Place and the Formation of Cultural Identity: The Muenster City Library

LINN SONG
Miami University

1. MEMORY, IDENTITY AND THE OTHER

The physical environment of the city is not only "objective" evidence of our existence, but also becomes a manifestation of our (one's) identity, as part of a collective/cultural narrative. However, it is precisely the new, "unconventional" interventions within the urban realm and their inherent relationship with the past, present and future that force us to continually reassess and reinterpret our understanding of place and an individual and cultural identity as a part of it. In this paper, the attempt will be made to examine the particulars of a singular urban intervention, namely the Muenster City Library and its relationship to the cityscape and its inhabitants. By studying the issues of place and identity based on cultural traditions, perceptions and beliefs in Muenster at a small scale through the examination the Library, one can begin to understand the processes of identity formation and perhaps speculate about the effects on the larger whole as it relates beyond the boundaries of our localities, cities and nations.

Aesthetically unusual buildings such as the City Library are too often simply disregarded as narcissistic or disrespectful of the existing fabric of a city. Buildings, which do not mimic the existing forms of their surroundings are often perceived as threatening our sense of place and identity because they seemingly originate from somewhere other than the locality of which they are a part. At the nucleus of this perceived threat to place and identity is the belief in a collective memory, which is a continuous process that controls the creation and/or redefinition of group myths about a shared, cultural past. The city offers itself as one cultural space in which the myths are understood, reinterpreted and renegotiated and the contradictions inherent in these constructed myths are apparent when one examines the existence of asserted differentiation within what is simultaneously celebrated as a homogenous culture, people or nation.

It is often perceived that the Other, as defined as that which is foreign, new, or exotic, has encroached into, and interrupted the territory of "us". Despite a continuous flow of Others into, for example, European or more specifically in the context of this paper German space, there is reluctance to adjust and renegotiate the construction of self and a cultural identity that would reflect a change in the cultural composition of the nation or a specific place. The tendency is rather to resist change based on a "textbook" history that is arguably not one's own. However, it is precisely the Other, who has changed the structure and visuals of social relations in western Europe (e.g., immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and foreigners) and the concerted and ever-escalating efforts of the dominating group to stem the flow of "them", that make it necessary to reassess and rename the place-world. Despite the need, the resistance continues in the tactics that are manifested in public and political discourse about regulating the influx of the Other, as well as in the practice of not only historical preservation but the regulation and planning of the built and unbuilt environments, resulting in the appropriation and embracement of (neo)historical environments and traditions as a form of identity preservation. Michael Sorkin proclaims that "(t)his is nowhere more visible than in . . . architecture, in buildings that rely for their authority on images drawn from history, from a spuriously appropriated past that substitutes for a more exigent and examined present . . . [T]he 'historic' has become the only complicit official urban value. The result is that the preservation of the physical remnants of the historical city has superseded attention to the human ecologies that produced and inhabit them."[1] Through a reliance on historicism and imagery of the past, the transformations in our inner cities that force us to rethink the relationship between the physical landscape and culture as they pertain to the realities of the present, are lost within a superficial discourse on aesthetics of homogeneity and the preservation of territory.

The notion that there exists an inseparable connection to cultural identity and a stable terrain or space has long been the

foundation for the governing concepts about nation, culture and "place". This belief however, has become increasingly problematic amidst globalization in its "best" and worst forms. It is an issue of "Us" and them (the Other), inside and outside, or center and periphery, which enables a city to maintain its sense of identity in an environment without "real" boundaries. The territory understood as inside and center has become a fragile container for the preservation of artifacts, history and memories of the city and its inhabitants, protected by the political practices of Culture.

II. LANDSCAPE AND GERMAN IDENTITY

A dominant or hegemonic culture is rarely passively internalised: commonly it is negotiated, resisted or selectively appropriated by people in every day life. So too, cultural representations (like landscapes) invoke both ideology and power, a power which is often institutionalised by dominant groups in legal discourse."[2]

After the unification of Germany in 1871, the focus of historical interests takes a significant turn, residing in the development of a German identity through the appropriation of history and its artifacts as embodying "German-ness" and Heimat. It was not a question about capturing everyday life in the present, but rather the searching for what once was. The clarity and confidence of "German-ness" and its manifestations in the buildings and artifacts of the physical environment that were shaped and articulated by the Heimatschutzers and the National Socialists, has been rattled by the stormy history of Germany in the 20th century, especially after 1933. Most recently, the traditional definitions of German identity are colliding with that of the new "German-European" and thus remains itself within Germany a controversial "artifact" of the country's cultural tradition that continues to play itself out in the regulation of traditional preservation, planning and both foreign and domestic politics.

