What is Old is New Again: The Reintegration of Dresden’s Landscape into the Modern German State

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the architecture of Dresden in the era of East/West reunification. Traditional theories of German national development have identified three foci for post-World War II development, the Geopolitics of Nostalgia that seeks to return German national identity to an era prior to World War II, Zero Point thinking that seeks to build a new Germany from the ashes of World War II and critical preservation has sought to preserve some Nazi landscapes in an effort to facilitate discussion on the controversial era. Being an East German city, however, Dresden was isolated from the development of West German identity. This paper examines the ways in which East German (GDR) memory has been dealt with in the landscape. Buildings and themes of the GDR have been disavowed, modified, or removed from the center of the city. The new Dresden is a city that has minimal clues to either its Nazi or East German past. It is being presented as a city with one eye on its proud, pre-Nazi and Soviet, history and one eye on its future potential. This demonstrates the diffusion of West German models of nationalism into the East after unification.

Key Words: Dresden, post-socialist urbanization, German unification, nationalism

INTRODUCTION

The unification of Germany was one of the most dramatic events of the late twentieth century, one that has been fraught with controversy, especially in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). One of the most important processes in the rebuilding of the national identity in the former East Germany has been a rebuilding of the urban built environment. The selection of sites by the German leadership for preservation has been part of the wider project of nationalism that has characterized the country over the past two decades.
One of the most significant restoration projects has been the rebuilding of Dresden, one of the largest East German cities. Dresden was almost completely destroyed during the final days of World War Two in one of the most infamous bombing missions in history. The firebombing decimated the inner city and required a complete rebuilding of the city. The city was rebuilt following a Soviet model of urban design, similar to other eastern European cities rebuilt after World War II. This model of urban development fell into disfavor as a result of the collapse of the GDR and the unification of Germany.

This paper emphasizes the connection between landscape and political development in modern Germany. The process of selecting buildings and monuments to preserve is part of the controversial political project of national development. The role of the GDR in modern Germany has been a difficult issue to resolve. Often, authorities have chosen to simply ignore and overwrite it, replacing GDR architecture and monuments with “historical” German landscapes that hearken back to an earlier period.

In the years since the fall of communism, Dresden has been dramatically reshaped, often employing one of six important approaches to the past in the landscape. Some of these approaches look backwards, utilizing iconic landscapes, important heroes, and historical landscapes of a previous era that preceded National Socialism and the GDR. A fourth approach disavows the past, portraying the present, through modernist architecture, as a break with the past and the opportunity to create a new history. The fifth approach has been to preserve GDR-era buildings that serve to discredit the East German regime as eccentric and not part of the grand narrative of German history. The final approach has been to maintain National Socialist or World War II historical buildings in an attempt to facilitate an open discussion on the events of the Nazi era.

**SPACE AND ITS “PRODUCTION”**

According to Lefebvre (1991, 1), until recently, space had a “strictly geometrical meaning” in most mainstream geographic research. In other words, space was not something that was influenced by cultural or political actions, it was innocent, and isolated from the political process. Outside of the mainstream, some research showed that space was more than geometric and was strongly influenced by societal development. Harvey, in his 1973 classic, *Social Justice and the City*, emphasizes that “spatial forms are there seen not as inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which ‘contain’ social processes” (Harvey 1996, 10). Lefebvre built on Harvey’s work by challenging the innocence of space in the political development of a region, prominently stating “that every society…produces a space, its own space” (1991, 1). Such is view is echoed by Moore and Whelan in their observation that “the cultural landscape is now conceived of as an emblematic site of representation, a locus of both power and resistance, and a key element in the heritage process” (2007, x). Similarly, Daniels and Cosgrove have emphasized that the critical turn in geography has “introduced metaphors and analogies more in keeping with an emphasis on meaning than function” (1993, 57). Space is now widely viewed as an active player in the political development of a region. It influences change and is changed during the process of political development. Smith also built on the role of space in political development by noting that, “landscape is, in part a ‘work’ consisting in itself as the construction of specific individuals and parties in pursuit of specific technical, political and sometimes artistic goals” (1993, 88). Such conclusions lead to an evaluation of landscape that not only focuses on the message of the architect, but places the individual building or monument in a wider discussion of the overarching political, economic, cultural and social development of the nation.
Several authors have emphasized the competitive nature of landscape development and its importance of the development and maintenance of national identity (Johnson 1994; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hagen 2004; Hoelscher 2003; Mitchell 1995; Schein 2006; Schein 1997; Yeoh 1991; Robertson and Hall 2007; Crowley 2007). Most stressed the importance governments place on creating public spaces that promote their identity. Also, the authors argue for the arbitrary nature of national identity, as well as the discourses and individual themes that are selected and displayed. Robertson and Hall emphasize that “attention must be paid to local identity and to the ways in which it is mediated through contested narratives of the past” (2007, 20). This is echoed by Busteed, who argued that “commemoration is a flexible process subject to perpetual revision in response to the need of the times” (2007, 70). In other words, as Lefebvre emphasized, a point is not a simple place on the map. It is continually being challenged, reinterpreted, modified and co-opted as dominant and minority discourses vie for influence in society.

