchiv Eisenhüttenstadt 3274.

Figure 2.2: Map of Stalinstadt in 1960. Harry Hofmann and Ernst Oldenburg, *Stalinstadt*. Dresden: Sachsenverlag, 1960, 8.
Figure 2.3: Rosenstraße, Eisenhüttenstadt. Part of the fifth living complex, 1959-1965. Image taken January 2019 by the author.

Figure 2.5: Prominent GDR authors at the first Bitterfeld convention, 1958. Note the unofficial motto of the convention and successive movement: “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel! Die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!” (Take up your pen, buddy! The socialist national culture needs you!). Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Accessed 15 April 2020 from https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/54101/moskau-und-bitterfelder-weg.

Figure 3.1: Eisenhüttenstadt’s sixth living complex in November 2014. “Die letzte frau in Plattenbau.” Märkische Oderzeitung, 29 November 2014. https://www.moz.de/landkreise/oder-spree/eisenhuettenstadt/artikel0/dg/0/1/1350021/.
Figure 3.2: Model of Eisenhüttenstadt from 1965, including the planned sixth and seventh living complexes. From Ludwig (2000), 91.

Figure 3.2: Typical mittelganghaus floorplan. “Mittelganghaus,” Jeder M2 Du, accessed 13 April 2020 from https://www.jeder-qm-du.de/ueber-die-platte/detail/mittelganghaus/. 

Figure 4.2. A graffitied swastika on the side of a building near the Eisenhüttenstadt train station. Image taken January 2019 by the author.


Figure 4.5. The Aufnahmeeinrichtung, Eisenhüttenstadt’s asylum seeker accommodation facility. Photo taken January 2019 by the author.
Figure 4.6. Deutsches Rotes Kreuz donation bin near the Aufnahmeeinrichtung, Eisenhüttenstadt. The facility is visible in the background. Image taken January 2019 by the author.

Figure 4.7. Jens Rötzsch, “Eisenhüttenstadt, Platz des Gedenkens.” Accessed April 16, 2020 from http://www.artnet.com/artists/jens-r%e3%b6tzsch/eisenh%e3%bcttenstadt-platz-des-gedenkens-sowjetisches-omld08gsj5t246-5nhBHvg2.
Appendix I: *The Sixteen Principles of Urban Design*

The urban planning and architectural design of our cities, which shall influence the construction of all of Germany, must express the social order of the German Democratic Republic, as well as the progressive traditions and great goals of our German people. They shall adhere to the following principles:

1. The city as a form of settlement did not arise by chance. The city is the richest economic and cultural form of community settlement, proven by centuries of experience. The city is in its structural and architectural design an expression of the political life and the national consciousness of the people.

2. The goal of urban planning is the harmonious fulfillments of man's basic rights to employment, housing, culture and recreation. The methodological principles of urban planning are based on the natural condition, on the social and economic foundations of the state, on the highest achievements of science, technology and art, on the needs of the economy, and on the use of progressive elements of the cultural heritage of the people.

3. Cities, per se, do not arise and do not exist. To a significant extent, cities are built by industry for industry. The growth of the city, the population, and the area are determined by city-forming factors, that is, from industry, governing bodies, and cultural sites, insofar as they have more than local
significance. In the capital, industry as an urbanization factor is of secondary importance to administrative bodies and cultural sites. The precise discernment and codification of city-forming factors is a matter determined by government.

4. The growth of the city must be subordinate to efficacy and remain within certain limits. An overgrown city, its population, and its area lead to difficulties in eliminating tangles in their structure, lead to entanglements in the organization of cultural life and the daily care of the population, and lead to administrative complications, both in business and in the development of industry.

5. Urban planning must be based on the principles of organicism, and the consideration of a city's historical structure in eliminating that city's shortcomings.

6. The center forms the veritable core of the city. The center of the city is the political center for its population. In the city center are the most important political, administrative and cultural sites. On the squares in the city center one might find political demonstrations, marches and popular celebrations held on festival days. The center of the city shall be composed of the most important and monumental buildings, dominating the architectural composition of the city plan and determining the architectural silhouette of the city.
7. In cities that lie on a river, the river and its embankments shall be one of the main arteries and architectural axes of the city.

8. Traffic circulation has to serve the city and its population. It should neither divide the city nor be cumbersome to the general public. Through traffic should be removed from the center and central district and rerouted outside its borders or to an outer ring. Equipment for the carriage of goods, such as rail- and canal-ways, should also be kept away from the central district of the city. Determining locations for main roads must take into account the coherence and tranquility of residential districts. In determining the width of main roads, it is important to note that the width of these main thoroughfares is not of crucial importance to urban transportation, but rather as an outlet for crossroads in order to appropriately ease the demands of traffic flow.

9. The visage of the city—that is, its individual artistic form—shall be defined by squares, main streets, and prominent buildings in the center of the city (in those largest cities containing skyscrapers). Squares and plazas shall serve as the structural basis for the planning of the city and for its overall architectural composition.

10. Residential areas shall consist of housing districts, the cores of which shall be district centers. For the sake of the residents of these housing districts, in them shall be all necessary cultural, utility, and social services. The second aspect in the structuring of residential areas shall be the residential
complex, which is formed by grouping together four housing structures, where there shall be located a central park, schools, kindergartens, and nurseries that serve the daily needs of the population. Urban transport must not be allowed within these residential areas, but neither the residential districts nor the residential complexes should be isolated entities in and of themselves. Latent in their structure and design are the demands of the city on a whole. The housing structures themselves function as a third aspect in the importance of complexes in planning and design.

