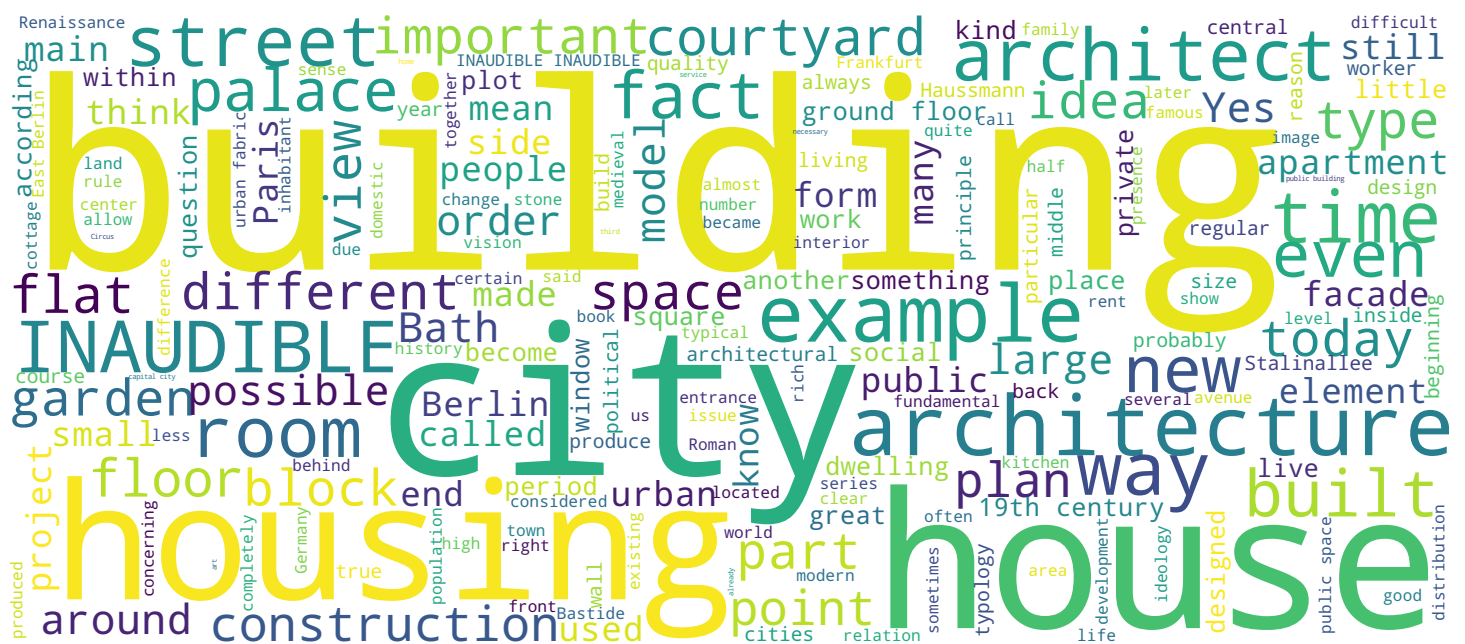


a Housing and Cities course video



EPFL





In October 1949, Berlin was declared the capital of the German Democratic Republic GDR; an idea that also became a true principle of urbanism. In order to make Berlin compatible with the image of a socialist capital city, it was necessary to house the population rendered homeless, due to the destruction of the war. From 1950 on the east sector which inherited most of the historic monuments aimed to make a tabula rasa of the Prussian heritage. Many modifications took place. For example the demolition of two important buildings in the city center. First, the Berliner Stadtsschloss, the city Castle which was damaged in the war, demolished and then replaced by the People's Palace. The Palast der Republik. Secondly, the Bauakademie built by Karl Friedrich Shinkle and which was replaced by the GDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The most celebrated and most spectacular demonstration of East German open politics and housing were Stalinallee, access of the socialist city and destined to become an avenue of prestige located in the prolongation of Alexanderplatz. The project began in 1953. Later, after the so-called destalinisation, it was called Karl Marx Allee.

