

Before Frauenkirche. Delayed Reconstruction Work of Historic German Buildings Destroyed during World War II

Second World War, Come era dove era, Germany, Reconstruction, Conservation

/Abstract

Abstract

After World War II, Germany suffered from Allied occupation for several years. During this period, the difficult operations of clearing the rubble and counting the damage to the buildings and infrastructural heritage of the cities began. At the same time, many architects started to investigate possible intervention strategies, giving rise to an interesting debate in which the theme of the interpretation of the ruins played a central role.

After 1949, the socio-political conditions changed: with the birth of two states, the priority was the physical reconstruction of the two new countries. A massive work of reorganization and reconstruction took its moves. This resulted in very diversified operational choices in each city, both in terms of restoration of historic buildings and urban and territorial planning. After the 1970s, once this phase was over, German scholars in both the East and the West started to draw up preliminary critical-descriptive studies on partial achievements. In these studies, those of Niels Gutschow and Werner Durth, Josef Nipper and Manfred Nutz, and Hartwig Beseler and Niels Gutschow are particularly significant.

In the early '90s of the twentieth century, before the reunification, the first reconstruction projects of the buildings destroyed by the war were conceived as "where it was, how it was." Some examples are those of the Knochenhaueramtshaus in Hildesheim and the Alte Waage in Braunschweig.

This paper aims to illustrate and critically comment on the motivations that led to the reconstruction of these buildings, framing them in the wider debate that has developed in Germany after reunification following the notorious cases of the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche in Dresden and the Berlin Castle, and the well-known exhibition curated in 2010 by Winfried Nerdinger at the Architekturmuseum of the TU München entitled *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion – Konstruktion der Geschichte*.

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Premise

For too complex reasons to be examined here, the contribution of German culture to the discipline of restoration, both in terms of theoretical reflection and operation, has not been particularly widespread in postwar Europe.¹ That was at least until the reunification of the country when several interventions catalyzed international critics' interest. After outlining the general framework within which the reconstruction of German cities was dealt with, the present paper aims to present some considerations regarding some of the 'where they were and how they were' rebuilding work - carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s - of monuments and urban environments destroyed during the war, which had been rebuilt in 'modern' forms only a few decades earlier.

Reconstruction in Germany.

Much of German cities' historical and infrastructural building stock was destroyed during World War II. The operations to clear the rubble and count the damage were long and complex. Between 1945 and 1949, many architects and public officials in charge of conservation began to discuss possible intervention strategies. This gave rise to an interesting debate that addressed the subject of war ruins within the more general framework of a process of spiritual rebirth of German society.² This resulted in a fascinating discussion, with no particular follow-up, which is still scarcely known.³

Indeed, the division into two states with distinct political orientations, the process of 'normalization' of West-German society after the amnesty of 1951 and the Nuremberg Trial brought about new political and social conditions. Although with different motivations, in both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, the priority became 'rebuilding.' Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of West Germany from 1949 to 1963, had as his motto the phrase "Das Land wieder aufbauen und die Wunden heilen lassen" (Rebuilding the country and healing the wounds). For these reasons and without a unified strategy in both East and West, the processes and ways cities were rebuilt were very diverse. Similarly, there was a wide variety of attitudes, often conditioned by economic availability, even for restoring individual monuments. Total reconstructions were carried out, such as for the Charlottenburg Castle⁴ in West Berlin, the

1 Giovanni Carbonara, Presentazione, in Donatella Fiorani, *Il restauro architettonico nei paesi di lingua tedesca. Fondamenti, dialettica, attualità* (Roma: Bonsignori, 2006), 7-10, 7.

2 Karl Jaspers, *La questione della colpa. Sulla responsabilità politica della Germania* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina editore, 1996); Susanne Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt. Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany* (Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003); Alexander Mitscherlich, Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

3 Michael S. Falser, "Trauerarbeit an Ruinen - Kategorien des Wiederaufbaus nach 1945" in *Rekonstruktion in Deutschland. Positionen zu einem umstrittenen Thema*, ed. Michael Braum and Ursula. Baus, (Basel - Boston - Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2009) 60-97, 66.

4 Beseler Harting and Niels Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur. Verluste, Schaden, Wiederaufbau* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz verlag, 1988) vol. I, 142-145.



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Residenzen⁵ and the Chinesischer Turm⁶ in Munich, the Gemälde-Galerie⁷ in Dresden, the Alte Börse in Leipzig, and for the Goethehauses⁸ in Frankfurt. At the same time, the Aegidienkirche⁹ in Hanover, the Gottfried Semper's Sankt Nikolai Kirche in Hamburg, and the Franziskaner Klosterkirche in West Berlin were kept in a state of ruin. There was no shortage of reconstruction interventions with more or less distinguishable additions of new parts, such as for the Staatsoper Unter den Linden¹⁰ and the Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main.¹¹ Yet, in interventions like for the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche¹², architect Egon Eiermann - after multiple

5 Kurt Faltlhauser, *Die Münchner Residenz. Geschichte, Zerstörung, Wiederaufbau* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2006); Tino Walz, *Untergang und Neubeginn: Die Rettung der Wittelsbacher Schatzkammer, der Wiederaufbau der Münchner Residenz und andere Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (München: Langen Müller, 2003).

6 Beseler, Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur*, vol. II, 1405.

7 Hubert Gregor Ermisch, *Der Dresdener Zwinger* (Dresda: Sachsen, 1954).

8 Walter Dirks, "Mut zum Abschied. Zur Wiederherstellung des Frankfurter Goethehauses," in *Frankfurter Hefte*, no. 8 (August 1947): 819 – 828. See <https://frankfurter-goethe-haus.de/von-der-zerstoerung-zum-wiederaufbau-des-frankfurter-goethe-hauses-1944-1951/die-zerstoerung-des-goethe-hauses/> [last accessed September 2023].

9 The city of Hannover was completely redesigned in the post-war period on the basis of urban planning criteria based on car mobility, according to the project of Rudolf Hillebrecht. See: Sid Auffarth, "Non ricostruire, ma costruire nuovamente. Hannover dopo la seconda guerra mondiale," *Storia urbana*, no. 129, (2010):155-170; Paul Zalewski, "Rudolf Hillebrecht und der autogerechte Wiederaufbau Hannovers nach 1945," in *Universität Hannover 1831 - 2006, Festschrift zum 175-jährigen Bestehen der Universität Hannover* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2006), vol. 1, 89-102; Paul Zalewski, "Zur „Konstruktion der Heimat“ im funktionalistischen Aufbau Hannovers nach 1945," *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej Bulletin der Polnischen Historischen Mission*, no.7 (2012): 293-337; Raffaele Amore, "The post-war 'reconstruction' of the city of Hanover and the restoration of the Aegidienkirche," in *Città e Guerra. Difese, distruzioni, permanenze delle memorie e dell'immagine urbana*, tomo II, *Tracce e Patrimoni*, ed. Raffaele Amore, Maria Ines Pascariello, Alessandra Veropalumbo (Napoli: Federico II University Press): 689-699.

10 Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 67-68.

11 Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 72-74; Michael S. Falser, "Hat Wiederaufbau denkmalwert? die Paulskirche im Reigen nachkriegszeitlicher Architektur Ikonen," in *Paulskirche eine Politische Architekturgeschichte*, ed Maximilian Liesner, Philipp Sturm, Peter Cachola Schmal, Philipp Kurz (Stuttgart: avedition, 2019), 104-121, 107-108.

