DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed by myself and is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted previously for any other degree.
The Frauenkirche being re-constructed, as it appeared in 2003. The inserted black stones derive from the original building which was destroyed in February 1945; the white stones are new ones.

(photo: Just, Bauplatz Dresden, p. 32)
PRESERVE AND REBUILD
The Built Environment, Status Transformations and Identity Construction in Eastern Germany after Reunification

Doctoral Thesis
by
Victoria Knebel

submitted to the University of Edinburgh
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Sociology
August 2005
ABSTRACT

The reunification of Germany in 1990 has prompted far-reaching debates about German identity, history and tradition. One framework for these debates is provided by the extensive urban development and building activities which have commenced in Eastern Germany since 1990. In a case study of the city of Dresden, this thesis explores the complex symbolic meanings of these building processes through an analysis of the social field of preservationism and urban planning. This field provides the setting for status struggles between East and West German elites, and for power contests over the symbolic control over competing identity narratives - local, East German and pan-German - attached to the Dresden built environment. These processes will be traced from the time of the GDR when the communist state officials were challenged in their absolute power by oppositional preservationists, through to the present time of reunified Germany, when the same preservationists have to contend with the representatives of the new political system. The thesis aims to contribute to the analysis of the German reunification process, as well as more generally to a better sociological understanding of the role of the built environment for identity construction and for social power contests.

Keywords: preservationism, built environment, power symbols, German reunification, status groups, civil society, identity, nostalgia.
I would like to thank my two supervisors, David McCrone and Jonathan Hearn, for their great support during the last four years. Their energetic advice, keen criticism and inspiring discussions made the writing of this PhD thesis a highly rewarding experience for me.

Much intellectual encouragement has also been provided by all those friends and fellow students in Edinburgh, Dresden and Leipzig who helped me greatly through the sincere interest they showed for my research, and who made me see many things much more clearly. The same is true for my wonderful extended family, with whom I shared many heated late-night discussions on Dresden, preservationism and politics.

My research has been funded by the ESRC and the Alfred-Freiherr-von-Oppenheim-Stiftung, for which I am most grateful.

My greatest thanks, however, go to all those Dresdeners who shared with me their time and their enthusiasm for Dresden and its history of urban development, and readily provided access to their personal files of correspondence, collections of newspaper cuttings and memorabilia. I dedicate this thesis to them and their untiring commitment to their city.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings and Social Power</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preservationist Field</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review: Buildings as Identity Symbols</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and Sources</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brief Chapter Outline</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Dresden Myths: Local Identity Narratives</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Kind of a City is Dresden</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History: The Baroque City</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cultural City</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresden Elites: the Bildungsbürger</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Narratives in Changing Contexts</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Preservation of Space: Buildings, Preservationism and Oppositional Identities in the GDR</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings as Important Identity Symbols after the War</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDR Cultural Policies and Preservationism</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self-Proclaimed Bürgertum</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-German Nationalism</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxon Nationalism</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 1989 - 1990: Political Transformations and the Symbol Frauenkirche</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Civil Rights Movement of the 1980s</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Transformations of 1989 - 1990</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding the Frauenkirche or Preserving the Ruin?</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Frauenkirche as Citizens’ Church: Claiming Civil Society</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Constellations in the Frauenkirche</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Frauenkirche Project as the Endeavour of a “Citizens' Initiative”</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Contra-Citizens’ Initiative: the Pro-Silbermann Group</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versions of Civil Society</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Competing “Civil Societies” in Reunified Germany</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Waldschlößchen Bridge: Who Cares Best for Dresden</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Background of the Bridge Debate</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pro-Bridge Faction</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Anti-Bridge Campaigners</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local versus Global Identity Narratives</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Anti-Bridge Protests and the Legacy of 1989</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Remembering the Past: Nostalgia as Empowerment</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Aesthetics of the Built Environment in East and West</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing Traditions of Memory</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Past as a Source of Empowerment</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Nostalgia and Agency</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Interviews and Documentary Sources</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

When the two German states were "re-unified" in 1990, an epoch of building activity of hitherto unimagined dimensions started. Berlin emerged as the "biggest building site in Europe"; millions of households in Eastern Germany had their living quarters renovated. Dresden, which had been completely destroyed in the war, has a particularly large share in these building activities. Except for some suburban quarters which had been spared by the war, and for a handful of landmark buildings which had been reconstructed shortly afterwards, large parts of the city centre lay bare. Only now many of the empty spaces in the city centre are being redeveloped, and some former landmark buildings are being re-erected according to historical plans. These projects are not carried out quietly, but provoke much emotional response amongst Dresdeners, and are often accompanied by impassioned disputes. Regularly citizen initiatives are spontaneously founded to promote one cause or to protest against another. The constant flaring up of heated arguments in Dresden about its buildings and city planning has provoked much attention, sometimes derogation and ridicule, in the national media. In Dresden itself, recently a columnist asked "What is it about this Streitkultur ("culture of dispute") of ours? Why do issues which elsewhere prompt a slight raising of an eyebrow at best, tend to explode so ferociously in Dresden?" (DNN 7/03/2002). This is also the question which I will address in this thesis. There are some features to these disputes, and to the modes of how they are carried out, which make them very interesting also from a sociological point of view.

I will argue that the Dresden building debates provide an interesting case study of how East Germans conceptualise their identities in the newly unified Germany, and the ensuing political and social changes which they are living through. For not only are the Dresden rebuilding debates about the reconstruction of Dresden's "public space" in a very literal and physical sense, but they also take place at a time when East German social statuses, values and traditions have to contend with those of Western Germany. The Dresden rebuilding projects provide a good case study for this, because they are situated at an intersection where East and West German elites meet: local interest groups deriving from the oppositional cultural elites and civil rights circles of the GDR,
urban planners and local preservationists, (West German) financial investors and urban developers, and old and new political elites all compete for a say in the rebuilding process, each with different aims and interests. Moreover, Dresden local and West German national elites each competently claim the buildings on which I will focus in this thesis as symbols for their own respective identity narratives. In a sense, the building projects therefore also provide a nice allegory of the reorderings of "social space" (cf. Lefebvre 1991; see also Brüggemann 2002) spurred by the reunification of Germany. This thesis will focus on these relations between symbolism, status struggles and identity construction. Using the Dresden building activities as a case study, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the German reunification process, and more generally wants to explore the social processes through which the built environment comes to be attached with complex symbolic meanings.

Dresden’s present building situation has its prehistory in the year 1945, when Dresden was bombed, just weeks before the end of the war, and eighty percent of the city was destroyed in one single night. Dresden’s once densely built urban landscape was reduced to rubble, and was further destroyed during the 40 years of communism. With 1989/90 and its changed political and economical situation, the possibility of rebuilding the still largely empty spaces of the city centre was raised: for the first time since 1945, rebuilding on a major scale became not just possible, but immediately imminent. This occasions fundamental thoughts of how this should be done: should there be a historically authentic rebuilding of buildings destroyed in the war? Should GDR buildings in the city centre be renovated or demolished? What should Dresden look like in the future? Should there be a modern urban concept, or should the pre-war image be resurrected, and how far could or should there be compromise? As the often very controversial public debates about the rebuilding of the destroyed baroque inner centre show, more is at stake than mere specialist questions of urban development. The question of what to build, to rebuild or not to build leads to complex examinations of one’s own history, in which the myth of the beautiful “Elb-Florence” and the trauma of destruction are interwoven with complex questions of guilt and victim identities.

In Dresden, architecture and building matters are therefore medium and symbol for more general German discourses on how to come to terms with the past, history, and identity.
View of the Dresden old town across the river Elbe, as it appeared in the 1930s. In the middle, there is the Frauenkirche, the court cathedral and the royal palace (from left to right). (photo: Deutsche Fotothek Dresden)
In a general German context, 1945 has been talked of as “zero hour”. In Dresden, this radical temporal discontinuity seemed to be paralleled by an equally spatial discontinuity: 1945 also created a kind of “ground zero“. Nothing was left after 1945 of the pre-war Dresden, all that was left seemed to be “empty space”, and 1990, for the first time, provided the challenge to “fill” this empty space with buildings and urban life. While the myth of “zero hour” has been heavily criticised - the German author Günther Grass famously wrote of 1945 that “there was no collapse, no absolute beginning, just sluggish and murky transitions” (Grass 1980: 23) - the Dresden myth of empty space seems more difficult to reject: for after all, physical solidity was turned into nothing in 1945, and after 1990 everything - new contemporary buildings, historical rebuilding, all degrees of compromise between the two - only becomes possible, because in many cases there is nothing there. And yet, this situation of ultimate freedom and infinite possibilities which often is enthusiastically broached by avant-garde architects and urban planners, is deceptive.

For empty as the Dresden city centre space may appear physically, it is symbolically crowded. Dresden is a place where memory of the past is everywhere. The bookstores are full of illustrated books on “Dresden as it used to be”, far outnumbering those on contemporary Dresden. Tourists are shown, as a substantial part of any guided tour, early documentary films from the 1920s, guiding the audience through the baroque streets. And even young Dresdeners, born thirty years or so after the war, usually are able to point out the exact location of buildings and street-routes which they never knew in reality: sometimes it seems that when people, no matter from which generation, conjure up an image of Dresden in their minds, it will be rather the pre-war Dresden than the present one, so that these images seem to be much more real than the “real” Dresden out there. But more than this, these images tend to have symbolic meanings attached to them: the fact of the destruction is bound up in multilayered narratives of guilt and victimhood, the baroque images conjure up narratives of Dresden’s one-time status as a royal capital and cultural centre of European stature, which again is interrelated with narratives of Dresden’s decline and presumed lapse into parochialism. These local narratives which find their point of focus in Dresden’s past buildings and its present seemingly “empty space” enter into complex relationships with greater German narratives, so that versions of national identity are constructed and modified from the particular viewpoint of
A model of Dresden in the 1990s, comprising the same part of the old town centre as the 1930s photo on p.3. White buildings are already existing ones; brown buildings mark planned projects. About half of the centre is demarcated building land. On the left, there is the already completed royal palace with the court cathedral; on the right, the brown Frauenkirche surrounded by the Neumarkt. (Photo: courtesy of the Stadtmuseum Dresden)
one particular place, which uses its particular symbols, traditions and circumstances, to apply them to the understanding of greater contexts like the reunified German nation. After all then, there is not as much empty space in Dresden as it might seem at first glance.¹

In Dresden, the truism that the present is the vantage point from which we look two-directionally towards the past and the future, is visualised as a temporary standpoint of physically empty ground, from where one can look back at the built urban landscape that once was, and look forward, whether with hope or fear, to the new buildings which will arise in the next five or ten years. In my thesis, I am interested in the ways in which Dresdeners are aware of this still unfixed period, how they make sense of it, and how they construct their Dresden and German identities in this situation. What narratives of the historical events which led to this situation do they tell? And more importantly: where do these narratives derive from, who is telling them and to which ends? And how exactly is this collective memorising “taking place”? What exact role are buildings playing in this process? These are all questions which I will explore in this thesis.

The Dresden building debates provide an intriguing case study for a sociological exploration of buildings as identity symbols, because they take place in a context of rapid political and social change: they flare up at a time, when the population of the ex-GDR is undergoing a process of identity reconstruction triggered by the necessity to adjust to life in the very new social and political system of unified Germany. As has often been pointed out, questions of identity become especially urgent and significant to the individual during such times of change. As I will show, the building matters in this context do not just provide a medium through which memories and historical traditions are discussed, but they are also a symbol for power struggles in Dresden society. In exploring these issues, I hope to contribute not only to an understanding of a particular chapter of post-war Dresden local history, but also to a more general sociological understanding of the role of the built environment for identity construction and for social power contests.

My thinking about the complex power relations in German post-¹ The obvious point should also be made that, although the Dresden city centre may seem empty compared to the dense urban fabric which had been there before the war, there actually do exist some buildings in Dresden: as I will discuss in the course of the thesis, some of the landmark buildings along the river Elbe which gave Dresden its famous silhouette have been rebuilt soon after the war, and there are new buildings from the socialist era. What ever is being built now will enter into a dialogue with these buildings.
unification society has been inspired by Max Weber’s concept of status groups. Weber is concerned with the instrumentalisation of “lifestyle” issues by particular social groups in order to demarcate themselves from other groups and substantiate their own powerful position in society (Weber 1970; see also Giddens 1971; Beetham 1985; Sterbling and Zipprian 1997). I will argue that this concept can be usefully applied to elite groups in Dresden who were oppositional to the GDR state, and who confirmed their own group identity through the preservation of buildings and particular “cultural” values, which they successfully staged against the cultural policies of the GDR state. In this context, I also found Bourdieu’s redevelopment of Weber’s thinking helpful, particularly his use of the concepts of “cultural capital” and social “distinction” for capturing forms of social order and their subversion, on which I will draw loosely (Bourdieu 2000; see also Eder 1989; Engler 2004).

The exploration of the question how this particular East German status group struggles to find an influential position in the newly ordered society of post-unification Germany has led me to the concept of “civil society”, which I treat as the structural context of these status struggles. In referring to civil society, I am not so much interested in its meaning as the broad sphere of public life between state institutions and private life (see Gellner 1994; Hall 1995; Bryant 1993), nor as the network of voluntary associations (Putnam 1993; Backhaus-Maul 1998), but rather in an understanding of civil society (inspired by Antonio Gramsci) as a sphere of power struggle: as the influential sphere of the intellectuals who have the power to create or withhold public consent on behalf of a particular ruling group, and whose powerful position can therefore be contested by rivalling groups who in their turn may help legitimating or delegitimising a different ruling group (Gramsci 1971; Bobbio 1989; see also Ely 1994; Kumar 1994 and Hearn 2001). In this understanding of the term, the concept of civil society seems particularly apt to provide a theoretical framework for my exploration of status struggles in Dresden. I will argue that the East German preservationist status group can be regarded as an instance of an oppositional GDR civil society group\(^5\) which withheld consent

\(^5\) For the widely debated question of whether a kind of civil society could have existed in the authoritarian communist states of central and eastern Europe, see for example Hann and Dunn (1996); Kubik (1996). However, most of this literature focuses on the non-existence of a free, non-state-controlled public sphere as a pre-condition for civil society to develop. However, as I will discuss in more detail in chapter 2, also a party-controlled society like that of the GDR was structured according to more complex principles than a single focus on political hierarchies would suggest: as I will show, one of these was the formation of status groups which acted as a kind of civil society delegitimating the GDR.
from the communist state and originally helped legitimise Kohl's CDU-dominated unified Germany. In the later chapters, I will explore how this particular social group in Dresden today engages with rivalling West German civil society groups in a kind of "status struggle" for the most influential civil society position in the newly structured post-unified German society, each propagating different values and identity narratives, and ultimately representing different versions of political power.  

The discursive framework within which these status struggles occur is provided by the different versions of history and memory which the contestants propagate. In particular, the Dresden preservationists treat local historical buildings as identity symbols which contest dominant versions of German national history and identity. Through the preservation of buildings, narratives of the local past are mobilised and portrayed as a source of empowerment. In order to approach these processes analytically, the concept of nostalgia usefully offered itself, which in recent years has received increasing sociological attention (see Davis 1979, Tannock 1995; Grainge1999; Boym 2001).

However, as will be obvious from this sketchy account of my theoretical framework, my aim is not to engage in detailed theoretical debates with these literatures. Rather, I have chosen a set of concepts as helpful instruments in order to formulate my own understanding of the social processes which are embodied in the Dresden rebuilding debates more clearly. Thus my thesis offers an exploration of the utility of theoretical concepts through their application in a particular case study, rather than through extensive discussions of theoretical debates. In order to give a clearer idea of my overall argument, I will now introduce in more detail some of the main issues I am concerned with throughout this thesis.

**BUILDINGS AND SOCIAL POWER**

Those people who are actively campaigning for building matters in Dresden (to whom I will turn presently), speak much of their love for Dresden, and the responsibility they feel for it. As one of these preservationists formulated it during an interview:

---

3 For an application of Weber's status concept to analysing civil society, see also Hearn (2002a).
This picture is evocative: somebody one loves and who is ill is somebody one cares for, one feels responsible for, one to be protected from potentially harmful outsiders. In such a situation, a feeling of belonging together, of not sharing the lover with somebody else, may become especially intense. As a metaphor of what this person feels for Dresden, it therefore sums up a deep running discourse of care, responsibility and not least ownership of Dresden, which is current amongst the group of people which shall be the focus of this thesis: Dresdeners who either professionally or voluntarily (in citizens initiatives etc.) occupy themselves with preservationist and building issues in Dresden. I will turn to defining this group more exactly presently; first, it is necessary to give a clearer picture of the complex situation of ownership and responsibilities in which the Dresden building debates are embedded.

Buildings are not a priori identity symbols; first and foremost buildings are structures that physically take up space in a city. And somebody who owns a building, quite literally also owns a bit of the territory of a place. The buildings on which I will focus in this thesis are not privately owned, but so-called "public buildings": the buildings of the old Saxon royal court, the proposed building site of a new bridge over the river Elbe, and the ruin of a church. "Public" in all of these cases means that they are owned either by the the freestate of Saxony, or by the city of Dresden, or (in the case of the church ruin) by the Saxon Lutheran church. "Public" in a democracy also means that they are owned by the population, the public, of Saxony, or of Dresden, or by the Saxon church members.

However, since the time when the buildings in question were originally built, these public institutions have undergone major changes, so that in fact the buildings have changed ownership several times. For example, the Dresden royal court buildings were built in the 18th century by the Saxon royal dynasty which has ceased to exist in 1918. They were "inherited" by the land of Saxony, one of the

---

4 At the end of quotes from interviews, the capitals in brackets refer to the initials of the interviewee (see the appendix for further details); the numbers refer to the page on my typed interview transcript. All interviews were conducted in German; quotations were translated by myself from the German transcripts.
federal states of the Weimar Republic, which in 1933 was turned into a part of Hitler's Third Reich, with many administrative powers being taken away from Saxony and centralised in Berlin. After the destruction of the buildings in 1945 and the defeat of Hitler's Germany, their ruins were inherited by the communist GDR, a completely new state. In the official ideology of this state, the buildings and ruins were now the "property of the people", who in practice, however, had little of a say on what should become of them. Then, in 1990, with German reunification and the reinstatement of the freestate of Saxony, they entered the possession of the Saxon state, and thus came under the direct responsibility of administrative offices whose leading personnel was imported from the former west. Similar histories of institutional change also can be told of the other owners of buildings, both the council and the church.

During all these many changes in legal ownership, however, these buildings always remained physically present (whether as buildings, as ruins or merely as sites) in the midst of Dresden. Dresdeners lived with these buildings and could justly claim them as "their" buildings, just as Parisians can claim the Eiffel tower as theirs and Edinburghers their castle. Yet in contrast to Paris and Edinburgh, where these buildings have been standing in a relatively unchanged form during the whole of the twentieth century (and longer), in Dresden these buildings have been destroyed, preserved and sometimes been rebuilt during the last 60 years. In other words, in the lifetime of still living people, the fate of these buildings has been changing again and again. It is this situation, in which many Dresdeners who think of these buildings as theirs have attempted to influence the course that the fate of these buildings would take: to ensure the preservation of the ruins during the GDR, to enforce a particular kind of rebuilding after unification, or to prevent this rebuilding for particular reasons, etc.

During the whole time since 1945, there has been an underlying conflict between these Dresdeners who thought of the buildings as their buildings, and therefore thought it their right and responsibility to decide what was to become of them, and the respective institutions which legally happened to own the buildings at a certain period of time. This conflict was especially apparent during the GDR years, when Dresdeners who always had identified with particular buildings now suddenly were faced by governing officials whose ideological aim it was to erase those identification objects of a non-communist era and to substitute them with new communist symbols. However, the conflict continued to exist in a different
form also after unification, when the groups who had worked for the preservation of certain buildings during the GDR time, attempted to hold on to the influence over them, which they had gradually gained through their long contestations and negotiations with the GDR state. Their claim on the buildings now became contested not by a communist government, but by the new economic elites who had come as urban developers and investors from the former West, with the aim of making money out of the valuable Dresden building sites. To a large degree, these new elites were supported wholeheartedly by the Dresden elected council officials.

Thus, all the building and preservationist campaigns in Dresden have not only been about buildings for their own sake, but also constitute power contests about who most legitimately can lay claim to those buildings: those who own them on paper (i.e. the respective authorities), or those who care for them and look after them in practice (i.e. the preservationist movement)? This conflict could be expressed in terms of the difference between "legal" and "moral" ownership - the latter argument being in accordance with the Lockian paradigm that those who put their own labour on an object acquire a sort of legitimate ownership right on that object. These conflicts have been enhanced by the fact that in contrast to governmental change, the institutions which provided the framework within which the preservation-minded Dresdeners could act have not changed: institutions such as the office for landmark preservation, or to a lesser extent the great museums and art collections, have always occupied a certain place in Dresden’s social structure, and have even had a great continuity in the personnel working there, bridging all political regime changes (see Magirius 1995a). What maybe has changed is the position of these institutions in the overall social structure of the new unified Germany: there are new power relations emerging in a still ongoing process, as the social status and values attached to each institution and individual position in society is changing with the new value system developing through reunification and its constitutional change. These transitions do not take place quietly and easily, but are accompanied by harsh competitions and contestations, much resentment and newly forming sympathies.

The contest over who should be rightfully responsible for the buildings is also symbolic of the power distribution in Dresden’s society. In this thesis, I will trace the process from the time of the GDR, when the communist state officials

---

5 For the role of institutionalised preservationism in reunified Germany, see Marquart 1997.
were challenged in their absolute power by oppositional preservationists, through to the present time of reunified Germany, when the same preservationists have to contend with the representatives of the new political system and the various circles of new economic elites for a powerful position in society. I will analyse preservationist circles - i.e. a group that has continuously (irrespective of political regime changes) constituted an important part of Dresden's cultural elites - and the role which they have been playing in Dresden society. What has been their influence with the changing governments on the one hand, and with a wider public on the other? How is this role changing?

THE PRESERVATIONIST FIELD
This social group which is the focus of my study I would like to call the “Preservationist Field”. The preservationist field consists of all those Dresdeners who - whether in their profession and office or in their leisure time - are actively engaged in matters to do with buildings. This may be because they are professional preservationists, urban planners, architects or decisionmakers in the city council, but it may also be that they are active in citizen's initiatives, societies or campaigning groups which support a particular building project or try to prevent it. The preservationist field thus represents one crosscut through Dresden society, containing members of the elected city government, of the council administration, of voluntary associations and interest groups. In calling this group of people a "preservationist field", I borrow Bourdieu's concept of a "social field", without wanting to make this a study resting on Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu 1998; see also Prior 2000). Yet at least one aspect of his field definition applies well to the group in the centre of my thesis:

Among people who occupy opposing positions in a field and who seem to be radically opposed in everything, there is a hidden, tacit accord about the fact that it is worth the effort to struggle for the things that are in play in the field. [...] [There is a] profound complicity between the adversaries inserted in the same field: they disagree with one another, but they at least agree about the object of disagreement. (Bourdieu 1998: 78)

This is more or less true also for the preservationist field in Dresden. Independent of the adversary opinions of what should be built where, and in which manner, and what should be preserved, there is a fundamental accord that buildings are important, moreover that they are important symbols of Dresden's identity. I
have called this social field not a building field but a preservationist field, because moreover there is a great agreement that as much as possible of Dresden’s existing built environment should be preserved. Even those investors and urban planners who postulate a rigorous “courage in the future” in the form of new, modernist buildings, often do so by referring to preservationist narratives, as I will show. The preservationist field thus is marked as the space within which certain narratives and discourses about Dresden’s buildings and general built cityscape and their history to the present day are told. The tensions within this field are about the interpretation of the symbolic meanings of buildings: which narratives are told, how and by whom and to which end?

However, as I have started to argue above, there are two clearly demarcated groups within this field. One consists of Dresdeners who often have spent much of their life in the city and profess to care for Dresden and love the city: they often belong to Dresden’s cultural elite (such as professional preservationists, museum curators, art historians, musicians etc.), or are members of the former GDR civil rights movements. Also to this group belong some former West Germans who have moved to Dresden after 1990 because of a personal preference or affiliation to Dresden (as they often explain): in some instances, they have become leading members of voluntary preservationist associations. While this first group provides a certain continuum that bridges the changes of the political system through reunification, the second group has been subject to these changes. During the GDR, it comprised the GDR’s governing elites, party cadres and communist cultural ideologues; today it comprises politicians and members of the city administration, but also many architects and investors. The large majority of this second group moved to Dresden after 1990 because they gained an office here; others, like architects and investors are not resident in Dresden at all. In other words, the first group is the one whose discourse of caring for Dresden I have described above; and which hereafter I will refer to when I speak of the Dresden preservationists. Their aims are often oppositional to those of the second group’s members. While the preservationists of the first group indeed form a fairly homogenous group (their internal differences I will discuss especially in chapter 3), the second group is not really a group at all; it only becomes unified in the eyes of the preservationists, as I will show.

My clear focus will be on the first of these groups, on those who often
voluntarily campaign for preservationist issues in Dresden. I will argue in chapter 2 that the oppositional preservationists in the GDR can be thought of as a status group which defined itself in cultural terms, as opposed to the official ideological focus of the GDR state on party politics. In caring for the preservation of buildings, they controlled a symbolic space which gave them a great influence with a wider public, while it was at the same time space out of the reach of orthodox communist GDR officials. Thus, they acted as a kind of "civil society" in Gramsci's understanding of the term, which withheld consent from the GDR regime and thus helped to delegitimise the power of the GDR government in the eyes of the public. After unification, this group wholeheartedly supported the new unified German state, but soon found itself disappointed in the hope that it would gain a powerful position for itself in this new society. For this influential position was already taken up by economic elites: investors have generally more of a say than professional preservationists. In chapters three, four and five I will trace the ensuing power struggles between the Dresden preservationists and these new elites active in the preservationist field, and explore the ways in which these power struggles take the form of debates about buildings in Dresden.

In this thesis, then, I will take the Dresden building debates as a case study for an exploration of how the built environment works as an identity symbol. I will argue that buildings "occupy space" for those who assume responsibility for these buildings. In doing so, these people gain control over a piece of physical space, but often also a powerful position in their society. This is because buildings also occupy "symbolic space" in a community: they are often seen by a wider public as important identity symbols. This symbolic importance of the buildings is enhanced by the fact that they figure centrally in narratives on local history and tradition. For the "occupation" of these buildings, and thus the taking possession of a piece of symbolic space, is reached in two ways: first, by physically caring for them (such instances will be described especially in chapters 2 and 3), and second, by embedding them in identity narratives which resonate well with a wider public and are felt to be empowering by many people. As I will show throughout the thesis, Dresden preservationist activists are using buildings as integral "building-stones" of local identity narratives, in order to gain wider public support and justifying their claims for responsibility for these buildings in the first place. Some of the most important ones of these narratives about local buildings and their significance for local identity I will discuss in the following first chapter. In
exploring these topics, I hope to contribute to the understanding of the process of German reunification, as well as more generally to the understanding of the role which the built environment can play for the construction of identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW: BUILDINGS AS IDENTITY SYMBOLS

At this point, I will not attempt an overview of the large field of academic literature dealing with the end of the GDR and the German reunification process (see Bahr 1990; Mayer 1997; Land 2000; Timmer 2000). References to this general body of literature and dominant issues in it will be inserted in the relevant sections throughout this thesis. My contribution to this literature shall be an exploration of the role that the built environment played in this transformation process: so far, there are no studies dealing with this specific field. In this literature review, I will mainly focus on the sociological and cultural literature dealing with the built environment more generally, which I found helpful for formulating my own ideas on the built environment’s importance for identity construction, collective memory and as a symbol for power.

- The German Case -

There is no shortage of literature on rebuilding German cities after the war. However, these are mostly historical accounts, and give little consideration to the social forces through which the rebuilding processes happen (e.g. Diefendorf 1990 and 1993, Rosenfeld 2002). While almost all of them dwell in the introduction on the importance of buildings and reconstruction for understanding (national) identity, none of them pursues this claim to any analytical depth. And although Rosenfeld in his study on Munich focuses on the ways that “memory shapes the evolution of the city’s architecture and monuments, and how the overall form of the urban landscape physically represents memories of the city’s past” (2002: 4), there is curiously little consideration of the social groups and decision making processes involved in this. Whose memories are physically represented? How and why did they come to be represented?

An exception to this is provided by Rudy Koshar’s study of the German preservationist movement in the twentieth century, and its role in shaping German discourses of memory (Koshar 1998). Koshar argues that German preservationism attempts to counter the fragmentations and discontinuities of German history, by advancing a counter-narrative of continuity by preserving,
and sometimes re-constructing, historical buildings as material evidence of uninterrupted traditions. While I find his study conceptually helpful, my own approach to preservationism and buildings as identity symbols diverges from Koshar’s in two important points. Firstly, Koshar treats buildings as symbols for a general German identity, and pays little attention to local dimensions. However, buildings are first and foremost local, and their capacity to become symbols for national identity is not self-explanatory. Therefore, in my own exploration of buildings as identity symbols the main focus will be on the interrelation between local and national narratives of identity. I will discuss instances where one and the same building over time changes its symbolic meanings, for example from an expression of absolutist power at its original construction as a building of the Saxon royal court, through becoming a symbol for the partition of Germany and hoped for reunification, to becoming a token for Saxon regionalism as a semi-independent confident European region in the early 21st century. Secondly, Koshar distinguishes not clearly between public discourses, the preservationists’ actions and state policies on preservation: it seems as if preservationists act in tacit accordance with the wider public’s dominant discourse on dealing with the past, and on behalf of the state authorities. In contrast to this, I will discuss the tensions between preservationists and dominant state policies, as well as the role that preservationists play in either constructing or opposing dominant public discourses on dealing with the German past.

Finally, all of the studies cited so far have West German cities as case studies. Rosenfeld discusses Munich, Diefendorf Cologne, and also Koshar uses predominantly examples from the South-West of Germany. Rosenfeld himself describes the difference in the preface to his book:

While in Eastern Germany [in 1989], I visited such cities as Berlin and Dresden and experienced firsthand the many ruins left by the Second World War. Seeing [...] the collapsed remnants of the Frauenkirche and the burnt-out shell of the Wettin monarchy’s residential palace in Dresden on a frigid, overcast winter day had a powerful impact and gave me the feeling of having been transported back in time - almost to the day of the buildings’ destruction. I came to realize, in turn, that Munich represented its past architecturally in a different manner... (Rosenfeld 2000: 18).

For West German cities such as Munich had been rebuilt in the 1950s, often in a historical way so that the newness of the buildings would not be apparent immediately. This means, that both the subject-matter of these studies and their
perspective is a different one from mine: the rebuilding of West German cities after the war took place in a completely different social and political context from that of Dresden today. Moreover, writing now, one or two generations after the completion of those projects, they look back on a historical “fact”. Their point of departure necessarily is the already physically materialised, solid urban landscape of the present, where ruins and urban waste lands belong to memory. In Dresden, the situation of my research is exactly the opposite: there is physical emptiness now, and the complete city with all its buildings a “matter” of memory only. As far as I know, there exists no sociological study so far on rebuilding in Eastern Germany in the context of the German reunification.

Two other books worth mentioning are two interesting studies on Berlin: Brian Ladd’s *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the urban landscape* (1997), and Alan Balfour’s *Berlin: the Politics of Order* (1990). Ladd writes about Berlin’s sheer number and diversity of buildings from all epochs, each with its own rich allusiveness and multilayered symbolic messages, and how they are or are not appropriated into the new capital of reunified Germany. Balfour’s account of the development of one particularly symbolic site (the central square Potsdamer Platz) from its first planning in the 18th century to the present day explores how architecture always intends to substantialise a particular order, but in the end proves to be not less transient than the order it was there to substantialise. Although neither of these focuses on the social actors of the building processes or provides a sociological analysis in the narrow sense, both are very allusive explorations of how buildings can function as multifaceted symbols of a fragmented urban history.

Apart from these studies on the continuing symbolic power of the built environment in Germany, there exists of course a large body of literature dealing with holocaust memorial sites. However, they provide a closely defined and very detailed field of study which engages mainly with German narratives of how to deal with the Nazi past. While this relates to the topic of my thesis, it does not play a dominant role: the Dresden sites about which I write are all older buildings and have no relation to nazi sites. Moreover, the fact of the destruction of Dresden is often embedded in narratives of victimhood of the war, in contrast to the guilt-narratives evoked by the holocaust and nazi sites. This whole topic of traditions of memory of the war, and questions of German guilt or victimhood identities, I will discuss in chapter 6. In all the former chapters of the thesis, however, my focus will
be on narratives of GDR history, and the transition form the GDR to unified Germany.

To sum up this section: the literature on German buildings as identity symbols mainly concentrates either on the rebuilding of West German cities shortly after the war, or on holocaust memorial sites. Moreover, buildings are mostly treated as symbols for aspects of national identity, while I am interested predominantly in buildings as local symbols, and how they are sometimes used to contest national identity narratives. Most importantly, much of this literature says little about the social actors involved in preservationism, and in dealing with the built environment. In the next section, I will therefore turn to the more general literature on buildings as identity symbols.

- Buildings, collective memory and power symbols -

Beyond the German case, there exists a large body of literature on the symbolic role of buildings for identity formation, and especially in connection with collective memory, on what Koshar calls “the built environment’s commemorative capital, its capacity to foster an awareness of the past” (1998: 5). In this literature, usually questions of the distribution of power are being asked: who intends a particular building as a power symbol? (Vale 1992; Calavita and Ferrer 2000; Wagenaar 2000). Whose memories does a building symbolise? (Dijkink 2000; see also McCrone, Morris and Kiely 1994). In answer to these questions, often national governments are focused upon, as in Lawrence Vale’s analysis of American architecture, where he argues that “national regimes have used architecture and urban design to express political power and control... to promote a version of identity that would support and help legitimise this rule... We can learn much about a political regime by observing what it builds” (Vale 1992: viii). Other studies, by contrast, focus on the importance of “popular memory“ (see Assmann 1991; Gillies 1994; Nora 2001). John Gillies, for example, distinguishes between elite and popular memory: “Elite time colonised and helped construct the boundaries of [...] nations. But popular time was more local as well as episodic” (Gillies 1994: 5). While elite memory “marches linear” in telling a consecutive account of the past, popular memory “dances and leaps” and makes no efforts to fill the gaps. Elite memory erects monuments and keeps archives; popular memory is embodied in the lived memories of individuals.

While certainly questions of power relations play a crucial role in the
construction (and analysis) of collective memories, it seems to me too easy to contrast “top-down”, official, homogenising narratives of memory with “bottom-up”, unofficial, heterogeneous ones (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984; Connor 1994; see also Burke 1996). First of all, such an approach seems to assume that “the” power is always with the state. However, power can be located in various social groups. In my study of Dresden, I am interested in the powerful position of the preservationists, a kind of mediating group between “the state” and “the people”. I will argue that there is no easy division into governing and governed, or into authoritative, prescribed memory and oppositional, diversified one. Secondly and connected to this, this kind of literature tends to emphasise questions of who “owns” memory. A general observation is that with the end of the 20th century, with increasing democratisation and globalisation, memory is owned by “the people” rather than by governments, and that national governments themselves are becoming less important (Gillies 1994; Lowenthal 1998; Assmann and Harth 1991). In keeping with this theoretical perspective is for example Pierre Nora’s multi-volume project to trace what he calls lieux de memoire, sites of memory, in France (e.g. Nora 2001). Seeking out the relation between collective memories and particular places, Nora’s basic argument is on the “devolution” of historiography from the level of the centralised nation-state to the particular, lived memories of the multiplicity of social groups and individuals living in the boundaries of the nation. As the editor to the American edition puts it in his introduction: “Nora’s collective work is a monument to decentralisation, fragmentation, the loss of a master narrative and the national myths that sustained it” (Nora 2001: 32). While my concern is also with the importance of buildings for local memory, I do not think that local memory has simply substituted former national memories. Rather, my interest is in the interplay of local and national memories, which one building can foster at the same time. Therefore, the question of who “owns” memory seems to be more complicated.

As Paul Claval notes, it is important to differentiate between situations where “the state was the only source of power and authority within the national territory: all legitimacy had to be rooted in it and was an expression of it. [Or where] the foundation of legitimacy, power and sovereignty rested on the participating communities.” (Claval 2000: 74). As I will argue, Dresden is a case where exactly this relation of power has been changing over the period which I will study: during the time of the GDR, the party state was "the only source of
power and authority“, while today “the foundation of legitimacy, power and sovereignty rests on the participating communities”. However, this de facto distribution of power is in both cases contested by the Dresden preservationist movement, which contested both the legitimacy of the GDR state and the dominant discourses of today’s elites. This leads to my concern with the difference between what one might call “legal” and “moral” ownership, which I have discussed above. In this context, the political geographer Gertjan Dijkink offers a helpful insight:

For those of local origin, physical structures (buildings, signs, objects) and institutions that are threatened by the dominant discourse on progress offer an opportunity to advance new identities and claims about basic values. The aim of the protesters is not to preserve the past, but to use its artefacts as an exposing device or symbol“. (Dijkink 2000: 68)

It is this two-dimensional role that buildings may play in a context of political power struggle: the local contesting the national, and local narratives of the past contesting dominant central narratives of the present, which I will explore further in this thesis.

- Buildings and the construction of identities -

A final question which needs to be covered here is how exactly a building can come to function as a symbol for collective identity (Lowenthal 1994; see also Smith 1999). The power of the surviving images of Dresden’s past built environment, and the passionate care that people feel for them, suggests that the claims to "preserve the identity of Dresden" are linked to the identity of Dresdeners. The buildings are important identity symbols, objects of identification in Dresden. However: varied, heterogeneous, multiple and changing as the personal identities of people are, must not also the collective image of Dresden vary significantly between the minds of different people? And how can something so fixed and solid as a building be a symbol for something so open and changeable as identity? Much of the literature on buildings as identity symbols is not very clear on how exactly this identification process works. To approach the question, I found it therefore useful to take another look at the concept of identity in general, as it is used in the academic literature (e.g. Anderson 1991; Smith 1991; Billig 1995; Cohen 1996; McCrone 1998; McCrone, Stewart, Kiely and Bechhoefer 1998; Straub
The German sociologist Jürgen Straub, for example, defines identity as follows:

Contrary to the common misunderstanding which regards “identity” in society and culture as a substance that is forever fixed and embedded in a stable context, theories of identity are the very opposite of this thinking. The concept of identity, as well as the attributes coherence and continuity, means only the internal consistency and duration of a form or structure, not something that needed to be preserved in its substance and quality, nothing that could or even should be protected from any change... (Straub 1998: 88)

In other words, identity itself is never fixed but always changing; it only needs a coherent form or structure. This may sound somewhat abstract. However, one could argue that the "form" can be extrapolated, outside the individual, and be the object of identification. In the Dresden case, it is buildings that provide such a form or structure, in dialogue with which we can ever formulate anew our own changing identities. Buildings in this sense only provide a frame of reference for our identity construction. Our identities may be always changing and relational, but we need the feeling that there is something stable about it. Thus, we can change our objects of identification, but we hope that the objects of identification themselves are ever-fixed. If Dresdeners talk of the "identity of Dresden" and their own collective local identity attached to it, this is what they mean: their own identities may be multiple and varied, but they hope for one common object of identification, or identity symbol, which itself exists in non-changing, always-the-same remaining form: the buildings of Dresden.

That this unchanging sameness of the object of identification is itself a construction by those who long for it, becomes also very clear in the Dresden case. The objects of identification all have undergone big changes in their material substance and looks: the building of the Frauenkirche, as I will show, has changed from a baroque church to a ruin to a new church resembling the baroque one again. The "identity of Dresden", the object of identification for those who identify with it, is nothing but the idea of those who identify with it. Yet notwithstanding all this consciousness that the "identity of Dresden" is just an idea - it is a very seductive one nevertheless, since after all, the buildings are out of stone: there is always the illusory, but seemingly realistic hope that the Dresden buildings in question, once rebuilt or preserved, then finally will be there, eternally in unchanging sameness, as strong identity symbols. As solid structures which seem
to survive the changes of time, buildings therefore provide such a continuous, coherent structure as Straub defines it as important for identity. Therefore it is possible in Dresden for various people to claim to be part of the collective identity of Dresden, attached to the same "collective image": buildings are the common point of reference which all share, even if their interpretations of it differ widely. The built environment is in Dresden the coherent structure where the construction of identity "takes place". How these structures are interpreted, however, which content is being led into them, is a matter for individual and collective debate and contest. Everybody may see a different building: in this sense, collective identity is always "imagined", as Benedict Anderson (1991) has put it.

This relates to a question asked by Anthony Cohen, namely how can we speak of a collective identity, if all people mean something different by it? In answer to this, Cohen argues that identity can not be constructed wholly accidentally, but that it needs what he calls an "objective correlative". While "the life of a symbol depends on the sharing of its form rather than its content", Cohen concedes that "it cannot function effectively without the presumption of some common content... It requires people to believe that it represents something substantive which they have in common". (Cohen 2000: 146) The built environment, in its stony substantiveness which leads people to the conviction that they are all seeing the same when they look at the Frauenkirche, and that therefore they all have exactly the same in mind when they claim that the identity of Dresden, and by extension their own collective identity depends on the existence of the Frauenkirche in the picture of "Florence on the Elbe" - the built environment is such an "objective correlative" in Dresden.

With this sketchy indication of the topics which I will explore in this thesis, I hope to have made my interest in the built environment's symbolic functions a little clearer. There follows a short outline of my research methods and the data on which the thesis is grounded.

**METHODS AND SOURCES**

I spent two periods of fieldwork in Dresden: from October 2002 to January 2003, and from June to October 2003. Later I visited Dresden repeatedly for shorter intervals. During these times, I collected the data for my thesis: interviews, fieldnotes from participant observation and a great amount of written documents. I worked closely with people who are actively participating in the present building
activities in Dresden, either because their jobs involve them in it, or because they are taking part in one of the many voluntary campaigning or support groups engaged in these issues. While they are thus not representative of the Dresden population at large, they are shaping and conditioning the identity discourses in Dresden. My approach was an ethnographic one, and I spent the time in Dresden with various forms of participant observation, as I will outline below. The core data for my thesis is provided by 27 in-depth interviews, almost all with people whom I had come to know quite well by the time of the actual interview. In the following, I will give a short indication of the details of my fieldwork.

- Interviews -
Since my chosen field of study concerns a relatively well-defined group, i.e. people either professionally or voluntarily active in the preservationist field in Dresden, the selection of whom to interview was predetermined to a degree: they include leading decisionmakers in the Dresden urban planning office and city council, professional preservationists and all leading figures of the groups involved with the Frauenkirche, my main case study. The remaining participants - influential intellectuals from Dresden’s cultural scene and members in campaigning groups - I often selected because they had published books and articles on matters of Dresden preservation and city planning; many more I came to know at the occasion of public events on which they spoke up or gave speeches; a few others I became acquainted with through a kind of snowballing method - i.e. those who already knew of my research interest introduced me to other involved persons who they thought might be of interest to me.

The people I interviewed can be roughly categorised into three groups: first, activists from various campaigning and pressure groups, second, decisionmakers and officials, and third, intellectuals. The first are involved voluntarily. They form the core group of my study, and range from well-known Dresden figures, some of them having previously published books, pamphlets, given speeches etc., to “ordinary” Dresdener, many of them active in a range of issues. Most often, they are involved in the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, one of Dresden’s former main churches and landmark buildings bombed in the war that remained a ruin until 1991. Some of them belong to the Society for the Historical Rebuilding of the Neumarkt, the urban area immediately surrounding the Frauenkirche, of which nothing remained standing. A large number of these people was also active in campaigning
against a new bridge over the river Elbe. The members of these different groups often tend to know each other, since Dresden is of a size that people active in one specific field will get in contact quickly. Depending on the particular issue they are engaged in, they also often sympathise with each other. Although they form a very heterogeneous group of people, they often think of themselves as a "group", and a remark that was made very often to me, with something between frustration and pride, was that "you'll always meet the same people here". Many of these voluntary activists have a prehistory in the 1980's civil rights movements opposing the GDR state.

The second group of people is smaller and comprises decisionmakers and officials, public ones such as the councillor for urban planning and the Dresden Lord Mayor, and private ones such as the chairman of the Frauenkirche Trust. Unlike the first group, they form not a group but are individuals representing their various authorities; amongst themselves they have little to do with each other. However, there is a tendency amongst the voluntary activists described above, to speak about these office holders in negative terms as "the others", to the extent that they were perceived as one group of people against whose unwise decisionmaking their own campaigns were directed. Many of these officials belong to the large number of west Germans entering elite positions in the former GDR after reunification.

The third group are individuals who are not firmly linked to any of the building projects, but who are well-known intellectuals and public figures who often take part in the debates and whose voice is heard and respected, and therefore influential. Amongst them is a former chief conservator, the cultural advisor to the Saxon government, the editor of the quarterly cultural magazine "Dresdner Hefte", and leading members of the Historical Society in Dresden.

Altogether, the people I have been working with all belong to the educated and cultural elites of Dresden. They almost all have university degrees. Many of them work in the arts sector, i.e. are preservationists, art historians, museum curators or musicians.

Most of my interviewees were born and raised in Dresden, and apart from shorter study or work-related periods spent elsewhere, they have been living in Dresden all their lives. Others came to Dresden for study-or work related reasons, and have since remained there. Only two administrative officers have no
residential links to Dresden at all. Similarly, most of my interviewees are East Germans, i.e. they have spent most of their lives there. The ones from the west, who came to Dresden from western Germany only after 1990, are a very diverse number of people. Some of them came as politicians, university professors or members of the business elite, i.e. form part of the general influx of Westerners into eastern elite positions after reunification. Others came also for work-related reasons but are active in the more grassroots citizens campaigning groups.

The majority of the people active in the building issues are middle-aged, but there is also a large proportion of people of pensioner age who remember Dresden well from before the war. People in their thirties and younger are fewer, but the ones there are seem to be especially active. I would suggest that this age distribution is not necessarily due to a weakening interest in Dresden’s past, the younger the population. Rather, this phenomenon might reflect the high status of building matters in Dresden. Many of the key players were publicly active in the preservationist field already during the GDR time (often semi-oppositionally). They have become something like moral authorities in this field, so that still today they are the ones at the forefront of public status and influence. A possibly surprising point is that taking an active interest in Dresden rebuilding issues does not differ as widely with age as might have been expected: people who remember Dresden from before the war do not seem to think differently about these issues from the generation of the now thirty year olds.

Finally, most of the people active in the preservationist field in Dresden are male. Partly this reflects the distribution of occupational posts in the public sector, and in the field of the arts. However, there are a few women amongst my interviewees who are active in campaigning groups, mostly together with their husbands. Altogether, amongst the people active in Dresden preservationist and building issues, gender differences do not seem to play a predominant role.

The interviews all lasted between 50 and 90 minutes, and were only very loosely structured by me: in the first part, I asked about my interview partners' biographical backgrounds, and their motives for being active in Dresden building issues. From there, the discussion naturally led on to what they thought about Dresden: its history, its role as a cultural city and familiar stereotypes linked to it, and what they thought about historical rebuilding. A third topic, finally, evolved around questions of civic participation, their self-understanding as civic
campaigning groups and broader questions of democratic processes. My interview partners thus had a very broad scope to talk about issues they felt were relevant in regard to Dresden's building matters and questions of identity. They mostly did so with great enthusiasm; often I had hardly to ask any questions at all for them to talk at length about the issues I was interested in. Yet notwithstanding the wide and diverse range of themes which were covered in this way, two points featured in almost every interview, without me explicitly prompting it: firstly, my interviewees would comment upon their present situation and life in reunified Germany, and secondly they would refer to Dresden's history in attempting to explain this present situation. Both themes were closely interlinked, and will feature in the course of this thesis.

- Participant Observation -
In order to embed the interviews into a wider context, I used various forms of participant observation. I attended many public lectures and panel discussions: on aspects of the Frauenkirche rebuilding, about the advantages or disadvantages of the historical Neumarkt project, or about the necessity or harm of the new bridge over the Elbe. Also, I was allowed to attend the Annual General Meetings of both the Frauenkirche and the Neumarkt societies as a guest. In September 2003, I attended daily the public hearing about the controversial project of building the new bridge - the protest was so large, that the hearing, usually a mere matter of protocol scheduled for one day in the course of the planning process, lasted for three weeks of 10 hour days. Through all these occasions I not only became familiar with all the ongoing discourses and debates on Dresden, but also got to know many people who are active in the various groups. Subsequently, there arose many occasions for informal chats, either in pubs after some public discussion forum, or often also at their houses where they invited me to continue talking about these issues over some coffee.

An occasion to get a more active perspective on what was going on in Dresden arose when the Historic Neumarkt Society decided to have a signature collection in order to call a referendum. On a number of days, I helped to collect signatures in the streets, which gave me a great opportunity to speak to people from a broader public, beyond the relatively small circle of activists and elites.

---

8 In Dresden Council law a citizens' referendum counts above and against any decision passed by the council; 15% of the Dresden adult population's signatures are necessary in order to call a referendum. (See chapter 5 for more details on Dresden referendums.)

24
which forms the core of my research. This was a very interesting experience, which helped me to place the discourses of my field in a wider context. For the same reason, I also took part in guided tours, both of the city generally and of the Frauenkirche. During these, I could talk to both tourists and guides; their views on the rebuilding projects gave me some interesting insights, too.

- Documents -

The huge amount of written documents which surrounds these issues in Dresden also helped me to embed my interview data in a wider context. I treat them as secondary sources that help me to a deeper understanding of the complicated issues, but also as constituting parts of the identity discourses which I am exploring.

First, there are the published books on Dresden’s history, architecture and culture. There is an impressive number of these available, many of them written during GDR times, which have reached numerous editions, and are still best-sellers. The authors of some of them I came to know personally, and I interviewed a few of them. These books have a very high standing in Dresden and are to a large degree responsible for the pervasive myth of the beautiful “old Dresden”. They are usually semi-academic, and address an informed, well-educated readership. Different from these are books produced, mostly after 1990, explicitly for tourists. Amongst the newly published studies on Dresden’s rebuilding process, by far the greatest number is concerned with the rebuilding project of the Frauenkirche, which will play a central role in this thesis.

Another large body of documents consisted in the more specific texts of the various groups I am working with, some publicised and freely available, such as information leaflets, newsletters, speeches and the like, and others, like minutes and internal letters being made available to me. Further, I made use of the wide coverage on the Dresden debates in newspapers, the local broadcasting media and the internet. Of these, the important sources came from the constant coverage of the building process in Dresden’s two daily papers, and also from the numerous letters-to-the-editor published every Saturday in both. Of further interest to me were the sporadic articles in German national papers, which discuss in regular intervals the progress of events in Dresden.

Another very helpful contextual source was provided by two internet chat sites: one linked to the home page of the Neumarkt society, which gives people
space to voice their opinion on questions of historic rebuilding, specifically in Dresden and also more generally. This site is prolifically responded to, as was another internet forum set up for three months in summer 2002 by a city development initiative under the theme of "Is Dresden just a village?" I will make copious use of both in this thesis.

A BRIEF CHAPTER OUTLINE

In the first chapter, I will introduce some of the most prevalent narratives on Dresden local history and its buildings as they are told by the Dresden preservationist circles, and give an indication of how they are competing with German national identity narratives. In the second chapter, I will show how the preservationists instrumentalised these narratives for their power contests with the communist state officials, in claiming particular buildings as their own rightful space. The third chapter will cover the transitional period of the end of the GDR and German reunification from 1989-1990, and at the example of the argument about the rebuilding of the ruin of the Frauenkirche thematise internal differences and contestations within the preservationist field in Dresden. I will continue to explore this topic in the fourth chapter, where I will analyse disagreements between the groups involved in the Frauenkirche rebuilding project, and take them as an example for the power struggles between old east German cultural and oppositional elites, and new Western influential groups during the process of reordering Dresden's society after reunification. The fifth chapter will further pursue this subject, at the example of the discourses of ownership and care in which the public heated debate about the building of a new bridge was embedded. The sixth chapter, finally, will sum up some of the main themes raised in the previous chapter, by concentrating on two different narratives of German identity and history, as they are competitively told by the Dresden preservationists on the one side, and by the new economic elites on the other.
The famous “Canaletto view” of Dresden across the Elbe (1748). In the middle, the Frauenkirche; on the right, the court cathedral, still in the process of construction. This is the defining image of Dresden, linked to Dresden being known as “Florence on the Elbe” (a phrase originally coined by J. G. Herder in the 1780s).
(courtesy of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden)
CHAPTER 1

DRESDEN MYTHS: LOCAL IDENTITY NARRATIVES

"There is no other city like Dresden... at best maybe Paris...", a lifelong Dresdener and preservation campaigner said to me during an interview. It is not uncommon to encounter praise of Dresden like this, which might sound ridiculously exaggerated to many, but is quite normal in Dresden. This might be the more surprising, since little of Dresden’s former beauty has been left since the war, and apart from a small historical ensemble of the former royal court complex, the first impression that a visitor will get of Dresden is of socialist concrete blocks and large, unhomely roads flanked by Soviet architecture. And yet, as another interviewee of mine wondered:

I have never seen another city whose people identified so strongly with it... it’s partly because of the trauma of the destruction. In Chemnitz you don’t get this, because Chemnitz was no Florence on the Elbe. It was no city that has adorned itself with the name of Florence, there you haven’t got a collective image like in Dresden. Here there exists a collective image... in collective memory. This has lived on as a dream... (SH 1)

I would like to begin this thesis therefore with an account of the “collective image” of this mythical Dresden, of Dresden not as it “really looks”, but as it is imagined by its citizens, since this is the subject matter of all the building contests which will be described in the following chapters.

