

In view of the great influence that bureaucratisation has had on the built environment in Europe since the 19th century, the tenacity with which the cult of the designing subject prevails in the 21st century is still rather remarkable. Years ago, Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva called for us to finally overcome our perspective on architecture as a manufactured object.¹ Instead, we should regard it as the materialisation of things that are themselves absent from the architectural location, but are essential to grasp what defines architecture as a social phenomenon: namely practices of exercising power, norms, negotiating compromises, as well as limiting regulations, the uncertainty of long, complex planning processes, competition rules and public campaigns.

Using the example of *New Frankfurt*, one of the largest urban planning campaigns of the Weimar Republic (Fig. 1), I wish to demonstrate how beneficial it could be to change the perspective in this sense. However, to do so, it is necessary to qualify a well-established narrative claiming that *New Frankfurt* is above all an aesthetic and social-reform phenomenon. As an aesthetic phenomenon, it is regarded as part of the «International Style»,² embodied by individual «geniuses» such as Ernst May. As a social-reform phenomenon, it is connected to the concept of the «New Human».³ What is always overlooked in this context is the fact that *New Frankfurt* was above all the result of a process of bureaucratisation in architectural production that had already begun in the 19th century. Following approaches from the fields of institutional and organisational sociology, I wish to interpret the architecture of *New Frankfurt* as an embodiment of the self-representation⁴ of social forms that strived to achieve a new, permanent social order and thereby take the decisive step from bourgeois to organised Modernity.⁵ In doing so, the priorities did not exclusively lie in the diffuse notion of a «New Human», in democratising society or in eradicating social woes.⁶ In fact, the actual quality of *New Frankfurt* lies in the special way it documents what the myth of the designing subject so successfully conceals: the politics of organised architectures.

The Journal *Das Neue Frankfurt*

In 1926, the first edition of a journal was published that was famously named after one of largest urban planning campaigns of the Weimar Republic: *Das Neue Frankfurt. Monatsschrift für die Fragen der Grosstadt-Gestaltung* (Fig. 2).⁷ It was initially edited by Ernst May, later in collaboration with the art historian Fritz Wichert. May had just been appointed Head of Frankfurt's Planning Department, following a comprehensive expansion of the department's authority.⁸ Accordingly, instead of seeking an architect, a «technical employee from the field of urban expansion, civil engineering and settlements» was required;⁹ in other words a planner who could

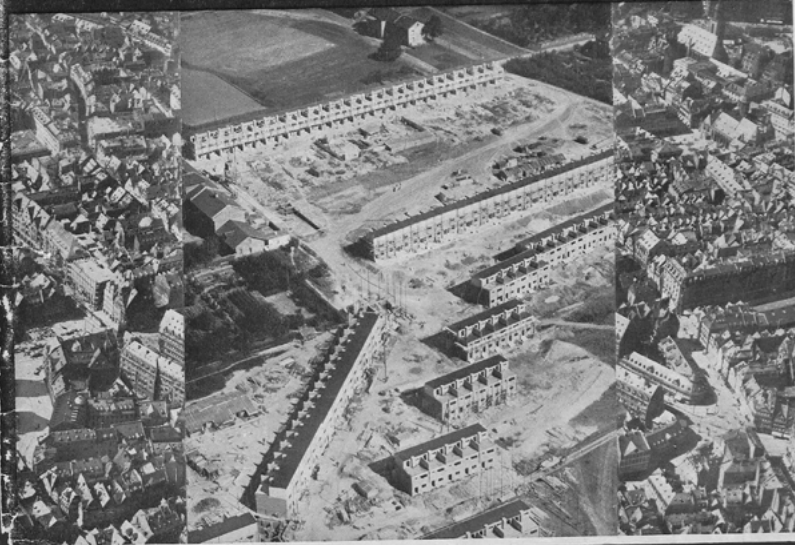


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DAS NEUE FRANKFURT

MONATSSCHRIFT FÜR DIE FRAGEN DER GROSSTADT-GESTALTUNG 1926 - 1927



2 Frontpage of *Das Neue Frankfurt. Monatsschrift für die Fragen der Grosstadt-Gestaltung*, 1926, Vol. 1, No. 10/11

use a surprisingly large apparatus to accelerate the city's transformation. In doing so, May was primarily responsible for the institution he led and the network that made its far-reaching authority possible in the first place. The journal provides interesting insight in this respect. In research on architectural history, it is still interpreted as a medium to spread the ideas of Ernst May. In fact, the layout is inspired by numerous comparable media, such as the journal *G*, which had been published by Hans Richter and Mies van der Rohe since 1923. Black bars structure the pages, the typography creates an overall modern impression (Fig. 3). Without a doubt, *Das Neue Frankfurt* thereby suggests its avant-garde approach. Unlike the above-mentioned comparison, however, the official nature of the medium can hardly be overlooked. This already applies to its protagonists. Ludwig Landmann, the Mayor of Frankfurt, Ernst May, Head of the Planning Department, Martin Elsaesser, Head of the Civil Engineering Authority, and Fritz Wichert, Head of the Frankfurt School of Art, represent no fewer than four important city officials involved in the publi-

