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With this journal *Kiez kieken: Observations of Berlin* the students’ articles of the course *Berlin Tales: Germany’s Kiez and Metropolis* taught by Prof. Maria Ebner are being published to open up classroom discourse to a broader academic community. Topics have been chosen individually by each student and involved first-hand fieldwork research in Berlin, Germany, between March 10\textsuperscript{th} and March 17\textsuperscript{th} of 2012 as well as continuous individual research throughout the course of the semester. Most students of this course have chosen to research topics that are located outside of their regular major’s program, and therefore represent a specific personal interest or emotional story. All articles are the result of thoughtful personal engagement with the city of Berlin, the culture of Germany, and the community of Fordham University.

ANNE BUCKEL,
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ANNIE BUCKEL, 
Comparative Literature FCRH '13

ABSTRACT

Berlin and sustainable fashion labels create a duel branding dynamic in that they use one another to brand themselves. Berlin brands itself as a future fashion city by identifying itself as the mecca of green fashion; sustainable fashion labels use the political and social history of Berlin to instill social values to their product. Together, they create a charged climate of collective sustainability, where each individual Berliner can participate in the social meaning of green identity as Berlin charges towards the future.

PART I: THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

The leaves had not yet sprung from their buds in the Tiergarten during the blustery days of March.

The sight of bareness and scarcity did not foretell the coming of spring only one week away. Berlin’s grey and beige desolation echoed a foreboding sense of loss and decay. But Berlin’s weather was nothing more than a red herring; the inner workings and toils of the city shone with the promise of a green future and a burgeoning viridescent spring.

Or at least that is how it brands itself. The sprawling metropolis that is Berlin is a brand like any company or corporation, with a clear outward identity (despite its oftentimes jumbled internal sense of self). This identity lies in the poignant intersection between Berlin’s past and future. “Berlin is one of the few cities in the world taking a risk to market itself as a progressive, informative city with nothing to hide” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 88). Berlin uses its torrid past as a way to inform its current innovations. The very heart of Berlin’s marketed identity relies upon the tension between historic remembrance and future-thinking progression.

The world of fashion in Berlin negotiates Berlin’s current worldwide reputation as a hub of the creative arts with its attempts at revitalizing economic and technological innovation. Notoriously declared „Arm, aber sexy“ (poor, but sexy) by current mayor Klaus Wowereit in 2003 (Wikipedia), Berlin’s creative class is notoriously visible in the city of cheap rents and open support for the arts. “Since entering the twentieth-first [sic] century, Berlin has transformed itself into a hip, technologically savvy, new media and marketing mecca for youthful and creative entrepreneurs, who... have been forging a new urban infrastructure of different scenes and industries, which the city’s marketers have recognized and mobilized. There is a rich historical dimension to the components that have gone into the making of this multifaceted...
twenty-first century image” (Ingram 26). Fashion provides the perfect medium to balance the two acts of creative freedom and economic development as Berlin moves towards this “new urban infrastructure” and reformulates and evolves its identity, still deeply entrenched in history.

Berlin is poised to become the next addition to the elite clique of international fashion cities alongside the bi-annual circus of New York, London, Milan, and Paris fashion weeks. But Berlin has steadily and silently built its fashion repertoire through the years, playing off Germany’s reputation for minimalist design and punk affects. And yet Berlin is an outcast; it does not play by the traditional rules as New York, London, Milan, or Paris. Berlin is sustainable.

Berlin is noteworthy among these well-established cities for its emphasis on green fashion labels. Berlin Fashion Week uses sustainable fashion as a way to brand itself as a future fashion city, a city with economic and cultural vivacity. A quick trip to the Berlin Fashion Week website reveals a slew of endorsements for sustainable and ethical fashion brands. Mercedes Benz Fashion Week holds events such as GREENshowroom and Ethical Fashion Show Berlin, industry-wide trade showcases and presentations, and endorses fashion shows produced by sustainable brands at the main stage on Brandenburg Straße. Sustainable fashion is a highly recognizable tenet of Berlin fashion as a whole.

Why is Berlin so friendly towards sustainable fashion? Partly because there are no major brands based out of Berlin along the lines of the Chanels, Oscar de la Rentas, Valentinos, and Burberrys of the four major fashion cities. Older brands, by nature, are more resistant to change, especially the large-scale structural change required by sustainability. Top designers usually resist measures that would limit their creativity. Executives are skeptical of the value sustainability could bring to their brands, fearful it may cause backlash from stockholders. The switch to sustainability requires: “a new approach to design, production and consumption... For the fashion sector, the moral imperative of sustainability threatens creativity and profit” (Fletcher 276). In other words, a pre-existing company would need to radically change its entire business structure to reach sustainability - a sacrifice few executives are willing to make.

Fashion brands in Berlin do not carry these burdens because of their youth. Berlin’s disadvantages as a burgeoning fashion city - mainly, lack of financial resources and international press and buyers - become an advantage for sustainability: “A surprising advantage is how a lack of an international mass market has allowed Cserer [a Berlin designer] the time and space to create more ethically sourced designs, something which designers abroad might aspire to but are not normally able to achieve” (Michaelson). Smaller ateliers where creativity flourishes (sometimes at the expense of business expertise) means that designers are more likely to focus on the ethics behind their business instead of the business itself.

But Berlin brands its fashion industry as a future source of economic vibrancy. Promotional materials created by Berlin’s official marketing campaign, be Berlin, urge the reader to “Invest in Berlin... the new attraction in Europe’s fashion industry” (Wohllaib 2) citing its low costs, high market potential, and consumer spending power as reasons to pump money into the burgeoning industry. Political motives inevitably play a part: “In Berlin, politics and fashion work together with the common goal of promoting the city as a leading fashion metropolis” (Wohllaib 3) the brochure reads. When sustainability is added to the mix of creativity and economy, Berlin inevitably invokes the future. A separate sustainability section of be Berlin nominates Berlin as “the place to be for future industries” (Campaign Trailer) sparking the connection between green industry and future
living. Berlin is actively promoting both the sustainable and fashion industries within their city; in combination, sustainable fashion becomes the epitome of Berlin’s hope for the future of its economy. By emphasizing the sustainable fashion labels that operate in the city, Berlin Fashion Week presents itself as the future standard-bearer of fashion (Mühlhans).

PART II: BRANDS OF THE FUTURE

Sustainable fashion itself exists in an oddly tense intersection between the past and the future. This intersection is not the present, but rather an amalgamation of past and future interests. Sustainable fashion is perceived as the future of fashion; the hope is that, one day, all fashion labels will follow sustainable business practices. And yet so much of its practices are engrained in the past. The industry’s basic philosophy towards the slower consumption of fashion originates in the past. “Anthropologically speaking, the concept of sustainable fashion was only possible when fashion became unsustainable - that is, when people began outliving their wardrobes, probably sometime after the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century” (Vreeland 118). The concept and process of sustainable fashion are rooted in the early modern and pre-modern era. And yet it is conceived of as a future-thinking business practice. While sustainable beliefs are conservative in nature, they are progressive in ideals.

“Increasingly, people are less confident in the future, or at least in the future that is purported through television news items, featuring political and economic instability in the far flung corners of the world” (453) writes Nathaniel Dafydd Beard. According to this premise, Beard hypothesizes that sustainable and ethical fashion provides a means to idealize the future and make the future consumable. On a social level, there is a movement “towards how to become more ‘rounded’ as individuals as we question our contribution, and impact, on society at large” (455).

Consumption is increasingly guided by an urge to enact this utopian future and to become political actors in the creation of a more hopeful future. How does Berlin participate in this sociological trend?

Sustainable brands within Berlin respond to this tension through the appropriation of the pessimism of Berlin’s past into an optimistic and inspiring future. Two brands in particular, Trippen and Mayer, present two varying perspectives on this politicized consumer promise.