This thesis will be about competing narratives, and how they are mobilised in connection with claims about symbolic buildings and sites, in order to push through particular interests. However, I will start this thesis with a more detailed account of only one strand of these narratives, which tells a fairly homogenous story of the history and “identity” of Dresden. How this narrative is contested, or more importantly is used to contest other, more dominant narratives, will be the subject of the rest of the thesis. Here, I will concentrate on the story of Dresden as it is told by the people with whom I did most of my fieldwork: Dresdeners who have long been active in building and preservationist matters, who often belong to the cultural elite of this city and often have been part of the 1980s civil rights
movement in Dresden. Who they are in particular and how their role in the social field of Dresden has been changing, will be the subject of the later chapters, which will tell their story in a roughly chronological manner, starting from the time of the GDR, over the events of 1989 and reunification, up to the present time more than a decade into unified Germany. In the present chapter, my aim is to communicate an idea of their concerns and narratives in general, which since the GDR time certainly have undergone various processes following the political events and social changes, but essentially form a continuity which bridges the incoherence and gaps left by those political events.

I hope to justify this structure of my thesis - to start with the narratives which people tell, before I discuss in more detail who these people actually are - by the fact that these narratives are general currency: everybody in Dresden knows them, they are in this form not inventions by contemporary interest groups, but urban folklore. They have been in circulation for a long time and provide a strong template for identification for many Dresdeners - irrespective of their age or social backgrounds. Therefore, they become important instruments to influence public opinion, as I will show in the later chapters. For, of course, as "folklore" they are not untouchable, but used to be modulated, told with particular twists in the story and particular emphases, with a particular morale, by particular groups and people for particular ends. But their power lies in the fact that they provide a rich narrative repertoire which is known by the addressees of particular interest groups as well as by those groups themselves.

WHAT KIND OF CITY IS DRESDEN?

In the following thesis, I will write much about the concerns of Dresdeners, their arguments about buildings, identity claims and power struggles. But what kind of city is this where all this takes place? To begin with, I will give a sketchy picture of Dresden, a kind of "sociological tourist guide" to Dresden, by selecting various well-known features of Dresden more or less at random, some of which are important to Dresdeners' self-images, and others that are attributed to it from the outside.

Dresden is a middle-sized city (450 000 inhabitants) in the very east of Germany. Since the reinstitution of the old Länder (federal states) in 1990 it is the capital of
Saxony, and therefore much more “on the map” than other east German places. As such, its social profile is ambiguous when compared with other East German cities, but also with Germany in general. On the one hand, it has a large unemployment rate like all of former Eastern Germany, which has risen drastically since 1990. One of the standard themes in the local media, but also in public discourse and private talks is the deplorable present condition, with a steady flux of especially young people away from Dresden, towards the former west, in search of employment or places to trainee and apprenticeship programs. On the other hand, Dresden is by no accounts a wholly dreary place. Statistics also show, that its unemployment figures, high as they might be, are still the lowest in the whole former east. Likewise, perhaps surprisingly, Dresden has one of the highest birth rates in the whole of Germany. This is the more remarkable, since for some time now the ever decreasing population of Germany at large has much concerned demographers and politicians.

Thus, whether Dresden is seen as an optimistic or a pessimistic place depends on which statistic, and especially on which comparison one choses. But Dresden is no place of extremes, but generally one viewed positively by its population and tourists alike. A recent online survey in which 500,000 Germans where asked about their satisfaction with their city, for example, showed that Dresdeners’ overall satisfaction with their city was with 68% voting “very positive” higher than in any other east German city, and in an all-German comparison comes before cities such as Berlin, Frankfurt or Duesseldorf. In the section “leisure time value of the surrounding countryside”, Dresden even reached the second highest place (after Munich) in all of Germany. (DNN 28/04/05)

According to the same study, one big issue of dissatisfaction in Dresden is

---

7 The statistical accounts start in Dec 1992, when Dresden had an unemployment rate of 8.0%; by 1996, it was 12.0%, and by 2000, 15.4%. Since then, the unemployment rate has only slightly risen, to 16.8 in April 2005: but it has never decreased. (Statistische Mitteilungen 2004, Kommunale Statistikstelle Dresden)

8 in the course of the 1990s, Dresden lost almost a fifth of its population due to people moving away from Dresden, mostly to the former west. (Statistische Mitteilungen 2003, Kommunale Statistikstelle Dresden)

9 in April 2005, there was an unemployment rate of 16.8% in Dresden, as compared to 19.2% in Eastern Germany and 11.3% in Germany in general. (quote by the Bundesagentur fuer Arbeit, May 2005)

10 In 2004, the Dresden birth rate was at 9.8 (number of births per 1000 inhabitants), as compared to the German birth rate at 8.1(Dresdner Zahlen Aktuell, (5)2004, Kommunale Statistikstelle Dresden).
the administration of the city: a category in which Dresden appears on the last place in a ranking of all major German cities. In this thesis (especially in the second half), the administrative structures of Dresden will play a large role, therefore here a few points worth being noted.

Due to its being the capital of Saxony, there are two governing bodies resident in Dresden: the Dresden city council with a league of mayors, and the Saxon parliament with its cabinet. Likewise, there are two big administrative apparatuses in Dresden: the city administration and the administration of Saxony. This fact conditions several characteristics of Dresden: first, there is an above average number of people employed in public and civil service in Dresden. This fact has a certain historical tradition, and due to it there is one popular image of Dresden as being a “city of civil servants” (Beamtenstadt), which in German connotes economic well-being, but also bureaucracy, conservatism, a certain reluctance to new ideas and changes, and unquestioning obedience to the respective authority in power - all images, which will play a further role below.

Second, the fact that there are two reigning authorities in Dresden leads to much rivalry and bureaucracy. For example, it plays a decisive role in regard to questions of urban planning and building preservation: of the old historical landmark buildings, some are owned by the freestate of Saxony (i.e. the former royal court buildings), and others by the city of Dresden - likewise, the fate of much of the still empty building land varies according to whether it is owned by the city or the freestate. Thirdly and maybe most importantly, this large field of politics and administration is inhabited to a large degree by politicians and functionaries from the former west. For example, of the eight ministerial posts in the Saxon freestate, over the 1990s only one was held by a person who had grown up in the former east. Likewise, of the eight mayors only two are from the east. This gives rise to an often expressed concern in the population, that Dresden is reigned over by foreigners: a sentiment often expressed in connection with the widely held “colonisation thesis”, arguing that the German re-unification was no unification between two equal parts, but the colonising of the east by the west. The fourth point, party politics, points to one of the reasons for this unequal distribution of government posts in Dresden: since 1990, both in Dresden local and

---

11 This has changed with the last election in Sept 2004, when for the first time the CDU lost its absolute majority: in the coalition government between CDU and Social Democrats that followed (still in existence at the time of writing), about half of the ministers come from the former east.

12 Compare for example Land (2000).
Typical examples of Dresden’s socialist architecture which shapes the urban landscape of the city centre to the present day. (photos: archive of Dresdener Verkehrsbetriebe (top) and A. Dubbers (2003), Die Innere Neustadt (bottom)).
in Saxon regional elections, the CDU (*Christian Democratic Union*) has held the absolute majority (over 50% of the vote). I will explore possible reasons for this in the course of this thesis. But regardless of the reasons, it quickly appeared that the CDU in those east German communes and federal states where it was in power generally recruited its leading politicians from the west, while the leading figures of the two other major parties in the east, the social democrats (SPD) and the PDS (the former communists), mainly had east German biographies. The fact that both the city and the freestate are governed by the same party evokes annoyance by many people, who get the impression that the city councillors of each party only act according to the wishes of their party peers on the free state level.

Another, completely different point worth mentioning is perhaps the first impression that Dresden may make on visitors: in view of the fact that Dresden still carries the image of one of the most beautiful cities of Germany, it comes to many as a surprise, that the dominant feature in the city centre is of faceless 1960s highrise concrete blocks, as they were spread over all the east block countries. Their dominance is only slightly relieved by a few baroque landmark buildings along the river Elbe, which have either survived the war or have been rebuilt afterwards; this ongoing process will be a main subject in this thesis. While the first sight of Dresden is thus rather appalling to many, it is juxtaposed by some remaining old residential quarters, mainly also along the river Elbe: huge turn-of-the-century mansion houses with large gardens and parklands around them. To many West German tourists this came as a surprise, too: used to the image of the GDR as consisting of either the above mentioned concrete blocks, or crumbling and decaying old town centres whose houses were often in such a ruinous state that nobody lived there anymore, the mansion house suburbs which ooze something like bourgeois wealth didn't fit. Consequently, property prices in these areas after 1990 rose to the second highest place in all of Germany (after Munich). The existence of these houses was due to a certain higher middle-class stratum always well present in Dresden, which shaped much of Dresden's images and discourses and also survived the GDR years, while it all but disappeared elsewhere in the GDR. This social group will play a large role in this thesis, especially in chapter 2.

So far I have introduced a few random facts about Dresden, selected according to their presence in public consciousness and discourse, and also to the
role which they play as background to the building debates which will be in the centre of this thesis. However, in order to answer the question “what kind of city is Dresden” even roughly, it is necessary also to take a look at the myths told about it, the perceived “mentality” of Dresden, what people call the “identity” of Dresden.

- Centre or Periphery? -

Dresden is the last major city before the Slavic borders, and this fact is mirrored in a certain orientation towards the east with which one is often confronted in daily life: for example, there are frequent and direct trains from Dresden to Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, but for Cologne, Frankfurt or Hanover one has to change in Leipzig. Yet whereas in Germany, Dresden is thus on the periphery, in Saxony, Dresden is not just at the centre of the region, but this region itself takes pride in being “central Europe”. This geographic location makes Dresden’s situatedness - central or peripheral - intriguingly dependent on the political context: Dresden has always been the capital of Saxony, but Saxony itself has changed its position within Europe several times. Up to 1815, Saxony was a territorially large power in central Europe: with borders with Prussia, Austria and Russia. Afterwards, approaching German unification in 1871 and consolidated by it, Saxony became a minor federal kingdom within the German Reich, situated at its eastern boundaries. In the time of the GDR, Saxony ceased to exist completely, and Dresden became the easternmost city of the GDR.

This geographical and political changing role was matched with changing and conflicting discourses on Dresden’s overall status. For example, as one of my interviewees, an art collector who moved to Dresden from the West in 1990, pointed out:

Dresden, I have to say, has always been firmly planted in the Western imagination. We got to hear news from Dresden, there were always reports in the papers... To us, Dresden felt closer than any other East German city - well, except for Eastern Berlin, of course. (FR 1)

This view was supported by another of my respondents, a Dresden concert singer who was allowed to tour the West:

on our tours, we often stayed in private accommodation, and I again and again was surprised... you come to any sort of place, and there is a picture of Dresden on the wall! (RD 5)
As a cultural symbol for all of Germany, Dresden thus maintained its central significance also in the West German imagination, notwithstanding its present marginalisation in the GDR. The latter was only partly true, however: on the one hand, at a time when the dreams of most of the population were directed towards Western Germany, and an important factor of unofficial living-standard was the reception of West-German television, Dresden was completely marginalised, being the only place in the GDR which due to its situation in a valley, in the very east, was not able to receive Western television and was subsequently dubbed “the valley of the Clueless” by the rest of the GDR’s population. Yet on the other hand, Dresden played a special role as a “cultural city”. This was on the one hand supported by official policies which made Dresden into the cultural flagship of the new “nation”, on the other hand it gave Dresden a special glamour also in the eyes of the rest of the GDR population. These contradictory images that Dresden held within the GDR, between utter province and alluring un-GDR-ishness, are well captured in the following quote from a focus group interview:

PW: Why was during the GDR years the wish for many so great, to move to Dresden, into that city of ruins? Why did all want to live in Dresden? And nobody wanted to leave Dresden?
CB: Well, in Dresden there was a little more cultural and intellectual life. When I was a student [from Chemnitz] in Dresden, I always noticed the difference, in the tram, between the people sitting there and the ones in Chemnitz. And there was no way I would have gone back to Chemnitz! After 14 days in Dresden, I knew, I’ll stay. There was a special atmosphere in Dresden.
PW: Berlin is an exception. Because in Berlin, you could earn more... the Berliners always wanted to go back to Berlin.
CB: Exactly. Even my sister-in-law, from eastern Berlin, always used to say: out there in the GDR... as Eastern Berliner!!
DB: yes, Dresden was the valley of the clueless.
[...]
CB: Even the Leipziger, with their international fair, they had a little Western flair. They have always looked down on us a bit.... I mean, a little backward and a little provincial we’ve always been. [...] yes, to be relocated to Dresden was the same as being sent into the jungle. (CB 13-15)

It is remarkable, how in this very short time the general agreement in this talk moves from the assertion that Dresden was a special and attractive city in the GDR, towards the notion of Dresden as utter province.

With re-unification, Dresden won in importance again, as the capital of one
of the five new reinstated federal states and a slightly faster growing economy than some other places in the former east. At the same time, however, its geographical peripherality became pronounced as rarely before, when Dresden now was one of the Easternmost cities not just of Germany, but of the whole European union. With the present enlargement of the EU, Dresden again has a geographically central position. As the mayor of Dresden told me in an interview in December 2003, a few days before the Czech Republic and Poland were officially integrated into the EU:

The challenge will be posed in the next few days: the Czech republic in the EU, Poland in the EU... we are in a very special condition here, Dresden will play a very important role. There will be the issue of a “border region” again, the co-operation will be different [...], the former natural surroundings will be there again... Dresden in the future is no outer boundary of the EU anymore, no, it will have a central function. And between Berlin, Munich and Prague I want to see a very self-confident city of Dresden. (IR 5)

- Dresden - A Matter of Pride or Embarrassment? -

In parallel to this fluctuation between being seen as periphery or centre, there exist two different images of Dresden's, and the Dresdeners', “mentality”, as it is called in common speech. One is an image of Dresden as cosmopolitan and open to the world, the site of architectural heritage of international standing and a renowned city of art and culture. Images of this kind have been prevalent in the travel-writings of artists and poets visiting Dresden, or autobiographies of artists resident in Dresden, since the 18th century, and the following quote from an essay published in 1931 is exemplary for this particular narrative. It is by the well-known Dresden born writer Erich Kaestner, and describes a journey to Dresden by boat, down the river Elbe from Bohemia:

On deck of the steamer which slowly made its way down the river from Bodenbach [in Bohemia], he now talked of history. His tale was of the country of Bohemia where we had taken anchorage just an hour ago... of the Hussites, ... the fateful and disastrous rivalry between Prussia and Austria. ... He then pointed to Dresden, whose spires now gradually appeared in view, golden in the evening sun. 'There lies Europe', he softly said. (quoted in Hoch 1998: 235)

This narrative does two things: it first thematises Dresden’s closeness to Bohemia, and constructs the narrative of the journey as one of progress, whose climax is
Dresden: after Bohemia, Dresden is "Europe". Secondly, however, Dresden is described as somehow outside or beyond European history: being itself no part of any of the historical events alluded to, Dresden comes after the events and wars of history. "Golden in the evening sun", it is almost a mythical manifestation of Europe, its muse or spirit, disconnected from the often gruesome realities of history.

However, this narrative is opposed by another one, in which Dresden is, far from being a city of European dimension, a byword for parochialism. In these narratives, Dresden is not only a geographical periphery somewhere in the east, marked by high unemployment and a steady flood of emigration to the west, but this geographical and political provincialism is perceived to be the outer marker of an inner mentality of the Dresdenerers, which often is described along the following lines:

With Dresden, you have to take into account the 40 years of socialism. This brought not just demolition, but also a closing in against the rest of the world. There was no western television... one has lived a little behind the seven mountains, and much that was old and good has thus been preserved, but one hasn’t had the view beyond... one has stewed in one’s own juice a little. There is no self-confidence anymore. Because for 40 years one has missed the plot of what’s happening in the world. (SH 3)

There are others who accuse Dresden of downright backwardness, nostalgic conservatism, and of having a "village mentality". This accusation of village-mentality is almost as deeply ingrained in the consciousness of Dresdenerers, as their pride in their city. In the summer of 2002, a tourism development institute in Dresden set up a web-page with an internet chatroom, where people were invited to write their opinions to the question "Is Dresden a village?" The chatroom existed for three months, and drew a great response. The very fact that a development initiative found it useful to pose this question, and also that it elicited such passionate response, both in the affirmative and in rejection, in itself is telling.

Both these images will play a role in the following thesis. Before I turn to a more in-depth analysis of Dresden myths and narratives, I will give a short outline of its history, at the hand of its building history. For whatever "mentality" or "identity" Dresden is credited with, it is seen to be embodied in the buildings of the city.
The Zwinger, August the Strong's amusement venue. The Zwinger is Dresden's most important landmark building beside the Frauenkirche. It was destroyed in the war, but reconstructed shortly afterwards (see chapter 2). (photo: courtesy of the Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden)
HISTORY: THE BAROQUE CITY

Since this is a chapter on narratives, I will tell the narrative of Dresden’s history in the version as it is frequently told by the cultural elites who are in the centre of my study. It is a narrative of pride, emphasising Dresden’s glory in the 18th century and lamenting its subsequent decay. The focus is on the baroque period. The urban landscape which was created in that “golden age” of Dresden continues to the present day to provide the defining images of Dresden as “Florence at the Elbe”, as in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Fixed for example in the famous paintings by Bernardo Belotto alias Canaletto, these images are still seen as a measuring point for any new urban planning.

First mentioned in 1206, Dresden’s time as a major city in the German empire began in the renaissance, when Dresden became the residency of an Elector, and silver mines were discovered in the mountains southwest of Dresden. In 1694, the Saxon Elector Friedrich August II, known as August the Strong, became king of Poland. Dresden now was the capital of one of the largest powers in the Europe of that time. To mark this new status as a royal city, August completely remodelled the city and in doing so “set the scene” for many of the discourses and images that have remained pervasive until today: this was the “Augustean Age of Splendour”, when the image of Dresden as a “cultural capital” of European significance was created. After a journey to Italy in the 1690s, August had conceived a plan to remake Dresden according to the model of Venice: architecture and landscape were to form a unity, and just like the palazzi of Venice line the canale grande, palaces and churches in Dresden were to line the riverbanks of the Elbe. In the decades that followed, until August’s death in 1733, the royal palace was enlarged and the original renaissance building turned into a representative baroque residency, and the court complex was extended through the buildings of the court cathedral (by the Italian architect Antonio Chiaveri) and the “Zwinger”, a large open air venue for summer concerts and amusements.

The acceptance of the Polish Crown had meant conversion to Catholicism for August, which created many tensions in Saxony, the heartland of Lutheran Protestantism, which I will thematise later. In terms of the baroque building history of Dresden, at any rate, this coexistence of the two different confessions had positive effects. The protestant city council of Dresden built a new main church, the Frauenkirche, adjacent to the buildings of the court. However, while
Canaletto’s famous 1748 view of the Frauenkirche, surrounded by the Neumarkt houses. (courtesy of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden).
this was to be a manifestation of protestant spirit and the power of the protestant city council next to the catholic court, it also fitted in with August’s plan of the Italian Elbe-city, and with its stone cupola reminded of the cathedrals of Rome and Florence. As a building, the Frauenkirche could thus be regarded both as a symbol for protestant civic power in Dresden, and contributed to August’s conception of the baroque Dresden as a symbol for royal power. As the Dresdener art historian Joachim Menzhausen in an article on Saxonian Baroque splendour points out with pride, Dresden could regard itself as a symbol for enlightened tolerance:

Nowhere in the Europe of that time, still rocked by religious quarrels, was there another capital, in which the two most significant church buildings of the two different confessions dominated the cityscape together, in perfect unison, practically next to each other on narrow old town space. (Menzhausen 1999: 164).

Thus, whenever “The Baroque Dresden” is invoked today, as a golden age on whose perfection also today’s aspirations for the future should be honed, what is conjured up is the idea of a unity between great buildings and landscape, tolerance between different religious confessions, and a kind of constructive sympathy between the royal court and the city.

Outside the immediate centre, summer palaces and palaces for foreign ambassadors were built along the river banks. Also in that time, a decree was issued that the river was not to be canalised and allowed to flow in its natural bed also in the inner city centre, and that the riverside meadows were to be preserved and not to be built on, to safeguard the “unity of culture and nature, that is Dresden”. At the same time, August started his great art collection with Italian and Flemish masters, as well as the famous “Green Vaults”, a unique collection of precious artefacts made from gold and precious stones. What is remarkable about these collections is that they were open to the public from the very beginning. The Dresden court orchestra of that time was described by Rousseau as “the best in Europe”, while in Saxony’s second great city, Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach held the civic post as organist and Cantor of the St. Thomas Church. In 1724, the Alchemist Boettcher, in a failed attempt to produce gold, incidentally found the formula to produce porcelain, so that china was produced - for the first time outside China - in Saxony, and the famous Meissen china manufactory was established.

All this greatness and splendour, which today’s Dresdeners don’t tire of
recalling and boasting about to everybody else, today also provides the basis to the discourse that “culture” is the element through which even politics are made in Dresden. It is always “culture” and the arts which are seen as the symbolic means to exercise power in Dresden, as in the following interview quote by a Dresden art historian and avid campaigner for the rebuilding of the Neumarkt (the urban area around the Frauenkirche which was destroyed in the war; another one of the famous Canaletto images):

August the strong... he was the first to use art as a means for public relations, as we would call it now. That’s what really created the Baroque here. His many projects, all the museum projects, the Green Vaults, the Royal Galleries, can only be understood from this perspective. Because they were open to the public from the beginning. ... even the palace was open to the public from the beginning. So to speak, a tradition of tourism which began in the 18th century. And this, in the end, is the reason for this very, very strong identification of Dresdeners with their city. And this progressive cultural policy after the Baroque epoch was taken up by the citizens, and it was this and no accident which made Dresden into one of the most beautiful cities of Europe. This high standard has been maintained, and when the court stepped into the background, it was the rich middle-class [Bürgertum] who took over. [my emphasis] (SH 7)

A disposition towards culture and a love for the arts have a more significant function than serving as leisure pursuits for people who are protected from the worries of money and politics: culture and art are themselves integral parts of the politics of Dresden as a royal residency. This is a point which I will pursue further throughout the thesis.

After the baroque age, common narratives of Dresden’s building history sometimes sound as if nothing happened until 1945, when the baroque Dresden was destroyed. Of course, this is not quite true: Dresden did not only acquire some more representative public buildings in its centre - the opera house, the completion of the Zwinger with the buildings to house the Old Master Collections, the Synagogue, all by the renown architect Gottfried Semper - but also received large extensions of its urban territory, both as tenements and in form of the distinct mansion house suburbs, which all shape Dresden today; the more so, since these extensions to some extent have survived the war, in contrast to the immediate baroque centre. An important point to note is that throughout the 19th
century the power of the citizens in city-planning matters increased, so that for example Dresden was one of the first German cities to have written "city planning statutes", which secured amongst others that the Elbe river has not been canalised and flows in her natural bed through the city centre, and prohibited the erection of any buildings on its banks (a point I will return to in chapter 5).

However, for the dominant myth of Dresden as a baroque city, all this plays hardly any role. Likewise, popular narratives mostly pass over the facts that Saxony in the 19th century turned into Germany's foremost industrial region, that it was here where German social democracy had its origin, so that Saxony at that time became known as the "red kingdom". The fundamental tenor, when Dresden's history is told, is usually a narrative of decline, as in the following quote by a leading member of the Dresden Historical Society:

Dresden's time of glory was in the 18th century. Yet in the end of the 18th century, the end of the Augustean age, there was an end to political greatness, and after 1813, because Saxony once again had stood on the wrong side [as one of Napoleon's last allies], there was an end to territorial greatness, and then suddenly, there was an end to everything. (HL 7)

In similar terms the story was told to me by a cultural historian:

Saxony then was the second greatest European power, you have to remember this! At least in terms of territory. And because of the seven years war, and then Napoleon, Saxony had to surrender this status to Prussia. Prussia has risen, and Saxony once again fought on the wrong side. [...] After 1800, it was an insignificant minor country. Culturally significant, but not politically. And that's where the dilemma begins, when everything becomes very biedermeierlich, introvert, self-centred, and we adopt the perspective of the injured, of hurt vanity, of the peevish little child. And then, in 1945, one has even lost one's great city of Dresden, and then 40 years of Socialism, dictated by Prussia, this all plays a role. (SH 2)

The role of Prussia in the last quote I will focus on towards the end of this chapter. For the present context, it is interesting that the history of Saxony, and therefore Dresden, is told as if nothing happened and developed after the baroque age: the whole nineteenth century is blotted out in most historical narratives on Dresden.

---

13 Still in the GDR the territory of former Saxony was one of the most important industrial regions of the Eastern block (Hess 1994: 296). This industrial history is for example used again today in the speech of Saxon politicians who want to generate pride in the region for electoral purposes (e.g. Luutz 2001).
today. The next date which is mentioned is 1945, when Dresden was destroyed. Thus, the history of Dresden usually is essentially told as the history of its buildings, with the cornerstones 18th century (when the buildings were constructed) - 1945 (when they were destroyed) - and “today”, after the “40 years of socialism”, after re-unification (when the buildings might be rebuilt). In the course of this thesis, where I will focus especially on the building history since 1945, it will become clear that Dresden’s building history in fact is much more a continuum than the focus on these dates suggests. At the same time, however, it is important to note that in the minds of many Dresdeners the history of Dresden essentially can be reduced to these few important dates: a fact that also conditions the nature of the campaigns for the rebuilding (and in a few cases preservation) of historical buildings. The baroque buildings are seen as the expression of Dresden’s former greatness, and in today’s context of identity construction therefore become important identity symbols. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will therefore turn to some of the interpretations and identity narratives which this most common version of Dresden’s history evokes.

**THE CULTURAL CITY**

Essentially, there are two different interpretations of Dresden’s history today. One glories in the memories of the baroque age, and draws its pride from there. This finds expression also in the building-debates: the internationally most renowned architectural project of the present is not some contemporary avant-garde architecture, but the historically authentic reconstruction of a baroque building, the Frauenkirche (which I will discuss in chapters three and four); the most famous buildings those of the baroque royal court. By contrast, a planned new “house of culture” designed by the star architect Daniel Libeskind, designer of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial and of Ground Zero in New York, is generally being met with overwhelming protest and opposition in Dresden. Similarly, the new synagogue, which was completed in 2001 and since then has won the prestigious World Architectural Award, is met with disapproving silence in Dresden (louder protests would pose the danger of being regarded as anti-Semitic).

In opposition to these sentiments, there are voices in Dresden which are embarrassed about this nostalgia for the past, and argue that instead of glorying in its past cultural splendour, Dresden should now face the future and create something new. I will explore these two arguments in more depth in chapters 5
and 6.

Thus, the history of Dresden evokes simultaneous pride and embarrassment. The first sentiment is successfully employed by the Dresden tourist industry, while the embarrassment is more often expressed by intellectuals, who see its roots in the supposed cultural decline of Dresden in the 19th century, as in the quote above: “when the dilemma begins, and everything becomes introvert and self-centred”. The image of Dresden as a city of culture, a matter of pride in the Baroque time, acquired a new meaning in the nineteenth century, where “culture” started to mean escapism from the real world.

This image arose at a time when Dresden ceased to have any political power in a greater German context. The future seemed to lie elsewhere: in a unified German state. This image of backwardness, however, was not wholly negative, but also coupled with a certain pleasantness. Dresden at that time received the reputation it still has today: as a place a little cut off from the modern developments of the world, but also secure from the perils of the modern world. An anecdote of a Berlin journalist of the 1850s illustrates this: asked what he would do if he knew that the world would perish tomorrow, he is reported to have retorted: quickly move to Dresden, because everything there happens thirty years later than elsewhere. In a similar vein, the Russian writer Dostojewski, who himself spent two unhappy years in Dresden in the 1870s, gives in his novel "The Demons" a characterisation of it which wonderfully captures some aspects of the image it still has today: the story is about a group of political conspirators in a Russian town who plot a revolution designed to change the world. At one point, one of the conspirators gets cold feet, and despairing of the outcome of their revolt he suggests that it might be better just to go into exile "to some quiet island". The leader of the group scornfully mocks him:

Here, my dear friend, you have the advent of a new religion, which will take the place of the old one, there are more and more champions for this gigantic cause. And you... off you go and emigrate! And, you know, I recommend Dresden to you, instead of a quiet island. For firstly, it’s a city which has never seen an epidemic, and an educated man like you must surely be afraid of death; secondly, you are close to the Russian border there, so that you can comfortably procure your regular income from your beloved fatherland, thirdly, the city holds a large amount of so called art treasures, and you are an aesthetician, former teacher, philologist, if I am not mistaken; and finally, Dresden has its own pocket-sized Switzerland - the latter for poetic inspiration, for surely you write a poem now and then! Short, it’s a treasure in a snuff box! (Dostojewski 2000 [1878]: 536)
Dresden thus is portrayed as a place which is by passed by major events elsewhere in the world, and depending on these events and one’s appraisal of them, this might mean that it is hopelessly backward and unmodern, but also that it is a safe haven from the more adverse aspects of the present. The GDR’s nickname “valley of the clueless” today echoes this image. However, as Dostojewski’s speaker ironically reminds his counterpart, this image also entailed the existence of rich cultural assets. Yet this “culture” now does not anymore stand for the foremost innovations of its time as in the Baroque age, but rather for the preservation of the culture of a former age - the “large amount of so called art treasures” stands for this in the quote above - and also for an often escapist romantic art, ironically alluded to by Dostojewski’s assurance that Dresden is good for poetic inspiration.

This double image of Dresden as the city of courtiers, bureaucracy and reactionary routine on the one hand, and a place for romantic imagination on the other is famously captured in ETA Hoffmann’s novel The Golden Pot. Set in Dresden, the story pictures Dresden as a place where the two worlds of poetry and prosaicness, art and philistinism coexist: the hero, the student Anselmus, is torn between his love of the bourgeois daughter of a philistine financier, and the beautiful Serpentina, daughter of the Prince of the Spirits. The Golden Pot today counts as one of the great romantic creations of German literature, and as the cultural historian Ingo Zimmermann suggested to me, Dresden therefore could be regarded as the prototypical romantic city.

Today in re-unified Germany, this image - cultural, but removed from the real world - has changed little. It finds expression for example in the currently fashionable itinerary for heads of state on official visit to Germany: often, they will spend the first two days in Berlin discussing politics, and go for the third to Dresden to be shown around the Frauenkirche-building site and the art galleries and spend the night in the opera. When I put the question of Dresden’s role today to my interviewees, many answers were similar to the following: “Well, Dresden plays the role that is imposed on it, but which it doesn’t decline: the role of a cultural city. And a cultural city, that means calmed down conflict.” (Luehr 10) Asked further what he meant by this definition, my interview partner took some time to think and then said that it also has to do with the suppression of memory: after conflict - the conflicts of Saxon history until 1871, the conflicts of the Nazi time and the destruction of the city and Dresdeners’ tendency to regard themselves as victims of this period, and the conflicts of the GDR time - Dresdeners always
resorted to "culture", i.e. the preservation of architecture, and the adoration of music, in order to forget the past conflicts, and also to ignore the present ones.

This ambivalence about Dresden's culture, between pride and embarrassment, ties in with the dichotomy of parochialness or cosmopolitanism, which I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, and finds its expression also in the always present question in Dresden, whether to build modern or to rebuild historical buildings. The critics of historical rebuilding accuse the Dresdenerers of backward-looking introversion, and postulate more opening to contemporary, international architecture, i.e. see modernism as an expression of cosmopolitanism, and historical rebuilding as an expression of parochialism.

However, while this critique comes mainly from West German decisionmakers and architects, many of the Dresden intellectuals who are active in rebuilding campaigns, now argue for a positive evaluation of Dresden's past again. Essentially, they warn Dresdeners that their latent embarrassment with their past will be instrumentalised by powerful investors, architects and decisionmakers, who benefit from the discourse of modernisation, future-orientation and "no to nostalgia": they will make fast money by selling off Dresden's cultural assets in order to build lots of new buildings everywhere. These preservationists now appeal to Dresdeners not to fall into the parochialism trap, but to find pride and a positive local identity through the rebuilding and preservation of Dresden's historical buildings. Turning the modernists' discourse back against them, they accuse those Dresdeners falling for the modernisation argument of parochialism in their turn, and describe historical rebuilding as a revolutionary model for other cities to follow. As Stefan Hertzig, vice-chairman of the Society for the Historical Rebuilding of the Neumarkt, put it to me:

There was this internet survey, "Is Dresden a village". Yes, it is a village. Not because of its size. But there exists something like a special village-mentality... It is always the dumbest country people who wear the trendiest clothes, and wouldn't be caught listening to anything else but to the most fashionable music. Why? Because they fear to be recognised as country pumpkins. Somebody who has self-confidence ... doesn't need to be afraid of so-called provincialism. ... Many of the calls for more modernity, from politicians who fear investors and so, derive from this real provincialism. ... "We need Libeskind": why do they need Libeskind? Why? Simply, because they don't have any self-confidence, and because Libeskind is "in" just now, with ground Zero and all that. But Dresden... Dresden just was one of the leading cities of Europe. If all this would come back, there would be an international commotion, and other cities would follow the example of
Dresden. Our society wants to give Dresdeners some of their confidence back (SH 10).

In this discourse, provincialism is the bowing to hostile discourses, without self-confidence for the values that one has oneself, in this case the old city of Dresden. What resonates in this appeal to local pride and self confidence is also an appeal to Dresdeners to feel responsible for their own city, not to give away to foreigners what is rightfully theirs. This is one of the core arguments of the preservationists in the centre of this thesis, and I will explore it further in all the following chapters.

**DRESDEN ELITES: THE BILDUNGSBÜRGER**

The answer to the question “what kind of a city is Dresden” should also involve some consideration of its social structures: what kind of people live there? Who are the elites? In the present context, I will focus only on a particular group from Dresden’s elites: those cultural circles which tell the identity narratives discussed in this chapter. As I will show also in the following chapters, they tend to identify with a particular tradition of being *bürgerlich* (well educated middle class). Here, I will discuss their narratives about this tradition, and how it becomes related to Dresden’s character as a “royal city”.

To begin with, a quote from an art historian, who in an interview tried to describe what he thinks are the reasons for Dresden’s “mentality” as a cultural city:

What is the relation between citizens [Bürgertum] and court in this city? What kind of middle-class [Bürgertum] was this? It was very different from Leipzig, where it was very confident, very rich, ... merchants. Here in Dresden, one was court-confident instead of self-confident. You got your living from the court. They were all courtiers, the architects and the carpenters. Then you had the dressmakers, the... for the luxury industry of the court. Glassmakers, dress-makers, all these things... so very specific profiles of people who were dependent on the court. Civic elites, such as lawyers, professors, doctors, pharmacists - they were in the minority here. This is the classical profile of a royal residency, this has always been like this in royal residencies. (SH 7)

Before I turn to the claim that Dresdeners were court-confident instead of self-confident in the second part of this section, here it is just worth to draw attention to the claim that Dresden’s “civil society” has been dominated by the royal court and court-related professions. In material terms, one was dependent for one's living on the court. Another person I spoke to, also mused on the same theme:
Well, I don’t know how to put it, but this was the age of beginning capitalism, where you could both make money and lose money very fast. But in a city like Dresden, where you got your living as an employee of the court, you maybe were less dependent on these fickle forces, you were more secure... so that money was there, but as a matter of course, and you could enjoy culture and these things at your leisure...(AW 3)

This image again fits the prevalent myth of Dresden as a place outside the worries of contemporary life: a well-to-do place where money is pleasantly spent, but which itself is untouched by any market problems, outside capitalist progress etc. While the preceding quote argues that this is due to the self contained economic system of a royal residency, the same characteristic is often extended to encompass the whole of Dresden, so that Dresden becomes a place defined by the consumption rather than the production of money. And while Saxony, as I have mentioned before, was Germany’s most developed industrial region in the 19th century, which due to its high percentage of industrial workers and their voting behaviour became known as “the red kingdom”, Dresden has maintained the image of a “cultural” city, which in this respect means the antithesis of work. An old description of Saxony’s three cities has it that “money is produced in Chemnitz, traded in Leipzig and spent in Dresden”. Or, as one of my interviewees put it:

Dresden has always been an Eldorado for Pensioners, i.e. for people who had made money somewhere and then built their mansion houses here, because it was so beautiful. And that’s how all this great culture came to be here. Dresden was a first rate cultural place. Not like Chemnitz, where the machines run... (ER 8)

In addition to courtiers, here it is pensioners who are said to define the social structure of Dresden. In the same vein was the description by Dostojewski quoted earlier, where Dresden is described as the ideal place for a well-educated gentleman with an inclination towards cultural things, who at the same time is able to live on a regular income from elsewhere. Pensioners and courtiers - people who do not need to make money or who have their life-post, and who therefore are at leisure to enjoy culture - as a significant part of the social structure of Dresden: this picture is an integral part of the Dresden myth.

Interestingly, this stereotype of people who don’t need to care about the production of money, even have some disdain for such mundane things as the production of money, and live in the higher sphere of culture instead, fits exactly
the German concept of a Bildungsbürger, which developed in the early 19th century. Literally meaning something like “the well-educated citizen”, the concept of Bildungsbürger has emerged from the fact that in German, the term Bürger means both bourgeois and citizen, i.e. that there is no differentiation in language between the social category of a specific class (the middle-class), and the political category of a citizen. The concept of the Bildungsbürger originally captured the ideal of the union between the two concepts in one person: economically well-to-do and of respected social status, and at the same time the embodiment of “the higher values of idealism and humanism” (Glaser 1993: 29). Yet as cultural historians have pointed out, in the course of the 19th century in Germany the socio-economic and political developments went in two different directions: while the Bürgertum, the middle class, indeed became the economically dominant class in developing capitalism, it failed to match this high economic position with a correspondingly high influence in politics (Münkler 1998). Thus, capitalism was not accompanied by a corresponding process of democratisation as in other European counties of that time. Instead, old aristocratic elites maintained the political power in the Prussia-led unified Germany of the 1870s, and finally led the country into war (for this argument, see Engelhardt 1986). In this development, the Bildungsbürger, devoid of a political function, turned into a prosperous, but unpolitical individual, content with the status-quo, and obeying authority in order not to be disturbed in his daily business. Today, the concept has become a synonym for the decent German citizen, content with reading his Goethe, and looking away from what happens in the world, and silently allowing Hitler and the holocaust to happen.14

So far, the concept of Dresden described in the beginning of this section, as a place of well-to-do people occupying themselves with cultural things, fits quite well this general German concept of the Bildungsbürger as conservative and unpolitical. However, as I would like to show now, there are two narratives today prevalent in Dresden, both of which see the Bildungsbürger as an important part of Dresden’s historical social structures. One is viewing this fact in a negative light (corresponding to the generally negative image of the Bildungsbürger in Germany), but the other, maybe surprisingly, interprets the Dresden tradition of

14 For an interesting exploration of this social group’s role in the emerging nationalism of 19th century Germany, see Leah Greenfeld’s analysis of what she calls the Bildungsburger’s feeling of “resentment” in her chapter on Germany in Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity (1992). Compare also Hroch 1985.
the Bildungsbürgertum in a throughout positive light. While according to the first view, Dresden's historical social structures as a court-dominated city with a large apolitical Bildungsbürgertum engendered a tradition of political passiveness and dogged obedience to any power that be, the second view argues that out of Dresden's social constellation developed a good democratic spirit with actively participating citizens. These are the arguments of each view.

- Court-Confidence: The Bildungsbürger as Bourgeois -
In the quote at the beginning of this section, my interview partner says: “Here in Dresden, one was court confident instead of self-confident”. A court-confidence in this discourse is the exact opposite of the notion of a freethinking citizen; it means not just a material, but also intellectual and mental dependency on a sovereign. In other words, “court-confidence” connotes all the negative image that the concept of a Bildungsburger also has today: it describes the bourgeois, with a lacking citizen-spirit. Proof of this inherent “court-mentality” is found in the fact that Dresden had an above-average number of Nazi party members:

Who had the most NSDAP members? Not the capital Berlin. Not the Rally-centre Nuremberg. No. It was Dresden, this city of courtiers. (SH 8)

In this narrative, Dresdeners then became the perfect GDR citizens, passively obedient to the new power and in their geographically secluded valley situation cut off from the rest of the world.

The beginning of this tradition of the Dresdeners' "court-confidence" is located by this narrative in the 18th century - otherwise Saxony's great enlightened Augustean age - and the religious division between king and country. The protestant citizens had to obey a now catholic king. On the one hand, Saxony being one of the most powerful protestant countries, this put the king in a weak position and firmly strengthened the protestant civil society (I'll return to this point below). The protestant powers could even allow themselves to discriminate against catholics, amongst others ruling that catholics were not allowed to own land, and were not allowed to hold religious processions on public ground (so that even the king had to hold his processions within the church). On the other hand, paradoxically, the same protestant citizens identified strongly with the court, and to the present day look up to August as their most important identity symbol. For the further story of this, I'd like to quote another person whom I interviewed:
... and this is so remarkable and crazy: always the Lutheran majority - outside. And the power, the laws, the administration, have always been made by catholics. [...] And then the nineteenth century. Prussia had grown into a super-power after the victory over Napoleon, and Protestantism became the official religion of the German empire. The Lutheran institutions have been strengthened, and the population in Saxony grew, and they were all protestants. And the catholic enclave became smaller and smaller. But: the laws were still made by the catholics, the others.

And then came the communists. Again is the government of an alien ideology, the atheist one now, so to say. And the people... they have always had this trauma, that they didn’t feel represented by the governing power. And then there was 1989 and finally the chance to represent oneself. And, and this is really just coincidence, the people have voted for the CDU (the German conservatives, the Christian Democrats), because the Christian aspect in the party name appealed to them, and the CDU, that is in the West a catholic party. And now the Saxon government is a fully catholic thing, catholics from the west. And again: Biedenkopf [Saxon first minister 1990-2002] is the great identification figure. Those who make the laws...

And isn’t it funny that the catholic church and the state belong together in Dresden’s centre: the court cathedral isn’t property of the catholic church, but of the Saxon state. And that’s funny, because the protestant tax payer pays for the preservation of the court cathedral, but his own churches he has to build himself... (PK 2)

First of all, it is remarkable how facts about Dresden’s history and present situation are forged into a coherent narrative here: of a people who always had the misfortune to be governed by an alien force - note that the protestant Dresden public is seen as a coherent entity here, with a changing, but always equally alien, government: of catholics, communists, and (again catholic) west Germans. Secondly, however, the point is made that it always is exactly this alien governing Stranger who provides the strong identification of Dresdener with Dresden and Saxony. For not only was, and is to the present day, the figure of the catholic king August the identity symbol of Saxony, but, as the speaker mentions, the Western catholic figure of Saxony’s first Prime Minister after the reinstallation of the Saxon freestate in 1990, Kurt Biedenkopf, in the population soon affectionately was called “King Kurt” and held in an almost monarchist veneration.15 This narrative of the Dresdener’s eternal identification with an otherwise alien court therefore links in with the accusation of the court-consciousness: there is no self confidence, but one always likes to look up to the strong powers, even when it does not represent one’s own interests.

15 he won 60% of the vote, a figure only topped by the long term Bavarian First minister Edmund Stoiber
- Self-Confidence: the Bildungsbürger as Citizen -

The other narrative, however, argues that it was exactly the particular political structure created by August's conversion, which led to the tradition of self-assertion of the citizens, who thus developed a spirit of self-confident citizenship. For in order to pacify the protestant nobility and the strong protestant church and to prevent a revolution, August decreed after his conversion that religion from now on was to be a matter of personal conscience, not of state order. Thus, for the first time the reformation's law, "cuius regio eius religio", was subverted. All jurisdiction and education were to remain in the hands of the protestant church. Saxony at that time thus was no absolutist state: both the lower aristocracy and the middle-class, powerful and wealthy through the mining industry and trade, were too powerful, and their strong position was underlined by the religious isolation of the court. For example, in the German Assembly of the Protestant Estates, where each protestant power was represented by its ruler, the Saxon Lutheran bishop was the equal of the Brandenburg/Prussian king (protestant ruler of a protestant country), because in the lack of a protestant king in Saxony, the bishop was the most powerful protestant. Thus, the protestant middle classes - also those in direct employment by the court - formed a powerful civil society with important rights and influence in many spheres of public life. The argument therefore is that the legacy of a royal residency does not need to be a spirit of dogged obedience, but that in a case like Saxony, where the king was weak and religiously isolated, the royal residency provided a large ground for an independently thinking and acting middle class.

At the same time, this narrative stresses that the relation between court and citizens was not one of opposition, but of constructive give and take. The conversion did not lead to religious strife, but created a constellation where for example buildings like the protestant Frauenkirche and the catholic court cathedral could be erected practically next to each other, not in rivalry, but in beautiful harmony. This aspect of the self-confident-citizen narrative is often emphasised today, where the campaigns are for more active participatory rights in decisionmaking processes (see chapter 5). When the king became weaker on the international political platform, this narrative continues, the Saxon middle-class, long practised in thinking and acting independently, turned Saxony into the first industrialised region within the German empire. They proved their political alertness in 1848 when Dresden became an important centre of the revolution; and
finally, in 1989, it was no coincidence that the revolution started first here, with demonstration slogans of “we are freethinking citizens”, but also “we postulate dialogue with the state”. Incidentally, this civic tradition is often seen in connection with the strong protestant tradition which has survived in Saxony even throughout the forceful secularisation policies of the GDR years, when the Saxon Lutheran Church maintained significantly more members than any other of the GDR regions. The fact that the events of 1989 started in Leipzig and Dresden is also often explained by this fact, as for example in the historian Ehrhardt Neubert’s influential study of 1989 as a “Protestant Revolution” (Neubert 1999). Today’s rebuilding project of the Frauenkirche thrives on a discourse of “rebuilding the citizen’s church Frauenkirche, as a task of a modern civil society”.

Thus, the evaluation of Dresden’s history as a royal court city can be different, depending on how one judges the role played in it by the citizens, or the middle-class: “court-confident” or self-confident. Some Dresden intellectuals, as I have shown, cringe about the Dresdeners’ supposed court-confidence, and this uneasiness mirrors the general German uneasiness about their strong Bildungsbürgertum tradition, apolitical, passive, but opportunistic. However, and this will be a core topic of the next chapter, the other Dresden narrative which emphasises Dresdeners’ tradition of self-confidence and political participation, also refers to the concept of the Bildungsburger: and in contrast to the mainly negative image that this concept usually has today, emphasises its positive connotations, so that many of the cultural elites in Dresden during the GDR time found in the concept of the Bildungsburger a template for positive identification. However, their identification with the concept reverted to its original meaning: that of being cultured and well-educated, plus being politically engaged and active. In their discourse, the original understanding of the term as a symbiosis between the well-to-do bourgeois and the cultured, politically active citizen was emphasised. The cultural elites who developed this discourse during the time of the GDR, carried it into reunified Germany, so that today’s building campaigns, as I will show in the last chapters of this thesis, also are held in the name of two traditions which are said to be typical of Dresden: that of culturedness and that of active citizens’ participation.
LOCAL NARRATIVES IN CHANGING CONTEXTS

In popular narrative accounts of what Dresden is like, one other important dimension concerns Dresden’s role in Germany, and its relation to other spatial contexts (Saxony, east/west/unified Germany, Europe). The debates about buildings and urban planning which will be the subject of this thesis take place in a context of change and insecurity: for not only has the political framework within which Dresdeners (like all East Germans) have to organise their lives changed rapidly over the last two decades, from the communist GDR to re-unified Germany, and now increasing Europeanisation, but this political change has been accompanied by many social changes and insecurities concerning vital factors such as employment, education, housing etc.

In this insecure context, the building debates are about the forming of Dresden local space, i.e. they engage with an entity, Dresden, that supposedly and apparently has remained the same throughout the outer changes. In calling for the preservation and sometimes rebuilding of historical buildings, the campaigners for these causes attempt to forge a continuity and “identity” for Dresden, which thus becomes a stable point of reference in the midst of an unstable and changing world. To conclude this chapter, I will discuss how the relation between Dresden and its changing contexts is constructed in the narratives of the Dresden rebuilding campaigns. This will lead in to the remaining chapters, where I will explore how the Dresden narratives are mobilised in order to contest other dominant narratives, first those of the GDR regime, and now those of unified Germany.

As often in the construction of collective identity, the Dresden identity narratives, as propounded by the Dresden preservationists and activists campaigning for preservation and rebuilding, partly thrive on the posing of an “other”, which in these narratives is constructed as a continuous entity: the great “other” of Dresden in these narratives is Prussia, the state that is made responsible for Dresden’s political decline in the 18th century.16 And although Prussia has long ceased to exist

---

16 As a result of the Seven Years War, Saxony lost the Polish Crown, and was left dramatically diminished in territory, with a destroyed country and huge state debts. This was one of the great bitter moments in the history of the Saxon resentment against Prussia, which until today Dresdeners seem not to have forgiven Prussia. Thus, for example the Saxon cultural historian Menzhausen’s description of the Seven Years War seems to be full of bitter sarcasm, when he points out, that yes, the Prussians do have a place in history, if it be only as the “inventors of the method, to finance one’s wars out of the means of the invaded countries.” (Menzhausen 1999: 256)
as a political entity, all future German governments having their seat in Berlin are often constructed as the direct inheritors of Prussia: the German Reich culminating in the Nazi regime, the communist East German state, and today sometimes even the new unified German government. Thus, the history of Dresden since the 18th century is sometimes told as a single narrative of Dresden’s victimhood of Prussia, as in the following quote by the Dresden born journalist Friedrich Dieckmann:

August’s ... life of art and luxury [continued] ... until the embittered Prussian, Friedrich II, demolished it all. And two hundred years later ... that Nero-like raging Berlin potentate of Austrian birth [i.e. Hitler], who gave the cause for the bomber wings of the 13 February 1945, has surpassed the results of Friedrich by far.

Since Prussian troops shot the city into ruins in the Seven Years War, Dresden has failed again and again because of Berlin: in 1815, when the victorious Prussians attempted to dissolve Saxony, the ally of Napoleon, and finally annexed half of it, and again in 1866, when together with Austria also Saxony lost the German-German war [i.e. the Prussian-Austrian war in which most other German states joined sides], [...] finally in 1952, when the Communist party .... dissolved ... Saxony: [...] the centre ruled, not caring for the regions; the old cultural and industrial nation Saxony was doomed to extinction. Therefore resistance from the people arose here first... and if Leipzig was the site of the most powerful demonstrations, so was Dresden the place where the peacefulness of the revolution was first safeguarded. (Dieckmann 1995: 52)

Saxony in this narrative becomes the victim of all supposedly Prussian-dominated (i.e. governing from Berlin) chapters of German history: Hitler was responsible for the war, therefore for the destruction of Dresden, and the GDR state dissolved Saxony and let it rot. But this narrative of victimhood is turned when with 1989 the revolution, equated with Dresden and Saxony, manages to overturn the GDR regime, equated with Prussia. The narrative as told in the above quote, covering the time until 1989, is a sad story with a happy ending: one where the hero continues to suffer unjust defeat, but in the end is rewarded for his ordeals. Saxony is reinstated, while the Prussian project, with all regimes deriving from it, has failed. In the discourse of the intellectual Saxon patriots therefore resonates a certain satisfaction, that history has somehow “proven Saxony right in the end”.

The reason for this is often found in the key element of their Saxon narrative: Saxony’s peacefulness, in juxtaposition to Prussia’s militarism. Dresdeners today seem almost to take pride in enumerating all the wars that Saxony has lost (almost all of which were led against Prussia): one of the first facts
about Saxon history that any child or visitor gets to hear is that Saxony always managed to be on the losing side. This unusual version of national pride needs to be understood in the context of German history. If Germany still has trouble to come to terms with its past as a militarist aggressor state which started two world wars, in Saxon history the flaw of defeat is turned into the virtue of being not fit for war, i.e. being peaceful. And even if this latter claim stretches the historical facts a little - Saxony joined most wars of its history up to 1870 voluntarily and was certainly not more pacifist than most other powers of that time - at least none of the wars was started by Saxony. An argument which I sometimes heard was that if Germany had been dominated by Saxony, been built on Saxon values - culture instead of warfare - it never could have become the aggressor state it was. Therefore, Dresdener take pride in the fact that the so-called “peaceful revolution” of 1989 was an achievement first and foremost of Saxons, with the famous Leipzig monday-prayers and Dresden, where for the first time people demonstrating in the streets met armoured police-forces with candles.

