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Transformations of 'Sacredness in Stone': Religious Architecture in Urban Space in 21st Century Germany—New Perspectives in the Study of Religious Architecture

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Abstract: Religious transformations in modern societies are not merely a discursive or demographic phenomenon, they also relate to religious architecture in urban space and affect the built environment at its core. Many churches, for instance, are in the process of reuse, closure, or even demolition. At the same time, there has been an increase in the construction of new mosques and a reorientation in synagogue architecture in Germany for the last twenty-five years. The three religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—undergo remarkable transformations with regard to the design and style of their places of worship. Often, however, these new designs are not easily 'readable' to visitors and believers alike. In addition, the role of contemporary religious architecture in its relation to urban space is changing. Which meanings do religious buildings convey, how are they positioned, and how do they structure urban space? In collaboration of the study of religions and architectural history, we approach these questions by means of studying the transformations of contemporary religious architecture in Germany in a comparative manner. We survey Jewish, Christian, and Muslim places of worship, that is, new constructions, reused, and demolished buildings in Germany since 1990. The selected buildings are studied in detail regarding their meaning and positioning in urban space. This article presents findings from an ongoing research project and opens new perspectives in the study of urban religion.

Keywords: comparative religion; architectural history; religious architecture; architectural semiotics; urban research; urban planning; sacred space; religious buildings

1. Introduction

In this paper, we aim to provide a contribution to research questions regarding the transformations of architectural designs and urban planning of religious architecture in Germany since the 1990s in a comparative manner. In the recent history and present-day situation of religious architecture in Germany, major new trends can be discerned. Whereas in former decades, the construction of Christian churches was the dominant architectural task in Germany regarding religious architecture, in recent decades, this has shifted substantially. Although new churches are still being built, this building activity has become a rather marginal phenomenon in contrast to other building activities such as the construction of new synagogues and, even more so, of new mosques. With regard to church buildings, the reuse of church buildings that have been taken out of liturgical use has become the main form

of transformation, apart from, in fewer cases, their demolition. This article aims at describing and analyzing these new transformational trends as architectural and social phenomena that mirror some of the current societal transformations regarding religious and cultural diversity.

As such, the article provides insights into the interconnectedness of religious architecture and religious diversity in contemporary German society. On the basis of data and (preliminary) findings from an ongoing research project, we show how societal transformations, such as a decline in church worshippers and an increase in the civil self-confidence of Muslim worshippers, affect the religious built environment and how, vice versa, the religious built environment affects societal discourses.

The transformations we witness today are rooted in century-long experiences of cooperation and conflict among different religions, triggered by the claim of sole representation shared by all three Abrahamic religions. Historically, the German urban environment served as a 'battleground' of symbolic and physical place-making, with Christianity as the dominating power. Since the Second World War, the constitutional principles of religious freedom and equality necessitated and induced the re-negotiation of the use of urban space, a slow process that only recently became a matter of broad societal attention and media discourse.

The shape of society is intertwined with and mirrored by the visual presence of built structures. Thus, the analysis of the visual structures and the analysis of society complement each other in the relation between the visual (architectural) form and the social form (e.g., Simmel 1900, p. 23). Nowadays, the German urban environment seems to function as a 'battleground' once again. The negotiation of *what* may be newly constructed, as well as *where*, is often accompanied by conflict, for example, in the case of mosque construction: conflicts concerning minaret height, mosque size, or a central or peripheral location of a new mosque. In the case of churches taken out of liturgical use, the debate on a new 'appropriate' use may prove to be a source of conflict, in some cases owing to the ascribed sacredness of such a building, or the fear of a distortion of its artistic and/or cultural heritage value.

In this contribution, we present the conceptual and methodological parameters of an ongoing research project, as well as some findings based on quantitative and qualitative enquiries. In a first step, we summarize some main research trends in the field of religious architecture (Section 2), focusing on those publications that are most relevant in the context of our project. In a conceptual section, we set out the theoretical parameters and approaches of this research (Section 3), before we turn to a few methodological considerations, providing an overview of the main data sources that are available concerning religious architecture in Germany (Section 4). In the next part, we present preliminary quantitative findings on the transformation of religious architecture (Section 5), and eventually turn to a brief presentation of three exemplary cases. These include the New Synagogue in Mainz, the Church of the Sacred Heart in Mönchengladbach (Lower Rhine Region), and the Cologne Central Mosque (Section 6). We conclude this article with a few hypotheses that shall be tested and refined in further research.

