

LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND DEMOCRACY: PLANNING, APPROPRIATING, AND EXPERIENCING THE MUNICH OLYMPIC PARK AND VILLAGE*

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Introduction

Noyan Dinçkal reminds us that sport entertains a close relationship with space in two different ways. Not only is the conquest of space a characteristic of many sports, but sport does not take place in a void but rather in purpose-built environments: from pitches to gyms and stadia, with entire sports landscapes being artificially moulded for mega-events like the FIFA World Cups and the Olympics.¹ While highly technical and specialized, as well as nowadays to a large degree homogenized, sports spaces also reflect the times and ideas, including the political views, of those who created them. Moreover, they also possess a further political dimension, insofar as they provide opportunities for their users to express political ideas and put them to the test.

One such space and sports landscape is the Munich Olympic Park, created for the 1972 Summer Olympics. This chapter explores its landscape and housing architecture as well as its post-Olympic uses and modifications. I thereby concentrate on the consecutive chains of planning, appropriating, and experiencing architecture. My prime aim is to use this specific location to explore the relationship between sports architecture and West German democracy.² In the process, I will also touch upon architecture's emotional politics as well as the development of German memorial culture.³

Relying on earlier work, this chapter compares and contrasts the ideas of Olympic planners and their realization for the 1972 Games with the built environment and park's later uses.⁴ It focuses specifically on garden architect Günther Grzimek's programmatic "Occupation of the Lawn" (*Besitzergreifung des Rasens*), as realized in the Olympic Park, and the unique Olympic Village (*Olympiadorf*) by architects Heinle, Wischer, and Partners (HW+P). Particular attention will be given to the local politics of the Olympic Park, as exemplified in the opposition by the inhabitants of the Olympic Village to changes to their environment and the commercialization of the park and respectively their support for maintaining its integrity as a historical monument.

The 1972 Munich Summer Olympics were largely the brainchild of Dortmund industrialist and head of German sport, Willi Daume. Apart from staging the quadrennial spectacle of sports and culture for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on German soil for the first time since the "Nazi Games" of 1936, Daume wanted to use the opportunity to represent a "modern Germany" to the world. A brilliant visionary, he first saw his chance with the IOC in 1965, then convinced Munich's

mayor Hans-Jochen Vogel to put the city forward, secured government funding and saw the Games through from conception to completion. Some fifty years later, Daume is almost completely forgotten, whereas the Games are mainly remembered for the Palestinian terrorist attack and the death of eleven Israeli sportsmen.

Even today, however, a visitor to the Munich Olympic site cannot fail to notice the spectacular architecture and design of the 1972 Games. The centerpiece of Munich's architecture was the sweeping Olympic roof developed by Stuttgart architects Günter Behnisch and Partners (B+P). This connected the main stadium, the gymnastics arena, and the swimming pool in the Olympic Park. Despite its size of 75,000 square-meters, the Plexiglass roof underscored the lightness and fluidity of the overall design (Figure 1). The Munich Olympics colour scheme, emblem, posters, and pictograms were the work of the bureau of Otl Aicher, a world-renowned graphic designer and the Games' "design commissioner." Both Behnisch and Aicher were tasked with conveying a positive image of West Germany to audiences around the globe, who were still sceptical about the country due to the problematic legacy of the Nazi regime. They certainly succeeded. While the roof's openness and transparency came to symbolize the positive attributes of the Bonn Republic,⁵ Aicher's designs suggested that West Germany society was modern and well-organized, informal, and easy-going.

In contrast to the manifold technical compromises, which affected the execution of B+P's original design over the years, Aicher succeeded in translating the ideas of the hfg Ulm, his design college (*Hochschule für Gestaltung*) in Bavaria, concerning a pure and objective "aesthetics of information" (Claus Pias) more or less directly into creative practices.⁶ The same applies to the Olympic Park, created by landscape architect Günther Grzimek, and Heinle, Wischer, and Partners' architecture for the Olympic Village, both of which have only recently received greater attention by scholars and which are the focus of this chapter.⁷

In the following I suggest that, analogous to B+P's stadium architecture and Aicher's designs, the park and village Grzimek and HW+P created in Munich ought to be interpreted as a translation of progressive ideas regarding freedom and participation in West German society and democracy into landscape design and housing architecture. Grzimek and HW+P's actions reflected a broader "discourse of democracy" (*Demokratiediskurs*) which was characteristic of a general change of social values in 1960s West Germany. This discourse aimed to address what social theorists Ralf Dahrendorf and Jürgen Habermas believed to be the political modernization deficits of the Federal Republic. Its spokespersons sought to extend the scope of democracy beyond the realm of the state and its institutions by rooting it more firmly in society and increasing the freedom and participation of the individual. This "deepening" of democracy was to be achieved through egalitarian social

reforms, the reduction or elimination of authoritarian structures in civil society and areas of everyday life, and through the creation of appropriate spaces for recreation and in housing.⁸ While the “1968ers” intensified this discourse by specifically demanding greater participation in politics and society for youth and young adults, cultural elite representatives of the previous reconstruction and “sceptical generation” or “1945ers” had initiated it.⁹ As members of these generations Grzimek (1915–96), Erwin Heinle (1917–2002), Robert Wischer (1930–2007), and others brought it to fruition in Munich.

