“Not the usual way?” On the involvement of an East German couple with the planning of the Ethiopian capital

¿De otra manera? la contribución de una pareja de arquitectos de Alemania del Este al desarrollo urbanístico de la capital etíope

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Introduction

“Not the usual way” (“Es war kein üblicher Weg”) is a phrase that recurred frequently in our recent interview with Peter and Ute Baumbach, in which the couple reflected on the three and a half years they spent teaching architecture and conducting urban planning projects in Addis Ababa in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The East German couple used these terms to mean not only how they had received the commission in the first place, but also the way they carried out their work in the Ethiopian capital amid the tensions of the Cold War. Although this might be interpreted merely as part of a self-historicizing narrative—an aggrandizement of the role of individuals in the outcome of complex historical processes—, we heard similar assertions from younger architects of the same period, such as Fasil Giorgghis, who was then a part-time assistant of the Baumbachs.

We examine the Ethiopian chapter in the careers of these prominent East German architects through the analysis of their plans and drawings, only a few of which have been published. Our focus is chiefly on the urban and architectural projects for Addis Ababa that were never executed. To gain a better understanding of specific players’ motivations and room for maneuver, these plans are contextualized within the Baumbachs’ first-person accounts. We juxtapose subjective statements with existing
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Our first encounter with the main protagonists of this story, Peter and Ute Baumbach, took place in a particular institutional context—at the opening of the exhibition Fläche – Körper – Raum. Peter Baumbach über Gebautes, Gedachtes und Gesehenes (Surface – Body – Space. Peter Baumbach on the Built, the Thought, and the Seen) at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) in Erkner (18 January-30 June 2018). That show featured the unrealized plans for Addis Ababa we analyze and contextualize in this article. They are part of the estate the Baumbachs have bequeathed to the IRS Archive for the History of Building and Planning in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). These materials will be transferred archive upon the death of the donors. In other words, plans for a city that never was are part of an archival collection yet to come. To make matters more complicated, the IRS in Erkner is itself an institution with an “inherited archive.” Its scientific staff have long managed the expectations attached to such donations (e.g., by donors, most of whom are architects and planners who were active in the GDR; by governmental stakeholders providing funding; by contemporary researchers, etc.). The process of constant shifting and re-adjustment of the analytic lens has triggered ongoing reflections on our positionalities as researchers. In the case of Peter and Ute Baumbach, their long-lasting ties to the institution hosting our project were crucial for establishing our connection to them as interviewees. Thanks to these credentials, we were able to conduct in-depth conversations requiring a certain degree of trust. This is especially relevant in dealing with interviewees from the former GDR, who are prone to some self-censorship, having internalized a cautious attitude. Because autobiographical accounts are inevitably subjective, we decided to implement a standardized set of interview questions, not only while interviewing the Baumbachs, but throughout the project. The point was to gather or verify information (gleaned from written sources) about the destination, duration, institutional contexts, and financing of architectural activities abroad. In addition, we asked about any involvement with local and international networks, modes and channels of communication, ideological background, personal motivations, memorable events, and conflict situations. In the second part of the interview, we posed more detailed questions about particular activities in planning or teaching. However, every interview depended on the interviewees’ willingness to collaborate, which was influenced by self-evaluation of activities in the GDR. This varied from positive reminiscences, as in the case of Peter and Ute Baumbach, to frustration, or even outright refusal to return to “painful memories.” Our approach to deploying oral history cannot be described as an elaborate method. Instead, we look upon these first-person accounts as a useful tool for gaining insights not otherwise accessible. We hope that other scholars will build upon the results of the research we present in this article. They may be able to interview...
other witnesses from this period, and may have access to sources that could not be consulted during our research project.

**Not the usual collaboration?**

Peter (born in 1940) and Ute Baumbach (born in 1938) belong to the generation that grew up almost simultaneously with the German Democratic Republic (proclaimed in 1949). They both graduated in architecture from the Technical University Dresden in 1964. During their studies and immediately afterwards, they travelled to Bulgaria and Hungary. After graduation, they settled in Rostock, the biggest port city in the GDR, where Peter became the chief architect of the Publicly Owned Enterprise for Housing Construction (Wohnungsbaukombinat; WBK). There, among other projects, he was involved in the urban and architectural planning of the mass housing estate Evershagen (1971-1974). In 1968, after working briefly on plans for the mass housing estate Lütten Klein, Ute moved to the same WBK as her husband. Together, they took part in the ideas competition for the design of the new district, Halle-Neustadt (1967) (fig. 1), followed by a diverse portfolio of architectural and urban plans for other East German cities, such as Schwerin or Halbersdorfer Hang in Karl-Marx-Stadt (currently Chemnitz; competition in 1978) (fig. 2). Of their only two international projects prior to their activity in Ethiopia, neither was ever built. The first was their joint project for the hotel complex of the Centre d’animation de la station touristique de la Baie, in Tangier, Morocco (fig. 3), submitted for a competition in 1975. The second was the GDR exhibition pavilion in Moscow (fig. 4). Slated for subsequent conversion into a permanent cultural forum, it was designed in 1980 by Peter Baumbach in collaboration with Ulrich Müther. In the 1980s, the Baumbachs expanded their joint oeuvre through projects with an inclination towards historicism such as the “Fünf Giebel Haus” (“Five-Gable House,” 1984-1987) and a reconstruction of the Gothic “Hausbaumhaus” (1981).
Figure 1: Design for the ideas competition, Halle-Neustadt (Germany), 1967.

Source: Peter & Ute Baumbach.

Figure 2: Plan of Halbersdorfer Hang in Karl-Marx-Stadt (presently Chemnitz), Germany, competition in 1978.

Source: Peter & Ute Baumbach.
The spousal collaboration, which was a continuous element in the Baumbachs’ careers, raises questions concerning entangled authorship and the potential marginalization of the female architect. Yet it also requires a nuanced perspective, because even though Ute collaborated with her husband closely throughout her career, she became a successful architect in her own right. In 1978 she completed her PhD at the Technical University Dresden with a monograph on the possibilities of impacting the air circulation in cities by means of urban planning. Alongside Iris Dullin-Grund (born in 1933) and Traute Kadziocch (born in 1936), she was part of the female team that planned and realized the mass housing estate Kaulsdorf Nord in Berlin (1981-1988). In 1982, for the first phase of the project, they jointly received an architectural award from the city of Berlin (Architekturpreis Berlin). In her articles on Evershagen and Kaulsdorf-Nord, Baumbach described the aims of urban planning of mass housing estates “built with the available means,” which might be read as an implicit critique of East German economic
On the basis of their respective writings, Ute appears as an analytic urban planner, precise in her wording and well-versed in the international architectural discourse, whereas Peter seems to be the more artistic personality, a teacher-leader. It can be only speculated to what extent the dynamics within the long-lasting partnership of the Baumbachs resembled those in the couple formed by Edwin Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) and Jane Drew (1911-1996)—but in reverse. The Baumbachs were more in line with the gendered stereotype, with Peter being the one in the spotlight. Ute’s role was similar to that of Edwin Maxwell Fry, who has been described by Iain Jackson and Jessica Holland as the “backroom-boy.” However, such a division of labor could not be confirmed in the interview, because Peter and Ute both repeatedly claimed they “worked very closely together,” and were reluctant to dwell on their modi operandi. We went along with this reluctance, not trying to force the answer we might have expected from our interviewees. Thus, we treat their projects as authored by both Peter and Ute, unless we have written proof at our disposal that only one of them was involved (which is not the case with their Ethiopian projects, apart from the Karl Marx monument).

