

Article

“Jewish Building” in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic after the Holocaust. Possibilities, Limits, Spaces

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Abstract: As early as the first months after the Second World War had ended, newly founded Jewish communities were beginning to form in Germany. These communities were established further in the years to follow, in the course of which new synagogues and community centers were erected. In today's perceptions, these building projects are often seen in the context of the efforts of gentile society to make reparations (Wiedergutmachung). This article examines the possibilities and conditions under which non-Jewish post-Nazi society was operating in regard to enabling “Jewish building (Jüdisches Bauen)”, and highlights the tremendous influence that political action has had on the projects of the Jewish communities. The synagogue projects in Mannheim and Würzburg are used as examples to illustrate this issue as it reflects in the Federal Republic of Germany. This article brings forth, for the first time, a description of the situation in the German Democratic Republic providing an overview on the extent of the construction activity. Subsequently, observations over the use of the term and the concept of “Jewish building (Jüdisches Bauen)” are outlined.

Keywords: synagogues; post-war Germany; FDR; GDR; Mannheim; Würzburg; Dresden; Erfurt; Leipzig; Berlin

Anyone who went to buy bread rolls as a Jew in 1961, took the tram or had to deal with an administrative office, was very likely to face a former SS man, a Wehrmacht soldier involved in ‘partisan combat’ and a deportation or former civil servant who had legalized Aryanizations and was now the neighborhood baker, the conductor or the counselor. In fact, such encounters were inevitable, a circumstance to which one could only react to in the form of remembrance of murdered relatives, or rather by doing the opposite and repressing the trauma.

Brumlik (2000, p. 29)¹

The fact that Jewish communities were refounded in German cities after 1945, was—and this is still being circulated to the present day—is synonymous with “doing the unthinkable”.² In addition to some German Jews who could hide and survive due to the aid of their non-Jewish spouses, this group included the few survivors of the concentration and death camps, the even smaller number of re-migrants and, more frequently, so-called displaced persons whom for various reasons did not

¹ “Wer 1961 als Jude Brötchen kaufen ging, mit der Straßenbahn fuhr oder auf einem Amt etwas erledigen musste, hatte eine große Chance, im Bäcker, im Schaffner oder im Regierungsrat einen ehemaligen SS-Mann, einem an der ‘Partisanenbekämpfung’ und Deportation beteiligten Wehrmachtssoldaten oder einem ehemaligen Beamten, der Aryanisierungen legalisiert hatte, zu begegnen. Genau genommen waren derlei Begegnungen sogar unausweichlich, ein Umstand, auf den sich im Bewußtsein der ermordeten Verwandten nur mit schlechtem Gewissen oder massiver Verdrängung reagieren ließ”.

² Following the title of a book by Gay and Hanenberg (2001).

emigrate, at least initially.³ Subsequently, whilst establishing the practice of a religious life, one of the most urgent tasks of the congregations was to support these survivors and provide for them.

The congregations were—and remained for many years—institutions that could be contacted in search for family members or acquaintances as well. The needs of the Jewish communities and their possibilities were changed fundamentally: they communities were significantly smaller and poorer. In addition, many of their members were in ill condition due to a number of reasons; suffering from the consequences of exclusion, deportation, loss of relatives, life in hiding and other experiences stemming from living in the concentration camps. Furthermore, life in Germany for the resuscitating Jewish communities and the newly founded ones meant operating within the midst of a non-Jewish society of perpetrators.⁴ In very few cases—and often solely as a result of individual initiative—emigrated Jews were asked to return,⁵ or, more frequently, the establishment of new Jewish community centers was strongly supported from the beginning.⁶

The Jewish communities were founded as united congregations (Einheitsgemeinden). Not only did they need to deliver prayer rooms for their members, but they also had to provide the spaces for social gatherings in order to make a cultural life possible. In addition, these Jewish communities were required to provide living spaces, especially for their older members. Subsequently, this had an effect on the constructions and demanded certain requirements to be met: the structure of rooms, the possible conversion of certain spaces and, furthermore, the fundamental decision for or against new buildings or rather continued use of existing ones. Furthermore, the congregations had to deal with reassignment and claim compensation for destroyed architecture and interiors.

This article focuses on the possibilities and conditions for the construction of synagogues and community centers between 1945 and 1989. First, an overview of “Jewish building (Jüdisches Bauen)” in the three western occupation zones and the Federal Republic of Germany, followed by two case studies that will be examined in order to illustrate the authorities’ scope of action and its resulting effects on the Jewish communities building projects. Moreover, the situation in the Soviet occupation zone and the German Democratic Republic will be analyzed and linked. Based on an examination of the synagogue’s construction history considering the possibilities and conditions related to its building, it is necessary for me to differentiate between the terms “Jewish building (Jüdisches Bauen)” and “Jewish architecture”. The use of the specific term “Jewish building” and its implications are presented in an additional concluding section.

1. “Jewish Building” in the Federal Republic of Germany

In all large and in some smaller cities of the West German occupation zones and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), founded in 1949, Jewish congregations were newly formed after 1945. In the late 1980s, the number of their members was less than 30,000, or 0.05 percent of the total population (Brenner 2007). In regards to their development, it was necessary that land and buildings that had been in the possession of Jewish communities and institutions prior to the war (until their expropriation or forced sale by the German National Socialists), were mostly transferred back to Jewish

³ Jewish DPs usually lived in camps in the early years after the end of the Second World War. In addition to accommodations, they had a well-developed infrastructure for cultural institutions and prayer rooms. The Nuremberg Institute for NS Research and Jewish History of the 20th Century and its director Jim G. Tobis deserve particular recognition for their research in the American zone. Cf. the German/English encyclopedia ([Nürnberger Institut für NS-Forschung und jüdische Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts e. V n.d.](#)).

⁴ Since the beginning of the 2000s, a number of monographs have been published which are dedicated to the history of Jewish communities after 1945. Exemplary: (Reinhard 2017). Brenner (2012) presents the various facets of Jewish existence in Germany between 1945 and 2012 in four phases: intermediate station (1945–1949), consolidation (1950–1967), positioning (1968–1989) and irruption (1990–2012).

⁵ The “only open invitation of a mayor to Jewish emigrants” (cf. Krohn 2011, p. 63) was issued by the senior mayor of Frankfurt am Main, Walter Kolb (SPD) in 1946/47. It received a divided response and, later on, was met with open opposition. Furthermore, the invitation was not only an exception but above all a merely symbolic act, which was not followed by any practical support for the former Jewish inhabitants of Frankfurt (cf. *ibid.*).

⁶ This was done, for example, by the senior mayor of the City of Mannheim, cf. the following descriptions in this article.

restitution successor organizations after 1945⁷ that sold. Germany was regarded by Jewish institutions worldwide as a “forbidden country” (Diner 2012), in which the establishment of Jewish communities and Jewish life were not encouraged. As a result, the newly-founded congregations had to negotiate not only with the municipality or the state for compensation, financial support and land, but also with these organizations. This policy implicated that the municipalities could not, or only after long disputes, dispose of the property of the pre-war institutions. Jewish communities were then highly dependent on German politics and their willingness to provide (financial) support, which without they were not able to realize construction projects. Even though the concrete actions of various political decision-makers were often delayed and complicated the community’s construction projects, their implementation was regarded as a political and referred to in the media as “reparation” stressing Germany’s goodwill in order to make Jewish life possible.⁸ These are only two facets of the tensions in which the re-establishment of Jewish community life had to develop.