The desire for increased individual freedom and participation in civil society was expressed by an emphasis on leisure and play, motion, human proportions and the creation of spaces that were free from the everyday constraints of modern industrial society. At the same time, Grzimek, and the architects of HW+P, did not question the fundamentals of twentieth-century technical modernity but rather reaffirmed and reinforced them. Their work in Munich was therefore typical of a 1960s technocratic optimism and belief that democracy in modern industrial countries could be improved and that social issues and problems could be solved through the careful planning of experts like themselves. Conceived in the late 1960s, Munich’s Olympic Park and Olympic Village were among the final manifestations of what Michael Ruck ironically called the “short summer of concrete utopia”¹⁰ before the end of the “economic miracle” in the 1970s.¹¹

Concretizations of 1960s and early 1970s utopian thinking, the park and the village have since become an integral part of Munich’s urban fabric and city life. They are used, inhabited, and enjoyed on a daily basis. As this chapter shows, their creators’ vision of deepening democracy has become a lived reality almost half a century later. Evidence of this are the attitudes Munich citizens profess towards the urban environments created by B+P, Aicher, Grzimek, HW+P, and others. By more and more taking advantage of the leisure opportunities the Olympic Park offers, especially if they live in the Olympic Village, citizens express a strong and self-confident sense of identification and ownership of “their” park and village, feeling very protective of these environments. This is articulated in a variety of ways, from running the upkeep of the village in a cooperative fashion to vocally opposing the all too overt commercial exploitation of the Olympic venues.

This often makes them thorns in the sides of those wanting to make changes to the environment, whether these are desirable, necessary, and reasonable or not. Ironically, the cultural elites succeeding those who created the 1972 environments, today sometimes face a resistance for which their predecessors laid the foundations. To illustrate this last point, I will end this chapter with a discussion of the conflicts between these and the inhabitants of the village about the most recent memorial for the victims of the Munich terrorist attack, the 2017 “Place of Memory: Olympic Terrorist Attack” (*Erinnerungsort Olympia-Attentat*).

Finally, it requires mentioning that the Munich Olympic architecture and design with its emphasis on playful “democratic” curves also needs to be understood as a reversal of the stiff and authoritarian monumentalism of the *Reichssportfeld*, the location of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, whose main stadium rose majestically above a level axis and “made unambiguous statements about Germany’s resilience, power, and will to succeed” during the Nazi period.¹²

The Olympic Park

Following Aicher’s guidelines, the main design handbook for the Munich Olympics stated: “This is how the Games are meant to be: serene, light, dynamic, unpolitical, free of pathos and free of ideology, a playful interpenetration of sports and culture.”¹³ This emphasis on informality, openness, lightness and cheerfulness, which Aicher suggested, also became the determining feature of the Olympic Park. The broad outline for this artificial landscape, on a previously drab 2.4 square-kilometre brown-field site located four kilometres north of the city center, came from architects B+P. However, the detailed landscape design and its translation into a lively green space were largely down to Günther Grzimek.

Grzimek’s philosophical approach to landscape architecture can be summarized in a few key ideas. While aware of the potential of aesthetics to manipulate the users of landscapes, Grzimek had no time for art, *Gartenkunst*, and rejected unnecessary decorative and ornamental elements. Instead he favoured the concept of an inclusive “user park” (*Benutzerpark*) with a quantifiable “user value of the green” (*Nutzwert des Grüns*) and its “output” (*Leistungsgrün*).¹⁴ For the Olympic Park this meant his focus extended beyond the 1972 Games and primarily concentrated on the site’s post-Olympic function as a green space for Munich’s citizens. For Grzimek, green public spaces were used by individuals or groups in need of physical relaxation and psychological recreation away from work in modern industrial society. According to different social requirements and preferences, public parks therefore had to provide a range of different spaces for privacy and communication, openness and closure, movement, and stillness (Figure 2).

While this in itself was not a new idea, as opposed to the creators of the equally multifunctional urban peoples’ parks (*Volkspark*) of the early twentieth century, Grzimek was less prescriptive in how the different parts of the park could be enjoyed.¹⁵ In order to allow the public to use the park in manifold ways, he brought together a multitude of natural elements and recreated various topographic and geographic conditions, such as: a mountain, hills and valleys, slopes, ridges and plains, a lake, marsh and shore, trees, groves and bushes, and lawns and meadows. In this new landscape, the user could “promenade, observe, see and be seen,” with the Olympic Mountain (*Olympiaberg*) offering especially varied opportunities: “There are numerous points on the mountain

where ... one can rest and lay down for a while without being observed.”¹⁶ In its focus on inclusivity and the expansion of individual freedoms, Grzimek planned the Olympic Park as “an article of daily use for democratic society.”¹⁷ Tellingly, signage invited the visitors to “walk on the lawns” and “pick the flowers” (*Dieser Rasen darf betreten werden! Blumen pflücken erwünscht!*).¹⁸ This seems a banality if one does not know of the ubiquitous no-trespassing signs on lawns (*Rasen betreten verboten!*) in West German parks in the post-war era. In the original concept, Grzimek even encouraged visitors to have open fires on the lawns and to swim in the Olympic Lake, permissions which have long since been withdrawn. The landscape architect inspired what he later called the “appropriation of the lawn” (*Besitzergreifung des Rasens*), which has important consequences for debates about post-Olympic uses and modifications of the park until the present:

The appropriation of the lawn arises from a new attitude, which one takes up with reference to one’s own competence. Whereas hitherto the architect alone was responsible for the aesthetics of a park environment, now a claim is laid from below. Seen this way, a process of democratic emancipation is taking place here.¹⁹

At the same time, Grzimek did not fully give up on aesthetics and his right to shape the landscape in ways to conform to what he considered his mission in society, to educate the park user in democracy (*zur Demokratie erziehen*).²⁰ In order to make the Olympic Park palatable to local audiences, it imitated Bavarian landscapes, not only through the shaping of an artificial topography but also through the planting of trees and shrubs. For example, all entrances to the park were marked by lime trees, the species which lined Munich’s boulevards. Grzimek also had huge white willows planted in the valley and by the lake, and, in order to optically increase the height of the mountain, gave it a crown of dwarf mountain pines.²¹ Interestingly, the Munich Olympic Park with its mountain, lake and grove also imitated the landscape of classical Olympia, i.e. the hill of Cronos, the dammed-up Alfeios river, and the classical stadium surrounded by grassy banks (Figure 3).²² Yet this park was never meant to provide an escape from modernity, to deny its urban and industrial surroundings and therefore by extension the legitimacy of modern industrial society (Figure 4). As Grzimek put it:

The appeal of this green space lies in its embeddedness in the urban environment. The tent roof, the television tower, the traffic-rich expressway interchange on three levels at Petuelring, the enormous gasometer and the production halls of BMW make it obvious that mountain, lake, meadows, and paths are elements of a landscape, which was transported into the city. It is the documentation of a new understanding of landscape design.²³

In terms of its acceptance by post-Olympic users, the Olympic Park was an immediate success with Munich citizens and tourists alike. As early as 1979, Willi Daume could rightfully claim that in Munich there were no Olympic “white elephants.”²⁴ This judgement still holds true almost fifty years later. As of the end of 2018, Olympiapark München GmbH, the park’s private operating company, had counted 215 million paying visitors to its cultural, commercial, sports and leisure

events and facilities.²⁵ With an estimated additional ten million recreational users annually, this figure does not even include the hundreds of millions more visitors who have enjoyed the park in their own individual ways over the past decades.

While the entire ensemble of the Olympic Park, with the sports venues to the south and village to its north, was included in the list of Bavarian monuments in 1998, unsurprisingly it has undergone some modifications over the years. With substantive alterations to the architecture ruled out in principle, and smaller changes strictly regulated due to the protection of monuments (*Denkmalschutz*), the park does nowadays include significant post-1972 architecture, which came in more or less by stealth. There is now, for example, the newly built Restaurant Coubertin next to the Olympic gym and furthermore the somewhat less conspicuous *Sea Life Center*, a big underground aquarium below the television tower.²⁶ These insertions have brought to the fore a basic tension: that between the Olympic Park as a permanent monument whose aesthetics ought to be protected (which has led to plans to apply for UNESCO World Heritage Site status)²⁷ and the desire for continuous change in order to continue the park's commercial exploitation, guarantee its upkeep and generate a profit.

The requirement for the park to earn its way became more obvious in 2005, when Munich's two professional soccer clubs, FC Bayern München and TSV 1860 München, moved to a new purpose-built soccer arena in Fröttmaning, in the northern outskirts of the city, and no longer paid for their use of the Olympic Stadium. This itself was due, firstly, to the insistence of B+P architects on their copyright to the architecture, which made it impossible for the clubs to initiate a modernization of the main Olympic venue. Secondly, the inhabitants of the Olympic Village successfully resisted the building of a new soccer arena in the park for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, which could have brought in additional revenue.²⁸ However, this also came at a price. To remain profitable, the operating company has over the years rented out the Olympic venues for manifold cultural and sports events, including alpine ski races (with artificial snow) from the top of the Olympic Mountain, car racing events (the German Touring Car Championship DTM from 2010 to 2013), the X Games (2013), and erotica fairs.

Turning the Olympic Park into an "event park" has led to recriminations from the architects and others. In a brochure published in 2012, B+P complained:

A jumble of advertisements and short-term visual triggers for consumption drowns out the unique symbiosis of landscape, architecture, and visual design. The Olympic Park is under threat to become a random amusement park like any other in the world.²⁹

However, there were also voices, which stressed that, in line with Grzimek's original ideas, a democratic society should be able to alter the landscape according to its changing needs.³⁰ While Grzimek worked with few budgetary constraints in the run-up to the 1972 Games, he was no anti-

capitalist either. At no point did he suggest that economic concerns should take the backseat after the Olympics.

The Olympic Village

Originally planned for 12,000 athletes, coaches, and functionaries, Heinle, Wischer, and Partners (HW+P) constructed one of the last large housing estates built in the Federal Republic. The Olympic Village was intended to show off the best in West German housing architecture and provide a counterexample to other, newly built housing estates of the economic boom. In contrast to the village, these estates were usually significantly larger, provided standardized housing for the less well-off in West German society and often very quickly became by-words for severe social problems.³¹ Examples that spring to mind are the *Neue Heimat* social housing developments in Nürnberg Langwasser, Kiel Mettenhof, Bremen Neue Vahr, Hamburg Mümmelmannsberg, as well as West Berlin's Märkisches Viertel and Egon Hartmann's Munich Neuperlach.

International inspiration for the Olympic Village came from British and American architects, urban planners and theorists Christopher Alexander (*A City is Not a Tree*, 1965), Jane Jacobs (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961), and Kevin Lynch (*The Image of the City*, 1960). Models, both in a positive and negative sense, were a number of British "New Towns," the Greater London Council developments in Thamesmead, Croydon, and Roehampton, as well as New Cumbernauld in Lanarkshire in Scotland and George Candilis' Toulouse Le Mirail.³² For historian Karen Beckmann, the Olympic Village is an example of the contemporary paradigm of "urbanity through density," which combined architectural and societal utopias with the mass production and prefabrication of architecture, the optimization of building processes, and the scientification of architectural planning.³³ For Natalie Heger, a further expert in architectural history, the village represents a "transitional phase from modern functionalism to the post-modern city" as "one of the last high points of modernist urban architecture."³⁴

In line with extending the scope of democracy by doing away with authoritarian structures and the emotional, political, and aesthetic prejudices of individual architects, HW+P entrusted the planning of the Olympic Village to a democratically-operating team of architects who were advised by social scientists.³⁵ One very prominent adviser was Alexander Mitscherlich, the social psychologist and critic of German urban planning and architecture, as well as in 1965 the author of the topical *The Inhospitability of Our Cities (Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte)*. Inspired by the teachings of Aicher's design college in Ulm and optimistically believing that the built environment could be "objectively" and scientifically planned, HW+P's intentions were to optimize architectural planning with findings from semiotics, systems technology, cybernetics, and operations research. In this way

HW+P, similarly to Günther Grzimek, aimed to take account of and provide housing solutions to central problems of modern urban and industrial society. The intention was to design environments that could contribute to resolving the tensions between community and individual, work and leisure, and public and private spheres. Like Grzimek, though making it less explicit, HW+P wanted to deepen democracy and root it more firmly in German society by increasing the freedom and participation of the future user of their buildings.