2. Current Research

From the perspective of religious studies, literature from the fields of material religion and semiotics frames the analysis of the architecture of religious traditions in historical and systematic perspectives. The material turn, influential for our approach, has taken ground since the 1980s in the study of cultures and religions and has focused on topics such as religious space (e.g., Chidester and Linenthal 1995; Knott 2008), religious architecture (e.g., Kieckhefer 2004; Kilde 2008), and visual culture (e.g., Morgan 2005), including the so-called embodiment paradigm (e.g., Csordas 1990; Griffith 2004; Schüler 2015) and the mediation of religious experience through physical bodies and sensual perception (e.g., Meyer 2012). This focus on the 'material' has played an allegedly marginal role in earlier research on religion (e.g., Vásquez 2011). Approaching religious architecture in this way, therefore, enables us to reach our goals in a more comprehensive manner than by only focusing on the meaning of architecture for religious communities, or for society.

Against this backdrop, we analyze religious architecture as signs and media, as spaces of cultural memory, as well as spaces of social identity and identification. In the context of increasing religious and cultural diversity (e.g., Krech and Hero 2011), and the accompanying processes of societal transformation, this has had consequences for the material forms of religious traditions (e.g., Schroer 2015, p. 18): New constructions, as well as reused and demolished church buildings, are prominent examples of this transformation (Gerhards and Wildt 2015, 2017; Büchse et al. 2012). For some time now, research on church reuse and dismantling has been undertaken from historical and theological perspectives (e.g., Gallhoff and Keller 2015; Erne 2009; Büchse et al. 2012; Scheurmann 2011; Bauer 2011; Gerhards 2008; Fisch 2008; Pahud de Mortanges 2007; Gerhards and Wildt 2015, 2017). The first discussions concerning the future of their own church buildings were held within the Protestant Church in the 1990s (Hoffmann-Tauschwitz 1990).

Contrary to the current debate on the demolition and reuse of church buildings in Germany, however, new churches are still being built. These building plans are not restricted to the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Church, but also encompass Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, and evangelical (so-called 'free Protestant') churches. Upon closer examination of these buildings, it appears that they are inspired, with regard to their religious and cultural traditions, by well-known architectural examples, but also by more recent (experimental) non-religious architecture. This observation mirrors recent publications and illustrated books that show an architectural reorientation in religious architecture (e.g., (Richardson 2004a, 2004b; Klanten and Feireiss 2010; Körner and Wiener 2010; Britton 2010; Zahner 2012) and the television documentary "Spirituelle Räume: Moderne Sakralarchitektur" by (Köhne 2011)). Whereas the church as a societal institution seems to become less relevant, church buildings gain relevance in diverse contexts, such as tourism, city marketing, religious heritage, and architecture (e.g., Behrens 2014; Schroer 2015, p. 32); see also (Beinhauer-Köhler et al. 2015)). Moreover, the increase and public presence of non-Christian religious communities in Germany has produced different religious architectures in public space (generally, e.g., (De Wildt and Gerhards 2014); regarding mosques, e.g., (Beinhauer-Köhler and Leggewie 2009; Korn 2012); regarding synagogues, e.g., (Brülls 2001; Knufinke 2011, 2015; Jacoby 2011)).

Besides the religious studies perspective, approaches of cultural studies, architecture, and urban planning are paramount in our analysis of the meanings and functions of religious architecture in urban space. Here, we build upon diverse strands of architectural and urban planning research. The methods of architectural iconography and iconology are employed for the interpretation of the architectural forms, especially the development thereof, in relation to religious architecture (Bandmann 1951; Smith 1956; Sedlmayr 1960; Reinle 1976; Warnke 1984), and in theories of semiotics of architecture, which have been developed since the 1960s and have influenced contemporary architecture (Eco 1971; Carlini and Schneider 1971, 1976; Norberg-Schulz 1974; Jencks 1977; Broadbent et al. 1980; Barthes 1983; Goodman 1984). For the interpretation of the significance of religious architecture in the context of urban planning, insights from urban semantics have proven fundamental (Rapoport 1982, 1993; Donald 1992). For the analysis of the impact of city planning on religious buildings, we build upon recent architectural sociology and urban planning in which the spatial-constructional shape of the surrounding environment is developed in a close and reciprocal relation to the social order (e.g., Sennett 1976; Löw 2008; Delitz 2009). A further basis of our research consists of the outcomes of heritage studies regarding unused and reused church buildings, which, for a few decades, have posed a specific challenge (Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz (DSD); Fisch 2008; Scheurmann 2011; Büchse et al. 2012; Beste 2014; Franz and Gotthardt 2015).

Besides these conceptual approaches, we draw on those studies that concern specific religious architecture, such as church buildings (e.g., Kahle 1990; Wöhler 2005; Wittmann-Englert 2006; Britton 2010; Zahner 2012), synagogues (e.g., Sachs and Voolen 2004; Knufinke 2010a), and mosques (e.g., Welzbacher 2008; Dechau 2009; Beinhauer-Köhler and Leggewie 2009). Here, our second methodical approach comes to the fore; that is, architectural history's hands-on expertise in the inductive

hermeneutical analysis of specific buildings of all religious backgrounds across regions and times. This allows us to question and challenge theory-based approaches and assumptions.

