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ICOMOS Germany
EPWG Spring School 2023
3-5 April - BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg

STADTHALLE COTTBUS

SOCIALIST ARCHITECTURE OF THE GDR

ICOMOS DEUTSCHES NATIONALKOMITEE
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I Acknowledgements

The international Spring School, dedicated to the examination and conceptualization of the historical evolution of Cottbus, a town situated in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), as well as to one of its prominent architectural landmarks, the Stadthalle Cottbus (event hall of Cottbus), was collaboratively orchestrated by the Emerging Professionals Working Group of ICOMOS Germany. This joint endeavor was realized thanks to the combined support of ICOMOS Germany and the Chair of Architectural Conservation at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg.

Between April 4th and 6th, 2023, a group of international students specializing in the disciplines of architecture, urban planning, and related fields embarked on an exploration of urban planning during the era of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), focusing on the development aspects of event halls and their surrounding areas, with the city of Cottbus and its Stadthalle serving as a specific case study. Their research encompassed the phases of initial planning, construction, utilization, appropriation, and the contemporary experiences of the city's residents and visitors about the Stadthalle and its environs. Ultimately, the students concluded their research with comprehensive findings and recommendations aimed at improving the future development and utilization of this building.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the individuals and institutions whose invaluable support and contributions were instrumental in the success of this Spring School.

Special gratitude is extended to Dr. Dörthe Hellmuth, Office Manager at ICOMOS Germany, Dr. John Ziesemer, Scientific Secretariat at ICOMOS Germany, and Prof. Dr. Johanna Blokker, Chair of Architectural Conservation at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, whose guidance and institutional support were essential in facilitating the organization of this event.

Junior Prof. Dr. Carola Neugebauer and lecturer and research associate Marie Enders from RWTH Aachen deserve special recognition for their insightful guest lectures. Thanks are also due to Dr. Elke Richter and Konrad Frommelt, lecturers and research associates from BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, for their expert

guidance during the site visits. Klaus-Ulrich Hörnicke, a retired Stadthalle employee, generously shared his local knowledge, providing with invaluable access to the building. Sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Piotr Szczepan Kisiel, Research Associate at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space in Erkner (IRS, as well as ICOMOS EPWG members Radwan Bachnak and Danica Petrović for their dedicated supervision and valuable contributions through instructive lectures, which played a crucial role in achieving educational objectives. Special thanks are also due to EPWG member Marie Baudis for her strong commitment to the organization and her dedicated post-event support, both of which significantly contributed to the overall success of this Spring School.

Additionally, heartfelt thanks go to Prof. Dr. Jörg Haspel, monument conservator, former state conservator of the city of Berlin, and ICOMOS honorary member, for his pivotal role in integrating this Spring School into the workshop Socialist Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe, enabling emerging professionals to share their research findings on the Stadthalle Cottbus.

Appreciation is extended to all participants, whose enlightening and thought-provoking contributions enriched this endeavor. Finally, gratitude is expressed to the residents of Cottbus, who graciously welcomed the participants into the urban life of their city and generously shared their insights and personal experiences.

The content collected in this publication encompasses diverse educational modalities, including presentations, urban explorations, discussions on ethnographic techniques in urban research, collaborative discussions, research findings, and conceptual developments.

The resulting compilation provides a multidisciplinary range of perspectives and insights. It demonstrates the potential for integrating visual methods into architecture and planning with an experimental approach rooted in ethnography. The work undertaken by the students has served as a catalyst for planning potential future endeavors that aim to enhance the accessibility of the Stadthalle Cottbus to a wider audience and foster a deeper connection with the community as a cherished cultural heritage.

Dr. Tino Mager
President of ICOMOS Germany

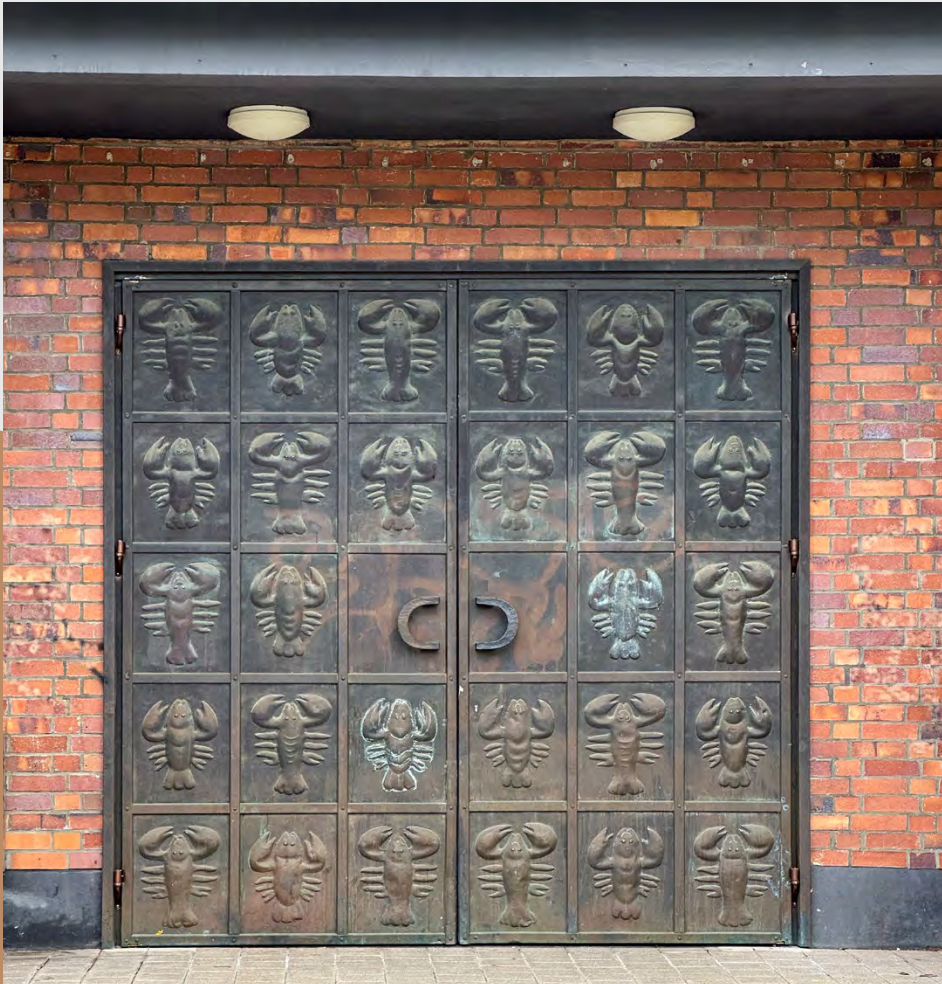
| Unveiling the Stadthalle Cottbus: Spring School on Heritage, Urban Ethnography, and Architectural Exploration



01
Stadthalle

The decision to conduct a Spring School with a focus on the Stadthalle Cottbus, utilizing urban ethnography as the primary methodology, stems from a profound interest in studying this building within its urban context. This educational initiative aimed to explore the Stadthalle as a case study, providing students with a unique opportunity to delve into the realms of architecture, urban planning, heritage studies, and related fields. The primary goal of the Spring School was to cultivate a profound comprehension of the “Stadthalle”, a German term referring to event halls located in the centers of towns. They serve as a versatile cultural and communal space, playing a pivotal role in the urban fabric by hosting various events, gatherings, and activities that contribute to the town's vibrant social life and historical legacy. Participants were encouraged to explore the role of the Stadthalle as a site within the broader urban landscape, and to learn more about its historical and architectural context.