This narrative of Saxon peacefulness is helped along by the course of historical events: while Saxony from a political power of European stature declined into insignificance, Prussia in the late 18th and early 19th century grew from a mediocre power into one of the greatest European powers and the greatest within the German Empire, so that in 1871 the newly founded German nation state was a geographical extension of political Prussia. Saxony therefore ceased to be an independent political power at the moment when the story of Germany, the aggressor state, starts. The Saxon peacefulness narrative therefore is able to claim innocence and passiveness, even victimship (e.g. the destruction of Dresden), in the dark sections of German history and the GDR time. Today, this narrative can therefore culminate in the pride that history seems to have proven Saxony right in the end: all historically suffered trouble at the hand of Prussia reaps its just reward, when Prussia has not just disappeared as a political entity, but unified Germany is at pains to remove any mementoes of its Prussian past from its image, while Saxony is reinstated as a political entity, and can even claim to have always honoured the antimilitarist, cultural values which unified Germany now aspires to.

In 1871, Saxony ceased to be an independent kingdom and became one of the federal states of the newly founded German Reich. The social-democrat majority in the Saxon parliament voted for a unified democratic Germany, but against a Prussian dominance in it. Thus, as various people proudly pointed out to me, Saxony was decisive in safeguarding some degree of federalism in the new German Reich in 1871.
Yet the story does not end in 1990. In the following chapter, I will concentrate in particular on the GDR-time hopes which members of the Dresden cultural elite attached to the desired event of German re-unification, drawing their emotional strength from exactly the narratives of Saxon and Dresden history as I have just described them. Then, the knowledge of the older Saxon culture was an act of mental opposition to the GDR state: Dresden could be seen as a cultural "centre" where an older, "real" German tradition of culture continued and was kept alive, in relation to which the official GDR ideology came to be seen as almost marginal. "Culture" as a Saxon identity marker provided an alternative model to political power and, as I will show, even could be used to oppose this power.

However, and this will be an important focus in the latter chapters of this thesis, with the advancing years into re-unification, there is a growing disappointment, both in Dresden and in East Germany at large, that the "happy ending" might not have been a happy ending after all. Generally, there are the well-known and well-researched feelings of frustration and disappointment in Eastern Germany in general, about ever-growing unemployment rates, the never-ceasing flood of especially young people moving away from Eastern Germany to the west in search of employment, the closure of schools and the increasing failures of the social benefits system. But particularly in Dresden, amongst the cultural elites and civil rights activists who I got to know over my fieldwork, there is disappointment that the hopes which one had set in reunification and the reinstitution of Saxony have not been fulfilled so far.

As I will show in the next chapter, during the time of the GDR these groups focused very strongly on the "Other", the communist GDR, and simultaneously identified very greatly with Western Germany - in whose federalism one saw the the own Saxon identity safeguarded and honoured - which now is being disappointed by the realities of unification. Instead, in political speeches, publications, surveys etc., Eastern Germany is today often treated as a homogeneous entity. Thus, the identity which the GDR-time cultural elites claim for themselves, i.e. the Saxon one, is not recognised, while the very framework to which they never felt much belonging to and which they fought against, i.e. the GDR, is now attributed to them as their natural identity framework. As I will show especially in the last two chapters, these groups' campaigns and activities in building and preservationist matters are a means for them to demarcate themselves both from this attributed GDR-identity, and from the unified German
state discourses. In their discourse, local and regional values, traditions and history, as I have described them in this chapter, are played off against all-German discourses of globalism and modernism.18

In this present demarcation, the unified German state does not serve as an “other” in the sense that the communist regime and in retrospect also the Nazi regime did, and it is not equated with Prussia and Prussian tradition as those former regimes were. However, one important aspect of the old Saxon-Prussian dichotomy is revived: that of centralism versus regionalism. For while, as in the quote above, Dresden intellectuals always have tended to see in Prussia the dominant power whose aim it was to annihilate and annex Saxony, they have seen Saxony as the paradigm of regionalism. Today, although Germany is a federal state and Saxony has been reinstated, there is a feeling that in the dominant discourse the same old centralism prevails. Therefore, as I will show, the building debates are to a great degree about the preservation and rebuilding of one’s own values, as a demarcation and alternative to the prevailing (West) German ones.

At the same time, however, the cultural elites’ campaigns for a strengthening of Saxon “identity” take place in a context where Germany has many problems: not just its failing economy, but also the ongoing and still unresolved problems of how to deal with the past etc. This context provides for political discourses and policies in contemporary Germany which tend to downplay and move away from the difficult German plane, and instead are strongly orientated towards Europe on the one hand (compare for example the unanimous favouring by all parliamentary parties of the EU constitution), but on the other hand also towards a strengthening of regionalism. The Dresden cultural elites’ campaigns for the preservation of buildings in the name of local and regional identity therefore also takes place in a context where the official policies of Germany are oriented towards raising regionalism: education, for example, is not centralised, but under the responsibility of each federal state. Expressions of Saxon regionalism are therefore not necessarily politically subversive, but even supported by German policies. Therefore, if Saxon identities today still in some ways thrive on a negative image of Prussia, this does not lead to explicit calls for Saxon independence (as is sometimes the case in Bavaria); rather, some positively evaluated aspects of German culture are emphasised to be Saxon, not Prussian, in

18 Compare the influential work on contemporary regionalism by the German philosopher Herrmann Lübbe (1994; 1997).
In order to fill this very general and sketchy outline of Dresden narratives and its contexts with life, I will now begin the more concrete, chronological exploration of the role of preservationism for identity narratives in Dresden. I will start in the following chapter with the important role of institutionalised preservationism in the GDR, and in the later chapters trace the story up to the present’s much diminished role of that institution in the post-unification period, where instead citizens initiatives and urban social movements play a much larger role.

19 I do not want to claim that Saxony is unique in Germany for this: there are other historical regions, most notably Bavaria, which are linked to Berlin, and by extension to the Federal republic at large, in similar adversity. Here it is just important to note that Saxony is one such case, and next to Bavaria probably the strongest. It is also the only such case in the so-called New Laender, the five new federal states of the former GDR. It is therefore also interesting to look at the construction of the Saxon region in political discourse, by regional politicians. See the study of Wolfgang Lautz (2001) Region als Programm. Zur Konstruktion sächsischer Identität im politischen Diskurs, Baden: Nomos.
1945 view of the destroyed Neumarkt; in the middle the ruin of the Frauenkirche. (photo: courtesy of the Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden)
CHAPTER 2

THE PRESERVATION OF SPACE: BUILDINGS, PRESERVATIONISM AND OPPOSITIONAL IDENTITY IN THE GDR

After the bombing night of 13 February 1945, Dresden, once widely known for its beauty as "Florence on the Elbe", was reduced to a city of ruins. The trauma which this provoked amongst Dresdeners is captured in the following quote by the Dresden writer Erich Kastner:

For a whole day I was walking aimlessly through the city, pursuing my memories. The school? Burnt out. The college with the grey boarding years? An empty facade... And the Frauenkirche, the old wonder building, where sometimes I sang in the choir? A few wretched stone fragments... I have controlled grief. It does not grow any more with the number of wounds. It reaches its limits earlier. ... It is as if the heart had fallen into a deep coma. (quoted in: ...oder Dresden 1987: 48)

This feeling of being in a deep coma, of not being able to realise the full horror of one entire city being wiped out completely in one single night, became a recurrent theme in post-war Dresden. At the same time, however, it provided the impetus for an immense interest amongst the Dresden population in the question of what now was to become of their city. Towards the end of the GDR years, this interest grew into a broad movement in Dresden, through which a large number of Dresdeners actively participated in the re-building process of the city. In this chapter, I will discuss the origins of this movement in the GDR years, and the role played in it by the institution of preservationism in Dresden.

The official line of the GDR on rebuilding was to erect a new socialist city, which should resemble pre-war Dresden as little as possible. In the 1950s and 60s, many ruins which were only slightly damaged were therefore demolished, as well as some intact buildings. In Dresden, this period today is therefore often referred to as "the second destruction of Dresden". However, from the very beginning there was a strong opposition amongst the population against this


57
The Frauenkirche as it had still appeared shortly before the War.
(photo: courtesy of the Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden)
policy of demolition and socialist rebuilding. This opposition was especially led by the preservationists, whose efforts I will discuss in this chapter. The preservationists in the GDR were civil servants, i.e. employed in the state-owned office of preservationism. Their position therefore was a highly ambiguous one: in theory, they were cultural functionaries of the GDR state. In practice, however, the object of their work - the remains of pre-war buildings often hailing from Dresden’s time as a royal city - comprised much substance which the communist ideologues did actually not want to be preserved, but rather to be rid of. Moreover, the individuals who filled these positions themselves often derived from pre-war Bildungsbürger circles, whose values were exactly those which the GDR tried to eliminate. The status of the preservationists within the GDR state was therefore a highly precarious one; several times the preservationist office was marked down for closure.21

In this chapter, I will particularly concentrate on the influence that the preservationists had with the broader Dresden public, due to their ambiguous status in the GDR’s official order. My main argument will be that through the preservation of old historic buildings they provided a “space”, both in a physical and a discursive sense, for the formulation and transmittance of various identities that were oppositional to the GDR-regime: expressions of “cultural identity”, a hope in German re-unification, and Saxon regionalism. Preservationism was in a crucial position here, because it could provide material expression to each of these sentiments. In exploring this, I will attempt to locate preservationists as identity “preservers” in the social order: what influence did they have with the governing powers on the one hand, and with the wider public on the other? Who were the actual persons holding these offices. What was their position in the social field?

In order to approach these questions, I will first discuss the symbolic role that especially the buildings of the former Saxon royal court acquired in Dresden in the beginning of the GDR era. I will then look at the role that preservationists played in the change of official cultural policies which occurred in the GDR in the 1970s, when the GDR government began to endorse historic Saxon buildings as the GDR’s own cultural heritage. I will then discuss the preservationists’ status as part of oppositional circles which defined themselves as “Bürgertum”. To conclude, I will take another look at the oppositional identities articulated through reference to preserved historic buildings: cultural, all-German

21 For an account of the preservationist office’s role during the GDR period, see Magirius 1995a.
The ruin of the Frauenkirche in the 1950s, with sheep grazing where the famous baroque Neumarkt quarter had been before.

(photo: courtesy of the Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden)
and Saxon.

BUILDINGS AS IMPORTANT IDENTITY SYMBOLS AFTER THE WAR

In a city full of ruins, buildings naturally became one of the most important concerns of the inhabitants. As one of my interviewees put it:

I have grown up myself in this landscape of rubble, and I remember how it was... as a Kruzaner [choir boy in the prominent Dresden boys' choir Kreuzchor] I have walked along the Prager Strasse, on Sunday mornings, ...across the huge meadows with the flocks of sheep... to the Kreuzkirche. A waste plain... and so of course I was interested, already as a child, whenever something new was being built... such a growing, this is something unique, probably not even in Germany and in Europe is this easily understandable... I mean, the destruction of this city, this tabula rasa, only this small old Island was there, which reminded you of the old Dresden, this historical centre, and then so much... I mean, I will be 52 years old soon, and all my life I have lived through the becoming of this city... (RD 3)

This image of walking along the Prager Strasse to the church Kreuzkirche, once encompassing one of Dresden's most densely built inner city areas, as along wide empty pastures with sheep grazing on them, has become a standing image of Dresden's fate. The person describing this image here situates himself within this famous narrative, which juxtaposes the actuality of a "waste plain" to the norm of a densely built city. He uses a standard phrase of this narrative of the destruction of Dresden, "tabula rasa", which invokes parallel narratives of Germany being a tabula rasa after 1945. However, critics of this have pointed out that 1945 was no "zero hour", but that there was a continuum in everyday life instead of a radical break (e.g. Grass 1980). Remarkably, he likewise stresses the fact that Dresden now was a "city-in-becoming" - again in contrast to the silently taken-for-granted norm, that a city today is a finished body - a departure from the norm so great that it is "something unique, probably not even in Germany and Europe easily understandable".

Juxtaposed to this is the "small island which reminded you of the old Dresden, the historical centre". The latter also had been badly damaged, but due to the efforts of the preservationists, to which I will turn presently, was beginning to be rebuilt immediately after the war. In the following, I would like to explore the great symbolical significance which this "small island of the old Dresden" received during the GDR time. This is a quote from another one of my interviews:

59
There is a fundamental need here to preserve this old city at least to some degree. Where this has been achieved - royal palace, Zwinger, this was in the very beginning [after the war], before they started to rebuild houses, they have started to rebuild the Zwinger! Crazy....! Where this has been achieved, it always was in 100% accordance with the will of the population. This decision. Well, and every saved stone, every rebuilt building could be certain of this tremendous approval. The brave men of defence, with Nadler [the Dresden chief preservationist] at their top, have taken care that in a city of rubble as Dresden then was, slowly rebuilding became possible again at all. It was a pile of rubble! And he was the preservationist of this pile of rubble! He has so to speak lived through all this, and protected, again and again protected. (HL 7)

There are at least two interesting points here: First, it is not, as one might have thought, builders and planners who are credited with the achievement of having started rebuilding the bombed city, but preservationists, the “brave men of defence”. Second, as the person quoted here points out himself, “rebuilding” in Dresden almost always does not mean houses, but prominent cultural artefacts. This stands in contrast to general narratives on “rebuilding German cities after the war”, where rebuilding means the creation of a new urban landscape in general: houses, streets, public buildings, whether in new or old architectural styles. Yet in the quote above, the speaker moves away from this general concept of rebuilding to talk solely about the preservation of landmark buildings, or their rebuilding in a historical style.

The great importance of historical buildings, and the preservationists’ role in preserving them, is a general feature of the discourse of educated, oppositional minded Dresdeners during the time of the GDR: in fact, the point that Dresdeners rebuilt the Zwinger (a famous component of Dresden’s baroque royal court complex) before they did houses was made to me with much pride during many other interviews, too. I think that the reasons for this - both for the actual fact that Dresdeners rebuilt the Zwinger before houses, and for the dominance of this narrative today and the pride it still engenders - may lie somewhere along the following lines.

A narrative of rebuilding houses did exist, of course, in Dresden just as in other cities. Yet in Dresden, just as in the GDR generally, it was a narrative endorsed especially by the new communist ideologists, who promoted the “Trümmerfrauen” (debris women) ordinary women who worked hard to remove

---

22 the German phrase used in the original sounds just as strangely in this context: "die tapferen Maenner der Verteidigung" also evokes images of soldiers in a battle, or barricade fighters.
the stone fragments lying everywhere to start a first kind of order again in the months and years immediately after the war, while the men had died in the war or were still away as prisoners of war— as "pioneers of the first hour", heroines of the building up of a new communist order.

Rebuilding the Zwinger, by contrast, belonged to a completely different narrative: originally built under the baroque King August as part of his extensive quarter of court buildings in the inner city, the Zwinger housed the famous Saxon Gallery of Old Masters and the royal collections of Meissen china, and also remained a venue for concerts and summer theatre productions for which it originally was built. The Zwinger therefore embodied most Dresdener's self-understanding of being the inhabitants of a "city of culture", which was closely connected to the pride of Dresden having once been a royal city. "Rebuilding the Zwinger"— both the actual fact and the narrative of it— was seen as belonging to the old Dresden narrative of culture and court-consciousness, and pitted against a newly proclaimed proletarian narrative of communist rebuilding. "The Dresdeners needed culture more than anything else, that's what they identified with" another of my interviewees points out (DS 4).23 The reconstruction of the old Saxon royal buildings thus reminded people of an old identity narrative, at a time when the accustomed everyday life context and present politics were in utter disarray: the city in ruins, Nazi Germany defeated, and government consisting of Soviet occupation forces and a sudden new political elite of communists. The material presence or absence of buildings re-enforced this uncertainty: while immediately after the war and in the early 1950s there were no new communist buildings at hand to symbolise the new order, there was still "this small island of the old Dresden, the historical centre", as the person quoted above formulates it. If Dresden therefore was now a "city-in-becoming", it was one which was to be built on the few still existing characteristics of an old royal capital.

What was still there, it needs pointing out, were only the ruins of the old centre, but many of them— the Zwinger, the royal palace, the court cathedral—

23 The way that Dresdener held on to everything that reminded them of their former identity as a city of culture have become almost legendary. For example, there are many moving accounts of opera performances shortly after the war: Since the opera house was now a ruin like everything else in the centre, the world star cast of the Dresden opera made an old inn at the outskirts of Dresden their new home. In this makeshift theatre all the great works of the opera canon were performed, with almost no stage sets, but attended evening after evening by people who themselves often were temporarily homeless. (See for example E. Kästner (1947) Wiedersehen mit der Oper.)
weren’t as badly damaged as to make rebuilding impossible. The preservationists’ “fight”, of which the quote above speaks, was at least in these instances directed at the securing of the ruins and their preservation from demolition. An exemplary story illustrating this and often told in Dresden is how the new communist mayor soon after the war wanted to demolish the ruins of the Zwinger, as an unwanted relic of feudalist exploitation. Concerned preservationists and citizens went to the Soviet Military Commander then still in overall charge and appealed to him: he decreed that the Zwinger should remain and might be rebuilt, explaining to the German fundamentalist communist that it had been proletarians after all who had done the actual building. To demolish the building now would mean to annihilate their hard efforts. There are many stories in the same vein: of uncultured new communist powers, to whom even the otherwise hated Soviets were superior in “cultured-ness”.

I think one can therefore argue something like this: the old power structures were in disarray and new ones were being implemented. In such times of the reordering of “social space”, actual, material space becomes important, too. It has been argued that for studying identity discourses it is not so much important to look at their content, but at the space they occupy (McCrone 2001: 179). It seems to me that this argument can be used on an almost naive level, too, by arguing that physical structures also occupy space, and whoever controls these buildings, controls a certain piece of space. If after the war Dresdeners rebuilt the Zwinger before houses and the “Old Dresden” came to be of such primary importance, it was not just because of nostalgic escape from the grim present into a better and more beautiful past, but it was also because they were spaces solely occupied by themselves, i.e. non-communist, oppositional, “cultural” , preservation-minded Dresdeners: the new political powers had renounced their claim over them by attempting to demolish them. Because they failed to do so, the buildings remained as a symbolic space out of the reach of the new political powers. The strata of preservation-minded Dresdeners therefore “gained space” for their own discourses, they got control over important symbols, at the very time when new power structures were to be implemented. Stories such as the above, where Dresdeners circumvented the new communist governing elite and appealed directly to a higher authority, the Soviet occupation officer, can also be interpreted as the Dresden preservationists’ negation of the authority of the communists. And when, as in the Zwinger instance, they were even proved right by this higher
authority against the new communists, they were confirmed in their claiming of space. These buildings therefore helped to foster an “us, the people” against “them, the state” discourse from the very beginning. The preservationists, who were the actual people carrying out most of these battles, therefore became the “brave men of defence”, carriers of an oppositional identity in a strategic position, and moral authorities to the present day, so that Hans Nadler, the chief preservationist over most of the GDR years, after 1990 was to be the first person to receive the title of a honorary citizen of Dresden.

In the next two sections I would like to pursue this topic by taking a closer look at the role the preservationists themselves played during the time of the GDR, before returning to the question of which symbolic space the historic buildings in Dresden occupied - Saxon and pan-German - towards the end of this chapter.

GDR CULTURAL POLICIES AND PRESERVATIONISM

In the 1970s and early 80s, the cultural policies of the GDR state were slowly changing. When before the GDR's own cultural functionaries had shown at best contemptuous neglect for the historic buildings, now buildings like the Zwinger or the opera house became endorsed as the GDR’s own cultural heritage. Primarily, this was part of a greater change in cultural policies taking place at that time, and encompassing the GDR’s new self-understanding as a Kulturnation (see Hahn 1990). Yet following my line of argument from the previous section, it could also be argued that the state slowly came to realise the continuing symbolic power of buildings such as the royal quarters in Dresden, and of the narratives they evoked. The GDR’s cultural ideologues therefore would choose to get control over these symbolic buildings themselves, rather than abandoning them to oppositional interpretations.

24 This process, which perhaps had its origin in many Soviet occupation officers’ high estimation of the German history of ideas and the German musical and literary tradition, was also ideologically justified with the role of Marx as firmly embedded in this German philosophical tradition. The new self-identification as „Kulturnation“ was the attempt to substantilise the claims of the GDR to be an independent new nation, through embedding it in a carefully selected tradition of German culture, and portray the GDR as the true heir to this culture, in contrast to „imperialist“ Western Germany. In practice, a new line on cultural policies was declared in 1971 by the newly elected Erich Honecker as GDR president, who with this change in policies also attempted to pacify the growing disaffection of the intellectuals. The intriguing history of the twists and changes of the GDR’s official line on culture, cultural heritage and cultural policies is well told in Ernst (1993) and Grünenberg (1990).
If there was a change in cultural policies on the part of the GDR's policy makers, this could on the one hand be interpreted as an attempt to regain the space they had lost previously. On the other hand, however, this can also be seen as the success of the preservationists in manipulating the government to follow their own aims and ends. For the preservationists and like-minded people did not lead an abstract "battle for space". In order to safeguard the protection and if possible rebuilding of those symbolic buildings they cared for, they would try to keep them out of reach of the governing powers as long as the government's line was demolition, yet at the same time they had to appeal to that very government, and negotiate with it for the financial means and political approval of rebuilding. In the following section, I would like to discuss this complex situation.

Since the focus of this thesis is on today's public debates about buildings, and is based most importantly on the interviews I conducted with today's activists, I will approach the question of GDR cultural policies and the role of the preservationists in it first from the perspective of the people I interviewed. Many of them see their own actions today as based on a tradition of preservationism in the GDR which they highlight in their narratives; therefore, it is important to look at these narratives more closely. In a second step, however, I will depart from there towards a more interpretative discussion of how the role of the preservationists in the GDR might be seen in sociological terms.

The following is a section of a focus group interview I carried out with four people, all of them voluntary members in various rebuilding societies today. Maybe it is worth quoting a lengthy part of the talk, because it neatly captures many of the important elements of the discourses on the GDR, how it was experienced and is remembered today, amongst ordinary, yet educated, oppositionally-inclined people:

CB: This consciousness for culture has certainly survived not in all cities. But in Dresden it has...
I: Why just here?
PW: Well, obviously, because there was the preservationists here. The palace could have been demolished just as in Brunswick and in other cities, if there hadn't been people who preserved this ruin! And if I look at Magdeburg, what wounds... all this could have happened to Dresden too.
CB: You know, I think this was also due to the cleverness of the Dresdeners, especially the preservationists, they have managed to
remove Dresden a bit from the immediate focus of the higher bigwigs in Berlin.
PW: And this was, in political terms, not un-dangerous.
CB: well, it was treated as belonging to old, bürgerlich values, bound to die soon anyway.
AW: But isn't this the whole joke? Honecker and Ulbricht [two of the GDR's presidents] have guided their state visitors through the Zwinger, just as the Chancellor is doing now. Isn't this funny...
CB: But this started only with Honecker. Ulbricht, he hated all capital, and aristocracy, and bourgeoisie [imitates Ulbricht's notorious wrong pronunciations] - he couldn't even pronounce these words, for him, all this should go away and be forgotten. But Honecker, who was much less independent, was easier manipulated by the Soviets. And there were some culturally minded people there, who said, we, too, cultivate the image of Peter the Great and Katharina.
AW: But wasn't this all just because it was also an export hit, because it brought in currency?
PW: well, for me all of this is connected to one year, 1983, the Luther Anniversary. That's how it started. and then 1985 was the big year. Then it was decided that the palace should be reconstructed, after they had rebuilt the opera house, 1985 was its official opening, then there was... it all started only in the 1980s.
CB: And Why? because they realised it brought them currency.
PW: Sure. With Luther they wooed the Americans.

There are two interesting aspects in this discussion, which are symptomatic of the way the cultural politics of the GDR time are thought of today in Dresden. One is the great symbolic role of the preservationists, the other an appraisal of the motives of GDR cultural policies, and their change in the 1970s with the transition from Ulbricht's to Honecker's presidency. To both I would now like to turn briefly.

In the quote above, the preservation of a "cultural consciousness" is connected to the preservation of buildings, and by extension the preservationists: are made responsible for the survival of a pre-GDR cultural consciousness especially in Dresden. This is an illustration of the great admiration preservationists receive in Dresden, and of the commonly held opinion that the preservationists in Dresden during the time of the GDR happened to be singularly energetic, dedicated individuals, who just by their personal dedication managed to prevent much harm to Dresden that was done elsewhere (the example here is Magdeburg, the medieval German Emperor's city, which after the bombing was completely
demolished and rebuilt in a 1960s/70s fashion). However, the point here is not so much whether these individuals were really like this, but the narratives they generated in a wider public. In the following, I would like to give a general idea of these narratives, in order to discuss the embeddedness of the preservationists in the social structures of the GDR in the next section.

If people in Dresden speak of "The Preservation", as the institution is generally known, they usually link this firmly with specific names and persons: first and foremost Hans Nadler, the chief preservationist throughout the GDR years, who is now 96 years of age and honorary citizen of Dresden, and Fritz Löffler, the author of the best-selling book "The Old Dresden", who died in 1988 at an old age. Both are names which will be encountered again and again in interview quotes in this thesis. The moral authority and symbolic significance they have acquired is so great that their lives and actions have become narratives in their own right, i.e. templates for identification. The time of the GDR thus added its own mythic personae to the long list of legendary Dresden identification figures (most prominent amongst them the baroque king August the Strong, as described in the previous chapter).

Characteristics they are credited with include political integrity, a great dedication to Dresden and great "cunning": Both never joined the communist party; Fritz Löffler lost his position as a curator of the Saxon Art Collections twice, first under the Nazis and then again under the communists, because he refused to bow to party guidelines of either kind. In his case, this brought him close to being forcefully expatriated in the 1960s to Western Germany (as the GDR did with a few cases of famous dissidents). He was forced before the Party Conference, and there famously made the concession to promise to closer align himself to Marxist-Leninist thought. In the eyes of oppositional Dresdeners, however, this instance was not seen as a weakness but as a sign of his love for Dresden: "He did it for Dresden, so that they couldn’t expel him. He stayed here, he didn’t go away. He had offers, but he didn’t go. Not even as a pensioner. He was married to

---

25 Yet note also the example of Brunswick, a West German city with a similar fate. Comparisons of Western rebuilding policies with those of the GDR will be focused on in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

Dresden", as one interviewee put it. The virtues of political integrity and dedication to Dresden are merged in the Löffler narrative into a model of behaviour in the GDR, where the lip confession to Marxism is judged to be a far lesser betrayal than the betrayal of Dresden would be. This was supported by the fact, that he never put his bow to marxism into practice, but is credited with a high degree of "cunning" in dealing with the party officials: "Löffler was very cunning. Incredibly cunning." (KH 1-2) Another person who had been a close friend of Fritz Löffler’s told me the story how Löffler solicited the unintentional help from a high party official, who had visited Dresden and had died soon afterwards. Later Löffler published an essay in which he claimed that this party cadre on his visit had looked in deep emotion at the ruin of the Frauenkirche and expressed the desire to see it rebuilt during his lifetime; therefore, Löffler argued, the Frauenkirche needed to be rebuilt if only in order to honour this wish of a dead party official. In private, Löffler later admitted that none of this was true; he had just thought that the lie wouldn’t do the dead man any harm, but potentially do a world of good to Dresden. Similar instances of “cunning devices” are told about Hans Nadler, the chief preservationist, who was successful in gaining party support for the rebuilding and protection of many castles and manor houses, by famously proclaiming the thesis “saving by using”, i.e. suggesting to the GDR with its notorious lack of buildings, usage such as putting schools, kindergartens and retirement homes into these old buildings.27

A few preservationists, and people in other positions in the arts and culture, thus acquired a standing in the eyes of many of the population that was not only due to the causes they pursued, but also was extended into admiration of the individual persons holding these offices. In the next section, I would like to look at how the position of the preservationists in the social field of GDR cultural politics in general might be defined.

The second point which becomes quite clear in the quoted talk above is the general belief that the change in politics was due to the realisation of the GDR officials, that “culture” would help bring in Western tourists and currency. Another

---

27 In retrospect, as many of the people I spoke to pointed out to me, this was a policy which really managed to just preserve many of the ancient buildings, which now after unification, due to ownership disputes and the owners’ lack of money are very often just left for decay. However, this is not the subject of this thesis, although it will be touched upon again in later chapters of this thesis.
quote in the same vein:

at some point one recognised that it was possible to earn international laurels with this... the opera house. But only because of these incredibly capable people [preservationists], who still never closed ranks with the political system, but who were just excellent in their field, and who could do just this! And we still build on their efforts today. (RD 6)

In this perspective, it clearly is the preservationists who are credited with successfully changing the government's cultural policies. Without the expertise of the Dresden preservationists, both in preserving and in researching the original building plans to lay the ground for historical reconstruction, there wouldn't have been anything left in Dresden which could serve the GDR as proof for its being a Kulturnation. So on the one hand, the preservationists successfully reached their own aims to preserve and rebuild as much as possible of the original Dresden. On the other hand, they also served the political system in gaining prestige abroad. How, then, can this relation be described? Were the preservationists the real holders of power, the actually dominant group, who successfully manipulated the government?

In the quote from the talk above, there resonates an argument against this. One of the speakers almost scornfully derides all preservation of "culture" in the GDR as not oppositional, but smoothly apolitical and un-dangerous to the GDR: far from being politically subversive, "culture" is rather seen as providing support to the system, in adorning it with an additional ornament, so that heads of state may lead their visitors through the Zwinger, "just as the chancellor is doing now". In this view, efforts like those of the preservationists were not intentionally launched to undermine the system. Rather, the relation between state officials and apparently oppositional cultural officials is seen as a well-working symbiosis where each side got what it wanted, instead of being a sphere of power contestation. The following quote from the former head curator of the Dresden Art Collections seems to lend support to this:

Even the GDR administration was not wholly without a cultural interest, and above all they were teachable. They have come to realise that one should rebuild historical monuments. This simply was important for their image, they regarded themselves as a Kulturnation. In campaigns they always presented themselves as a Kulturnation to the world. And buildings were of course important there. Castles, everything, was done with state support. So there wasn't an absolute wrecking. And preservation... preservation sometimes worked better
The former royal palace in Dresden, whose reconstruction was commenced during the time of the GDR. On the photo from 2005 it appears almost completed; yet note the remaining ruined piece in the middle. (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
than today. especially in the last two decades it had more of a say than it has today. (JN 88)

This reads not like the description of a power contest, but rather like the almost nostalgic memory of a time, when one could successfully pursue one's own aims, and even be supported in it by the state. However, this again only was possible because of the preservationists' great amount of influence with the political decision makers. One of the preservationists himself, one generation younger than Nadler and Löffler, also remembers his dealings with the cultural policy makers of the GDR:

And there was also a good side to the fact, that the cultural functionaries of the GDR were not always so... confident, that their objectives, which of course always were predetermined by the Party, were right. So that they always were accessible to some degree for certain criteria which you tried to make clear to them. [...] Also, since they wanted to make an impression abroad, they were quite interested in the judgement of other countries, also western countries of course, about the GDR and its cultural policies. And they didn't have a very clear cultural line. (HM 1-2)

It seems to me that this preservationist here very clearly paints a picture of the preservation office as a strategic position, from where the actual governing elites could be influenced. In his view, this was possible because of the GDR functionaries' insecurity in matters of the ideology of culture. In contrast to the political sphere, which was controlled in an authoritarian manner, culture in the GDR was a sphere still open for contest. Therefore, it can be argued that the preservationists really did hold a great amount of power over the GDR government. Whether they used it intentionally to undermine state ideology, or whether they were content in the space they had secured for themselves from the state, is a question which I will return to later. Their influence with a wider public, at any rate, was certainly immense. Preservationists came to be looked on as moral authorities, whose office allowed them to enact ideas which were otherwise not allowed to be expressed. As one of my interview partners recounts it for me:

Especially preservation was an immensely important carrier of this thinking. If these fighters [sic... again] of the preservation office hadn't been there, we wouldn't have this old Dresden anymore now. Every battle for the preservation of an old stone was really an act of resistance against the system. (RD 5)
That this threat was not just some escape from communist reality to an imagined idyllic Saxon past, but was taken seriously by the governing powers is shown by the fact that they repeatedly threatened to close down the Dresden preservationist office (Magirius 1995a).

The space which the preservationists thus secured came to provide a forum for explicitly oppositional movements to form around. In the 1980s, actual citizen initiatives began to form, usually in the form of loose networks meeting under the auspices of the Lutheran church, as I will show in the next chapter. These groups of people were not professional preservationists, but individuals who felt inspired by the preservationists and took up their cause in their own leisure time. One person who took part in such a group recounts one instance in 1985, when a famous old baroque House was due to be demolished, in order to make space for a hotel to be built at the site:

so to speak a first citizen initiative for the preservation of a monument formed... the people didn’t know of each other, but it quickly made the rounds: the last baroque house of the once famous Meißner Straße is due to be demolished [...] and suddenly one realised how many people were active in this cause, how many had written petitions [...] and so the house survived, and this brought encouragement... (RD 8)

This story was told to me by various people, generally as an explanation of where their present, post-unification campaigns for preservation or rebuilding have their origin. The preservationists were seen as the figureheads of this movement:

Well, and the preservationists being so to speak representatives of the people. For that’s what they were. Here in Dresden there was the famous Saxon Preservation, with its great tradition, which has had to fight for its own survival. They have tried to save and to protect... the names of Nadler and Löffler are famous... to preserve this, sometimes by crazy means, and somehow to rebuild this... (SH 6)

Significantly, the preservationists are here described as “representatives of the people” (Vertreter der Bürgerschaft), normally the phrase reserved for an elected parliament. The fact that they are thus seen as “legitimated” by the people, as though by a tacit election, although their actual employment contracts are given out by the state, becomes the more interesting if one remembers that in oppositional circles it was common to speak of the GDR state itself as an
“illegitimate” state.\(^{28}\)

To draw this together. I have argued that the preservationists in Dresden during the time of the GDR were highly influential, both with the government and with a wider public. With their objective, the preservation and rebuilding of historical buildings, they had control over powerful symbols. In Dresden, it was due to their efforts that buildings originally belonging to the Saxon royal court could be rebuilt during the time of the GDR. It could therefore be argued that the general opening of cultural policies which took place in the GDR in the 1970s was also at least partly due to the preservationists and people in other positions in the arts. Rebuilding former royal buildings, however, was not something that strengthened the official communist ideology. Rather, these buildings could be interpreted as symbols of the prevalence of older and different identity narratives - Saxon, all-German, “bourgeois” as opposed to proletarian, etc., as I will show in the remainder of this chapter. The preservationists had thus become a powerful institution indeed, and the fact that their aims where eventually endorsed by the GDR officials as their own - because exploitable as hallmarks of a Kulturmtion, and bringers of western currency - could be regarded as a confirmation of this ideological power of the preservationists.

It could therefore be argued that the preservation office as an institution run by the state, yet working in directions which undermined and altered official state policies, could be regarded as an institution of civil society in Gramsci’s sense, a sphere where “the processes of delegitimation and relegitimation take place” (Bobbio 1989: 26), the sphere “where values and meanings are established, where they are debated, contested and changed [...] the sphere that has to be colonised by any new class seeking to usurp the old” (Kumar 1993: 383). This might sound slightly ludicrous, given that the preservation office consisted just of a handful of people and can hardly be described as a “sphere”. However, their objective, buildings, provided “space”, both in a material and symbolic sense, for greater numbers of people to identify with, so that in a second step wider public movements formed, and the issue of preservationism became an important aspect of the general 1980s oppositional movement. And this was only possible because the actual preservationist office was certainly “colonised” by oppositional forces,

---

\(^{28}\) For the debate on the GDR’s legitimacy, see for example Wagner (1994) *Die DDR: ein Unrechtsstaat?* Leipzig: LGPZ.
or rather had never been successfully colonised by the GDR in the first place. If buildings through the efforts of the preservationists thus provided space for oppositional identities to formulate, I would like to explore the nature of this oppositional space more deeply in the next section, above all situating the preservationists in a wider social context.

THE SELF-PROCLAIMED BÜRGERTUM

In the first chapter of this thesis, I have discussed the Bildungsbürger discourses and their negative evaluation, which one of my interviewees summed up in the damning verdict that in Dresden the citizens don’t have any self-confidence, but a court-confidence. In the time of the GDR, this Bürger narrative was taken up again and told in a wholly positive light. A discourse developed in which some oppositional-inclined people identified themselves as being “bürgerlich”, an identification which alluded to the virtues both of being an independently thinking citizen, and a well-educated "bourgeois". Many of the people I interviewed proudly insisted on their “Bürgerlichkeit” which they managed to preserve during the GDR years. For example the regional historian Karl-Heinz Blaschke calls his autobiographical essay on his difficult dealings with the GDR authorities “Memories of a bürgerlich historian in a socialist state”. “Bürgerlich” in the context of the GDR was a kind of shorthand for an oppositional inclination towards the GDR state, coupled with a hope in re-unification, an ostentatious endorsement of “Culture” and often a loyalty to the (West-German) CDU. This is of course a crude oversimplification, but gives some first indicative idea of this group of people. The preservationists of Dresden, as well as other officeholders in the arts and culture sector during the GDR, often derived from this milieu; therefore, I would like to attempt in the following a more detailed discussion of it.

First of all, this endorsement of Bürgerlichkeit might seem curious in people in opposition to their state, since as I have shown in the previous chapter, bürgerlichkeit since the Nazi time had acquired not just the negative connotations of being conservative and reactionary, but also had been defined as a thoroughly un-subversive sentiment, supportive of the state and of the status-quo. For these reasons in the west of Germany, at least amongst left-wing intellectuals, a discourse had developed in which Bürgerlichkeit became the antithesis of democratisation and westernisation after the War. In the GDR, the concept
underwent a different transformation. From the perspective of the official marxist-leninist ideology, where the Bürger in its meaning as bourgeois is the exponent of the class whose rule has to be superseded by that of the working class in order to establish a truly communist society, the apolitical passive supporter of the state and the existing political order suddenly became demonised as an "enemy of the class", an enemy of the people, an enemy of the state. Suddenly to be a proletarian meant to be the bearer of state ideology, while to be a bourgeois meant to be a dissident, an active opponent of the state. This demonisation by the communist party naturally was a point of honour from the perspective of somebody who felt in opposition to the state, so that being bürgertlich had positive connotations just because of this. However, there was more to it. Here is a quote from one of my interviews:

...culture, that was of course the defence of a counter-model, of a different image of humanity... culture, especially music. There it has hibernated. There oppositional forces have been able to articulate themselves, there they still existed. And mentally, with this rejection of the official GDR one tried to maintain the ties with Bürgerlichkeit. (HL 8)

This "maintaining the ties" encompassed both the carrying on of a pre-GDR style of life, and also the endorsement of the West German state as Germany proper. For if the East German state delegitimised the claim of the Bürgertum to be the state-carrying elite, so this Bürgertum renounced the claim of this state to be legitimate, and regarded itself as a still pan-German Bürgertum.

However, that does not mean that their standing was one of complete opposition. On the one hand, this delegitimisation of the state by the self-proclaimed Bürgertum was only articulated in private. On the other hand, they also were wooed by the communist state. This derived from Walter Ulbricht's 1950s slogan "don't drive the intellectuals away", and resulted in a policy of bribing them with privileges such as slightly greater opportunities to travel abroad than the majority of the population had, and sometimes the permission to keep great houses and other private property, that usually in the GDR would have been de-privatised.29

This milieu of the Bürgertum in the GDR therefore had the position of a group not acknowledging the legitimacy of the state it was living in, but still being

29 On the GDR's policies regarding the intellectuals and its cultural elites, see for example Jäger (1994) and Prokop (2003).
courted by this state. This naturally gave it a great dose of power. The interesting question is whether they could not or would not put this power to greater use, in order to influence the state, or openly to campaign against it. For as is well known, the mass protests in the late 1980s which actually did overthrow the state had their source in a different milieu, not that of the self-proclaimed Bürgerturn, but rather that of the protestant church\footnote{(see for example Neubert 1991; or Land and Possekel 1994)}, as I will show in the following chapter. In an attempt to answer this puzzle, I will turn to Max Weber’s concept of class, status groups and parties, and I will argue that the GDR “Bürgerturn” could be thought of as a status group which did not grow into a party itself, but which secured a ground on which parties could form which eventually would explicitly turn against the state.

- Bürgerturn as a status group -

Whereas a class is defined by Max Weber in “its relation to the production and acquisition of goods, status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life” (Weber 1970: 193). In a society like the GDR, which was not based on a market economy and where the production of goods was completely controlled by the state, class differences did hardly exist. And as Weber argues, “when the bases of the acquisition and distribution of goods are relatively stable, stratification by status is favoured.” (ibid.: 194).

It might seem strange to speak of the GDR as of a society stratified by status: for even if the class dimension played a subordinate role, what about the party dimension? In a society where everything was politicised, it might be argued, parties which according to Weber reside in the political sphere, should be of overarching importance. Moreover, since the GDR was a state where the public sphere was state controlled, it could be argued that there was no social space in which different status groups could freely form. If the state, or the one party embodying the state, controlled all parameters of public life, it surely also had the monopoly on bestowing or withdrawing status honour on individuals and groups. Weber’s concept of status honour, by contrast, refers to the self-understanding of status groups. I think that there are at least two ways to answer this seeming contradiction. First, maybe one should not overrate public legality. The GDR has been famously described as a “niche society”, i.e. a society which withdrew from
Typical *bürgerlich* mansion houses in Dresden, which survived the war unharmed.
(photos in: Bürgerinitiative Blasewitz, Blasewitz, pp. 20 and 24)
the state’s control of the public sphere into private niches.31 These did not just encompass the family, but circles of acquaintances meeting in private houses, as well as peripheral institutions in which like-minded people would associate. The preservation office, for example, by many would be regarded as just such a niche. Secondly, making this niche society possible in the first place, is the argument that there is a distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes: While a totalitarian state encompasses and controls everything, an authoritarian regime leaves space from which one can rebel against it (cf Kubik 1996). The GDR being an authoritarian, but not a totalitarian state, I would argue that in Dresden, preservationism and other nominally state-run cultural institutions were just such spaces: they provided the space in which status groups could form and formulate their self-understanding. Moreover, just because the GDR was an authoritarian state which attempted to politicise everything, i.e. to shape all social life in accordance with its own party ideology, these niches, or private spaces, were used to rebel against this party authoritarianism, and oppose the party dimension with a status dimension.

In the eyes of the people defining themselves as “bürgerlich” in Dresden, Bürgerlichkeit was indeed defined first and foremost as a style of life. Take the following quote:

I have grown up in Strehlen [an area of Dresden], which then still was an intact quarter of grand detached houses... beautiful houses, a really wonderful area. [...] and this feeling, to have lived there in a time which called itself socialism and didn’t care too much for Bürgerlichkeit, but these bürgerlich houses, set in their generous grounds... well, this is also a kind of lifestyle. This has shaped me from early on [...] So [this] for me meant Dresden. [...] And then this increasing estrangement with what was being built there [in the city centre]... The Prager Strasse remained always alien to us, it was an expression of socialist architecture... (RD 5)

Again it is buildings which are chosen to symbolise what one means by Bürgerlichkeit, and it is buildings which are credited with providing a space for the preservation and articulation of this alternative identity. And these buildings, the “bürgerlich” houses are “also a kind of lifestyle”, and this is what Dresden for this person is about. This is contrasted with the socialist architecture which led to an “increasing estrangement” with the city centre. This specific lifestyle was above all defined in terms of “culture”:

31 Compare Ladislav Holy’s analysis of Czech society during the time of communism. (Holy 1996)
There were certain circles... Bildungsbürgertum. I have known this way of life myself, it has very much shaped me. There was this art’s patron, she died last year in her nineties, she lived close to me in Strehlen. And she gave soirees, and had a real art gallery at home. There she has exhibited the works of artists who weren’t courted and tolerated in the GDR. She has staged concerts, there was this atmosphere which you didn’t get elsewhere, the whole room was full with chairs and people...(RD 7)

The fact that many people from this GDR milieu did indeed live in large houses with spacious gardens certainly helped to ground this style of life. More often than not, they derived from a well-to-do middle-class before the war, which meant that they often still owned large houses in what was then and has become now again rich neighbourhoods. This property was not worth much in terms of money during the time of the GDR, and it was further devalued because owners of big houses were usually required by GDR law to let out some of the living space to tenants. At the same time, just because of the privileges often bestowed upon this group of people by the GDR state (to the reasons of which I will turn presently), their houses were sometimes excepted from the general de-privatisation of property in the GDR. At the same time, such privileges could also consist in the granting of a lifelong tenantship in one of these houses, if owned by the state. I would argue that the consciousness and memory of this specific class situation of before the war, on which the present life-style was based, did much to raise the status/social honour of these groups, in their own eyes and in that of other people. The fact that in the present this economic property had become devalued and was in official ideology even brandmarked, only helped to form a stronger group consciousness amongst these people.

Therefore, if Weber argues that “property as such is not always recognised as a status qualification, but in the long run it is, and with extraordinary regularity...(for of course, the possibility of a style of life expected for members of a status group is usually conditioned economically)” (Weber 1970: 187), this seems to hold true also for the GDR “Bürgertum”. A class situation was at the original roots of this status, making the life style possible in the first place. Yet in the GDR, where class differences became minimised, questions of lifestyle gained immensely
in importance in the stratification of society.32

Buildings are of course property. But as the quote about the bürgerlich houses above suggests, they can be more than exchangeable goods on the economic market, what they were not in the time of the GDR. They can also be the markers of a lifestyle, they can symbolise cultural, moral or intellectual property. If this was true for private houses, it was also true for the famous historic buildings of the city centre, which in a sense naturally felt as if they were "owned" by those who cared for them and preserved them, as I have argued above. And again, this ownership was not economic, but symbolic and above all cultural. From this sentiment, I think, also derives the sense of responsibility towards Dresden so often expressed to me in talks with people from this milieu, who argued that they did not go to the West "because Dresden needed me", "because I couldn't abandon Dresden".

In Weber’s concept of a status, a social group or stratum sets up specific codes of honour and conduct, which demarcate it from other groups, thus closing group membership. Often this is done to counter "the pretensions of sheer property": "all groups having interest in the status order react with special sharpness precisely against the pretensions of purely economic acquisition." (Weber 1970: 192) In other words, a status group tends to set up a counter-model to a society stratified along one specific dimension only, namely an economic one. Against the "pretensions of sheer property", it sets up a status system, in which not those who have the most money are most important, but those who spend it in the most refined way. Status stratification thus opposes the principle of the free market with a completely different value system, which makes it possible that the dominant groups in the market system are not the dominant groups in this other, status system.

I think that something similar happened in the GDR. Only here the original dominant principle wasn’t the free market, but the party-state, with its very clear cut hierarchies of party cadres and official recognition of the degree of

32 Weber continues that in periods of technical and economic transformation, the class stratification of a society becomes predominant; when these transformations slow down, it is status differences which are increasing in importance again. (1970: 194) This will be the subject of the later chapters, where I will explore the implications of the German re unification and its reorderings of all social structures on the preservationist field in Dresden.
one's collaboration with the state. According to this stratification of society, a "proletarian" party-member had a higher position in the overall system than a proletarian who wasn’t a party member, and the latter again had a higher position than an intellectual who wasn’t a party member, and so on. This dominant way of stratifying GDR society became juxtaposed by the bürgerlich status group with another system of stratification: one in which “Culture”, the maintaining of old traditions and a life-style in accord with this became the marker of one’s high or low standing in the overall social system. From this different point of view, a cultured Bürger had a higher position than an “uncultured” petty party-member. The point of this is not that the Bürger themselves therefore straightforwardly became the dominant group in the GDR - on the face of it, they did not and remained a “niche” of society - but that their way of stratifying society managed to become a serious threat to the socialist ideology. The state’s eventual endorsement of all things “cultural” was an expression of this. For “culture” became a property, which was mainly “owned” by the Bürger status group, because the state initially had neglected to claim it. When the state did start to claim it, as I have outlined above, it had to make itself indebted to these groups, whose status even from the perspective of the state rose accordingly.

An example of this would be that the recognition of Dresden’s beauty would be used by these bürgerlich people as a marker for a worthy person:

The communist party cadres were so dumb [“ungebildet”...uneducated], so uncultured, that they didn’t see, what the writer Erich Kästner has put in these words:
“If it should be true that I not only know what is bad and ugly, but also what is beautiful, then I have to give thanks for this gift to the good fortune that made me grow up in Dresden. I didn’t have to learn from books what beauty is. Not in the school, and not in the university. I was allowed to breathe in beauty like a forest warden’s children breathe in the forest air.” (ER 4)

This quote from the Dresden-born writer Erich Kaestner, later a left-wing intellectual living in Munich and prohibited by the Nazis, who returned to Dresden just after the bombing of Dresden and wrote famous memories and laments on the destruction of the city, is one of the most often quoted sayings on Dresden. In this quote, it is used to demarcate a cultured person, "who doesn’t have to learn from books what beauty is", but understands it naturally, from the dumb GDR officials who lack this natural understanding of beauty. Interestingly, this
corresponds very well to an argument by Bourdieu. Rethinking Weber's differentiation between class as a question of the production and acquisition of goods, and status as their consumption, Bourdieu thinks of the concept of the consumption of (economical) goods in terms of the acquisition of cultural capital. In an argument that is close to Weber's theory about the high status group's disdain of the "pretensions of sheer property" of the parvenu, who attempts to buy himself into the high status group by means of money, without the background of a long tradition of belonging to this status group, Bourdieu argues that the high status group, or in his terms the holders of a large amount of cultural capital, aim to distinguish themselves from the *nouveau riche* by their "naturalisation of taste":

The ideology of natural taste... naturalises real differences, converting differences in the mode of acquisition of culture into differences of nature; it only recognises as legitimate the relation to culture which least bears the visible marks of its genesis, which has nothing "academic", "scholastic", "bookish", "affected" or "studied" about it, but manifests by its ease and naturalness that true culture is nature... (Bourdieu 2000: 68).

In the struggle between the different manners of acquiring, the dominant groups are always at the side of the most insensible and invisible mode of acquisition, that is, the oldest and most precious one. (ibid.: 72)

This was exactly the point which made it possible, that "our beautiful Dresden" could be staged against the communist "philistines". Dresden in the discourse of the *Bürgertum* became a "disposition", to borrow another term from Bourdieu, for *bürgerlich* culture, which was handed down from one cultured generation to the next, acquired outside schools: much in contrast to the communist dogma, which one was asked to acquire by laborious study. And if Bourdieu is right, as I think he is, and that group is the dominant group which is on the side of the most invisible mode of acquisition, then this would also prove my thesis correct that the *Bürgertum* came to be the actual dominant group in Dresden, the group whose way of seeing-society-structured became the dominant one.

The Dresden Bürgers' consciousness of their ownership of culture was legitimated by this consciousness of naturalness, which set them apart from the "unnatural", acquired culture of the communists. And naturalness also meant ancientness: In their discourse, communist decision-makers were often referred to interchangeably as "history-less" or "culture-less". Being cultured also meant being the conscious heir of a long history. In the care for the old buildings of Dresden, and in one's appreciation of beauty one proved therefore a belonging to,
and an inheritance of a tradition and history that was much older than the history of the GDR and its attempts to create a new "socialist national culture". Therefore, the symbolic ownership of these buildings brought with it also a symbolic ownership of a long tradition of culture, which was seen as superior to the state's own very short history and desperate attempts to incorporate this culture.

It seems to me that it was this kind of status belonging which also made people from this milieu during the time of the GDR liable to be working in a very specific area, at least in Dresden, namely that of the arts. They were preservationists, but also art historians, art curators, architects, cultural and musical historians, or university professors in marginal areas such as ancient oriental cultures. These professions were open for them and naturally theirs: firstly, because they often derived from the pre-war Bildungsbürgertum, they often belonged to family traditions - where money was no issue - working in these fields. Secondly, other professions originally typical for the Bildungsbürgertum, in the GDR became unavailable or unattractive to them: lawyers, politicians, the finance sector. For they were now under strict state leadership, and thus very state supporting. In holding offices in the cultural sector, by contrast, they could control important institutions. Therefore, a specific style of life and sentiment became linked with the control of specific institutions.

Naturally, the influence which they could exert by way of these offices on the wider public was enormous. Just as the preservationists controlled with buildings strong identity symbols, so could also museum curators conceptionalise art exhibitions in order to give implicit commentaries on the present regime, without openly criticising it. A famous instance of this kind was for example the romanticism exhibition in Dresden 1972: as the curator of this exhibition later remembers, „Gordon Craig famously defined romanticism as „the escape from the bürgerlich dilemma of disempowerment” Everybody who visited the romantic exhibition was conscious of the strong parallels of the romantic period to the situation in the GDR of the 70s. Since the violent repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, the space for public opposition seemed diminished again, therefore one directed one’s gaze inside, to the sphere of the mind and of ideas. Just as the romantics had done.” (Neidhardt 2005: 67). The fact, that the same exhibition found a great international response - it was soon showed in London, Paris, Tokyo and Stockholm - naturally elicited pride in many Dresdeners, and increased the strong impact which it had made on them. These were the ways, how the bürgerlich intellectuals exerted their influence on a wider population.

