GREEN CITY ORIGINS:
DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE TO THE AUTO-ORIENTED CITY IN WEST GERMANY, 1960-1990

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ABSTRACT

This study examines West German urban environmental history between 1960 and 1990. The histories of mass motorization and of the attempt to build cities around the automobile in West Germany (the “auto-oriented city,” as some planners had labeled it) are well known to historians. Less well known is the history of the reformist opposition, of the attempts to resist this automotive transformation and to forge urban models around a different set of ideals. Dissatisfied with the patterns of urban growth and development, a coalition of reformers emerged to exert greater influence on city planning processes and to refashion cities around their new ideals. This coalition consisted of planners, architects, grassroots citizens’ initiatives, environmentalists, intellectuals, students, and some politicians. The reformers’ central grievance concerned the effects of the auto-oriented city. They insisted that it was eroding urban residents’ quality of life, safety, sense of aesthetics, and emotional ties to urban history and culture, as well as deteriorating the natural and built environments. Their agenda was both negative (they wanted to stop what they viewed as outsized and destructive infrastructural projects) and positive (they wanted to develop and use urban space according to their social, aesthetic, and environmental ideals). Moreover, their agenda contained a significant political component, as they insisted that planning practice in West Germany was undemocratic. This aspect of their agenda, and their attempts to democratize local planning processes, therefore places this study in the context of
West Germany’s political history. By the 1980s, the reformers had achieved partial success. They took advantage of shifting circumstances in the political and social climate to implement at least part of their agenda. Their efforts presaged current planning discourse about environmental sustainability and cities. The dissertation includes case studies of Munich and Erlangen but also draws from the experiences of other cities in West Germany and abroad. The study contains chapters on local politics, urbanism and the environmental movement, the international context, and the histories of pedestrian zones, bicycling, and traffic calming. A final chapter analyzes a contemporary planning controversy in Stuttgart in the context of this history.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

“A predominately automobile-oriented traffic planning no longer finds unanimous support among citizens, media, and politicians. On the contrary, citizens’ initiatives everywhere are fighting excessive street construction. The citizens’ protests have received considerable support from historic preservationists and city planners, from landscape architects and traffic safety researchers, and from environmentalists.”


This study covers a period in West German history (1960 to 1990) when the first serious debates arose about whether the country’s remarkable postwar prosperity had resulted in better conditions for its inhabitants. The era was known for its broad, and at times intense, public protest. Cities were at the center of this dissent. As a heavily urbanized country, most West Germans grew up, went to school, worked, and died in cities. Hence, it was no surprise that conflicts of all types occurred in them. Cities were the sites where many of the archetypal protest movements of these decades—students, antiwar, extra-parliamentary (APO, Ausserparlamentarische Opposition), left-radical—played themselves out. But cities were more than just the spaces upon which conflict occurred. They themselves were the subjects of much dissent, debate, and conflict.

During these decades, individuals, groups, organizations, and government agencies fought over the directions that West German cities would take. This conflict was

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motivated by a coalition of dissidents aimed at reforming urban development trajectories. Dissatisfied with the patterns of postwar development, these “urban reformers” wanted to exert greater influence on city planning processes. The reformers came from the various spatial professions (traditional town or city planning, transportation planning, urban design, architecture, and others), nongovernmental organizations such as environmental groups, and grassroots citizens’ groups. They also included intellectuals, students, and the occasional local politician. As the urban reformers saw things, city planning after World War II had begun to steer their cities toward an undesirable future. Granted, planners had successfully rebuilt West Germany’s ruined cities during the reconstruction period, lasting to about 1960. But the spectacular growth during the country’s “miracle economy” ("Wirtschaftswunder") decades was beginning to make their cities almost unrecognizable. Manic construction, fevered road-building, and increasing pollution and noise were the unhappy by-products of swift growth.

Over time, the reformers developed a program containing two main elements, both of which they saw as integral to their success. First, they believed that they were a democratizing presence in West German society. They wanted to open up local planning processes so that wider circles of people could participate in making decisions about how and what to build in cities. Unable to exert the degree of influence they thought their ideas deserved, at least initially, the reformers leveled fundamental criticisms of the political systems that they believed prevented public criticism of planning. In this respect, their wishes overlapped with the mass protest movements of the period. Democratization was in vogue in many places, both in West Germany and around the world. Their efforts coincided with, and were to some degree inspired by, a period of deep social discontent
with all things hegemonic, powerful, wealthy, poisonous, and undemocratic. West Germany’s political atmosphere gave the urban reformers much inspiration. They borrowed ideas, energy, tactical insights, and inspiration from elsewhere and utilized these as they saw fit. But the reformers were not simply offshoots of the mass protest movements of the period. West Germany’s cities caused worries among the population for their own dynamic reasons.

The second aspect of the urban reformers’ program was a precursor to what later came to be called “green urbanism” or “urban sustainability.” The reformers believed that modern city planning, as practiced in West Germany, was destructive of the spaces—the environments—that they inhabited. Their immediate surroundings shaped their form of environmentalism. Their laments about modern planning had a great deal to do with its effects on the countless small-scaled spaces of a city—its neighborhoods, buildings, plazas, streets, parks, and squares. Degrading these spaces amounted to an erosion in urban residents’ quality of life, in their safety, their sense of aesthetics, their emotional ties to a neighborhood or district, their attachment to the city’s history and culture, and to the natural environment of which their city was a part.

A central grievance of the reformers had to do with the automobile, or more specifically, with cities that were built around the needs of motorists. Mass motorization (usually measured by the number of vehicles owned per 1,000 citizens) was a hallmark of the postwar era, especially from the late 1950s forward in West Germany. While there had been cultural objections to mass motorization before World War II, after the war these declined as the car became a key symbol of a new, democratic, prosperous, and western-oriented society. The West German Wirtschaftswunder that began in the mid-
1950s had given consumers enormous buying power. Over time, this meant that West Germans could exercise long pent-up desires to own the ultimate consumer good, the automobile. The number of vehicles exploded, going from a few hundred thousand in the early 1950s to tens of millions a couple decades later. Along with mass motorization came the car culture. During this period, the West Germans developed their affection for the device. For millions of people, the car became a cult object.²

To handle the new reality of mass motorization, city planners in West Germany turned to a model of dispersed, auto-centric urban development, known in planning circles as the “autogerechte Stadt” (roughly, the “auto-ready city” or the “auto-oriented city”). The term became a catchphrase in planning circles after the German planner Hans-Bernhard Reichow published his book, Die autogerechte Stadt, in 1959.³ Reichow’s book coined a phrase, but the ideas behind the city that was “oriented” toward the car had been in circulation for years. In very simplified terms, the uppermost goal of the auto-oriented city was to ensure the free flow of motorized traffic. The object was to design a system where the motorist could travel from point to point with little or no obstruction, freed of having to share road space with other users (bicyclists, pedestrians, street trams). High-capacity roadways (“arterials”) running through and around cities, dedicated to motorized traffic, would be needed to ensure the smooth operation of the system. Transportation planners believed they had good reasons for building cities in this fashion. Without expanding and upgrading infrastructure, they maintained that West Germany’s cities would grind to a halt, as new vehicles clogged street systems. Backed by the automobile

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lobby and supported by a political climate in which the car was a key to economic performance, between the 1950s and 1970s, West German cities made enormous investments in auto-friendly infrastructure.4

Reichow’s formulation was abandoned by the 1970s, even by many of the planners who subscribed generally to the idea of making cities amenable to motorized traffic. Scholars acknowledge that the planning discipline began shifting to other models during these decades, including use of substitute phrases such as “menschengerecht” (roughly, human-oriented or –directed) in place of “autogerecht.” But the term “autogerechte Stadt” lived on for years and became a part of the rhetorical currency of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.5 The phrase could be found in the debates that occurred in these decades, articulated more often by the concept’s foes than by its supporters.

Regardless of the specific meaning that Reichow had intended for the idea, the phrase offered a convenient way for the urban reformers to articulate their worries.

Although planners and architects on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean had formulated these ideas for decades, after 1945 the American example was of particular importance in Europe. America’s spectacular wealth and high modernity, combined with the economic and political might of the United States, made the American example attractive to Europeans. This held true for the automobile, the ultimate consumer good.

Europeans adopted American ideas and advice, while Americans were eager to export

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4 An outstanding sum of this history is provided in Barbara Schmucki, Der Traum vom Verkehrsfluss: Städtische Verkehrsplanung seit 1945 im deutsch-deutschen Vergleich (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001).
their technical knowledge and expertise to whoever was willing to listen. The American model, however, was not an unalloyed good. Even when many Europeans were adopting American engineering know-how and importing its car culture, the American automotive experience was producing its own backlash. American dissenters such as Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, and Lewis Mumford questioned the automobile’s status in the United States, while other American critics took aim at attempts to build Interstate highways through cities. These “freeway revolts” simmered in a dozen or more cities between the 1950s and 1970s.

By the middle years of the 1960s, precisely when West Germans were buying automobiles at historically high rates, an increasing number of people in West Germany also began to call the autocentric model into question. They argued that modern transportation planning, specifically the attempts to build the autogerechte Stadt, subordinated all things to the car’s needs. They argued that the auto-ready city had enormous shortcomings, created social and environmental problems, and disregarded the historic and architectural value of cities, in particular of existing city centers.

At root, theirs was an argument about the use of space. The limiting feature of the city was space, or the lack thereof. To the reformers, the most obvious fact about cars was that they consumed an enormous amount of urban space. To move lots of cars with few choke points, a city had to be redesigned around the car’s spatial requirements. Transportation systems geared to the automobile required numerous wide and straight roads as well as huge parking lots. They required new tunnels and bridges smack in the

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6 On American influence, see Bruce E. Seely, “‘Push’ and ‘pull’ factors in technology transfer: moving American-style highway engineering to Europe, 1945–1965,” Comparative Technology Transfer and Society 2, 3, (December 2004), 229-46.

middle of the city. These were the cities of the postwar era, the horizontal, functionally separated, and automobile-dependent cities. Providing for the *autogerechte Stadt* required eliminating space for other things. Not even the tunnels, bridges, and elevated highways that engineers offered as solutions (each of these attempted to remove cars from ground level) could solve this basic contradiction.

The urban reformers detested the auto-ready city, believing it was unhealthy, environmentally disastrous, and asocial. Perhaps worst of all to the reformers, it was unlivable: noisy, dangerous, brutal, and ugly. They were most interested in finding ways to navigate the city without destroying it, to conserve space and reduce energy use, noise, danger, and pollution (all big themes during the 1970s and 1980s), and reduce speeds. Some modes of travel (a “mode” was planning jargon for each type of transportation, for example buses, cars, and motorcycles) were much better at this than others. Pedestrians and bicyclists, for instance, conserved space while accomplishing many of the reformers’ other goals.

Between 1960 and 1990, the urban reformers were successful in shifting West Germans’ understanding about what constituted the best type of city. The present study is about this shift. During the mid-1960s, the first coalitions of reformers coalesced around stopping the ambitious infrastructural plans that aimed to rework entire cities around the automobile. In cities like Munich, planners had the funds and the standing to create plans that would run urban freeways and build arterials through, above, and below cities. The protests that arose to stop these efforts had parallels to the “freeway revolts” that were occurring at around the same time in the United States and a few places in Europe, but they were not identical.
Within a few years, the reformers’ coalition had grown to include a much broader set of social, political, and environmental issues. Housing problems in inner-city neighborhoods, for example, had heightened the reformers’ understanding of the combined effects that economic growth and large-scale infrastructural planning had on inner-city groups. This awareness, plus prior experiences fighting planning bureaucracies, induced the reformers to articulate increasingly sophisticated critiques of planning, planners, and the political system that they believed inhibited their attempts at reform. In their view, the only way to alter planning was to broaden participation to include the public.

At about this time as well, environmentalism injected new ideas into the reformers’ agenda. The issues that arose in the public debate about the environment—air and water pollution, scarce energy supplies, nuclear power, forest death (“Waldsterben”), chemical poisoning—contributed to a sharpening of the reformers’ arguments. Environmental concerns also induced hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people to join citizens’ initiatives. The grassroots groups became most famous for the roles they played in the anti-nuclear opposition and in the formation of the Green party, but a huge range of issues motivated them. Besides nuclear power, these issues included democratization, nature conservation, and campaigns against airports and roads. Thousands of initiatives were allied with the reformist cause at one time or another. These initiatives almost always concentrated on local issues, which in an urbanized society meant problems facing cities. Urban transportation problems, in particular those involving automobiles (such as pollution, speed, danger, and noise), were among the most common foci of the initiatives. Their activism represented a type of micro-
environmentalism, often practiced at the neighborhood, street, or even block level, and provided a populist boost to the reformists’ efforts.

Running battles over all these issues characterized the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In the earlier years, much of the reformers’ program was negative. They wanted to stop what they thought were the worst dimensions of modern city planning, especially what they considered to be oversized, expensive, and destructive infrastructural projects. But the reformers were not just protesters, not just interested in revolting against the *autogerechte Stadt*. Their program was also positive in that they had their own ideas about better cities. They articulated these ideas in increasingly sophisticated fashion and worked to legitimize their agenda within the planning profession, local and state bureaucracies, the political class, and among the general public. By the 1980s, they had taken advantage of shifting circumstances in the West German political and social climate to implement at least part of their agenda.

The urban reformers constituted a heterogeneous collection of individuals. They were drawn from the spatial professions. Some were academics who became interested in urban-development issues. Still others sat in research institutions or established environmental organizations. A few were politicians who were either resistant to mainstream trends or joined the reformers after it became opportune to do so (this underscores a crucial point, that not all reformers were outsiders). During the middle years of the 1960s, intellectuals, architects, disaffected planners, art historians, and other professionals had formed an early coalition of people who were concerned about growth’s effects on the physical spaces they wanted to protect. During the late 1960s and 1970s, their ranks swelled to include a few political radicals (mostly on the left),
environmentalists, and many ordinary people. By far the largest share of the latter came from the ubiquitous citizens’ initiatives. During the 1970s, members of the new Green political parties joined the debate. The reformers were also generationally diverse. Often, the urban reformers were middle-aged or older. Initially, there was little participation by the younger generation that formed the student and antiwar movements, but this changed over time.

The histories of mass motorization and the autogerechte Stadt in West Germany are well known to historians. Far less well known is the history of the reformist opposition, of its attempts to resist the autogerecht transformation and to forge models that would refashion West Germany’s cities around a different set of ideals. The barest contours of the reformist dimension of this story are known. Historians have acknowledged that important shifts occurred in transportation-planning, in particular after 1970, and have understood that this amounted to a “greening” of the profession. An even smaller number of others have understood this shift in the context of the environmental movement. But usually all one finds in the literature is an oblique reference, a paragraph, or a few pages of discussion, and then on only pieces of the puzzle. Historians have provided only the occasional glimpse into who was responsible for this shift, how these persons understood themselves and their roles, how their efforts fit into the social and political contexts of the world they inhabited, and what they tried to accomplish. Outside of a little work on objections to urban freeways in European cities and on the citizens’

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initiatives, there is very little sense of the political and social dimensions of this particular story. 9

This work is not an indictment of the automobile or the car culture, nor does it argue that the period under examination here created a paradise for non-motorists in Germany. As Brian Ladd has written in a recent work about the car in the twentieth century, the critics of the automobile were on the wrong side of history during the twentieth century. 10 Despite coming under severe criticism at century’s end for its environmental destructiveness, spatial effects, resource use, and danger, the car remained dominant in the rich cities of the world. In the twenty-first century, moreover, it appears to be in no danger of disappearing, especially when given the explosive motorization of developing countries such as China and India.

As a matter of historical record, moreover, many urban reformers in West Germany did not demonize the automobile or the car culture. Many of the reformers who appear in this study were not radicals. They understood that it would be utopian to abolish automobiles from the city. But they regarded the obverse, the attempt to make West Germany’s cities autogerecht, to be utopian as well. The difference was that the former was an ambition, while the latter was occurring right in front of them. In their minds, reworking cities around the car was destroying much that they valued.

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10 Ladd, Autophobia, Introduction.
Periodization

Germany’s modern history is riven by political breaks. The years 1806, 1815, 1848, 1866, 1871, 1918, 1933, 1945, 1949, 1961, and 1989 mark Germany’s tortuous course through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, each shorthand for an important course correction of one form or another. The events that occurred during these years marked the country’s national history. Urban history does not always follow the same markers. Cities are tied to the political fates of nation-states or empires. Capital cities witness fateful political struggles; foreign armies besiege a country’s cities during wartime; national governments build urban infrastructure. But cities have their own timelines, which correspond to factors other than national politics. Technological developments, demographic trends, fluctuations in trade patterns and financial investment, environmental disasters, access to natural resources, diseases and mass infections, waves of crime and protest, and local political changes all shape urban history.

These observations speak to the nature of the urban experience. Cities have always required perpetual maintenance. They have concentrated large numbers of people into confined spaces. Monarchs and presidents, senates and parliaments, traders and bureaucrats, police and criminals, scholars and illiterates, rich and poor, have lived together in close quarters in cities. Urban residents required places to sleep, work, study, invest, relax, and recover from illness or injury, as well as spaces in which to be born and to die. To facilitate the enormous range of activities that occurred in them, cities needed the infrastructure for efficient travel between destinations. Cities also needed resources of every kind, ranging from clean water and sufficient food to sinks for household, industrial, and bodily wastes. Planners, architects, engineers, administrators, and
designers thus have struggled since the city first existed to create spaces that were healthy, beautiful, secure, and functional. Sometimes the outcome was pleasant, but often it was not. The explosive growth of cities that followed in train of the industrial revolution made this challenge even more difficult.

Periodization in urban history thus is not straightforward. The continuous and sometimes contradictory nature of events in cities means that distinct periods are difficult to define. Yet there are good reasons for selecting the period from 1960 to 1990 for this dissertation. The study begins in 1960 for two reasons. First, West Germany’s reconstruction period lasted for about the first fifteen years of the postwar period. It ended around 1960. During the reconstruction, cities were rebuilt from the rubble following the Allied bombing campaign during World War II. Jeffry Diefendorf’s and Klaus von Beyme’s work assesses the goals, aspirations, and accomplishments of German planners and architects after the war. Their histories cover the postwar debates about preserving the old city versus building anew, about architectural modernism versus traditionalism, about the role foreseen for the automobile in postwar Germany. These histories acknowledge that the decade of the 1960s was different. By then, the physical rebuilding from the rubble was over. Planners now were more focused on the almost limitless possibilities as well as dangers for cities that the superheated West German economy was beginning to create or grow. Gerd Albers, one of the country’s foremost

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planners, remarked that a “spectacular turn” occurred within his discipline during the early 1960s because of the greater ambitions and horizons that the new economic conditions allowed. As important as the reconstruction was for (West) Germany’s subsequent history, what came afterwards was also critical. The remarkable amount of new construction and development that occurred after 1960 had a profound impact on the real, physical environment, on the ways in which people conducted their daily lives, and on how they thought about cities and urban living.

Second, in 1960 Munich’s most important postwar mayor, Hans-Jochen Vogel, was first elected to office. His reign (1960 to 1972) not only coincided with the onset of this second phase of postwar city planning in West Germany; it also witnessed the full spectrum of planning’s ambition and liabilities during the height of Munich’s explosive growth. Vogel’s personal evolution tracked this spectrum. The mayor began the period with great faith in ambitious planning but ended in expressing doubts about some of the very processes he had helped set in motion.

There were also two main reasons for choosing 1990 as a termination point for this study. First, by 1990 the urban reformers had formulated their arguments, shifting debate among specialists and the public, and advanced their policy goals. During the 1980s they built some national institutions to further their agenda and shifted the dialogue enough to generate policy successes. Their arguments, lobbying, and pressure also encouraged the mass implementation of “Tempo 30” zones in cities (areas where motorists were restricted to 30 kilometers per hour / 18 miles per hour). This change, which was introduced in January 1990, had been sought for at least fifteen years by

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countless citizens’ initiatives and individual planners. Second, and more critically, extending the narrative past 1990 involved a new set of issues that were beyond this study’s original scope. The reunification of Germany in 1990 was the most obvious change that occurred during the 1990s. The integration of East German cities into a reunified Germany was a complex story. Even more critical was the emergence of environmental sustainability as an urban paradigm. The sustainability idea, first formulated during the 1980s, was given an enormous boost in 1992, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (commonly known as the Rio Conference). The focus on sustainable development found an audience among city planners, especially in Europe. The 1990s were marked by debate and action on these issues. The concluding chapter of this study touches on these issues.

The thirty-year period of West German history under consideration in this study was marked by the economic downturn of 1973/74. Although historians now debate the significance of this break, the fact was that it constituted the end of the miracle decades in West Germany and elsewhere. The remainder of the period was characterized by slower economic growth and higher unemployment. The end of the boom also meant the end of the rushed building and infrastructural construction that had characterized the previous decades. While the downturn did not stop new street and road construction, housing construction, or urban renewal schemes, it did slow these efforts. The effects of the break on this study are complex. On the one hand, the timing of the downturn—coming on the heels of the first oil shortage—appeared to confirm environmentalists’ worst forecasts about industrial society’s dangerous dependence on scarce resources. This shock helped
to open up new space in the debate about a host of related themes, including energy use, pollution, automobiles, cities, even about economic growth itself. Moreover, the new circumstances also allowed greater consideration for the virtues of urban preservation, including the preservation of existing inner-city neighborhoods. The reformers had been talking about these themes for years, but now the changed conditions called into question the wisdom of neglecting the existing urban fabric in favor of new construction.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, however, the downturn allowed the reformers to be cast as opponents of a return to prosperity.

Urban histories must borrow from many areas of inquiry. Scholars who work on cities acknowledge the interdisciplinary, even eclectic, nature of their task.\textsuperscript{14} This study too utilizes the work of many people. Academics, practitioners, journalists, activists, and authors from many fields can be found in the bibliography. Environmental, planning, architectural, and transportation history are well represented, as are the works of social, political, and cultural historians. The following three sections place the topic and theses of the dissertation in the context of this literature.

\textit{Cities, environment, and history}

This study is first and foremost a work of environmental history. At the broadest conceptual level, it is a blend of John McNeill’s three types of environmental history. The


first is material environmental history, “the stories of human involvement with forests and frogs, with cholera and chlorofluorocarbons.” Studies of this type concentrate on how humans have affected physical nature and vice-versa. The second is political environmental history, which concerns the “self-conscious human efforts to regulate the relationship between society and nature as well as between social groups.” This type focuses on the public struggles over issues such as access to resources, pollution, and wildlife conservation. The third is cultural environmental history, which concerns the ways in which humans have understood nature. Works in this area use the insights of poets, philosophers, artists, scientists, and other intellectuals as windows on a society’s views of the natural world.15

This study is based in part upon the proposition that environmental outcomes have differed across cities and over time. Urban air and water pollution, suburban expansion into surrounding countryside, energy consumed, and so forth have varied not just over time but also by type of city. During the first postwar decades, West Germany’s vibrant, expanding economy meant that the country consumed far more energy and materials than ever before. This was most true in the cities, the centers of the boom and home to the majority of the country’s citizens. The urban reformers’ efforts were aimed in part at reducing or at least slowing the growth of the energy and pollutant flows that were associated with greater dependence on the automobile. Second, this is a study in political environmental history. Planning for the common good is a political exercise. Who participates in the planning process, how completed plans are chosen, and how plans are implemented are all political questions. Each of these questions is subject to intense and

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often public debate. Third, this study also has a cultural dimension. The participants in it had formulated ideals about the relationships between the governed and the governing, between the city and nature, between humans and technologies, such as the automobile or the bicycle, and among the present, the past, and the future. Although these ideals were not always explicit, they motivated the participants to act, speak, plan, lobby, protest, write, discuss, network, envision, or defend. Munich’s debate over a tunnel during the 1960s, the Prinz-Carl-Palais debate (chapter 2), for example, was caused by a clash of views of Munich’s past in relation to its present. The reformers of the city’s plans extended their critique to a wider circle of issues, which involved the well being of the city’s residents, the continued viability of the city center, and nature itself.

This dissertation more narrowly fits into the young subfield of urban environmental history. During the 1970s, historians wrote about the city and the natural environment, following urban geographers who had explored the relationship earlier. However, the organized subfield of urban environmental history arose only in the early 1990s in the United States. It is even younger in Europe, by about a half decade. From its beginnings, urban environmental history struggled for legitimacy within the larger field of environmental history. Donald Worster, one of the world’s preeminent environmental historians, published in 1990 a classic thesis about the proper scope of the larger field. Environmental history, he wrote, is best understood as *agroecological*, by which he

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meant that it focuses on ecosystems “reorganized for agricultural purposes.” Cities were left out of Worster’s definition altogether. 17

Even as Worster was creating his agroecological thesis, other environmental historians were bringing the city into their analyses. William Cronon produced one of the most important. In *Nature’s Metropolis* (1991), he examined the history of Chicago’s dynamic interaction with (and eventual domination of) a rural “hinterland,” which extended hundreds of miles from the city’s borders. Chicago, Cronon argued, was a powerful force in the transformation of the natural environment of the American Midwest. 18 This book helped to break down historians’ reluctance to link urban and rural settings. 19 Three years after Worster’s essay appeared, Martin Melosi, another American historian, penned a rebuttal. He argued that cities lay within the natural world, not outside of it, hence they were as relevant to the interaction of humans and nature as any other human construct, farms included. Cities, he wrote, are “ever-mutating systems,” that are “major modifiers of the environment.” 20 Environmental historians have since accepted the city’s legitimacy as an object of study. Urban environmental history is now regarded as a distinct and respected subfield.

Scholars have emphasized how cities shaped nature “outside” their boundaries. They view cities as gigantic metabolic processors, which draw in physical goods from beyond urban boundaries, transform them into useful goods, and produce waste that in turn must be returned to the natural environment. Environmental histories of this

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processing function dominate the subfield. There are outstanding histories of urban water and air pollution, waste-collection and management systems, and drinking-water provision. These works focus on the health consequences for people who lived in or near cities.  

Conceptualizing cities as processors of matter and energy is one key to understanding their environmental functions and impact on nature, but cities are not just processing machines, simple black boxes in which such transformations occur. Cities are also heterogeneous, designed spaces. In the modern period, planners and architects became concerned that the industrial city was dangerous to both the natural world and human wellbeing. Their models focused on the location, function, optimum size, and density of cities. But they also paid close attention to design and layout—the mix of streets, plazas, buildings, parks, and public amenities—because they knew that these elements were also key to solving the problems that beset industrial cities around the world.  

Environmental historians’ interest in the processing function of cities, in urban metabolism, has produced work of much value. But greater attention should be paid to the linkages between design and environmental outcome, which have animated planners for well over a century.

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Urban environmental history also is underdeveloped on the topic of how cities fit into the many environmental movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite the fact that most people in the industrialized world lived in cities during the twentieth century, cities have tended not to be a focus of scholarship. A very recent volume on the global history of environmentalism, published by the German environmental historian Joachim Radkau, illustrates this point. As is true of all Radkau’s work, the research contained in his book is exhaustive, the arguments are persuasive, and the writing exceptional. Yet the urban dimensions of global environmentalism are tackled in sporadic fashion, constituting a few pages here and there in a volume running almost 800 pages. Much of the literature that exists on the subject of urban environmentalism examines reformers’ attempts to limit urban air pollution, especially coal smoke, during the industrial era. Peter Thorsheim, Stephen Mosley, David Stradling and Frank Uekoetter have written important monographs on this topic in British, American, and German cities. The environmental-justice literature has drawn attention to the resistance of underprivileged urbanites in America, who fought such things as the siting of toxic waste dumps, coal-fired power plants, and other nuisances in their neighborhoods. These studies emphasize the ways in which pollution and other unhealthy and dangerous features of industrial and urban development affected the poor and dispossessed, especially ethnic and racial minorities.

24 In Radkau’s Ära der Ökologie, for instance, one can find discussion of cities, urban environmentalism, and/or urban transportation on pages 63-8, 180-3, 302-08, 399-400, 579.
25 Peter Thorsheim, Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke and Culture in Britain since 1800 (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press, 2006); David Stradling, Smokeystacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Uekoetter, Age of Smoke; Mosley, Chimney of the World.
26 On environmental justice, see, e.g., Robert Gioelli, “Get the lead out: environmental politics in 1970s St. Louis,” Journal of Urban History 36, 4 (July 2010), 429-46; William Deverell and Greg Hise, eds., Land of
Few, however, have urban environmentalism as the centerpiece. Of these, most have focused on cities that developed green reputations over time. Richard Walker’s *The Country in the City* is a study of the San Francisco Bay area, Matthew Klingle’s *Emerald City* is about Seattle. Walker’s book asserts that popular opposition to highways in outlying parts of the Bay area starting in the 1950s was an important part of the environmental movement there. Strangely, however, neither of these books, nor Adam Rome’s more famous *Bulldozer in the Countryside*, has much to say about the highway revolts of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that took place near city centers. Rome subsumes the topic of roadway and highway construction under the general category of suburbanization, while Walker pays closest attention to those activists who sought to protect undeveloped land from new highway construction.

European urban environmental history also has struggled for legitimacy. As in the United States, the youth of the subfield in Europe has meant that urban environmental historians have had to fight for recognition and funding. As the historians Genviève Massard-Guilbaud and Peter Thorsheim wrote in a review, this situation occurred despite the fact that European environmental history arose out of a “history of urban technical networks” rather than out of a wilderness fixation, as in the United States. European environmental historians produced early works on these urban networks, for instance

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drinking water and sewerage systems. Others focused on urban diseases or on material and energy exchanges between cities and countryside.\(^{30}\)

Germany possesses some of the best environmental historians in the world—Radkau, Christof Mauch, Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Frank Uekoetter, Jens Ivo Engels, and Kai Hünemörder, to name only a few. These have produced much work of outstanding quality, including on the conservationist, Heimat protection, and the more recent mass environmental movements. They have focused by far the greatest part of their effort on forest, landscape, and watercourse protection, the histories of conservationists and environmentalists, pollution arising from industrialization, the creation of state and national parks, and controversies over the construction of large infrastructural projects, such as dams, power plants, and highways. They have devoted much attention to the peculiarities of German environmental history, on linkages between conservationists and the Nazis or the environmental policies of the Third Reich. For the postwar mass environmental movement, they have focused on topics that dominated West Germany’s headlines during the 1970s and 1980s, air and water pollution, chemical poisoning, and most of all Waldsterben, nuclear power, and the Greens.\(^{31}\) In their review of urban environmental history, Massard-Guilbaud and Thorsheim considered Germany


especially favorable for scholarship on the continent, yet here too the amount of work has been limited. Christoph Bernhardt, Dieter Schott, Brüggemeier, and Uekoetter are scholars who have worked on urban environmental history in the German context.

Some attention has been given to the urban dimensions of environmentalism in Germany, but only a few historians have addressed the topic. Jens Ivo Engels is an exception. His work has addressed almost every conceivable topic in the recent history of West Germany’s environmental movement, including cities. He has argued that urban and suburban environmentalism characterized the 1970s and has pointed out the different ways in which urban environmental groups, including grassroots groups, focused on problems in cities. His monumental book, *Naturpolitik in der Bundesrepublik* (*Environmental Politics in the Federal Republic*, 2006), includes a section on urban transportation and the citizens’ initiatives that were focused on cities. Yet this was no exhaustive treatment. In this section on urban transportation, the author relied on primary documents collected from a single archive and focused on the activities of one set of actors and a narrow window of time (the late 1970s and early 1980s). Engels’s interest was theoretical, about how environmentalists had become engaged in a language and logic of oppressors and victims. The urban citizens’ initiatives, he argued, were captured by a logic that demonized their opponents (motorists) and sacralized children and the elderly, the primary urban victims of the car. While there was some truth to Engels’s observations, this feature was just one aspect of a complex subject. A longer time

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perspective, extending backwards to the 1960s or even earlier, would have given greater context to his analysis.

German social scientists have been more prolific on the subject. This is understandable, given the importance of the mass environmental movement in (West) German politics. Since the 1970s, they have published a huge volume of material on the citizens’ initiatives, Greens, and protest movements that were linked to environmentalism such as the peace movement. Although the social scientists have tended to ask different questions about the initiatives from those posed in this study, their work is of much value. The initiatives existed in the thousands in West Germany between the late 1960s and 1980s, and many were short-lived and small-scale organizations. These features make studying them historically difficult, as the archival record is spotty. German social scientists—often under contract with state or federal agencies—conducted numerous surveys and analyses of the initiatives during the 1970s and 1980s. This material provides the basis for conclusions about the initiatives’ operation, lifespan, membership, leadership, goals, funding, and other features.

This study resists the temptation to place the Greens at the center of the narrative of Germany’s mass environmental movement. The Greens participated in the debates about the urban environment once Green parties were formed. But there were limits to the Greens’ importance, even during the party’s entry into local, state, and federal parliaments during the 1980s. They showed up late in the story. Green parties did not exist until the late 1970s at local and regional levels. By 1980, when the national party was formed, all the arguments that were relevant to the debate had been circulating for

33 One of the most comprehensive treatments on the new social movements in Germany is Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008).
years, many since the 1960s. Planners, transportation engineers, politicians, citizen
activists, and others not only had been long engaged in a discourse about urban
environments; they also had altered, reversed, or otherwise influenced policies in a
number of cities.

But there is another, larger point to be made about the Greens. A kind of teleology
surrounds the party’s place in the popular imagination. In this formulation, everything
that happened before the Greens was proto-Green, everything afterwards a result of what
the Greens imagined, said, or did. This interpretation was inspired by the topicality and
political relevance of the Greens during the 1980s, in particular after the national party
attained a measure of political power upon entering the Bundestag in 1983. Soon the Nazi
shadow, postwar Germany’s constant companion and the obsession of German historians
nearly everywhere, fell upon the Greens. Anna Bramwell’s work provided one of the
earliest attempts to link Germany’s ugly past to its present. Among other things, her
books aligned Green views with the ecological wing of the Nazi party. The title of her
book on Richard Walther Darré, the Third Reich’s agricultural minister who was
enamored of organic farming, contained the phrase “Green Party.” Historians poked
many holes in Bramwell’s thesis, but her efforts proved to be only the precursor to many
attempts to divine just how environmentally conscious the Nazis were. A fair number of
historians subsequently addressed similar questions about the relationships between
National Socialism and conservationism. These studies have confirmed that there were

34 Anna Bramwell, Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler’s Green Party (Bourne End: Kensal,
green party,” Organization & Environment, 14, 2 (June 2001), 173-187. Another early treatment of the
Nazi-Green connection, written by planners, is Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke Bultmann, “Politics,
planning and the protection of nature: political abuse of early ecological ideas in Germany, 1933-1945,”
conservationists who became Nazis, and Nazis who were conservationists, thus an overlap. But these studies also have shown that the relationship between the two was full of so many ambiguities and contradictions as to rule out simple generalizations.35

There was an extensive history of criticism, centering on the quality of the built and natural environments in cities, long before Green political parties appeared. This criticism was independent of the Greens. After the Greens emerged, the national party immersed itself in urban issues, which made sense given the party’s roots in local matters. It thus became a carrier of the urban reformers’ program. But it was just one actor among many that were important during the 1980s. The urban reformers did not fold themselves into the Green party; they maintained their independence. While they cooperated with the Greens, they never became adjuncts of the party and they continued to cooperate with other political parties.

Planning, expertise, and democratic governance

Planning historiography is dominated by studies of important people, of planners, architects, administrators, and engineers who wrote key treatises, created important plans, or oversaw the construction of significant infrastructure. The list of iconic figures in modern planning history is long: Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Reinhard Baumeister, Camillo Sitte, Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, Le Corbusier, Lewis Mumford, and Jane Jacobs, to cite only a few. Planning historians concentrate on these people and their

works. This makes much sense, as planning, architecture, and related professions were populated by well-educated elites, usually from wealthy or upper-middle-class backgrounds. Historians seek to understand why these figures created certain models for planning, architecture, or urban development.

One of planning history’s weaknesses is this focus on elites. The subfield resembles a kind of applied intellectual history, where planners, architects, and other members of the spatial professions take center stage. While there is good reason to focus on these people, there is another side to planning history that is often ignored. This side consisted of non-specialists, of ordinary people who were either the subjects of planning or, quite often, participants in planning processes themselves. Planning’s more accurate history, as Robin Bachin has argued, included much “community engagement and social reform.” Planning historians, she argued, needed to “recapture this broad-based coalition for urban planning history.”

The historiography of German planning and architecture is no exception. Much is focused on the late nineteenth century, when city planning first arose as an organized discipline and German planners enjoyed international reputations as brilliant theorists and practitioners of their art. During the twentieth century, Germany’s involvement in the two world wars, plus its division in 1949, influenced German planning and architecture.

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Germany’s urban history was marked by a great many periods, divides, events, and trends in the histories of these disciplines. Some of the breaks were obvious (the bombing of German cities during World War II, for example); others were not. For the postwar era, there was a divide between the reconstruction and post-reconstruction periods, but the era was also defined by debates among planners, architects, and engineers about how to design and build the postwar city. Historians have tended to focus on these debates.  

A central tension has existed within planning since the founding of the discipline as a formal enterprise. Planning, as Dirk von Laak and Anselm Doering-Manteuffel have written, promised to forge order out of the chaos of an increasingly complex industrial society. Planning assumed that the future was manageable, that reason could be applied to empirical fact in order to design a better world. Planning was thus founded upon the insights of the trained expert. With the support of the state, the expert could be vested with extraordinary power. During the twentieth century, planning was applied to an enormous variety of problems, ranging from steering entire economies to designing individual neighborhoods. Most states on earth, whether right, left, or center politically, developed or undeveloped economically, relied upon planning during the century. But for democratic governance, planning was a conundrum. Because they were experts and closely bound to state power, planners preferred to be unencumbered by democratic strictures. From the standpoint of technocratic efficiency, planning schemes could be implemented the swiftest when planners were the least troubled by the public.  


In a well-known thesis, the political scientist James C. Scott argued that this distance between expert planner and the general public was central to some of the twentieth century’s biggest disasters. He asserted that a divide existed between planners and public, between the rational, trained, and universal knowledge of the expert (viewed as being above and “outside” local conditions) and the intuitive, specific, and historic knowledge of the local layperson. He focused on “high-modernist ideology,” a “muscle-bound” version of planning that he argued was responsible for humanitarian calamities. “Authoritarian high modernism” occurred when planners, backed by all the resources of the state, sought to reorder society from the ground up, using simplified templates that paid no heed to local conditions. Their visions were utopian, their faith in rationality, instrumentality, and administrative competence total, their powers absolute. In this formulation, bureaucrats, politicians, revolutionaries, architects, engineers, and planners all contributed to schemes that were foreboding to Scott. His list includes the expected names (Lenin, Trotsky) as well as unexpected ones (Le Corbusier, Walter Rathenau, Robert Moses, Jean Monnet). The ruthlessness of Rathenau’s economic planning enabled Germany to fight World War I long after the country’s resources ought to have collapsed and it showed how societies could be reorganized to fight total war. Corbusier’s utopian urbanism inspired the creation of the functional, austere cities of Chandigarh in India, and Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. Worse was Joseph Stalin’s agricultural collectivization scheme, which led to the deaths of millions during the 1930s.

The story outlined in this dissertation illustrates the central political dilemma that Scott and others have outlined at the heart of planning in a democratic society. As the

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1960s opened in West Germany and elsewhere in the world, planners were regarded as competent managers, able to steer the economy and society in a desirable direction. But as the decade progressed, this faith began to erode. Part of this erosion was due to the emergence of the counter-culture (such as student and antiwar protest), which questioned core assumptions and values held of western societies. In the urban context, much of the erosion in the reputation of technocratic planning owed to an increasing perception that planning was failing to live up to expectations. Not only had Munich’s plans not delivered a better city; it also appeared to an increasing number of reformers that planning processes themselves were flawed. Their lack of democratic footing had produced some unpleasant outcomes. By not considering the needs and wishes of ordinary citizens, the reformers said, the planners had made choices that had resulted in disaster. Yet none of the reformers advocated getting rid of planning altogether. Rather, they wanted to replace an undemocratic form of planning with an improved, more inclusive version. Their desire was to bring planning closer to citizens’ preferences by opening planning to wider input, making bureaucracies more amenable to legislative (city councils’) wishes, making planners share information in a timely fashion, and exposing planners to the public through open exchanges of views.

The question of expertise in planning, however, was more complicated than the dualism between democracy and authority. The dividing lines among expert, layman, advocate, and critic were not always easy to identify. Some of the most important figures in this study—the architect Karl Klühspies, for instance—were experts in one form or another who were also critical of the dominant models or approaches to planning. At the same time, they provided a linkage to the general populace and a valuable service to the
layperson. The citizens’ initiatives needed expert competency in understanding technical planning and in formulating alternative plans to impress the hardened personnel within state or local bureaucracies. Klühspies not only embraced this role but also considered it indispensable to both his own success and that of the grassroots movement. To make things more complicated, some of the experts in this study worked both inside and outside administrative and political structures, alternating between roles as occasion or circumstance permitted. Occasionally, they inhabited multiple roles simultaneously. The geographer Heiner Monheim, for example, was an important figure within the federal government’s planning ministry at the same time as worked with citizens’ initiatives on matters of mutual interest and concern.

These examples speak to the need to revisit the expert as an analytical category. Michael Hascher has argued that while experts long have been important in German transportation history, they also never have been collectively a monolith. Experts, he maintains, arranged themselves into communities of specialists. These were formed to deal with the demands of planning, designing, and building large and complex transportation systems (canal, highway, or railroad networks, for example). The complexity of these systems meant that a single individual might have been a member of several overlapping but nonetheless discrete expert communities. There was thus ample opportunity, Hascher asserts, for the emergence of different points of view among experts. Hence one sees in transportation history the “counter-expert” (“Gegenexpert”), the dissenter who questioned prevailing state policy, sometimes with great success. This phenomenon extended back at least to Friedrich List, who during the 1830s and 1840s made successful pleas for the development of the railroad in Germany. List generated
enormous influence from outside the state apparatus, relying upon his status as a
respected member of the educated middle class.\textsuperscript{42}

No single discipline thus could claim a monopoly on planning expertise. In
transportation planning, traffic engineers dominated the field during the middle of the
twentieth century. Yet acknowledged experts were trained in other fields, such as
traditional city planning, architecture, or the social sciences. As Thomas Zeller showed in
his study of the design and construction of the \textit{Autobahn}, practitioners from different
disciplines fought to have their divergent views accepted as policy.\textsuperscript{43} Some disciplines
were forced onto the defensive, yet they maintained influence on the process. Moreover,
the pendulum could, and did, swing in one direction and then in another over time.
Architects and historic preservationists were among the first professionals to express
doubt about the direction of transportation planning in Munich during the 1960s. Their
training had taught them to value the architectonic features of the city at least as much as
its functional aspects. Streets, for example, were to them more than generic arteries for
traffic movement. They were specific places, critical features of Munich’s historic urban
fabric, sites for social engagement, and integral components of the city’s architectonic
structure. During the middle of the 1960s, these perspectives were at the margins of the
debate, and their protagonists fought to be taken seriously. Within a decade, however,
such opinions became regular features of the debate. Within two decades, they had
become close to the norm.

\textsuperscript{42} Michael Hascher, \textit{Politikberatung durch Experten: Das Beispiel der deutschen Verkehrspolitik im 19.
und 20. Jahrhundert} (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 16-17, 302-06.
\textsuperscript{43} Thomas Zeller, \textit{Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn, 1930-1970} (New York:
Berghahn, 2007).
Transportation: infrastructure, technology, and the city

The historiography of transportation is dominated by studies of technical systems. Railroads and transit networks, airports, canal systems, oceanic and overland shipping routes, highways and road building were (and remain) large, expensive, complex, and highly technical systems. They required enormous sums of money to build and maintain, depended upon the labor and ingenuity of thousands of people, and often required massive state subsidies and oversight. Hence historians have been attracted to them, including environmental historians who understand, correctly, that such colossal works not only altered nature but also, even more importantly, contributed to the economic scale and geographic reach of societies.

Both environmental and transportation historians long have recognized the significance of the automobile, including the infrastructure that was built for it, during the twentieth century. Historians study the transition between the eras of motoring as an elite and as a mass phenomenon. The automobile was a toy for the rich and upper-middle class in Wilhelmine, Weimar, and Nazi Germany. While it encountered popular resistance during the first half of the twentieth century in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, the car was an object of wide fascination.  

The German historian Peter Borscheid has proposed an intriguing thesis about this period of transition. He argued that a “speed imperative” was a hallmark of the modern

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era. During this era, Borscheid argues, humans became obsessed with speed because of its close association with the modern notion of progress, of the idea of forward movement. Faster speeds meant swifter forward movement, thus greater progress. Ever-greater advances in speed, particularly in travel and communications, has marked all of modern history. The railroad and steamship set the standard for swift physical movement, then the car, and finally the airplane. A similar sequence was true in communications, represented by the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and finally the internet. People admired anything that enhanced speed, in some cases to the point of cult status. During the first half of the twentieth century, the car became one of these objects in Europe. The automobile and the upper-class motorist represented a sleek new age of styling, grace, and above all speed. Cities were the first to adopt the car. As the centers of technology, industry, thus of modernity, cities in Europe and elsewhere became the “metropoles of speed.” In Europe, only the wealthy and upper-middle classes were able to afford automobiles during the interwar period. The car’s relationship to speed, however, allowed it to fix itself in the collective imagination of Europeans, including Germans. It had become a cult object, even though it was not yet accessible to most people.

In Germany, as in other European countries, mass motorization arrived in the post-World War II period. European countries followed the American example two to three decades later. Ironically, given the historical importance of the German automobile industry, both France and Great Britain flirted with mass motorization earlier than Germany. Scholarship has thus focused on the transfer of knowledge, people, financing, imagery, and rhetoric from the United States to Western Europe during the postwar era. Much of this literature concerns elite discourse, in particular among transportation-
planning experts.\textsuperscript{46} This strand of research often focuses on experts who lobbied for planning and building the infrastructure of a mass motorized society.\textsuperscript{47}

Numerous historians have examined the centrality of the automobile to West Germany’s political, cultural, and economic life. Axel Schildt, a social and cultural historian, has placed the automobile at the center of West Germany’s history, in particular given its role in shaping the country’s economic boom and its status as a marker of postwar consumption. He and other historians have emphasized how (West) Germans built a car-culture and what it meant to them.\textsuperscript{48} Among German transportation historians, Dietmar Klenke’s work is exemplary. He has focused on the political economy of West German transportation, including postwar struggles over fuel taxes, highway financing, speed limits, vehicle technology, and air pollution.\textsuperscript{49} In 2002, Kurt Möser published a comprehensive history of the automobile in Germany, from the car’s origins

\textsuperscript{46} An example here is the collection of essays contained in the December 2004 edition (volume 2, issue 3) of \textit{Comparative Technology Transfer and Society}: Seely, ‘‘‘Push’ and ‘pull’ factors’’; Per Ostby, ‘‘Educating the Norwegian nation traffic engineering and technological diffusion,’’ 247-72; Par Blomkvist, ‘‘Transferring technology—shaping ideology American traffic engineering and commercial interests in the establishment of a Swedish car society, 1945–1965,’’ 273-302; Per Lundin, ‘‘American numbers copied! Shaping the Swedish postwar car society.’’ 303-34.


\textsuperscript{49} Dietmar Klenke, ‘‘Verkehrspolitiken’’; Dietmar Klenke, ‘‘Freier Stau für Freie Bürger’’; \textit{Die Geschichte der bundesdeutschen Verkehrspolitik, 1949-1994} (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995); Klenke, ‘‘Bundesdeutsche Verkehrspolitik und Umwelt.’’
to the present.  

Möser’s study addressed this history from technical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives. It also included a very short discussion of resistance to the automobile in West Germany. Both authors’ studies inform this dissertation.

Barbara Schmucki comes the closest to addressing the topics and theses of this dissertation. Her outstanding book on transportation planning in East and West Germany, *Der Traum vom Verkehrsfluss* (“Dreaming of the Traffic Flow,” 2001), focuses on how planners in both countries attempted to fashion their cities (Munich and Dresden, specifically) around the automobile and public transit. Thematically, her focus is on these two dominant modes of urban transportation during the period. She devotes some attention to walking and bicycling, including brief discussions of pedestrian zones and traffic calming, to protests over infrastructure, and to citizens’ initiatives. As is typical of the literature, however, all of these topics are sideshows in her book. Her main focus is on the transportation planners who occupied the center of their professions during the decades after 1945. Schmucki’s work makes an important contribution to the literature, and is drawn upon for use in this study, but the book’s focus on a narrow range of specialists means that it devotes very little to the larger social and political context in which her story unfolds. While she recognizes that an important transformation occurred in transportation planning during the 1970s and 1980s, she does not examine the biographies of those involved or bring non-specialists into the discussion. The interests and perspectives of the general public, dissenters, environmentalists, and the few politicians who sided with the urban reformers thus play a small role in her study. She

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50 Kurt Möser, *Geschichte des Autos* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002).
51 Schmucki, *Traum*. 

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also spends very little time discussing the procedural questions that animated the urban reformers, in particular the question of democratization of planning.

By contrast, the literature on the American freeway revolts of the 1960s and 1970s is about political conflict, often written in terms of grassroots citizens’ groups versus established “highwaymen” (administrators, engineers, and transportation planners who were responsible for building the federal interstate system). This literature emphasizes popular participation in the debate about urban freeways, places this political conflict at the center of the narrative, and focuses on the groups and individuals who became outspoken reformers of planning. The freeway revolts are well known among American urban historians, but the European protests (Brian Ladd has labeled them the “European freeway revolts”) have received less attention. Studies of French and British cases have appeared in recent years, however. The West German experience had some parallels to the American. Doubts about urban road and street construction that began during the 1960s arose in places like Munich among an inchoate band of urban reformers. Their criticisms found increasing resonance among the wider public as the decade progressed. As in the United States, their goals were assisted by the visceral opposition of the student and antiwar movements, by unhappiness over urban development among


inner-city residents, and by discontent among governing and intellectual elites over the
direction of growth in West German cities. By 1969, this discontent was ready to explode
to the citizens’ initiatives of the 1970s.

The freeway revolts can be regarded as part of a larger history of roads and
streets. Unlike the historiography of the automobile, railroad, or other forms of
transportation, however, this history is underdeveloped. Hans-Liudger Dienel and Hans-Ulrich Schiedt make this case in an opening essay to their recent edited volume on road
and street history in the modern period. The work that has been done in Germany, they
argue, has focused much more on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than on the postwar era, and on the histories of long-distance roads such as the Autobahn rather than on urban streets.54 For their part, environmental historians have focused on the automobile’s effects on landscapes. Tom Zeller’s history of the Autobahn is a good example in the German context.55 Much interest in the relationship between cars and landscapes, however, stems from the peculiarities of the American experience, such as the relationship between mass motorization and wilderness preservation in the United States.56 American historians have been most interested in the relationship among motorization, road and highway construction, and suburban sprawl. Owen Gutfreund’s Twentieth-Century Sprawl (2004) and Adam Rome’s Bulldozer in the Countryside (2001) are examples of this literature. An environmental historian, Rome examines the linkages between mass suburbanization and road-building, on the one hand, and the

55 Zeller, Driving Germany.
emergence of the environmental movement in postwar America on the other hand. Rome’s thesis differs from those of most other American environmental historians in that he considers cities and suburbs to have been integral to the emergence of the modern mass environmental movement.\(^{57}\)

In contrast to scholars’ interest in the automobile and road-building as agents of environmental change, relatively few historical studies treat the greenest of all transportation modes, walking and bicycling. City planners have given both topics attention in recent decades, in large part because they recognize the environmental, social, and architectonic benefits of these modes, but historians have tended to focus their interest on large technical systems. There is irony here, as walking is the oldest mode of transportation. Despite the importance of high technology to humankind’s mobility during the twentieth century, walking remained the most common mode of transportation in the world. There are few historical studies that focus solely walking.\(^{58}\) Some focus on walking-related subjects such as pedestrian zones.\(^{59}\) More often, walking is treated as a side issue in debates about other topics.

Bicycling has received more attention from historians, but the coverage has been spotty. At the end of the nineteenth century, a bicycling craze swept both sides of the


Atlantic. Historians have concentrated much effort on this period as a result. As with the railroad or automobile, their work reflected a fascination with the bicycle’s technical development. Historians have also produced studied the social and economic influence of the bicycle during this period. Until World War II, the bicycle was the most important mode of urban transportation next to the foot in Europe. One monograph, by Anne-Katrin Ebert, examines the period before 1940 in an attempt to ascertain why the Dutch favored the bicycle more than Germans, but this work is one of the few scholarly efforts on the time period.\(^{60}\) During the 1950s and 1960s, bicycling almost disappeared as a means of practical transportation. But during the 1970s, the mode began to enjoy its rebirth across Europe, including in West Germany. There are even fewer scholars who have worked on this time period. An Austrian, Andreas Hochmuth, wrote about the revival of the bicycle after 1973 in an early work, *Kommt Zeit, kommt Rad* (1991). But as his book focused on the period before World War II and devoted little attention to the bicycle’s most recent history. Another Austrian, the historian Bernd Kreuzer, has focused on Viennese bicycling during the postwar era. Kreuzer argues that while bicycling enjoyed a renaissance in Europe, some cities were more aggressive than others in promoting cycling.\(^{61}\)

\(^{60}\) Anne-Katrin Ebert, *Radelnde Nationen: Die Geschichte des Fahrrads in Deutschland und den Niederlanden bis 1940* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2010). See also Anne-Katrin Ebert, “Cycling towards the nation: the use of the bicycle in Germany and the Netherlands, 1880-1940,” *European Review of History* 11, 3 (Autumn 2004), 347-64.

Sources and organization

This study relies on archival documents, materials that were published during the period examined, and secondary sources. In Munich, the Munich city archive, Bavarian state archive, the archive of the Institute for Urban Development and Housing (ISW, *Institut für Städtebau und Wohnungswesen*), the Munich Forum archive, the Munich city government, the Munich City Museum (*Münchner Stadtmuseum*) archive, and the District Council 3 (*Bezirksausschuss 3*) archive in the Maxvorstadt neighborhood provided primary source material. So did archives around Germany. These included Berlin’s FUSS e.V., the West Tangent Citizens’ Initiative (BIW, *Bürgerinitiative Westtangente*), the Federal Association of Environmental Action Groups (BBU, *Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz*) in Bonn, the Erlangen city archive and the Erlangen city government, and the Theodor Heuss Foundation in Stuttgart. The study also uses documents from the personal archives of the following individuals: Gerhard Gross, Dietmar Habermeier, Dietmar Hahlweg, Jörg Koppen, Rolf Monheim, Otto Resch, and Hans-Henning von Winning. In addition, published source materials came from the research libraries at the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR, *Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung*) in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and Munich’s Bavarian State Library (*Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*), the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität libraries, and the Deutsches Museum library.

The body of the dissertation consists of two sections. The first is thematic, the second more specific, focused on spatial and architectonic topics. Chapter 2 consists of a case study of Munich from 1960 to 1975. Munich provided a fitting example of the
promises, stresses, and contradictions of the booming economic conditions of this era. After the war, Munich had rebuilt from wartime devastation, returning to its place as the largest and most important city in southern Germany. But by 1960, a high-growth economy and a burgeoning population presented Munich with problems arising from growth itself, including increasing motorization. The city’s dynamic young mayor, Vogel, approved a plan to modernize the city’s transportation infrastructure. While much of this plan focused on public transit, in local history it has become known primarily for its forecasted expansion of street and highway capacity. From the mid-1960s forward, attempts to implement this plan created the first serious waves of discontent in Munich. While elites formed the early opposition, by the early 1970s the opposition had spread to wider segments of the city’s population. Opposition to planning for the automobile mixed with other currents, including resistance to urban renewal and housing policies.

Chapter 3 places the dissertation in the context of Germany’s environmental movement. From the 1960s through the 1980s, urban reformers formed an important but understudied part of the environmental movement. The West German environmental movement was most famous for opposition to nuclear power and the formation of the Green party, but during this period, environmentalism was also defined in urban terms. Visible environmental problems were literally at the doorsteps of urban dwellers. Air, water, and noise pollution, greenspace issues, and traffic congestion, among other problems, were a plague on West German cities by the late 1960s. A diverse set of urban actors participated in this aspect of the environmental movement. These included planners and architects, politicians, the citizens’ initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s, the
nascent Green parties in the late 1970s, and eventually established environmental organizations themselves.