1.1. Synagogues: An Overview

The first synagogue in post-war Germany was inaugurated in Stuttgart in 1952. It was designed by the Jewish architect Ernst Guggenheimer (1880–1973) and was permitted to be built on the site of the old synagogue that was destroyed in 1938. This was a remarkable architectural correspondence linking a new congregation and its predecessor, which was rarely conducted in later years. One of the characteristics of the synagogue buildings of the post-war decades is that they were often built outside city centers, thus failing to integrate within the visible public urban space. The newly erected buildings were often situated in residential areas. Such was the case in Düsseldorf (Hermann Zvi Guttmann, inaugurated in 1958) and Dortmund (Helmut Goldschmidt, inaugurated in 1956). In Hanover, the new synagogue (Hermann Zvi Guttmann, inaugurated in 1963) was erected opposite a slaughterhouse, in Osnabrück (Hermann Zvi Guttmann, inaugurated in 1968) on a former rubbish dump and in Paderborn (Karl Gerle, inaugurated in 1959) on an old Jewish cemetery. The searches for suitable sites lasted several years, and the Jewish communities were only able to assert their wishes and requirements to a certain and limited extent. Furthermore, in the 1950s for example, the Jewish community in Hanover initially planned to erect a new building within the immediate vicinity of the city center. The municipality and its building advisor (Baurat) at the time, Rudolf Hillebrecht, hindered the project’s realization.⁹ His aim was to use a plot of land in the area of Haeckelstraße, which was hardly developed at that time, next to the Jewish old people’s home (inaugurated in 1953). Objections by the congregation concerning, among other things, the poor accessibility for its members,¹⁰ were disregarded by the city. Hillebrecht prevailed, and the synagogue was inaugurated in 1963 on the site favored by him. His (1910–1999) career during the times of the National Socialism is comparatively typical to other architects who then became successful in post-war Germany:¹¹ From 1937, Hillebrecht was involved in the planning and redesigning of Hamburg, operating within the Konstanty Gutschow architecture office, coordinating the deployment of war prisoners and forced laborers. From 1944 on, Hillebrecht was also a member of the Task Force for the Reconstruction of bombarded, destroyed cities

⁷ For the American zone: Jewish Restitution Successor Organization; for the British zone: Jewish Trust Corporation; and for the French zone: Jewish Trust Corporation Branch Française. For an overview of the practice and self-understanding, and the development in the three zones of occupation until the second half of the 1950s as well as the controversy between the organisations and the Jewish communities, see (Schreiber 1997, pp. 167–90). Beside this there are various publications about the practice of restitution of Jewish (private) property (e.g., Goshler and Lillteicher 2012) as well as on compensation payments to the victims of Nazi persecution and on reparations to Israel (e.g., the contributions in Herbst and Goshler 2019). The examples in (Klei 2017) provide a brief insight into the restitution practice of former community property.

⁸ Rees-Dessauer (2019, pp. 156–72) examines these and other phrases in the context of inaugurations of synagogues.

⁹ Rudolf Hillebrecht an die Jüdische Gemeinde Hannover am 25.03.1958, quoted from (Quast 2001, p. 400).

¹⁰ Cf. Norbert Prager, Jüdische Gemeinde Hannover an die Hauptstadt Hannover, z. Hd. Oberstadtdirektor Wiechert. 31.3.1958. Betr.: Grundstück Ecke Ellern- und Lönnsstrasse, Schreiben des Stadtbaurates Herrn Professor Hillebrecht vom 25.3.1958. In: Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP), D/Ha2/2.

¹¹ Fundamentally (Dürth 1992).

(Arbeitsstab für den Wiederaufbau bombenzerstörter Städte).¹² Also active during this time in Hanover was Hans Stoßberg (1903–1989), the person responsible for the planning of the *Siedlungs-Musterstadt Auschwitz* (Auschwitz Model Settlement) between 1940 and 1943, who went on to serve as head of the city planning office between 1948 and 1968.¹³

About 30 synagogues were erected between 1945 and 1989.¹⁴ In addition, three further aspects are relevant for a presentation of the developments at the time: the construction of synagogues reached its quantitative peak between the mid-1950s and the first half of the 1960s. However, new buildings were erected until the 1980s, in a time in which most Jewish communities were facing issues such as the aging population and loss of its members.

Non-Jewish architects designed the majority of the new buildings between the early 1950s and 1989. Only four Jewish architects were involved, two of them a number of times: Hermann Zvi Guttmann (1917–1977) realized six synagogue constructions and Helmut Goldschmidt (1918–2005) four.¹⁵ As mentioned before, Ernst Guggenheimer was able to design several additional prayer rooms in existing buildings after 1945, but only one entirely new building in Stuttgart. At the time of the inauguration, Guggenheimer was already 72 years old. Furthermore, it was not until the late 1980s that Alfred Jacoby (1950–), a Jewish architect, began to realize synagogues in Germany once more: in 1988, the Jewish community in Darmstadt inaugurated a new building designed by him. Jacoby is also the architect responsible for most synagogues, with eleven buildings to date.

In order to achieve an understanding regarding the developments of the post-war decades it is important to note that prayer rooms and community spaces were set up in preserved buildings spread in numerous cities. An example is found in the case of Aachen, in a former patrician house, which the Jewish community used for its own purposes from the mid-1950s until the inauguration of a new building in May 1995. This approach was illustrated furthermore in at least ten other cases. It was manifested several times in the form of a conversion of the former parish halls, for example in Braunschweig and Regensburg. However, a former Jewish orphanage (Fürth), a mourning hall (Koblenz) and an atelier house (Baden-Baden) were also used as prayer rooms.¹⁶ The conditions and decisions in the context of such projects have not yet been researched, but it can be concluded that this was a solution for small congregations that did not have sufficient (financial) support from local and/or state-level politicians and were given back buildings that offered them the possibility of converting rooms and altering spaces.

In at least seven cases Jewish communities were able to use preserved synagogue buildings as these had not been completely destroyed in November 1938 or during the Second World War. Well-known examples are the Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main, the Roonstraße Synagogue in Cologne and the Synagogue in Augsburg.¹⁷ However, these synagogues were often too large for the day-to-day requirements of the communities and far too costly in terms of maintenance and or rehabilitation. The Jewish community in Augsburg in this case, was only able to use a part of its building until the 1980's and had, among other things, a smaller prayer room set up there.

¹² See (Dorn 2017), especially: “Das Büro Gutschow 1937–1945,” pp. 71–115.

¹³ For the planning of the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp complex and the architects involved, see (Stimpel 2011).

¹⁴ See (Knufinke n.d.). After the redesign of the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland's website, (Central Council of Jews in Germany), the synagogue list wasn't published again. The quantitative data must be discussed in detail. Among other things, Knufinke includes the synagogue in Saarbrücken, which was inaugurated in 1951, although the city has only belonged to the Federal Republic politically since 1957 and economically since 1959.

¹⁵ Only the actual new building complexes, including a synagogue, are counted here. Guttmann also designed prayer rooms for preserved synagogues in Augsburg, Bayreuth and Fürth, while Goldschmidt was responsible for the reconstruction and conversion of the Roonstraße synagogue in Cologne. For Guttmann see (Klei 2017) and for Goldschmidt (Hagspiel 2010).