Foucault emphasized that knowledge is based on layers of existence. An understanding of society is based on an evaluation of the power structures that exist at each layer. Furthermore, modern society is based on several levels of such structures (Rabinow 1984, 56). Modern governments often utilize several layers of historical evolution in an effort to provide justification and legitimacy for their conception of national development.

One of the key issues raised in Foucault’s analysis is his discussion of discourses. It is important to ask whom the discourse serves. In this analysis, Foucault emphasizes that discourses are not naturally evolving processes, but are actively manipulated by power elites in a society to promote their goals (Rabinow 1984, 57).

The conclusion that discourses are produced to gain power is also consistent with discussion of truth. According to Foucault, “truth is produced” (1980, 118). Societies produce truth that is consistent with the identity they are creating. This is key in studies of nationalism. Truth is presented as part of the national discourse. Societies utilize symbols to provide a set of instruction for the members of the nation.

The construction of a nation’s history is one of the important methods of transferring truth throughout society. Till emphasizes the placement of history into a wider discourse of national development in her study of modern Berlin. According to Till, “historical traces are produced through particular systems of meaning and cultural norms that have distinct genealogies” (2005, 95). Based on this observation, history, like truth is not a natural process, but is an integral part of the development of a power structure in a society.

States use history to justify their version of truth and promote their program of national development.

In more recent studies, landscapes are seen as points of contention, where all individuals are “situated inside landscapes, forming and reforming them” (O’Keefe 2007, 4). This challenges the traditional top-down approach to landscape studies and emphasizes that compete discourses of national development tend to vie for control of the landscape, or could view a place from disparate viewpoints.

Mitchell has also argued that public space provides an opportunity for an opposition group to stake a claim to a landscape and promote their visibility and legitimacy in a political movement (1995). Both the government and oppositional perspectives are important in understanding development in Dresden, a city with a controversial history that has been influenced by various political ideologies, from the far right, the far left, and the middle.

Monuments are important to nationalism because they have a sense of permanence. However, all monuments require both symbolic and physical maintenance (Forest and Johnson 2002, 524). In other words, even though the physical structure of the monument is stable, it is always under reinterpretation. In some instances, described as “critical junctures” by Forest and Johnson.
(2002), every aspect of a nation’s definition is challenged due to a dramatic upheaval. It is during such eras that the elements of the urban built environment are reevaluated and challenged. This challenge, according to Nora (1996) can take one of four different forms. First, the elements of the urban built environment could be glorified. Second, the elements could be co-opted into a new interpretation. Third, they could be disavowed and removed from public sight and mind. Finally, the importance and future of certain elements of the urban built environment could be contested between different power brokers in a society. The result of the re-evaluation of national identity during an era of societal change determines the future of any portion of the urban built environment.