Chapter 4, the final chapter in the first section, focuses on international dimensions. The groups and individuals who participated in the West German discourse were embedded in a transnational constellation. This fact in itself was not surprising. The spatial professions—architecture, landscape architecture, city planning, transportation engineering—had a long history of cosmopolitanism. So did activism of all kinds. During the postwar era, planners’ orientation was mostly westward to Western Europe and the United States and northward to Scandinavia rather than east to East Germany and the Soviet bloc. For the first several decades after the war, the American experience was the most significant for Western Europeans in general and West Germans in particular. While American urban models were the object of widespread fascination in the 1950s and early 1960s, the consensus about American cities began to break down by the middle of the 1960s. Reformers began to denounce the American city. But they often drew positive as well as negative inspiration from the United States at exactly the same time, taking cues from America’s own reformers in much the same fashion as the West German student and antiwar movements drew from their American counterparts. Urban Europeans could also be “with America against America,” in the phrasing of the historian Philipp Gassert. During the 1970s and 1980s, the urban reformers began to draw inspiration from elsewhere on the continent. Cities in central and northern Europe paid closer attention to environmental problems, devising programs to make their cities greener and more pleasant for their residents. The chapter uses the concept of
“westernization,” as formulated by Doering-Manteuffel, and “Americanization,” as used by numerous historians, in order to filter this discussion.62

The second section, entitled “specifics,” focuses on controversies over the organization of urban space during this period. How did the West German city change over the period covered in this dissertation? What were the urban reformers attempting to accomplish for the physical design and spatial arrangement of cities? Chapter 5 focuses on the West German pedestrian zone (“Fussgängerzone”). Germans had a unique fascination with the pedestrian zone, as hundreds of cities in East and West Germany developed them during the first postwar decades. They existed almost everywhere by the time of German reunification. As the chapter shows, the zones’ histories present a complicated story. While traffic-restricted areas had existed in cities for millennia, the roots of the modern pedestrian zone lay in interwar Europe. After World War II, they were built in larger numbers. The city leaders who approved the zones had many motivations. During the 1950s and 1960s, they were envisioned as functional components of the auto-oriented city, as "pedestrian islands in the car society,” in the words of a contemporary Swedish planner.63 They were built to foster consumerism, as outdoor versions of the indoor shopping mall that was sweeping the United States. They were also considered to be tools for historic preservation (most were placed in historic city centers), for fostering civic identity, and to attract tourism. This list expanded during the 1970s,

when planners and politicians attempted to redefine the zones around social and environmental goals. But the urban reformers never had much faith that the zones could address West Germany’s systemic urban problems. They believed that the pedestrian zones were too small, too focused on the historic city center, and too narrow a mechanism to be of much use in their campaign to make cities less destructive.

The sixth chapter examines the marginalization and rebirth of the bicycle in the postwar era. Following the invention of the modern bicycle in the late nineteenth century, the device became one of the most important means of urban travel in Europe. With the spread of the postwar car culture, however, the bicycle and the bicyclist became an afterthought for traffic engineers and city planners. Like the pedestrian or the street tram, the bicyclist was viewed as a hindrance to the motorist. But in the 1970s, the bicycle enjoyed a rebirth, in part because it appeared suitable for the new challenges that had arisen. In contrast to the perceived dangers represented by nuclear power plants, automobiles, and industrial emissions, the bicycle appeared to be a benign machine worthy of greater use. It was quiet, low speed, safe, cheap, small, non-polluting, and non-threatening. It became thus a darling of the urban reformers, a symbol of the environmental movement itself. This chapter includes a case study of the small Bavarian city of Erlangen, which during the 1970s and 1980s became known for its bicycling policies.

Chapter 7 treats traffic calming, a planning concept centered on slowing automobile traffic through street design. This chapter focuses on advocates’ attempts to redefine the purposes of city streets, from traffic arteries to spaces for social interaction. During the course of the 1970s and 1980s, traffic calming was a major topic in city
planning and transportation engineering circles. Its advocates, including many citizens’
initiatives, had some success in institutionalizing the concept over the objections of the
automobile industry’s representatives. Traffic calming represented the most fundamental
and direct challenge to the primacy of the automobile within West German cities in part
because it rejected the car’s speed as destructive of urban environments.

A brief concluding chapter analyzes a more recent planning controversy in
Stuttgart within the context of developments over the preceding decades. The case
demonstrates that while some issues continue to split the planning profession as well as
the general public, some things have changed over time. Urban environmentalism is now
central in contemporary Germany.
SECTION I:

THEMES
This chapter examines a fifteen-year period in Munich’s planning history, which was dominated by the conflict between two forces. The first was driven by economic growth. As the major metropolis in southern Germany, Munich grew at a spectacular rate during the *Wirtschaftswunder* years of the “long 1960s,” between the last third of the 1950s to 1973. The city’s population, employment, and economy all boomed during this period. As in other West German cities, the pattern of this growth began to resemble the American urban experience. People were increasingly housed on the urban fringe, either in new suburbs for single-family homes or in massive, publically funded high-rise complexes. The city center, in contrast, began to resemble the American downtown. It contained fewer and fewer residents, as large private firms and public agencies consumed real estate, transforming inner-city residential neighborhoods into office districts. In the years on either side of 1960, planners in Munich struggled to address the consequences of this growth. Believing that Munich was a world city (*Weltstadt*) that required an upgrade,
they developed comprehensive plans to encourage the center-periphery growth patterns and modernize the transportation infrastructure.

The second consisted of demands for the democratization of planning in Munich. It too had its origins in the period’s rapid growth, but it was more a reaction to the consequences of growth than an embrace of them. In addition, the critics’ reactions were part of the larger social and political context of the 1960s and early 1970s in West Germany. While the first major fight over growth in Munich centered on a traffic tunnel, the conflict quickly embraced a much wider range of issues and people. Eventually the struggle became a fundamental one, concerning not only what Munich would look like and how it would function, but also how the city government made decisions and who was to participate in decision-making.

The quotations at the head of this chapter summarize this conflict. While modernity is a slippery and problematic concept for historians, the participants in this story had no qualms about using the term “modern” and fit it into their own understanding of the world. To the city’s transportation planners, to become modern was to give Munich the latest transportation infrastructure, adopting the most technologically advanced systems and the most sophisticated methodologies. This effort was celebrated in slogans such as “München wird modern!” (“Munich is becoming modern!”), which found their way into the city’s public-relations materials. Invariably modernization meant infrastructure for motorized transportation, especially for the automobile but also for public transit.³ During the 1960s, the city became a gigantic construction zone, as the city implemented plans for its underground transit system (the U-Bahn) and built or expanded

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³ This is the definition advanced by the transportation historian Barbara Schmucki. See Schmucki, Traum, 263-7.
high-capacity freeways and arterial roadways in and around Munich. Construction proceeded at a furious pace during the second half of the decade in particular, after the city had attracted the 1972 Olympic Games (awarded to Munich in 1966). Because of the Olympics, Munich was able to attract public financing from the federal and state governments for speeding up completion of its infrastructure. This money allowed the city to complete the first stretch of the new U-Bahn system before the Games opened.4

To an increasing number of critics, this understanding of modernity was deeply unsatisfactory. To them, it led to sacrificing much of what they loved about Munich, its parks, plazas, gardens, and historic buildings, in favor of massive concrete tunnels, overpasses, and freeways. In this sense, their criticism was traditional, based in the logic and language of the historic preservationist movement. But their criticism was never reactionary. On the contrary, in particular after the mid-1960s, the critics were more upset about political processes that denied citizen participation, about economic processes that favored the advantaged over the dispossessed, and about planning processes that decreased the quality of life. Concern about historic preservation continued, but became a background concern. Hence the critics saw themselves as grassroots reformers in a moral cause. Their participation was consistent with, and a part of, the social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They saw themselves as advancing democracy in West Germany, opening administrative structures to public scrutiny, and questioning the monopoly of expertise in planning processes.

Much of the fifteen-year period examined here corresponded to the tenure of the city’s dynamic Oberbürgermeister (akin to a first or lord mayor), Hans-Jochen Vogel,

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who was in office from 1960 to 1972.\textsuperscript{5} Vogel was West Germany’s youngest big-city mayor and a rising star in national politics. He was the head of his unified local party, the SPD, with a large majority in the city council. During a time of unprecedented economic growth, Vogel thus enjoyed optimal conditions for realizing his many goals. There seemed to be little that he could not accomplish. He was instrumental in attracting the Olympic games to Munich. In attempting to come to grips with the consequences of growth, Vogel’s administration set in motion the plans that reordered Munich’s infrastructure and came close to altering the face of the city. But he also presided over a period of great upheaval, including the emergence of opposition to the city’s planning processes. Vogel himself began to question the wisdom of the dominant assumptions behind modern planning, so by the end of his tenure he was sounding more like a critic than a defender of the same planning he had helped create.

This chapter assesses Munich’s conflict in the context of five sets of events that occurred between 1960 and 1975. The first was the creation of the city’s urban-development plan (\textit{Stadtentwicklungsplan} or SEP, which was commonly referred to as the “Jensen Plan” after its lead author, Herbert Jensen), and its related transportation and land-use plans, which together established the framework for bold changes to the city. These sought to modernize Munich’s infrastructure, which included increasing motorized traffic access (both automobile and transit) to the city center. The second set arose as a direct result of the planning and construction of this infrastructure. It centered on opposition to the effects that the Jensen Plan would have on the city, in particular on some of the city’s most historic structures. This opposition crystallized in the mid-1960s

\textsuperscript{5} Technically, Munich had three mayors. The first was the \textit{Oberbürgermeister}. The other two were appointed by the first.
around plans to construct a freeway tunnel underneath the Prinz-Carl-Palais, a palace that lay between the Englischer Garten and the royal palace (the Residenz).

The tunnel controversy was key to the third set, the creation of the Munich Forum in 1968. Recognizing that the tunnel debate had been a watershed moment for Munich, the city government decided to handle calls for democratization by creating an organization to channel and distill the burgeoning public dissatisfaction with planning. The Forum was a unique organization, among the very first publicly funded institutions dedicated to the democratization of planning.

The Forum’s creation coincided with a broad new phase of the story, constituting the fourth set of events under discussion here. At the end of the 1960s, public opposition exploded in neighborhoods near the city center. While the tunnel controversy was in many respects a narrow technical matter, the fights that followed were about fundamental social questions and political rights. These were the harbingers of the citizens’ initiatives movement of the 1970s, which featured grassroots groups that brought wider segments of the population into the debate.

The chapter closes by examining the period after Vogel left office, when much political support for the democratization of planning was lost. His bureaucratic reforms, which were designed to introduce openness to planning, were reduced, while the city’s many critics were discouraged. Yet their assessments were wide of the mark. Too much had happened politically and socially, both inside and outside of Munich, for the city to return to planning decisions without citizen participation.
When the American army took Munich at the end of April 1945, it found a city in ruins. Like Germany’s other large cities, Munich had been a frequent target of Allied bombing during the war. The intensity and frequency of these attacks (there were 66 bombing attacks on Munich) had left almost half the buildings in the city destroyed. In some districts, such as the city center (Altstadt), the area around the main train station, and inner city neighborhoods like Schwabing, the figure was even higher. In order to begin the process of rebuilding the city, the American military moved quickly to install a new municipal government. For mayor, the Americans settled on Karl Scharnagl, who had been Munich’s last mayor (under the Bayerische Volkspartei) before the Nazi takeover in 1933. The Americans were attracted to Scharnagl because of his demonstrated competence as a Weimar-era politician and his lack of ties to the Nazi regime. Scharnagl, who helped found the CSU in 1946, governed for three years. Municipal elections in 1948 gave the largest share of the popular vote to the SPD. This established a preference for the Social Democrats in Munich that remained unbroken for the rest of the century, save for one six-year interregnum (1978-1984), when the CSU controlled both the city council (Stadtrat) and mayoral office. The SPD’s choice for mayor in 1948, Thomas Wimmer, was like his predecessor, a Weimar politician untainted by associations with the Nazis. The two men, in fact, had been imprisoned together at Dachau in 1944. Wimmer was also a member of the same generation, born two years after Scharnagl in 1887. Aged 61 in 1948, Wimmer became the leading figure to guide
Munich through the happier years of reconstruction after the currency reform, the creation of the West German state, and beginning of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

In Munich as elsewhere in Germany, east and west, the issue was the form that reconstruction would take. Planning historians have characterized this as a debate between modernists and preservationists. Modernists in postwar Germany were forward-looking, optimistic, and progressive. They believed that architecture should make a complete break with the past, in particular with the Nazi past. Not only did the ruins of 1945 present the physical opportunity to do rebuild from scratch, they also were testament to how the past in Germany was no guide to the future. Traditionalists, on the other hand, considered modernism’s lack of historical references to be a dangerous assault on Germany’s past. While their task in 1945 was complicated by the Nazi legacy, they maintained that the pre-Nazi past was worthy of reconstruction.8

Modernists were in thrall of concepts that had developed during the interwar period. Modernist architecture and planning had been an international phenomenon after World War I, when Germany was represented by the renowned Bauhaus school of design. The most famous statement of modernist concepts was the Charter of Athens, a manifesto penned by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier in 1943, which had grown out of a meeting of the International Congresses for Modern Architecture (universally known by its French acronym, CIAM, for *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne*) a decade earlier. The Charter made a strong plea for modernist concepts, such as functionalism

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8 This is an established argument among architectural historians. See Gavriel Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: architecture, monuments, and the legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), chapter 1.
(separating residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational functions from one another).

In Germany immediately after World War II, modernists particularly emphasized the idea of the “Stadtlandschaft,” based on the ideas of decentralization (building new cities in the countryside), functionalism (separating functions, as in the Charter of Athens), and organicism (building in harmony with local landscapes). The concept was first articulated by geographers in the 1920s, then picked up by Hans-Bernhard Reichow (later author of Die autogerechte Stadt) and others during the 1930s. Reichow reformulated his idea during the war itself (while a member of the Nazi party), then popularized the idea after the war, especially through his 1948 book, Organische Stadtbaukunst: Von der Grosstadt zur Stadtlandschaft (“The Organic Art of Building Towns: From the Metropolis to the City Landscape”). Although Reichow’s idea of building new cities on this model was never carried out due to high costs, the modernists in Germany had much enthusiasm for this model. They accepted the idea that Germany’s new cities ought to be rebuilt at lower densities than before the war, with well-lit housing districts connected by wide streets. These streets were to also connect the inner city to new suburbs, enabling commuters to reach both quickly. In cities where modernists had the upper hand, as in Frankfurt, Hannover, and Hamburg, local administrations gave less heed to preserving what remained of historic buildings. They preferred to focus on the creation of new downtown districts consisting of larger-scaled buildings serviced by wider streets. They based their actions partly on the idea that functionality should take

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precedence over aesthetics, partly on the notion that Germany’s reconstructed cities
needed a fresh infusion of light and air.¹⁰

But architectural traditionalism was an old and powerful adversary. The
traditionalists had distrusted modernists’ ideas and their urban plans for the better part of
a half-century. Based in the historic preservation and Heimatschutz movements of the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the traditionalists had recognized from the start
of heavy industrialization that rapid growth had the potential to destroy existing
cityscapes and rural landscapes. During the interwar period, they had battled with
Bauhaus modernists. Some had attached themselves to the Nazis, whose propaganda
vilified modernism, although once in power, the Nazi building program included a small
modernist component—another example of a disconnect between Nazi propaganda and
practice. Yet despite its association with the Nazis, traditionalist sentiments remained
strong in Germany after 1945. Traditionalists preferred to reconstruct the bombed
German cities along prewar lines—scrubbed of all outward signs that National Socialism
had ever existed. This effort meant the faithful reconstruction of major monuments and
buildings, the preservation of historic cityscapes, and a preference for smaller-scaled
building. After the war traditionalists held the upper hand in some cities, including
Münster, Freiburg, and Nuremberg. Like modernists, traditionalists tended to be
professionals and were drawn from an elite, highly educated stratum of society. But in
cities such as Munich, traditionalist sentiment was not confined to these elites. There was

¹⁰ Diefendorf, *Wake of War*, 74-9; Jeffry Diefendorf, “Artery: urban reconstruction and traffic planning in
considerable public support for the preservation of historic buildings, monuments, and cityscapes.\textsuperscript{11}

Yet most participants in these ideological battles were united on one key issue after the war ended. Both the modernists and the traditionalists wanted to avoid the urban model of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were the cities that had arisen during Germany’s period of rapid industrialization and that were characterized by their crowding, tenement slums (the notorious “Mietskasernen” in cities like Berlin), dirt, pollution, and poverty. These conditions had animated many attempts at reform during the Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi periods, and helped to create a consensus about the need to decentralize cities long before 1945. The \textit{Stadtlandschaft} concept was just one idea (in Germany and elsewhere) that had roots in the rejection of the industrial-era city. The traditionalists recognized these problems as well, buying into a postwar consensus that emphasized decongestion and well-lit housing, among other things. The differences between the modernists and traditionalists had more to do with architectural form and the importance of historic preservation. Even the latter was restricted to disputes about how faithful German cities should reconstruct their most important and symbolic historic structures. Both traditionalists and modernists shared a disdain for preserving inner-city housing, in particular the working-class housing that was built during the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries. They borrowed this view from their predecessors, who regarded such housing as unhealthy for residents.\textsuperscript{12}

The immediate postwar decades were the setting for another professional struggle in (West) Germany, this one over transportation planning. Here the issue was expertise (the monopoly of technical knowledge applied to complex problems) more than ideology. By the interwar decades, transportation planning had become a full-fledged subfield of city planning on both sides of the Atlantic. These planners, in Germany and elsewhere, favored the modern idea that chaotic particularities could be ordered into rational systems. They began to conceive of space as a uniform rather than a heterogeneous entity, a “plane on which traffic movements occurred in predictable patterns,” hence a mathematical challenge.\textsuperscript{13}

After 1945, transportation engineering became a highly specialized and quantified discipline. Postwar training curricula were established at technical universities in both East and West Germany. Transportation planning was given departmental standing and prized professorial chairs in these institutions. These departments trained graduates in the use of scientific data and sophisticated mathematical models that enabled them to forecast traffic “demand.” Their specialized methods enabled them to compete with the older and more established professions within city planning, while their opaque jargon meant that few others, especially laymen, could understand their debates. During the 1950s and 1960s, engineers discovered a formidable arsenal for use in transportation-planning


decision-making. They chose an agenda that considered motorists first; it was based on the technical argument that future traffic demand should determine what was planned and built. By the 1960s, this perception became a norm in Munich and other major cities.\textsuperscript{14}

Architects and other specialists did not possess these technical skills. Many thus found themselves marginalized in planning both intra-city streets and interurban highways. “The hard math of the civil engineer,” the environmental historian Tom Zeller has written of postwar Autobahn planning, “replace[d] the soft pencil of the landscape architect.”\textsuperscript{15}

Ironically, however, modernist architecture itself had made this outcome possible. Modernists had been engaged in the same project, ordering the urban world along rationalist lines, as had the transportation engineers. The Charter of Athens was an expression of an ideal that was now finding its expression in transportation-engineering models. The modernists’ notion of a functionally separated, horizontal city required a smoothly flowing, automobile-centric transportation system. Many architects had developed a fondness for suburban development over the course of the century. (Suburban development in Germany, in theory and practice, varied according to period, with architects on both the left and the right subscribing to widely different models of suburbanization. In addition, such development was also different from American practice.) By definition, dispersal of residents almost mandated widespread adoption of the car. Modernism in architecture submitted to the same rationalist paradigm that had


\textsuperscript{15} Zeller, Driving Germany, 199.
animated transportation engineering, placing highest value on high-speed, motorized, and efficient travel in order to connect far-flung city sections.\textsuperscript{16}

All these themes came together in the postwar rebuilding of Munich. The city experienced a fight between wings of several professions. The architects’ battle was most important in the immediate postwar years, when much of the city still lay in rubble. Traditional forces first gained the upper hand after 1945, in large part because traditionalist architects and historic preservationists had been especially active and powerful in Bavaria for over a half-century. Like elsewhere in Germany, Munich’s citizens attached emotional significance to the oldest and most symbolic part of their city, the \textit{Altstadt}. As Munich had a reputation as a city of art and architecture, many of its citizens wished to reconstruct the \textit{Altstadt} that was faithful to this image. They thus wanted none of the hallmarks of the industrial era (smokestacks, factories, or tenement slums) to darken their city’s skyline. There was strong support among political elites and the general public for the reconstruction of the city’s many architectural treasures, such as the royal palace (\textit{Residenz}) and the old town hall, both of which had been heavily damaged during the war.\textsuperscript{17}

There were, however, modernist aspects to Munich’s early reconstruction. Presaging concerns that arose in more intense fashion a decade later, key figures in Munich’s government wanted to build more transportation infrastructure to ease access to the inner city, particularly for the automobile.\textsuperscript{18} This goal was best exemplified in a plan

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\textsuperscript{17} Rosenfeld, \textit{Munich and Memory}, chapters 1-2; Nerdinger, “München: Bewährte Kontinuität,” 336-7; J.G. Hajdu, “Phases in the post-war German urban experience,” \textit{Town Planning Review} 50, 3 (July 1979), 272-4.

\textsuperscript{18} Diefendorf, \textit{Wake of War}, 91-4, 213.
designed by Karl Meitinger, head of the city’s building office. His plan (which was approved by the city council in 1945, but which Meitinger had worked on during the 1930s) was an attempt to split the difference between traditionalism and modernism. Meitinger acknowledged both extremes. One group, he wrote shortly after the war, “wants to let the debris stand and create a new city next to the old one.” The others, “the transportation fanatics,” wanted to build huge transportation axes coursing through the city. In between stood people such as himself. At the core of the “Meitinger Plan” was an Altstadtring, a ring road that would encircle the historic city center. The author foresaw a very wide ring (50 to 70 meters in width) like Vienna’s famous Ringstrasse. This road had two purposes. On the one hand, it would provide much greater capacity for automobile traffic, hence it was future-oriented, and a clear nod to modernism. On the other hand, the road was designed to protect the Altstadt from the car. It would move traffic around the historic center instead of through it, while its width enabled cars to be parked on it instead of in the Altstadt. Meitinger’s idea thus used a modernist device to protect a traditional space. Because it created a space protected from automobile traffic, it also set up the right conditions for a large pedestrian zone (see chapter 5).19

Meitinger’s plan was never realized. During the first decade after the war, the immediate needs of reconstruction took precedence over all else—clearing the rubble, rebuilding damaged structures, and housing the population. But the ideas contained in his plan, such as a broad ring road designed to protect the historic city center from traffic—proved inspirational to his successors in the planning bureaucracy through the 1950s and into the 1960s. Although Meitinger’s bifurcated plan, consisting of the traditional and the

modern, was never implemented exactly as he planned, it did inspire the construction of a high-capacity Altstadtring and a protected Altstadt as he had wished. Two decades after formulation, the plan would have enormous consequences. The economic growth that came to the city center during the miracle decades—in the form of real estate speculation, parking garages, new street construction, and the razing of old buildings to make way for new office complexes—would be concentrated along the Altstadtring and around the edges of the Altstadt, as Meitinger had hoped. The problem was that the ring road went through parts of historic, densely-built residential neighborhoods. As Munich’s economy boomed and development concentrated along areas adjacent to the ring road, these neighborhoods later become the flash points for Munich’s urban critics.

During the 1950s, West Germany’s high-consumption society emerged. Real wages rose, the five-day workweek became the norm, leisure time increased, and unemployment was low (in 1960, it was almost nothing, at 1.3%). There were increasing numbers of office workers, as the economy shifted away from the primary and secondary sectors and toward the tertiary sector. This trend in turn sped up postwar urbanization, which by the start of the 1950s was already fully underway as a result of the continuing influx of refugee populations from Eastern Europe. Massive housing construction on the urban periphery increased motorized commuting, which in turn boosted automobile ownership. During the 1950s, auto ownership increased eightfold, with growth highest at the end of the decade.

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Munich experienced all of this. During the 1950s, the size of the local economy nearly quadrupled, from about six billion marks annually to about 22 billion. Much of this growth was due to the presence of major firms such as Siemens and BMW, which had their headquarters in Munich, and to a host of other large companies in tertiary sectors such as banking and insurance. To these were added the offices of the Bavarian state government, two major universities, and a host of other public institutions. By 1961, the number of employees in Munich had doubled, from 309,000 in 1946 to 660,000. Economic growth, combined with migration from the east, contributed to a swift population increase in the city. Increasing consumption brought on by these factors led to rapid motorization. In 1950, there were 24 cars per 1,000 residents in Munich. A decade later, the ratio was 128/1,000, well above the West German average.\textsuperscript{22}

Munich’s leaders were well aware of the city’s growth trends. Coupled with the waning postwar ideological battles between traditionalism and modernism, these trends persuaded officials to consider modernist interventions in the city’s landscape.\textsuperscript{23} They pointed to the region’s rapid population growth (by 1957, the region had passed a million residents), increased commuting between new suburbs and the central city, and increasing motorization as grounds for worry about Munich’s future. The old street-system appeared to be incapable of handling the present motorized traffic in the city, not to mention expected growth.

During the second half of the 1950s, Munich’s planners thought it necessary to increase the street space devoted to the automobile. Doing so meant more than just widening existing streets to accommodate cars. It entailed building new high-capacity

\textsuperscript{22} Schmucki, \textit{Traum}, 59-69, 244 (motorization data from table 5, page 64).

\textsuperscript{23} On the reduction of hostilities between traditionalists and modernists, see Rosenfeld, \textit{Munich and Memory}, 147.
“arterial” roadways and the related ramps, tunnels, and overpasses which planners thought would be needed to modernize Munich’s transportation system. In 1955, the city’s chief planner, Hans Högg, made one ambitious proposal. His massive “star project” would have run six-lane elevated Autobahnen through the city center, where they would have met at an enormous interchange (the size of the Altstadt itself) near the main train station. After debating the issue, three years later the city adopted a less intrusive but still ambitious plan based on a ring system (concentric rings built around the city center), wherein traffic would be routed through and around the city along the rings rather than sending everything through a single interchange at the center. After consulting with outside experts on the idea, in 1960 the city further revised their ideas to include a public transit component. By that year, when Vogel entered the picture, the city was still formulating its long-range transportation plan.24

*The Jensen Plan*

The contrast between Vogel and his predecessor could not have been much greater. A very large part of this difference was biographical. Vogel, the son of a university professor in Göttingen, had a reputation as an intellectual and technocrat. Wimmer, on the other hand, had come from a lower-middle class background and was best known for his down-to-earth folksiness. But a big part of the contrast was generational. At only 34 years of age, Vogel was nearly four decades younger than his predecessor; hence there existed a visible difference in energy and style between the two

men. Wimmer had been part of a prewar generation that had been installed by the Allies right after the war ended. By 1960, these men were almost gone from Munich’s Rathaus and city council. Vogel represented a generation with little or no adult experience with politics before 1945. Vogel had been a member of the Hitler Youth and had served in the Wehrmacht as a young man at the end of the war, but this unpleasant association carried no political consequences during his tenure in office.²⁵

Vogel’s adult biography was dominated by his spectacular postwar career. Trained as a lawyer during the late 1940s, he passed his professional exams with ease and went into public service in the Bavarian state government. His tremendous intelligence and obvious political skills allowed him to rise rapidly, both within the bureaucracy and in the SPD, which he had joined in 1950. Vogel became Munich’s solicitor in 1958. Two years later, after befriending well-placed SPD members of Munich’s Stadtrat, he was the party’s candidate for mayor. He would prove to be one of Munich’s most popular mayors in its history. He won 64% of the popular vote in 1960. Six years later, he won with an even greater margin, at nearly 78%.²⁶

Vogel was a member of a generation that had much faith in planning. He led a city government that embraced the modern notion that careful, enlightened, and rational planning could solve big problems and steer society into the future. Numerous historians

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have used the term “planning euphoria” to describe the depth of this belief, in particular at the dawn of the 1960s, when the West German economy ran the hottest. This was the period when planners had the instruments, the standing, and the funds to redesign, tear down, and rebuild old neighborhoods from scratch urban renewal schemes or Sanierung. In some places, for example in the Ruhr town of Steele, just outside of Essen, plans could be made to raze entire towns and build new ones in their place. In 1960, planners in West Germany organized their work around the notion of urban development planning (Stadtentwicklungsplanung). The idea was to rectify the piecemeal shortcomings of planning practice through a single master plan for an entire city. The master plan was to be a blueprint, a unified vision of how the city was to develop over the long run. More detailed transportation and land-use plans would then be formulated under the goals established in the master plan, in order to coordinate efforts across departments and prevent plans from arising in ad hoc fashion.  

Upon taking office, Vogel set about boosting the city’s efforts to create a comprehensive urban development plan. The city had been working on its problems for some years, but had been unable to put together a master plan. Now, however, Vogel’s administration was in position to realize one, in part because Vogel and the SPD had placed much emphasis on the issue during the campaign. To speed up the process, the city established a working group headed by Kurt Leibbrand, a renowned transportation professor in Zurich. Within a year the group had put together a draft transportation plan

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for the inner city. But in the summer of 1961, Leibbrand was arrested on war-crimes charges for complicity in the murder of Italian soldiers, so the city had to find a replacement. It chose Herbert Jensen, who was also well known in German planning circles, in particular for his role in rebuilding Kiel. The reconstituted working group under Jensen moved quickly, formulating a general transportation plan in 1962, then a finalized master plan—the Jensen Plan—that was approved by the city council in July 1963.\(^\text{28}\)

The Jensen Plan was the most ambitious plan to emerge from the city government in Munich’s history. It envisioned the city center as the focal point of continued strong regional growth; hence it built its concepts around this core idea. The transportation component of the plan contained two large concepts.\(^\text{29}\) First, transit was to remain a major transportation system, but it was to be shifted from the existing street tram system to an underground one. Here transit would be no hindrance to aboveground automobile movement, and vice-versa. Within a decade this underground system (eventually consisting of the U-Bahn and parts of the S-Bahn) was opened. But this new transit system was both a gain and a loss for Munich, because the city’s transit authority would shut down one or two tram lines whenever a new underground line opened. This was perfectly consistent with the logic of the \textit{autogerechte Stadt}. Removal of the street trams made more street space available for automobiles.

Second, the plan envisioned a massive expansion of Munich’s street system. Consistent with other West German transportation planning trends, Munich’s plan

\(^\text{29}\) This discussion is based on Schmucki, “Stadt-(R)und-Fahrt,” 309-12; Schmucki, \textit{Traum}, 243-53; Rosenfeld, \textit{Munich and Memory}, 149.
foresaw a series of urban freeways, major arterials, and ring roads that would connect the various parts of the region together.\textsuperscript{30} The urban freeways and arterials would connect the different \textit{Autobahnen} with the city’s center, while ring roads in and around Munich would allow motorists wishing to pass through Munich to avoid the congestion of the city center altogether. At the center of all this was an \textit{Altstadtring} (see figures 1 and 2, Appendix A). Following Meitinger’s original idea, this inner ring would send through-traffic around the historic center of the city, creating a traffic-free space for a large pedestrian zone. In total, Munich’s new street and freeway system would require dozens of new bridges, traffic tunnels, and overpasses, not to mention the widening of existing streets throughout the city. To accommodate the forecasted traffic growth, Vogel had written, Munich needed to find space wherever it could, “in the form of underground transit routes, of tunnels and skyways, of overpass intersections and of parking garages.”\textsuperscript{31}

Despite the Jensen Plan’s clear technocratic thrust, traditionalist concerns had not evaporated. Concern had arisen about the harm the plan might do to Munich’s architectural and cultural heritage years before final passage. Much of this concern had been voiced within the bureaucracy and the city council. At several points starting in the late 1950s, the \textit{Stadtrat} had voted to insert preservationist language into the guidelines for the city’s planners. It did so again in 1963, in the final plan. The city’s politicians and head planners all paid heed to the preservation ideal in their public statements. Even the plan’s few critics at the time acknowledged the need to ease traffic flow within the city, they just wanted it done in a way that was compatible with preservation. A commentary

\textsuperscript{30} Diefendorf, “Artery,” 138.
in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in October 1961 about the working group’s inner-city traffic plan put the choice for Munich in blunt terms. There were two possibilities for the city, the author wrote. Either Munich would succumb to the auto-oriented, rational, mathematical precision of plans, such as those formulated by the transportation planners, or it would retain its “vibrant form,” which allowed its residents to form affectionate and lifelong attachments to the city. Using language that presaged debates that occurred later in the decade, the author decried those who wanted to turn Munich into an “*autogerechte Stadt*” (auto-oriented city) over those who wished to see it remain “*menschengerecht*” (human-scaled or –oriented).32

As events would show, the modernizing and technocratic dimensions of the Jensen Plan were more important than its traditionalist elements. But even as city officials argued that the plan would not destroy aspects of Munich that its residents loved, they knew they would have a public-relations problem if it were perceived as such.33 The first debates about planning’s lack of democratic footing originated inside the city government. From the beginning of his administration, Vogel had voiced concerns about the ambitious goals and massive scale of the Jensen Plan and the transportation and land use plans that accompanied it. He thought the plan had the potential to alienate voters and would be realizable only if the citizenry were kept informed of developments. Keeping everything secret, he wrote to Leibbrand in the spring of 1961, would be

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counterproductive, as leaks to the public from private meetings would only strengthen resistance.  

To this end, the city conducted two campaigns during the drafting process. First, the administration solicited input from external, organized interests, such as professional associations (engineers, architects), unions, business groups, retailers, the Deutsche Bundesbahn, and the media, about the transportation plan for the inner city. These groups were given the opportunity to comment on the plan and express reservations. Their consent was considered validation of the city’s methods and goals and was subsequently used as evidence of a public consensus behind the plan.

Second, the administration embarked on a public-relations campaign to convince the general public of the progressive nature of the plan. Part of this campaign consisted of media coverage of planning developments, which was cultivated by Vogel and other members of the administration. They spoke publicly and often about the need to address Munich’s problems in aggressive fashion. City leaders drummed home the idea that if Munich did not respond to the swift population growth and increasing traffic that was forecasted for the future, the city would drown in its own success. Among the most important aspects was a long-running public exhibition at the city museum titled “München plant und baut” (“Munich plans and builds”), which was designed to highlight

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the city’s plans to a wide audience. Over the next several years, the exhibition attracted over a half million visitors.\textsuperscript{36}

Still, controversy broke out almost immediately. This centered on the fate of the \textit{Viktualienmarkt} (literally, “victuals market”), an open-air produce- and flower-market to the immediate south of the Marienplatz. The market was a beloved, centuries-old institution, as much a part of the city’s cultural life as the Englischer Garten or the Theresienwiese (the location of the annual \textit{Oktoberfest}). But it now stood astride the anticipated route of the \textit{Altstadtring}. Because the market sat in the middle of a densely built neighborhood, there was no way to build a four- or six-lane road without going through, over, or under the market itself. Recognizing the spatial constraints involved, the working group under Leibbrand had drafted several alternatives for the Viktualienmarkt, including a tunnel underneath and an overpass above the market. Both options would have required massive intervention in the market’s atmospherics.

Concern over the fate of the \textit{Viktualienmarkt} emerged early in the process, linked to ongoing fears that the city’s historic jewels might fall victim to the city’s modernizing plans. In 1961, Felix Zapf, the head of the construction office, defined the market as a key part of Munich’s identity, as important as retaining the existing \textit{Hofgarten} (a park) or the wooded banks of the Isar. Similar worries animated city councilmen within the CSU,

who demanded that the city create alternatives to tunneling under or building over the market. After learning of the alternatives for the market in the final Jensen Plan, outside groups began organizing. Historic-preservation groups, professional associations, and grassroots neighborhood groups formed to contest the city’s plans for the area. During 1963 and 1964, these groups lobbied the city hard to preserve the market’s integrity. Eventually the city chose an option that did the least damage to the existing Viktualienmarkt. It narrowed the ring road to two lanes, kept it at ground level, and had it twist sharply around the southernmost edge of the market. Because of the narrow road width and tight quarters at this point, preserving the market meant introducing a choke point for traffic along the Altstadtring.

“Conflicts belong to democracy!”

During and after final passage of the Jensen Plan, the city bureaucracy worked on detailed blueprints for the many parts of the plan. Among the first action items was the completion of the Altstadtring, in particular the sections to the northeast of the city center. This was a tricky problem, for the multi-lane ring road would have to run through sensitive areas. These included existing residential neighborhoods and a section of the city packed with some of Munich’s most historically significant buildings, monuments,


and gardens. Among those were the Residenz, Hofgarten, Armeemuseum, Finanzgarten, the southern edge of the Englischer Garten, and the Prinz-Carl-Palais.

The pivot for the ring road’s northeastern quadrant was the area around the Prinz-Carl-Palais, located just to the southwest of the Englischer Garten. This early example of neoclassical architecture in the city (it was completed in 1806) sat on the spot where the ring road was slated to make a ninety-degree turn at its northeastern corner. Munich’s planners had eyed the area around the palace since the Meitinger Plan because there were few other viable options for cutting the *Altstadtring* through the area.

The fate of the palace thus had been under discussion during the preparation of the Jensen Plan. As was true of the *Viktualienmarkt*, historic preservation groups identified the palace as one of the city’s architectural treasures. The most important of these groups, the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts (the offices of which were in the palace), had been in contact with Vogel’s administration from its beginning about the need to preserve all the historic properties in the area. A number of these, including the Prinz-Carl-Palais, were under the direct control of the Bavarian state government. Because these properties were important to the state government for different reasons, planning the ring road through the area necessitated delicate conversations among the city, state, and historic preservation groups. One of the city’s proposals, for example, was to move the palace in its entirety. After the Bavarian government helped nix this idea as unfeasible, the city proposed building a tunnel that ran east and west directly under the palace. A series of ramps would exit the tunnel, connecting the multi-lane ring road to

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39 In addition to the documents cited in this and the following three paragraphs, the discussion of the Prinz-Carl-Palais case relies on Jürgen Reese, *Widerstand und Wandel der politischen Organisation: Darstellung und Analyse eines Programmkonfliktes in der Münchner Stadtplanung* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag / Guenther Holzboog KG, 1976), 15-149.
other high-capacity routes planned for the area. Under the plan, the palace would be surrounded by concrete. The city council initially approved this plan, known as *Bebauungsplan 280* (building plan 280), in 1966.\(^{40}\)

During the initial stages of planning the palace tunnel, the conversation took place among specialists who worked in relatively anonymous historic preservation committees. Extra-governmental criticism came from the Bavarian Academy of Fine Art, which represented an elite stratum of society, for its members were drawn largely from established, wealthy, and conservative circles. They tended to be art historians and preservationists from academia, museums, and other prestigious institutions. The name of the group’s director, Emil Preetorius, betrayed the aristocratic and traditionalist nature of the group. He and other members lobbied the city against the tunnel plan, convinced that it would destroy the integrity of the palace and degrade Munich’s architectural heritage.\(^{41}\)

But as the city worked on finalizing plan 280, the nature of outside criticism began to change. By 1965 it had become clear to the Academy that its efforts were having little effect on the city’s preservation committees. It thus began to make its appeals public.\(^{42}\)

At about the same time, a number of independent architects, who had gotten wind of the city’s proceedings, also became active. They began to work outside the city’s institutional framework in the hope of affecting the process of planning. Over two years starting in 1965, several of these younger architects found they shared a common outlook

\(^{40}\) StAM, Bu. u. R. 3372: Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste to Vogel, July 7, 1960, and July 4, 1963; Planungsreferat 90/3, 45: “Beschluss des Stadtplanungsausschusses vom 25.3.65 (öffentlich).”

\(^{41}\) StAM, Bu. u. R. 3375: Preetorius to Vogel, October 16, 1963; “Protokoll über die Sitzung der städtischen Baukunstkommission am 5.11.63”; “Sitzung von der städtischen Baukunstkommission am 23.3.65.”


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and started working together as an informal association of critics. In November 1967 they formed the *Münchner Bauforum*, akin to a citizens’ initiative, albeit one composed only of professionals. It became one of the most important critical voices in the city. With respect to the palace tunnel plan, their criticisms found an outlet in the media. A few influential journalists, such as Peter Bode and Joseph Stroebl of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, had become critical of the tunnel plan and began to cover the debate. Among other things, Stroebl broadcast an alternative plan that had been formulated by the *Bauforum*’s Karl Klühspies. Labeled “Plan K” after the author, this plan was elegant: instead of building a costly, ugly, and destructive tunnel, it called for routing *Altstadtring* traffic along narrow one-way streets on either side of the palace.43

After the city council approved building plan 280 in July 1966, the debate over the palace tunnel became broader and more heated. During the fall of 1966 and early winter of 1967, the city discovered that the critics’ objections had reached a broader audience. For the first time, the city faced charges that its process was undemocratic. The Academy put together a petition containing four thousand signatures that included prominent individuals, among them the physicist Werner Heisenberg. Impassioned stories about the palace tunnel appeared in the local media, which generated letters to the editor from worried citizens. Most spectacularly, members of the *Münchner Bauforum* organized a series of public meetings at which the critics, city officials, and the general public discussed the issue. These culminated in an assembly in January 1967, which an estimated thousand people attended. To quell the debate, the city fell back on a trusted method. It convened a committee of outside experts to review all the ideas and plans that had been submitted for the palace (by then, the city had received dozens of plans and

ideas for the palace). In February 1967, the committee came back with a predictable recommendation, endorsing plan 280 but with minor revisions. A tunnel project would proceed under the Prinz-Carl-Palais. Five years later, it was completed.44

The controversy surrounding the tunnel became part of local legend in Munich. To an increasing number of critics, the debate crystallized what was wrong about not only the direction of planning but also how the city government conducted its business. The events that culminated in February 1967 broke the trust in the city government’s claim to technocratic perfection. From 1967 onward, the city faced organized, articulate, and vocal external opposition. Proposed stretches of transportation infrastructure were subjected to intense public debate. Grassroots opposition to other components of the Jensen Plan began to form almost immediately. One component was a plan to expand streets running alongside the Isar river into a high-capacity urban freeway, a project known as the Isarparallele. Among other things, this road would have removed long stretches of mature trees on the riverbank. Opposition to the project centered on this feature, constituting an early instance of environmentally tinged resistance to road building within Munich (see chapter 3). In short, the Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel controversy was a watershed moment, a clear break in the city’s history. Before the tunnel, much of what the city planned was tolerable; after, little was.

The palace tunnel case showed that the city’s efforts to inject democratic precedents into the Jensen Plan had fallen short. In 1962, Vogel’s insistence on getting input from interest groups had been a participatory success. But this participation had come from highly organized parts of society; thus it did not represent the public in any

usual sense of the term. The city museum’s exhibition, “München plant und baut,” which was erected during preparation of the Jensen Plan, was likewise a mirage. It was visited by many thousands of people, but it had not involved the public in making decisions.

The vigor of the public outcry over the palace tunnel had been a surprise to city officials, given their previous experiences in planning, designing, and constructing other parts of the Altstadtring. The debate about the Viktualienmarkt, for instance, had presaged the controversy over the Prinz-Carl-Palais by several years. The controversy over the Viktualienmarkt had caused a reaction during the early 1960s, but had sparked nothing like the resistance to the palace tunnel that emerged a few years later. Why did public opposition become so strong, vocal, and generalized as a result of the Prinz-Carl-Palais controversy? Given the strong preservationist sentiments in Munich, why did earlier controversies not produce similar changes in public attitudes?

In the Viktualienmarkt case, the city produced several alternatives at an early stage, even before passage of the final Jensen Plan in 1963. It had done so because there had been disagreement within the administration (including from within the city council) about the value of the market. Organized pressure from public groups seemed to support the view that a tunnel or overpass was politically unwise, and the city retreated to the least interventionist option. In contrast, the tunnel under the Prinz-Carl-Palais was presented to the public as a fait accompli. Despite several years of objections by a few well-established preservationist groups, the city insisted on the need for a high-capacity tunnel directly under the palace. Even after the controversy became public, the bureaucracy remained wedded to the idea, arguing that any alternative would undermine

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45 This argument is advanced in Grauhan, “Strukturwandlungen planender Verwaltung.” 242-3.
the entire complex transportation system planned for the northeastern part of the city. The city’s dogged refusal to entertain alternatives to the tunnel backfired. Although defeated, the city’s critics emerged from the debate energized, convinced that the bureaucracy required public scrutiny in order to be moved from its positions.

The different responses to the Viktualienmarkt and Prinz-Carl-Palais cases also had much to do with the broad social changes of the 1960s. By the last third of the decade, public disquiet with politics had become common in West German society. The archetypal mass movements of the 1960s, including the student movement and the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO, Außerparlamentarische Opposition), intensified during the CDU/SPD Great Coalition, which was formed in Bonn in 1966. By February 1967, when the final decision on the palace tunnel was made, dissent had become a more public and important part of political discourse generally than in 1963-1964, when the Viktualienmarkt controversy had arisen. While the issues that animated the student movement and APO (such as university reform, the Vietnam war, and the emergency laws) appeared detached from local questions, the biting, incisive critiques that their protagonists leveled against West German democracy struck a chord among people who were interested in all manner of issues. These included an increasing number of people who were concerned about the rapidity of urban change and the direction that planners were taking West German cities. Nor did such criticism abate after the organized APO and student movements disintegrated. Rather, public dissatisfaction with politics and political institutions became the norm rather than the exception in the 1970s, most particularly at the local level.46

46 On APO, the student movement, and the New Left generally, see: Paul Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany (New York: Oxford
During the first half of the 1960s, vocal public opposition to authority had been dormant in Munich, as in most cities in the country save, perhaps, for West Berlin. Outside of annual rallies surrounding the Easter peace campaign and one spectacular incidence of youth rioting (the “Schwabing riots” of 1962), Munich was politically a quiet place before 1967. Vogel enjoyed not only a large Social Democratic majority in the city council, but he also made it a point to try to work with the CSU minority rather than against it.47 Thus as on the national political scene during the Great Coalition, in Munich there was little viable opposition, either inside the city council or outside the administration.

Vogel and the SPD ruled Munich in benevolent fashion, but to observers during the tunnel controversy, the city ran a closed shop. The dismissal of simpler, less costly, and thus more palatable alternatives, such as Kühspies’ Plan K, made little sense to external critics. More importantly, this dismissal undermined the notion that the local government was run on a democratic basis. To opponents, the events of 1965-1967 laid bare an imperious bureaucracy, which was enraptured by large-scale, technologically sophisticated, and expensive approaches to problems that had been formulated by a small but powerful band of technocrats. The city council’s acquiescence in bureaucratic decisions was seen as a failure to consider the general will. The public, it seemed, had no say in matters, despite the obvious distaste that so many had shown. The press took this

University Press, 2008), chapters 2, 3; Nick Thomas, Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 1-105. On the claim that the mid-sixties constituted a political turning point at the local level in addition to the national one, see Grunow and Pamme, “Kommunale Verwaltung,” 505-28.

47 Decades later, Vogel recalled fondly that this situation had allowed the city to make decisions on important matters very quickly. From Vogel’s remarks at public event, “Der Aufstieg Münchens zur heimlichen Hauptstadt, ‘Die Ära Vogel’,” held May 25, 2004 in the Münchner Stadtmuseum. Event part of Stadtmuseum series “München wie geplant—Zeitzeugen im Gespräch.” Audiotape of event provided by Landeshauptstadt München, Referat für Stadtplanung und Bauordnung, Stadtentwicklungsplanung.
position as well. Peter Bode, of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, wrote that the final tunnel decision had exposed the technocratic nature of planning in the city. The democratization of planning seemed inevitable, and just about everyone knew it.48

*Open the institutions*

The fallout from the Prinz-Carl-Palais controversy had immediate effects on Munich’s political landscape. The bureaucracy continued to work the efficiency angle, arguing that the tunnel had been necessary to save the city from vehicular strangulation. “Without traffic, a modern economy is unthinkable,” said Edgar Luther, the city’s chief planner, in a speech in April 1967 defending the Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel project. “Man and thus also the city lives from traffic.” But this was becoming a shopworn argument, and in 1967 it was less convincing than it had been earlier in the decade. For the first time, the city’s transportation planners discovered they had to defend themselves, their methods, and their approaches to an upset, motivated, and better informed public. They fell back on the expert’s superiority of understanding. The outside experts who had decided the case in February 1967 for the tunnel thought that the controversy had resulted from insufficient data rather than any democratic deficit. They considered attempts to broaden transportation planning decisions to include laymen a waste of time. The interests of the public could better be served, they argued, by setting up advisory boards of independent experts, who would meet a few times per year to go over the city’s plans.49

The conflict over the Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel was the first real sign in Munich that the experts’ view was in danger of being upended. Many years after the fact, Klühspies recalled that the tunnel controversy had been a teaching experience for architects such as himself. He had been educated, he said, into the same norms as his counterparts in transportation planning. The first order of business had been to provide the infrastructure for transportation, in particular for motorized transportation, to ensure its free flow. Everything else was subordinate to this goal. The tunnel debate was the moment when he began to understand the consequences of postwar transportation planning. Subordinating all other goals to the free flow of traffic had had real, physical effects on the historic cityscape in which Klühspies had grown up and that he still loved. This subordination, he implied, also had changed the psychological relationship between the resident and the city, from affection to alienation.

But criticism of planning content was only the immediate cause of the revolution that was in the offing. More important was the idea that the process was itself flawed. Among the city’s most vocal and incisive critics during the palace tunnel controversy, the members of the *Münchner Bauforum* now began pressing their case for systematic changes in the city’s planning processes. There were three elements to planning, they argued: research, plan-formulation, and decision-making. Because the first two were in the hands of the bureaucracy, the greatest power resided there. The bureaucracy built its plans on a narrow research base and restricted design to a small group of technocrats. While the city council retained decision-making powers, the bureaucracy gave it

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incomplete and imperfect information. The increasingly technical nature of transportation planning also meant that council members were at a disadvantage. Hence the council, which was supposed to represent the will of the voters, simply acceded to bureaucratic wishes.

To solve the problem, the critics wanted these functions separated. Plan formulation would stay within the bureaucracy, but research was to be placed in an independent office, preferably under the city council. Here it would provide council members with advice and information to balance the bureaucracy’s technocratic monopoly. The most critical changes were to be made to the decision-making function. The most important thing, the architects argued, was to create a broad basis for the council’s decisions. Dissent, especially public dissent, should be encouraged during the first, goal-setting phases of planning, long before the council made a final decision. Open debate about the city’s goals was the most crucial factor in avoiding another fiasco, because the public would participate in the process. Hence when the time came for decisions, the city council would choose between real alternatives that had been vetted by the public.51

The critics were fortunate in that they found an audience in Vogel and a few top members of his administration. As a politician directly elected by voters and an intellectual with a keen eye for the sweeping democratization trends that were sweeping the country, Vogel was willing to experiment. Between 1967 and 1969, he undertook two major institutional reforms. The first centered on organizing the citizen viewpoint in

planning. The palace-tunnel controversy had shocked him, as it had many others in the city government, for it challenged his belief that the city had gotten sufficient public input years earlier, during the initial planning of the Jensen Plan. Moreover, the political atmosphere in Munich, he later wrote, had become too heated and emotional not to take action. Partially for this reason, Vogel had taken up a close dialogue with the members of the *Münchner Bauforum* during the fall and winter of 1967—1968.\(^{52}\)

In the same connection, Vogel turned to his longtime friend and Olympics planning director, Hubert Abress, for advice. Abress too appreciated the political significance of the tunnel controversy and was now given the job of turning vague notions about institutional reform into reality. During the spring of 1968, Abress convened a series of meetings with representatives of some of the most powerful organizations in the city and state. These included the local chamber of commerce, the media, unions, university representatives, and specialist groups. They constituted a list of organizations similar to those the city had contacted in its attempt to give the Jensen Plan a democratic veneer. This time, however, external critics were involved; the *Münchner Bauforum* was a full participant in the proceedings.\(^{53}\)

In 1968, these talks produced a new organization, called the Munich Forum. Although several members of the *Münchner Bauforum* had been key participants in designing the Munich Forum, the two organizations were independent of one another (both the *Münchner Bauforum* and the Munich Forum would continue to exist as separate


institutions). The Munich Forum was to be an exchange for public discussion about the city’s planning. It would review the bureaucracy’s plans, and inject critical perspectives at early stages of the planning process.

The Forum was also a strange organizational creature. It was intended to have a respected and independent voice in the city’s affairs, but it would receive the bulk of its funding from the city government. It was to cooperate with the planning bureaucracy on important issues, but it was expected to be a critic of the very plans the bureaucracy produced. It was supposed to represent the ordinary citizen in planning matters, but large and wealthy institutions sat on its board. The Forum’s complex structure reflected all of this. A fifty-person program committee was to oversee working groups, in which the substantive, planning-oriented work of the Forum was to be done and where the Forum was to interact directly with the public. The Forum’s members (the city government, assorted interest groups, and the *Münchner Bauforum*) sat on their own committee, which was to meet at least annually for updates about the organization’s efforts. All of this was to be headed by a chairman, who would attempt to coordinate the different committees and interests.54

Skeptics asked whether the Forum could function as advertised. During the city council debate about creating the organization, some members pointed to the proposed membership of Vogel and Luther in the Forum as evidence that the organization would be subservient to the mayor’s office. Outside critics were also leery, but for different reasons. Despite being at the forefront of the effort to institutionalize citizen input into

decision-making structures and despite being founding members of the Munich Forum, the critics in the *Münchner Bauforum* had some doubts about the Munich Forum’s long-term independence. Because the Munich Forum had been founded on the city’s initiative and was supported financially by the city and a host of large organizations, they questioned whether the organization could fulfill its democratization mission. \(^{55}\)

Experience showed that these concerns were overstated. There was a disconnect among the many different interests behind the Forum, but the Forum’s work was not sacrificed to political expediency. Its members worked on an astonishing variety of subjects in transportation and land-use planning, environmental protection, historic preservation, urban design, economic development, university reform and expansion, affordable housing, the labor market, school construction, and other areas. They worked with the city on some projects and against it in others. They organized public meetings, hosted exhibitions, and funded citizens’ initiatives. \(^{56}\)

In the first decade of the Forum’s existence, the original members of the *Münchner Bauforum* provided much of the driving force behind this work. In 1971, for example, Klühspies took over working committees that focused on neighborhood democratization and transportation, negotiated with the city government on multiple issues, made presentations around West Germany, and gave media interviews. All of these activities were within his scope as a Forum member. Over the next decade, he became a leader in the Forum’s efforts to preserve the city’s tram network and to halt the construction of the *Mittlerer Ring* (Middle Ring), the ring road in between the

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\(^{56}\) A sampling of the Forum’s activities can be found in AMF, untitled binder: “Themen 1973 (Entwurf),” DS 101/72, December 11, 1972.
Altstadtring and the ring of Autobahnen that was planned to circle the city. As had been true of all his critiques, Klühspies’s activism on these matters amounted to a kind of informed condemnation. His well-researched tomes and reports, for example, all demonstrated a thorough understanding of the city’s plans and the rationale for them (or lack thereof, as he saw it). He objected to the city’s attempts to complete the Middle Ring on the grounds that it would increase auto traffic in Munich while deteriorating the quality of life and eroding transit use. As was the norm for Klühspies, he also put forward alternatives that he thought would be more effective in achieving the city’s goals while being lower cost to boot.57

Over time, the Munich Forum was a success story. To the world beyond Munich, its leaders highlighted its democratic credentials, as an institution to be emulated. To the group’s skeptics, especially those within the city bureaucracy, they sold the Forum as an inexpensive but indispensable institution. The technical capabilities of Forum members translated complex and arcane planning matters into terms that citizens could understand. Hence the Forum, its supporters argued, prevented the city bureaucracy from having to deal with an emotional, ill-informed citizenry. Moreover, they maintained, the Forum acted as a damper on the radicalization of Munich’s planning debate. It created a “political escape valve” in Munich, a forum for the expression of deep-seated discontent.