PART III: MAYER

Mayer is an upcycling brand. They do not use new fabrics. Instead, they take old fabrics from a wide variety of sources and repurpose them into clothing. One dress in their store on Große Hamburger Straße was made from pale pink pillowcases that originated in Bavaria. Each dress, cut and sewed in the same manner, was nevertheless different because of variations in the embroidery of each pillowcase.

Other articles of clothing were sourced from used military uniforms; sometimes, these uniforms were over one hundred years old. These pieces of cloth that had once signified violence were now recycled into trousers, coats, and dresses which made up Mayer’s Peace Collection, a moniker they give to each season’s new designs. Mayer plays off the dichotomy between past and future in sustainable fashion through the very blatant histories of the fabrics they use. The violent, malicious, and wasteful past of their fabrics are tenderly cared for and repurposed into progressive, everyday designs. The wearer of a repurposed military uniform signifies not only a green future, but a peaceful one at that, all locally engrained in the framework of history.
Mayer is branded as a philosophy and spirituality. As you flip through the pages of their catalog and lookbook, you come across words like “LOVE” “TRUTH” “UNITY” “HARMONY” “DEVOTION” and “SIMPLICITY” (Spring/Summer 2012 Lookbook). A sub-collection is entitled “Spirit & Soul”. The clothing in Spirit & Soul is described as “‘feeling-good pieces’... which stand for spiritual working-out and inner peace” (Spring/Summer 2012 Lookbook 13). Mayer uses very abstract and generalized words in an attempt to describe the essence behind their clothing more than the clothing itself.

Mayer’s tensions between the past and the future are political. Their clothes represent a threefold future balance of peace in the environment, the political sphere, and personal spirituality. Their clothing and aesthetics, sourced from the past, nevertheless call for a progressive future. The wearer of Mayer’s clothing not only repurposes cloth, but also repurposes societal political visions and personal philosophies.

A local Berlin publication wrote up a piece on Mayer in a recent issue, noting that Christine Mayer, the designer “likes working with fabrics ‘marked by life’” (Berlin & I, 36), reaffirming the concern with historicity inherent in her designs. But the most telling piece of information in the article was that: “The first jacket made of uniform fabric that she offered a boutique unexpectedly broke all sales records” (36). Not only are the designs themselves politically and historically motivated, but the Berliner is also actively participating in the most political of her designs. Berliners who are involved with her brand seek out the political meanings of the clothes; by buying and wearing them, they take hold of the agency to reintegrate German history into Berlin’s future and their own creative future.

**PART IV: TRIPPE**

Trippen, a shoe company, brands itself as an intersection between art and footwear. One of its stores on Alte Schönhauser Straße is not a store, but a gallery. Each shoe is displayed as an intricate piece of
sculpture. One of their advertising materials declares: “Unmatched, Trippen constitutes a total work of art” (Brand Advertising Publication).

Unlike Mayer, Trippen does not upcycle. Their brand is based on a commitment to “socially responsible” production methods. Shoes are handmade in Germany in a factory not too far from Berlin or in Italy by “skilled artisans.” They believe that “modern design combines environmental friendliness, sustainability, and social responsibility” (Merchandise Catalog) and very strongly connect the idea of avant-garde design with this social and environmental mantra.

Trippen justifies their sustainability by describing their materials as “natural” and “long-lasting” and argue that their production methods are “environmentally sound” and “recyclable” (Merchandise Catalog). They use materials like rubber, wood, and leather in the majority of their shoes. Some would consider this to be greenwashing, a marketing tactic that attributes false sustainability to products that are not environmentally sound. In today’s market sustainable materials signify something that is sustainable from its source and it does not necessarily refer to how long the consumer uses it or whether or not you can recycle it.

Trippen uses “buffalo and elk leather” and other materials sourced from around the world to add an aura of naturalism to their products, but it is still questionable whether these materials are truly sustainable and ethical. Nevertheless, the use of completely natural materials speaks to the tension between past and future in sustainable design. The designs themselves are evolving and avant-garde; the materials are natural and have been used in shoe design for centuries. This tension is epitomized in the name Trippen: “During the Middle Ages, people used to wear wooden platform soles, so-called “trippen”, underneath their shoes in order to protect the actual shoe from dirt” (Brand Advertising Publication). Trippen plays with this tension by instilling the past into their materials and the future into their designs.

Trippen, unlike most sustainable brands based out of Berlin, has a large international market, including twelve stores in Asia. They are a well-established company, dating back to the early 1990s. Hence Trippen is a formative representative of sustainable and ethical fashion from Berlin as it navigates the sustainable market on the global stage. Yet Trippen’s ethos is influenced less by local histories than it is by a universal abstraction of the past and the future; the worldwide structure of its business produces distance between Trippen and Berlin. It remains to be seen whether this lack of locational and historic association aids in international appeal or if Trippen’s Berlin roots and connection with Berlin’s creative reputation aid in the branding process.

[7] OTALLY NEW CUTTING-EDGE DESIGNS, BASED ON FUNCTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES BY NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MOST DIVERSE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION AND A COUTURE-LIKE APPROACH TO PATTERN DESIGN.

CONCLUSION:

FUTURE BERLINERS, FUTURE BRANDS

Should sustainable brands get rid of the tension between Berlin’s past and future? Can they ever become simply present? The tension between past and future in Mayer and Trippen is a political statement. The past is romanticized while the future - whether it is Berlin’s future or the world’s future - is idealized as a utopia. The present is hence neglected amidst this political posturing. In the realm of fashion, where the zeitgeist of the present dictates the continuous pulse of current market trends, brands rely on their association with everything modern and up to date.

Sustainable brands are not traditional capitalist businesses because they are based on underlying political and moral principles as opposed to the principles of the market. But, in their branding practices, brands like Mayer and Trippen play on the political motives through the past/future narrative. The de-politicization and de-localization of sustainable fashion may make it more palatable for fashion audiences worldwide, bringing sustainable fashion into the broader fashion market outside Germany. But in Berlin, the past/future narrative works to the advantage of both the city and the brand. “The culture of memory and historical recollection are tied to a ‘New Berlin’ which offers a phoenix-like rise from the ashes of chaos and ruin to viable urban marketability, capitalizing on history as a global mark of differentiation and distinction” (Pfefferkorn 96). Sustainable fashion brands use their branding practices to interpret and translate this re-imagined Berlin into a mélange of creative, economic, and political pursuits.

References


ABSTRACT

Berlin’s identity has undergone a variety of tumultuous changes from the Imperial Prussian Age and World War I, The Weimar Republic, The Nazi Regime, divided in the Cold War, and presently as the symbol of a unified Germany. Berlin has a distinct connection with its architecture, and the cultural and political attitudes throughout Berlin’s history are evident through many of the city’s residential buildings. Berliners also possess a contradictory relationship with their history, both fighting to preserve historical buildings and create futuristic modern structures. Architectural changes can have profound effects on the way that people experience their daily lives, as well as the way in which they perceive both themselves and their city. Urban spaces are unique repositories of memory, and residential developments are particularly significant in the creation of a collective city identity. The most important change in residential design in Berlin in the past century was through the development of working class apartment blocks colloquially known as Mietskaserne or “rental barracks”. Through an examination on the historical progression of residential architecture in Berlin, it is clear that the Mietskaserne are central to the Wohnkultur, or “living culture” that is unique to Berlin. The Berliner Wohnkultur has developed throughout various periods of urban development in the city’s history, and has a significant impact on the life of Berliners today.