Such a critical juncture faced Germany following the collapse of the GDR. The German state and nation were forced to reevaluate their identities and reconstruct their “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). The result of this process was an evaluation of elements of the urban built environment in an effort to determine the relevance of these elements to modern Germany. Moreover, the construction of new elements of symbolic capital was also tied to this process of nation building. New buildings and monuments in Dresden had to conform to the nation-building program of the modern German state.

The influence of societal power on geography and vice versa can also be seen in the selection of street names and the location of those streets (Alderman 2003; Yeoh 1992). This can be extended from street names into memorials, key buildings and other landscape features (Whelan 2003, 2008). Prominent placement of memorials show an effort by the leadership of the city, region, or country to have the population engage and reflect upon that event, person or era, while no monuments, or monuments that are not on popular thoroughfares leads to the population forgetting about an historical event, era or individual. Moore emphasized that space and scale are used by the leadership in an effort to “crystallize certain sociospatial arrangements in consciousness and practice in order to further social, political or cultural aims” (2008, 218). Therefore, it is essential to understand how placement and scalar relations can be read as indicators of the national development program of regions.

Geography plays an important role in the construction of national identities. The manipulation of space by society creates spaces that promote their discourse of nationalism. This is important in Germany as post-World War II West and East Germany needed to create new identities based on the political realities of their division into two countries. One method of transmitting this new national discourse was through the rebuilding of urban landscapes that provided important themes of a revised national identity for the citizens of the city and the German nation.

THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN POST-WORLD WAR II GERMANY

Governments can use space to promote their conception of national identity. This is seen throughout the world as the leadership is consciously involved in the selection of important memorials and monuments to events and individuals that help mold the national identity of the nation. This is especially evident in Dresden, a city that saw many regime changes during the twentieth century. The governments of Dresden and East Germany rebuilt Dresden after World War II, in the process, creating sites for public consumption in order to shape the development of a distinctly East German national identity.

The end of World War II left Germany in a dramatic state of destruction. The result of this destruction was a dramatic rebuilding process that dominated both German societies during the early post-war era. Not only was there a need to physically rebuild the German landscape, there was also a need to rebuild the national identity of the German population, that was now divided on two sides of a constructed border. These two issues, the rebuilding of the urban built environment and the rebuilding of the German
national identity, were strongly intertwined. Rosenfeld (2000 and Hagan (2005) identified three important trajectories of thought that influenced the rebuilding of German cities. First, one approach looked to rebuild the cities in an effort to preserve their historical integrity and maintain Germany's position as an important country (Hagan 2005, 95). This is contrasted with a second trajectory which looked to build anew, with new buildings and create a new identity for the German people. Finally, a third approach looked to maintain National Socialist landscapes in an effort to force the German nation into discussions of the Nazi era. This debate among the three perspectives has continued until modern times within the German state as was seen in the decision to return the capital of the reunified German state to Berlin (Haussermann and Strom 1994) and the subsequent rebuilding of Berlin that accompanied the return of the capital.

The process of identity construction throughout German history is especially evident in the major cities of Germany. According to Till, German cities are the foundation on which “German nationalism and modernity ha(ve) been staged, restaged, represented and contested” (2005). This sentiment is echoed by Hagen in his analysis of Nazi development in Rothenburg ob der Tauber and parades in Munich (2004; 2008). During the post-war era, cities were important because of the damage they incurred and the politics involved in their rebuilding.

One term that has been used by Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, (1984) to describe the politics of memory that has characterized the post World War II era in West Germany and modern Germany is Vergangenheitsbewältigung. This term can be translated as coming to terms with the past, specifically, the contested, still-evolving memory of the Third Reich (Rosenfeld 2000). This was a key idea in post-war politics in the two Germanys as well as in present-day united Germany. While the Nazi past in the former East Germany is beyond the scope of this paper (see Herf 1997), the West German process of identity construction is very important to understanding modern development in Dresden since it has become the dominant discourse in Germany. This can be seen in the rebuilding of historical sites and the remodeling of Soviet architecture to fit into the dominant (West) German themes of architecture.

