

MISCELLANEA

# Where Is Berlin? Cultural Commons and Urban Policy Among Real and Virtual Walls

Chiara Carolina Donelli – University of Parma – donelli.chiara@gmail.com

Michele Trimarchi – Magna Graecia University (Italy); University of Bologna (Italy) – michele.trimarchi@unibo.it

## ABSTRACT

“Poor but Sexy” is Berlin, in a well-known institutional slogan. The city has experienced a unique evolution since the end of World War II and the Cold War years, attracting creative talents who crafted a metropolitan and cosmopolitan network of fertile connections and exchanges. Berlin appears to be structured in micro-areas: *kiez* is the urban and social unit, a small commons where shared views and actions define the neighbourhood. Since the fall of the Wall, the Berlin community has lived in a multiple-layered town whose dynamics revealed many contradictions, due to the virtual walls and maps that end up opposing to the elaboration of a consistent metropolitan strategy. This article discusses the role of cultural commons in urban development, which does not fit a unique model or mechanism. An effective administrative action can encourage the diffusion and location of creative industries and cultural enterprises, generating a sustainable value chain for Berlin’s identity, based upon cultural commons.

## KEYWORDS

*Social Dynamics; Urban Strategies; Cultural Commons; Art System; Localisation.*

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## 1 Cultural Commons within a complex urban texture

Urban Commons in Berlin can be interpreted through the concept of kiez,<sup>1</sup> the micro-framework defining the urban structure. Berlin is formed by twelve Bezirke, self-government units with no legal personality. But kiez refers to a city neighbourhood: a relatively small community within a larger town, a district that has developed its own charm and distinctive image, gradually created by the inhabitants' social identity. The word kiez is therefore used by Berliners to describe the neighbourhood where they live and feel at home. It is an atmospheric stratification of local and relational memories rather than a precisely defined area with formal labels and borders. Nothing can contribute more to the diversification of the city than this strong sense of identity of a specific area; the kiez palimpsest could be considered the partial outcome of the strategies aimed at careful urban renewal<sup>2</sup> in the attempt at combining the physical renewal of buildings with the need to preserve the existing urban and social structure.

Development and urban growth have been peculiar in Berlin, and differently from other European towns they were based on the shared beliefs that:

- the displacement of low-income population from the city centre should be avoided;
- the socially hybrid structure of the city has to be preserved;
- the residents should be involved in the process of decisions directly affecting them.

Will this belief resist when the number of residents is expected to increase? What is going to happen when the enormous need for space will have to be primarily satisfied? This question is still unsolved, but it emphasises the divided texture of the city, where the problems of reconstruction have been essential for the reflection upon the shape of the cultural landscape and the design of public action.

## 2 Can a wall/scarf play the role of a backbone?

For decades the Berlin Wall has played the role of a backbone for cultural and social dynamics, viewed from both (somehow reciprocally impermeable) perspectives. As many previous analyses suggest, the fact

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1. Kiez is a German word that refers to a city neighbourhood, a relatively small community within a larger town. The word is mainly used in Berlin and northern Germany. In Berlin the term usually has a positive connotation, as inhabitants often identify with the Kiez they live in (<http://www.berlin.de>).

2. Concept developed in the western half of the city in the context of 1987 International Buildings Exhibition (IBA), 1984. It was firstly applied in Prenzlauerberg in 1993. Bauausstellung Berlin GmbH and Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin, *The City Center as a Place to Live: Efforts in Careful Urban Renewal*. (Berlin: Bauausstellung Berlin, 1984)

that the city had been heavily bombed in the WWII, and rigidly divided by a wall until twenty-five years ago, should be considered as the stepping stone for understanding its specificity.<sup>3</sup> The complex history over its shoulders offers distinctive reflections upon the urban layout<sup>4</sup>: no needs to invent a new city,<sup>5</sup> the challenge was rather to understand and restore its identity. The crucial question was not “How can Urban Planners recapture the loss?” but “Which one, among the Berlin’s many pasts, should they choose?” The memory of the 1920s without Nazis and Communists? Or the Berlin divided but without the Wall? Either Western or Eastern memories?

The singular situation in front of the planner was a city in which the Wall inhibited any push into the hinterlands and left a big empty grey zone crossing it in the middle. The concepts of centre and periphery were completely upside-down. The fall of the Wall has been the occasion for unavoidably and desirably reshaping the whole metropolitan area and its newly opened connections with the German territories.<sup>6</sup> Post-reunification has meant here a twenty-five years long boom in creativity: the city of talents pursued the urban marketing strategy to subsidise creativity aiming at a successful urban development for the future.<sup>7</sup> The image the city wanted to screen itself in was a tidy link between culture and creativity.

This was the case of the two symbols of Berlin: the Reichstag and the East Side Gallery, in which contemporary art had solved many controversial political problems.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, after a first disruptive wave against the symbol of the division, a process of re-appropriation followed. Other similar solutions, such as the Bernauer Strasse Park Memorial (1999), and the Berlin Wall Trail 160-km cycling path developed in 2010, were adopted years after. The Wall was over, and Berlin had to craft a new backbone. The city was building its vocabulary around the words: dynamic, cheap and innovative; new massive investment programs, like the regeneration

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3. Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

4. Boris Grésillon, “Berlin, Cultural Metropolis: Changes in the Cultural Geography of Berlin Since Reunification,” *Ecumene* 6, no. 3 (July 1999): 284–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096746089900600303>

5. Elizabeth A Strom, *Building the New Berlin: The Politics of Urban Development in Germany's Capital City* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001)

6. Margit Mayer, “New Lines of Division in the New Berlin,” in *Toward a New Metropolitanism Reconstituting Public Culture, Urban Citizenship, and the Multicultural Imaginary in New York and Berlin*, ed. Antje Dallmann, Günter H Lenz, and Friedrich Ulfers (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), 171-83

7. Stefan Krätke, “City of Talents? Berlin’s Regional Economy, Socio-Spatial Fabric and ‘Worst Practice’ Urban Governance,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 3 (2004): 511–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00533.x>

8. From the 1970s to the early 2000s, many authors highlighted the progression of the pairing of culture and urban planning. Among them Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York, NY: Hill; Wang, 1992); Michael Parkinson and Franco Bianchini, *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

of Potsdamer Platz<sup>9</sup> and the renewal of the Museuminsel, were being carried out.

In such a way Berlin managed to market itself from “divided city” to a globally-known international cultural district, and from a Cold War Wall tourism into a wide and multidimensional cultural destination.<sup>10</sup> Still, that was not enough to keep it from falling into financial bankrupt in 2001. Where is the “poor but sexy” Berlin? The overmentioned slogan was a clever practice of turning upside-down the image of the ongoing financial crisis of local government in 2000. In such a respect the 2001 administration led by Mayor Klaus Wowereit represented a new strategic direction, where new policies were implemented in order to boost Berlin’s role as a creative city and overcome the consequences of the fast de-industrialisation occurred after the reunification.

