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DEUTSCHLAND CHAPTER

To be fairly honest – there is no real issue of traditional architecture in this country. Yes, they have ‚reconstructed‘ the Frauenkirche in Dresden and the surrounding quarters ... under protest. They started a discussion to also reconstruct (the facades) of the Stadtschloss in Berlin ... and stopped it.

But there is no one really and seriously talking about traditional architecture as being an alternative or even something one could possibly think of doing today. This is very unlike the discussions happening in England, the USA or even the Netherlands. In my Dutch home country people, developers and even municipalities do, for commercial reasons at least, consider a traditional building style as something attractive.

Here in Germany people don't even know that they do have an option! As no one talks about it, developers haven't even realized that they could sell their houses better, faster and for a higher price if they would build them in a traditional style and authorities who are stuck in the 70's and 80's as they are trained in such a matter, cul-de-sacs and single story family houses in suburban structures are still the thing to do.

And then there are the architects ... the worst 'species' of them all. Educated at universities and schools of architecture where 'Bauhaus' is still considered to be the highpoint in architectural history, who continuously try to reinvent the wheel, who MUST do something 'new' and 'different' every time and seem to be completely disconnected from their own heritage and 'Heimat' because they have to be 'authentic' (THE fashion statement of the last decennia) and environmentally conscious and therefore produce a built environment that is made of so called solar powered, recyclable buildings that disintegrate after a lifespan of about 30 years ... when they are written off.

Isn't that sad??!

Strangely enough one could say 'the people', if asked, do actually like traditional and even classical architecture a lot. That is at least my

personal experience over the last ten years. Therefore I keep saying that I do build just for those and NOT for the professionals. The architectural profession HATES it ... and me for producing it! ☺

Luckily the economic and political climate is very good in Germany. The crisis lasted for about one year in 2009, the year after everyone recovered and this year the economy is running again like mad. Combined with a very low mortgage rate and the fear of a big recession that will go hand in hand with a devaluation of the Euro the building industry is also doing quite well again too. People tend to invest in bricks rather than anything else anymore and are particularly looking for sustainable houses ... for what they think sustainable means.

This is also a strong way in for traditional architecture as I feel it. People, not architects, are again looking for their heritage and for sustainable solutions to their daily living conditions. They want healthy food from organic farm shops, secure neighbourhoods and a cosy, traditional house with wooden floors, high ceilings and shutters on the windows that is running on regenerative energy.

All that can be done today without any problem at all. All the required building materials are around and if one does not make TOO much 'noise' it can even be done without too much struggle with the local authorities. The same is true for traditional urban design. You just need to convince an investor/developer that he is able to sell better if he builds what people want and then he will fight it out for you! ☺

We are just in the process of applying this technique in order to get planning permission for an entire new 'historic' village with about 400-500 houses, a village centre with a wedding chapel, a market- and town hall, a small harbour with lighthouse, lots of restaurants and small shops for local and organic goods (something people nowadays are really crazy about) and just outside the village a castle that will house a hotel. Doesn't that just sound wonderful?!

Within this ever faster and uniform world people and especially young families, IF they are asked, are looking for their roots, are becoming more aware of their heritage, their 'Heimat' ... the place they belong to. To me this is OUR way in! And as soon as Tradition is 're-established', even in the smallest projects, no one can deny it any longer.