The rebuilding of German cities can be viewed and read as a metaphor for the reconstruction of German identity in the unification era. This process of rebuilding cities has been referred to as the “geopolitics of nostalgia” (Till 2005). In Dresden, nostalgia for the pre-Nazi era was used in an effort to distance the city from the atrocities of the Nazi era. Also, the emphasis on an earlier historical era distances Dresden from the problems of the GDR.

Within the regions (Länder) that became part of East Germany, national identity followed a different trajectory than the West. The leadership of the East German state used history, both people and events, in an effort to unify the East German people into a nation that stood in contrast to the West. For example, Walter Ulbricht, the first major leader of East Germany, stated that the Social Unity Party (SED) was leading the “struggle against the division and for the unity of the German State” (Herf 1997, 109). Furthermore, Ulbricht based the East German view of history on a Cold War ideology. This is seen through his discussion of American and British war aims as being not the democratization of Germany, but as the “colonization and enslavement of the German people” (Herf 1997, 109). Such statements worked to position the East Germans as the protectors of the German people and the West as the destroyers of the German people. This identification by the East Germans as the protectors of the German people and the West as the destroyers of the German people was a major influence on rebuilding decisions in Dresden, a city that was in the Soviet sphere, but destroyed by American and British bombers. Such a project was
plainly understood by the National Front of Democratic Germany, (an alliance of East German political parties, controlled by the Socialist Unity Party) in their 1950 statement: “American bombers destroyed Dresden—with the help of the Soviet Union, we are rebuilding it!” (Taylor 2004, 392). Such a statement shows the influence of the Cold War upon East German thinking, as blame for the destruction of Dresden was placed exclusively with the United States.

**DRESDEN: DESTRUCTION AND REVIVAL**

On February 13-14, 1945, Dresden was decimated by two British air raids and one American raid that firebombed most of the center of the city. The firebombing has been referred to as “the perfect firestorm” due to its effectiveness (Taylor 2004, 274). The damage to Dresden was dramatic; most major landmarks were destroyed by fire. Fifteen square kilometers in the center of the city were destroyed (Wagner 2000). Forty percent of the buildings in Dresden were listed as “unusable” (Reichert 2000). This created not only a blank slate for the East German leadership to rebuild a “socialist city,” but it also provided them with a history that could be co-opted to promote their regime.

At the end of World War II, Dresden was firmly within the Soviet sphere of influence. Just referred to the East German period in Dresden as the “second destruction” (2000, 36). Ideology became the important principle in the rebuilding of the city. Along with the “memorials” to the destruction of Dresden by the capitalist West, the East Germans developed Dresden into a socialist city. The socialist city can be characterized by efficiency of large highways and uniformity of housing, seen in mile after mile of uniform cement-block housing. The East Germans referred to these buildings as *Plattenbauten*, or slab buildings (Kantschew 2011). This process of rebuilding turned Dresden from a Baroque showcase into a modernist city, a transformation described by Kurt Vonnegut as the “German Florence looking like Dayton, Ohio” (Taylor 2004, 399). The destruction of the city left the East German leadership with a blank slate to promote their identity, which stood diametrically opposed to the Baroque history of the city.

The end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany influenced a dramatic change in the urban built environment of Dresden. While the East German government looked to build a new city in Dresden, the reunified German state adopted more of a traditionalist trajectory for the cities of Germany. The traditionalist movement in Dresden has been referred to by many scholars as “moving toward a Baroque future” (Just 2000, 35). In other words, Dresden changed rapidly during the 1990s, but it was changing back into the city that existed before 1945. This traditionalist movement can be seen in the construction projects that have taken place in the era of unification. Since 1990, several important architectural cornerstones to Dresden’s identity have been restored to a high level of historical accuracy including the *Theaterplatz*, the *Taschenberg Palace, Friedrichstadt*, the Academy of Arts, and the *Frauenkirche* (Fig. 1). What was one of the important centers of the East German state, Dresden is now searching for an identity that situates it within the larger German state and nation. Part of this search for identity is in its reconstruction, a return to the glorious Baroque era when Dresden was one of the most important cities in Europe.