Notes

Summary



0m 26s



The street was conceived as a model of reconstruction beginning with the clearing of the bombing debris and removing the traces of the Old City. This new access became the true heart of the capital city, generating numerous new quarters around it. In the history of architecture, the Stalinallee is considered as an example of socialist realism. This powerful architectural ensemble was designed to instigate pride in the population and as a demonstration in relation to what was happening in the western part of the city. Stalinallee is 1.8 kilometres long and around 100 metres wide, constructed between 1953 and 1959. Since the constructed border contained housing, it was also a key residential complex, conceived as a palace for workers and punctuated by public buildings such as a sports hall. This long avenue re-establishes Berlin's prewar urban fabric with blocks 250 meters long the volumes themselves a regular and understated, since the accent is on the construction of a representative urban space. The buildings, in particular the residential palaces are inspired by the representative Moscow model. They were mainly designed by Hermann Henselmann who was an ex colleague of Sharon that decided to stay in East Berlin when Sharon moved to the west.

Notes

Summary

1m 57s





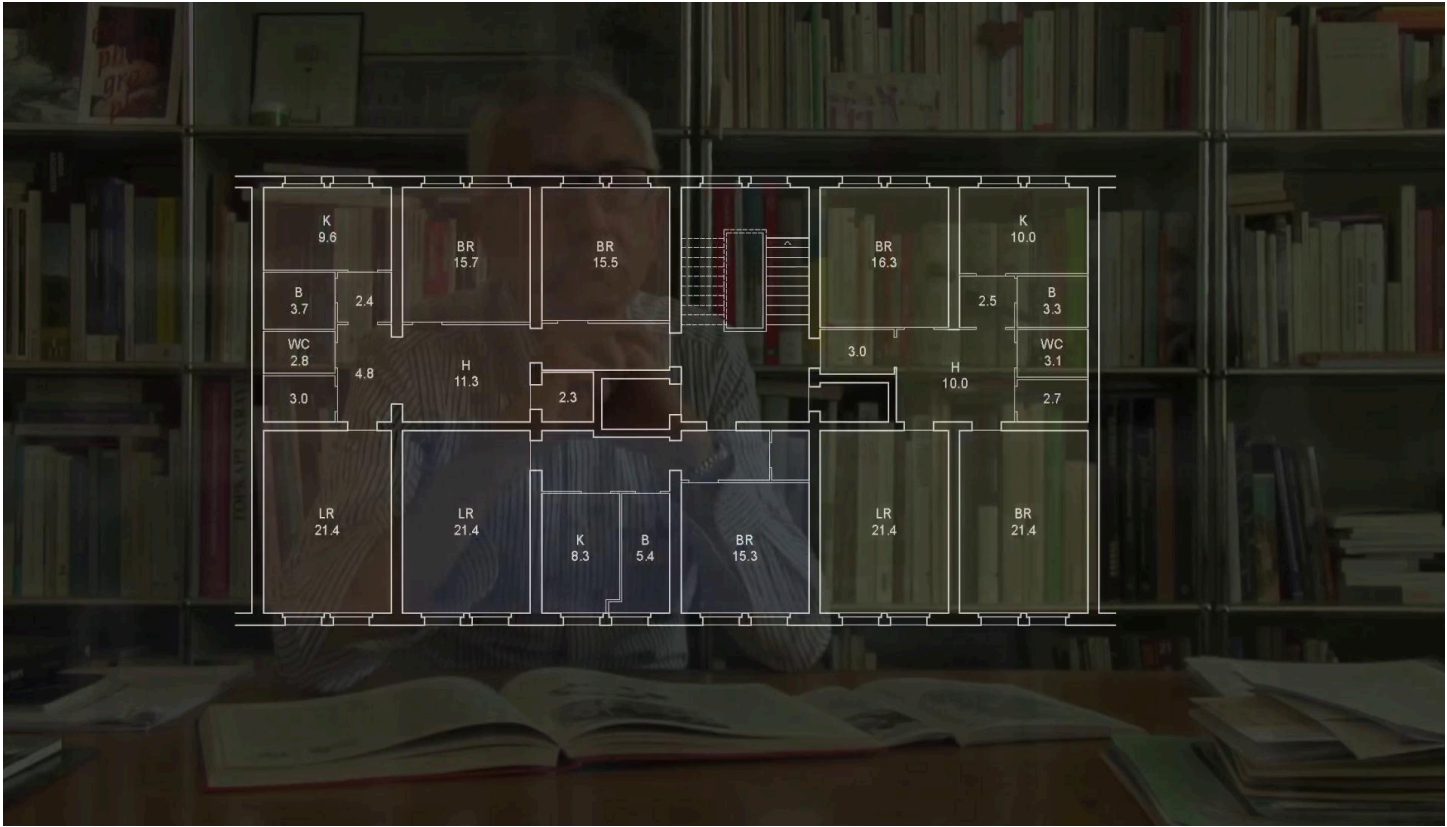
Originally, the buildings were to serve as a model for the construction of East Berlin. Expensive and ostentatious materials were used such as ceramics, granite and sandstone. But it quickly became clear that these buildings could not serve as models for urban reconstruction because they were too expensive. Instead from 1955 on, the socialist principles of industrialized architecture and prefabricated form were manifest through the Plattenbau construction type where the assembly of prefabricated elements was introduced on the basis of predetermined unit types. The outline of this axis was drawn by Eugen Hagmann in the first competition. But it was the chief architect of East Berlin, Hermann Henselmann who was given the task of designing this avenue. The leading socialist concept of the city diverged markedly from the Athens charter and adhered instead to the 16 principles of urbanism laid down during the voyage to Moscow in 1950. Even though the concept of the end of the traditional city gained international currency the GTA charter preserved the traditional city as the culturally richest urban form. However, in the first period, Henselmann was influenced by projects in the tradition of the modern movement.

