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Brick is warmer than concrete

Aesthetic anxiety and the making of architecture in Eastern European cities

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Publication date
2022

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Halauniova, A. (2022). *Brick is warmer than concrete: Aesthetic anxiety and the making of architecture in Eastern European cities*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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Summary

As numerous projects of beautifying cities worldwide make it clear, the appearance of built environments is gaining more and more relevance. How cities look concerns not only architects and inhabitants, but state officials, investors, and international organizations, all interested in making urban space as aesthetically pleasing as possible. But why do aesthetics matter? The study *Brick is Warmer than Concrete: Aesthetic Anxiety and the Making of Architecture in Eastern European Cities* examines how people come to care about urban appearances so deeply. In two cities that this dissertation addresses, Wrocław in Poland and Klaipėda in Lithuania, these dynamics are especially strong because there built environments and their aesthetics were reshaped multiple times to fit changing historical narratives about the place. Built under German rule, seized and rebuilt under state socialist rule, and later reconstructed as 'European', Wrocław and Klaipėda demonstrate how notions of 'beautiful' and 'ugly' architecture turned into critical terrains where meanings of the past, history, the nation, and the state acquired strong emotional resonances among local inhabitants and came to be experienced as personally relevant to them.

The effects of urban beautification have been well documented—it increases property values, crystallizes a city's 'brand,' and drives the displacement of marginalized populations. Yet, why 'beauty' is so powerful and efficient in asserting particular political projects remains underexplored. To explain how people come to have genuine faith in the aesthetic 'improvement' of built environments, I coin the term *aesthetic anxiety*. This term captures how in particular settings individuals come to see aesthetic 'improvement' as something that can 'fix' political failings and cast 'quality' and 'stability' upon their lives and why even a minor aesthetic transformation sparks fierce debates as to the meanings of the past, the nation, and the state.

Drawing upon archival materials, go-alongs, and more than one hundred interviews with architects, planners, state officials, and activists analyzed with a mixed-method approach called Q-sort, I examine how 'beauty' and 'ugliness' of architecture were understood in both cities in the period from 1945 until today, and how these understandings are practiced nowadays when architectural professionals resolve dilemmas concerning designing, reconstructing, and maintaining buildings of various historical periods. This study bridges cultural sociology, geography, and science and technology

studies to demonstrate how people's emotions and aesthetic feelings about buildings can offer a unique lens into broader processes of nation-building, de-communization, and Europeanization in postsocialist Eastern Europe. Beyond that, my study provides a framework for exploring how people's feelings about the aesthetics of built environments make them care about such notions as 'history,' 'nation,' 'state,' and 'Europeanness' elsewhere. That is especially relevant in places where built environments incite collective discomfort and concern, such as places that have experienced colonial rule, statelessness, a lack of sovereignty, and various forms of historical rupture.

The first part of my dissertation, **"Different beautiful(s) and ugly(s),"** draws on the results of the Q-sort interviews and go-alongs and it focuses upon the dominant ways in which urban professionals judge and justify what architectural aesthetics should be aspired for and what aesthetics must be obviated. The first way in which architectural professionals and inhabitants-turn-activists judge the aesthetics of architecture is what I term *beautiful-as-historical* style of valuation explored in Chapter 1. This is particularly evident in Wrocław. It is prevalent among city officials and can be traced back to state authorities' ideology of conservation and restoration of works of architecture that acquired resonance in the immediate aftermath of Wrocław's annexation in 1945 and which gave special status to the historicity of architecture as a condenser of national feelings. This valuation is likewise related to the postsocialist revival of popular interest in all things German and bourgeois. Nowadays, this approach to aesthetics assumes prioritization of well-renovated, German-period architectural stock (mainly 19th century architecture) in contrast to Soviet-period architecture (especially modernist, mass housing estates) that lacks physical maintenance and financial investments. When valuating aesthetics of architecture in this way, architectural professionals and activists praise the quality of the historicity of built environments and insist on the aesthetic superiority of this quality. Historicity, in their opinion, is materially built into German-period architecture and serves as evidence of that architecture's 'unquestionable' beauty. 'Decorativeness,' 'impressiveness,' a 'nice,' 'friendly' look, and a 'good fit' with its surroundings are the properties of architecture these city officials appreciated the most. At the same time, as they told me, buildings erected during communist rule were devoid of historicity. By defining beautiful architecture as that which is 'historical' and by treating German-period stock as deserving of special care, these individuals mark their emotional investments in the idea of national sovereignty and western bourgeois

development in contrast to domination and socialist statehood. In their view, only the historical period that preceded state socialist ideology in the Polish People's Republic possessing a 'truly' independent and aesthetically alluring character.