German Identities: Landscape and Heimat; Past and Present

When attempting to define the essence of German identity, it is essential to elaborate on the notion of Heimat and its connotations in its historical role in the formation of what constitutes "Germanness". Heimat, a term in the German language and psyche which cannot directly/accurately be translated into the English language – or many others for that matter – obtains meaning and definition through a plethora of subjects (e.g., dance, music, literature) and across boundaries of social and political issues, but often manifests itself through the appropriation of landscape and architecture where it derives meaning from imagery and the artifacts of the physical environment. The modern and foreign are a threat to social harmony and at its roots, Heimat aims to convey a sense of

security and safety, protection, "surveyability" and "boundedness", for which buildings and landscape, as a physical or easily "comprehendible" entities, were optimal political tools to represent the collective products and artifacts which form, bind, and protect German culture.

The concept of Heimat has its origins alongside "Fatherland" as they took on national meaning after the unification of Germany in 1871. A program of saving architecture and landscapes (Heimatschutz) took root within the newly unified Germany, perhaps to give form to this unification in order to fill a perceived need for a collective identity to be established quickly from a collection of previously independent states. Nature, depicted for example in landscape paintings as peaceful and pristine, was utilized as a tool to appeal to the masses for preserving pre-industrial German values, including emphasizing the local and small scale while rejecting the city as a product of the evils of "international" modernization. Heimatschutz promoted traditional building forms, folk custom, nature conservation, as well as landscape planning, romanticized "nature" and the countryside as "ideological instrument(s) of a bourgeois conservatism that feared for its power, (and) whose purpose was a defence of the status quo".[3]

Preservation of visual ensembles and regulation of aesthetics were used as a strategy (and still is) to create a unified, homogenous, picturesque village in the landscape or district within the city. The "regulated" aesthetic played an essential role to subvert individualism and its foundations in favor of a harmonious, unified society. In the representations of villages and landscapes, "details [were] consciously omitted, and the broad, horizontal perspective had the effect of reducing an entire town to secondary status in the landscape"[4] Not only was the human thus taken out of the picture but also, this strategy of representation underscored the built environment as an image/ideal picturesquely set into the landscape; simply blurring any evidence of subversion or non-conformity.

During the period of National Socialism preceding WWII, the National Socialists succeeded in "confiscating" Heimat to advance their political agenda that was fixated on the idea of a supremacist German culture based on tradition and historicism. In the 1930's, the formation of identity was no longer limited to imagery and representation of landscapes, buildings or cities, but extended to actual physical alterations of artifacts and thus history. In Cologne, from 1933-1938, the Martinsviertel was reconstructed to conform to a non-existent history. A total of sixty-five buildings were demolished and many others altered or even moved. Aesthetically "conforming" parts of the rubble were reattached as decoration on many new or restored buildings. Through the manipulation of memory, history was made more harmonious and cleaner than the reality of the two previous decades. Mere representation through imagery was forced to share the stage. Identity became a commodity, to be produced and forcibly consumed by Germans. Although the

image was now "re-attached" to its subject through its true, physical existence, the physical reality was transformed into a distorted, disconnected fiction. A collective identity was coerced and reinforced through the regulation of image consumption.

At the conclusion of WWII, Germany was once again faced with the task of redefining or reinventing a collective identity. The bombed out cities were removed from representation, thus leaving once again the "natural" landscape as an essential element to grasp as the spring of Heimat feelings. Ironically, in post-war Germany, modernization and technology became essential elements, which would aid in the formation of the new German identity. The images of Heimat were represented separate or apart from the physical reality of post-war Germany and instead of destroying nature, modernization was now there not only to help save it, but also enable one to drive or fly or take a train to actually experience it.

Perhaps the most significant and new factor of the post-war period, was the concept of a unified and integrated Europe. The realization of a united Europe was essential not only because it encouraged Germans to rethink and redefine their identity, but because it was the recognition of Europe as an "other" — an entity that was inherently different from Germany based on its cultures and histories — but one that could and would have a significant influence on integration rather than segregation on German culture, politics, and identity by extending or erasing the *traditional* borders which confined the territory of "German-ness".