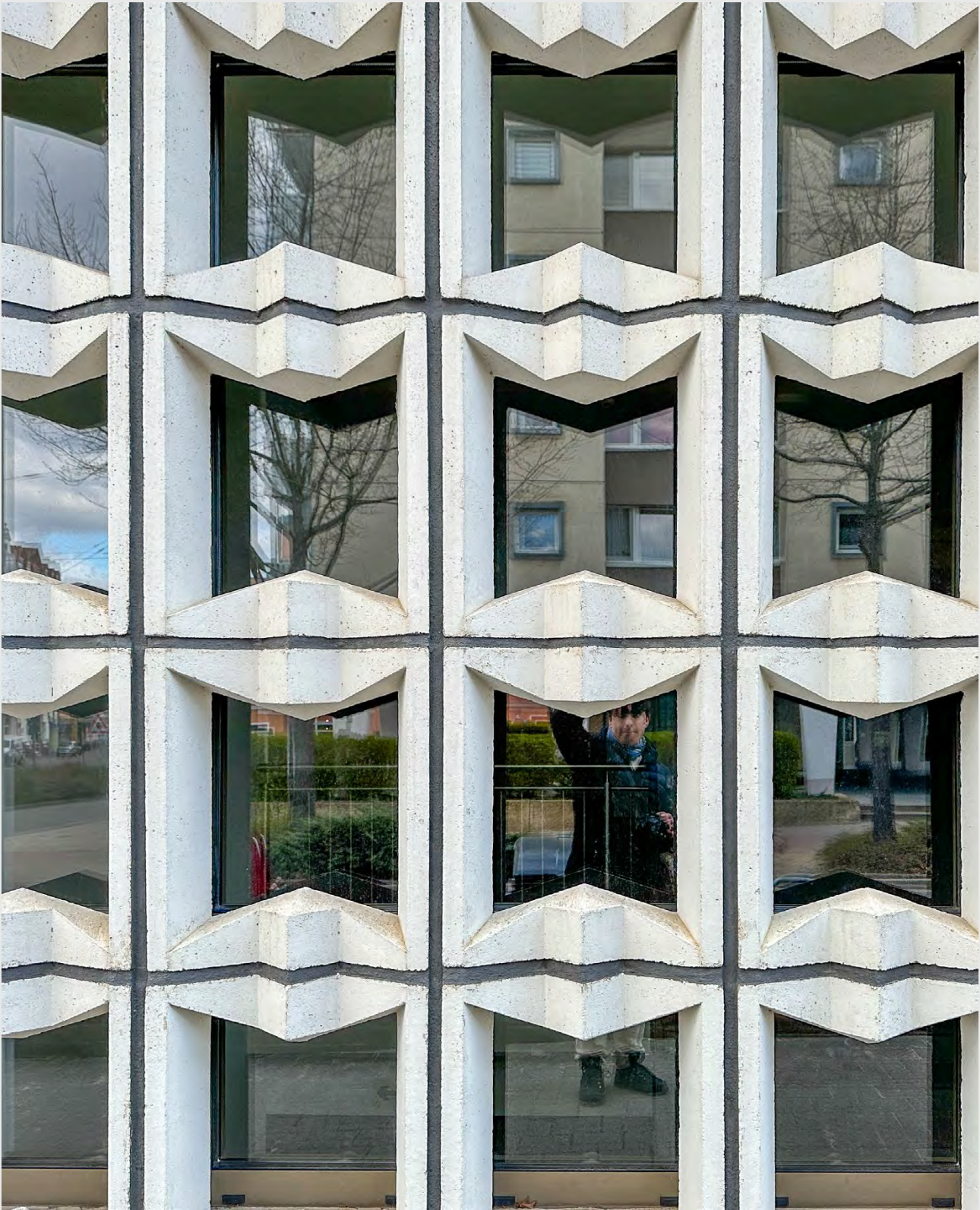
By applying urban ethnography as a methodology, the Spring School facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the Stadthalle, emphasizing participant engagement in the study of its cultural significance, evolution, and impact on the city. The program was tailored to nurture the intellectual growth of emerging professionals in various fields, preparing them to tackle complex challenges related to heritage conservation and urban development. Through this Spring School, students were presented with a unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context, gaining hands-on experience in the evaluation and interpretation of buildings from recent history. This Spring School not only engaged students in academic inquiry but also inspired them to contemplate the evolving nature of heritage and urban spaces, preparing them for future challenges and opportunities in their respective fields. Participants were encouraged to approach the Stadthalle Cottbus as a living heritage entity, and to consider its past, present, and future roles within the urban fabric, and how it shapes the broader urban experience.



02
Detail of side entrance



03
Stadthalle



04
Detail of side window

Urban Transformation: Cottbus' Postwar Evolution into a Socialist Center, Integrating Historical and Modern Architectural Elements



05
Drawing of the Stadthalle
Cottbus

After the Second World War, Cottbus not only developed into a center of the coal and energy industries but also became an important administrative center. In addition to political, scientific, and cultural institutions, Cottbus was also home to chemical, light, glass, ceramics, and textile factories. To meet the new requirements and rapidly advancing developments, quick solutions had to be found. Intending to create a socialist metropolis, the city's historic structures were to be combined with new buildings and modernization projects. Like a wall, the socialist buildings enclose the historic city center and simultaneously form a bridge to the existing structure through new functional areas. This development thus follows the Socialist party's demands to design cities from the inside out. Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State, put it this way during his visit to Cottbus in 1964 and the first construction phase in the city center was implemented.

As stated in the 16 principles of urban development adopted by the GDR in 1950, development and growth were closely linked to the economic size of the city and had to be subordinate to it. The design of the socialist city should always prioritize its purpose. Principle 4 states:

"The growth of the city must be subordinated to the principle of expediency and kept within certain limits. Excessive growth of the city, its population, and its area leads to complications in its structure that are difficult to eliminate, to complications in the organization of cultural life and the daily supply of the population, and to operational complications both in the activity and in the further development of the industry."

[„Das Wachstum der Stadt muss dem Grundsatz der Zweckmäßigkeit untergeordnet werden und sich in bestimmten Grenzen halten. Ein übermäßiges Wachstum der Stadt, ihrer Bevölkerung und ihrer Fläche führt zu schwer zu beseitigenden Verwicklungen ihrer Struktur, zu Verwicklungen in der Organisation des Kulturlebens und der täglichen Versorgung der Bevölkerung und zum betriebstechnischen Verwicklungen sowohl in der Tätigkeit wie in der Weiterentwicklung der Industrie.“]

Lothar Bolz, Von deutschem Bauen, Ost-Berlin 1951, pp. 32-52.

This led to the use of industrially produced building elements and, in 1966, to the first "Großplatten-Fließfertigung Bauten" (large slab prefabricated buildings). Construction production was to select the most cost-effective offers and also take into account the advantages of the location (such as industrial assembly construction, traditional construction methods, and workflows of the trades). This development was also to have an impact on the historic core of the town so that the "special urban architectural structures were to be expanded and mastered in the coming years and designed in a higher quality to create a socialist city". The city center should also cover three areas of communication: the area of commerce, relaxation, and recreation, as well as political and social representation. The latter also included the construction of a Stadthalle.

Stadtpromenade Cottbus: Past, Present, and Future

06
Second day of the workshop:
participants exploring
the Stadtpromenade in Cottbus,
guided by Dr. Elke Richter and
Konrad Frommelt



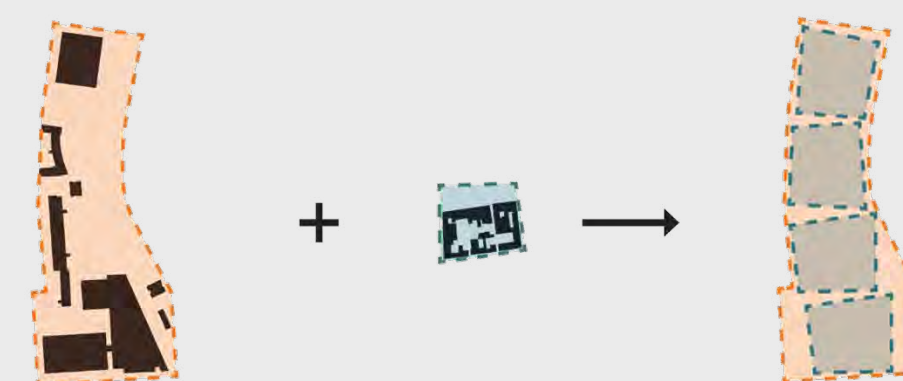
07
In front of the Stadthalle



On the second day of the workshop, participants explored the Stadtpromenade in Cottbus, guided by Dr. Elke Richter and Konrad Frommelt from BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg. They gained first-hand insight into how this area exemplifies the complexities of urban transformation, and learned how to balance the challenges of preserving its historical and architectural significance with opportunities for adaptive, community-focused redevelopment.