Other people in the GDR who were oppositionally inclined, but often did not derive from this Bildungsbürgertum, and who arguably were raised to work in more down-to-earth professions, would often choose engineering degrees. On the one hand, they were averagely well paid, and on the other hand they were too technical in content to provide much space for marxist-leninist ideologies. This led to the phenomenon that in the GDR there was a very high percentage of educated, culturally-interested engineers, who also provided a mass base for the 1980s civil rights movements.

80
But if the GDR Bildungsbürgertum thus came to receive dominance in their way of social vision, and also controlled important institutions, why did they not form into a "party" in Weber’s sense of the term, into a conscious group pursuing their ends in order to gain power over a community: in other words, why did they remain content in their officially low position, why did they not start a revolution?

For an answer to this it is important to emphasise again that they did eventually come to enjoy a high status also in the eyes of the GDR. Weber distinguishes between negatively and positively privileged status groups. The self-proclaimed GDR Bürgertum held a special position in this respect, due to the specific circumstances of the GDR. On the one hand, they were positively privileged, in the eyes of many people who envied them their houses and gardens, but also by the state which often bestowed certain privileges on them, such as a slightly greater freedom to travel, or the opportunity to live in larger houses (the extreme shortage of housing was one of the greatest problems of the GDR state). And the very fact that the state acknowledged their high status, to some degree also lent them a very high influence. It could therefore be argued, as I have mentioned before, that they were actually living in quite a felicitous symbiosis with the state they otherwise disdained. The GDR-time curator of the famous Saxon Collection of New Masters, Neidhardt, remembers this freedom to distribute one’s own values, which the state then granted them:

you also had the chance to educate people’s taste, try to make people see what is real art, serious art, and what is kitsch... today in this liberal society everything becomes buried under an avalanche of kitsch. And that’s sad. ...well, instead we now have the freedom of election. But most people don’t know what to do with this freedom. Well... (JN 8)

On the other hand, in comparison with the market value of their houses of before the War, and with their status then, which had also been underwritten by a class-belonging matching their high social status, they certainly were negatively privileged in a state that made laws against private property. Also, even if their status was acknowledged to some extent by the GDR state, its material foundation was rapidly vanishing. For, as in the case of the built environment again, even when policies agreed with the protection and preservation of buildings, there was less and less money to put this into practice. Weber argues that "the sense of dignity of the negatively privileged strata naturally refers to a future lying beyond
the present". And although, as I have just argued, the sense of negative privilege was almost counterbalanced by a sense of positive privilege of this group, nevertheless their political hope usually was in the future unification of Germany. It might be for this reason, that they did not attempt actively to change the GDR system, but waited for the coming of a different system which would be more favourable to them. Before I return to this point below, I will attempt a short summary of what I have said so far.

My argument has been that the circles in the GDR, and in my case especially in Dresden, which defined themselves as "bürgerlich" can be regarded as a "status group", which however at no point turned into a party. The GDR was of course a party state, striving for total control. However, it did not manage to secure support from all status groups. The bürgerliche status group maintained and developed a style of life, which even opposed the GDR's official model of hierarchies, i.e. the very way of seeing society structured, with a stratification model of its own. At the same time, these status groups maintained the control over key cultural institutions. Moreover, their success in imposing their own perspective of social structures even on the official state ideologists helped to make these cultural institutions - the state-owned art-collections, the theatres and opera houses, the office for preservationism - into key institutions to influence the state. As holders of these offices, individuals based in this status group thus managed to secure important ground on which more overt oppositional forces could form. Examples of this, in this field, would be the above mentioned citizen's initiatives for the protection of the built environment, and many other citizen's initiatives appearing in the 1980s, who eventually grew into the mass protests finally toppling the state in 1989, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

**PAN-GERMAN NATIONALISM**

I have argued that describing oneself as bürgerlich generally also entailed a belief in the re-unification of Germany. To this I would like to turn now, at the same time also returning to a closer focus on symbolic buildings in Dresden.

The kind of lifestyle, values and sentiments I have described as being led by the bürgerlich status group in Eastern Germany was being used to demarcate oneself from the party-dominated official standard GDR-lifestyle, and owed much to the memory of a previous context of a pre-war, i.e. no longer existing social
order. The maintaining and preserving of a way of life belonging to a bygone age, to safeguard it for the future, was motivated by the hope existing in these circles in particular, that at one point in the future Germany would be reunified. In the previous quotes, there is a remarkable discourse on the preservation of old values. Typically, in one quote the term "hibernation" is used: suggesting a long winter of sleep where no energies are being lost but rather tanked up again, after which the old way of life would be commenced again in a refreshed form. I will look at this unificationist discourse now in more detail, at the example of the role played by the ruin of the Frauenkirche as a symbol for re-unification amongst the preservationists and oppositional cultural elites of GDR-time Dresden.

When in 1955 the already mentioned Dresden art historian and preservationist Fritz Löffler first published his book The Old Dresden: history of its buildings, a detailed and scholarly account of the architectural beauty of Dresden before its destruction- with an image of the Frauenkirche embossed in gold onto the front cover - the book became an immediate best-seller. In its complex scope and inclusion of details - not just focusing on the famous landmarks but also on residential quarters and minor sites - it does not only remember Dresden as it had been before its destruction, but lends an intense reality to these images which make one forget that all this is not actually there anymore. Not a single ruin is shown in the book, which thus conjures up an illusion of wholeness which almost seems more real than the disintegrated reality. Interestingly, the other point which is not mentioned at all in the book is the existence of the GDR. There is only one allusion in the last sentence that things have changed: thankfully mentioning that although most was destroyed, much is already being rebuilt, Löffler concludes: "to give back the same expressiveness to [...] the Frauenkirche, what is required - as with the mastering of all tasks of national consequence - is the strength of a united people". (Löffler 1955: 141)

With this, the fate of the Frauenkirche becomes symbolically linked to the predicament of the partitioned Germany. In the past, it had been the most

35 In the later chapters of this thesis, I will look at how this milieu of people dealt with re-unification and searched for a place in the new order when it actually did come about.

36 One of the later civil rights activists, Konrad Weiβ, also describes his growing-up in this milieu:

I am Catholic and therefore I also adhered for some time to the position of hibernation, as most catholics in our country did. One didn't quite believe, in the beginning of the 50s, that all this communist stuff would last. At some point it all would change. Actually, many people maintained this position until the end of the GDR. (quoted in Land and Possekel 1994: 53)
famous landmark of the old German city of Dresden, and in the future it would again be the landmark of a renewed Dresden in a new unified Germany. Out of this spirit, the ruin was not removed with all the other piles of stones which were left of Dresden to make room for new buildings: it was carefully preserved, every single stone enumerated and inventoried, to prepare for the rebuilding as soon as time and finances would allow it (Nadler 1999). When time was passing, however, and the line of politics of the GDR government hardened with the end of the 1950s and the building of the Berlin wall in 1961, both a re-unification of Germany and the possible rebuilding of churches became increasingly unlikely. The ruin of the Frauenkirche, like a temporary token for the old church and a future rebuilt one, and the past Germany and the reunified future one, remained as in a deep-freeze condition. This became emphasised when in 1963, threatened by ever increasing official attempts to remove the ruin for being a dangerous safety hazard, the chief conservator of Dresden planted the ruin with rosebushes. The ruin now was at once consolidated and given a strange sense of permanence and transience at once. At the same time, the physical space it inhabited was secured by the preservationists from the GDR: also symbolic space was secured. When later, in the 1980s, the Frauenkirche was chosen as a central symbolic place of the East-German peace-movement (as I will show in the following chapter), officials had little chance to re-claim it as their own monument against “fascist-imperialist warfare”. And although the peace movement and the preservationists, unified in their opposition to the GDR state, both claimed the Frauenkirche for a different symbolical space, as I will discuss in the following chapter, the point is that the preservationists first of all actually gained this space, thus providing a forum for various oppositional sentiments to form.

In this rose-growing, naturalised condition, the ruin came to symbolise for many the partition of Germany. In autobiographical accounts of people from Dresden, there is an insistent matter-of-course linking of the rebuilding of the church with the re-unification of Germany. The Dresden theologian and art historian Karl Hoch, for example, recalls how throughout the GDR period, one waited for a “propitious moment” to rebuild the Frauenkirche, “for as yet there were no doubts about the continuance of the GDR” (Hoch 1999: 256) and,

---

7 Throughout the immediate after-war period, right into the mid-fifties, the re-unification of Germany remained feasible. The national anthem of the GDR started with the lines: „Risen from the ruins, facing the future/ let us serve you, the Germany, our united Fatherland“. In the 1960s, the singing of the text was banned, only the tune would be played at official occasions.
elsewhere, "for still there was the dreadful Berlin Wall" (ibid.: 258). Hans Nadler, the chief conservator of Dresden, writes in 1999:

The conservators of Dresden have regarded the rubbles of the Frauenkirche as an undividable monument for decades and have hoped for the day when it once would be possible to join the collapsed fragments together again to a whole. This wish was granted after the re-unification of our divided fatherland... (Nadler 1999:174).

In the discourse of the Bürgertum, the fragments of the Frauenkirche thus became a temporary token for future spatial cohesion and temporal continuity: this building would become whole again when Germany became "whole" again. The Frauenkirche became a symbol for a sentiment which did not acknowledge the GDR as a permanent and legitimate new "nation-state", instead seeing it as an indefinite substitute for a reunified Germany of the past and future. This sense of living in a historical vacuum (later echoed by voices after the unification who spoke of "the 45 years of the post-war being now at an end") was re-enforced by a sense of a standstill of time, with buildings like the Frauenkirche remaining exactly as they had fallen, waiting to be rebuilt in a vaguely imagined different age. This sentiment inevitably led also to the conceptualisation of a binary opposition between the "new state" and the "old nation". The bürgerlich status group regarded itself as fitting with this old nation, but not with the new state.

At the same time, the Frauenkirche was also proclaimed as a Bürgerkirche, as for example in a newspaper article from 1954, where the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche as "building of the Bürgertum" is postulated (Hoch 1999: 253). Speaking of the Frauenkirche as Bürgerkirche - i.e. not the church of some officialdom, but of the civic population - evoked this otherness and tied in with the discourses of culture to become a symbol for an alternative tradition of Bürgerlichkeit, opposed to that of the proletarian state. The loving preservation of the "bürgerlichen" values of "culture" corresponded thus to the preservation of the ruin of the Frauenkirche: both had been destroyed, but the remains now were jealously protected from total extinction. This appeal to tradition was emphasised by references to various details of the history of the church: how since the reformation, Dresden had been something like the secret capital of Lutheranism in Germany, and how, when the Saxonian Kurfürst August converted to Catholicism, the citizens of Dresden asserted this identity by building their own church, the Frauenkirche, immediately next to the royal palace and the new catholic royal
cathedral, proudly engraving the words Senatus Populusque Dresdensis on the Altar (Magirius 1995b: 120). Amongst the people perceiving themselves as "cultured" in Dresden during communism, this recalling of the proud history of the Bürgertum and civic self-assertion, which had been able to stand up against the reigning powers and preserve its own ways in the face of these authorities, provided an encouraging sense of belonging to this tradition. It therefore gave some sense of superiority in direct dealings with the state: we belong to this old tradition, you try in vain to be our new national state.38

For the Dresden preservationists and members of the bürgerlich status group, buildings like the Frauenkirche which they preserved from further demolition for a future rebuilding, became symbols of their hope for a German reunification. At the same time, they acquired a multilayered meaning, which helped these oppositional cultural elites to make sense of their own position in a state against which they felt adversity. Symbols like the ruin of the Frauenkirche, which did not fit into its new socialist surroundings, hailed from a better past and seemed to await a better future. Therefore, such symbols seemed to underlie the cultural elites' sense of "hibernation" in the GDR, a state whose legitimacy and permanence they privately did not acknowledge, and their passive wait for a German re-unification.

SAXON NATIONALISM

While the Frauenkirche certainly was one of the main symbolic buildings in Dresden, it certainly was not the only one during the time of the GDR. I started this chapter by pointing out how just after the war it was especially buildings of the former royal court complex that were protected from demolition and being rebuilt, in contrast to the Frauenkirche, already during the time of the GDR. The reasons why this was possible, as I have discussed above, had to do with the

---
38 However, as the preservationist Heinrich Magirius, he himself a member of this status group, points out, the tradition of the Bürgerkirche should also be understood as a tradition of compromise rather than of resistance:

There was no emphatic anti-roman or even anti-royal purpose to the building of the Dresden Frauenkirche. Both would have been unthinkable in the Saxonian royal capital. Yet certainly the monumental character of the Dresden Frauenkirche speaks of the determination of the citizens of a Lutheran country and a Lutheran city to hold their own against the converted Catholic rulers and the powers which lurked behind this conversion. (Magirius 1995b: 128)

I suspect that this reminder was also directed against the present discourses of the GDR. Bürgertum: not to become too vain of one’s oppositional position, when the actual situation was more one of secret opposition, yet open collaboration.

86
cultural image that the GDR wanted to paint of itself in order to enhance its own reputation as a cultural nation abroad. An effect of this was the re-erection of thoroughly un-communist buildings, whose very visible and material existence in the "public sphere" undermined the GDR ideology from within. And there was still another effect of this. For while the Frauenkirche, as I have just shown, stood especially for a sentiment of re-unificationism, these court buildings all had been originally erected as status symbols of Saxon royal power; unlike the Frauenkirche, they first and foremost evoked narratives of Saxony. As I have briefly indicated at the beginning of this chapter, these Saxon narratives could also be staged against present GDR ones. This I would like to explore in more detail in the following.

In the previous chapter, I have mentioned the old Saxon narratives which were always constructed in opposition to an Other, Prussia. These narratives received new sustenance and impetus during the years of the GDR, when all old animosities against Prussia were turned against the GDR state (both by the Bildungsbürger groups, and widely in the general public), which was regarded as the successor of Prussia. Expressing pride in being Saxon, during the GDR thus always also meant opposition to Berlin as the centre of GDR politics, as is illustrated by the following quote:

well, before 89 we have celebrated the Saxon flag, against eastern Germany... for reasons of political opposition we have especially tried to cultivate the Saxon identity, against the ideological monopolisation policies, this socialist uniformous mash... well, we tried - and that of course was easy especially in Saxony, which of course had been an entity for 1000 years - to build up a kind of counter-position. There was in Berlin this... I don't know, 500th anniversary, well and we have a little rebelled against this, have put the Saxon coat of arms in our cars and such things... (JN 1)

The reference here is to the big celebrations of Berlin's 750th anniversary officially staged all over the GDR in 1987. People in Dresden held against this by proclaiming, half-jokingly, the Dresden 781st anniversary, emphasising the older age of Dresden, at the same time reminding people of the fact, that even Dresden is one of the younger cities in the ancient electorate of Saxony (note, that my respondent derisively makes Berlin even 250 years younger than it actually was). Emphasising Saxon identity thus meant not just emphasising a historical continuity which could not be broken by the new political order, but also was a direct
expression of opposition to that new order. As the historian Kathrin Keller argues, the Saxon “national identity”, as she calls it, which existed during the times of the GDR, was constructed around an anti-Berlin communal identity, whose source was the rejection of centralism and of the policies which poured scarce public funds mainly into Berlin (Keller 1994).

This Saxon sentiment was an aspect of the sentiments and politics of the same status group as the proclamation of Bürgerlichkeit, the endorsement of culture and the hope for German re-unification. And in line with the GDR’s general line towards this status group, espousals of Saxon identity were therefore on the one hand suppressed and prohibited, (because they ran counter to the official marxist-leninist policy of centralisation, which was implanted in the name of a proclaimed cross-boundary unification of the working class), but on the other hand they were also passively tolerated, or even half-heartedly supported by party officials. This reached so far that in early 1989 (almost a year before the mass demonstrations later that year) in Dresden big celebrations could be held to remember the 900th anniversary of the Saxon royal Dynasty, House Wettin. There were various publications, and even a scholarly conference under the title “Saxon and the House Wettin”, which took place in the presence of the Dresden Party Chief and the Dresden Mayor. As Keller remarks, an event like this could only have been possible in Dresden, because “only here a strong local identification with the one-time royal capital city had developed, due to the many still present buildings of the court” (Keller 1994: 207).

- Preservationists as carriers of Saxon identity -
These facts are interesting in regard to the prevalent thesis amongst historians, that today’s ubiquitous Saxon nationalism is something that occurred, or reoccurred, suddenly and unexpectedly in 1990. Resting on the assumption that “Saxony” had ceased to exist as a political identity, and regionalism at the same time had been officially demonised as a “particularistic”, i.e. anti-working class and generally anti-marxist sentiment, many theorists tend to argue that Saxony only now has become such a strong reference point in public identity discourses. The responsibility for this is mainly believed to rest with those Western politicians who in 1990 came to constitute the political elite of the newly-formed freestate of Saxony, and who first successfully constructed narratives of “Saxon values” and the “great Saxon history” in order to instrumentalise them for their own
(successful) election campaigns (e.g. Luutz 2001). Prevalent narratives of Saxony are thus interpreted as model instances of an “invented tradition” (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984).

Contrary to this, my argument is that “Saxony” remained an important point of reference throughout the GDR years, and again I think that this was mainly due to the preservationists. For not only with their object, buildings, did they have powerful identity symbols at hand, and in protecting Saxon monuments secured them as “space” for these identity discourses notwithstanding the present non-existence of Saxony as a political entity; it should be pointed out that they remained a “Saxon” institution themselves.

The old German Länder which had existed in the same form since the founding of the first German state in 1871 (and like Saxony often had a history reaching back to medieval times) were dissolved in the GDR in 1952. Their legislative competencies were centralised in Berlin and smaller new administrative units with only local competencies were introduced. Saxony as a political and administrative entity ceased to exist. However, there were exceptions to this, the most well-known being the Lutheran church, which kept its synodal structure and thereby the old länder boundaries in its organisation. Preservationism was another such exception, though far less known. As one of the chief preservationists in Saxony, who worked in the same Dresden office for preservation from 1957 to his retirement in 1999, remembers: “The ‘sub-branche Dresden’ has always understood itself as the Saxon State Office for Preservation (Sächsisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege) and is able today (after reunification) to fulfil its full responsibilities as the expert office covering the whole of Saxony” (Magirius 1995a: 23).

This is remarkable for two reasons. First, there did not exist any Saxon state between 1949 and 1990 whose “state office for preservation” they could have been, and second, it highlights the rare instance of an institution of Saxon-wide responsibility that was not newly founded in 1990, but continued to work in almost unchanged shape, only with a slight increase in personnel. The institutional history to this ranges from the original founding of preservationist offices in Germany in the 19th century, from the beginning organised on the land, i.e. non-centralised, level, through to its more or less continuing existence in this form until 1952, when the GDR, in the course of restructuring its whole political territory, dissolved the old länder, and also dissolved these preservation offices and
centralised them in the Berlin Institute for Preservation. The former Saxon office, based in Dresden, became the “GDR institute for preservation, sub-branche Dresden”. However, it remained responsible for the three newly formed administrative areas Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz, i.e. the territory of the former freestate of Saxony. As the quote above suggests, the members of the Dresden sub-institute for preservation therefore continued to think of themselves as Saxon preservationists, even though the name of Saxony was missing in the title of their institution. With its focus on Saxon monuments it thus also became a powerful institutional carrier for a sense of “Saxon identity” in the wider population.39

At a time when Saxony had ceased to exist as an entity, its most physical expression, its built environment, thus remained dealt with as an entity. This meant that there was not just a handful of former royal monuments and landmark buildings in Dresden being cared for, but whole towns and villages with a particular style of architecture, different from that from Prussia, northern or southern Germany, were preserved, protected from building plans of GDR councils and brought into the consciousness of the wider population. Saxon architectural particularities were emphasised in publications. For example, there was a great number of semi-academic, heavily illustrated volumes on the famous Saxon Baroque.

The role of preservationism as an institutional carrier of Saxon identity became especially important, since it became the only available substitute for many previously existing “Saxon” institutions. For example in the academic sphere, regional history was deprecated as antiquated particularism anachronistic in the time of the victory of the international workers’ movement. In the GDR, there was therefore surprisingly little change to the Prussia-centred perspective which had been dominant in German historiography since the original German unification in 1871. History was told as Prussian history, partly because of marxist anti-particularism, partly because Saxony continued to be seen as the prototype of

39 For an account of the history of institutionalised preservationism in Saxony, see Magirius (1995a).
a backward absolutist country. According to this understanding, all university institutes for regional history still existing after the war were closed down in the early 1950s. However, as Karlheinz Blaschke, Saxony’s leading regional historian during the time of the GDR, who after the closure of the University institutes continued researching Saxon history from the position of an archivist in the Saxon State Archive, points out:

Even though the institutional heart of regional history thus had died a slow death, there remained some forces who could continue regional history as much as stood in their powers. The peculiar situation occurred that the central institution was lacking, yet the work was being continued at the peripheries by such institutions which had neighbouring, but still different fields. (Blaschke 1987: 187)

As one of the most important of those peripheral institutions which took over the work of institutionalised regional history Blaschke counts, beside the Saxon State Archive, the Dresden Institute for Preservation. That preservationists should become the main carriers of regional history was not so surprising, since from the beginning in the 19th century preservationism and history were linked at least at the level of the civic historical societies, which were initially founded as “Saxon society for the preservation of ancient monuments”. (Middell 1998: 65). In the time of the GDR, these originally lay societies increasingly became also the framework in which more scientific research was carried out. Although they were dissolved as civic associations, (and partly had been prohibited even earlier by the Nazis), some of them were allowed to carry on, under new names, under the auspices of the party-run Kulturbund, the GDR umbrella organisation for all art and culture. Their publication, the “Sächsische Heimatblätter” (Journal of the Saxon Heimat), which mainly consisted of articles on Saxon monuments, the history of small Saxon towns and articles on Saxon landscapes was the only such journal which remained in existence in the GDR. Originally a popular journal dealing with things like the “beauty of our Saxon landscape” and the “greatness of our Saxon heritage”, in the

---

40 This was in accordance with narratives which had been constructed previously, throughout the 19th century, by German nationalists in attempts to legitimate Prussia’s claim to be the centre and motive of a unified Germany. In these dominant narratives, Saxony was portrayed as the paradigm of anachronistic, feudalist absolutism, in contrast to progressive, modern Prussia. Similar narratives also existed in relation to Bavaria and other smaller kingdoms of the 19th century. (see for example Keller 1994)

41 When towards the end of the GDR time a new chair for Saxon regional history was established in Leipzig, it worked within an explicitly Marxist framework, i.e. telling Saxon history as an inevitable story of particularist decline and final integration into Germany, and then the GDR. (Blaschke 1987: 182)
it developed into an academic research journal, providing a scarce publishing opportunity for oppositional regional historians, to whom the academically institutionalised journals were not accessible any more (Blaschke 1987: 179).

Therefore the historian Kathrin Keller, taking stock in the 1990s of the existent research in Saxon regional history, finds that hardly any academic publications on Saxon regional history have come out of the GDR time, unless “one includes the great number of publications by especially Dresden based art historians and preservationists on architecture, as well as popular best-sellers such as Fritz Löffler’s “The Old Dresden” (Keller 1994: 206).

My argument thus far has been that preservationism in Dresden during the GDR helped to foster both a sense of all-German identity, and of Saxon identity. However, the two were not exclusive of one another, but rather were complementary aspects of the same thing. The contrasting Other in both cases, from which one wished to demarcate oneself by insisting on alternative identities, was the GDR state. In these discourses, German re-unification would be the end of the GDR, and also provide a political context in which Saxony would be allowed to flourish, it was hoped, integrated into the federal system of a unified Germany. Just as was the case with German unificationism, Saxon regionalism was therefore oriented both towards the past, and towards the future. In the following chapters, I will discuss how this sentiment gradually changed after the actual re-unification in 1990, when Saxon and Dresden regionalism increasingly came to be seen by the Dresden preservationists as an antithesis of the unified-German identity narratives, as they were proclaimed by the new West German elites in Dresden.

- Conclusion -

In this chapter, I have discussed one particular social group, preservationists, and the influence they had in the GDR years in sustaining oppositional identities. I have argued that through their office, the protection and preservation of historic buildings, preservationists controlled important identity symbols, thus being able to “preserve” a space for various sentiments to articulate themselves in, all of which were bound together by a common oppositional attitude towards the GDR state: Bürgertum, culture, German unificationism, Saxonism. On the one hand, preservationists were able to gain this space through the influence they held with

42 the editorial board of the Sächsische Heimatblätter consists of only illustrious names, almost all of which became the holders of university chairs after reunification.

92
the government, on the other hand, it provided a ground from where they were highly influential also with a wider public. In the overall political structure of the GDR state, preservationists thus were at an intermediary position, and can be thought of as an "interstitial sphere", as Jonathan Hearn writes on civil society:

...a unique interstitial ground between the highly concentrated powers of the state and the usually highly diffuse powers of popular sentiment, will, and mobilisation. It provides the institutional channels, or lineaments, along which power flows, or becomes blocked or diverted. (Hearn 2001: 346)

In the following chapters, I will continue to look at the sphere of preservationism again, in discussing how their role is changing in the new social space of unified Germany.
CHAPTER 3

1989-1990: POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE SYMBOL FRAUENKIRCHE

The "preservationist field" as I have described it so far, consisted mainly of very well educated people employed in the arts and cultural sector, who often identified themselves as anti-proletarian, and bürglerich. They were people who professionally or in their spare time campaigned for the preservation and sometimes rebuilding of older buildings and monuments, and mobilised narratives of culture around particular symbolic buildings in order to challenge and contest the GDR's claim to authority. In this chapter, I will introduce a second group of people who emerged in the preservationist field in Dresden in the 1980s: the new civil rights movements. They, too, campaigned for the preservation of buildings, and in doing so also challenged the GDR state. However, the narratives in which they embedded the buildings were different ones: not about old cultural values which needed to be resurrected and preserved, but about the need for political change. Because both groups felt unified in their opposition to the GDR state and used building narratives to challenge it, they felt complementary to each other and could not be clearly demarcated from one another. Sometimes they even overlapped in terms of membership: often the same persons would appeal to the political or the cultural narrative interchangeably, because both questioned the legitimacy and the practices of the GDR state.

As I will show in this chapter, this condition of harmony between the two groups gradually began to change in the last weeks of 1989 and in 1990. After new political and soon constitutional circumstances had been achieved, everybody sought to find a new, if possible influential, place in the new society of unified Germany. The former Bürgertum group and the civil rights activists found themselves each at different ends of the new political spectrum. It became now an important difference, whether one appealed to the cultural or the political narrative. This process I would like to discuss in the present chapter.

In Dresden, it was the ruin of the Frauenkirche, whose symbolic significance for Dresdeners I have begun to discuss in the previous chapter, which became an important forum for the power contest about the reordering of society after the
fall of the GDR system. I will therefore focus in this chapter on the public debate of 1989/90 about what was to become of it: should the church be rebuilt in the old style, should a new building arise at its site, or should the ruin be preserved as an antiwar monument? By the "bürgerlich" cultural elites, the preservation of the ruin had always been seen as a symbol for the preservation of an older identity, whose public articulation was subdued at present, but hopefully would be reinstated in a powerful social position in the future. For them, the call for preservation and rebuilding belonged to the same narrative: the first was seen as the precondition for the second, to be fulfilled when the "propitious hour" would come. However, when it did come, with the political changes of 1989 and finally with re-unification one year later, this narrative and with it the identity claim which it supported were contested from within the hitherto fairly homogenous group of preservation activists. Members of the civil rights movement argued that the ruin of the Frauenkirche all through the GDR years had been a powerful antiwar monument; rebuilding the Frauenkirche now would not only destroy this antiwar symbol, but also an important memorial to the GDR civil rights movement itself.

In the previous chapter, I have described how the preservationists from the Bürgertum status group in Dresden were generally acknowledged to have gained ground, through the preservation of pre-GDR buildings, on which oppositional activities could form. With the formation of the civil rights movement, this was exactly what began to happen. In the following, I will first discuss the role that the built environment played in Dresden for the civil rights movement in the 1980s, secondly turn to the impact of the political changes of 1989/90 on the preservationist field in Dresden, and thirdly take a closer look at the debate about rebuilding the Frauenkirche or preserving it as a ruin.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF THE 1980s
The last decade of the GDR, when the political authority of the state visibly began to crumble and the civil rights movement gained increasing recognition and influence, is one of the best documented and analysed periods in recent German
history. Without attempting an overview of the aims and actions of the civil rights movement, I would like to add a few thoughts on the role that the built environment played in the discourses of the civil rights activists.

As is well known, the GDR civil rights movement of this time generally formed under the roof of the protestant church. It became a publicly present and noticeable force in 1982 with the so-called peace-decade, a prayer held in several churches continuously over ten days, against the stationing of cruise missiles on the border between east and west Germany. The slogan of the GDR-wide peace decade was "for peace, justice and the preservation of creation", and was distributed through stickers and leaflets so that everybody had to become aware of it. From this sprang a number of local "workshops", small groups of people who met regularly to search for ways to put the aims of the slogan into practice. In Dresden, the built environment played a central role in two out of the three postulates of the movement: both the "workshop for peace" and that for the "preservation of creation" had buildings at the centre of their attention (see Jacobi 1999). In the peace discourse, the destruction of Dresden, still visibly present through the many ruins in the city centre, was thematised as the outcome of war in general. As antiwar symbols, the ruins were both emphasised as memorials of the war, and as warnings against present armament. In the environmentalist discourse, the neglect of the built environment through the authorities was thematised, as the wilful destruction of the population's living space. In the first part of this chapter, I would like to discuss briefly these two roles that the built environment played in the discourse of the civic rights movements of the 1980s. Before I start, however, a short note is needed on who the civic rights activists were.

In the previous chapter, I have described the very small group of people who mostly were involved professionally with art and preservation issues. They all belonged to the cultural elite of Dresden, held academic titles and thought of themselves as a "Bürgertum" status group. In contrast to that group, the civic

---

The spontaneous formation of the “Group of the Twenty” on 8th October 1989, confronting the armed police forces. (snapshot by Rigo Pohl)
rights movement attracted many more people, who derived from various social backgrounds, not just highly educated ones. A very good example of the social spectrum of the civic rights movement in general is the so-called “Group of Twenty”. This group of literally twenty people formed spontaneously during one of the demonstrations in October 1989 in Dresden: When demonstrators and armed police forces stood facing each other on the streets, a churchman called for twenty people from the mass of the demonstrators to volunteer and come forward, in order to act as spokespeople for the demonstrators. The logic behind this was to prevent an escalation of violence, and not to provoke the heavily armed policemen through the huge, anonymous mass of demonstrators. Instead, they should be faced with a small manageable number of people who could articulate the concerns of the demonstrators. The twenty people who thus assembled were representative of the mass of the demonstrators. In the course of the following weeks, they became famous in Dresden as the “Group of Twenty”, which led the ensuing dialogue between demonstrators and state officials. Its members included amongst others three engineers, a driving instructor, six people from small trade and building professions (baker, carpenter, car mechanic etc.) two students and three apprentices, a nurse and a sunday school teacher. The oldest was 58 and the youngest 17 years of age (cf. Urich 2001: 197). It can be assumed, that this randomly selected group of people provided more of a crosscut through the Dresden population, than the relatively closed group of highly educated professionals of the arts and culture sector which I have described in the previous chapter.44 And just as this group contained members from a variety of social backgrounds, so were also the civil rights activists who entered the preservationist field in the 1980s much more diverse than the cultural elites, who so far had comprised the preservationist field.

The second brief point which I would like to make to characterise the civil rights activists concerns the well-known role of the protestant church as a refuge and forum for the civil rights movement. The protestant church was one of the few organisations in the GDR which had maintained institutional independence from the state. Firstly, it provided the only non-state-run network of civic

44The fact, that those three members of the Group who held university degrees happened to be all engineers may be a co-incidence, but may also reflect the fact that many oppositionally inclined people who wished to go to university chose engineering as one of the least politicised subject areas.
institutions such as hospitals, kindergartens, a publishing house and newspapers, and was therefore the only non-state owner of any enterprises and social services. Secondly, it also preserved a sphere where the basic democratic rights of free speech and free assembly were maintained. Towards the end of the GDR, the church therefore became something like "the service sector for a deprived society in a crumbling political system", as Martin Fellisch (1999: 31) puts it. It therefore increasingly functioned as a public forum also for non-religious dissident groups and therefore came to play a key role in the events of 1989 (Neubert 1991: 30).

Within this general context of the civil rights movement in Dresden, I will now turn to the twofold role that buildings played in the discourse of the movement: firstly, as the increasingly decaying living-space of the GDR population, and secondly, as antiwar symbols.

- The preservation of buildings as safeguarding the population's living space from the hands of the GDR state -
The citizens' workshops "for the preservation of our creation" used the Christian discourse that God had trusted the earth to the preserving care of mankind, in order to campaign for environmentalist issues in a political regime which proclaimed pride in the fact that "socialist man had finally conquered the earth". Under these premises, the GDR's rivers and forests belonged to the heaviest polluted ones in Europe; whole villages with ancient churches and monuments were sacrificed to open cast brown coal mining. The unchecked emission of chemicals impaired, apart from the natural environment, also the built environment, which therefore was a central issue in the environmentalist campaigns for the "preservation of creation".

In the latter years of the GDR, the normal quarters of housing (which were almost completely in state ownership) were crumbling to pieces everywhere. Apart from the threat caused by chemical emissions, the built environment in the GDR was also jeopardised by the purposeful general neglect by the GDR authorities. Almost all of it was in public ownership, and the communes could not and did not spend any money on it. This was partly due to genuine lack of money, and partly due to socialist housing policies which attempted to remove people from the older urban structures away to new concrete blocks of socialist flats. To stop this process, an increasing number of people became active, and out of the
Decaying buildings in Dresden’s new town. At the end of the GDR, most of the surviving older (i.e. pre-GDR) housing quarters were in a similar condition. (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
workshop for the preservation of creation various citizens' initiatives began to form. One person I interviewed recounts the formation of one of these initiatives:

In the end of the eighties, when buildings were just crumbling to pieces, unforgettable to me, they just demolished whole rows of houses. One with an old gatehouse from the renaissance in between. I was there when it happened, it was like an execution. Afterwards we founded this workshop “the built environment”, under the roof of the church. I was one of them, we met here in our house... of course we knew that there always also is somebody from the Stasi amongst us... well, that was a real citizens initiative... 1988, I think. And we knew that our work was resistance work. (RD 8)

Such initiatives were directed less at the preservation of famous symbolic landmark monuments, as at the preservation of living space. As in the just quoted story, they often had their origin in a widespread sadness in the population, that one was not able to prevent the ever increasing decay of one's own living environment. As another former active member of the preservation movement told me in a conversation: “It was unbearable, to watch powerlessly the wilful destruction of our inheritance. Dozens of generations before us had created this space of living, had put all their energy and love and life's work into it, and now it was just abandoned and destroyed.” (LL) Thus, the actions to preserve these many rows of houses, also symbolically came to mean the preservation of one's own living space, of one's own belonging, against the intrusions of the GDR regime.

First, it was only a small stratum of well-educated people who in the environment of the preservationists actively campaigned for the preservation of these buildings, through long fights against the bureaucratic housing apparatus and attempts to reason with the authorities. Yet they had an increasingly broad base in the general population. One of my respondents, who in 1989 was active in a citizens' committee for the preservation of the built environment, remembers how dozens of ordinary people, inhabitants of the crumbling old town buildings, furiously came to the committee, accusing the state of the total neglect it had shown their own houses and living space. If one views this in relation to the communist state's claim to be the “people's republic”, to always act “in the name and for the good of the people”, and to have done away with private property so that all material goods could justly be “the people's property”, the symbolic importance of buildings for identification with one's state becomes apparent again: in allowing people's houses to crumble into pieces, the state did not keep its
Street in Dresden’s new town in the 1980s, an area which had survived the war, but subsequently was left for decay in the GDR.  (photo: Just, Banplatz Dresden)
promise to care for the people's property, while at the same time making it difficult for people to care for it on their own. And just as had happened after 1945 with the symbolic landmark buildings of a Saxon royal era, which were symbolically abandoned by the state and thus could become a symbolic breeding ground for oppositional sentiments, something similar happened in the last years of the GDR again, now with the large physical space of residential housing. The state abandoned its care, withdrew its responsibility, and left the inhabitants in possession of their own space.

Slowly a process set in, in which the people living in these houses just took the responsibility over into their own hands, thus confirming their increasing independence from the hands of the state, symbolising the rapid process in which the state lost hold over its own space of influence. This process took its most visible form from about the middle of the 1980s, when "squatting" became more and more an everyday phenomenon in the GDR. Other than in western countries, where this often means a form of social protest, and sometimes goes along with radical left-wing ideas of anarchy and commune-style living, in the GDR it was often carried out by persons who otherwise would describe themselves as orderly, decent citizens. Numerous empty, officially unrentable old town flats became inhabited by people, often students or young families, who paid their gas and electricity bills to the council, and even offered to pay rent to the council. The council housing officials were under orders not to let out these flats anymore, yet on the other hand had no means to prevent them from totally falling down. Closing an eye on people illegally moving in also meant that these flats would at least be cared for, so that greater ageing and weather damage would be prevented. This taking possession of living space which officially belonged to the state, but was abandoned by it, symbolically underlined the growing independence of the GDR citizens from their authoritarian state.

The movement to preserve the still existing built environment therefore provided a substantial ground for the general "we are the people" - discourse of 1989, which disputed the authoritarian claim of the Socialist party to only act in the name of "the people". There was thus a shift in the preservationist narratives: the preservationist circles described in the previous chapter had gained ground from the socialist regime, by using narratives of culture and old cultured civilisation; in their discourse, it was important to preserve old traditional values which survived in the still existing buildings from pre-GDR times. Without openly challenging the
Snapshot on a peace demonstration at the ruin of the Frauenkirche, 13 February 1988. Note the candles, which in autumn 1989 were to become the symbol of the „peaceful revolution“. The banner reads: „Don’t destroy human rights, as you once destroyed Dresden“. (photo: Evangelischer Pressedienst, Frankfurt)
communist party's claim to the monopoly of political power, they had set up an alternative sphere of culture, in which they themselves were the dominant group. The new civic rights movements, on the other hand, made use of the oppositional ground thus provided in buildings, but used it to challenge the state directly in its own sphere, that of politics. This is not to say that the preservationists saw buildings as ends in themselves, whereas the new civic rights' groups saw them merely as a means to political ends. Both put their efforts into the protection of buildings for the buildings' own sake. However, the new civic rights activists addressed their claims about buildings much more directly at the GDR state, than the cultural preservationist circles had done. It was not anymore the past monarchist and **burgerlich** glory which one recounted, lamented its loss and hoped for its reinstatement, but it was the political reality of the GDR system which was criticised through the citizens' workshops for the preservation of the built environment. The same sentiment was the driving force behind the peace movement and its utilisation of symbolic ruins, to which I would now like to turn.

-The peace movement: buildings as antiwar symbols-
While the environmentalist movement criticised the GDR on behalf of its neglect of the populations' living space, the criticism of the peace movement was directed against the GDR' policies of armament, which as they argued would ultimately lead to ruined cities again. Implicitly, the criticism thus was directed also at the official war remembrance procedures of the GDR.

At one of the 1989 demonstrations, one protester held a banner which read: "Don't destroy the human rights as you once destroyed Dresden". The "you" to which this slogan was addressed was the GDR state as representative of all authoritarian, militarist, human-rights-violating regimes; as the slogan implied, in many respects not distinguishable from Hitler's Germany which had started the war and thus initially had caused the subsequent destruction of Dresden. The slogan was an expression of the discourse prevalent amongst the East German civil rights movement, whose concerns besides human rights and preservationism also included campaigns against cold war armament. In Dresden, with its many still remaining ruins, most famous and visible amongst them the ruin of the Frauenkirche in the very centre of the city, this discourse had many impressive symbols at hand. Thus, the built environment and especially the ruin of the Frauenkirche, became the symbolical focus of yet another narrative. While the
preservationist groups described in the previous chapter had practically overlooked the existence of the GDR, the new civic movements set out to engage with the reality of the regime in which they were living, not looking back to some long past unified Germany, or a vague future one. In this new political consciousness the lacking willingness of the official ideology to face up to the German fascist past was heavily criticised. The ruin of the Frauenkirche came to be a completely different symbol from what it had meant for the cultural elites described in the previous chapter: not a passing token, preserved during a historical vacuum to become rebuilt in its former beauty again in better days, but the very real reminder of the war and also of Germany's fascism that had led to the war.

To illustrate this shift in the symbolic function of landmark buildings destroyed in the war, two moments in the history of the 1980s civil rights campaigns may serve, both of which have the ruin of the Frauenkirche in their centre: the peace demonstrations commemorating the 13th February, the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, starting in 1982, and an exhibition in 1985 on the destruction of Dresden 40 years before.45

In the days before the 13th February 1982 a group of students in Dresden distributed hand-written pamphlets, calling for a gathering at the ruin of the Frauenkirche to demonstrate for peace and against the stationing of the missile weapons. These pamphlets were copied again and again, and in no time had been spread across the whole of the GDR. State officials tried to prevent this event happening by sealing off train stations and by taking some of the organisers into custody. The pastor of the Kreuzkirche (the main Dresden Lutheran church after the loss of the Frauenkirche), countered with announcing a peace service in his church, giving the gathering of around 5000 people a legal frame within the church and circumventing the official ban on free assembly. After the peace service, a demonstration formed and walked the short distance to the ruin of the Frauenkirche, placing candles all around it and the statue of Martin Luther which stands in front of it (Urich 1999; Ulrich 2002). These peace demonstrations continued throughout the 1980s, until their model was taken up to provide the paradigm for the demonstrations of 1989. With this, the ruin of the Frauenkirche now suddenly was the symbol for political resistance, openly and publicly

45 In chapter 6, I will take up this discussion again and focus on the present post unification way of war commemoration, especially on the 60th anniversary in 2005.
contradicting the armament politics of the GDR. As had happened with the buildings as cultural symbols, the GDR officials later tried to regain the symbolic ground which they had lost by adopting the symbolic meaning of ruins as peace symbols for their own ends. After they had watched the unofficial peace demonstrations to the Frauenkirche on 13 February for three years, they used the reopening of the Dresden Opera House in 1985, at which many international guests were present, for a war commemoration of their own. The ruin of the Frauenkirche was sealed off and bathed in blue floodlight, and speeches on the evil of fascism and imperialism were being held, directed both against Hitler's Germany and the contemporary USA and Western Europe. However, this could not prevent the oppositional peace demonstration from taking place, and as in the previous years, hundreds of people walked to the ruin with candles, and placed them around the barriers.

Thus, in contrast to the cultural narrative, where the fact of the ruin was passed over and the emphasis laid on the beauty of the Frauenkirche before the war, and the hopeful beauty it would have again in unified Germany, here the fact of the destruction was emphasised as the paramount moment in the narrative. The same narrative was told through an exhibition in Dresden's main church held in 1985 on the 40th anniversary of the destruction of Dresden. With the title "...or Dresden" it was, first of all, a plea against the horrors of war always and everywhere, drawing attention to the fact that Dresden was not some singularly hard stricken place, but that its destruction in a way was a result of the destruction of Rotterdam, Coventry or Leningrad before, and that it was more important to look for peace and reconciliation instead of recriminations. It was therefore an admonishment against the official propaganda of the GDR, which in answer to the peace demonstrations had tried to establish the ruin of the Frauenkirche as a symbol of "capitalist-imperialist warmongery". Secondly, however, the exhibition made it quite clear, that something like the destruction of Dresden, with its claiming of 35,000 lives, also happened from "looking away". One of the most chilling parts of the exhibition showed how ordinary people of Dresden during the nazi period went on living their "totally normal" lives - normal lives in a totalitarian regime - by just withdrawing into the private sphere, and co-operating with the public sphere as far as necessary in order to be not disturbed by it. Drawing implicit parallels with the present, the exhibition was thus in fact an appeal to everybody - and especially to those culturally minded groups which I have
described in the previous chapter, who ignored the political realities of the GDR system and dwell in their own sphere of culture - to leave their niche and confront the GDR regime in its own sphere. At the opening of the exhibition, the pastor handed a little stone from the ruin of the Frauenkirche to everybody as a "Stein des Anstosses", which literally means either "a stone into which you bump" or "the stone which sets off an avalanche", and is a German idiom which can mean "something you take exception to", a "bone of contention" but also an "impetus to think":

ein Stein des Anstosses... telling of our suffering, we must not be silent on our guilt. The exhibition does not want to accuse, but to be a call upon everybody... Therefore in this exhibition a part of our history is being repeated and gone through again, so that never again the "normal" will be the breeding-ground for the totalitarian. The backward look serves the way forward. The exhibition reaches its goal if the necessary process of grieving transforms for us into the indispensable task to search for the external and internal peace. (Ziemer 1987: 2)

First of all the exhibition was an exhortation against war and against the official state policy of armament. But it goes a crucial step further: the exhibition makes it quite clear that it will not do to lay the blame elsewhere, not even on the government, but that the real cause of the "success" of fascism was the willingness of every single person to accept the totalitarian as normal by looking away without actively co-operating. Drawing a parallel to the present, the exhibition amounted to a (gentle) call for political protest, and was received as such by many Dresdeners.

Another moment which became important in this context was the invocation of the history of the Frauenkirche in the Nazi years, when it was at the centre of the power struggles in Dresden between the Nazi regime and the Lutheran church. Due to its strong symbolic powers in Dresden, it had been the Frauenkirche rather than any other of the main churches of Dresden which was to become the "Saxonian Cathedral", the main stronghold of the Hitler-embracing "German Christians" in Saxony. Before this project eventually succeeded, however, the Frauenkirche initially became a main centre in Germany for the dissident "Confessional Church" under its pastor Hugo Hahn. Hahn, one of the founding members of the Saxonian "emergency covenant" (Pfarrernotbund) which professed to the supremacy of God over Hitler held, until his imprisonment in 1934, services in the Frauenkirche which drew immense crowds of people also from farther afield, establishing the Frauenkirche as a symbol for religious
resistance against a hostile state (Bräuer 2000). The conjuring up of the Nazi period in the context of the oppositional movements of the 1980s was therefore so significant not only because it concerned a part of the German past which hitherto in Dresden one had tended to leave buried from memory, but also because it remembered the Frauenkirche as a symbol for resistance against the inclusivist politics of a hostile state.

To sum up this section:
Due to the significant role that the built environment, as well as single important buildings, has played in the public consciousness of Dresden since its destruction, all groups and movements who have appealed to a wider public for support have found it useful to use particular narratives of buildings to influence public opinion and gain this support. During the GDR time, first the Bürgerstum status group and then the political civic rights movement made use of the overarching importance of buildings in Dresden public consciousness, and both succeeded in mobilising public opinion against the GDR state.

In Max Weber’s model, which I have used above, the next step after the emergence of status groups is the political mobilisation through parties. The emergence at the end of the GDR of a broad civic movement, which grew out of the ground secured by the bürgerlich status group, might be possibly interpreted in such a light. For Weber, a party is located in the political sphere, its members have a clearly articulated common cause and use the party to enforce their own interest in political power. The 1980s civic groups used the gained symbolic ground; their emergence led to the first overt contestation of the GDR state (in contrast to the covert contestation previously through the bürgerlich status group), because they did not confront the state with an alternative, cultural sphere of power as the status group had done, but within the state’s own sphere, the political one.

Yet on the other hand, their ultimate aims were different. The civic rights movement was not a party grown out of the cultural status group, which converted the cultural status group’s ambition for power into practical action, but a mass movement whose political aims were directed towards a different address than the cultural elite’s ones. While the cultural oppositional elites circumvented the GDR state and addressed themselves to Western Germany as the nucleus of a hoped for unified Germany, the civil rights movement addressed its claim towards the GDR state. While the first group hoped for a position of power in that other,
unified German state, the civil rights movement campaigned for more political power (through the partaking in decisionmaking processes) in the GDR state.

These different aims found expression and were perpetuated through the different symbolic meanings which each attached to buildings. While the cultural elites used buildings as the symbol for another world lost and to be brought back, the civil rights activists used them as an admonition against this regime. The Bürgertum status group had proclaimed buildings as reminders of a better time, when Germany had been a praised “Cultural nation”, and Saxony in it the prototype of art and culturalism. For them, the buildings left from this area were a space which needed to be preserved against encroachments by the GDR state. Therefore, most of the proponents of this narrative hoped for a quick end of the GDR and a German re-unification. Out of this sentiment, for them the Frauenkirche became the symbol for re-unification, as I will show in the following section. By contrast, the civil rights activists regarded themselves not as exiles from a pre-GDR German Saxony, but as GDR citizens, the citizens of the state in which they lived and which they wanted to reform. From this different treatment of their relations to the GDR state there resulted also a different approach towards buildings. While the cultural circles regarded buildings primarily as monuments of another time, the civil rights activists saw in them their own space of living. Therefore, the emphasis of the cultural groups lay on the “preservation of monuments” (Denkmalpflege), while the civil rights activists preferred to talk of the “preservation of the built environment” (gebaute Umwelt). Monuments in this sense meant buildings as symbols pointing to another time, whereas the concept of the built environment referred to the everyday use of buildings in the present time.*

The only cause that unified both groups was an oppositional stance against the GDR regime. As long as it was the same GDR state which tried to prevent both, the preservation of monuments and the preservation of the built environment, the two groups felt they had much in common and collaborated on many issues. However, with the disappearance of the GDR this equanimity began to vanish, and it became apparent that their respective use of buildings in their narratives had different functions. With the end of the GDR in 1990 and with the loss of the common enemy, other imagined commonness disappeared. To this

---

*In this sense, the differentiation between buildings as monuments and as built environment corresponds closely to the differentiation drawn by the cultural historian Aleida Assmann between „monument” and „living world” (Lebenswelt). Cf.: A. Assmann and J.Harth (1991) Kultur als Lebenswelt und Monument, Frankfurt:Fischer.
Snapshot of the session where the "Call from Dresden" was drafted by a group of art historians and other members of Dresden's bürgerlich cultural elite. It took place in the private home of one of the authors.

(photo: Frauenkirchenjahrbuch 1999, p.68)
transformation period I would now like to turn.

THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF 1989 - 1990

On 14 November 1989, five weeks after the political events which led to the formation of the “Group of Twenty” which I have described at the beginning of this chapter, another group of approximately twenty people met in a private flat in Dresden, in order to draft a paper which called for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. They were two preservationists, five architects, three art historians, three engineers, a musician and an actor, two dentists, three church people; five of them held the title of professor and ten more held doctorates (cf. Hoch 1999: 262). They comprised exactly the culturally inclined, “bürgerlich” preservationist circle which I have described in chapter two. The impetus to the meeting came from the lutheran pastor Karl Hoch, who derived from the wealthy and influential Bildungsbürgertum of before the war, and after a doctoral degree in art history had turned to theology. Today, he does not tire of describing how he came to call such a meeting. His family, in whose 1890 built mansion house in Dresden he has spent all his life, had been friends with the preservationist Fritz Löffler, the famous author of The Old Dresden, whose popularity and importance as a public character I have discussed in the second chapter. On his death bed, Löffler asked Hoch to “clamour for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, as soon as a propitious hour is near”. Hoch tells the story that he didn’t believe for a second in that ever happening, but nevertheless didn’t want to disappoint the dying man, and promised. He felt that the propitious hour was there with the fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989, and five days later he organised the meeting with other interested persons in a private flat. The resulting text which they drafted on this evening was sent as a “Call from Dresden” to West German newspapers and broadcasting channels, to the West German chancellor and the President and to other western heads of state on the following 13th February, the anniversary of the destruction of Dresden.

This almost simultaneous formation of two “Groups of Twenty” in autumn 1989 in Dresden - one drawn from the civic rights campaigners on the streets, the other consisting of a select circle of highly educated and influential art historians and preservationists - can be regarded as symbolic of the time of social and political change which now followed. The concern of the first group was (after the paramount pursuit of civil rights and peace) the preservation of the built
environment, the concern of the second group, the rebuilding of a cultural monument. The first campaigned for political reform, the second for cultural concerns. While the first group formed as a channel between the wishes of the GDR public and the GDR state officials, the second one addressed itself to a West German public and West German politicians.

In 1989, both these groups held a great degree of power. Together, they had won out over the GDR regime, which by now had all but disappeared. Both had won much symbolic ground in Dresden, by successfully using symbolic buildings, most importantly the ruin of the Frauenkirche, as central buildingstones in the identity narratives which they respectively propagated. It was therefore no wonder that shortly after unification the Frauenkirche became a contested site, where the GDR cultural elites and the political civil rights movement competed for the authority of interpretation of its symbolic meanings with each other, and with the new imported West German elites. Before I turn to the debate about rebuilding or preserving the ruin in more detail, I will briefly point to a few events surrounding the Frauenkirche between 1989 and 1990, which paved the way to the rebuilding debate which set in shortly after the re-unification was constitutionally consumed.