12 The Kaiser Wilhelm Church, built in the late Romanesque style by Franz Schwechten, was opened in Sedantag in 1891 in memory of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Destroyed in 1943, it was redesigned by Egon Eiermann in the late 1950s (Egon Eiermann, *Die Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Kirche* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1994). He came up with several solutions: the first did not provide for the preservation of part of the original church; Only after the protests of the inhabitants did the project move towards the construction of new buildings next to the consolidated ruins of the ancient church. This intervention, together with the one for the Cathedral Church of St Michael in Coventry, has become a true architectural icon, reported by critics as one of the most successful examples of integration

Fig. 1
Dresden. The ruins of the Frauenkirche: on the left in 1945, in the centre in 1992, on the right in 1992. (Wenzel Fritz edited, *Berichte vom Wiederaufbau der Frauenkirche zu Dresden Konstruktion des Steinbaus und Integration der Ruine*, Karlsruhe:Universitätverlag Karlsruhe, 2007, 86,74, 90).

second thoughts - chose to juxtapose the ruins of the 19th-century church with a new building with contemporary forms. Other peculiar and interesting interventions include those in Munich by Hans Döllgast for the Alte Pinakothek¹³ and the Alter Südlicher Friedhof¹⁴ and those by Josef Wiedeman for the Glyptothek and the Siegestor¹⁵ or, again, those carried out in Cologne for the St. Alban¹⁶ complex by Rudolf Schwarz¹⁷ and Josef Bernard. Finally, there was no shortage of demolition without reconstruction, such as for the Stadtschlosses¹⁸ in East Berlin and the many churches¹⁹ in the cities of the German Democratic Republic²⁰ - for political-ideological reasons - or the Neues Pinakothek in Munich - for economic reasons.

between old and new, which has also found space in twentieth-century history manuals of architecture and restoration. See: Louise Campbell, "Reconstruction, Englishness and Coventry Cathedral", *Storia urbana*, no. 158 (2018): 87-110; Andrea Pane, "Ruins for remembrance' the debate about the bombed London City churches and its echoes in Italy," *Storia urbana*, no. 158 (2018):111-147; Paola Martire, "A case Study in the City of London: St Alban's church in Woof Street," *Storia urbana*, no. 158 (2018): 149-163; Maria Pia Sette, *Il restauro in architettura, quadro storico* (Torino: UTET, 2001); Giovanni Carbonara, *Architettura d'oggi e restauro. Un confronto antico-nuovo* (Torino: UTET, 2011).

13 Technische Universität München und Bund Deutscher Architekten Dba, *Hans Döllgast 1891-1974* (München: Callwey, 1987); Winfried Nerdinger, "Hans Döllgast ricostruzione della Alte Pinakothek a Monaco," *Casabella*, no. 636 (March 1996): 46-54; Franz Peter, Franz Wimmer, *Von den Spuren: Interpretierender Wiederaufbau im Werk von Hans Döllgast* (Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1998); Winfried Nerdinger, "Hans Döllgast. Cheerfully puritanical architecture," *Convention, OASE*, no. 49-50 (1998):108-119, 113 (<https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/4950/HansDollgast>, last accessed September 2024); Raffaele Amore, "Il nuovo per l'antico nell'opera di Hans Döllgast," in *Il Progetto di Architettura come intersezione di saperi. Per una nozione rinnovata di Patrimonio*, Atti dell'VIII Forum ProArch, Società Scientifica nazionale dei docenti di Progettazione Architettonica, ed. Alberto Calderoni, Bruna Di Palma, Antonio Nitti, Gaspare Oliva (Roma: ProArch, 2019): 212-219; Alberto Grimoldi, "Le vicende delle opere di Hans Döllgast a Monaco e i loro echi nella cultura tedesca," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura, Realtà dell'architettura fra materia e immagine. Per Giovanni Carbonara: studi e ricerche*, vol. 1, (2019): 175-182; Vitangelo Ardito, "La rovina e l'ornamento. Hans Döllgast e la ricostruzione dei monumenti in Germania nel secondo dopoguerra," *Opus*, no. 3 (2019): 49-68; Francesco Dal Co, "Un umanista sereno: Hans Döllgast 1891-1974," *Casabella*, no. 943, (March 2023): 60-61.

14 Winfried Nerdinger, "Hans Döllgast. Neue Raume aus Ruinen," *Casabella*, no. 943, (March 2023): 32-59, 62-101. Nerdinger, among other things, presents an interesting intervention by Dollgast for the South Cemetery in Munich. It should also be noted that the writer presented, a contribution entitled *L'Alter Südlicher Friedhof di Monaco di Baviera e Hans Döllgast* at the X AISU Congress, held in Turin from September 6 to 10, to be published.

15 Leila Signorelli, *Wiederaufbau: Josef Wiedeman e la conservazione viva dell'esistente* (Bologna: Bononia University press, 2019). See also Roberta Fonti, "Preventive conservation in Times of War. The case of Triumphal Arches," in *Città e Guerra. Difese, distruzioni, permanenze delle memorie e dell'immagine urbana*, tomo II, *Tracce e Patrimoni*, ed. Raffaele Amore, Maria Ines Pascariello, Alessandra Veropalumbo (Napoli: Federico II University Press): 1036-1046.

16 The block of St. Alban originally consisted of the old Pfarrkirche St. Alban and the Gürzenich, a town hall built around the middle of the fifteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the entire building, excluding the church, was used for the celebrations of the Cologne Carnival.

17 The project, different from the one proposed in the competition phase, involved the construction of a new building with public and commercial spaces and a ballroom that incorporates the ruins of the church (consolidated by means of reinforced concrete structures) and the Gürzenich building, of which only the facades have been preserved. It's interesting what one of the designers writes about it: "Wir haben erreicht, daß diese Kirche nicht wiederhergestellt wurde und fanden dabei die Zustimmung des Erzbischofs, [...] Was hätten wir wieder herstellen sollen? [...] Wir ließen den Raum kahl und zerstört. Er mahnt an die unerforschbare Bosheit des menschlichen Herzens. So steht er neben dem Festhaus. Die Feste des Lebens werden vor den Hintergrund des Todes gestellt" (Rudolf Schwarz, *Kirchenbau. Welt vor der Schwelle* (Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle 1960), 93. In English: "With the archbishop's approval, we managed to prevent the reconstruction of this church [...] What should we have restored? [...] We left that space empty and in ruin. It is a memento to the human heart's unfathomable evilness. A ruin is placed next to a party house. Life is celebrated against a backdrop of death", German translation by the author. Rudolf Schwarz was responsible for urban planning for the city of Cologne between 1946 and 1952, see Wolfgang Pehnt, Hilde Strohl, *Rudolf Schwarz, 1897-1961* (Milano: Electa, 2000); Thomas Hasler, *Architektur als Ausdruck: Rudolf Schwarz* (Berlino Mann, 2000); Rudolf Stegers, "Rudolf Schwarz, the Hochstadt, and the reconstruction of Cologne," in *Modernism and the Spirit of the City*, ed. Iain Boyd Whyte (London: Routledge, 2003); Adam Caruso and Helen Thomas, ed., *Rudolf Schwarz and the Monumental Order of Things* (Zurich: E T H Honggerberg, 2016).

18 Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 89.

19 There is also an extensive bibliography for the reconstruction of Berlin Castle. Only articles that appeared in *Casabella* are mentioned here. In particular, those published in no. 796 of 2010 and no. 920 of 2021.

20 See: Claudia Zanlungo, "Risorti dalle rovine". *La tutela dei monumenti e il destino dell'architettura sacra nella Germania socialista* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2018) and Henriette Von Preuschen, "Ideologia e conservazione dei beni culturali. Le chiese distrutte nella Repubblica Democratica tedesca," *Storia urbana*, no. 129 (2010):121-154.

German critics have only begun to produce systematic studies on the restoration modalities adopted in the postwar period - excluding the first surveys of destroyed or damaged buildings²¹ - since the 1980s.²²

One of the first contributions on the topic was by Niels Gutschow²³. In 1985, he published a short essay on the urban reconstructions of four West German cities: Münster, Hannover, Darmstadt, and Freudenstadt. Two years later, Klaus von Beyme²⁴ presented the first comparative report concerning reconstruction policies in the two Germanies, pointing out the many points of convergence. Two significant volumes were published in 1988: Niels Gutschow and Werner Durth's catalog entitled *Träume in Trümmern* (Dreams in Ruins)²⁵, concerning the cities of West Germany. In 1993, this was followed by a further publication on the cities of the German Democratic Republic, edited by Josef Nipper and Manfred Nutz²⁶, and the two-volume publication edited by Hartwig Beseler and Niels Gutschow entitled *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur. Verlust - Schäden - Wiederaufbau. Eine Dokumentation für das Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*²⁷.