This may seem obvious, in view of the current state of research on authorship issues. However, such professional and personal partnership was not a common model for architectural practice within the GDR, or for East German architects abroad. The majority of architects were male, and although their wives sometimes accompanied them, they were not architectural professionals themselves. Nevertheless, the usual absence of female protagonists might also be explained by their limited visibility in the sources and thus in architectural historiography, due to the frequent trope of the leading role of a male architect. Although the historiography of GDR architecture has recently acknowledged the role of female architects like Gertrud Schille and Iris Dullin-Grund, it has done so in ways that emphasize the career and personality of the particular architect. A broader view, beyond East Germany, shows that such marital collaborations were less uncommon than it might seem, including within other non-Soviet socialist countries. PiotrMarciniak even goes so far as to describe this phenomenon as a strategy for the careers of female architects in the People’s Republic of Poland.

Yet if the authorship of architectural and urban plans by Baumbachs is, except for rare cases, a joint one, there is a domain in which only Peter has been active—as a sculptor and painter (fig. 5). And this aspect of his biography proved decisive for an assignment that brought the East German couple to Ethiopia. Between 1979 and 1984, thanks to the friendship and artistic collaboration with the sculptor Joachim (Jo) Jastram (1928-2011), Peter Baumbach contributed to the design of the Karl Marx monument in Addis Ababa, being in charge of the spatial planning of the monument. The 4 m high relief, a highly ideological symbol of political ties between Ethiopia and the GDR, proved a major challenge in terms of logistics, as it could not be executed in situ due to the lack of materials, and had to be shipped from East Germany via air freight. It is believed to be the first and probably the only Karl Marx monument on the African continent.
For the Baumbachs, however, the monument project was meaningful for different reasons—it led to their being introduced to deputy city mayor Asseffa Tesema, with Jo Jastram acting as intermediary. In the aftermath of this fortuitous personal contact, Tesema invited them to Addis Ababa in 1987 to create and lead the “Advanced Planning Group”—a team of architects and engineers tasked with the planning of the Ethiopian capital at the Town Planning Department. Their main collaborators were an architect, Debebe Yazew, and two engineers, Tadele Mekonnen and Tesfaye Mengesha. Fasil Giorggis became a part-time assistant of the Baumbachs. He was involved both in the planning activities and in the explorative studio seminars. When we explicitly asked them about the agency of local actors and forms of cooperation, the East German couple were slightly puzzled by our question, as if the fact that they formed a small team with locally established, emerging professionals and worked with them on a fairly equal basis was self-evident. This was confirmed by Giorggis, who underlined the atmosphere of mutual respect, appreciation, and ease in the professional contacts.

In this regard, theirs was indeed “not the usual way” to receive and pursue a commission, because it subverted the common system of state contractors and strict political control in the GDR regulating who was allowed to go abroad and why. Even if, in general terms, their activity fits into the second type of actors described by Stanek as “individual professionals who were directly employed by planning institutions, universities, authorities, and sometimes private offices abroad,” the role of previous direct personal contacts between the Baumbachs and the Ethiopian stakeholders situates their activity beyond the range of common ways of exporting planning knowledge from the GDR, a country that controlled the mobility of its citizens more tightly than other Eastern Bloc nations. Nevertheless, the history of the involvement

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Figure 5: A garden in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), watercolor (fragment), undated [1987-1990].

Source: Peter Baumbach.
of European planners and architects in the “Global South” provides other examples where the Europeans’ personal ties with local stakeholders were crucial. Such personal links could be more important than professional reputation in establishing long-term cooperations, as the case of Michel Écochard in Beirut shows. In another parallel with the Baumbachs in Ethiopia, Écochard worked closely with teams of local Lebanese actors, instead of simply importing foreign know-how—even if it is difficult to judge the extent to which, in any of the cases, these were indeed collaborations on equal terms.

The Baumbachs came to Addis in January 1987 and left in July 1990 without a single return visit to the GDR during that time. Their teenage sons, Malte and Arne, remained at home in the GDR, but travelled at least once to visit their parents. Both the duration of Baumbachs’ continuous stay and the fact that they worked as a couple distinguishes their involvement abroad from that of many other architects and planners. This is true not only of those from the GDR, but also of the highly mobile global experts who tended to travel back and forth between the office and the construction sites, rarely remaining in one place for longer than a couple of weeks or months. Peter even observed that “if one stays in Addis for four years, one will remain there forever.” However, as a result of worsening economic conditions in the GDR and the unstable situation following the fall of the wall, the couple decided to return to their home country three months before the reunification of Germany (in October of 1990). Confronted with new challenges and professional opportunities, they established their office in Rostock in 1990, where it functioned successfully until their retirement in 2003.

### Individual motivation versus political and economic frameworks

In conversation, the Baumbachs demonstrated a unique perception of themselves as the creative partners of the Ethiopians rather than as agents of a socialist regime. This sense suggests another instance of their “unusual way.” As a designer-couple, they distanced themselves from the standardized architectural production of the GDR and presented a critical attitude towards prefabrication, favoring individualistic solutions. This approach is visible in the majority of their projects, with their broad repertoire of architectural language shifting effortlessly between contrasting traditions of Brick Gothic and structuralism, while simultaneously maintaining a steady interest in architectural details and complex relationships with topography. This trope of an “independent couple” versus the “outside world” recurs in their recollection of their time in Addis, where they lived outside the compound for foreign experts. They kept their distance from the expatriate community of academics and advisors, many of whom were also from the GDR. As Peter Baumbach stated: “Of course, we had some contact with other East Germans, but it was not that we met for breakfast.” Yet such separateness—perceived or experienced—as a couple was not uncommon. Other examples occur, as is demonstrated by scholarship on the aforementioned Fry and Drew, Alison (1928-1993) and Peter (1923-2003) Smithson or Zofia Garlińska-Hansen (1924-2013) and Oskar Hansen (1922-2005).