- The Frauenkirche as a symbol for reunification -

The national and international response which the "Call from Dresden" elicited, in the euphoric days of 1989, was overwhelming. Only two weeks later, the chancellor Helmut Kohl chose from all possible places Dresden, and there the ruin of the Frauenkirche, to deliver his first public speech to an East German audience. This choice came to be symbolic, for here for the first time the West German governing powers were confronted directly with the great yearning of a vast majority of East Germans for a German re-unification, with German flags being waved and the West German national anthem (later to become that of unified Germany as well) being sung, for the first time, spontaneously by thousands of East German people. For the first time, the Frauenkirche was thus from an official side symbolically linked with the project of re-unifying Germany.

This moment, when chancellor Kohl chose the ruin of the Frauenkirche for his first official visit to Eastern Germany after the fall of the wall, was a turning point also in the history of the Frauenkirche as an identity symbol. Up to this point, the ruin of the Frauenkirche had been an important identity symbol within
Dresden. Its meaning had been debatable - for some it was the token for Dresden's past beauty and glory, for others the bleak reminder of human failure, the horrors of war and the necessity for peace - but for almost every Dresdener it had been a personally important object of identification. With Kohl's visit, this local symbol became externalised and officialised. The Frauenkirche was hailed as a symbol for re-unification, a symbol for reconciliation not just generally between nations, but between east and west.

This was the emotional context in which the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was under way. In 1990 a fund-raising society was set up by the group who had drafted the "Call from Dresden". It soon found followers in many West German towns and cities (it is remarkable, that of the numerous German societies for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche all outside Dresden are located in the former West. There are also societies in the United States, Britain, France and Switzerland. These I will discuss in chapter four). In 1993 a foundation for the rebuilding of the church was set up, the trustees being the Saxon Freestate, the City of Dresden and the Church of Saxony. However, much of the public money spent on it comes from the German federal government. West German politicians readily embraced the Frauenkirche as a symbol for re-unification. In 1997 the Frauenkirche was the first project to receive the newly founded "National Award". In the accompanying speech the then German president Roman Herzog spoke of the re-building as "a unique contribution to the increase of our cultural heritage, to the growing together of our country and the co-operation with friends elsewhere" (Herzog 1997: 9).

It might have happened by chance, that from all possible places of eastern Germany it was the Frauenkirche which became this symbol, but once this step was made, it couldn't be undone. One Dresdener, who belongs to various building initiatives and was already active in the 1980s built environment workshops, confessed to me a general scepticism about projects like the Frauenkirche, where a single landmark building is being rebuilt, while hundreds of less exposed buildings are left to rot. He said that he did not understand the unjust behaviour of the German government: the Frauenkirche is the project which elicits sponsorship and the willingness to donate money from so many private individuals and corporations, so why does the government not let it be and rather spend some money of its own on other projects, like the upkeep of some streets of nineteenth century housing, which need the money much more urgently? The
answer, I think, lies just in the fact that the Frauenkirche has become a symbol: While thousands of streets in Germany need money spent on their upkeep, this is a matter of bureaucratic budget allocations and the responsibility of various national and local agencies. The Frauenkirche, on the other hand, derives its symbolic power from being officially portrayed as a project elevated from the normal concerns of financial distribution and household planning; money spent on it by the government is not a certain percentage of the state's budget spent on a particular building, but it is a symbolic, almost spiritual and immaterial contribution to the great cause of re-unification and reconciliation.

In private talks, Dresdeners often explained to me that the Frauenkirche needs to be rebuilt, because it is necessary for their own identification with the city. The official publications of the Frauenkirche rebuilding society and foundation, by contrast, speak of it as necessary for the "healing of wounds" and "building bridges - living reconciliation", as the official slogan was, which for many years was attached on a large banner to the scaffold around the building site. Thus, the functions of the Frauenkirche as a symbol for local Dresden identity and as a symbol for national identity seem to grow increasingly apart, as I would like to thematise also in the next chapter.

This claim by the west German political elites of the Frauenkirche as their symbol for reunification gives a good indication of how the political power constellations in Dresden changed in the year between the demonstrations of autumn 1989 and official re-unification in autumn 1990. Before I turn to the ensuing debate about the rebuilding of the church, I will briefly outline this new political context in which the debate took place.

- The political context: the success of the conservative party (CDU) -

I have described how the oppositional movement to overthrow the GDR state relied on two different narratives: one cultural, the other political. While the objective of the cultural narrative was re-unification, that of the political narrative was political reform within the GDR.

The long autumn of demonstrations in the GDR lasted from the first spontaneous demonstrations in September and early October 1989, still in the face of the assembled armed police forces, through to the almost institutionalised, habitual regular "Monday demonstrations" in the early spring of 1990. In that time a process took place that has become famous and seen as symbolic: the gradual
change of the demonstrators' slogan of "we are the people" into "we are one people". This designated the change from the demonstrators calling for political reform within the GDR, to calling for unification with the west of Germany. In parallel with this process, increasingly from the late autumn onwards, the content of speeches on the demonstrations slowly changed from general critiques of the GDR regime to veritable election campaigning by the various newly emerged political interest groups and parties. In the first and last free election of the GDR assembly in March 1990, the pro-unification conservative party CDU won the absolute majority, and half a year later, Germany was officially re-unified.

In analytical accounts of the transformation process from the end of the GDR to unified Germany, usually the increasing isolation of the civil rights activists from their basis in the mass of the population is thematised. The process is usually described as one in which three groups of actors took part: the quickly disappearing GDR officials, the civic rights movement activists, and the general population. While the civic rights activists strove for reforms within the GDR, the mass of the population preferred material benefits to be gained through the introduction of the market economy symbolised by the Deutsch-Mark. With the election of the conservative party CDU to power, the mass of the population officially delegitimised the civic rights activists and legitimated the CDU, whose election programme was built centrally around the quick introduction of the monetary and subsequently political unification. This is, very roughly, the common assessment by academic commentators (e.g. Jarausch 1995; Mayer 1997).

It seems to me, however, that the group of the bürgertich cultural elite which I have described in the previous chapter played a greater role in this process than is generally acknowledged, where they are mentioned at best in passing. Because they never have become active in the political sphere, their influence is mostly disregarded. However, the long years in which they used their cultural influence to distribute a discourse on the delegitimisation of the GDR and the desideratum of

---

47 For discussions of the history of the 1989/1990 GDR parties and their various ways into pan-Germany’s politics, see for example Urich 2000; Weilemann 1990.
reunification must have had a large impact on voting behaviour, too. I would therefore suggest that the reasons for the overwhelming CDU vote, which in Dresden gained even greater support than in most other areas of the GDR, also lay in the strong dominance of the culture discourse in Dresden, which as I have argued above often was linked by its proponents with conservative values, and a strong unification-ism. A further indication for the strength of this cultural discourse in Dresden is the fact that in Dresden many of the new parties deriving from the civil rights groups did not join the Green party as elsewhere in the GDR, but elected to be incorporated into the CDU. (Urch 2001; Heydemann 1990)

The overwhelming victory of the CDU, and the CDU-close former discourses of the Bürertum group, can be interpreted as the success of these former GDR oppositional cultural elites to take a powerful position in the new social order of unified Germany. In the CDU, this group entered into alliance with the West German holders of political power. Out of this alliance emerged the successful start of the Frauenkirche rebuilding project: the authors of the „Call from Dresden“ who formed the core of the rebuilding society, the Saxon Prime minister who was one of the three trustees of the rebuilding foundation and the former chairman of the Dresdner Bank who chairs the supervisory board of the foundation, although they all belong to different social groups, they all meet in the

---

48 Even studies like Land&Posselek (1994) on the discourse of oppositional intellectuals in the GDR describe the bürgerlich milieu as so conservative, „dusty“ and passive, that they argue it had little appeal to younger generations of oppositionals. But even if that was so, this argument neglects the huge influence which representatives of this status group had through the offices and positions which they often inhabited: as I have argued in the previous chapter, often elite positions in museums, art galleries and preservationism, through which they had a large instrumentum at hand to influence the wider public. Compare footnote 13 in chapter 2.

49 The CDU formed an election-bond with two new parties, one of which had emerged from the civil rights movement (Demokratischer Aufbruch), the other being a newly emerged conservative party (Deutsche Soziale Union). Together, they stood as „Alliance for Germany“. In Dresden, they won 59% of the vote, as compared to 48% in the GDR total. Of these, 45% of votes were given the CDU directly, as compared to 40.8% in the GDR total. (source: Kommunale Statistikstelle)

50 The links of the cultural elite circles who identified themselves as bürgerlich with the CDU are an interesting topic in their own right. This complicated relationship is quite well captured in the following quote from an interview with the editor of the historical journal Dresdner Hefte:

The old GDR-CDU, which then merged into the West-CDU, was to a large degree interwoven with these circles of old Bürertum. But they were a kind of diaspora, like emigrants who cannot recognise the image which they have of their heimat in reality. I mean, their understanding of Bürertum was in no way compatible with the reality of Western Germany! So they had to undertake enormous efforts of conforming to this reality of capitalism, which uses culture only as a nice decorum, but actually has as little to do with culture as real socialism had! (HL 9)

In chapter 5, I will return to this issue.

112
CDU. While I think that the changes of political and social power as they took place during the unification process in Dresden are much more subtle than can be shown by mere party membership, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that this was the context in which the plan to rebuild the Frauenkirche met with success and eventually got under way, with the founding of a Rebuilding Foundation in 1993. It is a matter of speculation, whether the success of the CDU in Dresden and the success of the Frauenkirche rebuilding project were just parallel processes, or whether the new political atmosphere conditioned the ground for the rebuilding project to become successful (which was certainly the case), or whether also the strength and public resonance of the Dresden cultural discourse - whose most prominent symbol was the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche - in Dresden conditioned the election success of the Christian Democrats in the first place.

Finally in this chapter, I'd like to dwell a little longer on the debate about the rebuilding of the church.

REBUILDING THE FRAUENKIRCHE OR PRESERVING THE RUIN?
The Protestant Bishop of Saxony wrote in 1995, looking back at the debate about the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in 1990:

We live in a time of a great change of values. We also live in a time in great danger of a general loss of values. In this serious situation the Frauenkirche becomes a symbol of all that is valuable in our time... (Kress 1995: 7).

The question of what is valuable in our time proved indeed at the core of the argument about whether to rebuild the church or not. However, while the bishop rather normatively sees the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche as a kind of bulwark of values in a valueless time, others found their own values offended when the removal of the ruin was decided, in favour of the rebuilding of the church. Therefore, public opinion in Dresden was split between those who wanted to rebuild the church (headed by the cultural elites), and those who wanted to preserve the ruin as a monument (mainly people from the civil rights circles).

Thus, the internal differences between the two originally oppositional GDR

---

51 I will discuss the circles involved in the rebuilding project in more detail in the following chapter.
milieux which comprised the preservationist field - the cultural elites on the one hand, and the civil rights movement on the other - became very obvious in the debate about the future of the ruin. Most fundamental amongst these differences was their respective posthumous relation to the GDR state which now had ceased to exist. While the cultural narrative never had accepted the GDR state as legitimate and now rationalised the project to rebuild the Frauenkirche as a necessary and logical component of the re-unification of Germany, the civil rights groups hailed the debate about the ruin of the Frauenkirche as a debate about how to deal with the legacy of the GDR. They argued, that in sharp contrast to the attitude of the cultural elites who never had accepted the GDR as a historical moment, GDR history had never been dealt with adequately and needed a great deal of reappraisal now. Further, the former civil rights activists argued that the rhetoric of the proponents of rebuilding, which claimed that to rebuild the church meant to “heal wounds”, in practice meant not the healing of wounds, but the negation of history. If the church was to stand there again, in the centre of Dresden, exactly as it had before the war, this was equal to confirming that the war and the GDR time had never happened.\(^{52}\) Instead, they argued, the preservation of the ruin would bring the unique chance to have a monument not just of the destruction of Dresden and thus of the folly of war, but also of civil courage in the GDR time and the peaceful opposition to the regime by the pacifist population, which had made the ruin their symbol. Thus, each faction claimed that the ruin’s symbolic function would be lost: either by keeping the ruin or by rebuilding the church, and with it a valuable part of German history. According to the civil rights group’s argument, the ruin was not only the "remains" of the old church, but also of a piece of GDR history of civil courage and resistance to the regime. Would, in rebuilding the church, the old Dresden be resurrected and all that had "remained" of the war and of a chapter of GDR history be erased: would the fragments be removed in order to forge a sense of continuity at the cost of "undoing history"?

This was certainly how many people, especially those formerly engaged in the civil rights movement, viewed the decision to rebuild the ruin. When in 1999, when the rebuilding was in full progress, the last remaining piece of rubble, which

---

\(^{52}\) This stood in close relation to the longstanding argument amongst preservationists and architects in Europe, as to how to deal best with war ruins of landmark buildings (Hellbrugge 1991). A similar stance, namely that the exact, "authentic" rebuilding of a building ruined in the war would mean the "undoing" of history, was taken for example with the Cathedral of Coventry and the West-Berlinian Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche. Both were left as ruins as a monument against war, and were juxtaposed with a new modernist church building beside the ruin.
so far had remained where it had fallen, was due to be incorporated into the growing new building, there were many enraged letters-to the-editor to the Dresden papers. For example:

for me, the ruin has yet another meaning than as a cultural monument (...) and a symbol for international reconciliation. ... it is linked to political resistance in the GDR. This symbolic meaning is lost through rebuilding. But I think, that even though we now live in a democracy, we need places to remind us of our civil courage, which give us the strength for civil courage in moments, when we may need it again. (Anneliese Müller 13. Feb. 2000)

In whose interest is such “tidying up” of history? Is it the same spirit which glorifies order and tidiness as ideal German virtues? ... Is it this eternal longing for perfection? ... Then everything should be done to keep visible the fatal results of an exaggerated love for order. If one didn’t have the courage to leave the ruin as a monument, at least this meek rest should be honoured. (DNN 30./31. Mai 1998)

People seem to be in power here who have no understanding for the symbolism of these stones. On the contrary, the piece of rubble seems to be a stumbling stone for those perfectionists who want to create the illusion of an ideal world and thus feed their own vanity. (DNN 30./31. Mai 1998)

There are two points worth pointing out in this discourse. First, the view that the rebuilding project tends to negate important aspects of German history and is born from the desire to create an "ideal world", and secondly a feeling that these aims are somehow propagated from people outside Dresden ("in whose interest is...?", "People seem to be in power who have no understanding for the symbolism of these stones"). I would like to discuss the latter point first, before I turn to the often argued point about the relation between "preservation" and "reconstruction".

With the progress of the rebuilding endeavour, it seems increasingly as if the project has become somewhat alienated from many of the groups in Dresden who originally regarded it as one of their most important symbols. Claimed as a symbol for reunification, the symbolic meaning of the Frauenkirche has become externalised, and there is a widespread feeling that it is set up as a monument for something it never had been in Dresden before.

The argument for the rebuilding of the church, which was first brought forward by the cultural Bürgertum group was soon taken up by the political officials who marked the church as an official symbol for reunification and a new German national identity within Europe. In their narrative, the church is described
as “important not only for Dresden, but for the German and European culture in general. ... it is one of the great masterpieces of European architecture... its reconstruction therefore is not just a task of local, but of European importance.” (Paul 1992: 38-9). Clearly, this discourse derives from the discourse of the GDR Bürgertum group described in the previous chapter. But there is a shift in emphasis: While the Bürgertum group also described the Frauenkirche as a masterpiece of European significance, they saw it first and foremost as a piece of Saxon heritage, and the reference to European stature only served to magnify the local Saxon tradition in retrospect. In painting the Frauenkirche as a European monument, the GDR preservationists claimed it as a symbol for Saxon identity. With the official rebuilding discourse of the early 1990s, this momentum is lost, and the Frauenkirche painted merely as a European symbol. While this was a strategically good move, for it started to attract indeed European-wide sponsorship, the importance of the church as a local symbol was purposively diminished. The other narrative which is used to support the pro-rebuilding argument concerns the tradition of the church as a "citizens' church", originally a building of the protestant Bürgertum, braving the Catholic court. Yet also this narrative is told not as one about local power constellations, but paints the rebuilding project as the success of a “world-wide citizens initiative” (Guratzsch), a monument which Western “civil society” erects for itself: again, the successfully realised aim behind this narrative is to elicit more willingness to spend from rich citizens (Bürger) everywhere, who then can see themselves in the tradition of those Dresden citizens of the 1720s who originally built the church. Again, the addressees of this narrative, which are supposed to and really do feel embedded in this narrative as relevant to their own identity, are not Dresdeners, but rich people in Germany and Europe. In the next chapter, I will discuss this “civil society” discourse which is central to the Frauenkirche project in more detail, especially analysing the difference between this discourse, in which civil society means participation in the form of financial support to a common cause, and the discourse of the 1980s civil rights movement, in which civil society means participation in the form of the questioning of and sometimes resistance to political decisions.

It is also for these reasons that the argument for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche initially found many sceptics. The argument of the civil rights movement milieu of the 1980s to leave the ruin as an antiwar monument found a broad basis for example in the field of the protestant church: many church
members took part in or at least sympathised with the civil rights groups, and the institution of the Saxon Protestant Church itself was initially against the rebuilding. Part of their argument was that there was no money for the new building of a church at a time when less than 30% of the population were members of the protestant church (source: Pressestelle der ELK Sachsen), when the Frauenkirche had no own congregation, and when all over Saxony existing old churches were crumbling to pieces due to the lack of money for their upkeep. In the end, the leading officials of the Saxon Church were convinced of the cause by those cultural preservationist groups who had drafted the "Call from Dresden"; the then bishop Johannes Hempel coined the phrase which became one of the most powerful slogans for the rebuilding of the church: "It is our humanist and Christian task to heal wounds, not to keep them artificially open". However, many ordinary members of the church on the basis maintained their scepticism of the rebuilding of the church, as the above mentioned debate about the integration into the new building of the last remaining piece of rubble made clear again.

The critics of the rebuilding found support partly even in the preservationist office itself, whose scepticism concerned especially the "negation of history" aspect. The institutionalised preservationists were in an interesting position here. On the one hand, the fundamental theorem of preservationism, fixed in the Charter of Venice in 1967, was "to preserve, not to rebuild" (cf. Martin and Krautzberger 2004: 171-9). In unison with the churches, one faction of preservationism therefore claimed that the task of preservationism was to try and preserve the many existing churches in Saxony's towns and villages from further ruin, instead of rebuilding the Frauenkirche. On the other hand, the preservationists of Dresden had been foremost in preserving the stones of the ruin during the GDR time and in battling for the eventual rebuilding of the church. "The famous Saxon preservationists with their great tradition", as one of my interviewees quoted earlier had described them, had in the words of another one become "the preservationists of a pile of rubble" after 1945. Preserving what there was left to preserve had meant the careful storing of any single stone of buildings like the Frauenkirche. Building on this, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche eventually became justified in preservationist circles as a case of "anastylosis", a term borrowed from archaeology which means that the Frauenkirche is rebuilt under the strict condition that everything that is left from the original building, from the comparably well-preserved altar to the hundreds of loose stones, is reintegrated
into the new building:

As preservationists we regard the archaeological rebuilding of the Frauenkirche as [...] an act of preserving the material substance within an admittedly not original, but new whole, in which nevertheless the important characteristics of the monument, also those of the destruction, are preserved. (Magirius 1995c: 83)

In the form it is re-emerging now, more than ten years after the first debates, the Frauenkirche therefore appears as a freckled building, where the white new sandstone is interspersed with the old black burnt stones of the original building. In this, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche became the landmark example of the soon-to-be-called “Dresden way” within German preservationism, which against the critique of especially West German preservationists meant the practising of a symbiosis between preservation and rebuilding.

This argument of preservationism between rebuilding and preservation connects to the question of whether rebuilding the Frauenkirche means the “undoing of history” or not. Those who criticise the Frauenkirche as a case of perfectionist rebuilding (as in the quotes above), argue that it means the victory of those reactionary nostalgics for the golden past of pre-war Dresden, capital of glorious Saxony, who through the exact rebuilding of long lost buildings attempt to make 1945, the war, the GDR time and many other aspects of the past forgotten. Through rebuilding, these critics argue, a continuity is forged that doesn’t exist, and any real discontinuities are tried to be forgotten. Proponents of the rebuilding of the church, by contrast, argue that it is really an act of preservationism, which means that the breaks and discontinuities of history are accepted in it. As the preservationist Magirius pointed out in a talk to me, the point is not to repeat history, but to make visible the gap which separates us from a former time. However, through the preservation of still existing matter or substance, a continuity is identified and emphasised that has survived the breaks of history. The way the rebuilding is now practised, it seems to many as if it dictates one symbolic meaning of the building. Pro-rebuilding preservationists, on the other hand, can argue that the Frauenkirche is, or at least should be, a task of “preservationism” which only forges the continuity of the building itself, i.e. as a mere form, and leaves the interpretation of its symbolic contents open.

- Conclusion -

The debate about the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche can be interpreted as a kind
of power struggle between the two major oppositional groups in GDR society, who claimed the success of 1989 for themselves and thus the legitimate inheritance of power: the sphere of the former cultural elites on the one hand, and that of the church/civil rights movement on the other. The power contest between them took place in the new context of re-unified Germany. The successful decision of rebuilding the church seemed to confirm the cultural elite’s claim to dominance: their place in the new society seemed more easily gained and better accepted in West German society than that of the civil rights groups, and the Frauenkirche has come to be seen as a symbol for this in Dresden.

The first phase of the reordering of society seemed thus to have been completed. The former Bürgertum status group seemed to have reached their aim for more official influence, in alliance with the CDU. For them, there exists a sense of satisfaction that now there is a state which values Dresden’s cultural traditions. Many of those people who had seen themselves as preservers of an alternative cultural tradition to that of the GDR state now felt that their lifelong efforts had achieved their end. Not only is the Frauenkirche being rebuilt just as they always had wished, but their own position as the cultural elites, and thus an important part of “civil society” in the new state of unified Germany is affirmed.

The other group, who likewise had challenged the communist party’s claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the people, and in their campaigns to win more public support had relied on a political narrative rather than the cultural one, seemed to have lost out. However, as I will show in the next two chapters, the reordering of society was not completed with this. The political narrative still had power, and increasingly so the further the time after re-unification progressed. For while the campaigns to portray the Frauenkirche as a symbol for reunification had become dominant, for many disenchanted people in Dresden, the Frauenkirche has come to be a symbol of unification in all its perceived negative aspects. Originally, as I have shown in the second chapter, the hope of rebuilding the Frauenkirche one day had been linked by the Bildungsbürger themselves to the hope of unifying Germany one day. Unified Germany in these discourses had stood for a better society, in which also Dresden and Saxony would receive their

53 It perhaps should be added, by way of showing that the civil rights groups’ engagement with buildings does not end there, that the same groups, often the identical persons, who campaigned for the Frauenkirche ruin to remain as a monument, directed their efforts next towards the building of the new synagogue in Dresden (which was completed in 2001). In this thesis, I have decided not to focus on the synagogue, because its building process took place outside of and
former glory back. Now that the unification as well as the Frauenkirche rebuilding have come to pass, there is an increasing sense of disappointment and unfulfilled hopes, for which the Frauenkirche "unofficially" stands.

In Dresden, the Frauenkirche continues to symbolise the further debates about power in unified Germany. In the following chapter, I will discuss an example of this power contest.

removed from the general public arguments about building and rebuilding in Dresden, which are the actual focus of my thesis. This is probably due to the sensitive issue of Jewishness, and the everpresent threat of antisemitism, which prevented a wider public from becoming openly emotionally involved in the building of the new synagogue. This was all the more remarkable considering the fact that the synagogue is a very modern building, whose young architect won the prestigious world architectural award for it. Moreover, the building stands at a prominent, central site in Dresden. It seems quite safe to assume that any such building with a different content would have evoked a loud public discussion and fierce opposition in Dresden. Nothing of the sort happened with the synagogue: in public debate it was simply ignored. Moreover, the narratives which the synagogue people told, seldom relate to the Dresden narratives central to this thesis: usually, they are embedded in greater contexts of Jewishness in the modern world, the status of Jews in Germany after the holocaust, etc. For the history of the new building of the Dresden Synagogue, see for example: M. Ulrich (2002) *Nach der Synagoge brannte die Stadt*, Leipzig: EVA.
CHAPTER 4

THE FRAUENKIRCHE AS CITIZENS' CHURCH: CLAIMING CIVIL SOCIETY

After the proponents of rebuilding had won out, the initially divided public opinion in Dresden shifted with an overwhelming majority behind the rebuilding project, as frequent opinion polls in the Dresden newspapers showed. This was probably due to the fact that the official rhetoric by the circles who had assumed responsibility for the project successfully played on all the narratives which are seen as empowering by many Dresdeners. The popular narrative of Dresden’s great cultural tradition, for example, blends in well with the rhetoric of the Frauenkirche as an international symbol for peace and reconciliation: the act of donating money to the church is hailed not just as a contribution towards the regaining of Dresden’s past splendour, but towards the preservation and rebuilding of “culture” in the whole western world. A positive narrative of Dresden’s history and tradition is thus not played out against other, German or globalist ones, but shown to be the paradigm and epitome of positive narratives of culture anywhere.

At the same time, the rebuilding groups often portray the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche as embodiment and triumph of Dresden’s “great civic tradition”. The narrative of the “citizens’ church” (Bürgerkirche) Frauenkirche emphasises the fact that the initial starting point of the rebuilding was given by citizens of Dresden, those who had published the “Call from Dresden”, and that the €100 millions needed for the project came almost exclusively from private donations by citizens. This narrative, which is often and delightedly told by those who have assumed responsibility for the rebuilding, holds therefore that the rebuilding is the project of “a citizens’ initiative which formed in November 1989 around 20 people, and has subsequently grown into one of the largest citizens’ initiative in our time” (Walter 2002: 83). In this narrative of the citizens’ church, the rebuilding is portrayed as the natural continuance of a history which started with the original erection of the church by the city of Dresden as counterweight to the adjacent royal court complex, later passed through the Nazi time as a centre of the
oppositional confessional church, and most recently saw the ruin as a symbol of peaceful resistance against the GDR regime.

The mobilising of these two central identity narratives of Dresden - the cultural and the civic great tradition - in support of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche resonates well with many Dresdeners, for it seems to suggest that being a citizen of Dresden, i.e. the original "owner" of the Frauenkirche, means to be part of a collective which is famed and admired virtually world-wide. In other words, relating one's personal identity to this proclaimed collective one, whose symbol is the Frauenkirche, is felt to be empowering by many. Therefore the progress of the rebuilding and any great public events which mark the completion of a further important building stage - e.g. the hand-over of the new cross by the British "Dresden Trust" in February 2000, or the first chiming of the new bells in May 2003, or the completion of the outside facade in June 2004 - are attended by thousands of Dresdeners. At the same time, this broad public support shows that the initiators of the rebuilding project cleverly selected exactly those current narratives of Dresden identity which resonate with most Dresdeners and thus ensured greatest possible support from the population.

As I will show in this chapter, however, this monopolisation of Dresden narratives, both the cultural and the civic one, by the group responsible for the rebuilding, has not gone unchallenged. Now that the rebuilding is almost completed, there is much disappointment in Dresden (articulated in private talks as well as in the local papers), about the fact that large commissions, most recently the building of the organ, as well as important positions at the Frauenkirche, such as the appointment of the organist and the director of church music, are all given to firms and individuals from the former west. The disappointment and sometimes rage which this elicits is not so much a matter of wounded Eastern, but rather Saxon identity. There is a strong feeling amongst many Dresdeners that the proud Dresden and Saxon tradition, whose narratives are felt to be empowering and whose symbol the Frauenkirche is understood to be, is slanted by such decisions. The officials responsible for these decisions and for the rebuilding of the church in general are therefore often seen as betraying the Dresdeners' symbol, Frauenkirche.

These wounded sensibilities are also a sign that the unification process with its reordering of social structures and power relations within society is far from completed yet. Contrary to the portrait of the German re-unification often painted
by politicians, according to which one social and political system has been exchanged for another one, and now everything is smoothly in place again, the unification process not only put social positions and statuses in question, but also led to questions being asked about fundamental social and political values, the answers to which are still fervently debated. There seems to be a general feeling of incompleteness and not-yet-achievedness of the aims, dreams and struggles of the GDR years. Thus, the Bildungsbürger still try to fight their cultural battle, and still hope for supremacy in it. Likewise, amongst some of the former civil rights activists there is a sense that the participating and socially engaged Bürger of the East, who had achieved direct dialogue with the state in 1989, now found themselves not listened to anymore by the new state.54

One important current debate concerns the meaning and place in society of "civil society", a highly fashionable term on the lips of politicians, that is also heavily relied on by the decisionmakers of the Frauenkirche rebuilding project. Their discourse of the "citizens' church" is initially indebted to discourses of the GDR civil rights movements, but has taken on a different meaning (to which I will turn presently) which is criticised not only by civil rights activists, but by many other Dresdeners too, many of which initially had been sympathetic to the rebuilding project. The Frauenkirche therefore today has also become a symbol for the competition between various groups to be the "true", legitimate "civil society". "Civil Society" has been recognised as a powerful sphere, and those who successfully can claim to "be" civil society inhabit this powerful sphere. Those who partake in the rebuilding of the "citizens' church" Frauenkirche - a project in which both representatives of the state and the wider public have a great interest - symbolically can claim the attributes of civil society for themselves. In this chapter, I will discuss these power contests which take place between those concerned with the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche: old eastern cultural elites, new western elites and descendants of the civil rights movement.

POWERS 54

Constellations in the Frauenkirche

In the previous two chapters I have described buildings in Dresden as symbolic sites, whose symbolic possession by, or inaccessibility to, particular social groups designated also the distribution of power in Dresden society. The sphere which

---

54 This disappointment of the civil rights activists is expressed in a popular saying: during the GDR time, you went to prison if you spoke out aloud, today, you may say everything, but nobody listens.
POWER STRUCTURES OF THE FRAUENKIRCHE PROJECT

- **Green** are all bodies which have decision-making power. Theoretically the Foundation with city, church and the freestate as trustees, yet in practice also the Dresdner Bank, who is represented in the Chairman of the board of directors and in the finance manager.

- **Yellow** are "citizens' initiatives", voluntary associations.
particularly used buildings as their forum from which to debate power and, during the GDR, to contest the governing power, I have described as the preservationist field. The project of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche is a focal point of the preservationist field in Dresden today - after the German reunification and the reinstallation of the Freestate of Saxony.

Actors in it are the old GDR cultural elites (those who initiated the project with the "Call from Dresden"), new West German economic elites (the Dresdner Bank, as I will show below), representatives of the old GDR civil rights movement, and key civic institutions such as the Saxon Lutheran Church and the Preservationist Office. At the same time, the field of the Frauenkirche rebuilding is one that both representatives of the "state" and the broad majority of the public have an interest in, so that it acts again as a kind of mediator between the public and the decision making spheres of the government.

Before I discuss the ensuing debates and power contests in more depth, it will be helpful to describe briefly the structure of the groups and individuals engaged with the rebuilding project. (Compare the attached diagram.)

The "owner" of the church is the Foundation for the Rebuilding of the Frauenkirche (hereafter only, "Foundation"), which manages both finances and architectural details of the building process. The foundation is represented by three trustees: the Protestant Church of Saxony, who donated the building site, the Freestate of Saxony and the City of Dresden, both of whom have agreed to donate regular sums of money towards the Foundation's financial capital. Representatives of these three institutions - the bishop of Saxony and two other high church officials, the Dresden mayor and the Saxon prime minister - form the core of the board of trustees, further members of which include the German chancellor, a few famous politicians and leading representatives of the business sector. Decisionmaking responsibilities and powers rest with the board of directors, who in turn appoint and supervise the managers who manage the affairs of the foundation. The board of directors is chaired by a leading manager (formerly the head) of the Dresdner Bank, Germany's second largest bank; further members of the board of directors include the former Saxon justice minister, a further church official, the head of the preservation office and a few others. There are two managers employed by the board: one for building questions, a former church employee, and one for finance, a former employee of the Dresdner Bank. While
this structure of board of trustees, board of directors and management is common in German foundations, two points need pointing out regarding who fills the various positions in the foundation: firstly the large role played in the foundation by the Dresdner Bank, besides representatives of local, regional and church government, and secondly the fact that not one of the original initiators of the rebuilding, who drafted the "Call from Dresden", are represented in it. I will discuss these points presently, after I have introduced the other major actors in the rebuilding project.

While the Foundation has the decision making function amongst the various groups related to the rebuilding project, the other major body, the Society in Support of the Rebuilding of the Frauenkirche (hereafter, Rebuilding Society), only has a supporting function to the Foundation: it collects the funds. In its executive committee most of the authors of the "Call from Dresden" are represented, i.e. the executive committee almost exclusively consists of Dresdeners, representatives of the cultural elite" group described in chapter 2 of this thesis. The chairman is a well-known Dresden trumpet player, whose role I will discuss below. The Dresdener rebuilding society functions as a kind of umbrella-organisation for various other supporting associations and initiatives outside Dresden: the numerous German ones are exclusively from the former West; further there are societies supporting the rebuilding project in France, Switzerland, Britain and the US.

Thus, the building site of the Frauenkirche is a point of focus, where various groups of Dresden's society meet each other, and with groups from outside Dresden.

Firstly there are the former cultural elites, assembled in the Rebuilding Society, which in 1989 euphorically had initiated the rebuilding project, in the hope and confidence that their 40 year long battle with the CDR state was now crowned with success, and that all they had ever lived for: a greater recognition and appreciation of "culture" in society, but also of their own dominant status within it, now finally had come true, as they had hoped, with the reunification of Germany and the reinstitution of Saxony as their political point of reference. They see the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche as their own achievement, and the visible symbol of their own success. However, their decisionmaking power is minimal; in relation to the foundation they have only supporting function. Interestingly, this lack of
influence - which in a way they chose themselves in organising for the foundation to be set up and gladly accepting the Dresden Bank’s offer to contribute its managerial and financial expertise to running the Foundation - is compensated by a sort of moral or symbolic influence which this group still has with many Dresdeners from a wider public. This becomes especially clear with the role that the chairman of the Rebuilding Society, a well known Dresden trumpet player, has assumed. Loosely befriended with some members of the circle who drafted the “Call from Dresden“, it was suggested at their first meeting that they would ask him to be their chairman and famous figurehead, who due to his popularity would draw more supporters than the group of quiet, specialist art historians who formed the nucleus of the future rebuilding society (Hoch 1999). This calculation worked out, and today for a majority of Dresdeners and Germans in general, the project of the rebuilding of the church is equal with the name of the trumpet player. In February 2002 he was hailed by the tabloid BILD as the "most important Dresdener“. However, it is just this symbolic influence of the chairman, Ludwig Guttler, which also brings him much distrust and scepticism about his real interests: is he really just selflessly working for the good of the Society, or is his main interest the enhancement of his own reputation that the Frauenkirche brings him? Is he trumpeting for the benefit of the church, or playing his own trumpet? The chief correspondent of a Dresden daily in a column encapsulated what many people expressed to me in private talks in similar terms:

...unbearable vanities and jealousies, which rage behind the scenes of the rebuilding project since many years. Everybody is looking for a place in the sun, wants to bathe in publicity. At their front is Guttler (the society’s chairman), who wants to stage every donation of money, no matter how small, with himself in the centre. As if a Ludwig-Güttler-Memorial-Hall is being erected. Of course this permanent free PR has no negative effects on the selling of the star-trumpetist’s CDs... The building site of the Frauenkirche should be no vanity fair. He who makes it one, jeopardises the credibility of the rebuilding project... (DNN 24./25.1. 1998)

Below I will return to the strange position of the rebuilding society, between having no actual power and using this great degree of symbolic power.

Another group which regards the Frauenkirche as their own piece of work is the institution of the Saxon Lutheran Church. Their relation to the Frauenkirche had from the beginning been ambiguous: as described in the previous chapter, the majority in the Saxon Synod had initially opposed the rebuilding on the grounds of
dwindling church membership figures and the more pressing task of the upkeep of the existing church buildings. However, once they had been persuaded, the Frauenkirche is being rebuilt first and foremost as a church: the Saxon bishop is the president of the board of trustees of the Foundation. However, it sometimes seems as if the Saxon Church is startled still at the greatness of the endeavour it undertakes. Many people outside the inner circle of those involved with the Frauenkirche to whom I spoke expressed their inability to understand, and sometimes their contempt for the behaviour of the church, from the bishop as chairman of the Foundation down to the newly appointed pastor of the Frauenkirche: due to their office, they have so much decisionmaking power and influence, so why do they not use it? As one person expressed it to me "Why, they could just refuse to consecrate the church in the end, it's all solely in their power: so why do they act as puppets of the Dresden Bank?" (AW 3). Others saw the reasons for the church representatives' reluctance to be at the forefront of decisionmaking in their "socialisation in the East", as an ingrained fear of authorities and a grovelling willingness to obey. I will return to these assumptions below; here it suffices to note that their position in the Frauenkirche rebuilding field is not less ambiguous than that of the heads of the rebuilding society.

The City of Dresden and the Freestate of Saxony, the other two trustees, simply bathe in the fame and glory that the Frauenkirche brings to Dresden and Saxony in general: the building site of the Frauenkirche has fast become Dresden's greatest tourist attraction and also draws business and investors into the Saxon capital. Otherwise, they stand back and generally get little involved in debates about the rebuilding progress.

The Dresdner Bank, finally, de facto manages the rebuilding project, by having high officials in key positions of the Foundation: both the chairman of the board of directors and the financial manager of the Foundation's affairs are from the Dresdner Bank. While it portrays its commitment as a prime example of philanthropic spirit in the German business sector, it generally is regarded as having quickly grasped the opportunity to link the prestigious building project with its name, in order to earn some of the Frauenkirche's glory for itself. One former financial manager of the foundation, who left his position in disagreement with the board of directors, in an interview to me even accused the involvement of the Dresdner Bank as a kind of large scale money laundering, since the Dresdner Bank never paid back the large sums from Jewish bank accounts it assimilated
during the Nazi time, and instead choses the prestigious Frauenkirche project to spend the money on, at the same time benefiting from enormous tax reliefs (WH 3). Besides such accusations, the Dresdner Bank’s involvement is generally regarded with great scepticism in Dresden, relating to the fact that they are seen as embodiments of Western capitalism that has annexed the Dresdeners’ own hopes and symbols. One member of the rebuilding society expressed to me her disappointment about the general direction that the rebuilding project, for which she once "would have died for", had taken: "I think when they consecrate the church they should have not a cross at the top, but a flag with the logo of the Dresden Bank" (ML3).

Finally, there are the numerous supporting associations outside Dresden, who mostly have former links with Dresden. Those in Western Germany often had previously emigrated from the GDR; the initiator of the American Friends of Dresden had emigrated as a child from Nazi Germany; and some of the members of the British Dresden Trust are the descendants of former bombing pilots in the war. A member of such an association, now living in Frankfurt, who had left Dresden as a student in 1958, describes in an article the high number of Dresdeners who during the GDR time emigrated to Western Germany as a great “diaspora of Dresdeners world-wide”: “I could list many great names... The “Call from Dresden”... has not only reached Dresdeners in the whole world, but the Frauenkirche for them has become a veritable symbol for the re-unification of all Dresdeners” (Dürichen 2002: 8).

All these groups and individuals want to rebuild the church, but for different reasons. Each group to some degree tend to claim the Frauenkirche as their own project. Each competitor for power in the Frauenkirche - and due to the Frauenkirche’s high status in Dresden (and German) public and political life for power in Dresden society in general - needs to seek legitimisation from a wider public, by successfully claiming authority of interpretation of the Frauenkirche’s symbolic meanings. I have already said that this public support is not easily gained. One point where the power contest amongst the groups involved with the Frauenkirche especially crystallises is the interpretation of it as citizen’s church, and thus the debate about "civil society“, to which I would now like to turn.
THE FRAUENKIRCHE PROJECT AS THE ENDEAVOUR OF A “CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE”

In an official leaflet distributed to tourists and potential sponsors, the Rebuilding Society defines itself as “the most successful citizen’s initiative of Germany to date” (Call for Support). Similarly, the chairman of the Foundation, after enthusing about the growing building, writes:

Yet remarkable is also the way it came to the rebuilding itself, which takes up an old tradition of the Frauenkirche. It was and it is the citizens who with their activities, their willingness for patronage, their scientific know-how and their organisational talent carry through the rebuilding project... The rebuilding is one of the greatest citizens’ initiatives of our time - a citizens' initiative which in the spirit of the Frauenkirche unites people of various roots, nationalities and histories. Thus the rebuilding becomes a symbol of citizens’ virtue (Bürgersinn).... (Waller 2000: 9)

Both the Rebuilding Society and the Foundation portray the Frauenkirche as a citizens’ church, deliberately invoking with it the idea of “civil society”, in two of its meanings which are very popular today in Germany: first, civil society as a breeding ground of philanthropy and patronage, and secondly as a new kind of social contract in which “people of various roots, nationalities and histories” are united. The first invokes present political debates in which ”the end of the welfare state“ is stated, and greater civic participation is invoked as a cure, especially in the form of financial donations to social and cultural causes. Thus, a representative of the Dresdner Bank describes this bank in the monthly journal of the Foundation as:

an example of how big commercial enterprises can act as role models in Germany for the enacting of social and political responsibility (...) hardly anybody doubts that the state has strained itself and should be reduced again to the fulfilment of its core tasks. ... and in its place should stand - besides the private initiative of every individual - also the initiative and commitment of businesses, to further and support cultural and social projects. (FK 2/2002: 1)

The second meaning, much promoted in political discourse, concerns a desired consensus on the difficult question of national identity, which should rest not on cultural differences, but on shared civic and constitutional values, encapsulated in the concept of constitutional “patriotism” (cf. Sternberger 1979; Habermas 1996; Sarcinelli 1993). The Frauenkirche as a citizens’ church in which citizens almost world-wide partake “in a wish for the reconciliation between nations“ is thus
Thus, highly. reputation and real paper which uncovered society", civil through the debated society thus as of individual acts hand, the one a sphere where only suspicion that those who paint society is struggle. Secondly, portrayal of there is a general. (Of who oppose civil are and harmony in general. A "us" becomes regarded by them as betrayal and as an act "against" the idea of civil society in general. In other words, the Rebuilding Society and Foundation defend the idea of harmony and common consent as being so paramount, that in their discourse it becomes a dictatorial postulate, used to draw a strict boundary between "us" who are civil society and harmoniously work for the Frauenkirche project, and "them" who oppose our decisions and therefore impair this project, and civil society in general. (Of "them", i.e. those others who do not wholeheartedly support the Rebuilding Society and Foundation, I will write more in the next section.) Thus, there is a deep contradiction between the Society's and Foundation's own portrayal of themselves as a sphere of harmony, and the widespread scepticism in the public that all the Frauenkirche is about is a "vanity fair" and a sphere of power struggle. Secondly, related to this contradiction is the Foundation's claim that civil society is about philanthropy. Again this claim stands in contrast to the public suspicion that those who paint themselves as disinterested philanthropists really only aim at promoting their own reputation: in other words, that instead of being a sphere where all work together towards the common good, the Frauenkirche is a sphere where everybody tries to find the best position for themselves. On the one hand, the idea of civil society is a deeply democratic one, where every individual acts as a part and for the benefit of society, yet on the other hand, an act of philanthropy enhances this individual in the eyes of this society above the rest.

This leads back to the point that the Frauenkirche as a citizens' church and thus as a symbol for civil society in general has become a field where power is debated through the contestation of different meanings of the very concept of civil society itself. In other words, those who most successfully claim to be the "real civil society", and thus the proper owners of the citizens' church, will earn most reputation and real power in a society which values the idea of civil society so highly. Thus, when the chairman of the society came under pressure by a tabloid paper which uncovered practices by which the trumpet player claimed to give
fund-raising concerts for the benefit of the rebuilding, in practice however put most of the collected money into his own pockets, the reaction of the society and the foundation were not outrage, but unquestioning support:

Güttler is without any question the motor of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. It was his untiring energy ... which has made the rebuilding possible in the first place. For 12 years now has his - voluntary - commitment helped more than anything else to make real the vision of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche as citizens' church. In a time when the lack of civic participation is often lamented, one should be glad for somebody like Güttler to exist (DNN 27/28 April 2002),

writes a member of the rebuilding society. It is interesting in this statement how the idea of the citizens' church is seemingly paradoxically interwoven with the admiration for the one strong man who is the motor of the rebuilding: is rebuilding the act of the citizens, or of the one great benefactor? How can this not be exclusive of each other? The official statement of the Rebuilding Society uses even more "strong man" rhetoric in refuting the accusations against Güttler:

the wrong accusations aim at damaging Prof. Güttler as individual and as embodiment of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche (...) Only a strong man like Ludwig Güttler was able to get the project going. With his incredible energy, his reputation and his authority (...), also his managerial talent he has been for 12 years the motor which conquered all difficulties... (statement Rebuilding Society, 10/04/2002)

Here it is taken for granted that harming this one person will inevitably harm the rebuilding project in general, because he is "the embodiment" of the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. As the benefactor of the church he is not a criticisable individual anymore, but the embodiment of a good cause which is above any possible critique. Any critique is forbidden, because it might harm the institution itself. If so, how can the Frauenkirche be proclaimed as a citizens' church, if seemingly it is actually the church of just one citizen?

At the core of the rebuilding society's discourse and their justification for being a true "civil society" is the term Ehrenamt, which literally means "honorary office" and is a term for voluntary, i.e. un-paid-for, work. It is tightly linked to the German debate about "civil society" and by politicians generally acknowledged to be something that needs strengthening (cf. for example Rosenbladt 2001). Thus, the fraud allegations against Güttler were successfully downplayed with reference
to his great Ehrenamt activities, which should be supported, not criticised: a pro-Guettler newspaper article titled "getting a beating for one's Ehrenamt" and argued that "all the non material support and the publicising of the rebuilding idea which his concerts provide" (SZ 20./21. 04. 02) should be applauded, not criticised. Thus, the claiming of the Frauenkirche as a "citizens’ church", i.e. as a site where citizens disinterestedly donate their efforts and labour towards the common good, means the accumulation of much "symbolic power", as Bourdieu calls the reward that society bestows on those who seemingly act "disinterestedly" (Bourdieu 1998).

As I will show in the following section, these two fundamental contradictions within the civil society discourse of Rebuilding Society and Foundation have not gone unnoticed: both the contradiction between portraying civil society as common effort, but also individual philanthropy, and between its claimed character as a sphere of consensus and harmony, and its actuality as a sphere of power contestations, are heavily criticised by many Dresdeners.

A CONTRA-CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE: THE PRO-SILBERMANN GROUP
The Frauenkirche is a symbolic site where power struggles are being played out, in the context of the still ongoing reordering of social space in Dresden, and the east in general, after German reunification. The stake in this contest is "civil society": those who most successfully claim the citizens’ church, and with it "being civil society", for themselves, will be in a powerful position within Dresden’s society in general, because they will be recognised and appreciated both by a broad local public and by political elites of the whole of Germany. Therefore, the claim of the Foundation and the Rebuilding Society to "be" civil society has not gone unchallenged. Their understanding of civil society has frequently been drawn into question: especially by Dresden civil rights activists of the 1980s, who claimed that their battle for civil rights, i.e. for "more" civil society, in the first place had been for greater political participation.

Thus, many Dresdeners take offence at the fact that the concept of a citizens’ church above all is invoked in order to gain more financial support. The fact that philanthropy and patronage are called upon as main pillars of Bürgergesellschaft (civil society, literally: "a society of citizens"), suggests that a Bürger must be somebody with money, a notion that is perceived as very Western in the East. Moreover, this also contributes to a sense that the civil society discourse of 1989, which strove for more active participation by citizens in decision making
processes, and on which the official Frauenkirche discourse of the citizens’ church clearly intends to play, has become a mere farce where Dresdeners willing to partake in the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche are granted no kind of participation outside that dictated by the foundation. Ordinary people who donated money felt devalued, when their money was accepted, but their opinion regarding building particulars was not listened to during the general meeting of the society. Others confessed to me that they were given the impression that their small financial and active contributions were not really needed. The common complaint of these various critics was that the Rebuilding Society and the Foundation made decisions in an autocratic manner, without transparency in the decision making process, and confronted the public and specialists alike with readymade, unchangeable decisions: the general critique thus amounted to the complaint that the rebuilders of the citizens’ church left the citizens outside. Interestingly, many of these people, too, then adopted the 1989 discourse of civil society, accusing the rebuilding Foundation and Society of devaluing or even betraying this tradition by calling themselves “citizens’ initiative”.

All these mutterings which had increased gradually with the progress of the rebuilding suddenly broke out in the open in 2000 with the so-called “organ-debate”, the heated argument about the proposed new organ for the Frauenkirche. In this section, I would like to discuss this debate in some detail, because it provides a good case study of the way in which the power struggle for the symbol Frauenkirche takes place.

In the previous chapters, I have argued that due to Dresden’s dominant image as a cultural city, matters of art and culture are of political importance in political power struggles. Therefore, the rebuilding of the Zwinger in the 1950s, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, the question of whether a new bridge over the Elbe is needed (of which more in the following chapter) have all become symbolic battlegrounds for power. Within this general context, it is perhaps less absurd than it might seem at first, that the question of what kind of organ to build into the new Frauenkirche developed into a major public debate in the time between January 2001 and February 2003. The Dresden title pages during this time were full of “the organ scandal”, and every Saturday edition brought numerous letters to the editor. A journalist remarked in September 2001 that “it is almost embarrassing that in Dresden these days the letters concerning the Frauenkirche organ are only
very marginally fewer than the ones concerning the terrorist attack. But only if one thinks that what is at stake is really just music” (DNN 27/9/2001). The German national newspapers also frequently commented on the progress of the debate, and the FAZ wrote: "Those who want to know anything about the condition of our society should look into the organ journals. All the questions that occupy Germany at present are dealt with there in detail." (FAZ 19/2/2001).

Slightly freakish as the question of the building of a church organ may seem at first, I would nevertheless like to discuss it as an exemplary case study for the various social groups and interests of the social scene in reunified Germany which meet in the Frauenkirche rebuilding project.

So what is the “Dresden organ scandal” about? The original debate seems to evolve around narrow specialist questions which at first sight seem secondary to the issues of identity and civil society. Soon after the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in exact accordance with historical plans had been decided in the early 1990s, leading international musical historians and organ experts pointed out the opportunity to rebuild an organ exactly like its original 1736 predecessor. Not only would that be in accordance with the general rebuilding idea, but it would also present the unique chance to recreate the sound of an organ by the famous Saxon organ builder Silbermann, in exactly the room and acoustics for which it originally had been built. Only very few original Silbermann organs have survived, and they are all set in rooms hailing from a different epoch. To rebuild the 1736 organ, in the 1724 finished church for which it was created, thus would present a major contribution to musicological research, and at the same time draw the most internationally renowned organ players eager to perform on such an instrument. After initially confirming this view and proclaiming in their statutes the aim “to rebuild the original 1736 Silbermann organ”, the rebuilding foundation changed its course in the late 1990s and now planned a more modern organ, which in important aspects would diverge from the Silbermann model. In reply to this u-turn, leading international organists and organ builders wrote a "Call to Dresden", entreatizing the foundation to rebuild the Silbermann organ. A public outcry followed, and a so-called "Pro-Silbermann group" formed, consisting of Dresdener and international organists, organ builders and musical experts as well as of many interested Dresdeners.

The organ debate is interesting, because it was led simultaneously at different levels, each of which concerned one particular identity narrative of
Dresden. And if civil society is the sphere where contestants for power create legitimacy for themselves, they do so by using identity narratives which resonate with a wider public. On the level of content and subject matter, i.e. the argument which organ would be best for which reasons, three interlinked narratives of Dresden were put into play by both sides: firstly, the organ debate was led as a debate about "authenticity", in which elements of the preservation versus rebuilding argument which I described in the previous chapter were linked with the populist argument about history in which "a courageous facing of the future" was played off against "regression into a baroque museum". Secondly, the Frauenkirche as a "Saxon" church was played off against readings of it as an "international symbol". Thirdly, the decision for the organ was mobilised by both sides to symbolise Dresden's identity as a cosmopolitan centre of culture, or of provincial mediocrity, respectively. On the level of the structure of the debate, the question of civil society itself was thematised.

- The Authenticity Debate -
As discussed in the previous chapter, the main critique often levelled against the Frauenkirche rebuilding project is that the claim of "authentic rebuilding" is nothing but the wish to unmake history by letting the church reappear in the midst of Dresden as if there had never been a war of destruction, nor 40 years of GDR time in which the ruin had become an impressive monument against war. This critique comes on the one hand from former civil rights activists, and on the other hand, in more moderate form, from the institute of preservationism, which after generally supporting the rebuilding, warned of too much whitewashing of history, by letting visible signs of the destruction disappear in the perfectionist attempt to let the church appear as it did at its first opening in 1734. The Frauenkirche foundation and rebuilding society generally counter these arguments by appealing to the church's value for Saxon and the world’s cultural heritage.