As a result, while the blandness of the Olympic Village's cast concrete architecture did not diverge much in terms of its visual appearance from other such housing developments, it was radically different concerning the variety of structures the built environment had to offer. The village consists of three curved architectural axes, extending from a center dedicated to communal life towards the south and the Olympic Park. Nowadays it even provides a nursery, school, churches, shops, a restaurant, a café, sports clubs, doctors, lawyers etc. Fittingly, HW+P used the metaphor of a hand reaching towards the sun to describe the overall village layout.³⁶ In fact, the majority of the 5,000 apartments and houses, most prominently the terraced high-rise buildings, which intended to provide all apartments with equal access to sunlight, are south facing (Figure 5).

Wanting to create a varied social and generational make-up among the village inhabitants, HW+P's planning team developed seven types of houses with seventy different apartment floorplans, from the simple one-bedroom bungalow to the ten-storey high-rise (Figure 6). Moreover, these diverse types of buildings were laid out in varied and non-hierarchical ways.³⁷ Most strikingly, HW+P realized a unique separation of pedestrian and motorized traffic on different horizontal levels, with the latter as well as car parking relegated completely to the underground.³⁸ This meant that the ground level of the Olympic Village became a safe space for walking, cycling, and social interactions. In fact, eighty percent of the village entrances lead on to the streets between these axes, which do not suffer from any car traffic, noise or exhaust pollution, and instead comprise manifold plant containers, ramps and plateaus, concrete benches, children's playgrounds, sandpits, and other architectural elements. In order to be as inclusive as possible, an objective which marked out the architecture as being far ahead of its time, the access to buildings included ramps for wheelchairs and prams (Figure 7). In its organization of space between houses, the village cleverly combines private with semi-private and public space, narrow and denser spaces with widened and open spaces. In line with contemporary urban sociologist Hans Paul Bahrdt's theory of the urban public, it offers its inhabitants both opportunities for privacy as well as for unforced communication and participation in public life.³⁹

The Olympic Park and Olympic Village share their creators' intentions to provide spaces for leisure and play for ordinary citizens after the Olympic Games. The idea that the Olympic venues,

with the exception of the stadium, the gym, and the pool, should not be exclusively dedicated to sports already had a strong presence during the 1972 Games themselves, in the so-called *Spielstraße* (Street of Play). As early as in the 1965 bid for the Olympics the Munich organizers proposed staging Games that provided a Coubertinian synthesis of sports and culture.⁴⁰ However, rather than focusing primarily on high classical culture, the organizers privileged popular culture and counterculture, bringing both directly into the Olympic Park. The *Spielstraße* put on theater for all ages, from clowns and acrobats to pantomime and street theater, some of which was intensely critical of the Olympic Games and its high-performance sports. Other activities included multi-media art, a sports photography exhibit, “free” jazz and folk music, avant-garde painting and sculpture, “physical games” on which the public could play, and bouncy castles for children to use.⁴¹ Intending to woo visitors and convince them to abandon their passivity and immerse themselves into play, the theater architect and designer Werner Ruhnau (1922–2015), also a “1945er,” who carried the main responsibility for this venture, attempted to reconfigure the roles of sports fans and lower the threshold between Olympic athletes and spectators. In line with his generation’s focus on participation and the deepening of democracy, Ruhnau believed that when the division between artists and spectators was overcome, the latter would turn into “responsible citizens” (*der Mitbürger, der mündig wird*).⁴² Contrary to his vision, all of the structures of the *Spielstraße* were provisional, and after the Games no discernible trace of its existence survived.

A similar focus on participation and the building of civil society, but one that was directed primarily at children and youth, also informed the activities of the Pedagogical Action and KEKS (*Kunst, Erziehung, Kybernetik, Soziologie*) groups in the Olympic Village. KEKS was a free collective of art educators, artists, social workers, students, and parents who wanted to translate SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt’s appeal to “dare more democracy” into a democratic and participatory art pedagogy for children and youth. This free pedagogy was intended to allow children and youth develop their surroundings in open and creative ways according to their needs and in the process emancipate themselves.⁴³ The post-Games village seemed the appropriate place to try this out. For this purpose, a separate space, the “Red City” with fixed and mobile objects made of concrete and wood, was set up to allow for free and creative play (Figure 8). It seems that the initiative had a very good take-up from its target group. As Tobias Scheffer, born in 1975, put it when asked about his childhood in the Olympic Village:

When we were a bit older, we did a lot of climbing in the Red City. At the time that required a lot of courage and skill – but I got away without major injuries. The trees were still too small to climb on, unfortunately. From 12 years or so onwards we cycled to the playground near the Olympic Mountain. One highlight was to play hide and seek in the student village as well as cops and robbers under the high-rises.⁴⁴

Nowadays, if not for children testing their climbing skills, the remnants of the Red City serve as a training ground and obstacle course for practitioners of the urban sport parkour, a development welcomed by the founders of Pedagogical Action and KEKS.⁴⁵