The concept of Heimat throughout the "histories" of Germany has been intimately tied to the formation of identity. Martin Walser called Heimat "the prettiest name for backwardness".[5] Ultimately, Heimat is an ideology which artificially pits community against urbanity, familiar against the foreign and the natural against the built as a political tool of exclusion. Heimat and its institutional offspring (e.g., historic preservation) encouraged a nostalgic, irrational and emotionally driven tie to the state, its landscape and a purified culture. The appropriation of the physical environment in the form of landscape and architecture encouraged a bonding with the earth and conveyed a sense of spiritual rootedness/belonging, as well as the values of timeless beauty and permanence.

Through homogenous imagery and representation, Heimat simultaneously obscured the true differences that lay between small local worlds and the larger nation they were a part of and emphasized and exaggerated differences outside of the nation's boundaries. Broad views and images of the landscape or singular physical artifacts of the city burdened with carrying the keys to a collective identity and touting the essence of place were potent political and social tools of memory manipulation utilized by the preservationists, the powerful and the influential. Identity had become a sort of science fiction created through a narrative spoken by historic sites and cityscapes/landscapes that

froze a sense of place and made it dependent on the existence of artifacts as a proof of its legitimacy.

In the early development of a unified Germany, Heimat asserted that the modern and the foreign must be defeated due to their threat to social harmony. In reality however, Heimat was repression and restriction presented as an ideal of cultural as well as environmental homogeneity and harmony, masked behind a shroud of permanence and security. As a result, Heimat, through its politics of exclusion which includes the visual purification of our environment through architectures of nostalgia and its subsequent appropriation as a static element of identity, attempts not only to eradicate past influences upon a given culture but denies a future confrontation with the Other not identified with the collective. The emerging state of ethnic and cultural multiplicities within Germany is perceived as threatening the stability and clarity of the collective culture and therefore the existence, or at least a sense of belonging for the individual. It appears that this is precisely the reason one is searching for identity in the past, the last bastion of perceived coherency and cohesiveness, for "[p]erception of the past is determined by the needs of the present and is functionalised as a counterpoint to the difficulties of existence".[6] Based on the present political and cultural debates, it cannot be denied that Heimat continues to be an essential element in the identity formation of Germany from the local to national level. The challenge of the future is rooted in the formation of a progressive, individual identity that embraces a dynamic definition of a collective, which is not bounded by geographical or national "space".

III: MUENSTER: POLITICAL PROCESSES AND IDENTITY FORMATION AFTER WWII

The physical patterns of a city's evolution reveal characteristics of the culture of which it is a part. The history of the evolution of Muenster aids in establishing an understanding of the contemporary perception of Muenster's identity, the sociological and political structures that have formed it, and the forces which preserve and/or demolish the city in the continuation of a collective narrative and identity formation/preservation. Over the course of Muenster's history, it is the period around the turn of the 19th / 20th century that is for many reasons significant in understanding the role of landscape and architecture in the formation and preservation of a "German" identity. This period marks the unification of Germany and brought with it the establishment of the Heimatschutz movement and the quest for a collective German narrative. It also marked the moment when Muenster began more extensively expanding outside the "boundaries" of the old city wall, or Promenade, "transforming the traditional boundaries between inside and outside of a town into the contradictory relationship between the city center and its periphery . . . "[7], emphasizing the conflict of "us" versus "them".

Confrontations with Modernity

During WWII, over 91% of the building substance of Muenster inside of the Promenade ring was destroyed and over 95% of the immediate area around the munster/cathedral (the former original monastery enclave), was obliterated. During post-war reconstruction, the rebuilding of the Prinzipalmarkt (the "heart" of Muenster) was an essential undertaking in the attempt to recreate a city which no longer physically existed. The Prinzipalmarkt, the main market place once lined with elegant, ornate gabled merchant houses as well as the city hall and flanked by the neo-gothic Lamberti Church constructed over the course of some 400 years, was the central focus of Muenster's, then idealogically radical, postwar rebuilding program. The two extremes of postwar reconstruction were manifested in the rebuilding of Warsaw (historical re-construction) and Rotterdam (radical departure from historical substance) but were not realized in any of the cities of postwar Germany. Contrary to other German cities, Muenster's politicians chose a more "radical" path of reconstruction, which leaned upon a "Warsawian" model and aesthetics of the past (however, in Muenster a random point in time was used to base reconstruction upon and not the status just before the war). Arguably, the decision to follow such a course of action meant avoiding the confrontation with history and coming to terms with the inherent problems carried with it. Since this "historical" reconstruction of its city core, Muenster has been occupied with "defending" it along with the new "old" image of the city against the "evils" of modernism and postmodernism that threaten to sever the fragile visual link to the medieval, or at least pre-WW II past.

Fig. 1. Prinzipalmarkt in Muenster Germany (photo by the author).