Without the Forum, its leaders argued, the political climate in the city would have been even worse than it eventually became.\(^{58}\)

The second major institutional reform initiated by Vogel during the late 1960s concerned planning’s research function. From the start of his administration in 1960, Vogel had been willing to experiment with his bureaucracy, bringing some planning functions directly under himself in order to influence the process. Now, he created a new entity altogether, the department of urban development (SER, *Stadtentwicklungsreferat*). The SER was intended to be the most innovative part of Munich’s bureaucracy and home to its most progressive thinking. It was to be placed under the mayor, again a sign of planning’s importance to the mayor, and entrusted to Abress. It was staffed with people trained in non-traditional planning fields, such as geography, sociology, political science, and law. A collegial atmosphere, team-oriented working conditions, and a high profile enabled the SER to attract staff that otherwise might have gone into academia or the private sector. Moreover, the staff worked on the city’s highest-priority projects, as Vogel and Abress had intended. They conducted research on matters of long-range significance to Munich in areas such as environmental protection, transportation, and the regional economy, all to elicit discussion about revising the city’s urban development plan.\(^{59}\)

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“Fighting for the chance to live together”

A center-periphery dualism characterized the housing market in West Germany during the 1960s. On the one hand, municipal governments and private builders constructed an enormous amount of housing on the exurban fringes of major cities. They concentrated apartments in large settlements—the towers in the park model based on the ideas of Corbusier and other architectural modernists. The great majority of the six million flats constructed during the decade in West Germany were in these types of settlements. Large numbers of new single-family homes were also added to this total, as many West Germans sought private idylls on the edges of West Germany’s cities. City centers, on the other hand, lost population. Many residents moved out of the inner city to the suburbs, leaving behind residents who were older and poorer, hence unable or unwilling to leave. Yet even they found they had no choice, as commercial demand for space in the inner cities increased. As real estate prices rose, landowners sold their apartment buildings to speculators or large firms that wished to convert them to office buildings.61

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, these trends produced a backlash in the form of popular, neighborhood-based uprisings. Frankfurt’s Westend rebellion was the most famous such case in West Germany. Resistance initially formed in the Westend because residents felt that they could no longer tolerate the conversion of their neighborhood into a commercial district. The initial protest centered on a citizens’ initiative, the Action Group Westend (Aktionsgemeinschaft Westend), which was formed

60 StAM, PZ 2939: Ralf Dantscher, as quoted in Marina Handloser, “Ein Kaplan geht auf die Barrikaden,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 20, 1971, unpaginated.
in July 1969 by middle-aged professionals and older retirees in the neighborhood. Within a year, university students had also discovered the neighborhood and joined the process that turned the Westend into a *cause célèbre* on the youthful left during the 1970s. Students started squatting in buildings that were slated for demolition, a form of resistance that quickly led to a showdown with the city government and, eventually, to violent street battles with the police. Much of this protest was a continuation of the youth rebellion of the 1960s, as the Westend provided a new backdrop for ongoing conflict over capitalism and the condition of the West German democracy. Among other things, the Westend uprising helped produce Joschka Fischer and the *Spontis* (anti-authoritarian leftists who used irreverent street theater and other spontaneous activities to draw attention to their alternative views). The Westend has remained the most famous case of urban protest in West Germany during the era.\(^6\)

Munich had its own experience with this same dynamic. During the late 1960s a set of conflicts emerged in Munich that introduced broader social themes, involved a wider segment of the population, and injected a radical dimension into the city’s politics. These conflicts originated in the city’s attempts to handle the explosive effects of economic growth. In 1965, following the Jensen Plan, the city government created a parallel land-use plan that defined large swathes of the inner city as core-development areas. The land-use plan approved the transformation of traditional residential neighborhoods into non-residential districts. These two plans together nourished economic trends that had been underway for some time in the region. Because the Jensen Plan gave people swifter access to the city center by car or public transit, and the city’s

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land-use plan allowed more development for commercial and administrative functions, investors began eyeing these districts. Their activity, often speculative, increased real estate prices.

Resistance arose in Munich’s inner-city neighborhoods for the same reasons as in the Westend. Long-term residents of these neighborhoods found not only that their rents were increasing swiftly, but also that their buildings could be sold out from underneath them, forcing them to move. These trends were particularly intense in neighborhoods that were both adjacent to the city center and were serviced by the new high-capacity arterials and the Altstadtring. Two neighborhoods in particular, Lehel and Maxvorstadt, were so situated. The Lehel neighborhood lay to the immediate northeast of the city center, in the same part of Munich as the Prinz-Carl-Palais. The Maxvorstadt neighborhood was due north of the city center. Among other things, it was home to both of Munich’s major universities. The Lehel had more working-class residents, the Maxvorstadt more professionals. Both had important arterial roadways running through them, including the Altstadtring. Both had been designated as core development areas under the 1965 land-use plan. The result was rising real estate prices and declining populations.

Although the Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel controversy had broken down the barriers to public expression of discontent, the miniature rebellions in Lehel and Maxvorstadt were in no way animated by the narrow historic preservationism that had originally motivated critics of the tunnel project. By the late 1960s, when broader protest began forming, historic preservation had begun to fade as an animating factor. Rather, critics were more concerned about the political and social dimensions of planning in the city. While the members of the Münchner Bauforum were architects, hence at first were
animated by spatial concerns, they quickly embraced these broader social dimensions and made them the centerpieces of their criticisms. So did organizations that were founded thereafter, particularly the citizens’ initiatives that were created in the inner city neighborhoods during the 1970s. As it had in Frankfurt’s Westend, protest started with residents’ fears that processes they could not control were destroying their neighborhoods. As large firms moved in, residents were pushed out. Not only did the city appear not to care, but its policies also appeared to worsen the situation. Many of these residents were poor or elderly, hence had few options elsewhere. *Aktion Maxvorstadt*, one of the largest and most active citizens’ initiatives in Munich, was founded in 1971 in part to counter residents’ sense of despair in the face of ongoing evictions and rent increases. “I am fighting in the first instance for the individual human being, for the chance to live together” said Ralf Dantscher, a member of *Aktion Maxvorstadt* who was instrumental in its creation, “and not for facades and architecture.”

The protests in Lehel and Maxvorstadt differed in important ways from the controversy over the palace tunnel project. One difference concerned the themes that had sparked dissent in the first place. In the neighborhood cases, the housing question was central. Another difference concerned the nature and breadth of public participation. During the palace tunnel controversy, public dissent had been confined largely to those who thought they had some qualifications for participation. While the members of the *Münchner Bauforum* and the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts were not engineers, they were trained in fields related to city planning or historic preservation. In the

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neighborhood protests, ordinary citizens were front and center. Students, housewives, teachers, professors, workers, professionals, and retirees were all represented, as were the usual planning specialists. So too were the clergy, as several churches (Protestant and Catholic) participated in the protests. The Catholic parish of St. Ludwig, in Maxvorstadt, was among the most important institutions in either neighborhood. It sheltered and encouraged Aktion Maxvorstadt from the beginning of its existence. Dantscher himself was a parish priest.  

In order to generate pressure on the city government, these groups relied on forms of protest that were different from what had come before. Borrowing heavily from the counter-cultural movements of the period, they attempted to influence events through diverse methods. To increase public awareness of their cause, they printed and distributed their own newsletters, flyers, and placards. They engaged in public demonstrations, including street fairs, block parties, and marches (one in July 1971 attracted several thousand participants). They hosted public exhibitions and invented creative forms of expression, such as marking buildings and sidewalks with tape or paint to document unjust evictions or improper street design. They considered the media to be an ally, finding and using sympathetic contacts at the Süddeutsche Zeitung, other newspapers, and radio and television broadcasters. They conducted their own research, issuing surveys to gather data that would bolster their arguments. They attempted to influence elections for mayor and city council, issuing voting guides, recommending candidates, and exhorting members to use the ballot to change matters. Public meetings with city

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officials also became more contentious and heated. Whereas such meetings had been sporadic and sparsely attended, during the 1970s they became far more common. It was not unusual to have hundreds of people present.

A final difference concerned who or what was to blame. The opposition in Lehel and Maxvorstadt pointed to economic as well as political processes. They argued that unrestricted capital was a major reason why Munich’s inner city neighborhoods had been brought to the brink of implosion. The large firms that were buying property throughout the inner city—in banking, insurance, financial services, and other industries—became the targets of the protestors’ ire. The critics argued that the firms’ massive capital reserves gave them more than just the power to transform neighborhoods by consuming property. Financial weight also gave the firms undue political influence. The land use plan of 1965 was the best example, but the city’s transportation plan also came under fire for mandating the removal of houses and apartment buildings for expansion of the street system. The indirect effect of such planning was worse. These projects increased the value of real estate along major arteries such as the Altstadtring, inducing speculation. Activists thus considered transportation planning to be driven by the same destructive forces as land-use planning.65

For the first time in debates about planning in postwar Munich, the far left participated in the criticism. The German Communist Party (DKP, Deutsche Kommunistische Partei) was less than two years old when public discontent in Lehel began in early 1970. Seizing upon spiraling rents in the Lehel, in particular for workers,

the DKP became one of the most active groups in the neighborhood. Its members were loud participants in public meetings, organized mass marches, and attempted to rally residents to their cause. Other groups during the conflict tried to keep the DKP at arm’s length. In one humorous episode, the DKP drove a truck with a loudspeaker slowly through the Lehel in order to advertise a march. A similarly equipped truck, outfitted by the SPD’s district chair, followed along, denouncing the march. But other groups also discovered that the communists were willing to participate in a common front in Lehel and elsewhere. For its part, the city allowed the DKP to participate, but nonetheless kept a close eye on the party.66

The DKP’s activism made Communism a part of the city’s debate about urban development during the 1970s. The new citizens’ initiatives and neighborhood organizations had to defend themselves against the accusation that they harbored Communists or were sympathetic to Communist ideas. In 1974, for example, the Munich Forum endured a controversy over the presence of a Communist on its program committee. A conservative member had opposed the DKP member’s participation and had threatened to withdraw his support for the Forum. While the issue was minor (the DKP member resigned during a contentious committee meeting), the fact that a single person’s presence could cause such a stir demonstrated that anti-Communism was a problem for these groups.67

The leftist charge never really stuck in Munich, in large part because the accusation of communist influence was implausible. Participants in the numerous citizens’ initiatives might have tilted leftward, but there is no evidence that a majority

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were on the far left. Some initiatives were also better situated to resist being so categorized. Because *Aktion Maxvorstadt* operated under the umbrella of St. Ludwig, the initiative was insulated against all charges of communist infiltration. Its members recognized the importance of this fact and retained St. Ludwig’s support long after Dantscher, who had been the most direct connection between the parish and the initiative, resigned the priesthood in 1972. Anton Forsthuber, a priest senior to Dantscher, was instrumental in maintaining St. Ludwig’s support for *Aktion Maxvorstadt* before and after Dantscher left. Forsthuber’s successor (after 1975, when Forsthuber retired), Helmut Hempfer, did so as well.68

As had occurred with the Munich Forum, the city government under Vogel tried to get ahead of the problem. Recognizing that the unrest in Lehel was a sign that things were headed in a new direction, the administration attempted to manage the conflict rather than squash or ignore it. Again Vogel assigned the problem to Abress and his SER, which created a working group tasked with engaging the public about one contentious issue—how to route the final pieces of the *Altstadtring* through the Lehel neighborhood. The result, dubbed “open planning Lehel,” was a cooperative experiment between the city, the Munich Forum, and the public. To gather input, the city organized public meetings, which were heavily attended and contentious. The Munich Forum assigned liaisons to work with the public. To provide information, between June and October 1970

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the Munich Forum held a major exhibition in a large tent on the planned route of the ring road. The city encouraged media coverage of the process, including both print and electronic media. But the open planning process was messy. Some of the city’s critics charged that the administration was interested only in the appearance of democratic planning. The process, they said, was rigged. The city would do what it wanted and use open planning as an “alibi.”

In the end, there was no clear resolution of the Lehel and Maxvorstadt conflicts. Unlike in the palace tunnel controversy, there was no single decision to be made and no individual project to be approved or rejected. Although the completed Altstadtring was opened in 1972, including the last sections through Lehel, the debate about its proper (re)design lasted much longer. On the question of real estate prices, in 1971 the city council passed a resolution vowing to overturn the 1965 land-use plan that had designated the inner city neighborhoods as core development areas. A couple years later, the city passed a “pink zones plan” (Rosa-Zonen-Plan) after the color used to highlight the neighborhoods that were returned to residential status. The plan went into effect, and the city’s planners began looking at strategies to improve these neighborhoods as residential districts. They worked on traffic congestion, aesthetic appearance, and housing quality, and restricted new private development for non-residential purposes. Nonetheless, for legal reasons the city discovered that it had to approve hundreds of proposals for commercial projects in these neighborhoods anyway. The basic economics

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of the situation, of the value of Munich’s center in the regional economy, continued to drive real estate prices upward through the end of the century.\footnote{Elmar Dittmann and Sigrid Dittmann, \textit{1945-1985 Altstadtring Nord-Ost: 40 Jahre Planung um Hofgarten und Armeemuseum. Eine Dokumentation} (Munich: Munich Forum, 1985); Hoffmann, “Auf der Überholspur in die Moderne,” 131-2; Gross, \textit{Bürgernahe}, 94-100; Alan Waterhouse, “The advent of localism in two planning cultures,” \textit{Town Planning Review} 50, 3 (July 1979), 316-19.}

The real issues were about ongoing political and economic processes and about vague but intensely felt quality-of-life issues. As a result, Munich’s inner city neighborhoods remained loci of conflict for years. While the intense, visceral, and violent character of Frankfurt’s Westend protests never reached Munich, an institutional basis for opposition evolved that lasted over the longer run. During the 1970s, citizens’ initiatives emerged in neighborhoods across the city, for instance in Haidhausen, Schwabing, and Sendling. Maxvorstadt remained home to some of the most important groups. Besides \textit{Aktion Maxvorstadt}, which could draw from an activist base of students and members of the educated middle class, the Munich Forum also had its offices in Maxvorstadt. Several of its members, Klühspies included, bounced among institutions, cross-pollinating both with their ideas and skills.\footnote{StAM, ZS 17/18: “Grauer Kreis—Weisser Kreis. Antrag der Bürgerinitiative ‘Schwabing-Maxvorstadt’ zur Beschlussfassung durch die Bürgerversammlung des 5. Bezirks am 30.10.72”; “Die Bürger-Aktion-Kaiserplatz,” March 1977; “Bürgerinitiative Münchner Freiheit. Argumente und Informationen #4,” undated, likely 1977. Otto Fischer, “Gefährden Verkehrspläne Alt-Sendling?,” \textit{Süddeutsche Zeitung}, May 7, 1969, unpaginated.}

\textit{Decline and fall or end of the beginning?}

The fundamental criticisms that arose in Munich’s residential neighborhoods indicated a broader shift in the political dialogue. Governance of the city became a much more contested issue than at any time in the postwar era. During the first half of the 1970s, the burgeoning grassroots opposition movement, the emergence of radical groups
such as the DKP, and most critically, a split within the ruling SPD created major political problems in the city. These led to Vogel’s withdrawal from local politics, which in turn threatened the reforms that his administration had initiated.

National trends provided the background for these changes. The student and APO movements collapsed at the end of the 1960s, causing disaffected youths to seek other outlets for their political goals. SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt, who was elected in 1969, broadcast hopes for broad political reforms, which were symbolized in his famous admonishment that West Germans should “dare more democracy.” Among other things, his statement encouraged a wave of mass citizen participation in politics that swept the country during the 1970s, especially at the local level. Brandt also attempted to bring the members of the APO and student movements into the party. During the early 1960s, the SPD had withdrawn support from both the extra-parliamentary movement and radical student groups. The most important of the latter was the Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund, or SDS, which later in the decade became key to animating mass student protest. Now, however, Brandt and other party leaders made it known that the SPD would welcome adherents of such organizations. In a narrow partisan sense, this strategy did work: between 1969 and 1972, membership in the SPD jumped by nearly a quarter as younger adults flocked to the party in hopes of promoting political reform.72

There were negative consequences for the SPD as well. At its 1959 national convention in the Bonn suburb of Bad Godesberg, the SPD had officially abandoned its

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72 Martin Klimke, “West Germany,” in 1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977, eds. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 97-110; Hockenos, Joschka Fischer, 131-2; Diane Parness, The SPD and the Challenge of Mass Politics (Boulder: Westview, 1991), 82-9. The German SDS and the American SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) shared the same acronym by coincidence. They were founded independently of one another and had only sporadic contact during the 1960s. See generally Klimke, Other Alliance.
Marxist roots in favor of doctrinal moderation. This shift had made the party more competitive in national elections, allowing it to attract a greater share of middle-class and Catholic voters. The move made possible the party’s first participation in federal governance, during the Great Coalition, and then leadership under Brandt’s SPD/FDP coalition. But after 1968 a younger, more theoretical, and more radical demographic entered the party. These were members of the New Left who had long regarded the Godesberg Program as a sellout. They wanted a return to a fundamental critique of capitalism, albeit with a heavy dose of New Left ideology to the classical Marxism that had formed the party’s identity for decades. Now the New Left found itself in a position to mount a challenge from within a political institution rather than from outside the system, as had been the case during the rage-fueled protests of the 1960s.73

The SPD’s Young Socialists (Jungsozialisten, universally known as the Jusos) became the locus of dissent within the party. Reorganized after the war as the party’s youth organization (defined as members under 35 years old), during the 1960s the Jusos became increasingly unhappy with the direction of their party. Much of the criticism arose out of dissatisfaction with the Godesberg Program, but it was amplified after 1966 by the SPD’s participation in the Great Coalition with the CDU/CSU. Embracing the APO movement, the Jusos endorsed participation in mass demonstrations, declared themselves ready to cooperate with the DKP and other Communist and far-left organizations, and strongly criticized both the party’s moderate platform and conciliatory strategies. At national conferences in 1969 and 1970, Jusos leadership developed a

double strategy for enacting their program. They would use their energy and numbers to
effect significant reforms within the SPD while working to create conditions favorable to
socialism outside it.74

As an SPD stronghold, Munich saw ferocious internecine fighting, as Jusos
activism began to animate the Munich branch of the party. Within a couple years after
1969, members had managed to maneuver themselves into the local SPD’s decision-
making apparatus. As was true nationally, Munich’s Jusos believed the local party
structure to be dominated by people who were staid, old, inactive, or conservative. Vogel
himself, by now one of the most recognized and popular politicians anywhere in the
republic, became a special target of their ire. He was perceived as being a member of the
party’s insider hierarchy, an enemy of true reform at both the local and national levels. In
their view, Vogel had sinned in other ways as well. His administration had taken
positions on key international issues that were anathema to leftists, including many Jusos,
involving how to react to the military dictatorship in Greece of 1967-1974 and the
American bombing of Cambodia that began in 1969. Even worse from the Jusos’
perspective, in 1971 Vogel had picked a fight with them in the national press. He had
accused their leadership of being “Communist agitators,” who wanted to “re-ideologize
the party in Marxist-Leninist style” by rejecting the Godesberg Program. Vogel thus
became a point man in an increasingly ideological public dispute over the direction of the
party. This feud, between the SPD’s younger, left-leaning members and the party

74 Helmut Bilstein, Harmut Hohlbein, and Hans-Ulrich Klose, Jungsozialisten—Junge Union—
Jungdemokraten: Die Nachwuchsorganisationen der Parteien in der Bundesrepublik (Opladen: Leske,
1972), 22-35.
establishment, became one of the key political storylines of the 1970s. Many fretted that it would have negative electoral consequences for the party.\footnote{“Jusos / SPD: Sozusagen die Macht,” Der Spiegel, March 3, 1971, 21-9.}

Consequences in Munich were immediate. The conflict between Vogel and the local Jusos dissuaded Vogel from running for reelection in 1972.\footnote{On the Jusos’ perception of Vogel, see Sylvia Streeck and Wolfgang Streeck, Parteiensystem und Status quo: Drei studien zum innerparteilichen Konflikt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 55-89. For Vogel’s view of the same conflicts, see Vogel, Amtskette, 179-95.} After the Olympics, Vogel resigned his office and headed to Bonn, to begin a short-lived tenure as head of the federal planning ministry, where, among other things, he became a critic of West Germany’s automobile fixation (see chapter 3). In Munich, Vogel’s announcement that he would not seek another six-year term was a seismic event. One repercussion was the election of Vogel’s hand picked successor, Georg Kronawitter, who was a supporter of the democratization efforts in Munich but was handicapped by intraparty warfare, at least during his first term in office (1972-1978).\footnote{Kronawitter had been plucked out of relative obscurity in Bavarian state politics, hence he was inexperienced in big-city politics. Even before he took office, his power had been diminished by a much smaller SPD share of the vote in the 1972 election (about 56%), compared with Vogel’s previous commanding victories. The SPD’s margin in the city council was now reduced. During his first few years in office, Kronawitter had neither the standing of his predecessor nor a united party behind him. The SPD’s faction in the city council was now susceptible to vote splitting, something that had been unthinkable during Vogel’s tenure.\footnote{StAM, ZS 474/2: “Handbuch des Münchner Stadtrates von 1972 bis 1978” (1973). Georg Kronawitter, Mit aller Leidenschaft: 20 Jahre Politik für München (Munich: Buchendorfer, 2001), 15-21; Hanko, “Die Ära Thomas Wimmer und Hans-Jochen Vogel,” 118-19; Florian Sattler, “Die Ära Kronawitter,” in 100 Jahre SPD, ed. SPD-Stadtratsfraktion, 133-42; Bauer and Piper with Lukas-Göttz, München, 402-7.}} Kronawitter had been plucked out of relative obscurity in Bavarian state politics, hence he was inexperienced in big-city politics. Even before he took office, his power had been diminished by a much smaller SPD share of the vote in the 1972 election (about 56%), compared with Vogel’s previous commanding victories. The SPD’s margin in the city council was now reduced. During his first few years in office, Kronawitter had neither the standing of his predecessor nor a united party behind him. The SPD’s faction in the city council was now susceptible to vote splitting, something that had been unthinkable during Vogel’s tenure.\footnote{Kronawitter served from 1972 to 1978 and again from 1984 to 1993.}
Vogel’s most prized bureaucratic accomplishment, the SER under Abress, suddenly lost political support. In 1973, nine SPD city council members joined with the FDP and CSU to approve Detlef Marx as Abress’s replacement. Marx defeated Karolus Heil, a sociologist who had been among the first of Vogel’s hirings in 1960 and later ran the SER’s research wing. Heil had been the preferred candidate of the SPD’s left wing and many of Munich’s urban critics. To them, the council’s vote for Marx was a vote against an independent SER, which had favored democratization of the planning process. Marx, in contrast, considered the SER to have been a kind of utopian research agency, whose excesses he now tried to bring under control. These disagreements spilled out into the open in a bitter dispute over the reorganization of the SER. Marx saw the department as having been run in too loose and disorganized a fashion. He charged that it was staffed by people who regarded the SER’s primary role as a “creative” force for “emancipatory” change. Marx thought that the proper role of the SER was to provide the “scientific” basis for practical, concrete planning. He thus proposed a classic bureaucratic reorganization based on hierarchical principles, with himself at the top of a smoothly-functioning system. This vision did not sit well with the SER staff, many of whom tried to stage an internal revolt to retain the original vision of the SER. One wrote in the Süddeutsche Zeitung that Marx was an “incompetent neophyte,” who did not understand the critical role of the department for Munich and wanted to take the department into the dark ages.79

In the end, none of the objections mattered much, as the political will that had created the SER in the first place had disappeared. Critics routinely decried Marx’s management style as authoritarian, his approach as technocratic. At one public meeting

organized by the Munich Forum, Marx said that he could not understand the citizens’ “pathological search for open planning,” given that there was no practical, working definition of open planning in the first place.\(^{80}\) Finally, after the CSU’s Erich Kiesl was elected mayor in 1978, the department’s independence was eliminated and its functions were transferred to other parts of the bureaucracy.\(^{81}\)

The marginalization of the SER had parallels outside of the city administration. The bureaucracy’s close cooperation with citizens’ groups waned after the SER lost its political standing. Some activists recalled that bureaucratic resistance was due not to Vogel’s or Abress’s disappearance, but rather to the emergence of left-wing terrorism and the oil shock-driven economic downturn, both of which had cast a pall over the grassroots democratization movement in West Germany. Citizens’ initiatives, for example, suddenly found themselves blamed for inhibiting investment (\textit{Investitionsstau} or “investment pile-up”). The initiatives’ blockage of nuclear power and street construction projects, so the argument went, meant that West German investors could not invest and workers could not work.\(^{82}\) Yet regardless of the causes or the timing of events, activists continuously reported their frustrations over how the city handled their grievances and suggestions for action. Public meetings about planning questions remained a commonplace in Munich, but citizens emerged discontent with the process, believing that the city’s representatives did not listen and would not use their input. On occasion, these meetings broke down into emotionally charged affairs, as frustrated


citizens hurled charges of bureaucratic stonewalling at Marx or his colleagues, such as planning chief Uli Zech.\footnote{Zech had been selected to be Stadtbaurat (to replace Edgar Luther) in 1970 through a public process designed to be as transparent and democratic as possible. The choice of Zech was nonetheless a disappointment to the city’s external critics. See Klaus Warnecke, \textit{Die Wahl des Stadtbaurates in München: Modellstudie eines demokratischen Auswahlverfahrens zur Besetzung kommunaler Wahlämter} (Munich: Munich Forum, 1970). On frustration with the city bureaucracy, see the following: Dantscher, \textit{Bürgerinitiativen}, 77; StAM, Presseamt Zeitungsausschnitte (PZ) 2939: Stefan Esser, “Maxvorstadt-Bewohner attackieren Stadtverwaltung,” \textit{Münchner Merkur}, November 2, 1972; StAM, unindexed Aktion Maxvorstadt collection, file “Veröffentlichungen der AMV”; “Eine ungehaltene Festrede oder: Blick zurück im Zorn,” Maxvorstädtler Echo: Meldungen und Meinungen der Aktion Maxvorstadt 11, 4 (November 22, 1996); AMF, binder “PA 1980-”: protocol from seminar “Das Münchner Forum in den 80er Jahren,” DS 58/83 (July 28, 1983).} In this environment, some members of Aktion Maxvorstadt became dispirited, and the group’s numbers waned in the second half of the decade.\footnote{Hank, “Die Aktion Maxvorstadt und die Pfarrei St. Ludwig,” 156-7.}

From the activists’ perspectives, West German planning law was insufficiently specific about the right of citizen participation in local processes. Unlike Great Britain, West Germany had no comprehensive national planning law. Rather, the rights and obligations of interested parties in local planning matters were outlined in multiple federal laws. This fractured structure meant that planning law was opaque, especially to outsiders. Even worse, none of the relevant statutes guaranteed the right of citizen participation in planning processes from the beginning to the end. Despite some reforms during the 1970s, when statutory amendments to some federal laws were enacted, the situation remained poor, at least in the view of those wanting greater participation rights. Municipalities were obligated to share information through various means (public hearings, for instance) and in a timely fashion. At several stages of the planning process, citizens had the right to voice their opinions, and municipal authorities had at least some obligation to incorporate these views into existing plans. But on the whole, the law did not rise to the level that activists wished, for it provided few guarantees that citizen input would alter decision-making inside local planning bureaucracies. Moreover, the
provisions that did exist were vague, leading to different interpretations of what the law meant about citizen participation.\(^8^5\)

Activists also perceived they were in a constant battle for survival. As an organization that received the bulk of its funding from the city, the Munich Forum lived through these years in fear of budgetary shortfalls, and for good reason—it did suffer from occasional budget cuts in the 1970s and early 1980s. Moreover, some of the urban critics feared that their professional careers could be harmed by activism. The *Münchner Bauforum*’s Jan Kim Wallenborn had provided a cautionary tale years earlier. After helping to spearhead the assault on the city bureaucracy over the palace tunnel and providing much of the intellectual force behind the Munich Forum, he disappeared from the local record. Klühspies maintained that Wallenborn had been one of several *Bauforum* members to be blacklisted by both private firms and the city. At the end of the 1960s, Wallenborn migrated to the United States, where he had academic contacts that enabled him to make a living teaching.\(^8^6\)

But the portrait that the dispirited critics painted of their world was too gloomy. At no time could conditions return to where they had been before the mid-1960s. Too many people and organizations outside the city government now had a strong interest in knowing what the administration was planning and what could be done about it. Despite the occasional budgetary constraints, the Munich Forum was never in danger of

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elimination. Its insight into planning matters, which was embodied in the numerous publications it produced, was considered first rate. Just as critically, the organization’s ability to act as a mediator, clearing house, and public organizer was highly valued, even within the city bureaucracy. More often than not, the city government treated the Forum as a difficult but necessary partner. Aware that the group’s reputation depended on its independence, the city did not threaten to mute the critics who did the substantive research and organizing inside the Forum. Nor did the citizens’ initiatives disappear. Instead of collapsing, the initiatives thrived during the 1970s and into the 1980s. Eventually activists overcame the city’s resistance to working with them, for instance on questions of bicycling and traffic-calming from the late 1970s through the 1980s (see chapters 6 and 7).

There were important reforms closer to home as well. Citizen engagement was the key factor in awakening Munich’s long-dormant district councils. These were neighborhood institutions, formed after World War II, that were designed to mediate between the city government and neighborhood residents. During the first postwar decades, the councils were largely dormant and ceremonial, staffed by unpaid volunteers with close attachments to the local parties. Hence they did little. This all changed in the early 1970s, when activists in Maxvorstadt and other inner-city neighborhoods discovered that the councils could become important institutional levers for their cause. Among other things, the councils had the authority to call public meetings, where citizens could articulate their concerns and pose questions about plans for the neighborhoods. Fighting to reactivate the councils after their long period of dormancy, citizen groups also began agitating for expansion of their powers. On this question at least, they found allies
within the city government. The most important was Munich’s third mayor (*Dritter Bürgermeister*), Eckhart Mueller-Heydenreich, who from the beginning of his tenure in 1972 promoted district council reform. Three years later, his efforts helped persuade the city council to give the 37 district councils (one for each of Munich’s officially designated neighborhoods) significant new powers, expanded rights to information, to demand that the city council respond in timely fashion to their petitions, and to participate in planning matters that affected their neighborhoods. Instead of being treated as institutional backwaters, the district councils now became full participants in the city’s affairs. During the 1970s, they became much more political in their outlook, more ambitious in their activities, and unhesitant to represent their neighborhoods’ interests. On matters such as transportation planning, the district councils became close allies with Munich’s activists (see chapter 7).  

There were other successes for Munich’s activists. Among the most important were two renewals of the city’s urban development plan, in 1974/1975 and again in 1983. Both plans differed from the 1963 Jensen Plan. The 1974/1975 plan developed a polycentric concept for the Munich region, treating the city center as only one development center among many in the region. In addition, the 1974/1975 plan laid a greater emphasis on transit and the retention of the city’s originality. Moreover, both the 1974/1975 and 1983 plans incorporated an environmentalist platform. But the most important changes were procedural. Aware that the citizens’ organizations and the

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general public were watching the city’s planning efforts, the city administration knew it had to ensure that its procedures were perceived as open. In March 1974, the government issued a draft plan to the public, in expectation that it would spur broad comment. This did in fact occur, as groups such as the Munich Forum led an open discussion and published sophisticated counter-proposals and analyses of the city’s draft.  

Finally, activists found that over time their work had become an appreciated part of Munich’s intellectual and political landscape. While some, such as Wallenborn, suffered as a result of their dissent, others did not. Klühspies was the best example, as he became an iconic figure inside and outside Munich. Unlike Wallenborn, he was able to make a living as a critic, working for a variety of groups in the city and elsewhere in West Germany. His many skills as an architect and articulate critic, his willingness to engage on the substance of planning, and his capabilities as a citizen organizer gave him enormous credibility over the long run. In 1977, his work was recognized in high-profile fashion when he received the Theodor Heuss prize, a prestigious national award (associated with the FDP) given to those who strengthened democratic processes. A decade later, the city government gave Klühspies its own honor, the “Friends of Munich” medal, to acknowledge what he had done for Munich. By the turn of the century, his name had become synonymous with the citizen protest during the 1960s and 1970s, an identification that Munich had come to treasure. Throughout his long stint as an urban  

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reformer, Klühspies maintained that citizen opposition was the reason why Munich did not become dominated by freeways, tunnels, and overpasses. "Had everything gone according to plan,” he wrote years later, “Munich would be unrecognizable today.”89

Conclusion

Social, cultural, and political historians of the 1960s have subjected the decade’s great popular movements in West Germany (students and APO) to much analysis. However, one of the great contradictions of the era has begged for explanation: how could the beneficiaries of the greatest sustained economic boom in world history become so dissatisfied that they became revolutionaries? This question remains far from settled. One intriguing, if underdeveloped, thesis involves mass culture. In the postwar western world in general, and in West Germany in particular, the consumer society enabled youth to become exposed en masse to new forms of transnational cultural expression in music, fashion, sexuality, forms of speech, and a host of other areas. The young eagerly consumed these forms, spread through television, film, and radio. Doing so set youth apart from their elders, creating an inchoate sense of liberation. It in turn created impatient expectations. Eventually their cultural rebellion took political form, as their dissatisfaction with archaic strictures made them receptive to critiques that their society

was corrupt, hypocritical, and in need of reform. Thus consumer society created its own deep dissatisfaction.90

An analogous argument can be made about planning’s effects on society around the same time. The modernism to which the planners of the 1950s and 1960s subscribed required a deep transformation. This change could not happen without fundamental intervention in the physical world, the physical transformation of the country’s landscapes and cityscapes. While Germany had undergone heavy industrialization in the late nineteenth century—so it had already experienced intense bouts of urban, industrial, and infrastructural development—the economic boom of the postwar decades was unprecedented in scale. Roads, bridges, tunnels, apartment towers, office complexes, and countless other projects were planned and built in the tens of thousands, even millions if one counts individual street segments or apartments and housing tracts. All of this activity had been animated by the reality of the *Wirtschaftswunder* decades, by an economic performance that outstripped all previous eras by a large margin.91 But this change created its own deep pool of dissatisfaction, as the negative effects of all this construction—and the consumerism that the construction enabled—became more apparent.

In some respects the opposition in Munich arose from traditionalist concerns. More conservative, *Heimatschutz*-oriented groups formed during the postwar decades, including during the 1960s, aiming to protect Munich and other cities from architectural


modernism. There was, moreover, some overlap between these groups and the coalition of protesters discussed in this chapter. There was also an overlap in goals, in particular during the early years of protest. The members of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts and *Münchner Bauforum* subscribed to the idea that Munich’s built form ought to be preserved, although the *Bauforum’s* architects tended not to be traditionalists.⁹²

Yet to label the dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Munich as anti-modern is as inaccurate as calling the student or APO movements reactionary. The dissenters saw little or no contradiction between their preservationist and modernist instincts. In their view, preserving what was best about everyday life in Munich was a progressive task; it meant building a better and more inclusive democracy. Retaining the physical, outward markers of the good life required a more accountable local government, broader citizen participation in public affairs, and rethinking the basic tenets of urban development. While traditional concerns—historic preservation—were the proximate causes of opposition to Munich’s planning, the situation soon changed. By the late 1960s, the main questions for debate focused on the democratic bases of planning and the social consequences of growth. During the 1970s, this agenda expanded still further to include an environmental dimension. Historic preservation itself mutated from a conservative and elite niche into a broadly popular cause. As the historian Rudy Koshar has written, during the 1970s the left appropriated historic preservation for its own ends.⁹³ A holistic, quality-of-life critique emerged, emphasizing the interplay among the natural and built environments, democratic institutions, and social engagement. Thus the democratization

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⁹² Rosenfeld discusses opposition by architectural traditionalists during this period. See Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*, chapter 5.
push that started during the 1960s was indispensable to the urban environmentalism of the 1970s.
CHAPTER 3:

A GREENER SHADE OF GREY: URBAN ENVIRONMENTALISM IN WEST GERMANY

“The uneasy feeling on the streets evidences the truth about our cities. The traffic, which pushes pedestrians onto the ever-narrower trails along the edges of our paved racecourses, damages eardrums, lungs, and nerves. The smog, which sinks down from smokestacks and often covertly opened incinerators, is becoming ever more dangerous to our health…. For many in our society the city already has become a danger zone.”

-- Uwe Schultz, *Umwelt aus Beton* (1971)\(^1\)

In the popular imagination, the history of West Germany’s mass environmental movement conjures up images of angry protesters blocking nuclear power plant construction sites, of shaggy and youthful Greens shaking up the *Bundestag*, of citizens obsessing about acid rain and forest death (*Waldsterben*). These images stick because they represent something that was true about the environmental movement. The nuclear-power controversy, the formation of the Greens, and the worry about forest death all were important components of the mass movement that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in West Germany. Yet as important as these elements were, they represented only a fraction, if a sizable one, of a much larger, more heterogeneous movement, the roots of which can be traced well back into the history of Federal Republic and earlier.

Environmental historians have begun tracing the contours of this history, delving into the

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many diverse corners of environmentalism and its forebears (conservationism and what we might term proto-environmental thinking).

Little of this examination has focused on cities, on those who worried about both the built and the natural environments, about the ways in which cities could be improved so as both to ameliorate damage to the natural environment and better the lives of the humans who inhabited them. The general lack of scholarship on this subject is odd, considering that West Germany was a highly urbanized and densely settled society when the mass environmental movement emerged at the end of the 1960s.

This chapter is a modest attempt to examine this topic. It contends that urban issues played an important part in the history of West Germany’s mass environmental movement during the 1970s and 1980s. Cities were not marginal to the self-understanding of environmentalists themselves or the topics they considered worthy of contention and debate. More narrowly, the chapter examines the emergence of concern about cities that connected transportation problems to environmental ones. This followed in the train of the upheavals of the 1960s, when the automobile and car-friendly planning first encountered a vigorous, popular urban opposition. The new theme of environmentalism fit well into the reformers’ sophisticated analysis of urban problems; hence they readily adopted these themes into their work. During the 1970s and 1980s, public worries about pollution and resource shortages enabled a growing opposition to chip away at the cultural and political dominance of the car. The chapter’s subjects are a large number of citizens’ initiatives, a smaller number of planning specialists and intellectuals, a few key politicians who seized upon urban environmentalism and helped
make it a public issue, several mainstream environmental organizations, and political parties.

**Revolution or evolution? Environmental breakthrough**

The origins of West Germany’s mass environmental movement are often traced to a brief period between the fall of 1969 and the winter of 1970. In September 1969, the SPD had managed to best the CDU in federal elections for the first time in the republic’s history. The Socialists rejected a continuance of the SPD/CDU Great Coalition, instead preferring to align with the much smaller FDP and give themselves control of the government. Willy Brandt, the popular, charismatic foreign minister and ex-mayor of Berlin, became Chancellor and gave immediate notice of his government’s reformist intentions. In his opening speech to the Bundestag, he most famously exhorted his countrymen to “dare more democracy,” but he also sprinkled references in his speech to the importance of nature and the need to protect his country’s citizens from air, water, and noise pollution. The new government’s interest in the environment also was due to Brandt’s interior minister, the FDP’s Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who led the government’s well-publicized foray into the subject over the next several months. In November 1969, his ministry formulated the neologism *Umweltschutz*, a literal translation of the English phrase “environmental protection” and a direct nod to contemporary developments in the United States. Genscher pushed to have powers in this area established in the interior ministry, resulting in a “water protection, air pollution control, and noise abatement”
section. In March 1970, Genscher announced that the government would formulate a comprehensive environmental program.²

The Brandt government’s activity occurred in the context of contemporaneous events elsewhere in the world. Many Europeans, including Genscher himself, had followed events in the United States with particular interest. During the 1960s, segments of the American populace (intellectuals, scientists, middle-class women) had fretted about the state of the natural environment, and in some cases had been motivated to activism. Critically acclaimed books, such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) and Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968), had contributed to their concern, but a generalized perception that the environment was deteriorating played a large role in their thinking as well. After January 1969, when coverage of an oil spill off Santa Barbara elevated these worries to national prominence, the natural environment became an issue worthy of political attention. After some initial hesitation, Richard Nixon’s administration itself embraced the issue. Nixon signed groundbreaking legislation such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and more generally highlighted the cause of environmental protection in his speeches. By the summer of 1970, the concepts of “environment” and “environmental protection” had become mainstream on both sides of the Atlantic. While Americans were the organizers of the first Earth Day, (April 22, 1970), the event attracted millions of attendees worldwide. At about the same time, the Council of Europe announced plans for its European Nature Conservation Year. In previous years, this kind of announcement would have attracted little popular attention,

but in 1970 it contributed much to Europeans’ growing awareness of the environment as a problem in need of attention.3

Much work had been done in the preceding decades to prepare the ground for the emergence of the mass-based environmentalism of the 1970s. As environmental historians have shown, the developments around 1970, in West Germany and elsewhere, did not arise from a cultural, intellectual, and political tabula rasa. The early 1970s represented a step, if a big one, in a long history of concern about nature, rather than a clean break between one period uninterested in environmental issues and another consumed by them. The question thus becomes how to interpret the change that did occur. For instance, was mass environmentalism a reaction—if delayed—to the deterioration of the physical environment that had been caused by postwar prosperity? Did the mass environmentalism contain original concerns about nature, or were none of the ideas new? Was it just a question of scale, the expansion of an extant environmental consciousness from social margins into the mainstream? Where should the weight of explanation lie for the environmental movement, from above (with Brandt and Genscher) or from below (out of the green-tinged milieu of intellectuals, scientists, ecologists, protestors of various stripes, and the new citizens’ initiatives)? Historians answer these questions in different fashion, but all answers depend on the interpretation of the preceding decades.4

In German history, two intertwined conservationist movements (Naturschutz and Heimatschutz) predated the mass environmentalism of the 1970s by nearly a century. These movements arose during the late nineteenth century because of widespread concern about the effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization on treasured and often historic natural and cultural landscapes. While conservationism had adherents across the political spectrum, after World War I some prominent conservationists became seduced by the blood-and-soil ideology espoused by the Nazis. Believing that the Nazis would conserve traditional landscapes in the interests of national identity and racial purity, after 1933 a few conservationists participated in the Nazi regime. Despite this, nature conservationists managed to revive their cause after the war (although conservationism as an ideal had to be stripped of racial and nationalist connotations that had been grafted onto it under the National Socialists). During the 1950s and 1960s, the leading conservationist organizations in West Germany continued to focus on traditional themes, such as landscape and bird protection, but generally left humans out of the

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equation. The movement’s leadership continued to be conservative in outlook, controlled by an older generation of males who viewed nature protection in the aesthetic and moralistic terms that had been a central component of conservationism in Germany since the turn of the century.⁶

Traditional conservationism was not the only vehicle for relating humans to nature during the first postwar decades. As the economic miracle got underway in West Germany, a kind of proto-environmentalism also began to emerge. This centered on issues broader than landscape protection, such as the effects of pollution and chemicals on human health. During the 1950s, and even more the 1960s, air, water, and noise pollution were the subjects of consternation and discussion. A good deal of the conversation occurred within a circle consisting of technical experts, regulators, industry, and specialized media, but the increasing pollutant loads that were the consequence of the boom decades meant that the issue was never far from public consciousness. Politicians and the popular media both paid attention to the topic as well. Willy Brandt, for example, made an important rhetorical flourish about stemming pollution years before his 1969 inaugural address to the Bundestag. During a failed attempt to wrest the Chancellorship from Konrad Adenauer in 1961, he had coined the well-known phrase “blue skies over the Ruhr” in a party-conference speech. His statement and related argument about cleaning up industrial pollution reached a broad audience, courtesy of the national press. The weekly news magazine Der Spiegel, for instance, devoted the cover of its August 9, 1961 issue to the theme. Brandt was not the first to point out the dismal state of the Ruhr’s air pollution; its air quality had been the subject of controversy for a decade already. His contribution was to raise the question of industrial pollution to the level of

⁶ Chaney, Miracle Years, 8-9, chapters 2-4.
national politics, taking it out of the local and regional context in which it resided. In the end, no policy changes resulted from Brandt’s electoral gambit, but his words had generated considerable resonance in the body politic and presaged increasing popular interest in the subject for the rest of the decade.\(^7\)

One can make a parallel argument about the emergence of a proto-environmentalism in the context of cities. Virtually all of the themes that became standard environmental criticisms of cities during the 1970s were articulated in the previous decade, in some cases much earlier. As the previous chapter detailed, deep skepticism had emerged during the 1960s about the negative consequences of West Germany’s urban growth patterns. Historic preservationists had sounded an alarm about modernism in city planning and architecture since the interwar period, and had engaged in a fierce ideological struggle with modernists about how to rebuild Germany’s war-ravaged cities. By the 1960s, however, historic preservationists were in a position similar to the nature conservationists. During this decade, critics began mounting a more expansive critique of postwar urbanism. Unhappy with the limited themes and tactical engagement of the conservative guard of historic preservationists, these newer critics wanted to expand the range of themes far beyond the concern for monuments and palaces that had animated preservationists in Munich and elsewhere; they wanted to apply these insights to everyday life. Part of the criticism came from unexpected sources, in particular from intellectuals outside the planning, architectural, and design professions. Jane Jacobs’s *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) appeared at almost exactly the same time as Rachel Carson’s book and also had a broad impact across the Atlantic.

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Even more important for West Germany was a book by the psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (1965), which portrayed West Germany’s rebuilt cities as anonymous entities that prevented citizens from forming healthy attachments to specific places. In Mitscherlich’s view, postwar development had damaged personal development and social cohesion by not allowing urban residents to establish emotional attachments to their cities.

The urban reformers who emerged during the 1960s were animated by what they perceived to be real problems all around them. At about the same time as the ecologically minded began to view pollution as an existential problem, the urban reformers began to perceive West Germany’s cities in increasingly dire terms. They thought that the manic construction of the boom years was producing cities that were on the brink of collapse. The aggressive expansion of West German urban infrastructure, including the countless new intra-city highways and widened streets, had produced a world that these critics saw as increasingly uncomfortable and dangerous for urban residents. All of this produced a search for alternatives during the middle and later 1960s. Groups began to seek all manner of solutions to urban problems, from alternative living arrangements to better forms of urban travel to more transparency in local governance. These concerns were often overlaid with a suspicion of technological gigantism as applied to cities. The first attempts to square the nascent urban environmentalism with the historic preservation agenda occurred during the period as well.

Two examples are worth highlighting in this context. One emerged in Cologne during the middle and late 1960s. A group of parents at a local inner-city Montessori school began discussing alternative solutions to housing and urban development
problems in the city. Led by a young architect, Erich Schneider-Wessling, the group soon came to reject much of the thinking that was then driving mainstream urban planning and development. It fashioned a diverse set of ideals into a provocative agenda centered on egalitarian housing and communal solidarity: grassroots engagement, active citizen participation in the design of living spaces, gender equality in working and living, anti-discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or income, and democratic decision-making. In 1968, the group named itself Urbanes Wohnen Köln (Urban Living Cologne) and set about challenging just about every established idea it encountered. Within a few years, the group’s membership had grown from a couple dozen people to nearly a hundred. Parallel groups also formed in Frankfurt, Bonn, Bielefeld, West Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. The Urban Living groups in these cities had similar premises, goals, operating structures, and membership levels (by the early 1970s, membership levels fluctuated between a dozen and a hundred or more individuals per group). Among many other things, Urban Living went on to initiate programs dedicated to opening and refurbishing “half-public spaces,” such as interior courtyards in Munich and other cities. Such programs were built upon the premise that these spaces contributed to making a city not only more beautiful but also more humane, hence more livable.8

A second example developed in Munich after 1967 in the wake of the Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel controversy. The 1963 Jensen Plan had included a scheme to run a multi-lane expressway along the western bank of the Isar river, straight into and past the heart

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of Munich, as a means of enabling traffic movement through the city. Dubbed the “Isar Parallel,” the expressway would have required the removal of several rows of mature trees running down the river’s picturesque banks. Energized by the fight over the Prince-Carl-Palace tunnel, the members of the Münchner Bauforum joined with the Munich Forum and a citizens’ initiative, the Verein zum Schutz der Isaranlagen (Society for the Protection of the Isar Grounds), to protest against the project on the basis that it would destroy a beautiful stretch of nature in the heart of the city.

The desire to protect trees along the Isar was nothing new. In 1902, an Isar Valley Society had been founded in Munich to protect the forested banks of the Isar from industrial development. The society’s efforts extended from Munich southward, to the upper reaches of the Isar toward the Alps. More than half a century later, during the early 1960s, some city officials voiced concern about the Isar Parallel, claiming that the expressway would harm a unique and valuable part of Munich. Later in the decade, the Bauforum-led protest repeated many of these criticisms. Karl Klühspies, the Bauforum’s ubiquitous critic, wrote that the plan threatened to transform the Isar banks into an “asphalt desert.” Street trees were a special target of planners and the auto lobby during the 1960s, and not just because they got in the way of plans to widen thoroughfares. The ADAC led a campaign to get rid of as many as possible, considering them to be both dangerous (higher vehicular speeds required greater distances between the roadway and

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fixed objects near the road) and an inconvenience for motorists searching for places to park.\textsuperscript{11}

But the objections that arose at the end of the 1960s formed a different kind of resonance. Not only did the charged atmosphere and broadened participation surrounding planning make the issue more political than earlier. The issue also resonated because the critics placed the Isar’s fate and that of Munich’s citizens into a global indictment of postwar planning. Klühspies and others in the \textit{Bauforum} argued that planners were willing to destroy everything of value in Munich in the interest of more pavement. He wrote in contempt that the transportation planners operated on the theory that “one must destroy the city in order to save it.”\textsuperscript{12} The assault on the Isar’s woody banks, he implied, was no different from a hundred other similar assaults in Munich, each of which eroded the social, historic, architectural, and now natural bases of the city.\textsuperscript{13}

This was the situation in 1969, when the Brandt government’s environmental protection rhetoric burst onto the public scene. As the Isar Parallel case showed, the urban critics were already attacking planning schemes on the basis of their threats to nature, human health, and social cohesion. But the sudden elevation of environmentalism to a national cause gave the critics powerful new weapons. It also allowed them to make better sense of their diverse condemnations of the postwar city, to rearrange the strands of criticism into a more unified message. Hence they were quick to pounce. In January

1970, for example, the \textit{Münchner Bauforum}’s Karl Assmann published the first edition of


\textsuperscript{12} Klühspies, “Zerstörung eines der schönsten städtischen Flusssufer von Europa,” 1563.

\textsuperscript{13} Klühspies, “Zerstörung eines der schönsten städtischen Flusssufer von Europa,” 1563-7.
*urbane information*, a “journal of environmental design.” It and later editions highlighted themes such as air pollution, chemical poisoning, even climate change. While cities were the journal’s focus, it presented the problems of cities in a context of an urgent and worldwide environmental crisis.\(^4\)

**Interlude: the early 1970s**

For a few years between 1969 and the onset of the global recession of 1974, it appeared as if environmental protection might become not only the dominant political invention of the decade but also the most important influence on public policy. Environmentalism was “in.” While the West German press had covered environmental problems, such as air pollution, in the years before 1969/70, the number of stories had been limited and the viewpoint tended to be that of the air-quality specialist. But during the early 1970s, media coverage changed. Suddenly, not only was environmentalism a favorite subject in the popular press, but the perspective shifted from specialist reporting to alarmism. Collectively, all this affected popular opinion. The percentage of the West German population that was aware of environmental issues leapt after 1969, increasing popular support for decisive action on the environment.\(^5\)

Scholars and intellectuals also contributed to a growing sense that environmental protection ought to be a cornerstone of public policy. Important influences continued to come from abroad. Books and reports predicting environmental catastrophe appeared in increasing number. One of the more important was *A Blueprint for Survival*, a collection of essays by conservationists and environmentalists put together in 1972 by the small but

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influential British journal *The Ecologist*. That same year, the Club of Rome’s *Limits to Growth* report made an even bigger splash. It forecast long term global shortages of raw materials resulting from the continuous growth of population, the economy, and pollution.  

All of this concern was not just rhetorical; it bore a relationship to the state of the real, physical environment. Pollution had been a by-product of industrialization everywhere, and air, water, and even noise pollution had animated much debate about pollution controls in Germany since the nineteenth century. But the massive expansion of the national economy after 1948 represented a difference in scale and kind that outstripped everything that had happened before. By the late 1960s, pollutant loads were becoming difficult to ignore. Enormous amounts of energy had been required to get the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* under way. Even more was required to keep it going. Between the late 1950s and 1973, the supply of energy, in particular oil from the Middle East, had remained ahead of this upsurge in demand, so fuel prices stayed low despite the boom, feeding the emerging consumer societies of Western Europe.

The consequences of energy consumption were felt most in the cities, where the boom was concentrated. Growing populations, ongoing suburbanization, and increasing motorization created severe local air pollution in West Germany’s cities. While coal-based smoke had been the dominant form of air pollution for the entirety of the industrial

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era before World War II, during the 1950s and the 1960s the first signs of oil-based pollution from motor vehicles began to be visible. “Smog,” a term imported verbatim from English, became an established word in the German lexicon. At first the German press made smog a synonym for air pollution in Los Angeles, the world’s foremost automobile city after World War II, but by 1969, smog had become a problem in West German cities too, and entered the popular imagination.¹⁹

During these years, Brandt and Genscher pressed their environmental agenda. The administration’s environmental program included proposals to regulate aircraft noise, lead in gasoline, detergent use, and trash disposal, among many other things. Over the next several years, the Brandt government passed or implemented statutes and regulatory orders on a wide variety of environmental subjects. It did so over sporadic objections from industry, labor unions, and the political parties. It also expanded the bureaucracy’s environmental powers by establishing several dedicated organizations, including the Council of Environmental Advisers in 1971 and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA, Umweltbundesamt) in 1974.²⁰

The administration’s efforts included a few jabs at the automobile’s privileged position in West German society. The car was coming under scrutiny because of the increasing awareness that it was causing spatial, social, and now environmental problems. “Until now, the motorization level has been the index of prosperity,” editorialized the Frankfurter Rundschau in a May 1971 piece that exemplified this new doubt, “but is the

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²⁰ Engels, Naturpolitik, 275-6, 285-7; Brüggemeier, Tschernobyl, 216-17.
car merely a glittering chrome status symbol?” In September 1973, the Council of Environmental Advisors issued a report, entitled simply “Auto and Environment,” the first of its kind by an agency of the federal government. In a blunt assessment, the report stated that the car caused accidents, claimed a large amount of scarce urban space, created solid waste problems, caused air, water, and noise pollution, and increased demand for oil.

Several members of Brandt’s cabinet echoed these sentiments. One was Lauritz Lauritzen, who ran the planning ministry before switching to the transportation ministry after Brandt’s reelection in November 1972. A supporter of local democratization efforts while he was at the planning ministry, he focused on environmental topics after moving to transportation. While here he attempted to scale back the size of the government’s massive road building program and he temporarily over ADAC objections enacted speed limits on some freeways. A second figure was Erhard Eppler, the Brandt government’s development minister. In April 1972, he gave a speech at an IG Metall convention in which he argued for measuring economic health by quality of life. Citing the Club of Rome, Eppler said that it was doubtful whether wider streets for more cars, bigger airports for faster jets, and more pesticides for larger harvests, was worth the increased deaths from traffic accidents, pollution in the water and atmosphere, and poison in the food. It was time, he argued, to measure economic progress by a quality-of-life standard. This was an admittedly vague idea, but it was meant to incorporate social and ecological

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21 StAM, PZ 489: Spoo, “Die Städte sind am Ende,” unpaginated.
goals into economic planning. Eppler’s speech struck a chord. It became a central theme in Brandt’s 1972 reelection campaign, and quickly spread into public discourse.¹³

Hans-Jochen Vogel, who took Lauritzen’s place as planning minister in December 1972, was the third cabinet member to take up these themes. That Vogel emerged as a critic of West Germany’s automobile culture was not surprising. Although he had been a booster of Munich’s automobile-oriented modernization during his first years as mayor, he was sensitive to other, competing agendas, including those of the historic preservationists and the nature conservationists. During the middle of the 1960s, his public remarks began to show concern for the ability of city governments to provide environmental services, such as clean air or proper sewage and trash disposal in the face of continuous growth. At the end of the decade, these had become integral components of his comprehensive thesis, adopted from the thinking of the American economist John Kenneth Galbraith, that urban growth patterns could not be sustained without a better and more thorough provision of public goods. By the time he left for Bonn in 1972, Vogel and his lieutenants had assigned much blame for polluted West German cities to the automobile.²⁴

Thus it was no surprise when Vogel, upon becoming the federal planning minister, went on the offensive. His two years here were marked by an attempt to show that mass...
motorization had created big problems for West German cities, once the public costs of
the automobile were factored in. “The car murders the big city,” he stated bluntly in an
interview in March 1973, not long after taking office.  

He argued that the country’s high
level of motorization had caused all manner of ills, including air pollution, sprawl, and
public health problems. He gave speeches on the virtues of public transit systems and
pedestrian zones as means for wresting West German cities from the grip of the
automobile. Believing the times gave him license to venture into uncharted territory,
Vogel even felt that he had the standing to lecture the auto companies, which heretofore
had enjoyed a status as a prime mover of the West German economy. He presented ten
theses to the industry in a public attempt to undermine the comfortable notion that auto
manufacturing would always be profitable. His thesis 3 was that the car had become a
plague more than a source of prosperity. Thesis 5 asserted that cities would have to favor
transit over the car if they wished to survive. Thesis 8 predicted that domestic demand for
automobiles would shrink because cities could not handle more of them. He advised the
industry to recognize that demand would slacken and diversify into other forms of
transportation if it wanted to survive.

Vogel’s move to the justice ministry in 1974 ended his direct involvement in urban
politics and policy, but he made a more lasting contribution in Bonn through the people
whom he helped install within the government. Vogel and his top lieutenant, Hubert

\[25\] Hans-Jochen Vogel, “Ich habe den Herren der Autoindustrie gesagt...’,” Münchner Stadtanzeiger,

Wohltat und Plage: Zehn Thesen des neuen Bundesministers Dr. Vogel,” Münchner Stadtanzeiger, March
Vogel, see: Georg Willeuthner, “Der ADAC antwortet: Es gibt noch keine Alternative,” ADAC Rundschau
(July, 1973), 3-4; StAM, unsorted, unindexed Aktion Maxvorstadt files: Gerd Brueggemann, “Ein
ideologisches Vehikel? Vogels falsche Therapie gegen das Umweltproblem Auto,” Die Welt, March 26,
1973, unpaginated.
Abress, raided Munich’s departments for personnel to take to Bonn. Among the most important came from the department of urban development (SER, *Stadtentwicklungsreferat*), including Abress himself. The SER had been Vogel’s top bureaucratic reform in Munich, the most innovative office in the city government. SER staff, many of whom were drawn from unconventional fields, worked on the highest-profile projects.

