

# Opening Panel Discussion

with Olaf Scholz, Winfried  
Nerdinger, and the Audience  
chaired by Anh-Linh Ngo



- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?

### Anh-Linh Ngo

First of all, I would like to thank Andrea Bärnreuther and the Bauhaus-Archiv for giving us an opportunity to discuss the issue of socially engaged architecture and its political prerequisites with a political representative and a Bauhaus expert once again at the end of the Bauhaus centenary year. Because I think it would be too easy and unfair to simply fling social issues at architects and designers and expect them to solve them.

Mr Nerdinger, let us now start by looking at the title of this event: Taking a stand? Your former colleague Dietrich Erben at TU Munich described some time ago how architectural discourse appropriated the concept of *Haltung*—as used in the German title of the event i.e. taking a stand, or adopting a particular stance or attitude—, which originally comes from conservative cultural anthropology.<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that the term *Haltung* concerns both fundamental and demonstrative aspects, as well as oscillating between interior mindset and exterior expression: «On the one hand, it describes in a nutshell, so to speak, an ensemble of inner, mental or character traits of a person or a group and, on the other hand, it includes externally visible communication of these in the form of appropriate behaviour.» It is thus a term shaped by both essentialist and action-theory ideas, which is why it is often used in political discourse. Interestingly, Paul Schmitthenner introduced *Haltung* [attitude] as a programmatic term for architecture. In the second edition of his book *Das Deutsche Wohnhaus* we read: «It is self-evident that a building will stand firm, that it will remain standing, but what is decisive is that it takes a stand.»

- [B] Mr Nerdinger, you were recently involved in a debate, via an article in *ARCH+* that addressed, to sum up briefly, how the New Right uses architecture as a meta-political argument.<sup>2</sup> Together with Stephan Trüby from the IGMA [Institute for Principles of Modern Architecture] at Stuttgart University, we examined right-wing spaces throughout Europe and found in the debate that, strangely enough, it is precisely the right-wingers who insist that architecture is neutral, that it is impossible to identify architecture of either the Left or the Right. I would like to ask whether it is possible to distinguish between architects' attitude and their work? Which points did you take away from this debate as a historian?

### Winfried Nerdinger

I have a general difficulty with the term *Haltung*, even a certain aversion to it, because there is a great deal of discussion among

«taking a stand» as a concept

right-wing spaces

«taking a stand» as a concept

complex relationship  
between formal  
and political concerns

architects about «attitude», and usually it only refers to something formal, i.e. representing a very specific type of formal expression as an allegedly personal attitude, and what is meant however is ultimately only a hallmark. The purported architectural attitude is thus a sales model that is in line with the market. But there is also a type of attitude that links formal and political concerns. You mentioned Schmitthenner; in his architecture, he also represented a political view or attitude by emphasizing that architecture must grow out of tradition, that it must, in a sense, grow out of German soil. Conversely, the attitude we encounter when it comes to the Bauhaus or Neues Bauen is diametrically opposed to this. There was an attempt to find an internationally valid form of expression. This attitude was also based on the ideas of the Dutch artists' group De Stijl, which aimed to create universal harmony by paring designs down to basic forms and primary colours. De Stijl thus represented a kind of social utopia, which was however only continued in a watered-down version at the Bauhaus. The «international architecture» advocated by Gropius and later by Mies van der Rohe at the Weißenhof exhibition in Stuttgart was a kind of cosmopolitan creed directed against national expression in architecture and was thus also a political statement against nationalists like Schmitthenner. In this respect, architecture in the Weimar Republic was politicized due to the attitude adopted by some, but certainly not all, architects.

right-wing spaces

The debate about right-wing spaces takes us to an entirely different set of issues. Personally, I would not want to link right-wing thinking to architecture in the way that the debate on right-wing spaces does and I think it is a mistake to claim that it is specifically right-wing to declare that architecture is neutral. Right-wing thinking, which in part is rooted in the mainstream within our society, has little to do with architecture and certainly had nothing to do with reconstruction; it has focused more on occupying historical spaces for ideological instrumentalization of the history associated with these spaces.

#### Olaf Scholz

I do have some ideas concerning the question raised in the title of the symposium «Taking a stand?» For example: I have been appointed as a government minister twice, first as Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and now as Federal Minister of Finance. When you take on this kind of position, you also assume responsibility for a building, and when I became Minister

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modern architecture vs.  
nazi architecture

democratic architecture

of Labour, I realized that most of today's Federal Ministry of Labour was once Joseph Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, with ministry premises also including, by the way, buildings that housed two Wilhelminian-era banks. Now, as Federal Minister of Finance, I am based in the former Reich Aviation Ministry. They both have architecture with a lot of granite, which means they look really threatening—there really is no other way to put it—and I somehow felt the need to make a small gesture in opposition to that, even back when I moved into the Ministry of Labour. And as I don't of course engage with architecture as intensively as some other people do, although I do deal with it occasionally, in the end I chose to hang some architectural photos showing the German Pavilion at Expo 58, the Brussels World's Fair, which Sep Ruf and Egon Eiermann designed as a counter-demonstration to the Nazi pavilion at the Paris World's Fair in 1937. When you see that and relate those buildings to each other, you realize immediately that very different attitudes are at play, and I think that this pavilion is much more of a manifestation of modernity and democracy than these two granite structures.