DAS NEUE FRANKFURT

MONATSSCHRIFT FÜR DIE FRAGEN DER GROSSTADTGESTALTUNG

SCHRIFTFLEITER: ERNST MAY ■ VERLAG ENGLERT UND SCHLOSSER · FRANKFURT AM MAIN

ZUM GELEIT

Von Oberbürgermeister Dr. Landmann

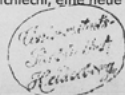
DAS PERSONEN-FAHRZEUG ALS AUSDRUCK DER KULTUR



Bild 1. REISEWAGEN IM 17. JAHRH. Tempo und Form spiegeln den Stand der Technik jener Zeit. Aus: Eugen Diederichs: Deutsches Leben der Vergangenheit in Bildern.

Neue Geistes- und Seelenkultur: darum rang das deutsche Volk (chon vor dem Kriege in qualvollem Streben. Einem war gegeben zu lägen, was er an der Zeit und die Zeit an ihrer Zivilisation litt: einem Philosophen und Dichter: Nietzsche! Sein Leben und Werk ist der tiefste Aufschrei der von einer ungeheiligen Zivilisation gemarterten Seele. Dann kam der Krieg. Aus den Trümmern einer zerfallenen Herrlichkeit erhob sich ein neues Wollen und Streben, ein Verfluch der Befinnung, des Sichzurechtfindens in der verwandelten Welt, eine Rückkehr zu einem Geistesstreben, das anknüpft an das Innerlich-Vertiefte, Äußerlich-Einfache und Edle der deutschen Geistes- und Gefühlswelt. Der Krieg erwies sich wiederum einmal nicht als reiner Zerstörer, sondern als gewaltiger Gestalter des Neuen.

Diesem neuen Gestaltungswillen sich offen aufnehmend und freudig mitteilhaftend zu erschließen, an der Auflösung alter, innerlich abgefordbener und in einem Scheindasein dahinvegetierender Formen und Gestaltungen und dem Aufbau neuer ästhetischer, seelischer Bindungen aus einem neuen Zeitgefühl, Zeitwillen und Zeitumständen heraus aufbauend mitzuarbeiten / muß Inhalt und Aufgabe aller der Gegenwart und Zukunft zugewandten politischen Geister sein. Überflüssig zu lägen, daß das nicht Zerfallen des überkommenen Kulturgutes bedeutet, das auf die Gegenwart wirkend für sie seinen Wert behält, insbesondere nicht Verachtung oder Zertrümmerung der historisch als Ausdruck des Gestaltungswillens der Vergangenheit bedeutfamen geistig-seelischen Werte oder Gebrauchsgüter. Aber ein neues Gechlecht, eine neue Zeit muß



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3 Page 1 of *Das Neue Frankfurt*. *Monatsschrift für die Fragen der Grosstadt-Gestaltung*, 1926, Vol. 1, No. 10/11

cation of *Das Neue Frankfurt*.¹⁰ Instead of a loose group of artists, literary figures, authors and architects, as was the case for the G-group,¹¹ *Das Neue Frankfurt* represented a new elite of municipal self-administration. Thus, the aim could hardly have been more different. While G regarded itself as a magazine for the most important contemporary trends in architecture and art, *Das Neue Frankfurt* demanded social transformation as an official policy. What is organised and ultimately institutionalised were no peripheral figures of society or even revolutionary artist groups.

A New Aristocracy

Das Neue Frankfurt became the ideological superstructure of a new form of bourgeoisie that had emerged even before World War I. Bourgeois solidarity with the working class, as well as a clear avowal to parliamentary democracy, individual freedom, social responsibility, private economy and economic democracy, were key demands of such groups, which were closely linked to the newly founded Deutsche

Demokratische Partei (DDP).¹² Bourgeois liberalism, as it was already known at the turn of the century, no longer marched in harmony with the idea of technical advances. It could only survive by unreservedly recognising the new reality of the machine and the masses. As the DDP's 1919 National Assembly election posters show, architecture, or more generally building, served as a key metaphor of this new liberalist order in society. The ambivalence of these political initiatives can already be seen on the level of vocabulary. In his seminal article *Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Maschine* (*Art in the age of the machine*, 1904), Friedrich Naumann, a founder member of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907, spoke of a new aristocracy. Its task was to create «a German national style in the age of machines» and propagate the ideal of «consummate artistic education for the mechanical nation».¹³ A later speech by Naumann to mark the DDP's foundation also claims that «upholding a nation state is both a technical piece of art and a moral undertaking».¹⁴ Speeches by other founder members spoke of an organic democracy, «based on the living, free cell, combined to form organs and limbs until the creation of an overall organism, the nation state». The constitutional state was the brain, the social state the stomach and the cultural state the heart. The parties were «political-economic apparatuses» that were not «aligned towards world views».¹⁵ Thus, world views are regarded as irrational aspects in the same way as people's individuality. Already in 1904, Naumann states:

The orderly and regular, the dutiful and moral, which one demands and can no longer do without, the depersonalisation of humans working in major industry, the endless practicality of general ledgers and conferences, the daily manoeuvring and levelling, the machine-like quality of a living condition that has become highly complicated, leaves in the dark background of the soul a space that does not at all wish to be electrically illuminated, that does not wish to be controlled; it is the space of lost passion and original human emotions.¹⁶

Is the modern subject therefore to be regarded as a product of an electrified enlightenment, led by a new aristocracy that is solely focused on the smooth operation of functional processes, freeing us of the stammering of former millennia? The outlined new social order was definitive for Ludwig Landmann, a member of the DDP and a great follower of Friedrich Naumann. Landmann embodied the ideal type of municipal officer and technocrat that the new liberalism strived for. He had studied Law and Economics before working in various positions in the municipal council. When elected Mayor of Frankfurt in 1924, he used the experience he had gathered in its bureaucratic apparatus. As a central figure of municipal civil service, he regarded himself as an executive body of communal will in his capacity as the Director of an initiative centre within the municipal council. This particularly applied to economics. In a memorandum in 1917, Landmann named infrastructures, settlement areas, electricity networks, low taxation and credits, as well as a high-performance working class, as the underlying pillar of economic development.¹⁷ Social aspects were clearly subordinate to economic considerations, as is evident in Landmann's speech on the «human economy»¹⁸ and the term «human material».¹⁹ In that sense, the new *bureaucratic-technical aristocracy* around Landmann was highly effective. In harmony with Naumann's programme of an expansive economic policy, Frankfurt's new elite was able to double the city's size in only a few years, attracting new industries to move there and expanding the transport network, including regular flight connections and a regional airline.²⁰

Zoning History

The approximately 12,000 housing units built between 1925 and 1930, above all in peripheral areas of Frankfurt, were part of this grand spatial reorganisation. It did not require special artistic abilities. In fact, it called for entirely different qualities.²¹ A look at the first edition of *Das Neue Frankfurt* is revealing in this respect. In it, Ernst May interestingly uses the metaphor of thread-pulling and weaving, connecting it to the idea of ordering:

A new, great order is preparing itself as the warp of a fabric, as yet largely unrecognisable, that will be produced in the days ahead, emerging from the tangle of chaotic world events, extracted thread by thread and neatly organised, more through the development of things than by human will.²²

How should one understand this metaphor? It is clear that May and many other contemporaries regarded World War I as a condition of disorganisation. However, it is more interesting that the threads of the past should not be severed. They may be knotted but are not useless. They should be «extracted thread by thread and neatly organised» to weave a new fabric. What this means in concrete is clearly a matter of speculation. In temporal terms, it foresees a «return to a spiritual striving that connects with the internalised, externally simple and noble aspect of the German spiritual and emotional world».²³ In that sense, the traumatic experience of World War I receives a positive reinterpretation. Once more, war is seen as a «powerful designer of the new».²⁴ However, the new is not created at the expense of the old, as this would contradict the thread metaphor. The old still has its significance in the present day, influencing it as «an expression of the past's will to shape things».²⁵ It is thus implied between the lines that it can serve as an example of how to build a complete identity of form and content. In that sense, Babylon, Alexandria, Thebes and Carthage are regarded as «inherently closed cultural complexes».²⁶ The continuity of historical thinking could thereby hardly be expressed more clearly. Yet the yearning for social order – which in historicism is a projection of cultural homogeneity upon past periods – is now concentrated on the present: the systematization of time into a sequence of clearly recognizable cultural complexes becomes a construction principle. It serves to literally realize a new homogeneous epoch before it could be described as such by future historians.