¹⁶ All the information is taken from the list given above in footnote 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Since only a few Jews lived in rural areas, preserved synagogues in villages and smaller towns remained in profane use by those who had benefited from forced sale until 1938/39 or were demolished when they no longer had any function.¹⁸

Decisive for the construction of new synagogues were the requirements of the communities, their financial abilities and which buildings or plots of land they could dispose of. Yet, the congregations could not act independently of the non-Jewish society and were especially bound to its political decision-makers. One issue was the provision of funds and, in particular, compensation payments. Urban policy was yet another factor influencing the choice of land, the aesthetic of the design and the size of constructions as well as the use of preserved architecture. This resulted in a non-Jewish society dictating the visibility and the representation of the Jewish present and past, heritage and history, reflected within the urban space. The following two examples illustrate the political options these non-Jewish societies had regarding “Jewish building” and the overall results of the actions finally taken.

1.2. Mannheim

In 1933, about 6400 Jews lived in the city of Mannheim; in May 1939, 2900, and in February 1940, about 2400 remained.¹⁹ The German National Socialists deported most of them in October 1940 to the Gurs camp in southern France, while others were transferred in the following years to extermination camps and sites in Poland and the former Soviet Union. A total of about 2200 Jews were murdered.²⁰ Before the National Socialists came to power, there were numerous Jewish businesses, a Jewish hospital, an orphanage founded in 1883 and two synagogues in the city: the main synagogue, built between 1851 and 1855, and the Lemle Moses Claus, an Orthodox center (Keller 2012). While the latter was completely destroyed by arson and plundering on 9 and 10 November 1938, and by the allied bombardments in 1944, the outer walls of the main synagogue centrally located in F2 13/15, including the main façade facing the street as well as the adjoining parish hall, remained intact.

The few survivors founded a community again after 1945 and from 1946 used the preserved former orphanage for their offices and a prayer room. However, the building offered inadequate conditions for their needs, so that the question of a possible conversion or a new building began to play a role at an early stage.

Until the mid-1950s, the actions of the city and especially of its senior mayor Hermann Heimerich (1885–1963, SPD), who had already been a member of the SPD between 1911 and 1933, towards the newly founded congregation concentrated on two aspects: dealing with the ruins of the former main synagogue and setting up a new congregation center together with a synagogue. In negotiations with the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) in the first half of the 1950s, among other things, the responsible authorities in the city attempted to facilitate an exchange and sale of land. In this manner, the Jewish community was to receive an area on which it could build and at least some funding.²¹

By 1950 at the latest, the departments of the city administration were considering granting the Jewish community money for the reconstruction of the synagogue ruins. Given the fact that the congregation had too few members and in consideration with construction’s large dimensions, this idea was finally abandoned.²² However, such a restoration could have been a unique process in the young Federal Republic. As mentioned earlier, there were synagogues prior to 1933 that had been preserved and could be possibly reused by the Jewish communities after 1945. These constructions

¹⁸ For the federal state of Hessen, the handling of the properties after 1945 is documented in (Altaras 2007).

¹⁹ See (Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim n.d.).

²⁰ The history of the Jews of Mannheim is the subject of several local historical studies, including (Keller 1995).

²¹ See e.g., Städtisches Vermessungs- und Liegenschaftsamt Mannheim an den Oberbürgermeister am 24.3.1955. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Kirchliche Angelegenheiten, Konfessionelle Gemeinden. Synagoge und Gemeindehaus der Jüdischen Gemeinde (Maximilianstraße 6). 4/1993 2082. 1955–1966.

²² Oberbürgermeister an Referat VIII. Mannheim. 11.9.1950. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Jüdische Kultusgemeinde. Verschiedene Angelegenheiten. 29/1970 468. 1950–1954.

were in poor condition and were partly destroyed at the time they were returned. However, none of them were so extensively damaged that only the ruins of outer walls (including the entrance façade facing the street) had survived. Although reconstruction was ruled out, in the coming months the city made an effort to develop concepts for the preservation and use of the ruins in order to increase the visibility of the destruction of the community. As a result, there were considerations to secure the walls and to construct a new building for a prayer room in the “courtyard”.²³ The necessary administrative rooms were to be housed once again in the adjoining former community house, which the municipality intended to acquire from JRSO for this purpose.²⁴ It was not until more than a year later, in December 1953, that these plans were disregarded, above all because of the financial support the federal government and the state Baden-Wuerttemberg failed to materialize:²⁵ the federal government refused funding on the grounds that such financial expenditures were a matter for the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg.²⁶ The state of Baden-Wuerttemberg argued that there was, among other things, a difficult budget situation, a possible “overlap with the state benefits from the global agreement of the former state of Württemberg-Baden with the JRSO”²⁷ and financial support that had already been provided on their part for the new building of a synagogue in Stuttgart.²⁸ Allegedly, it was “unreasonable” for the state to raise a further DM 150,000 to 200,000 for Mannheim in addition to the global agreement of DM 10 million and the expenses for the other congregations.²⁹ This did not mean that there was an intention to demolish the ruins. Rather, the administration discussed a proposal to make the interior of the building an accessible “memorial site” for the murdered Jews of Mannheim and to erect a memorial stone there.³⁰ The non-Jewish proponents, however, argued that the building’s remains were not only to be understood as a monument to the former Jewish population but in general as a symbol of “the frightfulness of the destruction brought about by political deception”.³¹ In this sense, the intention was to create a place of remembrance that—in view of the extensive destruction caused by the Allied bombardments—would include non-Jewish Germans into a sacrificial narrative. This idea, too, was not successful, and the property increasingly became an object of negotiation together with the plans for the construction of a new community center. However, as late as May 1955, the senior mayor spoke out against demolishing the ruins. His line of argument was focused on the well-being of the members of the Jewish community and Jewish emigrants, and he expressly opposed the JRSO. The JRSO had already agreed to the demolition, not least because it assumed that it would be able to sell the property sooner. In addition, the establishment of memorials commemorating the murdered Jews and preserving the destruction demonstrated in the buildings belonging to their community was not one of their tasks.³² In a retrospective presentation in the context of the inauguration of the new Jewish community center in 1957, it was said of Heimerich that he “refused to give the consent required under building law, to the removal of the façade until [...] the construction of an entirely new prayer hall for our Jewish fellow citizens was planned and

²³ Stadtbaudirektor an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 25.8.1952. In: *ibid.*

²⁴ Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 3.9.1952. In: *ibid.*

²⁵ Der Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim: Zur Stadtratssitzung am 1. Dezember 1953. 1.12.1953. In: *ibid.*

²⁶ Referat IV Abt. G an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 12.2.1953. In: *ibid.*

²⁷ “Überschneidung mit den Staatsleistungen aus dem Globalabkommen des früheren Landes Württemberg-Baden mit der JRSO”. Finanzministerium Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 25.2.1953. In: *ibid.*

²⁸ For example *id.* an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 5.8.1953. In: *ibid.*

²⁹ “nicht zumutbar”. Finanzministerium Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart an das Staatsministerium Baden-Württemberg am 5.10.1953. In: *ibid.*

³⁰ “Gedächtnisstätte”. Abschrift: Stadtverwaltung Mannheim, Hauptamt an das Referat VIII am 11.9.1954. Betr.: Ruine der Synagoge in F3. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Städtisches Hochbauamt. 3 Kultur. 1/1967 2101. 1954–56. Ruine der Synagoge F2.