**BUILDING THE NEW DRESDEN**

The collapse of the GDR provided the leadership and population of Dresden with an opportunity to evaluate their past and create an identity for the city differing from the central planning of the GDR. This led to open discussions that critically evaluated the role of the GDR in the history of Dresden. This reevaluation was common throughout the former GDR. In most of the regions of the former GDR, the integration into West Germany was a political project that was strongly
influenced by West German ideals, including traditional themes of architecture, or modern, cutting edge ideas of building design. As a result, the history of East Germany has often been seen as expendable and not part of the new German nation. This is especially evident in the major cities of the former East. In Berlin for example, conflict has focused on the development plan for Berlin and the destruction of GDR sites. In Dresden, the city has remodeled the socialist buildings and added new facades in an effort to bring the buildings more in line with the traditional architecture of Dresden, or more modern, contemporary architectural themes. Also important here has been the rise of Dresden as a cultural capital of both Germany and the European Union. Dresden refers to itself as the “Florence on the Elbe” (Taylor 2004, 9). The resurrection of music and art has led the way in an effort to carve out
Dresden's place in the wider European Union. While German politics are strongly tied to a federalist system, in which regions are highly influential, the desire to move away from the East German past has been an overarching concern that has unified efforts of Federal Government in Berlin and the leadership in Saxony (the region of Dresden).

**OPPOSITIONAL REACTIONS TO THE “NEW” DRESDEN**

Landslapes, with a history that helps promote the cause of an opposition group, can act as places of resistance to the dominant national identity (Mitchell 1995). In Dresden, a city that symbolizes the destruction of World War II, the neo-Nazi movement has frequently used the anniversary of the firebombing as an opportunity to protest. In 2011, 17,000 ultra-right-wing protesters showed up to form a human chain to mark the anniversary of the bombing. After this protest, a coalition of left-wing activists formed barricades to prevent the right-wing protests in the inner city. This led to clashes between police and both left-wing and right-wing protesters. The left-wing groups were joined by several German churches that formed picket lines to protest the right-wing activities. Such clashes occur regularly around the anniversary of the firebombings.

**THEMES OF THE NEW DRESDEN**

In the wake of the defeat of the East German model of national development, the new national identity encoded in the urban built environment of Dresden has focused on six major themes. Each of these themes has exerted a significant influence on the landscape, and has had to negotiate the history associated with each site and position itself within the modern German state.

**RECONCILIATION AND ICONIC LANDSCAPES**

Some of the most significant sites on the urban landscape of Dresden are the city’s churches. The rebuilding of the churches started during the GDR era. The GDR attempted to further infiltrate everyday life in East Germany by assisting in the rebuilding of churches throughout the GDR and using the rebuilding to promote their political ideology. In Dresden, several churches were rebuilt, with the support of the East German government, including the Höfkerche, the Kreuzkirche and the Church of the Magi (Dreikönigskirche), amongst others. While these churches were important to the population of Dresden, the most important church was left in a state of destruction throughout the entire GDR era.

The Frauenkirche of Dresden (Fig. 2) collapsed the day after the fire bombing in February 1945. The church, which stood for over 200 years, dominated the skyline of Dresden, and was one of the most significant symbols and sources of pride for Dresden. When the church was destroyed in World War II, citizens immediately came out and started cataloguing pieces for the reconstruction. The church was deliberately left in ruins...
as a propaganda tool. The East German government pointed to the western firebombing and the destruction of the Frauenkirche as an example of the imperialist tendencies of the West, and positioned the East Germans and Soviets as peace-loving protectors of the German people (Clayton 1999), and cast the west as the destroyers of civilization. This monument provided tangible evidence to support East Germany’s official ideology and promote their legitimacy as the protectors of the German nation.