The art historian Fritz Wichert combines this in the first issue of *Das Neue Frankfurt* with a «new physics of our inner life», which already becomes «a completely new human philosophy of life» in the moment of its materialisation.²⁷ *New Frankfurt* can be interpreted as the spatial translation of this paradoxical inversion of historicism. Its architecture drives a wedge between the past and the present in order to discern one cultural complex from the other. The mechanism of historical time zoning becomes a principle of spatial order.²⁸

If we take this perspective with respect to the programmatic cover of the first issue of *Das Neue Frankfurt*, we see a photomontage that highlights the contrasts between the old town centre and new peripheral settlements (see Fig. 2). At the edges, there is the tangle of the old town, while in the centre, there is the clarity and rationalism of the new settlement architecture. In a sense it is an inversion of actual urban spatial conditions. The new moves from the periphery into the centre, while the old urban core is displaced to the edges. Those who are also aware of the topographical situation will notice that something is not quite right. The modest size of Frankfurt's old town hardly conforms to the sea of houses in the image's

background. The photo of the city centre has clearly been cut into two halves, placed at the side of the settlement architecture and thereby stretched to increase its width.

What can we infer from this arrangement of images? Does the montage imply that the new is triumphing over the old, that order faces disorder, supplanting centuries of old urban structures with context-free rationalism? This would concur with our standard grasp of the avant-garde, but nevertheless falls short in this case. What we see before us, I believe, is not so much an «either-or» situation as «both this and that». The two spheres are designed accordingly in the magazine's title, brought together in broad black bands. On one side, we have the invention of the old town as a reserve of memory, thought and perhaps even history, with its meandering, labyrinthine passages. On the other side, there is the rhythmic march of the new, timeless planning rationalism of serially produced housing.²⁹

We are therefore dealing with a new regime of perspectives that translates historical narrative into a rational principle of social construction. The art historian Fritz Wichert even provides the key to its understanding in *Das Neue Frankfurt*:

Finally, this binding of entities, from individuals to larger and the greatest associations, to cities, states, parts of the globe, trade unions, confessions and leagues of nations – the individual types of such units being also diversely interwoven and entangled with each other – this ever spreading binding of the entire social order, is clearly expressed in the system of pillars and surfaces, in the very far-reaching repetition of the same entities and individual forms and in a marvellously achieved art of permeation.³⁰

Thus, the architectural form does not spring from any kind of dependency on function nor does it reject representation.³¹ Its preference for a «system of pillars and surfaces» instead of ornamentation reflects the rationalism of public municipal institutions. The degree of socialisation achieved in this way is regarded as evidence that the present day has already achieved the epochal homogeneity of past times. Organising society into a living organism is therefore not a practice outside aesthetic forms of expression. Picking up on new approaches of political iconography, the moment of aesthetic fictionalism is far more situated in political practice itself. The aesthetics of *New Frankfurt* would thus not be a mere phenomenon of reflection and instead be a substantial expression of the political self.³² Accordingly, Landmann regards the «design» and «implementation» of his newly founded Settlement Office, as well as modern architecture itself, as an institution defined by «simplicity» and «functionalism», without «superfluous, decorative ornamental measures».³³

Building Statutes and Regulations, or a «Love of the Unusual»

If one really takes this interpretation of organised Modernity seriously as an aesthetic practice, one cannot avoid seeing the *New Frankfurt* in the light of historical developments that were hitherto overlooked. Since the 19th century, bureaucrats, municipal politicians and administrative officials implemented a far-reaching economisation of all fields of life under the banner of the new. They did so using a social network that equally included institutions, organisations and the media. The personalised ordering power of the monarch was replaced by the rule of bureaucracy and therefore the deceptive illusion of «non-rulership», as described by Hannah Arendt.³⁴

However, this new dominance of bureaucracy is not only evident in the biographies of *New Frankfurt's* most important protagonists. It is also woven into its

avant-garde self-representation. In this context, one irritating detail, which to my knowledge has been overlooked to date and can be seen in the first issue of the magazine *Das Neue Frankfurt*, is revealing. A form by the Building Police is embedded into the layout, disrespectfully close to the last lines by Ernst May (Fig. 4). As the key indicates, this is an official printed template by the City of Frankfurt am Main. Due to various police regulations, it is used for applications to change the water supply and sewage drainage on a property. One might regard it as a mundane issue. However, the importance of this form lies less in its pragmatic function of making applications as efficient as possible, and more in its significance to the desired convergence of architecture, bureaucracy and aesthetics.

The foundations for this were by no means laid in the early 20th century. They date back to developments that began long before and are at least as important to modern architecture as the socio-economic consequences of industrialisation. Specifically, I mean the bureaucratisation of architectural production in the early 19th century. Building statutes and regulations such as those that came into effect in

völkerung unserer Stadt ein Führer ihrer fortchreitenden Entwicklung werden, sie darüber unterrichten, wie aus dem alten Frankfurt ein neues wird. Über die Grenzen unserer Stadt hinaus sollen diese Blätter dartun, wie zielbewußter Formwille kommender Stilgestaltung die Wege ebnet. E. M.

STADT. BAU-POLIZEI

RATHAUS NORDBAU FRANKFURT AM MAIN

DEN 19

ZU TGB. NR. KONTO NR.