In Klaipėda, architects, planners, city officials, and activists similarly valued 'old,' 'historical,' 'well-renovated' German-period architectural stock, which they deemed 'European.' I have termed this the *beautiful-as-European* style of valuation and examine it in Chapter 3. As I have demonstrated, in the current historical period, people value the 'clear,' 'coherent' and 'distinctive' character of 'German' and 'Prussian' architecture when they judge aesthetics in this way. Such architecture, in their opinion, shapes 'the heart of the city,' in the absence of which the inhabitants have no 'stable ground.' Architects, planners, city officials, and activists contrasted 'European' architecture with buildings erected under Soviet rule (particularly, modernist housing estates and public facilities), which they termed 'invading,' 'damaging,' and 'lacking' in quality and character. This way of interacting with aesthetics evinces a sentiment that only well-renovated German-period architecture demonstrates how the city 'was supposed to look,' would look if not for the Soviet Union's occupation of Lithuania. Soviet-period architecture, thus, poses a material 'threat' to the 'settled' urban fabric of what used to be Memel. It is therefore immanently 'ugly.'

Another way in which architectural professionals and activists interact with architectural aesthetics is what I term the *beautiful-as-modern* style of valuation that draws its inspiration from hopes and promises of socialist modernization in the 1950s–1960s, which is prominent in Wrocław. I examine this valuation of architectural aesthetics in Chapter 2. In Wrocław, some architects, planners, city officials, and activists appreciate German-period and socialist-period modernist architecture as examples of 'real' beauty and devalue contemporary constructions for their 'monstrosity' and 'egocentrism.' By prioritizing modernist buildings, these people associate architecture's 'elegance' and 'modest' beauty with 'good' state governance. They single out the architect's political intentions and in doing so express nostalgia for the pre-war public policies and socialist-period welfare state that promised to provide inhabitants 'good living conditions.' This way of handling architectural aesthetics is people's response to their concerns about the nature of urban governance and planning in Poland driven by the principles of 'wild capitalism' and neoliberalism, which Wrocław architectural professionals currently witness.

Finally, some architects, planners, city officials, and activists in Klaipėda handle the aesthetics of architecture in a manner I call the *beautiful-as-authentic* style of valuation, which I examine in Chapter 4. This traces back to the 1970s–1980s, when city inhabitants strove to achieve cultural and national distinction. These days, architectural professionals and activists who encounter aesthetics in this manner appreciate either German-period architectural stock or contemporary stylization of that architecture by caring for its 'authentic' materials first and foremost. For them, architectural imitations and stylizations are not inherently 'bad,' but can work as efficient means to mend the historical discontinuity imposed upon locals since the city's annexation. Defining beauty and ugliness in architecture in this manner functions as an aesthetic 'fix' for something that many people experience as a profound historical rupture.

In part 2, **"Caring for the beautiful and the ugly,"** I invite the reader to turn the attention toward how aesthetic appearances of architecture are made and maintained. This part foregrounds concrete acts of various groups of professionals that go into sustaining the values of historicity, modernness, Europeanness, and authenticity as those radiate aesthetic aspirations of people in Wrocław and Klaipėda. I demonstrated in Chapter 5, for example, that the surprising discovery of the 'historical' color of a German-period building in Wrocław incited passionate and controversial reactions among architectural professionals and inhabitants. While some city officials and conservation professionals insisted on the absolute necessity of reconstituting the Wrocław's railway station's 'true' historical ochre color during its renovation in 2010–2012, others reacted with 'shock' and strong aesthetic dislike for the proposed color scheme. For them, ochre was 'too colorful,' 'cheap,' and 'screamy,' but most importantly, 'unfamiliar.' While stratigraphic examinations of the building's pigments and archival research did not prove sufficient to substantiate the decision, the city conservator argued that using 'saturated' and 'bright' colors in the urban palette constitutes an accurate representation of how 'European' cities looked. Regardless of critical voices, the color ochre was chosen over the more familiar light beige. Though many architectural professionals and activists with whom I spoke had become used to the ochre shade, the color continues to signify concern. They asked: Is 'historically accurate' historicity better than familiarity? Discovery of an unfamiliar, saturated color triggered aesthetic anxiety in people and motivated them to debate the nature and goodnesses of historicity in architecture.