³¹ “die Furchtbarkeit der Zerstörung durch politische Irreführung”. Städtisches Gartenbauamt an das Städtische Hochbauamt, Mannheim am 8.12.1954. In: *ibid.*

³² Letter: Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim. Wiesbaden am 27.5.1955. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Kirchliche Angelegenheiten, Konfessionelle Gemeinden. Synagoge und Gemeindehaus der Jüdischen Gemeinde (Maximilianstraße 6). 4/1993 2082. 1955–1966.

financially secure.”³³ In January 1956, the department for building (Hochbauamt) reported that the original remains of the construction had been completely removed.³⁴

In comparison with other German cities, the different plans for dealing with the ruins are remarkable, mainly since their use as a place of remembrance would not only have meant greater visibility, but also recognition of the fact that the remains of the construction could function as an important component in the commemoration. Commemorative signs for destroyed synagogues had already been in use in 1945 and 1946 in Frankfurt am Main and Düsseldorf, but only in the form of commemorative plaques with short texts. Further commemorative plaques were created only occasionally in the first four decades following the end of the war, and were then often difficult to find in urban areas. They were and still are, located partly above eye level and in places that are difficult to access and not frequently visited. The inclusion of preserved ruins in memorial sites was never carried out and the inclusion of (empty) properties was only implemented from the 1980s onwards, for example in memory of the Bornplatz Synagogue in Hamburg.

The cities and municipalities were often more interested in building over the central former synagogue properties; surprisingly often, parking lots were set up on them. The site for a new community building in Mannheim’s Maximilianstraße 6 was probably acquired in March 1955.³⁵ The construction work began on 23 July 1955.³⁶ Shortly before, the city council had approved DM 60,000 and the JRSO had agreed on the availability of the area.³⁷ The municipality had also bought the former orphanage for DM 70,000 in order to create a financial basis for the construction of a new building.³⁸ Despite numerous efforts by the municipal authorities, federal and state financial aid was repeatedly denied.³⁹

On 19 May 1957, a simple, single-story, modern building with a flat roof was inaugurated according to the plan by the Mannheim-based architect Wilhelm Schlechte. The façade facing the street was closed off on the right by a window extending over the entire height and covering about a quarter of the total area. To the left, a round window with colored glass interrupted the closed area. The prayer room was located behind it. The building also housed a meeting room and several offices. Only a few years later, there was not enough space for the required uses and the congregation requested the municipality’s support for an extension. In this case, too—Heimerich’s term as senior mayor had ended in 1955—help was provided quickly and comparatively bypassing the routine bureaucratic steps. Planning began in July 1963,⁴⁰ and the construction work only two months later in September.⁴¹ The city once again provided financial contribution.⁴² The documents suggest that it was thanks to Senior Mayor Heimerich that planning and implementation were pushed forward until 1955. Furthermore, it is noticeable from the multitude of file notes and received communications by the municipality administration in comparison to other cities, that there was not an apparent opposition to the various projects. This is due to a number of reasons: documents were not properly preserved, rejection was

³³ “die baurechtlich notwendige Zustimmung zur Abtragung der Fassade solange verweigert [hat], bis [...] der Bau eines neuen Betsaals für unsere jüdischen Mitbürger projektiert und finanziell abgesichert war.” Referat IV an das Hauptamt am 18.5.1957. Betr.: Zur Einweihung. In: *ibid.*

³⁴ Handwritten note: Hochbauamt Mannheim, Abteilung Pl. am 13.1.1956. Betr.: Synagoge F2. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Städtisches Hochbauamt. 3 Kultur. 1/1967 2101. 1954–56. Ruine der Synagoge F2.

³⁵ Städtisches Vermessungs- und Liegenschaftsamt Mannheim an den Oberbürgermeister am 24.3.1955. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Kirchliche Angelegenheiten, Konfessionelle Gemeinden. Synagoge und Gemeindehaus der Jüdischen Gemeinde (Maximilianstraße 6). 4/1993 2082. 1955–1966.

³⁶ Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim am 17.7.1956. In: *ibid.*

³⁷ Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim an Fritz Mayer am 19.7.1955. In: *ibid.*

³⁸ “finanziellen Grundstock für den Neubau”. Referat IV an das Hauptamt am 18.5.1957. Betr.: Zur Einweihung. In: *ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim an den Bürgermeister Dr. Martini der Stadt Mannheim am 8.7.1963. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Kirchliche Angelegenheiten, Konfessionelle Gemeinden. Synagoge und Gemeindehaus der Jüdischen Gemeinde (Maximilianstraße 6). 4/1993 2082. 1955–1966.

⁴¹ Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim an den Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim, Referat III am 24.9.1963. In: *ibid.*

⁴² Id. an die Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim am 26.7.1963. In: *ibid.*

communicated on other levels, participants did not dare to formulate them in the form of written letters and against the authorities plans. At the same time, however, the comparatively uncomplicated support provided, for example, as part of the necessary restructuring in the 1960s, is apparent.⁴³ In addition, by comparison, a difference in language and content can be noticeable; for example, in the letters from the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, not only does it rigorously reject the request for financial support, which the city of Mannheim repeatedly presented, but it did not even make the slightest effort to seek solutions to provide the Jewish community with some form of help. Moreover, when reading the documents, one notices that the city appears to be the main player. We can then conclude that the Jewish community was in a situation in which it could only react or refrain from reacting.

The Mannheim administration tried several times, but always in vain, to persuade the community and the Senior Council of the Baden Israelites to turn to the federal government for financial support.⁴⁴ In a letter to the municipal upper administrative council in March 1954, the senior mayor stated, among other things, that the plans for the new building had “neither been supported by the Mannheim Jewish community nor by the Senior Council of the Israelites and had therefore been rejected [by the federal state].” In addition, “the Jewish community had never shown any initiative in regards to the new building issue.”⁴⁵ Against this background, the commitment to and realization of the community center should be read as a matter of concern for the city. A similar development in which a municipal administration was so actively involved in the construction of a synagogue can only be observed in Mannheim and in the construction of a new Jewish community center in Fasanenstraße, West Berlin: the city was forthcoming in providing financial resources, albeit very limited in amount, and assumed ownership of the building. One result was that only about 20 months had passed between the decision for the new building and its inauguration, including an architectural competition and the clearance of the former synagogue site (Slevogt 2009).

1.3. Würzburg

The planning for the building of a new Jewish community center in Würzburg was much more difficult—and took longer. In 1933, a community of 2145 Jews lived in the city. On 16 January 1938, there were 1237, and on 18 June 1943, just 29, all of whom were married to non-Jewish partners. More than 2000 Jews were deported from the city and the surrounding region of Lower Franconia (Landkreis Würzburg 2013, p. 66). A total of 52 survivors returned to in 1945. Just 24 of them had previously belonged to the religious community (Ophir and Wiesemann 1979, p. 448). Until 1933/38, the Jewish community had numerous institutions and thus a large number of different buildings, including several prayer houses and rooms, a teachers’ seminar, a school, an old people’s home and a hospital. The large synagogue, inaugurated in 1841 and expanded in the 1920s, included a community center, a primary school, a ritual bath, a slaughterhouse, apartments and a weekday synagogue. The complex was centrally located within the compounds of the Residenzschloss and the cathedral. In November 1938, it was plundered and its interior destroyed. It was not until the air raids in March 1945 that large parts of the building itself were destroyed. In 1956, its remains were leveled. The area was transformed into a sports arena for the seminary students across the street. On 9 November 1964, a commemorative plaque (Flade 1996, p. 403) was placed on a wall in such a way that it was not visible to passersby. In 2003/04, the Würzburg diocese finally built a library and an archive on the site. In the backyard, a memorial is situated—which is not openly accessible to the public.