The approaches mentioned so far have been hesitant to undertake the task of developing a comparative architectural or urban planning analysis of the religious buildings of the monotheistic religious traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (with the exception of a Master's thesis in art history, (Mages 2013)). Therefore, this article aims to provide new comparative approaches and perspectives, stimulating further research in this field.

3. Conceptual Parameters

As mentioned, the goal of this article is to discuss how, in the context of increasing religious diversity, synagogues, churches, and mosques are positioned in urban space, as well as how this provides meaningful discourse, and to create a platform to negotiate questions of belonging and identity by means of architectural forms.

We focus on these three monotheistic religious traditions because, with regard to the number of their religious buildings, they exceed a 'critical mass' on the one hand, and contrast one another with regard to their respective particularities on the other hand. Churches are threatened by demolition and are increasingly reused, whereas new churches are still being built; mosques are characterized by a strong growth and a move out of the backyards, albeit still being built in peripheral locations; and synagogues experience particular attention because of an increase in synagogue building since the 1990s and because they are characterized by experimental architecture in city centers and a more reclusive existence in reused buildings elsewhere.

As it is our aim to gain a better understanding of the public presence of religious buildings in the cities, the limitation to these three traditions also lies in the fact that they receive more public recognition and, as a consequence, generate more data regarding public discourses. Follow-up research shall also focus on other religious communities and other forms of religious spaces such as rooms of quiet or inter- and multi-religious sacred spaces.

In the context of our research questions, religious architecture is specifically suitable as the main research focus because places of worship are indispensable for religious practice, community life, or the facilitation of experiences of divine presence in space (Simmel 1968, 519–520 ff.). However, not only explicit religious functions come into play regarding religious buildings, or, in the words of the Dutch anthropologist Oskar Verkaaik, "[. . .] for religious minorities, their religious buildings represent religious identity and power and are therefore linked to processes of emancipation or integration. In nineteenth-century Europe, the Moorish style of synagogues or the neo-Gothic style of Catholic churches certainly served such purposes of visibility and communal pride. Similarly, some of the impressive contemporary mosques in the Islamic world, such as the ones in Casablanca or Islamabad, are obviously linked to postcolonial state power and may primarily be considered nationalist monuments rather than religious buildings in a strict sense" (Verkaaik 2013, p. 8). This is why the analysis of public discourse triggered by building activities of religious communities in Germany often leads us to questions of belonging and identity politics.

In order not to analytically remain with one specific object or a small group of similar objects, an approach that often characterizes art historical research, our research is based on urban planning research methods, which help us to understand how religious buildings are positioned in relation to other, non-religious buildings, and show how they visibly appear in the cityscape. The architectural form and urban positioning of buildings entails specific functions of bringing meaningful order into public space. New buildings, by their symbolic indifference or forms of experimental architecture, aim to provoke efforts of orientation and interpretation (Delitz 2009, 104 ff.), while this orientation and the structure of such places may remain unclear to passers-by. Newly built religious structures do not only increasingly express symbolic indifference in relation to one another, often, they also compete with non-religious buildings, which, in turn, has a direct impact on their visual presence in urban space. Whereas non-religious buildings make use of religious architectural elements (e.g., museums,

movie theatres), religious buildings often intentionally renounce conventional, religiously connoted forms (see, e.g., Schroer 2015, pp. 29–30).

4. Methodical and Analytical Considerations

For the research presented in this article, we combine quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative study will eventually lead to a comprehensive database, while the qualitative study focuses on the relations between architectural forms, urban positioning, religious aspects, and social situations in selected cases.

Regarding the *quantitative study*, we are in the process of building a database that records all new, remodeled, reused, and demolished synagogues, churches, and mosques in Germany since 1990. They are mapped, described, keyworded, and will be made available for academic and public use. The date 1990 was chosen because there have been significant changes for all three of the religious traditions since the German reunification. The role of religious buildings and institutions changed in the eastern parts of Germany, which influenced the developments in the western parts of Germany too. The architectural transformation processes are clearly recognizable since then. In this quantitative analysis, data such as urban positioning, architectural language, and religious–political intentions are collected and discussed. This provides not only data collection for further research, but also a monitoring mechanism; that is, the quantitative data make it possible to contextualize the occasionally heated arguments in social discourses on religious change in Germany.