But it is not only the discovery of a new material object that gives rise to inhabitants' concerns regarding aesthetics. In Chapter 6, I reveal how local inhabitants' habituated, mundane aesthetic feelings relate to their valuations of particular architecture as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of particular care. Using the case of the Wrocław Manhattan estate built in 1972–1978 and renovated in 2015–2016, I followed architectural professionals' and inhabitants' commitments to 'modernize' the estate as a result of the 'bad quality' and 'unaesthetic appeal' of its concrete. This chapter documents how people's understanding of socialism and socialist architecture as 'deviating' from western European modernity resulted in their treatment of the estate's concrete as a socialist materiality. This was manifest in how the housing cooperative board, architects, and residents attended to the concrete's porosity, propensity for energy loss, and degradation as qualities that result from socialism's flaws as a political regime: its perceived lack of care and competence. However, after the 'modernized' plastered concrete of the renovated estate became covered in bird excrement, many residents and architectural professionals questioned the value of the new design. The estate's residents were able to test how 'modernized' concrete changes as a result of everyday use, under different weather conditions, and at different times of the year. As a result, plaster covered in bird excrement appeared 'cheap' and 'untrustworthy.' Under these new circumstances, the 1970s concrete seemed again to be good quality and, therefore, deserved 'better quality' maintenance. This chapter foregrounds people's anxious quest to inhabit architecture devoid of neglect and 'outdatedness' and the role of aesthetics in their search for 'modern' and 'good quality' housing.

The aesthetic anxiety local inhabitants experience in both cities resides not only in the design choices that they make, but also in the institutional frameworks that allow for some changes and prevent others. In Chapter 7, I explore how various architectural professionals aimed to secure protected status for the destroyed Klaipėda castle (former Memelburg) in the last decades of state socialist rule and after the regime's dissolution. I examined how archeologists, historians, and architects ensured the 'Europeanness' of the nonexistent castle by aligning their aesthetic aspirations with limitations that existing institutional frameworks in the city imposed. Some did so by drawing on the criteria of 'documentary evidence'—prioritizing any form of historic evidentiary facts, such as images, unearthed artefacts, speeches, and memoranda that potentially hinted at the value of the castle for the city and its history. Others, in a slightly divergent manner, drew on the criteria of 'aesthetic

completeness' when trying to justify the necessity of reconstructing the castle. These architectural professionals, activists, and archeologists insisted that Klaipėda is profoundly incomplete without the reconstructed castle. People tried to make both criteria 'convincing' to the state apparatus in order to secure funding and heritage status for the project, and 'Europeanness' became the unifying frame according which architecture was acknowledged as having high aesthetic status. I demonstrated that professionals associated the 'Europeanness' of the building itself with the 'Europeanness' of the conservation and restoration procedures. In their view, one can secure the value of the 'lost' building only by investing diligent and careful work in its reconstruction. Such extra-attentiveness to institutional frameworks and regulations was understood by them as a sign of a 'superior,' 'European' bureaucracy in contrast to the 'inferior,' 'not based on the evidence,' Soviet one. This chapter outlines how aesthetic anxiety over what constitutes 'Europeanness' in architecture resides in the practices of people who labor to align their aesthetic desires with changing institutional frameworks.