21 A first account of the war damage was published in the journal *Die Kunstpflege* in 1948 (*Die Kunstpflege*, no. 1 (1948): 87-146.), which was updated in 1958 (Heinrich Neu, "Die Verluste an Kulturgut in Deutschland durch den Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ed. Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, vol. 1, (Bonn: 1958), 373-437 and, for the GDR in 1978, (*Schicksale deutscher Baudenkmale im zweiten Weltkrieg: Eine Dokumentation der Schäden und Totalverluste auf dem Gebiet der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, ed Gotz Eckardt (München: Beck, 1978) vol. 1-2). Since the late 1980s, English-language volumes on reconstruction in Germany have also been published. These include: Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities After World War II* (New York, Oxford: New York-Oxford University Press, 1993); Wim Denslagen, *Architectural Restoration in Western Europe: Controversy and Continuity* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 1994); Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Past: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and the Memory. Architecture, Monuments and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe. The Destruction of History Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

22 At the invitation of the ICOMOS National Committee of the German Democratic Republic, a meeting was held from 15 to 19 November 1982 on the theme *Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War*, which ended with the drafting of the Declaration of Dresden on the 'Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War' (1982), which helped to direct the research and give a strong impetus to the systematization of knowledge related to reconstruction policies in Germany post-World War II in a historical key. Below are points 7 and 8 of the Charter which in some way foreshadow the methods that the German authors will use to classify the interventions carried out. «7. In reconstructing monuments destroyed by war various techniques have been developed. A multiplicity of factors have to be taken into account in each individual case. These range from the conservation of a monument for its symbolic value to the restoration of a townscape condition which cannot be abandoned. In the restoration of monuments destroyed by war special care should be taken that the historic development up to the present time can be traced. This applies to the elements of monuments from different periods as well as other evidence of its fate. This might include modern elements which have been added in a responsible manner. The complete reconstruction of severely damaged monuments must be regarded as an exceptional circumstance which is justified only for special reasons resulting from the destruction of a monument of great significance by war. Such a reconstruction must be based on reliable documentation of its condition before destruction». <https://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/184-the-declaration-of-dresden> [Last accessed october 2023].

23 Niels Gutschow, "Stadträume des Wiederaufbaus –Objekte der Denkmalpflege?," *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, no.43 (1985): 9 -19. Niels Gutschow was head of the Münster Authority of Monument Protection and was a member of the German National Committee for Conservation between 1980 and 2000. <https://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/people/all/person/persdetail/gutschow.html> [Last accessed october 2023].

24 Klaus von Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau. Architektur und Städtebaupolitik in beiden deutschen Staaten* (München-Zürich: Piper, 1987).

25 Werner Durth, Niels Gutschow, *Träume in Trümmern. Planungen zum Wiederaufbau zerstörter Städte im Westen Deutschlands 1940 – 1950*, vol. 1 Konzepte, vol. 2 Städte (Braunschweig:Vieweg & Sohn, 1988); Werner Durth, Niels Gutschow, *Träume in Trümmern. Stadtplanung 1940-1950* (München: dtv, 1993).

26 Josef Nipper, Manfred Nutz, eds., *Kriegszerstörung und Wiederaufbau deutscher Städte. Geographische Studien zu Schadensausmaß und Bevölkerungsschutz im Zweiten Weltkrieg, zu Wiederaufbauideen und Aufbaurealität*, heft 57 (Köln: Kölner geographische Arbeiten, 1993).

27 Hartwig Beseler, Niels Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur. Verlust – Schäden – Wiederaufbau. Eine Dokumentation für das Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. I Nord, vol. II Süd (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag 1988).

In the latter study, based on an extensive and detailed survey, Hartwig Beseler proposed an initial classification of the different types of interventions used in monument restoration. In addition to the few interventions of simple ruin conservation²⁸, he identified three forms: “naive Wiederherstellung”²⁹ (naive restoration), characterized by the restoration of the exterior appearance and the adaptation of the interior to modern standards, and “archäologische Rekonstruktion”³⁰ (archaeological reconstructions), out-and-out reconstructions that favored the oldest and most accomplished forms of the monument, freeing it from subsequent transformations; and, finally, interventions with a strong stamp of “Purismus”³¹ (Purism) characterized by simplified reconstructions and contemporary additions. More recently, in 2009, taking up Beseler’s studies, Michael S. Falser suggested a more nuanced classification into seven distinct types of intervention.³² They are very interesting studies, testifying to the richness and variety of solutions adopted for the reconstruction of German cities; due to their critical and compositional significance, some of them deserve further insight.

‘Delayed reconstructions’ after the fall of the Berlin Wall

With reunification, many German cities, including Berlin, underwent massive urban redevelopment programs and major restorations of monuments damaged during World War II that had not yet been addressed for different circumstances. In particular, the second category has attracted the attention of national and international critics for various reasons. David Chipperfield’s restoration works of the Neues Museum³³ in Berlin and Peter Zumthor’s project of the Diocesan Museum in Cologne³⁴ - to name two

28 Hartwig Beseler, *Baudenkmale – Zeugnisse architektonischer Überlieferung im Umbruch*, in Beseler, Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur*, vol. I, p. XXXIII – XXXV.

29 Beseler, *Baudenkmale*, XXV.

30 Beseler, *Baudenkmale*, XXV.

31 Beseler, *Baudenkmale*, XXV.

32 Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 67. Falser identifies seven distinct types of intervention: «1. Abriss der Ruine [...]; 2. Die liegen gebliebene, innerstädtische Ruine [...]; 3. Ruinenerhalt und kommentierender Gegenbau [...]; 4. Die zeitgenössische Integration der sichtbar bleibenden Ruine [...]; 5. Die zeitgenössische Aneignung der formalen Qualitäten der Ruine [...]; 6. Teilrekonstruktion von erhaltener Original-substanz mit neuen Ergänzungen; 7. (Vermeintliche) Vollrekonstruktion nach Teiler oder Totalverlust [...]». In English: “1. Ruin demolition [...]; 2. Conservation in a state of ruin [...]; 3. Conservation of ruins with the addition of new construction [...]; 4. Contemporary integration of ruins [...]; 5. Contemporary reinterpretation of ruins [...]; 6. Partial reconstruction with non-recognizable additions [...]; 7. (Alleged) complete reconstruction after a partial or total reconstruction [...]”.

33 The competition and the project for the restoration of the Neues Museum in Berlin has been the subject of numerous articles and critical essays, so much so that it is impossible to report them all. The following are the articles that appeared in Italy in *Casabella*: no. 657 (June 1998), *Museumsinsel -Berlin* con articoli di N. Kieren, G. Grassi, D. Chipperfield, F. O. Gery e F. Venezia, dedicated to the competition, 34-61; no. 721 (April 2004), *Progetto di restauro e completamento del Neues Museum* with essays by D. Chipperfield and N. Bernau, 41-42; no. 778 (June 2009) *Neues Museum* with an essay by D. Chipperfield, 78; *Forum Museumsinsel*, no. 843 (November 2014): 33. For the competition, see: *Museumsinsel Berlin. Wettbewerb zum Neuen Museum* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Paris: avedition, 1994) and the essay of Rita Capezzuto, “Berlino ricostruisce l’isola die Musei”, *Domus*, no. 831 (2000): 51.

34 The former Catholic parish church of St. Kolumba was one of the oldest and largest churches in Cologne. Destroyed as a result of the bombings, it was placed in ruins after the war, preserving the ground floor of the tower, the vestibule, large sections of the boundary wall of the complex, the base of some pillars and the crypt. In particular, a statue of the Madonna and Child from the fifteenth century placed on a pillar of the choir and miraculously preserved on site, became one of the symbols of the city’s rebirth and gave its name to the project to arrange the ruins: *Madonna in Trümmern*. The architect Gottfried Böhm completed the arrangement of the complex by building an octagonal chapel on the grounds of the old church, in which the aforementioned statue of the Madonna was placed (S. Stefan Kraus, Anna Pawlik, Martin Struck, Lothar Schnepf, Kraus, A. Pawlik e M. Struck, ed., *Kolumba Kapelle* (Colonia: Kolumba, 2021)). Peter Zumthor’s recent project has incorporated the foundations of the old church and the aforementioned Böhm Chapel into a new museum building. The intervention

of the best-known ones - have been the subject of almost unanimous critical acclaim for how the theme of additions and additions has been articulated in a contemporary key. Others, such as the reconstruction of the Fraukirche³⁵ in Dresden and Berlin Castle³⁶, have brought the theme of “where it was, as it was” reconstruction for buildings destroyed by war and natural disasters to the attention of the scientific community and international public opinion.

Damage to the historic built heritage resulting from armed conflicts and natural disasters challenges current models and methods of operation in the field of conservation by confronting restoration specialists and affected communities with exceptional and unconventional choices, including the possibility of resorting to the “where it was, as it was” reconstruction of destroyed monuments. In this sense, this issue is still of great interest and, unfortunately, extremely topical today. However, the uniqueness of the interventions mentioned above in Dresden and Berlin was that they were designed and implemented more than fifty years after their destruction. Usually, the decision to reconstruct a building destroyed by a sudden event “as it was” is made in the immediacy of the event - as happened after the war in most of Europe, including Italy, Germany and Poland, or as it happened almost simultaneously with the cases under review, after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) with the reconstruction of the Mostar Bridge - in response to psychological instances, to cope with the trauma caused by the destructive event. For this reason, the decision to reconstruct the two monuments mentioned above has raised several perplexities and a consequent interesting debate from the very beginning.