VERFÜGUNG

Betrifft: GRUNDSTÜCK

1) HERRN

HIER

ANLAGEN

Zur — veränderten — Ausführung der Ergänzung der Erweiterung — der Grundstücksent- und Bewässerung

nach Maßgabe des Antrages vom 192 und der nachträglich zum Baugesuch Nr. — mit demselben — eingereichten und in einer Ausfertigung zurückfolgenden Pläne wird, unbeschadet der Rechte Dritter, die baupolizeiliche Genehmigung erteilt. Bei der Herstellung, Unterhaltung und Benutzung der Ent- u. Bewässerungsanlagen sind außer den ortstatutarischen Bestimmungen die Vorschriften der Bauordnung vom 4. Juni 1912 nebst Polizeiverordnungen vom 15. Juni 1925, die Polizei-Verordnung vom 13. Oktober 1911 nebst Ausnahmegesamtheiten vom 24. Dezember 1924, die Polizei-Verordnungen vom 20. Februar 1920 und die Bestimmungen der Benutzungsordnung für die städtische Wasserleitung vom 29. April 1924, mit den technischen Vorschriften vom 1. Januar 1924 sowie die auf den Ent- und Bewässerungsplänen vermerkten Bedingungen zu beachten. Die Genehmigung tritt gemäß § 4 der Bauordnung vom 4. Juni 1912 erst nach Einreichung der tarifmäßigen Gebühren in Wirksamkeit.

GEBOHREN

laut § 1, Ziffer 2a der Gebührenordnung RM.

laut § 1, Ziffer 2a der Gebührenordnung a

Gesamtbetrag RM.

Z. 2. Die Gebühren sind dem Einziehungs-Amt unter obiger K. No. zur Einziehung überwiesen worden.

Frankfurt a. M., den

Den Beginn der Arbeit wollen Sie der Baupolizei rechtzeitig mitteilen.

2) Der Rechnungsführung zur weiteren Veranlassung.

3) Mitteilung an die Kanalverwaltung ist abzugeben.

4) W. vort.

L. A.

7

Bild 13. AMTLICHE DRUCKSACHE DER STADT FRANKFURT AM MAIN. Gefolgt von Leitfaden.

4 Page 7 of *Das Neue Frankfurt*. Monatsschrift für die Fragen der Grosstadt-Gestaltung, 1926, Vol. 1, No. 10/11

Frankfurt and elsewhere from the early 19th century onwards had a decisive effect on architecture and urban planning. These regulations cannot be simply categorized in the history of architecture as a canonised form of reflection on practical, aesthetic and intellectual principles of building. The texts take neither traditional convention nor the authority of the architect and his/her work into account. The direction of impact is completely different. Looking at the context of these texts, there is a clear attempt to extend the order of the modern state and its institutions into public space. Above all, however, the architect plays a conspicuously limited role. Architecture becomes a matter of state, much like aspects of education. Thus, the often invoked functionalism of architecture is not derived from the inner insight of the designing subject, let alone the subsequent tendency towards social realities. Its origins largely lie in an understanding of the state as the sum of organs that work together expediently. Accordingly, adhering to public order and security is identified with the achievement of a total uniformity, both in the media of architecture, its planning and procedural processes and also in its material forms.³⁵

This connection between the bureaucratisation of planning and the new functionalised grasp of architecture is also evident in Frankfurt. Building statutes for the City of Frankfurt and Sachsenhausen dated June 11, 1809 are instructive in this context.³⁶ They firstly served to unify the many already existent building regulations in the 18th century, with the aim of «as complete and specific regulations as possible in this important matter for the public state police and equally for the rights of private property».³⁷ Secondly, it was an instrument in the far-reaching process of unifying the city. Paragraph 6, for instance, in the best modernist sense, attacks «the canopies of old houses projecting over city [as the] city's greatest blot».³⁸ By contrast, Paragraph 12 speaks of a «love of the unusual». As a result, some builders were inspired to ignore the stipulated lines and thereby infringe upon the laws of «symmetry and good taste». The guideline continues: «In such cases, the builder should be obliged to choose a different building plan.»³⁹

Several things are notable. Firstly, the «love of the unusual» is criminalised, including every form of architectural expression that deviates from the strict regime of the prescribed cubature. Secondly, bourgeois values such as the rules of good taste are neither derived historically nor in terms of architectural theory, as had already been standard practice in the 18th century.⁴⁰ They are legitimised by the authority of the bureaucratic apparatus. Thus, already in the 19th century, urban planning became less an architectural task and more a technocratic challenge. The ideal of stringent Neoclassicism that strives for simplicity is unthinkable without the technocratic unification it entailed.