PART I: HISTORICAL ORIGINS

The Mietskaserne were initially developed in Berlin during the Gründerzeit or “Founder Epoch” from roughly 1840 until the panic of 1873 (Kuck 4). This time period in German history was characterized by rapid industrialization and a population boom throughout central Europe. Industrial innovations such as the Bessemer process for producing steel allowed for the rapid construction of new buildings, and the exponential expansion of industrialized areas. Berlin’s population alone had grown from 170,000 in 1800 to over one million in 1877 and two million by the early 1900s (Ladd 96). By the 1920s, Berlin’s population had doubled from two to four million people (Ward 315). This growth can be attributed to Berlin’s rise as a European industrial center. Workers from all over Europe came to Berlin in search of work, and this massive influx of immigrants caused a substantial housing problem. Accommodations for workers became scarce, and Berlin was forced to develop an affordable way to quickly house the thousands of immigrant workers in Berlin. In 1858, Prussian city planner James Hobrecht became the head of a commission designed to create a development plan for...
Berlin’s expansion decades into the future. In order to direct Berlin’s expansion, Hobrecht’s commission emphasized the rapid development of suburban neighborhoods by making farmland outside Berlin easily accessible from the city center, and then quickly developing the land for residential use. In 1862 Hobrecht produced a zoning plan called the Hobrecht plan which imposed a 22 meter (72 feet) height limit for all buildings, restructured streets to connect suburban neighborhoods, and developed an efficient sewage system (Kuck 5). Hobrecht’s plan was designed to make Berlin’s growth feasible, and completely ignored any aesthetic concerns about the city’s expansion. These changes paved the way for the first Mietskaserne, which Hobrecht believed would end Berlin’s housing crisis.

**PART II: LIVING IN THE MIETSKASERNE**

While the Mietskaserne seemed like a pragmatic solution to Berlin’s housing crisis, they quickly became notorious for their overcrowding and deplorable living conditions. For wealthy landowners, the housing shortage was an opportunity to build a fortune, and the Mietskaserne were designed simply to accommodate as many people as possible and to maximize rental profits. In Meyers Hof, one of the largest Mietskaserne built in 1875 over 2,000 people crammed into 300 tiny rooms at an average of six people per room (Kuck 20). Typical Mietskaserne were designed around a central Hof or “courtyard”, which Hobrecht believed would become the center of residential life in Berlin. Originally designed to accommodate horse drawn water pumps in the event of a fire, the Hofe would later become crucial to life in the Mietskaserne. Each floor of the Mietskaserne typically had small communal bathrooms and heating was usually only available in the kitchen.

People of various economic backgrounds lived together in the Mietskaserne, with the wealthiest tenants on the lower floors and the poorest people living on the top floors and in the basement. Meyers Hof did not have any elevators, and therefore rooms on the lower floors were more desirable. The rent for these rooms could cost almost ten times as much as the rent for the cheapest rooms in the basement or top floors (Kuck 6). In this way, residents were vertically segregated based on their economic situation. In addition, many of the poorer tenants would sublet individual beds in their rooms. A sleeping place was often illegally shared by several people in shifts, so while family members were at work random people known as Schlafgänger, or “night lodgers” would pay to sleep in their bed (Kuck 11).

By definition, Schlafgänger had no real homes and sometimes even slept in makeshift beds in hallways, or closets to avoid paying the cost of subletting an actual bed. The Schlafgänger showed the sheer magnitude of the Berlin housing crisis. This excessive overcrowding in the Mietskaserne was blamed for disease, and led many residents to suicide. These appalling living conditions led to a public backlash against the Mietskaserne, and many were destroyed through bombings in World War II or through postwar reconstruction. Other Mietskaserne had problems with squatters and several, such as
Meyers Hof in 1972, were demolished by the city government.

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 led to a rediscovery of the Mietskaserne. Dissatisfied with Berlin’s image as the former headquarters of the Third Reich and ground zero for the Cold War, the Internationale Baustellung (IBA) or “International Building Exhibition,” was established in the West in 1979 to redesign newer buildings that complemented older prewar neighborhoods (Schmaling 23). The organization consisted of a group of architects, urban planners, and historians interested in rediscovering the architectural heritage of Berlin (Ladd 232). Funded by the West throughout the 1980s, the IBA was established to rebuild many of the city’s newer districts and design buildings that complemented older prewar neighborhoods. They looked at the time of the Gründerzeit as Germany’s greatest architectural era, and believed that a shift backwards in German architectural history would help improve Berlin’s contemporary image. Their beliefs were adopted by Berlin’s building director from 1991-1996 Hans Stimmann, who implemented a policy of Critical Reconstruction to “undo the errors of the previous half-century” (Ladd 231). Stimmann passed city ordinances reminiscent of the Hobrecht plan including setting the maximum building height to 22 meters (72 feet) for cornices and 30 meters (98 feet) for rooftops, as well as creating uniform guidelines for façade materials, lot sizes, and street plans (Ward 316). Critical Reconstruction introduced a backwards shift in urban planning that has affected both public and private architectural developments throughout modern Berlin.

Given the city’s complex past, it is hardly surprising that Berliners are highly conscious of architectural symbolism. Although urban and architectural forms do not automatically carry a particular political connotation, the nostalgic focus of Critical Reconstruction reveals the contemporary shame and resentment associated with the Nazi and Cold War images that continue to define Berlin. Critical Reconstruction looked to portray Berlin as the European center of industry that it was during the Gründerzeit, and their leading theorist Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm, “located Berlin’s essence in the 18th century block structure of Friedrichstadt and the dense pattern of five story courtyard buildings that covered those and newer blocks at the end of the 19th century” (Ladd 231).

Critical Reconstruction asserted that the Mietskaserne were an important component of Berlin’s identity, and what was once seen as the blight of urban life in Berlin had become part of the plan to revamp the city’s image. As a result, Critical Reconstruction efforts in Berlin became incredibly aggressive. In the 1990s Berlin had over 300 major construction sites (with 50 in the neighborhood of Mitte alone) and public and private development rose from under $5 billion to over $15 billion (Ward 286). Opponents of Critical Reconstruction argue that selective reconstruction denies Berlin’s intricate history and creates a biased perception of the past. They also point out that the Mietskaserne were horrible places to live, and that the architectural efforts of Critical Reconstruction are contrived. Although they were free from Nazi or Cold War regimes, the 1890s and 1920s

were hardly halcyon times in Berlin’s history, and Berlin should not feign a utopian past. Through the proliferation of memorials and museums throughout the city, Berliners are constantly surrounded by fragments of the city’s past and these reminders have instilled the importance of historical memory. In *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity* Janet Ward explains that “In Critical reconstruction’s purported reach back into history or modernity, neither history nor modernity is brought forth” (Ward 163). Therefore, rather than dwell on the mistakes of previous generations Berlin should be perceived as a place that recognizes and has learned from its past, but also looks towards the future.

**PART IV: CONTEMPORARY MIETSKASERNE**

The Mietskaserne were created as a result of unique social circumstances during the *Gründerzeit*, but have now become an indistinguishable component of modern Berliner Wohnkultur, and assert that architectural decisions can have a profound impact on the everyday lives of the populace for generations. As Brian Ladd eloquently explains, in *The Ghosts of Berlin*:

> “Like existing buildings (such as the Reichstag) and remembered ones (such as the royal palace), the image of the Mietskaserne embodies a set of beliefs about the history and identity of Berlin. The Mietskaserne is the prominent symbol of Berlin as industrial metropolis. Attitudes toward that sometimes menacing city, in turn, were often projected onto the buildings identified as Mietskasernen. The history of the Mietskaserne, then, is a key part of Berlin’s identity” (Ladd 100).