Upon reunification, plans were developed by the Dresden City government to rebuild the Frauenkirche. These plans were supported at both the local and international level. One of the most visible international supporters of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was the Dresden Trust, a group established in 1993 by a group of British religious leaders, including the former canon of the Coventry Cathedral in the UK (Harding 2005). Coventry, which was firebombed by the Germans in the 1940s, has established itself as a key leader in the reconciliation process in Europe, especially as it relates to the rebuilding of churches destroyed during the war. The Dresden Trust, which also included the Duke of Kent as one of its major patrons, was established to fundraise for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. The Dresden Trust was seen as a method of reconciliation between the British and Germans. The focal point of the Trust’s work was the donation of the Cross and Orb to top the newly reconstructed Frauenkirche (BBC 1998).

The propaganda of the Cold War has been replaced with another set of interpretations of the destruction of the Frauenkirche. In 1995, during the ceremonies commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the firebombing, posters appeared showing the destroyed city center with the quote, “Dank Hitler” (Russell 1999, 7): “Thank Hitler.” This reinterpretation of the destruction – as a product of Hitler’s tyranny rather than Allied aggression, follows several other themes that switch blame for the atrocities of World War II away from the German people and the American and British bombers to the National Socialist party in general or Hitler in particular.

One of the most fundamental issues with the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was a need to situate this project as a work of religion or nationalism. The rebuilding of a church seems to be a religious project on the surface. However, the Frauenkirche is more than a simple church in Dresden; historically, it was one of the lynchpins of the city’s identity. The rebuilding was seen as not just the rebuilding of a church, but one of the final steps in returning the skyline of Dresden to its original splendor. The rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was more about nationalism and identity than about religion, since people identified the church more as an iconic landscape than as a place of worship. The importance of the Frauenkirche is seen on two fronts. First, the rebuilding was an immediate priority of the new city leadership in Dresden upon reunification. Second, as seen in the reconsecration ceremony in 2005, Dr. Paul Oestreicher, a canon emeritus of Coventry Cathedral and a founder of the Dresden Trust, stated, “[t]he church is to Dresden what St Paul’s is to London. This is true both architecturally and psychologically” (Harding 2005).

HEROES

The collapse of the GDR required the regions of the former East Germany to reevaluate their important historical figures. Often this process did not involve the selection of new heroes, but a return to those who were considered significant prior to 1933. In Dresden, the important individuals were either those associated with the Electors from Saxony or important religious figures.

The Saxon Electors were influential agents in the Holy Roman Empire. They were part of the larger group who elected the Holy Roman Emperor, and therefore held important influence in Central Europe. The ebb and flow of the Saxon electors among the electors in the Holy Roman Empire led to eras of shifting importance of Dresden.
as a major city of Europe. The electors who were important figures helped Dresden move to a position of power with the city structure of the Holy Roman Empire. These power brokers are commemorated throughout Dresden in sculptures and monuments. For example, the Golden statue of Friedrich Augustus II (Fig. 3), unveiled in 1735, has become an important tourist site in the Neustadt. (The “new city” across the river from the historical core). Augustus II was a significant figure in raising the profile of Dresden in the Holy Roman Empire. Known as Augustus the Strong, he was influential in establishing Dresden as an artistic and architectural center in Europe during the mid-eighteenth century. It is during this era that Dresden established his castle at a building called the Zwinger in the center of the city. He was also influential in establishing Dresden as important pottery center in Europe.

HISTORY

In Dresden, the recent selection of historical events to emphasize and memorialize in the landscape has followed the pattern seen in West Germany immediately after WWII. In an effort to come to terms with the Nazi history, the West Germans tried to identify strongly with the era before National Socialism. In Dresden, the politics of memory not only looked to disavow the Nazi past, but also the GDR past. In the 1990s, the city leadership returned to the Saxon era of Dresden’s history, when Dresden was an important city and its leaders were influential electors of the Holy Roman Emperor, who were able to influence power throughout Central Europe.