Muenster, dedicated to its self-declared reputation as a cultural center, was the first city in Germany to build a new theater complex (Stadttheater) after the war. The conservative new design was illuminated through the comments about the project that emphasized history, aesthetics and historic imagery as carriers of meaning: "[despite poverty, new buildings should be beautiful reminders of what once was]."[8] Those opposed to the Reconstructionists' design however, asserted that it was simply

a bleak indication of the aimlessness and helplessness of many who were too cowardly to initiate new solutions.[9] Soon after the original design was presented by the city, the Architektenkammer [Guild of Architects] became involved in demanding that alternative proposals be accepted to be judged by a third party commission of experts. A new design by Deilmann, von Hausen, Rave und Ruhnau (DvHRR) was chosen among five entries and debates quickly arose that were centered primarily around the aesthetics of the "foreign" proposal of DvHRR.

Fig. 2. Populist rhetoric was aimed at demolishing the Stadttheater even before it was built (photo by the author).

Populists strategies were utilized by the Reconstructionists by questioning the authority of the "experts", the age of the young architects, the suitability of the site itself, the designs disrespect for the surrounding churches, and the city's commitment to a "history sympathetic" reconstruction. The politicians countered by downplaying the modern aesthetics, underscoring the benefits to the city and its inhabitants, and the importance of the project at the local, regional and even national level as well as emphasizing the efficiency and objective quality of the design in regards to functionality. The significance of the theater as Germany's first since the war, its aesthetics reflecting a new democracy and thus its importance in asserting a local identity that carried over into a regional and national presence was underscored in the political processes, which drove the defense and completion of the now classic, 1950's theater project. The City Theater was "[not like a museum for art lovers or a swimming pool for swimmers . . . it was about the city itself]."[10]

In 1974, Muenster's next confrontation with "modernity" presented itself in the form of a seemingly harmless piece of modern sculpture by the American artist, George Rickey. The city's art commission, concerned that the general, conservative attitude of the city's inhabitants towards modern art was detrimental to Muenster's image as a whole, determined that the purchase of a piece of modern, abstract sculpture would be an appropriate use of available funds.[11] The local newspapers published a photograph and story about the plans to purchase the sculpture, which ignited a six-and-a-half month long battle over art, aesthetics, local patriotism, and economics. The citizens of Muenster felt "terrorized" by the coercion and imposition of "taste" by the city's art commission and politicians, and bitterly expressed their disapproval of the intentions to buy and erect the Rickey sculpture in a small city park.

Fig. 3. Today. Rickey's three squares rotate silently and unassuming in an urban green space (photo by the author).

Fig. 4. Oldenburg's "Pool Balls" (in background) are yet another silent witness to the battles with modernity (photo by the author).

Many of the protests took on the form of letters written to the local newspapers. which criticized the sculpture e.g.. as an "embarrassment" and a "tasteless 'thing'" that would "[ruin the picturesque image of the city]".[12] Despite much continued criticism and a complicated chain of events in which attempts were made to silence public dissent and involved the purchase of the sculpture by the State Bank rather than the city. the sculpture was bought and erected in May 1975.

The reactions and the protest by the general public regarding the purchase and installation of the Rickey sculpture simply underscored the belief by the art commission. a number of politicians and the state museum director that the inhabitants of Muenster could benefit greatly from a "lesson" in modern art (sculpture). Thus. the State Museum. with the support of the city. curated the internationally acclaimed sculpture exhibition of 1977. The concept of the exhibition included a comprehensive look at the development of modern sculpture in the 20th century by examining historical precedents. site unspecific sculpture and objects which were to be commissioned especially for the exhibition. by e.g.. Richard Serra. Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys. Claes Oldenburg and Richard Long.

The exhibition was met with mixed reactions. Globally. the show was a great success and brought the provincial town of Muenster into the limelight of the international art scene. However. many of the locals refused to engage themselves with the unfamiliar "objects" and ignited and catapulted a new wave of protest and disapproval into public discourse. Printed criticism in the newspapers and even physical attacks (e.g.. in the form of graffiti) upon the individual installations were exercised freely. The climax of protest manifested itself in July 1977 as a group of around 200 people. mostly students. attempted to dislodge one (of three) of Oldenburg's 11 ton concrete "Pool Balls" and push it into the Aa Lake. The atmosphere was described as similar to a "civil war" and police in riot gear were called in to disperse the crowd.

The installation survived the assault and was ironically purchased by the city at the conclusion of the exhibition. The Pool Balls now stand as both another reminder of the turbulent

history of identity formation in Muenster. but as a present-day icon of the city as well.

