Summary

For God's sake, not this kind of a capital
Heinrich Klotz in conversation with Nikolaus
Kuhnert and Angelika Schnell
p.23

ARCH⁺: *A return to the "normal and conventional city" is being called for in current projects in Berlin, at the same time corresponding with a rediscovery of a specific "Berlin architecture" that historically stands out due to its purism, simplicity and clarity. What do you think about this development?*

Klotz: There are two reasons why the demand for a "simple" architecture doesn't make much sense. First of all, normality and convention can be taken for granted. Everybody realizes their necessity and doesn't have to call for them. Secondly, this kind of architecture is indeed elitist. Take, for example, Kollhoff's blueprint for the Potsdamer Platz area: It requires an intellectual perception, the recognition that this egalitarianism could be regarded as a value in itself. A totally uniform block design with building crown and classical façade shapes each building, not allowing for individual differences. This kind of architecture thus offends the history that it embraces, it offends its diversity. This diversity definitely gets lost. I'm saying this regardless of any political implications or ideologies. It is a question of form. I ask myself what it would be like to move around in Kollhoff's city. I might not be able to perceive any differentiation, orientation will be difficult, I might feel thrown into a city that is even more uniform than functionalism has ever managed to be.

The thesis of urbanity might be a trap. One doesn't have to deal with the public space once you reconstructed the city according to Aldo Rossi's theories or der Krier's blueprints. This results in a schematic apparatus without any relation to what happens in the city and in the buildings and how people live today.

This "new simplicity" has a couple of ramifications. First of all, there is a return to functionalism, a return to the square, the container, the utilitarian architecture of construction-related economical functionalism. It is not the old container, however, but a different one, a container covered with a classical façade order and alleged diversification tendencies, since you do not use one form for a whole block but split it up (according to the unit construction system). But that does not change any part of the game. This "new simplicity" is a new rigour which might even imply more echoes of fascist architecture than has ever been the case before. For me, this is very disquieting.

We are talking about the history of architecture's power to define. With his exhibition trilogy "Modern Architecture in Germany 1900 -1950" at the DAM, Lampugnani wants to rewrite history. He wants to destroy the relation between avantgarde and modernism by discovering "modern" elements even in the conservative modernism and in the Nazi aesthetic, which he traces down to the modernization of the German society. Step by step, the rehabilitation of conservative modernism leads to a de-tabooing of Nazi architecture, i.e. Speer.

I am not sure whether they would risk to maintain that Speer is their father and not Ungers. I noticed that quite a few of these "New Berlin" protagonists are students of Ungers. One might easily be tempted to reproach Ungers for having inspired them with his strict forms. I think that this would be a mistake. Ungers has always proven a good sense of delicate proportions that are close to human needs and not at all stolid. When I look at Kollhoff's Potsdamer Platz or at his interior perspective for the extension of the Neues Museum, I must say, that this is a language that I would never want to speak. This language includes a power stance that we have not encountered any more since 1945 and that we have clearly rejected. The issues inherent in the vocabulary being used in Berlin, and this is not simply a suspicion - this approach towards classicism which has developed into fascist architecture is not unintentional.

When I interpret this intention only in terms of architecture, it means: I! I! I! am claiming power, although I don't like to read political qualities into architecture and jump to conclusions. Transparency does not always stand for democracy, and heavy rock does not always stand for fascism. But these blueprints do present a type of architecture that forces me to ask: In a city like this, what kind of political attitude am I supposed to have? This is one aspect of the "new simplicity". The second aspect has to do with the pleasure of giving up complexity. Talking about simplicity of this kind means affirming in a very clear way: First of all, there is a block, the eternal block and once again the block, covered with simple façades that might only carry pseudo pilasters and nothing else. This is the "new simplicity". Complexity, diversity - devices used to constitute humanity throughout the history of architecture - are rendered invalid. I am surprised about the quick willingness to give up all other qualities related to building and architecture for this "new simplicity".

