GÜNTER BEHNISCH:
DEMOCRATIC AND HUMANE ARCHITECTURE: PLENARY COMPLEX OF THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG, BONN/ GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to discuss Günter Behnisch democratic and humane architecture, its basic conceptions and spatial reflections within practical references by focusing on Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, Bonn in Germany. As one of the most impressive work of Günter Behnisch, Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag in Bonn reflects his democratic and humane architecture where these dimensions can be read openly. The study portrays specific forms of Günter Behnisch democratic and humane architecture with their interactions that are generated, evaluated and transformed into design forms. These actions examined and exhibited by particular practical references via respective observations and interpretations. The objective here is to uncover new connections and new potentials inquiring through theory construction and a connection to practice. This study aims to expose a new discussion on democratic and humane architecture and also proposes a novel way of discoursing the architectural theory and its reflection on practice. The research is structured by respective field research and archive studies on Günter Behnisch architecture.

Keywords: Günter Behnisch; democratic architecture; humane architecture, Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kathleen James-Chakraborty (2000) declares that the modern architecture of the post-war years in Germany and wherever else modernist German architects exerted an influence, which by this time seemed to be almost everywhere, was a very different phenomenon from what it had been in the teens and even the 1920`s. According to Hackel (2007) German architects absorbed and transformed foreign ideas to develop their distinct and unique architecture where he informs that ' the new German architecture does not fit into any predefined formal scheme, school or style. [11] Within this era, Günter Behnisch was one of the most influential architects in Germany that was commemorated as the master builder of democracy and shaped Germany's image in the world. Recognized as the defender of democratic architecture` Günter Behnisch, directed him to create open, free and diverse architecture equates diversity of tectonic details with individuality, pluralism, and democracy. He always declares that he is against to clear hierarchy and propose the order of architecture, but individualized and unpredictable`.[15]

Günter Behnisch examines architecture as a social entity, which he expresses his basic attitude as comprehension of the social fabric of humanity. He always considers the importance of the human needs and aims for the consideration of the needs of the users in connection with the respect for man and nature [13]. Within this purpose, his architecture can be characterized as it focuses on freedom of form and construction, sensible towards modern material and building that rejects fashion and convenience and pushes at the boundaries of acceptable forms, thus demanding for an aesthetic of freedom. His ambition is fighting for transparency, consequent modernity and lightness. He defines his architecture and the way his works as the product of a specific time of confrontation, reaction, and of specific personalities and contexts. [2] [3] [4] [5] For him architecture does not simply reflect "nature", it doesn't merely satisfy functional requirements, either. It also reflects, for example, problems of the social and economic situation in which it is created, as well as problems that may also have been subjectively felt or objectively recognized by those who make architecture or have been able to influence it [12] [9]. His works are characterized by openness and considerateness that make it possible to produce open and considerate architecture that architecture becomes many-facetted when it is considered and worked on from many angles, when many forces can play a part in it etc. [14, p. 5] These aspects are considered as the essence of good architecture that his architecture is the work on the world knowledge.

Günter Behnisch is considered as a unique example that could transparently reflects his ideological and theoretical thoughts into design concepts and elements that this interaction can be read openly. This study is not aiming to discuss the political, historical content of democratic and humane architecture, main purpose is to discuss its basic conceptions and spatial reflections within practical references by focusing on Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, Bonn in Germany. The Bundestag, in fact, is the single project that clearly crystallizes the principles underlying Behnisch's work. The main purpose is to uncover new connections and new potentials inquiring through theory construction and a connection to practice. Briefly, the study portrays specific forms of Günter Behnisch democratic and humane architecture with their interactions that are generated, evaluated and transformed into design forms.