Karl Ganser was one of these SER staffers who headed to Bonn in the early 1970s. A former geography professor at Munich’s technical university, Ganser developed a reputation as one of the SER’s brilliant if unconventional thinkers. He had worked on the Olympics preparations, the city’s democratization efforts in the Lehel neighborhood and elsewhere, and he had helped prepare Munich’s first environmental study. After transferring to Bonn, Ganser became the director of a new research institute (BfLR, *Bundesforschungsanstalt für Landeskunde und Raumordnung*) within Vogel’s planning ministry. Ganser was given the resources, staff (the BfLR eventually had about 150 employees), and programmatic freedom to envision new directions for West German planning. Following the SER model, Ganser staffed the BfLR with young professionals from a wide variety of fields, including forestry, that tended to be defined outside of planning altogether. One of these professionals was Heiner Monheim, an even younger geographer (Ganser was in his thirties, Monheim his twenties), who had been a student of Ganser’s while in Munich. Believing that innovative work required networking, Ganser encouraged alliances with other parts of the federal bureaucracy and independent research institutions. Among other things, this strategy netted standing relationships with the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) and the *Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik*.
Under Ganser’s direction, starting in the late 1970s Monheim used these contacts to establish key pilot programs in such areas as bicycling and traffic calming. In 1980, Ganser moved to the North-Rhine Westphalian planning ministry to implement innovative projects in urban renewal, street construction, historic preservation, and land-use planning. IBA-Emscher Park, a multi-billion-Mark project to revitalize a large swath of the industrial Ruhr along ecological lines, was the highlight of Ganser’s time in North-Rhine Westphalia and proved to be the capstone of his career. He also published widely on alternative perspectives in city and regional planning.

Eppler, Vogel, Klühspies, and Ganser constituted a camp of pragmatists, believing that their work would solve practical problems rather than serve ideological goals. In 1971, Eppler had written that the West German politicians who were in their forties, including himself, Vogel, and Genscher, were all pragmatists because they had been forced to fight for the Nazi regime at the end of the war, when they were still teens. Eppler argued that because politicians of this age had witnessed the war’s gruesome reality, all had emerged convinced of the danger of ideological fanaticism. In the political climate in West Germany in the early 1970s, Eppler’s charge was a broadside at the left wing of the SPD. It also resonated in Munich, where Vogel and Ganser both cited the

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exhausting fights with Munich’s *Jusos* during the early 1970s for strengthening their belief in pragmatic approaches to problems.\(^{28}\)

Design and planning professionals began linking modern road and street building to environmental problems. They produced essays and books on concrete gigantism in city planning, defining these as environmental problems. They pointed to the tunnels, bridges, and spaghetti-bowl intersections of the modern era as being as destructive to the natural environment as anything humans had devised. Planners also began hosting conferences on the environmental responsibilities of their profession. The 1971 annual conference hosted by the *Deutscher Städtetag*, for example, emphasized environmental issues. This was the same conference that Vogel had organized under the banner “Save our cities now!” and that included a keynote address by the American economist Galbraith.\(^{29}\) Gerd Albers, a renowned planner and one of the most influential people in his field, used his own research institute, the *Institut für Städtebau und Wohnungswesen* (ISW), for similar purposes. Starting in 1972, ISW organized conferences on ecology and cities. These conferences attracted academics, research institutions, city planning departments, architectural and design firms, independent professionals, and activists such as Klühspies.\(^{30}\)


Crisis and activism during the mid-1970s

The OPEC oil embargo that began in October 1973 changed the political and economic landscape for West Germany and the industrialized world. As OPEC was the main source for the oil-dependent western societies, the dramatic price spike following the embargo was felt across all economic sectors. The embargo contributed to a global economic recession beginning in 1974, the worst since World War II, and brought the end of the postwar economic boom.

The oil shock had two contradictory effects for the environmental movement. On the one hand, it appeared to validate the Club of Rome’s *Limits to Growth* thesis. Suddenly, energy supply became as big an environmental issue as pollution had been since 1969. The oil shock was in fact artificial, the result of a political decision by OPEC to restrict supply. Yet coming so close on the heels of the Club of Rome report, it supported the forecast of impending resource shortages and suggested that such shortages could become grim reality. The car-free Sundays of 1973/74 (motorists were prohibited from driving altogether on these days) were evidence of just how dependent all West Germans were on oil and, by extension, the automobile.

But on the other hand, the economic downturn that accompanied the oil shock also shifted the political climate in West Germany, from generalized support for environmental protection to a greater hostility to it. While the environmental implications of the oil shock concerned long-term problems, the economic repercussions were real and had to be addressed over the shorter term. The government now faced the problem of how to get the economy up and running again quickly. Unemployment became a real
political problem, rising from almost nothing to nearly five percent. Industrial associations began pressing the government to ease its environmental program, asserting that the environmental protection cost the economy jobs. The automobile industry, reeling from the effects of oil price hikes on vehicle sales, also attacked the government’s policies and environmentalism in general. It brushed off an old argument that speed limits (such as those proposed by Lauritzen and in some cases implemented through his efforts) were not only authoritarian but now, in the face of the hit that the auto industry had just suffered, also helped to prevent the revival of West Germany’s most important economic sector. Such objections found a more receptive ear after Helmut Schmidt replaced Brandt as Chancellor in May 1974. Over the next several years, the more pragmatic Schmidt downplayed environmental protection in the interest of economic revival. Labeled “Model Germany,” his programs sought to align the interests of the government, industry, and unions into a program emphasizing economic modernization. Among other things, it called for an enormous expansion of the country’s nuclear energy capacity.31

The history of Germany’s mass environmental movement is most famous for what occurred during the life of the Schmidt government (1974-1982), in particular for controversies over the construction of nuclear power plants that followed in the wake of the Schmidt government’s nuclear expansion. In the mid-1970s, local citizens’ initiatives formed to protest the construction of specific plants. The most important of these occurred near the small village of Wyhl, in Baden-Württemberg, and near Brokdorf, in Schleswig-Holstein. Here, the initiatives led to large organized protests, marked by the infusion of activists from well beyond the local area. The site occupations brought

together a heterogeneous collection of groups, which included both expected participants (students, intellectuals, committed environmentalists, and political radicals) and unexpected ones (farmers, winegrowers, ordinary townspeople). Their numbers, plus their tactic of physical occupation of the construction sites, were the reasons why the protests generated such a high profile in West Germany and abroad. The Wyhl and Brokdorf protests and later ones at sites such as Gorleben helped to scale back the size of the West German nuclear program. Politically, the confrontational tactics, successful networking of oppositional groups, and mass scale of the protests inspired the formation of the Green party in the late 1970s.\footnote{Christopher Rootes, “The Environmental Movement,” in Klimke and Scharloth, eds., \textit{1968 in Europe}, 295-305; Roger Karapin, \textit{Protest Politics in Germany: Movements on the Left and Right since the 1960s} (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), chapter 3.}

As famous and important as these protests were, West Germany’s mass environmental movement was always about much more than opposition to nuclear power. An oppositional milieu had been a central feature of West German society for a decade, if not longer, before the first anti-nuclear protests. The student and antiwar protest’s counterculture never went away, even after these movements broke down during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Rather, opposition splintered into numerous branches. Some groups were expressly political in orientation, as was true of the Marxist K-Gruppen and the Baader-Meinhof complex in the 1970s or, later, the peace movement of the early 1980s. Others were oriented more toward social and cultural change, for instance toward altering food production systems (promoting organic farming), gender roles, sexual mores, reproductive rights, or replacing the consumer society of the postwar decades with simpler and more ecological forms of consumption. All shared a skepticism of the larger society, albeit at various levels of intensity and with diverse goals. In different ways, too,
each challenged the dominant political, social, and cultural order, often at the local level but occasionally at the national as well.\textsuperscript{33}

The citizens’ initiatives were at the center of this popular opposition. They had begun forming at the end of the 1960s, in the midst of the student and extra-parliamentary opposition. The initiatives were a tangible expression of the widespread clamor for direct democracy, in particular after the election of Brandt and his call for greater citizen participation in public affairs. Well before nuclear power became a central cause for environmentalists, citizens’ initiatives became common features of the political landscape in West Germany. Before the German Greens became an international phenomenon, the citizens’ initiatives had established West German environmentalists’ bona fides in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{34}

Initiatives were formed in all parts of the country and intruded into every conceivable public issue, most often locally. Topically, the initiatives tended to focus on social and environmental issues (surveys generally showed that a bit fewer than half of all initiatives focused on environmental problems). In a well-known formulation, the social scientist Peter Mayer-Tasch argued in 1976 that the initiatives could be separated into two types, those that focused on general goals and those that focused on smaller and more concrete problems. The former focused on big issues, such as women’s rights, and tended to survive over the longer term. The latter were \textit{ad hoc}, in that they were formed to

\textsuperscript{33} William T. Markham, \textit{Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany: Hardy Survivors in the Twentieth Century and Beyond} (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 103-09.

\textsuperscript{34} Karl-Werner Brand, Detlef Büsser, and Dieter Rucht, \textit{Aufbruch in eine andere Gesellschaft: Neue soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik} (Frankfurt: Campus, 1986), 96-101; Michael Getler, “Citizen action groups are changing staid image of West German politics,” \textit{The Washington Post}, June 1, 1978, A21.
accomplish a specific task such as preventing an airport’s expansion or, more positively, building a kindergarten or playground in a neighborhood.\textsuperscript{35}

The events and political climate of the late 1960s infused the initiatives with a distrust of institutional power and hierarchy. Members tended to believe in the virtues of small, loose-knit organizations with flat governing structures as a means of retaining direct control of decision-making. The bulk of initiatives had fewer than 100 members, many only twenty or thirty.\textsuperscript{36} The initiatives prided themselves on the directness of the experience they offered, on the face-to-face interaction, social exchange, collegiality, non-partisanship, and solidarity that came with participation. They subscribed to a meritocratic conviction that any person who was willing to get involved would be rewarded with responsibilities in the initiative. Their self-image, in short, revolved around a citizenship ideal consisting of voluntary, cooperative, civic-minded, and positive action in the local community. These features gave the initiatives much of their appeal in West Germany.

Munich’s \textit{Aktion Maxvorstadt}, possibly the most well known citizens’ initiative in this city, was one of many groups to embrace these ideals. It had no executive board nor charter, rewarded no honorary or administrative titles, was associated with no political party, had no entry requirements, demanded no membership dues, and excluded no one from participation. To keep members informed and activated, it utilized face-to-face exchange through weekly meetings. Disagreements were handled in these meetings or in


other informal settings. The initiative subscribed to an achievement principle 
(Leistungsprinzip), according to which individuals who gave the most time and effort 
were rewarded with leadership of the initiative’s programs. Because time was short for 
most members and the workload demands were high, these duties tended to rotate every 
few months. Over time, the initiative found that it relied on the most committed 
activists.37

As the Aktion Maxvorstadt case suggested, the individuals who wound up leading 
the citizens’ initiatives tended to have more technical or professional experience with the issues, more passion for and interest in politics and social issues, or simply more available time on their hands. The initiatives drew from demographic groups in which this type of person was prominent. Although working-class neighborhoods in cities had active initiatives, even here membership often leaned toward the educated middle class, with teachers, civil servants, academics, students, and professionals well represented. (A well-known case of working class resistance occurred in the Ruhr town of Oberhausen. There, residents of the working-class “Siedlung Eisenheim” [“Settlement Eisenheim”] worked together with a student group led by their professor, Roland Günter, to prevent the settlement from being razed in an urban renewal scheme. Günter would emerge as a leader for the protection of working-class housing throughout the Ruhr.) The initiatives were more male than female, although this imbalance evened out a bit over the course of the 1970s. The initiatives also tended to attract younger people, but it was a myth that

students overran them. Rather, people between the ages of 25 and 50 were well represented, if not dominant.  

At their peak, the initiatives numbered in the thousands, with many times that number of people participating in them. However, the many surveys of citizens’ initiatives that were conducted during the 1970s and 1980s failed to arrive at common totals. Many initiatives were unregistered associations or short lived, so no one had an accurate sense of the true population. The most common estimates placed the total number of initiatives at three to four thousand nationwide, before the emergence of the anti-nuclear power movement in the mid-1970s, with more forming thereafter. One 1976 study concluded that some 15,000 initiatives had been formed in that year alone. A year later, another asserted there were 50,000 initiatives in existence in West Germany. These were considered extreme figures, however.

Researchers had just as difficult a time gauging the total number of people involved. Again, part of the problem rested on the lack of a complete database of initiatives, but part was also due to the fluidity of membership in such organizations. Estimates of the share of the national population that was involved at any given moment ranged from one to three percent. One study estimated that up to twelve percent of the national population had participated in an initiative at some time. The number of individuals involved ranged from as low as sixty thousand people at the beginning of the 1970s to several million at the end. Even studies that exhaustively reviewed the evidence

from previous surveys arrived at different conclusions as to the most accurate numbers. One conducted in 1978 concluded that the environmental citizens’ initiatives alone had 1.2 million members. An even more thorough review two years later concluded that the environmental initiatives had somewhere between 170,000 and 230,000 members who were active participants.\textsuperscript{39}

Urban citizens’ initiatives constituted a significant part of the overall environmental movement during these years. Initiatives formed early in cities, where there was already a deep-seated angst over the effects of postwar planning on housing, transportation, and urban renewal. City size correlated with level of activism (bigger cities had more initiatives). Before the emergence of the nuclear-power opposition, survey data showed that urban problems were a primary concern for West Germany’s citizens’ initiatives, perhaps the dominant concern. Before the mid-1970s, the data indicated that problems related to transportation, housing, city planning, and industry were the focal points of concern for the environmental initiatives. Time and again, transportation planners discovered citizen activism as a constant presence in their field. Karl Ganser wrote in 1975 that the “largest portion” of the citizens’ initiatives worked on transportation, and that public meetings organized by local governments had the “liveliest debates” on the topic. Energy, on the other hand, was a rare worry before the middle of the decade. After the emergence of the anti-nuclear opposition, this situation did change. Energy became a favorite theme and presumably the main reason for the sudden jump in initiatives’ numbers in the second half of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Andritzky and Wahl-Terlinden, Mitwirkung, 32-6; Rüdig, “Bürgerinitiativen im Umweltschutz,” 134-7, 174.
\textsuperscript{40} Konrad Otto, Umweltpolitik der Städte: Materialien zur Umweltpolitik der Gross- und Mittelstädte auf der Basis von Befragungen (Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller, 1976), 78-80; Ganser, “Verkehrsplanung heute und
But the urban environmental groups did not disappear. They continued to represent a substantial percentage of all citizens’ initiatives. Table 1 shows that in 1977, forty percent of all environmental initiatives in West Germany were active in the energy field, with the vast majority of these focused on nuclear-power plants. Yet fully a third still listed transportation as their main area of activity. Another 23% indicated that they concentrated on city planning (which included initiatives focused on urban renewal schemes, street trees, pedestrian zones, and recreational areas), while smaller percentages responded that their focus was on air and noise pollution, industrial areas, and waste management. Because the initiatives were not identified by location (urban, suburban, town, rural), it is impossible to tell from the data how many of them were focused on cities. Moreover, as the surveyors allowed the initiatives to provide multiple responses, it would be inaccurate to add the apparently urban-themed or -related responses together to arrive at a total estimate of initiatives that focused on cities. Yet it is clear that urban issues and problems received a good deal of the initiatives’ attention even after the nuclear opposition formed.

One of the most important and visible initiatives in the transportation field during the 1970s was West Berlin’s Bürgerinitiative Westtangente (BIW, West Tangent Citizens’ Initiative). As was true of many transportation initiatives, the BIW was formed to stop a single piece of infrastructure, the construction of a high-capacity urban freeway, the West Tangent (Westtangente). The West Tangent was one part of the city’s long-term goal to construct a network of freeways through the city, based on the hopeful political idea that a reunited Berlin would need such a system in the future. The West Tangent was

slated to run north to south straight through Schöneberg, a densely settled working-class district just south of the Tiergarten. During the 1960s, a freeway interchange had been constructed on the southern edge of the district. Dubbed the Schöneberger Kreuz, the interchange was a perfect example of gigantism in modern freeway planning and was placed at the center of the BIW logo. Sensing that the city was preparing to begin construction of the West Tangent, Schöneberg residents formed the BIW in March 1974.\footnote{Archive, Bürgerinitiative Westtangente (ArBIW), binder “Aktionen 1: 3-74 bis 3-75”: flyer, “Statt Osttangente—Westtangente?,” undated, likely January/February 1974; untitled BIW document, March 14, 1974. Bürgerinitiative Westtangente e.V., Stadtautobahnen: Ein Schwarzbuch zur Verkehrsplanung (Berlin: Bürgerinitiative Westtangente e.V., 1976), 6-12.}

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<th>Area of focus / activity</th>
<th>Number of initiatives (N = 331 initiatives)</th>
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<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
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Self-reported data. Multiple responses allowed. Source: Adapted from Andritzky and Wahl-Tenderlin 1978, Table 1, pp. 59-60.

There was little at the outset to suggest that the BIW would be unique. It was one of dozens of transportation-focused citizens’ initiatives that were formed in West Berlin.
during the 1970s, one small component of the city’s larger and notorious counterculture. Similar initiatives had already formed in West Berlin to contest other stretches of the city’s urban freeway plan. One had been created in 1970 to fight a similar freeway (the East Tangent), which was slated to run through Neukölln and Kreuzberg, districts to Schöneberg’s immediate east, bordering the Berlin Wall. Moreover, the BIW followed a pattern that had arisen in similar inner-city neighborhoods elsewhere, as in Munich’s Lehel and Maxvorstadt neighborhoods a few years earlier. After World War II, investors had ignored both Schöneberg and Kreuzberg, preferring areas to the west of the Tiergarten. The Wilhelmine-era tenement housing that had dominated these districts was rebuilt after the war, but the new buildings were not high quality. Over time the districts became even less attractive, as residents moved to newer housing on the outer fringes of West Berlin. During the 1960s, sections of both districts were slated for demolition and urban renewal. Later in the decade, students and other protesters began taking over Kreuzberg’s abandoned buildings. Like Frankfurt’s Westend neighborhood, Kreuzberg became a center of West Germany’s squatters’ movement. In 1974, when the BIW was formed, Schöneberg’s residents faced the familiar prospect of razed apartment buildings and new freeway construction.42

But the BIW became the most important transportation citizens’ initiative in West Berlin and in West Germany. From the outset the group’s core members sought every opportunity to enlarge the initiative’s scope and influence well beyond the West Tangent freeway question. They crafted an articulate indictment of modern transportation planning, skillfully utilized the media to amplify this message, built a network of contacts around West Germany and abroad, and became a resource for other initiatives in other parts of the country. One of the initiative’s most visible efforts, was the group’s publication in 1976 of a *Black Book (Schwarzbuch)*, an indictment of urban freeways that proved to be both technically sound and accessible to the layperson. “We have learned through our work,” the book’s authors began, “that transportation planning, city planning, and environmental protection cannot be separated and should be treated as a unity.” Environmentalism was the thread running through the book, whether the topic was noise or air pollution, urban recreation, auto emissions, green spaces, housing, street trees, or traffic accidents. The book’s larger significance, however, rested in its distribution. BIW members marketed the *Schwarzbuch* to as wide an audience as possible, by appealing to newspaper editors or radio programs to review the tome. Within a year of its release, the book had sold several thousand copies. In absolute terms, this was not a wide release for a book. But many of the books were shipped to other citizens’ initiatives on their request, allowing the BIW to spread its program to like-minded organizations. For all these reasons, by 1978 the BIW had become one of the most competent, aggressive, and most recognized groups in the nation.44

43 Bürgerinitiative Westtangente e.V., *Schwarzbuch*, 1.
Organization and (partial) success, 1978-1990

From the late 1970s through the 1980s, the transportation critics’ positions made more headway at local, state, and federal levels than had earlier been the case. The 1980s in particular were marked by intense debate over the centrality of the automobile in West German life. This decade saw attempts to introduce speed limits on the Autobahnen and other highways throughout the country and to require technical fixes to reduce automobile air pollution (such as the catalytic converter). Transportation historians generally agree that the 1980s was the decade when transportation planning began to incorporate an environmental agenda on a wider footing in West Germany.45

A big part of the explanation for these developments rested with the perception of environmental crisis. The ecological protests that had characterized the 1970s continued well into the 1980s in West Germany. On occasion these reached mass proportions, most famously within the context of the nuclear freeze movement of the early 1980s (with which environmentalists were closely allied). Environmental catastrophes also continued to occur, reinforcing the impression that industrial civilization was threatening the natural order. Several of these were major chemical or oil spills, as happened when dioxin spilled at Seveso, Italy in 1976 or when the oil tanker Amoco Cadiz broke up off the Brittany coast in 1978. The Chernobyl nuclear accident of 1986 caused panic all across Europe.

The most significant long-term development in West Germany, in terms of perceptions of

the state of the natural environment, was the emergence of the Waldsterben debate in the 1980s. After November 1981, when the country’s premier news magazine Der Spiegel published a series of articles on the topic, forest death became an obsessive concern for West Germans. Air pollution was identified as causing the acid rain that killed forests. Significantly, industry was not the only object of public condemnation. It became clear that the car was also a major source of air pollution beyond the confines of cities. The automobile thus came under more scrutiny as a polluter than at any time before. German auto manufacturers were again put on the defensive and had to fight intense policy battles over pollution-mitigation measures, such as the catalytic converter and speed limits.46

But a bigger part of the explanation for the environmental policy successes rested on the emergence of a powerful coalition that was able to capitalize on the favorable political climate. The citizens’ initiatives, the Greens, mainstream environmental organizations, and critics within the planning profession organized to articulate, promote, and implement their agenda. During the first half of the 1980s, this coalition began making headway. Fueled by ongoing Waldsterben fears among the general population and bolstered by studies that connected high speeds to increased air pollution, in 1984 the Greens’ and Social Democrats’ parliamentary factions endorsed speed limits on the Autobahn, rural highways, and in cities. They adopted the critics’ formula of “Tempo 100 / 80 / 30,” meaning speed limits of 100, 80, and 30 kilometers per hour respectively.47

While not all policy measures were adopted during the 1980s (the auto lobby managed to

beat back a general speed limit on the Autobahn), a number were. In cities, critics prompted the reworking of street-design standards to favor bicyclists and pedestrians, to reduce vehicular speeds to Tempo 30 on many streets, and to improve what they called the Wohnumfeld (roughly, the “living environment”).

Historians emphasize the contribution of several actors for the successes of the 1980s. Dietmar Klenke, for example, has focused more on the environmental movement, Barbara Schmucki on the transportation planning.48 Yet the picture was much more complicated because of the substantial overlap of ideas, personnel, organizational structures, and financing across a dense network of actors that now constituted the opposition. This extended to the urban critics, that part of the increasingly green-hued opposition that focused on cities. A single advocate was a member of local and national citizens’ initiatives, sat on panels that were organized by environmental non-profits, borrowed ideas and data that had been formulated or gathered by scholars and practitioners, and worked with the Greens or other political parties on creating a new bicycling program or transportation lobbying group.

During the 1970s, the citizens’ initiatives constructed organizational networks to address national issues such as nuclear power and alternative transportation. The most important development in this regard was the creation of the Federal Association of Environmental Action Groups (BBU, Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz) in 1972, an umbrella group for environmental citizens’ initiatives. This was the first attempt to arrange the welter of initiatives under a national organization for political purposes. During the rest of the decade, the BBU became best known for three things: as a kind of

national face for the thousands of local citizens’ initiatives, for its emergence as a leader of the anti-nuclear opposition in West Germany, and for its chaotic internal politics.\(^{49}\)

In 1978, the BBU and West Berlin’s BIW created the Transportation Working Group (AKV, *Arbeitskreis Verkehr*) in 1978, which was intended to be a dedicated organizational home for those citizens’ initiatives around the country that were focused on transportation issues. From its inception through the entirety of the 1980s, the AKV provided two key functions. First, it was a clearinghouse that allowed the local citizens’ initiatives to share ideas and information. The AKV’s vehicle for doing this was its exhaustive quarterly newsletter, the *Informations-Dienst Verkehr* (Transportation Information Service). The typewritten issues often consisted of 80 or more pages of small-font print and contained dozens of individual articles. Information-sharing was a rudimentary task that might have been provided by the BBU, but the BBU never made urban transportation as high a priority as its proponents wished. It tended to focus more on the nuclear-power question, despite evidence (cited often by the AKV’s principals) that the BBU’s largest membership bloc consisted of initiatives interested in transportation. This became a major irritant between the two organizations, contributing to their eventual split. Second, the AKV provided a means for the local transportation initiatives to coordinate their efforts, develop common strategies and messaging, and launch national campaigns. Member initiatives organized working groups on diverse issues, often attempting to link their efforts to broader political trends. These included

Waldsterben, peace and disarmament, feminism, and oil dependency, among a great many others.50

The formation of the first Green parties was another, much more conspicuous, development in the late 1970s. In 1977 and 1978, green and alternative lists of candidates appeared in some city-states (Hamburg, Bremen, West Berlin) and states (Lower Saxony, Baden-Württemberg, Schleswig-Holstein) to contest elections there. A fledgling national party contested the European Parliament elections in 1979, leading to the formal creation of West Germany’s Green party in 1980. The Greens participated in their first national election that year and in March 1983 won enough votes to sit in the Bundestag. These parties arose out of the same mix of people who had become dissatisfied with the social, political, and cultural structures of West German society: activists from citizens’ initiatives, former students who had protested during the 1960s, alternative-lifestyle advocates, academics, Marxists, and those individuals who just worried about the deterioration of nature. During the early stages, not all participants were on the political left. The idea of forming a political party to protect nature also attracted traditional conservationists, whose views harkened back to the Naturschutz and Heimatschutz movements. The views of many were difficult to categorize. One of the most important was Herbert Gruhl, a Christian Democratic politician who had written a best-selling book on ecology in 1975. In 1978, he founded one of the earliest green parties, the Grüne Aktion Zukunft (Green Action Future), in Baden-Württemberg. Gruhl participated in the


Urbanism was a part of Green rhetoric from the beginning. The earliest party platforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s rejected the dominant planning models and embraced alternatives that they thought would lead to more ecologically, aesthetically, and livable cities. The first program of the Lower Saxony Party of Environmental Protection, written in 1977, called for “livable neighborhoods within cities” as one of six goals.\footnote{“Program of the Lower Saxony Party of Environmental Protection,” in Mayer and Ely, eds., *German Greens*, 213-14.} This goal was to be achieved through the creation or preservation of parks and recreation facilities and the historic preservation of worthy buildings and places. The Hesse Green List’s program of the same year also called for a halt to the “destruction of our cities and countryside.”\footnote{“Hesse Green List: Electoral Initiative for Environmental Protection and Democracy,” in Mayer and Ely, eds., *German Greens*, 214.} In 1978, the first party platform of Gruhl’s Green Action Future favored improving streets over building more of them, investing in bicycling and foot paths, favoring “energy saving” transit, and making housing more livable rather than encouraging sprawl. Together, these measures would contribute to the “security of body and soul” for urbanites.\footnote{“Program of the Grüne Aktion Zukunft (GAZ), 1978,” in *Herbert Gruhl—Unter den Karawanen der Blinden. Schlüsseltexte, Interviews und Reden (1976-1993)*, ed. Volker Kempf (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), 139-41.}

All these ideas could be found in the national Green party’s electoral platforms. The first platform of 1980, written upon the party’s founding, contained a long section on city planning, housing, and urban transportation. This foundational document criticized
existing models of how to plan and build cities, claiming they destroyed both humans and the natural world. In typical blunt fashion, the Greens called for a “menschenfreundlich” (philanthropic) city planning as opposed to the existing “menschenfeindlich” (misanthropic) one. In practical terms, the party opposed the separation of functions (as in the Charter of Athens), skyscrapers, the transformation of residential neighborhoods into commercial districts, and transportation planning that favored the automobile. Instead, it favored historic preservation, socially and ecologically benign architecture, mixed land-use practices, inner-city green spaces and recreational areas, and “humane” transportation planning focusing on transit, bicycling, and walking.  

A part of the explanation for the Greens’ interest in urban issues stemmed from the origins of the party itself. The oppositional milieu of the late 1970s, from which the Greens emerged, included all manner of people with links to citizens’ initiatives and other types of local opposition in the large cities. Not only did they have longstanding concerns about cities and the environment; they also had experience in working with and against local bureaucracies. The commitment to participatory democracy was a direct reflection of these local experiences. The strong linkages to local politics were maintained after the national party was founded. While the Greens were most conspicuous for their energetic participation in national politics during the 1980s, the party also established itself as a political force in cities around the country. While few cities elected Green mayors or put the party into majority status on the city council, the Greens did manage to play a role not dissimilar from that of the much older FDP, as it often found itself the third largest party in local elections. It thus had enough votes to be

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taken seriously on many city councils. If conditions were favorable, local Greens could ally, formally or informally, with a larger party to form a governing coalition, as happened in Berlin from 1989 to 1991. One observer estimated that by the end of the 1980s some six thousand people from Green or Alternative List electoral slates sat on city councils. As this represented nearly one-fifth of the Green party’s membership, participation in local government accounted for the largest share of party activity.\textsuperscript{56}

West Germany’s mainstream environmental organizations also became interested in urban transportation issues. As in the United States, traditional conservationist organizations in West Germany had a difficult time adjusting to the new theme of environmentalism, as well as to the political realities that environmentalism created. But over the course of the 1970s, the conservationist organizations began to adjust to the presence of both the citizens’ initiatives (and their organizational offspring, such as the BBU) and to the newer mass-membership environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The most important of the latter organizations was Friends of the Earth Germany (better known by its acronym, BUND, for \textit{Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland}), which was formed in 1975. BUND’s founders sought to create a mass-membership organization that would embrace all of the new environmental themes. Within a decade it had grown to nearly 150,000 members, rivaling in size the BBU. By 1980, too, BUND had begun working in areas that had been the terrain of the citizens’ initiatives, evincing an interest in landscapes and biotopes, including cities, that were far beyond the purview of traditional conservationism. Around this time it also became involved in transportation issues, immersing itself in the air-

pollution, speed-limit, and alternative-transportation debates of the 1980s. As was true of the other actors involved, BUND activities ran the gamut, from publishing tracts critical of the automobile to lobbying for better legislation. These activities, plus BUND leadership’s reputation for managerial competence and internal stability, soon turned the organization into a competitor to the BBU. During the 1980s, BUND and other national environmental organizations became more powerful within the environmental movement, while the BBU was not able to retain the position it had reached during the 1970s.  

This activity occurred in tandem with the evolution of the planning profession. The planners’ dissent had begun during the sixties’ fights over the spatial and social consequences of urban growth. Reflecting broader social trends, this dissent began to acquire green hues around 1969 and, over the course of the 1970s, moved from the margins of the field into the mainstream. The BfLR’s Karl Ganser and Heiner Monheim were two of the most prominent who used their institutional and scholarly weight to affect professional discourse in this direction. Over the 1970s, they interacted with an increasing number of like-minded professionals. Some of these, such as the Federal Environment Agency’s (UBA) Konrad Otto, also came to hold positions within the federal government, which brought funding to experimental programs in areas such as bicycling and traffic calming. Other figures worked in think tanks, academia, or the private sector, as was true for instance of the Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik’s (DIfU) Dieter Apel and Rudolf Menke or the academics Helmut Holzapfel and Roland Günter.

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57 Engels, Naturpolitik, 311-18; Chaney, Miracle Years, 199-201; Markham, Environmental Organizations, 676-7. BUND’s views on transportation policy are outlined in Werner Reh, “Strassenbau ohne Ende: Verkehr,” in Umwelt-Bilanz: Die ökologische Lage der Bundesrepublik, ed. Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND) (Hamburg: Rasch und Roehring, 1988), 191-208.

58 This corresponds roughly to the timing outlined by the transportation historian Barbara Schmucki. See: Schmucki, “Cities as Traffic Machines,” 149-70; Schmucki, Traum, 183-93.
Their significance rested on more than just the publication of numerous scholarly works. During the 1970s and 1980s, they created their own professional organizations as a means to institutionalize their perspectives. Apel, Monheim, and Holzapfel were active in the “Forum Mensch und Verkehr” (“Man and Transportation Forum”), an interdisciplinary think tank that was founded in 1985. The forum arose out of the national speed-limit debate and, as the name suggested, was oriented toward giving intellectual and institutional heft to alternative policies.\(^{59}\)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that cities were important locales of mass environmental politics in West Germany. It has shown that a large number of individuals and groups demonstrated an interest in urban environmentalism, specifically environmental problems related to automobile travel in cities. Thousands of organizations and millions of human beings were involved at some point, although the exact numbers cannot be known. These participants were drawn from diverse segments of society and ranged from the most

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powerful individuals at the top of the federal government to the common citizens who worked on neighborhood issues.

In assessing the significance of the Brandt/Genscher administration’s contribution to the mass environmental movement, German environmental historians debate whether their participation shows that West German environmentalism originated more from above rather than from below. The evidence is contradictory. On the one hand, Brandt, Genscher, and other political leaders did make an important contribution to this history. On the other hand, none of it would have mattered were some social groups not already engaged and a larger body politic not willing to embrace these issues.

This question speaks to the contribution made by each category of participant examined in this chapter. One temptation is to assign the greatest weight to the citizens’ initiatives, which were among the first organizations to engage and were the most prolific. Without question, the initiatives were key in forcing transportation issues onto the agendas of countless localities and into the minds of their fellow citizens. But they were always hindered by their inability sustain the kind of lobbying nationally that was required to force change at the highest political levels. The grassroots basis of the initiatives was their strength and weakness at the same time. Their suspicion of hierarchy and power prevented them from forming organizations they needed to be effective. The BBU, for all its glory during the 1970s, was unable to overcome this problem. Nor was the Transportation Working Group (AKV), which accomplished much during this period but by the middle of the 1980s had begun to reach its limits. As the decade progressed, the group found that it was being shut out of strategic political decisions within the environmental movement. BUND, the Greens, and the critical planners all had an interest
in creating more effective organizations, which could gather resources and concentrate them for decisive action.

Another, equal temptation is to default to the usual explanation, to give the greatest share of credit to either the Greens or the planners. The Greens had a positive impact on the debate. While the party’s small size and fledgling status meant that it had little hope of enacting its own federal legislation during the 1980s, its very existence raised the profile of environmental issues in West Germany. Hence, the party raised the fortunes of all sorts of environmental causes, urban transportation issues among them. The Greens joined forces with the citizens’ initiatives, established environmental organizations, and became policy experts on issues like speed limits, bicycling, traffic calming, and pollution control technology.

But there are at least two reasons not to place the bulk of explanatory weight on them. One is chronological: the Greens did not exist until very late in the story. Others had done much of the hard work in establishing the legitimacy of their goals and undertaking the organizational efforts to build a movement. Moreover, the arguments that the Greens articulated, as in their early party platforms, were hardly original. Every one had been worked out in much greater detail years beforehand. Sometimes these had been articulated by the citizens’ initiatives, sometimes by independent critics such as Klühspies or intellectuals such as Mitscherlich and Jacobs, sometimes by politicians such as Eppler or Vogel, sometimes by people in the very planning bureaucracies that were the subject of so much scorn. Second, it is debatable whether the Greens were the most important political party involved, even at the local level. Long before Green and Alternative List candidates appeared in local elections, cities had discussed many of these
issues for a decade or longer. As Munich’s debate during the 1960s and early 1970s had shown, political tensions existed within the established political parties, in Munich’s case the SPD, as much as they did among the parties. The struggle over the greening of local policies could thus come down to which wing of the largest party gained the upper hand over time.

There is also much to commend assigning the greatest weight to the planners and other experts. They did much of the difficult intellectual work. Because of the volume of scholarly literature that was produced at the time, it is easy to identify the individuals who pushed the greenest of agendas. These people altered their fields over time, although by exactly how much is open to interpretation.

But here, too, there is a significant problem. As was true of all the participants in this story, the experts became intertwined with the other milieus. A close examination of the biographies of the major participants shows much cross-pollination. UBA’s Konrad Otto had been an early participant in the citizens’ initiatives. Before he moved to his position in the federal government, he had sat on the BBU’s board and had been active in environmental citizens’ initiatives in Lower Saxony. Heiner Monheim had a longstanding relationship with the transportation initiatives. He became a member of the West Tangent Citizens’ Initiative (BIW) in West Berlin shortly after it was founded and corresponded regularly with this group’s principals. These critics became resources for the citizens’ initiatives. The Transportation Working Group (AKV), for example, kept abreast of the work of Otto, Monheim, Holzapfel, Apel, and occasionally called upon them for technical advice or to provide other types of assistance. The critics also could be found interacting with the Greens, or the environmental non-profits, or members of other
disciplines in pursuit of their preferred policy goals. There was much to separate the participants from one another. There were tensions, disagreements, and differences in standing. But there was also much that bound them together, blurring the distinctions among them and thus the lines of causality.

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CHAPTER 4:

WESTERNIZATION, AMERICANIZATION, AND EUROPEANIZATION IN PLANNING

“Surely the present high standard of living enjoyed in the U.S. and its primacy in the world economy can be ascribed, at least in part, to the outstanding structural design of its road network.”

-- Josef Walther Hollatz, *Städtebau und Wohnungswesen in USA* (1955)

“After a recent educational visit to the United States, the Lord Mayor, Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel, astounded many a city planner when he declared before [Munich’s] city council: ‘With every billion invested into road construction, the city comes a step closer to death.’”

-- City of Munich, *München plant und baut* (early 1970s)  

Cities are both local and global constructs. On the one hand, they are physical entities located at a precise spot in geographic space. They therefore have particular histories that are not replicated anywhere else. Citizens can develop deep attachment to these unique histories and to unique urban cultures that are generated over time. At the same time, however, cities are also subject to events and processes that extend far beyond their borders. They are under ever-present influences from outside. Warfare, in- and out-migration, national and international politics, global economic and technological change, and environmental effects (droughts and floods, for example) have always shaped the design and form of cities, not to mention their social, demographic, and political character.

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The professions that are involved in planning, designing, and building the city have been important in exposing cities to trends and developments from abroad. Architecture, city planning and its related fields, and transportation engineering have been international in orientation since their beginnings. As Brian Ladd has argued in the context of planning history, such fields are "at once national and international as well as local." Architectural history, for instance, is unintelligible without reference to its cosmopolitanism. As the ancient Greeks colonized the Aegean and Mediterranean, they created cities following established design practices and using a few basic principles. Each new city had an acropolis, an enclosing wall, and specific types of districts. The Romans, being much better imperialists than the Greeks, were even more important in this respect. They created hundreds of new cities across Europe and the Mediterranean basin as a component of their attempt to subjugate, pacify, and ultimately incorporate conquered peoples into the empire. These new towns also followed standardized plans, whether in North Africa or Britain. They included a gridded street pattern, a forum at the town center, and a series of public buildings near the forum—temple, theater, public baths, with an amphitheater usually built outside the town limits. A cursory review of European architectural history reveals major examples of cosmopolitanism in architecture, from the Gothic cathedrals of the high Middle Ages through the Renaissance and Baroque urbanism of the early modern period.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, city planning, transportation planning and engineering, landscape architecture, and urban design all emerged as

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2 Ladd, Urban Planning, 3.
organized, professional disciplines. All were cosmopolitan in orientation at birth. During
the 1830s and 1840s, for instance, cholera outbreaks in European cities inspired the urban
sanitation movement, led by the British reformer Edwin Chadwick. Inspired partly by the
poor public health conditions in Paris, Baron von Haussmann’s reconstruction of that city
during the 1850s generated enormous interest elsewhere in Europe. Planners elsewhere
took notice of Haussmann’s initiatives, which included modern infrastructure, (sewers
and water lines, for instance), new parks, and broad new boulevards.\textsuperscript{4}

Ideas and participants in planning increasingly flowed across borders as the
nineteenth century came to an end and the twentieth began. Part of the explanation had to
do with the escalating industrialization and urbanization of the period across much of
Europe. Under these conditions, problems such as inadequate and substandard housing or
insufficient clean water supply became acute, and required intervention by municipalities.
But part of the explanation had to do with the heightened sense of cosmopolitanism that
was also a characteristic of this period. Planners, architects, engineers, and other
professionals involved in city planning issues proved to be enthusiastic adherents to this
cosmopolitanism in the decades leading up to World War I. German, British, French,
American, and other countries’ planners engaged in a spirited dialogue about urban
problems and city planning. They studied and copied each others’ reforms as needed and
feasible. The British Garden City concept (which was based on the ideas of the reformers
Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin), for example, had an enormous influence on the

\textsuperscript{4} Dieter Schott, “Die Stadt als Thema und Medium europäischer Kommunikation—Stadtplanung als
Resultat europäischer Lernprozesse,” in \textit{Städte im europäischen Raum: Verkehr, Kommunikation und
Sutcliffe, “Urban Planning in Europe and North America before 1914: International Aspects of a Prophetic
Hans Jürgen Teuteberg (Cologne: Böhlau, 1983), 443.
continent after its formulation around 1900. German planners quickly translated the British texts, established a German Garden City society, and engaged in extensive and fruitful dialogue with their counterparts in Britain. But the obverse was true as well. In the years before World War I, German city planning had achieved a preeminent position in the youthful and dynamic global profession. German planning was viewed as the most advanced in the world, German planners as the most competent in the field. Observers from abroad, in particular from the United States and Great Britain, saw German cities as the most ordered, their services (water, electricity, transit, sewerage) as among the most advanced (in engineering terms) and efficiently delivered. Planners from these countries made study trips to Germany to discover the reasons for this success, while central concepts in German planning law made their way into American and British legislation.5

Such cosmopolitanism intensified during the twentieth century. An architectural avant-garde had sprung up across Europe towards the end of World War I, fueled by disillusionment with the war and the societies that had produced it. As in other parts of the artistic world, members of the European architectural avant-garde had become impatient with all forms of tradition in their profession. They sought to create new, abstract styles to express their desire to remake the world in a positive, socially just, and revolutionary fashion. The modernist or ‘international’ style that emerged became synonymous with the most famous of the new art and architectural schools: the Bauhaus in Germany, De Stijl in Holland, Vkhutemas in the Soviet Union, and L’Esprit Nouveau

in France. As internationalism was an obvious leitmotif for these schools, their leading protagonists had links across the continent and overseas. Their professional networks included the United States. Not only had the work of prominent American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright been transmitted to the continent before, during, and after the war, but many European modernists had also traveled to the U.S. to study architecture and urbanism. Transatlanticism ran in the other direction as well. Several American architects and architectural critics heralded continental modernism during the 1920s, laying the foundations for a generous American reception of the Bauhaus architects who fled the Nazi regime after 1933. A number of the most important landed at American universities during the 1930s (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Walter Gropius at Harvard), where they had a profound influence on the subsequent course of American architecture.6

The cosmopolitanism of architecture, city planning, and related professions thus creates difficulties in establishing causality across borders. Instances of unilinear influence are rare, wherein one country’s professional establishment and its ideas are transmitted wholly to another. This extends to the period after 1945. Despite the heavy foreign presence in Germany (east and west) and the strong admiration for foreign planning models, German professionals never accepted such models without criticism.

While influence from abroad was strong, West German planners, architects, transportation engineers, and activists participated in transnational networks. Outside influences were both positive and negative, in the sense that West Germans were selective in their choices of experiences and models. Over time, these could and did change as priorities in West German planning shifted.

**Westernization, Americanization, Europeanization**

Europeans have used the term “Americanization” for over a century to describe American influences on their continent. Within the last few decades, scholars have used the term to assess the processes by which American cultural and economic cues were transmitted and received in modern European (and world) history. “America since at least the end of the nineteenth century has exported certain products, techniques, fashions, investments, and art forms, as well as people, institutions, and values, that have been strongly identified with America both by Americans and by others,” writes the historian Richard Kuisel. These exports were “features of mass culture or consumer society” that “were fully developed and proselytized on a global scale by Americans.”7 There are several steps in the Americanization process: the exporter (the American government, firms, organizations, and individuals), the medium of transmission (film or radio, for instance), and the receiver (Europeans and other non-Americans). Historians of Americanization acknowledge the difficulties inherent in the concept. They point out, for example, the overlap between Americanization and two processes with which it is often closely associated, globalization and modernization. They acknowledge that Americanization narrows discussion to how Americans influenced Europeans, rather than

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the other way around. American cultural exports, some historians of Americanization maintain, were first imported from the rest of the world, “reassembled and repackaged” by Americans, then sold abroad in altered form.8

Historians have written much about American influence in the spatial professions (architecture, city planning, traffic engineering, etc.) in West Germany, but Americanization is insufficient for understanding the cosmopolitanism of these professions.9 Americanization implies a linearity that never existed, a monolithic rather than multidimensional influence. Even for the period after 1945, when American influence in Europe was at its peak, there was no uniform America that Europeans received. In Phillip Gassert’s “with America against America” formulation, the United States was both loved and reviled at the same time in West Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Critics hated America even as they drew inspiration from it. “Anti-American ideas” in West Germany, Gassert contends, “often reflected Americans’ own criticisms of conditions in the United States and led to the formation of alliances between critics of ‘America’ on both sides of the Atlantic.”10


10 Philipp Gassert, “With America against America,” 502.
Here we might be better served by the concept of “westernization” as used by the German historian Anselm Doering-Manteuffel. In his formulation, westernization focuses on the creation of common value orientations on both sides of the Atlantic during the modern period. It emphasizes the circulation of ideas, norms, and values, rather than their unidirectional transmission. Americanization is thus part of a larger narrative of transatlantic cultural integration that has been ongoing for centuries. By focusing on integration and exchange, westernization acknowledges that European cultural trends influenced the United States, as well as vice-versa. This was true even at the height of American influence in Europe, during the decades after 1945. The process began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and culminated in the late twentieth century. The greatest acceleration occurred in the twentieth. Despite the interruptions of the two world wars, which encouraged some segments of society to resist western influences, Germany was a full participant in this process. Doering-Manteuffel agrees that American cultural influence in Europe increased during the twentieth century, in particular after 1945. The United States, as the coalition leader, sought to integrate both West Germany and Western Europe into a transatlantic order as a cultural, political, and military block. In this view, American hegemony served the dual purpose of furthering westernization (thus enhancing shared values) and insulating Western Europe against eastern influence, in particular Communist ideologies.

Within the context of the Cold War, West Germany’s urban critics were oriented toward the west in the geopolitical sense. They took few cues from developments within the Soviet bloc. This was not due to ignorance about the east (including East Germany), as information about planning in the east was readily available and opportunities existed.

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11 Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?*, 5-17.
for professional networking. German transportation engineers on both sides of the border shared information at conferences, for instance. But West German professionals, including the urban critics, had more opportunities to travel and study in the United States and elsewhere in Western Europe. Moreover, the dynamics of urban development in West Germany were much more like those in the west than in the east. Motorization levels, to point out only one critical distinction, separated Western Europe from Eastern Europe, although planners in East Germany also worried about a replication (never realized) of the American experience with mass motorization.¹²

Finally, the westernization concept also provides space for examining how other influences besides America shaped experiences. Planners, critics, activists, architects, engineers, politicians, and ordinary citizens in West Germany were receptive to transnational cues that were distinct from Americanization processes. Individuals, groups, and organizations were adept at utilizing concepts drawn from all over the world. During the 1970s and 1980s, West Germany’s urban critics became enamored with models from other parts of Europe, in particular from the Low Countries and Scandinavia. The critics believed that these models showed how to plan and build better cities. As a consequence, the critics increasingly turned to other Europeans for inspiration and assistance. America, in contrast, became less of a model to be emulated and more of a cautionary tale to be avoided. During these decades, a kind of “Europeanization” developed among West Germany’s urban critics.¹³

¹² Schmucki, Traum, 401.
¹³ For an example of a West German critic borrowing from multiple national contexts, see Freimut Duve, “Editorial,” Technologie und Politik 14, 3 (1979), 3-12.
America: problem and solution

During the first few decades after World War II, much of the world regarded America as the wealthiest and most modern country on earth and, therefore, thought it worthy of emulation. But therein also lay the seed of disillusionment. The urban model that was exported from the United States began to undermine itself. This model was the dispersed, horizontal city with high levels of personal mobility, therefore high motorization. But this model never enjoyed complete acceptance in West Germany and came under increasing attack as the postwar era progressed. Neither West Germans nor other Western Europeans could stomach the full implications of American-style development. While the perception of American cities and American planning therefore shifted from positive to negative over the period, West Germans also read into the American experience what they wanted to take from it. They interpreted events and trends in the United States according to the lessons they hoped they and their compatriots would learn for West Germany.

The United States was the preeminent automobile society. It had been the first to undergo mass motorization in the twentieth century. While Europeans had invented the car and led the world in technological advances during the last decades of the nineteenth century, Americans caught up quickly after 1900. American innovations, combined with an enormous domestic market, hastened both production and consumption. In 1904 the United States surpassed France as the largest car manufacturer in the world. Three years later it surpassed all of Europe, even before the introduction of Henry Ford’s Model T and his company’s refinement of the assembly-line technique. The growth in automobile consumption was astonishing. In 1900 there was one car for every 9,526 Americans. In
1920 the ratio was one in thirteen, in 1927 one in 5.3—representing by far the most vehicles per capita in the world. Street paving and road construction also began in earnest in the first decades of the twentieth century. While the states and federal government could not agree on responsibility for funding public highways, during the interwar period both subsidized road construction and improvement. During the same period the first highways built exclusively for the motor vehicle were constructed, allowing experimentation in design and engineering. The nation saw the construction of both scenic parkways in rural areas and high-capacity freeways near cities. The latter were built to move urbanites to and from the suburbs and recreational areas, such as Long Island, which developed under the direction of New York’s imperious chief planner, Robert Moses.\(^\text{14}\)

During the 1920s, motorization continued unabated, with the automobile becoming a common item among those Americans with the money to buy one. While the Depression and World War II slowed and then halted this trend, by the end of World War II the nation was again primed for a dramatic upsurge. The combination of postwar prosperity and mass suburbanization resulted in unparalleled levels of auto ownership. Already the highest in the world, American motorization now skyrocketed. American auto manufacturers stood atop the industry, holding unchallenged dominance of the global market. In 1955, two-thirds of the cars produced worldwide were American. That year the Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler) also held 94 percent of the American market, itself the largest market in the world by far. Road construction and paving paralleled these trends. Road building in the United States took on enormous

proportions, in particular after passage of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956, which involved the federal government on an unprecedented scale. The result was an “empire of roads” that far outstripped in scale anything else on earth. By 1990 the United States had 2.4 million miles of paved roads, equal to the total amount in France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, China, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Hungary, and Poland. While the road network density was lower in the United States than in some of these countries (owing to the enormous size of the American landmass), the scale of the road network still reflected an almost single-minded devotion to pavement. The federal government’s investment in roads and highways dwarfed its expenditures on other types of transportation infrastructure, with $58 billion spent on highways between 1947 and 1970. By comparison, airports and airlines received $12 billion over the period, waterways $6 billion, while urban mass transit, at $795 million, received barely one percent of the highway sum.\(^\text{15}\)

The United States provided the great engineering model, in particular its embrace of the ideal of frictionless traffic flow, for the rest of the world. American engineers had made great use of a range of mechanisms and devices to accomplish this ideal, including electronic signalization, the construction of bypass and overflow streets, highways with no grade-level crossings, removal of on-street parking, and the strict separation of travel modes. Transportation engineering enjoyed prominence among the different planning subfields. This status was earned in the interwar period but had become dominant by the late 1940s and early 1950s. Engineering’s technical prowess, in particular its use of

sophisticated mathematical modeling, appealed to faith in technocratic progress. (This was not unique; contemporaries in many other fields, including those unrelated to the social or applied sciences, were beginning to use statistics and mathematical models in the expectation that these would improve conditions.)\textsuperscript{16} As an engineering discipline, the profession was dedicated to standardized models and techniques that could be applied anywhere, without regard to specifics of place or subtleties of context. Transportation engineering also was unified as a discipline, so it did not fall into the kinds of internal squabbling that tore other fields apart. Unlike architects and city planners, engineers could thus make a strong case for themselves as competent, apolitical technocrats who could disconnect themselves from slow and painstaking deliberative processes in favor of swift, rational decision-making. All of these qualities enabled engineers to become lead designers of many urban highways built after World War II, and in particular the many that were built after passage of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956.\textsuperscript{17}

Europeans followed American trends. During the long economic upturn that lasted from the 1950s through 1973, Western European economies experienced an unprecedented boom, spawning copies of the advanced consumer societies that the Americans had pioneered. Europeans’ consumerism was fueled, literally, by cheap oil. Energy use tripled in Western Europe during these decades.\textsuperscript{18} Almost everywhere, copying the American model meant copying the automobile society. Although there were variations in degree of mass motorization, as well as pockets of resistance to the

\textsuperscript{17} Ellis, “Professional Conflict over Urban Form,” 262-79.
\textsuperscript{18} Christian Pfister, “The ‘1950s Syndrome’ and the Transition from a Slow-Going to a Rapid Loss of Global Sustainability,” in \textit{The Turning Points of Environmental History}, ed. Frank Uekoetter (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 90-118 (quotation on page 96, energy data from Figure 7.4, page 98).
automobile, Western European consumers took to the car by the millions. Increasing motorization levels in turn created severe traffic congestion, causing much consternation in local governments across the continent. In 1954, Amsterdam’s police commissioner proposed that the city pave over its canals in order to create roads for cars and solve the congestion problem. As outlandish as the idea sounds today, at the time it attracted significant support from those who worried that Amsterdam would be left behind in the new Europe. As was argued in other cities, some considered Amsterdam’s historic infrastructure to be a hindrance to progress; hence it ought to be replaced by “modern” systems, including transportation systems based on the automobile.19

West Germany was no different during these decades. After the currency reform of 1948 and the onset of the economic boom, West Germans began copying American consumerism. The country was caught in “a grand race to catch up” vis-à-vis American consumerism, as the historian Dietmar Klenke has called it. “The desire to catch up was too overpowering in all matters of individual conduct: material culture, [everyday] travel, and all that which surrounds cosmopolitan middle class lifestyles.”20 Automobiles were among the biggest of these prestige objects, and during the 1950s West Germans began consuming them as never before. Shortly before the war, Germany had one car for every sixty residents. By 1956-1957, that number (for West Germany) was one in twenty-five.21

20 Klenke, Freier Stau, 40-1.
21 Schmucki, Traum, 100-103, 126, 401.
Transportation engineers in Europe were important in helping to cause these shifts toward mass motorization on the continent. Far from being neutral technocrats, they assumed the role of advocates for more and better roads in Europe, positioning themselves and their views in the context of a hopeful, robust, future-oriented program of national modernization. During the 1950s, the American government, national governments in Europe, and international organizations such as the International Road Federation (a road building association funded mostly by American corporations) sent European engineers to the U.S. There, they studied at the Bureau of Public Roads in Washington, D.C., and Yale’s Bureau of Highway Traffic, both of which spread the virtues of American engineering. The Europeans often returned convinced that the American case was the most worthy of emulation. For its part, the U.S. government was motivated in part for strategic reasons (the construction of new roads and the rebuilding of damaged cities under the Marshall Plan served the larger goal of stabilizing Western Europe). But it was also motivated to serve the business interests of large American construction and engineering firms that were active in Europe.\footnote{Seely, “‘Push’ and ‘pull’ factors in technology transfer,” 229-46; Ostby, “Educating the Norwegian nation,” 247-72; Blomkvist, “Transferring technology,” 273-302; Lundin, “American numbers copied!,” 303-34. For an example of American motorization data and planning techniques cited as authoritative in a municipal planning context, see Arbeitsgemeinschaft Stadtentwicklungsplan München, \textit{Stadtentwicklungsplan München: Grundzüge des Gesamtverkehrsplanes. Teil A: Innenstadt} (Munich: Landeshauptstadt München, Städtisches Nachrichtendienst, 1961), 8-11. On American motives, see, e.g., Jeffrey W. Cody, \textit{Exporting American Architecture, 1870-2000} (New York: Routledge, 2003), 128-34.}

West German engineers were little different from their colleagues elsewhere in Europe. After the onset of the Cold War, both the American and West German governments funded professional and educational study trips to the United States in order to deepen transatlantic ties. One such was a 1955 trip by a transportation planning and housing study group. City planners, architects, engineers, and administrators spent seven...
weeks touring major American cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, and San Francisco. Josef Walther Hollatz, a prominent engineer from Essen, edited the group’s report upon its return. He opened one chapter by pointing out how far ahead the United States was compared with Europe, in particular with respect to motorization levels. Thus, he contended, West Germans ought to take great interest in what the Americans were doing. Writing in glowing terms about the high quality of American streets and roads, Hollatz argued that American success was due to twenty-five years of engineering’s dominance of transportation planning. West German engineering needed to enjoy a similar position within city governments. Only then, he argued, would city streets be guaranteed to have “higher safety, capacity, and efficiency.”