Stadtpromenade Altmarkt overlapping

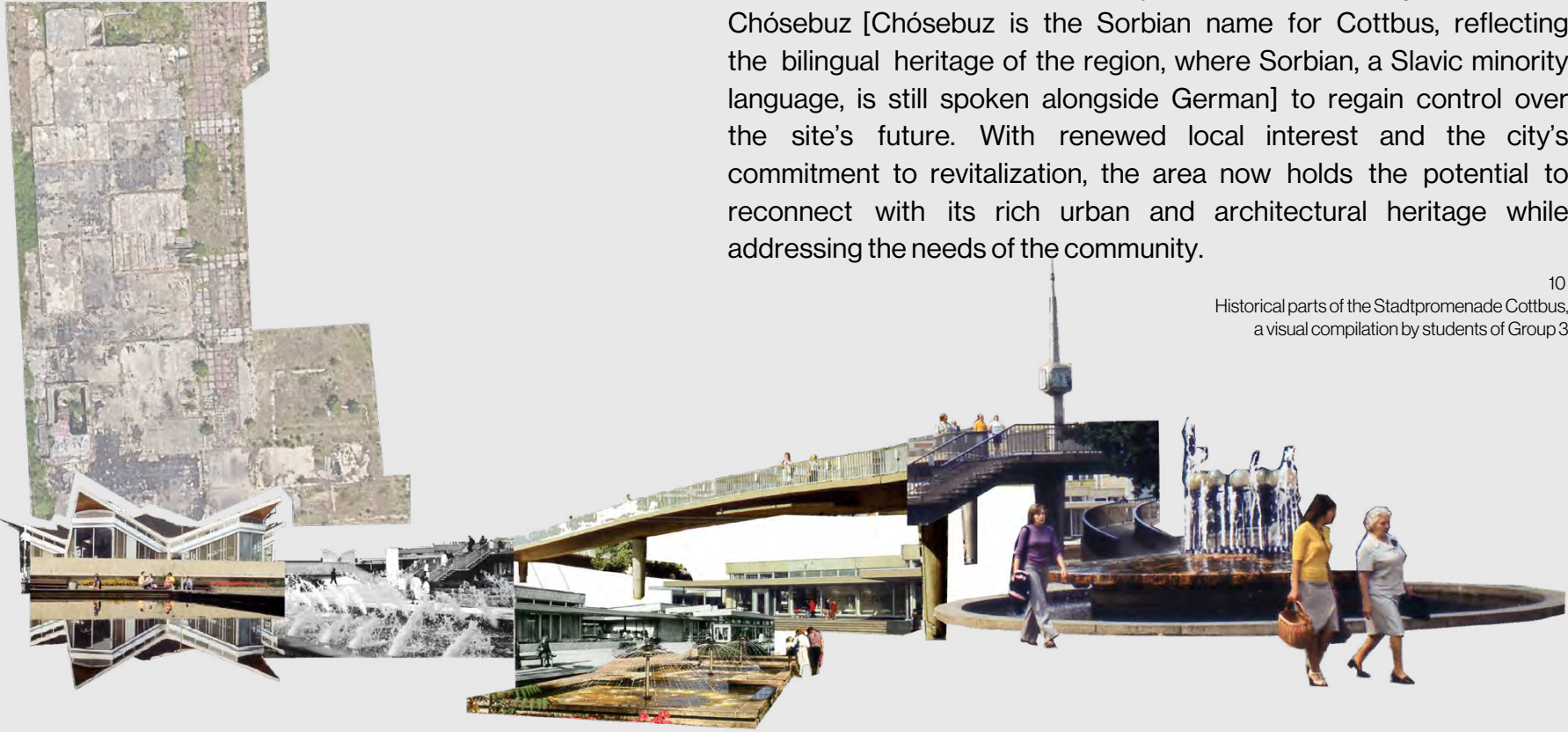


08
Black White Plan
of the Stadtpromenade,
a visual compilation
by students of Group 2

The Stadtpromenade was part of a large-scale urban transformation initiated in 1965. Situated west of the historic city walls, between Petersilienstraße and Karl-Liebknecht-Straße, this area replaced numerous existing buildings to create a modern urban ensemble. Key structures included the department store with pedestrian terraces, the iconic Milch-Eis-Mokka-Bar “Kosmos”, the residential complex Stadtpromenade 10–12,



09
One of the facade elements
along the Stadtpromenade



10
Historical parts of the Stadtpromenade Cottbus,
a visual compilation by students of Group 3

the Stadthalle, a hotel, pavilion buildings, the restaurant “Am Stadttor”, and the Volksbuchhandlung [people’s bookshop]. These developments were accompanied by the relocation of tram lines and the addition of green spaces, fountains, sculptures, and wall reliefs, leading to the ensemble being granted protected monument status as early as 1978.

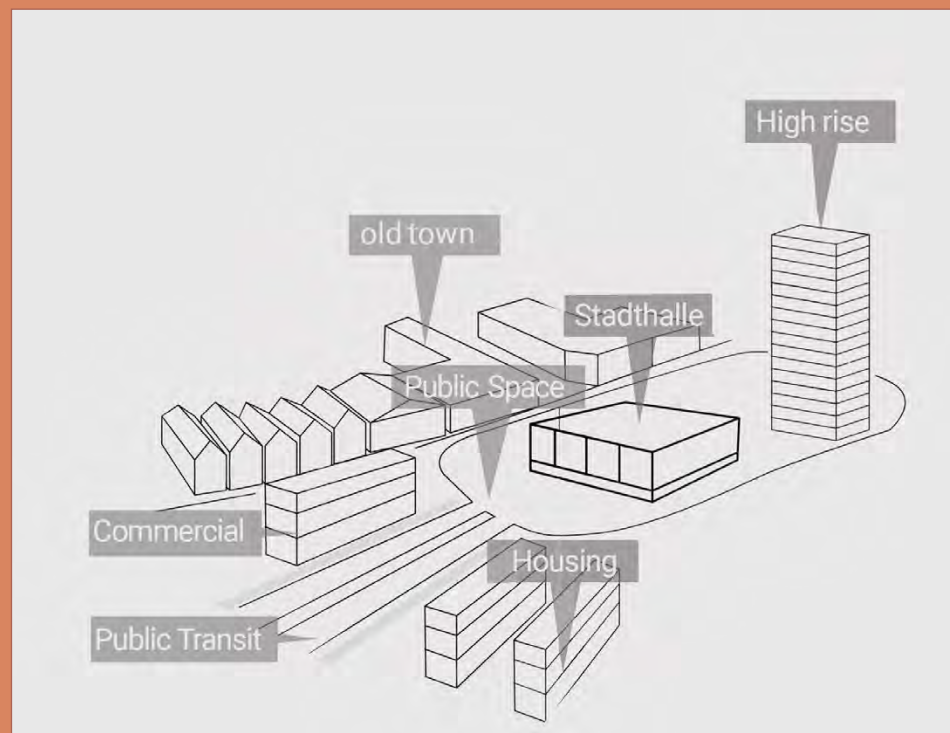
The Stadtpromenade was envisioned as a “New Center,” serving as a modern counterpart to the traditional commercial hub in the old town. It flourished in the 1970s and 1980s with bustling retail spaces, a discotheque, a bowling center, and vibrant gastronomy. However, after the German reunification, the area struggled to maintain its significance. Increasing vacancies and insufficient investment led to a steady decline. By 1997, two thirds of the pavilion structures were empty and deteriorating.

In 2007, the “Sternchen” pedestrian bridge and other structures were demolished, making way for the Blechen-Carré shopping center, which opened in 2008. Additional demolitions in 2011 left a northern section of the site vacant, and plans for further development failed. This area remained a fenced-off and neglected wasteland, causing frustration among residents.

In 2023, the Stadtpromenade took a promising turn when the property was sold to the Gebäudewirtschaft Cottbus GmbH (GWC). This transfer of ownership has enabled the city of Cottbus/ Chósebuz [Chósebuz is the Sorbian name for Cottbus, reflecting the bilingual heritage of the region, where Sorbian, a Slavic minority language, is still spoken alongside German] to regain control over the site’s future. With renewed local interest and the city’s commitment to revitalization, the area now holds the potential to reconnect with its rich urban and architectural heritage while addressing the needs of the community.

The Stadthalle Cottbus:

Key Structure in the Development of Cottbus' City Center



11
Axonometric drawing
of Stadtpromenade Cottbus,
a visual compilation
by students of Group 1

The Stadthalle Cottbus is a representation of architectural and cultural importance situated prominently in the city's central urban landscape. As part of an academic workshop, a group of students conducted a systematic investigation with the primary objective of comprehensively analyzing the historical development and urban planning principles that informed the construction of this event hall. Equipped with comprehensive knowledge about the development of urban planning and architectural design in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and adept in the techniques and methodologies of urban ethnography, these students were well prepared to visit the Stadthalle Cottbus and explore its historical and present-day nuances.

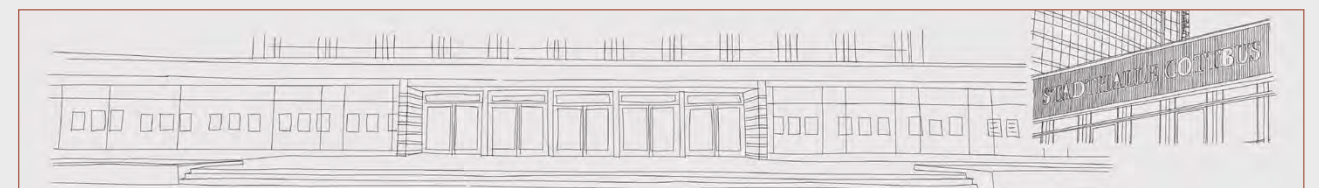
Thanks to the expertise of former Stadthalle employee Klaus-Ulrich Hörnicke, participants were given access to the inner workings of the building and were guided on a tour that unveiled historical and cultural insights. Mr Hörnicke talked about his own experiences at the Stadthalle, both as an employee and as a visitor to public events, and offered the students an insight into the Stadthalle's life. The visit, driven by curiosity for architectural and cultural exploration, turned into a journey of recollection and discovery.

Eberhard Kühn's Architectural Triumph:

The Efficient and Timeless Design of the Stadthalle Cottbus (1975)

The Stadthalle Cottbus is situated in the central area of the town, at Berliner Platz, and serves as a gateway to the vibrant Stadtpromenade. Nowadays it is surrounded by facilities such as the Spreegalerie shopping mall, the "Hotel Lindner", formerly the "Hotel Lausitz", and the Puschkin Park. Dating back to the 1970s, Stadthalle played a crucial role in the creation of the new and modern Cottbus city center and formed an architectural ensemble with the hotel. The entrance to the Stadthalle is prominently positioned at Berliner Platz, where a fountain on the right side of its front facade welcomes visitors to this urban space.

Designed by Cottbus architect Eberhard Kühn, the Stadthalle was inaugurated in 1975. Architectural magazines of that time highlight that it was constructed to meet the community's desire for a versatile, modern event venue, and it served as a cultural hub during that era. The construction of the Stadthalle, while fascinating and challenging, was remarkably efficient so that the building was completed three months ahead of schedule. This Stadthalle is the largest building of its kind in Brandenburg, exemplifying several notable architectural attributes. The architectural design of the building consists of a square-shaped ground floor, whereas the first floor has a hexagonal floor plan that deviates from conventional design norms. It is a monolithic structure crafted from on-site reinforced concrete, guaranteeing structural stability. The roof is supported by robust steel trusses, which highlights the use of advanced engineering methods of the time.