The Muenster City Library

[The over-sized chunk of concrete . . . is not a grain silo . . . Being built on this site is the most modern asylum ever for public books: Atom bomb and radiation-proof as well as outrageously costly].[13]

The new City Library . . . if outside the Promenade Ring could present an enrichment for the city: but. in the historical city center it is completely out of place and is contributing to the loss of identity. which Muenster is suffering.[14]

Protest and disapproval once again surfaced in 1987 as the plans and model of Bolles-Wilson's competition-winning entry for the Muenster City Library were presented to the public. The aesthetic of the proposed Library was a topic which occupied many conversations and disputes and would continue to do so from the conception to construction and completion of the project. The general public refused to acknowledge the sensitivity of the new Library to its context by avoiding to see past their own preconceived images. for the contextuality of the Library did not depend on the simplistic reproduction of neo-medieval imagery to acknowledge the past. A new visual and spatial axis, created by the division of the building into two parts. re-organizes the hierarchies of the urban fabric. extending to and drawing in the surroundings. Additional decisions regarding the form and detailing defer to the city. underscoring and enhancing the importance of the context in which the library stands. The configuration of the small plaza at the library entrance (squares/plazas were not a part of the original medieval city planning) creates not only a transitional entry for the library and terrace for the library café. but it embraces the neighboring Krameramtshaus and incorporates the long historic side façade as an important edge and front which had not originally been "exposed" due to the configuration of the urban block. There is a general absence of "staticity": the articulation of the façade, the detailing of the paving along the Buecherei-gasse and the ambiguous forms of the copper roofs/walls deny a

buildings of the Prizipalmarkt. there is seemingly an inherently "German" history which is conveyed through these images and artifacts. Thus. the majority of Germans could identify with this popular image while none of the "other" ethnicities could identify themselves with it and feel that this image of the city is completely "alien" to their feelings of identity and representation.

The cognitive mapping exercise underscored the differences in defining identity with local imagery. Cognitive maps generate an image from which we understand and interpret our environment[17] and while the popular icons in the center of the Muenster cityscape dominated many of the images drawn by Germans (Prinzipalmarkt-64%. the Cathedral and Lamberti Church-57%. the Promenade-27%). those of "other" ethnicities were devoid of these icons. Place and identity are composed of collective images as well as very individual. personal ones and the city provides us with an organizational framework in which our experiences are choreographed. However. one must question who controls this framework and for what purpose. As one begins to comprehend the power of historic representation and imagery in defining or manipulating the boundaries of "place" and identity. it becomes evident how it was used as a tool of the Heimat movement and the NS. and continues to be used as a powerful political and economic tool in current identity formation in a global as well as regional context.

The majority of respondents who criticize the library as being insensitive to its context (many who have since changed their opinions about the building). based their opinion on the unique aesthetic of the "unusual" (many said "ugly") building. perhaps underscoring the notion that acceptance is sometimes a long process of confrontation. engagement and understanding of the Other. The contradictions prevalent in many returned surveys show that defining how one perceives and then judges her/his environment — or specifically a piece of architecture is a complex process in which individual preferences as well as collective/social influences play major roles. Buildings affect the way we perceive a city but our own. personal experiences in fact *give* meaning to our environment. A progressive sense of place *is* embedded in the cultural. physical, experiential and psychological aspects of location but is simultaneously unbounded. for trajectories of the Other ensure a continual state of flux.

Over the course of seven years since its completion. the Library has altered the way people use the city. People come in. store their fruits and vegetables in the free lockers after a shopping spree or come in at lunchtime or after work in order to check-out a few books. have a coffee. read a local or international paper or magazine. surf the internet. browse a wide selection of pamphlets and information. or simply meet friends. It has become a truly democratic and public space where chance meetings and social interaction take place. The function of the building has become quite ambiguous through the appropria-
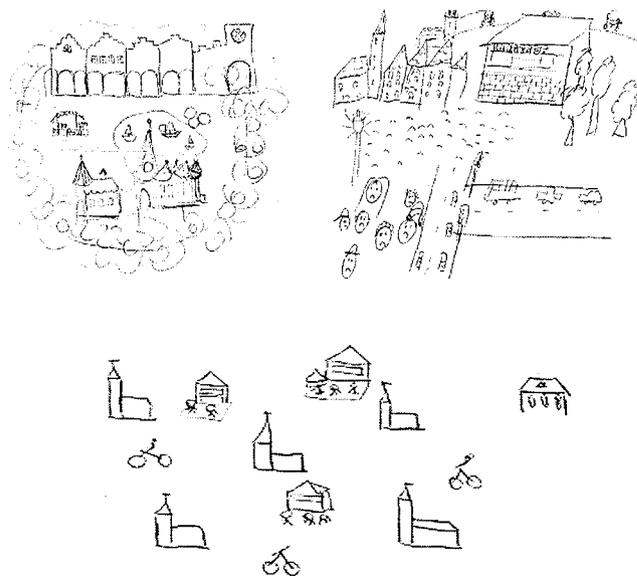