Surprisingly to many, the Foundation and Society turned their back on this, their own discourse, in deciding not to rebuild the Silbermann organ, but opting for a modern organ, suddenly arguing that "a work of art is not reproducible: the

---

55 the Frauenkirche is already designated for entry in the UNESCO’s list of world heritage sites after its completion
Satirical collage of the Frauenkirche rising out of the German national parliament building Reichstag, with an industrial chimney on top and linked to a modern office building. The title “Planning of the rebuilding of the Dresden Frauenkirche, Version George Bähr Plus” (George Bähr being the original architect of the church) is a pun on the Rebuilding Society’s favorisation of an organ “Silbermann Plus”, which according to the Society will combine all the advantages of the original Silbermann organ with those of a modern concert instrument. (courtesy of Hartmut Schütz, March 2002)
aura of the original organ is lost for ever, and the attempt to reconstruct the organ would be nothing more than an "epigonal reproduction" (organ pamphlet of the Foundation). And further "the organ is not for a museum, but for a church of today and tomorrow" (ibid.). Thus, the Foundation aimed at mobilising widespread scepticism against rebuilding as a perfectionist attempt to create an ideal world, in order to gain public support for its decision.

However, since those people who generally are critical of historic rebuilding are critical of the Frauenkirche project at large, they were only contemptuous of the organ argument, while for those generally in support of the rebuilding project, the argument that the organ needed to be modern seemed strange in view of the general aim to rebuild the church as close to the original as possible. Moreover, musical experts pointed out that with an organ, the originality lies in its building plans, exact chemical consistency of its pipes, and its physics: to rebuild the organ therefore would be much less an ill-fated attempt to reproduce a unique aura, than the attempt to recreate, paintings inside the church, of whose original colours nothing is known whatsoever (Pro-Silbermann résumé 5/2/2002). Thus, the supporters of the reconstruction of the Silbermann organ turned the anti-rebuilding narrative back against the Frauenkirche Foundation, using it much more successfully by describing the Foundation's decision to rebuild the original wood-carved frame of the organ, but not the organ itself, as a "Potemkinian facade" (undated letter by Ch. Wolff to the Foundation) - a scathing accusation often levelled in Dresden against proponents of rebuilding who "only care for the perfect look without asking what meaning and substance is behind". Other critics pleaded with the foundation to wait a little longer with a final decision about the organ: "This would mean that the Frauenkirche remained silent in its first years. Then I would get my way after all: the thorn in the flesh" (e-mail Weigle, 23-24/02/02) - a clear reference to the fact that the writer would have preferred the church altogether as a "thorn in the flesh", i.e. the ruin as a monument in the midst of the otherwise blooming city, rather than a shining, perfectly rebuilt church.

On this level of the organ debate, then, current narratives of how to treat history are mobilised by both sides of the argument, according to where one

---

56 Potemkin having been a famous Russian Prince who built up the facades of whole villages, but only the facades of the houses, with no houses behind. When the Tsar came to visit the area he was pleased of the well-looking, blooming streets he was being led through, without recognising that they were only the facades of houses. "Potemkinian" villages or facades since then have become a byword for shallow surface work with no substance behind.
assumes the greatest chances of public support to lie. Each accuses the other of attempting to whitewash history through perfectionist rebuilding. The Foundation's sudden adaptation of this narratives seemed unconvincing to a majority of the public, however, and the sceptical disagreement deepened when the question was debated of whether the new organ would be a "Saxon organ".

"A Saxon Organ for the Frauenkirche..."
While the debate so far was regarded by many as specialist enough not to feel personally concerned about it, this changed when the question of how the organ would fit into "Saxon tradition" entered the scene.

Most of the organ building firms which had submitted proposals for the organ had withdrawn their offers after the foundation's decision for a modern organ, because "they could not support the concept of the foundation". The only firm which to the last held up its offer to build an organ under the conditions of the Foundation was a firm from the French Alsace. Since the foundation did not want to depart from its standpoint, it had no other choice than to give the commission to this firm. When it did so, however, a storm of protest broke loose.

One Dresden daily interpreted the decision as "a decision against renown experts, against the musical city of Dresden and Saxon organ building, and against the call of the rebuilding society to rebuild the church in accordance with the original."(DNN 17/02/2003) This columnist was supported by another one who wrote that "in view of the world-wide esteem in which Saxon organ building is held, I consider it embarrassing and scandalous, that behind the prospect of one of the best Saxon organs there now will be a French instrument" (DNN 13/2/02). Somebody else called upon the board of directors to resign because of this "incredibly cynical provocation of the inhabitants of Saxony, in view of the many most highly qualified Saxon organ building firms" (Renner, letter to the DNN 23./24.02.02).

This reference to the great Saxon tradition of organ building and Dresden's reputation as a musical city resonated with many Dresdeners even if they previously had taken only random notice of the organ debate. There was a flood of appalled letters to the Dresden papers, all in the same vein as the following one: "If the commission for the building of the organ is not given to a Dresden or Saxon firm, we would consider this a insult of the feelings of many Dresdeners who take part in the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in their hearts and through material
assistance” (e-mail by Krüger 15/02/02). The concern of the organ specialists that Saxon organ building firms would have the most experience and know-how in dealing with organs like the original Frauenkirche one thus brought to the surface a deep-seated feeling amongst a wider, non-specialist public, that the Frauenkirche with all it contains is first and foremost “our church”, a sentiment which previously had been nurtured by the Frauenkirche foundation and society themselves, in order to gain more support. The decision to let the organ be built by an Alsatian instead of a Saxon firm therefore to many seemed to betray symbolically the Saxon musical, cultural and crafts tradition, and literally seemed to mean the selling off of an important part of the Frauenkirche as a piece of Saxon culture.

To the wounded pride of a “Saxon tradition” were added references to the bad employment situation: "It is appalling that a large order of €1.53 millions is given abroad. Is there such an economic boom in Germany, and especially in Saxony, that we can afford this?“ wrote somebody in an open letter to the mayor. The decision was felt by many to be particularly bitter, since the rebuilding society had sought to attract from the public financial contributions towards the "rebuilding of the Silbermann organ". As the author of another letter-to-the-editor expresses it: "how brazen do you have to be in this country, to call for financial contributions from the public and then to neglect the crafts scene of your own country! You should be ashamed of yourselves!" (Flade, 17/02/02).

What needs to be pointed out in this public outcry is that, but for the occasional snipe at France, the indignation was not really German, but Saxon nationalist. The offence to many was not so much that the organ was built by a French instead of a German organ builder, but that it was built by an Alsatian instead of a Saxon one. This is worth noting, not only because it shows that the Frauenkirche for many Dresdeners still is more a Saxon than a German symbol. Moreover, it also shows how the Rebuilding Foundation miscalculated in appealing to public support by drawing on the narrative of the Frauenkirche as “a national symbol of a new Germany which is defined by reconciliation with its neighbours and the symbolic building of bridges”. The organ debate showed that this narrative had remained official rhetoric which politicians occasionally used, but had found little resonance with a broad public in Dresden and Saxony. While the foundation tried to portray the chosen organ builder as a representative of one’s neighbour France with whom gestures of reconciliation were opportune, in the perspective of the Dresden public the organ builder comes not from neighbouring
France, but from the Alsace, i.e. some European region far removed geographically and culturally from Saxony.

Maybe more by accident than on purpose, both the Frauenkirche foundation and its specialist opponents in the Silbermann group had thus hit upon the importance of the Saxon identity narrative to the population. Remarkably, all four Dresden papers - two dailies and two tabloids which all support the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in general, but formerly had been equally divided on the organ question - suddenly turned in unison behind the Pro-Silbermann Group. Even the tabloid BILD, previously the glowing advocate of Güttdler, now changed its direction and lamented that now there would be no organ "according to the ancient Saxon organ builder's tradition" (BILD 16/2/02).

The seeming all-importance of the Saxon narrative for which the organ debate so suddenly had become an expression was further underlined by the fact that it even came on the political agenda. There were not only several sessions of the Dresden city council on the organ question, but a member of the Saxon parliament even founded a citizens' initiative "a Saxon organ for the Frauenkirche" and collected signatures "for the famous and traditional Saxon craft of organ building", and in order to prevent "an interest group from pushing its opinion through against the will of the citizens of Dresden" (Dr. Marlies Volkmer, MdL: SPD, press statement 25/02/2003). The fact that this 'citizens' initiative" was founded - and from an elected politician, i.e. somebody who through her election held legitimate power anyway - again shows the power that the discourse of "citizens' initiatives" as expression of "civil society" carries in Dresden. Before I return to this point below, I'd briefly like to mention another powerful Dresden identity narrative which was brought into play in the organ debate.

- Cultural Cosmopolis or Parochialism -
Already the authors of the "Call to Dresden" who had warned the foundation of a decision against the Silbermann organ, had written: "ours is not a petty experts' argument for details. We call for a (...) decision which will justify Dresden's reputation as a prominent centre of European musical culture." The outrage about a non-Saxon organ blended in with the sensitive topic in Dresden, whether one's cultural regional pride was justified because of the true greatness of Saxon cultural tradition, or whether it was just a sign of hopeless parochialism.
In the organ debate, both sides simultaneously played on the pride of Dresdeners on the one hand, and on their fear to seem parochial and provincially minded on the other. Thus the chairman of the foundation supported his decision for the Alsatian organ builder with a reference to Saxony’s former cosmopolitanism: "Silbermann himself absolved his apprenticeship in the French Alsace and brought fruitful impulses from there back into Saxony“ (BW 2) - therefore, to look beyond one’s own boundaries, instead of boiling in one’s own juices, would be a sign that one was still a worthy part of this cosmopolitan tradition. Yet while his narrative draws on the Frauenkirche as a "matter of worldwide importance“, (as many years ago the art historian Fritz Lößler had called it), the proponents of the Silbermann organ more skilfully embedded the same discourse of the Frauenkirche’s international importance in a narrative of the great Saxon cultural tradition:

[the decision for the Alsatian] shows lacking local-historical consciousness [...]. Instead of an organ which relates to the regional cultural landscape and would be carried out by those who know this scene intimately, one has fallen for an instrument of globalised, and thus meaningless characteristics. Such a new organ which might be found in any mediocre concert hall does Dresden no honour!” (Klaus Eichhorn letter 30/11/2001)

and:

Instead of the European cultural monument Frauenkirche with its Silbermann-organ, we will get a commercially oriented concept of provincial mediocrity. Instead of the sound cosmos of a Silbermann organ with its unique artistic identity, we will get a modern concert organ which any ambitious provincial town could afford. (Harald Vogel letter 15/12/2001)

In the Pro-Silbermann discourse, it is the Silbermann organ which just because of its embeddedness in the Saxon cultural landscape and unique identity would advertise the Frauenkirche as a European cultural monument, while the modern organ, just because it would have no localised "identity" and could be found anywhere, would support those who see in Dresden a provincial town of mediocre cultural status.

The fact that Dresden’s reputation as a cultural or parochial city was thematised to some length in the organ debate, again shows the importance of these narratives for models of "Dresden identity", to which many Dresdeners would feel a sense of belonging, so that they would support those who tell the
narratives best. And telling the narrative of Dresden’s cultural greatness best entailed locating the greatness firmly in Dresden locally, as the supporters of the Silbermann organ did, rather than just waving to the Frauenkirche as a matter of "world importance", but with no local relevance.

The most powerful narrative which was claimed by both sides in the organ debate was that of civil society itself. It concerned not the kind of organ that would be best, but the way in which the debate was led by the foundation. Thus, it touched upon the actual structure of the decisionmaking field of the Frauenkirche. In the following, I will focus upon various aspects of the Pro-Silbermann Group’s criticism of the Foundation, regarding the Foundation’s acting as a self-proclaimed “civil society” group.

- Civil Society: The Issues of Transparency and Dialogue -

The foremost critique levelled against the Foundation’s proceedings in the organ question was that it lacked transparency in its decisionmaking process, that it refused publicness and that it showed little readiness to communicate with a wider public: three points which often are regarded as basic principles of a working "civil society". Repeated offers and requests made by the Pro-Silbermann group to discuss the organ argument publicly in open panel discussions were declined or simply left unanswered by the foundation. Musical specialists who wrote entreating letters to the foundation complained that their letters remained unanswered. One member of the Trust’s organ committee, himself an organist, left the committee under protest because "he was refused access to important documents, and the raising of certain discussion topics was prohibited by the chairman of the committee" (letter Wolff to Walter, undated). When representatives of the Saxon protestant church prohibited a public discussion forum about the organ in the Kreuzkirche, this was felt by many to be the more disappointing, since the same church had in 1989 been the foremost church to provide a roof for "democratic dialogue".

This behaviour of the Foundation probably has lost the Frauenkirche project more friends than anything else. It was felt that they betrayed their claim to represent a prime example of civil society in the new Germany: how could the concerns of the proclaimed "citizens' church" be dealt with by neglecting and misinforming the citizens? As a columnist put it: "he who needs to decide on
Der Einzige im ganzen Land
mit Kompetenz und Sachverstand.
Bescheiden steuert er die Dinge -
für grad mal 30 Silberlinge.

Caricature of the Rebuilding Society’s chairman Ludwig Gütter and his autocratic decisionmaking concerning the organ of the Frauenkirche. The title says: “Original Güttermann Organ” - a pun on the hitherto proclaimed aim of the Rebuilding Society to rebuild the “original Silbermann organ”. The verse reads: “Nobody else can equal him/ in competence and expertise./ He modestly directs the course-
for just thirty pieces of silver.”

(by Friedemann Weber)
matters of such public interest must not avoid the public, and needs to be open to criticism and argument." (DNN 23-24/2/02). Similarly, the Pro-Silbermann group wrote in a public letter: "the lack of transparency and the ignoring of both public opinion and the arguments of the international public of specialists is not worthy of the spirit of the rebuilding project." (resume 5/2/2002)

What all this reminded the wider public of, and was supposed to remind them of, was the discourse of the civic rights movement in 1989, when it was exactly the same points: transparency, the honouring of public opinion, and dialogue between decisionmakers and a wider public, which had been postulated. The Pro-Silbermann Group explicitly drew on the tradition of 1989 by calling the representatives of the foundation to a "round table discussion". The invitation letter to the foundation starts: "the tradition of a round table as a means of problem solution between contrary opinions - well known from the time of 1989/90 - has been a very positive experience especially in Dresden." (e-mail Tannenberg, 7. February 2003). Explicitly the tradition of 1989 is first firmly locally embedded and described as a typical Dresden tradition, and then claimed by the Silbermann group as the heirs of this tradition. Interestingly, while the Foundation claims a version of "civil society" for itself which relies on the - Western - understanding of the concept as philanthropy, the Pro-Silbermann group claims a version of civil society as it had been propagated in the East in 1989. Both refer in their respective discourse to the "citizens' church" - the Silbermann group in its continuous references to "the spirit of the rebuilding project" calling on the Foundation to be true to its own promises - but they both mean something different by it.

- Who Is Responsible? -

The foundation's notorious lack of transparency led to the question being asked, whose interests were really being served in the decision for the modern, Alsatian organ. The "expert advisory committee" set up by the foundation consisted, apart from the trumpet playing chairman, of no qualified specialists: the three organists who had been part of it initially, one after the other had left the committee under protest. Members of the Pro-Silbermann group whom I questioned about their views concerning the decision, all said that they didn't really know what had led to the decision: the trumpet playing chairman might have wanted the modern organ to be more compatible with his modern trumpet. But apart from him, nobody in
the Foundation came forward with a convincing motive as to why they wanted an organ which did not agree with any renowned organists, organ builders and not least the public. The "wider public" consisted in Dresden of many people who all had donated small sums to the rebuilding cause and thus felt they had a right to be informed of decisionmaking processes. (DNN, 23-24/2/02; DNN 24-25/11/01)

The debate even entered party politics in the city council. The conservative (CDU) majority supported the decision of the Foundation, since both the Dresden mayor and the Saxon prime minister, both CDU members, were also members of the Frauenkirche Foundation’s board of trustees. The green party, by contrast, whose prime concerns otherwise are not matters of music and culture, sharply accused the Foundation of lacking democratic behaviour. It used the issue to attack the chairman of the Rebuilding Society, another member of the conservative party, about his former Stasi membership: implicitly painting themselves as the inheritors of the 1989 tradition of the civil rights movement, and the conservative party as a conglomeration of third rate Western party functionaries and former GDR Party cadres: thus affecting to feel no surprise at the undemocratic proceedings of the CDU-infused Rebuilding Foundation and Society (letter of the Greens to the SZ 31/1/2002).

- Inheritors of the GDR -

Altogether, the debate about civil society widened into a debate about democracy and the inheritance of GDR traditions. The West German decisionmakers, foremost amongst them the representatives of the Dresdner Bank in the Rebuilding Foundation, were seen by many as the embodiments of Western capitalism. The Eastern core members of the Rebuilding Society held on to their dream of the unifying force of culture. And - mostly outside the Rebuilding Society, in such groups as the Silbermann group or the green party in the city council - the former civil rights movement argued for a firmer implantation of the values of 1989 into contemporary Dresden society.

As the organ debate showed, the time of the GDR after all lay back just over ten years; all the former protagonists of the particular groups were still active, and the Frauenkirche, due to its public exposure, was a focal point where they all met and debated. Accusations about "GDR mentality" were therefore never far away. As one of the Silbermann group members who had been present at the final round
table discussion recounted the event for me:

Walter’s (i.e. the Foundation’s chairman, from the Dresdner Bank) body language oozed pure victor’s mentality. But Burger (i.e. the building director of the Foundation, a former GDR church official): cowering. Glaser (i.e. the Foundation’s preservationist advisor, from the GDR cultural circles): very insecure. And Walter, he was the only one who relaxedly lay back, smoked his cigar... well, he once was one of the most important business bosses of Germany. Crazy! (TF 2)

This perspective on the Foundation: a mixture of arrogant Western capitalism and Eastern inferiority and fearful reticence, was one which I often got to hear from members of the Pro-Silbermann Group. The Foundation was accused of behaving as "in the darkest of GDR times" (internet forum 28/1/2002). The majority of the Rebuilding Society’s members were derided for their silent support of these procedures. This view on the society was expressed not only by GDR civil rights activists, but was taken up by everybody critical of the Foundation’s and Rebuilding Society’s procedures. Thus, the chairman of the American Friends of Dresden accused the Foundation to behave "like the Politibüro" (Blobel, 15/03/2002), and the chairman of the Munich support society wrote an open letter to all members of the Rebuilding Society, warning them not to keep silent at their chair’s behaviour:

After 1945, our generation has accused our parents and grandparents that they haven’t informed themselves - maybe because it was the easy way. Yet in the third reich it was dangerous to know too much, and life threatening to act according to one’s conscience. We are all grateful that we live in a democracy. But lived democracy means daily civil courage. (Winkler 28/01/2002)

And a disappointed member of the Pro Silbermann Group in a talk to me summed up his view of the Foundations’ decisionmaking:

This is no democracy, it’s a dictatorship which pretends to be democracy. (...) Look, in America there are lots of people who believe that that war makes sense. And in the Frauenkirche, people are told successfully that all is about wonderful civic participation... (TF 4)

This disappointed opinion of Western democracy which one saw embodied in the groups responsible for the Frauenkirche rebuilding was enhanced by the
Foundation's demonstration of complete unanimity: after the organ experts had left the "expert committee", the leftover committee announced that it had reached the decision for the modern organ "with no votes against the decision", while the Rebuilding Society announced to the press that after the above mentioned accusations against their chairman, "99% of the members of the society" had declared their support for their chairman. If this is Western democracy, the members of the Silbermann group asked, then where is the difference to the one party system of the GDR?

- The Question of Philanthropy Again -
When the decision for the modern organ was announced, a private cultural foundation which had initially agreed to pay for the organ withdrew the money, arguing that it had only ever assented to pay for the Silbermann organ. Likewise the American chairman of the Friends of Dresden, who had donated his Nobel prize to the Frauenkirche, and subsequently had been elected a honorary member of the board of trustees, left the board in protest and threatened to hold back any further financial assistance. The Frauenkirche Foundation felt offended and expressed their dismay in newspaper articles:

Here we have a sponsor who wants to ignore the hard work of the advisory committee and the decisionmakers. That raises the question, who on earth the sponsor Peter Dussmann thinks he is... (Freie Presse 11/04/02)

Dussmann and Blobel now withdraw their money. This can not be called democratic spirit or true philanthropy anymore. It's what you usually call blackmail. (FAZ 20/02/02)

While this obviously is not right - "philanthropy" is the bestowing of money upon a public good cause which one feels worthwhile, and nobody can dictate to the philanthropist which cause this should be - it highlights the Frauenkirche Foundation's claim to be the one and only benefactor and philanthropist for the public good cause called "rebuilding of the Frauenkirche". From this standpoint, it assumes all decisionmaking authority, and denies anybody else the right to partake in the decisionmaking process.
The Outcome of the Decision

After the decision for the modern organ had been finalised, it left everybody who had been outside the decisionmaking circles puzzled in retrospect. Basically, the Foundation, supported by the Rebuilding Society, had pushed through their decision, without giving any believable reason for it (beyond the "irreproducibility of the work of art", which was led ad absurdum by being expressed by the members of an association only existing with the aim to reproduce the piece of art "Frauenkirche") - and had done so against the vote of international experts, against public opinion in Dresden, and against the wishes of a majority of the sponsors. The only legitimisation which they claimed was that in rebuilding the Frauenkirche they "made a gift to the world". This legitimisation, however, lends enormous symbolic power to its proponents: even the many critical and sceptical people I spoke to, would often, after railing at the Foundation and the Society in the strongest terms, say: "well, of course you have to admit that the chairman of the Foundation has done great good to the cause of the Frauenkirche..."

At the same time, however, the organ debate also delineated a process of the rebuilding project's high loss in public opinion and status in Dresden. The final decision of the Foundation to rebuild the modernised organ engendered wide public disapproval because the Foundation relied on the "wrong" narratives to support its decision, i.e. on the ones resonating not favourably enough with the experiences and self-understanding of the majority of Dresdeners. Yet the big scandal by many was felt to consist not so much in the kind of organ that is now being built, but in the exclusion of the public. The symbol of the Frauenkirche had started out as a citizens initiative, there to claim back lost Saxon cultural heritage. As such, it had enjoyed very widespread success. After the organ debate, those responsible for the rebuilding appeared as a group who had lost credibility in their cultural aims and sold off "Saxon heritage" to different cultural traditions abroad. Moreover, they had lost their credibility as a "citizens' initiative", with a grounding in great civic support. Instead, they now came to be seen as representatives of the new reigning powers, whether that might mean "Western capitalism" as embodied by the Dresdner Bank, or the CDU-led political elites, against whom now new "citizens' initiatives", who in their turn claimed legitimisation from public opinion, stood up.
VERSIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Since the discourse of the “citizens’ church” Frauenkirche as a symbol for “civil society” is so omnipresent amongst those concerned with the rebuilding project, it seems necessary to engage with it also on an analytical level. As described earlier, the civil society concept is used by both the Frauenkirche foundation and society with a highly normative, positive connotation, so that the rebuilding project itself comes to be portrayed as the symbol for something that will be the salvation of all that is foul in present German society. This claim of the foundation and the society to be the sole legitimate representative of civil society is challenged by groups such as the Silbermann group, who likewise claim to be representatives of “real civil society”. Rather than accepting the foundations’ claim to be the prototypical proponent of a wonderful thing, I would like to explore the reasons why this concept holds so much attraction to different groups of people, what exactly they respectively mean by it, and finally ask whether they really might form a kind of civil society in Dresden.

To start with, it is necessary to disentangle the several levels of meaning in which the concept plays a role regarding the Frauenkirche rebuilding. On the one hand, the concept is used prolifically by the groups I am studying in their own discourses. On the other hand, I would like to explore how far an analytical use of the term might be applicable to make sense of what is going on with the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche.

The claim of the Foundation to represent civil society rests on the apparently obvious fact that the project is not an undertaking of the government, but of voluntary associations (the rebuilding society) and of free players on the financial market (the Dresden Bank), together with specialists who contribute their technical know-how voluntarily and to some extent without taking money in return (e.g. members of the preservationist office). In this respect, the field of individuals and social groups around the Frauenkirche seems to fulfil the basic requirements of civil society, to be the sphere between the family and the state, where free individuals interact voluntarily (cf. Gellner 1994). As the then Saxon Prime Minister and member of the board of trustees, Kurt Biedenkopf, expressed it in a talk at the annual meeting of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society, where he painted the Frauenkirche project as a prime example of civil society:
civil society always emerges when citizens feel that the state should not be omnipresent. It emerges where a society’s valuation of freedom leads citizens to freely associate with each other and to organise important things for themselves. (Biedenkopf 2002: 45)

This self-understanding of Foundation and Society as representatives of this ideal version of civil society is countered by the Pro-Silbermann group which likewise refers to a concept of civil society to legitimate its right of participation. Their use of the term explicitly refers to the 1989 civil rights movement tradition, with round table discussions, transparent decision making processes etc. Thus, while in the understanding of the Foundation “civic participation” means first and foremost the donation of money, i.e. an act of philanthropy, for the Pro-Silbermann group it means the taking part in decision-making processes. Moreover, while the first understanding assumes that civic participation should be “in support” of something that decisionmakers decree, support financially and ideally, the second understanding involves the right and duty of every citizen to consider decisions critically and question them. “When you get the impression that they at those levels are so very narrow-minded in their thinking, as a citizen you are called upon to interfere in order to prevent worse...” (RD 4), a member of the Silbermann Group said to me, and as another one expressed it to me: “decisionmakers always need to realise that the citizens are wakeful” (ER 4). Explicitly, this understanding is linked to the tradition of 1989, and locally embedded in Dresden and Saxony:

Very important is the political signal. That you say: we are here, you can’t carry on like this, there is resistance... I have been socialised, so to speak, in 1989, in Dresden, in Saxony with its great tradition of civil courage... it’s almost a question of honour, that you keep up the flag... (TF 4)

This different understanding - civil society as questioning and controlling decisionmakers rather than supporting them - was by some members of the Silbermann group regarded as a difference between East and West Germany:

In the West, they use that term “civic participation” when they mean the private willingness to spend money. But I think that it also has much to do with civil courage. This is a wholly different level of meaning - but I think that’s what’s important here in the East... (AW 6)

Interestingly, in all these quotes those responsible for the Frauenkirche project were equated with “decisionmakers” in general, and parallels were drawn
between their behaviour and that of "the state" in other contested building arguments (of which more in the next chapter). Thus, in the view of the Pro-Silbermann group, the Frauenkirche officials' claim to be civil society and meaning to be independent from the state is not accepted: the Silbermann group members claim "civil society" for themselves, while they attribute state-functions to the Frauenkirche officials.

These different attitudes led to much mutual irritation. A member of the Silbermann group expressed it like this: "They always cry: citizens, you should participate, become active in this cause! But instead of saying 'thank you for your participation' they brand our activities as meddling and disturbance." (ER 4) The Frauenkirche Foundation’s director for building questions, by contrast, said to me that he couldn’t understand "why there always have to be citizens' initiatives against something", the Frauenkirche foundation and rebuilding society both professing to be a citizen’s initiative for something. In this discourse, citizen initiatives "for" something are good, while those "against" something are bad.

The differentiation between citizens' initiatives for something and those against something is widespread in Dresden, as I will further discuss in the next chapter. This differentiation, however, for the members of the Rebuilding Society seems to be ingrained in the very name "Society in support of the Rebuilding of the Frauenkirche": it seems to imply that anybody who also supports this project should be a member of the Society, and that all that can be done in support of the rebuilding is done by the Society. If then a group emerges which also claims an interest in a part of the rebuilding project, as the Silbermann group did, this group is almost by definition suspicious in the eyes of the official Rebuilding Society: if we are in support of the Frauenkirche, how can somebody else be of contrary opinion to us, but still claim to support the rebuilding project? In other words, the Society claims a monopoly over the Frauenkirche; anybody who also takes an active interest in the Frauenkirche, but not from the premises of the Rebuilding Society, must do so almost illegally: we are civil society. Who is outside us, must be against us, and therefore against civil society.

This respective claim to be the only legitimate civil society was illustrated by an instance in the organ debate, where the chairman of the Rebuilding Society in an interview with a tabloid paper described the proponents of the Silbermann group as an "Organ mafia". One member of the pro-Silbermann group countered by denouncing the way in which the trust proceeded as "the methods of the
politbüro". Interestingly, both attributes can be understood in the light of the underlying civil society debate: a mafia undermines the legitimate power. The use of this attribute against the Society's critics made clear that the Rebuilding Society sees itself as the legitimate power. The politbüro, however, in the eyes of GDR oppositionals likewise claimed a power to which it was not democratically legitimated. The Silbermann group's use of this attribute therefore made clear that on their part, they did not accept the Rebuilding Society's claim to legitimacy, and contested it from their own standpoint as the legitimate heirs of the GDR's civil rights movement. It is also worth noting that the frame of reference in the first case is Western society (where legitimate power can be undermined by a mafia, which has no existence in Eastern authoritarian states) - while the frame of reference in the second case is the discourse of the Eastern opposition movements.

All this shows that "civil society" as far as it regards the Frauenkirche rebuilding project is no innocent sphere encompassing anything between state and family, but is felt to be a sphere of power, the inhabiting of which is contested: it is very desirable, but it is not granted to everybody.

CONCLUSION: COMPETING "CIVIL SOCIETIES" IN REUNIFIED GERMANY
Before I turn to the competition between various "civil societies" in Dresden, it needs pointing out that the claim of the Foundation to represent civil society because the Frauenkirche is a "citizens' church" rather than a project of the state needs to be taken cautiously: after all, the three trustees of the Foundation are the Saxon Lutheran Church, the City of Dresden and the Freestate of Saxony. While the church classically is often regarded as a prime example of a large civil society institution, and it is a matter for debate whether the local city council is rather a part of the state or of civil society (in Germany at least the majority of theorists seems to regard it as a part of "the state" - I will discuss this question with regard to the Dresden situation in the following chapter), the Freestate of Germany at least clearly is a level of state government rather than of civil society. Thus, even if the Frauenkirche field might be counted as a part of civil society, between family and the state, its independence from the state is not as complete as it is proclaimed in the Foundation's discourse.

However, this is only where the intricacies of civil society, and the
Frauenkirche as its Dresden symbol, start. As discussed above, there are several contestants in Dresden who claim to represent “true” civil society: in the Frauenkirche, they are represented in the Rebuilding Foundation, the Rebuilding Society and the Silbermann Group respectively. Many of the Foundation’s members have strong links to the Dresden Bank, while others hold key political positions: they are thus members of the West German economic elite, or else of the West German political elite (mostly connected to the CDU). The leading members of the Rebuilding Society, by contrast, all derive from the GDR’s bürgerlich cultural elites. The members of the Silbermann group, finally, have often been active in the East German civil rights movement, and strongly draw on its discourse. The Frauenkirche is thus a point of focus where the contestants for civil society status, i.e. for a powerful position within post-unification Dresden society meet. Helpful in this context are theories of civil society as no innocent, independent sphere, but rather as a staging post for power claims. As Norberto Bobbio, for example, argues:

Civil society is the place where, especially in periods of institutional crisis, de facto powers are formed that aim at obtaining their own legitimacy even at the expense of legitimate power: where, in other words, the processes of delegitimisation and re legitimisation take place. (Bobbio 1989: 26)

In chapter 2, I have argued that during the time of the GDR, the bürgerlich cultural elites could be thought of as such a civil society group, who obtained their own legitimacy in the eyes of a wider public, by delegitimising the communist state. However, the process of reunification, a true period of “institutional crisis”, initiated a reordering of society at a large scale. Not only the communist party cadres lost their power; also the powerful “civil society” groups oppositional to the GDR found it hard to hold on to their former influential status in society. In the present chapter, I have attempted a case study of how these power contests between various social groups take place in the Dresden of post-unification. In order to sum up the most important points from this exploration, I would like to briefly reprise the arguments of the two previous chapters.

I have shown how in Dresden in different political contexts buildings were seen by particular social groups as symbolic tokens for the possession of “space”: whoever could successfully claim possession of or responsibility for a particular building, symbolically had gained ground in the power contest with the state.
each case, these groups can be thought of as parts of Dresden’s “civil society”:

The preservationist cultural elites of the GDR time used buildings to set up an alternative sphere of power circumventing the official GDR power hierarchies. With their commonly held hope for German reunification and the total disregard which they showed the GDR state, it could be argued that they always regarded themselves as the cultural civil society of pan-Germany, i.e. of a state in which before the war they had played an important role as cultural elites, legitimating the state and distributing the state’s cultural ideology to a wider public, through their high positions in key cultural institutions (museum directors, school directors, etc.: administering the state’s “cultural heritage” and thus holding in their hands the key to an important area of the state’s legitimisation). During the GDR time, it was the preservationist circles who arguably were the only part of this pre-war German civil society which the new state did not wholly manage to “colonise”. While for example the educational sector was completely subordinated to the new GDR state, it was to some extent the arts sector, and especially the institution of preservationism which had proved most resistant to being engulfed by the GDR state. At the same time, as I have argued in chapter 2, this cultural/preservationist field’s agenda was not the overturning of the GDR state in order to take somehow control oneself, but was the preserving of an alternative cultural sphere of power, on the one hand mobilising the wider public against the GDR state, on the other hand avoiding too much contact with the GDR state altogether, hoping for the German unification instead. In other words, they regarded themselves not as a political threat to the GDR state, waiting to assume political power themselves, but rather as “cultural civil society”, delegitimising one state, the GDR, while legitimating another one instead, namely unified pan-Germany: they continued to regard themselves as leading members of a pan-German civil society. It is therefore significant that the authors of the above discussed “Call from Dresden” addressed their call not to the still existing GDR government, but to high representatives of the still nominally foreign state of Western Germany.

The GDR civil rights movements which I have described in chapter 3, which emerged in the 1980s and played such a large role in 1989, likewise used buildings in order to stake a claim over a symbolic territory of the GDR state, namely the physical living space of its citizens. Learning from the civil rights movement of neighbouring Poland, they used the discourse of “civil society” to describe themselves (cf. Wesolowski 1995). In their understanding of the term, civil society
was a sphere of freedom staged against an unfree state. At the same time however, they aimed at reforming this state into a democracy, so that they could play their role as members of “civil society”, as they understood the term, openly and legitimately. Like the cultural elites discussed before, their agenda also was not the seizing of political power for themselves (this became clear at the latest after 1989, when few of the civil rights groups were prepared to enter party politics and stand at elections), but rather the reformation of the power structures in the GDR state, so that decisionmaking processes would encompass participation by grassroots groups and “normal citizens”. Even though they were not influential elites - their whole point was to be ordinary representatives of ordinary people, i.e. to be the public rather than an elite institution to influence the public - they nevertheless held a great power to legitimate or delegitimise the GDR state, as the events of 1989 showed. However, the crucial difference to the cultural civil society milieu was that they clearly regarded themselves as the civil society (even in their slightly different meaning of the term) of the GDR state, rather than of pan-Germany as the cultural elites did. Typically, the Dresden “Group of Twenty” therefore addressed themselves to the representatives of the GDR government, in contrast to the authors’ of the “Call from Dresden” address to the West German government.

After the German reunification presented a new situation, these groups of people brought their self-understandings of civil society with them into the new state. However, the social and political system of unified Germany is that of former Western Germany, which only has been extended to cover the territory of former Eastern Germany as well. This means, that both the actual political structures - who the elites are, which ground civil society covers, who “is” civil society - and meanings attached to these social positions, are to a large degree fixed. The former GDR groups which regarded themselves as civil society now are faced with the difficulty of finding a place for themselves in this system.

The Frauenkirche project, where Eastern and Western contestants for civil society meet, provides a good example for the ensuing power struggle. The former civil rights groups, which in Dresden largely argued against the rebuilding project altogether, realised with disappointment that after the German reunification they were hardly listened to anymore, either by the new state representatives, or by a wider public: the Frauenkirche project commenced against their warnings, as I have shown in the previous chapter. In general, however, the
civil rights groups with their demands for more grassroots participation to some extent find a space within the field of social protest movements, left wing parties and citizens’ initiatives which forms a firm part also of the West German and now unified German social-political scene. They continue claiming access to the political sphere of the state, aiming at the reform of the democratic structures of the new state now, as I will further discuss in the following chapter.

More complicated is the predicament of the group which I have described as cultural elites and bürgerlich preservationists. For while their ideological support of the new state and their eagerness to bestow legitimacy on it are gladly accepted by the representatives of this new state, their role as powerful civil society is less clear. Their legitimating support might be accepted, yet it is not clear how powerful their role would be if they wanted to withhold this legitimating support. The new German state already has a (Western) sphere of civil society in Bobbio’s sense which creates legitimacy for the unified German state. This situation is well illustrated by the Frauenkirche case, where the old Dresden cultural elites, assembled in the Rebuilding Society, largely act as the supporters of the West German political and economic elites of the Frauenkirche Foundation, with hardly a voice of their own. Those members of the cultural elites who openly challenge this power constellation - for example those assembled in the Silbermann group - seriously impair the otherwise smooth proceedings of the Frauenkirche Foundation (for example by undermining the Foundation’s high standing in the eyes of the public), but so far have not the power to uproot them altogether.

These power relations are underlined by the dominant Frauenkirche discourse as a “citizens’ church”, and as a symbol for harmony and reconciliation, i.e. the antitheses of “power struggle”. The Western contestants for the powerful status of “civil society” are eager to proclaim a discourse of civil society as a liberal and interest-free zone, to which only those can have access which support this model of civil society. At the same time, this model is portrayed as the great saviour from all the ills of society, including the GDR’s undemocratic and authoritarian legacies. This model of civil society is supported by one part of the GDR cultural elites group desirous for civil society status in unified Germany - in the Frauenkirche case, namely those in the Rebuilding Society - which hopes to

---

57 Compare also academic theoretical debates on the need “for more civil society”, as they are currently discussed amongst German sociologists: many of the views exposed there correspond closely to those of the Western elites in the Frauenkirche field (see Roth 2000; Gohl 2001; Dahrendorf 2002).
find access to the Western dominated sphere of civil society in this way. Another part of the GDR cultural preservationist elites, however - in the Frauenkirche case, those in the Pro-Silbermann group - makes use of the former civil rights movement discourses of civil society, because this discourse presents a narrative of civil society as a field of power struggle. In contrast to the first group, they do not ask to be admitted into the western civil society, but challenge it by claiming civil society status for themselves, with the aim of taking possession of this influential sphere themselves.

All of these groups claim the Frauenkirche as a "citizens' church", and thus each for their own version of civil society, because all have recognised the Frauenkirche as an important symbol - influential both with governmental levels and a wider public - whose interpretative control means to have gained an important piece of "civil society". This chapter thus was concerned not so much with power competitions between civil society and the state, but between various contestants for the sphere of civil society itself. In the next chapter, I will continue this exploration by discussing how each of these groups relates to the representatives of "the state".
CHAPTER 5

THE WALDSCHLÖSCHEN BRIDGE: WHO CARES BEST FOR DRESDEN

With the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, the previous two chapters focused on a "cultural" building project, whose great public interest lies especially in the fact of its historical rebuilding, and how this might reflect on issues of historical tradition and identity. By contrast, the question whether a new bridge should be built across the river Elbe seems to be an issue of the "modern" Dresden, of growing traffic demand and closing a gap in Dresden's road network. What relates this bridge project to the apparently wholly different case of the Frauenkirche are not only the fervent public debates it, too, elicits, but also the fact that the same Dresden preservationist circles are actively engaged in both projects - campaigning against the bridge, while they worked for the Frauenkirche in one way or the other. In this chapter, I will discuss the strong public response both for and against the building of the Waldschlösschen bridge, as it is called, and in doing so continue the exploration of the social actors who compete for power in the post-unification preservationist scene in Dresden.

While in the previous chapter on the Frauenkirche I have discussed the ways in which various citizens' initiatives compete for "civil society" status, here the seemingly obvious focus would be on the relations between "civil society" and "the state". After all, the bridge project is organised and financed by the city council, with support from the Saxon Freestate and the EU - i.e. all "state" organisations - whereas the protesters against the bridge derive from "civil society" circles, mainly originating from the former civil rights associations and the cultural elites. However, as I will argue in this chapter, the power relations in the bridge debate are more complex than an easy division between state and civil society would suggest. Not only is the question whether a city council belongs to the state or to civil society itself a contentious issue, but the bridge debate divides both the city council and "civil society" also internally. In particular, strong economic organisations, trade associations and the automobile association ADAC - all of which one would define as belonging into civil society - are lobbying for the building of the bridge.

Just as in the Frauenkirche case, the real opponents in the bridge debate
therefore are within civil society. Yet in contrast to the Frauenkirche, where “the state” plays no overtly decisionmaking role, the bridge case illustrates how contestations between various civil society groups can be seen as power competitions between these groups for more influence with the government. In exploring this situation, I will focus on the Dresden preservationist circles’ power contests with the new economic and political elites, and thus continue to explore an issue which I have introduced in the previous chapter. As I will argue, the anti-bridge campaigns have some features of a local urban movement: first, because they express protest against existing economic and political structures, and secondly, because they explicitly position themselves in the tradition of the 1980s civil rights movement. Therefore, I will discuss them as a case study for the increasing expressions of discontent amongst the East German population 15 years after reunification, and trace the growing disappointment in Dresden, but also in Eastern Germany in generally, with the outcomes of reunification and the democratic system.

To begin with, I will briefly outline the case itself, the controversial plans to build the new bridge and the debates accompanying the planning process, culminating in a local referendum in February 2005. I will then explore both sides of the argument in more detail, and suggest where the proponents of each side are situated in Dresden’s overall social structure. Thirdly, I will focus on the citizens initiatives’ core accusation against the city council: namely, that the councillors act only out of greed, bow to investors and happily sell off Dresden’s greatest assets. What the council representatives don’t show according to this accusation, is any sign of “caring” for Dresden. Through the discourse of caring, the present building quarrels are linked to those of the GDR time, when preservationism meant that

---

58 It might seem exaggerated to speak of a small interest group like the anti-bridge campaigners as a “movement”. However, the urban sociologist Chris Pickvance, for example, defines a social movement as follows: “Social movements are made up of organisations existing on a neighbourhood, city, regional, national or even international basis to advance the declared aims of the movement. [...] Social movements are mobilised groups with three features. First, they advance claims which range from cultural critique to demands for a change in resource allocation within the existing socioeconomic framework. Secondly, because social movements have an ‘outsider’ status vis-à-vis the political system, they are often deprived of the behind-the-scenes channels of influence available to established pressure groups, and therefore engage in public and non-institutionalised forms of action (...). Thirdly, social movements are defined in contrast to political parties...” (Pickvance 1995: 124). In my treatment of the anti-bridge campaigns as a form of a social movement, I loosely refer to this definition, as it also captures the Dresden case well. Further theoretical background literature on urban social movements and collective action on which I have drawn includes Melucci 1996; Barker and Kennedy (eds) 1996, Lowe 1986 and Zimmer & Nährlich (eds) (2000).
buildings were symbolically claimed as "our" space by the oppositional preservationists. Then, the preservationists felt legitimated in their acts by the fact that the GDR to them proved to be an alienated, uncaring government. Now, fifteen years after reunification, the same discourse is used by the building initiatives against the Dresden city council, implicitly drawing a continuous line between their GDR time "battles for space" and the present ones.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE BRIDGE DEBATE

Plans to build a bridge over the Elbe at this spot had been made several times since the 1930s, but for various reasons they had never been put into practice. The general euphoria of the early 1990s - that now a new age had begun and finally some things could be got moving - prompted the old urban development plans to be taken out again, and the idea of the bridge became public currency again. A few CDU council members especially began to support the building of the bridge. When in this atmosphere the Saxon finance minister (likewise from the CDU) promised generous contributions from the Freestate's own budget, the planning of the bridge was commissioned.

However, from the beginning there were critics of this project. Mostly, they derived from environmentalist initiatives which had grown out of the 1960s movements, but amongst the critics there were also many representatives of Dresden's cultural elites who formerly had worked for the preservation of cultural monuments in Dresden. Their argument in short was that the possibilities which the new political and economic situation presented should be used for more pressing issues, notably the preservation of existing buildings as well as the maintenance of the existing bridges and road networks, which all were in desperate need of repair. It would be folly, they argued, to neglect these issues and instead to destroy the natural river bank meadows, one of the last remaining beautiful spots in Dresden after most of the buildings and landscapes of the city had been destroyed in the war and the GDR period. For the planned location of the proposed dual-carriageway bridge was not only immediately adjacent to the rebuilt historic centre, but would also cross the Elbe where its meadow banks were widest, a spot loved by Dresdeners for the quietness and peacefulness it provided for walks and picnics in the midst of the noisy city. Incidentally, the name of the proposed site - the Waldschlößchen area - summarises all this: literally meaning "the
castle in the woods", it is named after a small manor house adjacent to the proposed bridge building site. To Dresdeners, the very sound of the name suggests exactly the symbiosis between culture and landscape (castles and woods) they are so proud of. To build a new huge concrete bridge there, and then to name it after this site the Waldschlößchen bridge, sounds to many like a contradiction in terms, and a bitter irony.

The 1990s passed, and the building of the bridge was postponed again and again, while the planning commissioned for it by the city council continued and devoured ever greater sums of money. (After more than a decade of planning, it emerged that the mere planning costs of the Dresden bridge - of which it was unsure whether it would ever be built - were higher than the complete planning-plus-building of the two new bridges which the two neighbouring towns of Pirna and Meissen meanwhile had built over the Elbe taken together.) In 2000 it looked as if the building would now finally commence, but the plans were not approved by the communal supervising authority. New planning was commissioned, and the public debate continued. In 2003 the new plans were publicised. The public hearing, which is part of any greater building project and gives citizens and public associations and institutions the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns, and normally is dealt with in one or two days, lasted three weeks: there was an incredibly large number of critics, so that the hearing had to be prolonged day by day.

Up to this stage, the argument had solely been between the bridge supporters of CDU and liberals in the city council, and the bridge-opponents in citizens initiatives. Due to the fact that the CDU held the absolute majority in the city council, its members were under no pressure to justify their reasons for the bridge project to the public. The seemingly most obvious reason of growing traffic demands was successfully refuted by the critics of the bridge: in the course of the hearing it emerged that many of the facts and figures about the bridge publicised by city council and administration were contradictory, and sometimes false: if the bridge was built, there would be more traffic congestion than before, not less, and the pollution of the environment through emissions would transgress the permissible figures.

After this, it seemed as if the bridge project had finally failed. In June 2004, the council election brought an unforeseen large victory to the social democrats, the former communists and the greens, with the CDU loosing more than 15% of
their former votes. With this, there was for the first time since 1990 a left wing majority in the council: and with it, a majority against the bridge. However, this was the moment when the CDU together with the liberals, now the opposition in the city council, began their campaigns for a referendum on the bridge. This was the moment when a wider public was mobilised for the bridge. Before I turn to the referendum and the discourses used by proponents and opponents to solicit wider support, I would like to give a short overview over the history of local referendums in Dresden since 1990, since this will throw light on the political context of many of the building debates since 1990, and on some issues of “civic participation” which I will discuss towards the end of this chapter.

- The Referendum -

According to the Dresden council statutes, a referendum must be held whenever at least 15% of the Dresden adult population give their signatures in support of a referendum for a particular cause. The outcome of a referendum counts over and above any city council decision and is valid for three years, after which time it can only be reverted by another referendum.

Since 1990, when the right for a referendum was implanted in Dresden communal law, there have been seven instances when citizens collected signatures for a referendum.59 However, in most cases no referendum was called afterwards by the council. In some cases, the necessary number of signatures was not collected. In two other recent cases, the legal frameworks were changed by the conservative-led city council after the signatures had been collected: in one case, citizens aimed to protest against the building of a new Volkswagen plant, an ultramodern glass-and-steel construction, for which the urban planning office had designated an area within the old Dresden park and landscape garden in the midst of the city centre. While the council officials were delighted about the possibility of attracting a prestigious and economically valuable investor into the city, the citizens initiative argued that this needn’t take place in the famous garden, one of Dresden’s greatest assets. They started to collect signatures for a referendum, in the hope that a majority of Dresdeners would vote against the plant at this

59 While according to the German constitution there are no national referendums in Germany - partly due to the bad experiences of the misuse of referendums by Hitler - there exist in many federal states as well as councils the possibility to call regional or local referendums on certain issues. Usually they are, like in Dresden, linked to a Bürgerbegehren (public petition), i.e. a certain percentage of the population needs to declare with their signature that they wish a referendum to be held on a particular issue.
particular site. At the time, in 1998, the hurdle for a referendum was still 5% of signatures of the adult population; after they had been collected, the conservative majority in the city council passed an emergency legislation according to which the hurdle now was to be 15%. Thus the number of signatures was insufficient for a referendum and the Volkswagen plant was built. In the most recent case, a citizens initiative which campaigns for the historic rebuilding of the Neumarkt, the urban area immediately surrounding the Frauenkirche, collected the now necessary 15% percent of signatures. However, the city council which fears that potential investors might be deterred by a pre-set development plan, pronounced the collected signatures invalid and so far refuses to stage a referendum, since the printed information on the signature lists "was too detailed and complicated to be taken in quickly, so that many of those who gave their signature might not have known what they signed up for" (Stadttag 15/4/2003). In this case, which took place in 2002/03, the citizens initiative took the council to court, and the court case is still running at the time of writing.

The only referendum which so far had been held before the one on the bridge, was supported by the CDU council majority itself and concerned the building of a motorway to Prague. The referendum was staged quickly and elicited a support for the motorway of 60% of the vote, notwithstanding all campaigns against it by critics, who only got 30%.

Several points are remarkable about these planned, postulated, failed and staged referenda: first of all, they all concerned questions of building and urban planning and development. In each case, a citizens initiative had campaigned long for or against a planned building project respectively, and when they sensed great public support behind their campaigns, they collected signatures for a referendum to be held. The second point, however, concerns the political power relations under which the referendum campaigns took place. From 1990 to 2004, there was a conservative majority in the city council, in most election periods even an absolute majority (over 50% of the vote). Significantly, although the referendum is enshrined in legislation as a democratic participatory device to realise strong citizens' wishes even if they are not shared by the political power which happens to be reigning at that time, the reality in Dresden so far has been that the referendum instead has been either a tool of those in power, or has been deflated by this power. Thus, the only referenda held so far concerned causes which the city council itself wished to be realised: the building of the motorway, and now the
building of the new bridge. All other desired referenda, through which typically a citizens initiative aimed to prevent a new urban development which in its view would harm the attractiveness of Dresden, were so far thwarted by the city council. People active in citizens' initiatives are bitterly aware of this fact and tend to speak very sarcastically of the benefits of democracy.

This was the context in which the bridge referendum took place, and in which it was seen especially by the critics of the bridge. The conservative and liberal parties in the city council, now on the opposition benches, saw their long cherished bridge project fail, and shortly after the social democrat election victory announced their aim to campaign for a referendum. As many commentators remarked, it was ironic that the conservatives, who so far had tried hard to prevent referenda whenever possible, now discovered this instrument of participatory politics. First they attempted in vain to lower the hurdle for a referendum again to 5% percent, which they themselves had raised before in a cause adverse to their own policies. In the end, however, they successfully managed to collect the 60000 necessary signatures, (with the help of the automobile association ADAC). The referendum was staged for the 27th February, and in the weeks before there were feverish campaigns on both sides to raise the greatest support possible respectively for or against the bridge building project.

Before I turn to the campaigning in more detail, two points in these campaigns need pointing out: first, that they were led, especially by the liberals and conservatives, but also by the former communist party, as a means of election campaigning: many posters boasted in large writing the name of the party, in connection with a "yes" or "no" respectively. This seemed to suggest that what was at stake was not so much a specific building question of importance to Dresden, but rather a vote according to one's party preference. This seems to show that despite the efforts of the citizens initiatives usually active in Dresden on building matters, the referendum is not really ingrained in the minds of councillors and a wider public as a means of participatory democracy outside party politics. While much is spoken, also in the council, of the necessity of a broader citizens' education in the east of Germany, these efforts are led ad absurdum by the city councillors themselves, who seem to take every opportunity to demonstrate that politics is just about political parties and not much else.

Secondly and in slight contrast to this, however, both sides seemed eager to demonstrate that they were the real proponents of the will of the citizens, by
accumulating as many citizens initiatives as possible, many explicitly founded for this reason, behind their cause. Thus, the proponents of the bridge boasted that they were supported by prestigious organisations (mainly business and economic interest groups) such as the "association of private house owners and landlords", the "association of Saxon traffic", the "Dresden Taxi association" or the "Society of Saxon traffic engineers". The opponents listed initiatives which ranged from well-known environmentalist (the green League), social (the people's solidarity) and urban development groups (the city Development Forum) to interest groups which had formed explicitly against the bridge, some of them in open confrontation to their umbrella organisations which supported the bridge (i.e. "Members of the ADAC (the German form of the AA) against the bridge"). The fact, that both sides were eager to supersede the other side in the number of voluntary organisations supporting their respective cause seems to show the high profile that citizens initiatives have in Dresden, a point which I will discuss further towards the end of this chapter.