⁴³ Similar observations can be made regarding the support for the construction of the second new synagogue in the 1980s.

⁴⁴ Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mannheim an den Vorstand der Jüdischen Kultusgemeinde am 17.9.1953. In: Stadtarchiv Mannheim: Stadt Mannheim. Hauptverwaltung. Jüdische Kultusgemeinde. Verschiedene Angelegenheiten. 29/1970 468. 1950–1954.

⁴⁵ “weder von der Mannheimer Jüdischen Gemeinde noch vom Oberrat der Israeliten unterstützt und deshalb [vom Land] abgelehnt worden”/“die Jüdische Gemeinde nie eine Initiative in der Neubaufrage gezeigt.” Oberbürgermeister an den Oberverwaltungsrat Dr. Hahn am 10.3.1954. In: *ibid.*

Since 1957 at the latest,⁴⁶ the Jewish community had tried to find a site for a new synagogue through negotiations with the city and the JRSO. During this time, the congregation could only fall back on the preserved building of its old people's home, in which it furnished a prayer room next to living spaces for survivors. The building was then transferred to the Jewish community in the 1960s after long negotiations with the JRSO. The organization had also received the entire property of the former congregation from the city and sold it (Flade 1996, pp. 400–1). Probably at the beginning of 1959,⁴⁷ the municipal administration finally offered the post-war community a plot of land. This was a narrow area of 200 square meters on Valentin-Becker-Straße outside the city center, which was adjacent to the Jewish old people's home, an elevated railway line and the city ring (in planning at the time). New buildings were already being planned to neighbor the old people's home and on the property bordering it at the back. The offer was associated with further restrictions: the site was initially to be made available to the community for only 66 years by heritable building right and then by advance sale. In the draft contract, the city also specified under point 1 that the community “may erect and maintain a synagogue with community rooms as a single-story building adjacent to the Israelite Old People's Home and Hospital [...]”.⁴⁸ The surrounding buildings were (and remained in the following years) at least two stories but generally three to five stories tall. Apparently, the Jewish community was the only developer to be subject to such a restriction. Point 2 of the draft contract made it clear that the city itself was planning to rebuild an old people's home on a neighboring site with the *Stiftung Siechenhauspflege*. It therefore noted in the contract that “ill, infirm, frail and recovering persons will remain in the garden area” and that the Jewish community had to take this into consideration. Thus, not allowing “either an entrance or an exit to the building” on the side facing the municipal old people's home. “Furthermore, it should neither be possible to look into the owner's garden from inside the synagogue nor, vice versa, from the owner's garden inside the synagogue”.⁴⁹ In addition, the senior mayor at the time, Helmuth Zimmerer (1912–1984, Free Voters [Freie Wählerschaft]), specified that the exit/entrance of the synagogue must be in the direction of the Jewish old people's home.⁵⁰ These stipulations dictated strict architectural guidelines on top of an already existing, heavy regulation stemming from the size and layout of the site. In addition, the requirements meant that a visual relationship between two facilities, i.e., between Jewish and non-Jewish users, should be prevented. The new community building was to be constructed as a segregated body without windows on three sides, disregarding its (structural) surroundings. The congregation was required to isolate itself within its new building. Furthermore, the draft contract contained passages by which the city aimed to establish its right to increase the rent. These resulted in calculable costs for the congregation, which was already in a financially strained situation.⁵¹

The Jewish community started to look for an alternative in the form of another plot of land. These attempts—some of which resulted in concrete plans by the architect Hermann Zvi Guttman⁵²—failed

⁴⁶ Hermann Guttman an Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Würzburg, 24.11.1957. In: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. 2017/310/426.

⁴⁷ Israelitische Gemeinde Würzburg an Hermann Guttman, 25.01.1959. In: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. 2017/310/427–441.

⁴⁸ “im Anschluss an das Israelitische Alters- und Krankenhaus [...] eine Synagoge mit Gemeinderäumen als einstöckiges Gebäude errichten und unterhalten [darf].” Entwurf des Erbbaurechtsvertrags zwischen der Siechenhausstiftung und Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Würzburg und Unterfranken. Würzburg, 19.02.1959. In: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. 2017/310/400.

⁴⁹ “in dem anliegenden Garten kranke, sieche, gebrechliche und erholungsbedürftige Personen aufhalten werden,”/“weder Ein- noch Ausgang haben. Weiter darf weder vom Inneren der Synagoge in den Garten der Eigentümerin noch umgekehrt vom Garten der Eigentümerin in das Innere der Synagoge ein Einblick möglich sein.” In: *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Helmuth Zimmerer, Oberbürgermeister Würzburg, an Hermann Guttman, 13.03.1959. In: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. 2017/310/452.

⁵¹ Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Würzburg und Unterfranken an Hermann Guttman am 27.04.1959 nach einem Gespräch mit dem zuständigen Rechtsrat der Stadtverwaltung (Schindler). In: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. 2017/310/427–44.

⁵² In (Klei 2017, pp. 197–218), I present this aspect in detail as well as the entire process of the construction of a new synagogue in Würzburg.

due to the city's lack of support and had to be finally abandoned by 1962 at the latest. The congregation then planned to convert only the prayer room in the old people's home.⁵³ In mid-1964, it returned to the planning of a new building situated next to the old people's home. The municipality decided in autumn—on the initiative of Zimmerer—not only to provide a subsidy for the building, but also to act as the owner. There has been no indication so far as to whether the move was conducted in coordination with the Jewish council. The decision suggested that the municipality subsequently had sovereignty over the project and could take actions without the necessity of further negotiation. In addition, the municipality was thriving to present an example for other cities and claimed that its "population endorsed the decision because its decent members did not approve of the 1938 operation [the November Pogrom 1938, A.K.]".⁵⁴ Thus, the city created a narrative in which its inhabitant's participation in acts of exclusion, 'Aryanisation', humiliation and deportation could be denied and furthermore the notion of seemingly selfless "reparations" could be established. In this case, the discourse was established by a member of the perpetrator society, of whom Micha Brumlik already referred to in the quote presented at the beginning of the text: Senior Mayor Helmuth Zimmerer had been a member of the SA between February and June 1933, had been a member of the NSDAP from May 1933 and the SS from January 1934. In 1963, one year before Zimmerer pushed his proposal through in the city council, the anti-Semitic contents of his dissertation submitted to the University of Erlangen in 1936, "Race, Nationality, Citizenship of the Reich. A Contribution to the Ethnic Concept of State" (Rasse, Staatsangehörigkeit, Reichsbürgerschaft. Ein Beitrag zum völkischen Staatsbegriff) became known. This had no consequences for his political career: he remained senior mayor until 1968 and held various other municipal offices until his retirement in 1977. It was not until 2015—after a three-year examination—that a street named after him in 1988 was renamed (Jung 2015). Würzburg's case illustrates that encounters with Nazi perpetrators in day-to-day life took place also on a political level and could directly affect the life and future of the Jewish community.

In early 1964, Guttman designed diverse variants for a striking building in which facades' would feature Jewish symbols.⁵⁵ These symbols, however, should not only unmistakably refer to the Jewish community, but also embody a fundamental examination of the question regarding synagogue building after the Holocaust. At the time of the inauguration in March 1970, about 13 years after the first considerations for a new building, none of Guttman's initial ideas were recognizable due to the influence of the municipal authorities: starting in 1966, a simple and inconspicuous building was erected, its facades did not provide any indications of its function and the identity of the communities it would inhabit.

