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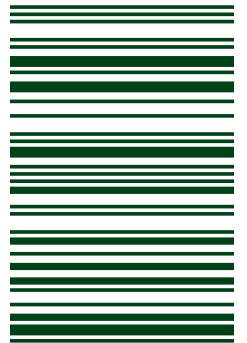
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In the middle of Berlin, at the Alexanderplatz, one of the last buildings in public hands stays empty at this moment. It looks like a haunted house, 40,000 sqm without windows, 10 floors high, the House of Statistics: headquarters of statistical institutes both of the GDR and later of the Federal Republic of Germany, as well as the East German intelligence agency, Stasi. Today, it is a symbol of the quest for affordable space in the growing city tossed around on the waves of neoliberal globalization. It is a place where two discourses, or better still two fight lines converge: affordable space for housing, working and artistic production, and the question of civil rights and urban citizenship of refugees.

WHAT HAPPENED?

In the so-called “summer of migration” in 2015, 600 people arrived on peak days in Berlin from the war zones in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and from the poverty and cruelty shaken states in sub-Saharan Africa. Women, men, and children made their way to Berlin, taking chancellor Merkel’s words “We make it!”¹ at face value. These dynamics caused a remarkable shift. Long-fought-for changes came at arms length. The selling and use of public lands to the highest bidder became a political ambition. Around the House of Statistics, an initiative² developed, seeking to transform this former Stasi office building into social housing for refugees, students, seniors, as well as, providing spaces for artistic and cultural production and education.

In 1993 Architect Hans Kollhoff’s won the competition for the masterplan for the Alexanderplatz, the central square where the emblematic Berlin TV tower is located. The masterplan foresaw 11, 100 meter-high skyscrapers—a massive intervention into Berlin’s usually 33 meter-eaves. However, the masterplan has not been carried out. In 2015 the plan was revised to reduce the amount of skyscrapers to nine, given the fact that some GDR high-rise buildings had been renovated and given monument protection. At the same time, the pressure on available space in the city has reached a new high: after the financial and euro crisis, international capital was pouring into Berlin, which at about the same time started to grow by about 50,000 inhabitants a year. After decades of stagnant numbers of inhabitants and a subsequent oversupply of available and affordable spaces for housing and production, one of Berlin’s main currencies for its late and alternative success became scarce all of a sudden. Real estate prices were and are roaring, especially compared to the income of Berliners.

There is a threefold hybridity of dynamics at play in Berlin whereby the House of Statistics can be seen as one of its prominent culmination points: The global financial crisis, the increasingly intense debate on

affordable space for housing, but also for cultural production and small businesses, and the summer of migration, which raised the question on how to provide basic human rights to a relatively high number of refugees, and furthermore how to live together as a society.

On one side of the political spectrum the claim for a new approach to citizenship, partly an urban citizenship³, is arising in the wake of the refugee topic. On the other, there is a shift to the right in the political system in Germany and the rest of the EU becomes visible. It can be observed that EU nation-states, including Germany, “expand the modes of control”⁴ of immigrants by harsher enforcement of migratory laws at the borders or even totally close of the national borders like in Hungary. At the same time, cities have deployed stronger enforcement of inner border control, in the sense of continuous control of the immigrant’s legal residency status which is monitored by local authorities and handed over to federal agencies. In this light, the idea of urban citizenship seems to be rather ambiguous in places where a differentiated system of civil rights for different groups of refugees⁵ is in effect. One result of this different-rights-for-different-refugees approach is that discrimination differs between migrant groups: certain groups are systematically marginalized and denied a future in Germany.

This creates a paradoxical situation where refugees are supposed to become part of the cities they arrive to, but on the other hand they have a very hard time in becoming part of the local community and partake in the most basic activities due to unclear legal residency status. In Germany they are not allowed to work if they do not have legal status; they are not allowed to produce their own goods, sell things, not even open a bank account. In many cases they are denied many public services⁶. Access to substantial rights is based on national citizenship, not on residency. Many scholars, politicians, and civil rights groups claim that, in order to form a functioning urban society, access to substantial rights like housing, healthcare, education, and cultural recreation, need to be based not on citizenship, but on denizenship.