We portray the built diversity of religious architecture in Germany for the first time ever in such a comprehensive way. On the basis of existing data (e.g., Hoffmann and Gregori 2014; Nollert et al. 2011; Keller 2011; Deutsches Liturgisches Institut (DLI); moderneREGIONAL gUG 2014) and new surveys, we are in the process of collecting a complete dataset of all transformations of synagogues, churches, and mosques in Germany since 1990. The project "invisibilis—Der Kirchenwiederfinder", for instance, lists churches that have become "invisible" because of closure, demolition, or reuse (moderneREGIONAL gUG 2014). The Foundation for Jewish Heritage and the Center for Jewish Art launched the website "Historic Synagogues of Europe" in February 2018, which also lists synagogues in Germany. On the basis of our own research, we were able to add seven synagogues (new, re-consecrated, and reused buildings) to this website.[1]

In our own database, the record of each object includes (but is not restricted to) data such as building type; name of the building; geo-coordinates; confession/denomination; and dates such as opening date, reuse dates, or demolition date. Furthermore, the database contains information regarding the architect (bureau), the client, urban positioning, architectural style (exterior and interior), object plans, and photographs. The record also includes background information, such as reasons for reuse or demolition, discourse data such as relevant literature and other media output, and the main stakeholders involved in the decision-making processes. We developed this database using the platform "heurist network", an open access data management system developed by Sydney University in Australia.

The geographical and visual documentation provides insights into the invisibility and visibility of religious architecture in German cities. Furthermore, the data provide information about how many objects choose a more conventional or experimental architectural design and how this changes over time. Finally, the geographical documentation provides data on where synagogues, churches,

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[1]   The Synagogue Tiferet Israel in Berlin, which was a former residential building and business that has been reused in 2006; 2. the Synagogue in the Tucholskystraße in Berlin, founded in 1904 and reconsecrated in 1990; 3. the New Synagogue in Schwerin, which has been built in 2008; 4. the Synagogue in Hameln, which has been built in 2011; 5. the Synagogue Gescher LaMassoret e.V. in Köln-Riehl, which is a reused former protestant chapel in 2016; 6. the Synagogue and community center Mischkan HaZafon in Bad Segeberg, which is a reused mill in 2007; 7. the Synagogue am Schrevenpark in Kiel, which is a reused former residential building in 2008.

and mosques are positioned with regard to central and peripheral spaces in the city and in relation to each other. We present some first results of this quantitative study in Section 5 of this article.

Regarding the *qualitative study*, we analyze selected cases of synagogues, churches, and mosques in a comparative manner regarding their architectural meaning and urban positioning in the city in relation to the religious and non-religious motivations for building them. In these case studies, architectural-iconological form analyses, urban planning analyses, textual analyses, and analyses of socio-spatial settings are combined in order to understand the intended and socially perceived meanings of religious buildings. The selection of the cases matches the architectural-historical state of the art (e.g., Dechau 2009; Schoppengerd 2008; Welzbacher 2008) and is aligned with the first results of the quantitative survey in order to ensure a high correlation between qualitative case studies and quantitative empirical findings: the New Synagogue Mainz, the New Synagogue Dresden, the Provost's Church of the Holy Trinity Leipzig, the Church of the Sacred Heart in Mönchengladbach, the Cologne Central Mosque, and the Merkez-Mosque Essen. Three of these cases will be portrayed in some more detail below (Section 6).

We conduct these qualitative case studies because only a detailed inquiry of specific architectural forms, urban positioning, religious and political intentions, as well as the religious-sociological contexts can provide an encompassing understanding of the interplay between these diverse components. Every case study pays attention to four analytical dimensions:

(a) *The visual shape of the architecture and its ascribed meaning*: Buildings are analyzed by means of iconographic-hermeneutical architectural interpretation. In the same course, diverse aspects of the building that are meaningful are identified and interpreted, such as materials, specific forms and elements, ways of construction, and actors involved in design and construction. The reconstruction of their meaning is done in a historical-critical way; that is, possible levels of meaning are verified by textual sources or formal comparisons.

(b) *The interplay with and referentiality to urban space*: In a second step, the context of the building is included. It is investigated how the building positions itself in the urban context, whether it is positioned in a prominent, perhaps even dominant, place at a square or a highly visible location, or if it is localized invisibly in a city block or backyard. Synagogues, churches, and mosques are positioned and oriented in a varying manner. Combined with the visual form and the question of semantic (non-)ambiguity, we examine how the building contributes to urban architectural arrangements.

(c) *The religious and non-religious intentions and motivations connected to the building project*: With the aid of the analysis of relevant sources as well as in discussions with architects and clients, we analyze the process of design and construction. Which religious intentions shaped the building? Which considerations lie behind the decision for a specific architectural form? How does this relate to traditional ways of construction? What kind of 'readability' did the architects have in mind and which user groups did they consider?

(d) *The social and cultural context in which the construction activity is situated*: Often, new buildings and conversions of buildings and their demolitions are embedded in public and societal debates (De Wildt and Gerhards 2014). Discussions arise with regard to specific building plans, which are even perceived nationwide on occasion. These discussions deal less with technical building or traffic issues, but more with broader societal issues such as "integration" or "majority culture" (Kuppinger 2014). We analyze these discourses based on relevant sources such as newspaper and other media articles, participant observations, and interviews.