2. A BRIEF DESIGN HISTORY OF PLENARY CHAMBERS, BONN /GERMANY

Plenary Chambers, Bonn /Germany has a speculated design history that took nearly 70 years since to its current state. Beginning from 1930`s every altered administrations took different decisions about the design and construction process, that there were so many variables effective in the design and utilization of the building. In between 1930 and 1933, the first building complex was Pedagogical Academy designed by Martin Witte, under the influence of Bauhaus tradition was used as a university for teacher training

[18, p. 25]. The simple, elongated building, which runs essentially parallel to the banks of the Rhine, was designed in the spirit of modernism of the 1920s and contained not only the usual seminar rooms but also an auditorium and a gymnasium. (Fig. 1) [16, p.263]

Fig. 1. Pädagogische Akademie Bonn | Witte, Martin view from Rhine river. Source: Technische Universität Berlin, Architekturmuseum Source: [20]

As early as September 1948, as part of the drafting of the Basic Law by the Parliamentary Council, Bonn served as a meeting place. On the occasion of this event, the Pedagogical Academy was rebuilt in August 1948, so that the Pedagogical Academy, which had already proven itself as a conference venue, was now proposed as the seat of both chambers of parliament, the Bundestag. It was also the only one of the Bonn buildings under consideration that required extensive construction, especially with a view to the construction of a suitable plenary hall. [19] The conversion of the Academy into what is now known as the "Bundeshaus" building was one of the first parliamentary buildings in the world in the tradition of New Building. The building opened a series of buildings that were to embody a new democratic attitude of the state after 1945. [16, p. 264] The architect for the project, Hans Schwippert, had managed to fully renovate the old part of the building, and construct an addition to house the plenary chamber (Fig. 2) Barnstone (2006: 105) . Hans Schwippert, a colleague of Erich Mendelsohn and Mies van der Rohe purpose here was to create democratic architecture where he declared that; [....] I wanted a house of openness, an architecture of encounter and conversation." cited in [9].


Fig. 2. View of the completed Bundeshaus from the Rhine River, 1949. Source: [19; p. 17]

This renovation was intended as a temporary solution in order to be able to later build a plenary hall elsewhere that would meet the requirements. Due to the large amount of office space required, there were further plans for the construction of a rectangular plenary hall for an administrative and restaurant wing as a connecting element to the building of the former Pedagogical Academy [9] (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. A view of the patio outside the restaurant addition, looking towards the plenary chamber. Source: [19, p.24,26]

Starting from 1930`s to 1969`s the whole site has developed and renovated gradually as the representation of democracy, new face of Germany (Fig. 4). Schwippert deliberately outlines his design idea in distinction from the previously seclusion atmosphere of closed plenary rooms. From his personal understanding of democracy, Schwippert derived the demands on a parliament building, but not from a general model of a conceivable' democratic architecture'. Schwippert was only able to determine how the architecture of the most important building in the new democratic state should be designed based on his personal understanding. [19]
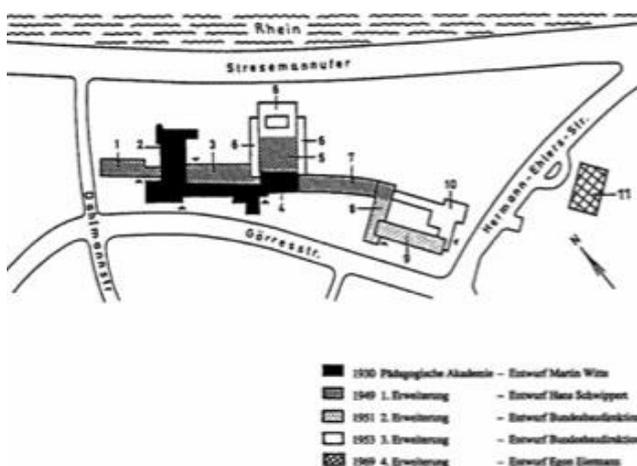
1 north wing
2 Federal Council Chamber
3 Restaurant
4 Converting hall
5 Plenary hall
6 Extension with presidential area
7 south wings
8 Intermediate structure
9 Old high-rise for members of parliament
10 Parliamentary group building
**11** New parliament building ("Langer Eugen")

Fig. 4. Site plan with the construction periods 1930-1969 Source: [16,p.266]

After years, in the summer of 1971, a competition for urban development ideas for the site was launched under the title Federal Buildings and their integration into the City of