All these aspects—discovery, mundane aesthetic feelings, and alignment— matter in how aesthetic anxiety manifests itself in the daily practices of architectural professionals, activists, and inhabitants in both cities. In Chapter 8, I trace how the abovementioned aspects come together. To illustrate my framework, I took the red clay brick used in Memel and Klaipėda as an example. I revealed how red clay brick and construction materials aesthetically resembling it came to be understood as the ultimate substratum of beauty in the city. In this chapter, I explore how the settlers forcedly relocated to Klaipėda came to be infatuated by the red clay brick of German-period architecture, how a similar material was produced and used by the Lithuanian architects during Soviet rule, and how the degradation of the 'Soviet' red clay brick resulted in inhabitants' collective disappointment with Soviet socialism and socialist aesthetics. I demonstrate that people interpreted the brick's failings as inherent flaws in the Soviet regime. Finally, I disclose that the disappointment with red clay brick's 'Soviet-ness' reverberates today when architectural professionals use red tiles and red panels as construction materials that tie contemporary architecture to pre-Soviet Memel. This chapter portrays how people resolve the angst of historical discontinuity by valuing red clay brick.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Het uiterlijk van de gebouwde omgeving wordt steeds relevanter. Dit blijkt onder andere uit talloze projecten wereldwijd die beogen steden over de hele wereld te verfraaien. Hoe steden eruitzien, is niet alleen het domein van architecten en inwoners, maar ook van staatsfunctionarissen, investeerders en internationale organisaties. Zij zijn allen belanghebbenden bij het verfraaien van de stedelijke ruimte. Maar waarom is esthetiek belangrijk? De studie *Brick is Warmer than Concrete: Aesthetic Anxiety and the Making of Architecture in Eastern European Cities* onderzoekt hoe het komt dat mensen zo veel belang hechten aan het uiterlijk van de stedelijke omgeving. In de twee steden die in dit proefschrift aan de orde komen, Wrocław in Polen en Klaipėda in Litouwen, is deze dynamiek duidelijk zichtbaar. In beide steden werd de gebouwde omgeving en de esthetiek ervan meerdere keren hervormd om te passen bij veranderende historische verhalen over de locaties. Gebouwd onder Duitse heerschappij, in beslag genomen en herbouwd onder staatssocialistische heerschappij en later gereconstrueerd als 'Europees', laten Wrocław en Klaipėda zien hoe noties van 'mooie' en 'lelijke' architectuur cruciaal werden in de betekenisgeving van het verleden, de geschiedenis, de natie en de staat en de persoonlijke relevantie daarvan voor lokale bewoners.

Hoewel de effecten van stedelijke verfraaiing goed zijn gedocumenteerd - het verhoogt de waarde van onroerend goed, kristalliseert het 'merk' van een stad en zorgt voor de gedwongen verplaatsing van gemarginaliseerde bevolkingsgroepen - is de vraag waarom 'schoonheid' zo krachtig en efficiënt is in het bestendigen van bepaalde politieke projecten grotendeels over het hoofd gezien. Om te duiden hoe mensen daadwerkelijk belang hechten aan de waarde van esthetische 'verbetering' van gebouwde omgevingen, gebruik ik de term *esthetische angst*. Deze term geeft weer hoe individuen esthetische 'verbetering' gaan zien als iets dat politieke tekortkomingen kan 'repareren' en 'kwaliteit' en 'stabiliteit' op hun leven kan projecteren. Daarnaast verduidelijkt dit concept waarom in bepaalde situaties zelfs een kleine esthetische transformatie felle debatten op gang brengt over de betekenissen van het 'verleden', de 'natie' en de 'staat'.