There seems to exist a general agreement among people who grew up in the village that, compared to other city children, they experienced a far greater degree of freedom in an exciting environment that brought together urban and natural elements and that, due to the absence of car traffic, was very safe. This has led some either to remain in the Olympic Village as adults, or to return to live there, once they have had children themselves.⁴⁶

The Association of the Inhabitants of the Olympic Village (EIG)

Beyond listing visitor numbers, it is difficult to find reliable information about the degree of emotional attachment the citizens of Munich and others feel in relation to the Olympic Park. Nevertheless, the figures arguably make it Europe's most popular leisure facility in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It is considerably easier to understand architecture's emotional politics when it comes to the Olympic Village and its inhabitants. This is because after initial problems to find buyers for the housing on offer in the village after the Olympics, for the past forty-five years the c. 8,000 villagers have formed a vibrant and vocal community with a distinct identity. This community displays a high degree of identification with its "habitat," as a recent book publication put it.⁴⁷ To be accurate, around one quarter of the villagers are Munich university students living in a distinct part of the village, the Student Village, whose population makeup therefore changes over completely every three to four years. However, the remainder of the village population is relatively stable.

In 1974, the villagers formed their own "Association of the Inhabitants of the Olympic Village" (*Einwohner-Interessen-Gemeinschaft Olympisches Dorf e.V.*), hereafter EIG, of which almost fifty percent of the village's households are members. The EIG publishes the magazine *Der Dorfbote* (The Village Courier) two or three times per year. It reports about local developments and current problems facing the village. In more than one hundred issues so far, the *Dorfbote* routinely celebrates a sense of communal pride and reminds the villagers of the history of their environment and that they live in a very special architectural monument: "We live in the Olympic Park!"⁴⁸ In line with the high degree of identification with the village, the *Dorfbote* reported in 2010 that private citizens submitted two applications to their Munich neighborhood parliament (*Bezirksausschuss*) for Milbertshofen-Am Hart to change its name on official maps and signage from "former Olympic Village" to "Olympic Village."⁴⁹ In fact, the Munich village is unique among Olympic villages as most were either torn down after the event or have since been integrated into the urban fabric of the

host cities, to an extent that they are no longer recognizable as separate from it. This difference in Munich also becomes clear when each year, on occasion of European Heritage Day (*Tag des offenen Denkmals*), the EIG leads visitors, usually attending in three-figure numbers, through the park and village on the second Sunday in September.

In 2017, the EIG described its aims and objectives as follows:

1. Keep the green in the village tidy.
2. Secure the housing value.
3. Create a high-quality place of living.
4. Maintain the monument.
5. Remember history.
6. Bring together the village inhabitants.
7. Participate and create.⁵⁰

The enormous mass of concrete used by HW+P in the village meant that, in order to turn it into a welcoming environment, the architects included various types of green spaces between the buildings. The villagers in turn were encouraged to enhance the visual appearance of their living environment further by, for example, increasing the volume of green on balconies and building facades (see 1. above). Even if many of the EIG members did not own their homes, the next two objectives (2. and 3.) would hardly come as a surprise. However, well-educated and largely from a middle-class background with secure incomes, around ninety percent of the villagers do own their homes.⁵¹ Therefore, the association's focus on maintaining, if not raising, the value of their properties is all the more understandable. Their socio-economic status and ownership of cultural capital distinguishes the villagers from the inhabitants of Milbertshofen-Am Hart and Hasenberg, two poorer working-class areas in the immediate vicinity.

Even in the early years of its existence, the EIG empowered its members to take control of their environment and therefore put into practice the ideas which had informed HW+P's planning (6. and 7.). One of its first initiatives was to successfully take over the day-to-day running and maintenance of the eleven high-rise buildings in the village, a highly complex task, after the occupants, then mostly young families with big mortgages, felt ripped off by the commercial property management.⁵² One of the association's latest ventures is the *Olywelt*, a cooperative founded in 2011 with the aim of maintaining a healthy shopping street (*Ladenstraße*) in the center of the village, which had been degrading. With a deposit of 250 Euros per person and 385 members, by 2014 the *Olywelt* succeeded in buying up two properties and renting them out to businesses, whose main aim is to benefit the villagers. This way, the EIG managed to prevent the downward spiral, befalling many formerly healthy commercial centers due to increased competition of the internet and large shopping centers.⁵³

With the Olympic Village originally built in an industrial part of Munich which suffered from significant air pollution, the EIG was also successful in forcing the nearby chemical plant Bärlocher to

relocate in 1993 and additionally was successful in changing the production practices in the paintworks of carmakers BMW. However, the BMW parent plant is still close by, and the EIG was unsuccessful in preventing the building of the BMW Museum and BMW World, a futuristic and rather monumental exhibition center immediately adjacent to the village, where buyers of luxury cars can pick up their new vehicles.

Over the years, the association has certainly brought together the villagers to defend and enhance their quality of life, just like originally envisioned by the architects, maintaining the status quo in the Olympic Village and Olympic Park (see 4.). Resistance against the building of a football arena for the 2006 FIFA World Cup has already been mentioned. On that occasion, the EIG astutely threatened to exhaust all legal means to prevent the building of this structure, which meant that the stadium would have never been finished on time for the tournament.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, the EIG also took a largely negative stance when Munich planned to apply for the Winter Olympics in 2018, with the bid relying on some of the already existing infrastructure in the Olympic Park, like the Stadium. In the event, a popular referendum held in Munich and at other planned locations for the Games rejected the plans. The association opposed the Games due to the expected burden on the public purse, but also on individuals, including expected rent rises for the ten percent of villagers that do not own their properties and, more generally, expected increases in the cost of living. Other objections included the concern that due to security measures the village could become a high security environment, as well as the potential for irreversible changes made to the park and the related disruption caused by years of construction work.⁵⁵