When Frankfurt lost its independence as a free city in 1866, it experienced a decisive modernising drive. The *Announcement on the Appointment of the Royal Police Governing Board in Frankfurt am Main on September 1867* announces that the Building Police will be excluded from the «takeover of the police administration by the state»,⁴¹ meaning Prussia. However, this did not protect the city from a hitherto unknown bureaucratisation and standardisation process in the practical field of building. A new set of rules was presented with the fourth *Regulation on the organisation of urban building*.⁴² Its aim was primarily to implement new organisational structures. The most important innovation in this respect regarded the use of a Building Deputation. It consisted of three magistrates, three city officials and three members of the citizenry. It was elected for an official period of six years and had

far-reaching powers: including defining the building authorities' responsibilities, controlling adherence to principles and administrative norms, matters of maintenance, improvement and expansion of the urban infrastructures, the construction of new buildings, accounting and «appraisal in the naming of all building officials». It was even the Building Deputation's role to propose and assess all new urban development projects.⁴³

While building statutes explicitly stipulated the on-site inspection of building sites in the presence of applicants, representatives of the building authority and residents, this is no longer mentioned in the later regulations. There is also no discussion of architectural aspects. Instead, great attention is paid to the description of processes and standardised application documents, as well as plans required to be submitted for a building project. How should such shifts be interpreted? It is clear that trust in bureaucratic procedure grew in the second half of the 19th century. This not only applies to general regulations, but also especially affects the entire field of planning. Architecture impressed when it conformed to the inner procedural logic of the bureaucratic, technical apparatus, not because it was based on an appropriate design. In other words, only what expressed foreseeable processes in terms of planning law was regarded as legitimate architecture. Achieving order became the paramount argument. But what does that mean? The common good? The rule of law? The order of architecture? The order of the public space? Presumably everything at once. The order of architecture is synonymous with the order of society and its institutions.⁴⁴ Thus, 19th century planning law was subject to the same conditions as Peter Galison and Lorraine Daston's description of the so-called exact sciences in the 19th century. In this context, the claim of objectivity and rationalism is also connected to strategies that react to illegitimate subjectivity, i.e. the «love of the unusual».⁴⁵ Such a claim to be factually objective, or in this case legitimately subjective, could therefore be described in the sense of an ideological superstructure, a new elite that recognised bureaucratisation as an appropriate means with which to achieve its economic and political interests as widely as possible.⁴⁶

The Myth of a Failed Modernity

In view of this conclusion, it would be an inadequate simplification to describe *New Frankfurt* purely as an avant-garde or socially humanitarian project. Nor is it a purely architectural phenomenon. The architecture of *New Frankfurt* is modern precisely because it makes the bureaucratisation of Modernity tangible, both in general and specifically in modern architecture; not because it questions existing social conditions, since it is very clear that in the major settlements of *New Frankfurt*, the *Neues Bauen* movement and the «physical self-representation» of a new economic and political order cannot be separated. The efficiency with which thousands of housing units were built within a period of only five years, partly under industrialised conditions, does not reflect a disinterested design stance or philanthropy. Above all, it highlights the importance of architecture in a new bourgeois-capitalist social order for the physical representation of institutions and their bureaucratic instruments. Addressing subsistence levels and the social aspect of housing at all is a plausible – if extremely suggestive – method of communicating such matter-of-factness in daily life and the legitimacy of a new social order and its elite; indeed without people being constantly aware of it in everyday life. Yet this connection was all the more apparent to the *New Frankfurt* protagonists. Did not the frugal use of means

demonstrate a new rational order that was beyond all doubt? Does not the reduction of design means and the sometimes radical seriality of housing units reflect the realisation of the egalitarian principle in modern society? In a sense, could one claim that the «New Human» had become a subject that is liberated from traditional power structures?⁴⁷

In the architectural theory of the late 1990s, doubts were rightly raised in this respect. Critical studies of architectural Modernity often name *New Frankfurt* as an example of the failed reform approach of the avant-garde.⁴⁸ The gap between aims and reality is regarded as too great. Instead of making an authentic contribution to liberating housing, the result was to establish norms and limitations for social life. It is also claimed that *New Frankfurt* was naive enough to believe that society could be changed through architecture without questioning the bourgeois capitalist system.⁴⁹ Thus, it is claimed that the ambitious social-reformist aims were merely achieved on an aesthetic level, but not on the level of practice. Modernity was therefore a false promise. Such arguments overlook the fact that *New Frankfurt* was never characterised by such reformist urges in the first place, since it would have completely contradicted its bureaucratic nature. Bureaucracies and institutions are aimed at the long-term implementation of order, rather than change. *New Frankfurt* was therefore never an anti-capitalist or anti-bourgeois project that merely failed to implement its ideas. Instead, I suggest that such interpretations of architecture, i.e. the physical self-representation of a bureaucratic elite and its institutions, are based upon it. The rationalisation of society and a bourgeois-capitalist social order, as strived for by the city's modern bureaucrats, are not a contradiction, but in fact mutually depend on each other.