However, there is little tangible development towards an urban citizenship approach in cities in Germany even though there are many pragmatic and yet highly inspirational cooperative practices⁷ that cater to refugees. Unlike the sanctuary cities discussion in the USA, in Germany there are no cities that apply local practices that are not in line with federal institutions and procedures to protect its denizens. Looking at Berlin, one could better talk about sanctuary districts that allow for a certain degree and so far unprecedented level of self organization and articulation. Two examples can be seen in this light: a refugee protest camp at the

central Oranien square (2012–2013) in the former western inner city district of Kreuzberg, and an occupied empty school building⁸ in the same district during the same years. Both actions were related to a 500 kilometer protest march from Würzburg to Berlin against the prohibition of work for refugees and the restriction to free movement within Germany and the EU. On both examples, local district tolerated the occupation and wanted to allow space for the protest against federal states policies. In contrast, the city of Berlin on the regional level⁹ wanted to intervene with police force. In both cases the occupations got evacuated by the district and the senate (regional level) after strong protests and the status quo was reinstalled. That was the case in 2014, before the summer of migration.

Today, the war in Syria remains as inhumane as one could imagine, but the influx of migrants has been reduced as a result of a deal with the increasingly authoritarian Turkish regime and the increased support of the stumbling regime in Libya. In this context the House of Statistics remains a symbol of a sanctuary in the city center of Berlin. It is a promise for a user-centered, not only profit driven way of making our city. The chances that the local initiative will accomplish its purposes—affordable housing, spaces for working and for cultural production, as well as living spaces for refugees—remain. The newly elected left regional government—consisting of a coalition of the social democrats, the left party, and the greens—could become an enabler in converting the House of Statistics into a hybrid space which could become a remarkable example of how cities in Europe do not always have to abide by market pressures and how de facto citizen rights can be granted on an urban level.

- 1 “Wir schaffen das!” stated by Chancellor Angela Merkel in a press conference on August 31, 2015 asked for the immigration challenge that year.
- 2 “Initiative Haus der Statistik,” <https://hausderstatistik.org/>.
- 3 The concept of an urban citizenship claims a residency based provision of basic rights rather than a citizenship based one.
- 4 Henrik Lebuhn, “Urban Citizenship, Border Practices and Immigrants’ Rights in Europe: Ambivalences of a Cosmopolitan Project,” *Open Citizenship 4, Issue 2* (2013): 13.
- 5 Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 6 This situation has been worked on by official institutions in the last years, however it has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner.
- 7 Moabit Hilft, Campus Metropolis, Sharehouse Refugio, CUCULA, Akademie der ZUsammenKUNFT (carried out by the Initiative of House of Statistics).
- 8 Gerhart-Hauptmann-Schule
- 9 Berlin is one state of the 16 German states.

ABOUT

informa is the peer-reviewed journal of the University of Puerto Rico School of Architecture. Initially conceived as a professional architecture magazine from 2001–2015, it has now been reformatted as an academic publication. The journal publishes commissioned and peer-reviewed articles about architecture, urbanism, and spatial theory.

AIMS AND SCOPE

informa has been a printed platform for the dissemination of work by professors at the University of Puerto Rico School of Architecture, and for a number of local and international contributors. Since 2001, *informa* has focused in publishing essays and projects that address, analyze, or reflect on history, design, technology, urbanism, and teaching. The recognitions it has received throughout the years and the contributions made to architectural debates, particularly within Latin America, have been an encouragement to broaden *informa*'s discussions.