The qualitative analysis of selected cases has been and will be done in a team of project members from the study of religions and architectural history. This ensures equal attention to the architectural and religious dimensions of the religious buildings and the reciprocal relation thereof.

5. Facts and Figures of Transformation

No overview of the quantity and spread of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim transformed buildings in Germany exists up-to-date; therefore, we have undertaken the endeavor to gain a broad survey of

the current state of religious architectural transformations. No such data are recorded in a systematic manner by official institutions. On the basis of our research, an estimation concerning the built presence of diverse religious communities, and also concerning the architectural diversity, can now be made.

We may assume that more than 300 new buildings have been constructed since the 1990s, with about half of them being mosques, followed by churches of diverse Christian confessions, and finally synagogues. With regard to new buildings of the three religions, the building activity is the highest in North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, Berlin, and Bavaria, especially in metropolitan areas such as the Ruhr area.

Our current research shows that of the 133 *synagogues and Jewish prayer* halls that are in use in Germany today, roughly 24 have been built since 1990 and about 23 current synagogues are reused buildings, mostly former factories or other businesses (7 synagogues), as well as reused churches and chapels (10 synagogues). Since 1990, two historical synagogues have been translocated to a new place. Six synagogues are existing structures that have been re-consecrated. One former synagogue has been demolished in Osterholz-Scharmbeck in 2004. Four synagogues are planned to be built in the coming years.

The comparatively strong *building activity of Muslims* can be partially attributed to the so-called 100-mosques-plan of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, a reform movement established at the end of the nineteenth century, which made it their priority to build one hundred mosques within ten years in Germany. This goal was announced in 1989 on the occasion of the celebration of the centennial of the Ahmadiyya. These building activities were concentrated on West Germany. The goal, however, was not reached, and was thus replaced with the plan to build five mosques every year until 2010. Nowadays, the focus lies on remodeling backyard mosques into representative mosques (Lathan 2010, p. 103). Recent inquiries show that 48 Ahmadiyya-Mosques have been built in Germany. These 48 also include mosques from a previous date and mosques after 2010 ((Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Deutschland KdöR 2018): list of Ahmadiyya-Mosques in Germany: http://www.ahmadiyya.de/gebetsstaette/moscheen/; Springer 2018). Of course, mosques have also been built, or are in planning, commissioned by other Islamic organizations, such as Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB).

Regarding *Catholic and Protestant church buildings*, we can only give some rough estimations at this point based on surveys conducted by Catholic media services. These figures wait to be re-checked with the data collected in our project. The Catholic news company "Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur" published on its website on 29 August 2018 that, since 2000, 540 catholic churches and chapels have been taken out of liturgical use, of which 538 have been deconsecrated, 160 demolished, and 142 sold. According to this report, 49 Catholic churches have been built since 2000 and about a hundred received a different liturgical use. According to the same website, 710 Protestant churches have been taken out of liturgical use, and 330 buildings have been reused, are not in use anymore, or are rented out. A total of 272 Protestant churches have been sold and 105 have been demolished (Katholische Nachrichten Agentur (KNA)). The website of the Roman-Catholic church in Germany, katholisch.de, published on its website on 6 October 2017 that roughly 140 churches have been demolished and that more than 500 churches have been taken out of liturgical use since the year 2000 (Glenz 2017).

6. Case Studies

In this section, we portray three of the cases that are currently under research; that is, the New Synagogue in Mainz, the Church of the Sacred Heart in Mönchengladbach, and the Cologne Central Mosque. Describing these cases, we pay attention to the four analytic dimensions sketched above: (a) the visual shape of the architecture and its ascribed meaning; (b) the interplay with and referentiality to urban space; (c) the religious and non-religious intentions and motivations connected to the building project; and (d) the social and cultural context in which the construction activity is situated.

The first example is the *New Synagogue in Mainz*, a spectacular design by the architect Manuel Herz, which was opened in 2010. This Jewish community center owes its name ("Light of the Exile") to the rabbi Gershom Ben Judah (960–1040), who lived in Mainz and was, during his lifetime, well-known

for his wisdom throughout Europe. Therefore, he was named "Light of the exile". Manuel Herz points out that there is hardly another city where so many Jews have been killed or banished as in Mainz. Still, Mainz is also the city where, with remarkable resilience, the Jewish residents tried to rebuild their community time and again (Herz 2010, p. 119). The new synagogue was built at the site of the former synagogue, which had been destroyed during the "Reichskristallnacht" in 1938 (Knufinke 2010b, p. 45), and is an eminent example of the expansion in synagogue building in Germany since the 1990s. This growth in newly built synagogues can be mainly attributed to the emigration of Jewish people from former Soviet Russia to Germany (Verkaaik 2013, p. 7; Rosenfeld 2016, p. 277; Neckar 2017, p. 171).