But even as West Germans were transitioning to mass motorization, they were also importing other types of lessons from the American urban experience. One of these pertained to powerful criticisms made by American elites. During the 1950s and 1960s, American planners and architects such as Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, Robert Venturi, and Lewis Mumford, as well as economists such as John Kenneth Galbraith, all became well known among West German planners for their critiques of the American system. This constellation was not unlike that of the emerging mass environmental movement that started at roughly the same time, where the writings of Americans such as Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, and Paul Ehrlich became important abroad.24

The work of two of these—Jacobs and Galbraith—are worth highlighting, both for the reasons why they became critics and for their influence on West Germans who

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24 On American influence in West German architectural debates during the postwar period, see Werner Durth, “The Rediscovery of the City and Postmodern Architecture,” in Junker, ed., Cold War, Volume II, 387-93.
were becoming concerned about trends in their own country. Jacobs’s 1961 masterpiece, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, generated an immediate reaction on both sides of the Atlantic for its elegant but forceful and uncompromising critique of the failures of modern planning.\(^{25}\) In particular, the book savaged the inability of planners to create the conditions in which cities could thrive. Cities, she argued, needed diversity, not uniformity. Modernism, in particular the variety derived from interwar thinking in both the United States and Europe, fostered the latter. Urban renewal projects and highway-building programs, both of which were at their peak in the United States, valued massive scale over fine grain, technological achievement over historic preservation, and technocratic elitism over democratic inclusion. Jacobs argued that planners should instead foster environments that retained the virtues of inner-city neighborhoods. These allowed immediate, face-to-face interaction among citizens, a quality that in turn fostered sociability, public safety, and neighborly trust.

For these reasons, Jacobs placed an emphasis on street design. Modernists, most famously Le Corbusier, had attacked the traditional narrow street as congested and stifling. They preferred the wide, straight street that introduced lots of sunlight and allowed the free movement of vehicles. Pedestrians were to be removed from the street, onto interior courtyards or playgrounds, for their own safety and enjoyment. Jacobs argued, in contrast, that the modernists had gotten everything backwards. The narrow, traditional street would produce the sociable world she desired. Adults needed these streets for neighborly interaction, children for play. Without them, she contended, the city was doomed.

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The reaction to Jacobs’s *Death and Life* had parallels to the reception of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, published at about the same time. While both authors had worked for years in their respective fields, nonetheless both were considered outsiders. Both were women in fields dominated by men, both had attacked establishment paradigms, and both had criticized the most powerful figures in their professions. Their books were thus assailed as the scribbling of discontented housewives. Over time, however, the quality of their work triumphed, gaining them adherents inside and outside the professional milieus in which they worked. Sometimes they won over skeptics. Mumford’s initial review of *Death and Life*, which was published in the *New Yorker* magazine, pilloried Jacobs.

Titled “Mother Jacobs’s Home Remedies,” Mumford accused Jacobs of misunderstanding planning history, oversimplifying the problems of the city, and failing to prescribe solutions to the problems she had identified. But Mumford was bitter mostly because she had attacked him in *Death and Life*, in particular for an anti-city bias. This criticism had struck Mumford hard, not only for the cutting irony (Mumford was one of the century’s great urbanists), but also because the two had shared a warm correspondence since they had first met in the mid-1950s. Nonetheless his reaction soon changed for the better, in large part because he and Jacobs had long shared a disdain for both large-scale urban renewal projects and highway construction in cities.26

Jacobs became an important figure in European planning circles as well as American. Like Carson’s book, *Death and Life* was translated into German quickly. The

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book was controversial among West German planners upon publication of its 1963 translation. While many were resistant to Jacobs’s core message, others considered her message to be of vital importance (Mitscherlich, for one, was inspired by Jacobs’s vision).\footnote{Radkau, "Ära der Ökologie," 302-03.} A couple years after publication, Hannover’s influential chief planner, Rudolf Hillebrecht, invited Jacobs on a tour of West Germany. Jacobs’s focus on children’s play needs also got the attention of the Frankfurt sociologist Alexander Mitscherlich, whose 1965 book on the problems of urban youth itself became a key text among West German planners. Another important sociologist, Hans-Paul Bahrdt, devoted part of his treatise \textit{Humaner Städtebau} to Jacobs. Bahrdt used her as a starting point for discussion of the problems inherent in urban renewal, accepting her trenchant critiques. The challenge, he claimed, was that she had left many holes to fill. Planners ought to value the mixed-use inner-city neighborhoods of the kind Jacobs had waxed poetic about. At the same time, he wrote, cities needed to renew decrepit neighborhoods. The key was to retain these neighborhoods’ virtues while preventing the sterile death that had accompanied many urban renewal schemes. By the time Bahrdt’s book was published in 1968, \textit{Death and Life} had become a central work in the West German planning lexicon, for decades a foundational text in the field.\footnote{Hans-Paul Bahrdt, \textit{Humaner Städtebau: Überlegungen zur Wohnungspolitik und Stadtplanung für eine nahe Zukunft. Zeitfragen Nr. 4.} (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1968), 160-4; Klemek, "Placing Jane Jacobs," 56-64; Durth, “The Rediscovery of the City,” 387-93; Jeffry Diefendorf (1999), “The West German debate on urban planning,” paper presented at the German Historical Institute conference “The American Impact on Western Europe: Americanization and Westernization in Transatlantic Perspective,” (Washington, D.C., March 25-27, 1999). On West German planners’ easy familiarity with Jacobs, see, e.g., the opening passage in Andreas Kossak, “Grundfragen des Beitrags der Verkehrsplanung zur Gestaltung der städtischen Umwelt,” \textit{Stadtbauwelt} 53 (March 31, 1977), 372.}

In contrast to Jacobs, Galbraith was an insider. He was famous in the United States for his popular treatises on economics, his friendship with John F. Kennedy, and
his political ties to the Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations. The publication of
his 1958 best seller *The Affluent Society* in particular made Galbraith’s a household name.
In asserting a relationship between private affluence and public squalor, Galbraith identified a new and uncomfortable theme in postwar America. Private prosperity, he argued, was only one dimension of a good society. Without massive investment in public goods, an imbalance would result between the private and the public. Thus private consumption could destroy not only itself but also many other things worth having. One of the most famous passages in the book, about a family taking a countryside tour, made the point in vivid terms. Galbraith contrasted the family’s luxurious belongings with an impoverished public realm. They drove their “mauve and cerise, air-conditioned, power-steered, and power-braked automobile” through a filthy landscape. They ate their “exquisitely packaged food” next to a polluted stream. They camped in a park that was “a menace to public health and morals.” Here Galbraith delivered his indictment of postwar America. “Just before dozing off on an air mattress, beneath a nylon tent, amid the stench of decaying refuse,” he wrote, “they may reflect vaguely on the curious unevenness of their blessings. Is this, indeed, the American genius?” For the next two decades, Galbraith reiterated these themes, warning of the dangers inherent in a system that valued consumption over everything else.29

Galbraith’s many interests included urban policy. His writing in *The Affluent Society* was peppered with urban examples, and Galbraith used cities to highlight the need for a balance between private wealth and public goods. During the mid-1960s,

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Galbraith became one of several prominent intellectuals involved in grassroots opposition to Boston’s planned freeway system. Like Jacobs, he did so in part because he was a resident of an old neighborhood, Cambridge (established in the 1600s), through which a highway was planned to run. Like Mumford and Jacobs, Galbraith had also earlier (in *The Liberal Hour*) attacked the highway and the automobile society that it helped to create. In 1966 he published an essay that applied his most famous dictum to American cities, claiming they suffered from public squalor in the midst of private affluence. Perpetual economic growth was impossible if cities continued to be starved of the means to provide the services necessary for a healthy society. City governments were underfunded, he argued, and needed massive fiscal assistance from the federal government to avoid social breakdown. Through the 1960s, Galbraith’s ideas had won him influence, as his private/public formula became something of an axiom. Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations commissioned reports on the gap between the two spheres, while Galbraith’s quality of life concept became a common term in the national discourse.³⁰

Galbraith’s formula found a ready audience among influential West Germans, like Munich’s Vogel, who had begun to question whether the economic successes of the miracle years were worth the costs. Some years after the fact, Vogel recalled that during the mid-1960s his reading of intellectuals like Galbraith had been important in this personal transformation. He highlighted Galbraith’s major works at the time (*The Affluent Society* and *The New Industrial Society*, both of which had been quickly translated into German) as well as the writings of Jacobs and Mumford, the French economist Jean Fourastie, and the German social critics Mitscherlich and Bahrdt. Vogel’s admiration for

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Galbraith likely reflected the fact that Vogel’s politics predisposed him toward the ideas of one of the greatest American liberals of the era.\(^\text{31}\)

By the end of the decade, Vogel’s rhetoric contained Galbraithian arguments. His speeches laid a heavy emphasis on the impoverishment of the public sphere versus the affluence of the private. He became part of a campaign for increases in local government funding through a dramatic shifting of federal revenues downward to municipalities. Galbraith and his ideas took center stage at the 1971 *Deutscher Städtetag* national conference, which met in Munich with Vogel as the organizer. Under the slogan ‘‘Rettet unsere Städte jetzt!’’ (‘‘Save our cities now!’’), conference participants listened to opening speeches by Galbraith and Vogel that described an urban world in crisis. Galbraith spoke of cities in desperate need of reform, in particular in public services and financing. Vogel’s speech stressed the global dimensions of this crisis, laying emphasis upon rapid urban population growth and decreasing quality of life. He included environmental deterioration among the latter. West Germans needed to learn from the problems in American cities, Vogel claimed. The riots of the 1960s in the United States were due not to race but to deteriorating living conditions brought on by a failure to invest in the public sphere. While the conference was significant in a number of respects, it showed that Galbraith’s thinking had been incorporated into an urban critique, pushed by Vogel and other politicians in West Germany, which stressed catastrophe brought on by the country’s spectacular economic performance in the 1950s and 1960s. This critique

included the ill effects of rapid motorization, which Vogel and others linked with the degradation of the natural and built environments.\textsuperscript{32}

The examples of Jacobs and Galbraith show that American intellectuals made a case to Europeans that the American model had serious flaws. West Germans also learned from events in the United States. These provided examples of how local, grassroots opposition could coalesce into successful movements. Here lay the irony of the American example, the antithesis to its own thesis. Much like the European student movement of the 1960s, the urban critics vilified American hegemony (Vietnam on the one hand, cities built around the automobile on the other) even as they admired, studied, and used lessons from the democratic opposition in the United States.\textsuperscript{33}

West Germans could draw on many examples of countercultural protest from the United States. The freeway revolts that emerged in American cities from the 1950s through 1970s were the most fitting grassroots movements for West Germany’s urban critics. The American freeway revolts centered on attempts to build Interstate highways through cities. The planned freeways were designed to move large numbers of vehicles at continuous high speeds. These were to be of a scale (four lanes at a minimum, often elevated, plus rights of way on each side) that would dwarf the dense residential neighborhoods that they were slated to run through. The revolts featured local opposition groups, which were against construction, versus local, state, and federal bureaucracies and the large business interests that were behind the freeway plans. Strong grassroots opposition to central-city highway construction emerged in Boston, Miami, Baltimore,

\textsuperscript{32} The texts of both speeches are reprinted in the conference proceedings. See Deutscher Städtetag, ed., \textit{Rettet unsere Städte jetzt!}, 9-24, 55-84.

Houston, New Orleans, San Francisco, San Antonio, and Washington, D.C., among other cities. While not all opposition movements succeeded, in many of these cities the revolts were successful in stopping all or part of the proposed freeways.\textsuperscript{34}

To the opposition, the planned freeways would create two major problems for American cities. One problem was direct: freeway construction required the removal of inner-city housing. In some cities, this meant that housing in wealthy, historic neighborhoods would be affected. More often, it meant the demolition of housing in poor, frequently African-American, neighborhoods. Protesting coalitions thus often crossed racial and income lines. In Washington, D.C., the coalition included wealthy white residents of Georgetown who felt threatened by plans to build a massive Interstate bridge across the Potomac. The coalition also included African-American residents in the District’s northeast quadrant, who protested against plans to run freeways through their neighborhoods. “White men's roads through black men's homes,” was their rallying cry, a pointed slogan in the racial politics of 1960s America.\textsuperscript{35} Another problem, as the freeway opponents saw it, was even more troubling. Construction would lead to a massive degradation of the surrounding cityscape. The freeway’s immediate physical destruction was just the beginning of a long-term process of degeneration. After construction, the ugliness, noise, pollution, and grime would ruin all parts of the city that the freeways bordered. Here, the protest had an environmental tinge to it. The protesters considered the freeways as being destructive of the environment in which urban residents lived.

Jacobs herself had become an anti-highway activist because of attempts to build one through Greenwich Village. During the 1950s, she and a few neighbors had pitted

\textsuperscript{34} For an outstanding summary of the freeway revolts, see Mohl, “Stop the Road,” 674-706.
themselves against Moses and one of his planned roadway extensions through the Village’s Washington Square. *Death and Life* was partially a result of experiences with the technocratic Moses, on the one hand, and lay opposition at the neighborhood level on the other. During the 1960s she was also an important figure in stopping an even bigger project, the Lower Manhattan Expressway, which would have run a ten-lane elevated highway across the southern portion of the island. This basic conflict over the proper use of urban space animated Jacobs and many of her Greenwich Village neighbors during the 1950s.

In one way or another, this insight about the use of urban space also proved to be the central factor in animating local opposition groups across the country. Conflict in New Orleans, for instance, arose during the early 1960s over the effects that a planned highway would have on the city’s historic French Quarter. The plan was to construct a six-lane, 108-foot-wide, elevated highway between the Mississippi riverfront and the Quarter. First envisioned in the late 1940s by Moses, it was later redesigned and supported by a powerful constellation of the city’s business community, prominent politicians, and the federal Bureau of Public Roads (later the Federal Highway Administration), which decided to include it as part of the Interstate system. Local opposition came from a small but vigorous and connected group of architects and preservationists, who were concerned about the effects of the highway on historic Jackson Square, alongside which the highway was planned to run. This group overturned the project via grassroots organizing, media relations, political negotiation, and simple obstinace.

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In Boston historic preservation was not the central point of dispute, but local opposition also originated in districts located near the center of the metropolitan area, in particular the Cambridge, Somerville, and Fenway neighborhoods. The dispute centered on the final part of a regional highway system that would have cut through these dense residential areas. Opposition coalesced in the late 1960s, in part because of expanding ideological dissatisfaction with urban highway construction and urban redevelopment schemes in general. But organized and effective opposition arose primarily because the well-educated and -connected residents of these areas knew that the highway system would have corrosive effects on their neighborhoods.  

San Francisco provided one of the earliest and most influential cases of opposition to urban highway construction. Grassroots opposition in San Francisco was an important cause of later revolts around the country. During the 1940s and 1950s San Francisco had developed plans to construct nine highways through the city as part of a regional system. Yet the plans were rebuked on two occasions by the city’s board of supervisors. In the first of these, in 1959, it ordered a review of the plans. Then it rejected another plan seven years later, in 1966. The second rejection led to a withdrawal of federal funds for new highways in the city. Prosperous neighborhoods had been among those affected by the plans, and residents of these neighborhoods had been the most effective at organizing resistance. As in the Greenwich Village case, the most active opponents were women, including Diane Feinstein and a number of others who were well connected within California’s Democratic party. But neighborhood opposition was not the entire story. Some American historians have argued that even in the late 1950s, environmentalism was well enough established in San Francisco to influence public policy in the city. A long

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37 Baumbach and Borah, Second Battle; Sloan, Citizen Participation, 24-8, 74-83.
tradition of environmental thought and activism in the area created an awareness of non-economic and non-utilitarian values. This was a major cause of the citizen activism against highways. Important, too, was the fact that the highway plans did not enjoy unanimous support among the powerful. Important segments of the business community, such as those linked to the tourist trade, and the media had had doubts about the plans from their inception.38

The American highway revolts became examples for West Germany’s urban critics. Munich’s opposition provided a good illustration. As discontent with the city’s transportation planning emerged in the mid-1960s, members of the group that led the opposition, the Münchner Bauforum, stressed both the dangers and promises in the American urban experience. Several in the group already had had direct experience in the United States, thanks to their cosmopolitan professional backgrounds as architects and planners. Helmut Borcherdt had in 1952 been so inspired upon first seeing an image of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Falling Water that he arranged to study at Wright’s school of architecture in Arizona. His subsequent years in the United States exposed him to some of the leading architectural minds in the world. His experiences included a stint at the firm of the famed Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen, who at the time was designing both the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and the Dulles International Airport terminal in Virginia.

Based in part on such direct experiences, in part on their awareness of the problems that American cities were facing by the mid-1960s, the Bauforum’s members concluded that American-style automobility would be a disaster. Borcherdt, for one, articulated such a critique a few years after returning to Munich. In the United States, he

38 Issel, “‘Land values, human values, and the preservation of the city’s treasured appearance’,” 611-46.
argued, highway construction between suburb and center had only encouraged the spread of the former and hastened the demise of the latter. Vibrant city centers had been ripped asunder, their residents evacuated, their buildings torn down. Americans had converted their city centers into spaces for serving the hordes of commuters, who in any case spent more time in gigantic traffic jams than they did moving anywhere. Karl Klühspies made similar arguments for at least another decade, contending that following the American model would cause Munich to hollow out its residential core and replace it with a wasteland of parking lots and highways. It was therefore no surprise that the Bauforum’s members considered Munich’s Jensen plan of 1963, the original source of the group’s discontent, to have been American in inspiration.39

Yet despite their concern, Munich’s critics admired grassroots groups in the United States. The highway revolts of the 1960s were just one part of urban protest there. The poor race relations that had caused much unrest in American cities also caused many reformers to push planning in a direction more responsive to the needs and wishes of residents, especially poor African-Americans living in the inner cities. American critics called for a reevaluation of planning’s methods and goals, in particular for greater transparency and more direct citizen participation in local governance. These influences helped shape Munich’s debate about its own program of reform. In the fall of 1967, the Bauforum’s Jan Kim Wallenborn had written detailed proposals to mayor Vogel about how to reform the city’s bureaucracy so as to make it more transparent to the public. The

language and tenor of Wallenborn’s arguments showed the influence of contemporary thinking about city planning in the United States. As was true of the other Bauforum’s critics, Wallenborn followed American developments, had his own contacts there, and took American examples seriously. Late in the decade, he moved permanently to the United States, becoming a fellow at Wayne State’s Center for Urban Studies in Detroit.  

Activists in Munich continued throughout the 1970s to borrow inspiration from the American grassroots opposition. During the unrest in the Lehel neighborhood around 1970, some began calling for a Sozialplan for the neighborhood. This term was a direct translation of “social planning,” which was then the rage in American planning circles. It referred to processes in which communities were to first define their own needs, after which city administrations were to create plans built to meet these needs. The battles over urban highways in the United States also attracted attention in West Germany. Despite Klühspies’s strong opposition to road and street construction along American lines, he was drawn to cases in the United States that showed how citizen involvement could change matters for the better. Klühspies cultivated contacts among San Francisco’s grassroots opposition, which he admired for its vibrancy as well as its many accomplishments. He and a colleague at the Munich Forum, Oskar Holl, collaborated with activists in the Bay area and put together publications that highlighted San Francisco’s successes. They used the example of the successful fight against the Embarcadero Freeway, a double-decked stretch of freeway that was slated to run the

length of San Francisco’s waterfront, to show how citizen activism could defeat the largest projects.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Europeans turning to Europe}

In the postwar era, there continued to be a pan-European discourse about cities in addition to the transatlantic one. The West German urban critics both borrowed from and contributed to these European flows of information, people, and resources. West German planners, for instance, could find employment in Austria and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. The many who possessed good English skills fared even better. Many planners, regardless of linguistic capabilities, had many opportunities to attend conferences or otherwise network with peers in other parts of the continent.

American models shaped this discourse throughout the postwar era, but over time these became less convincing as the urban problems associated with mass motorization in Europe increased. Cities across the continent faced similar pressures from increasing traffic volumes and congestion. The first signs of European discontent with this situation arose during the late 1950s and early 1960s, at about the same time as Jacobs, Mumford, Galbraith, and other American intellectuals were beginning their critiques of similar problems in the United States. Moreover, citizens in some cities in West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom began campaigns against the transformations of their cities by the automobile, at roughly the same time as the American freeway revolts were

underway. In Paris, for instance, during the 1950s and 1960s city leaders embraced the expansion of infrastructure for the automobile, adopting the view that such investment contributed to the enhancement of the city’s (and the nation’s) grandeur. But by the 1970s, this formula had been called into question by a constellation of people and organizations (not dissimilar to those active elsewhere—citizens’ groups, ecologists, and the like) that were concerned about the flood of automobiles. While they had limited success, their efforts contributed to the city’s increased scrutiny of policies toward the car. Similar events transpired in British cities (London and Oxford, for instance) during the 1960s and 1970s. There, a familiar combination of housing, historic preservation, aesthetic, and environmental concerns about proposed plans for new freeways and arterials caused an opposition to form and coalesce, often consisting of grassroots and neighborhood-based groups.42

After the late 1960s, the urban critics in West Germany discovered that America offered few solutions to the problem of the auto-oriented city. The freeway revolts had been about stopping freeway construction rather than formulating alternatives. The opponents’ activism might have resulted in fewer freeways in some cities, but America was still a nation dominated by the automobile. Instead, West Germany’s urban critics found inspiration from elsewhere within Europe. They became aware that European cities had begun to innovate by focusing on the quality of the urban experience—on environmental, aesthetic, sociability, livability, and historic preservation issues. These innovations appealed to West Germany’s urban critics, who also wanted to place planning on what they considered a sounder footing in their own country.

42 Flonneau, “City infrastructures and city dwellers,” 102-07; Ladd, Autophobia, 113-16; Skinner, “‘What price democracy and justice?’,” 171-96.
Colin Buchanan, a British planner and engineer, provided an important early example of European influences in West Germany. Buchanan was most famous for his leadership of an early 1960s Ministry of Transport study group that worked on the problem of increasing motorization in Great Britain. Born in 1907 to a family of accomplished engineers, Buchanan himself became an experienced road-builder in the interwar Empire. Yet he also displayed a lifelong interest in protecting town and countryside, in nature conservation, and historic preservation. He spent his childhood tramping around the British countryside, which left an indelible mark on his psyche.43

Buchanan developed a view that the automobile was the transformative piece of technology in the history of the British landscape. He considered 1900 as the “high noon of the English countryside,” because the automobile had not yet entered the equation. The interwar period, he contended, was the real beginning of rural Britain’s decline, marked by the first wave of motorization and the “forces of erosion” it unleashed on the countryside.44 Buchanan worried about the even more rapid increase in motorization after World War II. In Mixed Blessing (1958), he argued that while cars had much utility for Britons, they had disastrous consequences. With respect to the latter he did not mince words:

[Motorized Britain] is a picture of death and injury, pain and bereavement, noise and smell, and of vast winding trails of serious damage to urban and country amenities with vulgarity, shoddiness and the plain squalor of mud, dirt and litter.... That the motor vehicle should have developed into a killer is a tragedy enough; that it should also have become a wholesale destroyer of much that we have prized as civilized living is nothing short of a disaster. Apart from war, it is difficult to think

of any previous activity of man that has wrought this kind of dual havoc.  

These sentiments pervaded the report issued by the Ministry of Transport in 1963 under Buchanan’s name. Based on the spectacular increase in motorization after the war, and on future growth in same, the authors forecast a bleak future for British cities. Absent dramatic changes, congestion would increase while the quality of urban life declined. Great Britain could either model itself on America, meaning the wholesale reworking of cities around the car, or find some way of retaining the amenities of towns and cities that had been built long before the automobile. The first alternative was rejected out of hand as both unfeasible and undesirable. Great Britain did not have the resources or the land area to replicate American development. “All the American experience of sprawl suggests that in our small country we would do well to have no more of it.” The challenge was to find a way to tolerate the automobile while retaining the best of urban living. While the Americans were willing to sacrifice open countryside and historic city centers, the British were not. Unless they were willing to let their cities become smaller versions of Los Angeles, an accommodation would have to be found.

The report turned Buchanan into a celebrity within British planning circles. It was considered groundbreaking for two reasons, in its synthesis of ideas about the relationships among cars, pedestrians and cities, but perhaps more importantly for its forceful rejection of the city that catered entirely to the motorist. The report also drew attention on the continent, where it was translated quickly into German. Buchanan’s ideas

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46 Minister of Transport (Great Britain), *Traffic in Towns: A study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* (London: Minister of Transport, 1963), 183.
47 Minister of Transport (Great Britain), *Traffic in Towns*, 23, 180-3.
were broadcast to West German planners almost immediately. The most important transmitter was an expert panel that had been commissioned by the Bundestag. It gave the Buchanan report a close read and came to many of the same conclusions, for instance in its advocacy of shifting motorists to public transit and protecting pedestrians in central city districts. Buchanan’s emphasis on defending historic inner-city neighborhoods against the automobile then became an accepted concept among West German planners. He was an important reason why traffic calming became a major subject of discussion during the 1970s.48

Buchanan was important for another reason. The reception of his work showed that trans-European planning networks remained vibrant after 1945. His report contained a detailed study of conditions on the continent. But it also demonstrated a growing European dissatisfaction with wholesale importation of the American model. His use of the Los Angeles example was not uncommon. To European critics, this city’s dense network of highways, its huge parking lots, endless traffic jams, and smog all came to be synonymous with Los Angeles. Over the next few decades, the city became the ultimate horror scenario of the automobile run amok (“But the auto-oriented city is almost an impossibility,” one critic wrote, "even if individual examples of such auto-cities exist on

Few in West Germany, even among those who wanted to encourage automobile use, thought replicating Los Angeles was a good idea. Over time, defenders of the city vanished.

There was no shortage of alternatives that became available to planners and activists starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The urban reformers sought out positive examples and allies wherever they could be found, in particular to the north (Scandinavia) and west (Netherlands) but also in other parts of Europe. Over time, they helped to build trans-European advocacy networks. Transnational organizations were involved in this process. In 1975, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) hosted a massive conference on limiting motorized traffic in cities. Entitled “Better Towns with Less Traffic” (a play on the Buchanan report’s title, *Traffic in Towns*), the conference featured reports about cities that had attempted to reduce motorized traffic. These came from Sweden, Italy, Singapore, Japan, France, West Germany, and Great Britain (the cities were Uppsala, Bologna, Singapore, Nagoya, Besançon, Munich, and Nottingham).

The West German urban reformers considered the conference to be a sign that planning trends had been altered in their favor. The conference’s high profile and broad participation suggested to them that their agenda was on the leading edges of European

city planning. In the years following, the reformers were quick to make use of examples from the conference to enhance their agenda. Karl Ganser, for instance, highlighted Uppsala’s innovations in transportation planning. He claimed to a West German audience not long after the conference that the Swedish city’s experimentation had reduced automobile traffic, increased the alternative modes (bicycling, walking, transit use), and enhanced the quality of life for residents.51 Other reformers highlighted cities from the same set of countries, including Japanese cities that were seen as models for bicycling. Nor were their interests unique. Planners from other European countries, as well as some Americans, began to view the Scandinavian, Dutch, and even West German cases in more favorable lights for their dedication to alternative planning.52

The OECD conference sparked a reaction among the urban reformers because its themes spoke to the values and preferences that they had been formulating for years. Eager to have their agenda implemented, they began to develop the networks and institutional support to create sophisticated research programs focusing on examples from abroad. In the early 1980s, for example, Dieter Apel of the prestigious German Institute for Urban Affairs (DIfU, Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik) conducted a major study of cities he regarded as being particularly innovative in environmental policy. His selected cities were in Sweden (Uppsala, Gothenburg, Malmö, Västerås), Denmark (Copenhagen, Odense), the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Delft, Groningen, The Hague, Tilburg), and Italy (Bologna). In addition, he included a few West German cities (Erlangen, Göttingen,

Hannover). American cities were nowhere to be found. Apel’s report, issued in 1984, was intended to be a catalogue of successful measures used by each city. It was especially exhaustive but not unusual; other critics had produced similar documents before and would continue to do so well after Apel’s study appeared.⁵³

**Conclusion**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a group from Munich’s Maxvorstadt and Schwabing neighborhoods met to negotiate how streets might be redesigned to reduce the speed and obtrusiveness of the automobile, to increase the safety and viability of walking and bicycling, and to improve the aesthetics of the streetscape for residents. This working group (AKVB, *Arbeitskreis Münchner Bürger für Verkehrsberuhigung*) consisted of neighborhood activists, freelance architects and planners, historic preservationists, transportation engineers, and members of the city’s planning departments. As expected, the group’s deliberations focused on the smallest public spaces in these neighborhoods, on specific streets, street segments, bike paths and lanes, sidewalks, footpaths between buildings, and even individual street corners. Yet despite their attention to design minutiae in two neighborhoods in one city, many in the group were well versed in a cosmopolitan urbanism. By the time the AKVB began meeting, several of its members had been working within international contexts for years. These individuals had first-hand experience overseas and had developed contacts around the world. They were

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participants in discourses that transcended national boundaries. Their social, political, and intellectual interests placed them within the global movements of the 1960s and 1970s: environmentalism, democratization, and historic preservation.

The AKVB story is not a study in contradiction. Rather, it illustrates that the urban critics in Munich, as elsewhere in West Germany, were embedded in transnational networks that allowed them to borrow or ignore cues from wherever they wished. The members of the AKVB wanted to retain those specific qualities that made their neighborhoods, Maxvorstadt and Schwabing, worth inhabiting. But in so doing they were informed by the experiences of other cities, often far from their own. The ideas and deeds of people living in places thousands of miles away had an influence on the ideas and deeds of people focused on how to best design a single crosswalk or intersection. Transnational cues, in other words, informed their process of place making. These currents did not always square with one another. The members used what they considered to be most valuable to them, and discarded or ignored what they did not want or need.

The AKVB members’ behavior was not unusual. Cities have always contained individuals who engaged in this kind of dualism, between cosmopolitanism on the one hand and particularism on the other, at one and the same time. The spatial professions have illustrated this dualism since their origins. The planners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were so engaged, as were those of the interwar and postwar periods. Even historic preservationism provided an example. Historic preservation might have been the most particular of the spatial professions, having been dedicated to saving specific historical buildings and monuments in particular places. Yet it, too, mirrored the cosmopolitanism of other fields. Gerd Albers, one of West Germany’s foremost planners
(and based in Munich), participated in the reinvigoration of this field during the period under study here. Between the 1950s and 1970s, he recalled later, international institutions had been at the forefront of the movement to revive the field. These institutions—UNESCO, for instance—had arranged conferences on the subject and had taken the initial steps to place historic preservation on an organizational footing. The culmination of their efforts was an architectural heritage year (1975), organized by the Council of Europe. The planning for this event took several years and involved international meetings represented by delegates from across the continent. The year is generally considered to have been one of the reasons why historic preservation became a more important (and broader-based) cause in cities after the middle of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} Albers, “Altstadt wohin?,” 331-44.
SECTION II:

SPECIFICS
CHAPTER 5:

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE WEST GERMAN FUSSGÄNGERZONE

“The hustle and bustle of downtown Munich is inconceivable without its pedestrian zone. No one could seriously deny that Munich has gained from it. But can one view this successful experiment as the beginning of Munich’s development towards a pedestrian city? The answer should clearly be ‘no.’ … A pedestrian zone can only be one component of a pedestrianized city.”

-- Brigitte Popowniak, Fussgängerwege in der Maxvorstadt (1980)¹

The Fussgängerzone (pedestrian zone) was one of the most successful features of postwar urban planning in Germany, if success is defined in terms of endurance and popularity. Between the late 1940s and 1990, hundreds of cities in both East and West Germany created pedestrian zones, although West Germany became the country most associated with them. (East Germany created around 140 zones between 1969 and 1989, a fraction of those created in the West.) During the 1970s alone, the decade when the concept reached its peak, several hundred pedestrian zones were created in West Germany. By 1990 over a thousand zones existed throughout the country. Hardly a single city, whether large or small, proved unable to resist the new fad. Many created several zones.² A few cities such as Munich created Fussgängerzonen that became famous around the world. Others, such as Freiburg and Nuremberg, gradually expanded the idea to the point where large parts of their historic city centers were given over to pedestrians.

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To supporters the *Fussgängerzone* was the most obvious and deliberate way to give people a respite from the noise and grime of the motorized world. Over time, however, the zones came under fierce criticism. To their detractors, they were little more than outdoor versions of American-style shopping malls, integral parts of the mass consumer society. These detractors argued that the consumerist orientation of the zones destroyed the cultural and historical substance of existing city centers.

The history of the West German pedestrian zone was far more complicated than either of these positions suggests. While planners regarded the earlier zones as integral parts of the *autogerechte Stadt*, others later saw them as solutions to the problems created by the *autogerechte Stadt*. Early on, the zones were regarded as consumer islands (*Konsuminseln*) designed to stimulate shopping and consumption. But over time they were also repackaged to stress their recreational, cultural and social dimensions. Moreover, the justification for them was multi-faceted, often contradictory, and it evolved over time. Rationales differed in 1950 versus 1970 or 1980: the zones were to help solve the city center’s traffic problems; save the center from economic decline; enhance retailers’ profits; protect the public; provide recreational space; protect the natural environment; humanize the city; contribute to historic preservation; enhance and project the city’s image domestically and abroad. They were sold as integral to the preservation of historic city centers at the same time as they were touted as part of the new modern city. Further, over time their physical form and size changed. Many zones were expanded after their initial creation or were integrated into redesigns of entire city centers, and for awhile their advocates hoped to spread them beyond city centers into outlying residential neighborhoods. Finally, there was never a firm lineup of supporters
and detractors. The zones could be supported by the very organizations and individuals that one would think would oppose them, while they could be opposed by those groups that one would expect would be most enthusiastic about them. Not only did the position taken by some groups change over time, shifting from opposition to support and vice-versa; at any given time one could find similar groups differing on whether and how pedestrian zones ought to be built.

This chapter focuses on the curiosity that was the West German *Fussgängerzone*. From the pioneering zones created in the 1950s and 1960s through the boom of the 1970s and finally into what can be termed a maturation phase after about 1980, they became iconic urban artifacts even in the face of severe criticism. Their importance in the context of this dissertation, which centers on opposition to auto-oriented urban development, is therefore complex. The zones’ checkered cultural significance and their shifting line-up of supporters and detractors make them difficult to categorize and analyze. Nonetheless, their importance here lies in the precedent they set for those who wanted to shift the focus and goals of urban planning away from models that emphasized cars to those that emphasized the human being on foot. By the late 1960s, the zones were criticized as symbols of what was wrong with postwar planning, including their close relationship with both modernism in planning and consumerism in society. Over time, however, the provided physical examples of car-free environments as well as intellectual touchstones for further debate about how to deemphasize the automobile and enhance the pedestrian. As Paulhans Peters, editor of the planning journal *Baumeister*, put it in 1977, the West German pedestrian zone was “the beginning of a great rethinking.”

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A brief history of the foot minus the wheel

Before the modern era, foot traffic dominated movement in cities. The slow speed of walking severely limited how far people were willing or able to travel. This basic fact meant that cities had to be built at very high densities. It was also a significant reason why the physical size of cities was low by modern standards. Other important forms of street transportation existed (horses, carriages, wagons, etc.), but the premodern city has been rightly labeled the “Fussgängerstadt” owing to the preponderance of foot traffic. This situation began to change slowly beginning in the early modern period, then much faster during the nineteenth century. The development of new forms of transportation such as the railroad, streetcar, and bicycle changed the travel equation dramatically. Because the newer forms enabled faster speeds, they helped to create the rapid urban expansion that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and elsewhere.4

Despite the ubiquity of pedestrians in premodern cities, the idea of reserving some urban spaces solely for pedestrians was an ancient one. Pompeii might have been the first city in history to have such a space, a forum located in the city center with gates to keep carts and wagons out.5 Such spaces were common in the cities of medieval and early modern Europe, as elsewhere in the preindustrial world. Architects, planners, administrators, monarchs, bureaucrats, engineers, reformers, and private citizens

4 Christoph Maria Merki, Verkehrsgeschichte und Mobilität (Stuttgart: Eugen Ulmer, 2008), 27.  
designed and built pedestrian-only or traffic-controlled spaces. These were spaces where pedestrians were always allowed, but where other forms of transportation were either banned or restricted in terms of time of day or type of access. The spaces took innumerable forms—squares, plazas, interior courtyards, walkways, small tunnels and bridges, parks, bazaars, palaces, terraces, outdoor markets, staircases, promenades, and gardens. On occasion they could be enormous, but they were often small, interstitial spaces worked into the fabric of the surrounding city. They were created for a wide variety of reasons, including aesthetic, commercial, religious, social, political, public health, reformist, recreational, and practical. Access could be limited by edict, tradition, or simple design. Outdoor staircases were obvious examples of access limited by design, as were bollards, gates, and fences.

The traffic-limited aspect of the largest spaces was a byproduct of grandiose schemes undertaken for other purposes. Europe’s urban parks and gardens were good examples. In the preindustrial era, parks were designed as military parade grounds, aristocratic preserves, and even commercial endeavors dedicated to for-profit entertainment. Monastic and royal gardens were intended for quiet refuge and contemplation. In the nineteenth century, an urban-parks movement spread throughout Europe, which focused on sanitation and viewed large public parks as the lungs of overcrowded cities. Urban squares and plazas provided similar examples. The grand squares built in major French cities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were designed to highlight aristocratic wealth and the glory of the monarch. The most famous of these were Paris’s statue squares, so named because they were built with an equestrian statue of a king at the center. The specific design differed according to each square’s
purpose. One was the Place Royal (now the Place des Vosges, completed in 1612), bordered by housing for the wealthy. The formal garden on the square was meant only for pedestrians and was intended to give its elite residents a respite from the urban grind. It is now considered to be the most important residential square in Europe, having set the design standard for all that followed. A different model was the Place Vendôme (completed in 1720), which offered a more sober setting, as it was ringed by large commercial institutions. Over time carriages (and then automobiles) gained access to the Place Vendôme, but then only partially and under controlled circumstances. All these spaces—gardens, parks, squares—had rules regarding who could use them, how and when they could be accessed, and by what form of conveyance. Pedestrians had priority; carriages and wagons had to follow certain guidelines or were banned altogether.\(^6\)

In the broadest historical sense, the West German *Fussgängerzone* continued a long trend of fencing off parts of the European city and reserving them for the exclusive or primary use of pedestrians. The pedestrian shopping street itself predated the Federal Republic. A very small number of such streets had been created during the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, with Essen, Cologne, and Bremen all creating early versions. During the first decade after World War II, other cities, elsewhere in Europe and in North America, created zones. Rotterdam’s pedestrian-only shopping street, the Lijnbaan, was created out of the ruins of the city center during the 1950s. It became an early and well-known success story in West German planning circles, as did Copenhagen’s experiment with its pedestrian zone a decade later. A number of American cities experimented with

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downtown pedestrian zones as well, to varying degrees of success, starting with Kalamazoo, Michigan in the late 1950s.7

There were, however, at least three critical differences that made the West German case unique. The first was the economic and technical context in which the West German zones were created. Cities planned and built the zones in the face of the exploding wealth, and therefore motorization, of the 1950s and 1960s. The early zones were seen by many planners as an integral part of a comprehensive reworking of city centers that placed great emphasis upon bringing people into the center by automobile. Second, West German cities created many more zones than elsewhere. The scale of their endeavor outstripped all competitors. This proliferation led to a third and final distinction. *Fussgängerzonen* tended to share specific location, design and economic attributes that made them distinguishable from the *ad hoc* quality of many preindustrial spaces. They were created with deliberation by large public bureaucracies. They were placed in city centers, frequently along the main commercial trade routes, and often featured common design elements such as plantings and benches intended to make visitors comfortable.

*Pedestrian zones of the 1950s and 1960s*

In the immediate postwar decades, West German planners saw opportunities in the bombed ruins to recast their cities. Leading modernists pushed the concept as part of their larger attempts to rework West Germany’s cities around the needs of the motorist.

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Kiel’s Herbert Jensen and Stuttgart’s Paul Bonatz were modernists, or leaned in that direction; during the war, they had all forecast the effects of postwar motorization on inner cities. Pedestrian zones constituted a small part of reconstruction plans for cities such as Kiel, Cologne, Kassel, and Stuttgart, among others.  

In the 1950s, Jensen and other planners argued that city centers faced erosion from suburban competition. With no improvement to the transportation linkages between city center and periphery, firms would move their headquarters to the suburbs, while individuals would shop at the new suburban shopping centers. This diagnosis was little different from that pushed by business leaders and transportation engineers in the United States. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, they argued that urban freeways would help keep central business districts from dying due to suburban competition. Like his American counterparts, Jensen followed the modernist formula for solving the problem. The most direct approach was to expand the capacity of the street system to give motorized vehicles more freedom of maneuver, in theory speeding up traffic between city center and suburbs. This was accomplished by widening existing streets and building urban freeways and new arterial roads. Ring roads—high capacity loops arrayed in concentric circles around city centers—were important new features in West Germany. These were designed to reroute through traffic around the city center rather than through it. (For cities that had been founded during the medieval period, the innermost ring roads followed the contours of the former city walls. In many cases, these had been removed.

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8 A few of these are summarized in Logemann, “Einkaufsparadies und ‘Gute Stube’,” 103-22.
during the early nineteenth century.) Combined, such measures allowed motorists to move faster between city center and periphery.⁹

A complementary approach was to isolate the different modes from one another. Planners thought that the surest way to maintain slow vehicular speeds within the city was to keep traffic mixed together. Traffic would crawl along if cars and trucks had to share street space with the other modes of surface transportation (street trams, bicycles, and pedestrians). Instead, they argued that automobiles should be separated from pedestrian traffic. The purpose of this approach was the same as adding system capacity, to increase average vehicle speeds. Hans-Bernhard Reichow, author of *Die autogerechte Stadt* (1959), pointed to safety as a major reason for separating motorists from pedestrians. “The removal of pedestrian walkways from the streetscape is already obligatory,” he wrote in his book, “because the human capacity for reaction, especially that of the elderly and of children, is simply no match for the automobile’s high speeds.”¹⁰

Handing streets over to motorists meant that space for the other modes had to be found somewhere else. The alternatives were to shunt the other modes onto infrastructure above, below, or off to the side of the street. Planners developed a distaste for street trams, for example, and instead wanted public transit in the form of subways and elevated trains. For the city center, however, Jensen and others thought that the motor vehicle was a big problem. To remain viable, the center had to retain its historic functions as the focus

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of public life and as a shopping destination. Because the narrow streets of the city center were easy to overwhelm, allowing vehicles to crowd onto them was a recipe for ruination. People would be unwilling to visit the city center if doing so was unpleasant in addition to inconvenient. Banning motorized traffic from the center would create spaces freed of congestion, hence attractive to shoppers and other visitors. The new ring roads allowed this to happen. By sending traffic around the center, ring roads made the center’s historic thoroughfares (the main trade routes along which cities had been founded) redundant.\textsuperscript{11} Getting through the city no longer required going through the exact center of town.

As the concept was applied through the early 1970s, the typical West German pedestrian zone was a contiguous space carved out of a few existing streets and plazas within the city center. Most often this practice meant the exact center of the most historic part of the city, the \textit{Altstadt}. Munich’s pedestrian zone was perhaps the best-known example in West Germany and the world, consisting of a simple crossed pattern running north-south and east-west with the \textit{Marienplatz} at the center (the street sections were parts of Neuhauser-, Kaufinger-, Sendlinger-, and Theatinerstrasse). These streets had long been main thoroughfares through the city, with the \textit{Marienplatz} sitting at their intersection. Jensen had formulated this skeletal framework in the early 1960s while he worked on the city’s general transportation plan that would end up bearing his name. In 1965 Jensen perfected the initial proposal, which became the basis for a design competition held two years later. In 1972 Munich opened its completed zone, with much

\textsuperscript{11} Jensen, “Verbesserung der Verkehrsverhältnisse,” 307-09.
press attention. After 1972, the city expanded the zone in stages, opening small extensions on side streets but keeping the crossed pattern more or less intact (figure 1).\(^{12}\)

It was no coincidence that the new \emph{Fussgängerzonen} in West Germany became synonymous with commerce over time.\(^{13}\) Essen and Cologne had established a precedent in the interwar period, having turned small sections of main shopping streets into pedestrian-only spaces. For city planners in the immediate postwar decades, turning shopping streets into pedestrian zones was deliberate. Shopping, they discovered, could prevent the new zones from becoming hollowed-out, lifeless spaces. Bernhard Winkler, winner of Munich’s design competition in 1967 and thus responsible for filling in the details to Jensen’s skeletal plan, put the issue in these terms: “The removal of traffic from this zone will surely cause some sort of vacuum, into which certain powers will assert themselves. [Success] depends on whether the department stores realize the opportunity, or if the vacuum is filled in a chaotic fashion.”\(^{14}\)

Planners assisted matters by easing shoppers’ access to the new zones. To enable swift arrival and departure by car, cities built huge new parking decks at the edges of the \emph{Altstadt} along the ring roads. They also coordinated the placement of new transit stops inside the zones. Munich’s planners, for example, located the largest transit stop in its system directly beneath the \emph{Marienplatz}, the epicenter of the new zone and the city itself.

\(^{12}\) Stadtarchiv München (StAM), Bürgermeister und Rat (Bu. u. R.) 3400: Edgar Luther to Herbert Jensen, December 7, 1964.


The motorization-and-shopping thesis

The few historians who have written about pedestrian zones tend to stress the transportation and consumerist aspects. The transportation historian Barbara Schmucki, for instance, has argued that the zones were not much more than “shopping islands in the motorized city.” Jan Logemann devotes more attention to economic history. Both the West German pedestrian zone and the American shopping mall are filtered through the lens of mass consumption. Spatial differences set them apart: West German zones were in the city center, American malls on the suburban periphery, but both were dedicated to shopping. Logemann also reviews the work of planners such as Victor Gruen, an Austrian emigrant to the United States. Gruen was credited with designing the first suburban shopping mall during the 1950s, but he also sought to import the inner city pedestrian zone from Europe to the United States. A number of cities, including Kalamazoo, Minneapolis, Miami Beach, Toledo, and Fresno, experimented with pedestrian zones during the 1950s and 1960s. In a good many of these cities, however, the zones proved unable to compete with suburban malls and were not successful.

Both of these interpretations contain much that is true. The early pedestrian zones were formulated as part of the autogerechte Stadt and were often created by West German planners who leaned toward modernism in transportation planning. It is also true that consumption was, and continues to be, integral to the economic viability of the zones. But both of these features were more important earlier in the process than later and never encompassed the full range of motives behind their creation. Logemann devotes

some attention to these later developments, specifically to how planners began repackaging the West German pedestrian zones to encompass quality of life and historic preservation themes. But his analysis of these themes (and of those who worked on repackaging the zones) is brief, involving no more than a couple tantalizing pages. An essay by Dirk Schubert also expands on the motorization-plus-shopping thesis by touching on later attempts to broaden the focus and purpose of the zones. After the mid-1960s, he argued, increasing unrest about the automobile in cities led planners and the public to embrace the social dimensions of the zones. Yet his essay focuses more on the question of private space (the zones as consumerist havens) versus public space than on other issues.

The motorization-plus-shopping thesis begins to run into difficulty when evaluating the motives behind the creation of Fussgängerzonen. Even for the early generation of pedestrian zones, local planners and politicians did not formulate their rationales only in terms of modernist transportation planning or consumerism. They sold the zones in broader terms, with the traffic and commercial benefits being only two of several overlapping goals. Munich’s zone, for instance, was never a one-sided proposition to its principals. As early as 1963 the city issued glossy brochures trumpeting the Marienplatz zone as a way to accomplish several things simultaneously. The zone, once built, would protect the pedestrian and make driving easier. But it also would be a direct contribution to the preservation of the Altstadt, a means of retaining much of what the city’s residents held dear. This claim was made even as the city trumpeted the aspects of the 1963 urban development plan (the Jensen Plan) that would bring Munich to the level

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17 Schubert, “Fussgängerzonen,” 210-16, 222.
of a wholly modern international city.\textsuperscript{18} The emphasis on Altstadt protection was a central theme in Munich during the reconstruction. Politicians, architects, and the public subscribed to rebuilding the Altstadt along lines that were faithful to prewar traditions. Once the Altstadt was rebuilt, they sought to preserve it as an intact unit; this had been a key motive behind Meitinger’s plan for an Altstadtring, which would shift development toward the edges of the Altstadt rather than in the center. Again, this showed an emotional attachment to Altstadt preservation that Munich’s postwar leaders had shared.\textsuperscript{19}

Herbert Jensen’s motives about pedestrian zones were themselves mixed. His writing during the 1950s showed much concern with car traffic in city centers or with the need to protect the center’s dominant retailing position. But his concerns also stemmed from the very high value he placed on the diverse cultural, political, and social functions of the historic city center. He referred to the Altstadt as the “heart” of the city, the “focal point of public life” and the “epicenter of community life.” He argued that as Kiel’s center was threatened by the “nervous commotion” of motorized traffic, creating pedestrian zones would enable a “new urban experience,” presumably one more in keeping with the rhythms of the preindustrial city. The pedestrian zones did not have to be shopping streets, either; to Jensen, they also could be office or cultural centers or recreational spaces.\textsuperscript{20}

Jensen repeated many of these themes after he began working on Munich’s transportation plan in 1961. He argued from the beginning that the Marienplatz zone

would perform a complex set of overlapping tasks. These included easing congestion, making commuting easier and walking safer, modernizing the city, attracting tourists, encouraging economic development and preserving the historic substance of Munich’s Altstadt, all at the same time. “Then the old and honorable Munich can not only be preserved,” Jensen said in a 1965 speech, “but it can be explored anew as a thoroughly modern city by its own residents and by many enthusiastic, international visitors, by the placidly discerning shoppers and the guests lingering in the comfortable atmosphere, by the art-lovers strolling in the city, and by the business traveler—in short, by people.”

Other cities were not exempt from such logic. Göttingen, a small city in Lower Saxony (population 130,000), made the decision in the late 1960s to block its historic city center to traffic. Because Göttingen had survived the war untouched, its city center had retained its original architecture and narrow street pattern. The city government also did not follow the postwar trend of busting new arterials through the historic city. As a result, Göttingen’s planners and residents had developed a strong emotional attachment to their Altstadt. The rerouting of traffic around the city center and the creation of the large pedestrian zone in the city center were done as much to protect the historic and social importance of the center (including shielding the 8,000 residents who lived in the Altstadt) as to retain the center’s shopping function. A retrospective booklet on the Weender Strasse (Göttingen’s main street, at the center of the zone), issued by the city museum in 1989, noted that from the 1950s the street suffered from pollution and noise. For this reason, the publication insisted, the city government decided in the late 1960s to reject making the street fully autogerecht, because doing so would destroy its mature

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architectural form. Choosing to create the pedestrian zone, it indicated, had proven to be the right decision. The zone had become a space for play, recreation, meeting, strolling and dining. Shopping was mentioned but did not figure prominently.  

Different interest groups also had varied and sometimes contradictory views on the zones. The close relationship between the Fussgängerzonen and retailers, for one, was not as straightforward as it appears. Logemann argues from a small number of cases (e.g., Bremen) that retailers were the zones’ strongest supporters. He argues that West German retailers and planners learned from the decay of American downtowns during the 1950s and 1960s and came to fear a shift of retailing to the suburbs, as had occurred in a great many American cities. In this narrative, retailers saw pedestrian zones as the instrument most capable of saving their businesses, and therefore lobbied hard for their creation.  

It is true that retailers, retailer associations, and their representatives in West Germany vocalized support for pedestrian zones, but it was not true that retailers were always supporters. On the contrary, retailers were pitted against planners and local politicians at least as often as they were allied. Retailers’ opposition could be the most strident and sustained of any encountered by local governments. Retailers became supporters only when unambiguous evidence of the zones’ commercial success emerged. The process of converting retailers from opponents to supporters took until the 1970s on a general basis in the Federal Republic, and in smaller cities retailers’ opposition lasted until well into the 1980s.

Ironically, retailers feared that a lack of direct automobile access to the city center would force motorists toward the newer shopping centers on the suburban fringe. Retailers had articulated such concerns from the very beginning of the postwar era. The architect Adolf Abel, writing in 1950, had made note of the odd fact that retailers tended to oppose the zones, lamenting that they did not seem to know what was good for them: “Why do businessmen of to-day not understand [that pedestrian shopping streets are the best shopping streets], instead of hanging on to the main traffic arteries where even parking is impossible?”25 Kiel’s retailers, Jensen noted, had been against the city’s pedestrian zone when it was first formulated and then built (late 1940s and early 1950s), but came around in support after the zone proved a success. Munich managed to avoid organized opposition to its plans from the beginning, possibly because from 1961, Jensen had brought the good news from Kiel with him. But preventing strident retailer opposition took some doing. Bernhard Winkler, the architect who later won the design competition for Munich’s pedestrian zone, credited the city government. He recalled that in 1969 the city had constituted a working group that included all the major interested parties, retailers included. The experience was a “learning process” for all participants, one that allowed common goals to be formulated and objections defused.26 These accounts of conflicts between planners and retailers were not unusual.

As retailers were not a monolithic group, their interests and thus their positions on the zones diverged. Larger cities tended to design and implement plans for zones much

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earlier than smaller ones. Massive resistance from retailers in smaller cities was one of the chief reasons for this discrepancy, other than the high cost of building the zones. Small-city retailers believed that their economic position was weak compared with retailers in large cities. Their argument was based on the idea that small cities were magnets for shoppers in rural areas, who had no choice but to drive to get to the market. If direct automobile access were removed in one town, so the retailers’ argument went, rural shoppers would turn to other towns in the region.  

Splits occurred within cities’ retailing establishments as well. Larger retailers, in particular department stores, enjoyed the most prominent locations along the main shopping streets and had the resources to expand their operations once the zones were built and proved successful. Smaller retailers, on the other hand, feared the consequences of the zones’ success perhaps as much as their failure. The increased demand from more customers meant increased rents. Larger retailers were more capable than smaller retailers of paying these rents. “If a pedestrian zone is effective, the prices for properties and buildings will rise,” remarked a representative for Munich’s retailers in 1969, while making a case for retaining the city center’s mix of large, middle, and small retailers. “Thanks to their capital power, the big department stores will then be in the position to pay such rents or to acquire buildings there.” This observation, that pedestrian zones would force small businesses out of the city center, proved to be an enduring criticism.

Nuremberg’s long experience with its Fussgängerzone illustrates the conflict between retailers and planners. The city’s first small pedestrian street was created in

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1961, but the zone’s major expansion occurred only after a searing debate on the matter in the early 1970s. Eventually the zone came to encompass much of the city’s enormous Altstadt and is considered today to be a planning model. Retailers, however, opposed expanding Nuremberg’s zone at every step of the process. They argued that larger zones meant fewer parking spaces and less access for motorists to the city center, therefore fewer visitors and lower profits. In 1975 they submitted, through the chamber of commerce (IHK, Industrie- und Handelskammer), a resolution opposing a major expansion of the zone from 800 total meters in street length to more than 1800 meters. They asserted that the expansion represented a kind of pedestrian gigantism (“Überdimensionierung”) that would erode the city center, unless more parking spaces were created on its edge to compensate. At each step in the process, from the late 1960s forward at any rate, Nuremberg’s retailers also found themselves at odds with the public, which supported each expansion by wide margins.  

The complicated relationship among pedestrian zones, retailing and retailers is mirrored by the fluctuating position of the gigantic auto lobby, ADAC. Unsurprisingly, ADAC was among the most vocal and important supporters of the autogerechte Stadt in postwar West Germany. In particular, it consistently pushed the idea that city centers had to become more accessible to motorists or face extinction at the hands of suburban competition. ADAC had extended this argument far beyond retailing, to encompass the economic fate of the entire city center. The organization embraced nearly the entire

agenda advanced by modernist planners during the postwar era, including the construction or expansion of parking garages and high-capacity ring roads and radials.

Yet ADAC, too, viewed the pedestrian zone with some suspicion. The organization’s concerns were dominated by roads and parking, hence gave support for the zones only if cities’ plans included satisfactory provisions for parking and traffic management. ADAC had spent decades arguing against restrictions on motorists and their freedom of movement, thus pedestrian zones could be antithetical to such a vision if they did not contain such provisions. ADAC articulated its views early in Munich’s planning of the pedestrian zone surrounding the Marienplatz. It rejected the zone in its entirety out of concerns that the zone was a hindrance to automobile access to the city center. It wanted parking garages constructed in vacant lots, directly in the Altstadt itself, as well as underneath the city’s numerous plazas. ADAC voiced this position even as the city’s politicians fretted about how to ensure that shoppers had short walks between the planned zone and parking garages on the inner ring road (the city settled on distances of no more than 400 meters from any point in the zone).