The neighborhoods of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Wedding were prominent locations of the Mietskaserne during Berlin’s immense population growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and embodied the physical changes that the time has experienced in the last century. At the time of their construction, living conditions in both Wedding and Prenzlauer Berg were both considered atrocious, but these same housing developments have now become some of the most demanded real estate throughout Berlin. Hackescher Höfe, a 1906 Mietskaserne located in Mitte has even become one of Berlin’s premier tourist attractions, attracting tens of thousands of visitors every year (Jordan 3). The revival of the Mietskaserne through Critical Reconstruction has led Berliners to manifest the idea of Kieze: “compact urban neighborhoods that have a European vitality and are defined by distinctive Berlin architecture” (Till 44). During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Mietskaserne asserted that uniformity was an unavoidable part of modern life. Apartment blocks offer the exact same accommodations to everyone, and therefore have no unique or intimate relationship with their inhabitants. Whereas apartments around the world have standardized living experiences for many people, it has taken its own unique identity in Berlin. In other cities, the uniformity and standardization of life has made personal residences a retreat from the public sphere. In Berlin however, the Mietskaserne’s central Hof has developed a transparent lifestyle that has become the hallmark of the Berliner Wohnkultur. Hobrecht’s predictions about the Hof ultimately became true, and as Berlin resident and Deutsche Welle writer Stuart Braun observes that the Hof is a “unique public/private space you don’t see in many cities […] I wondered whether Berlin is so relaxed because people already share their lives in the Hof? Could this unsung inner realm be the communal glue that binds the city?” (Braun 2011). In the renovated quarters of the former Mietskaserne, space and proximity facilitate public life and provide an environment that has become as much a retreat from the city as it is a part of it. The contemporary support of the Mietskaserne is a testament to the fluidity of life in Berlin. What was once a divided city became a
reunified capital, and what were once overcrowded working class slums have become trendy neighborhoods. The Berliner Wohnkultur embraces these changes, and asserts that a life in flux is the only guarantee of life in modern Berlin.

References


CAROLINE INZUCCHI, FCRH '15

ABSTRACT

Berlin is currently in the midst of a peculiar problem in comparison to other capital cities. The central European capital cannot seem to pull itself out of a sluggish housing market, nor can the city’s government ensure proper development gains to its primary investors. Berlin’s housing values stand at 84% of their 1978 values after being adjusted for inflation. This shocking change is a function of steady decline after the post-wall real estate boom, a steady withdrawal of federal subsidies, political meandering with development agents, and variety of problems derived from a rebellious social attitude toward extravagancy in the city. Any sort of rapid change in Berlin’s housing market is not to be expected, as prices are dictated to landlords by Germany’s Mietspiegel. The Mietspiegel, or rent index, ensures slow growth and favors tenants in Germany’s housing market. If Berlin’s Senate Department for Economics and Technology wants to see a rapidly growing market in both the short run and long run, the Mietspiegel must either be abolished, which would sacrifice equality within the German economy, or entirely reformed. Price reforms to Germany’s Mietspiegel focused on Berlin may bring forth strong international interest and investment, but any future reforms including vast increases to rental prices is risky, as national interest in rentals for what has always been known to be a low-cost housing market may decrease.

PART I: PRICE COMPARISONS

Berlin’s housing prices stand as some of the lowest in prominent European capitals. This fact is supported by current prices in Berlin. A 10-unit (3 rooms per unit) apartment building in the Schöneberg district of Berlin can be purchased for a low price of 980,000 Euros,¹ whereas a 3-room apartment in Paris is priced upwards of 1 million Euros.² These properties are both located in historic districts, surrounded by early renaissance architecture, with equal amenities. Standard housing in Berlin is estimated to be, on average, 2,000-4,000 Euros per square meter,³ while housing in the least expensive region of the Greater London area, Tower Hamlets, is averaged at 4,730

Euros per square meter. These trends follow into the market for luxury housing, where London’s Kensington market prices average 9,700 Euros per square meter, while new luxury apartments in Berlin’s prime Mitte area sell for prices just above 7,500 Euros per square meter. These price comparisons do not reflect the fact that Berlin is the capital of the de facto economic leader of the European Union. Germany remains, after the global financial crisis, one of the most prominent contenders in European and global markets. Even with this national economic stability, Berlin fails to bolster a stable and profitable housing industry. Germany competes in the world economic and political ranks with the likes of Great Britain and the United States, yet according to the Global Property Guide (2011), Germany’s urban housing prices and rental yields are closer to those of nations with less vibrant economies, such as Poland and Ireland. This low price yet low return housing market is most prominent in the nation’s capital.

**PART II: HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS**

With the recent economic predicaments in the European Union, the fates of the Eurozone and Euro are unknown at the present time. These current circumstances and future currency possibilities are heavily reminiscent of the initial reunification of eastern and western Germany in 1990, and may have affected the market for housing in Berlin today. The housing shortage experienced in Berlin during this crisis spurred rapid expansion and development in the city, but may have led to slow growth and major losses at the turn of the millennium. This laggard growth is mainly a problem derived from political circumstances. The Berlin of the post-wall reconstruction era stands in contrast to the Berlin of the new millennium in terms of development. The Berlin wall imposed a large expanse of security area into the cityscape. For instance, the security zone in Potsdamerplatz extended 70 meters out from the wall in its shortest area, but 500 meters out in its most defended area. On the eastern side of the wall, citizens were often restricted access to housing close to the security zone. This area was only occupied by government ‘authorized’ citizens. These extreme security measures led to a severe dearth of development surrounding the wall, which fell in the middle of the city. What most investors would consider ‘prime real-estate’ was left barren by the wall.

Once the wall fell, a property boom took hold of the city, which saw rapid development in each quarter. The post-wall reconstruction was spurred by prior western government subsidy. These subsidies were phased out after 1989. The support of the German Federal government was slowly repealed. This, in addition to the newfound capitalism east of the wall, led to a massive shift in Berlin’s economic structure. Reunification introduced East Berlin the harsh realities of globalization. Berlin experienced the pressure of globalization during the mid 80s, but was insulated by large government subsidies. While well-developed western nations and their capitals deindustrialized rapidly and made the jump from manufacturing based economies to service and knowledge based economies, Berlin lagged behind. Due to insulation created by the government prior to the fall of the wall, after the copious government subsidies were withdrawn Berlin’s policy makers were forced to come together and face the growing pressure

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of globalization. Berlin’s city officials and the Senate Department for Economics and Technology were forced by growing pressure to attract new capital investment, to prove the city was not just “an adventure playground” supported only by the strong economies of Germany’s other major cities. Berlin has never lost this stigma, and this idea has affected the market for housing.

Berlin acts as Germany’s youthful playground in the respect that it remains a haven for artist, newly introduced immigrant populations, and various radical leftist groups.

Ignoring the effects of social situations, it has been proven that the division of land in Germany led to large decreases in property prices following division. These property prices caused the economic and production gradient for the city to shift west, leaving housing prices in the east extremely low even after reunification. This shift due to division and reunification has had a lasting effect on Berlin’s housing market.

PART III: CURRENT PRICE MODELING

Germany’s housing policies are pro-tenant. Germany determines proper rental prices based on the Mietspiegel or rent index. The Mietspiegel collects rental price data and indicates comparative monthly prices for apartments with similar features and characteristics such as amenities, location, and overall neighborhood quality. From the Mietspiegel, most rental prices are derived. Any multi-family property ready for use before 1999 has its rental prices dictated through the Mietspiegel. Many other properties not controlled by the rental index either have prices set by public housing laws or use the Mietspiegel to compete in the low-price market. If a landlord exceeds the Mietspiegel by 20% for any tenant in a period of limited housing, he can be fined and may suffer other legal consequences. Berlin’s average rent from the Mietspiegel 2011 is defined as 5.21 Euros per square meter for a middle-condition building, but the Mietspiegel varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. The city district of Kreuzberg’s Mietspiegel would be very low compared to Mitte’s Mietspiegel because it is not centrally located or near a central business district. The rental price of an apartment is subject to change based on an increased Mietspiegel, but only if there is an indexation clause written into the initial agreement between the tenant and landlord. If this clause is written into the contract, the rent must be kept unchanged for a year before a formal written note is delivered to the tenant informing them about the index-linked increase in rent. Rents may only be increased once every 15 months. German property laws favor tenants and therefore encourage renting over purchasing. Due to this overwhelmingly pro-tenant rental environment, cities are often entirely regulated based on the price caps set by the Mietspiegel.