As for their motivation as individuals, the Baumbachs did not mention financial reasons, even if at least one other East German architects working in sub-Saharan Africa, Heinz Schwarzbach (born in 1936, and involved in developing the masterplan
speculated that the Baumbachs’ contract in Addis Ababa must have been more lucrative than activities elsewhere. Nor have they confirmed any broader commercial motivation, such as with the case of the Western architects from the Institute for Building in the Tropics (Institut für Tropenbau, IfT), who used successful projects as publicity to gain new contracts. In hindsight, the Baumbachs seemed to be motivated by a chance to work and live in a different environment that confronted them with new challenges within different historical and societal contexts. In addition, unlike Charles (Karoly) Polónyi (1928-2002), who—reflecting on his African activities—interpreted them as a reaction stemming from his discontent with the Hungarian reform movement, the Baumbachs’ motivations do not appear to have arisen explicitly from ideological struggles back home. Due to the circumstances of the interview, conducted three decades after their involvement in Addis Ababa, we had to rely on subjective narratives reconstructed from the memories of the interviewees. The process is more one of storytelling, rather than of “playing back a tape.” We made an effort to confront the story with other source material available, but the information we gathered from the first-person account was not always verifiable. Therefore, whenever we venture into speculation, we clearly state that we are doing so.

Both Peter and Ute were involved in teaching during their stay in Addis, where they taught studio at the Faculty for Architecture of the University of Addis Ababa. Peter had already begun his teaching career prior to leaving the GDR; in fact, in 1984 he was made honorary professor at the Art Academy Weißensee in Berlin and ultimately became a full professor in 1993. According to the recollections of Fasil Giorghis, Peter (whose personality once again featured prominently in our interview with Giorghis) was perceived by his students as a charismatic teacher and mentor, who was nonetheless able to approach future architects and planners on equal footing. Both in the GDR and in Ethiopia, he pursued exploratory teaching methods, focusing on design processes: “the task was not a specified place and program. Instead, it was an ongoing search for a topic, from which to derive the program, and for a place, in order to capture its essence. It was a process of becoming—with abiding resistance.” This processual approach was depicted by both sides—by Giorghis and his former teachers—as the actual aim of the studio work. Instead of the particular deliverables, the focus was on engagement with the city and uncovering its many layers through walking, discovering, and drawing, while remaining in constant dialogue with participants. Such poetic and vague descriptions of the Baumbachs’ teaching methods were accompanied by memories of fascinated engagement with the surroundings, as well as the desire for future architects to become “not only planners, but also observers and flâneurs,” a recurring theme in statements from other students of Peter Baumbach when he taught in Berlin. To communicate with their Ethiopian coworkers, students, or other foreigners involved, the Baumbachs primarily spoke and wrote in English. Peter also possessed basic proficiency in Russian and Ute a “school knowledge” of Russian and French. To substantiate the importance of the Baumbachs’ instructional methods, further research in Addis Ababa and interviews with a larger group of their former students are necessary. Yet conversations with architects who were taught by Peter Baumbach at the Art Academy Weißensee confirm that he had a profound impact on his students, especially regarding the philosophy of design.

Even if the Ethiopian engagement of Peter and Ute Baumbach was indeed motivated solely by individual decisions and a personal fascination with Addis Ababa, as both
claimed, the Baumbachs’ project nevertheless fit into the official agenda of exporting know-how from the GDR to Ethiopia in support of the Derg regime.\(^51\) Therefore, it is also necessary to consider their stay within the overarching political and economic circumstances. And in the 1980s, these were opportune for the East German professionals. The Baumbachs are anonymously but unambiguously listed as “two urban planners at the City Council of Addis Ababa”\(^52\) among 53 East German professionals active in Ethiopia in the 1980s. Their planning activity was made possible within the framework of academic exchange programs offering advanced training for the elites, coordinated by one of the GDR’s “foreign trade services” (Außenhandelbetrieb), “Intercoop.”\(^53\) For that matter, before the Baumbachs came to Ethiopia, another couple of East German architects, Karin and Klaus Ferstl from the Technical University Dresden, were assigned to the Faculty for Architecture and Urban Planning as instructors, where they supervised studio work including projects such as a hotel tower for central Addis Ababa.\(^54\) Yet their presence was only briefly mentioned by the Baumbachs.

Other aspects of “brotherly” support for the Ethiopian socialist state included export of technical equipment for agriculture and industry; large-scale investments, such as the cement plants Mugher I and II, as well as arms and munitions.\(^55\) The political—and to a certain extent, ideological—framework for this economic aid, defined as “solidarity” or “active and steady friendship”\(^56\) for fellow socialist countries, was delivered by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), in which the GDR had been a full member since 1949; later, in 1986, Ethiopia gained the status of an observer.\(^57\) The CMEA was the organization that promoted international training and multilateral joint investments, and is frequently referenced in the official correspondence on the intrastate level. However, it is hardly ever mentioned by architects and planners, as if its influence was limited to the formal frameworks and economic investments.

As broad archival and oral history research both in Germany and via case studies abroad (i.a. Belgium, Poland, Finland, Nigeria, China, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka) demonstrate, the position of East German architects and planners was strongly bound to fluctuations in international relations. Many of their activities emerged only after East Germany had become a member of the United Nations and had been recognized by the Non-Aligned and NATO states in 1972-1973. This also explains why involvement with transnational discourse and practices occurred much later than in other non-Soviet socialist countries. Due to the unclear legal and political status of the GDR, exchange and leeway may have been limited. Moreover, there are substantial differences between the plans and focus regions in different periods. In the 1950s, investments were targeted mainly in countries under Soviet influence, which were often conceived as reparations for World War II. During the 1960s—a time which saw many attempts to establish ties to newly-funded African states—the regional focus was expanded, resulting in several projects undertaken in Tanganyika and Zanzibar/Tanzania or Guinea, though sometimes they were only partially completed and on others, ground was never even broken.\(^58\) Following the aforementioned change in political status, the subsequent decade brought more competition with capitalist actors—sometimes even unlikely collaborations, as was the case with the planning of Abuja\(^59\)—and coincidentally, more investments in the non-European CMEA countries Cuba and Vietnam (the reconstruction of Vinh being the flagship project).\(^60\) Finally, in the last decade of the Cold War, the GDR attempted to gain influence in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, but the majority of
the proposed housing estate projects remained on paper due to precarious economic conditions and ongoing or lingering military conflicts in these three countries. Thus, there is a fundamental difference between the foreign involvement of the GDR and that of other CMEA members, even if the institutional frameworks were similar. In this light, we might be led to conclude that actors from East Germany—such as the Baumbachs—were confronted with conditions of permanent scarcity, both at home and in destination countries such as Ethiopia. And yet the Baumbachs did not position themselves within the discourses on low-cost housing or appropriate technologies, which are often slanted towards developmentalism. They either implicitly distanced themselves on an ideological level or were not aware of the ongoing discussions. However, unawareness seems rather improbable, since by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the interest in “building in the tropics,” albeit with a substantial delay compared to West Germany or other countries of the Eastern bloc, had also reached East German architectural teaching. The Institute for Advanced Training (Weiterbildungsinstitut (WBI)) in Weimar, for instance, became a hub for the circulation of knowledge.