The challenge was to craft a diffused quality of urban life: cultural facilities; independent and artist’s run galleries rather than museums and established cultural centres; small green areas and parks rather than big sports stadiums, spread in the city; small cafes and bars rather than chain restaurants. This reflects Wowereit’s approach, including his famous slogan. In other words, Berlin was bankrupt but possessed an image of “coolness” which could be exploited in the name of profit. If until the early 2000s we could observe a focus on the pursuit of the “capital of culture” status, now we can clearly observe a pursuit of the status of “creative city.”<sup>11</sup>

Wowereit’s strategic plan seems to be fully achieved. What made the creation of a creative hub in the middle of Europe possible? Not only a strategic plan but a cauldron of cultural policies, public action, attitude and different contingencies:

- The openness of the city towards a wide range of possibilities led to the creation of a bunch of different types of format.
- The historical tidy relation between the city and contemporary art. The art scene was playing a key role in the recovery process based on the city’s attractiveness for artists, and it never missed to provide artists with new materials and new forms of interest: starting from the Wall, passing through the squat movements, arriving to the plethora of neglected sites.
- The charm image magnets for the young were effective. Berlin was marked as an alternative city during the division, when

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9. Potsdamer Platz, was sold in May 1990 by the Berlin Senate to the Daimler-Benz corporation at a price below market value—a controversial sale later challenged by the European Commission. Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*

10. Claudia Seldin, “The Creative Shift—Considerations on the 21st Century Approach to Cultural Urban Planning: The Case of Berlin,” *Culture + Urban Space* 65 (2014), <https://cultureurbanspace.interartive.org/creative-seldin>

11. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Richard L Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York, N.Y.; London: Routledge, 2005); Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos in association with Comedia, 1995).

western citizens were exempt from the military service and therefore it soon started to attract many non-conventional young residents. No mandatory closing times for bars led to a thriving nightlife where small cafes, independent production, graffiti art and subcultural squats merged to generate a cool and authentic wave.

- The simple fact of being the capital exerted a strong attraction on organisations and artists due to the higher visibility and financial options it could provide them with.
- The capital of encounter and network creation induced artists to come and go. The community is being continuously transformed, with no central point. Pluralism and variability appear to be unique features of Berlins' art scene.
- The hard shelter of good and affordable living conditions played also a crucial role for the development of contemporary art.
- The concession of visas for foreign artists and professionals of the "creative class" played an important role.
- The state support of start-ups and project spaces provided entrants in the art system to feel taken care of.
- The polycentric structure of the city was a very important factor: every kiez is a small city itself, ending up in a multitude of social structures and living conditions. This polycentric structure could be also found in the art scene: such a differentiated panorama fitted everyone's need.

Berlin is a city of contradictions: ongoing economic woes and dramatic history but also creativity and cultural richness continue to flourish.<sup>12</sup> Is really Berlin the metropolis of hope, or instead it became the metropolis of the hopeful? Two cases are developed and discussed in order for us to examine and evaluate such trends.

### 3 Different maps, different stories, the same city

#### 3.1 Berlin's backbone: mapping the intangible

Berlin is huge, it has the same extension of New York City (area of 892 square kilometres) with one third population (3.4 million inhabitants).<sup>13</sup> It is laying there, as close as possible to reality; we could say it is democratic, with no material barriers even in the touristic hubs somehow inspiring the "Berlin doesn't love you" slogan. It is shaped by a structure of bus networks, inner connections, urban lakes (not just blue dots in the map), widespread green areas, empty spaces and, again, infinite streets: Berlin stands there, naked in front of its visitors. Close to it, the U-Bahn map, a

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12. Elsa Vivant, "Creatives in the City: Urban Contradictions of the Creative City," *City, Culture and Society* 4, no. 2 (June 2013): 57–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2013.02.003>

13. *Statistischer Bericht*, Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam, December 31, 2013.

knot of colourful lines, intersections, stations, connections used to travel and think long-distance. Thinking about Berlin through its various maps arises from the fascination of two completely different structures, telling the same stories. Why not turning upside-down the dynamics and use the same structure (cultural maps) for telling different stories?

Each map is drawing new connections, telling different stories and reshaping the city's skeleton. Creativity has always played a huge role on how we think places, it is naturally built in the process of organising and planning. Berlin has incorporated the creative discourse within its urban development, requiring (and crafting) new rules aimed at orientating urban planning, in order for the city to build a specific and highly competitive image of itself. Therefore, in order for us to understand where is Berlin we need to start with its cultural map, analysing different areas to understand their most evident features, sinking into its contradictory aspects and perspectives, accepting the impossibility of drawing whatever general rules or analyses, also related to its landscape.

### 3.2 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The National Museums in Berlin, originated by the Royal Museum by Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, now belong to the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) and are supported collectively by the German Federal Government and the sixteen Länder. The location of the National Museums in the map is reassuring for the visitors: museums are mainly centrally located, often aggregated in clusters, they refer all to the same website, discounted admission for cumulative entrance is allowed, they have been renewed (some are brand new), and easily accessible. What clearly emerges is the absence of any master plans, neither for the collections and exhibitions, nor for their territorial locations.

Located in various neighbourhoods throughout the city, major sites could be easily pinpointed. The main point of interest was represented by the two former eastern sectors: Museumsinsel and the Humboldt Forum, for their central location and as the symbol of a glorious past sullied by the DDR period,<sup>14</sup> and the Kulturforum, as a part of the massive renewal of the area of Postdamer Platz. Together with the State Museums, Berlin has a wide range of different institutions and exhibition spaces devoted to Contemporary Art; some of them are partly publicly financed: Martin-Gropius-Bau, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Akademie der Künste, Kunstverein. They enrich the range of public exhibition spaces, as well as private collections and experimental forms of the independent scene. Since they are

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14. After its reconstruction the island became a cultural showcase for the DDR and the Soviet Union. Its location in the eastern part of Berlin had important impacts on the way in which the museums were rebuilt and the DDR focused the rebuilding of the museums on restoring and reconstruction rather than on modernisation.

not sharing any programming with the State Museums our analysis will not deal with them.

Moving South from Museumsinsel in the eastern sector, following the route of the massive urban redeveloped node of Postdamer platz and the Bundestag, we find the recent museum area of the Kulturforum. The museums complex was built to overcome the absence of a suitable cultural complex in the eastern half of Berlin. The long-term plan of the foundation is to make the Museumsinsel into an area for museums showing classical art (and moving back the Gemäldegalerie to the Bode museum), while making the Kulturforum into an area dedicated to modern art museums (and add the recently donated Pietzsch collection to the Kulturforum).<sup>15</sup>

None of the museums of the Museumsinsel has in agenda activities, workshops, special programs aimed at encouraging visitors (especially the residents) to come back and “live,” instead of simply “getting in,” the museum. The inclusive map of the state museums is confusing, not well finished, compared with the one distributed with the Berlin Welcome Card, which proves much more appealing and neat.