The outcome was a severe disappointment for the opponents of the bridge: 68% voted for, compared to 32% against the bridge, with an overall turnout of 67%, greater than that of the last council election. How can this result be explained? One possible explanation I have already mentioned; namely that due to the pronounced party-focus under which the campaigning took place many people voted according to their party preferences. This is not the place for a deeper analysis of these preferences: but it is worth mentioning that first, there is generally a strong conservative electorate in Dresden (and Saxony in general). Secondly, in German national politics the social democrats at that point were in the middle of their second term of office and according to opinion polls continuously losing support. Therefore, many federal state elections showed great CDU success rates, and the outcome of the referendum may partly be explained by this general political trend. However, I believe that the main reasons lie not in party preferences, but in the respective discourses in which both sides embedded their election campaigning: while the critics of the bridge reasoned mainly in cultural terms, the proponents attracted wide support with economical promises at a time when almost a fifth of the east German population is unemployed. To the details of the referendum campaigns I now turn, first discussing the proponents and then the critics in more depth.
THE PRO-BRIDGE FACTION

On the decisionmaking level, the proponents of the bridge are politicians mainly from the CDU, of whom those in leading positions (such as the head of the development office and the head of the council treasury) mainly have come from the former West. They were joined by the liberal party FDP.60 Both parties argued that Dresden is in a desperate economic situation which only could be relieved by more financial investors, who they claim must receive all incentives and privileges possible. One such incentive would be the new bridge: which would not only make traffic flow through the city easier and thus provide better access to potential development sites, but would also be a powerful symbol for Dresden’s liveliness as a modern, future-oriented city. The pro-bridge council representatives were supported by powerful lobbying groups from the business sector, and not least by the ADAC (the German AA). In other words, the real influence amongst the public lay with these economic “civil society” groups, who successfully exerted their influence upon the governing circles in the city council. To turn to their argumentation in more detail.

Asked in a television interview why the bridge should be so necessary, a leading conservative member of the city council said that first, it would do justice to the “basic civil right of mobility”, and second, it would be a symbol for the “liveliness” of Dresden. The first point concerns a public debate which has been fuelled by the car-lobby in Germany for the past decade, namely to implant a “basic right for mobility” in Germany’s constitution, the Grundgesetz (basic law). Regardless of the fact that Dresden already has six inner city bridges over the Elbe, so that no part of Dresden is exactly a disconnected island whose inhabitants are prevented from being mobile as long as the new bridge does not exist, the mobility argument was used extensively by all bridge-proponents as a shorthand for alleged growing traffic demand and the easing of Dresden’s traffic network.

60 The liberal’s (FDP) role in Dresden and the East of Germany is interesting: with their neoliberalist policies (standing for less taxes and less social benefits) they have acquired an image of being the party of well-off people. In the east, where a broad stratum of well-off people who could compare with those in the west is lacking, they generally have had bad election results since 1990. However, it is also the FDP which in Germany is the greatest ally of the car-lobby, so that for example it is mainly due to the FDP that there are no speed limits on German motorways (which it successfully prevented with the slogan of “free speed for free citizens”, as the CDU’s partner in government throughout the 1980s and 90s.) These “driver friendly” policies endear the FDP also to easterners who otherwise would not agree with the FDP’s neoliberalism, so that in Dresden the FDP saw a great chance to win more public appreciation by using its “free speed” and “civil right of mobility” slogans in support of the bridge.
Interestingly, however, these arguments were supported by few data and figures: as the critics argued, this was because all traffic surveys and prognoses tended to undermine the argument of the necessity of the bridge. To the critics' elaborate listings of facts and figures against the bridge I will turn below.

Of greater interest is the second argument: that the bridge would be a symbol for the liveliness of Dresden. It plays on the fear of many Dresdeners to be “backward”, “provincial” and “stagnant”, only looking back to their baroque age and not setting any signs for the future. This narrative, which is adopted by city councillors, urban planners and investors, actively challenges the narratives of Dresden's great cultural and civic traditions, by claiming that Dresden's history has little to be proud of, but is defined by provinciality, "court-confidence“ and introvertedness: the future, this narrative polemically claims, lies not in Dresden's past, but in its hooking up with international modernity. Put into practice, this course means as many new buildings as possible, which in turn would create more employment, draw more tourists to Dresden and would generally solve all of Dresden's problems.

This one narrative of Dresden's need for more progress was enough to bring a majority of Dresdeners behind the bridge project: the "courage for the future" discourse resonates well with many Dresdeners, as also other recent building debates have shown. In 2002, for example, a citizens' initiative campaigned against the planned building of a new high-rise glass-and-steel building in the midst of an old landscape garden by a biotechnological company. As a response to these campaigns, a newspaper article raged at "those people of an eternal Yesterday who follow a consequent policy of job destruction! ... How many chances are we yet to miss, until people such as these leave their ivory tower?“ (DNN, 3/2/2002). In a similar vein are the following quotes from letters to newspapers: "Dresden is and remains fixated on looking-back and thus maims itself. There remains no space for visions of the future and a courageous forward looking attitude“ (DNN, 20/4/02). Or: "The Dresdeners sit beneath a baroque cheese dome, and alas, if somebody tries to lift the lid: a gigantic clamour, bawling and endless discussions are bound to follow. We live in the 3rd millennium, yet in Dresden people seem to be stuck mentally in the middle ages“ (DNN 27/4/02) And a woman summarised the reasons behind this enrage, when she stood up in a public panel discussion on the bridge and cried that she felt ashamed, because she thinks that all of Germany is laughing about Dresden, and she does
not want to be a laughing stock.

The success of this modernising globalisation discourse in Dresden can be understood in the context of Germany's (and especially the East's) bad economic situation, as I would like to argue. As the just quoted voices suggest, the argument that the bridge will draw more business into the era and thus also lead to more employment appeals to many Dresdeners who in the view of widespread unemployment have lost much of their self-confidence. Despairing of ever succeeding in the new economic system with which they are confronted since reunification, any promise of empowerment by those who already are successful (i.e. West German business elites) sounds alluring.

At the same time, however, the discourse of a "future-oriented mobility for all citizens and the creation of an attractive traffic-infrastructure for businesses" (Bürgerentscheid, Feb. 2005) appealed also to those who felt that they already had started to profit, even if modestly, by the new economic system. For example, due to state benefits (Eigenheimzulage) and cheap mortgages, many Dresdeners have fulfilled their dream of being property owners by buying into one of the many estate developments of small detached houses at the outskirts of the city. Since these estates lack all infrastructure and mostly are not connected to the Dresden public transport network, these new property owners are completely dependent on their cars for getting around, so that the discourse of individual mobility appeals to them very greatly. In other words, the universalist modernist discourses of flexibility, mobility, and globalism are instrumentalised by Western business elites, the car lobby etc., in favour of the building of the Waldschlößchen bridge in Dresden. They meet with great success amongst an East German audience which has lost faith in local solutions, and looks up to seemingly successful prophets from the West. In this situation, the critics of the bridge found it more difficult to solicit support. To their arguments I will turn now.

**THE ANTI-BRIDGE CAMPAIGNERS**

Before I analyse the discourse of the anti-bridge campaigners, I will give an indication of who they were. In the first chapter, I have argued that there are two local narratives (i.e. in distinction to the just cited globalist ones) about Dresden: one, that it is a great cultural city, and the other, that it has a great civic tradition. Whoever wants to mobilise support from a wider public for a specific building agenda, tends to draw on one or both of the two narratives. In the previous
chapters I have argued that - deriving from the time of the GDR - there are especially two particular social groups in Dresden who actively engage in building matters and together with the responsible council officials provide the "preservationist field" in Dresden: the cultural elites identifying themselves as bürgerlich on the one hand, and civic rights groups and democratic grassroots groups on the other. While the first group tends to draw especially on the cultural narrative of Dresden, the second group often refers to the "civil courage" narrative. During the GDR time, both groups could not be clearly demarcated from one another, because they felt that they had much in common in their oppositional stance to the GDR regime. After unification, however, many differences between them came to light, and while before they had often worked together at a common project, now there were often rivalries between them, also in regard to their position in the new society in general. This new demarcation between the two groups found an expression for example in the debates about the Frauenkirche, where the first group campaigned for the rebuilding and the second one against it, and where in cases like the organ debate the two groups often found themselves in antagonistic camps.

However, with the argument over the bridge the interesting situation was that both narratives - the cultural and the civic one - were seen to be threatened and offended by the council's planning procedures - so that both narratives together were mobilised against the bridge project. Moreover, both of these groups respectively felt that the influential civil society positions which the just described West German elites (i.e. business circles, the ADAC functionaries etc.) were now filling should legitimately be theirs. Their frustration was not so much with those business and car lobbying groups themselves, as with the city council of Dresden. As I will show below, there was a strong sense amongst both groups that the city council did not listen to them, although through their unceasing efforts on behalf of Dresden's urban landscape during the GDR times they felt that they had acquired a right to take part in decision-making processes regarding building matters in Dresden.

As a result, members of the two different social groups found themselves working together again: almost like in GDR times. The persons speaking up during the public hearing on the bridge comprised activists from environmentalist groups and professors of art history, associations of young parents and retired members from the preservationist office. Indeed, I would like to reprise the
differentiation which I have made in chapter 3 between two “Groups of Twenty” who formed in 1989: one of civic rights activists from various social backgrounds demonstrating for more political participation, the other of art professors and notabilities from the Bildungsbürger milieu who called for the cultural necessity to rebuild the Frauenkirche. While the two groups seemed to have not much in common during the ensuing years of the first post unification years, they both met during the anti-bridge campaigns, in which members of both groups became active. A list of 120 signatures of “public figures against the bridge” unified the names of numerous members of both groups; a leading member of the civic rights “Group of Twenty” became the founder of the anti-bridge citizens initiative, while various renowned members of the Frauenkirche group wrote open letters listing the harm that would be done by the bridge to Dresden’s cultural heritage.

The fact in which both groups agreed, and which opposed them to the western elites in favour of the bridge, was that they used local discourses instead of globalist ones. Both emphasised the importance to preserve Dresden’s natural landscape, the Elbe meadows, which would be destroyed at their most sensitive spot if the bridge was to be built. Their discourse was illustrated by an emotionally charged moment during the public hearing when suddenly an opponent of the bridge asked to be allowed to show some photo slides. All of a sudden there was a deep silence in the restless atmosphere of the auditorium, when without commentary or argumentation pictures of the area where the bridge is planned were shown: wide meadows through which the river winds, opening up the picture to the towers of the old town. The silence was broken only once when somebody from the audience called: "this is our home" (Heimat)!

With this, there was a line drawn between “us, the opponents of the bridge”, and “them, who want to destroy our home”. “Them”, in this context, are the planning offices who only care for numbers and figures, but not for the sense of belonging which a place can convey. A member of “them” is also the architect of the planned bridge who defended the thoughtfulness of his model by claiming that he had “even made the long way from the West to Dresden in order to spend one afternoon here, visiting the proposed site” - a boast received with the utmost contempt by the Dresdeners in the auditorium - and “them” is above all the city council, which as the elected representatives of all Dresdeners should know better than to destroy wilfully the “home” of Dresdeners. Thus, the disappointment in the council is especially strong, since it listens to "them", the west German
economic elites, instead of to "us" who have always cared for Dresden. This last antagonism in particular, between city council and ordinary Dresdeners engaged against the bridge, came to play a large role in the whole bridge debate, as it did in other building arguments. The following press release of the citizens initiative representing the opponents of the bridge is therefore not uncommon of the general view that many Dresdeners have of their council:

The planning process is a political, planning, financial and moral fiasco, for which the city council and the city administration are responsible. The citizens initiative "Waldschlößchen bridge" accuses the responsible lord mayor and the mayor for urban development to have failed professionally and politically. (9/4/2003)

Explaining his mistrust of the city council, another bridge opponent argued in a talk to me:

You get the feeling, that the culture and the specific situation of Dresden don’t play a role for the politicians of Dresden. They think in completely different categories! If this was differently, I think that many of the building arguments wouldn’t escalate like they do. (...) Leipzig has had more luck with their mayors since 1990 (...) they are cultured persons with a moral authority. Everybody there knows: if this man says something, it can’t be completely wrong, so we can support him. And this is exactly what in Dresden unfortunately runs differently. Here nobody has any trust in the politicians. (RD 6)

This antagonism between citizens who associate to prevent the further destruction of their city on the one hand, and the city council accused of this destruction on the other hand, of course reminds one of the similar constellation at the time of the GDR. Then, the efforts of the preservationist-minded citizens were directed at the prevention of the demolition of still existing valuable buildings, now the efforts are

---

61 Generally there is a sort of playful competition between Dresden and Leipzig. Dresdeners often express pride in their history as the royal capital of Saxony, Dresden's culture and beauty. Leipziggers, by contrast, refer to a proud tradition of independent citizenship, not court-docile as Dresdeners are supposed to be. During GDR times, these images were enhanced: with the annual Leipzig International Fair, Leipzig acquired a world-open, international image, whereas Dresden, as described, could not even receive western television and was widely known as "valley of the clueless". Fitting with these mutual images, Western journalists reported the events of the peaceful revolution of 1989 from Leipzig (which they knew from the fairs) - so that Leipzig has gone down in history books as the city of the citizens revolt, when in fact the decisive events had occurred in Dresden. (Cf. Bahr 1990). This image of Leipzig as the city of enlightened, independent, confident citizens (Bürgerturn) is sometimes even adopted by Dresdeners moaning about their supposedly absolutist city council. The quote is one such instance.
directed at the preservation of the last untouched spaces of the "old Dresden" which have survived until now. Then, as I have shown in chapter II, every success in the preservation of a building was seen as a kind of "gaining of space", gained by "us", the Dresdener, from "them", the communists. Today, the same discourse prevails, only that the relation to the government has become more complicated. For the city council is not a superimposed alien rule of a dictatorship anymore from which one could justly demarcate oneself, but a democratically elected body, there to "represent" the will of the citizens.

The deep disappointment and sometimes fury of the citizens initiatives concerns exactly this point: they feel that they themselves are the ones legitimating the city council, so how can the city council dare to decide against their wishes? Moreover, why does it listen to interest groups from the West, when it is not listening to them? There is a feeling that a large betrayal of trust has been committed repeatedly by the councillors; and this seems to be the reason also for the great number of citizens initiatives occupying themselves with planning and building issues in Dresden. They feel that they continue the work begun in the GDR, when they worked and cared for their Dresden, against the infringements and interventions by an alienated government. When the present government in their eyes proves to be not less alienated, and unaffiliated to Dresden, they feel that they have to carry on this work. Only the methods are new ones, prescribed by the democratic system: therefore the great number of participatory democratic activities like signature collections and referenda. As the instigator of the referendum for the rebuilding of the Neumarkt said to me:

They said: we are the elected representatives of the people. Where is your legitimisation? So we went and collected 68000 signatures: this is our legitimisation! Many elected city council members would be glad if they had only half the number of votes legitimising them! (FR 6)

Other than during the GDR time, the new political system allows the campaigners to be acknowledged as legitimate. What they feel is the problem is that the politicians themselves do not act in accordance with the democratic rules, by neglecting the outcome of signature collections and the like insofar as it does not fit with their own aims.
Referendum poster against the bridge. Under the heading: “No! against the Waldschlößchenbrücke”, the poster on the cartoon says “Here the city council is closing down the 8th high school”. The further text argues: Children are our bridge into tomorrow’s world.

*Waldschlößchenbrücke: costs of € 157 millions, still increasing
*Kindergartens: need € 117 millions for renovation
*Schools: need € 475 millions for renovation
- The Anti-Bridge Discourse -

One of the anti-bridge posters read "because we love Dresden... NO to the bridge". In this line, the central argument of the bridge critics is that the bridge would be harmful to Dresden: those who love Dresden and care for it must be against the bridge. Under this general slogan, the two dominant narratives of Dresden - as a city with a tradition of civic courage and participation, and as a city of culture - are called upon, implying that the building of the bridge would be contrary to both traditions, and that those who identify with these narratives should be against the bridge.

The first line of argument reminded Dresdeners to think for themselves, not blindly to believe the slogans of the politicians desiring the bridge, and to consider the financial situation of the city. Thus, this line of argument refrained from any reference to Dresden's beauty, and instead called upon citizens to feel responsible for the ways in which budgets are distributed and the city is generally headed. Anti-bridge posters thus reminded people that the building of the bridge would draw subsidies away from public transport, social services, schools and kindergartens, public libraries etc. They asked why Dresden, one of the most indebted councils in Germany, should want to build the most expensive inner-city bridge in all of Germany\(^2\). Furthermore, the usefulness for Dresdeners in general was questioned: according to various experts' reports, the bridge would serve as a short-cut between the two motorways tangenti ng Dresden in the north and the south, and thus draw more long-distance traffic and heavy lorries into the city, while at the same time it would only produce more traffic congestion within Dresden, instead of relieving the existing road network (\textit{Bürgerentscheid}, Feb. 2005).

Interestingly, a phrase that was used in this context again and again was that the Dresden council would wilfully "sell off the family silver". To use this phrase against the city councillors implies a twofold critique: first that, instead of

\(^2\) The bridge would cost €157 mio, and according to the critics be the most expensive inner-city bridge in all of Germany. As a comparison, the referendum information leaflet lists recently built bridges in other German cities, whose costs are all between €10 mio and €50 mio. Moreover, the costs for the upkeep of the bridge - €1 mio p.a. - would be as high as the running costs of all other 6 (already existing) bridges of Dresden taken together. In the same source, the bridge project is compared to other Dresden building projects, of which it also takes the most expensive place, followed by the Frauenkirche with a total cost of €130 mio (\textit{Bürgerentscheid}, Feb 2005). At the same time, a council official declared that in order to finance the bridge, at least one of Dresden's theaters would have to be closed down, due to Dresden's huge debts.
Wer soll das bezahlen?

- Dresdens Schuldenberg: 920 Mio. Euro = 6 Frauenkirchen.
- Brückenkosten für die Stadt: über 60 Mio. Euro = 2 Sportstadien.

Referendum poster against the bridge, which shows the completed bridge with no connecting roads. The person on the drawing explains: "Then the money had run out". The text argues further:

Who shall pay for all this?

* Dresden's mountain of debts: € 920 millions, which is equal to the cost of 6 Frauenkirches
* Interest rates (which the city has to pay on the debts): € 37 millions p.a. which otherwise would pay for 18 renovated schools and kindergartens each year.
* the city's own contribution to the bridge: more than € 60 millions, which would pay for two sport stadiums.
drawing up reasonable plans to move Dresden out of its debts and use the little money that is left reasonably, more debts are incurred by planning a gigantic building which would destroy the beautiful inner-city river landscape, i.e. one of the last remaining pieces of Dresden’s “family silver”. Secondly, the fact that this critique is posed by the citizens against the city council suggests again that this “family silver” is the rightful possession of the citizens of Dresden, not of some councillors who have come here only for a short period. Therefore, they have no right to sell off something that is not even rightfully theirs, but that is given into their good care for their time as representatives of the Dresden people.

The second line of discourse draws on the narrative of Dresden as a cultural city once more. In an open letter, the retired preservationist Magirius, one of the authors of the 1989 “Call from Dresden” to rebuild the Frauenkirche, draws a link between the importance to rebuild the Frauenkirche and the importance not to build the bridge:

The famous view from the location where the Waldschlößchen bridge is planned is unique in showing the singularly beautiful situatedness of the city in the landscape. The Frauenkirche is often portrayed as the “heart and soul” of Dresden. Yet the “bell of stone” can only resonate in the generous scope of the Elbe landscape. Heart and soul need space. This landscape situation into which the historical buildings have been composed is a gift to the Dresdener. Many generations have valued this gift. It is therefore incomprehensible, why a bridge which destroys this gift is built just now, when Dresden receives with the Frauenkirche its “crown” back. (Magirius, 7th Sept 2003)

Here, the emphasis in the anti-bridge critique is moved to the harm it would do to Dresden’s cultural importance and natural beauty. During the anti-bridge campaigns, many letters to papers and speeches at the public hearings referred to the same line of argument. The fact was emphasised that Dresden is possibly the only city in Europe of some size, in which the river is not canalised but flows freely in its natural bed, so that even in the historic centre there are spreading meadows; and that this situation was fixed in the first Dresden building charter at the end of the 17th century, and had remained unharmed until now. The bridge would be a major incision in this river landscape, especially since it would cut through it at the spot where the meadows are widest. By coincidence, just at the time of the most heated quarrels over the bridge, the UNESCO decided to grant world heritage status to the Elbe valley in and immediately around Dresden, and this fact was
taken as a further proof of the importance of the cultural landscape and the harm that the bridge would do to it.

Similarly linking the narrative of Dresden as a cultural city with the danger that the bridge would pose to this image, a demonstration was held in February 2004 for the preservation of the cultural landscape of Dresden: main issues were the planned closures of public libraries, of the musical theatre and extreme cuts in the budget of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, all run by the city of Dresden. With the slogan "Culture instead of Concrete", a main issue on this demonstration was again the bridge project, whose required sums of money would necessitate the cuts and closures of those cultural institutions.

Thus, the anti-bridge protests took up the discourses of previous building arguments in two ways: first, the bridge is seen as a monstrous new building which would harm what is left of Dresden’s beauty even further. With this, it fits in with the debate about the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche, of the area around the Frauenkirche, the Neumarkt, and also with the preservationist efforts of the GDR years. Secondly, it raises questions about who should decide the way Dresden is to go. Is this the responsibility of the elected representatives in the city council and the administration officers, as they themselves argue, or is it the responsibility of every Dresdener who feels called upon to care for their city? The web page of an association of various citizens initiatives campaigning for building issues, against the bridge, but also against the closure of cultural and social institutions, defends this latter argument in its name "We are Dresden" - a slogan probably purposely reminiscent of the 1989 demonstrators’ slogan of "we are the people". Thus, fifteen years into the unification of Germany, it appears that the ideals of 1989 are not forgotten and are now brought forward again in the attempt to reform the new, west-German system. In Dresden, the debate about the building of the bridge is symbolic of this growing feeling.

In order to articulate their concerns with the proposed bridge building, the protesters used various means, mainly designed to inform a wider public about the particulars of the building plans. Posters were distributed all over the city which listed other public spending projects which would be cut when the bridge was built: public transport, public libraries, social care and cultural institutions. At the proposed building site, a large canvas was raised which showed a monstrous image of the proposed bridge. Next to it, erected wooden crosses reminiscent of a cemetery symbolised all the values which would be buried by the bridge building:
The proposed building site for the Waldschlösschen bridge. Campaigners against the project have erected symbolic crosses, each demarcating the burial of one of Dresden's valuable assets - such as culture, nature, the philharmonic orchestra, kindergartens, public transport, etc. - in the case of the building of the bridge. (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
culture, administrative competence, justice. Frequent actions were staged - such as sledging in winter and picnicking in summer to which everybody was invited - in order to emphasise the Elbe meadows as an invaluable recreational site. These and other actions were carried through and supported by a large network of individuals, environmentalist associations, cultural interest groups, parents' associations and many others. The fact that so many different interest groups, each with their own concerns, felt called to common action against the bridge seems to justify defining the protests as a local "movement". Before I turn to this point again towards the end of this chapter, I would like to summarise the two opposing arguments, for and against the bridge, by contrasting the global and the local identity discourse which they employ respectively.

LOCAL VERSUS GLOBAL IDENTITY NARRATIVES

Critics and advocates of the Waldschlößchen bridge use two fundamentally different approaches to Dresden: while one appeals to Dresdeners to feel proud of their great cultural tradition and to attempt to live up to it by preserving what is left of material witnesses of this tradition, the other approach warns that this pride in Dresden's history is provincial and parochial: rather than always dwelling in an imagined past, one should face the future and try to catch up with modernity. Both narratives are used by the critics and the proponents of the bridge and other building projects respectively as appeals to the general Dresden public, in order to win more support for each of the aims.

Both discourses address the often invoked "feeling of inferiority" that East Germans according to surveys still tend to show in relation to West Germany (cf. Pollack 1998; Mühlberg 2001). Yet a new source of pride is shown by each to lie in a different sense of belonging: while the bridge critics and preservation activists in Dresden appeal to Dresden's local and regional history, which they claim was great even in the GDR years where it created an oppositional identity to the east German one, the bridge proponents avoid this local narrative and instead play a supposedly future-oriented global Western identity narrative off against a backward East-identity. By the Dresden preservationist circles, belonging to Dresden is emphasised as an empowering identity model. By politicians and economic elites, "too much" identification with Dresden is constructed as maiming and hindering, and juxtaposed to it is an appeal to identification with what is constructed as modern, western and globalist values. Implicitly, the proponents of
the bridge thus argue that an identification with Dresden - as the critics in the citizen initiatives postulate it - means not only regression into the past instead of a positive affirmation of modern life, but also a parochialism that is typical for the supposed GDR-citizens mentality of being confined to one's own walls and not looking beyond one's own boundaries. In contrast to it, the willingness to build the bridge and many more new buildings everywhere in Dresden is constructed as the positive stance of all those who have surpassed the GDR heritage and have arrived in the borderless, free world of modern Western globalism.

An illustration of the bridge proponents' stance was given in a letter that the chairwoman of the Dresden CDU wrote in answer to a letter by a bridge opponent. Quoting Erich Kästner, the ubiquitously cherished Dresden writer who in the 1930s compared the two major Saxon cities and declared that "Leipzig - this is reality. But Dresden - belongs into fairy tale", she makes use of a quote often cited also by the bridge critics. Their argument is that it is exactly this fairy tale quality that they want to preserve for Dresden. The CDU chairwoman, however, continues: "and this is what we want to change now. It is time for Dresden to arrive in reality..." (letter by FdH, 10/01/05). Here the deep misunderstanding between the two sides becomes clear: All agree on the myth of Dresden as being a "fairy tale" location. However, while the Dresden preservationists argue for the need to preserve this unique quality, the stance of political and economic elites is that it is time to catch up with modernity: please, no fairy tales. In the following discussion, I will broaden the bridge case to a more general exploration of the Dresden preservationists' (amongst them the bridge-critics) use of local identity narratives, in opposition to modernising globalist tropes.

Most of the persons to whom I spoke about their anti-bridge activities, refused to accept the accusation that their dominant aim should be to preserve everything as it always has been. As one person actively engaged in various initiatives argued to me:

Yes, there are those people who blindly follow the delusion to remake everything exactly as it once had been. I can't accept this. Yet there are other instances... I really want to become active in those cases, where still existing beautiful places are planned to be destroyed through new buildings: like the Waldschlößchenbrücke. (RD 4)

A second common ground amongst these activists is an aversion to that modernist architecture - or seemingly planless building activity like the bridge - in Dresden
Typical examples of post-unification architecture in Dresden’s city centre - the kind of urban development against which preservationist activists campaign because they regard it as globalist modernism which is insensitive to Dresden’s particularities.

Cartoon by a Dresden artist, distributed amongst the members of the Society for the Historic Rebuilding of the Neumarkt by an avid campaigner against "everywhere-the-same sort of architecture". The tourist guide asks: "Has anybody already found out in which beautiful city of our country we are now?" (in Barbara Henniger: GegenVerkehr)
which they consider universally commonplace and therefore unspecific to Dresden:

In a time in which capitalism produces such a nondescript everywhere-the-same sort of culture, old civilisations of course suddenly feel called upon, to emphasise their own values against this. This is not negative! I mean, what else should a city like Dresden do... I mean, it is good if you build in a modern style, but this city will never be able to measure up against the East-Asian cityscapes. But one can be proud of the riches one has got here. And I think if identity means this, that one directs oneself against this nondescript culture, then I think it is understandable. (HM 10)

Exemplary for the general rebuilding discourse in Dresden, the argument for the preservation and sometimes rebuilding of old buildings is tied in this quote to the protection of the particular “identity” of one’s own city, against the encroachments of an “nondescript everywhere-the-same sort of culture” and the levelling and equalisations of global capitalism.® The preservation of “identity” is a key term in the narratives of these activists. Asked, what exactly she meant when she said that the rebuilding of the Neumarkt is important for the preservation of the identity of Dresden, a member of the Neumarkt society told me:

something typical, something that you get only at this particular place, that isn’t exchangeable. Through globalisation and modern mobility, all cities look more and more like each other... all becomes so exchangeable... In the GDR time, everything between the Baltic Sea and Thuringia was exchangeable, but what they are building now, you can find anywhere in Europe. And I always think, that it is very important, that every city has a centre, or if you will a couple of small centres, which is like this only in this particular city. (CB 6)

The “identity” of Dresden is juxtaposed to other contemporary places and what they look like: the high-rise estates of real socialism all over the former GDR, and now in her view the equally uniform outcomes of globalism, where the different regions of Europe are losing their distinctiveness and build the same kind of architecture everywhere. In relation to this, the particularity and speciality of Dresden is emphasised and postulated: Arguing against the proposed plan, initiated by the Dresden council, of the American architect Daniel Libeskind to build a new “house of culture” on an exposed old town site, an art historian said in

® An intriguing exploration of a parallel case is provided by Glendinning and Page’s work on contemporary Scottish urban planning and architecture in Clone City: Crisis and Renewal in Contemporary Scottish Architecture (1999).
an interview:

Why is Dresden not allowed to look like Dresden? The press, and the politicians, enforce this: “we have to build modern, we need international star architects for Dresden to be recognised internationally...” But Libeskind does not insert himself in what he finds, he is planning a solitary building, which doesn’t relate to its surroundings. (SH 9/10)

Similarly, another person who is engaged in various Dresden building campaigning groups, argued:

What is needed is an inner affiliation towards Dresden. And not the attitude: “I the architect...”. There is this tendency amongst architects to say: “I do things different. I don’t do what you expect me to do.” And this “I do things consciously differently” is the most terrible thing today... In Dresden, an architect should serve the city, not his own vanity! (KT 9)

It is interesting that in these quotes not just an internationally exchangeable architecture is juxtaposed to a particular, specific Dresden one, but also the practice of internationally working architects is described as closed: they lack an affiliation towards Dresden, they don’t care for it. They only care for their own reputation, their frame of reference is their own work. An architecture that relates itself to Dresden, by contrast, accepts the existing Dresden built environment as its point of reference, and thus contributes to the space in Dresden with which many Dresdeners identify. It relates to what many Dresdeners feel is “the identity” of Dresden, while the buildings of many international star architects only relate back to the architects themselves. Or as another respondent expressed it:

The Neumarkt should be rebuilt according to a dialogic principle: architects should not serve their own vanity through architectural gags, but work with what they find. This is a tradition in Dresden... playfully engage with the existing facts, use modern materials, but: show respect towards the already existing surroundings, hold yourself back. That’s the dialogic principle. (HL 6)

This “dialogic principle” is a standing phrase amongst many of the rebuilding activists. According to it, Dresden’s "identity “ will be saved not when old things are exactly being rebuilt, but when architects and planners accept existent buildings which have survived the war, or even the images of them which have survived in the memories of people, as their frame of reference, in dialogue with which new
things will generate. Thus, the Dresden identity discourse is different from a nostalgic clinging to an eternally fixed ideal, but also different from the calls to break with all old things, and build something totally new in order to "wage a new beginning".

Altogether then, "Dresden", however understood, is the point of reference for these activists. By contrast, the elected head of the planning office, a planner from Western Germany who during his term of office in Dresden lives in a hotel and spends long weekends at his home in Mainz in the West - by many Dresdeners seen as symbolic for his lacking affinity to and care about Dresden - seems to have West German cities as his point of reference: asked what he wanted to achieve during his term of office, he answered that he wanted to fill as many still empty spaces as possible with buildings (WF 4). This answer was paradigmatic for his different perspective from the Dresden citizens activists I had interviewed before: although most of them are lay people in planning matters, they all were bursting with specific ideas that they would do in Dresden if they were responsible: build such and such houses in this area, leave that spot free because it granted a unique view which was part of the composure of Dresden since the 18th century, rebuild houses in a historical manner at this place and get a modernist architect to develop a concept for that area, etc. By contrast, the only vision of the person really responsible for planning was to fill as many empty spots as possible, no matter how. While from the perspective of the citizen activists, Dresden and its previous developmental history is the point of reference, for the head planning official the point of reference implicitly seems to be West German cities, where large empty spaces like in Dresden have not existed since the 1960s.

In general then, the whole debate is not so much between proponents of modernist architecture on the one side and proponents of historical rebuilding on the other side, but is led by the Dresden activists as a defence of "their own" legitimate possession against foreigners who want to take their possession from them. In this context, a great role is played by the fact that most decisionmakers in the city council and administration are indeed "foreigners", i.e. in most cases have come to Dresden after 1990 from the West, or even are here only for the time of their term of office. As one person who regards herself as an old Dresdener expressed her fury about this constellation:
The problem is, that they are not Dresdeners, but people who have no personal links to this city. For them, Dresden is just a... an economic factor. Just a short period in their career. And these people - most of them completely devoid of any sense of culture - they flog Dresden to the investors! (HR 4)

Another like-minded woman told me that she had sent a guidebook for tourists to the head of the planning office, because she had got the impression 'that he didn't know the first thing about Dresden" (IA 3). In these quotes, very clearly the concern of the Dresden preservationists with Dresden as a cultural place is expressed, and juxtaposed to the foreigners' lacking understanding of Dresden, by merely seeing it as an "economic factor». The critics' appeal to Dresden's civic tradition reinforces this line: as described in chapter 1, this civic narrative refers to the fact that Dresden could only become the beautiful cultural city it has been through the strength of self-confident citizens, who gave a counterweight to the court and furthered their own affairs. Drawing parallels to this time, one person argued in an interview:

The city council obeys the Saxon government. And this is another specific Dresden problem: the many levels of administrative bureaucracy. And certainly this is partly due to the court tradition. The Saxon government, they always act like they are the royal court. They pretend to be the court. And look down upon the citizens, who unfortunately don't have a good representation in the council either. The council only looks up to the Saxon government. (RD 4)

Therefore, this argument runs, the citizens have to take their own interests into their own hands, since they can't count upon the council. In addition, drawing from more recent history, this narrative appeals to the 1989 tradition, arguing that it was the citizens who gained the sovereignty over their own city of Dresden by demonstrating on the streets, and that it would be folly to relinquish this ground now to the state again - or to new economic elites form the West, who likewise are not caring for Dresden and therefore do not deserve the influence with the city council that the have. The reference to this civic tradition thus calls to Dresdeners to think for themselves, instead of accepting the modernist arguments at face value, and to take on responsibility for Dresden instead of relinquishing it to the clueless authorities.
THE ANTI-BRIDGE PROTESTS AND THE LEGACY OF 1989

The building debates therefore can also be seen in the context of the public debates through which the reunification process is evaluated widely in Eastern Germany in general. I would like to mention them briefly, in order to situate the building debates in this wider context:

East German theorists have spoken of the "lost chance of 1989" and argued that by quietly assimilating the east with as little ado as possible, (West) Germany not only had lost a "political public", but also the chance of a better democratic system, and the possibility of a real unification between two equal parts (Probst 1998; Land 2000). The East German philosopher Rainer Land writes, polemically: "sometimes the question is discussed whether there are any specifically East German interests, or a specifically east German potential. The problems of the East are those of the modernisation of the West, no others." And he continues:

The significance of the Revolution of 1989 extends beyond a catch-up modernisation [the implicit reference here is to an influential article by Habermas about 1989 as a "catch-up revolution" (nachholende Revolution 1990), it was more than the end of a cul de sac and the return to one's kin. Autumn 1989 has wrestled with several crucial question of the "modernisation of modernity". In my eyes, the outstanding idea of 1989 was a new approach to publicness and democracy, towards a "new forum". This forum was not supposed to be a party, but a dialogue between parties and citizens... this forum was conceived of as a collective political workshop... At issue were demands for transparency, a public dialogue concerning public matters and their reform, and visions of new structures. Will it be possible to craft a connection between publicness and power [Öffentlichkeit und Macht], leading to the creation of a new society? (Land 2000: 31-2)\footnote{Land's polemic with his reference to Habermas connects to a passionately led debate in Germany whether the GDR was "colonised" by Western Germany, or not (see Zelle 1998; Pfahl-Traugber 2000; Rohrschneider 2000; Woderich 2000). The "colonisation thesis" argues that the GDR was not only administratively and politically annexed to Western Germany, but that this process was accompanied by a distinctly colonial discourse, in which the GDR was portrayed as a backward proponent of "eastern" mentalities which Western Germany had successfully left behind (compare Fabian's analysis of the use of time in colonialist discourse; Fabian 1983). In this discourse, Western Germany becomes the proponent of Western, liberal, rational values, while the GDR is described as embodying Eastern, authoritarian, emotional mentalities (i.e. the differentiation made by Hans Kohn (1994) in his essay on Western and Eastern Nationalism, see also Brubaker 1996).}

Land argues that this project failed, because the new political public that had emerged in East Germany in autumn 1989 - represented by the civil rights movement - did not succeed in constituting a new political power. Instead, the
power which was constructed through unification emerged parallel to and independent of this public. Within one year the new public had lost its appeal in the population which had to deal with more urgent material problems, while the imported institutional power structures continued to lack a mooring in political society (Land 2000: 35).

Questions of "publicness and power" [Öffentlichkeit und Macht] were raised in 1989 and, whether "the West" has purposely tried to negate them as Land argues, or not, they are still unanswered. In the immediate aftermath of unification in 1990, people in Eastern Germany had more urgent concerns, to do with new workplace challenges and getting adjusted to the new social and political system that was thrust upon them. The concerns of the citizen movements had retreated into the background, often remembered with mere nostalgia. People in Western Germany, on the other hand, at first lived on their lives as before. With the bitter realisation of East German civil rights activists that unification had meant no serious moment in the West Germans' identity, 1989 finally seemed to belong to history.

I will now argue, however, that the building debates in Dresden with their discourses of public accountability, power, responsibilities and rights, raise exactly the issues that Land raises in the quote above as those unfinished ones of 1989. Again, there are calls for more transparent and democratic decision making processes, dialogic forums and round tables. And that is exactly the point in Dresden: for whereas at other times and places citizens may also be unsatisfied with city planning decisions and protest against them, in Dresden people see themselves as directly carrying on the project that was begun on the streets in autumn 1989, and see themselves as directly legitimised by this tradition. The citizens initiatives ask all the questions which they had put before the GDR regime now of the new political system. Therefore, the Dresden building debates provide an example of how the parameters of this new state are discussed and constructed at present.

This happens in a situation when the news is full of unprecedented figures of unemployment in the whole of Germany, ever sinking rates of economic growth and rising state debts. In May 2005, the Social Democrat leader Franz Müntefering's critique of large businesses and their lack of a moral and social conscience spurned a large public debate on the character of capitalism itself and the direction it was taking. As the writer Magnus Enzensberger ironically
commented,

All of a sudden the K-word (i.e. Kapitalismus), which for decades had been current only amongst the members of left-wing reading societies, flared up on all title-pages. Who would have thought, everybody seemed to ask, that such evil powers could be at work in an orderly welfare state like ours?" (Enzensberger 2005: 53).

This still ongoing debate brings out in the open what GDR civil rights activists (supported by some West German intellectuals) had been warning of since 1990: that not only the GDR state, but also the now unified German state is in need of new solutions, regarding its social, economic and also political system. The writer Günther Grass, for example, joined the capitalism debate by warning that freedom and democracy, which Germans have been given as a present by the allies after the war, is now in danger of being lost again: lost to an globalised economic dictatorship against which parliamentary democracy is powerless, and to which it bows by acting according to the dictates of economic lobbying groups (Grass 2005). In the remaining pages of this chapter, I will discuss how these contemporary German issues are reflected in the Dresden building debates, by focusing on the campaigners' critique of the German democratic system.

- The Issue of Civic Participation -
Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the anti-bridge campaigners' (and generally Dresden preservationists') frustration with the Dresden city council resulted from their realisation that they had lost their influence - which they had acquired through their laborious efforts on behalf of the built environment throughout the GDR years - after reunification to new economic interest and lobbying groups such as the ADAC. It is not the Dresden preservationists who now are in the powerful civil society position of which Bobbio, as quoted earlier, writes that they have the power to delegitimise and rel legitimise the ruling group: this position is taken up in Dresden by Western economic elites. In this context, the postulates of the 1980s civil rights movement are recalled again, and now directed at the representatives of the new state. In exploring this situation, I will take up the discussion in the previous chapter about the campaigners' understanding of civic participation. To start with a quote from an interview with a fervent anti-bridge campaigner:
What I personally think is the most important point about civic participation: if you don’t take on responsibility yourselves, things are done by those who are paid for them. Yet they often don’t personally care... very often they are people who have become disillusioned and depressed through the structures... they do their work with as little effort as possible, and with no personal involvement. (TF 5)

Again, the issue of "caring" for Dresden is raised, and the administrative officers are not trusted to do so. As another bridge opponent, losing control during the above mentioned, emotionally charged public hearings, shouted at the representatives of the administrative offices: "It is a scandal, that we are here and do the work that you are paid for!" Voluntary activists, on the other hand, are often mistrusted by administrative officers and seen as an unwanted opposition to their own work. Despite the official political calls for more citizens’ engagement in public causes and more voluntary work, many people active in voluntary citizens initiatives in Dresden complained to me that their efforts were not honoured, but thwarted by the officials:

Some days ago there was this interview in the paper with the president of the Saxon State office for archaeology, where she says: "we have elected bodies which are responsible for all this. We don’t need any extra-parliamentary opposition". And this is exactly the point! Here we have had a one-party reign for 70 years, and they don’t want anybody to put a spoke in their wheel(...) But the fact that there are people here who come together “extra-parliamentary”, in their leisure time, and take on things which should be in the responsibility of those who are paid for it, but are neglected by them, - you can see this again with that new bridge - this is both shit and it’s great. (TF 3)

The cited quote by the Saxon chief archaeologist was given in a context when the archaeologist office allowed the still existing cellars of ancient Dresden houses (which themselves had disappeared since the war) to be demolished, in order to build a new underground car park at the site. This decision was met with great opposition by enraged citizens who claimed that the cellars were not only valuable remains from the old Dresden back to medieval times, but had also served as refuge for hundreds of people in the bombing night in February 1945 and therefore were an important stone document of the war. The fact that the archaeologist, whose sole justification for her paid office should be the preservation of archaeological remnants, abandoned these cellars, and on top of this insulted the campaigners who tried to preserve the cellars - is seen by many
campaigners as an outrageous, but typical act of an administrative officer in Dresden, paradigmatically for a number of other similar cases in Dresden - the planning of the new bridge, where the citizens initiative came up with the correct figures, while the paid-for offices failed; and all the many projects where the city sold off valuable cultural sites to investors, in order to make quick money but not "caring for" Dresden.

In the quote above, the origin of such behaviour is argued to lie in the "seventy years of one party rule": a reference to the fact, that after the Nazi and the communist party rule, after reunification the CDU reigned in Dresden and Saxony with an absolute majority of over 50%, and that thus in the self-understanding of the ruling group not much had changed even after unification and the official institution of democracy. The implication of this is not as overcharged as it might seem at first: the argument is not that the CDU is the direct inheritor of the dictatorial parties in the two previous systems, but that its self-understanding is just as overconfident and remote from the concerns of the population as these authoritarian parties had been. As another person said to me: "We have only changed the bigwigs, apart from this, nothing has changed" (JF). Nevertheless, there is also a context to this accusation in the uneasiness amongst many eastern civic rights activists, that not only the Nazi time was not thoroughly dealt with after 1945 as many high Nazi officials were allowed to access positions in the new administrative systems (both in East and West), but that the same happened with the GDR system after reunification, and a large percentage of civil servants in the administrative apparatus were still in the same positions they had held before 1989. The disappointment of the civic rights activists lies in the fact that the new imported Western elites seem to feel comfortable in co-operating with those representatives of the old GDR system, while the former oppositional circles have to content themselves with peripheral roles again. From this perspective, civic participation is understood by the Dresden building campaigners in the same terms as it was during the GDR: as the legitimate opposition to an uncaring government.

This view of the relation between local and regional government on the one hand and the wider public on the other was implicitly supported also by the political theorist Wolfgang Patzelt who teaches at the Dresden University, who suggested to me that the fact that the majority in the Dresden city council had been held so long by the CDU is unusual compared to most other larger cities in
Germany: while the CDU may hold the majority in many federal state governments, cities are often ruled by a green or social democratic majority. Therefore, Patzelt suggested, there may be a vague feeling in Dresden that this is somehow not right. Local government is often seen as an instance of “civil society” rather than of state government, therefore, there might be a feeling that the power in it should be in the hands of those parties which are seen by the population as closer to the concerns of the citizens, i.e. the greens, or even the former communists in the former east.

In other words, the Dresden city council with its CDU politicians who often tend to obey calls from the CDU Saxon state government, is seen by many Dresdeners as another level of “those above”, rather than as an integral part of Dresden civil society. Rather than being seen as the true representatives of the Dresden citizens, the city council is seen as a representative of national and Saxon government. At the same time, this impression was reinforced by the proceedings of the CDU in Dresden itself: just because they had won subsequent elections with so overwhelming majorities, they never have had to court citizens’ support while in office, and have therefore neglected to build up a broad public sentiment of support. (This might also be one of the reasons for the unforeseen election failure last June.)

The fact, that there is so much readiness in Dresden to found citizen initiatives and postulate more civic participation opportunities in building matters may partly also be due to this party constellation in the Dresden city council. For the other parties in the city council have been so weak that whenever one party tried to push through some aim, they tried to accumulate some extra support and legitimisation from the public, which in several instances has led to the strange case that elected council representatives have founded citizens initiatives: i.e. making use of a form of democracy there to supplement and counterweigh representative politics, rather than a normal instrument used by elected representatives. This common practice may also have led the ground for the conservatives themselves, after their election defeat, to found a citizens initiative for the bridge and through it to campaign for a referendum on the bridge.

\[^{65}\text{Other recent examples of this practice included a move by the Saxon FDP to found a citizens initiative in support of the building of a large biomedical plant in an old landscape garden, against which another citizens initiative had protested for preservationist reasons. Compare also the instance described in the previous chapter, where an elected member of the city council founded a citizen initiative “a Saxon organ for the Frauenkirche”.}\]
In the beginning of this chapter, I have suggested that the anti-Waldschlößchen campaigns can be understood as a social movement, even though it is confined to very specific aims. Concluding and summing up the main themes raised in this chapter, I will open up the topic by indicating very briefly how the Dresden anti-bridge protests, as well as other preservationist campaigns in Dresden, might fit into the larger context of social dissatisfaction and protest in Eastern Germany (and increasingly Germany at large) 15 years after re-unification.

It might be coincidence, but the time when the anti-bridge campaigns reached their peak - in the winter of 2004/2005 - was a time when many other protests, locally and also nationally, against the current social and economic situation in Germany took place. The most large scale protests in 2004/5 were certainly those against the governments' social reforms ("Hartz 4"), which took place all over Germany, yet concentrated especially in the former East. And although the very specific agenda of the anti-bridge campaign largely concerns a different field of dissatisfaction from that of the "Hartz 4" protests - in Dresden, probably even different parts of the public participated in each, so that the "Hartz 4" protesters in many cases may have voted for the bridge - there are some parallel features shared by both. Firstly, the anti-bridge campaigners argued that the bridge would further increase Dresden's council debts, so that subsidies to necessary social services would be cut further - thus expressing the same concern over the decline of the social system as the Hartz 4 protesters. Secondly, moreover, the "Hartz 4" protesters adopted the former 1989 rallying cry of "we are the people", thus explicitly situating themselves in the 1989 civil rights tradition, just as the leaders of the anti-bridge campaign in Dresden did. Another recent protest movement in Dresden concerned the proposed closures of cultural institutions such as libraries, theatres and even the prestigious Dresdner Philharmonie. In early spring 2004, thousands of Dresdeners assembled on the

---

66 The name "Hartz 4" derives from Peter Hartz, the name of the leader of an expert's committee established by the German government under chancellor Gerhard Schröder in order to combat the ever-rising unemployment in Germany. Of the committee's several reform proposals, the fourth one was put into practice in January 2005, therefore the name "Hartz 4" under which this new social policy is known. It comprises changes in the social benefits system, in particular large cuttings in the height of unemployment benefits paid to the individual. As yet, there is no published academic analysis of this protest movement. For journalistic accounts, see for example the winter issues 2004/5 of the political magazine Der Spiegel.

67 This is not a statistical fact, but only the impression which I got by talking informally to a variety of people. Many Dresdeners who were moved to participating in the anti-Hartz 4-demonstrations out of existential anxieties, at the same time might have voted for the bridge because they believed in the promise that the bridge would bring more employment to Dresden.
streets to demonstrate against these plans - constituting the largest demonstrations by the general public since 1989 in Dresden. All these protest movements might be different in their aims; however, they all share the same uneasiness and discontent with the direction that the present socio-economic system is taking, and feel so strongly about it, that they are motivated to public protest. The 1989 inheritance which all these increasing protests claim is also expressed in the fact that they draw explicitly on an understanding of civic participation as the legitimate right of questioning and challenging state policies. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, this clashes with the dominant Western understanding of civic participation as balancing, supporting and legitimising the state. Therefore, citizens initiatives and interest groups in Dresden like those against the bridge are often perceived as "meddling", as an unwanted "extra-parliamentary opposition", i.e. as irritating rather than supportive by local state representatives. The people active in the Dresden citizens initiatives, in turn, regard their "meddling" as the right of a "questioning public" to react to the "backroom policies" and "autistic decision-making" (Entscheidungsausztimms) of the respective authorities (DNN 23/4/2002). They are not satisfied with a supportive role towards the state, but claim more symbolic "space" to partake in decisionmaking processes.

For all of these reasons, I would argue that the anti-bridge protests, and other preservationist campaigns in Dresden can be seen as one part of a greater growing protest movement in Germany 15 years after reunification. However, the intellectual elites leading preservationist protests in Dresden such as those against the Waldschlösschen bridge are more specific about what they protest against: they see instances like the planned bridge not just as a harm to a particular beautiful spot of Dresden, but also as a sign for the continuum of a politics of globalisation and market economy which as they argue led to the "selling off" of the east (Ausverkauf des Ostens) through unification in the first place.68 Instead of bringing

---

68 The point has often been made that reunification was not a unification between two parts which would both benefit by it, but the enlargement of the West German market at the cost of the eastern economic future. As a prime example for this process often the privatisation of the GDR economy through a state-run Trust, the Treuhand, is cited, as for example by Günther Grass: "It is no wonder that the people in the incorporated new Länder feel themselves treated as second-class citizens... the economic substance of the vanished state, once "the people's property", has been expropriated, often with the criminal help of the Treuhand... after the Treuhand had got its bargain, the West German business sector has refused necessary investments and the creation of jobs..."(2005: 3). For an English account of the privatisation of the GDR economy through the Treuhand, see John Borneman's chapter "The Invocation of the Rechtssstaat in East Germany: Governmental and Unification Criminality" in Borneman 1997.
in more business and employment, plans such as the bridge project in their view are part of a market policy which draws away business and employment from local sites, and benefits only capitalist, globalist interest groups, making the locals the losers. As I have argued in this chapter, their main concern is with the fact that these interest groups are so influential also with the city council, as well as with a wider public in Dresden.

In the following, last chapter of this thesis I will focus on the discourses of the Dresden preservationists once more, in order to explore how they attempt to oppose the success of the modernist, globalist, market discourse by portraying local, cultural narratives as a key resource of empowerment to Dresdeners.
The Frauenkirche as it appeared in spring 2004. In the foreground, the excavated remains of the cellars of the baroque Neumarkt houses, and the remains of Dresden’s medieval fortress walls. (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
CHAPTER 6

REMEMBERING THE PAST: NOSTALGIA AS EMPOWERMENT

In the previous chapter, I have described how Dresden’s identity is defended against a trend to uniformity in urban planning, in which each place is made to look exactly like any other. However, there is also a temporal dimension to the discourse of Dresden’s identity, which poses a continuity of Dresden’s identity through history. This is at the core of the whole Frauenkirche rebuilding endeavour; but also issues like the Waldschlößchen bridge critiques thrive on the same discourse: that there has never been a bridge at this site, and that the site as it is now and has grown dear to Dresdeners over the centuries would be lost forever. In this chapter, I will explore in more detail the ways in which the past is dealt with in the rebuilding and preservation discourse. The Dresden preservationists’ general approach to the past is encapsulated in a quote from an avid campaigner for the historical rebuilding of the Neumarkt, the area around the Frauenkirche:

In former times, a city has grown like a tree. They have a stem, layer on layer, and you have seen by the annual rings: this is an old town, this is an extension from the 19th century... and then there was the destruction. And the tree was really destroyed. And in this case it has further been totally destroyed through the demolition by the communists... [...] our identity has been lost through the bombardings of the second world war... and many people want this to be rebuilt. That’s the point: you have to know where you come from, in order to know, where you’re going to go. Without this past we don’t have any future. And we need an image of what our past was like... architecture. (FR 1-3)

In this quote, buildings are seen as the visible guarantee for memories of a pre-war past, the knowledge of which is argued to be important for facing the future.\(^6\) I will contrast this tradition of local memory with the very different approach to the past which Dresden preservationists since reunification have encountered amongst the incoming Western elites. In the latters’ perspective, it is not the pre-war past as in Dresden, but rather the post-war past of the economic miracle and the successful

\(^6\) Compare Hall’s argument that identities are not about “the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our ,roots‘”. (Hall 1996: 4)
history of democracy and market economy which are remembered as key identity narratives. In this chapter, I will discuss the ensuing competitions between the two memory narratives.