12
Facade elements of
the Stadthalle
Cottbus, a visual
compilation by
students of Group 1

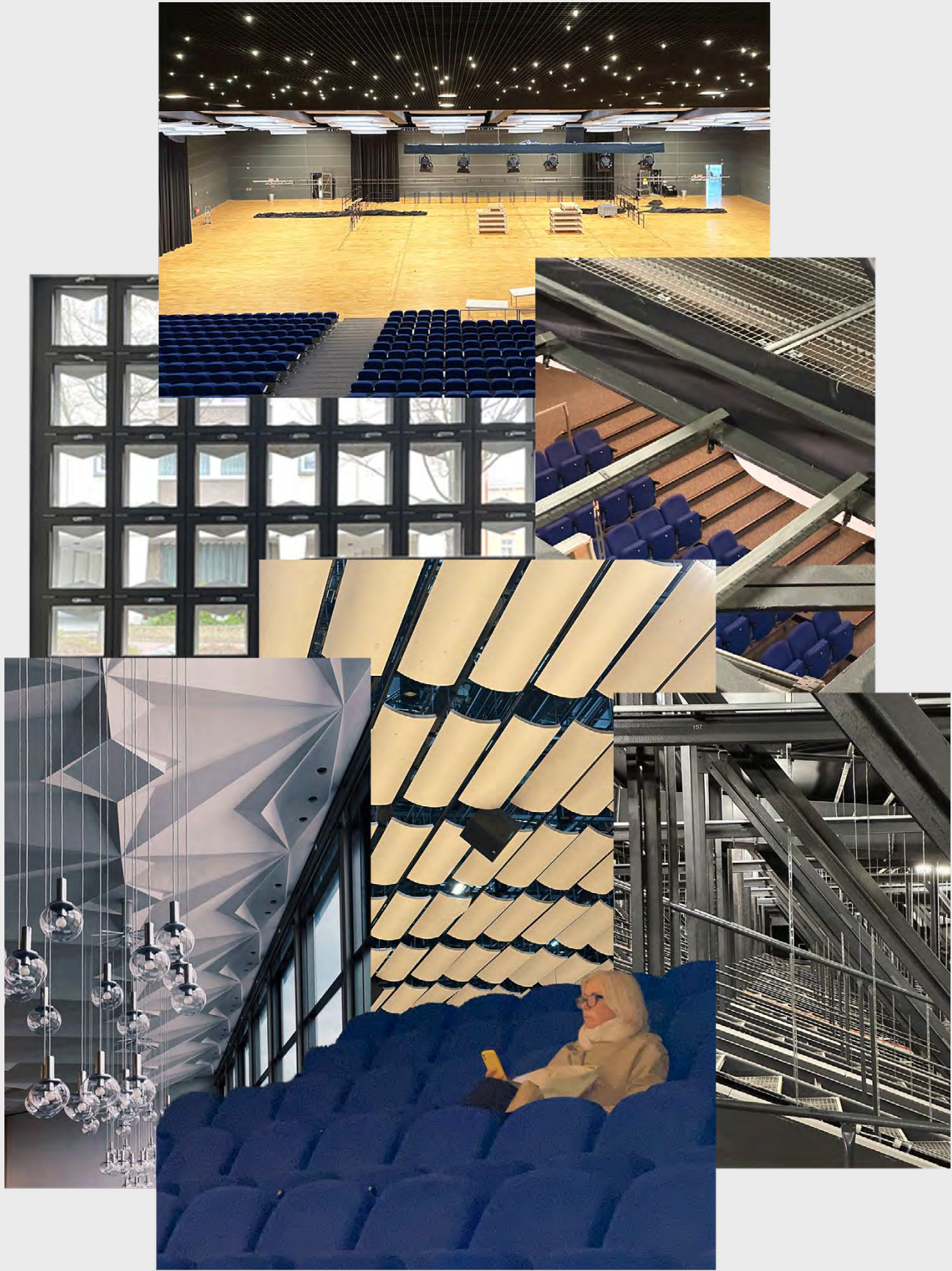
The Stadthalle is capable of accommodating a wide range of events. From concerts and shows to conferences and sports competitions, the building's layout and features can be adapted to suit various purposes, demonstrating its adaptability to different activities and functions. Aesthetic elegance in the interior is evident in the foyer on the first floor, featuring a stucco ceiling adorned with clear glass ball lights and a natural wood-treated back wall. This design creates an ambiance of sophistication and festivity, preparing visitors for the events before entering the hall. The design emphasizes the adaptability of the hall, as it can accommodate events with varying capacities, from 1500 to 2700 people.



13
Architectural elements and models of the Stadthalle Cottbus

Comfort and aesthetics are prioritized, evidenced by chrome-plated tubular steel chairs with upholstered seats.

Overall, the architectural integration into the local context is evident through the use of white terrazzo elements in the shape of trapezoid on red gable walls, clinker brick surfaces mirroring the traditional material of the city wall, and extensive steel-aluminum window surfaces. An intriguing detail of the Stadthalle Cottbus is the incorporation of art into its architecture, exemplified by the bronze side doors featuring lobster bas-reliefs. The lobster, an emblem of Cottbus, serves as a symbol of the city's cultural and historical connection.



14
Architectural elements in the Stadthalle Cottbus

The Resilient Evolution of the Stadthalle Cottbus in Contemporary Urbanity

The hall has undergone extensive renovations, including a major modernization in the late 1980s and a comprehensive overhaul in 2000–2001, which focused on improving the stage equipment and electronics and upgrading the event hall to meet modern comfort and technical standards. The current urban setting surrounding the Stadthalle has evolved over time, with changes to the original concept, as pavilions, walkways, and iconic establishments along the Stadtpromenade like the “Kosmos” milk bar and the “Galeria” department store have been closed, replaced or removed.



15
Tour of the Stadthalle Cottbus
with Klaus-Ulrich Hörnicke and
Prof. Dr. Johanna Blokker

16
Visit of the Stadthalle Cottbus



The Stadthalle Cottbus stands today as a versatile and modern event venue, hosting a wide range of cultural, recreational, and educational events. This **multifunctional space** welcomes both local and international talents, with performances ranging from concerts and theater productions to international ensembles like the Chinese National Circus and the Russian State Ballet. The venue also serves as a hub for academic and business gatherings, facilitating conferences, conventions, and professional networking. The area in front of the main entrance to the Stadthalle now is an open space, ushering in a new era for this vibrant cultural hub in Cottbus. In addition to its role as a venue for various events, the Stadthalle remains an integral part of the city's evolving urban landscape.

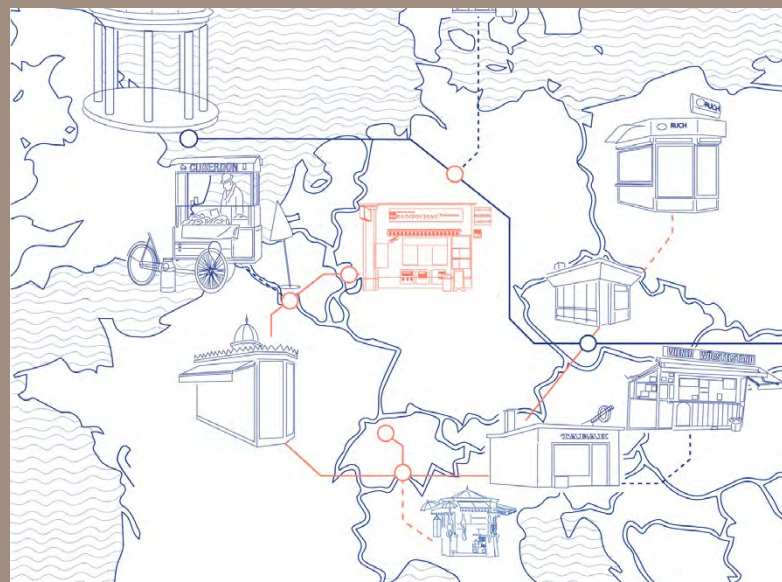


17
Stadthalle Cottbus, then and now:
The demolition of Hotel Lausitz and the contemporary urban setting,
a visual compilation by students of Group 4