- 1 Bruno Latour a. Albena Yaneva, Give me a gun and I will make all buildings move. An ANT's view of architecture, in: *Explorations in Architecture. Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. by Reto Geiser, Basel 2008, p. 80-89.
- 2 Caspar Julius Reinsberg, *Der Internationale Stil des Neuen Frankfurt. Zum transnationalen Kulturtransfer in der Architektur-, Stadtplanungs- und Designgeschichte 1925–1960*, Dissertation, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, 2018.
- 3 *New Frankfurt* in a sense democratised the elitist idea of Nietzsche's *Superman*. This is in many ways the problematic core statement of an exhibition presented in the Deutsches Architekturmuseum; *Neuer Mensch, Neue Wohnung. Die Bauten des Neuen Frankfurt 1925–1933*, ed. by Wolfgang Voigt, Dorothea Deschermeier a. Peter Cachola Schmal, exh. cat., Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin 2019.
- 4 Markus Dauss a. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, Gebaute Raumsymbolik. Die «Architektur der Gesellschaft» aus der Sicht der Institutionenanalyse, in: *Die Architektur der Gesellschaft. Theorien für die Architektursociologie*, ed. by Joachim Fischer a. Heike Delitz, Bielefeld 2009, p. 109-136.
- 5 My distinction between bourgeois and organised Modernity concurs with Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Erfindung der Kreativität. Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung*, 5th ed., Berlin 2017, p. 315-317.
- 6 Christoph Mohr a. Michael Müller, *Funktionalität und Moderne. Das Neue Frankfurt und seine Bauten 1925–1933*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, p. 11.
- 7 *Das Neue Frankfurt. Monatsschrift für die Fragen der Grosstadt-Gestaltung*, 1926, Vol. 1, No. 10/11.
- 8 Ernst May was responsible for the Civil Engineering Authority, the Building Police, the Settlement Authority, the Office of Urban and Regional Planning and the Garden Authority.
- 9 Reinsberg 2018 (as Note 2), p. 44.
- 10 Brief biographies of *New Frankfurt* protagonists are presented in: *Akteure des Neuen Frankfurt*, ed. by Evelyn Brockhoff, Christina Gräwe, Ulrike May et al., Frankfurt am Main 2016, p. 73-200.
- 11 Detlef Mertins a. Michael W. Jennings, Introduction: The G-Group and the European Avant-Garde, in: *G. An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film 1923–1926*, ed. by Detlef Mertins a. Michael W. Jennings, Los Angeles 2010, p. 3-20.
- 12 Efforts to renew liberalism climaxed shortly after the end of World War I with the foundation of the Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP); Werner Stephan, *Aufstieg und Verfall des Linksliberalismus 1918–1933*, Göttingen 1973.
- 13 Friedrich Naumann, Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Maschine, in: *Der Kunstwart*, 1904, Vol. 17, No. 20, p. 318-327 (translated by the author).
- 14 Cited from Stephan 1973 (as Note 12), p. 58 (translated by the author).
- 15 Cited from *ibid.*, p. 143 (translated by the author).
- 16 Naumann 1904 (as Note 13), p. 327 (translated by the author).
- 17 Ludwig Landmann, *Denkschrift vom 29. September 1917*, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Magistratsakten, T 70.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 19 Landmann uses the term two years later; Ludwig Landmann, Das Siedlungsamt der Großstadt, in: *Kommunale Wohnungs- und Siedlungsämter*, Deutscher Verein für Wohnungsreform, Stuttgart 1919, p. 1-25, p. 1.
- 20 Naumann had already enthused about the factory chimneys as the minarets of the western world, praising infrastructures and new building tasks – ships, bridges, gas facilities, railway stations, covered markets and exhibition halls – as the new aesthetics of the future mechanical nation; Naumann 1904 (as Note 13), p. 325.
- 21 This also explains May's election, since at the time his reputation was mainly as a planner and hardly as an architect; Mohr/Müller 1984 (as Note 6), p. 32-33.
- 22 Ernst May, Das neue Frankfurt, in: *Das Neue Frankfurt 1926* (as Note 7), p. 2-7, p. 3 (translated by the author).
- 23 Ludwig Landmann: Zum Geleit, in: *ibid.*, p. 1-2, p. 1 (translated by the author).
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 May 1926 (as Note 22), p. 2 (translated by the author).
- 27 Fritz Wichert, Zeitwende – Kunstwende, in: *Das Neue Frankfurt 1926* (as Note 7), p. 15-24, p. 20 (translated by the author).
- 28 Regarding the ideological and political semantics of the term: Ariane Leendertz, Ordnung, Ausgleich, Harmonie. Koordinaten raumplanerischen Denkens in Deutschland, 1920 bis 1970, in: *Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Thomas Etzemüller, Bielefeld 2009, p. 129-150 (translated by the author).
- 29 In this respect, I agree with the observation by Gerhard Vinken that the old town and modern urban planning must be related to each other dialectically; Gerhard Vinken, *Zone Heimat. Altstadt im modernen Städtebau*, München 2010.
- 30 Wichert 1926 (as Note 27), p. 15-24, p. 21 (translated by the author).
- 31 The Wölfflin student and networker Wichert was very aware of the great importance