The third aspect is: This all leads away from the tradition of modernism and does not affirm it. It might look as if we had a functionalism, at least if we look at it in terms of container architecture. It might look as if one could continue modernism with the means of simplification, i.e. Berlin classicism. As if it was possible to take regionalism and place into modern architecture by simplifying the local qualities in a modernist way. This, however, is a reversion of modernism and the postmodern era. We do have the chance for a second modernism today. Actually, the high renaissance of modernism is still to come. Modernism as a new language has in no way been talked out. Habermas talked about the continuation of the project of modernism. The new simplicity is a counter-quality in relation to the second modernism, picking up what some people were starting to think about at the beginning of this century. The new simplicity diverts into a new classicism or moralism, since simplicity does have moral undertones: If I am simple, I am honest and true. All these connotations move into a moralizing direction, thereby dismissing any other quality. This term is dogmatic, because it doesn't tolerate anything else next to itself. It suggests, that simplicity in the moral sense is the strong value in architecture.

If you look at this tendency towards rigour from a different angle, namely, the qualities being rejected, you will notice, that deconstruction is being attacked. They reproach deconstruction for repeating and continuing the alleged societal trend towards chaos. They also attack the so called media architecture, ranging from Nouvel to computer installations, and, thirdly, hightech, the presentation of technology as a device of expression.

Deconstruction is important because it is an attempt to render possible an expressive architecture, an architecture of fiction, with the means of an unhistoric language. It is important, because with this language you can show that we do not live in a perfected world, and that the completeness of a building is not self-evident, suggesting a natural unity, but that the difficult process of coming together is being shown and depicted. That doesn't have anything to do with chaos. The alleged chaos used to defame deconstruction does serve as a legitimation for the rigorous block. It is easy to suspect dogmatism, because so much is being dismissed, regarding the wealth of expressive devices, in the name of the Only.

Meanwhile, glass architecture is being defamed per se. Everything constructed in glass and steel produces aggression. Glass is a synonym for the unsolid or, as Kollhoff lately said in his lectures at the ETH, for "shaky" houses (in contrast to "solid" ones made of rocks or bricks).

That has something to do, of course, with the history of architecture in the old Federal Republic of Germany, that had an ideology of its own, an ideology of lightness, of transparency, of democracy, of open-mindedness. Those were all epithets which had been assigned to the materials and the form in order to prove that we wanted to get rid of the representative Third-Reich type of building. "Swinging Germany", the keyword for the pavilion in Montreal, or the "cheerful games" in Munich, those were the highest objectives people wanted to achieve. That was o.k. It was not o.k. that people became dogmatic about it and wanted to forbid everything else. You can't do that in the name of democracy. This wonderful school

building in Lorch or Günther Behnisch's Hysolar-Institut are buildings that I like very much and that affirm the big impulse of the post-war era: to get rid of the heaviness and let democracy present itself in architectural terms. It is depressing, however, to hear that same man say that Stirling was fascist, because architecture has never managed to be identical with the purpose regarding the ideological content. The new Bundestag has been designed along standards of democratic transparency. At the same time, though, this nice ideal of the inner circle, summarizing parliamentary democracy, is a romantic idea. Politics do not mean harmony and renunciation of opposition. One cannot make a statement with that singular type of building having only this kind of content. The "Swinging Germany" equation thus works only in parts. The Staatsgalerie, however, clearly embodies a pluralism content-wise, and not just an explicitness. Architecture is rarely explicit in its forms. This also applies to the Berlin block, of course, that cannot be said to be fascist. But the Haus der Deutschen Kunst is the next relative of the entrance building's interior for Kollhoff's Museumsinsel.

If we get your points right, you are still pleading for postmodernism. In his recent speech at the AA in London, Charles Jencks has talked about "architecture and complexity", trying to redefine postmodernism by using the term complexity. He has tried to free postmodernism from its historic-decorative cul-de-sac by interrelating the debate about architecture with developments in the natural sciences. Are there any correlations between his approach and your work at the ZKM? You have been working a lot with new media ...

I have never liked to use the term "postmodernism". I have always preferred to talk about a revision of modernism. It has always been my view, that there are elements inherent going beyond historism. Historism has been the standard accusation concerning postmodernism. Eisenman, Koolhaas and Gehry are inspiring forces in architecture, because they render possible fiction and the expressive content without using the vocabulary of historism. In other words: The self-legitimation Habermas used to talk about is being maintained without giving up fiction. Modernism emphasized the demand to identify art and life, to break down the barriers between both, so that it becomes possible to say that art becomes life, and life becomes art. Functionalism was a deliberate reduction of form to its usefulness in life.