#### Winfried Nerdinger

complex relationship  
between formal  
and political concern

[B]

I can very much understand your comments about what you like about the transparent glass architecture from 1958 at the Brussels World's Fair. The German Pavilion in Brussels as well as the Chancellor's bungalow in Bonn were conceived as a direct counter-position to the kind of «blood and soil» monumental architecture in which you have your office now. Light, seemingly weightless architecture was supposed to demonstrate that this was a new democratic Germany, setting it apart from the ponderous monumental architecture of the Nazi era. However, this transparent architecture can also only be associated with a certain attitude within this deliberate state of tension. To that extent your photographic counter demonstration is also historically correct. Nowadays though you can find glass architecture everywhere, widely used, particularly to accommodate capitalist corporations and banks, and that has nothing at all to do with a specific attitude or with democratic architecture. Erich Mendelsohn already called this «architecture for rich moneybags» in the 1920s.

social democratic attitude

social democratic  
construction schemes

However, there is definitely a type of architecture that was associated with a Social Democratic attitude, which you can find for example in Vienna, in blocks of flats in the municipal-funded social housing schemes (the best known is Karl-Marx-Hof, which

- [A] Can we see in the Bauhaus as a whole—despite its apparent heterogeneity—a uniform stance or even something like the epitome of a social attitude?
- [I] What can we learn from the history of the Bauhaus and Modernism when facing current issues? And how can this enable us to gain new insights into the past?

is over one kilometre long) and which, formally, is conservative architecture. The focus here was not on formal architectural experiments or new materials; the point about the attitude adopted here was that residential buildings were constructed to serve the goal of raising a new Social Democratic generation of young people, who would grow up around large courtyards in communities, where they would be socialized and develop a sense of solidarity. That was the architectural policy adopted by Red Vienna. The Social Democratic attitude was not articulated in new materials and modern flair, but in spatial constellations. A Social Democratic architectural attitude was not a special formal manifestation, nor was it a monolithic block, because the courtyard-based ensembles were each designed individually.

#### Anh-Linh Ngo

Mr Nerdinger has pointed out the many contradictions that emerge in a historical-critical view of the Bauhaus: There is not one Bauhaus, but at least four different versions. What is however astonishing, 100 years after the Bauhaus was first founded, is that the myth associated with it is more potent than ever, despite all the critiques. Although there is considerable scepticism about the myths surrounding the Bauhaus, there is something, some core, that fires our imagination, a positive energy. That led all political parties to invoke the Bauhaus' social dimension in the Bundestag debate on 15th January 2015: All the parliamentary groups—CDU/CSU, SPD, Bündnis 90, the Greens and even the Left Group—expressed a cross-party consensus that the Bauhaus is a positive, socially engaged idea and contains a humanistic blueprint for the future.

[A]

Mr Scholz, you have been a Member of the Bundestag, albeit with some interruptions, since 1998. Have you ever seen such broad agreement between all parties on a cultural policy issue? This unity gives us pause for thought because, in my view, it indicates a shortcoming, namely that we lack a blueprint for the future. Having such a strong sense of this shortcoming at present makes us so forceful in invoking a historical institution that symbolizes this positive vision of the future. And that is probably the real reason for the Bauhaus' posthumous success.

[I]

Mr Scholz, which lessons would you draw from engaging with the Bauhaus or, as Mr Nerdinger asked, which Bauhaus would you like to see?

different bauhaus versions

bauhaus centenary  
bauhaus myths

bauhaus as a source  
of inspiration

social relevance of  
the bauhaus

lessons from the bauhaus

### Olaf Scholz

Let me say first of all that it's not actually so rare for the parties in the German Bundestag to agree with each other; it happens quite often, sometimes it is carefully hidden, but it isn't necessarily such a bad thing in a democracy. I believe that the Bauhaus' success is more related to the way that more has ultimately been achieved with this school and the ideas discussed in connection with it, so that the whole thing has developed its own momentum. That is why it is also a screen for projections that political and social ideas can be transposed onto. At the end of the day, for all its esoteric beginnings, it did engage with modernity and its exigencies; that occurred in architectural terms, but also socially, with various people and varying attitudes, and this also played a role in reality. Because those involved in constructing housing in cities during the Weimar Republic, but also in the new Federal Republic, who were, incidentally, often Social Democrats, were always aware that what they were doing was not self-evident, but required them to engage with architecture and society. Like much of what happens in life, the new awakening ultimately achieved with the Bauhaus is a narrative that goes its own way and develops a life of its own, quite independently of the school's founders. There is no reason at all to deplore that; it should be taken as a productive initial precondition for the future.

bauhaus as a screen  
for projections reflecting  
our own aspirations

housing construction

social democratic  
construction schemes

new political, social, and  
architectural awakening

### Winfried Nerdinger

I would agree immediately with that last point. The whole point about important ideas is that they provide an impetus for further developments, which then pick up new impetuses as history unfolds, undergoing constant transformations in the process. The Bauhaus provided sources of inspiration that have been developed fruitfully. The problem is that in many cases there is now simply a linear reference back to the Bauhaus as an ever-effervescent font of ideas, thus mythologizing the historical Bauhaus. Repeatedly drawing inspiration for the present by looking to the past and remodelling this input is a genuine principle in appropriation of culture, but the appropriation takes place in the light of contemporary interests, whereas Gropius used the historical Bauhaus to construct a transtemporal idea that would continuously impact manifold countries and eras. However, the historical Bauhaus's blind faith in progress has grown rather outmoded today, it developed hardly any social ideas—with the exception of the period when Hannes Meyer was director—and architecture played almost no

bauhaus as a source  
of inspiration

bauhaus myths

interpretative power of the  
bauhaus' founder

bauhaus idea of always up-to-date,  
universally valid design

[E] What are the political prerequisites for socially engaged architecture or design?

role at the Bauhaus during two-thirds of its existence. We should therefore always reflect critically on references that look back to the Bauhaus, which need to be historically contextualized.