Today, seeking to reaffirm its relevance in this second generation, the Editorial Board retains *informa*'s original foundations while simultaneously aiming to broaden its outlook, by reformulating the publication into an indexed, peer-reviewed journal. In collaborative spirits responding to the digital realities of the twenty-first century, and to connect the journal to a more extensive audience, *informa* is reconceived as an open-access, online publication. In this way, the journal becomes a vehicle to discuss, teach, learn, and disseminate from within the Caribbean, but in forthright dialogue with a globalized society. This outward projection produces knowledge about architecture and cities which can ultimately inform policies, shift paradigms, and lead to the creation of spaces that are just, inclusive, and democratic. Each issue of *informa* has, at its core, the publication of research papers. It also consists of any combination of commissioned essays, invited projects, reviews (books, articles and built work),

and interviews. It publishes academically rigorous projects, research, and written works that elucidate on relevant and timely topics within contemporary architectural discourse.

Subjects covered include writings about individual architectural designers, historians, and theorists; theoretical texts; spatial theory; architectural history; design theory; urbanism; spatial practices and cultures; interdisciplinary collaborations; place-based art and performance; emerging currents and patterns; pedagogy; visual culture; technology; sustainability; and emerging forms of place-based cultures. Complimenting these multi-perspective approaches, topics that are welcome include: citizenship, community, user-participation, dynamic and unconventional research methodologies, ethics, time and ephemerality, history and heritage, structural and material innovations, everyday life, and the politics of space.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The journal is published once a year. Material submitted to *informa* through our call for papers is subject to peer review using the 'double-blind' refereeing process. Submissions should follow the rules and guidelines established by the Chicago Manual of Style. *informa* will consider articles written in Spanish and English that fall within the categories described in the journal's aims and scope. All manuscripts are subject to initial appraisal by the Editor-in-Chief, and, if found suitable for further consideration, they will then be peer reviewed by independent, anonymous expert referees from outside of the University of Puerto Rico. *informa* considers submissions on the conditions that:

- A. The manuscript adheres to the journal's formal and stylistic rules and guidelines, as specified by the Editorial Board on the website.
- B. The manuscript is framed within architectural design, history, or theory categories, and deal with themes that fall within the journal's scope.

- C. The manuscript must be the author's original work.
- D. The manuscript must be clearly structured, well argued, and its objectives must be addressed in a coherent manner.
- E. The manuscript does not duplicate any other previously published work, including the author's previously published work.
- F. The manuscript is not currently under consideration for peer review, accepted for publication, or published elsewhere.

PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

The Editor-in-Chief will review each submitted manuscript alongside a Research Editor to assess which manuscripts are to be rejected or accepted for peer-review consideration. This decision will be based on each manuscript's ability to meet the journal's Editorial Policy and Submission Guidelines.

Authors will be notified by the Editor-in-Chief of the outcome of their submission, stating whether the manuscript has been accepted for consideration or rejected. Manuscripts selected for consideration will be passed on for double-blind peer-review. Two referees from outside of the University of Puerto Rico will assess the article and fill out the article review sheet provided by the Editorial Board.

The Editor-in-Chief and a Research Editor will assess the sheet and pass on the anonymous feedback with any additional comments to the author.

Referees may recommend to:

1. Accept outright
2. Request a minor revision, where authors revise their manuscript to address specific concerns
3. Request a major revision, where authors revise their manuscript to address significant concerns and perhaps undertake additional work
4. Reject outright

Once notified, the authors will re-submit their amended manuscripts while adhering to the specifications listed in the Submission Guidelines.