I have always regarded it as a challenge to maintain that this aspect of modernism has failed, since life doesn't tolerate art at all costs, and art is not suited to be identical with life, since art is different from life. Art is fiction, poetry. This is the main feature of postmodernism in painting as well as in architecture. It kind of says: despite of everything... Postmodernism says: We redefine fiction. We redefine the work of art. We reestablish the difference in relation to life. But Gehry and Kohlhaas have never relapsed

into the avantgarde phase of the classical modern age. They have maintained this difference in relation to life by using a language that renders possible a fiction without historism. They are entering a phase of the second modernism. But we didn't need historism to establish fiction. Those were linguistic intensities, transitory phases which finally lead back to the self-legitimation of deconstruction. The objective was not to become nostalgically stunted but to reestablish the work of art as being different from life.

Kollhoff also tries to establish architecture as art. In a conversation with Peter Neitzke, published in "Centrum-Jahrbuch" (1993), he maintains that it is possible to free Nazi architecture from its exploitation and complicity. If one understands Nazi architecture as art, if one looks at the inherent values of the architectural discourse, one might be able to work with the conservative elements.

What matters in the end is the credibility of the artwork. What story does it tell, and what is the message? When all it has to say is: The container may once again be designed with pilasters and façades of the 1930s, it is questionable whether this is a useful and humanistic story. If the vocabulary contains only re-tectonization, heaviness, gravity, emotionalism, after Paxton's crystal palace, after the Olympic tent, then something is being covered up, even more so, when it is clear, that this is the old functionalism in classical disguise. This container is being legitimized by an ideology of the urban. The block is being split up among a couple of architects, but all of them are basically doing the same stuff. And what does the public get out of it? The eternal celebration of the rediscovery of the parameter building complex which in its extreme form produces an urban monotony that we did want to get rid of. What we have is a container architecture, blocks in a row with façades. They have got some impressive innercity property at their disposal and boast with delusions of capital-city-grandeur. We are great indeed!

Berlin is in a difficult and unstable economic and political situation. Isn't that a good explanation for this yearning for a myth of gravity?

The yearning itself might be understandable, but not the alliance of power. We are talking about the formation of an architectural movement. It is the gesture of being forearmed, of vigorous action, of coping with this city. There are no open ends. Decisions are being made, things are being fulfilled, set up, hard and heavy, block after block. We almost encounter a type of strong language.

Who is responsible for that? What kinds of architects are these people? What kinds of politicians are these people who get together and offer us this Berlin of the future that actually is a Berlin of the past? I don't belong

to those who attack historism. I have always seen historism as a transitory supporting device. But it cannot be the language of the future. I don't like to come to Berlin so much anymore, because there is a phalanx of self-opinionatedness and disrespect, that one gets tangled up with, for example between both senators for construction and housing affairs. It is my impression that there is also a certain amount of hypocrisy because people maintain that everything is transparent and democratic, for example in the case of the Stadtforum, a totally hypocritical event where people lead an ineffective pseudo-discourse with masses of printed paper. And they are building these blocks. And Mr. Stimmann, the city's building director, told me quite frankly, that he never really studied architecture, that he doesn't understand much about architecture and that when he got in touch with the generation of 1968 they advised him to put away the pencil. He confessed that. And people like him tell me what architecture has to look like today. As a member of the jury in the contest for the Potsdamer Platz I was shocked. Kollhoff, an architect I like and who has, in the early years of his career, been responsible for many convincing buildings in the city, buildings one might describe as belonging to a second modernism, a person like him is now turning to tectonics. Architecture is supposed to carry and weigh, gravity and "character" must be expressed. In the last analysis that means, power must become visible. Weighing has become lifting. The term "lightness" which might perhaps be worn out is being completely contradicted here. These are reactions that almost make you cry, because they embody so much helplessness. They try to create something expressive and meaningful, but the words get stuck in your throat. You don't really want to criticize this anymore, because it is so naïve in the end. But if the whole city looks like this, if this is the new era, I have less and less reason to travel to Berlin and more and more reason to say: for God's sake, not this kind of a capital!