Without going into the merits of what was later achieved - see the specific bibliography on this topic -, it is useful to mention that the two monuments immediately after the war had been subjected to different types of intervention.

The ruins of the Frauenkirche in Dresden [fig. 1 and 2] were preserved in the center of the city and have taken on different roles and meanings over the years. During the 1950s, they became the “Mahnung an Schuld und Sühne unseres Volkes”³⁷; later, the “Mahnmal gegen den Krieg”³⁸. In the 1980s, they became a symbol of freedom of thought for the youth of the time: it was no coincidence that the demonstrations leading up to the collapse of the regime of the German Democratic Republic that took place in Dresden were held near the ruins of the church.

Conversely, after the war, the ruins of the Berlin Castle were razed for obvious

- which presents undoubted elements of great quality - has been highly appreciated by critics (Chiara Bagliore, “Un museo per contemplare,” *Casabella*, no. 760, 2007, 7-21), but in fact it has transformed one of the symbolic places of the post-war reconstruction of the city, erasing its memory and testament.

35 On the operating methods - which denote the complexity of the intervention and the significant effort in terms of applied research - with which the church was rebuilt, see: *Berichte vom Wiederaufbau der Frauenkirche zu Dresden Konstruktion des Steinbaus und Integration der Ruine*, ed. Fritz Wenzel (Karlsruhe: Universitätsverlag Karlsruhe, 2007).

36 There is also an extensive bibliography for the reconstruction of Berlin Castle. Only articles that appeared in the magazine *Casabella* are mentioned here. In particular, those published in no. 796 (December 2010) and 920 (April 2021).

37 Stephan Hirzel, “Wiederaufbau der Dresdner Frauenkirche,” *Zeitschrift für Kunst*, no.1 (1947), 48-50, 50; cited in Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 81. In English: “Our people’s monument of guilt and atonement.”

38 Hans Hunger, “Der Aufbau des Zentrums der Stadt Dresden im Siebenjahresplan,” *Deutsche Architektur* no. 8 (1959): 596; cited in Falser, *Trauerarbeit an Ruinen*, 81. In English: “Memorial against war.”



ideological reasons. The Palast der Republik was built in their place - an architectural icon of the new power.

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Thus, although with different nuances, the church ruins and the new Palace had assumed a significant urban role in the two cities and acquired their historicity. Nevertheless, first, the Dresden church and then the Berlin Castle (after the demolition of the palace) were - with the local citizenry's support - rebuilt as they were before the conflict to erase two symbols of the Cold War period. They had become too cumbersome for two cities that, in different ways, wanted to look to the future without the burden of remembering the war and the undemocratic regime of the former GDR.

As predictable, the ensuing debate was polarized between those who argued the anachronism of such choices and those who, conversely, argued that reconstruction of destroyed buildings has always been an architectural practice. In particular, in the German cultural sphere, mention should be made of the work by the Architekturmuseum der TU München and the Institut für Denkmalpflege und Bauforschung der ETH Zürich, which organized a symposium in 2008 entitled *Das Prinzip Rekonstruktion*, held at the ETH Zurich, and a subsequent exhibition at the Architekturmuseum der TU München, entitled *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion - Konstruktion der Geschichte*³⁹. The latter's outcome was published in the homonymous volume edited by Winfried Nerdinger.⁴⁰

39 <https://www.db-bauzeitung.de/empfehlungen/ausstellungen/geschichte-der-rekonstruktion-konstruktion-der-geschichte-muenchen/> (last accessed October 2023).

40 *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion - Konstruktion der Geschichte*, edited Winfried Nerdinger with Markus Eisen and Hilde Strobi (München, Berlin, London, New York: Ernest von Siemens Kunststiftung, 2010). The book was received positively by German critics, although there was no shortage of dissenting voices, collected in the volume

Fig. 2
Dresda. FrauenKirche today.

It is a very interesting study, which proposes several essays and then a vast catalog divided into ten distinct sections, with historical examples of reconstructions of destroyed buildings. The study aims to demonstrate how - for different reasons - the practice of 'reconstruction' has characterized and still characterizes the history of architecture.

In his introductory essay, Nerdinger wrote: „Eine Kopie ist kein Betrug, ein Faksimile keine Fälschung, ein Abguss kein Verbrechen und eine Rekonstruktion keine Lüge“⁴¹ [...] „Wer einen verlorenen oder zerstörten Bau rekonstruiert, fälscht nicht [...] denn es handelt sich immer um einen Neubau, der als solcher trotz historischer Formen zumindest für die Zeitgenossen bekannt und kenntlich ist und über entsprechende Quellen und Dokumente auch für spätere Generationen immer als Wiederholung identifizierbar bleibt“⁴² [...] „Rekonstruktion hat jedoch vielfach nichts mit >Denkmalpflege< zu tun, sondern ist ein von religiösen oder Memorialen Kategorien und Interessen geleiteter Vorgang einer epochen- und Kultur spezifischen Erinnerungskultur.“⁴³

In other words, Nerdinger identifies 'the 'where it was, as it was' reconstruction of a destroyed building' as an 'architectural category,' removing it from the field of 'monument preservation. Then, he adds, „Wenn es vorrangig da rum geht, Erinnerung über Architektur zu bewahren, muss die bauliche Substanz nicht zwingend >original< sein.“⁴⁴

This is both an interesting and questionable cultural position. However, it negates one of the foundational principles of architectural restoration: that is, the impossibility of separating an artwork from its material.

Disassociating the values and meaning of architecture from its materiality and, therefore, imagining that we can reconstruct what has been destroyed to

Denkmalpflege statt Attrappenkult Gegen die Rekonstruktion von Baudenkmalern – eine Anthologie, ed. Johannes Habich (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH, 2011), with essays by Adrian von Buttlar, Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, Michael S. Falser, Achim Hubel e Georg Mörsch. See: Michael S. Falser, "Die Erfindung einer Tradition namens Rekonstruktion oder Die Polemik der Zwischenzeilen," 88-97. Then, regarding the controversy following Falser's aforementioned writing, see the article that appeared in the magazine *Bauwelt* titled *Bauwelt-Fundamente: Denkmalpflege statt Attrappenkult* (<https://www.bauwelt.de/themen/buecher/Bauwelt-Fundamente-Denkmalpflege-statt-Attrappenkult-Gegen-Rekonstruktion-Baudenkmaelern-Anthologie-2110208.html>) (last accessed October 2023). On the same topic, see also: Michael S. Falser, "Zwischen Identität und Authentizität. Das Humboldt Forum und Rekonstruktion in Deutschland," in *der Architekt, Authentizität. Eigenschaft oder Zuschreibung?*, no. 4 (2017): 29-33. It is also worth recalling Ascensión Hernández Martínez's 2007 volume (Ascensión Hernández Martínez, *La clonacion arquitectonica* (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela 2007)). Drawing deeply different conclusions from Nerdinger, he discusses the theme of 'cloning' historical buildings destroyed by war and natural calamities. This study was published some years later in Italy with a preface by Maria Antonietta Crippa (Ascensión Hernández Martínez, *La clonazione architettonica*, Italian edition edited by Maria Antonietta Crippa ([Milano: Jaka book 2010])). It also proposes an interesting thesis about a possible connection between the crisis of modernity and, thus, some specific themes of post-modern architecture and the proliferation of reconstructions of historical buildings in the last two decades of the 20th century.

41 Winfried Nerdinger, "Zur Einführung. Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion historischer Kontinuität," in *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion - Konstruktion der Geschichte*, 10-15, 10. In English: "A copy is not a fraud, a fac-simile is not a fake; reconstruction is not a lie."

42 Nerdinger, "Zur Einführung. Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion historischer Kontinuität", 10-15, 10. In English: "Who reconstructs a lost or destroyed building does not falsify [...] because a reconstructed building will always be a new building; despite its historical forms, it is recognizable by contemporary people and can always be identified as a copy by future generations through sources and documents."

43 Nerdinger, "Zur Einführung. Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion historischer Kontinuität", 11. In English: "The reconstruction of a destroyed building has nothing to do with the 'conservation of monuments'; it is a choice produced by religious interests and culture of memory (Erinnerungskultur)."

44 Nerdinger, "Zur Einführung. Konstruktion und Rekonstruktion historischer Kontinuität", 11. In English: "If the goal is the conservation of memory through architecture, architectural matter does not have to be 'original'."

preserve its memory could be a solution worthy of discussion, to be possibly applied only in exceptional and very limited cases. After all, even Roberto Pane had affirmed that the significance of Warsaw's old center for the Polish nation "non poteva essere sostituito e compensato da quello che l'architettura moderna sarebbe stata in grado di fornire"⁴⁵ at the Conference of Venice in 1964. He observed that, in particular cases, 'reconstruction' can represent an undesirable yet necessary choice.