Bonn, for which a total of 36 designs were submitted. In addition to the design by Behnisch & Partner, the jury proposed three further designs for further processing. After many contradictions and debates, Behnisch & Partner declared that they would continue to participate in the planning process. [16] Behnisch received an order for the entrance building in 1983. At this point in time, it became clear that extensive renovation measures would be necessary in the plenary hall. Behnisch & Partner was to again develop solutions for remedying the deficiencies in the plenary hall. The demolition of the old plenary hall began in October 1987, and one year later the construction work could begin. These included work on the new November 1989 [9] (Fig. 5). Before the construction work was completed on 30 October 1992, the political conditions had changed as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall on 9 November 1989. After the reunification, an additional 150 seats were thus required in the plenary hall. [9, p. 268]

Fig. 5. Design process of Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, proposed by Günter Behnisch between 1984-1992 (from left to right: First Proposal in 1984, Second Proposal in 1987, Final Proposal in 1992). Source: Author ,2018 courtesy of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) / Behnisch achieves in in SAAI (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering)
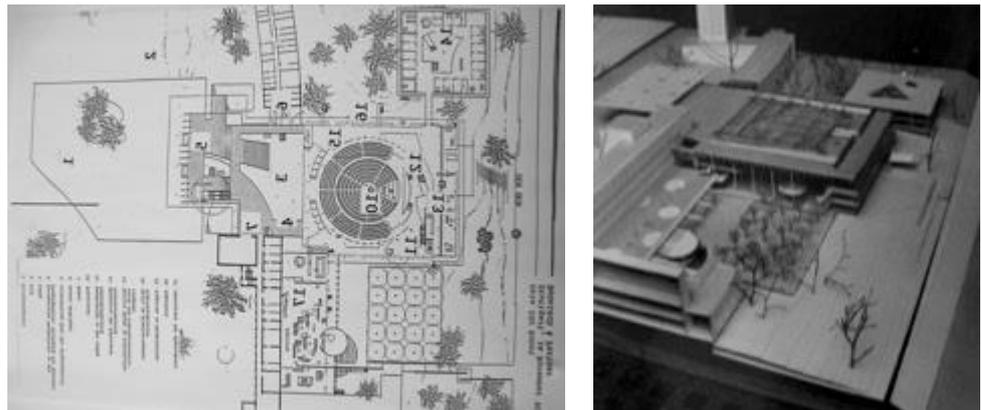
4. Transparent wall pane in the entrance hall passageway for visitors 5. Light opening above the entrance hall 6. south wing 7. Floors 10. Plenary 11. wall panel in the lobby presidential area 12. back of the eagle wall presidential area   13. other walls in the presidential area and presidential extension 14. halls in the extension presidential area 15. Carpets in walking halls 16. outer skin 17. restaurant for deputy

Fig. 6. Plan of the entry level of the Bundeshaus and the model photo, 1990 Source: Author, 2018 , courtesy of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) / Behnisch achieves in in SAAI (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering)

Behnisch & Partner's design included the new plenary hall with the entrance, the presidential area, the restaurant and the presidential annex with the offices. The existing deve-

lopment was to be integrated with the former academy building of Martin Witte and the south wing built by Schwippert, to which the new buildings bordered. The new plenary hall was rebuilt at the same place where the plenary hall was previously located, the same applies to the foyer, the contact, the restaurant and the rooms of the president. The south wing and the academy building were used for the accommodation of the administration as well as the faction room. (Fig. 6) In addition to its integration into the existing building stock, embedding it in the Rhine landscape was a central aspect of the design (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Site view of the current utilization. Source: Author,2018 courtesy of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) / Behnisch achieves in in SAAI (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering

The Behnisch project spanned 20 years, several competitions and design proposals, and bridged the period before and after unification. [1,p. 139] As Von W.J. Stock (2010) states, with the Bonn plenary hall, completed after many debates and delays, which was the most modern parliament building in the world at that time as a "work hall of democracy" (Behnisch) designed as transparent.

Behnisch interpretation of the building German Bundestag reflects his democratic and humane architecture, structured on controversial design and political history. [4] Behnisch adopted the idea that democracy offers the opportunity to make the state more accessible and more humane. Behnisch democratic architecture has its roots from Hans Schwippert`s ideas, where he developed it further by his humanistic way of architectural thinking. The parliament, as the representative body in government, is the "voice of the people" and for this reason, the plenary chamber was the key. (Fig. 8.) This major space with circular plan and transparent walls, approved as the symbol of democratic Germany and also democratic architecture.