Using the icons of the 1930s, Kollhoff definitely presents the most suggestive images of a "stony" Berlin...

Kollhoff is the most interesting person, because he is a much better architect. In contrast to many of his colleagues, he has always possessed a sense of urbanity. Those big housing blocks of the IBA era were strict, but they did have a certain openness. He did not philosophize with the hammer, they had a context and movement, they were not rigid. But the second level blueprint for Potsdamer Platz is a drastic change towards aggression. It made me think he wanted to create a caricature. When I realized that he was serious about it, the word "fascistic" came out of my mouth - for the first time, just to show you how disappointed I was. This all happened against the background of the unfortunate liaison between a building director who cannot be an architect and the former IBA director

Kleihues who thinks he is a second Hauss-mann. His "critical reconstruction" was an event in the context of postmodernism. The regaining of the block was not intended on the grounds of historism alone, but initially had programmatic reasons, to allow for a broader range of use, especially in the city. Even when the IBA was taking place some people complained about the formalism, the rigid following of height-of-eaves and parameter norms etc. But in spite of all this, architectural variety and modern expressive devices were still possible at that time. It is definitely fatal for Berlin though, that this actually worn-out concept of "critical reconstruction", together with the new political situation and the economic pressure, has helped to lift Kleihues into such a position of power. What you see emerging in the Friedrichstadt area is so monotonous - in terms of urban development, functionalism and architecture - that a democratic society will find it hard to identify with it. The insisting additional remark that individual variety can emerge in architectural expression is hypocritical, since we are dealing here with cheap façade variations only, which is a disrespect of any general public interest.

One cannot say that nothing new emerges in the Friedrichstadt area. The quality of the blocks that are being constructed there is of such an extreme condension that the Friedrichstadt area has never witnessed before. Up to four basement floors and eight floors above ground make up a high-rise city that is following height-of-eaves norms by certain manipulations. The small-part parcel structure is being given up for economic reasons. It is especially hypocritical that this is being legitimized for the public by referring to history. The brochures present the whole spectrum of architectural variety, ranging from the two-story baroque building style to the five-story building style of the 19th century. But we are not dealing with "reconstruction" here, neither a critical one nor any other kind. It goes beyond history because while following the given norm, you spare yourself any kind of analysis, even a historical one. This also explains the strong façade orientation, because it is the façade that exemplifies the alleged connection with the historical models.

As far as Kleihues is concerned: You cannot reproach him for wanting power. His specific kind of megalomania, the way he approached the senator during the IBA, like a Prussian king, was quite brave at the time. Unfortunately, people might have ignored the delusive aspect of it. This becomes clear only today. In an interview with Oechslin in "Archithese" Kleihues attacks the technique of the so called flexible framework being used by Rogers and Kohlhaas, among others, to take into consideration developments that cannot be foreseen today in the planning phase, to think in time categories and not in spatial fixations. For Kleihues, this is an attitude that does not suit Berlin and therefore

has to be dismissed. He thinks, this has to do with English empiricism, while Berlin is the city of idealism and enlightenment. The gesture means: You should know who exactly you are getting involved.

The "infamous albion": empiricism as strictly utilitarian thinking, idealism as the big outline. This is hypocritical. If you also say, I am the prophet of a romantic rationalism, this is hypocritical as well. It is simply ridiculous to say today, I am advocating German idealism, and German idealism is embodied in these buildings, as a contrast to English empiricism. If this is what he wants, he has returned to Prussian values, to egotistical reasons of state, to a freaked-out nationalism. This method isn't new: You equip yourself with the noble terms of the great icons of German philosophy in order to say, I am doing the right thing. By the way, England is the country of enlightenment. This theoretical support for his building style is supposed to make the German nation feel innovative. You rid yourself of all Western contexts and traditions in order to leave the old Federal Republic behind. Then we are sailing off into a different country that attempts to say, after a couple of years of Western empiricism we finally belong to ourselves only. Hans Ulrich Wehler has brilliantly described this in FAZ, articulating an opposite standpoint to Kleihues' theories.