## 4 Galleries and the art market

### 4.1 Remoteness from the market?

The reputation of being “Poor but Sexy” does not imply a distance from the market but somehow fuels it: Berlin is now more than just one hot-spot of the international art production. Germany’s capital is home to around 400 galleries, and for almost twenty years a new gallery was opened almost weekly in various locations across the city. The galleries offer more than 57,000 square metres of exhibition space for artists from home and abroad to show their work. Although Berlin’s reputation as a sort of “non-economic zone,” for art galleries it seems almost an imperative to, at least, open a branch in the city. According to the research work carried out by the Institute of Strategic Resource Development,<sup>16</sup> one of the main attractions to prefer Berlin is the lively art scene, for both the artist living here and their audience.

There is a shared perception from the cultural actors that Berlin art’s sustainability could not really rely upon the city’s market, which is not able to adequately respond to an oversized offer. The art market shows many weaknesses, and the local troops of collectors do not manage to fulfil the

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15. Charly Wilder, “Debate Pits Modern Art Against Old Masters,” *Der Spiegel*, September 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/berlin-s-culture-war-debate-pits-modern-art-against-old-masters-a-855704.html>

16. Institut für Strategieentwicklung (IFSE), “Studio Berlin. In Kooperation Mit Dem Neuen Berliner Kunstverein (N.b.k.)” (Berlin: Institut für Strategieentwicklung (IFSE), June 2010); Institut für Strategieentwicklung (IFSE), “Studio Berlin II. In Kooperation Mit Dem Neuen Berliner Kunstverein (N.b.k.)” (Berlin: Institut für Strategieentwicklung (IFSE), June 2011)

available options. Despite the art professionals' complaint that the city lacks a real collectors' class, this is a negligible problem because Berlin plays the role of central node in the worldwide network. In an international perspective, Berlin's model is particularly desirable for potential connections, for both its bohemian image and low production expenses.

## 4.2 Different maps for different markets

The art commercial scene follows different routes of evolution compared to State Museums and the independent scene. The choice of their location is mainly based on different scenarios according to the network built by the galleries. What makes the decisive difference between Berlin and an art galleries' neighbourhood, such as New York City's Chelsea, is that Berlin galleries are scattered all over the city rather than being concentrated only in one single district. The two criteria adopted used here to analyse the galleries' locations in the city centre are: Index and LVBG. The former has been chosen due to its wide diffusion and historical importance,<sup>17</sup> the latter (Landesverband Berliner Galerien—LVBG) has been adopted according to the selective requirement for being included.<sup>18</sup> Using both criteria four main commercial clusters could be drawn. Berlin-Mitte is the district with the highest density of galleries, although through the years galleries have been changing to a large extent. Most of the young galleries settled around Auguststrasse were founded in the 1990s. The district that once used to be the symbol of the independent ongoing culture is now affordable only for established galleries due to the increasing average rents. While large galleries enhance their reputation moving to new and fashionable district, smaller galleries locate in neighbourhoods where spaces are more convenient and/or available. [Fig. 1]

Berlin-Mitte is the most important location for galleries. This is followed by districts of the former western part of the city: Charlottenburg and Schöneberg (Kurfürstenstrasse e Postdamerstrasse). The hub, along Potsdamer Strasse, situated mostly in West Berlin's Tiergarten district, has its origin back in the beginning of last century. Located in this district (and enjoying a lively night life) until World War II, art dealers moved to Charlottenburg, which became the preferred area of some prominent galleries and art dealers before the fall of the Wall.

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17. Index brochure has been founded in 2001 and is published quarterly. In the early years, the selection for the "index" was done in a democratic decision-making process by the galleries. Meanwhile, the number of galleries is so big that it is selected strictly, who will be among the 60 chosen ones. The responsibility for this lies in the hands of a selection committee appointed for two years.

18. Requirement to become members: Gallery shall be in operation for 3 years. The Gallery shall produce at least 4 exhibition per year. The Gallery must have its own space, suitable for art presentation. Opening hours must be at least 20 hours per week. The Gallery shall continuously promote artists alive with appropriate space to present their work. The Gallery shall operate by the standard guidelines of the Federation of European Art Galleries Association (F.E.A.G.A.). <www.berliner-galerien.de>.



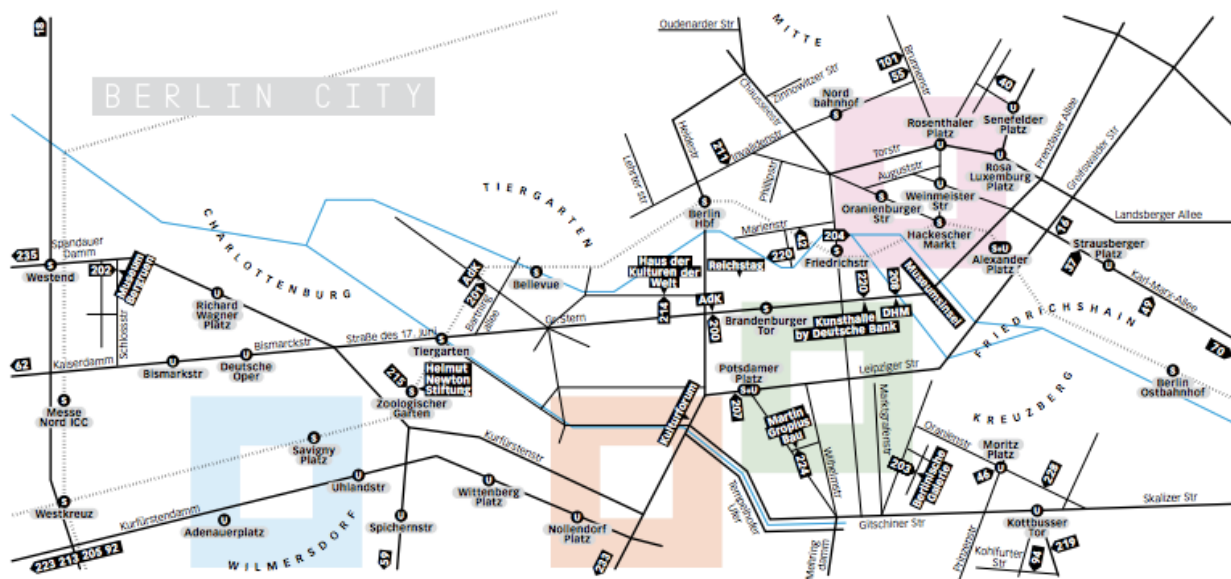


FIG. 1 Landesverband Berliner Galerien (LVBG) Map, 2014

The continued movement of galleries in and out of the district continues to give it a fresh lease in terms of art and lifestyle, or how it was defined an exodus of luxury to West Berlin.<sup>19</sup> More and more investors tend to live in the western district, and so business goes where its clients are.<sup>20</sup>

There is also another story, the one of the Galleries which resettle out of the beaten tracks, and quickly become magnets for new settlements and resettlement of further galleries, which is what already happens, for example, in Kreuzberg. Most of the galleries in Berlin have several moves behind them, and in the geography of this movement we can observe two major trends. The former moves from one art centre to the next gallery hotspot, and the latter intentionally avoids clusters, settles in less occupied places such as Moabit, Neukölln or Wedding, and gradually redefines its focus.