Aan de hand van archiefmateriaal, *go-alongs* en meer dan honderd interviews met architecten, planners, staatsfunctionarissen en activisten, die ik heb geanalyseerd met een *mixed-methods* aanpak genaamd Q-sort, onderzoek ik hoe betekenis werd en wordt gegeven aan 'schoonheid' en

'lelijkheid' van architectuur in beide steden in de periode van 1945 tot vandaag, en hoe deze inzichten tegenwoordig worden toegepast wanneer architectuurprofessionals dilemma's oplossen met betrekking tot het ontwerpen, reconstrueren en onderhouden van gebouwen uit verschillende historische perioden. Deze studie slaat een brug tussen cultuursociologie, geografie en *science and technology studies* (STS) om aan te tonen hoe emoties en esthetische gevoelens met betrekking tot gebouwen een unieke lens kunnen bieden voor het analyseren van bredere processen van natievorming, *decommunisation* en Europeanisering in postsocialistisch Oost-Europa. Daarnaast biedt mijn onderzoek een kader om te onderzoeken hoe de gevoelens die mensen hebben ten aanzien van de esthetiek van gebouwde omgevingen ertoe kunnen leiden dat ze zich ook interesseren in noties als 'geschiedenis', 'natie', 'staat' en 'Europees-zijn'. Dat is vooral relevant op plaatsen waar de gebouwde omgeving collectief ongemak en bezorgdheid oproept, zoals plaatsen die koloniale overheersing, staatloosheid, een gebrek aan soevereiniteit en historische disrupties hebben ondergaan.

Het eerste deel van mijn proefschrift, "Verschillende vormen van mooi and lelijk", is gebaseerd op de resultaten van de Q-sort-interviews en *go-alongs* en richt zich op de dominante manieren waarop stedelijke professionals beoordelen en rechtvaardigen welke architecturale esthetiek nastrevenswaardig is en welke esthetiek moet worden vermeden. De eerste manier waarop architectuurprofessionals en bewoners-activisten de esthetiek van architectuur beoordelen, is de evaluatiestijl die ik *"mooi als historisch"* noem. Ik onderzoek deze stijl in hoofdstuk 1. Deze stijl komt vooral naar voren in Wrocław. Het komt veel voor onder stadsambtenaren en is terug te voeren op de ideologie van de staatsautoriteiten waarin conservering en restauratie van architectuurwerken centraal staat. Deze ideologie kreeg weerklank in de onmiddellijke nasleep van de annexatie van Wrocław in 1945 en gaf een speciale status aan de historiciteit van architectuur als gemeenplaats van nationale gevoelens. Deze evaluatiestijl houdt eveneens verband met de postsocialistische heropleving van de brede belangstelling voor alles wat Duits en burgerlijk is. Tegenwoordig veronderstelt deze esthetische benadering een voorkeur voor gerenoveerde architectuur uit de Duitse periode (voornamelijk 19e-eeuwse architectuur) in tegenstelling tot architectuur uit de Sovjetperiode (vooral modernistische, grootschalige woningcomplexen) die fysiek onderhoud en financiële investeringen ontberen. Bij deze manier evalueren van de esthetiek van architectuur, prijzen architectuurprofessionals en activisten de kwaliteit van de historiciteit van gebouwde omgevingen en

benadrukken ze de esthetische superioriteit van deze kwaliteit. Historiciteit is naar hun mening materieel ingebouwd in de architectuur uit de Duitse periode en dient als bewijs van de 'onbetwistbare' schoonheid van die architectuur. 'Decoratief', 'indrukwekkend', een 'mooie', 'vriendelijke' uitstraling en een 'goede fit' met de omgeving zijn de eigenschappen van architectuur die deze stadsambtenaren het meest waardeerden. Tegelijkertijd, zoals ze me vertelden, waren gebouwen die tijdens het communistische bewind waren opgetrokken, verstoken van historiciteit. Door prachtige architectuur te definiëren als dat wat 'historisch' is en door architectuur uit de Duitse periode te behandelen met speciale zorg, markeren deze individuen hun emotionele investeringen in een idee van nationale soevereiniteit en bourgeois westerse ontwikkeling in tegenstelling tot socialistische staatsoverheersing. Volgens hen heeft alleen de historische periode die voorafging aan de staatssocialistische ideologie in de Poolse Volksrepubliek een 'echt' onafhankelijk en esthetisch aantrekkelijk karakter.