### Anh-Linh Ngo

*neues bauen* [new building]

social democratic  
construction schemes

resolving social issues  
through architecture

industrialized building

rationalizing  
housing construction

demand for  
affordable housing

modernist housing estates

hauszinssteuer  
[a weimar-era real estate tax]

public housing construction

Mr Scholz, as you mentioned, *Neues Bauen* [New Building] would not have been conceivable without a close alliance with the Social Democrats. In 1925, Heinrich Pëus, together with Fritz Hesse, then Mayor of Dessau, ensured the continued survival of the Bauhaus, which had no future after the political turnaround in Weimar. Pëus, who had from the outset been a Social Democrat, was convinced that the Bauhaus' views corresponded to Social Democratic goals and that social problems could be solved by drawing on modern means of production, along with industrialization and prefabricated construction methods to build housing. The ambition was to ensure social housing was available for many citizens. We know, however, that disappointment quickly set in, because Gropius did not manage to reduce costs as promised with the Dessau-Törten model housing estate. Residents protested due to the buildings' inadequacies. This example demonstrates that it is not enough to simply entrust architects with solving a social issue if

[E] there are no political flanking measures. At the same time, however, there were also a number of examples that demonstrate how it can work. You mentioned the large housing estates in Berlin and in other cities. Another Social Democrat, Martin Wagner, Head of Municipal Planning and Building, had been much more successful with his proposal concerning what was known as *Hauszinssteuer* [a Weimar-era real estate tax, revenue from which was used to help fund social housing]. This special real-estate tax was levied from 1924; the Minister of Finance was a Social Democrat, Rudolf Hilferding. In the first three years after its introduction, tax revenue from this source already amounted to 850 million Reichsmark and remained relatively constant. Between 1924 and 1931, this tax revenue was used to create an enormous amount of housing; public housing construction clearly exceeded private-sector construction of homes. We tend nowadays to discuss rent caps etc. instead. Instruments like that tackle the symptoms, but do not lead to new housing being built. They ease some of the pressure, which I think is right and important, especially in the kind of over-heated situation we have today, but that is not enough. I would like to ask you, as a politician dealing with fiscal issues, whether political constellations still exist nowadays in which something like that



hauszinssteuer  
[a weimar-era real estate tax]

*Hauszinssteuer* would be conceivable? As Minister of Finance, what do you think about instruments of that kind, which evidently worked in the 1920s? Why are there no longer such ambitious reflections today?

#### Olaf Scholz

land use and  
land management

Reflections like that do exist today. Just think of Hans-Jochen Vogel, who talks often and openly about these issues and has also just written a new book<sup>3</sup> in which he calls for a new approach to land use and land management. In that sense, this is all topical. We have just been grappling with ensuring that property tax can continue to exist in Germany. And I am glad that I could make the legislation on this possible at the very last minute thanks to a constitutional amendment, with an agreement between the sixteen federal states and the German Bundestag. In other words, the political constellations of today differ very much from those of the past. However, I think it is in any event quite right to be giving more thought again to the question of building social housing. I remember very well that I was widely ridiculed in Hamburg in 2010 for saying that social housing should be a major issue. The regional government at the time—a CDU/Green coalition, incidentally—claimed there was no need, and back then the figures I proposed were described as absurd and far too high. The bold proposal in that period was for 6,000 flats per year, but now they are managing to build many more flats there, 10,000 to 12,000, and a substantial proportion is social housing. Someone once interjected in a debate with me that building social housing is so enormously important, and that we also need to learn this again, citing a not entirely scholarly figure: 400,000—more than half—of the over 760,000 flats built for rental in the city were once built as social housing.

social housing

demand for  
affordable housing

It is a mistake to think that cheap housing can be created without us making any effort, without anyone having to take care of this issue, as the market will regulate everything. And that is why we need to make a new start in fostering housing construction today that can measure up to the commitment, élan and impetus of the 1920s, which produced housing estates that remain exemplary to this day. We need to achieve something in the order of magnitude of 300,000 to 400,000 new apartments per year in Germany, and at least 100,000 of those should be social housing if we are to solve today's housing problems. And in this respect, I believe we can still learn a great deal from what some people

public housing  
construction

social and political  
commitment

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cooperative housing  
construction

have done on the basis of the Bauhaus' engagement with architecture, for example in cooperative, city-funded or local-authority housing construction.

Anh-Linh Ngo

hauszinssteuer  
[a weimar-era real estate tax]

Housing associations and cooperatives could only build so much because the *Hauszinssteuer* existed, which meant they did not have to take out so many loans. Let me ask you again: Do you think a tax like that is conceivable today?

Olaf Scholz

I think the *Hauszinssteuer* is something worth considering. One point I would like to make: I have just ensured that we continue to tax land at all, because that could have been over by the end of this year. And it was a very laborious undertaking, as we have all realized. I would say that we do nevertheless have to generate income that will enable us to finance housing construction. The *Hauszinssteuer* is one proposed solution that I think could be discussed too, but you could also simply say that we must ensure that high earners pay correspondingly high taxes. Building social housing costs money; billions are required, and it needs to be subsidized, and that holds true today just as it did in the past. Taking up this challenge also means at the same time making clear that it is a challenge for our society, that tax revenue must be used for this purpose, and those resources need to be comprehensive. The challenge remains unchanged and the various options must be discussed. Because there is no question that we need to build.

[E]

Anh-Linh Ngo

land use and  
land management

We need to build, but land is becoming increasingly scarce. You have already mentioned that Hans-Jochen Vogel has been fighting for a new land use and land management system for decades. In the context of the exhibition *1989 to 2019: Politics of Space in the New Berlin*, we looked at how much public land was privatized by the Berlin Senate after the fall of the Berlin Wall. A horrific figure emerged: 21 million square metres. That is an area the size of the entire Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district. If a city privatizes such a large area, rising prices should come as no surprise to it. Hans-Jochen Vogel advocates a different land use and land management system, in which ownership and use would be separated. In other words, the point is not about social ownership and expropriation of land, but about introducing new provisions that would allow

[E] What are the political prerequisites for socially engaged architecture or design?

the public authorities to regulate social use of land. Where do you stand on this question?

#### Olaf Scholz

Hans-Jochen Vogel has addressed this issue previously, back when he was Mayor of Munich and triggered enormous discussions about the topic. Now he is putting it on the agenda again. Yes, the privatisations in recent years have been a huge mistake. Conversely, a positive effect is noticeable where this has not happened, for example in Hamburg, where about 300,000 apartments out of the total housing stock are still owned by the public sector or co-operatives. That is why I believe that we must ensure flourishing public land ownership to ensure this can continue. We need large housing companies that are not privatised, and they must also continue to build. When land is allocated, we need to make full use of the options available today. That means, for example, not always selling land outright, but insisting instead on a leasehold contract, which makes it possible to distinguish between a plot of land and a building's utilization, and allows national and local authorities to influence subsequent development when the leasehold ends, thus also ensuring that higher land prices are not reflected in an analogous rise in rent and house prices.