### 4.3 Between institution and market: Kommunale Galerien

At the junction between commercial galleries and the State Museums there are thirty freely accessible local galleries in different Berlin districts. Kommunale Galerien Berlin form together the AK KGB—Arbeitskreis Kommunale Galerien Berlin (Working Group Municipal Galleries Berlin) places for the promoting artists, where innovative artistic experiments and new communication formats take place; they are also active in art education projects for people from different backgrounds, cultural traditions and generations. They have been built for creating networking action among different milieus and professionals, particularly between the independent scene and institutional cultural workers.

19. Isabelle Graw, "The Myth of Remoteness from the Market," *Texte Zur Kunst* 94 (2014): 62

20. *ibid.*: 62

## 5 The independent scene

### 5.1 *Zwischennutzung*

A major force and many peculiar factors related to Berlin's cultural geography are the Projekträume (project spaces, interim use). Project spaces are alternative, self-organised art spaces, usually run by artists or curators who contribute to the Berlin art scene from different perspectives. Since 1972, when the first project space opened its door in Berlin, their number kept increasing year by year.<sup>21</sup> Open and fluid structure, easy to reallocate, affordable price, high numbers of potential participants, are all features that perfectly match with the city's start-up culture.

The practice of *Zwischennutzung* (temporary rent contract usually with controlled price introduced in Berlin in the 1990s)<sup>22</sup> feeds for the most part the proliferation of such a culture. The diversity of temporary usage reflects the heterogenous nature of their promoters: start-ups; migrants; system refugees; drop-outs; part-time activists. The grounds were particularly influential for the proliferation of such contracts due to high amount of wasted and empty spaces, the outcome of the speculative boom of the early 1990s.<sup>23</sup> They are literally wastelands: "urban sites that appear to be unmarketable in the medium to long term," as phrased by the Department for Urban Development.<sup>24</sup> A trend in the use of such a type of contract could be observed especially in low-income, high immigration *kieze*, and this provides landlords with incentives to use such a contract to avoid squatters and redevelop the area, without being bound in long term contracts. [Fig. 2]

At the same time, the cultural activities offered to the local community are regarded as the key element in the upgrade of problematic areas: on one hand the usual audience of off-scenes discovers new places in the city, and establishes new connections, being stimulated by curiosity. Artists and curators, on the other hand, gain access to temporary working spaces for a lower or free rent, although they have to face short term

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21. Studio Urban Catalyst, "Urban Catalysts. Strategies for Temporary Uses—Potential for Development of Urban Residual Areas in European Metropolises" (Berlin, 2003), [www.template.com/think-pool/one786f.html?think\\_id=4272](http://www.template.com/think-pool/one786f.html?think_id=4272)

22. Klaus Overmeyer et al., *Urban Pioneers: Temporary Use and Urban Development in Berlin = Berlin: Stadtentwicklung Durch Zwischennutzung*. (Berlin: Jovis, 2007)

23. Following the reunification of the city, in the early 1990s many of the vacant sites located in the central districts of Berlin became prime pieces of real estate in the context of the speculative boom which hit Berlin in 1990–1991. Many sites in the Friedrichstadt were snapped up by international investors; while one the most famous "wastelands" inherited from Berlin's division, the Potsdamer Platz, was sold in May 1990 by the Berlin Senate to the *Daimler-Benz corporation* at a price below market value—a controversial sale later challenged by the European Commission. This was a period of economic boom and inflated growth forecasts for Berlin, which came to an end in 1993. Those brief years of building boom left an oversupply of office space which has not been absorbed since. Lower than expected growth rates and investment flows have limited the demand for commercial development on Berlin's remaining vacant lots. Claire Colomb, "Pushing the Urban Frontier: Temporary Uses of Space, City Marketing and the Creative City Discourse in 2000s Berlin," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2012): 131–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9906.2012.00607.x>

24. Overmeyer et al., *Urban Pioneers*

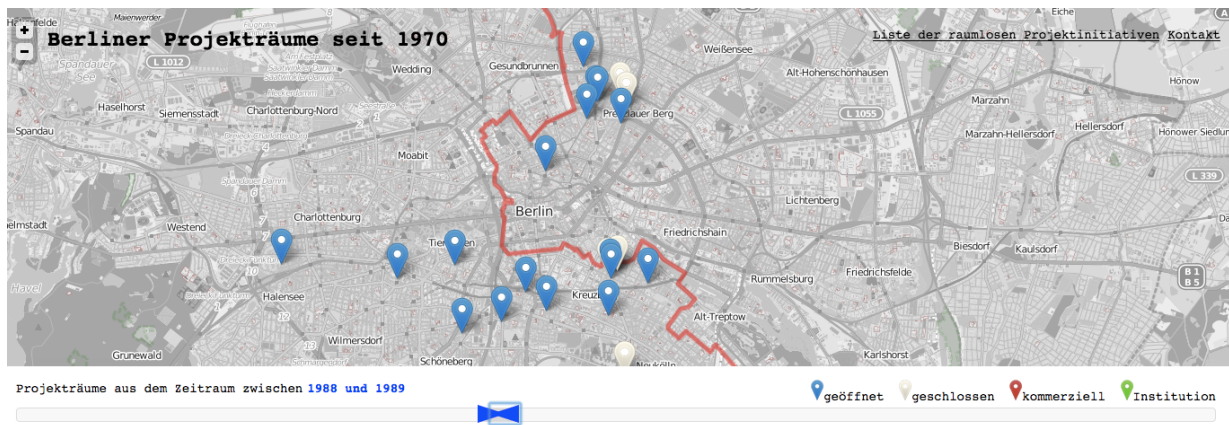


FIG. 2 Interaktive Projekträumekarte, 1988-1988. Powered by Leaflet—Projektraumdaten und Webseite/Data and Website: Séverine Marguin und Erik Streb del Toro. Data <https://openstreetmap.org>. Titles: <http://wikimedia.org/> and <http://www.projektraeume-berlin.net/>

programming. Despite the long neglect in 2007, policy-makers started<sup>25</sup> to realise that one of the city's main features could be promoted as a strength to attract more young creatives, and mentioned the availability of vacant spaces for temporary uses as the key for the continuous development of the cultural economy. The artists, the ones who were facing the dark side of gentrification processes<sup>26</sup> and tried to escape from it, are the actors who unconsciously fed it. Indeed, the former poor area of Kreuzberg and Neukölln are now simply gentrified areas.