Hence, we believe this caveat to be an important aspect to consider with regard to the reality of the planning process in which the Baumbachs took part, since the probability of the designs’ full implementation was low from the very beginning. Paradoxically, due to the expectation of non-implementation, we suspect, after having interviewed the architects and investigated the plans thoroughly, the Baumbachs tended towards work that was more experimental and less subject to the restrictions and logistics of specific financing. Nevertheless, the question of the structures and geographies of power is the one that matters, particularly for the Ethiopian case. The Baumbachs worked in a country ruled by a military regime that was responsible for the “Qey Shibir,” a campaign of violent repression against its opponents in 1976-1977. In the 1980s, Ethiopia was undergoing a process of dramatic resettlement and changes in land ownership, while suffering from the fallout of famine and existing ethnic tensions. These elements were briefly mentioned in the statement from the exhibition catalogue, in which Peter Baumbach discussed his impressions of Ethiopia, including those of “partly unimaginable poverty, diseases and, until 1992 [1], repression by the Mengistu regime.” However, these issues did not emerge during our interviews: the respondents preferred to focus on their professional work, considering it in fairly neutral terms and not ascribing any particular political importance to it. Such an attitude confronts the researcher with the challenge of interpreting the silence, which could be a willful omission, an act of self-censorship, or sheer forgetfulness. In this case, though, it may also be a consequence of the Baumbachs’ self-perception as a creative couple, attempting to remain in charge of his/her narrative. And in the specific context of foreign experts coming from a country intent on exporting its ideology (GDR) and arriving in a country where this ideology was embraced and adapted by an authoritarian regime (Ethiopia), refraining from political statements may not necessarily have been an act of defiance in the late 1980s, but it did have a certain subversive character. To compensate for gaps in the oral testimony, a fuller understanding of the ideological entanglements of the actors (and narrators of the story) requires closer analysis of the urban planning the Baumbachs proposed. It might deliver insights into their views on local contexts and tensions.
Peeling off the layers: the Baumbachs’ urban plans for Addis Ababa and their genealogy

In the historiography of urban planning in Addis Ababa, the 1970s and 1980s have yet to be thoroughly studied. They are usually covered by a sentence or paragraph bridging the two periods on which most authors have tended to focus, Italian occupation or the Haile Selassie era (1941–1974), and the current situation. Typical depictions of the Derg period (1974–1991) mention stagnation in the construction industry due to economic crisis and alleged “intellectual isolation.” Only a few nuanced analyses have been provided, including those by Ethiopian authors such as Dandena Tufa and Fasil Giorghis; indeed, Giorghis has become one of the most frequently cited commentators on the history of Ethiopian planning.

Yet, significant insight into the lives and motivations of the enigmatic “builders from the ‘brotherly’ Soviet bloc states” active in the city in the late 1980s requires oral history approaches and the ability to trace various archival sources in Ethiopia and in the Eastern bloc countries, the homes of these architects and planners. In this regard, the collection of the Baumbachs’ plans and drawings, is a valuable source for making sense of the planning activities of the Derg period. From the perspective of architectural historiography, it is also a fairly detailed visual collection, despite the lack of correspondence or other written sources, such as contracts (which perhaps might be found in the national or municipal archives in Addis Ababa). However, experience of archival research and work with contemporary witnesses proves that such personal collections tend to be strongly curated in accordance with the autobiographical narrative. While the visual sources are indispensable to a more coherent understanding of the biographical story, it is also crucial to chart the silences in the personal archive and seek subsequent connections or inspirations that were not explicitly mentioned in conversation. We argue that it would be opportune to apply such an interpretation to the Baumbachs’ urban plans for Addis Ababa.

The plans we analyze and contextualize in this article were displayed during the aforementioned exhibition Fläche – Körper – Raum. Peter Baumbach über Gebautes, Gedachtes und Gesehenes (Surface – Body – Space. Peter Baumbach on the Built, the Thought and the Seen) that took place at the IRS in Erkner. Materials concerning Addis Ababa can be divided into five groups: 1) plans for the city center; 2) plans and general sketches of the topography of Mekanissa, one of the extensions of the city to the south; 3) designs for particular buildings or complexes, most notably the Civic Centre; 4) drawings and watercolor paintings by Peter Baumbach, depicting the Ethiopian landscape; 5) a small number of photographs taken by Peter and Ute Baumbach during their stay in Ethiopia (fig. 6).
In the interview, the Baumbachs repeatedly emphasized that knowledge of the history and urban conditions of Addis Ababa were not only essential for any resident working as an architect and urban planner, but a matter of responsibility. In this regard, their planning and teaching activities can both be interpreted as a conversation about previous urban plans for Addis, but only some aspects of that conversation were mentioned explicitly during the interview. It is interesting to note that they concentrated mainly on two episodes of “antecedents.” The activities of emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) and the period of Italian occupation (1936-1941). Surprisingly enough, the most obvious reference framework—the multi-scale Ethio-Italian masterplan from 1984/1986, which was drawn up just prior to their arrival and the planning for the city center, with the Abiot Square (Revolution Square) connecting the main axes by Charles Polónyi that predated it—came up only during a later conversation when we explicitly inquired about them. It would be an oversimplification to assume a willing omission of that aspect. As our previous work with contemporary witnesses from the Baumbachs’ generation suggests, even those who show a keen interest in historicizing their own oeuvre refrain from considering such recent plans, dating back to the 1970s at most, as truly “historical” or important for the genealogy of their own work. Instead, they tend to perceive them from a pragmatic point of view, in the sense of available surveys, rather than projects in their own right. Apart from that, the current structure of the city center in Addis Ababa still bears strong traces of the Italian planning activity, so engagement with that period is inescapable—or perhaps even compulsory—due to the physical vestiges. The Baumbachs’ attitude towards urban planning from the Italian period is an ambiguous one—they intensely studied the geometric and rectilinear system of streets of the new settlements, which replaced the local irregular layout plan and became the basis for their own projects. Although the East German couple appreciated the infrastructure completed by the Italians, and during the postwar period, they were critical of the rigidity of the rational planning
because it did not consider the local context and living habits. As they mentioned several times, the construction of multi-story housing would “never fit the needs of the Ethiopian population” since they—according to the Baumbachs—would prefer a living in a garden in which they could cultivate vegetables and breed livestock for food self-sufficiency.