Otherwise, there is the risk of creating meaningless architecture or, even worse, buildings that ideologically celebrate power. An ideological example of such a reconstruction practice is the 'Hauszmann National Program'⁴⁶ (2014) of the Hungarian authorities, which envisages the reconstruction of the Budavára complex in Budapest according to its original forms with obvious nationalistic goals as well as tourist exploitation.

It is a non-negligible effect of the so-called 'cancel culture', which has found fertile ground in the countries of the old communist bloc. There, demolishing statues and buildings erected after the war and rebuilding ancient monuments destroyed or demolished by pro-Russian⁴⁷ regimes has become a common practice without - it seems to me - helping those populations coming to terms with their own history. Instead, it fueled nationalism and ideological oppositions, which unfortunately dominate contemporary Eastern Europe's political scene.

'Delayed reconstructions' of the Alte Waage at Braunschweig and the Knochenhaueramtshaus in Hildesheim

Before the two important cases mentioned above in Dresden and Berlin, two historic cities in Lower Saxony, Braunschweig and Hildesheim, also produced two interesting 'where it was, as it was' reconstructions of buildings destroyed by World War II air raids.

Braunschweig is a town of early medieval origins, which grew during the 13th and 14th centuries as an important trading center and joined the Hanseatic League. Although part of the Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, throughout the Middle Ages, it was ruled by wealthy local families and guilds of arts and crafts (Zunft - Gilde). The princes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel did not regain control of the city until the end of the 17th century; soon after, the Collegium Carolinum - later Technical University of Braunschweig - was founded, and the city became an important cultural hub.

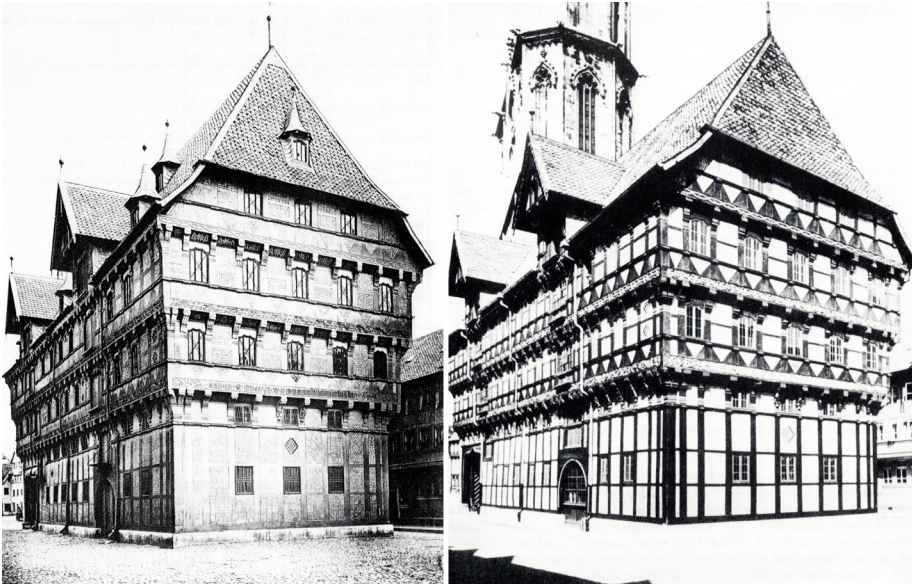
Since its construction in 1543, Braunschweig's Alte Waage⁴⁸ (old public weighbridge)

45 Roberto Pane, ed., "Teoria della conservazione e del restauro dei monumenti", in *Roberto Pane. Attualità e dialettica del restauro, Antologia*, ed. Mauro Civita (Chieti: Solfanelli, 1987): 171-187, already published in Roberto Pane, *Attualità dell'ambiente antico* (Firenze: la Nuova Italia, 1967). In English: "could not be substituted and compensated by what modern architecture would have been able to provide"

46 <https://nemzetihauszmannprogram.hu/> (last accessed November 2023).

47 Singular and tragic, in this regard, is the story of the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odessa, demolished in 1936, which was rebuilt by the Ukrainian authorities between 1999 and 2003 and which last July 2023 was damaged again during a Russian missile attack on Odessa.

48 Beseler, Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur*, vol. II, 281; Justus Herrenberger, "Die Baustelle „Alte Waage“ in Braunschweig" (Goltze, Göttingen 1993), see: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:084-13103014592>



has been one of the city's most iconic public buildings. It was built near St. Andrew's Church, in the area at the southern end of the Wallmarkt - a long, narrow square used for the wool market near one of the city gates. At about twenty-one meters high, it was the tallest half-timbered building in the city. During the 17th century, the old building was abandoned with the construction of the new weighbridge. In 1854, it was restored by ducal architect Friedrich Maria Krahe, who made some significant changes to the facades [fig. 03].

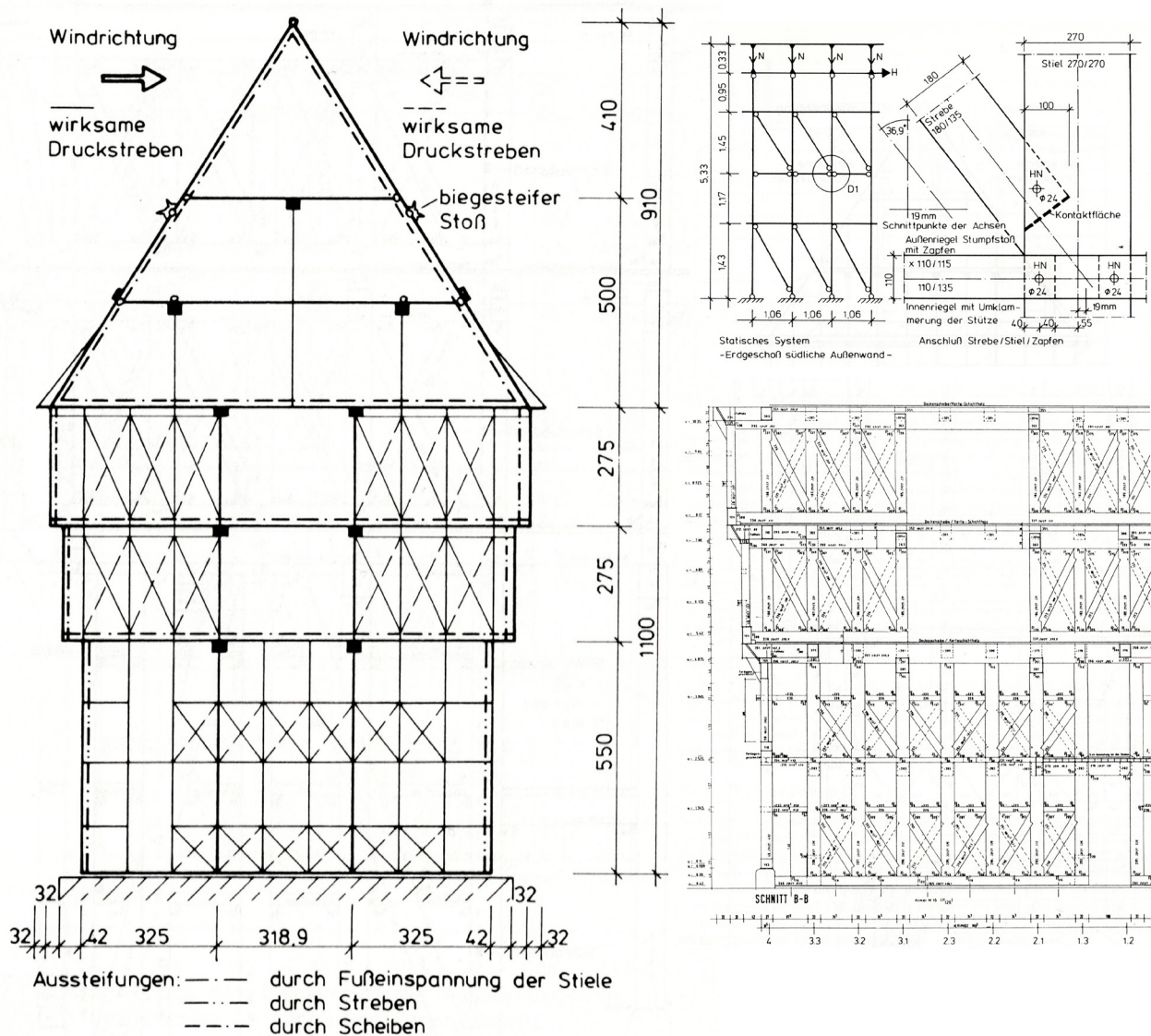
By the end of the 19th century, the Braunschweig population grew considerably, and the living conditions around the Wallmarkt deteriorated. Thus, at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, reclamation and urban redevelopment works started in the area. They were then further fostered by the National Socialist Party's seizure of power. Herman Flesche, as a city official, was in charge of the project to redevelop the area west of the Wallmarkt. Works were completed in 1939. As part of these interventions, the Alte Waage building was restored, removing some of the changes made by Krahe, and designated as the Heimat der Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth House).