This Mietspiegel pricing regimen can be linked to Berlin’s low cost housing. Price caps and other rent controls in housing can often lead to a lack of renovation and development. If rent is set by the Mietspiegel, which is dictated mainly by neighborhood quality, there is less of an incentive for property owners and landlords to undertake any major renovations. Renovation costs in Berlin are often higher than rental yields for investors. There full renovation costs can fall between 400 Euros and 1,000 Euros per square meter. For many investors and landlords, it is not advantageous to renovate properties, simply because the Mietspiegel is not entirely dictated

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by amenities and is impacted dramatically by other housing prices in the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{11} Housing prices in Berlin do not increase dramatically, but instead change slowly over time because they are based heavily on a government index and rent averages.

**PART IV: SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

In addition to a plethora of pro-tenant laws, the artist culture in Berlin also creates an environment of renters. Artists often do not sustain a steady enough or high enough income conducive to purchasing property, especially in a city where nearly half of the population subsists on government benefits.\textsuperscript{12} While rental rates are extremely low due to government regulations, property prices are often out of the range for artists who only engage in freelance work and newly introduced immigrant populations, as foreigners have historically found many struggles in Berlin’s job market.\textsuperscript{12} For a city that has seen unemployment rates above 17% in the past decade, it is simply not feasible to assume the market for home and apartment sales can thrive.\textsuperscript{13} As stated before, property prices within Berlin are extremely low in comparison to other capital cities, but these prices seem to not fall into the price range of the artistic, immigrant, and many low-income communities. The city's citizens continually enjoy low rents spurred on by a lack of disposable income for home purchases within the public market. Berlin’s GDP per capita is one of the lowest in Germany at 24,800 Euros, which falls below the German average of 27,200 Euros.\textsuperscript{13} Coupled with the city’s unemployment rate, which fluctuates above 10%, the per capita income gives a clear reason for the tenant based economy—most citizens cannot afford to buy Berlin’s low-priced housing.\textsuperscript{12}

Similar to the large low-income population, Berlin’s housing market suffers from radical leftist groups dwelling in squatting homes.\textsuperscript{14} These groups, most notably the Antifaschistische Aktion, take over dilapidated structures and live free of rent.\textsuperscript{15} These structures are often planned to be demolished, but are left standing due to an exorbitant amount of squatters living in the buildings.\textsuperscript{15} Squatters were more prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, when over 170 buildings were recorded as squats in Berlin, but are still a strong force in Berlin’s social and political sphere.\textsuperscript{15} This mentality seems to affect the market for housing, as a radical anarchist attitude is ingrained within the city’s population. Rent prices and yields for investors are low, yet many city dwellers still opt to live in overtaken squats for free.\textsuperscript{14} Squatters often live in buildings for a sense of community, sometimes political and sometimes artistic.\textsuperscript{15} The fall of the wall created a squatting boom along with a housing boom, as Berlin became known as the capital for alternative lifestyles and a center for radical political youth movements.\textsuperscript{15} Squatters affect market prices negatively by providing a free housing alternative for a sect of the population. Squatters have created a new opinion in Berlin concerning housing entitlement, which may upend the real estate market.

**PART V: URBAN PLANNING**

The economy along with the political sphere of Berlin affect market prices dramatically, but urban planning also plays a role in the sluggish market. Berlin has been called a “veritable black hole” by some real estate analysts, but is often referred to as a low risk investment by many international developers.\textsuperscript{16} Berlin’s market currently has very low


yields for investors. Even in popular areas near the Mitte district these yields remain close to 4-5%. While there is little risk of a housing collapse and while housing prices have only increased by a minute amount in the past years, yields for investors rarely fluctuate above 5% for single apartments. These low yields mean that investors in apartment buildings have very small returns on their investments.

Berlin’s low price housing market is often considered a product of planning, as Berlin is not a dense city like New York or London. While New York and London see central densities above 5,000 inhabitants per square kilometer, Berlin currently suffers from an oversupply of housing. New York Times writer Erik Kirschbaum referred to Berlin as the real estate market’s “veritable black hole.” This reference is a product of both a desperate economic situation and poor urban design. Berlin is a city built out but not up. Buildings are not incredibly tall, as they are designed to interact well with the 6-story renaissance palazzo style apartment buildings that fill the city. Due to this lack of tall buildings, especially within the city’s center, Berlin does not enjoy the high-density rates that global cities like New York and Tokyo see. This lack of density affects housing prices negatively. Density facilitates economic growth and ensures stability within housing markets. A dense city maintains an air of exclusivity, making the city somehow more desirable. Berlin, with low to moderate density rates, restricts its workforce, its output capacity, and greatly reduces real-estate prices by keeping such a wide city area so sparsely populated. Berlin may be able to improve its economy by building taller buildings instead of keeping short housing complexes across an area of nearly 900 square kilometers. The city can benefit from high density by creating an agglomeration economy.

Berlin’s urban planning flaws do not stop at poor density numbers. The city’s process of urban planning is flawed in itself. Berlin’s Senate Department for Urban Development and the Economy has set up a maze of regulations and provisions in the city’s building code on top of the strict regulations in the Federal Building Code. While development in Germany suffers at the hand of heavy regulation, Berlin suffers from more regulations and legal restrictions than all other German cities due to its position as the nation’s capital. In addition to Berlin’s city planners, all developments within the capital are overseen by a review board of politicians who hold seats in the federal government. The capital’s developments are severely restricted by various codes from both the state department responsible for urban planning as well as the federal government. These rules and regulations hold up development and, in turn, make construction more expensive for investors. The costs of construction in Berlin are extremely high already, due to copious union protection laws, and the seemingly excessive review procedure by the federal government only makes development in the city more unappealing to potential investors.


CONCLUSION

While Berlin’s housing is being purchased by many foreign buyers who see potential within the economically barren city, Berlin’s housing market has yet to show any promise. The city suffers from historical setbacks in planning and the aftershock of an extreme housing boom.

Due to these historical circumstances and planning flaws, Berlin has become a low density, low occupancy city, not fully living up to its title as a “sexy” city. Berlin’s economy has certainly brought down housing prices, as the city currently has a very weak, artistic and service-based economy. The social influence of Berlin’s radical leftist ideologies has severely impacted Berlin’s housing regulations and prices. Berlin remains a haven for low-income tenants, despite the fact that Berlin is currently an international, vibrant, and youthful city. Berlin’s housing market condition will not and cannot change radically so long as the Mietspiegel stays in effect. The Mietspiegel ensures a slow-growth housing market. Development will not improve until government regulations and taxes are loosened on foreign and national investors. Berlin is a city of promise, but it seems that the government wants to keep the city’s housing low-cost through various planning decisions and regulations. This low-price housing market may uphold Berlin’s reputation as a youthful and rebellious city, but the economy will surely continue to suffer if current regulations, taxes, and price-caps remain intact.

PRICE COMPARISON

PRICE COMPARISON


YIELDS BY BOROUGH

ABSTRACT

Due to the lack of research on the image of men of Turkish background in Germany, and because no such research exists in the context of America, the effect of Turkish-German cinema on Americans is an interesting and unexplored topic. An American audience has little to no connection to the Turkish community in Germany; therefore, the audience members can be accidentally or purposely influenced. I conducted interviews and surveys, which were built around the context of Feo Adalag’s film “When We Leave.” The interviews were conducted with men of Turkish descent in Berlin, and the surveys were conducted with female American students in New York City. The results show that the film possibly influences Americans, and that the stereotypes, which were promoted by the male characters in the film, do not portray all such men.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wegen der geringen Forschung über die Darstellung des Mannes türkischer Herkunft in Deutschland, und weil keine im Rahmen von Amerika existiert, ist der Effekt des türkisch-deutschen Kinos auf Amerikaner ein interessantes und unerforschtes Thema. Ein amerikanisches Publikum hat wenig bis gar keine Verbindung zur türkischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland; deswegen können die Zuschauer unbeabsichtigt oder mit Absicht beeinflusst werden. Ich leitete Interviews und Umfragen, die in Zusammenhang mit dem Film „Die Fremde“ auf die Regisseurin Feo Adalag beruhten. Die Interviews wurden mit Männern türkischer Herkunft in Berlin, und die Umfragen mit amerikanischen Studentinnen in New York City, durchgeführt. Die Resultate zeigen, dass der Film Amerikanerinnen möglicherweise beeinflusste, und dass die Stereotypen, die durch die Darstellung von männlichen Charakteren im Film gefördert wurden, solche Männer nicht unbedingt vertritt.