The example of Würzburg not only demonstrates that urban politics could delay the building projects of Jewish communities and impose limitations on its ideas. It also reveals the conditions under which Jewish architects in post-war Germany had to work at times: Hermann Zvi Guttman had worked for the Jewish community since 1957 and supported it in various aspects through participation in its projects. After 1964, he was successively forced out of building projects. Today, it can only be concluded that he was responsible for the synagogues' interior design, furnishing and mikveh. In 1965, Guttman wrote to the municipality about his perception of the municipal activities and the consequences regarding his work: "The outcome of such a procedure is obvious, and I am very sorry that the city of Würzburg is using its position of power as a provider of funds, to push aside a Jewish architect who has served the Jewish religious community more than accommodatingly for over six years. Furthermore, I the architect, would ultimately have the role of a *mashgiach* (supervisor), whose

⁵³ Cf. Hermann Schönwolf—Architekt BDA—an den Stadtrat—Bauaufsichtsamt—, 19.04.1962: Umbau im Israelitischen Altersheim Würzburg, Valentin-Becker-Str. 11. StA Würzburg, Archiv mit lfd. Nr.: 13197, Bauakte für das Anwesen Valentin-Becker-Straße 11. 1938 bis 1972, Israelitisches Krankenhaus, Israelitische Gemeinde Würzburg.

⁵⁴ "ein gutes Beispiel für andere Städte"/"Bevölkerung billige diesen Entschluss, weil ein anständiger Teil 1938 die damalige Aktion [das Novemberpogrom 1938, A.K.] nicht". Several articles appeared in the local media about this process, in which the city could generate was able to present itself as a supporter of the community. Among others, (R. 1964).

⁵⁵ See: Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Sammlung Hermann Zvi Guttman. U.a. 2017/314/189 bis 017/314/207.

responsibility is to supervise and make sure the city's work is kosher. [...] Sometimes it seems that even for the construction of a Jewish house of worship a Jew is not welcomed, especially one—irony of fate—whose repeatedly proven that he knows something about it.”⁵⁶

2. “Jewish Building” in the German Democratic Republic

Until 1990, eight Jewish communities existed in the GDR: in Dresden, Erfurt, Halle/Saale, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Leipzig, Magdeburg, East Berlin and Schwerin. Ten others, which had also been founded between 1945 and 1948, disbanded after a few years (Mertens 2001, p. 173). According to a census in October 1946, about 2600 people in the Soviet zone identified themselves as Jews (ibid., p. 172). In 1952/53, the number of parishioners dropped to less than 1000, after numerous Jews fled the GDR as a result of anti-Semitic campaigns and persecutions, among other things. In the decades to come, the Jewish communities were also affected by a marked ageing of the population. At the end of the 1980s, 365 people were registered as members (Wiltmann 1999, p. 282)—the vast majority being in East Berlin. On the one hand, many Jewish re-migrants and their descendants were not organized as members in their communities. On the other hand, cases are documented in which non-Jews were members.⁵⁷

Synagogues and Community Rooms. An Overview

One difference to the developments in the Federal Republic of Germany was that the construction projects of the municipalities were essentially completed by the mid-1950s. One exception was the construction of a new community center with a prayer room and apartments situated in (then) Karl-Marx-Stadt, (today Chemnitz), which was inaugurated in 1961.⁵⁸ It was located about 700 m (800 yards) south of the old synagogues' site but was less centrally integrated and had almost no public visibility. In addition to its locality, this was due to the fact that it was situated in a residential area, set back from the road and surrounded by a fence. The architecture presented no evidence of its use by a Jewish community. The two-story building with a saddle roof was reminiscent of a residential building in its façade design. In this manner, it was integrated into the surrounding buildings: row houses that were generously grouped into green spaces. Only a panel attached to the fence named the owner: Jewish Community/Karl-Marx-Stadt.

One of the prerequisites for the developments was the implementation of the command no. 82/48 of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) of 29 April 1948. Furthermore, the assets that the National Socialist state had seized from institutions were returned to their successor organizations on the condition they were classified as democratic.⁵⁹ As early as mid-1945, Jewish communities were able to reuse their former buildings property—above all cemeteries, (former) community centers and preserved synagogues. Along with the order, ownership was returned. East Berlin was an exception and there, ownership over the buildings to the Jewish community was not returned. This had consequences, among other things, for the community's influence over rentals and the retention of income. The existing congregations were also responsible for buildings and cemeteries in places in which no Jewish survivors had returned and/or new congregations had been formed.

⁵⁶ “Der Ausgang einer solchen Prozedure liegt auf der Hand und es tut mir sehr leid, daß die Stadt Würzburg ihre Machtposition als Geldgeber dahingehend ausnützt einen jüdischen Architekten, der die Israelitische Kultusgemeinde seit über 6 Jahren mehr als kulant bedient, beiseite zu schieben. Bei einer weiteren Entwicklung in dieser Richtung käme mir, dem Architekten, letztlich die Rolle eines ‚Maschgiachs‘ zu, der die Arbeiten der Stadt zu ‚kaschern‘ hat. [...] Manchmal scheint es, daß sogar zum Bau eines jüdischen Gotteshauses ein Jude nicht gern gesehen wird, noch dazu einer—Ironie des Loses—der es mehrfach bewiesen hat, daß er davon etwas versteht.”

⁵⁷ See e.g., (Brenner 1995, S. 216–26).

⁵⁸ The building was demolished in favor of a new building inaugurated in 2002 (architect: Alfred Jacoby). Material traces of or commemorative signs for the GDR building were not integrated.

⁵⁹ See e.g., Bundesarchiv, BArch DX 1/667.

Against this background, the Jewish communities often used existing buildings in addition to the aforementioned new community center in Karl-Marx-Stadt: in Dresden, they set up their offices and a prayer room in a house on Bautzener Straße in Neustadt. Other rooms were rented out as living quarters, not only to Jews. From 1920, the residential and commercial building belonged to the Jewish couple Louis and Henriette Schrimmer, who ran a factory for shoe polish and chemical products in the rear building. The Jewish religious community acquired the small complex in 1937, and from April 1940 onwards it had to serve as a so-called *Judenhaus*.⁶⁰ At the New Jewish Cemetery, a building was erected on the site of the destroyed funeral hall. It could be used both for funerals and as a synagogue and was inaugurated in June 1950. Its status within the (architectural) history of the GDR communities is not entirely clear in the research literature to date and in public perception: publications variously state that the former mourning hall was “restored or rebuilt” (“wiederhergestellt bzw. umgebaut”, [Alicke 2017](#)), “reconstructed” (“rekonstruiert”, [Freundeskreis Dresdner Synagoge e.V. 2013](#)), “converted” to a synagogue (“umgebaut”, [Knufinke 2008](#), p. 108), “still preserved today after many changes” (“nach vielen Veränderungen heute noch erhalten”, [Knufinke 2007](#), p. 175)⁶¹ or “the first new synagogue building of the GDR” (“erste Synagogen-Neubau der DDR”, [Ullrich 2001](#), p. 41). The documents themselves⁶² do not (so far) provide a clear picture: the preserved plans fail to reveal the exact extent of the destruction of February 13, 1945, and the scope of the structural remains and their possibility of reintegration within the compounds of the new building. However, it is obvious that the designs of the buildings’ facades and roof, for example, do not match the previous building. However, the arrangement of the rooms follows the former floor plan, so that it can be assumed that the new building was erected on the preserved foundation walls of the destroyed funeral hall.⁶³ In addition, a second building is claimed to be “the only new synagogue building after the Second World War” ([Landeshauptstadt Erfurt, Stadtverwaltung n.d.](#)) on the territory of the former GDR: in Erfurt, a new building was opened on 13 August 1952, according to plans by the architect Willy Nöckel. Regardless of whether this status is appropriate or not, the building has two other unique selling points: it was erected on a part of the area on which the destroyed synagogue in 1938 was situated, thus directly relates to an aspect of the history of the community and its destruction. In addition, a complex housing integrating the synagogue and the community center was built. Such multifunctional complexes, which were common in the FRG, were not usually built in the GDR. Due to the return of the various properties, the municipalities were neither forced nor required to centralize their uses in one location.