The Alte Waage and all the buildings of the Wollmarkt were destroyed by the devastating Allied bombardment on October 15, 1944. In November 1946, the Braunschweig Chamber of Industry and Commerce announced a competition for their reconstruction, which architect Friedrich Wilhelm Kraemer won. He planned to construct new modern buildings, rejecting any reconstruction hypothesis, in open contrast to the population's will, which, on the contrary, wanted the square to be reconfigured according to its historical appearance. Kraemer's project represented a complete break with traditional architecture. Even less appreciated by the population, he envisioned a level car park instead of the Alte Waage.

Due to the lack of financial resources, unavailability of construction materials, and several administrative delays, work did not begin until 1953. The need to build houses

(last accessed October 2023); Karsten Kablitz, "Die archäologischen Ausgrabungen auf dem Gelände der Alte Waage in der Braunschweiger Neustadt," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke. Die Alte Waage in der Braunschweiger Neustadt*, ed. Stadtarchiv Braunschweiger (Braunschweiger: Stadtarchiv Braunschweiger, 1993), 9-50.

Fig. 3
Braunschweig. The Alte Waage in 1861, left. The Alte Waage in 1934-35, right, after restorations by F.M. Krahe. (Justus Herrenberger, "Das Stadtbaukunstwerk Alte Waage," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke. Die Alte Waage in der Braunschweiger Neustadt*, Stadtarchiv Braunschweiger edited. Braunschweiger: Stadtarchiv Braunschweiger, 1993: 109-122, 120-121)



for the evacuees resulted in implementing the project proposed by architect Kraemer despite the population's opposition. The remains of the old buildings were demolished: only a few architectural elements that survived the fire were set as spolia on the facades of the new architecture, and the site area of the Alte Waage became a car park.

After overcoming the economic problems of the postwar period during the 1970s and 1980s, the issue of rebuilding the Alte Waage was repeatedly addressed by municipal authorities at the request of city committees⁴⁹. These demands became increasingly pressing, so much so that in 1990, forty-five years after the end of the conflict, the City Council decreed its reconstruction.

The intervention followed meticulous comparative-historical research on the half-timbered houses of Lower Saxony and extensive analysis of existing graphic and

49 Justus Herrenberger, "Das Stadtbaukunstwerk Alte Waage," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 109-122; Klaus j. Beckmann, "Städtebaulicher Realisierungswettbewerb Wollmarkt/Alte Waage," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 137-166; Wolfgang Wiechers, "Städterneuerung und Städtebauforderung. Die Städtebauliche Sanierung des Bereiches Wollmarkt / Alte Waage als Baustein zur Erneuerung der Braunschweiger Innenstadt," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 167-190; Andras Zunft, "Wollmarkt/Alte Waage. Städtebauliche Entwicklung und Diskussion nach 1945," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 191-220.

Fig. 4 Braunschweig. The Alte Waage. Construction details of the wooden structure. (Dröge Georg, Dröge Thomas, "Die Alte Waage. Wiederaufbau einer ingeniosen historischen Holzkonstruktion," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke. Die Alte Waage in der Braunschweiger Neustadt*, Stadarchiv Braunschweiger edited. Braunschweiger: Stadarchiv Braunschweiger, 1993: 67-108, 75,77,93).



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iconographic material. Some elements that survived the fire and had been preserved were put back in place within the new structure and rebuilt according to the original criteria and specific structural analyses [fig. 4]⁵⁰. The work was completed in 1994 [fig. 5].

The events surrounding the Marktplatz and Knochenhaueramtshaus in Hildesheim do not strongly differ from the ones just recounted. About thirty kilometers from the more important city of Hanover, Hildesheim was founded in the 9th century on the banks of the Innerste River, and its history was for centuries linked to that of the bishopric, founded by Ludwig the Pious (815). It obtained city rights in 1249, soon joined the Hanseatic League, and fell under the domain of the Dukes of Brunswick in 1523. Due to its location along several important land and river communication routes, it was a thriving commercial center.

At the beginning of the war, the city's historic center consisted of about 1,500 half-timbered houses built between the 16th and 18th centuries, decorated with polychrome painted reliefs. Among them, the most representative was the Knochenhaueramtshaus (Butchers' Guild House), built in 1529 opposite the town hall in the market square by the wealthy Butchers' Guild.⁵¹ Gothic in its architectural setting, with its slender pitched

50 Georg Dröge, Thomas Dröge, "Die Alte Waage. Wiederaufbau einer ingeniosen historischen Holzkonstruktion," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 67-108; Justus Herrenberger, "Der Wiederaufbau der Alten Waage 1990-1994," in *Braunschweiger Werkstücke*, 123-135.

51 Heinz-Günter Borck, "Marktplatz und Stadtgeschichte am Beispiel der Stadt Hildesheim," in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim: Dokumentation des Wiederaufbaus* (Hildesheim: Bernward, 1989), 9-22; Walter Achilles, "Der

Fig. 5
Braunschweig. The Alte Waage
today.

Fig. 6
Hildesheim. The
Knochenhaueramtshaus at
the beginning of the twentieth
century.

roof, the Knochenhaueramtshaus had a facade richly decorated with Renaissance motifs embedded in the corbels that supported the cantilevered planes of the facade, whose top overhang of as much as 2.40 m above the base. After the suppression of the Butchers' guild by the Napoleonic regime (1809), the building was purchased by the city government in 1853. On August 1, 1884, a raging fire destroyed its top four floors, which were faithfully rebuilt within two years [fig. 6].

In 1945, the city of Hildesheim was repeatedly bombed. The incendiary devices used at the March 22, 1945 air raid destroyed much of the historic center and, in particular, the area around the market square, where the most representative buildings were located.

After the end of the war, most religious buildings were rebuilt in their original forms. Among them were St. Mary's Cathedral⁵² and St. Michael's Church⁵³. For economic reasons and the pressing need to provide housing for the homeless, residential buildings were constructed using contemporary techniques and forms. Regarding the Marketplatz area, only the Town Hall and the Tempelhaus were restored, the former in a simplified form. At first, between 1946 and 1949, a large part of the citizenry wanted the reconstruction of the Knochenhaueramtshaus. Lack of funds prompted this to be discarded; instead, it was decided to widen the square northward. Therefore, several modern buildings were constructed in place of the destroyed ones, while the area occupied by the Knochenhaueramtshaus and the adjacent Bäckeramtshaus was left vacant; it was not until 1960 that a hotel was built, designed by architect Dieter Oesterlen⁵⁴ and years of intense city controversy followed because this decision was made against the will of the majority of the population [fig. 7].

In 1970, the association Gesellschaft für den Wiederaufbau des Knochenhauer-Amtshauses e.V was founded to reconstruct the building of the Butchers' Guild House and, more generally, promote the creation of traditional-style architecture.