22 The East German couple also clearly recognized the discrepancy between the interest of the regime in building up a modern capital city and the particular needs of the population. Hired as consultants for Addis Ababa’s urban projects, while committed to an anthropological approach to city planning, the Baumbachs quickly understood that they would encounter obstacles. Peter Baumbach mentioned the scarcity of financing—both from the Ethiopian side and from the GDR—to support urban planning projects, at a time when the political priority was to expand the country’s military capacity in the aftermath of the 1974 revolution. At the same time, he also admitted the impossibility of implementing an urban master plan within three years under conditions of political upheaval. Fasil Giorggis provided more insight concerning the challenges of that period in the interview, and blamed the complicated decision-making processes and bureaucracy for the inability to implement the Baumbachs’ plans and any other housing schemes that were part of the masterplan from 1984-1986.81

23 Although the Baumbachs did not explicitly refer to Charles Polónyi during our interview, their plans can be interpreted as a continuation and specification his designs from 1978 and the masterplan from 1984/1986. Both foresaw the southward expansion of the growing city (the Entoto Mountains pose a natural limitation to the construction activities on the northern side82). The master plan was a complex governance device, a spatial implementation of political reforms, to be applied on different scales and to encompass not only the capital but also the areas surrounding it; urban planning was only one of its three levels.83 One of the Baumbachs’ plans for Mekanissa—the southwestern extension of Addis for ca. 70,000 inhabitants84—depicts the urban structure of one of its quarters described as “Mekanissa 2.” It was to be divided into several “kebele” with neighborhoods being the smallest administrative units introduced by the Derg regime (fig. 7).85 However, on the drawing, the term “kebele” also designates a building, which might have been either a seat of the local administration or of the revolutionary peasant organization tasked with promoting land reform (the farmlands were also included in the plan of the urban quarter). As with the silences of oral history, the visual sources entail ambiguities than cannot be resolved with a straightforward interpretation.
The Mekanissa plan is schematic and geometric, contrasting with a “sketch for a basic arrangement” (fig. 8). It is an abstract of the Baumbachs’ almost anthropological study of the history and topography of the city, situated on a hill-locked plain 2300 meters above sea level. The words “landscape,” “urban forest,” and “gardens” dominate the sketch. It also bears red markings intended to highlight the relief of the terrain and also to reflect the genuine intention, to assimilate architecture and urban planning into the existing topography and vegetation. The imperative phrases on their sketch give vigorous and definite instruction concerning the creation of green areas—conceived as gardens—surrounding the narrow, winding main buildings. The gardens pervading the urban area of the city function here as “windows to landscape,” thus anchoring the cityscape to the surrounding landscape. The East German couple also recommend concealing fences underneath the greenery in an attempt to convey the impression that the gardens would be part of the existing landscape. The succession of gardens throughout the plan is structured into intimate and open spaces, which, according to note on the sketch, are inspired by contrasting concepts of (European) romantic and baroque landscape architectures. These were considered by the Baumbachs as general references for structuring the space, out of the wide variety of different repertoires of landscape planning, rather than blunt imposition of a European paradigm in the Ethiopian context.
Furthermore, like the geometric design for Mekanissa 2, the sketch also suggests making use of particular garden areas as permanent sources for crops in continuation of the century-old practice of cultivating eucalyptus trees in urban forests, which turned the city into a mosaic of green parcels. While speaking about this aspect and stressing the topographical character of Addis Ababa,\textsuperscript{86} the Baumbachs frequently referred to the influence of Menelik II and Italian planners on the city’s urban landscape. Furthermore, they noted that until 1967, the city was populated by local farmers and dominated by local dwellings, the so-called “chika” or a vernacular architecture forming an extensive arrangement of Quonset huts, which contrasted with the more contemporary settlements designed by the Italians as part of their grander vision for developing a modernist city.\textsuperscript{87} Such remarks are in line with their general sensitivity towards historical layers of architecture and urban planning, visible in some of the projects, such as the Fünf Giebel Haus, realized in the GDR prior to their arrival in Addis. A revival of the city’s agriculturally-oriented economy in the Baumbachs’ plans for Mekanissa was not the usual solution recommended by the GDR planners in their international assignments. Although crop areas were, for instance, included in the planning for the extensions of Vinh (Vietnam), alongside industrial sites,\textsuperscript{88} typical plans for new quarters included spaces of leisure such as parks or sport facilities rather than agricultural elements.\textsuperscript{89} However, in case of Addis Ababa, the East German couple explicitly tied their plans in with local traditions and implicitly adapted the aims of the Derg land reform.

Both of them often recalled, in a nostalgic tone, that “Addis Ababa used to be a very green city.” Clearly, they considered green planning to be one of the most important
devices in their concepts for Addis Ababa. Despite that, they never used either the term “garden city” or “green belt.” In the interview, they also voiced a critique of the supposed ignorance of “other European urban planners”—without stating the names—who had worked there and were responsible for forest’s slow “transformation into concrete” and its gradual erasure from the urban’s landscape, the last chapter of this process being the current activities of Chinese contractors, which they observed during their two visits to Ethiopia after 1991. The parallel between their approach and that of Charles Polónyi⁹¹ (fig. 9) appears to be based upon a similar sensitivity towards the local landscape of the city with its ravines and rivers as well as a desire to establish a firm connection between the newly planned areas and existing axes. Still, there is also a noticeable difference, with the Baumbachs’ drawings demonstrating a stronger interest in the particular relief of the terrain; this focus is perhaps due to a more complete understanding and engagement with the topographic tissue of Addis Ababa, which was developed during their extended stay.

Figure 9: Charles Polónyi, Addis Ababa City Center (Ethiopia), 1978


The issue of the connectivity between different historical layers and, coincidentally another important link between the activities of the couple and the history of the development of the Ethiopian capital, came up again in a remark by Peter Baumbach stating that “the British had planned roads leading to nowhere.” By “the British,” he might have meant, first, Patrick Abercrombie (1879-1957), who was in charge of the masterplan of Addis Ababa between 1954 and 1956, and, second, the masterplan by Bolton and Hennessy Partners from 1959. In this context, the design for Mekanissa was a critical engagement with the existing infrastructural axes set during the Italian period, which was subsequently extended by British planners. The plan from 1959
proposed the creation of satellite towns, whereas the Baumbachs (like Polónyi before them) opted for the new extensions directly evolving from the existing areas.