In Klaipėda waardeerden architecten, planners, stadsfunctionarissen en activisten op dezelfde manier 'oude', 'historische', 'goed gerenoveerde' architectuur uit de Duitse periode, die zij als 'Europees' beschouwden. Ik noem deze evaluatiestijl *"mooi als Europees"* en onderzoek deze in hoofdstuk 3. Zoals ik heb aangetoond, waarderen mensen in de huidige historische periode het 'heldere', 'samenhangende' en 'onderscheidende' karakter van 'Duitse' en 'Pruisische' architectuur wanneer ze esthetiek beoordelen. Dergelijke architectuur vormt naar hun mening 'het hart van de stad'. Bij het ontbreken daarvan zouden bewoners geen 'stabiele grond' hebben. Architecten, planologen, stadsfunctionarisen en activisten onderscheiden 'Europese" architectuur van gebouwen die tot stand kwamen tijdens het Sovjet bewind (met name modernistische woonwijken en openbare voorzieningen), die ze 'invasief', 'beschadigend' en 'tekortkomend' in kwaliteit en karakter noemden. Deze manier van omgaan met esthetiek getuigt van een sentiment dat alleen goed gerenoveerde architectuur uit de Duitse periode laat zien hoe de stad zoals deze 'er uit zou moeten zien' er werkelijk uit zou hebben gezien, als Litouwen niet door de Sovjet-Unie bezet was geweest. Architectuur uit de Sovjetperiode vormt dus een materiële 'bedreiging' voor het 'gevestigde' stedelijke weefsel van wat vroeger Memel was. Het is daarom per definitie 'lelijk'.

Een andere manier waarop architectuurprofessionals en -activisten omgaan met architecturale esthetiek, is de evaluatiestijl die ik *"mooi als modern"* noem. Deze stijl haalt inspiratie uit de hoop en beloften van

socialistische modernisering in de jaren 1950-1960, die prominent aanwezig is in Wrocław. Ik onderzoek deze waardering van architecturale esthetiek in hoofdstuk 2. In Wrocław waarderen sommige architecten, planologen, stadsfunctionarissen en activisten de modernistische architectuur uit de Duitse en socialistische periode als voorbeelden van 'echte' schoonheid en devalueren ze hedendaagse constructies vanwege hun 'monsterlijkheid' en 'egocentrisme'. Door modernistische gebouwen voorop te stellen, associëren deze mensen de 'elegantie' en de 'bescheiden' schoonheid van de architectuur met 'goed' bestuur. Ze benadrukken de politieke bedoelingen van de architect en drukken daarmee heimwee uit naar het vooroorlogse overheidsbeleid en de socialistische welvaartsstaat die de bewoners 'goede levensomstandigheden' beloofden. Dit is een reactie die voortkomt uit zorgen over de aard van stadsbestuur en stadsplanning in Polen, gedreven door de principes van 'wild kapitalisme' en neoliberalisme, waar architectuurprofessionals in Wrocław momenteel getuige van zijn.

Ten slotte evalueren sommige architecten, planologen, stadsfunctionarissen en activisten in Klaipėda de esthetiek van architectuur op een manier die ik *"mooi als authentiek"* noem. Deze evaluatiestijl onderzoek ik in hoofdstuk 4. Deze stijl is te herleiden tot de jaren zeventig en tachtig, toen stadsbewoners streefden naar culturele en nationale onderscheiding. Tegenwoordig waarderen architecturale professionals en activisten die op deze manier met esthetiek omgaan architectuur uit de Duitse periode, of hedendaagse stilering van die architectuur, door het belang van het gebruik van 'authentieke' materialen voorop te stellen. Voor hen zijn architecturale imitaties en stileringen niet inherent 'slecht', maar kunnen ze een efficiënt middel zijn om de historische discontinuïteit te herstellen die de lokale bevolking sinds de annexatie van de stad is opgelegd. Het op deze manier definiëren van schoonheid en lelijkheid in architectuur fungeert als een esthetische 'fix' voor iets dat veel mensen ervaren als een diepgaande historische breuk.