As I will argue, the two different traditions of memory correspond to different experiences of power in the present post-unification context. Whether a particular person claims belonging to a Dresden identity narrative or not, depends to some extent on the position of this individual in the social field and his or her opportunities for influencing decision making processes. People belonging to the Dresdener Bürgertum group (as described in the second chapter) or to the GDR civil rights movement (see third chapter) tend to stress the importance of preserving the uniqueness of “Dresden identity”, while people from Western Germany who have moved to Dresden after 1990 - urban planners and investors, journalists and architects - tend to adopt a narrative which sets itself up in conscious opposition to this first one, stresses the importance of progress and “catching up with the rest of the world” and describes the “Dresden identity” narrative as harmful for this aim. This is because the first group sees their chance to be active, and to have power and influence, within the Dresden framework, while the second group senses a possibility for power within an all-German narrative of progress.

In exploring these issues in this concluding chapter, I will discuss why preservationism is such an important concern in Dresden in the context of the identity debates of reunification. I will argue that the preservationist circles mobilise local narratives of the past as an empowering device, in order to strengthen both the self-confidence amongst Dresdeners in general, and in order to strengthen their own position in Dresden’s contemporary society.

DIFFERENT AESTHETICS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN EAST AND WEST

Amongst the many mutually surprising things which East and West Germans discovered about the respective others after reunification was also the different appearance of East and West German towns and cities. West German towns looked new, refurbished and orderly, while East German houses largely showed crumbling, un-renovated facades. So far, this confirmed the cliché images of each, and provided a potential source of pride in the West, and of admiration and sometimes envy in the East. What came as a surprise was the fact that the former
widespread negative evaluation of the condition of the Eastern built environment, and the positive image of the Western urban landscapes, had to be reassessed by many. In particular, those East Germans who during the GDR time had campaigned for the preservation and maintenance of the old existing urban structures were horrified at the West German towns, where most old buildings had vanished completely, and the few remaining old ones had been made to look like new ones through insensitive renovation (e.g. thick layers of bright paint on facades which formerly had shown natural stone, etc.). Moreover, whole streets had been demolished in order to widen the roads for better traffic flow, and each city, town or village was surrounded by huge extensions of new developments, shopping centres and private housing estates. Much of this was not due to war destructions, but an outcome of urban planning strategies of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Many West Germans who visited the East after reunification were equally struck by the ways the buildings and urban landscapes looked. In a bad condition as they were, they still largely looked like towns on old pre-war photographs: old residential quarters and old-town centres survived, even when they were left to slowly crumble to pieces, as described in chapter 3. As in the quote at the start of this section on the rings of a tree, in East German towns and cities therefore the various layers of history remained visible. Old buildings still standing, often still with the old scattered plaster of the time in which they were built, ruins, and new GDR buildings all contributed to shape the appearance of East German towns - in marked contrast to West German towns, where everything only reached back to the 1960s.

In talks to me, many East Germans confessed that they had lost much of their admiration for the excellent upkeep of the West German built environment, and only now began to value the more “naturally-grown” appearance of Eastern towns. Likewise, many Westerners expressed their great admiration of the East German "unfalsified“ urban landscapes to me. One of these people is an art historian who left West Germany in 1990 and came to live in Dresden, and subsequently co-founded the society for the rebuilding of the historical Neumarkt. He told me that one reason why he has made Dresden his new home was that he couldn’t stand the West German whitewashed cityscapes any more, and that he believed that there were still chances in the East for more sensitive planning and preservation strategies, in order to preserve built structures which had disappeared in Western Germany as early as in the 1960s. In particular, his critique
is directed against the trend in West Germany which has started right after 1945, to demolish even buildings which had survived the war, in order to annihilate anything reminiscent of the past, and to "make space" for a completely new beginning, untampered by the ghosts of the past:

It has been said, also in the West, that the past disappears if we demolish all this, then it will never reappear. But exactly there lies the error. The past is very much alive [...]. I think the only possibility to get to grips with the past is ...dialogue. And a vital part of this is the built environment. The built past. They wanted to bury Nazism by attempting to demolish architecture [...], generally, demolition in order to smooth down the past, this is just not right. (FR 7)

His view is shared also by many East Germans to whom I spoke, and who lamented the policies of "renovation" which commenced after 1990 also in the East. Now, many surviving old buildings are either demolished or renovated in a way so that nothing is left of their original appearance and substance.

**COMPETING TRADITIONS OF MEMORY**

As the quote above suggests, the reasons for these different aesthetics lie not just in the economic affluence in the West and the lack of money in the East, but also in two different dealings with the German past. I will argue that the dominant culture of remembrance in Western Germany has tended to "forget" 1945 and everything which had been before, and concentrated instead on the successful history of the German Federal Republic after the war. This selective memory was facilitated by the visible symbols of the past, i.e. the built environment: mostly, West Germans have been surrounded by buildings hailing from the last fifty years. By contrast, the East German public memory has been nurtured by a built environment which constantly reminded one of older, pre-war times. Against the unsuccessful attempts of the communist state officials to foster a new communist identity, oppositional circles cherished memories of the non-communist pre-war past, and also cultivated an oppositional remembrance of the Nazi-time and the war itself. In their selective memories, it was rather the GDR time itself, i.e. everything after 1945, which maybe was not forgotten, but certainly downplayed in the public consciousness. Before I come to the special role that Dresden has come to play recently in unified-German commemoration, I will briefly discuss both cultures of memory and forgetting.
In the political self-understanding and self-representation of the Federal Republic, official proclamations of German guilt have become standard motifs in political rhetoric, and infrequent calls by conservative politicians or intellectuals to finally leave the past behind are usually met with a storm of disapproval. However, as a few people have pointed out, these phrases of humility sometimes seem to be merely for political correctness' sake: one pays lip service to the horrors of the German past, and then moves on. One of the most scathing critiques of this attitude has been posed by the German born writer W.G. Sebald, who in the 1970s left Western Germany to live in England. In a highly controversial essay he writes:

Notwithstanding our laboured efforts for the so-called coming-to-terms-with-the-past, it seems to me that we Germans today are a people of striking history-blindness and traditionlessness. Whenever we look back, especially on the years 1930 to 1950, it is always a simultaneous looking and looking away. (Sebald 1999: 25)

Sebald's thesis is that the deep and absolute horror which the bombed cities of Germany should have awoken in their inhabitants, a horror of what had occasioned the war, and what had become of the German nation, has from the beginning been suppressed and thus negated by a collective silence. Instead, "this total destruction does not appear as the awful end of a collective aberration, but rather as the first step of successful rebuilding". (ibid.: 14). He speaks of

the surprising ability of self-anaesthetisation of a society that apparently has emerged from the war of destruction without any greater harm... which allows this society to recognise in fact its own genesis out of absolute degradation, but at the same time to blot out this fact from its emotions, or even to make it into a further laurel in the list of those things which one has conquered victoriously, without any signs of weakness. (p.20)

Therefore, he concludes,

---

70 Compare for example the huge debate provoked by the renowned German writer Martin Walser in 2002, when at the occasion of being awarded Germany's most prestigious book prize he delivered a speech calling for a new self-definition of Germans, beyond Auschwitz and the Holocaust (see also Giesen 2002).

71 Similar critiques of the collective silence in western Germany have been posed by leading intellectuals such as Günther Grass, and in academic literature by Mitscherlich 1967, Schwan 1997, Assmann 1999. See also Wolfgang Schivelbusch's exploration of what he calls the "culture of defeat" (Schivelbusch 2001).
The meanwhile legendary and in some aspects indeed admirable German process of rebuilding, which after the destruction's by the war enemies denoted something like a second gradual liquidation of one's own prehistory, forbade from the beginning any form of retrospective, [...] [because of] the creation of a new, faceless reality, and lined up the population without exception towards the future and committed them to silence about what had happened to them. (p.15)

Rebuilding here is used in the more general sense in which it has become a great myth in Germany, in tandem with the "economic miracle", namely how in only a few years after the war, the immeasurable amount of rubble had been removed and given way to the orderly planned towns and cities of Western Germany, where all looks new and fine and nothing reminds of pre-war history, and the war itself. In other words, in the German Federal Republic any memory and commemoration of the Nazi time and the war has been suppressed, and this has found expression in the built environment. One didn't want to be reminded of one's history, but preferred to think of 1945 as "zero hour" instead, a complete new beginning. Therefore, apart from the fast rebuilding of a few landmark historic city centres72, in almost all West German towns and cities even those buildings and urban quarters which had survived the war intact were demolished in the 1950s and 1960s, in order to express Germany's new identity as the country of the economic miracle through new housing quarters and road networks.

The GDR's official stance on 1945 was not much different from that of Western Germany. Here, one's own roots in the German past were disputed with the argument that fascism had been the outcome of capitalist imperialism, while communism now was a completely new era, which had its roots anywhere but in the German past. However, as I have discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the oppositional circles in the GDR nourished a lively culture of commemoration. The population was constantly reminded of what had been by the still existent old buildings, but also by the many ruins and empty spaces in the midst of the city centre. The attitude of many of the oppositionally-minded preservationists in the GDR time was one of "if the state refuses to remember, we must." Local memory is full of stories of the 13 February, the night of the bombing of Dresden, and the events of Nazi Germany which ultimately led to it. An institutional roof for

72 such as Munich and Nuremberg, where the facades of houses have been rebuilt in a vaguely historicising style, and new modern structures have been constructed behind the facades.
commemorative events was provided by the churches, as I have described in chapter 3.

At the same time, there existed amongst these Eastern oppositional circles a certain consciousness of the fact that their own commemoration contrasted with the widespread “forgetting” in Western Germany. As one Lutheran pastor from the Bildungsburger milieu put it to me, in explanation of the fact that after his studies at a West German university in the early 1950s he returned to the East, to Dresden:

I always knew that I never wanted to be a pastor in Western Germany. Everything was different there... The West Germans so to speak have won the war. This is an ugly sentence, but it’s the truth: they have been rewarded for Auschwitz. They got the Marshall plan, and they quickly forgot what they had done to the Jews. That this was not a small thing, the holocaust. And there are so many nouveau riches there... No, I didn’t like that atmosphere. (KH 9)

With reunification these two different cultures of commemoration in East and West met. On the one side, there stood the collective culture of memory in the West which tended to “forget” everything before and including 1945, concentrating its pride on the collective memory of the common achievements in the Federal Republic of Germany, after 1945. On the other side, there was the population of the ex-GDR who did not share these crucial post-war memories of West Germans. Moreover, a lively culture of remembrance concerned especially that period which West Germans tend to downplay and “forget” in their collective memory: the time before 1945. Of course, this differentiation is oversimplified: West Germans of course do share also some national memories of before the war, and East Germans continue to feel as a community especially because of their common memories of the GDR time, which is not shared by West Germans. Yet there is a tendency in dominant Western discourses to look forward from 1945, to be proud of all that one has achieved since then, and also today to continue looking forward. In the East, and maybe places like Dresden especially, by contrast, all through the time of the GDR there was a tendency to look backward from 1945, to times one could feel proud of (Saxon greatness, Baroque glory etc.), as well as to remember the war and 1945, as a part of an expression of oppositional sentiment towards the GDR, as I have discussed in chapters 2 and 3. While in the West, as Sebald has argued, 1945 was seen as the chance for a new beginning, in
ruined Dresden it could appear as the end of a great tradition. As I have shown, the present of the GDR was especially in bürgerlich discourses experienced as a period of standstill and "hibernation", while the hopes lay in a German reunification that would build on pre-war values. After reunification had been achieved, many of these oppositional circles felt disappointed that the dominant identity narratives of unified Germany instead continued to rely on West-German memories of the period after 1945, i.e. on memories that could not be shared by the East German part of the reunified nation.

Interesting in this context is Ernest Renan’s definition of national identity, famously quoted by Benedict Anderson, namely that the "essence of a nation“ consists not only of all that its members have in common, but also in the fact that they all need to have forgotten some things (Renan 1882; Anderson 1991). Part of the difficulties of reunified Germany of really becoming one "imagined community“ certainly lies in the fact that not only each has different memories, but also that each thrives on a different culture of forgetting.

The Dresden debates about whether one should demolish or preserve old buildings are paradigmatic for this general German conundrum: whether one should look for the routes of one’s identity, or look for a new identity, disconnected from the past and turned towards the future. While originally the one attitude was that of oppositional GDR people, and the other the dominant one of West German self-understanding, now both are competing for dominance in the new context of unified Germany. This was well illustrated by the ado surrounding the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden in February 2005.

- The 60th Anniversary of the Dresden Bombing -
The local memory of the horrendous events of 13 February 1945 seems to stand isolated and not to fit into the ubiquitous narratives of “looking forward, not backward” which Dresdener increasingly encounter since unification. This finds expression also in the fact that was often pointed out to me during my fieldwork, namely, that today there is no official memorial or monument to the 13 February. The ruin of the Frauenkirche, which during the GDR years had served this purpose and by many had been seen as an antiwar memorial, was removed. Against the initial opposition of many civil rights activists, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche was commenced under the slogan that it was important to “heal wounds", not to keep them artificially open. As I have shown in chapter 3, for some members of
the Dresden peace movement of the late GDR years, who after re-unification voted against the rebuilding of the church and for the preservation of the ruin, the discourse of "healing wounds" sounded uncomfortably close to the western discourse of "moving forward and putting the past behind". While now, 15 years on, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche is approved of by a majority of people, there in parallel still exists a widespread sense which supports Sebald's thesis, namely that the "closing of wounds" would now forever prevent a real debate with the past.

It is also for this reason that the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche takes an ambiguous place within the Dresden rebuilding and preservation discourses: many people who wholeheartedly campaign against the building of the new bridge and thus against the destruction of the Elbe meadows, or for the preservation of old urban quarters, often feel slightly uneasy about the white, newish-looking Frauenkirche which now is already standing in the city centre. It is still a matter for debate, whether the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche fits the metaphor of the grown city, where you can see the epochs like the rings on a tree, or whether it negates this metaphor. Thus, the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche thematises an ambiguity which one could express as the difference between rebuilding and preservation: While rebuilding involves a negation of the past, an undoing of history, preservation emphasises exactly the quality of buildings as historical beings. Depending on one's standpoint, the Frauenkirche can be claimed for both approaches to the past. Today, the new-built Frauenkirche seems to fit better into the Western discourse of forgetting the War, than into the local discourse of remembrance. The strange feeling that many Dresdeners (at least those active in the preservationist circles - altogether certainly a minority in the Dresden population) have about the Frauenkirche may also be linked to the fact that it has been grasped by leading German politicians as a new national German symbol, at the same time losing some of its importance as a local symbol, as I have described in chapters 3 and 4.

It therefore might be no coincidence, that it is of all possible buildings in Germany the Frauenkirche which recently has become the symbol for a new Germany-wide commemoration of the war. In February 2005, the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden became a large-scale event, broadcast almost world-wide, with the Frauenkirche in the centre of it. I think that part of the suddenly huge national and international interest which the anniversary awoke is
due to the fact that it is for West Germans almost the first time that the war and the bombing of German cities are publicly commemorated on such a large scale. It was as if in the West for the first time the deep silence was broken. This also finds expression in the flood of books on the bombing of German cities which suddenly appear on the market.\textsuperscript{73} Parallel to the celebrations there was an academic historical conference in Dresden on the long avoided question whether the bombing of German cities was a war crime or the justified retaliation by the countries which Germany had attacked before. That the whole issue of commemorating the war is a sensitive issue indeed was also shown by the fact that right wing extremists also used this day to demonstrate and to articulate their versions of Germany’s innocent victimhood. In the midst of all the uneasiness which the 60th anniversary commemoration therefore awoke in Dresden and Germany generally, it seemed as if the Frauenkirche for journalists, politicians and public figures was the redeeming element on this day, about which they could safely broadcast and which they could safely make the heart of their public speeches - the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche has become an official symbol with only "good" meanings, which through its history of course is somehow linked to the war and therefore a good symbol for the "right kind" of commemoration, but at the same time far removed from it, "future-oriented", and already in nothing reminiscent of the war ruin it still had been fifteen years ago.

Yet for exactly the same reason, there were many people with whom I talked who had been part of the 1980s peace movement in Dresden, of which likewise the 13 February and the then ruin of the Frauenkirche had been the most important symbol. They said that for them, the symbolic power which the ruin had hold was lost now with the rebuilding of the church, and that also the straightforward meaning of the unofficial antiwar memorial as a peace symbol, in opposition to the armament policies of an authoritarian regime, had become convoluted both through the rebuilding, and through the annexation by the official Western discourse of those in power. Somehow they felt that their own tradition of commemoration had been taken away from them the moment the official Western elites discovered the Frauenkirche as their symbol for the newly discovered act of commemoration.

Ironically, even those immediately responsible for the rebuilding project in

\textsuperscript{73} Most recently, the equally controversial works: Jörg Friedrich (2002): Der Brand; and Frederick Taylor (2005) Dresden: Tuesday, February 13, 1945.
the Frauenkirche Foundation and Society seemed to feel the strange imbalance between rebuilding the Frauenkirche in all its former beauty, but at the same time attempting to hold on to its symbolic meaning as an antiwar memorial. They ordered that the church (still a building site inside) should be opened to the public for two hours; however, the rich painting of the walls and ceilings should be covered, so that people would only come for "quiet remembrance" and not "misuse" the opportunity, in order to visit the church as a tourist attraction. For this of course is exactly the problem: the Frauenkirche has been marketed for the past decade exactly as a tourist attraction, and now all of a sudden those responsible for it sense an irreconcilability of this with the idea of the antiwar monument. Indeed, the sudden fear that it is "mistaken" for a tourist attraction seemed so great that there were leaflets distributed in which people were given exact orders of how to behave in the church: "to walk with measured tread on the pre-set route past the chancel, and there to put a candle on the pre-set place" (DNN 11/02/2005). This organised, predetermined form of remembrance unsurprisingly met with little enthusiasm from a wider public (many of whom probably indeed had come to glance at the much-spoken of ceiling paintings and were now disappointed), and with a good deal of mockery amongst those preservation activists with whom I had become acquainted during my fieldwork.

- Rebuilding as Contesting the Western Narrative of Progress -

After this short digression to the new form of war commemoration and the Frauenkirche’s symbolic problems, I would like to return briefly to the issue discussed before, namely that East Germans engaged with preservationist issues feel misunderstood and offended by the new post-unification discourse of "looking-forward", demolishing old buildings and building new structures “which are an expression of our modern spirit of the time”. In opposition to this discourse, any sort of rebuilding or preservation which relates itself to the substances and images left from before the war, is regarded by those who campaign for it as a constructive engagement with the past. In view of the fact that calls for preservation and historical rebuilding generally rely on a local identity narrative, while critics counterpose a narrative of universal modern progress, to rebuild Dresden at the same time comes to mean a contribution towards the general German “coming-to-terms-with-the past”. In other words, those Dresdeners who campaign for preservation today come to see themselves not as
hopelessly backward in relation to Western Germany (as they are often accused of being by their critics), but as a kind of avant-garde in finally dealing with the past, which the West has not managed to do to the present day. As the editor of the Dresden quarterly journal “Dresdner Hefte” expressed it to me:

In the West they had a different kind of the suppression of memory: not through ideology as in the GDR, but through economic affluence. And that’s a task which we now have to accomplish as well: making their lies transparent. Ours have been seen through. Now theirs. There always follows suppression on suppression on suppression... (HL p.10)

In this quote, the modernising discourses of for example the proponents of the Waldschlößchen bridge, postulating financial investment and development, are seen as an act of the suppression of memory through the power of the economic market. Implicitly, this discourse juxtaposes memory of the past as an act of culture to future-oriented market discourses. The rebuilding and preservation of buildings - keeping publicly visible what has been - is seen as the way to achieve this “coming to terms with the past”. Interestingly, by many of the proponents of this a continuous line is drawn between their efforts today and that of the GDR years:

In the GDR - resistance often also meant resistance against the demolition of buildings. Today in capitalism, the preservationists are again viewed negatively. Then, the “old men of the Augustusstrasse” [i.e. of the preservation office] were insulted as reactionaries, and today again we are called reactionaries... That is no democracy, and therefore I’m somehow honoured to be called reactionary by them... (FR 6)

Here, preservationism is constructed as opposition to a dominant power, and therefore also as a legitimate democratic right. The preoccupation with history itself thus becomes a means to demonstrate and support one’s own position in society: just as an inclination towards “culture” in the GDR years could serve as an expression of opposition against the communist state, so today the use and understanding of historical narratives can be constructed as opposition to dominant Western narratives, and therefore as a strengthening of one’s own identity as Dresdener - Dresden here signifying not a part of backward, communist East-Germany, but of oppositional, cultured East-Germany.

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the discourse of culture, which has served as a marker of Dresden identity since the nineteenth century, and with
a new impetus also during the GDR years. Today again, this is perceived as an issue: "We have to understand which conflicts have led to our being here in the present. This is culture", somebody defined it for me. If what happens to buildings symbolises the rebuilding and preservation of identity, then culture is yet another perceived tradition which is seen to be honoured through rebuilding and preservation. For not only is the making-present of the past itself regarded as cultured, but those who partake in it underline their own belonging into a long tradition of being cultured. Those who deny the importance of history, are therefore uncultured by definition. This is applied to many of the planners and politicians who have come from the West and now hold the actual decision-making positions in Dresden, (like those urban planners who want to build the new bridge). Similar to what happened in the GDR, their dominant positions thus are questioned through the posing of a different narrative. In a way, the Dresden preservationists stage a discourse of culture against the Westerners’ discourse of the market. Thus, the rebuilding and preservation of old buildings not only safeguards Dresden's identity through history, but also that of the Dresdeners who identify with their city.

THE PAST AS A SOURCE OF EMPOWERMENT

So why is the memory of the Dresden past so important for the Dresdener preservationists, and why is it generally disregarded or even refused by the representatives of the new Western elites? Helpful for answering this question is the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who in the 1920s/30s was the first to argue that personal memory is conditioned by “social frameworks of memory”: “our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory, and is thus capable of the act of recollection” (Halbwachs 1992: 39). In Dresden, it therefore depends on the "social framework“ to which an individual belongs - i.e. whether he or she feels a sense of belonging with the bürgerlich cultural elites, or is a former civil rights activist, or is a West German urban developer or investor, etc. - which memories and interpretations he or she links, for example, to a building like the Frauenkirche. Depending on this social framework, one person will remember the Frauenkirche predominantly as a significant architectural achievement of the Baroque symbolising Dresden’s glory as “Florence on the Elbe”, another will focus on memories of its ruin and see it above all as an antiwar memorial, and for a third the rebuilt church is a symbol for
reunification, and so on. A landmark building like the Frauenkirche derives its symbolic power from the fact that it helps sustain various narratives of the past at once. However, it has a different meaning, a different symbolic function, in each of them. It is therefore something that the anthropologist Eric Wolf has called a master symbol:

 [...] a national master symbol, not as the unified projection of a supposedly homogeneous national culture, but as a manifold of heterogeneous referents drawn from various traditions [...] combined into a multifunctional unity. [...] they provide the cultural idiom of behaviour and ideal representations through which different groups in a society can pursue and manipulate their different fates within a co-ordinated framework (Wolf 2001: 140).

These different narratives can be adopted by various people, in various simultaneous combinations, for various reasons. But what are these reasons? Halbwachs argues that we like to dwell in memories because the act of remembrance is an empowering one for each individual. For while in the present society “we occupy a definite position” in the social structure and are “subject to constraints” which the society imposes upon us, the society of our memory provides us with the “illusion of a society that does not imprison us, and is there on our acceptance”: it does not impose itself on us as the present society does, but we seem to be free to recall it when and how we wish (Halbwachs 1992: 50). Memory in this sense is about the power relations between the individual and society: in the present, society tells me what to do, in memory, I am dominating society. Thus, Halbwachs draws a connection between the process of memory and the individual’s position in society, in a particular take on the old structure/agency debate: in the present we are powerless parts of the social structure, in memory we seem to have the possibility for agency.

According to this argument, one could argue that in Dresden memories of the past provide people with a greater sense of control, while the present with its social changes and insecurities might give people a sense of disempowerment. Therefore Dresdners nurse their local memories, as opposed to the West German elites’ discourses of progress towards a globalist future. Dresdners tend to rely on a local Dresden and Saxon narrative for their identity, at a time when East Germans are presented with a narrative of the success of West Germany in becoming a democracy and one of the world’s leading economies. East Germany, on the other hand, in this narrative is portrayed as a place where only now
democracy is introduced in a laborious process, at the same time swallowing up such a large amount of subsidies from the West that they put West Germany’s economic wealth at risk. The local past is able to provide a strong and empowering narrative to be held up against this: for it means remembering a past when Dresden as a royal capital city had more possibility for independent agency in Germany and even Europe than it now has as a provincial East German city. Dresden’s buildings are seen as the expression of this, the constituting elements of a narrative which allows for a more comfortable identification, which gives individuals a more empowering sense of their own identity.\footnote{Compare Anthony Smith’s concern with golden ages, of which he writes: “The ideal of a golden age is not simply a form of escapism or consolation for present tribulations. For later generations, the standard of golden ages comes to define the normative character of the evolving community. They define what is, and what is not to be admired and emulated. They define an ideal, which is not so much to be resurrected ... as to be recreated in modern times.” (Smith 1991)}

The Dresden local narratives are especially propagated by preservationist circles, who appeal to a wider public to identify locally. As one active campaigner for the rebuilding of the Neumarkt put it:

Dresden was one of the leading cities in Europe. If some of this was to be rebuilt, everybody would look at Dresden, Dresden would be a world-wide example... And our society campaigns for this, and in doing so we also want to give some self-confidence back to the Dresdener... a self-confidence which they have lost through the war and the 40 years of communism. (SH 3)

This attitude serves a twofold purpose: first, to lend a source of more empowerment to Dresdeners; second, to generate a wider support amongst Dresdeners’ for the preservationists’ cause, in order that their own position in society might be strengthened. For as I have argued in the previous chapters, the whole field of preservation, architecture and “culture” which had a (partly unofficial, i.e. not party-supported) very high status in Dresden during the time of the GDR, has been losing this status since reunification to more economically and politically powerful circles. Those in turn are the ones thriving on the narratives of progress and a market-oriented future. An example of the preservationists’ loss of influence to these new elites was symbolically provided by a recent instance concerning the rebuilding of the Neumarkt, the area around the Frauenkirche: in the course of the building of a new subterranean car park, the remnants of Dresden’s medieval fortress walls, dating from before the 12th century, were
The Frauenkirche in summer 2005. In the foreground, the construction work on the new Neumarkt houses is beginning. The archeological excavations which had been visible at the site have been demolished to make space for the underground car park. The new houses are built out of concrete. As a concession to the Society for the historical rebuilding of the Neumarkt, some of the concrete houses will later be decorated with historicising facades. (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
found. This was spectacular, since it revolutionised Dresden historiography which so far had assumed that Dresden was founded in the early 13th century. However, notwithstanding the archaeological value of the site, it was in the way of the underground car park: in the end, the fortress remnants were demolished in order to give way to a totality of ten more parking spaces. The preservationist circles in Dresden which ferociously protested against this happening felt powerless in the end.

This loss of influence was also lamented by the co-ordinator of Dresden’s newly granted UNESCO world heritage status, who in a recent public lecture expressed his hopes that the Dresden Elbe valley would not further be given to insensitive estate development, which would impair further the harmonious balance between natural and built environment. With some envy, the heritage co-ordinator showed photo slides of the English town of Bath, where the National Trust has prevented further urban development by buying up whole stretches of the surrounding hills, making the land unavailable to estate developers. As the Dresden heritage co-ordinator argued, it was this kind of powerful position - which the National Trust holds in Britain - that German preservationists can only dream of at the moment. The gaining of a similarly influential status is also what the Dresden preservationist circles - who realised at the end of the GDR time in retrospect that they had gained unexpected influence over the GDR functionaries - are aiming at achieving again in the new social-political system.

The way in which local narratives of the past are mobilised to this end, relates to a question which is explored by Jonathan Hearn: that of the connection between narratives of history, and of agency. Asking "how actual people connect with the collective narratives that their lives and particular circumstances present to them" (Hearn 2002b: 5), Hearn argues that "narratives can be understood according to how they express one of three paradigmatic agentic situations". Either individuals sense a possibility for agency "with the flow" of a narrative, or their "will and desire runs contrary to the flow/emplotment of an encompassing narrative", or "the agent/protagonist’s will is relatively indeterminate, and the sense of emplotment relatively weak and open-ended" (ibid.: 9). Hearn’s model helps us to understand the fact that decisionmakers from the former west tend to damn too much identification with Dresden as "bad nostalgia", while members of the former GDR cultural elites or of the 1980s civil rights movement argue for the need to remember the past. Western decisionmakers and urban planners tend to
identify with positive narratives of the German unification, because they have benefited from it and today hold powerful positions in Dresden. Somebody like the head of the Dresden planning office who attempts to push through the building of the Waldschlößchen bridge, for example, gains a sense of empowerment "with the flow" of the Western modernising globalist narrative. Identification with the local Dresden narratives of the past, by contrast, to some extent means to go "against the flow" of the Western modernising market narrative. However, it provides an alternative, local, framework for agency, which is empowering for those who adopt it. It is therefore no coincidence that those who identify with the Dresden narrative are also those who argue that they should have more possibilities for active participation in decision-making processes. By contrast, those who find their own empowerment in western, globalist narratives of progress feel threatened by these narratives of local memory and condemn their proponents as "political troublemakers" and unwanted "extra-parliamentary opposition".

- The Question of Nostalgia -
Critics of rebuilding and preservationism in Dresden often deride the preservationists' concerns with the past as nostalgia. For those who endorse the narrative of progress, nostalgia is viewed as a way of conservative escapism that neglects the less than rosy aspects of the past and prevents a positive orientation towards the future. Especially in intellectual circles I encountered much ridicule directed against the preservation of historical buildings, not to mention the historical rebuilding of formerly destroyed buildings. I became especially aware of this dominant perspective when in a graduate seminar in Leipzig other participants asked what method I would use in order to dismantle the fake and Disneyland-esque rebuilding process in Dresden. That I wanted to do so was taken for granted.75 I think that a big danger lies in this normative perspective: for while it is certainly important to analyse discourses like the ones mobilised in favour of the Frauenkirche rebuilding thoroughly and not to take them at face value, it is equally important not to take the equally ideologised discourses of the proponents of progress and modern architecture at face value. Self-evident and unquestionable as this may seem, it is surprising how pervasive and acceptable the "modernism,  

75 A similar perspective is also adopted by Köhnke and Kösser (2002) in their work on Saxon imagery.
not reactionism" discourse is amongst intellectuals. I suspect that this is due to the general political “left” orientation of German intellectuals, which identifies with the old left-liberal narrative of progress and modernity, as against a more "right-wing" perspective of supposed conservatism, retrogression into the past and nostalgia. Likewise, the American historian and specialist of German post-war history Charles Maier, for example, writes that “nostalgia is to memory as kitsch is to art” (cited in Boym 2001: 14).

However, I would like to argue that nostalgia does not need to mean a negation of the future and regress into the past. Rather, I will suggest that nostalgia is an important aspect in the construction of personal identities. In the following discussion, I will firstly move towards a more positive evaluation of the concept of nostalgia, and secondly open up the concept to encompass a relation to the future as well as to the past.

- Nostalgia - directed towards the past and the future -
When nostalgia is focused upon today in Germany, its paradigm often is seen to lie in the infamous “Ostalgie” - nostalgia for the East - embodied in such blockbuster films as “Good-bye Lenin”: the East Germans’ longing for their secure past in cosy niches, where everybody had employment. In this sentiment, the actual experiences of living in an authoritarian state are glossed over and forgotten, and even formerly hated expressions of this, such as the singing of militarist communist songs, the propagandist news broadcasts and the inadequate outputs of the GDR economy, such as the car-brand Trabant, are remembered as curiosa and receive cult-status.

However, parallel to this, another form of nostalgia runs, which could be called a nostalgia for the oppositional movement: it remembers the atrocities of the Stasi, and campaigns for a more lucid reappraisal of that time. It might be questioned if this form of memory of bad times can be called nostalgia at all. In a certain sense, I think, it can: in chapter 2, I have mentioned the positive hopes that people during the GDR times attached to the idea of a reunified Germany. Then, many people felt a sense of nostalgia for the times before the Third Reich, often even for the times when Saxony still was an independent kingdom. Their nostalgia had parallels to that of an exile: one had lost this home temporarily, but there still

76 a phenomenon also discussed by other authors on postcommunist regimes. For example, compare Boym on the two different cultures of remembrance in Post-Soviet Russia (2001: 63).
was hope to regain it in the future. This “homecoming” would be achieved with the reunification of Germany and the reinstallment of the Saxon state, at least in its federal form. Thus, the nostalgia of the GDR times had had a definite positive, hopeful and forward looking ring to it. Today, there is a widespread sense that this utopia hasn’t been fulfilled yet. Although Germany is unified again and Saxony is a political entity once more, there is a widespread feeling of disappointment in the original hopes attached to these facts. This finds expression for example in the present building debates, with the preservation activists’ calls for more political participation, which I have described in the previous chapter. If nostalgia is a longing for homecoming, it could therefore be argued that there is a feeling of a still pending homecoming to the utopias of reunified Germany. The calls against the forgetting of the injustices of the GDR regime, and not to bury one’s original hopes into a better future, are part of this form of nostalgia - a nostalgia for the nostalgia of the GDR time. It runs contrary to today’s nostalgia for the cosy security of the GDR.

Therefore, if nostalgia is the longing for a better past, there is more to it in Dresden than a sentimental longing for the cosy, homely looks of baroque buildings (as the campaigners are sometimes accused of). If there is nostalgia in the building debates, it is also directed to a time when the people had a say in building matters, and by extension in public affairs in general. This time is located to some extent in the 18th century - when the city council set up binding rules for town planning to which everybody who built a house had to adhere, in contrast to today when only the financial power of private investors and developers seems to count; to a lesser extent it is located also in the GDR - here the semi-official distributions of power play a role which I have discussed in the second chapter and which provided a great zone of influence for some exposed preservationists, art historians etc. While it seems absurd that possibilities of influence are perceived to have been greater in the 18th century and during the authoritarian GDR years than now in a democracy, this is exactly the point: part of today’s nostalgia that motivates the preservationist rebuilding movement is for the nostalgias of the

Incidentally, nostalgia literally means “the longing for coming home”, from the Greek nostos (homecoming) and algia (longing).

Writing on a different context, the cultural theorist Stuart Tannock similarly points out, that “Nostalgia approaches the past as a stable source of value and meaning - not to be conflated with the desire for a stable, traditional and hierarchical society” (1995: 455). Therefore, he and others argue, nostalgia can also be employed by left-wing groups, who may feel that the past was more open and tolerant than a closed authoritarian present (see also Grainge 1999).
GDR time, where one was still convinced that in a different regime one would have more of a say. The fact that the campaigns for a referendum on the Neumarkt have been thwarted by the city council, although the society has collected the necessary number of signatures of 15% of the adult population, is seen as evidence that the hopes for a better political system that allows more participation have not been realised so far. The “nostalgia” that drives for example the Neumarkt campaigns, I would therefore argue, has two sides, certainly the backward-looking “all was better in former times” one, but also a future-looking one, which sees the success or failure to rebuild the Neumarkt as a symbol for the still-to-be-awaited outcome of real democratisation.

Nostalgia thus can also be directed towards the future, as a nostalgia for the past not-yet-come-true dreams of the future. This was nicely captured in an East German satirical journal, whose January edition of 2004 started with the editor’s best wishes for the new year, and the message: “Cheer up! Now it is only 26 more years until we can say again: they have been betraying us for 40 years!” (Eulenspiegel 1/2004). The allusion of course is to the frequently expressed sentiment in the East Germany of 1989, that “for 40 years we have been betrayed by our government”, which supposedly would only be a distant memory by the time one was living in happily unified Germany. Now, 14 years into unification, the disenchantment with the new political system is growing, one does not quite know whether to direct one’s hopes into the future, or nostalgically remember the positive utopias of West Germany to which one adhered during GDR times. The satire therefore nicely captures the ways in which nostalgia is looking backward and forward simultaneously: to a better future and a better past, and to the past’s hope for a better future, and the future’s memory of a nostalgic past.

“No lapse posited”

There is yet another reason why one should not damn the preservationists too easily as kitschy nostalgics. Nostalgia is generally understood as the longing for something that is irretrievably lost. In this sense, the concept may not apply at all to the Dresden preservationist circles: their efforts are spurned by the hope that they will yet reach their aims in the future. The literature on nostalgia presupposes “a fall from a golden age” (Grainge 1999: 623), or a “lapse”: the “nostalgic subject” in the “post-lapsarian world” “posits a lapse” and remembers nostalgically the “pre-lapsarian world” (Tannock 1995). In the Dresden building debates, however,
it is often unclear when exactly this lapse is posited: in 1990 with the end of the GDR, or in 1945 with the bombing of Dresden and the end of the old Germany, or even earlier, with the decline of Saxony as a major political power? It seems to me that each of these commands a bit of nostalgia, while at the same time they interact and overlap in a way that almost poses a continuity. A quote that illustrates this point is from one of the active supporters of the Frauenkirche rebuilding:

The location of the Frauenkirche, in this river bend... it is an incredible site. Really, it is the centre.[...] And this genius loci was then taken up by the ruin. And it was for sure, the ruin wouldn’t have any future, and the only alternatives were demolition or rebuilding. And the first church on this site was the road chapel, St Mary, even before the founding of Dresden. So you would annihilate 1000 years of church history [...] if we don’t rebuild the Frauenkirche, there will be a high-riser from the Deutsche Bank at its site, like in Frankfurt, and we can’t do anything against it. (KH 7)

This narrative does not pose a lapse, but a great continuity of “a thousand years of church history” at this site. It generously passes over the fact that the to-be-rebuilt Frauenkirche was not a thousand years old, but just 200 at the time of its destruction in 1945. And also this destruction itself is incorporated in this narrative of continuity: the “genius loci” remained unchanged even when there was only a ruin. None of the real discontinuities are allowed to count as “lapses” that would prompt nostalgia: but this lapse is feared of in the near future (with the thinkable erection of a bank building at the site), and rebuilding is described as the way to prevent it happening.

Another person, an avid campaigner against the Waldschlösschen bridge, told me that he didn’t think much of “the blind delusion, to make everything just the same again as it used to be”. Instead, he is passionately engaged “against those cases where still existing wonderful places are to be destroyed through new buildings: as they plan to do with that bridge”, for in his view “Dresden, in contrast to other cities, still has got some chances...” (RD 2). It seems almost as if none of the previous lapses is strong enough to command an overwhelming nostalgia: to borrow Tannock’s terminology, we still live in the pre-lapsarian world, we haven’t lost our home yet. Therefore, people feel called to action to prevent a future, ultimate lapse: when Dresden really ceases to be what it has been.

However, “real” nostalgia for the golden past of pre-war Dresden, capital
A souvenir stall opposite the Frauenkirche, spring 2004. T-shirts with images of the Zwinger and the rebuilt Frauenkirche are sold together with t-shirts proclaiming "Germany", as well as with items of GDR-nostalgia (models of the GDR car-brand Trabant, and figures from the GDR children’s TV program Sandmann). (photo: Sebastian Knebel)
of glorious Saxony, does also exist in Dresden. It is largely driven by the tourist industry, which capitalises on the comfortably antique appearance of new-built houses around the Frauenkirche, containing restaurants served by waiters in baroque-style costumes. Likewise the newly risen Frauenkirche, hardly reminiscent of the ruin which had been at its place the last forty years, caters for this sentiment and for Dresden's income made on tourists. In this sentiment, a continuity is forged that doesn't exist, and through the exact rebuilding of long-lost buildings any real "lapses“ - the war, 1945 and the GDR time - seem to be removed. However, the tourist industry is a part of the "market": this nostalgia for the cosiness of baroque Dresden is a by-product of the same modernising trope that otherwise sacrifices archaeological sites to parking spaces. For the majority of those building activists who have been in the centre of this discussion, by contrast, the point is not to repeat and undo history. Rather, through the preservation of still existing matter or substance, a continuity is identified and emphasised that has survived the breaks of history (e.g. the remaining stones of the old Frauenkirche which are inserted into the new construction, or the Elbe meadows at the proposed bridge building site).79

CONCLUSION: NOSTALGIA AND AGENCY

The cultural theorist Stuart Tannock writes about nostalgia that it responds to an experience of discontinuity - to the sense that agency or identity are somehow blocked or threatened. This is due to a separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community. (Tannock 1995: 456)

If nostalgia is the longing to return to a formerly possessed home, it is thus also the desire for more possibilities for agency. It is for this reason that the preservation, or even rebuilding of historic building is so passionately campaigned for in Dresden: it holds the promise of a greater possibility for agency. As I have

79 These two different attitudes to rebuilding loosely correspond to the difference between what the cultural theorist Svetlana Boym has called "restorative“ and "reflective“ nostalgia. In her model, restorative nostalgia focuses on nostos, the lost home, and aims to reconstruct it. It is homogenising and closed. Reflective nostalgia, by contrast, focuses on algia, longing, and is multiple, open and fragmentatious. (Boym 2001)
argued, the successful preservation of a building against the original will of the GDR state often meant a literal and symbolic gaining of space. It meant that this building, abandoned by the state but preserved by people oppositional to it, now not only provided a further piece of physical space in the symbolic possession of oppositional circles, but also a gaining of more power, of space in the power distribution of GDR society. It is thus a piece of space which oppositional circles felt they "owned" and in which they accordingly were able to act, to some extent, according to their own free will.

In the present context of post-unification Germany, the same motive drives the campaigns for preservation and rebuilding. Paradigmatic for this relation is the discourse of "caring for Dresden", which as I have described in chapter 5 is employed by Dresden preservationists in order to manifest the legitimacy of their own claims on Dresden against that of the decisionmakers, who mostly are non-Dresdener and described as not caring for Dresden. It expresses the preservationists' disappointment and sense of injustice that their opportunities for agency are very limited in the present context of re-unification, where "their" Dresden is decided about by mostly West-German decisionmakers, who have gained their office not because of their contributions to Dresden, but because of party memberships and business careers outside Dresden. The memory of the GDR time, as well as of pre-war times, by contrast, evokes a time when their own influence was far greater.

However, the preservationists' "nostalgic longing" for those better times is combined today with calls for the reformation of the democratic system, which then should provide greater participatory rights for civil society groups, and altogether be distinguished by a fairer distribution of decisionmaking powers. Drawing from the remembered resources of the past, the campaigns to preserve and rebuild historical built (and in the bridge case, natural) environments are therefore not locked in an only backward-looking perspective, but are directed towards the future. The buildings in question which all belong to Dresden or Saxon, i.e. local, history, appear as tokens and symbols for a more promising future. The nostalgia to repossess them can be understood as the longing for one's own "home", where accordingly one also would have a greater possibility for agency than in the new and foreign context of Western Germany, whose dominant collective identity narratives postulate progress and catching-up with modern, market-oriented globalism. These post-unification discourses sometimes
tend to paint East Germany as a homogeneously evil place; every GDR citizen who was saved from there through unification and resettled into the new home of democratic unified Germany should be thankful (e.g. Pfahl-Traughber 2000; Rohrschneider 2000). The relationship which is expressed in this discourse is one between the bestower (West) and the receiver (East) of a gift (unification). As anthropologists have pointed out, such a relation is always also one of domination, in which the gift bestower gains symbolic power over the gift receiver, by putting him or her under obligation to oneself (e.g. Bourdieu 1998). Nostalgia for the East therefore is also the wish to escape from this obligation into the (partly imagined) freedoms of one’s lost former homeland. However, a nostalgia for the East for many people (not least those groups who are in the centre of my study) is out of the question, since their own opportunities for influence were not less barred there than today. Instead, their nostalgia is directed towards Dresden and Saxony as “true” homelands, the context in which they hope that their longing for more influence and greater possibilities for agency will eventually be fulfilled. It is for this reason, that the claims on the “identity of Dresden” are so passionately expressed in the calls for preservation and rebuilding in Dresden.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

1. Unpublished Interviews
The following list comprises the names of all persons with whom I have conducted in-depth interviews, and the dates of the interviews. All gave me permission to cite their full names. In brackets I indicate their initials, which I use as reference when I quote from an interview in the text of this thesis.

Ingrid Appelt [IA], retired architect, member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society; 15 Nov 2002.
Christine and Dieter Brandes [CB and DB], nurse and engineer, members of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society and the Neumarkt Society; 22 Dec 2002.
Eberhard Burger [ED], building director of the Frauenkirche Foundation; 15 Sep 2003.
Reinhardt Decker [RD], opera singer, anti-bridge activist; 19 July 2003.
Walther Feßenmayr [WF], head of the City Office for Planning and Urban Development; 20 Sep 2003.
Thomas Friedlaender [TF], musician, anti-bridge activist and leading member of the Silbermann group; 23 March 2003.
Prof. Ludwig Gütter [LG], trumpetist, chairman of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society; 18 Sep 2003.
Wolf-Dieter Heinze [WH], business manager, former finance manager of the Frauenkirche Foundation; 17 Dec 2004.
Dr. Stefan Hertzig [SH], art historian, vice-chairman of the Neumarkt Society; 16 Aug 2003.
Dr. Karl-Ludwig Hoch [KH], Lutheran pastor and art historian, founding member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society; 11 July 2003.
Dr. Joachim Jäger [JJ], engineer, administration officer for the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society, 17 March 2003.
Peter Kopp [PK], musician; 13 Aug 2004.
Lutz and Maria Langlotz [LL and ML], retired engineer and housewife, leading members of the Neumarkt Society, members of the Silbermann group and anti-bridge activists; 19 March 2003.
Hans-Peter Lühr [HL], journalist, leading member of the Dresden Historical Society and editor of the Dresdner Hefte; 14 July 2003.
Prof. Heinrich Magirius [HM], retired chief preservationist of Saxony, founding member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society and active against the bridge; 16 Aug 2003.
Prof. Joachim Neidhardt [JN], art historian and chief curator of the Saxon Art Collections, founding member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society and of the Neumarkt Society; 25 Aug 2003.
Prof. Walther Patzelt [WP], Professor for political theory at Dresden University; 3 Dec 2004.
Fritz Reimann [FR], art collector, chairman of the Neumarkt Society; 24 March 2003.


Eberhardt and Hilke Renner [ER and HR], architect and restaurateur, anti-bridge activists and members of the Silbermann Group; 12 July 2003.

Ingolf Rossberg [IR], Mayor of Dresden; 16 Dec 2003.

Tim Schicke [TS], engineering student, member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society and the Neumarkt Society; 20 Dec 2002.

Dr. Dieter Schölzel [DS], architect, founding member of the Frauenkirche Rebuilding Society; 16 July 2003.

Kristian Töpfer [KT], engineer, member of the Frauenkirche and Neumarkt Societies; 12 July 2003.

Bernhardt Walter [BW], bank manager, chairman of the Frauenkirche Foundation; 20 Sep 2003.

Angelika and Paul Weber [AW and PW], cultural managers, anti-bridge activists; 22 Dec 2002.

Prof. Ingo Zimmermann [IZ], musical historian and cultural advisor to the Saxon Government; 20 Aug 2003.

2. Documents

The following is a list of (mostly published) documents (e.g. books, leaflets, flyers, pamphlets, internet sites etc.) which all served me as helpful primary data. The many unpublished documents which were made available to me by various individuals (e.g. private letters, memos etc.) are only listed where I explicitly quote from them. Publications which are quoted in the text of the thesis are listed in the reference section below.

General

a) Books


Lühr, Hans-Peter (ed.) Die Dresdner Hefte: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte; issues
9 (1) through to 23 (1).


b) Statistical Publications
Kommunale Statistikstelle Dresden:
Statistische Mitteilungen
Dresdner Zahlen Aktuell

Pressestelle der Bundesagentur für Arbeit:
Arbeitslosenzahlen 1990-2004

Pressestelle der Evangelischen Landeskirche (ELK) Sachsen:
Kirchenein- und Austritte 1990-2004

c) Newspapers
Many issues from the two dailies Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten, cited in abbreviation as DNN, and Sächsische Zeitung, cited as SZ, as well as from the Dresden tabloids BILD and Morgenpost.
Also issues from the German national newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, cited as FAZ, and from the German political weekly Der Spiegel.

d) Internet Sites
www.dresden.de (official web-page of the City of Dresden)
www.stadtmitte.de (The internet forum: Is Dresden a village?)
www.wir-sind-dresden.de (common website of various associations and initiatives engaged with the development of Dresden

Regarding the Frauenkirche
a) publications
The society for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche: Dresden’s Miracle in Stone: The rebuilding of the Frauenkirche. (engl. version), [information leaflet and call for support].

The Re-Erection of the Frauenkirche in Dresden: Call for Support (1993), Dresden: Stiftung Frauenkirche e.V.


Studenteninitiative Wiederaufbau Frauenkirche Dresden e.V. (ed.) Frauenkirchen-
Nachrichten: Neues rund um den Wiederaufbau des Dresdner Wahrzeichens.


b) Miscellanea

Die neue Orgel der Dresdner Frauenkirche: Der Weg zur Entscheidung; publ. by the Frauenkirche Foundation, Feb 2003.

Pro-Silbermann resume 5/2/2002
letter by Friedrich Wolff to the Foundation Frauenkirche, undated.
press-statement of the SPD, 25/02/2003

Statement Rebuilding Society: Stellungnahme der Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Wiederaufbaus der Frauenkirche Dresden e.V. zu den Vorwürfen gegen Prof. Gütler, 10/04/2002

The Call from Dresden, Feb 1990
The Call to Dresden, Feb 2001

numerous newspaper articles and letters-to-the-editor;
numerous emails to the website of the Pro-Silbermann group.

c) relevant websites
www.frauenkirche-dresden.de (official website of the Society for the Rebuilding of the Frauenkirche)
www.dresdner-bank.de/unternehmen/kultursport/frauenkirche
http://pisces.sbu.ac.uk/BE/CECM/german/dresdeng.html (informations of the British Dresden Trust)
www.friends.dresdner.coni (website of the American Friends of Dresden)
www.frauenkirche-silbermann.de (website of the ProSilbermann group, much frequented visitor's book, documentary of the organ debate)

Regarding the Neumarkt
a) publications

numerous newspaper articles and letters to the editor.

b) relevant websites
www.neumarkt-dresden.de

Regarding the Waldschlößchen Bridge

a) publications

numerous newspaper articles and letters-to-the-editor

b) unpublished documents
press release of the citizens initiative, 9.4.2003
open letter by Prof. Heinrich Magirius, 7 Sept 2003
letter Friederike de Haas, 10.1.05
protocols from the public hearing on the Waldschlößchenbrücke, Sept 2003.

c) relevant websites
www.waldschloesschenbruecke.de
www.pro-waldschloesschenbruecke.de
www.kultur-statt-beton.de

All English translations of quotes from interviews or documentary data are by myself.
REFERENCES

The following list comprises only publications cited in the text of the thesis; it is not intended as a full bibliography.


Brubaker, Roger (1996) “Civic and ethnic nations in France and Germany” in
J. Hutchinson and A. Smith (eds) *Ethnicity*, Oxford: OUP.


Bryant, Christopher (2002) "Social Self-organisation, civility and sociology: a comment on Kumar’s ‘Civil Society’" *British Journal for Sociology*, 44(3).


Fellisch, Martin (1999) "Die Dresdner Kreuzkirche und die Bürgerbewegung", Dresdner Hefte 17(3).
Gohl, Christopher (2001) "Bürgergesellschaft als politische Zielperspektive" Aus Parlament und Zeitgeschichte 6-7/01.
" (2002a) “Identity, class and civil society in Scotland’s neo-nationalism” Nations and Nationalism 8 (1).
" (2002b) “Narrative, agency and mood: on the social construction
of national history in Scotland” Comparative Studies in Society and History 44 (4).


Hoffmann, ETA (1978) [1813] Der goldene Topf, Berlin: Reclam.


Jacobi, Maria (1999) "Der Ökologische Arbeitskreis der Dresdner Kirchenbezirke in den 80er Jahren", Dresdner Hefte, 17(3).


Kubik, Jan (1996) "Between the state and the network of cousins: the role of civil society and non-civic associations in the democratisation of Poland 1945-96", 221
unpubl. paper to seminar Civil Society before Democracy, Princeton 1996.

Kumar, Krishan (1994) "Civil society: an inquiry into the usefulness of an historical term", British Journal of Sociology, 45(1).


Menzhausen, Joachim (1999) Kultiirlandschaft Sachsen: ein Jahrtausen Geschichte und
Paul, Jürgen (1992) "Der Wiederaufbau der Frauenkirche: Kritik und Rechtfertigung, Dresdner Hefte 10(4).


All English translations of quotes from German works are by myself.