This kind of embedding in the existing structure is also visible in their plans for the Civic Centre that was supposed to be built in direct proximity of the City Hall, designed by Arturo Mezzedimi (1922-2010) and erected in 1961-1964. The structure of the city hall was mirrored in the radial design of the Civic Centre composed alongside multiple semi-concentric lines, which reflected the relief of the slope in the sharp angle adjacent to the Menelik Square between the Churchill Avenue and Eden Street (fig. 10). The complex consisted of several buildings, including a multipurpose cultural and conference hall and two nine-story office towers with steep roofs connected by a lower shopping centre/bazar accessible through multiple gangways (figs. 11 and 12). With its variety of forms and functions, it was the most experimental design by the Baumbachs in Addis. This might be explained not only by the characteristics of that typology—as at this time, these kinds of complexes invited architects to engage in formal experimentation—, but also by the fact that the assignment had no chance of implementation due to financial scarcity.

Figure 10: Civic Centre and its surroundings, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), undated [1987-1990].

Source: Peter & Ute Baumbach.

Figure 11: Longitudinal section of the Civic Centre, Addid Ababa (Ethiopia) undated [1987-1990].

Source: Peter & Ute Baumbach.
Conclusion: “Second World” architects in the “Third World”: the role of the (autobiographical) narrative

As the story of an East German couple’s involvement in the planning of Addis Ababa began with the Karl Marx monument, it may also be brought to a close with it, for it is a paradox. What was regarded as an episode of lesser relevance for Peter Baumbach, has proven to be the work with which his involvement in Ethiopia is mostly associated, at least in German architectural historiography (whereas in the international context, his involvement and that of Ute Baumbach remain largely unknown). This monument seems better suited to fit the Baumbachs into the narrative of “socialist export,” a symbol of ideological “transfer.” We claim that this perspective is reductive and does not acknowledge the actual work of the architects for the City Council and the rationale behind it—which attempted to enmesh the architectural plans with the surrounding environment and integrate the architecture with the existing living practices of the local inhabitants. Another consequence of such discursive focus on the political monument is the fact that the contribution of Ute Baumbach as a co-author of the majority of the projects, apart from the Karl Marx monument, has been disregarded in the historiography.

The planning activities of the Baumbachs in Addis could briefly be summarized as follows: the couple from the GDR was invited to Ethiopia in the late 1980s where they developed urban plans for the City Council and taught at the university. Due to economic and political conditions, their plans remained mostly unrealized and three and a half years later, they returned to Germany. However, the simplicity of this story is deceptive. Thus, our analysis of the Baumbachs’ involvement in Addis Ababa might instead be read as an attempt at adopting a “micro global” perspective for architectural and urban history. This approach is helpful to detect overlooked and marginalized topics, thus making the history of the Cold War architecture more differentiated in terms of scales, regional differences, and temporal frameworks, accounting also for biographic stories, with their specifics and “unusual ways.”
interviews with Peter and Ute Baumbach as well as with Fasil Giorggis, combined with an analysis of plans and drawings, and a broad survey of the literature, make it clear that the East German couple did not develop the whole master plan for Addis Ababa, as has wrongly been stated in some publications. Yet the relevance of the unrealized plans by the Baumbachs becomes evident in conversations with scholars dealing with the built environment of Addis Ababa and its changes within the last thirty years. Their sensitivity towards the local landscape and preference for low-rise housing and mixed use development are understood as a counterpoint to the current development, marked by the quick emergence of high-rises (often erected by Chinese construction firms) and high density of office spaces. In this regard, the contribution by the Baumbachs is an important layer of Addis’s urban palimpsest.

Underneath the whiteprints of the unrealized plans for Addis Ababa lie stories of other members of the Baumbachs’ team yet to be uncovered through oral history research in Amharic, the recovery of which is necessary in order to access a wider group of contemporary witnesses who collaborated with the Baumbachs in the 1980s and who might be able to provide more insight into motivations, exchanges, and tensions within the international team. These perspectives are crucial in avoiding the bias described by Nasr and Volait as “a built-in bent towards antagonistic settings in research, to the detriment of the ordinary negotiated resolutions that take place quietly on a daily basis.” Moreover, these plans represent an important point of reference for a generation of Ethiopian architects and urbanists who were taught by or worked with the East German couple—some of whom are by now influential actors in architectural and urban teaching and practice. In this regard, in-depth interviews with those involved with the Baumbachs, as well as compiled archival research in Germany, are only selected pieces of a larger puzzle that should be complemented and challenged in dialogue with other researchers.

As we demonstrated in this article, there are some limitations while employing an oral history approach in order to understand the activities of the Baumbachs in Ethiopia and how they could be situated within a variety of political and economic contexts. However, we are convinced that this approach offers insights that would not be accessible by any other means, especially in cases when the plans remained unexecuted and there is no material evidence to validate the intentions of the architects.

Aiming to avoid writing a romanticized oral history from afar, we touched upon the gender and power dynamics within the couple and also in relation to the “outside world,” which raise the questions: who is in charge of the (auto-)biographic narrative and how are activities and the oeuvre remembered, historicized and, perhaps, mythicized? In our conversations, Peter Baumbach took center stage and dominated the storytelling; contrastingly, Ute was a more reticent interviewee. It is not for us to decide whether this behavior reflects entrenched societal patterns related to gender role or if it comprises particular personality traces of these two individuals—or perhaps both. Despite her more reserved nature, Ute was however not reduced to a silent role in terms of the actual designs; her equally meaningful contribution to the planning in Addis Ababa was consistently referenced by her spouse and stated in her own comments. Therefore, apart from a standardized set of questions, both sensitivity and time are required in order to fully grasp the nuances of interpersonal relations.

It might be tempting to fill the silences and omissions with one’s own interpretations, yet these would be nothing more than pure speculation. While writing this article, we
frequently realized how easy it would be to turn the Baumbachs’ story into one of supposed complicity with the Derg regime. However, the fact that plans for Mekenissa were never implemented also means that the Baumbachs cannot be directly linked with atrocities of that period, since the implementation of such an urban scheme would have entailed the compulsory relocation of thousands of inhabitants. In general, the process of confronting oral history sources with historiography may quickly become an accusation as (written) sources and testimonies constantly fall short of one another. For this reason, it has been essential not to rely on oral testimonies, but to juxtapose them with the visual sources (e.g. plans and drawings), reading them in combination with current literature on the urban history of Addis Ababa.

As Adrian Forty has observed, consulting an archive is “like consulting the oracle—it doesn’t necessarily reveal what you had hoped, or expected to find, and it speaks in riddles; you have to learn how to listen to the archive, to let it speak to you, before it yields its secrets. And what it hides may be as significant as what it reveals.” Borrowing this metaphor, with its poetic allure, we conclude that speaking with contemporary witnesses can also be likened to a consultation with the oracle. No matter how many secrets are yielded, the process inevitably results in some disappointment. Clearly, gaps and contradictions are an inherent part of the story. Drilling through different sediments of memory with oral history might seem tedious, or riddled with restrictions and biases—but so is the history of urban and architectural planning based on archival sources and mappings of the built environment. Combining the three angles offers more insights, yet even then, the historian cannot attain complete comprehensiveness. Some aspects of the story will forever remain oblique.