Exploring Urban Heritage through the Lens of Urban Ethnography



18
Marie Enders,
Third Place Trinkhalle 1.0



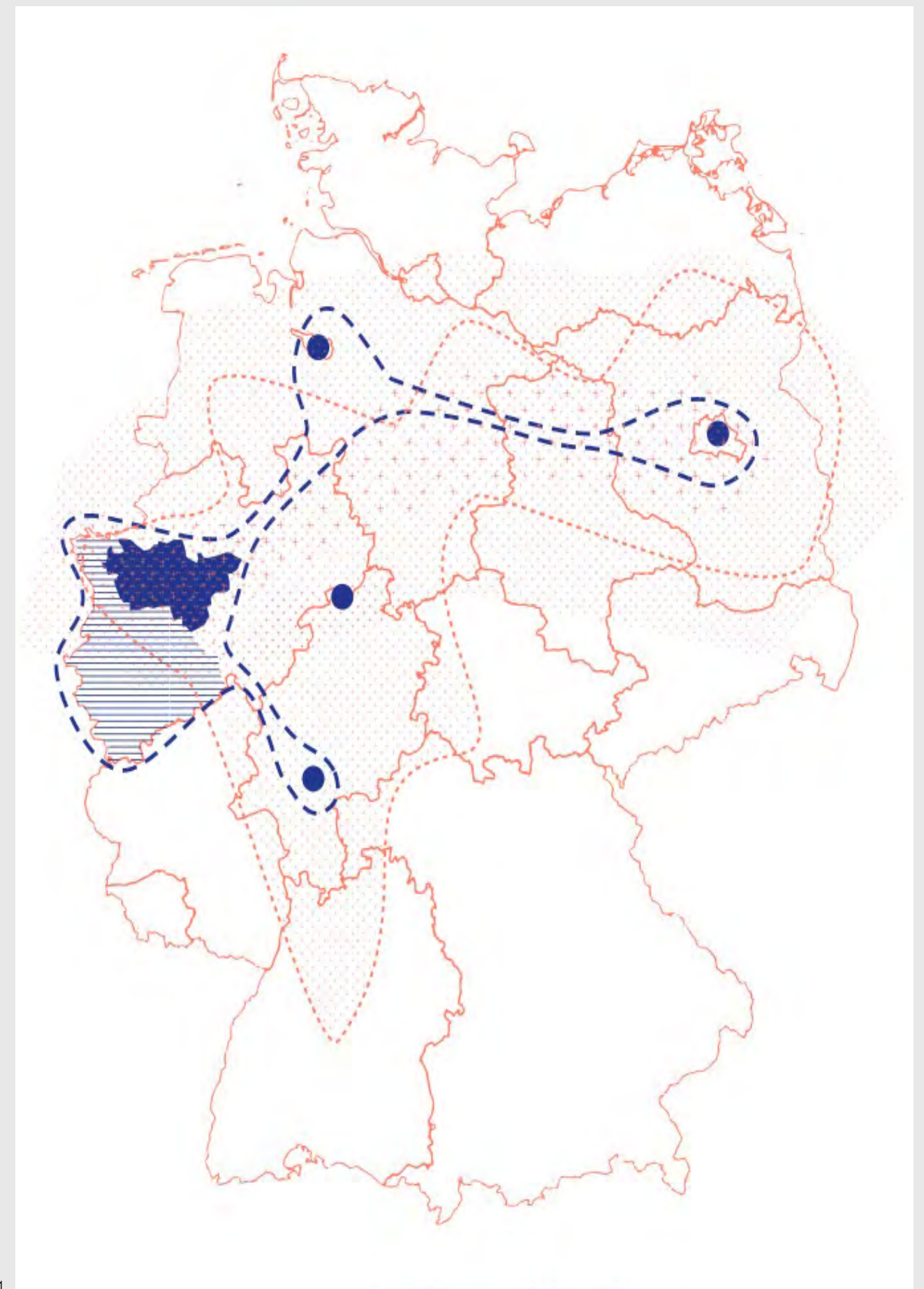
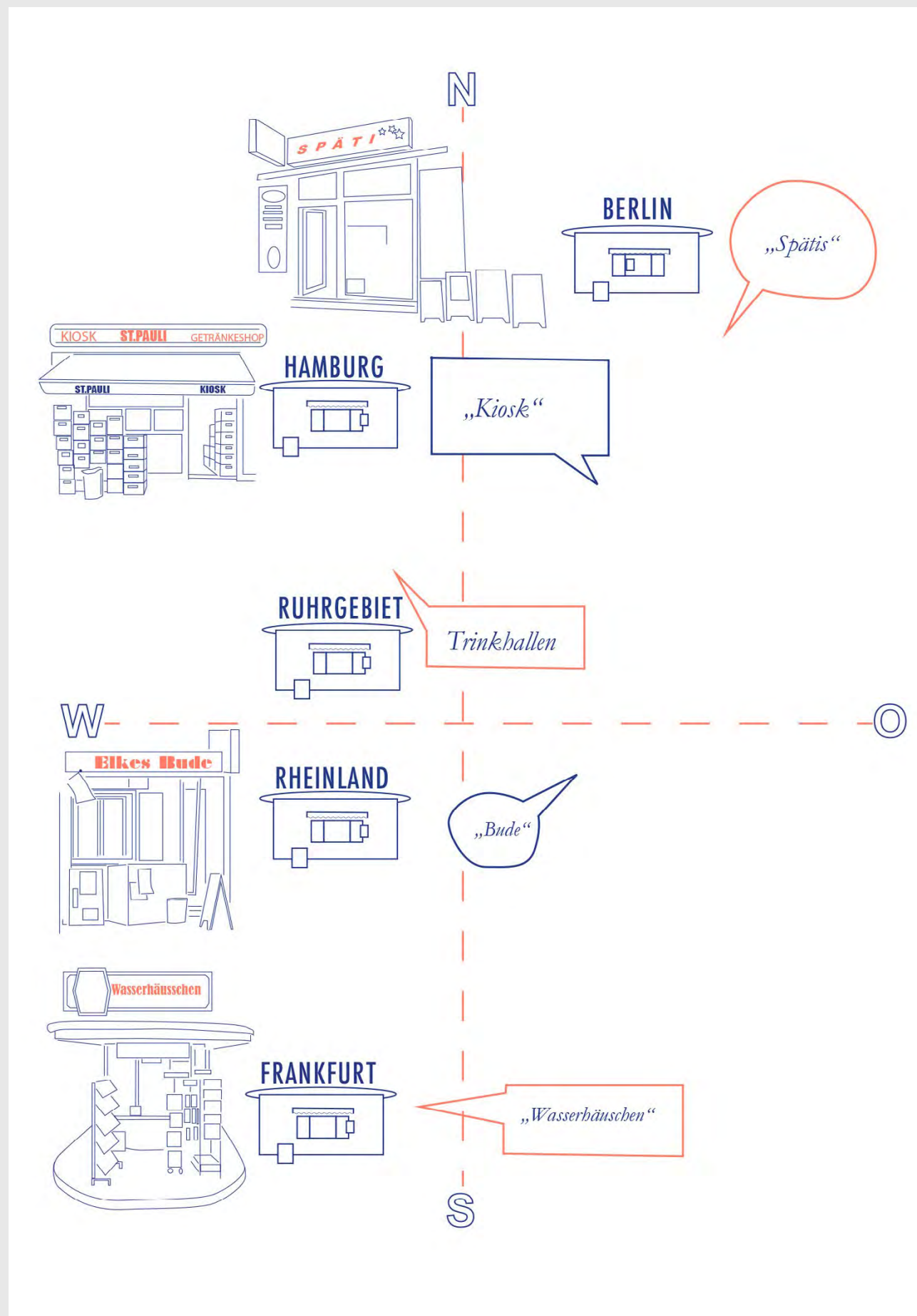
19

As part of the workshop, Marie Enders, research associate at RWTH Aachen, provided valuable insights into the method of urban ethnography, drawing from her award-winning Master's thesis about the "Third Place Trinkhalle". She described the Trinkhalle, a typology deeply rooted in the Ruhrgebiet [Ruhr area], as more than just a convenience store. As a reliable corner shop and informal night watchman, the Trinkhalle acts as a microcosm of its community and reflects the diversity and social structures of the region. It embodies authenticity for strangers and normality for locals and is a vivid example of how everyday spaces shape and represent urban life.

Urban ethnography, as introduced by Enders, delves into the interplay between physical spaces and the social dynamics they host. It examines how spaces are not only shaped by past and present but also how they serve as arenas for negotiations and projections of possible futures. This method connects ethnographic fieldwork with visual representation, offering tools to investigate spaces beyond their surface appearance and explore their deeper social and cultural dimensions.

Urban ethnography serves as a critical framework for examining the historical development of the Stadtpromenade in Cottbus while assessing its potential trajectories for future transformation. Initially conceived as a modern urban counterpart to the historic city center, the area of the Stadtpromenade now contends with the challenges of spatial decline and the complexities of redevelopment. By applying the principles of urban ethnography, workshop participants explored how spaces like the Stadthalle and surrounding areas are imagined, used, and contested by the community.

Through this lens, Cottbus and its Stadtpromenade become a case study for understanding how urban spaces reflect societal desires and struggles. The method provides a way to connect the tangible history of these spaces with their intangible narratives, inspiring innovative approaches to their revitalization and integration into the city's future development.



Unveiling Heritage

Three-Day Workshop Program on GDR Architecture and the Stadthalle Cottbus through Architectural Ethnography

The workshop spanned three working days, with each day having a distinct focus. The first day included lectures on GDR heritage, insights into urban and architectural ethnography, and a tour of the Stadthalle Cottbus. On the second day, participants began with a historical overview during a walk along the Stadtpromenade, followed by on-site work that involved conducting interviews and observing the interactions of people and visitors around the Stadthalle. The third day centered around activities at BTU Cottbus and featured final presentations by the working teams.

The participants were tasked with examining questions designed to uncover layers of historical importance, public perception, and the contemporary role of socialist architecture. The ensuing topics and questions served as points of reference and guided the participants in their examination of the Stadthalle Cottbus, unraveling its implications in the broader context of architectural, cultural, and historical discourse. As students embarked on their research, they delved into topics such as Exploring Architectural Identity, Memory and Gathering Spaces, Local Perspectives and Emotional Connections, Heritage Promotion, Cultural Impact, Sensitizing Communities, and Aesthetics and Conservation.

April 4th, 2023
DAY 2

Tour Stadtpromenade
Dr. Elke Richter and
Konrad Frommelt

Work on Site and Faculty

Workshop with EPWG
and Dr. Piotr Kissiel

April 5th, 2023
DAY 3

Preparation of Presentations
5 Groups with 4 Participants

Presentations round of Outcomes

Divided into small groups, participants explored in detail the significance of the GDR's architectural heritage for Cottbus residents and the expectations they placed on the role of the Stadthalle in this context.

The workshop started with a welcome from Danica Petrović of the ICOMOS-EP Working Group and Prof. Dr. Johanna Blokker from BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, who both provided the framework for a thematic introduction. Prof. Dr. Carola Neugebauer from RWTH Aachen gave insights into the architectural heritage of the GDR, enriching the theoretical understanding. The theoretical knowledge was further deepened by an exploration of the "Architectural Ethnography" working methodology by Marie Enders from RWTH-Aachen. She based her presentation on her master and research project, which showed a potential approach for the subsequent group work during the workshop.