Notes

Summary

3m 29s





The residential building he built on the verbal visa in Berlin in 1951 marked the change. Here, Henselmann realized the fusion of classical elements borrowed from Friedrich Shinkel with the modern luxurious housing type. This was the prototype that unified all the desired qualities. Therefore, Henselmann became the chief architect of the Stalinallee. Unlike the parallel Hansaviertel project in West Berlin, the aim of the Stalinallee project was not to study different typologies materials or construction systems. Obtrusively, from typological point of view, the Western experimentation is rich, because you can imagine starting from a building within a park, you can really experiment different kind of orientation, different distribution and the most critical point concerning the Stalinallee is the fact that, from a very typological point of view, the apartments were very comfortable for the time, but very repetitive. And we could say today rigid in the plan. That's the reason why in the publication devoted to Stalinallee, it's difficult to find the plans of the building. But all the books insisted on the very prestigious and representative image, on the ensemble, on the urban sector.

Notes

Summary

4m 58s





Generally the flats have three rooms with a bathroom, internal toilets and later telephone and central heating. The size was around 70 square metres. The standard generally corresponded to the dream of clean and heated accommodation and to the main socialist idea of a healthy city for all. The structural system was not adapted to typological combinations. But two repeated units in order to accommodate workers and housing of a good standard. The lack of typological variety was due to ideology, but more importantly to economy. However, attention was paid to the entrances which were generous often double height spaces. Prefabrication and repetition are the parameters that nevertheless permitted East Germany to produce an architectural ensemble which had a phenomenal impact both on the city and on the collective imagination. The buildings were finished in a manner typical for socialist realism. Today, we would call them monumental. The slender row of housing which continues all the way along the boulevard is complemented by vertical accents. Decorative neoclassical elements and historical references such as the double Doms of INAUDIBLE imported to Frankfurter Tor were added systematically.

Notes

Summary

6m 46s





acknowledgements
the MOOC team would like to thank the residents of Berlin for their warm welcome, as well as the people who have generously allowed us to use their image and video contributions

The avenue is punctuated with public buildings, theaters, cinema, cafes, restaurants and gardens. The street is generally lined with commerce on the ground floor which is placed either perpendicular to the housing facade or projecting out at ground floor level, in which case they create terraces of promontories at first floor level, which gives the buildings an intermediate scale. Until the middle of the sixties of last century Western culture used to criticize very strongly the architecture and also the ideology which actually produced the Kar-Marx-Allee. But around the middle of the 60s, Aldo Rossi was probably the first architect celebrating the quality of this way of building the city. Naturally once again, we are dealing with two very different ideological positions about architecture, about the city. And naturally, Rossi underlines the quality of the Stalinallee because probably there was a certain amount, a sort of provocation in his state. But it is true that the traditional European city still exists in a way in the eastern part.

Notes

Summary

8m 13s