11. Access to light and air are not the only determining factors for healthy and peaceful living conditions, but also population density and orientations, as well as the development of transportation systems.

12. It is impossible to transform a city into a garden. Of course, care must be taken to provide sufficient greenery, but the principle not to overturn is that in the city one lives urbanistically, whereas on the outskirts or outside the city one lives rurally.

13. The many storey high-rise is more economical than a one- or two-storey design. It also reflects the character of the metropolis.

14. Urban planning is the basis of architectural design. Central to urban planning and architectural design of a city is the creation of an individual and unique visage for that city. The architecture must embody both the progressive traditions as well as the past experiences of the people.
15. For urban planning, as for architectural design, there shall be no abstract scheme. Crucial are only the summarization of essential architectural factors and the demands of daily life.

16. Simultaneously and in accordance with the work on a city plan shall be completed designs for the planning and development of specific neighborhoods, as well as plazas and main street with neatly organized housing blocks, whose construction will be completed first.\textsuperscript{146}

Appendix II: Timeline

Mid-13th century: First recorded habitation in the community of Fürstenberg (Oder).

1844-1846: Berlin-Breslau railway constructed; Eisenhüttenstadt’s current train station likely constructed around 1850.

1891: The Oder-Spree Canal, connecting the waterways of Berlin to the Oder River, is completed.

December 6, 1939: The prisoner-war-camp Stalag III-B opens on the western bank of the Oder-Spree canal, approximately four kilometers from the village of Fürstenberg.

February 5, 1945: The Stalag III-B camp is abandoned; prisoners are relocated to other Stalags.

April 24, 1945: Soviet troops invade Fürstenberg and liberate the Stalag III-B prisoner-of-war camp.

May 7, 1945: Nazi Germany signs unconditional surrender of the Second World War at Reims, France.

October 7, 1949: The German Democratic Republic (GDR) is formally established.

April 14 - May 25 1950: A select group of GDR architects and bureaucrats take a study trip to Moscow which would inform the drafting of the *Sechzehn Grundsätze*. Among the participants are Kurt Liebknecht, Lothar Bolz, and Kurt Leucht.

July 6, 1950: German and Poland reach formal agreement on national borders.

July 20-27, 1950: First Five-Year Plan drafted at the First SED Party Congress; decision to construct a major ironworks on the Oder River announced.
July 25 1950: Following party restructuring determined at the First Party congress, Walter Ulbricht is officially recognized as First Secretary of the SED Party.

July 27 1950: The *Sechzehn Grundsätze* are ratified at the First SED Party Congress.

August 18 1950: Ground is broken on the EKO construction site.


October 1950: Franz Ehrlich presents plan for first model city which is ultimately rejected on the basis of appearing too “abstracted.”

November 14 1950: Location for the model city of Stalinstadt is officially determined south of the EKO construction site.

April 14 1951: Lothar Bolz formally accepts plan by Kurt Leucht as basis for city.

Late 1951: Final master plan completed and adopted.

September 19, 1951: First blast furnace at the EKO plant begins operation.
July 1952: The city is formally declared to be the first socialist model city at the Second SED Party Congress. Construction begins on the first living complex.

February 1953: Official “founding” and convening of city council.

March 5 1953: Stalin dies in Moscow.

Spring 1953: Construction begins on the second living complex.

May 7 1953: “Stalinstadt” officially adopted as city name.

June 16-17 1953: Major strike turned uprising against SED party government, protests originate in Berlin and spread to nearly all of the nation’s major population areas.

Mid-1954: Construction begins on the third and forth living complexes.

Summer 1955: Construction is completed on four original living complexes.

1959 - 1965: Construction takes place on the fifth living complex, due south of the city’s core developments. While the initial developments were completed on a much shorter timeline, the fifth was constructed sporadically and not completed until 1965.
May 1961: City renamed “Eisenhüttenstadt” as a part of nationwide destalinization measures.

1969 - 1975: Construction takes place on the sixth living complex.

May 3 1971: Walter Ulbricht is ousted as First Party Secretary, Erich Honecker is sworn in as First Party Secretary.

October 2 1973: The Wohnungsbauprogramm is approved at the 10th SED Party Congress.


October 18 1989: Amid growing political unrest, Egon Krenz replaces Erich Honecker as First Party Secretary.

November 9-10 1989: Following Günter Schabowski’s mistaken declaration that East Germany had opened its borders to the West, individuals begin passing en masse through border checkpoints in Berlin. Individuals also begin to demolish the Berlin Wall, creating unofficial border crossings, in a night that has come to be known as “the fall of the Berlin Wall.”
March 18 1990: East Germany holds “first free multi-party elections”;

July 2 1990: Negotiations begin between East and West Germany to establish a treaty of unification.

August 23 1990: East German parliament ratifies accession of GDR to FRG.

October 3 1990: The GDR and FRG are formally unified.

Late September 1991: Cities in the former GDR, including Hoyerswerda and Eisenhüttenstadt, are the site of far-right violence targeting immigrants and foreign guest workers.

1993: First Asylum Seeker facilities are opened in Eisenhüttenstadt.

1995: Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR is founded in Eisenhüttenstadt.

September 24 2017: National parliamentary elections see the far-right AfD party win seats in the Bundestag for the first time, obtaining the third-most number of seats.

September 1 2019: The Brandenburg parliamentary elections take place; the AfD doubles seat holdings and currently holds second-most seats in the regional parliament.
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