There is a current debate in the FAZ about the new right, going back to an article by Ulrich Raulff, in which he describes the process of re-formation of German conservatism. This process is characterized by the questioning of the liaison between the conservative forces and Western civilization, which resulted in liberalism and which has been accomplished in the old Federal Republic between 1949 and 1989. After the collapse of the socialist countries, the division of the world into East and West has become obsolete. A reunited Germany, located in Central Europe, is trying to redefine the term nation. This is being done especially by historians like Ernst Nolte, but also Rainer Zitelmann and Karlheinz Weißmann. You get the impression that everything that Fritz Stern has called Germany's historic destiny is being reevaluated: the despair of civilization, the special path between East and West, between democracy and state authoritarianism. There are obvious parallels between the debate among right-wing historians and architectural historians with their center being the "stony" coalition in Berlin. The question regarding Western bonds is related to the question of democracy, the openness of society and internationalism. Isn't the architectural debate in Berlin, which has been turned into a German debate by Lampugnani in Der Spiegel, an overture for a redefinition of the German nation between East and West?

Yes. On a superficial level, Berlin architecture is being discussed. But these ideas are being disseminated from the new capital. The question of Western bonds is, of course, more complicated. Those bonds should exist between partners that are equal. In other words: A partnership between Germany and the Western nations has yet to be established. Unfortunately, we are the ones being rejected. Attempts to establish Western bonds have not always been accepted in recent years, resulting in the emergence of Rapallo as a third. One must not mix up nationalism and the attempt to be a partner. At the moment, the question is, does Berlin, with the help of this architectural movement, want to establish itself as the city we have already known, the Berlin of national megalomania? The current attitude of power, that tolerates no relaxation, the biases lacking liberalism, they all ignore an open Berlin. You can call Langhans a liberal in comparison to this architecture. Fahrenkamp, Mies van der Rohe, the Luckhardts and Mendelsohn do represent a different Berlin, a city, that has not been biased towards an architecture of power: for the purpose of "coping" with the city. The objective is to create clarity, at the expense of complexity. But this architecture contradicts all social, cultural and scientific developments. You cannot create a "capital architecture" against all experimental and innovative tendencies that we have got in our culture. The vast potential offered by other areas can be used for architecture, for instance the potential of the new media that open up a world of movement. A building cannot become immaterial, but it can position itself in relation to this question. It is worth an attempt to communicate and inform by using projection and light façades, as we wanted to do it with Rem Koolhaas' ZKM building. This really is the most positive task of architecture: to communicate between social and cultural issues and technical possibilities. In Berlin, people don't use these new possibilities, they don't even realize that they exist. The multiplication of the trivial building block pattern is also a form of abuse of the urban body.

Koolhaas once said that when the Wall existed, when Berlin was an island, the city had an open society. This is being reversed right now: The Wall has fallen, and a closed society is emerging. Not only do you leave the history of the old Federal Republic, but the former GDR is being occupied as well. The reunification process has created insecurities and fears concerning the future. This is why people are looking for a remythologization of a common past. Fritz Neumeyer is talking about all that quite frankly. In this process, you stumble over all kinds of things: the myth of Berlin, Prussian classicism, and, hesitatingly yet, the Third Reich. In the area of painting, German myths have been taken up again already: Think of Lüpertz, Kiefer, Baselitz. Are there any connections between both areas?

Recognizing echoes of the Nazi ideology in these paintings would be a false interpretation. Lüpertz has created a large painting with the dominant colors black, red and gold. You see a schematic breastplate and a steel helmet, both of them being hollow, and a shovel that looks like a machine gun - an extremely dangerous object that stays schematic and hollow. This is no remythologization, it is demythologization. The same can be said about Kiefer. It embodies such a powerful tremendousness that you realize it as its own counterargument. This is not the triumph of the massive. I am surprised about Fritz Neumeyer's remark in his contribution to Berlin architecture, that we are dealing not only with demythologization but also with remythologization. It leaves me speechless to hear somebody say things like that today. What kinds of myths do we want to load onto architecture? The myth of heaviness, of violence? The myth of representation, of ceremony?

There is a yearning for the meaningful, for greatness...

A city of human rights would be meaningful. But a remythologized city? I can only hope, that Neumeyer means something else and not what you would actually have to mean, when you are talking about remythologization. You cannot use these terms arbitrarily. At a later point in time, he won't be able to say: I have been misunderstood. All these people have to take into account that they cannot say they have been misunderstood. These things are quite easy to understand. But people might say, again, we didn't get it right

Translated from German by Tamara Domenrat.