ADAC continued its opposition through the 1960s, not just to Munich’s pedestrian zone (which it called the “most radical” of all proposed zones), but to the concept in general. It tried to ally itself with disgruntled retailers, relying on the increasingly worn argument that the zones pushed motorists to the suburbs. “It has already happened in various cities,” so the ADAC Rundschau put it in March 1968, “that at least the motorists prefer those shopping areas that they can effortlessly reach with

30 Hajdu, “Pedestrian malls in West Germany.” 328.
their vehicles and where they can find a parking space without a long search. … Of late, even in large cities, less shopping is being done downtown while more shopping is being done in the not yet congested outskirts!"\(^{32}\) 

ADAC began to support pedestrian zones only in the 1970s, after its argument that the zones would kill city centers was proven false. ADAC switched its relationship with retailers on the matter, from one of alliance with disgruntled retailers to a gentle scolding of them. The organization claimed that retailers did not understand the profitability of the zones. But this support only extended to shopping-oriented zones in the city center, and only when these were properly supported by transportation infrastructure (meaning transit and automobile access). Karl-Heinz Schaechterle of Munich’s technical university, a planner who often took positions similar to those of ADAC and the auto industry, had been tasked by the city with evaluating the Marienplatz zone. Schaechterle’s report, which was produced in 1969, forecast increasing competition from parking-rich suburban shopping centers. He argued that the city’s zone could be successful only if the city built more parking on its edges and if plans for the ring roads and radials surrounding the city center were completed. ADAC opposed pedestrian zones in any other context, in particular in residential neighborhoods outside of the boundaries of the innermost ring road. Again the stated reason was the removal of parking spaces, which for a car lobby amounted to a sin. This opposition surfaced as the city of Munich contemplated an aggressive expansion of Fussgängerzonen following the opening of the Marienplatz zone in 1972.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\) “‘Stadtverbot’ für Autos?,” \textit{ADAC Rundschau}, March, 1968, 12. 
The largest numbers of West German cities planned and created *Fussgängerzonen* during the 1970s. While there were only eight in 1950, by 1966 there were 63 zones. The numbers exploded thereafter, to 214 in 1973 and more than 300 by 1977. More than 200 zones were built in the short span of six years, from 1970 to 1976. The phenomenon had a kind of manic dimension to it during these years, exciting architects, landscape architects, planners, and government officials, as well as the public in general. Pedestrian zones had proven their economic viability in those cities that had experimented with them. New zones were visited in huge numbers by shoppers and curious onlookers, often surpassing expectations. Survey data buttressed such numbers, showing overwhelming public support for new zones and the expansion of existing ones.

Critically, too, some cities had enjoyed great media success. Munich was the best example and was itself a cause of the boom. The city had timed the completion of its *Marienplatz* zone for July 1972, a month before it hosted the summer Olympics, and had surrounded the opening with tremendous fanfare. The zone was judged successful upon opening. The curious visited the zone in much larger numbers than had been forecasted by planners. Even before the Olympics began, studies showed that about 50,000 more people visited per day than had done so beforehand. The Olympics boosted this success. Millions of people came to Munich to see the games (the city had expected roughly 100,000 visitors daily during the games). Every kind of mass media, from all over the

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*Boom: expansion and diversification during the 1970s*


world, covered them. The city’s brand new pedestrian zone thus could be showcased to a global audience. Located amidst the city’s most iconic structures, the zone was not only one of the largest in the world, but also considered to be one of the best designed and most attractive. The high profile of Munich’s zone contributed to its reputation as the epitome of the West German pedestrian zone, and was heralded as a model for other cities around the world.35

The upshot was a rush on pedestrian zones in the early 1970s, as city governments planned new zones or expanded existing ones. These were second-generation attempts, distinguishable from the first generation of postwar zones for their greater size and purpose.36 Much of the push was due to a desire to emulate economically successful examples, as well as to a fear of being left behind while other cities grabbed the economic and media spotlight. Enough positive attention had been garnered by existing pedestrian zones, as the Munich case showed, to bolster local governments’ interest in them. But by the 1970s cities had developed many more reasons for building them, beyond the already long list formulated in previous decades.

A series of important studies conducted by Rolf Monheim, older brother of Heiner Monheim and a longtime academic at the University of Bayreuth, revealed the diversity in cities’ goals regarding the zones. Monheim’s constituted the first major, systematic studies of West German pedestrian zones and were key to establishing his reputation as


36 The first- and second-generation distinction is explicit in Hajdu, “Pedestrian malls in West Germany.” A similar distinction between earlier (pre-1970s) and later (1970s-forward) zones is also made in Schubert, “Fussgängerzonen,” and Logemann, “Einkaufsparadies und ‘Gute Stube’.”
an academic. In 1975, he published the first study. Based on surveys of hundreds of planners and officials in cities having pedestrian zones, the study’s results challenged conventional wisdom. They showed a wide spectrum of motives for creating the zones, as well as expectations about their function and performance. Monheim identified twelve primary goals (“Oberziele”) that had been important in motivating city officials to create the zones. These included the familiar goals, including traffic improvement and support for retailing. However, and critically, the list also included general economic goals (support for tourism), civic goals (historic preservation, improving the city’s image), social and cultural goals (providing leisure space and opportunities, preventing the decay of the Altstadt) and environmental protection.

Planners ranked these goals differently according to their particular type of training. Transportation planners chose “better traffic conditions and safety” and “noise and air pollution [protection]” as their top two priorities for the pedestrian zones, by overwhelming margins. Planners trained in the more traditional area of town planning (Stadtplanung) selected a far different set of priorities, which focused on improving the city’s image, providing leisure opportunities to citizens, and increasing tourism. Finally, planners who worked in economic development (Wirtschaftsplanung) focused on competition with neighboring cities.37 Together, the multiplicity of goals plus the divergence across planning’s sub-disciplines led Monheim to argue that cities seldom established a clear hierarchy of goals for their pedestrian zones. They articulated several goals simultaneously, treating them as complementary even if they were contradictory.

As Monheim’s survey data revealed, city officials saw the zones as a means for addressing all manner of urban problems, including newly emergent concerns about the

natural environment. Other studies showed the public held similar views, wanting the zones to be designed with recreational, environmental, and communal goals having priority. All of this represented a reversal of the logic during the immediate postwar period, when the zones were tied to the rationalization of motorized transportation. By the early 1970s, with the emergence of the modern environmental movement, it became easy to identify the car-free zones with environmental protection. There was a certain logic to the argument. In order to eliminate the environmental problems created by cars, get rid of the cars themselves.

This was one of the reasons why, for perhaps two or three years, pedestrian zones became the darlings of the federal government. The *Auto und Umwelt* (Auto and Environment) report that had been commissioned by Hans-Dietrich Genscher’s interior ministry included a section on the importance of preventing city centers from falling victim to automobile traffic. To avoid the fate of America’s cities, which dedicated vast spaces to roads and parking, West German planners should build pedestrian zones and use other tools to halt or reverse the erosion of their central cities. Munich’s former mayor and the new planning minister (1972-74), Hans-Jochen Vogel, pushed the report publicly. Having witnessed first-hand the enthusiastic reaction to the opening of Munich’s zone, Vogel began concentrating on the pedestrian zone as a means for combating urban decline. This was a part of his offensive against the automobile in general, during the heady first wave of mass environmentalism. This period gave national

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politicians such as Vogel the temerity to suggest that the car was doing more harm than

Adapting the zones to new environmental sensibilities found resonance locally. In 1972, flush from the success of the \textit{Marienplatz} zone, Munich’s new mayor, Georg Kronawitter, attempted to expand the concept to residential neighborhoods bordering the city center, including Maxvorstadt, Schwabing, and Lehel. The \textit{Marienplatz} zone, so the city asserted, was proof of the concept’s success. Moreover, it had led to greater public support for additional zones. The city’s expansive plan (up to twelve new zones) was based, from the beginning, on non-commercial arguments. The new zones would not be the kind of commercial project that resulted in a “department store monostructure.”\footnote{Fischer, “Schritt für Schritt zur Fussgängerstadt.”}

Rather, the city intended to highlight the recreational and cultural dimensions of the new zones. The zones would help reintroduce the notion that streets had a public dimension. They would be improve residents’ lives via a reduction in noise and pollution. Moreover, the scheme would reflect the city’s more recent and democratic approach to planning. The city formed a working group that included representatives from the Munich Forum, citizens’ initiatives, neighborhood residents, and economic interest groups. Despite years of attention from Kronawitter and his staff, and despite some success in creating new zones, Munich’s plan was never realized in full. This was due in part to its ambition and in part to partisan politics. The governing SPD had initiated the plan, while the FDP and CSU remained lukewarm. After the CSU and Erich Kiesl assumed control of the city council and mayor’s office in 1978, the plan was allowed to atrophy. Yet these factors
alone do not tell the entire story. While the grassroots groups that participated in the
working group did not reject the concept, they preferred to shift the discussion to other
types of solutions besides pedestrian zones. They treated additional pedestrian zones as a
welcome but unnecessary diversion from the real challenges facing Munich. Their
favorite alternative to the pedestrian zone was traffic calming (Verkehrsberuhigung), a
planning instrument intended to rework all city streets in favor of non-motorists. From the
very beginning, the city had couched its plan in a language that anticipated this shift. It
linked the expansion of pedestrian zones to other instruments as the means for combating
the negative consequences of motorized traffic. But its pleas largely fell on deaf ears.
To the activists and citizens’ initiatives of Munich, the flood of automobiles required a
more systematic approach that pedestrian zones could not provide.

Konsumopolis: pedestrian zones and the urban reformers

The debate over Munich’s expansion plans reflected a different intellectual and
social climate than had prevailed a decade earlier, when the Marienplatz zone had been
envisaged. Kronawitter’s spatial focus on residential neighborhoods and his thematic
focus on the social, cultural, and environmental aspects of the zones resulted from the
controversies that had ripped through the city over the previous several years. The
planning of the Marienplatz zone had itself come under intense scrutiny during the late
1960s, at exactly the same time as the city was encountering sharp opposition to all of its

41 StAM, Planungsreferat 90/5, Nr. 3: “Protokoll über die Sitzung der Planungskommission vom 25.10.72”;
“Bekanntgabe im Stadtplanungs- und Stadtentwicklungsausschuss vom 31.10.72.” AMF: Informationshilfe
für Kommunalwähler, Berichte und Protokolle 51 (Munich: Munich Forum, 1977), unpaginated. Archiv
Bezirksausschuss 3 Maxvorstadt/Universität, binder “Verkehrsführung / Plan K / Verkehrskonzept /
Verkehrsberuhigung 1972-1977”; assorted documents. “Schritt für Schritt zur Fussgängerstadt,”
Süddeutsche Zeitung, May 18, 1973; “Grosse Pläne mit Fussgängerzonen,” Süddeutsche Zeitung, May 15,
“Parking Management,” 104-05.
planning goals and methods. The fallout over the Prince Carl Palace tunnel had had major political repercussions, for example, forcing city leaders to find means to channel protest. A growing band of critics were in open revolt, challenging the city and questioning assumptions underlying each and every plan.

The Marienplatz zone was no exception. The architects who had formed the Münchner Bauforum argued in the late 1960s that the city’s plans were destroying Munich’s cultural and spiritual substance. The city’s featured pedestrian zone was a part of this process and a symptom of a much deeper problem. In 1968, Karl Klühspies’ issued a thorough rebuttal of the Marienplatz zone. The polemic had all the characteristics of Klühspies’ work, combining well-researched argumentation, biting commentary, and non-technical illustrations that distilled complex issues into compelling imagery. The attempt to create the autogerechte Stadt in Munich, he wrote, was a utopian experiment that had proven to be “one of the most expensive and gravest mistakes of our time.” But creating pedestrian zones in city centers (which he termed the “Fussgängergerechte Stadt”) was a superficial and counterproductive response. The zones were little more than simplistic reactions to the auto-oriented city, and they failed to challenge planning’s methods or goals. Jensen’s plan for the zone had been presented to the city as a fait accompli, to Klühspies another example of the strategy employed by technocrats to force their schemes upon democratically elected city councils. Klühspies maintained that Jensen’s idea should have been subjected to constant, public criticism after the original proposal was approved, but this was not done. The design competition for the Marienplatz zone, he said, had been limited to the details of paving and

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42 The following discussion is based on: Karl Klühspies, Münchner Fussgängerzonen: Gedanken zur Stadtentwicklung (Munich: Münchner BauForum, 1968); Karl Assmann, Zentrale Fussgängerbereiche (Munich: Münchner Bauforum e.V., 1969), frontispiece.
decoration, not to foundational questions about its size, basic layout, purpose, and content.

Had the city allowed such questions to be addressed, Kühspies believed, it might avoid a looming catastrophe, for the plan was flawed on all levels. What worked in Kiel might not work in Munich. The design was wrong. The goals were wrong. The zone was not a magic solution to traffic congestion in the city center. Rather, it would result in more driving, not less, encouraging suburbanites to treat the city as a shopping destination. The inner ring road that was required to make the whole thing work destroyed the architectural scale of the old city. The zone’s crossed pattern (of north-south/east-west streets intersecting at the Marienplatz) would form an artificial barrier to cross-traffic; this in turn would rip apart the organic relationships within the Altstadt that had been established over hundreds of years. Economically, the zone would advantage the largest retailers at the expense of the smallest. The zone would encourage new development over the preservation of the old and thereby destroy the feel of the city center. Kühspies also claimed that the zone was another example of the city wanting to enhance and protect the Altstadt at the expense of inner-city neighborhoods. Any serious alternative proposal should attempt to sprinkle multiple zones across the boundary (the Altstadtring) between these inner city neighborhoods and the Altstadt. Doing so would go some way toward correcting the imbalance between what Kühspies saw as the favored and disfavored parts of the city.

The Bauforum’s critics were not alone. They counted among their influential allies the journalist and cultural critic Peter M. Bode of the Süddeutsche Zeitung and the architect Paulhans Peters, the editor of the planning journal Baumeister. Peters argued
along lines similar to Klühspies that the Marienplatz zone’s purpose, scale, and design were all wrong. He later developed a systematic critique of pedestrian zones in general, contending that while new zones often gave pedestrians a euphoria akin to “the ending of slavery,” they were flawed instruments.\textsuperscript{43} Their fixation on shopping reduced the inner city to a “Konsumopolis”.\textsuperscript{44} Their touristic features alienated residents from their own city center. These were mono-functional spaces, barely alive. They eliminated almost everything that had made cities thrive in the first place. They needed multi-functionality, meaning street theater, street musicians, children’s play areas, and a hearty injection of political and religious activities.

Further, Peters argued, it was no use turning a few streets in the city center into pedestrian zones if the rest of the city remained “autogerecht”. What use were streets in the zone if the surrounding ring roads were even worse than before, “full of stinking traffic”?\textsuperscript{45} The zones were a kind of grandiose trick, an attempt to create an ideal, protected environment in one small part of the city while the rest rotted from automobiles. “Sometimes planning measures appear as if people in pedestrian zones are viewed like Indians on their reservations,” he wrote. “They have been pushed out [of their world but on the reservation] are protected from the mean outside world. … Time passes outside, while it stands still on the reservation. The reservation does not belong to its inhabitants.”\textsuperscript{46}

Peters’ insight, that the pedestrian zone amounted to little more than a downtown showcase, reflected an increasing dissatisfaction with the pedestrian zone as a general

\textsuperscript{43} Peters, \textit{Stadt für Menschen}, 63.
\textsuperscript{44} Peters, \textit{Stadt für Menschen}, 64.
\textsuperscript{45} Peters, \textit{Stadt für Menschen}, 64.

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solution to the problem of the automobile. Criticism became louder and more coherent as organized opposition to the *autogerechte Stadt* formed through the 1970s. Per design and intent, pedestrian zones were carved out of a few streets in the city center. They did not address conditions in other areas of the city, especially in residential neighborhoods.

Munich’s most controversial plans, such as the tunnel under the Prince Carl Palace, were controversial because of their feared impacts on neighborhoods bordering the *Altstadt*. By 1972, when Kronawitter formulated his plan to extend pedestrian zones outward, the city had experienced years of tumult regarding the fate of Lehel, Maxvorstadt, Schwabing, and similar inner city neighborhoods. The *Marienplatz* zone, opened that very summer, offered little or nothing to solve problems in these neighborhoods. Even worse, it might exacerbate them if the zone were to succeed in drawing more commercial investment into Munich’s center.

Such criticisms were accurate. Cities could have large, successful pedestrian zones while also having deteriorating conditions for pedestrians everywhere elsewhere in the city. Cologne provided one example. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the city had invested in a large pedestrian zone. This consisted of two major streets connecting Cologne’s famous cathedral and the *Neumarkt*. The zone enjoyed both commercial and popular success and became one of the most well known in the country. During these same decades, however, Cologne’s government was busy making the rest of the city *autogerecht*. It widened streets, permitted parking on sidewalks, and turned interstitial spaces (plazas, alleys, courtyards, etc.) into parking lots. But by the middle years of the 1970s, the city government admitted it had done a disservice to its residents. By turning the city’s streets into high-speed freeways and its alleys, sidewalks and plazas into
parking lots, the city had worsened conditions for a great number of people. Between 1976 and 1978, the city government made a series of decisions to improve the living conditions in and around inner-city residential neighborhoods. The focus was on slowing and redirecting traffic, removing parking spaces and improving the quality of the streetscape for pedestrians in general.47

An irony lay at the center of all of this. The pedestrian zone reached the peak of its popularity during the decade, whether measured by the number of cities building them or by their immense popularity with the general public. Yet as the critiques leveled by some intellectuals had shown, the zones were being marginalized even as the 1970s boom began.48 Some critics rejected the grand scale of the new zones. Their own solutions revisited the old model of small, interstitial pedestrian spaces that had given cities much of their vibrancy throughout history. The architects and community activists who had founded Urban Living (Urbanes Wohnen) in Cologne during the 1960s, for example, had a strong interest in restoring the semi-public spaces that had been characteristic of these earlier cities. They (and their colleagues in other cities around West Germany) considered communal spaces in the immediate vicinity of residents to be the antidote to the modern city’s isolation, exclusivity, noise, grime, and pollution. The Urban Living organization based in Munich turned its attention to interior courtyards in their city, many of which had been turned into parking lots or outdoor storage spaces during the postwar decades. Using a cooperative, neighborhood-based development model, the group transformed hundreds of such courtyards throughout Munich into quiet, green refuges. These were


48 A similar argument is advanced in Schubert, “Fussgängerzonen,” 215.

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stripped of cars, junk, and concrete and replaced with grass, trees, and gardens. They were, in effect, miniature pedestrian zones (albeit stripped of the title, the commerce, and media attention) for the residents who lived adjacent to the courtyards. But the larger focus for most of the urban reformers remained the street itself, for it was only here that systematic solutions to the city’s many problems could be found. Planners, citizens’ initiatives, government officials, and politicians increasingly turned to other mechanisms that could address problems on larger scales and for other modes besides pedestrians. Although the pedestrian zones remained popular in West Germany and became permanent features in city centers, the reformers and the larger planning profession also developed less confidence in them as the 1970s continued. By the 1980s, the situation had reached the point of no return. Although the pedestrian zone had become a fixture almost everywhere, it was also passé, a victim of its own spatial limitations and the attractions of other devices that promised bigger returns.

**Conclusion**

By the 1980s the *Fussgängerzone* occupied a dual niche in West Germany. On the one hand, by most measures the zones were successful. The zones built during the 1970s proved durable. Most enjoyed high degrees of popularity, as measured in both local opinion surveys and in visitation levels. Although there were problems with the zones (crime and safety, for instance), they had not proven to be the *Altstadt’s* economic death knell. Rather, the zones enabled city centers to retain a competitive position in retailing vis-à-vis suburban shopping centers. Cities had taken some steps to respond to the urban

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reformers, creating cultural and social attractions and non-commercial activities within the zones. Over time the zones morphed into a kind of prestige object for residents and city officials alike. No less an authority on the subject than Rolf Monheim argued thirty years after his 1975 study that city governments had engaged in an open-ended, “multiyear learning process” with respect to the zones. By broadening their use to include cultural and social events like huge open-air concerts, they had helped to bind residents’ to their cities. In this way the zones served to increase civic identity.  

On the other hand, the zones had long passed the point where they captured the imagination of those looking to blunt the autogerechte Stadt. Their utility as a device to counter the automobile had come and gone, and their limitations were recognized even as the 1970s boom was at its height. Spatially, attention had turned to ordinary neighborhoods, either at the edges of the Altstadt or elsewhere in West Germany’s far-flung cities. The downtown pedestrian zone offered few solutions to the daily problems of residents in these neighborhoods.

Spatially, the zones had upper limits. For practical and political reasons, one could not turn an entire city into a gigantic pedestrian zone. It was true that cities such as Aachen, Freiburg, and Nuremberg had experimented with very large zones, but these were just large enough to cover the historic city centers. Even those few cities in Europe that were considered ideal for pedestrians had, and continue to have, means of transporting people and goods over long distances at (relatively) high speeds. Venice, for instance, long was considered a kind of pedestrian utopia, but its canals served as its highways, the lifeblood of the city’s commerce and transport.

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One could, however, alter the conditions that non-motorists confronted throughout
the entire city. By the 1980s this insight was dominant among the urban reformers.
During the 1970s they had debated and developed sophisticated models that offered
systemic challenges to the automobile, in ways that pedestrian zones could not. By the
late 1970s and early 1980s these models had gained real traction amongst the increasingly
wide circle of critics. The questions then became the form that interventions under the
new models would take, the scale at which they could be implemented, and the speed
with which they could be accomplished.
CHAPTER 6:

“The bicycle is the only mode of transportation that does not contribute to the destruction of our cities and the environment. It is quiet, fully exhaust-free, relatively cheap, [and] requires little maintenance…. The bicycle is the mode with the greatest future.”

-- Transportation Working Group (Arbeitskreis Verkehr), June 1980

While the long history of the bicycle in Europe is characterized by success more than failure, during the 1950s and 1960s the bicycle had all but died as an important form of practical, daily transportation for a great many people in Europe. There were a few exceptions where the bicycle held on, for instance in the Netherlands. The West German case was closer to the norm, because over these decades the automobile came to dominate the street. But from the early 1970s the bicycle enjoyed a renaissance. Its rediscovery occurred in two waves. The first began in the early 1970s as a result of heightened concerns about the environmental and architectonic consequences of building cities around the car. The second, beginning in the late 1970s, built on the first wave but added a mass component. Together, these waves resulted in sustained attention to the bicycle and its specific needs within the urban setting. During the 1970s, cycling advocates emerged from several directions: from within the environmental movement itself, including West Germany’s largest environmental organizations, from the planning profession, where a small but influential number of planners began touting the bicycle as

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1 Archiv Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz (ArBBU): “Info-Blätter” 1985-86.
a means to achieve several ends simultaneously, from unaffiliated individuals, who saw the bicycle as an alternative to the car, and from local politicians in some cities and towns, who designed and implemented bicycling programs. Often, these were the same urban reformers who had been participants in the larger debate about West German cities. Bicycling, however, brought new groups and individuals into the discussion. Together, this ungainly coalition amounted to more than the sum of its parts, helping to reestablish the bicycle as a legitimate form of practical urban transportation.

Cycling advocates saw the bike as an instrument for addressing four issues simultaneously. The first was ecological. The bicycle offered one way out of the perceived environmental crisis facing industrial cities in West Germany and elsewhere in the developed world. During the 1970s and 1980s, West German society developed deep concerns about the dangers of twentieth century technology. These fears extended well beyond the perceived environmental sins of the automobile (Waldsterben, smog, etc.). Millions of West Germans during these decades worried about catastrophic accidents at nuclear power plants or fretted about annihilation in a nuclear war. In this context, the bicycle appeared to be a benign form of technology, its use a symbolic and substantive response to the dangers of the age. It possessed virtues that came to epitomize a new green sensibility: small, light, cheap, silent, humane, and appropriately scaled to urban living. Unlike the car, the bicycle required no energy aside from that provided by its user, a fact that resonated in the context of the oil crises of the 1970s. Unlike nuclear power plants, the bicycle was also harmless. There was no chance of a bicycle meltdown. For these reasons, during the 1970s and into the 1980s, the bicycle became closely identified with the environmental movement.
The second issue involved the limited space available to cities. During the 1970s the bicycle came to be seen by its advocates as a means to address the *autogerechte Stadt*’s enormous consumption of urban space. The bicycle required a very different type of urban transportation system than the car. Because it was small, the bike was suited to preserving the fine-grained scale of the built, historic city. Because it was a human-powered vehicle, it could help set the outer limits of the city. Unlike the motorist, the cyclist could only ride so far before time constraints and physical exhaustion began to set in. This meant, in theory, that cities built around the bicycle could be dense, multifunctional, and small.

A third issue was political. To the urban reformers, the bicycle was a democratic piece of technology. It fit perfectly into their political critique of modern planning. Because the bicycle could be used by nearly everyone, including the very young, the very old, and the poor, making the world suitable for cycling came to be seen as a political program in addition to an environmental and architectonic one. Altering the streetscape to favor the bicyclist meant a reordering of the social order, upending the privileged status of the motorist—consistently viewed as a middle-aged wealthy male—in favor of children, teens, the elderly, women, and people who could not afford a car. Riding a bike—and advocating for it in the public realm—became a kind of social and political statement during this period, a simultaneous rejection of the luxury and status that the car conferred upon the motorist and an embrace of an alternative form of living centered around smaller scale, modest living, and slower pace. This democratic impulse was a main reason why bicycling often joined walking in the reformers’ rhetoric and programmatic goals.
A final issue involved public health. Cycling’s resurgence owed much to changing cultural notions of the body and health during the 1970s and 1980s. Bicycling fit easily into an emergent sporting paradigm. The fitness boom that began in the late 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic accompanied the second wave of interest in the bicycle, overlapping and strengthening the first that had begun earlier in the decade for environmental and architectonic reasons. The marketing of the bicycle increased as a result, with manufacturers linking the bicycle to the new ideal of the fit (and young) body.

This chapter addresses these issues in the following sections. A short first section covers the history of the bicycle to the early 1970s. The second begins in 1972 and provides an intensive case study of how Erlangen, a small city in Bavaria, increased bicycling via an array of innovative measures. The third section expands the analysis to West Germany as a whole, addressing the effects of the intense interest in the bicycle that accompanied the second wave during the late 1970s.

_A brief history of the bicycle_

After a period of invention, experimentation, and technical evolution during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the bicycle thereafter became a device for popular use. It enjoyed wide popularity during the 1890s, again between the two world wars, and once more during the immediate postwar years. The American and European experiences were similar until the first decades of the twentieth century, when they started to diverge. Earlier mass motorization in the United States meant an earlier decline in bicycle use. The bicycle was still a device for everyday use in Germany until the
postwar era, after which it fell out of favor with both planners and the ordinary citizen. During the 1950s and 1960s, planners lumped it into the same category as the pedestrian and the street tram, viewing it as an impediment to motorized traffic flow. Ordinary citizens abandoned it in favor of the automobile, the ultimate consumer good of the postwar era.

Historians who write about the bicycle concentrate on a small number of subjects and periods. Thematically, the literature tends to concentrate on the cultural and social aspects of bicycling, on cycling technology, and on the economic trajectory of the cycling industry. For instance, historians often focus on the different groups who participated in cycling (women, the working class, and so on) and on the significance of this participation. Historians also have been enamored with the bicycle’s technical evolution, in particular during the nineteenth century when the machine was in its infancy. There is also much disparity in the periods covered by historians. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are favorites for study, the interwar period less so. Recent European cycling history (after 1945) has received very little attention.²

The 1890s is a favorite decade of study, because of the coincidence of important technical developments with the emergence of mass cycling.³ During the decade, the technical development of the modern or “safety” bicycle (as we know it now, a chain-

driven vehicle with two wheels of equal size) was an important spur to intense popular interest in cycling. Despite the fact that the first bicycle prototypes were invented in the early nineteenth century, it had taken half a century of technical improvements before the bicycle could evolve from a curiosity for thrill-seekers to a device suitable for most people. By the 1890s, mass-production techniques also allowed manufacturers to reduce prices to the point where the bicycle was in reach of the middle class. Cycling therefore became a popular pastime in both Europe and the United States, enabling many living in the burgeoning industrial cities to escape to the countryside. This phenomenon in turn gave rise to a number of social controversies, including gender relations. Women could not ride a bicycle easily wearing the cumbersome dresses of the period, for instance, forcing them to wear garments allowing greater bodily movement. But the new clothing proved controversial, partly because it allowed women to have greater independence. Moreover, because these garments hugged the female body, they challenged conventional attitudes about female physicality and of proper gender roles. In similar fashion, the bicycle enabled unmarried couples to take long, unchaperoned excursions in rural areas. Some considered this scandalous, as it provided greater opportunity for sexual relations.

With rapid increases in ridership, cycling manufacturers ballooned in number and size. Several of these, such as the Pope firm in the United States and Raleigh in Great Britain, became important industrial manufacturers. These firms joined with cycling clubs to form the first powerful lobbies for improved (paved) roads. This was of particular importance in the United States, where their efforts yielded some success in inducing state governments to take the paving issue seriously. It also contributed to the emergence of the first transportation engineering departments.
Ironically, considering the automobile’s central role in marginalizing the bicycle in the twentieth century, the bicycling industry and lobby helped create the conditions that proved favorable to motorization. The bicycling industry’s technical achievements were critical to the initial development of the automobile. The earliest automobile manufacturers relied on parts and production methods developed by bicycling firms, a reality that manufacturers such as Carl Benz freely admitted. In addition, bicycle lobbies occasionally became important road improvement lobbies, before the automobile industry organized to do the same. They wanted better roads for similar reasons as the later auto lobbies, to provide better conditions for their pursuit. In similar fashion to automobile clubs and associations, bicycling clubs during the early decades of mass cycling marketed the machine to the public in terms of sport and leisure, emphasizing the speed, beauty, and power of the bike.  

During the early decades of the twentieth century, cycling patterns began to diverge in Europe and the United States, establishing trends which are visible today. In America, the cycling industry began to suffer after the 1890s. There, bicycling fell victim to its status as a fad. Part of the explanation was the rise of the automobile, which in the United States started becoming a mass consumer good by the second decade of the twentieth century. The bicycle was never established as a device for mass urban transportation and the cycling industry never fully recovered from this decline. In Europe, however, things were different. In contrast to the United States, the bicycle managed to make the transition from a plaything for people with money to a practical device for use by almost everyone, including members of the working class. Bicycling manufacturers,

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4 Kurt Möser provides an outstanding summary of this history. See Möser, Geschichte des Autos, 22-8. See also Merki, Verkehrsgeschichte, 52-3.
including American manufacturers who exported to Europe, continued to reduce the price of the machine. After 1900, this meant that larger numbers of workers could afford to buy one. During the first half of the twentieth century, bicycling managed to establish itself as an important means of daily urban transportation. The machine remained a viable travel option in part because the onset of mass motorization was delayed in Europe relative to the United States. Suburbanization brought on by the car had also not yet occurred, which meant that cities remained compact and distances between destinations were short. These were favorable conditions for cycling. By the start of World War II, there were some 45 million bicycles in use in Europe.\(^5\)

Although urbanites made great use of the bicycle all over the continent during these decades, cycling patterns varied. As traffic studies were in their infancy, travel data for the bicycle was not as widespread or reliable as historians would prefer. However, it was clear that some cities had more cycling than others. Cities such as Hannover, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen might have had mode splits well over fifty percent ("mode split" is planning parlance for share of all trips taken by a type or "mode" of transportation; thus, over half of all trips taken within these cities were by bicycle). These cities had enormous numbers of bicycles. In 1934, for example, Copenhageners owned around 400,000 bicycles, enough for most residents of the city.\(^6\) Even those European cities on the lower end of the scale likely had splits of twenty to thirty percent. A number of factors explained this variance, including residential density levels, size of


city, and type and extent of public transit. Better public transit service could substitute for bicycling because it offered transportation within the same short range (perhaps five or six kilometers) as the bicycle.7

Culture, too, played a role. The Dutch developed an affinity for the bicycle that was unmatched almost everywhere else. Cycling advocates there managed to link the machine to Dutch perceptions of their country’s strengths. Cyclists and cyclists’ associations, for instance, married the bicycle to personal independence and control of the body, two virtues held in high esteem by the populace. The Netherlands’ massive cycling lobby, the Royal Dutch Cycling Club (ANWB), helped to tie the machine to the nation’s collective political ideals by labeling it “the horse of democracy.”8 The organizational strength of the ANWB also contributed. Like counterparts elsewhere, it was a significant road lobbyist. During the interwar period, the ANWB was more important than the country’s automobile lobby in exerting pressure on the Dutch government for improved roads.9

Germans were never as enamored with the bicycle as the Dutch, but the machine maintained a high degree of popularity throughout the interwar years. German production tripled during the 1920s, reaching three million bicycles annually by 1927. By the end of the decade the average price of a bicycle had decreased to about a month’s pay for the average factory worker, allowing millions to afford a machine and enabling mode splits on par with many other European cities. Berlin, for example, had splits as high as 25% by the early 1930s. The Nazis had a complicated relationship with the bicycle. They

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8 Ebert, “Cycling towards the nation,” 362
expanded the country’s network of cycling paths while lending visible support to the automobile as the mass transportation device of the future. The Autobahn and the Volkswagen were tangible signs of their interest in the car, as were traffic regulations designed to preference the motorist over other users of Germany’s roads and streets. Despite the regime’s (and Hitler’s) preference for the car, however, motorization in Germany remained modest during the 1930s. The car remained too expensive for most people. The bicycle, in contrast, not only continued to provide a cheap form of transportation but required little in the way of materials and energy. With the onset of war and resulting shortages of nearly everything essential to operating motor vehicles, the bicycle became an even greater necessity. It enjoyed spectacular levels of use, with mode splits estimated as high as 65% in German cities during the conflict.10

In the first postwar years, bicycling remained a prominent mode of transportation in Europe. Economic dislocation forced millions to adapt to difficult circumstances. The bicycle’s ready availability, cheap operating costs, and zero fuel needs allowed it retain its attraction. However, after the economies of the American-led alliance in Europe recovered from the war, a new era of mass motorization began. The automobile became the principal cause of a long and dramatic decline in bicycle use. This occurred throughout Western Europe. Even in cities like Copenhagen, which during the first half of the century had established itself as a cycling city of the first rank, the bicycle lost its status as the dominant form of travel.11

West Germany was a part of this process. From the middle years of the 1950s, millions of workers were able to afford an automobile for the very first time in German

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10 Hochmuth, Kommt Zeit, 95-107.
11 Ministry of Transport (Denmark), Bicycle in Denmark, 6-7.
They were eager to dispense the bicycle in favor of the car, the shiny status symbol of the new mass consumer society. For their part, planners who were eager to modernize West Germany’s cities marginalized the bicycle. Between the 1950s and 1970s, bicycling and bicyclists almost disappeared from their thinking. A bias toward the automobile, coupled with dramatic increases in auto ownership, turned cycling into a frivolity. Serious people drove cars, or so most thought at the time. In contrast, the bicycle came to be seen as a toy for children and teens or sporting equipment for adults. In any case, it was regarded as unsuitable for daily life in cities.

Almost everywhere, planners reduced or eliminated funding for bicycling infrastructure, decreasing the number and length of cycling paths and all other forms of investment for bicyclists. Simultaneously, a dramatic increase in the number of motor vehicles on the road endangered the bicyclist in traffic, and more cars on more roads soon began to produce fewer cyclists. Cycling, like walking, became unattractive once small numbers of bicycles were forced to share road space with many automobiles, particularly at high speeds. The privileging of the automobile during these decades led to a sharp decrease in the number of cyclists and therefore of cycling’s mode split in cities large and small. In Vienna, mass motorization combined with planners’ neglect led to a dramatic decline in bicycling use. As in West Germany, Viennese planners were interested in maximizing the street system’s capacity for motorized traffic. In so doing, they chipped away at the infrastructure for all other modes. Pedestrians, for example, had to make do with smaller sidewalks and were forced to cross busy streets by traversing underground passages. Cyclists had it worse, as cycling-specific facilities almost disappeared. By the 1970s, the city’s network of bicycling paths was reduced to a grand total of eleven.
kilometers, most of it in parks and other green spaces rather than along roadways. Travel studies showed that only one percent of the city’s residents commuted to work using the bicycle.¹²

There were a few exceptions during the 1960s. The college town of Davis, California, was a very rare American example where planners decided to make bicycling a priority using innovative research methods.¹³ In Europe, the Dutch continued their interest in the bike, although even there mass motorization threatened the bike’s place atop the transport hierarchy. Yet there were portents of things to come. Amsterdam provided an example during the 1960s of how youthful protest movements envisioned the bicycle as part of their social critique. The Provo group, consisting of young men who were disenchanted with the smugness of Dutch bourgeois society, was the most famous of Amsterdam’s opposition movements during the decade. The Provos became famous around the world for their skillful and entertaining blend of street “happenings,” irreverence toward all forms of authority (especially the police), and creative media manipulation.

The Provos also leveled serious criticism at Dutch society, including attacks that had a basis in ecology. Among the most influential of these was the White Bicycles campaign, now regarded as the world’s first bicycle-sharing proposal. In “Provocation #5,” issued in July 1965, the group broadcast its proposal. “The asphalt terror of the

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motorized bourgeoisie has lasted long enough,” it read. “The white bicycle is the first free communal transport. … [It] is a symbol of simplicity and cleanliness in contrast to the vanity and foulness of the authoritarian car.”

This document became the first of other “white plans”: a White Chimney Plan brought attention to air pollution; a White Women Plan presaged the women’s movement. In so doing, for a brief time the Provos managed to turn the bicycle into a high profile symbol of resistance to authority. The Provo movement was significant partly because it gave birth to wider forms of protest in the city, including a squatter’s movement that during the 1970s and 1980s managed to stop the demolition of inner-city neighborhoods for road construction and urban renewal schemes and thereby ended any remaining ambition to rebuild the city center around the automobile.

But the Provos and their White Bicycles campaign were rarities during the 1960s. The real push to incorporate the machine into the urban critics’ agenda emerged during the following two decades, in tandem with rising worries about planning’s effects on the natural and built environments. Over the course of these decades, the urban reformers developed a sophisticated case for the bicycle. Their argument progressed as follows. First, next to the legs, the bicycle was the most accessible means of transportation for the greatest number of people. The bicycle’s low price gave the device an enormous

14 Richard Kempton, Provo: Amsterdam’s Anarchist Revolt (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2007), 47-8.
15 Mak, Amsterdam, 284-307; Casciato, That City is Mine!, 209-29; Kempton, Provo, 47-50.
advantage relative to the far more expensive car. Even during the postwar nadir for bicycling in West Germany, bicycle sales outstripped automobile sales. Yet the strong prejudice in favor of the automobile in West Germany was due in part to the mistaken idea that most people owned a car. This was not true; despite increasing motorization, only a minority of individuals in West Germany owned an automobile while a majority owned a bicycle (in 1977, the figures were 29% and 60%, respectively). In contrast, the bicycle was far more democratic, because it could be owned and used by far more people who could not drive for financial or personal reasons. These included children, teens, the elderly, the poor, and so on. The reformers’ second argument was environmental. The bicycle used no energy, save for the rider’s exertions. During the 1970s this was a powerful argument for two obvious reasons—urban air pollution and the oil supply both had become major political issues in West Germany and Western Europe. (The 1973 oil embargo prompted the Dutch government, for instance, to implement more policies to increase bicycling in its cities.) In addition, the machine was almost noiseless. This feature might seem to be an odd thing to highlight, but the bicycle’s lack of noise was a major selling point. During the 1970s and 1980s, West Germans considered noise pollution in cities, including that from automobiles, to be a serious public health hazard.

The reformers’ third argument fit into their spatial assessment of the *autogerechte Stadt*. Whereas lots of cars required enormous quantities of space, the bicycle required comparatively little. The bicycle occupied perhaps a quarter or a fifth the amount of space as a car. This meant that all of the infrastructure necessary for moving and storing bicycles could be a small fraction of that required by the automobile. The cyclist’s small size and agility relative to the motorist gave him or her an advantage in negotiating dense
urban settings. Thus the bicycle was a means of travel that conserved urban space rather
than consumed it. This became more important the closer one got to the city center,
where space reached a premium. West German planners, the reformers asserted, had
given away much of this valuable space to automobiles during the postwar era.

Finally, advocates claimed that West Germany was ripe for more bicycling. This
claim was based on more than wishful thinking. It rested on the first nationwide,
 systemic traffic studies to focus on non-motorists, which were conducted in the mid-to-
late 1970s. Until then, transportation planners had bothered to collected data only on
adults traveling by automobile or public transit. Non-motorists and children were
neglected. This intellectual bias told much about the status of these groups within the
planning profession. As a consequence of the critics’ heightened interest in the effects of
mass motorization on West German cities, researchers began including these groups in
their studies. One of these, Werner Brög of Munich, conducted a series of rigorous
surveys in the mid-1970s that yielded surprising results. When children and non-
motorists were included in the surveys, data indicated that about four trips in ten in West
Germany were by foot or on bike.17 This was an enormous tally. Moreover, such studies
also suggested a huge latent demand for bicycling. Respondents indicated that they
wanted to cycle but in most cases could not, or would not, because of safety concerns or
cultural constraints. This demand could be tapped if planners created the physical and
legal conditions to induce cycling.18 Combined with the real experiences of the small

17 Werner Brög, “Ausgewählte empirische Ergebnisse zur Fahrradnutzung in der Bundesrepublik
Deutschland und einige methodische Anmerkungen zur Erhebung entsprechender Verhaltensdaten,” in 1.
Internationaler Fahrradkongress VELO/CITY, ed. Bundesminister für Verkehr, Verkehrspolitische
Grundsatzabteilung (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Bundesminister für Verkehr, 1981), 49-51. A very brief
summary of this history is contained in Schmucki, Traum, 65-6.
number of West German cities that had attempted to build a cycling culture, such considerations encouraged advocates that the time was right for a nationwide renaissance of the bicycle.

**Cycling as local politics: Erlangen after 1972**

The small Bavarian city of Erlangen offers an example of how one city placed the bicycle at the center of its transportation planning. The city’s aggressive promotion of the machine as a practical form of transportation predated the mass bicycling culture that began forming in the late 1970s. It was one of a handful of cities in West Germany and Western Europe during the early and middle years of the 1970s that recognized the value of urban cycling. These were cities that were concentrated in northern and northwestern Europe, including Bremen and Münster (West Germany), Västerås, Uppsala, and Malmö (Sweden), Odense (Denmark), and Delft, Tilburg, and Groningen (the Netherlands). While a very few were larger cities, such as Bremen or Amsterdam, most tended to be smaller in size, thus ideal laboratories for experimentation.\(^\text{19}\) After 1972, Erlangen invested in infrastructural improvements to encourage high rates of bicycle riding. These included dramatic expansions of the city’s cycling path network, the integration of bike lanes into the very fabric of the city’s streets and plazas, and an array of other measures to sustain a local cycling culture. The combined effect of these measures yielded the desired result: despite the doubling of motorization in Erlangen (in 1970 there was about one car for every four residents, in 1990 the ratio was one in two), the share of trips taken

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by bicycle within the city limits also doubled, from 14% in 1974 to 27% in 1990.\textsuperscript{20} Erlangen’s success allowed the city to claim the status as a \textit{Radlstadt} (cycling city) of the first order, a reputation that the city government worked hard to cultivate.

Erlangen sits roughly twenty kilometers northwest of Nuremberg and is today part of the Nuremberg-Fürth-Erlangen conurbation. Its founding around the eleventh century was driven by a favorable geographic position overlooking the Regnitz river and astride trade routes running north from Nuremberg and east from Frankfurt am Main. During the Thirty Years’ War, Erlangen found itself caught between the Swedish and Austrian armies and was put to the torch in 1632. In part to reverse the town’s subsequent economic misfortune, the Protestant margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth allowed French Huguenot refugees to settle in Erlangen following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. This decision had a number of far-reaching consequences. From a spatial perspective, the most important was the creation of a new town designed for the Huguenots. Laid out to the immediate south of the old city Erlangen, it became the effective hub of the conglomeration and, over the longer term, emerged as the modern city’s center. The new town was characterized by a formal, gridded street layout and a series of plazas, which were intended to enhance the visual and functional effects of the plan’s monumental architecture.\textsuperscript{21} During the twentieth century, Erlangen’s \textit{Innenstadt} was one of the best-preserved examples of baroque city planning in Germany, and its ordered streets and plazas became integral architectonic elements in the city’s experimentation with bicycle planning.

\textsuperscript{20} Stadtarchiv Erlangen (StE), file “Oberbürgermeister (Hrsg.): ‘Weitere Fortschreibung der Leitlinien zur Siedlungsentwicklung und zum Verkehr in Erlangen. Entwurf,’” April, 1995, 14, 17.
As was true of other cities in West Germany, Erlangen experienced a long boom after World War II that had important ramifications for the city’s development. Physically, Erlangen emerged from World War II almost untouched. It was neither bombed nor destroyed by street fighting. While city residents experienced the traumas of the immediate postwar period such as hunger and privation, they also benefited in one critical respect when Siemens decided to relocate research and production facilities from Berlin to Erlangen. Siemens became the driving force in the city’s phenomenal postwar growth and cemented the status of the electrical engineering, research, and manufacturing industries in the local economy. The result was unprecedented. “Thousands of apartments, thousands of jobs in offices and laboratories, entire districts were literally ‘conjured up out of thin air,’” wrote Volkmar Schardt, a longtime newspaper editor in Erlangen. As Siemens constructed large office and manufacturing facilities to the south of the Innenstadt, Erlangen’s university (now known as the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) created a technical faculty, siting its campus next to the Siemens complex. Over time the faculty would achieve a reputation as one of the best in Germany and contributed directly to the university’s rapid expansion, doubling the number of students from 1960 to 1970, to about 10,000. Together, Siemens and the university drove rapid growth in the city’s population, from 56,000 in 1950 to 99,000 in 1972, after which it stabilized.

Auto ownership and use during the 1950s and 1960s followed these trends. The city witnessed the motorization boom in much the same way and for much the same

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23 Pfeiffer, Erlangen, 183; Schardt “Wo Technologie geschmiedet wird,” 30.  
24 StE: file “Oberbürgermeister…”, 4.
reasons as other cities in West Germany. Increasing prosperity enabled a larger share of the populace to purchase an automobile. From 1954 through 1970, car ownership per capita increased eight-fold. The city’s growth, moreover, encouraged driving, because much of the new construction that was required to house all the newcomers was suburban. A good deal of this lay to the west of the city on the opposite side of the broad Regnitz valley. These patterns greatly increased the number of people who commuted in and out of the city center by car, a problem that the city encouraged in part by adding new bridges across the river.\(^{25}\) As also was true in other places, Erlangen’s street network could not support the enormous increase in traffic. Population growth, new suburban housing, and increasing motorization soon overwhelmed the roads that had been built during the 1950s to bypass the Innenstadt. During the 1960s, Erlangen’s transportation planners, following the pattern typical for the period, had developed a formal plan that focused exclusively on autos and auto-oriented development. Their solution was to expand the street network’s capacity, including plans to widen streets that ran through the historic district.\(^ {26}\)

This was the situation in 1972, when municipal elections brought the SPD candidate for mayor, Dietmar Hahlweg, into power. Hahlweg defeated the older and more experienced sitting mayor, Heinrich Lades of the CSU. A personable and capable figure, Hahlweg governed the city for the next 24 years. Under the guidance of Hahlweg and his chief deputy Dietmar Habermeier, Erlangen began a series of initiatives to shift


the city away from its increasing reliance on the automobile toward alternative modes of travel, the most important being the bicycle. From the beginning, these two individuals regarded the bicycle as an integral component of a larger vision for the city, which emphasized the livability of the city center, environmental protection, historic preservation, and spatially concentrated development.

The election results signified not just a partisan shift but, perhaps more importantly, a generational change as well. Hahlweg was 37 at the time of his election; Lades was 57. Hahlweg had embraced environmental protection and democratization; Lades had not. The change in leadership reflected the remarkable shifts that had occurred within the Erlangen SPD, which had witnessed a groundswell of participation as a younger cohort, driven by the social changes of the period, enlisted in the party in large numbers and began to demand changes within the party and the city administration. The turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s that had roiled local politics in cities like Munich also had had an impact even in little Erlangen. The extra-parliamentary and student movements had generated a burgeoning membership in the local Jusos chapter (SPD Jungsozialisten), for instance, and forced the issues of intra-party democratization and citizen engagement onto the party’s agenda. At the same time, the local party was made to confront the themes that animated the left, especially peace, environmental protection, and women’s equality.27

Hahlweg and Habermeier embodied this shift in Erlangen’s politics. They belonged to the same generation (Habermeier was just 34). Each had spent considerable

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time living away from Erlangen. Both had studied law in Munich and Hahlweg had spent a year at the University of Pittsburgh concentrating on urban renewal issues. By the time the two joined forces in the early 1970s, their thinking reflected their exposure to the problems that were then activating the urban reformers.

Habermeier had run as the Juso candidate for city council in the 1972 elections. In remarks prepared for a Jusos conference in Mannheim in April 1971, he had called for greater citizen participation in local government decision-making, citing the need for decentralized participation at the neighborhood level and in citizens’ forums. He attacked the car as a “status symbol” and argued that building cities around the needs of the motorist cost valuable recreational space, eroded the urban aesthetic, harmed human health, and damaged the natural environment through air pollution from exhaust. The Jusos, he wrote, demanded the removal of cars from the Innenstadt, the construction and privileging of transit systems, and the creation of pedestrian zones.

During two election campaigns (he had also run for mayor in 1971), Hahlweg argued that the biggest danger to the city was its rapid development. By this he meant the consequences of the city’s growth, in particular the erosion of Erlangen’s quality of life brought about by the swift increase in automobile use. Lades had embraced the continued expansion of the street system and its capacity to move automobiles. In contrast, Hahlweg emphasized maintaining the long-term viability and livability of the city center, on the one hand, and for rethinking where and how to build new suburbs on the other. He put together a bundle of proposals outlining his view that the Innenstadt ought to be made

attractive for living and shopping and that the key was solving the city’s transportation problems via emphasizing transit, walking, and bicycling and discouraging automobile use. Hahlweg seized upon the bicycle as a symbol of the direction he wanted to take the city, an idea became a part of his campaign for mayor. Hahlweg passed around campaign literature showing him on a bicycle, surrounded by other cyclists (figure 3). 

In his inaugural address to the newly elected, SPD-controlled city council on July 5, 1972, Hahlweg elaborated this vision for the city. Under the umbrella concept of “humane city planning,” he observed that while Erlangen’s development since the war had been positive in many respects and allowed its citizens to live in material comfort, it had also showed that growth could result in a deteriorating natural environment and a lower quality of life. Every year, he insisted, Erlangen had experienced more noise, decreasing air quality, more traffic jams, fewer parks and playgrounds, and the clearing of the remaining woods in and around the city. He underscored the importance of public investment in schools, hospitals, playgrounds, and amenities to ensure that a wealthy society did not impoverish its common weal. Hahlweg insisted that the solution to Erlangen’s growth-related problems lay not just in changing public policies, but also in altering the way in which the city interacted with its citizens. Too often the citizen of Erlangen had been “confronted with completed plans, without also having been presented with alternatives.”

These views reflected trends that were taking root elsewhere, particularly under Munich’s Hans-Jochen Vogel. Hahlweg made direct references to Vogel’s efforts in

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environmental protection and democratization, themes that Hahlweg paired as synonymous. Hahlweg believed that Erlangen needed institutions which would connect the lay citizen with the planning specialist. He pointed to the success of the Munich Forum, a body that he believed allowed citizens to express views that would otherwise remain silent. Here he assumed that the typical citizen would condemn auto-centric development. Further, Hahlweg referenced the conclusions reached at the Deutscher Städtetag conference held in Munich in May 1971, organized by Vogel under the “Save our cities now!” slogan. This conference had emphasized the need to solve the urban transportation “chaos” that had caused smog and noise and damaged human health. Hahlweg’s pointed references to the need for heavy public investment rested upon the same distinction between private extravagance and public want that the American economist John Kenneth Galbraith had drawn in his keynote address to the Munich conference.\footnote{Deutscher Städtetag, \textit{Rettet unsere Städte jetzt!}}

Under Hahlweg’s direction the city thus moved quickly toward the model that he laid out during the campaign. Spatially, this contained two major components. First, he sought to build alternatives for traveling between the city and its suburbs. This goal would be accomplished through improvements in bus service and the construction of a far-reaching network of cycling paths. Second, he wanted to redirect motorized traffic around the city center through a system of ring roads, and prioritize the core for bicyclists, pedestrians, and buses. The rationale behind this idea was similar to that behind the pedestrian zone, but the analogy was not perfect. Automobiles were never banished from the city center, the scale of the idea dwarfed that of the typical \textit{Fussgängerzone}, and the model relied upon an interlocking web of infrastructure.
designed with the non-motorist in mind—bus-only travel lanes, a dense network of
cycling paths, several small pedestrian zones, and traffic calming. The aim of these many
small-scale measures was to reduce auto travel and hence noise and air pollution, which
would revitalize the Innenstadt.\textsuperscript{34} After the city council approved these measures, the
administration created a working group under Habermeier’s direction, consisting of
representatives from all relevant departments. Over the next fifteen years the group
oversaw the doubling of the cycling path network’s length, making the network in the
city center denser, and extending its reach to the city’s many suburbs (figure 4).

At first, the city’s efforts proved insufficient to achieve the goals set out by the
administration. At the midpoint of the mayor’s first term, the city commissioned a study
that forecasted continuing growth in automobile ownership and use. Rather than
accepting the forecast as inevitable and returning to policies with the car at the center, the
city instead drafted a general transportation plan that increased the existing emphasis on
alternative modes. “It must be tried, with all defensible means, to shift traffic volume to
public transit, to the bicycle, and to pedestrian traffic.”\textsuperscript{35} It asserted in its key section on
the plan’s goals. The new plan called for more aggressive measures beyond just
increasing the city’s network of cycling paths.\textsuperscript{36}

Habermeier’s working group attended to the fine detail necessary for this work.
They looked at the problem from the standpoint of the cyclist, a task made easier by the
fact that Habermeier, like Hahlweg, was himself an enthusiastic cyclist. His expertise

\textsuperscript{34} Archiv Dietmar Hahlweg: Dietmar Hahlweg, “Verkehrskonzept für die Innenstadt,” Erlanger

\textsuperscript{35} Archiv Dietmar Hahlweg: Stadt Erlangen, Stadtentwicklungsplan Erlangen: Fachplan Verkehr.

\textsuperscript{36} Archiv Dietmar Habermeier: Rob van der Plas, “In Erlangen wird Radfahren grossgeschrieben,”
encouraged the group to consult with cycling groups, such as the local branch of the ADFC (Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad Club, a national cycling organization similar to the ADAC), and to contract with cyclists to give information about problems in the city’s network of bike paths. The group focused on closing the gaps in this network, trouble spots that inconvenienced or endangered cyclists. As intersections, for instance, often put the cyclist at a high risk of accident, the city invested in special traffic lights that gave cyclists preference over motorists. The group also focused on improving the quality of the cycling path network. Here Erlangen’s baroque, gridded street system offered a big advantage. Erlangen’s wide streets allowed the city to put much of its cycling network on the street surface itself rather than on sidewalks. Putting Radwege on the street surface was uncommon at the time. Cities had started building cycling paths as early as the 1920s, part of the modernist program to separate the travel modes in the interest of movement efficiency. Most cities had simply shuffled bicycles onto sidewalks, thereby creating more street space for automobile use. There, the cyclist and the pedestrian battled over a few feet of sidewalk. This was dangerous for all parties. Pedestrians risked being run over by cyclists traveling at higher speeds. Cyclists had to be careful to avoid hitting both pedestrians and inanimate objects such as light poles, street signs, and mailboxes. Erlangen’s approach proved to be more durable. As research started to show that on-street paths were safer, cycling advocates began shifting their emphasis in other cities, pushing local administrations to adopt the same solution.37

Habermeier’s working group used unconventional methods wherever necessary. It created a system of signs to guide the cyclist through the city. These directed cyclists to

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specific bike routes and major destinations within the city, in much the same way that a highway network alerted motorists. Parks and other green spaces were incorporated into this system, giving cyclists connections and shortcuts through the city that motorists did not enjoy. During winter months, when cycling rates usually fell, the city tried to keep the entire path system cleared of snow and ice. The working group enacted traffic rules that favored cyclists. It allowed them to ride through the city’s pedestrian zones, on lanes reserved for buses, and against traffic on one-way streets. The city also recognized that success could be achieved only if the city’s culture changed, so cyclists were given equal treatment in the flow of traffic. Only then would the process perpetuate itself, as cycling would no longer be considered an activity undertaken by teenagers, university students, and the eccentric. The measures to promote a new cycling culture were fashioned as strategic complements to infrastructural investments. The city created public bicycle repair centers, operated a cheap bike loan program, distributed free maps of the cycling network, offered free bicycles to city employees for use during the workday, and held annual bicycling festivals. Erlangen was ahead of trends, at least compared with most West German cities. Many of the design measures were against common practice, and in some cases they violated the national street code (Strassenverkehrsordnung). The experiment took an enormous amount of work, sustained attention to detail, “and above all the courage to try unconventional solutions,” in Habermeier’s phrasing.³⁸

There were two practical results. First, cycling in Erlangen increased. Much of the increase took place during the first decade of Hahwleg’s administration, during the period

of intense policy changes in the city. In 1974, 15% of all weekday trips were by bicycle. Six years later, the figure was 26%. Erlangen’s residents took one in four trips by bicycle, well more than twice the national average. Gains were highest in the city center, an expected result given the amount of infrastructural investment in that part of the city. The increase in cycling came at the expense of trips by car (a four percentage point drop over the same timeframe, from 39% to 35%) and on foot (33% to 26%). This shift occurred despite rising auto ownership in Erlangen over the same period.\textsuperscript{39}

The second result was a change in the city’s national and international image. The very success of the city’s bicycling efforts generated a fair amount of attention. Over time, Erlangen became known as a \textit{Radlstadt} of the first rank. Surveys rated Erlangen as the best cycling city in West Germany. Erlangen achieved a similar reputation abroad, recognized with a few other European cities as being especially cycling friendly. Journalists and planners wanted to understand how the city achieved its success. Cycling advocates wanted to sell Erlangen’s story as proof that such a transformation could be accomplished.\textsuperscript{40}

The bicycle was one element of the city’s attempts to market itself as an environmental success story. Habermeier was particularly active; as the head of the city’s bicycle working group, he addressed city planners, bicycling enthusiasts, and environmental groups around the country and, as the city’s success became known, elsewhere in Europe. As a dedicated cyclist, he joined activist circles, in particular the


ADFC, where he served on the national executive committee. As was true of other urban critics, Habermeier thus had a dual role—as an advocate and the administrator of Erlangen’s cycling program—and crossed between these two spheres with fluidity. Over time his participation in bicycling conferences became routine, his presentations becoming different versions of the same story. The message was that Erlangen’s success was achievable in other cities that had the will and vision to pursue aggressive cycling programs over the long term.  