#### Winfried Nerdinger

In principle, I can also agree with Mr Scholz on this point, but I would like to state the argument somewhat more directly. The *Hauszinssteuer* was a state intervention that encroached on private property; real-estate owners were obliged to relinquish a certain percentage of their rental income to compensate for a large number of citizens having lost all their savings due to inflation, which did not affect real estate. The heyday of social housing in the Weimar Republic was based on this *Hauszinssteuer* and thus on political intervention in private property to help level out social disparities. During the Weimar Republic, the state became involved in housing construction for the first time and acted directly or indirectly, mostly through subsidized cooperatives, as the commissioning client. In the Federal Republic of Germany, national, regional, and local authorities continued to fulfil this role of creating homes for citizens by building social housing. However, they increasingly moved away from such home construction schemes in the course of liberalization driven by a market-economy focus, which proved disastrous in this respect, and even sold some of

hauszinssteuer  
[a weimar-era real estate tax]

public housing construction

cooperatives as new forms  
of ownership

neoliberalism  
as a paradigm shift

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social housing

land use and  
land management

their own housing stock on the private market. Another point that links in here is that the public authorities have acquired less and less land for potential future development; today we face the problem that national, regional, and local authorities want to promote social housing again at last, but potential building land is now largely owned by private investors, with prices being driven ever higher. Attempting to influence the price of building land nowadays, as Mr Vogel, who, moreover, achieved nothing in this respect when he held political office, also proposes, can ultimately only be described as a cosmetic exercise. The only way to find genuine solutions to this sort of explosive development on the construction

- [E] market is through clear political intervention: firstly, by ensuring that the exorbitant increase in land value, which has occurred without any effort on the part of the owners, is redirected through taxation as fully as possible to fund construction of social housing, and, secondly, by public authorities once again acquiring and developing large areas of building land. To this day, Vienna City Council's social housing scheme remains an outstanding example of this approach.

#### Anh-Linh Ngo

Maybe we can come back to this important question later when we open the discussion for the audience. Mr Scholz let us briefly return to the way in which you contrast the two architectural attitudes that you position in analogy to different systems. I think you are probably preaching to the converted when you raise this point with architects, because, as architectural historian Karin Wilhelm put it in the debate on right-wing spaces, spatial formations and building constellations are per se also instructions for action, i.e. they specify or at least suggest possible uses. If this room we are sitting in were designed differently and if we were seated differently in it, a different constellation would come into being and a different statement about the community formed here. The situation here is very much focused on information coming from the front of the room and that is also reflected in the way we are discussing. More generally, spaces prepare and constitute forms of use and consequently have a corresponding impact on users. That is also confirmed by Mr Nerdinger's example, the only difference being that the idea of a Social Democratic upbringing that underlies the Viennese courtyard ensembles is now a historical phenomenon, so that it would be intriguing to find out how these courtyards affect today's users. You have given a very convincing

social impact of  
architecture

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social democratic  
architecture

description of how one feels in the different buildings that house the ministries and what is actually conveyed there in the sense of demonstrations of power. Arno Brandhuber, a contemporary architect from Berlin, once said that «architecture is the ordering of social relationships through buildings». That means that architecture is definitively political. However, the strange thing is that the political parties have hardly any programmatic approach to address architecture, as far as I can see. What should Social Democratic architecture look like today, from your point of view? A Neues Bauen [New Building] for the 21st century?

#### Olaf Scholz

functional city

[E] Well, I can tell you my views as a Social Democrat about how building should be addressed in future. I do not think anyone wants a scenario where a building has a stamp stating: This is the SPD style. Irrespective of that, though, I want to state my position on this very clearly: We somehow need to move beyond the Athens Charter (1933), which was very much devised with respect to 1920s and 1930s architecture. The neighbourhoods that we like, which were usually built much earlier, are not compatible with zoning laws that adhere to the model of a «functional» city in the sense of one that is function-driven or one that functions smoothly. I once said that half of the city I live in could not be rebuilt today with contemporary zoning laws, as the whole thing violates all the regulations we have now. That holds especially true when it comes to creating vibrant neighbourhoods with housing and workplaces side by side and everything blended together, because the entire approach is still based on a huge amount of separation, the idea that it is best not to see each other at all: You head off to work in the morning, so you're in the work district, then you go shopping, so you're in the shopping district, then it's time for leisure, so you're in the leisure district, then you go off to be at home, so you're in the residential district. Of course, that was never taken to quite such extremes, but the consequences of this way of thinking are still very tangible today. And that's why I think we still need a few more legislative changes to allow different functions to coexist, which also means that we have to address how they may interfere with each other, which would be the very first thing to consider.

mixt-use city

The second point is that we must engage with the need to build as something entailing societal reform. We cannot complain that there is a housing shortage and then do nothing to ensure that homes are built, and I believe that we must—and this

affordable housing

is something that we can draw on from the Neues Bauen movement, for example —tackle the question of how to build affordably. In this respect I believe some people are making things too easy for themselves, in fact I would say that holds true for quite a few of those currently active in this field. The very first simplification lies in claiming that everything would look monotonous. That kind of stance means we can now use practically none of the modern options available to us and every building must in a sense reinvent everything from scratch, although a great deal could be combined.