TEIL I: „DIE FREMDE“ UND MÄNNER TÜRKISCHER HERKUNFT IN DEUTSCHLAND

Themen wie die Unterdrückung der Frau und Ehrenmord werden zur Zeit des öfteren im türkisch-deutschen Kino erforscht. Solche Filme können Männer türkischer Herkunft in Deutschland stereotypieren, da der Mann oft als der Unterdrücker oder Mörder dargestellt wird (Berghahn 55). Obwohl es ein großes Maß an Forschung über die Frau türkischer Herkunft in Deutschland gibt, findet sich weniger Forschung über den türkischen Mann. Keine mir bekannte Forschung existiert über die Darstellung des Mannes türkischer Herkunft in Deutschland aus der Perspektive eines amerikanischen Publikums. Die


TEIL II: BESTEHENDE LITERATUR ÜBER MÄNNER TÜRKISCHER HERKUNFT IN DEUTSCHLAND UND DEUTSCHEM KINO


TEIL III: ZUSAMMENFASSUNG DES FILMS „DIE FREMDE“

Der Film „Die Fremde“, von der Regisseurin Feo Adalag aus dem Jahr 2010, handelt von der

Aus diesem Grund konzentriert sich die vorliegende Forschung ausschließlich auf die Charaktere Mehmet und Acar, die männlichen Charaktere, die in Berlin aufgewachsen sind. Ich wollte Männer erforschen, die seit einer langen Zeit in Berlin wohnen, und sozusagen „zwischen Kulturen“ leben. Mehmet und Acar stellen keine Türken in Berlin dar, sondern Männer türkischer Herkunft, die mit der Kultur Berlin vertraut sind. Mehmet ist älter als Umay, stark, und neigt zu Gewalt; er schlägt Umay. Acar ist jünger, nicht so gewaltätig wie Mehmet, und sein Verhältnis zu Umay ist gut; er ist ihr gegenüber aber auch gewaltätig (Die Fremde).

TEIL IV: EIN BLICK HINTER DIE KULISSEN: INTERVIEWS MIT MÄNNERN TÜRKISCHER HERKUNFT IN BERLIN


Figur 2. Umay lag mehmal wegen Gewalt auf dem Boden.
© Feo Adalag, Die Fremde.
**TEIL V: INTERVIEWPARTNER**

**BERKANT (31 Jahre)**
Geburtsort: Berlin
Religion: Islam
Geschwister: 11 Brüder, 1 Schwester
Höchste Bildungsstufe erreicht: Abitur
Beruf: Besitzer eines Spätverkaufs
Familienstand: verheiratet, keine Kinder


**TÜMER (28 Jahre)**
Geburtsort: Berlin
Religion: keine
Geschwister: 2 jüngere Schwestern
Höchste Bildungsstufe erreicht: Bachelor
Beruf: Student
Familienstand: ledig, keine Kinder

Tümer (28) hatte nie Autorität über seine Schwestern. Seine Eltern wendeten nie Gewalt an ihm an, und er und seine Schwester hatten „jugendliche Streite...aber jetzt nicht, nicht im Ernst. [Es war] [s]chupsen [...] in Maßen.“ Nach einigen Fragen über seine Ansichten zu Frauenrechten sagte er etwas verärgert, „Sie sollen die gleichen Rechte haben wie alle Menschen auf der Erde [...]“. Er glaubt, dass Gewalt an Frauen niemals akzeptabel ist, und, dass sie komplett frei sein sollen, ihre Entscheidungen zu treffen. Über Ehre sagt er, dass er den Begriff nicht benutzt, und dieser keine Rolle für ihn spielt (Tümer).


**OZAN (37 Jahre)**
Geburtsort: Berlin
Religion: keine
Geschwister: 3 ältere Schwestern
Höchste Bildungsstufe erreicht: Realschule
Job: arbeitet in einem Projekt vom Arbeitsamt
Familienstand: verheiratet/getrennt lebend, 1 Sohn

...warum soll man leben wenn es keine Ehre gibt?...
TEIL VI: UNTERSCHIEDE ZWISCHEN DEN DARSTELLUNGEN IM FILM UND DEN INTERVIEWPARTNERN


TEIL VII: WAS DIE ECHTEN FREMDEN DENKEN: AMERIKANISCHE STUDENTINNEN WERDEN ÜBER DEN FILM „DIE FREMDE“ BEFRAGT

Fünf amerikanische Studentinnen—die echten Fremden—nahmen an einer Umfrage teil. Auch diese Umfrage war vertraulich. Die Fragen wurden auf eine Art formuliert, um nicht versteckt nach Stereotypen zu fragen, sondern über die Charaktere im Film selbst. Zum Beispiel, „Wie würden sie die ethnischen deutschen Charaktere im Film beschreiben?“, und „Wie viel Prozent, wenn überhaupt, haben Männer türkischer Herkunft in Berlin ähnliche Eigenschaften wie Mehmet? Erkläre bitte welche Eigenschaften, und wie sie dargestellt werden."

Zuerst wurden die Probandinnen über ihre Vorkenntnisse zur türkischen Gemeinschaft in Deutschland und dem Thema „Ehrenmord“ befragt. Vier von den fünf hatten keine Vorkenntnisse von der türkischen Gesellschaft, aber alle hatten Vorkenntnisse zu dem Thema „Ehrenmord“, die sie von Medien und Filmen angenommen hatten. Wenn gefragt, wie sie die ethnischen deutschen Charaktere beschreiben würden, benutzten sie Wörter wie „unabhängig,“ „modern,“ und, „wie jeder Großstadtbewohner [...]“. Im Gegensatz dazu beschrieben sie die ethnischen türkischen Charaktere als „reserviert,“ „strenger,“ und „ernst [...].“ Zur Szene in der Mehmet Umay auf den
Boden schiebt, hatten alle erschütterte Reaktionen, und eine Probandin fand Mehmet wörtlich „aggressiv,“ Spohns Stereotypen gemäß.


**TEIL VIII: DAS VERZERRTE BILD, DAS DER FILM SCHAFFT**


Der Film ist aber nicht der einzige Einfluss auf die Meinungen eines Publikums. Es gibt andere Quellen, wovon die Probandinnen diese Stereotypen annehmen könnten—vielleicht nicht über Türken in Deutschland aber zumindest über Menschen aus dem Nahen Osten oder Muslime überhaupt. Laut der Medien, insbesondere nach den 9/11 Anschlägen, stellt „der türkische Mann […] eine Bedrohung für Sicherheit und, als ein moslemischer Ehemann oder Vater, für die Grundwerte der westlichen liberalen Demokratie, dar“ (Berghahn 57). Obwohl nur eine Probandin Vorkenntnisse von der türkischen Gesellschaft in Berlin hatte, nannten vier von fünf Medien, Filme oder Fernsehern als die Quellen ihrer Vorkenntnisse zum Thema „Ehrenmord."

**FAZIT: EINE LÜCKE**


**Referenzen**


*Notiz: Englische Texte wurden von mir persönlich übersetzt.*
Germany is a nation haunted by its past. The effects of World War II and the Cold War within Germany has somewhat forced the German Volk to remain silent and repress a sense of national pride. If not to make matters worse, Germany has also endured years of strict censorship under the totalitarian Nazi regime and in the following Stasi state of East Germany. Nevertheless, the recent phenomenon of street art in Berlin following the reunification of Germany has become a new medium for Berliners to embrace their freedom of speech and expression, while picking the brains of random pedestrians.