The Memorialization of the Olympic Terrorist Attack

It is interesting that the darkest aspects of the Olympic Village's history have received relatively little coverage in the EIG magazine (see 5.). This most notably concerns the 1972 terrorist attack and hostage crisis in the lodgings of the Israeli team at Connolly Street 31, which caused the death of eleven Israeli athletes, one German police officer, and five members of the Palestinian terrorist commando. Whether this is because the villagers do not want to be reminded of the horrible event in their midst, remains unclear, though the incursion of extreme political violence into a space which was explicitly designed to be serene and playful may be difficult to accept for many until this day. The following quotation from a 2016 article by a leading figure of the association is typical. While it mentions terrorism in passing, it prioritizes how the 1972 Olympic Games attempted to supersede the legacy of the 1936 "Nazi Olympics:"

The Olympic Park stands for freedom and democracy and was designed by its creators as the opposite to the Olympic Games in Hitler's Germany in 1936. The ideas of freedom and

democracy move people all over the world like the Olympic idea of peaceful competition between the peoples and the search for an adequate response to terror.⁵⁶

To be sure, remembering the “Black September” attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics has proven to be difficult throughout the past half-century. The IOC and Munich Olympic organizers initially did little to keep the memory of the terrorist attack alive in the immediate aftermath of the Games. Accordingly, the commemorative ceremonies on anniversaries in the first two decades after the Games were small-scale events in the village.⁵⁷

The problems of memorialization began as early as in November 1972 with the installation of a subtle tablet at Connolly Street 31. Embarrassingly and disrespectfully, this misspelt some names of victims and displayed a cross rather than the Star of David. The Munich Jewish Community (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*) and the Central Council of Jews in Germany had it quickly replaced with a similarly modest plaque. Until this day, it reminds passers-by that eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team died a violent death during the 1972 Games, simply listing their names in German and Hebrew (Figure 9).

The general shift in the culture of public memory in Germany from *Geschichtsvergessenheit* (historical amnesia) to *Geschichtsversessenheit* (an obsession with history) in the 1980s and 1990s also affected the memorialization of the victims of the terrorist attack.⁵⁸ When on the twentieth anniversary the German National Olympic Committee organized a ceremony on their behalf, both Daume, the chief organizer of the 1972 Olympics, and some of the relatives of the murdered athletes attended. Members of the victims’ families used the occasion to express their desire for a more visible and prominent memorial, a wish Daume subsequently made his own.⁵⁹ The result was the Wailing Beam or Memory Beam (*Klagebalken* or *Gedenkbalken*) by Bavarian sculptor Fritz Koenig (Figure 10). While conspicuous in and of itself and due to its size, it was, however, positioned in a relatively peripheral location three years later. Made from a single, ten-metre-long slab of granite from the quarry of the former concentration camp Flossenbürg in Northeast Bavaria, it symbolically connects the terrorist attack with Jewish suffering under the Nazis. Accordingly, for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Koenig’s Wailing Beam was a memorial “Against the Terror of the Past and Today.”⁶⁰

Not that its realization was without controversy either. Historian James E. Young’s observation that “Holocaust memorial-work in Germany remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing occupation,”⁶¹ also applied to this memorial even though it was primarily for victims of the terrorist attack. While its decisions were without consequence, the local city parliament *Bezirksausschuss Milbertshofen-Am Hart* unanimously rejected the plans for the Wailing Beam, as did the Munich Jewish Community. Both suggested that the military airport in Fürstenfeldbruck, near the city, where nine of the Israeli athletes along with Munich police officer Anton Fliegerbauer had lost their lives during a botched liberation attempt would be a more fitting location, an idea that

was taken up by the Landratsamt Fürstenfeldbruck in 1999 with a separate memorial there.⁶²

Moreover, objections arose from the fact that Koenig originally wanted the beam to include only the Hebrew names of the eleven Israeli victims and leave out Fliegerbauer. This was addressed by the sculptor, as was the criticism that the memorial was incomprehensible to visitors of the park who, with increasing temporal distance, potentially knew little of the event. The solution to the latter was the addition of a base plate to the memorial with very basic information almost identical to that on the panel at Connolly Street.⁶³

This then brings us to the 2017 “Place of Memory: Olympic Terrorist Attack” (*Erinnerungsort Olympia-Attentat*), temporally removed by another twenty-five years from the events. Bavarian Minister President Horst Seehofer suggested this third memorial in the Olympic Park at around the fortieth anniversary of the terrorist attack during a visit to Israel, where he attended a ceremony for the victims in Tel Aviv.⁶⁴ Angering relatives as well as Israeli politicians, the IOC had earlier that year rejected a high-profile campaign to hold a minute of silence for the victims at the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. Seehofer’s initiative was therefore welcomed. He delegated its realization to the Bavarian Minister of Culture and Education Ludwig Spaenle, who assembled a team of experts, including Bernhard Purin, the director of the Jewish Museum in Munich, and Jörg Skriebeleit, the director of the Concentration Camp Memorial Flossenbürg.