In terms of architecture, Dresden has been rebuilt to look as it did prior to 1933, with little reference to the National Socialist or GDR era. One of the most visible examples
of this return to the Baroque era is the prominence of the Semper Opera House (Fig. 4) on the landscape of Dresden. The Opera House, built by the Saxon electors shows the artistic importance of Dresden and ties to the political power of the Saxon electors. While the Semper Opera was rebuilt during the GDR era, it supports the rebuilding program that focusing on returning Dresden to look as it did prior to 1933 by concentrating on architectural themes that were prominent during the Baroque era, as opposed to a modern approach to rebuilding the city, or keeping the buildings built in a Soviet model of architecture.

MODERN THEMES

Along with the return to the Baroque history of Dresden, the era of unification in Dresden has brought a focus on “zero point thinking” (Rosenfeld 2000) similar to what West Germany promoted during the early post-war era. Zero point thinking emphasizes a new era in Germany, and positions the present as an opportunity to break free of the burdens of the past. This is accomplished by disavowing the past and starting a new history from the present. Hence, the present is hour zero, or the beginning of history. Such a zero hour began with unification in Dresden in the eyes of several leaders of modern Dresden.

Several major construction projects show the influence of zero point thinking: the construction of the new transparent Volkswagen factory is probably the most prominent and well know example of zero point thinking in Dresden.

The Volkswagen factory (Die Gläserne Manufaktur) (Fig. 5) is an excellent example of modern themes in the architecture of Dresden. The factory, opened in 2002, is completely covered in glass, allowing any-
one walking by the opportunity to watch cars being built. The use of glass emphasis transparency in the production process as one can watch a car being assembled from the outside, making the process of assembling a car a “spectacle” (Volkswagen 2011). Volkswagen’s idea was to not only make the production process transparent, but to make its very existence a cultural centerpiece and a tourist attraction. According to Volkswagen, “Die Gläserne Manufaktur” is an example of the demands of today’s knowledge society in which we require open working environments for networked processes. Rethinking the concept of work – this is what “Die Gläserne Manufaktur” has made a reality” (2011). The factory also represents a commitment to the former East by Volkswagen. The new factory has become an important tourist site in Dresden, its location in the middle of Dresden, is strongly emphasized by Volkswagen (2011), representing a new era in the history of Dresden, emphasizing transparency in the production process. According to Volkswagen (2012), the whole production is now a public spectacle, in which people can watch the production process, representing an expression of democracy in which the entire production process is open and transparent to the public.

THE ECCENTRIC GDR

Traces of the GDR past are still seen in the landscape of Dresden. The incorporation of East German landscapes has tended to followed two trajectories, especially in the tourist centers of German cities. First, East German buildings are often given new façades in an effort to preserve the buildings, and to give them a new look consistent with the architecture that shows the themes of a modern, unified Germany. In Dresden, the Plattenbauten that lined Prager Strasse, the

Figure 5: The Volkswagen transparent factory (courtesy of the author).
main pedestrian walkway from the central train station to the center of the city, were preserved, but outfitted with new façades to hide the utilitarian, modernist East German landscapes that are not seen as desirable in the modern era.

Other East German landscapes selected for inclusion in modern German cities have been chosen to discredit the GDR. Such sites tend to highlight the more eccentric characteristics of the GDR. For example, in Berlin, the Fernsehturm and the Palast der Republik, have been seen as part of uniqueness of the East German regime, and have the unique quirky nature of both of these sites have been used to position them into the landscape of modern Berlin. The eccentricity of some East German sites is seen in either their architecture, the Fernsehturm, the big ball in the center of Berlin, or in their function, a museum devoted to hygiene or the main legislative chamber of a country that doubles as a bowling alley. While the Fernsehturm been included in the skyline of Berlin, the Palast der Republik has been destroyed. However, the East Berliners used the uniqueness of the landscape as part of their unsuccessful campaign to preserve the site. The Fernsehturm remained, partially because of its uniqueness and oddity. The legend of the Pope's revenge, the dome reflects a cross in sunlight, is one example of the quirkiness that has made the tower famous and a key component of the skyline in Berlin. Most of the quirky sites are maintained as tourist sites, primarily for foreign visitors.