In deel 2, "Zorgen voor het mooie en het lelijke", nodig ik de lezer uit om de aandacht te richten op de manier waarop esthetische verschijningsvormen van architectuur worden gemaakt en onderhouden. In dit deel worden concrete daden van verschillende groepen professionals naar voren gebracht die zich inzetten voor het ondersteunen van waarden als historiciteit, moderniteit, Europeesheid en authenticiteit die voortvloeien uit de esthetische ambities van mensen in Wrocław en Klaipėda. Zo toonde ik in hoofdstuk 5 aan dat de verrassende ontdekking van de ‘historische’ kleur van

een gebouw uit de Duitse periode in Wrocław gepassioneerde en controversiële reacties opriep bij architectuurprofessionals en -bewoners. Terwijl sommige stadsfunctionarissen en natuurbeschermingsprofessionals aandrongen op de absolute noodzaak om de 'echte' historische okerkleur van het treinstation van Wrocław te herstellen tijdens de renovatie in 2010-2012, reageerden anderen met 'shock' en een sterke esthetische afkeer van het voorgestelde kleurenschema. Voor hen was oker 'te kleurrijk', 'goedkoop' en 'schreeuwerig', maar vooral 'niet vertrouwd'. Terwijl stratigrafisch onderzoek van de pigmenten van het gebouw en archiefonderzoek niet voldoende bleek om de beslissing te onderbouwen, betoogde de stadsconservator dat het gebruik van 'verzadigde' en 'heldere' kleuren in het stedelijke palet een nauwkeurige weergave is van hoe 'Europese' steden eruitzagen. Los van kritische stemmen werd de kleur oker gekozen boven het meer bekende lichtbeige. Hoewel veel architectuurprofessionals en activisten met wie ik sprak gewend waren geraakt aan de okertint, blijft de kleur reden tot zorg. Ze vroegen: is historisch correcte historiciteit beter dan vertrouwdheid? De ontdekking van een onbekende, verzadigde kleur veroorzaakte esthetische angst bij mensen en motiveerde hen om te debatteren over de aard en goedheid van historiciteit in de architectuur.

Maar het is niet alleen de ontdekking van een nieuw materieel object dat aanleiding geeft tot bezorgdheid bij de bewoners over esthetiek. In hoofdstuk 6 laat ik zien hoe genormaliseerde alledaagse esthetische gevoelens van lokale bewoners zich verhouden tot hun waardering van bepaalde architectuur als 'het verdienen' of 'niet verdienen' van speciale zorg en onderhoud. Aan de hand van een casus, het vastgoedcomplex Wrocław Manhattan, gebouwd in 1972-1978 en gerenoveerd in 2015-2016, volgde ik de toezeggingen van architectuurprofessionals en bewoners om het complex te 'moderniseren' vanwege de 'slechte kwaliteit' en 'estethisch afstotelijkheid' van het beton. Dit hoofdstuk documenteert hoe mensen socialisme en socialistische architectuur als ‘afwijkend’ zagen, ten opzichte van de West-Europese moderniteit en hoe dit resulteerde in hun behandeling van het beton als een socialistisch materiaal. Dit kwam tot uiting in hoe het bestuur, architecten en bewoners van de woningbouwcoöperatie de porositeit van het beton, de neiging tot energieverlies en degradatie als kwaliteiten zagen die het gevolg zijn van het gebrek aan zorg en competentie die inherent zijn aan het socialisme als politiek regime. Nadat het ‘gemoderniseerde’ gepleisterde beton van het gerenoveerde complex echter onder de vogelpoep kwam te zitten, twijfelden veel bewoners en bouwprofessionals aan de waarde van het nieuwe

ontwerp. De bewoners van het landgoed konden testen hoe ‘gemoderniseerd’ beton verandert door dagelijks gebruik, onder verschillende weersomstandigheden en in verschillende tijden van het jaar. Als gevolg daarvan bleek gips bedekt met vogelpoep 'goedkoop' en 'onbetrouwbaar'. Onder deze nieuwe omstandigheden leek het beton uit de jaren 70 weer van goede kwaliteit en verdiende het daarom 'beter onderhoud’. Dit hoofdstuk belicht de angstige zoektocht van mensen om niet-verwaarloosde en ’verouderde’ architectuur te bewonen en de rol van esthetiek in hun zoektocht naar 'moderne' en 'goede' huisvesting.