The North American historian Gavriel. D. Rosenfeld discerns two main trends in synagogue design since the reunification of Germany: "[. . .] those built since 1990 have been far more conspicuous and have radiated a sense of normalcy. At the same time, they have also dealt more directly with the memory of the holocaust" (Rosenfeld 2016, p. 290). The contour of the New Synagogue in Mainz is based on the Hebrew word for "holiness" ("kedusha"). The structure was meant as a symbol for the revival of the Jewish community in Mainz. At the same time, the architect incorporated elements of the original synagogue that was destroyed during the "Reichskristallnacht". In the word "kedusha" (Hebrew: קדושה), the past and the future are referenced (Rosenfeld 2016, pp. 293–94). Herz stipulates that the translation of this word designates "to elevate", "blessing" (German: "Erhöhen, Segnen, bzw. Segensspruch"): "By means of formulating a blessing, e.g., for wine or bread, a profane and secular object is elevated and sanctified. It transcends the mundane and becomes something special. This is especially what the Jewish community in Mainz should experience."[2] At the same time, this word refers to a shofar horn (Keller 2013, p. 579; Herz 2010, p. 125). A shofar is a ram's horn, which encompasses a multitude of meanings in Judaism: "a rich nexus of metaphorical tropes, those of supernatural power, joy, freedom, victory, deliverance, national identity, moral virtue, repentance, social justice, and many other topics, some of which have remained constant while others have changed" (Miller 2002, p. 83). For Manuel Herz, the shofar, in this context, refers to new beginnings and feelings of hope in relation to it being blown on New Year's Day (Herz 2010, p. 125).

In the case of church buildings, as stated earlier, a diversity of transformations can be observed. Although new churches are still being built, church demolition and the reuse of church buildings are more prominent current transformations in Germany (De Wildt and Plum 2019). Concerning church reuse, both main Christian confessions, Protestant and Roman-Catholic, employ a hierarchy of options concerning favorable forms of reuse (Duttweiler 2011, p. 190). Church demolition is, from the stance of said church institutions, officially regarded as "ultima ratio" ((Deutsche Bischofskonferenz DBK, pp. 18–21); Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)). Forms of church reuse encompass the entire spectrum of usage that is considered congruent with the religious identity of the church, such as a columbarium or a church library. Lower in the hierarchy are cultural uses such as spaces for concerts or exhibitions, and, even further down the line, commercial usage such as residential housing and businesses.

The second example of contemporary transformations of religious space we want to highlight briefly here is the reuse of the *Herz-Jesu-Kirche in Mönchengladbach-Pesch* (Church of the Sacred Heart) in 2011. This Gothic Revival church, built in 1903, and listed as protected heritage since 1994, was repurposed as a residential building with 23 social housing units by the private investor "Schleiff Denkmalentwicklung" in Erkelenz, who bought the building for a symbolical amount, and "B15 Architekten" in Mönchengladbach ((Deutsche Bank AG DB, p. 17); (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung BBSR, p. 10)). The Herz-Jesu-Kirche was originally built by the architect Josef Kleesattel (1852–1926) and rebuilt in 1956 by the architects

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2   German original: "Durch das Sprechen eines Segensspruchs, beispielsweise dem für Wein oder Brot, wird ein Gegenstand erhöht und geheiligt. Er wird aus dem alltäglichen herausgehoben und zu etwas Besonderem. Genau dies soll die Jüdische Gemeinde in Mainz ebenfalls erfahren" (Herz 2010, pp. 121–22).

Emil Steffann and Heinz Aretz after being destroyed during the Second World War (Scholz 2017, p. 23). In 2007, this church was taken out of liturgical use (Nagel 2014).

In an interview, Georg Wilms, the director of Schleiff Denkmalentwicklung, expressed the idea that repurposing a church differs from the repurposing of a secular building, because church closure and church reuse trigger more emotional responses among residents and neighbors (Schnettler 2009). The final decision to take the Herz-Jesu-Kirche out of liturgical use was met with strong emotions of the church community, as well as outright criticism. The causes for the discontinuation of the church as a liturgical space were the decayed building structure and, consequently, the strong need for renovation; the dwindling of church community members; as well as a less active church community altogether. The parsonage and the parish house were demolished, and the parish house was replaced with a new building for housing social activities of the community. The 23 housing units within the church building are constructed reversible as a house-in-house construction at three to four levels. Each unit consists of two to four rooms, and all of the units are situated in the side aisles, the choir, and the transepts. According to the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs, and Spatial Development (BBSR), a significant factor for the success of the project and the compliance of the religious community was the fact that the revenue of the plot sale was designated in its entirety for the benefit of the community and not for other projects ((Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung BBSR, pp. 9–10); Beste 2014, p. 40).

