

## Laudation Ursula Baus

In the international context, Werner Sewing may be considered as the most influential and important German language architectural and urban design critic. In England, in the United States and China, his analyses and theses on architecture and urban design are being met with a high degree of attention, which is conversely a result of his interest in international development. While it is often the case that in Germany the discourse is suffocating as a result of parochial narrowness, Sewing has been able to make larger connections thanks to his knowledge of economy, politics and sociology. However, just because of the arguments on the international level or the interdisciplinary approach, Sewing does not smooth out the spectrum of issues. On the contrary, they serve to meticulously distinguish the influences from different cultural contexts and disciplines. Werner Sewing's engagement since the fall of the Berlin Wall cannot be overestimated. Being thoroughly committed to urban existence, his analyses and comments on urban development and architecture of the German capital remained independent of all participating interest groups. Lobbyists, politicians, planners and architects were never able to find in him a fellow ally who could be instrumentalized. His rhetorical energy is feared. As an architectural and urban theoretician, he is suspicious of any kind of consensus, being formed in his thinking by Niklas Luhmann and much later by Max Weber. He is not so much radical as being committed to independent insight situated between pop and high culture.

If "new urbanism" is imported from the USA as a panacea, Werner Sewing disarms it by means of his profound knowledge of the term as an aesthetically and socially bogus claim and shows it to be in the German context as an attempt at ennobling a reactionary traditionalism. With great appetite for controversy, he analyzes everything behind the images, with which urban design and architecture are able to succeed, thanks to the questionable "iconic turn" – nevertheless paying tribute to the architects for their design competence. In his language-bound engagement, the need for contemporary architectural theory manifest itself in the best possible manner.