NOTES

1. We would like to thank Peter and Ute Baumbach as well as Fasil Giorghis for sharing their stories and their trust. Our colleagues from the Scientific Collections of the IRS, Kai Drewes, Alexander Obeth, Anja Pienkny and Paul Perschke made it possible to access contemporary witnesses and sources in an uncomplicated way. Another colleague, Harald Engler, offered valuable knowledge from this longterm experience of conducting oral history in the context of the former GDR. Our research was supported by the grant of the Henkel Foundation GDR-Architecture Abroad. Projects, Actors and Cultural Transfer Processes (October 2016-October 2018, PIs: Christoph Bernhardt and Andreas Butter), the research trip to Addis Ababa in May 2019 was only possible thanks to the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/CCA Montreal multidisciplinary research programme "Centring Africa." Editors-in-chief of ABE, Johan Lagae, Ricardo Agarez and Tania Sengupta generously shared their insights and critiques which were essential for contextualizing the story of an East German couple in East Africa. Comments from both anonymous reviewers helped us to tackle the methodological challenges. A conversation with Hone Mandefro Belaye from the Concordia University in Montreal added another layer to our reflexions.
We introduced ourselves to the Baumbachs on 18 January 2018, at the opening of the exhibition *Fläche – Körper – Raum. Peter Baumbach über Gebautes, Gedachtes und Gesehenes* (18 January-30 June 2018) at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) in Erkner (Germany). The in-depth guided interview with Peter and Ute Baumbach, with a standardized set of questions, took place over the phone on 17 September 2018. Both authors posed questions. Subsequent conversations, to confirm and contextualize information, were conducted by phone by Monika Motylińska and Phuong Phan in August and September 2019. Aware of the limitations inherent to interviews that are not conducted face-to-face, we abstain from interpreting any non-verbal signals. However, logistical reasons aside, factors such as greater comfort for elderly interviewees when the interviewer is not present in the room speak in favor of interviewing on the phone as a less intrusive method (cf. e.g. Roger W. SHUY, “In-person vs. telephone interviewing,” in James HOLSTEIN and Jaber F. GUBRIUM (eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003, p. 175-193; Vicente M. LECHUGA, “Exploring culture from a distance: The utility of telephone interviews in qualitative research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (QSE), 2012, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 251-268. If not stated otherwise, all information concerning the Baumbachs’ activities in Ethiopia as well as quotes by the East German couple in this article come from the interview on the 17 September 2018. The conversation was not taped, but the minutes were archived as a part of our project documentation (see note 6).

3. In our article, for reasons of consistency we use the spelling “Addis Ababa,” unless in quotes, where “Addis Abeba” might appear.

4. Interview with Fasil Giorghis conducted by Monika Motylińska on the 21st of May 2019 in Addis Ababa. As of 2019, Giorghis has been Chairman of Conservation of Urban and Architectural Heritage at the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction, and City Development (EIABC). In addition, he has his own architectural practice. One of his most prominent projects is the “Red Terror” Martyrs’ Memorial Museum in Addis Ababa (established in 2010).


Oral history of architecture has been investigated in a variety of institutional settings, often in relation to exhibition projects. In the international context, the CCA in Montreal is currently one of the leading institutions establishing oral history approaches for its own collections and for architectural historiography (Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), “Toolkit for Today: Oral History,” URL: https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/59468/toolkit-for-today-oral-history. Accessed 18 November 2019); oral history of the architecture and planning in the former GDR has been archived and analysed by the researchers from the IRS in Erkner since 1992, therefore we have had direct access to archival recordings, minutes and catalogues of questions that we modified for the purposes of the project. However, in our research we consulted also works dealing with oral history approaches not specifically related to architectural history such as: Nancy Mackay, Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive, New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2006; from the Palgrave series on oral history: Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki (eds.), Oral history off the record: toward an ethnography of practice, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013 (Palgrave Studies in Oral History); Shelley Trower (ed.), Place, writing, and voice in oral history, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 (Palgrave Studies in Oral History); Douglas A. Boyd (ed.), Oral history and digital humanities: voice, access, and engagement, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014 (Palgrave Studies in Oral History).


9. However, other drawings and plans, for example for Halbersdorfer Hang in Karl-Marx-Stadt were already donated to the archive as a premortem bequest, Erkner (Germany), IRS archive, C68 Peter Baumbach Vorlass-Findbuch.


12. See Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait (eds.), Urbanism: imported or exported?, Chichester: Wiley Academy, 2003, passim (esp. the contribution by Anthony King).

13. Although it was never explicitly stated, perhaps the fact that both authors of this article come from former Eastern Bloc countries was an additional boon. It had often proven to be a door-opener throughout the two-year project, prompting the architects we interviewed to reminisce about their exchanges with colleagues from Poland or Vietnam.


15. All in all, 20 in-depth interviews and several shorter conversations were conducted in the course of the research project, however in a number of cases, the interviewees decided against disclosing their names or/and giving permission to use the given information in our publications.

16. All the biographic information on Peter and Ute Baumbach come from the CVs submitted to the Architectural Association of the GDR (Bund der Architekten; Erkner Germany, IRS archive; Baumbach, Peter, B2 3651 and Baumbach, Ute, B2 3652, Die Wissenschaftlichen Sammlungen zur Bau- und Planungsgeschichte der DDR).


23. Ibid., p. 326.

24. On negotiating the attitude of the reviewer(s) and accepting the boundaries of the interviewee(s), set in an entirely different cultural context, however, see Pamela

25. We list the projects discussed in this article as authored by Peter and Ute Baumbach according to the alphabetic order of the first names. For the complicated issues of authorship within artistic couples, and on handling uncertainties and oblique elements of biographical stories, cf. Jane ALISON and Coralie MALISSARD (eds.), Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-Garde, Exhibition Catalogue (Metz, Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2018; London, Barbican Art Gallery, 2018-2019), London; Munich; New York, NY: Prestel, 2018.


27. Interview with Heinz Schwarzbach conducted on the phone on 17 September 2018.

28. Christina BUDDE, Mary PEPCHINSKI, Peter CACHOLA SCHMAL and Wolfgang VOIGT (eds.), Frau_Architekt, op. cit. (note 18).


32. Michaela MEISE, Eshi Addis Ababa, Cologne: Walther König, 2016, p. 139 (the author also describes the circumstances of the erection and adaptations of the design by Jo Jastram and Peter Baumbach).


34. Interview with Fasil Giorghis conducted on the 21st of May 2019 in Addis Ababa (see note 4).


43. Interview with Hans Demeter, 23 April 2019, conducted for the ongoing research project Tropical Architecture Made in Bavaria? The Institut für Tropenbau and the Making of Social Infrastructure in Africa, together with Rachel Lee.