Fig. 7. Clockwise from top left: Territory: Most interestingly to note is the (incorrect) depiction of the Aasee and Oldenburg's "Pool Balls' within the "boundaries" of the Promenade. The contents of territory have been re-defined. Consumerism: a popular department store chain is at the heart of Muenster according to this foreigner; surrounded by traffic. the typical imagery of Muenster (Prinzipalmarkt) and frowning faces. Homogeneity: This foreigner depicts a Muenster of identical churches and houses/buildings. Of note is the synagogue, which is somewhat detached from the mass of the map, singled out perhaps as a source of personal identity.

tion of many individuals and groups. vanishing into the background of everyday life. It is thus, not only the acceptance of differences and multiplicities on the part of the citizens which are essential in nurturing a sense of a heterogeneous yet communal identity — which offers the opportunity for everyone to extract a part for themselves — but also the ability of the building itself to accept a multiplicity of uses. functions and meaning.

The responses of the questionnaire suggest that although many perceive the Library as ideally belonging to the periphery, others. especially those who work and use the library. have embraced it as a significant part of the city core or of *the* City. The wide acceptance of the Library by the employees[18] supports the assumption made before the execution of the questionnaires that those who work in the Library are more likely to be aware of. and appreciate the architecture. because it is a major part of their everyday lives and experiences. The "knowledge" which is acquired from the building can indeed affect the way in which one perceives. recognizes and reacts to one's space in the world. Thus. it is the emergence of authentic relations or the emergence of new meanings in the building and city that evolve through confrontation and engagement with the building and city fabric rather than "just" the building/object
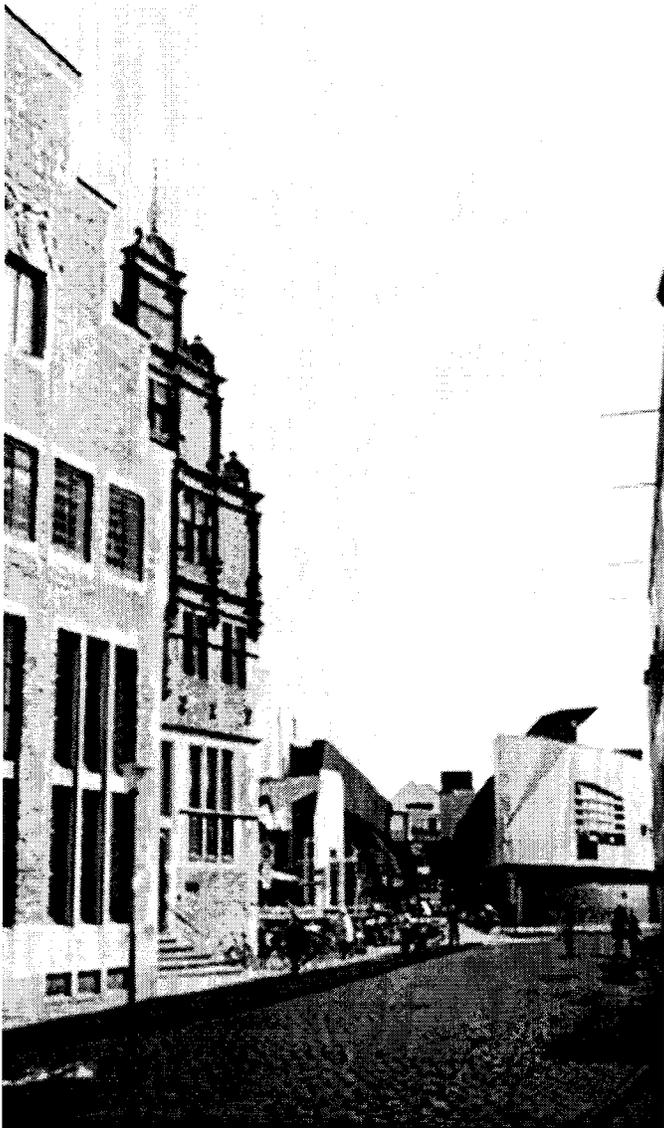
Fig. 6. The entry terrace and café (photo by the author).