## 5.2 What is close to you: Projekträumekarte

The Interaktive Projekträumekarte (interactive historical map) realised in the Freie Szene context by Severine Marguin are pinpointed in the map with different realities.<sup>27</sup> The problematic part of these realities is the absence of any networks or databases of information related to the locations. Not only visitors but the actors themselves do not know each other. To analyse the trajectories of these temporary uses and interim spaces means to understand the broader political economy of urban transformation, economic restructuring, and changing urban governance in Berlin.<sup>28</sup>

Soon after the fall of the Wall, the former Wall East Sector of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte (Oranienburgerstrasse) saw new spaces blossoming thanks to the declaration of the area as a redevelopment zone (Sanierungsgebiet). The old district of Prenzlauer Berg was in the immediate vicinity of the city centre but was circumvented by the Berlin Wall and had been therefore neglected during the lifetime of the Eastern Ger-

25. In 2007, the Senate Department of Urban Development commissioned a study to investigate how urban development and planning policy could encourage the further growth of cultural industries.

26. Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008)

27. Cultural sociologist, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg + EHESS Paris. The creator of the map. Interviewed on 21 August 2014

28. Florian Haydn and Robert Temel, *Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of City Spaces* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006)

man state.<sup>29</sup> In the second half of the 1990s a considerable increase in investments occurred, resulting in a rise of prices and an increasing number of spaces (indicatively around 2000) closed or moved to different areas. The area of Mitte, as described before, indeed saw the commercialisation and institutionalisation of many structures that used to be independent in the 1990s.

The wealthy areas of the West, as Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf, never really experienced such a diffusion of Projekträume, differently from the galleries scene, and barely no social housing building, compared to traditionally inner urban, unemployed working-class areas such as Kreuzberg, Friederichschain, or Neukölln. In the course of the development of the city, gentrification became the dominant trend for development of most inner-city neighbourhoods; various studies already discuss the different types of gentrification and the different phases recorded in various times.<sup>30</sup>

From the fall of the Wall the northern areas have lost room at the benefit of the southern districts. Indeed, the concentration of newly opened pioneer locations (such as project spaces, clubs, galleries) has shifted from Mitte (1992), to Prenzlauer Berg (1997), to Friedrichshain (2002) in a clockwise movement across the city, reaching Kreuzberg and even parts of Neukölln.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of this sort of cultural and sub-cultural poles is connected with a shift of image of the new locations, specifically the development of an “artists’ quarter,” “gallery district” or “hip district” in both the media and public perception. Consequently, rental price rose not only for housing but also for the retail segment, so that interim use, dependent on affordable rent, started to move.<sup>32</sup> [Fig. 3]

Differently from the large-scale investment of the 1990s, the city is now involved in the global competition for creativity-based industries, and some way has to be found to keep some commodities or places unique and attractive enough. The implication of this is that urban policy-makers are now explicitly targeting the “off-beat,” “alternative,” and previously “underground” subcultural and artistic sectors,<sup>33</sup> for instance Kreuzberg as a gentrified, established underground cool area.

29. Matthias Bernt, *Stadterneuerung Unter Aufwertungsdruck* (Sinzheim: Pro-Universitats-Verl., 1998); Stefan Kratke, “Berlins Umbau Zur Neuen Metropole,” *Leviathan* 19, no. 3 (1991): 327–52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23984081>; Matthias Bernt and Andrej Holm, “Exploring the Substance and Style of Gentrification: Berlin’s ‘Prenzlberg,’” in *Gentrification in a Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism*, ed. Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 107–26

30. Andrej Holm, “Berlin’s Gentrification Mainstream,” in *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism*, ed. Matthias Bernt, Britta Grell, and Andrej Holm (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013), 171–88; Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy,” *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>

31. *ibid*

32. Kate Shaw, “The Place of Alternative Culture and the Politics of Its Protection in Berlin, Amsterdam and Melbourne,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 6, no. 2 (June 2005): 149–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649350500136830>

33. The importance of the approximate 150 non-profit and mostly self-funded artists’ run spaces was recently honoured by the Berlin Senate. In September 2012, the first prizes for artistic spaces were awarded. Seven selected artists’ initiatives received a €30,000 grant each.

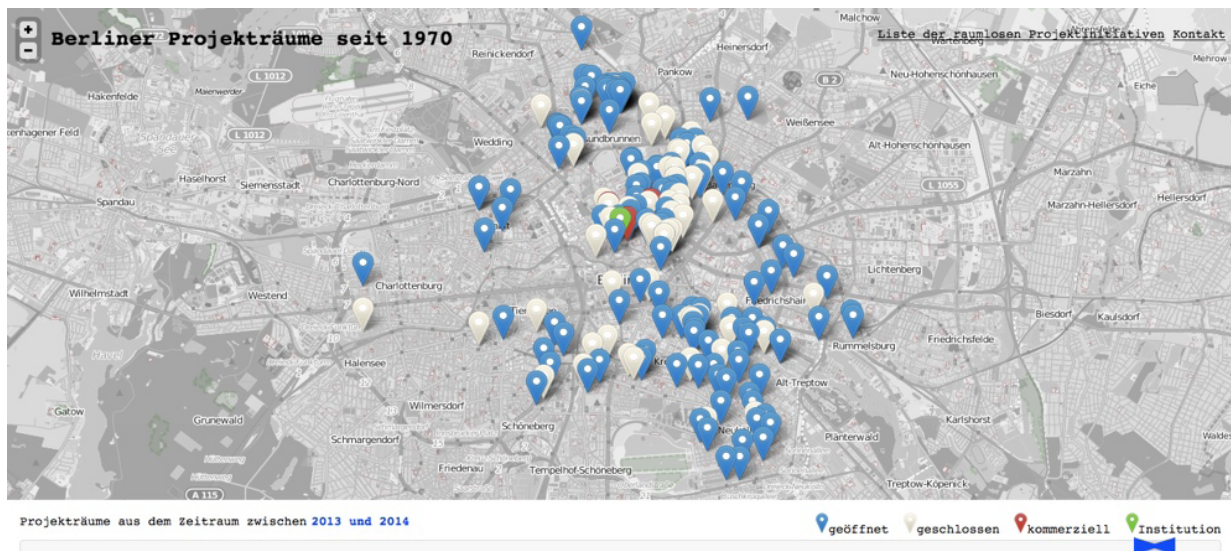


FIG. 3 Interaktive Projekträumekarte, 2013-2014. Powered by Leaflet—Projektraumdaten und Webseite/Data and Website: Séverine Marguin und Erik Streb del Toro. Data <https://openstreetmap.org>. Titles: <http://wikimedia.org/> and <http://www.projektraeume-berlin.net/>

## 6. Broadcast map: the image to tourists

The maps are pieces of the puzzle describing the city's identity. Every map has been crafted by different entities to build or make visible connections, to attract visitors or customers, and to provide them with guide and orientation.<sup>34</sup> None of the previously considered maps has been built for showcasing a specific image aimed at marketing the public.