rationalizing housing  
construction

Thirdly, we need to agree on what it should all cost. Something has gone wrong somewhere when people start explaining to us today that rental space costs 12–13 euros per square metre in a building on a plot of land that they own, even though they paid nothing for the land. In my view, the first question to be asked is what someone can afford. That leads you to conclude that around eight euros [per square metre] is really the upper limit for most people. And that means that the economy and architecture and everyone involved in building must have an overriding ambition to build for a broader swathe of the population without construction quality deteriorating. My point is that this can indeed be done, and this has also been demonstrated. In this case, however, we need to aspire to reform, to find a way to actually get these 300,000 new homes every year, to issue building permits, designate sites for construction, make sure that what is built does not become monotonous but nonetheless taps into contemporary scope for rationalization to make it affordable. And one more point: The construction industry in Germany has benefited enormously from freedom of movement in the European Union. That is why first-class skilled workers were available very cheaply for long periods. And I am firmly convinced that is the reason why, at some point around 1980, people stopped thinking about what could be improved, as the only innovation still needed involved finding cheap labour. We are still suffering from this today, which means there really is a great deal that could be articulated from a Social Democratic perspective concerning construction and architectural policy, but the buildings wouldn't have some kind of «SPD style».

construction and  
architectural policy

social democratic attitude

#### Anh-Linh Ngo

You have mentioned all the political prerequisites, so why isn't this being implemented? With *ARCH+*, I moved into a building

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land management

construction and  
architectural policy

where the Berlin Senate had, for the first time, decided not to sell the land to the highest bidder, but had instead awarded plots to important urban projects as part of a concept-driven tendering procedure, and for the first time, it became legally possible to combine housing and workplaces. Why is so little happening in terms of land policy or the Land Utilization Ordinance? These are all essential policy instruments for sustainability and traffic avoidance. What can you as politicians do to change this?

#### Olaf Scholz

[E] And now for a short commercial break if I may. First, we need to take measures and drive these approaches forward and second, I have already proved that this works. When I became Mayor of Hamburg in 2011, I decided we would use the concept-driven tendering method. We immediately abolished the highest-bidder system and made sure that plots were allocated according to quality criteria. I invented the one-third mix: For all construction projects with more than 20 apartments, one third must be publicly subsidized housing. And I was able to make this a binding requirement, either through our power to grant building permits or because we had access to the land. We immediately started drawing up new local development plans everywhere and issuing building permits, in order to ratchet up home building to the kind of order of magnitude that would at least start to respond to demand. We also took the plunge and once again built new districts, which we designed to ensure that housing and work could function in tandem. In other words, in practice—in the office I held for seven years—I have adhered to everything I have just called for here, and consequently the situation there is now quite different from elsewhere, so that although prices have increased due to a huge influx of people, this rise has been more moderate than in other centres—and all that in one of Germany's richest cities.

The thing that bothers me is when people just talk about how something or other does need to be done, although in progressive discourses that really amounts to not much more than empty words. The truth is that, as a matter of fact, all this can be done. You just must get going. Something along the lines of type approval for buildings, which saves EUR 600 to 1,000 per square metre, is almost non-existent in German building law and the construction industry hasn't been clamouring for its introduction; I was the one who initiated it in Hamburg. As the City of Hamburg holds legislative power, it could do that, and the municipal

rationalizing housing  
construction

affordable housing

housing association developed something along these lines. And now everyone else wants to copy it, because they have realized that you can save an incredible amount of money if you have already planned certain basic elements, even if every building looks different. And that is important if you want apartments that a lot of people can afford.

Anh-Linh Ngo

As I mentioned earlier, I would like to involve the audience now and I hope that you have lots of questions.

Member of audience

need for a new image

Mr Nerdinger, I found your comments about Mr. Gropius and his attempt to reach out and make an impact on the world highly appealing. But now, when I hear Mr Scholz say that Social Democratic building means creating the legal and financial conditions for this to happen, I wonder whether we might not also need images that inspire us, images of a social or democratic urban district or of a completely new region? We are both from Munich, we know Neuperlach—there was an exhibition on Neue Heimat [the large union-led housing corporation] recently at TU Munich’s Architekturmuseum—I don’t know whether we want to have Neue Heimat and Neuperlach again today. Don’t we simply need a new image, a new design, something that must be carried out into the world, even if it comes from the President of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts?

Winfried Nerdinger

socially engaged architecture

You are certainly right that we lack a model for democratic building to get the ball rolling on new socially engaged architecture. In my opinion, it is no longer possible today to pick up on Neue Heimat architecture in Neuperlach or the Märkisches Viertel in Berlin. However, the starting point should not be a new image of the city, however that may look, but instead we should first address the very fundamental issue of how we envision housing will look in future within a democratic society; on that basis we should then develop appropriate forms of housing, which also calls for political decisions. I do not have the answer either; there is still a great deal that needs to be developed on this front. However, I believe that we should be moving towards experiments with cooperatives, and there ought to be much more funding and experimentation in this area. It could make building cheaper if

cooperative housing  
construction

cooperatives as a new form  
of ownership



cooperatives constructed homes without seeking a profit; it would reduce the pressure on rents, because cooperatives regulate who is entitled to live there and rent increases on a social basis rather than in terms of market forces; in addition, cooperative architecture could lead to a new way of living together, geared not only towards individual self-realization, but also towards developing democratic and social behaviour. Bruno Taut's Hufeisensiedlung in Berlin was a prime example of this in the 1920s; that kind of quality would need to be transposed into present-day conditions. However, to do that, we would have to create the legal basis and fitting forms of architecture.