However, overall, conversions predominated: in Halle an der Saale, the building inaugurated in 1894 on the Humboldthain cemetery grounds was converted and used as a synagogue from 1953. The board set up the community center in a former residential and commercial building on Große Märkerstraße. It had been acquired in 1918 by its predecessor community and, from the end of the 1940s, continued to house not only the community offices, but also apartments for non-Jews. Furthermore, the municipal council was able to use the former cemetery building on the Dessauer Straße cemetery opened in 1925—which from September 1939 had served as an old people’s home, *Judenhaus* and internment center for subsequent deportation to the extermination camps and sites in Eastern Europe—as a residential building and an old people’s home. It was leased for the city for those purposes among others, from 1 January 1951.⁶⁴ In Leipzig, the community used a preserved synagogue: the Brodyne synagogue, which was built in a residential building at the beginning of

⁶⁰ On 7 November 2018, a commemorative sign pointing out the history of the building was inaugurated. Cf. ([Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsen 2018](#)).

⁶¹ Later ([Knufinke 2007](#), p. 176), it is said that “it was rebuilt in a changed form” (“man es in veränderter Form wieder aufbaute”).

⁶² For example stored in Stadtarchiv Dresden.

⁶³ For a description of the original building, see ([Knufinke 2007](#), pp. 176–77).

⁶⁴ Jüdische Gemeinde zu Halle/Saale an das Finanzamt Halle/Saale-Stadt—Bewertungsstelle am 26.06.1951. In: Centrum Judaicum Archiv (CJA), CJA 2A2 1850. [Dietzel \(1991](#), p. 32), however, states that the building stood empty in 1945 and was confiscated by the Soviet authorities. It then served as accommodation for refugees and SED party headquarters, then it was again unused and returned to the community in 1953. It was then repaired and used as a Jewish old people’s home

the 20th century by the Talmud Torah Association, was not destroyed in November 1938 due to its inclusion in the perimeter of a block. Nonetheless, the interior decoration was demolished by the perpetrators. The synagogue was reopened on 28 October 1945. The community also owned a building nearby, in which offices and a prayer room were accommodated.⁶⁵ In Magdeburg, the congregation had to move several times at first after 1945. Since 1968—to the present day—the Jewish community has had a former residential building in Gröperstraße at its disposal. With its foundation in 1948, the newly founded Jewish community in Schwerin received two small buildings in the city center. In the 19th century and in the first third of the 20th century, the buildings had fulfilled different functions for the congregation, among others as a mikveh and an Israelite school. The former synagogue situated in the inner courtyard was demolished at the end of 1938 and was not rebuilt after 1945.⁶⁶ Ultimately, in East Berlin, the congregation was permitted to use the preserved synagogue in Rykestraße again, where the first service after the Second World War ended, took place on 29 July 1945. In the following years, extensive restoration work had to be carried out, and on 30 August 1953, the synagogue was rededicated. In the following decades, it was renovated several times (Simon 2004). Furthermore, the congregation used part of the preserved areas of the former synagogue complex in Oranienburger Straße for offices and as a community center. Other rooms were rented out. Here, too, various renovation and conversion work was carried out until the 1980s. From the summer of 1958, only a section of the synagogues' façade survived. After the destruction of the interior in November 1938 and of the building fabric in 1943 as a result of the Allied bombings, additional parts of the construction's substance were removed in 1958. In 1966, a commemorative plaque was attached to the surviving ruins, making it a memorial and increasing its visibility. Over the next 23 years, the community, politicians and town planners repeatedly considered the manner in which they would deal with the historical remains. In the early 1980s there were recurring discussions regarding the possibilities of extending (or reconstructing) the rearward building parts of the ruins and the possible set up of a Jewish museum.⁶⁷ The ruins had already been acknowledged and listed as a historical monument in September 1977.⁶⁸

Only at the end of the 1980s and with a view to the 50th anniversary of the so-called *Reichspogromnacht* did the plans become concrete and led, among other things, to the foundation of the *Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin—Centrum Judaicum*. In addition to the synagogues in Leipzig and Berlin Rykestraße, synagogues had also been preserved in some villages and smaller towns in the GDR. They were often also owned and in the use of those who had benefited from the forced sales until 1938/39. As a rule, these owners had to pay compensation to the congregations to which the property was returned in 1948. In this case, as well as others already mentioned, the buildings were neglected or abandoned, it could result in demolition after 1945.⁶⁹

An exception was the synagogue in Görlitz, a centrally located building inaugurated in 1911 that had once been able to accommodate 280 men and 220 women. In November 1938, only its interior was destroyed, and it went on to serve the nearby Gerhard Hauptmann Theater as a warehouse for scenery in the following years. After 1945, the former synagogue was returned to the Jewish community in Dresden. However, similar to the few Jews still living in the town of Görlitz and its surroundings, the

before it was rented to the city in 1961, which then also operated a residence for senior citizens. Later it was also used as an institution for mentally challenged youths.

⁶⁵ A short insight into the history of the house is given by Held (1995, pp. 12–13).

⁶⁶ It was not until 2008 that a new building was erected in its place. Cf. (Von Mecklenburg n.d.).

⁶⁷ For example: Hauptverwaltung der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlin an den Oberbürgermeister von Berlin, Eberhard Krack am 20.2.1981. Betr.: Synagogenruine 104 Berlin, Oranienburger Str. 30. In: CJA 5A1 636, Bl. 3. The file contains several letters on this issue.

⁶⁸ Denkmalerklärung. Magistratsbeschuß vom 21.9.1977. Rat des Stadtbezirks Berlin-Mitte für Jüdische Gemeinde von Berlin: Das Ensemble Oranienburger Straße. Oranienburger Str. 29/30—Ruine der Synagoge. In: CJA 5A1 675, Bl. 60.

⁶⁹ See numerous examples for Thuringia in the Zentralarchiv zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland (Heidelberg), including the former synagogues in Bibra B1/38 551 and Schwarza B1/38 552.