To deepen their understanding of the Cottbus Stadthalle case study, a comprehensive tour of the building offered insights into its history and architecture. Additionally, a city tour conducted by Elke Richter and Konrad Frommelt from BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg provided participants with an overview of the event hall's urban context.

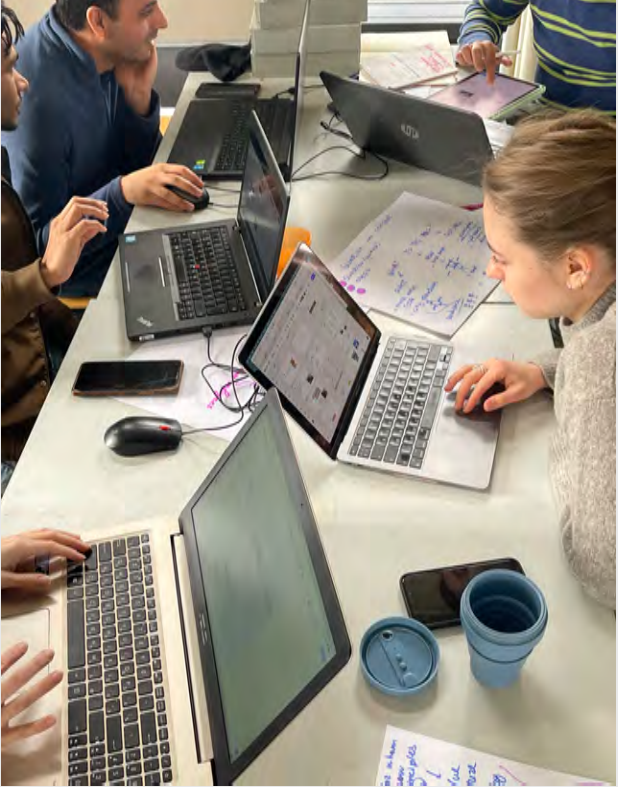
All lectures and guided tours were designed to equip students with substantial input to gain comprehensive insights in order to discuss the central question in small group discussions on the second day of the workshop. The highlight of the participants' efforts was the presentation of various results through posters on the workshop's final day.



22
Workshop introduction by EPWG group representative Danica Petrović



23
Introduction of GDR heritage by Dr. Carola Silvia Neugebauer



24
Group work

Unveiling Perspectives: Student Insights and Visions of the Stadthalle Cottbus



25
Presentation of the outcomes

Charting the Course for the Stadthalle Cottbus:

A Visionary Exploration

Revitalizing the Stadtpromenade:

"Thinking Outside the Box" – a Vision for the Open Space in front of the Stadthalle Cottbus

Preserving Identity:

Insights into the Stadthalle Cottbus and the Nuances of GDR Architecture in the Urban Landscape

Harmonizing Utopia and Reality:

Vision for a Dynamic and Inclusive Future of the Stadthalle Cottbus

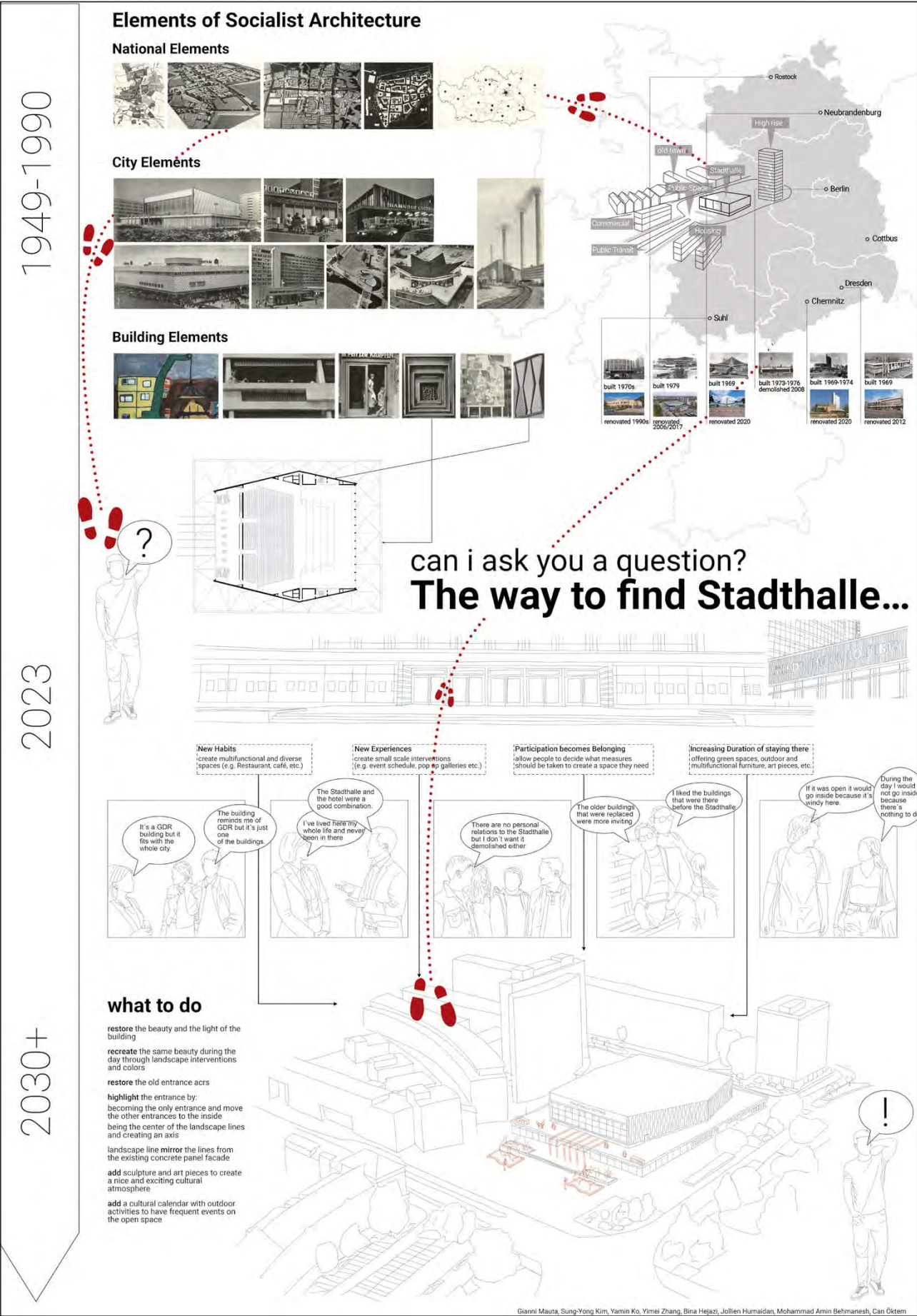
Charting the Course for the Stadthalle Cottbus:

A Visionary Exploration

Gianni Mauta (RWTH Aachen), Sung-Yong Kim (TU Bergakademie Freiberg), Yamin Ko (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), Yimei Zhang (TU München), Bina Hejazi (Universität Stuttgart), Jollien Humaidan (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), Mohammad Amin Behmanesh (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), and Can Öktem (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg)

The presentation of the first group at the Workshop on the Stadthalle Cottbus was encapsulated in their poster titled "The Way to Find the Stadthalle". Their exploration began with dissecting the elements constituting a functional ensemble and spotlighting how the Stadthalle served as an integral element of the city of Cottbus. By comparing it to similar cases, the group unearthed striking parallels that underlined its architectural significance within the broader context. The presentation vividly showcased the building's design evolution. It highlighted how the architectural style reflected the cultural context of the era in which it was built.

The group delved into the spectrum of renovations, meticulously highlighting the various changes that have shaped the Stadthalle over time, offering a profound insight into its development history. They emphasized the seamless integration of the old hotel "Lausitz" into the structure and showed how it harmoniously coexisted within the fabric of everyday life. The presentation eagerly envisioned the future trajectory of the Stadthalle, contemplating its evolving function and role within the cityscape. Functionality emerged as the central theme, illustrating the versatility and adaptability of the Stadthalle which lends itself to a variety of uses. Leisure and cultural activities were explored as potential uses for the building, with the idea of it being a hub for cultural engagement. The group set a high value on preserving the heritage of the Stadthalle and emphasized the need to respect and appreciate its historical and cultural significance. They engaged in thought-provoking discussions around assigning a tangible value to the building's intrinsic heritage and acknowledging its immense worth as a symbol to be cherished and preserved for generations to come.