"Berlin doesn't love you," say many stickers plastering traffic lights in Kreuzberg. Besides the mainstream not all the residents, especially the residents in the city centre, have reacted so enthusiastically to the constantly increasing flood of visitors.<sup>35</sup> In 1992–1993 it was decided to involve the private sector more strongly in the marketing of Berlin as a tourist goal.<sup>36</sup> The tourism office Berlin Tourismus Marketing GmbH (BTM) – now renamed Visit Berlin – is a public-private partnership, partially financed by the city of Berlin and the tourism industry. In 1994 Partner für Berlin, a second public-private partnership was founded, and it started to carry out a marketing strategy for Berlin.

The marketing public relations activity carried out by the Berlin Senate and Partner für Berlin to reach this social-political objective has been varied and versatile throughout the years since the campaign "be Berlin," a

34. Johannes Novy, "What's New About New Tourism? And What Do Recent Change in Travel Implies for the 'Tourist City' Berlin," in *The Tourist City Berlin: Tourism and Architecture*, ed. Jana Richter (Salenstein: Braun, 2010)

35. Claire Colomb et al., "The 'Be Berlin' Campaign. Old Wine in New Bottles or Innovative Form of Participatory Place Branding?" in *Towards Effective Place Brand Management: Branding European Cities and Regions* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010), 173–90

36. Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (London: Routledge, 2012); Johannes Novy and Sandra Huning, "New Tourism (Areas) in the 'New Berlin,'" in *World Tourism Cities: Developing Tourism Off the Beaten Track*, ed. Robert Maitland and Peter Newman (London; New York: Routledge, 2009)

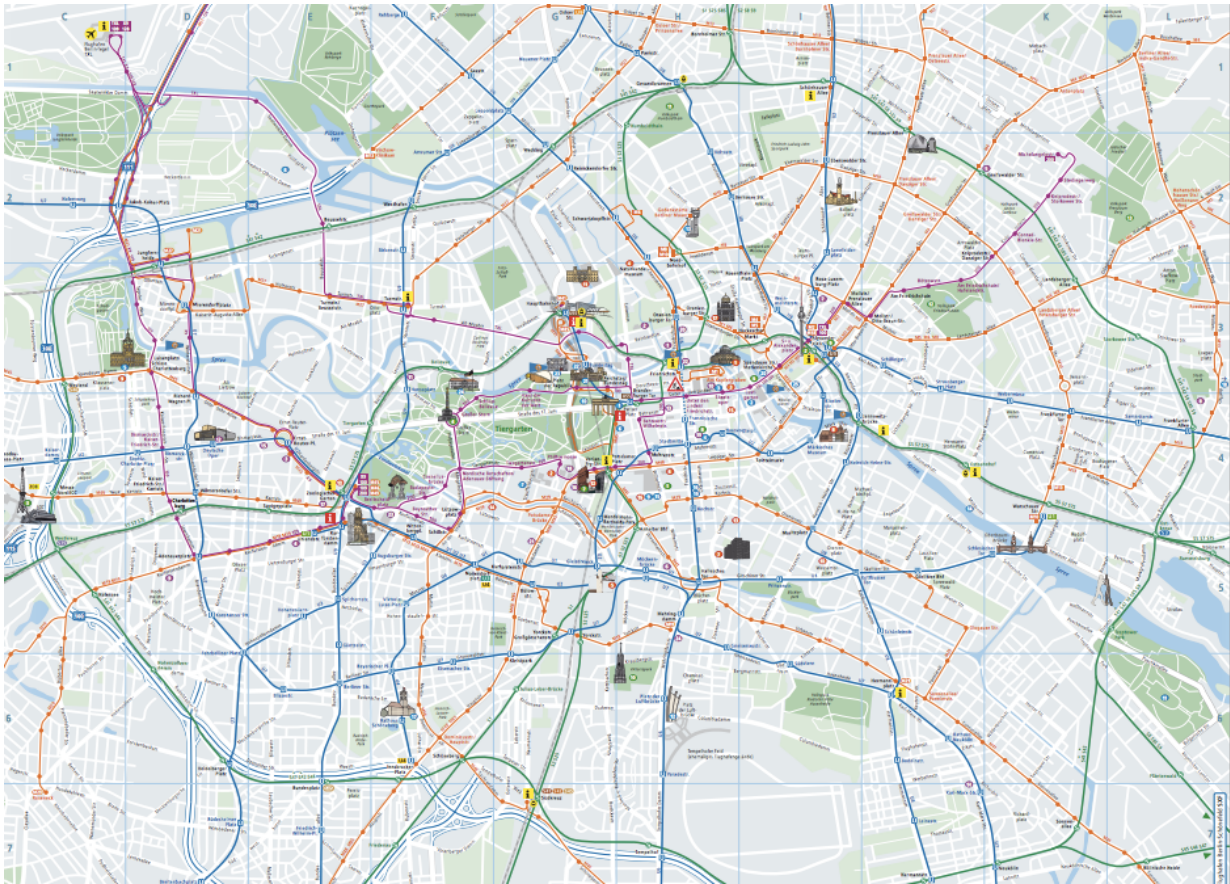


FIG. 4 Berlin Welcome Card Map, from <https://visitberlin.de>

participatory marketing campaign launched in 2008 in which the city was presented as an international and open metropolis, a young exciting location for business and science, as well as a future-oriented industrial region, a world renowned creative metropolis or quite simply the “place to be.” In the first four years of “be Berlin” the city has developed a clear brand profile, and Berlin started to be promoted as “creative city.” [Fig. 4]

As confirmed by an image survey conducted by TNS Infratest on behalf of the Berlin marketing campaign at the beginning of 2011, the “Metropolis on the Spree River” today is perceived more strongly as an attractive place where to live and work than in 2007. The high proportion of income in the city makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between tourism and other forms of migration and mobility, as well as other forms of leisure and consumption. There is a growing number of highly mobile academics, artists, and creative workers, and entrepreneurs that can be encountered in Berlin. They are sometimes referred to as Yuccies (Young Urban Creative Internationals). As happened in East London, there is an increase in the number of cafes, bars, institutions and other venues for target groups that simply enjoy going out, or are eager for experiences. Urban and social processes focused upon transformation are clearly favoured.

The city’s approach to tourism policy seems to convey its main efforts on marketing initiatives aimed at targeting temporary visitors, affluent consumers and voyagers, due to a tourist-oriented network of urban ser-



FIG. 5 Everyone loves Berlin, University of Applied Science, Potsdam <https://incom.org/projekt/4679>, 2014. The project was created in the seminar "Google Maps and beyond: Maps for Desktop, Mobile and Print" at the University for Applied Sciences Potsdam, and published on July 30, 2014.

vices. What is absent is the consideration of the impact that uncontrolled tourism ends up exerting upon residents and the neighbourhoods.

The two maps of the BVG and City Welcome Card put spotlight on the city centre, pinpointing places in the city centre with international vocation as major points of interest. The project "Everyone loves Berlin"<sup>37</sup> is looking at Instagram data from Berlin. To snap pictures and, consequently, to upload them on a social network means a recognition of some places rather than others as points of interest. [Fig. 5]

It is reassuring enough for urban planners, then the tourist map and the Everyone loves Berlin map barely coincide. The tourist maps are the actual result of the strategic urban planning in Berlin, based on policy, tools and strategies determining the medium and long-term goals for the future of the city.