Library and the cultural and urban context of which it is a part made Muenster and the library a seemingly ideal location for exploration. Not only has the Library contributed aesthetically to a more diverse urban environment, it has, through its function and location adjacent to the Prinzipalmarkt, also helped diversify the way the "historic" core is used, introducing once again, urbane and culturally significant social functions into "public space". The library thus, offers a counterweight to the purely consumption-oriented functions and spaces of the Prinzipalmarkt. Also, in contrast with other, seemingly comparable examples of visually unique urban interventions such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Frank Gehry) or the Stadthaus in Ulm (Richard Meier), the library is as a public building whose primary function is for the general public and not economically based. In other words, access is unrestricted and the library does not contribute to the economic prosperity of the city or any particular citizen and was not designed by "famous" architects with "star-allure". Thus, the potential for acceptance of the library, based on recognizability, economic gain or other tangential concerns could be reduced to a minimum.

Fig. 5. View from the Lamberti Church past the Krameramtshaus (photo by the author).

clear and cohesive reading, but rather rely on an inclusion of the contextual whole to enable comprehension of the new urban condition. The library weaves itself into the city similar to the manner in which the complex layering of histories and physical artifacts are embedded within the urban realm.

V. THE MUENSTER CITY LIBRARY: A CASE STUDY[15]

One of the intentions of the following case study of the Muenster City Library is to expose how meanings and perceptions of a building can change depending on use and engagement as well as the role of architecture as a means of individual and collective representation. The circumstances surrounding the conception, design and building of the City
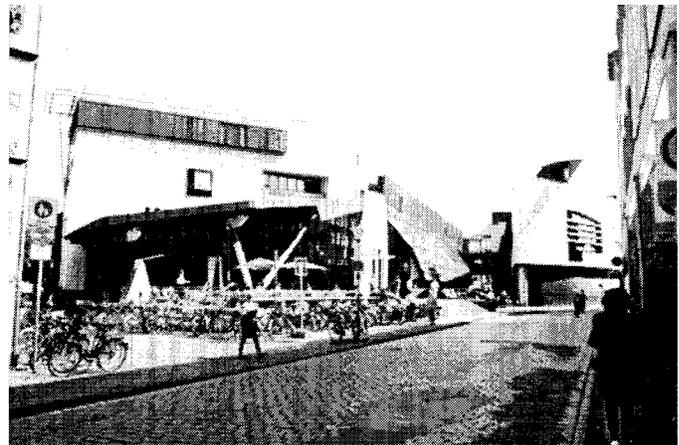
Architecture: Imagery and Identification

Two groupings of the participants examined[16] in order to correlate place and identity relative to general intensity of use of the building and possible differences at a cultural level. Commonalities through all groups exist in regards to the importance of "meaning in architecture." About 80% of all participants thought buildings should "speak to them". In judging their own personal environments, ranging from the exterior of their house/apartment to their neighborhood, over 60% feel at least to some extent, that the exterior of their house and/or their street is an important part of their identity. As the scale increases to neighborhoods, a majority still feels that their street still represents a part of "who they are". When the scale moves to the city as a whole and one then considers the popular image of the city with its cathedral, churches and neo-medieval

itself, which truly define a sense of place and identity. Within the boundaries of territory, there exists other voices, bodies, forms and worlds whose presence can be suppressed through the manipulation and sustenance of politics, selected imagery and representation. It is thus the individual experience which must allow the Other to emerge, to transgress boundaries which enclose and suffocate, and open up possibilities within the urban realm of experience. Place and identity are determined not only by the experiential reality, but by the physical as well.

VI: CONCLUSION: DISCOVERING PLACES AND IDENTITIES OF THE FUTURE

[The form of the city] must be plastic to the perceptual habits of thousands of citizens, open-ended to change of function and meaning, receptive to the formation of new imagery. It must invite its viewers to explore the world.[19]

Yi-Fu Tuan wrote that place is necessarily static and unchanging.[20] However, we cannot freeze time and thus, if we understand place as a static concept, we distance ourselves more and more from the present as our fixed understanding of place moves farther and farther into "history". The often prevalent myth that the local traditions are deep and eternal while globalization holds within it only the shallowness of the moment,[21] has led us to equate the new with the Other; with less embedded, superficial global forces and the old with the local, the authentic or resistant. However, in order to remain "connected" to the past *and* present, "the global sometimes has to be brought down to earth, the local has to be brought up to the surface, to be demystified."[22] As the Other transgresses the edges of territory and place and as the local and global interact, cultural identity must be continually reinterpreted and reordered. The cultural and historical diversity found in our modern cities are becoming resistant to explanations traditionally employed about identity and place. The realities of present-day place, for example, in Muenster and Germany speak of hybridities, not purities, as the "either-or" clarity of "Germanness" must give way to "both-ands" of a "difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion."[23]