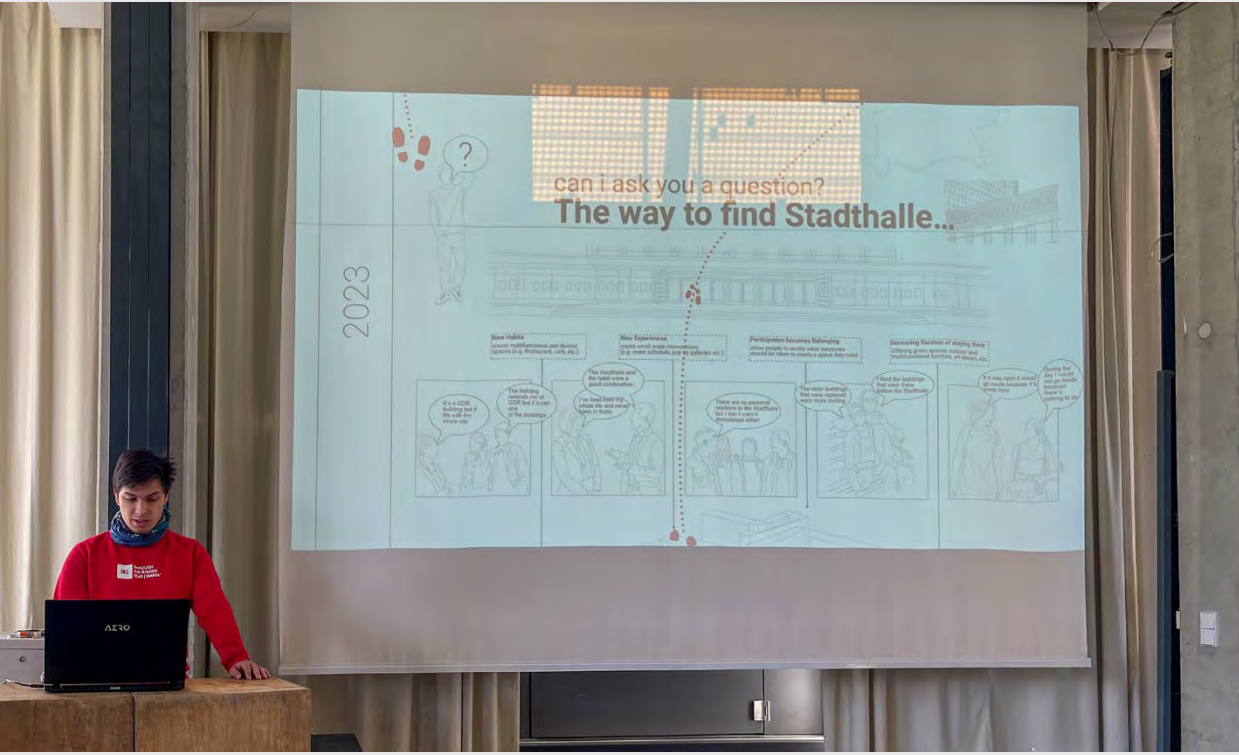


26
Group 01

The group's investigation revealed an important aspect: access to the Stadthalle was limited to those holding tickets for special events, thus excluding free entry for everyone. This realization led them to reflect on the exclusivity of the building, and they recognized that it is not inherently accessible to all, contrasting its nature with that of a space designed for universal use.

Drawing parallels to the Palace of Culture in Dresden, they highlighted a critical disparity: the absence of communal activities inside the Stadthalle Cottbus. The comparison made it clear that the Stadthalle needed to overcome its exclusive, event-oriented approach and expand its offerings to the community. They proposed integrating communal spaces such as cafés or libraries inside the Stadthalle, envisioning it not just as a venue for events but as a vibrant and inclusive space catering to diverse societal needs.

This observation led to discussions on democratizing access to and usage of the Stadthalle, and on seeing it as a place where the community can meet for various activities beyond paid events. The group emphasized the importance of creating an environment where individuals from all walks of life feel welcome and are able to engage in a wide range of activities, in order to foster a sense of inclusivity and shared ownership among the population.



27
Group 01 presentation

Revitalizing the Stadtpromenade:

“Thinking Outside the Box”

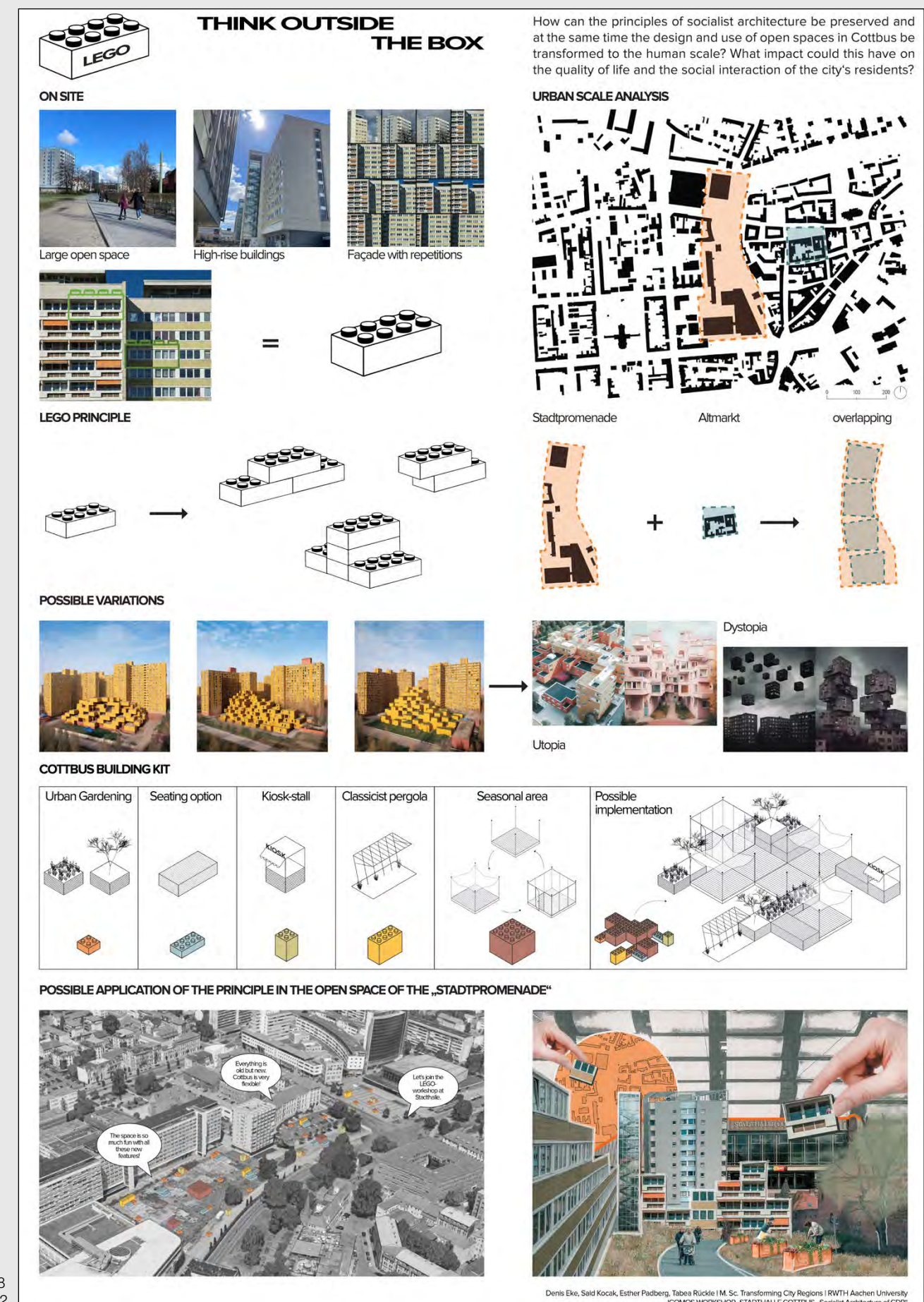
- A vision for the open space in front of the Stadthalle Cottbus

Denis Eke (RWTH Aachen), Said Kocak (RWTH Aachen), Esther Padberg (RWTH Aachen) and Tabea Rückle (RWTH Aachen)

The second group focused their exploration on a novel approach, likened to Lego blocks, that aimed to navigate between utopia and dystopia in their vision for the open, undeveloped central space of the Stadtpromenade. Their focus on the area, surrounded by repetitive high-rise Plattenbauten [prefabricated buildings], was pivotal, drawing inspiration from historical analyses of the site's previous purposes. They immersed themselves in the historical context and reflected on the former function of the pavilions that once stood on this site, envisioning a multifaceted revival: from shops to urban gardening, diverse seating options, kiosk-stalls, classic pergolas, and even seasonal areas. The group conceptualized the potential implementation of these diverse functions within the space. Their project, named “Thinking Outside the Box”, reflected their architectural concept manifested in box-shaped pavilions. Their efforts to preserve the principles of socialist architecture while transforming the design and use of open spaces in Cottbus to a human scale was evident.

In pursuit of their vision, the group sought answers to crucial questions. They reflected on preserving socialist architectural ideals while reimagining the city's open spaces and the potential impacts on the quality of life and social interactions among the city's residents. This quest for a harmonious coalescence between historical heritage and contemporary needs fueled their innovative proposals.

Their vision aimed at redefining the landscape, not only physically but also socially, and envisioning a space that catered to the human experience while acknowledging and respecting the city's architectural heritage. By infusing new life and purpose into the space, they wanted to create a dynamic environment that fosters social engagement and improves the general well-being of the city's inhabitants.