## 7 A hidden map: Urban Development Planning

Behind the maps showcased to the public there are different organs and institutes, which analyse both the weak and the strong points of the city and set the areas of different potential development according with this. The task assigned to the Stadtentwicklungsplan Zentren 3<sup>38</sup> (urban development planning) is to identify social and spacial problems at an

37. Project by Nicole Meckel, Sebastian Moschner, Janina Schulikow, Ina Soth, Philipp Geuder of University of Postdam.

38. Urban development plans (UDP) are instruments for the informal city structural planning. Urban development plans are designed for the whole city of Berlin and include directives and objectives for different functions such as work, living, social infrastructure, transport, supply and waste disposal.



FIG. 6 Stadtentwicklungszept Berlin 2030, Transformationsräume der BerlinStrategie

early stage and to develop corresponding coping strategies to deal with these problems.

While Berlin is still attracting young people, the structure of the population is changing: the urban community is becoming older and more international.<sup>39</sup> No longer the Wall divides the city today, but the S-Bahn Ring marks the separation between newcomers and “real Berliners.” Within the ring only one up to three residents was born in Berlin. The map shows how the city failed in maintaining its native inhabitants in the inner area (it is a common problem of many cities where art and culture are a prevailing feature of the perceived identity). [Fig. 6]

The other interesting data are related to the nationality of migrants. Turkish immigrants are mostly concentrated in the west area: Wedding, Kreuzberg, partially in Neukölln. The new lines of immigration still follow the former route of the wall. The high number of immigrants in the centre seems to contradict the gentrification displacement due to the progressive rise of prices; gentrification occurs here in the form of “displacement

39. *Statistischer Bericht*, Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam, December 31, 2013



from lifestyle" reducing housing quality (shared apartments, old and not renewed buildings).<sup>40</sup>

A considerable part of immigration is related to the city's cultural opportunities. In the BerlinStrategie | Stadtentwicklungs-konzept Berlin 2030 (Urban Development Concept Berlin 2030)<sup>41</sup> an entry is reserved for the "cultural diversity." Different strengths deserve a key role in the creation of possible future opportunities for the city, as underlined in the urban development concept, which emphasises the importance of an extended and diversified cultural supply, of architectural views as witnesses of the different ages of the city, of the ability to attract creative industries, of multiculturalism, and of public funding of the arts.

## 8 When problems become opportunities: what's after?

### 8.1 Too many maps for a consistent strategy

In the light of the controversial evolution of the dynamics of art within the urban fabric, as experienced by Berlin in the late years, the question is whether urban commons, with their powerful political dimension, can transcend extreme needs and symbolic resistance on the one hand and harmless local initiatives on the other.<sup>42</sup> big investment was never supported by any consistent policy or long-term strategy, but was heavier without any consideration of the ongoing situation. This could be easily observed in the maps: in the years in which the municipality was investing on the Mitte district (Postdamer Platz, Museuminsel, Reichstag), the independent cultural scene was carrying interest in completely different areas, mostly more conventionally recognised and more strictly related with the residents. The attempt was to fill the empty grey zone left by the Wall with high profile architecture without the recognition that the population, the real potential stakeholder, had already been displaced away. [Fig. 7]

The new century brought the awareness of relying on a poor budget, and to be attractive at the same time. Was that an illusion? In the coming years poverty could not be any more adopted as an asset, and some questions needed to be asked. Answers were quite difficult, if not impossible, as Scheffler observed: Berlin is condemned to becoming and never to being. It is a mixture of disappointed expectations and unrevealed opportunities. The year of the fall of the Wall was for too long considered the year zero,

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40. Jörg Blasius, "Verdrängungen in Einem Gentrifizierten Gebiet," in *Lebensstile in Den Städten: Konzepte Und Methoden*, ed. Jens S. Dangschat and Jörg Blasius (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1994), 408-25, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-10618-0\\_26](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-10618-0_26)

41. Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, "Berlin Strategie 2030" (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2015), <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/stadtentwicklungskonzept/>

42. Chiara Donelli, "Where Is Berlin? Too Many (Virtual) Walls Shape the Town and Its Communities," *Tafter Journal* 83 (August 2015), <https://www.tafterjournal.it/2015/07/15/where-is-berlin-too-many-virtual-walls-shape-the-town-and-its-communities/>

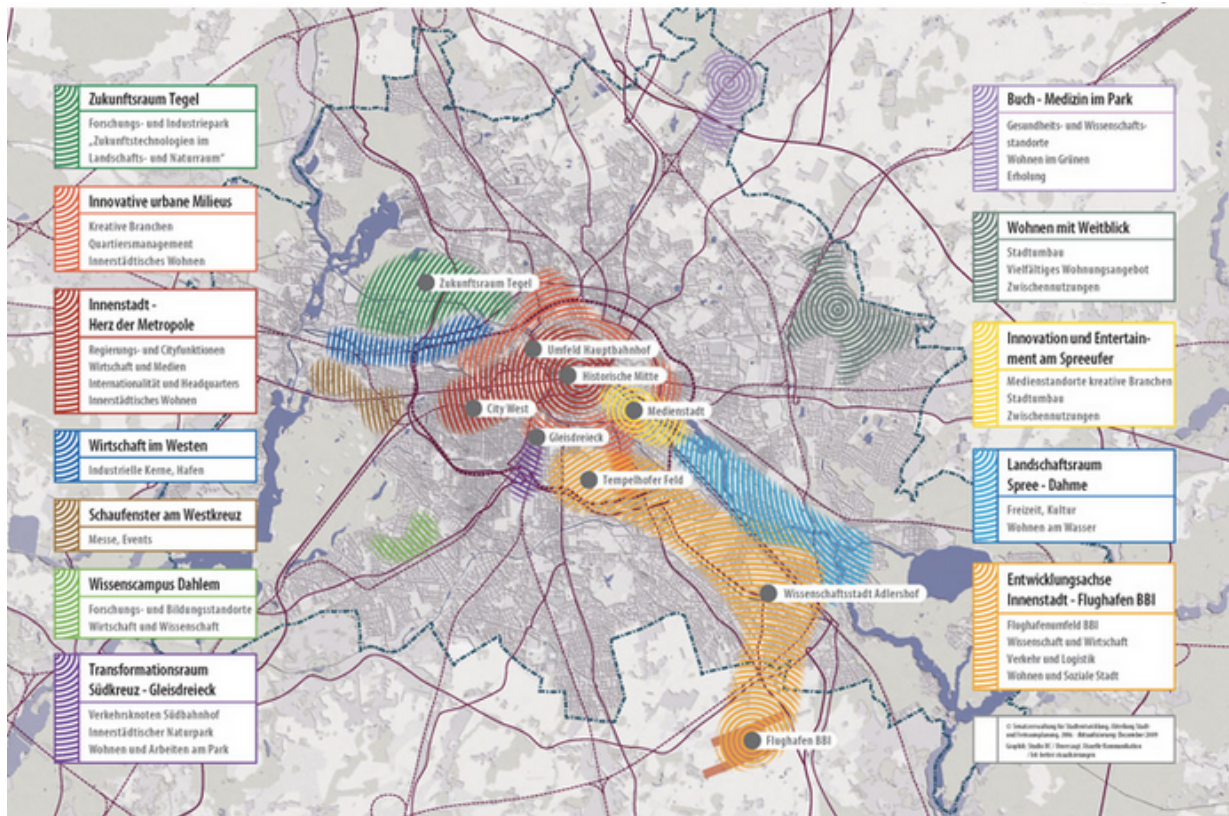


FIG. 7 Strategic development areas in Berlin. Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2009