Jewish community had no use for it.⁷⁰ The Dresden community initially tried to utilize it and offer the synagogue as an exchange for another plot of land or building.⁷¹ This tactic failed to succeed and at the end of the 1950s, long-lasting disputes between the Jewish community and the city of Görlitz arose. These disputes were based on the legality of a purchase contract from 1957 as well as additional plans to convert the building into a chamber theater stage.⁷² One of the difficulties in finding a solution was that the city had neither the need for rooms for cultural or social purposes nor the financial means to repair and extend the building. Thus, in the 1960s, alternative concepts or the use of the building were discussed. The documents disclose that the City Council and the Department of Church Affairs (Referat für Kirchenfragen) were interested in preserving the building and in addition establishing further function that would do justice to its former use. Increasingly, plans to preserve the synagogue as a memorial, were being developed. Among other things, a permanent exhibition for the Jewish victims of fascism was to be set up there as well. Due to the building's proximity to Poland, there were promises to establish a place of international political importance and "a center of attraction for Görlitz." It was also intended to be used to "educate the youth and keep adults' conscience active [...]"⁷³ It was not until 1963 that a valid purchase contract was finally concluded with the municipality. However, the building continued to deteriorate in the following years. The city and the state authorities apparently lacked the financial means to carry out further extensive renovations. To make matters worse, none of the initially intended uses could have been implemented. Even though this may not have been due to available funds, there seems to have been a lack of (memorial-) political interest at the time. However, regarding the debates over the possible concepts and purposes of the buildings in the 1950s and early 1960s, it is striking that only cultural and memorial sites were considered. However, the building initiative failed to prevail all together. In addition, and although it was foreseeable that newly-founded Jewish communities would not settle in the city, there were no apparent plans to demolish the synagogue.

3. "Jewish Building": A Concept

After the Holocaust, the surviving Jews were faced with the question of how they could continue to live within the post-Nazi societies of the German states. Whether and how the experiences of deprivation of basic human rights, persecution and murder between 1933 and 1945 can be taken into account by the design of buildings, does not seem to have been a subject of debate in the post-war decades. So far there has been no evidence found that can point out a possible debate between the architects (or community representatives) of the post-war decades regarding the question of the design of synagogues, Jewish community centers, and other buildings. Nevertheless, the newly erected buildings are marked by the consequences of the systematic murder of Jews: they were considerably smaller and more restrained than the synagogues built in Germany from the second half of the 19th century onwards. Visible references to the Jewish community and uses were largely omitted, and an architectural language that incorporated references to the history of the communities failed to develop. The strong dependence on German politics, its ideas and willingness to make concessions described here, demonstrates that the design of the building is not solely serving the demands of the communities: the actions from the non-Jewish post-war society's side or rather lack of it, dictated the

⁷⁰ See among others Reisebericht. 27. und 28. April 1955. In: Archiv Zentrum Judaicum Berlin (CJA), 2A2, 255, Bl. 21–26, here Bl. 24.

⁷¹ See among others Jüdische Gemeinde zu Dresden an das Ministerium des Inneren des Landes Sachsen—Amt zum Schutze des Volkseigentums am 5. Juni 1952. Betr. Grundstück in Görlitz, Otto-Müller-Str. 3. In: Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden. 11430 Bezirkstag/Rat des Bezirkes Dresden 7563.

⁷² Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Görlitz an die Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen (Eggarth) am 28.1.1959. In: Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden. 11430 Bezirkstag/Rat des Bezirkes Dresden Nr. 10863, Bl. 882.

⁷³ "einen Anziehungspunkt für Görlitz"/"Erziehung der Jugend und der Wachhaltung des Gewissens für die Erwachsenen [...] dienen." Aktennotiz: Referat Kirchenfragen (Breitmann) an den 1. Stellvertreter des Vorsitzenden, Dresden am 24.1.1963. In: Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden. 11430 Bezirkstag/Rat des Bezirkes Dresden Nr. 10863, Bl. 868.

possibilities Jewish communities had in the context of designing their buildings. This also becomes clear in comparison between unrealized designs and architectures actually produced. In the first half of the 1960s, for example, Hermann Zvi Guttmann produced designs for the synagogue in Würzburg according to which the building would have stood out in its surroundings by its form and unmistakably drawn attention to the Jewish community with symbols and inscriptions. As described, in Würzburg and in other cases Guttmann was unable to assert himself with such ideas. Nonetheless, these drafts are an indication that there could have been other possibilities for constructing a synagogue after the Holocaust in Germany and that Jewish parties did in fact formulate such plans.

How is it possible to integrate these findings and link them together with architectural historical research on synagogue construction and Jewish construction projects more strongly? Can the term “Jewish architecture” be used for such an investigation? Examples found in architecture articles and researches illustrate that it is often initially used for the classification of an architectural genre: the architect of the synagogue in Mainz (inaugurated 2010), Manuel Herz, argued in an interview that Judaism—in contrast to Christianity—due to its history and the Diaspora, “never found its own architectural culture or developed its own building tradition” (Hübsch 2010, p. 57).⁷⁴ Jews rather merely borrowed the architectural language of their respective countries of residence. Herz restricts himself here to synagogue constructions. He refers to the “Jewish architecture” subject exclusively in terms of the historical construction process stressing the perspective of tradition and its influence on such building projects.

Salomon Korn designed the Jewish Community Center in Frankfurt am Main (inaugurated in 1986). In addition, in 1988 he published the first comprehensive treatise on synagogue constructions in Germany after 1945. He writes that there is “neither a characteristic to the architectural style nor is there a special architecture”⁷⁵ for synagogues (Korn 1988, p. 292). The architectural historian Ulrich Knufinke, further claims that Jewish architecture begins with the integration of Jewish symbols such as the Star of David, the Tent of David and the Temple. Knufinke symbolically perceives the new synagogue buildings as architecture which indicates the state of German-Jewish history after the Second World War (Knufinke 2010, p. 51). In his perception, these buildings are defined as “Jewish Buildings” not because of their functional use, but rather their symbolic and polemic role among gentile population as well as their ambiguous presence in the urban scenery.

Historian Rosenfeld (2011) examines in his study “Building after Auschwitz Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust” ways in which buildings are permeated by Jewish historical memory. Rosenfeld is therefore claiming that ‘Jewish architecture’ receives its attributed meaning merely by the architects stating it as so and the perception of the public. The attribution is thus produced and shaped in a discourse with the media.

This brief insight illustrates that the term ‘Jewish architecture’ is perceived on the one hand as a stylistic approach often applied to the religious functions of buildings and—on the other hand following Rosenfeld’s perception—as an act of actors. Both of these approaches have one thing in common, and that is the reference to the existing buildings.

This article encourages an expansion of understanding related to the term “Jewish building”. It aims to distinguish between a purely stylistic approach and a traditional approach regarding the building’s history. In addition, further aspects for research and perception should be brought into focus: In addition to the synagogues, this essay has drawn attention to the importance of Jewish community centers. Jewish communities had and still have to carry out numerous other construction tasks, including cemetery buildings, old people’s homes, youth centers, schools, kindergartens and monuments. At times, after 1945, they were also sometimes responsible for the (re-)use of preserved buildings from former Jewish estates. Including such building tasks in investigations opens up a space

⁷⁴ “nie zu einer eigenen Architekturkultur gefunden oder eine eigene Bau-Tradition entwickelt”.

⁷⁵ Weder “einen charakteristischen Baustil noch eine besondere Architektur gibt”.

for understanding the history of Jewish communities beyond the religious practice of their members. It expands the view over the historical context of the construction activities and thus also on the needs of the congregations. Furthermore, investigations should include as a central category, the actions, and inaction of the non-Jewish society around the Jewish communities, which determined the ability of Jewish architects to build. The fact that this was a society of perpetrators who had engaged in the exclusion, deprivation of rights, persecution, expulsion, deportation and murder of Jews only a few years earlier is relevant to any survey of the post-war decades.

These considerations explicitly incorporate Rosenfeld's approach. However, they suggest that the analysis of both the constructional and retrospective reception of architecture in Jewish use that had been created and/or preserved should be linked more closely to concrete cases of architecture in their materiality and their respective complex construction histories. By this means it is possible to understand and relate the constructions that result from the attributions of meaning by actors to concrete cases of architecture.

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