#### Olaf Scholz

Since you mention this exhibition about Neue Heimat, which is quite impressive, I would like to point out that it was the most important protagonist in housing policy in the Federal Republic of Germany. Over a 30-year period, around 700 architects and urban planners built approximately 460,000 modern apartments, most of them social housing. This example also shows that the market cannot achieve this on its own; there needs to be a political will and steps must be taken to ensure there is a sufficient, affordable supply of housing that city-dwellers would like to live in. We won't succeed if we work with nothing but restrictions that hinder implementation. I deliberately quoted Richard Florida's book in my speech; he always used to write beautiful books about the beautiful life of the urban creative class. However, he has also very rapidly—and this is really striking—written a second book, *The New Urban Crisis* (2017). In it, he notes that the impetus to add a more liberal dimension to how people live together in cities is not wrong, but that he had overlooked the fact that the city does not only consist of the creative class, whom he had described previously, but also of many other people. Incidentally, I think it is a great achievement for someone who works as an academic and has such international success to be able to look at his own views from a different perspective. I have not met many people yet who can do that, but it is an indication that something has happened. And if we don't take up this challenge of building affordable housing and if we fail to assert that society has a duty to ensure it works, simply declaring instead that it will work, or complaining that it won't work unless we do something about it, then we shall not manage to disrupt this development. Doing something to address this calls for democratic courage, because scant available land not

social housing

affordable housing

new urban crisis

- [O] What is the significance and relevance of the Bauhaus and Modernism today—a historical phenomenon or a resource for the present? And what, if anything, constitutes their current relevance?

only means that we have to keep land prices under control, but also that we need to grant building permits, for otherwise these additional dwellings will not exist.

#### Ulrich Hartung

I have a question for Winfried Nerdinger. It has been said that the new residential areas—which may perhaps be developed even in Berlin, where at least intellectually there is still a kind of building ban—should of course not cost much, but nor should they look cheap, to put it bluntly. That of course applies to a greater or lesser degree to every building project, but it is particularly pronounced here, as we are talking about mass housing construction. On the basis of your experience and your often systematic analysis of the Bauhaus, which you have presented again here with astonishing clarity, could you imagine managing to develop a positive attitude towards the Bauhaus, perhaps not ruling out the possibility that the Bauhaus may indeed be of some significance, perhaps even with regard to design issues, when resolving the question of how to build cheaply but well? Would you also rule that scenario out for yourself in the longer term? After all, didn't the Bauhaus to some degree produce a unified attitude that could be subsumed, for example, within the term Modernism? An attitude that could perhaps also to some extent serve as a role model for new housing construction in cities.

mass housing construction

modernism as an attitude

#### Winfried Nerdinger

If I consider Bauhaus and architecture in conjunction, that, first of all, brings me to Walter Gropius, who pursued the concept of reducing construction costs through rationalization, which you also mentioned. However, this hardly functioned even for his own housing estates, because far too few apartments were constructed. And they were not well-built either, as there turned out to be a lot of building defects. You need to produce large quantities of homes, if you want to build houses along a crane track with a perfectly organized time-plan and work schedule, otherwise you will not cut costs substantially. I would venture to question whether that is really the right approach for mass housing construction in future, as rationalization à la Gropius almost always leads to a certain degree of monotony, as shown particularly by the Gropius settlements.

rationalizing housing construction

mass housing construction

The most important Twenties housing was built in Frankfurt, Berlin, Hamburg and Altona by Ernst May, Bruno Taut, Fritz Schumacher and Gustav Oelsner. In Hamburg, by the way, this

kind of building is not so modernist at all, but is in brick, with courtyards too, mixed use and in some cases as perimeter block development. These forms of residential estate can certainly be developed further. You could also draw on what Hannes Meyer tried to create in terms of socially engaged architecture, for example the gallery-access homes in the Törten housing estate in Dessau. On the other hand, as you realized from my lecture, I do not think it would be appropriate to reactivate Walter Gropius' ideas on architecture today.

#### Member of audience

I would like to say something about the situation for architects, as they were not really mentioned enough this evening. If we want this much-proclaimed diversity and want to make a new start, architects should be given more opportunities to contribute their creativity. I am among those, probably like many people in this room, who has been struggling for decades to gain access to projects. To cite just one example: You can only build a school if you have already built one. Telling investors what they want to hear and not listening to good ideas is now standard practice in this country's architectural culture, and I think that if you really want something fresh and new, you should give creatively minded people in this country a chance. May I ask what your attitude to this would be?

#### Olaf Scholz

Firstly, I think that is right: We must ensure that new ideas can play a role. Good building in cities in Germany and everywhere is always also about holding architectural competitions in which someone can present their own competition entry, for example. That is important. Although it is not possible for every single project, we should do this frequently, if we want to be inspired anew again and again. Secondly, we must of course ensure that what is built is good. This means that, as clients commissioning architecture, we must also dare to make appropriate demands concerning price calculations and suchlike, and of course we must have a grasp of what constitutes good architecture. That does not mean that we should fool ourselves into believing that we are architects ourselves. That's a point I made in one of my first speeches to the Hamburg Association of Architects; I told them I was interested in this subject, but that I would not be drawing up designs myself or interfering with them, because that would be outside my skill-set and the results would be quite horrible.

Anh-Linh Ngo

Could I just interject something here? An institution is currently being founded that is intended to deal with architecture of the future and could be something like a new Bauhaus, namely the Bundesstiftung Bauakademie [Building Academy Federal Foundation]. And what has happened? The institution is to be led by a political appointee. The selection committee—including Johannes Kahrs, whom you know from the Hamburg regional association of your party—has appointed Florian Pronold as founding director.<sup>4</sup> You were just saying that politicians are not architects. So why does something like this happen?

Olaf Scholz

I really cannot say because I was not a member of the selection committee, and it is also, quite seriously, information that I think one must accept. Incidentally though, I do however happen to know that the person you mentioned has been rather involved with this topic and is very committed and has considerable management skills. But I do not know what ultimately played a role in the selection committee and who else was on their list, so I really cannot pass judgement on that decision.

Philipp Oswalt

First a follow-up remark on how the position of Bauakademie founding director was filled. I thought what you said was a bit oversimplified; it's all very well that you managed to make positive comments about Mr. Pronold, but the position was not advertised as a managerial one but as a job for an expert, and he simply does not meet that requirement, so it is a very strange procedure.