The third example we would like to sketch briefly here is the *Cologne Central Mosque*. This case is exemplary for much of the turmoil that often, but not always, accompanies the construction of new mosques in Western Europe (Kuppinger 2014). This case gained a lot of media attention owing to campaigns of "Pro Köln" and "Pro NRW", right wing groups that can be considered "anti-Islam" (Kreutz and Sarhan 2010, p. 100). Media coverage painted a picture of great opposition to the proposed plan to build a mosque, although other observers noticed much less opposition (Kreutz and Sarhan 2010, p. 101; Gerrens 2013, pp. 339–41, 344). DITIB, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, one of the largest Muslim organizations in Germany, was the initiator of the project. Although the initial plan was to build an Ottoman style mosque, DITIB "was persuaded that a translation of the cultural language of the East into the symbolism of Western modernity would be an important gesture of integration" (Kreutz and Sarhan 2010, p. 102). DITIB appointed a predominantly non-Muslim jury for the architectural competition, consisting of representatives of the main Christian churches in Germany, politicians, and so on (Gerrens 2013, p. 337). The design that won was that of Gottfried and Paul Böhm, architects that are known for their Catholic church architecture (Gerrens 2013, pp. 337–38; Korn 2012, p. 117). Besides the critique from right wing groups, critique was also formulated by the well-known intellectual Ralph Giordano, who turned the discussion from a right-wing oppositional debate into a nationwide debate (Gerrens 2013, p. 339). Furthermore, political compromises were made about height and width of the dome to underscore that the mosque was not a demonstration of political and religious power (Gerrens 2013, p. 342). The turmoil did not cease, however, and three years later, a conflict between the architects and clients arose, which was later appeased (Gerrens 2013, pp. 344–46). The two main Christian denominations in Germany uttered critique as well as acceptance (Gerrens 2013, pp. 347–53). With a delay of five years, the mosque was taken into use for Friday prayer in June 2017. The building consists not only of a prayer space, but also of conference rooms, administration offices, a library, and so on (Winterhager 2017, pp. 28–35). On 29 September 2018, the mosque was officially opened by the Turkish president Erdogan. This event was not without controversy as well. The prime minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, did not attend the ceremony because he wanted DITIB to take a more distanced stance towards Turkey. The mayor of Cologne, Henriette Reker, did not give a speech at the opening event, as was originally intended, as she was kept in the dark about her actual role for too long. The event was kept modest because of safety issues (Tagesschau 2018).

While, obviously, these cases studies present only a glimpse of the full picture, they open up the full spectrum of the analysis of built religious architectures in their relation to societal discourse and

architectural meaning making. From their position in urban geography to mass mediated debates, they offer vast material to be studied in more detail in the future. Nonetheless, we may draw a few conclusions and formulate hypotheses in the remaining section of this article.

7. Conclusions

Since the 1990s, the religious architectural landscape of Germany has transformed drastically. Whereas in previous decades, between the 1950s and 1970s, observers noted a "Kirchenbau-boom" (Stegmann 2017, pp. 69–80), nowadays, closure, demolition, and reuse are more dominant phenomena regarding church buildings. During the last decades, we can observe an increase in building activities of mosques, and, to a lesser extent, of synagogues, that has contributed to the diversity of the religious cityscape in Germany. In this article, we have given a first overview of the transformations in religious architecture in German cities since the 1990s.

The research undertaken so far allows us to formulate the following hypotheses that shall be a basis for future research.

Hypothesis 1. The increase in religious plurality in society becomes visible in the cityscape and in architecture (Burchardt and Höhne 2015) and can function as a catalyst for societal conflict. Whereas churches and synagogues are usually found in city centers, mosques are predominantly positioned in the periphery of the cities (e.g., Kuppinger 2014, p. 801). This is because of the history of Islamic presence in Germany. The first generation of labor migrants, predominantly from Turkey, did not build representative mosques because their general objective seemed to be to re-migrate to Turkey eventually. In this context, mosques were established in buildings such as residential houses, former shops, and so on. These kinds of mosque types are designated with the common German terms "Hinterhofmoscheen" or "Ladenmoscheen", roughly translated as "backyard mosques" or "storefront mosques", designating those buildings that cannot directly be identified as mosques by their architectural form (e.g., Gharaibeh 2017, pp. 230–31). Although new mosques are usually constructed in the periphery, they can trigger debates as is the case with the Central Mosque in Cologne (e.g., Beinhauer-Köhler and Leggewie 2009, pp. 146–60).

The ever-growing amount of literature on the topic of mosque conflicts, especially when they are designed as representative buildings with a minaret and dome, also testifies to this fact (e.g., Hohage 2013; Hüttermann 2011; Schmitt 2003, 2015; Kuppinger 2014). According to Lorenz Korn, minarets are often interpreted as signs of Muslim presence in Europe or symbols of power. Korn states that in the case of the Cologne Central mosque, societal and religious-political controversies are projected onto architectural and urban planning themes (Korn 2012, pp. 117–18).