Erlangen’s transformation was assisted by several factors. Its small size helped, because distances were within an acceptable bicycling range for most people. In addition, Erlangen benefited from the presence of a university. Here a large body of students and faculty was predisposed to bicycle riding, for financial or ideological reasons; before 1972 bicycle riding for daily travel appears to have been already higher than in neighboring Nuremberg and Fürth.

But in Erlangen’s case these factors cannot alone explain its success. It was true that Erlangen was full of faculty and students because the university was an important and established institution. But the university was neither the largest nor the most important organization in the city. That distinction went to Siemens. Of the city’s roughly eighty thousand jobs as of the early 1990s, some 42,000 were in the industrial sector.


Siemens continued to be Erlangen’s most important firm, employing roughly 75% of the city’s industrial jobs or greater than thirty thousand. By way of comparison, the university had some 21,000 students. Erlangen was more company town than college town.43 Erlangen’s success also was not just a function of its smaller physical size. It was the case that smaller cities, in West Germany and elsewhere in Europe, tended to have higher cycling rates. But only a very few similarly sized cities in West Germany—Münster, for example—had rates approaching Erlangen’s mode split for bicycles. Even a small city like Lower Saxony’s Göttingen, well known for its commitment to protecting its inner city from automobile traffic, had cycling rates less than half that of Erlangen in 1981. (Göttingen’s pedestrian rates, however, were much higher.)44 Local policies were therefore key to shaping the outcome.

The explanation for Erlangen’s success must include the political climate that gave rise to the city’s bike-friendly policies. Erlangen’s political landscape in the 1970s and 1980s was fractured into multiple and overlapping elements that resist simplistic generalizations. It contained not just the democratic-socialist left but also a competitive center right and, by the late 1970s, two legitimate minority parties, the FDP and the Greens. The city had a long history of industrial politics, which had split Erlangen along familiar lines. Parties on the left (with the SPD being the most important by far in Erlangen through the twentieth century) represented the interests of Erlangen’s workers in the electrical and textile industries, while those on the right (after the war, the CSU) represented the interests of the city’s major industrial employers.

44 Data from Apel, Stadtverkehrsplanung, 251, 281.
The political climate fluctuated between different forms of left and right over the postwar period. Since 1946, the SPD and the CSU had alternated in the mayor’s office. The SPD’s Michael Poeschke governed from 1946 to 1959, after which the CSU’s Lades began his tenure. Erlangen’s voters proved fickle in other elections as well, at times voting in one party for local office while sending representatives from the other to the Land or Bund legislatures. While Hahlweg and the SPD enjoyed a long run together, the party enjoyed an absolute majority in the city council only once, during Hahlweg’s first term as mayor (1972 through 1978). The generational shifts of the late 1960s and early 1970s unsettled the politics of the SPD in any case, and the emergence of the Greens by the late 1970s siphoned younger voters away from the Social Democrats. As the CSU never trailed the SPD by many votes in the city council, that party’s objections always had to be taken seriously.45

The most important political schism concerned the automobile. The dramatic suburban growth of the 1950s and 1960s meant that many of the people who worked in the city center continued to commute by car from outside. This group provided the CSU with a reliable constituency. Hahlweg found it best to demonstrate that his alternative program, including his bicycling measures, had support outside the SPD-led city council.

“There are difficult people, which is taxing for us,” Habermeier once said in an interview. “But there are also spirits that we call on. We should actually be happy that, in this city, there is a citizen’s initiative for and against everything. But fortunately there are none against the bicycle.”46 The mayor could rely on groups that favored his policies. The city thus partnered with environmental groups that supported bicycling, for instance with

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45 Schweigert and Treuheit, eds., ..., dass der Mensch, 229, 236-8.
Bund-Naturschutz in Bayern, which had operated the city’s bike loan program, the
Erlanger Alternativ-Gruppe gegen Atomkraft (Erlangen Alternative Group Against
Nuclear Power), which helped establish the city’s bicycling repair coop, and the Erlanger
Radlerinitiative (Erlangen Cycling Initiative), a citizens’ initiative boasting a large
membership. In July 1979 Habermeier created one of the first branches of the ADFC,
which supported the city’s efforts in a number of respects, including the organization and
distribution of the city’s comprehensive bicycling maps. Finally, neighborhood citizens’
initiatives supported the city’s plans, particularly those involving traffic calming and
pedestrian zones in specific neighborhoods.⁴⁷

Despite this, auto-oriented development remained an important political topic.
Throughout the period the CSU pushed for additional bridges over the Regnitz, a
program that Lades had embraced while mayor. Siemens executives and motorists voiced
their opinion, either through the CSU or directly to the city, that the city’s policies were
anathema to commuters. Retailers expressed concern that pedestrian zones and traffic-
calmed streets limited automobile access, and thereby customers, to the Innenstadt. These
issues came to a head in 1986, when the SPD and its coalition partner, the Greens, could
not agree on fiscal policy. Hahlweg took the dramatic step of allying with the CSU to
obtain the votes he needed in the council, but he had to agree to commission an
independent report on the city’s transportation planning. Business concerns, given voice
in the council by the CSU, charged that the city had a policy of hostility to motorists.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ StE, file I.21.F.1: Monika Wahl, “Vorbereitung eines Ausstellungsteils zur Fahrradgeschichte in
Nachrichten (June 15, 1982), unpaginated. Archiv Hans-Henning von Winning: brochure “Radwege in
⁴⁸ Helmut Pfister and Wolfgang Vogel, “Global denken—kommunal handeln. Kommunal Umweltpolitik
am Beispiel infrastruktueller Ver- und Entsorgung in Erlangen,” in Hopfinger, ed., Franken, 185;
The expert group contained representatives from both ends of the spectrum. It included two esteemed planners, Karl-Heinz Schaechterle, ADAC’s favorite transportation planner, and Gerd Albers. Expecting that the group would deliver a report confirming its views, the CSU was disappointed. The experts failed to confirm the ideal of the autogerechte Stadt. “There is no pure auto-city, and there is no pure cyclist-city,” Albers wrote. “The entire system of ‘city traffic’ can only be a conglomeration made up of different modes that exist against and next to one another. And in this respect it was confirmed that there is no patent remedy for solving the urban traffic problem, that there is not one single remedy (thank God), and that is good.”

Albers’s statement reflected the extent to which transportation planning had changed in West Germany. Planners’ fixation on the automobile had begun to diminish. In contrast, the bicycle had risen in importance, at least to a level of respect sufficient to have planners include it in their discussions. Erlangen itself had had something to do with this shift. Dieter Apel, at the German Institute of Urban Affairs (DIfU, Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik), considered the city worthy of inclusion in his massive review of Europe’s leading cities in alternative transportation planning. (This was the study that focused on how some Swedish, Dutch, and Danish cities, in addition to a few others around Europe, had implemented policies to encourage transit, walking, and bicycling.) Erlangen, he wrote in conclusion, was West Germany’s distinguished cycling city, providing the best example of how to plan for the machine.

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50 Apel, Stadtverkehrsplanung, 316.
Cycling as national politics: West Germany after 1977

While Erlangen started its programs to encourage cycling in the early 1970s, most cities in West Germany did not. Popular interest in the bicycle had begun to increase during the early 1970s with the emergence of the mass environmental movement and the first oil crisis of 1973. But by the middle years of the decade, this interest was still confined to a minority of the population.

A combination of factors generated a second wave of interest in cycling that began late in the decade. High energy prices remained through the 1970s. So too did the environmental movement, which by middle of the 1970s was an established fixture in West Germany’s social landscape that was making a significant political statement in opposition to nuclear power. Urban environmentalists were also interested in the bicycle, incorporating it into their critique of transportation planning. But there were two key additional factors. The first accompanied the international fitness boom that began in the late 1970s. West Germans saw cycling as a way to acquire the slim and fit figure that had become the international standard for beauty. The second factor involved West German successes in international cycling, especially the exploits of young Dietrich “Didi” Thurau, the first German to have a realistic shot at winning the Tour de France. Thurau’s spectacular, if unsuccessful performance in the 1977 Tour generated intense public interest in professional cycling, as well as heightened media coverage of the event for several years thereafter.

These factors reinforced one another. The bicycling industry marketed cycling based on sport and fitness. Thurau’s performances caused West German sales of high-end
road bicycles to soar during the late 1970s; the British firm Raleigh’s trade team signed him for the 1977 season partly as a way to increase its presence in the burgeoning West German market.\textsuperscript{51} “The fitness movement, alternative lifestyles and the rise in gasoline costs got the German citizens onto their bicycles,” the \textit{Frankfurter Rundschau} asserted in explaining the sudden and spectacular increase in cycling. “In advertisements, the bicycle is the symbol of freedom, youth and leisure time, and politicians now love to climb onto bicycles in the presence of photo-ready press cameras—to use a (fashionable) word of the moment, the bicycle is ‘in’.”\textsuperscript{52}

The spike in popularity was a boon to those who had been seeking to reestablish the bike as a transportation option in West German cities. To its advocates the bicycle was considered a kind of miracle technology, offering an ideal combination of qualities that together could solve many of the problems besetting West German cities. The only fear among advocates was that the bike’s surge in popularity would prove to be fleeting. The omnipresent Heiner Monheim commented that while the newfound press attention was welcome, the media and the general public needed to be educated in the long history of urban bicycling. The implication was that this information would help prevent the bicycle from falling victim to the media cycle, being relegated once again to the margins of fashion.\textsuperscript{53} Recognizing that planners interested in cycling had a chance to capitalize on heightened interest, Monheim’s office in the federal planning ministry put together a


\textsuperscript{52} StAM, PZ 1016: “Neben den Füssen das am weitesten verbreitete Verkehrsmittel,” \textit{Frankfurter Rundschau}, June 18, 1980, unpaginated.

lengthy report on the subject in 1978. The contributors explained that the “boom” in cycling’s popularity had resulted from the increasing importance of environmentalism, ongoing high energy prices, interest in historic preservation, worries about traffic safety, and the success of Germany’s professional cyclists. Monheim argued that planners needed to take advantage of the situation by creating plans and programs that would make people want to cycle.54

The urban critics found their work enhanced during the second wave. The popularity of the bicycle increased their numbers and sense of what could be accomplished. What had been local or regional efforts became national ones. What had been national organizations soon became European ones. As these groups expanded into sophisticated organizational networks, the boundaries between politics, advocacy, and technical expertise became blurred. The individuals who led the effort often had several roles to play important roles in a host of organizations.

Citizens’ initiatives dedicated to promoting bicycling in cities began to spring up locally, in tandem with those initiatives seeking to redirect the trajectory of West German urban development in general. By the late 1970s, they existed nearly everywhere—in Essen, Kiel, Bonn, Munich, Frankfurt, Freiburg, Cologne, Heidelberg, and Karlsruhe among many other cities. Groups such as the Radlerinitiative Kassel, the Fahrradinitiative Mülheim, the Aktion Radfahren ohne Risiko (Oberursel, Hesse), the Bürgerinitiative Fussgänger- und Fahrradfreundliches Düsseldorf, the Fahrradinitiative Odenthal-Glöbusch (North Rhine-Westphalia), the Radlerinitiative Nürnberg, and the Bürgeraktion Umweltschutz Zentrales Oberrheingebiet Arbeitskreis Verkehr in Karlsruhe.

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54 Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, Fahrrad, 9, 13, 55.
were just a few of the hundreds of grassroots initiatives dedicated to pushing bicycling locally.\textsuperscript{55}

These groups at first coordinated their efforts informally, then on a far more formal basis. In 1977, planning began for the first “alternative” transportation congress, organized jointly by the West Tangent Citizens’ Initiative (BIW) in Berlin and the \textit{Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz} (BBU) in Bonn. The BIW had been at the center of citizen activism in West Berlin on all matters related to urban development, in particular road-building, and had developed a reputation for its aggressive and creative work among West Germany’s citizens’ initiatives. Its members treated the bicycle more as a personally, politically, and environmentally liberating device than a simple mode of transportation, and the bike figured prominently in members’ thinking. “We believe the bicycle to be the world’s best means of transportation,” wrote Michael Höppner, one of the resident cycling enthusiasts in the organization.\textsuperscript{56}

The alternative transportation congress, held in Berlin in April 1978, was conceived as the “beginning of a long-term, nationwide cooperation between citizens’ initiatives and environmental organizations on transportation problems,” and to that end it lived up to billing.\textsuperscript{57} It was a first attempt by this part of the environmental movement to mobilize nationally. Among other things the congress fathered the Transportation Working Group (AKV, \textit{Arbeitskreis Verkehr}), the citizens’ initiatives clearinghouse that focused on linkages between transportation and the environment. It organized subsequent

annual conferences and provided information through its exhaustive quarterly newsletter, the *Informations-Dienst Verkehr* (“Transportation Information Service”). While the AKV filled the clearinghouse role brilliantly, its problem was that the organization never had the resources to do much more than provide a forum for nationwide discussion about cycling.

The gap between organizational aspirations and capabilities had to be filled by other organizations instead. The most visible of these was the ADFC, which was founded in the cycling-friendly city of Bremen in April 1979. Jan Tebbe, its founder, believed that cyclists had no national advocacy group. He wanted a lobby strong enough to achieve the same kinds of rights and privileges that the ADAC had acquired for motorists in West Germany. Both the goals and structure of the ADFC reflected a particular view of how public policies were changed, but it differed from that held by many of the activists in citizens’ initiatives. While Tebbe shared the view that bureaucrats saw transportation problems from the motorist’s viewpoint (derisively called the “windshield perspective”), his solution was to create an organization that would be taken seriously by government agencies. Because Tebbe believed this role required a membership broader than the hard core of activists that had dominated citizens’ initiatives, the ADFC attempted to attract the casual cyclist. The organization evolved to the point where it offered an array of services to members, such technical support, tips, and discounts on cycling-themed holidays, all marketed through glossy newsletters and brochures. In this respect it copied the ADAC.58

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The founding of the ADFC presented a dilemma for many cycling advocates among the citizens’ initiatives. For those who subscribed to the ideals of activism and direct democracy, the citizens’ initiative was an emotional subject. They had trouble squaring their belief in the virtues of the decentralized, non-hierarchical model with the concentration of power and resources that the ADFC appeared to represent. An example was provided by the response of grassroots groups sharing the name of Green Cyclists (“Grüne Radler”). These operated independently in a number of cities across West Germany, with limited national cooperation. After the alternative transportation congress in 1978, members became more enthusiastic about building a nationwide network, but more to share ideas than to build an organization. The formation of the ADFC highlighted this dilemma and resulted in a schizophrenic reaction in the Green Cyclists groups. Recognizing that formal coordination had its advantages, in 1980 some members prepared to form a formal, national organization. “The cycling initiatives are popping up in West Germany like mushrooms,” gushed the bbu aktuell umweltmagazin in a story about these plans. “The rising number of active groups with, on the one hand, varying degrees of experience, and on the other hand, limited information and coordination, were at the heart of the decision to create a nationwide umbrella organization.”59 Soon, however, this attempt backfired, as local members became uncomfortable with the very notion of a national organization, which implied hierarchy and therefore a betrayal of participatory democracy. Members griped that such an organization would mirror the

ADFC, which in their minds represented a kind of “executive association” that would “paralyze” the democratic basis of the movement.60

The Green Cyclists’ criticism of the ADFC was accurate in some respects. Eventually a national Green Cyclists organization was created, but it turned out to be far weaker than the ADFC. Although both had local branches, the ADFC had a well-funded and effective national organization, giving its operations coherence. But during the early years of the ADFC, local members complained that the group was too centralized, with decisions at the national level made by an executive committee rather than the membership. On policy, too, cooperation between the ADFC and its local membership could be difficult.61

Such difficulties did not conceal the fact that by the early 1980s cycling advocates were building an effective national network. Their efforts also had begun to expand beyond West German boundaries. In 1980 Tebbe spearheaded the first VELO/CITY conference, an international initiative dedicated, as its name implied, to urban cycling. VELO/CITY then became the biggest bicycling conference series in Europe, meeting on a bi-annual basis in selected cities. By 1983 West German groups, including the ADFC and a local initiative in Kiel, had also laid the groundwork for the

ECF (European Cyclists Federation), the most important lobbying group for the bicycle within the European Community.62

The bicycling boom in West Germany caught much of the planning profession off guard, forcing cities to create or adapt programs in response to cycling’s popularity. Der Spiegel observed in June 1978 that city planners had long regarded cycling as the “left over refuse” of their profession. Planners, the magazine asserted, had “not yet realized that the Germans have been on a bicycle tour for quite some time.”63 Within city administrations the bicycle was endorsed as a means for getting out of the city into the countryside, a view that reflected ignorance of the long history of urban cycling in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Cities were reserved for cars, the occasional tram, and in spots the pedestrian, but cycling within the city was still considered an oddity.

Munich’s experience was typical. It had produced a rudimentary bicycling plan in 1973, focused on developing cycling paths at the edges of the city. This plan neglected the city center entirely (figure 5), an implicit admission that the bicycle was suitable for recreation in the countryside on weekends, but not for practical use in the center, as roadway space was simply too limited. But through the 1970s the city’s interest in the bicycle and cycling infrastructure grew. The general transportation plan that was passed in 1975 generically called for a wide-ranging network of cycling paths. Two years later, the administration had begun to take notice of the trend toward everyday cycling in the city. The administration summarized the situation in September 1977:

“Over the last few years, bicycling has perceptibly grown. This includes commuter and shopping traffic, as well as traffic to and from

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schools. Especially in the realm of recreation, the importance of the bicycle has grown. Based upon this, one can draw the conclusion that there has been a certain change in citizens’ attitudes toward the bicycle. They no longer see it just as a hobbyist’s device but primarily as a practical, relatively fast and at the same time environmentally friendly means of transportation. This trend will surely develop further given attempts to save energy.”

Taken in the summer of 1977, Munich’s decision to improve its cycling infrastructure was a response to pressures from the city’s urban critics. The members of Aktion Maxvorstadt, for instance, voiced their early support for the city’s expanded cycling path network, as did the individuals who went on to found the ADFC branch in Munich. At meetings hosted by the city’s district councils, citizens voiced their support for more bicycle-friendly infrastructure. Maxvorstadt’s district council headed a long and ultimately successful campaign to have paths run the length of the Leopoldstrasse, the main axis north from the city center through Schwabing. The city was also aware of developments elsewhere in West Germany and Europe. For instance, the city monitored programs in the cycling-happy cities of Delft (Holland) and Bremen. Like other cities, Munich soon dedicated funds to cycling paths and other bicycling infrastructure in the city center, a process that continued through the 1980s.

But the history of the period cannot be cast as an avant-garde cadre of activists versus a retrograde block of planners and public officials. These categories were not


mutually exclusive, and the urban critics often occupied positions inside powerful organizations. As in the Erlangen case, local politicians could be advocates for the bicycle. Similar characters occupied positions in state and federal government offices as well as in independent institutions. These included DIfU’s Dieter Apel, the federal planning ministry’s Heiner Monheim, and the federal environment agency’s (UBA, Umweltbundesamt) Konrad Otto. These individuals sponsored conferences, organized scholarly research, and coordinated activities with cycling advocates in other organizations. Their publications reached a wide audience among local politicians, urban planners, and advocates. They also collaborated with one another.

Apel provides an example of a researcher whose work helped place cycling on a solid empirical footing. His report on urban transportation, released by DIfU in 1984, drew attention to cities’ cycling programs. Apel’s analysis went beyond establishing the basic facts about these efforts. He also provided the exhaustive details that explained why some cities had generated more results than others. Subtle programmatic distinctions were important but not always clear to planners who were unfamiliar with how best to design cycling infrastructure. As shown in Table 4.1, for example, length of cycling path network did not always explain why some cities became cycling havens. The expected candidates (e.g., Erlangen) populated the top of the list, but the bottom also included cities well known for their bicycling. Cycling path lengths (standardized per resident) were low for both Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Their numbers were not far from that of West Berlin, a city with very low rates of cycling. Apel explained that the distinction had much to do with the quality as the quantity of the cycling networks. Danish and Dutch
cities had invested in high quality cycling infrastructure compared with the typical West German city.  

Table 4.1: Cycling path networks, selected cities, 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population (1000s)</th>
<th>Length of path network (km)</th>
<th>Network length per resident (km / 1000 residents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Västerås (Sweden)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erlangen</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odense (Denmark)</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uppsala (Sweden)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiburg</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malmö (Sweden)</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannover</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen (Denmark)</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam (Netherlands)</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Berlin</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cologne</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Apel 1984, Table 57, p. 317.

The urban critics’ influence extended beyond research to include designing and funding federal programs to support bicycling. Otto played a similar role within the Federal Environment Agency as Monheim did within the planning ministry. Otto was the force behind UBA’s bicycling programs beginning in the late 1970s. As other urban critics were also doing, Otto viewed the bicycle in explicitly environmental terms. He

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considered the machine to be an important means of combating the deterioration of the natural and built environments. Supporting the bicycle, he once wrote, was a key part of an “ecologically-oriented” transportation politics. One of Otto’s earliest efforts was a series, “Fahrrad und Umwelt” (“Bicycle and Environment”), that brought public agencies, the bicycling industry, environmental organizations, and cycling advocacy groups together. Participants discussed the institutional, programmatic, and political hurdles to stronger cycling policies in federal policy. Among the ideas the participants generated was the creation of a “bicycling foundation” that would be “a permanent institution for cycling support.” Jan Tebbe became the director upon its opening in 1982, but the project suffered from a lack of funding and had to close within a year.67

A far more successful idea to emerge from the UBA series was the “Bicycling-friendly City Model Project.” The project was designed to show that policy and design changes to favor the bicycle could improve environmental conditions in cities and reduce automobile congestion. The project had two major components. The first was experimental, to test the design and policy changes that would increase bicycling rates in two small cities. After soliciting bids from around the country, UBA chose Detmold in North-Rhine Westphalia and Rosenheim in Bavaria from 131 applicant cities. Over six years, UBA and its small army of contractors worked with the local governments in an attempt to build cycling in these cities. The program sought to emulate Erlangen, which shared its expertise with the organizers. Measures included familiar design and policy

changes, such as expanding the network of cycling paths, improving the safety of intersections, allowing cyclists to travel in the opposite direction on one-way streets, and providing bicycle parking at major destinations. A significant part of the initiative focused on cycling culture. The project’s designers focused on altering locals’ perceptions of bicycling and bicyclists. Contractors focused on public relations, annual bicycling festivals, and opening cycling offices at prominent locations in the city centers. Their offices provided technical assistance and cafes for socializing. City employees were given free use of “office” bicycles and politicians were encouraged to use them for symbolic effect, much in the same fashion that Hahlweg had done in Erlangen.

The second component of UBA’s model project was much broader, to demonstrate to local politicians and planners around West Germany that the measures undertaken in Detmold and Rosenheim would be effective and inexpensive. During the study period from 1981 to 1987, UBA reached out to much of cycling’s advocacy network for technical expertise and support. Otto organized semi-annual meetings of a 45-member expert group, put together a series of working papers that drew from international experiences, and assembled public meetings around central Europe as a way to attract attention to the program. UBA contracted much of the planning work to firms and individuals in Freiburg, Berlin, Munich, and elsewhere. The major contractor was Werner Brög’s research firm, Socialdata, in Munich. It in turn worked with the cycling

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citizens’ initiatives and major environmental organizations such as BUND, which by then had developed an intense programmatic interest in alternative transportation.69

UBA’s project was a precursor to what followed in the succeeding decades. The agency repeated experimental projects in the Detmold/Rosenheim mold. One, focused on walking and bicycling, ran in the early 2000s. In similar fashion, it focused on improving conditions for these modes in three small cities (Lingen in Lower Saxony, Plauen in Saxony, and Wittenberg in Saxony-Anhalt). As in the Detmold/Rosenheim project, the Lingen/Plauen/Wittenberg project focused on building more inclusive structures for planning decisions, increasing information available to residents, and improving infrastructure for non-motorists. Another aim was to show other cities that low-cost approaches could generate results. As if to repeat the claims made years earlier by Habermeier about Erlangen’s program, UBA concluded that “innovative, cost-effective, and unconventional solutions” were among the most potent means of increasing cycling in West German cities.70

Conclusion: the bicycle as institution

The more recent of UBA’s model projects underscored the status of the bicycle in post-reunification Germany. On the one hand, the fact that the agency’s administrators felt the need to create another model project along lines similar to the Detmold/Rosenheim project meant that urban bicycling still needed some assistance in


70 For the project’s summary report, see Juliane Krause and Edzard Hildebrand, Modellvorhaben Fussgänger- und fahrradfreundliche Stadt. Chancen des Fuss- und Radverkehrs als Beitrag zur Umweltentlastung (Dessau: Umweltbundesamt, 2005), quotation on p. 148.
Germany. Some cities appeared to have made little progress over the intervening decade and a half. Hamburg, for example, ranked last among major German cities in a 2005 survey conducted by the ADFC and BUND. Despite the length of the city’s cycling path network (Table 4.1), Hamburg’s residents gave the city particularly low marks for the quality of its network, for illegal car parking on the paths, and for poor safety in general. No city, the local ADFC chief complained, “had done less for cycling than Hamburg.”

But on the other hand, in post-reunification Germany bicycling never was in danger of disappearing as it had in the first decades following World War II. The same organizations that arose in the 1970s and 1980s to lobby for bicycling became institutional fixtures in the following decades. Not only did these continue their work on behalf of bicyclists, but they also deepened their cooperative efforts. The 2005 survey that was administered by the ADFC and BUND (with UBA providing financial support) was one of several nationwide assessments of cycling conditions in Germany that these organizations conducted during the 1990s and 2000s. Local media, governments, cycling advocates, and the general public all paid attention to the survey results. Higher ratings were greeted with some satisfaction, poorer ratings with much consternation and appeals for improvement. Local cycling advocates, including local ADFC affiliates, were in place and quick to point out their city’s deficiencies. They could draw from the general public to show support for their cause. As occurred in Hamburg, for example, thousands of people to demonstrate in support of better cycling conditions after the 2005 survey results confirmed what they already believed about their city.  

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Cycling advocates might have lamented the situation in Germany, but their pessimism overstated conditions, at least compared with earlier decades. The truth was that the revival of the bicycle that began during the 1970s had resulted in real changes in Germany. In 1970, most adults in West Germany would not consider using the bicycle for practical purposes. Thirty or forty years later the opposite was true. Cycling became a common sight in German cities. Cycling infrastructure existed in just about every large city, traffic rules and signaling systems privileged cyclists, and bicycle parking was made available at major public and private destinations. Critically, bicycling achieved a level of acceptance among planners and local politicians. While there continued to be much variation across cities, nearly everyone regarded bicycling in positive terms. Most saw it as an instrument that had few negative effects. As had occurred in the 1970s, concerns about the built and natural environments fueled much of this sentiment toward the bicycle. Worries about climate change and the reemergence of concerns about oil supply injected a new dynamism into the discussion.

By 2000, Germany boasted a ten percent mode split for the bicycle, which exceeded the average for all European Union countries. It lagged behind the two acknowledged leaders, the Netherlands and Denmark, but was roughly on a par with Sweden and Belgium. It had the highest split among the larger European countries, comparing favorably with France, Great Britain, Italy, and Spain, all of which were below five percent.373 Munich’s ten percent mode split for bicyclists meant that the city was typical for Germany. By the 2000s, Munich’s planners had expanded the city’s cycling network to 1,200 kilometers. In contrast to the plan that had been adopted in

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373 European Conference of Ministers of Transport, National Policies to Promote Cycling (Brussels: European Conference of Ministers of Transport, 2004), Table 1.2, page 20.
1973, Munich’s cycling network contained a dense system of routes running all through the city center. Munich’s planners adopted the same wide variety of means to encourage cycling in the city that first had been tried in cities like Erlangen three decades earlier. They installed a signposting system along the cycling network, built on-street cycling paths, allowed cyclists to ride opposite one-way traffic, identified and fixed intersections identified as dangerous to cyclists, built bike racks and bike service stations, created a bike-sharing program, passed out glossy cycling route maps, and encouraged people to take their bicycles onto public transit. “In Munich,” the city observed in a 2007 report on the subject, “the bicycle is a fully fledged means of transport for everyday life.”

CHAPTER 7:

“IMPROVEMENT OF THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT:”

TRAFFIC CALMING

“Tempo 30 was not conceived by planners or politicians, rather by parents of children struck by automobiles…. Beginning in the early 1970s, at the latest, the affected citizens organized into parents’, citizens’, and traffic calming initiatives. Progressive planners, environmental and transportation organizations, churches, unions, and even political parties have for the most part joined in the effort.”

-- Karl-Heinz Ludewig, Tempo 30—Wege zu menschenfreundlichen Städten und Dörfern (1990)

The urban critics often used the term Wohnumfeldverbesserung in their discussions about how best to design cities. The phrase could be translated as “improvement of the neighborhood environment” or “improvement of the living environment.” In a narrow sense, it conveyed the simple idea that planners ought to pay close attention to the design and function of residential neighborhoods so as to make them healthy, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing places to live. But the term also conveyed something much more significant, for it contained the essence of the urban critics’ program. The term joined two fundamental ideas. One was the idea that the neighborhood was critical to the health and well being of its inhabitants. The other was that the environment was not just a thing that existed at enormous scales that were far away—an ocean, for example, or a forest. It was also important at far smaller scales that

1 Karl-Heinz Ludewig, Tempo 30—Wege zu menschenfreundlichen Städten und Dörfern, (Berlin: Arbeitskreis Verkehr und Umwelt—UMKEHR e.V., 1990), 17.
were much closer to home. The “living environment” was an immediate, concrete experience rather than an abstract one. Nuclear power plant safety or soil and atmospheric pollution were real things, but they were also disconnected from most people’s lives. In contrast, focusing on the areas around one’s literal doorstep connected ordinary people to health, safety, and quality of life issues that formed one’s immediate existence.

Traffic calming was an important part of the critics’ agenda to make the “living environment” better for urbanites in West Germany. It centered on the idea that streets were more than traffic arteries, conduits for motorized transportation; they were multifunctional spaces. Streets had important functions that modern transportation planning had eliminated in the interest of more and faster traffic. Traffic calming was the attempt to recapture these functions for city streets and, therefore, make cities healthier, cleaner, quieter, safer, more sociable, and more livable. Traffic calming used physical and legal tools to reduce motorized traffic volumes and speeds. Slowing vehicular speeds had many advantages, so the critics argued. It allowed other types of people besides motorists to feel safe on and around the street—children could play on the street and the elderly could cross the street with less fear of being struck by a car, for instance. Lower speeds also produced less noise and localized air pollution, which increased socializing on the street and made life more bearable in apartments bordering the street. Some design changes that went along with traffic calming improved street aesthetics. Design changes to streets could integrate them better into their surroundings. Street trees, benches, sandboxes, paving stones, and other treatments had the effect of softening the hard geometry and asphalt of the modern street.
Although its origins reached back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, traffic calming became an important concept in the 1970s and 1980s in conjunction with popular opposition to the automobile. At its most extreme, it represented a fundamental challenge to the autogerechte Stadt itself. In its most advanced and sophisticated form, traffic calming was a key component of an alternative ideal model. It encapsulated its advocates’ desire for gentler, quieter, safer, greener, and more sociable living. It was an attempt to rescale the most fundamental space in the city, the street, to the needs and capacities of the human body rather than the motor vehicle, the dominant machine of the twentieth century.

Traffic calming was a political project. Although it had an important technical element, traffic calming challenged the modernist status quo. The street served as a physical space for articulating and contesting different ideal models of society. Traffic-calming advocates placed emphasis upon the street as a social, aesthetic, and environmental space. The coalition of urban critics who were interested in traffic calming consisted of two groups. One comprised of members of the spatial professions. Within this group, architects and those trained in traditional city planning tended to predominate. In contrast to engineers, architects and traditional city planners had training that allowed them to consider a wide array of social, political, and spatial relationships. They thus placed high value on factors that an engineer, who had been trained to understand and manipulate the world using technical analysis and quantitative skills, would not consider or even recognize as important. They accused engineers, for instance, of being unable to see the street as a social space for non-motorists as well as motorists.
The second group consisted of those outside the spatial professions, including environmentalists, journalists, and the citizens’ initiatives. Traffic calming encapsulated all the themes that thousands of local citizens’ initiatives advocated. Traffic calming was a part of their program to displace the powerful, the hierarchical, and the entrenched with the common, the democratic, and the vulnerable. In this case, the former was the motorist, or more accurately the economic, political, and administrative forces that had created the autogerechte Stadt in postwar West Germany. The latter was the ordinary person who had to suffer dangers and indignities whenever he or she decided to take a walk, ride a bicycle, or even breathe the air in the neighborhood. In the course of the traffic-calming debate, children and the elderly became the symbols of this besieged commoner, the most vulnerable users of the street and by extension the most vulnerable members of society.

_A brief history of the street_

Throughout urban history, streets have had multiple purposes. They were key aesthetic elements, helping to organize the visual relationship between buildings, parks, plazas, and other architectural features of the city. They were important for establishing and maintaining order, as in Baron von Haussmann’s plans for Paris in the nineteenth century. They impacted citizens’ health, sometimes negatively (before the twentieth century, streets were often unpaved, unswept, and full of garbage and offal). The street also had two main purposes that conflicted with one another. On the one hand, streets

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have been the main instruments for circulating goods and people through the city. On the other hand, streets have been social spaces, often providing the only space for interaction among urban residents. These two functions have been in opposition to one another. If a city’s streets were too multi-functional, the city risked congestion. Congestion jeopardized the rapid circulation of goods and people that were necessary for the city’s economic viability. Yet if a city’s streets were too efficient at circulation, the social activities that made the city worth living in were at risk. Often the street was the only space available for recreation, communication, social interaction, and important economic activities like open-air markets. For the better part of human history, these two functions existed in constant tension. The narrow streets and lanes of pre-modern European cities could serve both functions because slow speeds required nothing wider. Walking constituted the great majority of urban “transport”; far less transport was by the more expensive but slightly faster horse-drawn cart or wagon.

This situation began to change slowly in Europe during the early modern period. In the major cities of northwestern Europe in the seventeenth century, travel continued to be dominated by foot and horse traffic. But authorities began to worry about population growth and the resulting physical expansion of the city. Expansion had resulted in increased horse-drawn carriage traffic. Controlling street space for the purpose of order (including guaranteeing the orderly circulation of traffic) thus became a major concern. In Paris, for instance, Nicolas Delamare’s ideas presaged those of the more famous Baron Georges von Haussmann by two centuries. In his influential Traité de la Police (published in the first decades of the eighteenth century), Delamare sought to use the state’s police power to increase order on Paris’s teeming streets. Believing that the

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3 Möser, Geschichte des Autos, 88.
circulation of goods and people was the lifeblood of urban commerce, Dalamare wanted to eliminate blockages and obstacles that had hindered coach traffic.\(^4\)

Such themes intensified in the nineteenth century. The onset of the Industrial Revolution meant rapid increases in urban populations. These, combined with new forms of transportation such as the omnibus (a form of horse-drawn mass transit) and, later, the electric tram, meant a dramatic increase in longer-distance and higher-speed travel. The century was thus characterized by attempts to regulate and restructure the street in the interests of improved safety, public health, and traffic efficiency. Local authorities began or increased the cleaning, policing, and paving of city streets, and widened streets to enhance circulation. These measures had a boomerang effect, as streets became less safe due to higher vehicular speeds. In Great Britain through much of the nineteenth century, authorities experimented with measures to shield pedestrians from traffic, such as at busy street crossings.\(^5\)

Some European cities also introduced urban reconstruction plans featuring monumental boulevards. The most famous such plan was Haussmann’s reconstruction of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s. Because Haussmann believed that wide and straight streets would ease traffic circulation in the city, his plan’s most memorable feature was the creation of several large boulevards through the city center. Haussmann was not alone. Planners as diverse as Daniel Burnham, whose 1909 plan for remaking Chicago embodied the American city-beautiful movement, and Ebenezer Howard, founder of the


Garden City movement in Great Britain, regarded the grand boulevard as central elements in their thinking.\(^6\)

To enhance circulation further, planners also began separating modes of transportation. Sidewalks, which had been rare, became more common during the nineteenth century. By routing pedestrians onto the sidewalks at the street’s edges, the center was freed for travel by higher-speed vehicles, such as carriages and omnibuses. Haussmann’s boulevards channeled wheeled traffic onto a broad center section and foot traffic onto generous sidewalks. This development, combined with increased sidewalk paving, also contributed to the emergence of a promenading and café culture in European cities in the second half of the century. In the German context, Reinhard Baumeister was a major figure. An engineer by training, he believed that traffic considerations should be a first principle of urban planning. He argued in his important 1876 book, *Stadt-Erweiterungen in technischer, baupolizeilicher und wirtschaftlicher Beziehung*, for the separation of pedestrians from wheeled vehicles as a means to rationalize urban transportation.\(^7\)

By the end of the nineteenth century, Baumeister’s sentiment had become the norm on both sides of the Atlantic. Technical innovations such as the electric tram, which spurred suburb-to-city commuting, and the modern bicycle were important developments. The bicycling-advocacy groups and private firms that arose in the wake of the 1890s cycling boom were among the first and most powerful organizations to lobby for better (paved) roads and streets. The automobile’s ascendance during the first third of the

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twentieth century encouraged the view that the street’s circulatory function was primary. The invention of modern paving contributed to this view. Municipal engineers (the forerunners of professional transportation engineers) had experimented with paving techniques during the nineteenth century. After 1900, techniques were developed to allow paving to increase dramatically. Improved paving allowed faster vehicle speeds and greater comfort for motorists. Engineers thus knew that better paving meant increased motorization, which in turn meant increased demand for paving.\(^8\)

A few planners expressed reservations about abandoning the social function of the street in favor of traffic circulation. The origins of traffic calming therefore can be found around the turn of the century. In his small but renowned 1889 text, Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen, the Austrian architect Camillo Sitte objected to the increased emphases on rationality and technicality in city planning. Sitte’s work placed great emphasis upon the organic relationships among the different built elements of a city—streets, buildings, plazas, monuments. He thus admired the aesthetics of the medieval city while he decried the geometrical and technical precision in the modern city. In contrast to the leading German planners (such as Baumeister and Joseph Stübben), Sitte focused on the crooked, narrow, historic, and human-scaled street rather than the straight, wide, and rational one. Designing cities around the circulation function horrified him. “There is evidence enough,” he lamented, “to show that those who advocate planning cities for the mere circulation of traffic, with the success they have had, are scarcely justified in casting the assistance of art, history, and the great traditions of city

\(^8\) McShane, Asphalt Path, 103-22.
building to the four winds." Other planners picked up this theme. Herman Muthesius, the architect and founder of the *Deutscher Werkbund* (which had a great influence on Bauhaus intellectuals), was one. Writing about twenty years after the publication of Sitte’s *Der Städtebau*, Muthesius called the wide street one of the biggest mistakes of contemporary planning. He thought streets running through residential neighborhoods should be designed to prevent or limit through traffic. He preferred streets that were safe for local residents to walk around on foot. 

These arguments, however, were weak in the face of the increasing motorization of the twentieth century. Because the earliest automobiles were underpowered, the machine’s impact on the streetscape remained limited for some time. But during the interwar period, at the latest, the car’s increasing capabilities altered the equation fundamentally. The automobile’s improved speed and power meant that it became the dominant form of street transportation, separating it from all others. Although the timing varied by country, the car’s arrival in large numbers ended the street’s social function almost everywhere during the course of the century. Early- and mid-twentieth-century planners struggled to find solutions to its increasing domination of the streetscape. Some planners accepted this situation with reservations, while others embraced it. The Swiss modernist architect Le Corbusier was the most famous of the latter group. A technophile and automobile enthusiast, he saw the city as a type of machine. He once admitted to feeling a “rapture of power” while observing the car traffic

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on the Champs Elysees. In his mind, the planner’s goal was to maximize this machine’s efficiency. Whereas Sitte emphasized the small, aesthetic, irregular, and historic, Corbusier disdained it. Rather, he embraced the new, standardized, ordered, and workable, all on an enormous scale. His famous vision for a rebuilt Paris would have razed the historic city center and replaced it with hundreds of residential towers surrounded by parkland. The towers would have been linked via a system of elevated freeways reserved for motorized vehicles. City streets as commonly understood would not have existed. Rather, pedestrians would have had their own footpath system, on ground level through the greenery that surrounded the towers.\footnote{Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning* (London: John Rodker, 1929), 116-22, 168-72; Michael Southworth and Eran Ben-Joseph, *Streets and the Shaping of Towns and Cities* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2003), 79-80; McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 208; Bedarida and Sutcliffe, “The Street in the Structure and Life of the City,” 28, 36.}

Corbusier’s infatuation with the auto-only street was not unusual. Modernist architects of his ilk, city planners, and transportation engineers in the United States and Europe all developed schemes for rationalizing street traffic through mode separation. Above all, this meant prioritizing street space for motorized vehicles. They abandoned previous conceptions of the street as a shared space for multiple users. Different countries made their first attempts to build intercity, limited-access freeways, while some cities experimented with intracity, auto-only streets.\footnote{Möser, *Geschichte des Autos*, 93-6; Jeffrey R. Brown, Eric A. Morris, and Brian D. Taylor, “Planning for cars in cities: planners, engineers, and freeways in the 20th century,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75, 2 (Spring 2009), 161-77.} After the war, planners in West Germany began implementing schemes to bind their rebuilt cities together with high-capacity “arterial” streets. These were large in scale, geometric in design, and dedicated to moving automobiles and trucks in big numbers. All features of the traditional streetscape that were obstacles to this goal were to be eliminated. Pedestrians, cyclists, rough and uneven
pavement like cobblestones, street trees, sharp curves, parked vehicles, street “furniture” such as benches or mailboxes—all were slated for the street edge or removal.\textsuperscript{14} The street’s circulation function came to dominate its social function, in West Germany as everywhere else. Streets became highly engineered constructs, dominated by the need to move cars and other vehicles at high speeds from point to point. Whereas the auto-only street was the exception in interwar Germany, in West Germany these streets became the norm. The situation for non-motorists thus changed dramatically, from being full participants in and around the streetscape to being marginalized or non-existent.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Intellectuals’ unease}

At the height of this process, a small number of intellectuals began to express reservations about the wisdom of designing streets in this manner. These criticisms began in the early 1960s, emanating from a diverse group of thinkers in Europe and the United States. Jane Jacobs, for example, was the most famous iconoclast during these years. In \textit{Death and Life}, she argued that functional planning resulted in streets that were barren and lifeless. A healthy urbanism required a vibrant street life, which meant designing streets to favor the pedestrian over the automobile.\textsuperscript{16}

More important than Jacobs in the traffic calming context was the British government’s report, “Traffic in Towns,” issued in 1963 under Colin Buchanan’s name. In considering motorized traffic to be a detriment to urban life, the Buchanan report

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Möser, \textit{Geschichte des Autos}, 99. Barbara Schmucki documents this shift in photographic form, in Schmucki, \textit{Traum}.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Diefendorf, “The West German Debate on Urban Planning.” For a slightly more pessimistic assessment of Jacobs’s reception in West Germany, see Klemek, “Placing Jane Jacobs within the transatlantic urban conversation,” 49-67.
\end{itemize}
called for protecting neighborhoods in existing cities. This would be done via the creation of “environmental areas” or “urban rooms,” zones where “people can live, work, shop, look about, and move around on foot in reasonable freedom from the hazards of motor traffic.”

The report envisioned a network or “cellular structure” of such zones, serviced by “urban corridors” or arterials that would carry motorized traffic into and around them. This model implied that high-capacity roads would be a part of any solution, but it also was one of the first public reports in Europe that emphasized shielding parts of the city from traffic’s consequences.

The Buchanan report made an immediate impression in West Germany. Its ideas helped lead a committee, commissioned by the Bundestag to study traffic in West Germany, to similar conclusions in its own report, published a year after Buchanan. “There should be no transportation planning,” its authors claimed in a nod to the Buchanan report, “which is geared solely toward [motorized] traffic or only toward one type of transport.” Over time, Buchanan’s concept became an important idea in West German planning circles.

These early critics also pointed out the unequal social effects of designing streets around the car. Much of this focus centered on children. Jacobs lamented attempts to shift the location of children’s play from streets to playgrounds, for several reasons arguing that this was an unhealthy development for children. Planners had gotten it exactly backwards. Children’s street play was an indicator that the city was alive and well. For children, Jacobs wrote, “the point may be less to segregate the cars than to reduce the domination by cars and combat the erosion of sidewalk play space by cars.”

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17 Minister of Transport (Great Britain), *Traffic in Towns*, 41.
18 Minister of Transport (Great Britain), *Traffic in Towns*, 41-7, 112.
Jacobs’s ideas found resonance among West German intellectuals. The most important of these might have been the Frankfurt psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich. He had acquired notoriety in postwar Germany after heading a commission at the Nuremberg trials that investigated Nazi medical practices. His 1947 report, written originally in English as *Doctors of Infamy*, was a devastating examination of these crimes. Mitscherlich’s contribution to city-planning history consisted of a later publication, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (The Inhospitality of our Cities, 1965). It appeared in the middle of a series of works that were highly critical of West German society and turned Mitscherlich into a counter-cultural icon. The book, which was first excerpted in the journal *Stadtbauwelt* in 1964, was widely cited.\(^1\)

In *Die Unwirtlichkeit*, Mitscherlich argued that the modern city was incapable of producing mentally healthy individuals. He asserted that the modern city was a monotonous place, having lost its historic qualities. Neither the new suburb nor the rebuilt city center offered the kind of vital, place-specific experiences necessary for the complete unfolding of human potential. This development, Mitscherlich claimed, was tragic, for in historic cities the constant interaction among the individual, the group, and the public (spatial) realm produced a person’s identity. “If it is in order, the city becomes the object of desire for its citizens,” he wrote.\(^2\) West Germany’s modernist experiment had created few public spaces that would create such public affection. Having few opportunities for socialization, West Germans had had to spend their time in private

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\(^{1}\) Diefendorf, “The West German Debate on Urban Planning,” 16.

spaces such as their homes, which did not offer the same opportunities for socializing and public engagement.\textsuperscript{23}

Mitscherlich further insisted that modern city planning marginalized many groups, including the young, the old, and the unemployed. Planners, he argued, created cities for adults, in particular for adults with money. They ignored the other groups. This “mercantile” planning resulted in cities that no longer provided spaces for children and teens to develop strong place-specific identities. On the other end of the age scale, it prevented the elderly from participating fully in social and political life.\textsuperscript{24}

These arguments became much more common over the decade following publication of \textit{Die Unwirtlichkeit}. The ideas contained in the book fit perfectly into the social and political atmosphere of the times. Within a few years, it had become a core text for all those who were dissatisfied with urban conditions in West Germany. Mitscherlich himself became a powerful voice in the debate about cities. During the early 1970s, he criticized modern cities for being unhealthy and environmentally harmful, the result of city planning schemes that had gone awry. He regarded the attempt to plan cities around the car to be a mistake. “All of these ‘auto-oriented cities’ remain congested and polluted,” he said at a conference in 1972, “despite having been sacrificed to the behemoth of ‘rationalization’.”\textsuperscript{25} Mitscherlich’s arguments contained apocalyptic rhetoric


that was also a feature of the period. His phrase *grosse Stadtverwüstung* ("great urban desolation"), for example, was cited often in the press.26

The urban critics who emerged in West German cities emphasized themes that were similar to those that Mitscherlich, Jacobs, Buchanan, and other public intellectuals had already articulated. These critics became part of a broader effort to establish traffic calming in West German cities. Heiner Monheim became one of the most important individuals in the debate. As was true in the case of bicycling, Monheim’s office within the planning ministry financed programs, arranged conferences on the subject, and produced thorough reports on the subject. Monheim maintained contacts with citizens’ initiatives that focused on traffic calming and wrote often on the subject.27 Other planners, such as Helmut Holzapfel, Dieter Apel, and Rolf Monheim played similar roles. Their research lent empirical heft to traffic calming, while their participation in the public debate gave the subject credibility in the media. Jos Weber, a young Dutch planner who had settled in Hamburg, became a force behind his city’s experimentation with traffic calming in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Still others included Hans-Henning von Winning, Edgar Streichert, and Max Eichenauer, the principals of a planning firm in

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Munich that conducted numerous traffic calming studies and pilot projects for cities throughout West Germany.

**The Dutch weigh in**

The concept and term “traffic calming” likely entered the English vocabulary during the 1980s as a direct translation of the German word *Verkehrsberuhigung*. This fact signaled both West German leadership in this area and the degree to which planners in the English-speaking world followed German developments. Yet the West Germans generally were not considered the pioneers in the area. This distinction went to the Dutch. Starting in the early 1970s, the Dutch began experimenting with aggressive schemes to quiet motorized traffic in residential areas. Within a few years, they had established their reputation as the leader in Europe. Their experiences with traffic calming not only provided West German planners and activists with examples but also provided opportunities for sharing information and expertise across national boundaries.

Delft, a small city in Holland’s Randstad, was by far the most famous Dutch city in this respect, credited with originating the Dutch variant of traffic calming around 1970. It also was reputed to have among the most progressive transportation planning in Western Europe. In this latter respect it resembled Erlangen, a city of almost the same size and socio-economic position, which also began its aggressive bicycling plans in the early 1970s. As in Erlangen, an election had brought into the Delft city council a new set of politicians, who were interested in revisiting the auto-oriented principles that had

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begun to dominate transportation politics in Holland. Coincidentally, the city government also had planners who were willing to experiment with new street design ideas that emphasized pedestrian safety. As in Erlangen, the city invested heavily in bicycling infrastructure, public transit, green spaces, and street redesign.\(^{29}\)

The most famous expression of Delft’s experimentation during these years was the \textit{woonerf} or “living yard”. The concept began with the observation that streets in Holland had become sterile, lifeless spaces dominated by the automobile. As the term “living yard” implied, this concept regarded the street in a much broader context. The street was to be treated as a space for social interaction, health and reinvigoration, play and recreation. The street was not a simple means of conveyance. The users of the street were to be regarded as equals; thus the motorist was just one element, not the dominant force. Instead of preserving the standard separation of the driving lane(s) and the sidewalk, the concept eliminated the distinction. Motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit were to be mixed rather than separated. Delft planners refashioned the city’s streets, introducing all manner of obstacles to reduce vehicular speeds to walking pace. At the same time, these obstacles were designed to create environments that would encourage social interaction. Trees, plantings, speed humps, paving stones, benches, sandboxes, and gardens all found their way onto the street surface. All of these measures also served an environmental goal. The living yard reduced space normally reserved for cars and increased it for softer, more natural elements (trees, bushes, grass, dirt, and sand).

\(^{29}\) An outstanding summary of Delft’s experiences with alternative transportation planning is provided in Apel et al., \textit{Kompakt, mobil, urban}, 103-30. See also Carmen Hass-Klau, \textit{The Pedestrian and City Traffic} (New York: Belhaven, 1990), 212-13. Delft’s experimentation with alternative transportation planning was, and remains, well known outside of Germany. See, e.g., essays in Tolley, ed., \textit{Greening}. 301
Delft’s experimentation spread quickly in Holland. By 1975 the national government had decided to give the *woonerf* a close examination. The following year the concept was embedded in Dutch law, becoming a legal part of the national transportation planning process. The concept also spread because of direct citizen engagement. As in West Germany, the early years of the decade had marked an explosion in citizen involvement in planning. The Dutch were admired for the strength of their participation, in particular in transportation planning. In Delft, for instance, informal groups had formed to help plan and erect the first *woonerven*, albeit with the assistance and encouragement of the city’s planners. Delft gained a reputation for its citizen involvement, a kind of co-deliberation in which neighborhood residents and the planners engaged in a conversation on project particulars from beginning to end. The vigor and length of citizen participation in Holland did not escape external observers. “Crucial to the large number and variety of citizens’ initiatives,” one West German commentator wrote, “is the quirk of the Dutch to continually form their opinions and to keep discussing them until the ideas eventually are carried out.”

The Dutch experience was exported to West Germany almost immediately. A few planners, such as Weber in Hamburg, were personal conduits. His position as a planning professor allowed him to speak with an authoritative voice and participate in planning the first neighborhood-level traffic-calming measures in the city. Moreover, he was recognized as an expert in Dutch practices. He traveled often to Delft on business and

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maintained contacts there, giving his ideas a cache they otherwise would not have enjoyed. In his scholarly writing and statements to the press, Weber highlighted his expertise in Dutch practices. He judged Hamburg’s efforts in the light of the Dutch experience, arguing for both an effective form of traffic calming—by which he meant adopting Delft’s design standards—and a democratic form of civic decision-making along the lines found in Delft.31

West Germans accepted that Dutch transportation planning was ahead of the curve. As Heiner Monheim wrote, it was well known in West Germany that the Dutch had done “pioneer’s work” on traffic calming and that cities such as Delft and Tilburg had become “meccas” of alternative planning.32 Rolf Monheim noted that planning in the Netherlands was considered by West German planners to be “especially progressive.”33 Countless publications referenced the Dutch, citing their experience with such frequency that the phrase “Delft model” became a kind of shorthand for a certain type of planning. West German cities sent study delegations to Holland. When in the mid-1980s Munich’s city government sought to emulate traffic calming models elsewhere, it sent its formal delegation to study West Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, and several Dutch cities. West German activists also corresponded with their Dutch colleagues about adopting tactics that had proven successful in Holland.34

Groundswell: popular unrest in West Germany

Unhappiness with motorized traffic in inner cities had begun at about the same time in West Germany as in Holland. Unease with traffic on residential streets began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Citizens’ initiatives and other activist groups sought to implement early traffic calming schemes. However, there were few organizations or individuals that had the capacity, desire, or audience to articulate a comprehensive program for traffic calming.

This situation began to change in the mid-1970s for several reasons. One of the most important came from an unexpected source. The respected radio journalist Alfred Zerban, of West German Broadcasting (WDR; Westdeutscher Rundfunk) in Cologne, turned his popular show Freie Fahrt ins Wochenend (roughly, Green Light into the Weekend) into a platform for traffic calming. His first broadcast on the topic, on October 4, 1975, called for the widespread conversion of residential streets to Tempo 30 zones, in which motorists would be restricted to thirty kilometers per hour. The catchphrase that Zerban and citizens’ initiatives adopted, 30 statt 50 (30, not 50), was intended to contrast the Tempo 30 idea as a safe and humane alternative to the existing Tempo 50 speed limit, which had prevailed in West German cities since 1957. Safety emerged as a key theme in Zerban’s first broadcasts on the subject. He highlighted the threats that high automobile speeds presented to children and the elderly living in cities. West Germany ranked among the worst in the world when it came to accidents involving children and the elderly. In 1975, he reported, some 65,000 children were involved in

35 “Freie Fahrt” is an idiomatic expression that has multiple possible translations, including “Free Ride,” “Free Passage,” “Clear Lane,” “Move Ahead,” among others.
accidents in West Germany. Zerban pressed the case that traffic dangers were especially high in inner city neighborhoods. Twice as many pedestrians in these places, he said, died each year from accidents compared with vehicular passengers. More than half of the pedestrians killed were under 15 or older than 65.  

