

## **Urban Development in the Global Cold War. East Germany in UN-HABITAT, 1976-1989**

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The doctoral thesis by Jakob Marcks aims to contribute to the field of the Global Cold War on the example of competition in the area of urban development, focusing on the developmental policies of the GDR within the environment of the international agency UN-HABITAT. The concept of the Global Cold War is a trendy one and the dissertation communicates well with the existing and developing field. The choice to study the area of urban planning and development also makes sense; the field still offers plenty of topics that are not yet covered by the existing scholarship. The role of international organizations – namely the UN-HABITAT – and of the GDR as an actor is among those under-researched topics.

First of all, it is necessary to say that the author handled his thesis well. It is a valuable contribution to the state of the art and a fine piece of scholarship. The problems that I discuss in this review are not major flaws and I do not think they significantly devalue the thesis.

Marck's main historiographical framework lies in the conceptualization of the Global Cold War, in particular the growing field of scholarly work that focuses on European socialist countries and their role in global history, globalization, history of development, and relations to decolonization. He combines this field with the scholarship on urban planning, showing the evolution of modernist planning of housing projects rooted in the interwar period toward smaller and more environmentally sensitive projects, as well as explaining the concept of an ideal socialist city.

Marcks proves to know the literature very well and builds on it satisfyingly, particularly on the seminal work of Lukasz Stanek. Marcks also manages to delimitate himself and show how he moves beyond Stanek's conceptualizations and how he adds to them – especially the place-based approach and analytical focus on what Marcks calls the “donor's side” (p. 5). Marcks offers a “long-term institutional perspective [that] enables the exploration of significant groundwork on the political and institutional level, such as capacity-building efforts aimed at establishing the necessary foundations to implement all of these projects.” (p. 7) He thus manages to combine the roles of state and non-state actors as well as the example of the Bauakademie as a space of interaction / mediation in the process of knowledge transfer.

Building on the work of scholars such as Odd Arne Westad, Max Trecker, Sara Lorenzini, or Eric Burton, Marcks shows that he is well-oriented in the field. More literature could surely be added but the scholarship on the GDR in the Global Cold War is already extensive and one cannot expect the dissertation to give a full overview, especially if it considers also literature concerning the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and the Eastern Bloc as a whole. In some cases, however, as I will show, some more literature would have been warranted. Having published on the topic before, the author could have cited his own previously published work more and could have shown how the thesis relates to them.

The core of Marcks's primary sources lies in German archives. The author uses an array of them, including the Bundesarchiv, the Bauhaus Dessau Archiv, and the Politisches Archiv des

Auswärtigen Amts. Research in these archives was complemented by the findings from Czech archives (Národní archiv), the UN archives in New York, and the ANC archive in Fort Hare, South Africa. Unfortunately, Jakob Marcks was unable to study the UN-HABITAT documentation in Nairobi but the pool of sources is ample enough for an extensive analysis and for achieving the thesis' aims.

The author's use of terminology is very nuanced; Marcks shows great sensitivity and ability to understand the complexities of historical concepts. This can be illustrated by his discussion of the use concept of the Global South / Third World (p. 15-16) or the discussion of the use of the GDR as the typization for socialist countries or a specific case study and the limits of both approaches (p. 10-11).

The thesis is divided into three chapters, besides the methodological introduction. The first one gives an overview of the development as a concept and a policy during the Cold War. It is an essential chapter to understand Marck's conceptualization. However, there are some issues that I would like to point out. Firstly – the GDR is not very much present in the chapter. Indeed, the aim is rather to give a general overview of the global trends during the Cold War but still – the thesis is very much framed by writing the GDR and the Eastern Bloc into the global history of development and could thus show how these problems communicate with each other. Secondly, I think the chapter could also use some insight from the contemporary conceptualizations of development, from Walt Rostow to Raúl Prebisch to Immanuel Wallerstein, to name just a few. Especially if Marcks essentially uses some of their terminology in his analysis (dependency, core-periphery, etc.). Thirdly, this chapter also could have been the place to discuss how the evolution of urban planning coincided with the general evolution of developmental policies in the *longue durée*.

The next chapter concerns with the global urban question and the solutions proposed by the global community – and in particular the founding of the United Nations specialized program UN-HABITAT. Marcks presents very well the intricacies of the foundation of HABITAT, focusing not only on state actors but also on international organizations – how ECOSOC or UNEP influenced the founding and how they aspired to protect their interests. On the other side of the scale, Marcks also uses the trajectories of two heads of the East German HABITAT delegation – Gerhard Kosel and Gottfried Wagner. On the backdrop of their lives, Marcks shows the development of the East German approach to the matter, verbalized by the author in a sub-chapter title: From modernism to pragmatism. As Marcks points out, the GDR's involvement with the HABITAT ended up facilitating business for GDR companies. “In the GDR's final years, the commercial exploitation of HABITAT became a strategic priority of Bauakademie” (p. 103). Marcks further shows (and questions) the approach of the GDR, that the housing crisis in the Global South was a direct consequence of colonialism and was not, therefore, a global problem, only a problem of former colonial countries. This was the logic used to justify not paying voluntary contributions to the HABITAT but, as Marcks argues, economic factors could have been at play, too. The chapter also sets the problem in the context of the East German state structure – presents often conflicting agendas of individual state institutions, adoption of the housing issue in the peace rhetoric for political purposes, inclusion of not only planners and architects but also foreign policy experts in the East German HABITAT delegation, and also showing how different socialist countries could apply different strategies in relation to the global housing problem.

The last chapter introduces practical aspects of the GDR's involvement in the UN-HABITAT, focusing on five specific cases in which this involvement materialized. The cases are chosen to demonstrate the variety of levels of interaction, from the presentation of an ideal of a socialist city at the 1976 Vancouver conference, through the activities of the Bauakademie, assistance to the construction of a refugee camp in Tanzania, activities within the 1987 Year of Shelter for the Homeless, to the international seminars organized at the Bauakademie in Dessau. The case studies also give voices to other interacting actors, showing for example the Group of 77's proposal for the Vancouver declaration which mirrored the New International Economic Order or how the expertise of East German specialists teaching at the Bauakademie was questioned by the seminar participants from post-colonial countries. Marcks proves that he understands the network-building and multi-directional character of the knowledge transfers. I think the case studies also work particularly well because of the chosen timeframe, that is, the late Cold War, which is still a less charted territory in this field.

The quality of writing is very good. The thesis is easy to read and is on a high level language-wise. There are no visible typos, misspells, or mistakes. The only thing that I found somewhat confusing on the formal level was what seems a merging of two referencing systems. While most references are placed in footnotes, some are placed directly in the text in brackets (while being fully cited in footnotes at the same time) – especially in the introduction. I could not find any system in this double-referencing so I had to conclude that it was a mistake. If there is some logic behind that, Marcks should explain it during the defense.

Altogether, Jakob Marcks' dissertation is a welcome contribution to the existing field and fulfills the criteria for a qualification thesis of this level. The author has proven his capacity for standalone scientific work. I recommend it to be defended and believe that it should be published as a book.