Since the 1990s, mosques have become more visible in the German cityscapes. They are usually designed with a reference to an Ottoman architectural style with minarets and a dome. In the case of buildings that are reused as mosques, minarets are often added (Schmitt 2002, pp. 154–55). Initiatives to build mosques in the cities are often met with struggles for control by the municipalities and opponents: "Thus, the discussion about how many meters a minaret should measure translates into the question of how Islam is positioned in a European state and versus Christianity. [...] such conflicts are not isolated incidents, but instead are embedded in larger processes of urban cultural and political negotiations and transformation" (Kuppinger 2014, p. 796).

Hypothesis 2. Church buildings are still very present in the cityscape and are also—contrary to popular belief—still being constructed, but their dominant role and function transforms. Nevertheless, their former spatial and symbolic dominance has been challenged by other building types, religious and secular, and they are increasingly positioned in direct proximity to mosques, synagogues, and non-religious landmark buildings. Furthermore, church buildings are increasingly in the process of reuse for a variety of reasons, mostly linked to a decline in churchgoing for religious-liturgical

reasons (De Wildt and Plum 2019). These phenomena change the cityscape in the religious respect from a seemingly unambiguous mono-religious Christian presence, as the main societal identity marker, to a more diverse cityscape that represents the current societal plurality in religious and non-religious architectural presence and the ensuing ambiguity of meanings.

Hypothesis 3. Newly built structures are predominantly situated in urban space, whether in a prominent central place or in the periphery of expanding cities. Church demolition and reuse usually seem to take place in underdeveloped (rural) regions (Schröteler-Von Brandt 2012, pp. 8–10). It must be noted, however, that in rural regions, the church is often the last institution that remains open when other buildings, such as the town shop, have already been closed. Most churches that have been closed in Germany are situated in the Ruhr-area (Gallhoff and Keller 2015, p. 4).

Hypothesis 4. Type, number, and religious-political intention of newly built religious structures differ considerably between religious communities. New synagogues often employ experimental avant-garde architecture for new buildings (Hollenstein 2009, pp. 64–69), newly built churches appear mostly modern, and newly constructed mosques are usually built in a conventional orientalist form. The number of newly built places of worship is the highest regarding mosques, owing to the increase in Muslim citizens, and reuse most often concerns churches. The function of newly built places of worship in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is not only restricted to their use as a liturgical space, but also encompasses social, cultural, and representative functions.

Hypothesis 5. Religious buildings undergo a transformation not only in their architectural style, but also in their urban positioning. Contemporary religious architecture often renounces traditional and dominant characteristics and is no longer positioned at prominent places such as town squares, on elevations, or in visual axes, and abstains from its function as a main focal point of orientation in the cities. Building regulations, such as building codes and zoning laws, contribute to the distribution of religious architecture in urban space and spatialize religious differences. The urban infrastructures, consisting of policies, administration, resources, normative ideas, ideal subject formations, and so on, shape the space, as well as the practices of the people occupying the space.

In this way, participation, inclusion, and exclusion, for example, on the basis of class or religion, is mediated (Burchardt and Höhne 2015, p. 2). "[. . .] socio-technical networks are hardly neutral. While they often appear depoliticized, they carry highly political or normative ideas of their ideal users and their transformative power to improve cities, communities and so on. [. . .] Understanding these political functions of urban material forms is also central to the analysis of urban diversity and to questions of how infrastructures help to discipline, exclude or include segments of urban populations" (Burchardt and Höhne 2015, p. 3).

Hypothesis 6. A religious building might end up 'in the wrong place' because of socio-economic shifts in the related parish. Over time, the neighborhood marked by a traditional church building might be more in need of a synagogue or mosque instead, thus concentrating the issues discussed in this project in a single urban district.

Starting from these hypotheses, which are based on an ongoing-research project, in-depth comparative case analyses and additional quantitative studies will provide a more detailed understanding of these transformations regarding architectural and urban planning issues on the one hand, and religious and sociological contexts and issues on the other hand. Follow-up research may focus on how German cities are transforming with regard to the religious landscape and how this impacts contemporary society. Religious architecture not only functions as a mere reflection of the increase in religious plurality and the decline in Christianity, but also produces these transformations.

The three examples highlighted in this contribution demonstrate that religious architecture in Germany is a highly relevant research field, with regard to both the architectural transformations as well as the social processes accompanying these transformations. At the same time, this field of research lacks both comprehensive quantitative surveys and thorough qualitative case studies in a comparative perspective and as a collaboration between the study of religion and architectural history. Beyond the general interest to comprehend the social changes attributed or connected to religious communities, the project includes two more layers of analysis. On the one hand, it is our aim to include all forms of religious architecture and not merely the "spectacular cases" in order to gain an overview of the many less sensational, but also meaningful facets of transformation with regard to religious architecture. On the other hand, it is our aim to understand the shifting roles of religious buildings as non-verbal forms of negotiation of cultural representation in times of global mobility.

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