But I actually wanted to address something else: We were just looking at the question of something along the lines of «Social Democratic architecture», and in recent years I have found it very striking that the Social Democrats were actually the main driving force behind many of the reconstruction projects. Looking at the Berlin City Palace, or now also at the Bauakademie, the Garnisonkirche in Potsdam, and other cases like Frankfurt's Municipal Theatre, I wonder what they are trying to tell us with these reconstructions? What kind of attitude is that? Is it somehow an attempt to counteract their traumatic experiences with Neue Heimat or what is it all about? I still do not understand why the Social Democrats of all people engage in this kind of historical production and identity production.

social democratic  
architecture

reconstruction  
as a controversial area

production of history  
and identity

### Olaf Scholz

social democratic attitude

construction and  
architectural policy

demand for  
affordable housing

I don't want to start evaluating individual projects now, because I have different views on the various projects, and I believe that for that reason too it must always be possible to discuss what one finds positive or negative. You may have gathered from what I said that I do not have a high regard for historicizing architecture, but that would be a completely different debate. The question I want to answer, however, is about what it means to build from the perspective of Social Democratic policy. That means, on the one hand, that there must be enough to go around for a large number of people, which is why we are building a lot of housing, and it means that we must also defend our decision to build as much as we do, and that the housing must be affordable and good and high quality—I think that's all part of it. However, it does not mean that there is no room or no need for places that stand out to some extent. For example, this category should in many cases include our schools, which ought to be very special places where we are quite right to invest a great deal of money, in order to create places where children can come together and grow up together. That was, at any rate, always important for me when I had responsibility for this area. But it also includes buildings related to culture, which stand out due to their special qualities. In any case, I realize how significant it was for my home city that the opera was rebuilt after the war, which really touched everyone, during a period when there really were a lot of shortages, and it even moved people who had no intention of ever setting foot inside it. I think that is part of this issue. And I believe that large cultural buildings can also be a part of urban society. I did not initiate the Elbphilharmonie project, but am simply associated with its completion, and I think that when you look at this building, you realize it is definitively an antithesis to earlier buildings. For example, think of a very famous opera house, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, which in some aspects emulates Versailles; the well-to-do in Buenos Aires would gather there in the early afternoon and start drinking champagne, yet would finally still get some idea of the piece performed. And then there is the Elbphilharmonie, where millions of people can visit the 30-metre-high platform and embrace this as a public building—in other words, a complete antithesis. I do not think you have to be opposed to marvellous architecture if you are a Social Democrat. I think we need a mixture of both: wonderful buildings that serve cultural purposes, for example, designed for use by

many people, and at the same time, of course, urban spaces with enough apartments—and the two must be combined.

Annemarie Jaeggi

hauszinssteuer [a Weimar-era real estate tax]

My question is for Mr Scholz and is about financing housing. Mr Ngo referred to the *Hauszinssteuer* introduced in 1924, which generated an incredible amount of money, but it should also be noted in this context that 50 per cent of what was an immeasurable sum did at least flow into the general budget later. I would like to ask how can we actually utilize such revenues (you mentioned the example of property tax) for specific purposes, so that they are used to build housing and not to compensate for shortfalls in other areas, so that we do not repeat the Weimar Republic's experiences.

Olaf Scholz

social housing construction

construction and architectural policy

demand for affordable housing

Well, property tax generates 14 billion Euro a year in Germany. Just to set the record straight: There is virtually no scope to earmark funds for special purposes—German law does not permit that with tax revenue. It must be a political decision. And that's why I think we were correct when we decided recently that social housing construction can continue to be supported by the Federal Republic of Germany, for one of the earlier versions of the constitution provided that this programme would expire in 2019, i.e. at the end of the year. That meant we had to amend the Basic Law during this legislative period so that we could continue with that policy, and the Federal Government is now allocating considerable funds to social housing construction throughout Germany. But there must be the will to do this on a suitably large scale. I think that we need to have vigorous debate on issues like this. In a large city, proper social housing costs 200 to 400 million Euro in subsidies every year, depending on the size of the city. It simply does not work unless we put this into practice by setting policy priorities. It is quite simple! In my view, there must be a will to ensure that affordable housing is available. I still surprise all sorts of people right across society by saying that half of all households in almost every medium-sized and large city in Germany are eligible for a certificate entitling them to live in publicly funded housing. That is the reality of income levels in this country, which is not as rosy as it appears on prime-time TV. And that is why I think part of the task involves saying that this is a political issue and that it is not just about the poor—although it should always be about them too—but actually concerns a fair number of us. That is why

social housing must be made a new priority and we should not look down on it. I think it's great to see what can be done with concept-driven construction, by the way, because it simply leads to social housing being created in wealthy districts, which otherwise would not have happened for many decades.

Member of audience

In the description of today's event, one sentence reads that attitudes inform processes of reception and repression in historiography and politics of memory. Minister Scholz, what do you think the many Bauhaus staff and students who had to leave Germany after 1933 for political and ethnic reasons would say today in 2019 about the decision taken by the Berlin Tax Office a few weeks ago to suspend the non-profit status of the Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Nazi-Regimes [VVN/ Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime], which clearly threatens its survival? And you have played a not insignificant role in this matter and even called for the rules concerning critical and politically active associations to be made more stringent. That is why I find it so remarkable that you are here with us this evening, in the context of this conference, and I would very much like to ask you what taking a stand means to you in this context, and what kind of attitude you think Bauhaus staff and students from back then would adopt towards the VVN?

«taking a stand» as a concept

Olaf Scholz

Thank you very much for this question! You did not have to take such a circuitous route via the Bauhaus but could have asked directly about the non-profit status. No, it's not true to say that the point is to make things more difficult, but the fact of the matter is that there is case law from the Federal Fiscal Court concerning non-profit associations that are also politically active on the side. That has led to enormous uncertainty and we are now trying to work out how to remove this uncertainty. I honestly think it is farcical if, while we are trying to salvage what must be possible to salvage, some people say we are doing the opposite, just because that suits them. It is simply untrue, a lie, a farcical drama, and that is not the right approach. We are working to find a solution for the non-profit legislation, without, in the end, creating a legal framework that will allow very reactionary, very rich people to set up mechanisms to collect money, as they do in the USA, and then make use of their non-profit status to influence the political process in Germany. It's not a piece of cake to get the system to

[E] What are the political prerequisites for socially engaged architecture or design?

work, ensuring that one scenario doesn't arise but the other category is protected, but we are working very hard on it and I am also quite confident that we will find a solution. And the second point about the VVN decision, I am trying to find out more about it, because it is a decision by the Berlin Tax Office and German fiscal confidentiality rules means that I also learnt about this decision from the press, as you did; I am not informed about this decision, it is not transmitted to me, just to make that clear. I do not know what reasoning is given for this decision. I am familiar with the legal framework for it, however, and if I have understood the information I was trying to find out correctly, then it is a problem that can be solved and could perhaps have been resolved by other means than making it public; however, as I have said, I do not know enough about it to be able to evaluate that myself. I cannot imagine that it would be correct to deny this body non-profit status. But no one asked my opinion; you are the first to do so.