The Editor-in-Chief and the Research Editor will assess the manuscript to ensure the requested changes have been amended. The authors must provide the following documents:

1. The manuscript has not been previously published nor has it been accepted for publication in another journal or magazine.
2. If the manuscript is published in a website or available online in any form, upon accepted for publication in *informa*, it will be removed from the site. It can be replaced by a PDF copy of the article as published in *informa*, or images of the PDF pages. Authors must include the title, abstract, keywords, and hyperlink to the journal.
3. A letter stating that the author certifies that republication of their article in another forum must specify that it was originally published in *informa* with appropriate citation.
4. Declaration of originality.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Authors submitting manuscripts to *informa* must do so through the journal's institutional page:

revistas.upr.edu/index.php/informa/

As a bilingual journal, commissioned texts and submitted manuscripts will be published in either Spanish or English, in accordance to the language they were originally written in. Abstracts and keywords will be published in, both, Spanish and English. Authors must submit their abstract and keywords in both languages. In addition to abiding by the journal's Editorial Policy, the following formal and thematic specifications must be met in order for articles to be published in *informa*:

1. The manuscript contains nothing that is abusive, defamatory, libelous, obscene, fraudulent, or illegal.
2. Each manuscript's first page must include a full title and subtitle, if any.
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4. The second page of the manuscript must include an abstract of 150–200 words along with a minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 key words.
5. For research-based manuscripts: the target word count is 4,000–8,000 words.
6. For review-based manuscripts (books or creative work): the word count should not exceed 1,000 words.
7. Submissions must be formatted according to the latest Chicago Manual of Style.
8. The manuscript must be clearly organized, with a logical hierarchy of headings and subheadings, and specifying images with figure numbers.
9. Quotations exceeding 40 words must be indented.
10. Endnotes should be signaled by superscript numbers in the main text and listed at the end of the text before the references.
11. All submissions must be sent as, both, Word and PDF documents, using Times New Roman at 11 points and with a line spacing of 1.5, leaving 1" margins around the entire page.
12. Each author is responsible for obtaining necessary permissions to reproduce any copyrighted material, including images.
13. Authors should include a separate statement confirming that all authors have agreed to the submission and that the article is not currently being considered for publication by any other print or electronic journal.
14. Due to the broad range of subject matter, authors are also encouraged to separately supply the names of one or more potential referees. Please include those in a "Comments to the editor" document, and if possible please include potential referees' email addresses.

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A practicing architect, Juan Penabad completed his undergraduate degree from the University of Puerto Rico School of Architecture, and his Master in Architecture at Yale University. Committed with teaching since 1993, Penabad has taught at the School of Architecture of the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, as well as the School of Architecture of the University of Puerto Rico. He teaches courses on building technology, professional practice, applied theory and design method, along with drawing and design studios from freshman year, on to graduate level.

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Mrinal S. Rammohan is a writer with a keen interest in architectural history and theory. He completed his Master in Architectural History from The Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL), and is now working as Written Communications Manager at Foster + Partners in London. His previous research has been exhibited at prestigious venues including the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Venice Biennale 2014. He is also one of the founding editors of *LOBBY* magazine. A sharp storyteller, his current research interests include exploring the boundaries of satire and using fiction as a tool for critical thinking.

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MARTIN SCHWEGMANN
Architect and Researcher, Studio
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Martin Schwegmann is a Berlin-based architect, urban researcher and policy advisor. He is Studio Commissioner for Berlin, an intermediary between politics and administration, civil society and the private sector in order to advocate for, secure and develop affordable space for artistic production. He is part of the civil society initiative trying to turn the House of Statistics in the center of Berlin into an innovative place for integrated housing and working as well as cultural, artistic and social uses. Schwegmann is cofounder and member of the Urban Research Group at the Georg Simmel Center for Metropolitan Studies at the Humboldt University Berlin. His professional focus lies on international cooperative urban development, urban commons, citizens' participation and self-organization. He holds a Doctorate in urban planning from the Habitat Unit at the Technical University Berlin.

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Julia Sedlock is a founding member and director of Cosmo Design Factory, a community design collective that provides educational and mentorship opportunities for their neighbors in Philmont NY. In addition to several houses nearing completion, her design practice leverages architectural speculation as a tool for civic engagement and community development. Her writings have been published in *PLAT*, *MAS Context*, *Soiled*, *Conditions*, and *Log*. Julia has taught undergraduate and graduate studios at NJIT and holds a Master in Architecture and a Master in Design Criticism from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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