PART I: EXPRESSIONS OF STREET ART

There is more to patriotism than hanging flags, singing anthems and saying verbal pledges. Anthony Smith, author of Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism, describes nationalism as a relatively modern and recent phenomenon. Nationalism is derived from a set of ideals and traditions that bind a society together. Objects can also become social constructions of nationalism (Smith 1-4). In Germany, their national colors are black, red and gold, their national animal is the black eagle, and their emblem is the Reichsadler, all of which can be classified as social constructions of nationalism.

However, many believe that Germany’s Nazi as well as its communist past has had an adverse effect on national pride within the country. Thomas Kovach and Martin Walser’s book, The Burden of the Past: Martin Walser on Modern German Identity: Texts, Contexts, Commentary, which discusses the effects of

\[ \text{Unter den Linden, Berlin. © Personal photograph by author, 2012.} \]
the Holocaust within Germany, explains how German nationalism was repressed and overlooked between the years of 1945 and 1989 as a result of World War II and the Cold War in order to decrease the nation’s association to their Nazi past. He specifically stated that “in the last thirty years it has often happened that Germans abroad have made an unpleasantly German impression precisely by trying to be accommodatingly un-German” (Kovach and Walser 70).² In spite of the nation’s turbulent past, nationalism is manifested in the street art of present day Berlin. However, after venturing through the streets of Berlin, it is noticeable that there is more depth to their street art than just national pride. Berliners tend to fully embrace their freedom of speech and expression through street art.

What can be said from a person’s mouth is only momentarily and may not be remembered, but a well-placed scribble of graffiti with a purpose is a lasting reminder of the ideals of the Volk. The numerous murals scattered around Berlin are inescapable, and each of them demands its own attention and moment of reflection from your everyday passerby, whether it be a local, a tourist or just a flâneur on an afternoon stroll.

PART II: WHY IS FREEDOM OF SPEECH SIGNIFICANT IN BERLIN?

From 1933 to 1990 the German people have been under strict censorship. 1933 marked the end of the Weimar Republic, a period most notable for its unique intellectual productivity in areas such as, architecture, the arts, theatre and literature. Nevertheless, this period was short lived when the National Socialist German Workers’ Party gained control of Germany in 1933. Joseph Goebbels was appointed Reich Minister of Propaganda in 1933, and Germany was put under strict censorship while under his surveillance (Raphael).³ All sectors of the media, culture and the arts were under strict scrutiny. Notable Weimar newspapers such as Der Sturm, known for its intellectual discourse on the arts and literature, were either discontinued or edited to promote Nazi ideals. Personal mail and phone calls were not immune to Nazi surveillance. The consequence for speaking out against the Nazi government was imprisonment or execution. For example, Sophie Scholl was a German student and an active participant of the White Rose Non-Violent Resistance Group in Nazi Germany, who was executed in 1943 for dropping anti-war pamphlets in the University of Munich (McDonough).⁴

Although World War II ended the Nazi regime in Germany, Censorship within the nation did not cease to exist. The newly founded state of East Germany, which was under the control of the Soviet Union, established a new system of strict censorship. All written work had to be screened innumerable times for anything that could be deemed as detrimental to the socialist ideology. Journalists needed government recommendation in order to be employed. Any criticism of the standard of living and education within East Germany was not permitted because of its possible compromise of the effectiveness of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) of East Germany (Green, Karolides 191-92).⁵ The collapse of the Berlin

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Wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany in 1990 led to an outburst of public opinion through street art. Many neighborhoods in former East Berlin were covered in graffiti within a few months after the fall of the wall. It is possible that the strict censorship during the totalitarian Nazi regime and the Soviet control of East Germany intensified the extent to which Berliners embraced their newly found freedom of speech and expression.

**PART III: THE ORIGINS OF STREET ART IN BERLIN**

Graffiti art has been an important aspect of Berlin since the late 1970s. From 1945 to 1989, Germany was occupied and divided by the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. The American, British and French sectors merged into West Germany and the Soviet sector remained separated as East Germany. Berlin was also divided into four parts. In order to prevent East Berliners from escaping to West Berlin or the suspected influence of Fascism from West Berlin, the Soviet Union constructed the Berlin Wall, which divided the city from 1961 until 1989. Over time the Berlin Wall became a medium for West Berliners and international artist to express their disdain for the Wall through graffiti art. Since then the influence of graffiti art has spread throughout the city and it has become an eminent norm of Berlin and part of its identity. The popularity of street art within the city has led to the publication of several books, which individually try to make sense of the phenomenon. Street art has also been incorporated into countless Berlin travel guides such as Benjamin Wolbergs’ *Urban Illustration Berlin: Street Art Cityguide*, in which he documents street graffiti throughout the city.6

Another phenomenon attributed to the Berlin Wall was this yearning for national unity among Germans despite the fact that the Berlin wall physically divided the city. Over the years the Berlin Wall was viewed as this unnatural entity which exemplified the desire for German unity. The wall even had illnesses attributed to it called “Mauerkrankheit”, which can be linked to its unnatural nature (Ladd 28).7 After the reunification of Germany in 1990, parts of the wall such as the East Side Gallery along Mühlenstraße were preserved after years of deciding whether to completely demolish the wall or save sections of it. Several of the murals and messages from visitors on the wall gallery exhibit themes of unity, peace and freedom. For instance, one of the murals on the wall called “Dancing to Freedom” depicts two colorful abstract figures dancing with the slogan "no more wars, no more walls, a united world" painted underneath it (Figure 2). Another example is the first mural on the wall depicting “Dancing to Freedom” with the flag of Israel superimposed on it, signifying the consolidation between Berlin and its Jewish population (Figure 3).

**PART IV: STREET ART IN BERLIN TODAY**

Even though some of the graffiti in the city may appear aimless, nevertheless, graffiti art in Berlin tends to be highly politicized and usually uses current social themes and issues for subject matter, such as

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anarchy, unity, antifascism, individuality, and equality for races, homosexuality and feminism. For example, while walking through Berlin one can observe several “gegen Nazis” (against Nazis) posters all over the neighborhood of Prenzlauer Berg as well as numerous ANTIFA stickers posted around the rest of the city. The Anti-Fascist Action (ANTIFA) is a multinational European group whose aim is to suppress fascism. A majority of its group members are against sexism, racism and homophobia, and follow left-wing ideals (Simone). Even though Prenzlauer Berg is a neighborhood most notable for its historical buildings and serene landscape, graffiti in the area continues to exacerbate the tension among its residents. There is a growing opposition in the neighborhood against the ongoing renovation of the Mietkaseren, which is leading to gentrification of its residents (Papen). Some tenants use the streets as their canvas to demonstrate their disdain for the change in economic classes within the area. Take for instance the building on Brunnenstraße 183 in the Mitte-Prenzlauer Berg area of Berlin with the words “Wir Bleiben Alle” (We all remain) painted on its façade (Figure 4).

Wir Bleiben Alle is a group that advocates for the preservation of self-organized spaces and is also against gentrification. In the neighborhood of Kreuzberg, the phrase “Oury Jalloh - Das war Mord! Aufklärung! Gerechtigkeit! Entschädigung! (Oury Jalloh - It was murder! Enlightenment! Justice! Compensation!)” was spray-painted on a wall as well as several “Freiheit für Mumia Abu Jamal (Freedom for Mumia Abu Jamal)” posters. Oury Jalloh was a Sierra Leonean who died in a prison fire in Dessau, Germany. His death sparked protests throughout Germany. Mumia Abu Jamal is an American journalist, who was incarcerated and accused of murdering Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in 1981. In 2002 he was given an honorary membership to the Association of Those Persecuted by the Nazi Regime – Federation of Antifascists and Antifascist Groups (VVN-BdA) in Berlin.