The brief design history of Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag outlined here with its main contents and objectives. Based on these contents, the study mainly aims to find out the embodiment of democratic and humane architecture and its spatial reflection as design forms, aimed to uncover new connections and new potentials inquiring through theory construction and a connection to practice. Interpreted more widely, these aspects presented in the fields of tectonics, typology, or style, as well as forming key concepts in cultural and disciplinary contexts. All design values will be discussed with their conceptual contents through practical references where each concept deliberated as the main design ideas in Behnisch democratic and humane architecture. The research is structured by respective field research and archive's studies of Günter Behnisch architecture conducted in March 2018 at SAAI- (Südwestdeutsches Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering) located in Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe-Germany
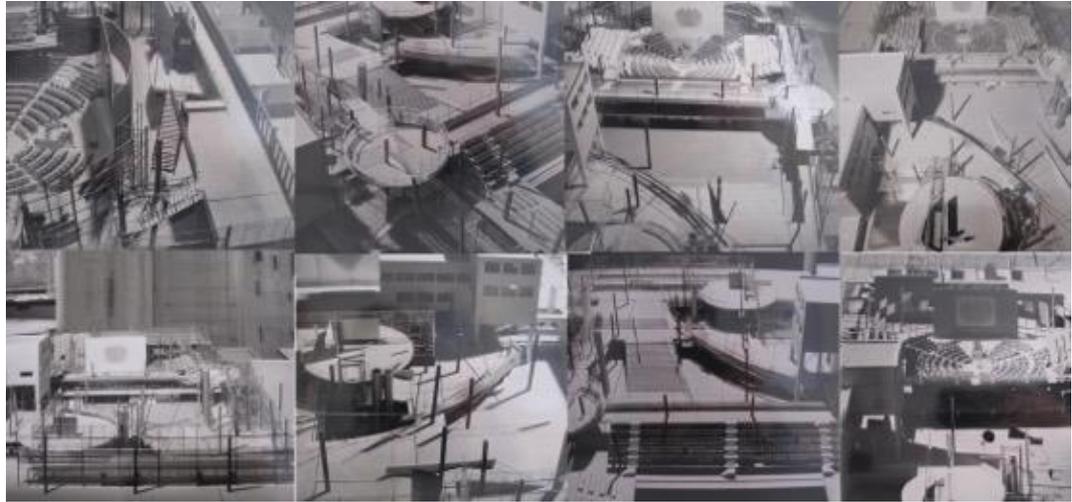
Fig. 8. Model photos of interior design of German Bundestag displays spatial relations between planery chamber and foyers. Behnisch and Partners, 1992. Source: Author, 2018, courtesy of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) / Behnisch achieves in SAAI (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering)

3. THE EMBODIMENT OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES, AND THE SYMBOL OF THE OPEN SOCIETY

For Günter Behnisch, democracy is the key concept and defines `Democratic' in itself , as an "umbrella term". Behnisch had dedicated himself to "building for democracy". In each of his works, he is also known as the architect, who wanted to open up leeway for himself and users, reduce constraints, question norms and dissolve hierarchies. His ambition is fighting for transparency, consequent modernity and lightness. He defines his architecture and the way his works as the product of a specific time of confrontation, reaction, and of specific personalities and contexts. [3, p. 65] His architecture is about combination of elements; places, time, senses, memory, meaning and ideology; integrity of an open, free and democratic order. This integration reference to the pluralism that is a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization. Akin to this description, Behnisch utilize the concept pluralism as one of the major design concepts in Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag. His understanding of pluralism in society is that the state is composed of the different people who reside there, the voters, from whom all political power is supposed to flow. [6]

According to Barnstone (2016: 146) beyond representation, pluralism in all areas of life lies at the heart of democracy. In order for pluralism to thrive, parliament must be open and accessible, participatory as well as representative. Barnstone (2006:147) also indicates that Behnisch promotes the new Bundeshaus as a showcase for pluralism in the Federal Republic, freedom of speech, participatory democracy and, above all. Pluralism as the source of the main design idea of the building means the freedom to interpret events and architecture individually. Behnisch explains the significance of the individual in a democracy metaphorically by comparing the Bundeshaus' interior design to a game of "Mikado," or "pick-up-sticks," which is a game of chance and skill. (Behnisch & Partner, 1993) . Particularly he reflects this idea in railings that are among the most important interior elements and almost everywhere, mainly concerning the association of the individual differences in society. Their form and function far exceed mere practical safety aspects. [6, p.82] (Fig. 9). Moreover, the colourful colored glass stripes located in the main hall of the building, also give the impression of a random order. The parapet band made of several polished sheets attached at different angles of inclination. [16, p. 172]