De esthetische angst die lokale bewoners in beide steden ervaren, heeft niet alleen betrekking op de ontwerpkeuzes die ze maken, maar ook op de institutionele kaders die sommige veranderingen mogelijk maken en andere voorkomen. In hoofdstuk 7 beschrijf ik hoe verschillende architectuurprofessionals in de laatste decennia van staatssocialistische heerschappij en na de ontbinding van het regime, de beschermde status van het verwoeste Klaipėda-kasteel (voormalig Memelburg) probeerden veilig te stellen. Ik onderzocht hoe archeologen, historici en architecten de ‘Europeesheid’ van het niet-bestaande kasteel verzekerden door hun esthetische ambities af te stemmen op de beperkingen die werden opgelegd door bestaande institutionele kaders. Sommigen deden dit door gebruik te maken van de criteria van 'documentair bewijs' - waarbij prioriteit werd gegeven aan elke vorm van historische bewijs, zoals afbeeldingen, opgegraven artefacten, toespraken en memoranda die mogelijk wezen op de waarde van het kasteel voor de stad en haar geschiedenis. Anderen maakten gebruik van criteria van 'esthetische volledigheid' bij het rechtvaardigen van de noodzaak van reconstructie van het kasteel. Deze architectuurprofessionals, activisten en archeologen hielden vol dat Klaipėda absoluut onvolledig is zonder het gereconstrueerde kasteel. Men probeerde beide criteria 'overtuigend' te maken voor het staatsapparaat om financiering en erfgoedstatus voor het project veilig te stellen, en 'Europeesheid' werd het verenigende kader waarbinnen architectuur esthetisch kon worden erkend. Ik heb laten zien dat professionals de ‘Europeesheid’ van het gebouw zelf associeerden met de ‘Europeesheid’ van de conserverings- en restauratieprocedures. Volgens hen kan men de waarde van het 'verloren' gebouw alleen veilig stellen door ijverig en zorgvuldig werk te investeren in de wederopbouw. Een dergelijke extra aandacht voor institutionele kaders en regelgeving werd door hen opgevat als een teken van een ‘superieure’, ‘Europese’ bureaucratie in tegenstelling tot de ‘inferieure’, ‘niet gebaseerd op bewijs’, regelgeving van de Sovjet-Unie. Dit

hoofdstuk schetst hoe esthetische bezorgdheid over wat 'Europees-zijn' in de architectuur is, aanwezig is in de praktijken van mensen die zich inspannen om hun esthetische verlangens af te stemmen op veranderende institutionele kaders.

Al deze aspecten - ontdekking, alledaagse esthetische gevoelens en afstemming - zijn van belang in hoe esthetische angst zich manifesteert in de dagelijkse praktijk van architecturale professionals, activisten en bewoners in beide steden. In hoofdstuk 8 laat ik zien hoe bovengenoemde aspecten bij elkaar komen. Om mijn raamwerk te illustreren, nam ik de rode baksteen die in Memel en Klaipėda werd gebruikt als voorbeeld. Ik onthulde hoe rode baksteen en bouwmaterialen die er esthetisch op leken, werden begrepen als het ultieme toonbeeld van schoonheid in de stad. In dit hoofdstuk onderzoek ik hoe de kolonisten die gedwongen naar Klaipėda waren verhuisd, verliefd raakten op de rode bakstenen van de Duitse architectuur, hoe een soortgelijk materiaal werd geproduceerd en gebruikt door Litouwse architecten tijdens de Sovjetregering, en hoe de slijtage van de 'Sovjet' rode bakstenen leidde tot een collectieve teleurstelling van de bewoners over het sovjetsocialisme en de socialistische esthetiek. Ik laat zien dat mensen de tekortkomingen van de baksteen interpreteerden als inherente gebreken van het Sovjetregime. Tot slot onthul ik dat de teleurstelling over de 'Sovjet-heid' van rode baksteen vandaag de dag weerklinkt wanneer architectonische professionals rode tegels en rode panelen gebruiken als bouwmaterialen die hedendaagse architectuur verbinden met pre-Sovjet Memel. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien hoe mensen de angst voor historische discontinuïteit oplossen door rode bakstenen te waarderen.