Expanding Europe - shrinking continent
Michael Wegener, Klaus R. Kunzmann, Klaus Spiekermann
p.28

The 1990s are a decade of transition in Europe. The unification of the two German states, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of central and eastern Europe have revived the long-forgotten vision of a Europe without borders.

The Single European Market and the Maastricht Treaty have opened the way for the free exchange of goods and services in western Europe. After the accession of Austria, Sweden and Finland, some 370 million people will live in the European Union. Many countries in central and eastern Europe wish to become associated with the Union and in the long run to become members.

At the same time the continent once again sees the evolution of a new generation of transport and communication systems. A high-speed railway network linking the most

important business centres in a matter of hours is emerging. The Channel Tunnel, the fixed links to Scandinavia and the new alpine crossings will remove the last remaining geographical barriers between countries. A continent-wide network of European roads and motorways facilitates the integration of peripheral regions into the Single European Market. New trans-European telecommunication networks ('information highways') make new dimensions of information exchange feasible.

The European Urban System
The new transport and communication systems are changing the map of the continent. Nation states are growing together into an integrated system of regions connected by more intensive flows of people, goods and services than ever. This transformation in particular affects cities. National urban hierarchies are amalgamating into a unified European urban system. Regional monopolies are collapsing under the assault of international or global competition.

The emerging European urban system is hierarchical.[1] There are only two true world cities in Europe: London and Paris. At the next level there are three large 'European' conurbations, the Randstad in Holland and the Rhine-Ruhr and Rhine-Main regions in Germany. One level below there is the league of 'Euro-metropoles': cities with transnational, European functions. Because of its links to eastern Europe, Berlin is one of them; whether it someday will become a global city cannot be said today.

The dynamism of the European urban system has stimulated the imagination of visionaries. Two of the most influential metaphors for the future evolution of the European urban system are the 'Blue Banana' and the 'Blue Star'; Berlin plays a role only in the latter.

Time-space maps
Modern transport systems reduce the time needed for spatial movements. Measured in temporal units, space is shrinking. There are several methods to visualise the interaction between space and time: isochrone maps, cognitive maps and time-space maps. In time-space maps the elements of a map are represented in two-dimensional space such that the distance between two points is no longer proportional to their physical distance but proportional to the travel time between them.

Time-space maps can be used to show the impact of the high-speed rail system on the space-time system in Europe. As early as 1991 France was contracted by the TGV between Paris and Lyon, whereas Spain and Portugal appear enlarged and Great Britain and Ireland removed to the periphery. In the year 2010 the continent has shrunk by about half its temporal dimension. Southeast England and London have come closer to the continent because of the Channel Tunnel, whereas Scotland and Ireland remain peripheral.

Berlin in Europe
The time-space system of Europe as seen by a railway traveller from Berlin today shows the imbalance between west and east: In highly accessible western Europe travel is relatively fast, whereas east and south-east Europe are zones of slow movement. In about 2020 the continent has returned to its familiar proportions but has lost half its size. Most travel times from Berlin are about halved.

Banana or Grape?
The enlargement of Europe and its simultaneous temporal shrinking are the consistent expression of the increasing competition between countries in Europe. Yet the dark side of unbridled competition is polarisation. In the European context this means the widening of the gap between winners and losers, between north and south, west and east and centre and periphery.

European transport policy has in the past contributed to increasing the locational advantages of central over peripheral regions. The extension of the high-speed rail network occurs predominantly where sufficient demand makes large investment profitable, and that is in the highly urbanised central conurbations.

The polarisation of the European urban system is harmful for winners as well as for losers. Loser cities suffer from unemployment, outmigration, decreasing tax income and growing social problems. But also winner cities pay a high price for their success, in the form of skyrocketing land prices, daily traffic collapse, increasing pollution and urban sprawl at their periphery.

The 'Blue Banana' is the visual expression of spatial concentration in a Europe built on competition. Cities that are outside this corridor or not connected to it have no chance to compete. An alternative spatial image would be the 'Blue Grape', a metaphor for a spatial system built on cooperation rather than competition between regions and cities. Berlin is not part of the Banana, but it is in the Grape.