Spaenle justified the new memorial with reference to the historical importance of the attack as “the big-bang event of mediatized terrorism:”

This event was a defining turning point in Bavarian and German, if not international post-war history. Moreover, it is a key event in the history of German-Israeli relations. The Bavarian government takes account of this now through the conception and realization of a memorial space on the historical grounds of the Olympic Park.⁶⁵

Both Purin and Skriebeleit suggested that a new memorial space (*Gedenkraum*) was necessary due to shifts in collective memory, which of course meant that the event was in danger of being altogether forgotten by new generations of visitors to the park. The necessity for a supplement to the existing memorials was all the more urgent because these provided so little information about what actually happened on September 5 and 6, 1972.⁶⁶ The new memorial therefore had to be able to inform as well as possess a mnemonic aura. It needed to conform to Aleida Assmann’s description of places of memory as a “‘peculiar tissue (*Gespinst*) of space and time’ (Walter Benjamin), which combines presence with absence, the sensual present with the historical past.”⁶⁷

The combination of both functions was impressively realized in *Einschnitt* (Incision), the winning submission to the architectural competition by architectural firm Brückner & Brückner. The name *Einschnitt* both evokes an open wound and suggests the life-changing impact of the terrorist attack on not only the victims but also their friends and relatives, if not the participants and spectators of the Olympic Games. As Stephan Gräbner, one of the architects, put it: “When you think

about the massacre, it took something away, cutting into the lives of the victims, the families, the Olympic Games. We wanted to fill this void with memory.”⁶⁸ *Einschnitt*, which cost 2.4 million Euros and was jointly paid for by the Bavarian and German Federal governments, the IOC and the US Foundation for Global Sports Development, is an exhibition space carved into a grassy hillside in the Olympic Park. It features a 27-minute loop of news footage on a large LED screen along the back wall and a triangular column with twelve panels. The video loop sets the terrorist attack in its 1972 Olympic context while each panel introduces the life story of one of the victims through texts in English and German as well as images, including, very movingly, an image of a personal item related to their stay in Munich in the summer of 1972 (Figure 11a+b).⁶⁹

In amalgamating memorial, archival, and exhibition elements it conforms to a new type of memorials which Bill Niven has labelled “combimemorials.”⁷⁰ In deploying methods of intermediality, for Niven “combimemorials” like *Einschnitt* are primarily a symptom of “a post-national grounding of memorialization in concrete memory work” in German memory culture from 1995 onwards.⁷¹ Rather than speaking to an anonymously imagined audience, they create direct links between “rememberers” and victims.⁷²

Skriebeleit described the design of *Einschnitt* with the following sentences:

The new “Place of Memory: Olympic Terrorist Attack” puts the eleven murdered Israeli athletes and the Bavarian police office at the center of a presentation unlike a classical exhibition. The presentation creates an informative form of dignity (*Würdeform*) which rests less on emotion than cognition.

This, of course, chimes well with the sober and rational aesthetics of the 1972 Olympic planners. And yet “[i]t attempts to get close to the historical event in all its drama without offering opportunities for voyeurism or facile pedagogical lessons.” And finally, suggesting again a recourse to the ideas of the original creators of the Olympic Park: “The future ‘Place of Memory: Olympic Terrorist Attack’ is deliberately conceived as an open space which is meant to allow individual perspectives on the attack, its prehistory and aftereffects.”⁷³

Like the layered history of the Olympic Park itself, which had variously served since the eighteenth century as an army camp, parade ground, horse-racing track, airfield for Zeppelins and hot-air balloons, as well as the city’s first civilian airport, the three memorials illustrate change over time and the different layers in the memory of the terrorist attack. Though there is little awareness of this among visitors, violence was already inscribed in the site by the Olympic Mountain, originally the “Rubble Mountain” (*Schuttberg*), which contains ten million cubic meters of rubble from the allied bombing raids on the city during World War II.⁷⁴

The *Einschnitt* memorial might have been created without much controversy, had Spaenle felt the necessity to consult with the inhabitants of the Olympic Village and the EIG from the outset. The failure to do this in 2014, as well as hiccups concerning the way the Bavarian Ministry of Culture

and Education organized later information meetings and a workshop in early 2015, were interpreted as symptoms of the arrogance of state power. This created a lot of bad blood on the side of the villagers, which while not identical with the membership of the association overlapped with it to a significant degree. So did the accusations by Bernhard Purin that their mobilization against the memorial played into the hands of antisemites and by a local politician who compared their opposition to the anti-Islam and anti-immigration agitation by the rightwing “Pegida” group in Dresden.⁷⁵ In reality, what Skriebeleit ironically called the “uproar of the organized home inhabitants and home owners” (*Aufregung der organisierten Einwohner- und Eigentümerschaft*)⁷⁶ might have had little to do with the memorial as such. That said, some voiced a preference for a history trail similar to the one on the former *Reichssportfeld* in Berlin, which tells the story of the 1936 Games on forty-five rather inconspicuous information panels spread throughout the sports park. Rather, their resistance related to the planned size and location of *Einschnitt*. Using the democratic means at their disposal, for example, collecting more than 1,000 signatures on two occasions, the villagers succeeded in preventing the building of the memorial in two locations at hills in the park adjacent to the Olympic Village.⁷⁷ The reasons they gave were entirely plausible. For example, one of the hills was used by the local children for sledging in winter, furthermore there were concerns that the memorial could be misused as a party space by youth, as well as that video surveillance introduced to prevent such misappropriations, graffiti or other physical damage to the memorial, would potentially affect those living close by.⁷⁸ In the end, however, the villagers gave up their resistance against the realization of *Einschnitt*, at a third location and at a significantly reduced size, even if this involved the unpopular felling of three original lime trees.⁷⁹ The memorial, which has since become a frequently visited point of attraction in the Olympic Park, is situated in an easily accessible location nearby the village since September 2017.