Preserving Identity:

Insights into the Stadthalle Cottbus and the Nuances of GDR Architecture in the Urban Landscape

Helene Damerow (TU Berlin) and Lilli Rast (TU Berlin)

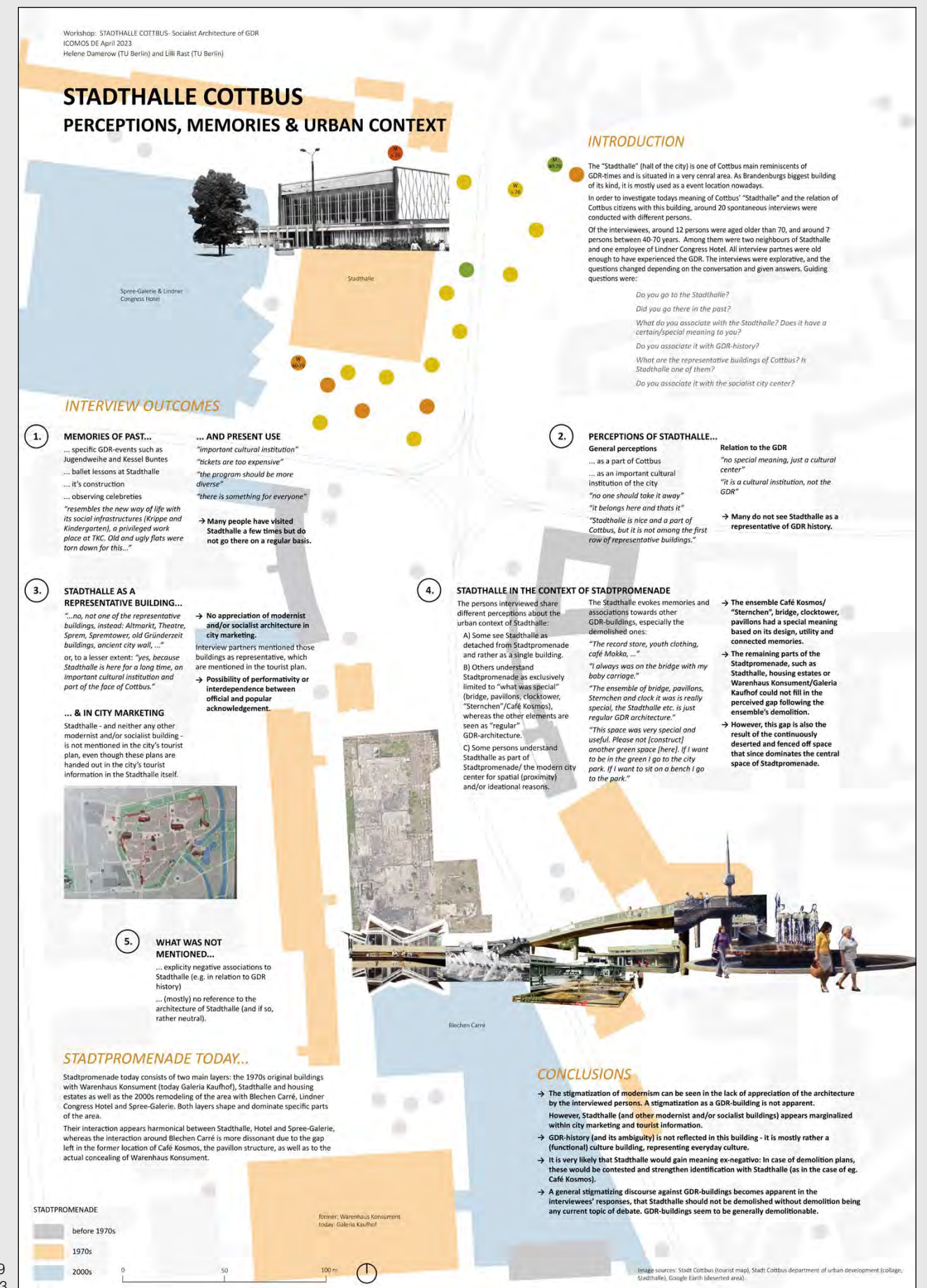
The findings of group three from their interviews provided a multifaceted view of the Stadthalle Cottbus, reflecting on its past and present usage while emphasizing the interactions with people that have shaped its significance. The threat of demolition proved to be a major issue, drawing parallels to the fate of the already demolished Palast der Republik in Berlin and leading to demands to preserve the Stadthalle in light of the previous loss of the Kosmos milk bar in Cottbus.

The group's understanding of Cottbus' historical development from a "dying city" in the 2000s, which was dependent on federal state funding, underlined the urgent need for communal consumption spaces to revitalize the urban landscape.

Their findings stressed the necessity of innovative interventions, proposing the creation of new places of consumption previously absent in the city's urban fabric. They called for learning from past experiences and pointed out that the city doesn't sufficiently recognize modernist and socialist architecture in marketing and tourism.

Their analysis unveiled a dichotomy: while the Stadthalle represented an everyday cultural hub, its architectural significance seemed marginalized within the city's marketing strategies and tourist information. The interviews revealed that GDR buildings are still stigmatized. The respondents had a general preference for demolition, even if this is not currently a topic of debate.

The discourse about GDR buildings signaled widespread opposition to their preservation. This could potentially jeopardize structures like the Stadthalle if demolition plans were to emerge. However, the prospect of demolition could paradoxically trigger an intensified identification with the Stadthalle, as seen in the case of the Kosmos milk bar. The group concluded that a more nuanced understanding of GDR architecture and its significance is needed, and highlighted the potential for a performative or interconnected relationship between official recognition and public perception of buildings such as the Stadthalle within the Stadtpromenade.



Harmonizing Utopia and Reality:

Vision for a Dynamic and Inclusive Future
of the Stadthalle Cottbus

Md Ariful Islam (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), Ali Mohseni (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg),
Polina Ivanova (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg), Olga Polskaia (KU Lueven) and Nemanja Delja
(BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg)

The fourth group's analysis of the Stadthalle focused on the hall's exclusivity, examining its past and present, and envisioning its future role within the community. The group recognized the utopian ideals historically embedded in the building's creation and reflecting the ambitions of urban planning under communist and socialist regimes.

Their exploration emphasized the need for a harmonious balance between the idealistic vision of a utopian city and the pragmatic understanding of the real needs and desires of the city's inhabitants, a balance that has often been challenging to achieve. In their reflection on the present the group highlighted a discrepancy: the Stadthalle exists more as a symbol of the past rather than playing an active role in the daily lives of the citizens. It is seen as a mere façade that evokes historical memories without actively engaging the community in meaningful discussions.

Their vision for the future was to transform the Stadthalle into a vibrant, inclusive space by leveraging art to attract visitors and to reactivate the surrounding open space for daily activities. They proposed integrating the local community, including Cottbus students and refugees, by offering them a platform in the Stadthalle to share ideas, host events, and foster exchanges. The group's forward-looking recommendations emphasized the importance of unlocking the building's narrative to create a space that encourages reflection and discussion. Their vision centered around transforming the Stadthalle from a static emblem of the past into a dynamic, inclusive hub that facilitates dialogue, engagement, and a sense of communal ownership among the city's diverse inhabitants.

RECONTEXTUALIZATION

STADTHALLE COTTBUS: IN PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE

ICOMOS - WORKSHOP STADTHALLE COTTBUS
Date: April 3-5, 2023

MD ARIFUL ISLAM
ALI MOHSENI
POLINA IVANOVA
OLGA POLSKAIA
NEMANJA DELJA

PAST



1975 opened
Progress & modernisation Concrete & glass



1990 trouble time
Image crisis Missing of sense of belonging



2000 reopening
New elements in old structure

In the context of communist and socialist regimes, the idea of a perfect society manifested in urban planning and architecture took on a particularly ambitious and often authoritarian character.

Balance an idealistic vision of a utopian city with a realistic understanding of the needs and desires of its inhabitants

PRESENT

The building is not a participant in the daily practices of citizens. It is included in public life as a façade. A façade that reminds us our past, but does not invite us to discuss.



Locked narrative



Passive usage



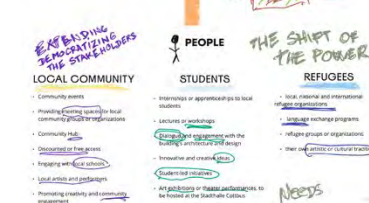
Exclusive usage



FUTURE



LÜFTEN



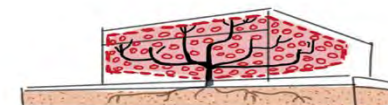
Principles

- Accessibility
- Community engagement
- Multi-use functionality
- Dialogue
- Open access
- Public spaces
- Safe space



UNLOCK THE BUILDING (NARRATIVE) TO
CREATE A PLACE FOR REFLECTION AND
DISCUSSION

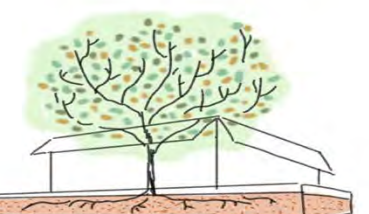
ORGANISED TOP DOWN VITRINA



POTENTIAL



REPURPOSED REFLECTION



Unveiling the GDR's Architectural Heritage:

Workshop Conclusions and Future Directions



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Visit to Cottbus during the "Socialist Modernism" workshop on April 20th, organized by EPWG Germany and BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, and featuring the presentation of the workshop outcomes



The diverse outcomes of the workshop on the Stadthalle Cottbus have shown a spectrum of possibilities for dealing with the architectural heritage of the GDR and highlighted the manifold opportunities that arise from them. These varied results of the working groups offered insightful perspectives on the building's past, present, and potential future role within the community.

A summary of these findings was presented by Danica Petrović on April 20, 2023, at the Max-Lingner-Haus in Berlin, on the occasion of the ICOMOS workshop "Socialist Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe". This presentation served as a platform to share the comprehensive insights from the workshop discussions and investigations.

The ICOMOS EP working group extends heartfelt thanks to all participants and contributors who enriched the dialogue and made valuable contributions. As the workshop draws to a close, the group eagerly anticipates the prospects and discussions that await them at the next EPWG workshop, which will take place on-site and online. This collective effort has laid the groundwork for continued exploration and innovative approaches to the conservation and reimagining of architectural heritage in the GDR context.

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Field trip



Imprint

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