of symbolic forms in legitimising organisations and institutions. During World War I, the Foreign Office entrusted him with a diplomatic mission. In the neutral Netherlands, Wichert was to use means of cultural propaganda to encourage a positive image of Germany among the public. Wichert was extremely dedicated to the task. From 1915, he was therefore permanently appointed to the Imperial German Legation in The Hague; Evonne Anita Levy, *The German Art Historians of World War I*: Grautoff, Wichert, Weisbach and Brinkmann and the activities of the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 2011, Vol. 74, No. 3, p. 373-400, p. 390-397; Carina Danzer, *Fritz Wichert (1878–1951) – Die Arbeitsbiografie eines Kulturpolitikers*, Dissertation, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, 2015.

32 Dietrich Erben, *Die Fiktion der Politik und die Schönheit der Bürokratie. Baupolitik unter Cosimo I de' Medici in Florenz*, in: *Politikstile und die Sichtbarkeit des Politischen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Dietrich Erben a. Christine Tauber, Passau 2016, p. 71-92.

33 Landmann 1919 (as Note 19), p. 18 (translated by the author).

34 Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, 14th edition, München 2014, p. 51.

35 In this context, it should be noted that the term 'function' was originally applied to architecture from official and scientific language before it decisively shaped discourse in the field in the following centuries. The strong convergence of different fields of significance regarding the term 'function' is notable with respect to the subject of this article: it denotes both the interaction between organs in a body, the expedient joining of parts to form a whole, and also the 'actions' and 'services' of official authorities; Ute Poerschke, *Transfer wissenschaftlicher Funktionsbegriffe in die Architekturtheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Wissenschaftsgeschichte als Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. by Michael Eggert a. Matthias Rothe, Bielefeld 2009, p. 193-213.

36 Baustatut für die Stadt Frankfurt und Sachsenhausen vom 11. Juni 1809, in: *Neue Sammlung von Gesetzen, Statuten und Verordnungen für Frankfurt am Main*, Vol. III, Baugesetze und Baupolizei-Verordnungen für Frankfurt am Main: 1809–1872, ed. by Anton Heinrich Emil Oven, Frankfurt am Main 1872.

37 Ibid., p. 1 (translated by the author).

38 Ibid., p. 12 (translated by the author).

39 Ibid., p. 13-14 (translated by the author).

40 Carsten Ruhl, *Palladio bears away the Palm. Zur Ästhetisierung palladianischer Architektur in England*, Hildesheim 2003.

41 Oven 1872 (as Note 36), p. 149.

42 Regarding regulations with respect to the organisation of urban building; *ibid.*, p. 152-164.

43 The Building Deputation could draw on an extensive administrative apparatus to enforce its authority. A «senior technician» in the position of a Building Councillor acted as an advising member and himself had far-reaching powers. There were also inspectors, building supervisors, draughtsmen, office clerks and office civil servants.

44 Another important driving force behind the bureaucratisation of building came with the reform of building law in 1891 under the Frankfurt Mayor Franz Adickes, who cannot be discussed further here for reasons of space; Lothar Gall, *Franz Adickes: Oberbürgermeister und Universitätsgründer*, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

45 Lorraine Daston a. Peter Galison, *Objektivität*, Berlin 2007, p. 28.

46 Regarding our example, this means that ordering models are not neutral placements and instead drawn from subjective interests.

47 The reality was indeed very disappointing. Unlike the parallel developments in Vienna for instance, many of the new apartments and houses were unaffordable for the working class families they were intended for. The famous *Frankfurt kitchen* could only be enjoyed by families that were able to pay a monthly fee in addition to their rent for the apartment. Only the very smallest units were within the financial means of many needy families and those with many children. Nevertheless, the myth of the great efficiency of *New Frankfurt* still prevails today. I believe that its architecture plays a key role in this respect.

48 Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1999.

49 «It is doubtful, for instance, whether the radical ambition to design the city according to the needs of the collective could have any real meaning in a context where the capitalist system of ownership was left basically untouched.»; *ibid.*, p. 38