The dexterity of culture allows a city to move to different rhythms and diverse beats. Thus, if we can conceive of the land, our cityscapes and "place" as continually metamorphosing entities rather than static ones reliant on the past, and as active and generative forces, a progressive and tolerant sense of place, identity and culture can be created or activated. Bolles-Wilson's type-less building, a piece of a cultural framework, does not dictate and is not fixed or prescribed in an already existing history, but rather functions as a venue in and around which new practices, interactions, confrontations and conflicts will take place, allowing histories and cultures to evolve. A sensitive work of architecture such as the Bolles-Wilson's Muenster City Library is controversial because it provokes and moves us. It

calls upon us to reassess our image/sense of identity and place as manifested in our cities and landscapes. It brings to light what social, economic and political practices and processes are involved in the shaping of our lands, our cityscapes and our cultures and entices us to consciously link place and identity with the wider world, the global and the local, and to thus reinterpret and modify our existing positions towards ourselves, our city and our culture. Architecture, free of historic and aesthetic precepts, together with a progressive sense of place possess the potential and power to create an urban realm in which our interactions, experiences and interventions can continually modify, transform and regenerate us, for the act of erecting borders and the construction of distinct categories disrupts what is inherently continuous.

NOTES

[1] Sorkin, Michael, ed. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1999. p. xiv.

[2] Duncan, James, and David Ley, eds. *Place/Culture/Representation.* London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 11-12.

[3] Rollins, William. "Heimat, Modernity, and Nation," in *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging.* eds. Hermand and Steakley. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1996. p. 93.

[4] Ibid. p. 97.

[5] Wickham, Christopher J. *Constructing Heimat in Post-war Germany.* New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999, p. vi.

[6] Ibid. p. 66.

[7] Ibid. p. 184.

[8] Resing, Volker. *Der Theaterneubau in Muenster: Kulturpolitische Konflikte 1949-1956.* Muenster: Verlag Regensberg, 1999, p. 29 (my translation from German).

[9] Ibid. p. 20.

[10] Ibid. p.102 (my translation from German).

[11] Schemann, Vera. "Wie die Muensteraner Ihren Rickey Lieben Lernten . . .", pp. 6-7. This is a work that traces the history of the battle over the George Rickey sculpture written by a gymnasia student in Munster, which was awarded a national prize in historic documentation.

[12] Ibid. pp. 11-17, 39 (my translation from German)

[13] Helmut. "Halleluja — Betonierte Buccherbude oder Silo fuer die Maisheiligen? [Concrete Shack for Books or a Silo for the Corn Saints?]". *Westfaelische Nachrichten* (local newspaper in Muenster), 17, April, 1992 (my translation from German).

[14] Kemper, Heinrich in a "reader's letter" to the *Westfaelische Nachrichten*, 21, August, 1993 (my translation from German).

[15] The questionnaires and cognitive mapping exercises as well as interviews were conducted by the author in December 2000/January 2001 in Muenster, Germany. The questionnaire (from 625 distributed questionnaires, 238 were completed and returned) included 52 questions sorted into sections pertaining to respondents' background, perceptions of Muenster, architecture and definitions of "German" architecture/culture, and the Muenster City Library.

[16] GROUP1: library employees, library users, politicians, residents in the immediate vicinity of the library and general public (residents and visitors) and GROUP 2: Ethnic groups (German and Others)

[17] Downs, Roger M. and David Stea. *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping.* New York: Harper & Row, 1977. p.68.

[18] While 23% of library employees initially found Bolles-Wilson's new library "ugly" (the highest percentage among all groups), today it is a mere 6.5% (now the lowest). An overwhelming 94% of library employees see the library as an important site in Muenster and would, or already have shown it to

visitors, family, friends and acquaintances (85% of Library users and 87% of politicians). 90% of library employees knew who the architects of the building are and 78% of them feel that the library is contextually sensitive.

[19] Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960, p. 119.

[20] Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977. p.179.

[21] Hannerz, Ulf. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge, 1996. p. 28.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Intentions in Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press 1965, p. 181. Here Norberg-Schulz paraphrases Robert Venturi's "phenomenon of 'Both-and' in architecture" in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. p. 23.