During the '70s, the issue of reconstructing the Knochenhaueramtshaus was repeatedly broached by municipal authorities, even going so far as to consider rebuilding it in different locations than the original one⁵⁵. The situation changed in the early 1980s when Hildesheim's Sparkasse decided to demolish its headquarters, which had been built on the lots of three of the old half-timbered houses overlooking Marketplatz's south side after the war. Among the various design solutions devised, the city authorities approved the one involving the reconstruction (with floor plan modifications) of the three pre-war buildings. Therefore, nearly forty years after the end of the war, a complex urban program was initiated, including the reconstruction of all the old buildings facing

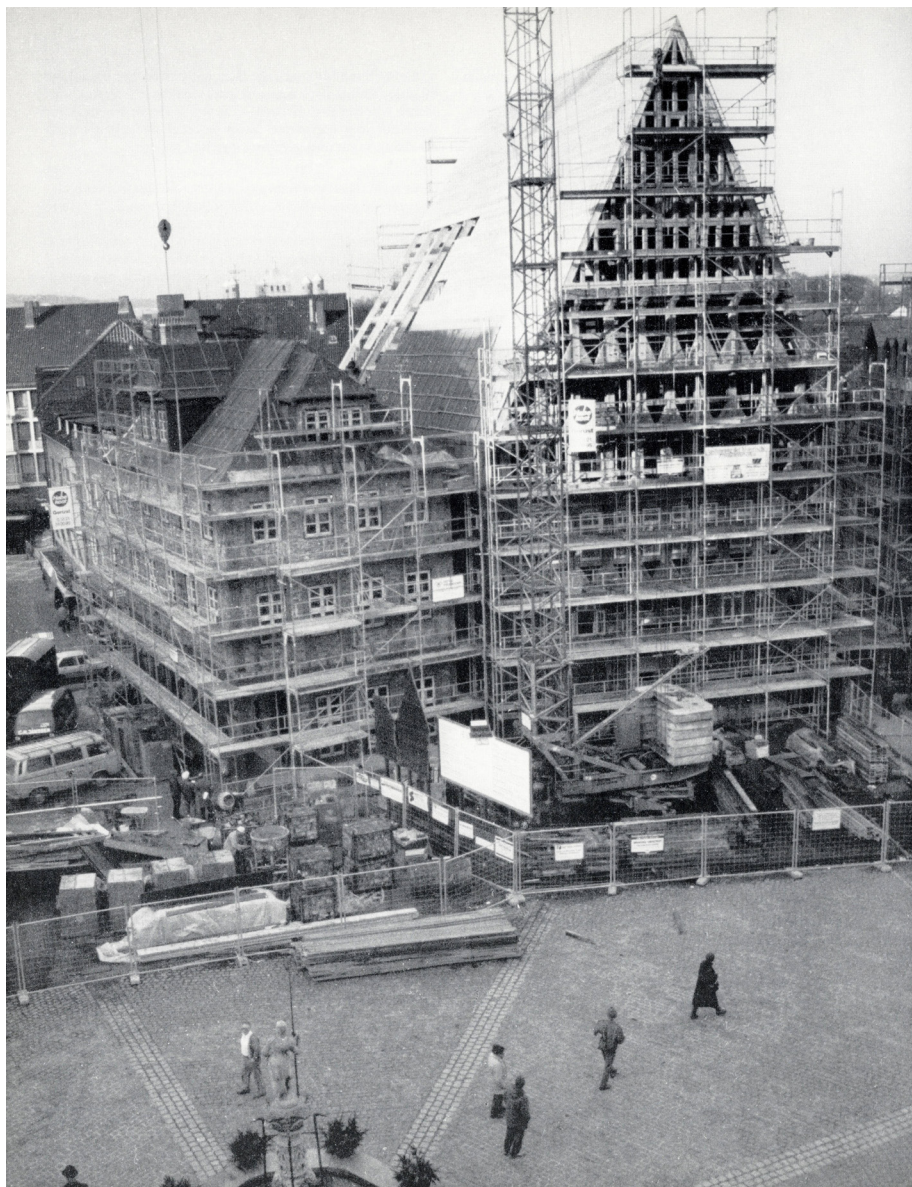
historische Marktplatz – Gestalt und Bebauung," in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 23-58; Wolfgang Reimann, "Die städtebauliche Planung für den Marktplatz in Hildesheim", in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 59-80.

52 Hildesheim Cathedral was built in the ninth century. Damaged during the Second World War, it was rebuilt in simplified forms. Since 1985, together with the abbey church of St. Michael, it has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

53 The abbey church of St. Michael, built at the beginning of the year 1000, was rebuilt according to its original form after the Second World War, eliminating the later additions and rebuilding the west tower that had been demolished after 1650.

54 Anne Schmedding, Dieter Oesterlen (1911–1994). *Tradition und zeitgemäßer Raum. Forschungen zur Nachkriegsmoderne* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2011).

55 Wilhelm Buerstedde, "Die kommunalpolitische Auseinandersetzung um den Wiederaufbau des Marktplatzes," in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 81-90.

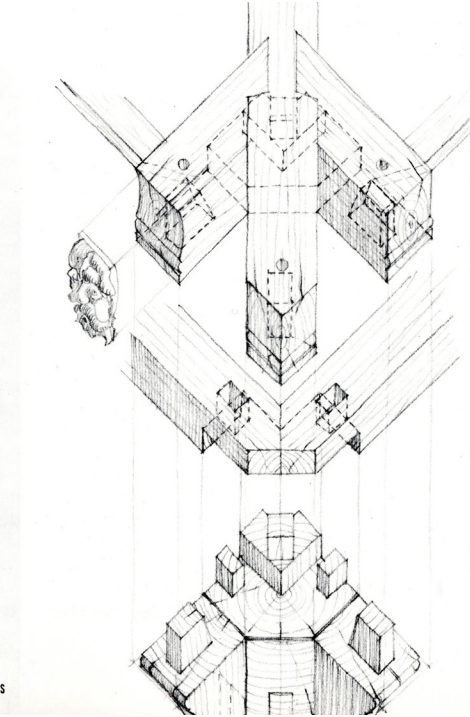
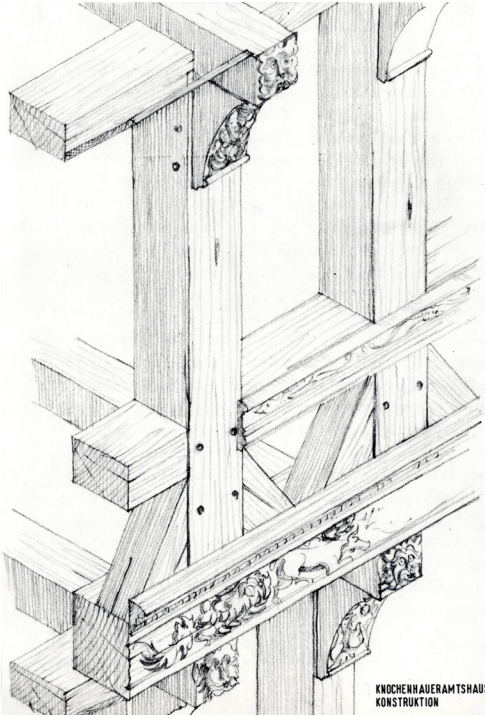


onto Marketplatz over the following decade. In particular, in 1986, the city authorities decreed to rebuild the Bäckeramtshaus and Knochenhaueramtshaus. The Rose Hotel, which had been in disuse for a few years, was demolished. The foundation structures and cellars of the Knochenhaueramtshaus were found below it. Thus, reconstruction works began and were completed in November 1989 [fig. 8-9-10], just days after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The complex task of reconstructing the entire urban environment of the square and its most representative historic buildings was carried out with the financial support of banks, patrons, and public and private foundations, but above all, thanks to the determination of the citizens of Hildesheim, who participated in various capacities in the reconstruction, donating money and making available the iconographic material in their possession⁵⁶. A restaurant is now located on the ground floor of the Knochenhaueramtshaus, and on the upper floors is the city's civic museum (Stadtmuseum). Since the 1990s, the new

56 Heinz Geyer, "Die Rekonstruktion des Knochenhauer-Amtshauses und des Bäckeramtshauses," in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 91-100; Dietrich Klose, "Arbeitsprozesse zum Wiederaufbau des Knochenhauer-Amtshauses und des Bäckeramtshauses," in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 101-132.

Fig. 7
Hildesheim. Hotel Rose by Dieter Oesterlen. Demolished (https://www.baunetz.de/meldungen/Meldungen-Dokumentation_von_Radio_Bremen_im_NDR_7261968.html).



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Marktplatz⁵⁷ has been the venue for all the most important events and happenings in the city, and even the memory of the buildings built after the war has been lost. In this regard, it is singular to point out that a photo calendar of 2024 dedicated to the city of Hildesheim is on sale (also online) with photos of buildings from the years built after the war: the month of June is dedicated to the Rose Hotel.⁵⁸

Conclusions

The theoretical issues and technical problems faced at the end of World War II in restoring German cities destroyed by bombs are as relevant as ever and can stimulate useful critical-methodological reflections.

Indeed, the effects produced by the destruction of the architectural heritage due to wartime events or natural disasters challenge the shared principles of contemporary conservation and restoration culture. Consequently, this prompts critical reflection about important theoretical issues, such as “where it was, as it was” reconstruction.

In the years just after the end of World War II, realizing the German people’s responsibility for what had happened induced dismay and prompted many architects and preservationists to wonder what role ruins should play in cities’ reconstruction plans. In the early 1950s, socio-political conditions changed: with the emergence of two states, the priority became physically rebuilding the two countries. A massive reorganization and rebuilding effort began. City by city, it took the form of very diverse operational choices, both in terms of restoration of historic buildings and urban and land use planning.