One of the sites selected by the leadership of Dresden for preservation in Dresden is the Museum of Hygiene (Fig. 6). While built prior to the era of the GDR, with links to the strong interest in hygiene throughout the history of Germany, modern discussions of the museum tend to assume that the museum was created by the GDR. This is especially

Figure 6: The Museum of Hygiene (courtesy of the author).
evident in tourist guides. For example, Let’s Go refers to the museum as an “ill-named museum [that] long celebrated the health and cleanliness of GDR Germans” (Harrison 2002, 170). Harrison is referring to the fact that the museum has evolved into a museum about health more than hygiene and that leads to his assessment as “ill-named.”

The museum was rebuilt by the GDR after the firebombing, and dedicated to showing the citizens of the GDR proper conceptions of hygiene. The museum’s website (dhmd.de 2011) refers to its role as “comparable to the Federal Agency of Health Education in the Federal Republic of Germany.” This idea of emphasizing hygiene to this level is obviously quite eccentric and works to discredit the history of the GDR through the emphasis on quirky or eccentric ideas, while ignoring the obvious connection to Nazi positions on hygiene and racial purity. Nowhere in any of the travel reviews or popular literature is this connection made. This further supports the view that the city leadership seeks to follow the common trajectory of rebuilding both buildings and identity that either returns to an era prior to 1933, or, in the case of former East German regions, sets zero hour as 1990. This is seen in tourist guides who often refer to the museum as “bizarre,” “playful” and “not the Zwinger” (Harrison 2002, 170).

Another dramatic example of war damage that has been preserved was the original orb of the Frauenkirche. The orb, on the roof of the church, was found in the rubble after the firebombing. While the British presented a new orb as a gift to commemorate the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, the original Orb is still displayed in the church as a reminder of the damage (Fig. 7).

CONCLUSION

The landscape of Dresden is strongly tied to the rebuilding of national identity in unified Germany. The unification of Germany forced a process of reexamining nationalism in the former GDR. With the discrediting of the East German model of national development, the citizens and leaders of Dresden
have been forced to develop a new national identity, one in line with that of the rest of Germany. This new identity has encompassed several distinct uses of the landscape. People and events from the past have been selected to fit with the modern conception of the German nation. In Dresden, this idea of “moving towards a Baroque future” has seen Dresden embrace its position as a Baroque showplace, with an emphasis on iconic landscapes, important Saxon electors that raised the prestige of the city, and important sites that show the beauty of Dresden’s urban built environment. The National Socialist past and the history of the GDR have been deemphasized in an effort to focus on the less controversial Baroque history of the city.

This historical emphasis has been combined with a modern view of Dresden. The modern view is consistent with the idea of “zero point thinking” that has been an important influence on post World War II German history. The new buildings, like the Volkswagen factory, seek to show a new era in Dresden’s history and move beyond the controversial past of National Socialism and the GDR.

Remnants of both the GDR and the Nazi regime are also still visible parts of Dresden’s landscape. What has been selected to remain in Dresden fits into models of nationalism that seek to discredit the GDR through an emphasis on the eccentric nature of GDR. The Museum of Hygiene has been selected for preservation because it is an interesting, quirky example of East German policies and identity. This is consistent with other East German cities that have preserved East German architectural sites because of their eccentric nature.

Certain landscapes have also been preserved in order to facilitate discussions of the Nazi era. This approach to urban development is limited in Dresden, with the Kreuzkirche, the original orb of the Frauenkirche as two of the most prominent examples.

Dresden is again returning to a position of importance in the German urban system. This return to importance has led to a substantial altering of the urban built environment in the city. The sites selected for preservation or rebuilding are strongly influenced by the national identity of the restored, unified German nation. The process of reconstruction in Dresden is not simply a process of restoring buildings. It is strongly tied to the rebuilding of the national identity in Dresden. Such a connection between nationalism and architecture is an important link that shows architecture as an integral part of the national development project in modern Germany.

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Figure 7: The original Orb of the Frauenkirche, damaged in 1945 (courtesy of the author).
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REFERENCES