49. Erkner (Germany), IRS archive, Peter Baumbach’s resumé, Sign. 3651, Ute Baumbach’s resumé, Sign. 3652.

50. Informal conversations following an invited lecture at the Art Academy Berlin-Weißeensee by Monika Motylińska on 5 December 2019.


64. Anne Fenk, Rachel Lee and Monika Motylińska, “Unlikely collaborations,” op. cit. (note 42). Apart from the two issues of the journal Tropenbaubriefe (Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar, 1986), which are referred to in the literature (e.g. Andreas Butter, “Showcase and window to the world. East German Architecture abroad 1949-1990,” Planning Perspectives, vol. 33, no. 2, 2018, p. 249-269) several other publications were published in the 1980s in Weimar (e.g. Flüchtlingslager für den ANC: Entwurfsvarianten; Ergebnisse des städtebaulichen Ideenwettbewerbes für Studenten der Lehrveranstaltungsreihe Tropen- und Auslandsbau aus Anlaß des Internationalen Jahres Unterkünfte für die Obdachlosen, Oktober 1987, Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar, Weiterbildungsinstitut für Städtebau und Architektur, Weimar: HAB, 1987), which became a hotspot for advanced training programs for foreigners, especially those coming from other CMEA countries like Cuba.

65. For a fictionalized but extensively researched account of that period, see Maaza Mengiste, Beneath the Lion’s Gaze, New York, NY: W.W Norton & CO, 2011.


68. For the reflection on different types of silence and dealing with the “off-the-record” events see: Alexander FREUND, “Toward an Ethics of Silence? Negotiating Off-the-Record Events and Identity in Oral History,” in Anna SHEFTEL and Stacey ZEMBRZYCKI (eds.), Oral history off the record, op. cit. (note 7), p. 223-238.


76. Conversation with Łukasz Stanek on the 26th of February 2018, Erkner (Germany).

77. On some plans spelled as “Mekanisa.”


80. Short research trip to Addis Ababa by Monika Motylińska in May 2019.


82. However, the slopes of the hill have been partially covered with informal settlements in the recent decades (observation during the research trip in May 2019).


84. According to Tufa (Dandena Tufa, “Historical Development of Addis Ababa: plans and realities,” op. cit. (note 73), p. 51) Mekanissa was planned for 70000 inhabitants, the Baumbachs spoke rather of 30000 inhabitants, but this number might as well refer only to Mekanissa 2.


86. Cf. Dandena Tufa, “Historical Development of Addis Ababa: plans and realities,” op. cit. (note 72), p. 28: “Addis Ababa is a good example to show the role of land form; its northern mountain ranges, deep gorges and the hills raised in between the gorges have played a decisive role in shaping the past and present structure of the city.”


89. For instance a plan for the mass housing estate Augustinas in Santiago de Chile by Werner Rösler from 1971 (Erkner (Germany), IRS archive, C 17 10 01); a plan of the mass housing estate in Warschau, Poland, by Karl Kirschner from 1974 (Erkner (Germany), IRS archive, C 42 30 01); urban planning for Tete Matundo in Maputo, Mozambique, by Jörg Streitparth, Horst Baeseler, and Wolfgang Weigel from 1981 (Erkner (Germany), IRS archive, C 01 01 05).


93. As for 2019, this area, designated as Arada Park, is partially used as parking space and a bus station.


99. Conversations with Hone Mandefro Belaye from the Concordia University in Montreal on 9 and 11 December 2019.

100. Which only exists in the architectural discourse, oftentimes not associated with particular names, but generally identified as the 1980s’ planning by the architects from the Soviet Bloc.


103. Wendy James, Donald L. Donham, Eisei Kurimoto and Alessandro Triulzi (eds.), Remapping Ethiopia, op.cit. (note 66).
ABSTRACTS

This article examines the Ethiopian chapter in the careers of Peter and Ute Baumbach, prominent architects from the German Democratic Republic (GDR), by analyzing their previously (mostly) unpublished plans and drawings as well as oral history. In line with Łukasz Stanek’s investigation of the architectures of mondialisation, we combine reflections gathered in the course of research on the mobility of East German architects in an effort to broaden the scope of knowledge about the circulation of planning practices between the “Second World” and the “Global South,” embedded in complex Cold War economic and political contexts. While analyzing Baumbachs’ activities, we confront their narrative with the historiography of urban planning in Ethiopia, where we investigate links and disconnections stated by the protagonists themselves or those traceable in the sources. Using first-person accounts as a starting point for an investigation into developments that in many ways escape the conventional historical record, the story of the East German couple’s involvement in Addis also allows us to reflect on the limitations and biases as well as the benefits of oral history approaches, for further research in the history of architecture and planning beyond Europe.


Estudio del episodio etíope en las carreras profesionales de Peter y Ute Baumbach, pareja de grandes arquitectos de la República Democrática Alemana (RDA), tanto a través de un análisis de planes y dibujos en gran parte inéditos como de fuentes orales. Siguiendo los métodos de investigación desarrollados por Łukasz Stanek sobre las arquitecturas de la mundialización, las observaciones cumuladas a lo largo de investigaciones sobre la movilidad de los arquitectos de Alemania del Este son explotadas para ampliar los conocimientos sobre la circulación de las prácticas en urbanismo entre el Segundo Mundo y el Sur global asociados en los contextos
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Étude de l’épisode éthiopien dans les carrières de Peter et Ute Baumbach, couple d’architectes majeurs de République démocratique allemande (RDA), au travers d’une analyse de plans et de dessins demeurés en grande partie inédits mais aussi de sources orales. Suivant les méthodes de recherche développées par Łukasz Stanek sur les architectures de la mondialisation, les observations rassemblées au cours d’investigations sur la mobilité des architectes est-allemands sont exploitées pour élargir le champ de connaissance sur la circulation des pratiques d’urbanisme entre le Second Monde et le Sud global associés dans les contextes économiques et politiques de la guerre froide. Cette analyse des activités des Baumbach permet de confronter leur propre récit à l’historiographie de l’urbanisme en Éthiopie, en examinant les rapports et les désaccords révélés par les protagonistes eux-mêmes ou ceux livrés par les sources. Par l’utilisation de récits à la première personne comme point de départ d’une enquête sur des processus qui, d’une certaine façon, échappent au souvenir historique conventionnel, l’histoire du rôle joué par le couple d’architectes est-allemands à Addis-Abeba permet également de réfléchir sur les limites et la partialité mais aussi sur les avantages des approches de l’histoire orale dans le cadre de recherches futures sur l’histoire de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme dans les pays hors d’Europe.

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Quoted persons: Baumbach Peter (1940-), Baumbach Ute (1938-)

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