(Fig. 10). Beside these analogical representations, Behnisch utilizes the concepts transparency for to foster the concept pluralism. For him, free speech, freedom of conscience, free press are the major dimensions of open and free architecture that resembles the notion of plurality. Within this manner, the concept transparency is related to open and accessible government, whereas in sociology it signifies a pluralistic society. [1]

Fig. 9. Left- model photo of the bird's nest handrail, 1990 (Source: Author, 2018 courtesy of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) / Behnisch achieves in SAAI (Southwest German Archive for Architecture and Civil Engineering) -right. The photo of the bird's nest handrail, 2018 (Source: Author, 2018)
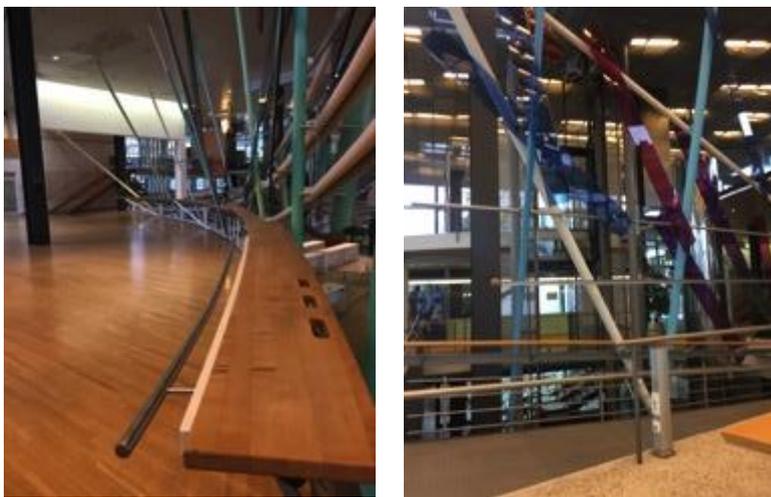

Fig. 10. Examples of handrails with colourful stripes. Source: Author, 2018

As Barnstone (2006: 178) states that pluralism is twofold: transparency to difference and to interpretation. In this sense transparency is interpreted as the expression of the openness both in ideological and architectural realm. Behnisch utilizes the term transparency as an analogy of the open society. In Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, he exploits transparency not only the source of the implicit expressions but also the explicit reflections. [1, p. 30] (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Transparency in Plenary Chambers, Bonn /Germany. Source: Author, 2018

He justifies such a transparent concept of architecture as being inherently democratic in contrast to the `solidification` and `fossilization` he eschews. [10] Thus transparency has to be understood as a layered term that is used as literally, metaphorically, and analogically. Accordingly transparency finds its expression in the building façade maintain a close rapport with the natural environment and their physical transparency suggests the openness of democratic political process [15, p. 64]

In his pluralistic view, diversity can be approved as the other theme reflects his democratic and humanistic architecture. Behnisch always put the `human` at the centre of his design and always believe the importance of individuality and diversity. According to LeCuyer (2001) Behnisch equates diversity with individuality, pluralism, and democracy. Central to this approach he believes that there is no single order that is allowed to define the whole. "Life requires order of another kind. We think more like nature. There is order, but it is individualized. [15]
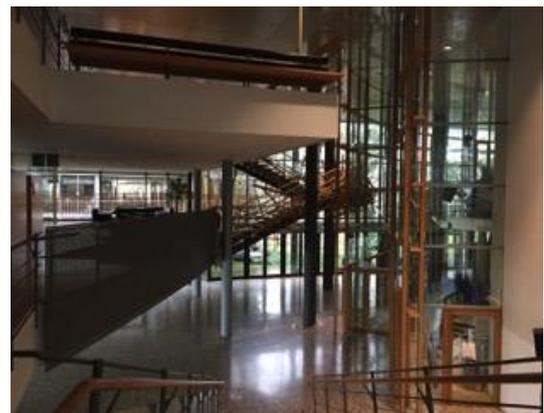