Over the next few months, Zerban continued the case for traffic calming, basing many of his arguments on the latest scholarly research. He noted that psychologists had determined that small children could never perceive streets in the same manner as adults and thus should not be expected to behave predictably on them. He invoked research that showed the effectiveness of Tempo 30 zones in reducing speeds. He brought in studio guests, such as Heiner Monheim, to refute engineers’ claims that maximizing roadway capacity for motor vehicles was the most intelligent transportation policy. In all of these contexts he stressed Dutch developments. Prior to his first broadcast on the subject, Zerban had visited the Dutch city of Delft, famous for it’s innovations in traffic calming. As the trip had been an inspiration for Zerban, he invited Dutch experts onto his show, including the transportation minister, Theodoros Westerterp. Zerban’s broadcasts came when the Dutch were implementing nationwide Tempo 30 regulations. The Dutch were also pushing hard to have the European Community recognize Holland’s traffic calming as a model for member states.

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To the surprise of WDR’s editors, Zerban’s broadcasts generated a torrent of supportive letters. The broadcasts had struck a nerve with the public. Zerban recognized the emotional, popular appeal of the topic. His broadcasts provided listeners with practical information about accident rates and study data showing how Tempo 30 was much safer than Tempo 50. He began to argue that direct citizen pressure was the only means to overcome political and technocratic reluctance to doing something about traffic problems. Because politicians and bureaucrats had not led on the issue, Zerban had said on one of his broadcasts, citizens now had to fight “to protect their lives, the lives of their children and their own well-being in their residential neighborhoods.” Such statements had an effect on listeners. The press and other observers credited Zerban with creating a groundswell of public activism for Tempo 30. Citizens’ initiatives began forming in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, often led by parents or community leaders who had no expertise in transportation planning. For example, Peter Haanen, a parish priest in Cologne’s inner-city neighborhood of Zollstock, created an initiative called “Humane streets in Zollstock.” Haanen’s outspoken support for Tempo 30 as a means of protecting children turned him into a public figure in Cologne. It is unknown how many similar initiatives were created in response to Zerban’s broadcasts. Estimates ranged from a few dozen in North-Rhine Westphalia to as high as 300 initiatives nationwide.

Zerban’s broadcasts tapped into an existing popular unease about traffic safety, in particular about the safety of children who were considered at risk in West Germany’s

inner cities. Not long after Zerban’s broadcasts began, the Cologne city government began studying Dutch traffic calming techniques and started a few experimental stretches of calmed streets. Direct citizen pressure was also an important reason why the state of North-Rhine Westphalia began a massive traffic-calming experiment in 1976. The experiment ran for three years and included thirty neighborhoods, each of which contained up to 20,000 residents. It was designed to establish the effectiveness of various traffic-calming measures in slowing motorized traffic. These measures included alternative street systems, *woonerf*-style design treatments, and regulatory changes. The state’s transportation minister admitted that popular pressure had been a factor in his decision to create the program. “In addition to many other questions, one of the most important and frequent demands concerned the improvement of traffic safety in residential neighborhoods,” he wrote, “which was expressed in the countless citizens initiatives under the slogan ‘Tempo 30 in Residential Neighborhoods’.”

The experiment was an important development in West Germany, as a state government supported an initiative of this size for the first time.

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Competing models emerge

North-Rhine Westphalia’s experiment indicated the degree to which traffic calming was becoming an important topic in West German planning. By the late 1970s, it was receiving attention from politicians, activists, planners, transportation engineers, the media, and interest groups. In the wake of the experiment in North-Rhine Westphalia, the strength of public opinion shifted the debate from whether traffic calming ought to be done at all to the scope and form it ought to take. Monheim’s agency co-sponsored (with UBA, the Federal Environment Agency) a large, nationwide traffic calming model project. Similar in design and scale to the one on bicycling, this project sponsored traffic calming initiatives in six West German towns and cities. The goal was to understand which measures would be the most effective in revitalizing street space for social purposes. These measures ranged from regulatory changes (blanketing a town with Tempo 30 zones) to the physical redesign of an entire inner city, as was the case in the small Bavarian city of Ingolstadt. But the project was also political, in that it sought to legitimize traffic calming in the eyes of the planning profession and the West German citizenry.42

All this activity took place against a central background question concerning the form traffic calming would take. Would it be limited in scale, applied only in specific instances and places, or would it be massive and ambitious, applied broadly to every part of every West German city? Over the 1970s, planners and activists developed many

42 A summary of the model project can be found in Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, Verkehrsberuhigung und Stadtverkehr. Textsammlung zu einem städtebaulichen Verkehrskonzept (Bonn: Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, 1985), 61-7. See also Heiner Monheim, “Neuorientierung,” 149-51. For an outstanding summary of the extensive design changes made to Ingolstadt’s historic inner city as a part of the model project, see Max Eichenauer, Hans-Henning von Winning and Edgar Steichert, Flächenhafte Verkehrsberuhigung Ingolstadt: Planungsvorbereitende Studie, Modellgebiet Ingolstadt. Kurzfassung (Bonn: Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, 1982).
different versions of traffic calming. By the end of that decade and into the 1980s, they began to collapse the options down to two, one strong and one weak.43

The weak variant acknowledged that high vehicle speeds were a problem, but limited the concept to residential neighborhoods. The idea was backed by mainstream transportation planners such as Karlheinz Schaechterle of Munich’s technical university and was based on the so-called bundling theory. Following Buchanan, this theory held that traffic calming should attempt to draw traffic from side streets onto the high-capacity arterials that bounded residential neighborhoods. This would improve the side streets but create more traffic along the arterials. This version thus did not seek to reduce the absolute amount of traffic across the entire city. Rather, it sought only to shift the balance between side streets and arterials. This version became acceptable to groups that wanted no overall reductions in automobile travel. Many local governments, the federal transportation ministry, and even interest groups associated with the automobile industry thus eventually accepted the weak version.44

The urban critics considered the weak version to be an inferior alternative to the strong. The strong version—called “principal” or “fundamental” traffic calming by the citizens’ initiatives that formulated the concept—sought to redesign and reregulate every city street, including arterials, with the goal of reducing the total amount of automobile traffic in the city. By reducing speeds on all streets from Tempo 50 to Tempo 30, including arterials, the proponents of this idea thought that automobile travel would become more time consuming, thus more expensive. At the same time, they thought the

43 This distinction follows Holzapfel, Traube, and Ulrich, Autoverkehr 2000, 92. The transportation historian Barbara Schmucki makes a similar argument in Schmucki, Traum, 164.
greener, safer, quieter, and more sociable modes—transit, walking, and bicycling—would be made less difficult and more desirable. They hoped to reverse decades of increasing automobile travel in West Germany, shift travel to more socially and environmentally benign modes, and improve the social, architectural, and environmental functions of the street.

The strong version coalesced in the late 1970s and was formulated by citizens’ initiatives in Bonn and West Berlin. “The principle of traffic calming represents a fundamental change in transportation planning. It has as its goal the reduction of disturbances in urban life caused by automobiles, while simultaneously improving the traffic conditions for non-motorized modes of transportation,” wrote the authors of the foundational document on the topic. “Motorized traffic will be reduced to the benefit of the city's citizens. Travel by car will be made more difficult and the shortest and most attractive routes will be reserved for pedestrians and bicyclists.”\(^\text{45}\) The concept envisioned widespread use of the Dutch *woonerf* for residential streets. It also envisioned returning arterials to boulevard status, with wide sidewalks, bicycle and tram lanes, and generous tree-lined medians. Part of the argument for arterial redesign was based on the observation that about 40% of all city residents in West Germany lived adjacent to them. Advocates asserted that these residents had as much right to live safely, in peace and quiet, as any other person. They thus argued that arterials needed to become *Wohnstrassen*, streets for living like any other traffic-calmed residential side street.

\(^{45}\) The initiators here were members of the Arbeitskreis Verkehr (AKV) in the Landesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz (LBU), a precursor to the nationwide AKV established later under the Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz (BBU). Quotation from AKV in LBU, “Prinzipielle Verkehrsberuhigung—Bürgerinitiativen für eine neue Verkehrspolitik” (1978), as quoted in Michael Höppner, *Fahrradverkehr und Verkehrsberuhigung. Ein Beitrag zur Umweltentlastung der Städte* (Berlin: Umweltbundesamt, 1980), 29-30.
Finally, the version also included measures not previously associated with the concept, such as increasing public transit, reducing parking, and requiring automobiles to carry speed-limiting technical devices.\textsuperscript{46}

The urban critics who pushed the strong version suspected that groups that were hostile to their agenda were backing the weak version of traffic calming. These suspicions were first expressed in the late 1970s and were repeated for years afterward. The critics’ main fear was that hostile groups supported the weak version as a backdoor means of building more high-capacity arterial streets. “Since the topic of traffic calming enjoys an increasing popularity among city planners and local politicians,” wrote Heiner Monheim in a typical passage, “the highway builders have also discovered it for themselves. Recently, they began to propagate their arterials, which are disliked by local politicians and protested against by citizens’ initiatives, under the motto of traffic calming.” In almost all of West Germany’s large cities, Monheim continued, expanding or building arterials was justified “‘as traffic calming’ or ‘a contribution to traffic calming’ or a ‘precondition for traffic calming.’”\textsuperscript{47} In this interpretation, city governments, allied with groups friendly to the auto and construction industries, could claim that building and expanding arterials represented a victory for a more livable city. Thus traffic calming became nothing more than a green veneer, a way to continue the same transportation policies by wrapping them in a new marketing strategy.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{47} Quotation in Heiner Monheim, “Verkehrsberuhigung durch…,” 10.

This argument had a plausible basis in fact. During the 1970s, as traffic calming became a prominent part of the planning discourse in West Germany, organizations and individuals that might have been most hostile to the concept gradually adopted it. ADAC was one of these. Until the early 1970s, ADAC had promoted mode separation. Its youth-education programs during the 1960s, for instance, stressed removing children and teens from the streetscape altogether, to playgrounds and kindergartens. In the organization’s view, this scheme had the added benefit of removing obstacles to the smooth and swift movement of automobiles. ADAC changed course after public interest in traffic calming blossomed. In November 1976 the organization decided to endorse the concept. As was the case with pedestrian zones, ADAC’s shift was a surprising turn of events. Its transportation policy department asserted that traffic calming was not anti-automobile, “but rather the attempt to work with the car on a reasonable basis,” a way to promote a “peaceful coexistence of pedestrians, bicyclists, children, and cars.”49 The organization quickly publicized its newfound devotion, dedicating the December 1976 cover of its flagship publication, *ADAC Motorwelt,* to a traffic calming experiment in the Munich suburb of Unterhaching. This story gave a warm endorsement to traffic calming on the *woonerf* model. Yet the story also said that traffic calming justified building more arterials, because the displaced auto traffic had to go somewhere. This was a simplified version of the bundling theory.50

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The upshot was that by the end of the 1970s, traffic calming enjoyed widespread support, at least in principle. Yet this support was as much rhetorical as substantive. Granted, in a few major cities, traffic-calming experiments had proceeded apace. These were clustered in the north and northwest, perhaps not coincidentally in the part of the country closest to Holland. Implementation otherwise progressed slowly. Advocates feared a foot-dragging campaign by conservative transportation planners and their allies in local planning departments and the automotive industry. “Road builders and transportation planners really did everything,” Heiner Monheim grumbled, “in order to relegate traffic calming into an ‘exotic niche.’” 51

The model projects in the state and federal governments, combined with experimentation in cities around the country, substantiated many of the claims that advocates had been making about traffic calming for years. This experience contributed to a shift in the professional debate, from resistance on the part of more conservative planners to a grudging acceptance. Experimentation showed that Tempo 30 zones were effective in slowing traffic if they covered large parts of a city rather than just a street segment or two. Practical experience (from Holland and West Germany) had shown that simple traffic calming measures, including but not limited to regulatory changes like Tempo 30 zones, could be constructed rapidly and at a low cost. 52

51 Heiner Monheim, “Neuorientierung,” 140.
Speed, the environment, and politics

Over the course of Germany’s history, speed limits on the nation’s highways and in cities have been the subjects of sporadic political debate. The first speed limits in cities were established in 1910. National speed limits were set and reset through the Nazi era and the early years of the Federal Republic. A few years after limits within cities were raised in the early 1950s, intense debates broke out about speed limits and safety. Medical doctors and other figures in the medical field prompted the discussion, as they were the ones who saw the effects of high speeds on the human body. High or non-existent speed limits on the nation’s highways and streets, they claimed, had left an enormous toll of injuries and deaths in West Germany. The public debate that resulted led to the introduction of Tempo 50 speed limits inside of cities, but auto industry pressure prevented an introduction of speed limits on the Autobahnen or other highways. During the 1960s and 1970s, any proposal to limit speeds on highways was met with stiff opposition from the automobile industry, which formulated the issue in terms of personal freedoms. Driving at high speeds, it insisted in its public relations campaigns, was a type of human right. Infringement upon this right amounted to tyranny. In the early 1970s, for example, the federal government imposed a Tempo 100 limit on some highways, but the auto industry mounted an effective campaign against further proposed limits on the Autobahn.

The national political climate changed in favor of speed limits during the first half of the 1980s. Heightened environmental concerns were the most important cause of this shift. When Waldsterben became a subject of broad public concern starting in the early

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53 Klenke, Freier Stau, 47-50, 90-7.
years of the decade, criticism of automobile pollution intensified. Air pollution experts began to point at automobile exhaust as an important cause of forest-killing acid rain, placing the question of national speed limits on the national political agenda once again.

With the *Waldsterben* issue gripping the country’s imagination, the situation become acute by the middle of the decade. A steady stream of reports and committee hearings on the linkages between high speeds and automobile exhaust put the automobile industry on the defensive. Public opinion polls began showing that a clear majority of the population supported stricter nationwide speed limits, including on the previously sacrosanct *Autobahn*. By 1984, both opposition parties in the *Bundestag* (the Greens and the Social Democrats), had endorsed the formula on speed limits that the urban reformers had been pushing for years. This formula—“Tempo 100/80/30”—would have introduced maximum limits of 100 kilometers-per-hour on the *Autobahn*, 80 k.p.h. on other highways, and 30 k.p.h. within cities. However, after intense lobbying by the auto industry, in 1986 the federal government gave up on a national speed limit on the *Autobahn*.55 The historiography of speed limit debates in Germany, it should be noted, is dominated by this conflict, over the top speeds allowed on the nation’s freeways, especially the *Autobahnen* and for the period after 1973.56

The situation turned out differently for intra-urban traffic calming. By the early 1980s, the urban reformers had momentum on their side even without the assistance that the *Waldsterben* debate gave the issue. The experimental project that had been conducted in North-Rhine Westphalia was just a precursor to other big experiments. The traffic

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56 Kurt Möser, for instance, wrote a sidebar history of the speed limit debates in his *Geschichte des Autos* (pages 276-8), but focused his discussion on the *Autobahnen* to the exclusion of almost every other type of road and street.
calming model project, headed by Monheim’s planning office and the Federal Environment Agency, got underway during this period. In September 1982, a report issued by the “Hoecherl commission” (named for its chairman, Hermann Hoecherl) of the federal transportation ministry endorsed experimentation with Tempo 30 zones. Not long thereafter, Cologne began its own high-profile and large-scale initiative, designed to test the efficacy of Tempo 30 zones throughout the city. Over the next several years, empirical evidence from these various experiments began to become available, giving the urban reformers a stronger empirical basis upon which to make their claims and to counter those of the auto lobby.

Citizens’ initiatives shifted their strategy during this period to take advantage of the more favorable climate. In 1983, the Transportation Working Group (Arbeitskreis Verkehr, the group within the BBU responsible for organizing transportation-oriented local citizens’ initiatives) endorsed a nationwide campaign to reduce speed limits to Tempo 30 on all city streets in West Germany. This followed a searing internal debate on the question of whether the organization should continue to push the “fundamental” or strong version of traffic calming or pursue a more limited strategy aimed at achievable regulatory changes—a change in the legal speed limit within cities from Tempo 50 to Tempo 30. It chose the Tempo 30 strategy, recognizing that the political conditions might be favorable enough to achieve passage of the cheaper regulatory version. The Transportation Working Group tailored a national public relations campaign designed to sell the benefits of speed reduction in cities. The campaign’s rhetoric equated lower speeds with a higher quality of life and singled out children and the elderly as beneficiaries. It crafted slogans, media messages, and visuals (posters and stickers) that

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reinforced these messages. It identified other organizations with which it could form alliances. These extended beyond the national environmental groups, which had already begun to focus on alternative transportation, to include medical doctors, universities, unions, and groups representing children, seniors, and the handicapped. It also began to interact with the national Green party in an attempt to make the issue part of federal legislative dialogue.\textsuperscript{58}

The intensification of the \textit{Waldsterben} debate in West Germany gave such efforts a boost. The citizens’ initiatives, Greens, environmental groups, and planners who supported traffic calming had put the idea into media circulation for years, in some cases extending even back to the 1960s. These efforts, plus the association of automobile speeds with safety, \textit{Waldsterben}, and the quality of life, helped reduce the public’s resistance to the idea of slowing traffic speeds in cities. Holzapfel and his colleagues claimed that most people wanted slower speeds in urban areas, at least on residential streets, because they understood that slower speeds meant a better “direct living environment” (their neighborhood) and fewer injuries, especially to children.\textsuperscript{59}

West Germany’s populace apparently saw the tradeoff between speed and other things they valued much more clearly for city streets than they did for highways. The emotional appeal of the auto industry’s campaigns spoke to a citizen’s “right” to travel at high speeds by car, but everyone knew that the highest vehicular speeds were appropriate only in a very few places. This basic fact was a reason why the auto industry could generate so much support in opposition to speed limits on the \textit{Autobahn}. City streets, in contrast, were quite different spaces, even to the most casual of observers. They were

\textsuperscript{59} Holzapfel, Traube, and Ullrich, \textit{Autoverkehr 2000}, 96-7.
crowded, inhabited by many different kinds of users, and bounded by trees, buildings, shrubs, poles, benches, and other objects. The public appeared to understand this distinction about city streets, placing more weight on other values besides motorized speed. Survey data showed that during the 1980s, support for traffic calming increased as more people became familiar with the benefits of slower speeds on city streets.  

For all of these reasons, the urban reformers soon began to score victories. In 1985, the transportation ministry allowed a temporary alteration to federal regulations governing urban speed limits. This was a five-year experiment (to December 31, 1989), designed to give legal cover to cities wishing to reduce inner-city speeds from Tempo 50 to Tempo 30. It had an immediate effect. The number of Tempo 30 zones in West Germany ballooned over the next couple years, from a few hundred to well over four thousand. Cities that had resisted creating such zones in part because federal regulations did not allow them, now became enthusiastic converts.

Localities’ spirited reception to the regulatory change meant that there was no question whether the federal government would make the Tempo 30 zone a permanent part of the federal code when the trial period ended. The only question concerned its extent. There were two sides to the debate. The first was a coalition consisting of the federal transportation ministry and the auto industry, supported by some CDU-led state governments, that wanted to allow Tempo 30 zones in residential neighborhoods only. Arterials were to be excluded, a position consistent with the bundling theory of traffic calming going back to the 1963 Buchanan report. The other side was a coalition consisting of the federal environmental agency (UBA), SPD-led state governments, local

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and national citizens’ initiatives, the Greens, independent institutions such as the
*Deutscher Städtetag* and German Institute for Urban Affairs, alternative mass
membership organizations for motorists, and environmental groups such as BUND. This
coalition proposed a Tempo 30 limit for all city streets, including arterials. After much
discussion, the *Bundesrat* decided in September 1989 to make permanent the weaker
version (as of January 1st, 1990), which meant that arterials would not be included.62
From 1990 onward, cities had the legal authority to limit speeds to Tempo 30 in
residential neighborhoods, making it the default speed limit on such streets throughout
the country.

*Case study: Munich*

The origins of traffic calming in Munich mirrored those elsewhere, where
frustration over deteriorating conditions in urban neighborhoods was great.
Transportation infrastructure, in particular streets and street networks, became a central
point of debate in Munich during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The urban reformers in
Munich focused much effort on how street alterations fed commercial development,
which evicted residents and raised rents at the same time. They also argued that wider
and straighter streets only generated more traffic, worsening the natural environment and
diminishing residents’ quality of life. They began to formulate alternative plans for
moving traffic through the city. One of these was Plan K, the plan formulated by Karl
Klühspies in 1967 as an alternative to the city’s Prinz-Carl-Palais tunnel. Its system of
one-way streets was intended to redirect traffic in Maxvorstadt, making it more difficult

(June 12, 1989), 94-7.
to move through the neighborhood. Klühspies’ stature as an established and forceful critic guaranteed that the plan receive attention, from both the media and the city government. It was also controversial and subjected to heavy debate within the city council on numerous occasions over several years. Despite the support from two mayors (Hans-Jochen Vogel and his successor, Georg Kronawitter), the city council ultimately rejected Klühspies’ plan. It foundered on opposition from neighborhoods adjacent to the Maxvorstadt (which feared that the plan would induce a traffic shift from the Maxvorstadt to other neighborhoods) and from the city’s bureaucracy.  

Nonetheless, Plan K proved useful. It helped to establish traffic calming as a legitimate topic of discussion in Munich. Other organizations thereafter produced their own traffic calming schemes. Aktion Maxvorstadt, for instance (Klühspies was a member), produced a plan in 1973 titled “Modell Maxvorstadt.” It called for a reorganization of traffic in the neighborhood, based on the idea that motorized traffic and “humane living” were incompatible. Because the Maxvorstadt was well served by public transit, the authors asserted that almost all of the motorized traffic in the neighborhood was superfluous. They believed that if car travel in the neighborhood were difficult, motorists would understand that the streetscape was no longer for their benefit. They thus proposed turning the neighborhood street network into a maze of one-way streets, making it virtually impossible to navigate by car from one end to the other.  


Children’s issues came to the surface in this context. Werner Suerbaum, a university professor and founding member of the *Aktion Maxvorstadt* citizens’ initiative, took up the cause of children’s health and safety in 1973, in a letter to the city government. Lamenting the conditions at an elementary school in Maxvorstadt, he combined quality of life, public health, and environmental sentiments into a single argument focused on children. He charged that the “flowing traffic” on the busy street next to the school made life difficult for the students. The pollutants and the “infernal noise” from traffic turned the children into nervous wrecks and made it impossible for them to concentrate on their studies.\(^{65}\)

The upshot was that there was some hope and expectation that the city government would be receptive to pressure. One reason was that traffic calming had found support among more than just the activists in the Munich Forum and in citizens’ initiatives such as *Aktion Maxvorstadt*. It had also become a favorite topic among the city’s numerous district councils, which during the 1970s focused their attention on problems that bedeviled the neighborhoods they represented. Traffic calming soon became one of their favored projects, appearing as an agenda item in the periodic citizens’ meetings organized by the councils. These meetings resulted in petitions (*Bürgeranträge*) demanding that the city government implement traffic calming. During the 1970s, traffic problems would become the most common grievance petitioned. The district councils also made sporadic attempts to band together to pressure the city to act. A 1973 letter to mayor Kronawitter, composed by the chairmen of seven councils in the city center, referred to the repeated and strident calls by citizens for traffic calming on the

streets in these neighborhoods. To emphasize citizen involvement in the city’s planning, the councils indicated that they, not the city’s bureaucracy, were in the best position to force a decision. “As the city’s administration has, for the most part, up until now stood idly by as our city’s traffic avalanche grows, the district councils, as representatives of the citizens, saw themselves forced to take the initiative.”

All this activity von unten, however, resulted in little practical action. The few concrete plans for traffic calming had been mooted by the middle part of the 1970s. Plan K had been rejected by the city council. Aktion Maxvorstadt’s model plan had received a warm reception when released in 1973 but the city did not act on it. In the end, the district councils’ constant drumbeat of support for traffic calming had generated enormous discussion but no results. Among the reasons given by the city government was the need to replace the 1963 urban development plan (the Jensen plan) with an updated version, a process completed in 1975. The revised version referenced the need for traffic calming, but even thereafter the city did not move to implement measures in any part of the city.

This dynamic, between citizen concern about increased traffic and the city’s uncertain attempts to defuse this pressure, appeared to be common across West Germany. Heiner Monheim observed that despite the heavy emphasis on traffic calming among scholars and practitioners, few local governments had redesigned streets using traffic calming models by the end of the 1970s. He placed the blame not on a lack of popular

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support, but on disputes within city governments as to whether and how to proceed.

“Citizens’ appeals for, and politicians’ support of, traffic calming,” Monheim lamented, “are refused by local administrations, often with various stonewalling strategies.”

Munich’s experience conformed to this general pattern. On the one hand, citizens’ concerns regarding traffic were taken seriously. Because these concerns had been voiced repeatedly, through the district councils and citizens’ organizations, the city’s politicians were well aware of the issue. Over time, traffic calming was embraced by all the major parties, with the only partisan debate concerning the type and extent of traffic calming to be implemented. Moreover, the city bureaucracy time and again issued documents supportive of traffic calming in general, showing an awareness of developments elsewhere in West Germany and Western Europe. The next revision of the city’s urban development plan, issued in 1983, contained a lengthy section on the desirability of traffic calming and on the city’s plans for traffic calming. This was a big improvement over the 1975 and 1963 plans, which said much less or even nothing about it. On the other hand, Munich’s government took a long time to develop and implement such plans. Traffic calming measures did not appear on a widespread basis in the city until well into the 1980s.

The experiences in Maxvorstadt and Schwabing were illustrative. The district councils representing these neighborhoods had been among the most active in petitioning

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the city for action on traffic calming. Residents in Schwabing confronted ever-growing traffic volumes, due in part to the neighborhood’s popularity as a restaurant and nightclub center. Maxvorstadt had been a center of unrest in Munich since the late 1960s and was the home of some of the city’s most prominent activists and citizens’ initiatives. In 1977 the city government, the district councils in these neighborhoods, and citizens’ initiatives began discussions on comprehensive traffic calming measures. The city government had been pressured to begin such planning for some time, partly as a result of popular frustration over its lack of action. Thus the city, the Urban Living (Urbanes Wohnen) citizens’ initiative, and the district councils created a working group (AKVB; Arbeitskreis Münchner Bürger für Verkehrsberuhigung) for these neighborhoods. Over the following decade, the working group met on a regular basis (monthly in most cases). Regular participants included representatives from the Munich Forum, other citizens’ initiatives, architectural and design firms, ADAC and other economic interest groups, and the district councils in Schwabing and Maxvorstadt. It also included representatives from various planning departments, who were part of the city’s efforts since the early 1970s to ensure—or at least appear to ensure—that the government’s decisions reflected direct citizen input.70

The group’s history reflected the complex story of citizen participation in Munich’s city planning. When the group was created, its organizers believed that it would serve as a model for other neighborhoods. By bringing citizens, technical professionals, businesspeople and city administrators into a single working group that focused on a narrow topic, the organizers hoped to realize the ideal of democratic

70 The protocols of AKVB’s monthly meetings are located in the archive of District Council 3 (Bezirksausschuss Maxvorstadt/Universität).
planning from the inception of the process. Early citizen participation would create a popular consensus for whatever plan emerged from the deliberations. Moreover, the group’s diverse membership would identify both technical and political problems at the beginning of the process rather than at the end. This process in turn would eliminate poor decisions and *post hoc* controversy.\(^1\)

The group’s opening years appeared to justify these hopes. They resulted in a variety of innovative approaches to the traffic calming problem. One was the creation of a registry of problem areas in Schwabing and Maxvorstadt which were marked by traffic jams, high noise and pollution levels, and other problems. Another innovation was work on a wide-ranging pedestrian and bicycling network. Perhaps the most important was to identify a catalogue of traffic calming measures to be used on different street segments in these neighborhoods. By 1981 much of this had been packaged into a general traffic calming proposal for both neighborhoods and submitted to the city for its approval.\(^2\)

At this point, the process slowed. The city delayed making decisions on the matter until the middle of the decade, when the topic was picked up again. The record is unclear as to whether this delay was deliberate or the result of discord within the city administration over how to proceed. There appeared to be a schism between the city’s planners on the one hand and outside architects on the other. The latter feared that the work of the AKVB would be given little priority within the city administration. The danger, they argued, was that traffic calming in Munich would be narrowly defined as a technical matter. It would not be regarded as its proper light, as a means to reinvigorate


the social life of a community through street design. Regardless of the cause, members of
the AKVB were exasperated by the city’s plodding rate of progress.73

The city’s reawakened interest in traffic calming was political. It occurred in
tandem with the reelection of the SPD’s Georg Kronawitter in 1984, who replaced the
CSU’s more conservative Erich Kiesl. The AKVB found its work reinvigorated as a part
of the city’s general interest in traffic calming. In the summer of 1985, the new SPD-led
city council authorized the first experimental Tempo 30 zones. A year later Kronawitter
created a large cross-departmental working group on traffic calming, charged with
planning and creating as many Tempo 30 zones as possible within Munich.74 Between
1985 and 1990, the city created 76 such zones throughout the city. By the 1990s, a large
percentage of Munich’s streets came under Tempo 30 regulation. Like other large cities
around the country, Munich undertook an expansive public-relations campaign to inform
neighborhood residents of traffic-calming plans. This citywide campaign was a joint
effort between the Munich Forum and the city government. Again reflecting the extent to
which norms had changed by the end of the 1980s, the glossy brochures and
informational packages issued in this campaign utilized many of the safety and
environmental arguments that had been advanced by activists for years. The district
councils, meanwhile, continued to issue petitions in support of traffic calming, often
asking that their neighborhoods be selected for inclusion in the city’s Tempo 30

“München Aktivitäten”: assorted documents. Münch, “Arbeitskreis Münchner Bürger für

experiment. By the mid-1980s at the latest, district councils supported traffic calming almost unanimously.\(^75\)

**Conclusion**

The permanent incorporation of Tempo 30 regulations into federal design guidelines as of January 1\(^{st}\), 1990 was the result of two decades of debate. To those who wished to remake West German cities along more progressive social and environmental lines, this was only a partial success. For them, the change was more a truce than a revolution. The Tempo 30 zones were regulatory devices rather than architectonic ones; they were legal mechanisms designed to slow traffic rather than design interventions to reconstruct the physical surface of the street. The Dutch *woonerf* had proven to be too expensive and controversial for implementation on a mass basis in West Germany. There was no large-scale effort in West Germany to rebuild local streets along the *woonerf* model, hence no attempt to create the idyllic spaces that the *woonerf* promised. Streets did not become new spaces for living and playing, where non-motorists—young children included—were given full equality with motorists. Streets did not become spaces where social interaction was given as high a priority as circulation. They also did not become miniature green spaces, reintroducing bits of nature into the urban world long dominated by asphalt and metal.\(^76\)

The Tempo 30 settlement at the end of the 1980s thus represented a defeat of sorts for those who preferred the strong version of traffic calming. It failed to attack what critics regarded as a root of the *autogerechte Stadt*, the arterial streets that enabled the


\(^76\) ArFUSS: Arbeitskreis Verkehr im BBU, *Informations-Dienst Verkehr* 25 (September 1987), 25.
entire high-capacity system to function in the first place. Without addressing these streets, as critics had argued since “fundamental” traffic calming was first formulated, the compromise offered no systemic change. The urban critics had pushed hard to have the regulation be a blanket change that would encompass entire cities. The critics believed that such a change would have had revolutionary implications for German cities. In their thinking, slowing all motorized traffic to a crawl would have reduced air and noise pollution, reduced accidents and injury, and made the city much more pleasant to inhabit. It also would have made other modes more competitive with the automobile. Travel by tram or bicycle would have become more attractive because residents would be less inclined to see them as slower and less convenient.

Yet this interpretation is too negative. The regulatory change that took effect in January 1990 represented the culmination of years of effort. It resulted from a long political campaign mounted by the urban reformers to move traffic calming from theoretical construct to on-the-ground realization. Moreover, the traffic-calming debate in the 1970s and 1980s dismantled the idea that streets were unifunctional spaces. Streets were no longer seen as spaces reserved for the circulation function, the movement of automobiles. There had been a shift in attitudes toward the street. By the early 1990s, planners were more receptive to modes of transportation that heretofore had been regarded as obstacles to the car. More importantly, by this time the idea that the city street was a multifunctional space had been legitimized. Even the most ardent opponents of the urban reformers had had to adapt to the language and arguments of traffic-calming advocates. Planners accepted that the street was a social space in which different types of users engaged in multiple types of activities.
Nor was this the end of the story. After 1990 local parties incorporated traffic calming into their platforms, as in Berlin when the Greens and SPD joined in a coalition government (after 1989). Street protests over high speeds continued to occur in places like Hamburg, provoked by traffic accidents involving children. Critics focused on their program of transforming arterials into boulevards, as they had always anticipated. In the 1990s the debate continued over the extent to which city streets ought to be dedicated to motorists. While the urban reformers never achieved their most ambitious goals, the logic behind traffic calming had found wide resonance in West German society. The street’s social function had returned to the center of attention.

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CHAPTER 8:

CONCLUSION: THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

“In the recent past there have been many theoretical and practical attempts to surmount this serious [environmental] crisis (e.g., Buchanan 1960—‘environmental areas’; J. Vogel 1971—‘Save our cities now!’; priority for public transit; construction of pedestrian zones, of traffic-calmed neighborhoods; the rediscovery of the bicycle.) An important milestone was the 1975 OECD conference in Paris, with its theme ‘Better Cities through Less Traffic.’ Political and administrative negotiations thus must become more clearly focused on the reduction of problems associated with automobiles.”

-- Claus Dyckhoff, “Wohnumfeldverbesserung durch Verkehrsberuhigung” (1985)

“The urbane, ecological city cannot be adapted to the car.”

-- Dieter Apel, Michael Lehmbrock, Tim Pharoa, and Joerg Thiemann-Linden, Kompakt, mobil, urban (1997)\(^1\)

In 1988, the transportation planner Gerhard Heimerl suggested building a high-speed rail system underneath the city of Stuttgart. After six years of on-and-off discussion, Heimerl’s idea found expression in “Stuttgart 21,” a rail infrastructure project sponsored by the Deutsche Bahn and the city, state, and federal governments.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Claus Dyckhoff, “Wohnumfeldverbesserung durch Verkehrsberuhigung,” in Grüne Wende im Städtebau: Wege zum ökologischen Planen und Bauen, ed. Siegfried Rehberg, (Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller, 1985), 129; Apel et al., Kompakt, mobil, urban, 459.

21 was to be in the grandest of planning traditions. Like postwar plans to build highways through and around West Germany’s cities, it foresees a colossal system of new infrastructure in the heart of the city. The centerpiece was to be a complex of high-speed rail lines running beneath the city center, designed to better connect Stuttgart to Europe’s latest and fastest rail networks. The existing above ground complex of rail lines was regarded as outdated and in need of replacement. The existing cul-de-sac design required trains to enter and leave the central station by the same route, forcing them to reverse course. The Stuttgart 21 plan would allow them to enter and leave in the same direction.

To accomplish their plan, the designers proposed constructing dozens of new tunnels and bridges throughout the greater Stuttgart region, seventy miles of new lines. The existing rail lines and yards, some 100 hectares (247 acres), would be removed, opening these spaces for urban development.

As had been true of the Munich’s Jensen Plan of 1963, and countless similar plans during the postwar era, the Stuttgart 21 backers maintained that their plan was vital to securing Stuttgart’s economic future. If Stuttgart did not upgrade its infrastructure (in this case, high speed rail) and connect the city to the rest of Europe, they argued, Stuttgart would be left behind. Stuttgart needed the project to bind the city to the far-reaching transportation systems that were regarded as the lifeblood of commerce. Here the planners married the speed imperative to the economic one. A station that allowed trains to pass through the city without reversing course would enhance the efficiency of movement, increasing speed. This in turn would make Stuttgart more attractive as an investment hub.

Infrastructural investment on the scale of Stuttgart 21 required a good deal of space. Historic buildings, old trees, and parts of the inner city would be affected and in some cases eliminated. As was true of the Prinz-Carl-Palais project in Munich during the mid-1960s, the Stuttgart 21 tunnel project threatened an important historic structure. In Stuttgart’s case, it was the central rail station, designed by the architect Paul Bonatz. It was built between 1914 and 1928 and was widely recognized as one of the most significant buildings in twentieth-century German architecture. Over the remainder of the century, the massive station, with its signature clock tower, became a defining mark of the city. Under the Stuttgart 21 plan, however, much of the station would be bulldozed to make room for the new station. Only a fraction of the original structure, including the clock tower and a small part of the building’s façade, was to be preserved.

The plan’s advocates regarded the sacrifice of Bonatz’s masterpiece as a small price to pay, but others were not as convinced. The “façadist dodge,” as a New York Times story put it in reference to the planners’ attempt to preserve only fragments of the station, failed to placate architects and historic preservationists in Stuttgart and elsewhere. As had been true in Munich decades earlier, these became early opponents of Stuttgart 21. This and other controversies, such as distributing the cost burden (which ran in the billions of Euros), meant that the project was years in the making. Finally, in 2007, the project’s sponsors announced that Stuttgart 21 would go forward as planned.

What happened thereafter became one of the most remarkable episodes in the recent history of city planning. A vigorous popular opposition emerged to protest almost every feature of Stuttgart 21. Historic preservationists and architects objected to the

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razing of the central rail station. Others thought the project would be a disaster for the city’s built environment, for the effect the many bridges and tunnels would have on existing neighborhoods. A great many thought the project was too costly, its price tag just too high during a period of economic austerity. The opposition was led initially by a familiar coalition of the Greens, a citizens’ initiative (“Leben in Stuttgart”), and environmental groups such as BUND. The Greens had been the only political party in Stuttgart to oppose the project from the beginning. Within two years, this coalition was organizing weekly street demonstrations that attracted several thousand protesters at a time.

The simmering discontent with Stuttgart 21 exploded in 2010, after work on the project began. In the late summer and early fall, huge numbers of people poured onto Stuttgart’s streets in protest. The proximate causes of protest were the attempts to demolish Bonatz’s station (save for parts of the façade) and the removal of nearly 300 mature trees in the city’s Schlossgarten, a large and historic park in the city center, to make room for the project’s infrastructure. Demonstrations reached enormous proportions, as organizers claimed over 60,000 participants on some days. Their efforts to disrupt events in turn were met with force. One protest, on September 30, became especially violent. Police fired water cannons and pepper spray at protesters who were defending the Schlossgarten trees. Images of bloodied protesters being dragged away by police in riot gear became iconic overnight in Germany. These images also helped to turn Stuttgart 21 into an international story.

The size, demographic makeup, and passionate quality of the protests showed that the oppositional coalition did not consist of just Greens, leftists, and ecologists. A sizable
swath of Stuttgart’s ordinary citizens had joined. Bankers, clergymen, architects, engineers, students, retirees, small-business owners, and many other types of people all participated. Stuttgart long had had a reputation for middle-class respectability and voted accordingly (the CDU had ruled the city and the state of Baden-Württemberg for almost all the postwar era). Now, however, these same voters took to the streets in frustration over the project. Survey data reflected this shift. A substantial minority of Stuttgart’s residents had opposed the plan from the beginning, but over time the proportion increased as the plan reached implementation. By the time of the mass street protests, surveys showed that a majority of the city’s inhabitants rejected the plan.

The scale and vigor of the massive street demonstrations proved shocking. As had happened forty years earlier in Munich and other cities in Europe and the United States, the planners and politicians behind the project expressed bewilderment over the surge of popular opposition. Wolfgang Drexler, a lead spokesman for Stuttgart 21, said in September 2010 that he was “astonished” by the size of the street protests. He and others had worked for years to sell Stuttgart 21 and had endured all manner of delays, including lawsuits. Now, however, he watched as a flood of citizen protest washed over them. Among other things, the protesters claimed that the planning process had been closed, shut off from citizen input.

The CDU fared poorly in this climate. Not only was it in charge of the local and state governments and thus responsible for the project, but its leaders at all levels of government had also shown little appreciation of the fact that they had an extra-parliamentary opposition (in miniature form) on their hands. Angela Merkel, the conservative Chancellor, waded into the controversy by aligning herself, and her
government, with the project. Merkel, the weekly news magazine Der Spiegel editorialized in response, believed that citizens should exercise their voice in elections, but otherwise policy matters should remain in the hands of politicians. To voters, her party appeared to be more concerned with the project than listening to protesters’ wishes. A warning shot had been fired in June 2009, when the Greens won a plurality in Stuttgart’s city council, bumping the CDU down to second place for the first time in three decades. In 2010, as the mass protests began, vitriol landed on the head of Stefan Mappus, Baden-Württemberg’s prime minister. His approach to the political process, which appeared to take little heed of citizens’ wishes on the project, started alienating voters. Survey data indicated that Mappus’s party was losing voter support to the Greens, whose objections to Stuttgart 21 positioned them for large gains in state elections scheduled for March 2011.4 (This in fact occurred; while the CDU won the largest share of votes, the Greens and the SPD won enough combined votes to form a governing coalition, ousting the CDU from power in Baden-Württemberg.)

Much was familiar about the Stuttgart 21 case, including its politics, but the Stuttgart 21 case also showed that some things had changed between the 1960s, when objections to such massive infrastructural projects began, and the twenty-first century. Perhaps the most important of these changes was environmental. Both sides claimed a green mantle in the debate. The protesting coalition argued that Stuttgart 21 would be an environmental disaster. Part of their argument rested on systemic planning issues. Werner Wölfle, a Green councilman, claimed that the rail project was a colossal waste of resources that squandered billions on an “oasis” in the city center. These funds, he said,

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could be better spent on making Stuttgart a truly “green city.” Much of the protesters’ opposition was emotional, focused on the removal of the Schlossgarten trees. Protesters considered the park’s mature trees to be historic elements, part of the city’s very fabric. The Schlossgarten trees became symbols of what was wrong with the planners’ thinking, their models, and their approach to the natural world. Losing them meant losing both a treasured part of the city and a beautiful slice of nature to boot.

Critically, the Stuttgart 21 planners also defended the project on environmental grounds. They had anticipated that the park trees would become a flashpoint and had promised to plant an equal number of trees elsewhere in the city. Reminiscent of Munich’s Isar Parallel plan in the 1960s, this strategy failed to convince the protesters. They were far more concerned about the particular set of trees slated for removal rather than the absolute number involved.

More important was the planners’ rationale for Stuttgart 21 as a whole. It, too, rested on a green logic. By putting the entire rail system underground, they claimed, Stuttgart could reclaim rail yards that had occupied much of the city center for decades. This would be an advantage for the city and its residents, as the ground could be turned into parks, plazas, housing, office space, and civic amenities. Moreover, elimination of the yards would have enormous environmental benefits. Hartmut Topp, a planning professor with impeccable green credentials, argued in a public symposium that the project would enhance Stuttgart’s environment. By eliminating the yards, it would close a loophole in the middle of the city and reconnect parts of the city that had been severed for decades. This fact, plus the addition of new housing and workspace on the reclaimed

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land, would shorten trip distances for Stuttgart’s inhabitants. Topp believed that more trips by bicycle and on foot, and fewer by car, could be taken as a result. Stuttgart 21’s planners highlighted similar arguments in their marketing campaign for the project. Under the slogan “fewer autos, better air,” the city calculated that the project would dramatically reduce the amount of car trips taken in the city, increase the amount of trips by bicycle, on foot, or by public transit, and reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by city residents in the process.6

The Stuttgart 21 case showed that a set of green norms had infused city planning in Germany. For decades, planners and other professionals in architecture, urban design, and other fields had mulled over how to make cities less destructive of the natural environment while improving what planners liked to call their “livability.” The urban reformers that had led the campaigns during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s were a part of this process. Their arguments about transportation had always had a green component of one form or another, and over time their interest in ecology and cities deepened. In the 1980s, for example, Helmut Holzapfel co-authored or edited books that incorporated diverse ecological criticisms of auto-oriented transportation planning (accidents, noise, air pollution, energy, consumption of landscape, Waldsterben, traffic’s effects on wildlife biology, pavement’s effects on watercourses, and so on).7 A decade later, Dieter Apel and colleagues produced an even more comprehensive work. Transportation was only one element, they said, in making a city wholly livable. Energy use reduction, concentrated settlement patterns, protection of natural and cultural landscapes in and around cities,

protection of place-specific characteristics, and other elements were all necessary to make cities “compact, mobile, and urbane.”

During the 1980s and 1990s, Karl Ganser also worked on urban-ecological projects. During the 1980s, he moved to the housing and transportation ministry within the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (recall that during the 1970s, Ganser had been Heiner Monheim’s boss at the federal planning ministry’s BfLR). In North-Rhine Westphalia, Ganser worked closely with the ministry’s head, Christoph Zöpel, on a planning agenda that included urban renewal, historic preservation, economic development, and transportation issues. During this period, both men were exposed to crosscutting forces that were buffeting the state. Citizens’ initiatives had been clamoring for the protection of working-class housing for about a decade, while others lobbied for the protection of neighborhood amenities (the Tempo 30 groups were a good example). Economically, the Ruhr was facing industrial decline, which had led to the closing and abandonment of factories, mines, and plants. Ganser and Zöpel sought to address these diverse problems and issues under a single, comprehensive, and thematic roof. Their most important solution was the industrial rehabilitation project IBA-Emscher Park. The project, which began in 1989 and lasted through the 1990s, was an attempt at large-scale historic preservation, economic revitalization, and ecological restoration. With Ganser at the head of the effort, IBA-Emscher Park became one of the most well known planning projects in (West) Germany and abroad for its ambitious scale and objectives. The Emscher, a river in the Ruhr, was a symbol for the entire project. During the course of industrialization over the previous century, the river had been turned into an open sewer for all types of waste that poured out of the region’s factories and cities. Restoring the

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8 Apel et al., *Kompakt, mobil, urban*, 448-9, 455-9.
Emscher’s water quality and banks would indicate that the most shattered of landscapes could be restored within the context of economic revitalization.⁹

The ecologically-minded thinking and efforts of reformers such as Ganser, Apel, and Holzapfel occurred within a context of growing German (and European) planners’ interest in urban sustainability. The term “sustainable development” had been coined in 1987 by the authors of Our Common Future, a report issued by a United Nations commission chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Sustainable development became a catchphrase in planning circles a few years later, after the United Nations’ Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The conference included a call to apply ecological principles to local circumstances. In reunified Germany, planners got to work on these ideas immediately. Within a couple years, the Deutscher Städtetag (Association of German Towns and Cities) produced a comprehensive guide to the issue. The “Sustainable City,” it claimed, was “the city anywhere in the world that is aware of its obligation to ensure sustained, environmentally safe development for the well-being of its citizens and for the ecological balance as a whole.”¹⁰ The guide provided detailed recommendations on local energy use, wastewater management, soil protection, transportation policy, building design, and environmental impact assessments. During the 1990s and 2000s, European planners adopted the rhetoric of sustainable development as a way to organize and articulate their increasingly green agenda. European cities, in particular in the central and northern parts of the continent, showed creativity and innovation in addressing environmental problems of all types. Many of these issues had

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¹⁰ Klaus Fiedler and Jörg Hennerkes, Cities for a Sustainable Development: Material for a “Local Agenda 21” (Cologne: Association of German Cities and Towns, 1995), 5.
been points of debate for decades, but others were newer items on the agenda. Climate change, for example, had been a sporadic theme during the 1970s, but the heightened scientific knowledge of the problem plus concern for the consequences made it a central issue among European planners by the twenty-first century.\footnote{Jerry Yudelson, \textit{Green Building Trends: Europe} (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2009); Timothy Beatley, \textit{Green Urbanism: Learning from European Cities} (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000). For a review of sustainable development as a historical and theoretical concept, see Susan Baker, \textit{Sustainable Development} (New York: Routledge, 2006). On climate change, see Ursula von Petz, “Historische Stadt- und Verkehrsplanung in Nürnberg,” \textit{Die Alte Stadt} 36, 1 (2009), 133. See also the brief reference to climate change in chapter three of this study.}

Freiburg, in southwest Germany, developed a reputation as Germany’s foremost eco-city. It was well known for its pedestrian zone, one of the largest in Germany, and for the quality of its bicycling infrastructure. By 2010, over a quarter of all trips taken in the city were by bicycle. It was even more famous as a center for alternative energy, especially solar power. During the 1970s, the Wyhl nuclear protests, not far from Freiburg, had attracted environmentalists to a city already full of sympathetic intellectuals. The desire to turn Freiburg into an alternative-energy center intensified during the 1980s, in particular after the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. Realizing that a green reputation could pay off for the local economy, Freiburg’s leaders began to design policies to spur investment in the city. Among other initiatives, they designated new solar-powered subdivisions and created incentives to attract renewable energy firms to Freiburg.\footnote{Heather Rogers, \textit{Green Gone Wrong: How our Economy is Undermining the Environmental Revolution} (New York: Scribner, 2010), 83-91; Thomas Schroepfer and Limin Hee, “Emerging forms of sustainable urbanism: case studies of Vauban Freiburg and solarCity Linz,” \textit{Journal of Green Building} 3, 2 (Spring 2008), 67-76.}

Planners abroad started noticing distinctions between European and (West) German cities and others around the world in some key areas of urban sustainability. Travel patterns were one such area. In 1989, a controversial study by two Australian
researchers correlated land use patterns and travel patterns in cities around the world and found that European urbanites consumed less fuel than their counterparts in Australian or American cities (although more than Asian urbanites). The authors explained these differences in terms of land use patterns—Asian and European cities were denser on average.\(^\text{13}\) They followed this study up with a massive book on the topic a decade later, and found a similar pattern. People living in European cities traveled more by public transit and less by car, burned less gasoline, produced less carbon dioxide and other air pollutants, and suffered fewer transportation-related deadly accidents than people in American and Australian cities. The German cities included in the study performed at least as well as the study’s other European cities, in some cases better. The authors again pointed to multiple reasons for these discrepancies, with land use patterns being among the most important. But they were also quick to point to other explanations. Europeans invested more in public transit systems, for example, and had created policies designed to get people out of their cars in cities. They regarded German cities as leaders in these areas.\(^\text{14}\)

Reversing the situation that had held in the first postwar decades, American planners began looking to European models, including German models, which they now regarded as innovative. One such was John Pucher, a planning professor at Rutgers University. Although Germans lived in one of the world’s most motorized societies, Pucher and a colleague wrote in 1996, “Germany has had the strongest and most


organized political opposition to the car in Europe…. The love-hate relationship with the car is probably more passionate in Germany than anywhere else in the world. The conflict between automobility and environmental protection permeates virtually every aspect of German transport policy.”¹⁵ Pucher and his colleagues became interested in why residents of German cities had little problem moving around on foot or by bicycle, in contrast to the United States. Data showed that about a third of all trips in Germany were by these modes (roughly ten percent by bicycle, a bit more than twice that figure on foot). These data placed German cities at the higher end of the European scale, behind only the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. The data also showed that Germany bested Great Britain, France, and Italy. Germans made about ten times the number of trips by bicycle as Americans, and they walked nearly four times as often. American planners recognized that these differences did not occur by accident. They explained that Germany’s urban policies had created this situation, which in their eyes were worth emulating in the United States.¹⁶

Despite these observations, German cities never became ecological idylls. While almost everyone in Germany became an adherent of sustainable development in principle, few cities resembled Freiburg in their devotion to the idea. This observation held true for the narrow set of topics in this study. The German public did not reject the automobile en masse, and the car’s hold on the popular imagination remained. On the contrary, motorization continued to increase, albeit slowly, remaining at one of the

highest levels in the world. The car lobby, ably represented by ADAC as well as some of the wealthiest auto manufacturers on earth, retained considerable power in Germany. There were consequently no serious attempts to rebuild entire cities without the automobile. What did occur was piecemeal, incremental change rather than radical transformation.

In 2001, Heiner Monheim wrote that the attempt to wean cities from dependence on the car had fallen short of the goals that he and his cohort of planners had envisioned decades before. The traffic calming measures that he had advocated in the 1970s and 1980s, which involved mass redesign of streetscapes throughout (West) German cities, had proved too expensive over the long term. Planners like him had had to settle for interventions that involved only parts of urban street networks. This compromise, he maintained, would not do. German planners needed to continue to work toward the goal of the “city of short distances,” in which walking, bicycling, and transit would be encouraged by bringing destinations closer together. His judgment of past efforts was thus skeptical, while his optimism about the future was tempered by experience.17 Having worked for decades on altering urban policies in (West) Germany, the urban reformers like Monheim had a difficult time seeing the incremental progress that they had helped to make possible. To them, change was slow, even invisible at times. In this respect, their perspectives often differed from those foreign planners who held German cities in high esteem.

How, then, should the efforts of the urban reformers, and the history of which they were a central part, be judged? Part of the answer is ambiguous. On the one hand, it

was true, as Heiner Monheim had lamented, that the reformers had not accomplished all of their goals. Rather, as they repeatedly indicated through the years, their successes were partial and incremental rather than revolutionary. They suffered as many defeats as victories, perhaps even more. Yet Monheim undersold his own accomplishments, as well as those of his peers and their predecessors. The reformers’ efforts had amounted to something in Germany. As Klühspies had indicated about Munich, at the least the reformers had prevented some of the most destructive (in their opinion) auto-oriented projects from being realized. More positively, the reformers had managed to carve out space for their own ideals within (West) German planning. Over time, their ideas became acceptable, even mainstream, parts of the planning dialogue, and their efforts helped to bring about alterations in the way people thought about, and lived in, cities. The reformers’ influence extended beyond transportation matters to encompass the full range of issues that were on display during the Stuttgart 21 controversy. The reformers were among the first to see that transportation investments had enormous consequences for the built and natural environments and became important voices in linking these issues. They were convinced that their efforts would help protect the natural environment, enhance urban spaces, and improve the health and well being of their fellow citizens. And over time their efforts helped to form new ideas, alter the perspectives of planners and specialists, and shaped the ongoing planning, design, and construction of German cities.

The biographies of many of the participants were evidence in favor of the thesis. They became established figures in their own right. Ganser, the brothers Monheim, Apel, Holzapfel, Hans-Henning von Winning, Jos Weber, and Werner Brög, among others, became respected members of their fields. Konrad Otto (now Konrad Otto-

18 Klühspies, “The Long Path on the Way to Change Awareness.”
Zimmermann), went from his position overseeing bicycling and traffic calming programs at the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) to head Freiburg’s environmental planning department. In 1992, he moved to the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a global association of local governments. He is now Secretary General of the organization, the largest of its kind in the world. Klühspies, the architect-turned-activist who helped found the Munich Forum and was active in dozens of important issues, is now in his eighties. Klühspies long ago became an iconic figure in Munich.

But an evaluation can also extend to the political dimensions of this history. In 2008, the American writer Paul Hockenos published an “alternative history” of the Federal Republic. He wanted to write a positive account of modern Germany’s history, one that emphasized the upward trajectory of the country’s politics. By this he meant that twenty-first century Germany had advanced to the point where it could be called a “liberal society with a vibrant democracy.” This happy state of affairs in Germany, Hockenos claimed, was the result of pressure from below. Younger generations in postwar West Germany, such as the student generation of the late 1960s, had been instrumental in forcing German politics along an increasingly democratic path. This study posits a similar trajectory, asserting that the activism of the urban reformers constituted a form of democratic participation. This activism overlapped with the many other types of pressure for political change that occurred at about the same time. While this history does not place the greatest weight on the same set of actors as in Hockenos, it does argue that the coalition of urban reformers—selected planners, ordinary citizens, local politicians,

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19 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer.
20 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer, 7-8.
etc.—constituted a type of pressure for political change that emanated as much or more from below as from above. The ubiquity and strength of the citizens’ initiatives during the 1970s and 1980s supports this conclusion, as does the Stuttgart 21 case in the twenty-first century. The Stuttgart case made world headlines due to the very fact that a city-planning dispute could bring 60,000 people into open, and occasionally violent, street protest. As this history shows, the citizen’s desire for participation, starting in the 1960s, existed in constant tension with the expert’s technical knowledge on the one hand and the official’s need to exercise administrative power on the other. (Often, such tension could be located within single persons who were involved in this story.) This contradiction will exist in any society that depends on a division of labor to function. In this history, the balance among these different elements depended much on the degree to which (West) Germany’s citizens claimed a right to participate in the affairs of their cities.
APPENDIX A:

FIGURES
Figure 1: Munich’s Altstadt and neighboring districts are depicted in this 1973 city of Munich document. The Altstadt corresponds to the area inside the outer black lines, which in turn show the contours of the Altstadtring. The northeast corner, where the Altstadtring makes a ninety-degree turn, is the area where the Prinz-Carl-Palais controversy occurred. The green and reddish colors show the existing (1973) and planned expansions of the pedestrian zone. The Marienplatz is the green square at the center of the image.

Figure 2: Planned major street network following the 1963 Jensen Plan (status as of 1965). The Altstadtring is the centermost ring, containing the Altstadt.
Figure 3: Dietmar Hahwleg (third from right) in a campaign flyer during his bid for mayor.

Figure 4: Erlangen’s cycling path network in 1995. The Innenstadt is in the center-right of the image. The Regnitz valley is the largely blank area running north to south through the center.

Figure 5: The city of Munich’s foray into bicycle planning, 1973. The city center is the large yellow circle in the middle.


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