the point which everything could have been started from. The Wall was a big wand for the city, but this doesn't mean an absence of identity, although the municipal emphasis upon special effects, aimed at keeping high attention on Berlin, was not necessarily successful, and the city was not benefiting from such an approach. The needed backbone is still missing.

The question shouldn't be: "which cultural maps?" but: "how to develop a consistent map?" It is clear enough that there is still room for creating synergies and develop "inter-map" strategies. Berlin needs to craft a strategic exchequer where differences are acknowledged and respected, but similarities unified and connections strengthened, also considering the crucial role of contemporary art in shaping urban identity. Past experience could tell us a lot. The city did not learn from the success of *Zwischennutzung*, an interesting method to manage vacancy and to capitalise on the off scene. The magmatic and undefined movement of squat, and project space later, never met any institutional feedback and was never included in the city's planning. The independent scene is no longer understood primarily as a cultural attack against the mainstream or as the resistance to a hegemonic culture. Now it is time to start looking at it as niche markets to be fed.

Unbridled capital, Berlin holds the reputation of a city where everything is possible, where its own scars and voids become a playground for creativity and experimentation for everything, from the arts to politics and from architecture to philosophy; a *carte blanche* of unlimited possibilities. Different "Berlins" are laid on the maps as no grasped opportunities or

unexpected market losses. The city is (should be?) ready to be reinvented with new perspectives and real synergies.

## 8.2 Cultural commons for next years' Berlin

Quite often the word "commons" is used as a virtuous label for complex phenomena. It is not among our intentions to focus upon the political and policy view of commons, which often tends to focus upon sentimental statements rather than technical features. A common is undivided by nature, and the sharing setting can normally generate unsolved issues, whose crucial weight flows into the "tragedy of the commons," a major negative paradox able to show the symmetrical correspondence between costs and benefits. *Cujus commoda ejus incommoda*, used to say law experts in ancient Rome. It did not change that much.

Berlin suffers from the typical manufacturing capitalism disease which tends to measure outcomes (not certainly values, which are out of its vocabulary unless monetary) in a short-term perspective and in merely quantitative terms, i.e. ignoring the slower but more powerful impact upon society and the economy, and at the same time considering competition more realistic than co-operation. In such a backward framework creativity requires protection, and the intellectual property rights regulation tends to raise walls and to close doors. Whatever we may believe of the legal justifications of intellectual property protection, we should acknowledge the inter-disciplinary option whose features need to consistently combine the legal features of creativity on one hand, and the economic benefits of circulating creative ideas. In such a respect neither public ownership (too general) nor individual property (too particular) can consistently respond to the complex needs of a post-feudal and post-manufacturing framework in which the value of ideas can be properly measured through their ability to fertilise further creative intuitions, production and exchange.

Cultural commons<sup>43</sup> do not imply physical property: cultural heritage, museum endowment and even performing arts objects cannot represent a common property case; at the same time they cannot be normally traded in a private market framework, despite the numerous art thefts and the ambiguity of contemporary art equally hosted in public museums and in private collections.<sup>44</sup> Cultural commons cannot generate the "tragedy of the commons," since their shared use does not produce any spoliation or decay, and it does not imply the usual difficulty connected to the identification of the formal and substantial stakeholders. In cultural commons the value is generated by their cognitive power: what is being shared is knowledge and its infinite possible elaborations, which grow through

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43. For a recent discussion on cultural commons, see Enrico Bertacchini et al., eds., *Cultural Commons: A New Perspective on the Production and Evolution of Cultures* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2012).

44. David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 2012

time: cultural commons are positively affected by a natural multiplication of value. This implies that an investment in culture, associated to loose constraints and even options for shared enjoyment and common participation, is able to exert a strong impact in terms of quality of urban and social life, in a dimension that no other action can attain.

In such a respect, urban cultural commons can still be the effective response to Berlin's dilemmas between gentrification and anarchy. What the fall of the Wall generated has been a long and systematic loss of any territorial, social and even cultural orientation, due to the (too) many virtual walls whose impermeability ended up to keep the lively and magmatic patches of the city tightly separated. Even the Tacheles experience,<sup>45</sup> although fertile from many points of view, proved unable to craft social and cultural connections out of its physical area and its intellectual milieu. Commons can overcome reciprocal separation, since they multiply their creative, dialogic and relational value due to their common property in which individual effort is enhanced and acknowledged since other individuals are carrying such effort ahead, entering the process whereby creative intuitions are transformed into products and actions. Nobody is harmed.

Such an option requires specific administrative action, starting from a selective and generous tax exemption aimed at encouraging consistent although heterogeneous localisation in a district and shared use of facilities. Rather than monetary subsidies, whose flows end up to generate competition due to their quantitative constraints, public action should focus upon infrastructural, technological and human capital building support; this would, again, encourage the common management and responsibility of cultural resources and projects. It could avoid gentrification until the creative effort prevails upon the mere sale of atmospheres and products; and at the same time it could overcome the anarchic individualism normally related to the non-strategic growth of creative action, introducing substantial elements of shared responsibility and long-term views. Berlin needs cultural commons.

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45. Verena Lenna and Michele Trimarchi, "For a Culture of Urban Commons. Practices and Policies," in *Art and Economics in the City: New Cultural Maps*, ed. Caterina Benincasa, Gianfranco Neri, and Michele Trimarchi (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019), 205–42.

**Chiara Carolina Donelli**, PhD, Research Fellow at University of Parma in Public and Cultural Management. She has been a visiting PhD at the University of South Australia . Her research interests includes cultural management, governance and philanthropy. She has been working in the cultural fields for cultural organisation in the area of strategic projects. She has been a reviewer for Public Management Review.

**Michele Trimarchi**, PhD, teaches Public Economics (Catanzaro), Cultural Economics (Bologna), and Lateral Thinking (IED Roma). He is member of the editorial board of Creative Industries Journal, and of the international council of Creative Industries Federation. Expert in international cultural cooperation projects (Indonesia, Brazil, India, Balkan area, Guatemala), Michele is founder of Tools for Culture, a nonprofit active in the area of strategic projects for the arts and culture.

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