#### Member of audience

Now a question from young people about what you think politicians or even architects or other people do to support young people? When it comes to sustainable living, or Fridays for Future, we do not feel understood by politicians at all. We young people, all of us sitting here, all living in Berlin, probably will not be able to live in Berlin any longer when we move out [of our parents' homes], because rents are so high. In your opinion, what do you think you are doing to ensure that we can continue to live in Berlin in future, with reasonable rents? Please reply in a way that we can understand!

demand for affordable housing

#### Olaf Scholz

First, making money available, secondly, drawing up local development plans, third, building apartments, fourth, convincing public housing companies to start building again, which they have not done for a long time. Fifth, I could imagine that we might at some point consider the question of whether all firms with a certain number of flats might also have some sort of permanent obligation to build, in other words, whether a company with five thousand dwellings might always have to keep constructing—as a certain percentage of its housing stock. That would also lead to increases, because essentially the worst thing is to build a lot all at once and then to reduce housing construction significantly. You need to build a lot at steady pace. And that applies to Berlin just as it

[E]



demand for affordable housing

does to all other attractive locations where many people want to live; it's not possible unless there are large numbers of additional apartments that are affordable, also because they are publicly subsidized. But all that is possible, it needs to happen.

Member of audience

And how long do you think it will be until you manage that?

Olaf Scholz

That is indeed a good question, and I find myself always coming back to my former position as First Mayor of Hamburg. I am completely stunned to see that it takes three to five years for a new local development plan in a major city in Germany. And I said to myself: That cannot be the way things are. It means you must start early. That is why it's extremely important that we insist on constant development of planning areas. If you wait too long, nothing will come of it. But I have the feeling that many people everywhere have come to a realization about this, and the same goes for the government in Berlin; I am convinced it views housing construction as a very central issue and is trying to identify corresponding areas throughout the city. That was also noted recently in the newspapers. And I think the question you have asked is completely justified. Because if someone says that they want to leave home soon, and then hears the development plan will be ready in five years and the apartment three years after that, they'll think to themselves that they actually wanted to have moved on twice by then. And that, I think, is not acceptable; something must change.

Member of audience

There was a big Fridays for Future demonstration today. I'd like to ask, just out of curiosity, if you feel pressured as a politician or if you have the feeling that it achieves something politically when young people take to the streets to fight for the future.

Olaf Scholz

I think it is great that it is happening. I think all those who are doing it deserve to have us address these issues seriously, not as slogans, but by discussing in tangible terms the points raised. And I think that it helps a lot. In my view, we have taken some considerable far-reaching decisions; they would not have been possible without this public pressure from the young people who take to the streets on Fridays for Future. It has given us incredible

strength, which we probably would not have had otherwise, enabling us to overcome all the resistance that emerges every day. So, it's right and positive that this is happening, and it is also possible to find solutions to respond to the concerns being expressed.

Member of audience

Coming back to a point, what exactly do you do to promote sustainable living in Berlin—and what do you do sustainably?

Olaf Scholz

I am the Federal Minister of Finance, so I can now report on what I am doing as Federal Minister of Finance. I ensure that houses are built and that is why we have increased funding for social housing. I have ensured that we have dramatically increased funding to expand local public transport in Germany and Berlin is also benefiting from this. We are building new suburban trains, new underground trains, we are developing new mobility concepts. We are ensuring that there will soon be zero-emission vehicles. That is a huge industrial feat that is now also essential. And for example, as First Major of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg I have ensured that many cities in Germany, including Berlin, have declared that from 2020 they wish to purchase only zero-emission buses for their public transport systems. This has put enormous pressure on the industry, as they could easily work out that from then on, they would not be able to sell any of the buses in their existing range. And through legislation we have now established the regulatory framework for this to happen. In the bill adopted by the Bundesrat today, we have done the groundwork to make buying emission-free or significantly reduced-emission vehicles more attractive. And we have ensured, for example, that cities will soon be able to pass laws stipulating that only zero-emission models will be permitted in future for certain categories of vehicles in frequent use, such as taxis or those used by car rental companies. I could go on and on with this list. We have got the ball rolling for almost EUR 90 billion for the railways to ensure this works nationwide. We are making sure that the electricity grid is upgraded to bear the load from electric mobility. We want renewable energies to be expanded so that they meet 65 per cent of our electricity needs by 2030 at the latest. And we're making sure that buildings are insulated so that they emit less, and we've now introduced such favourable tax incentives and subsidies for building renovation that we hope to see a dramatic drop in emissions

from buildings over the next ten years. And we are making it more expensive to use fossil fuels in buildings and likewise for vehicles, so that when people buy their next car, they can consider perhaps buying one that has less environmental impact.

*In order to afford sufficient scope during the symposium's opening event for the unique opportunity to enter into a discussion with Olaf Scholz, Federal Minister of Finance and Vice-Chancellor, we focused the discussion on the first evening of the symposium on topical issues pertaining to the political course to be steered when tackling housing and urban planning issues in the 21st century, rather than, as originally envisaged, concentrating on Professor Winfried Nerdinger's opening lecture and the symposium programme. We should also like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Winfried Nerdinger, who agreed to an interview with the editor after the symposium, thus making it possible to include both nexuses of questions in the publication.*