Conclusion

As the example of their opposition to the *Einschnitt* memorial shows, the villagers do not shy away from making their voices heard, even if this does not prove popular with everyone. For example, they had to cope with “comments including from local politicians [that] were negative to the extent of bordering on defamation.”⁸⁰ Of course, these middle-class and home-owning citizens of Munich possess the requisite cultural capital and socio-economic status not to be seriously affected by denunciations of their activism. They self-confidently voice their opposition against the building of a stadium, against air pollution by industry, the holding of another Olympic Games in Germany – one recalls the Berlin and Hamburg *NOlympia* campaigns in the 1990s and in 2015 – or a memorial. Arguably, similar to the popular opposition to grand building projects like the new railway station in

Stuttgart aka as *Stuttgart 21*, even if at a smaller level, contests like this one show that civil society and grassroots democracy are alive and well in Germany.⁸¹ They are indicators of a country that has changed significantly for the better since the 1960s and 1970s.

This was what the “sceptical generation” and “1945ers” had in mind when they acknowledged that in the first decades after 1945 the Federal Republic was a democracy in name more than in reality. To deepen West German democracy, not just to put on a sports mega event, but to use a sports topography for this purpose was the ultimate intention of the planners, architects and designers of the 1972 Olympics. Behnisch and Partners, Otl Aicher, Günther Grzimek, and Heinle, Wischer and Partners’ attempts to do so through the creation of appropriate spaces for recreation, leisure and play, as well as in housing architecture, was certainly successful in this case.

That said, the “1945ers” knew that democracy is constantly in need of rejuvenation. It is therefore of crucial importance that new generations must have a chance to appropriate the Olympic Park and Olympic Village according to their own needs and desires. One must therefore be aware that the make-up of the village’s population, which has been relatively stable for a long period of time, with many residents having reached pension age, brings with it the danger of stagnation and fossilization of this urban environment. This, of course, would be the exact opposite outcome of what its creators wanted to achieve.

Endnotes

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¹ Noyan Dinçkal, *Sportlandschaften. Sport, Raum und (Massen-)Kultur in Deutschland 1880–1930* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 13–4.

² See Till van Rahden, *Demokratie. Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus, 2019).

³ See Till Großmann and Philipp Nielsen, eds. *Architecture, Democracy and Emotions. The Politics of Feelings since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2018) and Bill Niven and Chloe Paver, eds. *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (New York, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁴ See Kay Schiller and Christopher Young, *The 1972 Munich Olympics and the Making of Modern Germany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2010), 87–126 and Schiller and Young, “Motion and Landscape: Otl Aicher, Günther Grzimek and the Graphic and Garden Designs of the 1972 Munich Olympics,” *Urban History* 37.2 (2010): 272–88.

⁵ The prominent German architectural sociologist Bernhard Schäfers commented in 2006: “Die großartigen architektonischen Lösungen für einzelne Bauwerke brachten neue, im gesellschaftspolitischen Bereich dominant werdende Prinzipien zum Tragen: Öffentlichkeit und Transparenz, Demokratie und Partizipation;” quoted in Simone Egger, “München wird moderner.” *Stadt und Atmosphäre in den langen 1960er Jahren* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 374.

⁶ On Aicher’s work on the Munich site, see Markus Rathgeb, *Otl Aicher* (London: Phaidon, 2006), 76–112; Schiller and Young, *1972 Munich Olympics*, 95–104; Schiller and Young, “Motion and Landscape,” 276–84.

⁷ See Stefanie Hennecke, Regine Keller and Juliane Schneegans (eds.), *Demokratisches Grün – Olympiapark München* (Berlin: Jovis, 2013), Natalie Heger, *Das Olympische Dorf München* (Berlin: Reimer, 2014) and Karen Beckmann, *Urbanität durch Dichte. Geschichte und Gegenwart der Großwohntkomplexe der 1970er Jahre* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015).

⁸ Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglättete Demokratie: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006), 243.

⁹ See A. Dirk Moses, “The Forty-Fivers: a Generation between Fascism and Democracy,” *German Politics and Society* 17, no. 1 (1999): 94–126 and Ulrich Herbert, “Generationenfolge in der deutschen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Reulecke, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003), 94–114.

¹⁰ Michael Ruck, “Ein kurzer Sommer der konkreten Utopie – Zur westdeutschen Planungsgeschichte der langen 60er Jahre,” in *Dynamische Zeiten: die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, ed. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers (Hamburg: Christians, 2000), 362–401; see also Ruck, “Westdeutsche Planungsdiskurse und Planungspraxis der 1960er Jahre im internationalen Vergleich,” in *Aufbruch in die Zukunft. Die 1960er Jahre zwischen Planungseuphorie und kulturellem Wandel: DDR, CSSR und Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Vergleich*, ed. Heinz Gerhard Haupt and Jörg Requate (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2004), 289–325.

¹¹ Regarding the 1970s as a caesura in the history of West Germany, see the chapters in Konrad Jarausch, ed. *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) and Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom. Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd ed. 2010).

¹² Schiller and Young, *1972 Munich Olympics*, 105.

¹³ Organisationskomitee für die Spiele der XX. Olympiade München 1972, *Richtlinien und Normen für die visuelle Gestaltung. Handbuch A* (Munich: Organisationskomitee für die Spiele der XX. Olympiade München 1972, c. 1969), Vorwort. [my translation]

¹⁴ Schiller and Young, “Motion and Landscape,” 284.

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- ²⁷ Wolfgang Görl, "Er muss lebendig bleiben," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 18, 2018.
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- ³² Heger, *Das Olympische Dorf München*, 119 and 82.
- ³³ Beckmann, *Urbanität durch Dichte*, 7.
- ³⁴ Heger, *Das Olympische Dorf München*, 239 and 13. [my translations]
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⁸¹ *Stuttgart 21* is an expensive large-scale urban development project with a renewed Stuttgart central train station at its core which is due to be operational from 2021. From 2009 a broad range of issues, including costs and benefits as well as geological and environmental concerns, have led to grassroots political actions against it. These included numerous demonstrations, one of which on September 30, 2010 attracted wide-spread attention because it was marred by police violence against protesters.

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