It was certainly an extraordinary experience, not devoid of mistakes and compromises, with different outcomes city by city due to manifold factors, and prolonged over time in some urban contexts, as proven by the cases examined.

While the events of the Frauenkirke and Berlin Schloss should also be framed and examined within the reunification process, the reconstructions of the Alte Waage in Braunschweig and the Knochenhaueramtshaus in Hildesheim highlight a problematic issue that was experienced by many small and medium-sized cities in Germany. In the major urban centers, most significant monuments were almost always rebuilt, sometimes integrally, or differentiating the rebuilt parts by removing the decorative apparatus, or occasionally juxtaposing ancient and new. Still, they were rebuilt. This has not always been the case in smaller urban settings, often for economic reasons. In Braunschweig and Hildesheim, the churches and the few stone buildings were reconstructed; however, much of the historic building fabric consisting of half-timbered houses was not rebuilt. The need to build housing for the homeless prompted local authorities to favor

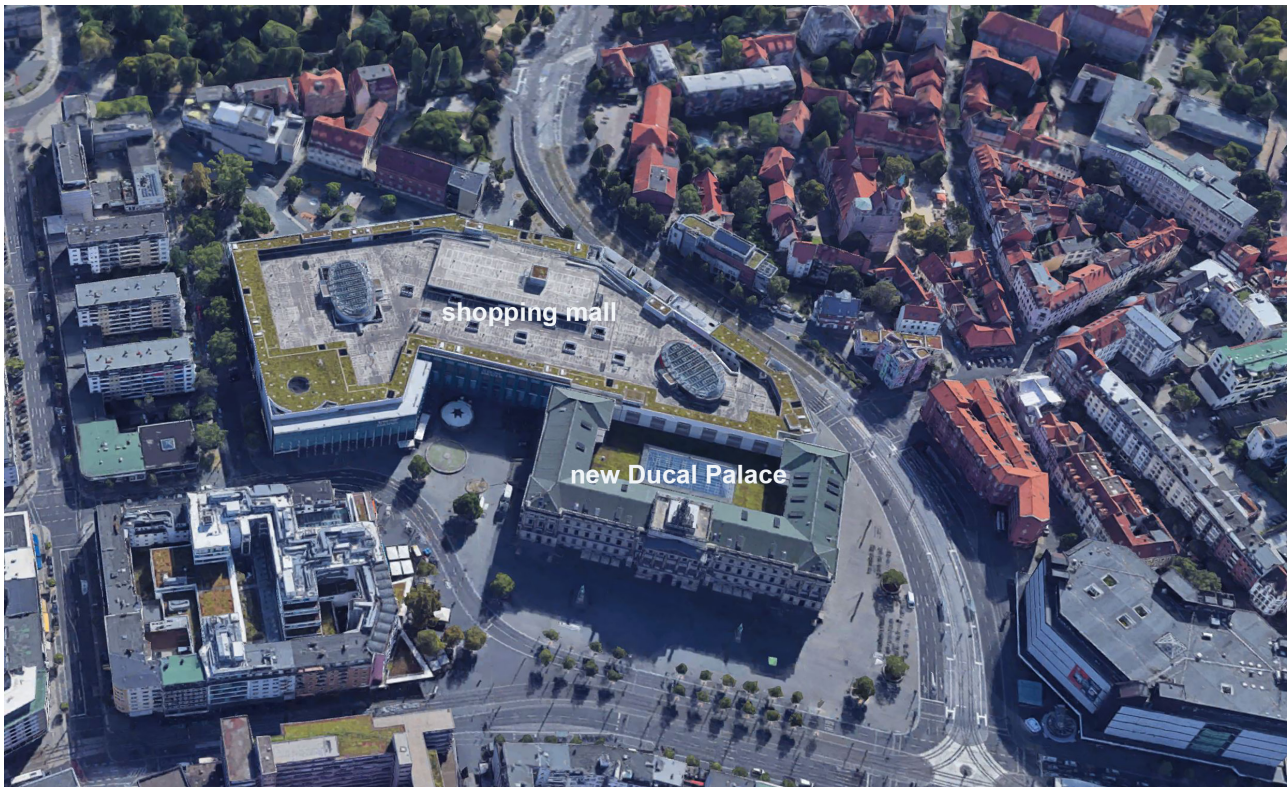
57 Dietrich Klose, “Die Rekonstruktion der Südseite des Marktplatzes,” in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 133-150; Ernst Sieverts, “Die Rekonstruktion der Nordseite des Marktplatzes- Das Forte Hotel,” in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 151-156; Michael Knobbe, “Hans Siegfried Laessing, Der Umbau der Gebäude Markt 2 und Markt 6,” in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim*, 157-159.

58 Hildesheim Damals Calvendo. <https://www.calvendo.de/galerie/hildesheim-damals/> (last accessed November 2023).

Fig. 8
Hildesheim. The Knochenhaueramtshaus during reconstruction (*Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim: Dokumentation des Wiederaufbaus*, Hildesheim: Bernward, 1989, 6).

Fig. 9
Hildesheim. The Knochenhaueramtshaus. Dettagli costruttivi (Dietrich Klose, *Arbeitsprozesse zum Wiederaufbau des Knochenhauer-Amtshauses und des Bäckeramtshauses*, in *Der Marktplatz zu Hildesheim: Dokumentation des Wiederaufbaus*, Hildesheim: Bernward, 1989, 101-132, 105).

Fig. 10
Hildesheim. The Knochenhaueramtshaus today.



the construction of modern concrete buildings even in the historic urban fabric, often against the wishes of the citizens themselves, who would, conversely, have preferred to rebuild what had burned down just a few months earlier. The choices of earmarking the Alte Waage site for a car park in Braunschweig, altering the Marketplatz, and building a modern hotel in place of the Knochenhaueramtshaus in Hildesheim were dictated by contingencies that were never fully accepted by the citizenry and, therefore, always opposed. At the end of the last century, new economic conditions allowed the respective administrations to go back on decisions made after the war and rebuild what had long since ceased to exist as it was. Judging from how the population has received these decisions and the urban role that the reconstructed buildings have assumed, especially in Hildesheim⁵⁹, this was the 'right choice'. This leads to the conclusion that - as Nedinger noted - in particular circumstances, the 'memory' of a building is more important even than its materiality, and, therefore, one can legitimately imagine 'reconstructing' an ancient building destroyed by an extraordinary event. Yet, only in specific cases and under specific conditions, which hopefully will not be repeated, such as wars and natural disasters. It is a susceptible issue which can hardly be generalized. It will be necessary to evaluate the forces into play case by case and individuate solutions to fulfill the 'right to memory' of involved communities, after acknowledging the destructive event and the impossibility to rewrite history. Of course, it is easy to get carried away: in Braunschweig, in addition to the Alte Waage, the 18th-century Ducal

59 The same could be said for the buildings on the east side of the town hall square (Römerberg) in Frankfurt, burned down as a result of the bombings of March 1944, were rebuilt in their pre-war consistency between 1981 and 1983, replacing two reinforced concrete buildings built at the end of the war. Beseler, Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale deutscher Architektur*, vol. II, 811-813. *Dom-Römerberg-Bereich: Wettbewerb 1980*, ed Magistrat der Stadt Frankfurt am Main (Braunschweig, Wiesbaden: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1980); *Die Immer neue Altstadt. Bauen zwischen Dom und Romer seit 1900*, ed. Sturm Philipp Schmal Peter Cachola (Berlin: Jovis, 2018); Matthias Alexander, *Die Neue Altstadt*, vol. I *Die Entstehung*, vol. II, *Das Quartier* (Frankfurt: Societäts, 2018).

Fig. 11. Braunschweig. The new Ducal Palace. Da Googlemap2023.

Palace, which was also damaged and demolished after the war, was rebuilt in 2005 as part of a questionable project that also included the construction of a shopping mall that runs adjacent to the Palace and partly envelops it [fig. 11].

In general, the various approaches that have characterized the variety of choices performed in Germany in the post-war period (illustrated in the mentioned essays by Beseler, Gutschow, and Falser, and still scarcely known in Italy) can represent a solicitation to individuate alternative solutions from the “where it was, how it was” restoration. This does not alter the awareness that the substitution of destroyed buildings with contemporary ones – with entirely different form, color, and spatiality – has managed to provide convincing responses, psychologically coherent with the involved populations’ needs⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Analogous considerations could also be made for several post-earthquake reconstruction interventions performed in Italy, starting with the Irpinian earthquake.

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