Fig. 12. Diversity in the design form. interior view of Plenary Chambers, Bonn/ Germany. Source: Author, 2018

Within his humanistic way of thinking, Behnisch utilizes diversity as the `diversity of opinion`. [1] This principle reflects to the building as the formal representation of the different forms that are organized in one whole. This analogical representation rooted in his architectural approach where he describes his way of designing as working out piece by piece recognizing the many aspects and separate parts that have combined to form a "single entity. [3] Leaning to this idea, diversity could be read openly in the design form of the whole building, mainly in the interior spatial relationship. Building has a modest, clear and transparent rectangle form; conversely it has a dynamic, multi-layered and diverse structure in interior (Fig. 12). The complex as a whole is full of variety and surprise and the

different parts relate to one another and to the building as a whole in many ways and at many levels. [2]

Pluralism also refers to the theme equality that Behnisch utilize the concept in the meaning of creating equal quality and value. Behnisch informs that, he particularly utilizes the equality as a design concept in the planery chamber that has a perfect circular shape. The perfect circle symbolizes the equality accorded to all the members of the diverse political parties. The circle, as it has a non- hierarchical nature, ensure to promote debates where the members are all in equal positions [16] (Fig. 13).

In addition to the design of the chamber, Behnisch ambition was to create differentiated areas, which are equal in quality and value. Most of the work places have their own character and arrangements. Every each of the spaces in the building represents the equality as a design notion as having the same value and quality. He defined his architecture as an assembly of elements drawn from a variety of worldviews and his method of working as one. [2]

Fig. 13. Planery Chamber of Bonn Bundestag (source : photo received from Eva Lenz, Communication manager of Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, Bonn,2018)

In this building Behnisch (1997b) informs that they have tried to devise an organizing form which would allow individual elements, a maximum of independence, in relation both to the building as a whole and to its other parts-an order capable of assimilating the different elements.

Fig. 14. Pluralism in the design form. interior view of Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, Bonn (Source: Author, 2018)

Planery Complex in Bonn has an exceptional character that clearly demonstrates the implicit meanings through its spatial formation. These meanings/ principles one of which is about the material objects that should show a mutual respect by maintaining a distance from one another. For Behnisch, various elements could remain `themselves` and find expression in a way that corresponds to their essence, yet each element and each part could also serve a purpose within the overall scheme and the non-materials gaps could assume a special importance. [2] (Fig. 14). All these structure is related to his democratic and humane architecture where each individual in a society has its own character, and every individual has relation as whole to form a meaningful entity.

4. EPILOGUE

Evidently, Behnisch can be admitted as the apologist of democracy and freedom, and known as the interrogator of the status quo. Behnisch had dedicated himself to "building for democracy", saying that his life was permeated by democracy. Behnisch's philosophy abandons a fixed theoretical framework in favor of a more emotional, intellectual approach. Behnisch advocates an architectural thinking grounded in modesty and humanization. It is portrayed by use of different layers and a differentiation. He always believes the freedom of form and his ambition was adding new contents to this structure.

Plenary Complex of the German Bundestag, Bonn is a powerful example that clearly reflects Behnisch`s democratic architecture concerning the spatial design, form-function relations. During the design process for 20 years, as Behnisch himself states that there are quite different solutions and proposals in between the design decisions at the beginning and at the end of the design process. But throughout these years, his democratic and humane architecture has always been at the core of his design approach and solutions. The strong formal relationships, the productiveness of the tectonic details, the consistent and movement in space transitions can be considered as clear expressions of his democratic architecture.

The design solution which is based on pluralism, and which provides references that are compatible with the conceptual contents of diversity, equality and transparency can be considered as the best representatives of his democratic and humanistic architecture. However, the fact that, the ability of the reflection of the inner meanings of all these concepts into the design forms is almost the answer to the question of `what is a good architecture '. For this reason, this building can be used as an important example in the theory and practice discussions, in the field of contemporary architecture, has the power of demonstrating the reflection of the basic conceptions of the design idea into the design form.

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