CONCLUSION

Berlin is a city known for its struggle to define itself and come to terms with its past. As a result, some of the street art in the city expresses allegiance to Berlin’s struggle to define itself as a city. In the neighborhood of Friedrichshain near the East Side

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Gallery, one can find a mural on the side of a building depicting a man and woman having intercourse, with a speech bubble saying “I ♥ Berlin” (Figure 5). The German Reichsadler is tattooed on the left arm of the man and the words “Wir sind ein Volk” (We are one people) is tattooed on his left leg. The woman has the coat of arms of the former German Democratic Republic tattooed on her lower back. This mural seems to promote consolidation among East and West Berliners under a renewed and unified Berlin. Another interesting aspect of this mural was the slogan “Berlin is poor but sexy” tattooed on the man’s right thigh, which was a famous quote used to define the city, coined by Klaus Wowereit, the current mayor of Berlin. The quote comes from the fact that Berlin is not a rich city, yet there is this enchanting element to the city which continues to draw people to its streets.

Despite the fact that Berlin was faced with decades of totalitarian control and strict censorship, Berliners embrace to express the ideals, and social issues that have become a part of their lives through the use of street art. Berlin is also a city still trying to define itself. German art critic and journalist, Karl Scheffler once stated that “Berlin ist eine Stadt, verdammt dazu, ewig zu werden, niemals zu sein” (Haxthausen 31), (Berlin is a city condemned forever to becoming and never to being).  

However, it is possible that Berlin is defined by the graffiti that coats the walls of the city, because even though the streets may be remote at moments, the buildings are forever talking.

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Figure 5. *Wir Sind Ein Volk*, Berlin. © Personal photograph by author, 2012.

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to analyze three important memorials in the landscape of Berlin: The Neue Wache, the Jewish Museum, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Each space is placed in the historical context of its construction or alteration and the social and cultural impacts are measured. The Neue Wache is found to be an old structure that has been repurposed several times and by several different German governments to suit the political needs of the day. The Jewish Museum is an example of the marriage of information distribution and countermemorialization as a means of conferring emotion without interfering with the unfolding of a story. Finally, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe embraces the idea of using design and structure to inspire a real emotional response while discarding the notion of the aggressor-victim dichotomy is inherently bad. The three sites of memory are finally all woven together to present a brief study of the history of collective consciousness as it relates to the reunification of East and West Germany.

PART I: COUNTER-MONUMENTS

Walking the streets of Berlin does not yield the same experiences that an American visitor might expect of a “typical” European city. A walk down the street is interrupted as the traveler trips over the markers of the past. The now crumbling Berlin Wall still exists in large chunks to remind a disjointed populace of its disconnected history. Artifacts serve as art space for the East Side Gallery near Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain while the fragments of the wall are held together in Potsdamer Platz with the used chewing gum of tourists and commemorative plaques. Scattered throughout the city, The Jewish Museum Berlin, the Neue Wache, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe all represent different attempts to capture different aspects of the collective memory of Berlin over time. Following the reunification of Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl attempted to “update” the collective consciousness by rededicating the Neue Wache. There followed a counter-monument-movement embodied in the design of the Jewish Museum’s new building and finally a new hybrid of the two in the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe that blends information with the traditional memorial and “the void” so closely linked with the counter-monument-movement.
PART II: NEUE WACHE

When Germany was reunified in 1990, there was great debate over what should be done with East and West German sites that played an important role in the history of the German people before separation. The Neue Wache was one such place (Figure 1). The Neue Wache was originally built from 1816-1818 to be a guardhouse for Prussian soldiers and it remained a guardhouse until the fall of the monarchy at the end of the First World War 100 years later (Till 253). The fall of the monarchy and the defeat during the war prompted the commemoration of the space as a memorial in 1931 for the German war dead. After the Second World War, the structure found itself within the bounds of the Soviet Sector of Berlin. Since it was heavily damaged during the war, the Neue Wache was rebuilt and, in 1960, one year before the Berlin Wall was constructed, then it was reopened to commemorate “the Victims of Fascism and Militarism.” In effect, the memorial had been repurposed as a Soviet propaganda piece. As with the wall that would go up a year later, the Neue Wache became a political attempt to reframe collective consciousness by promoting socialism through the denunciation of fascism. East Germany reaffirmed the propagandized nature of the place by commemorating an eternal flame and entombing the remains of an unknown soldier and an unknown concentration camp victim on the 20th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic in 1969. The reunification in 1990 presented a Berlin with the opportunity to once again dedicate the site.

In 1993, The German Chancellor (and former West German Chancellor) Helmut Kohl chose to rededicate the Neue Wache for his own political means in an attempt to whitewash the space’s recent socialist past and lead what he believed would be steps toward cultural reunification. The Neue Wache was commemorated yet again, although this time, the eternal flame of the GDR was removed. Kohl attempted to reframe the monument’s purpose to commemorate the deaths of all people killed in war so as to unify the German people behind the concept of universal mourning (Ladd 218-19). However, as Kohl’s all-inclusive memorial included commemorating the deaths of even the Nazi soldiers who were responsible for carrying out the atrocities of the Second World War, the dedication was protested my many who chanted slogans such as, “German murderers are not victims!” (Ladd 220). Kohl’s framing was not new but a 40-year-old continuation of the West German convention for reconciling residual guilt as evidenced by the annual “National Day of Mourning” that was observed by the West German state on the same day as “Heroes’ Day” under National Socialism. Unfortunately it is exactly this link to nationalism through mourning that reminded many of the kind of strong nationalism that had not been seen since the Third Reich and thus dissuaded some. This opposition came from the public despite the endorsement of the Bundestag that no doubt had the interest of reunification in mind (Grenzer 98). Such a conflict between politicians and the populace presents an early indicator of the struggles of cultural reunification that were to come.

The rededication of the Neue Wache required physical modification in order to physically wipe away the past and bring the site into line with Kohl’s vision. An enlarged Pietá called Mother with her Dead Son replaced the GDR’s eternal flame. The selection of the sculpture and its size are particularly important. The original artist, Käthe Kollwitz, was born a Prussian in 1867. She became a world-renowned artist and many of her works focused on the suffering of war. She was alive for the unification in 1871 and witnessed both the First and Second World Wars, having died months before the conclusion of World War Two. The magnification of her originally small and now life-sized Pietá signifies the importance and magnitude of
history. It signals a louder call for peace than the softer calls of the past that have gone unheard. In presenting the visage of a mother and her dead son, the new German government put suffering on display as a warning to the future. While the *Neue Wache* of East Berlin was a memorial to the fallen of the war, the *Neue Wache* of reunified Berlin took one further step and commemorated all victims of all wars. The extension of the monument’s meaning is evident in the fact that the new government selected a work of Käthe Kollwitz, a famous pacifist and mother of a son killed in the First World War, to be the centerpiece of the “new” monument. The reframing of the memorial itself as a place dedicated to the victims of all wars in all places attempts to wash away a sense of imposed socialist nationalism by leveraging an emotional response.

**PART III: JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN**

The Jewish Museum Berlin (Figure 2) was slated to be augmented before the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the reunification forced a reconsideration of how the museum should be altered in order to not only encourage the remembrance of German Jews, but also reintegrate Eastern and Western German Jews who had been separated for many years. The construction was scrapped and later restarted, taking nearly a decade before final completion in 1999. The design that was selected and eventually built was that of Daniel Libeskind. The “old” building, gutted in 1993 for the purpose of being used as a part of the Jewish Museum, was originally a legal court of justice after its construction in 1735. By mating the old court to the new building styled after the deconstructed Star of David, Libeskind created a new kind of museum that forced the visitor to walk through the past and descend into the depths beneath the original building in order to reach the new construction which would house the permanent exhibits. In effect, Libeskind tried to create a physical space that would deconstruct the history of German Jews and in doing so created a form of counter-monument with the main goal not to memorialize but to tell a narrative.

The counter-monument is a rejection of the typical conception of the memorial as a space where accomplishments are frozen in time to be glorified forever. The Holocaust, sometimes referred to as the “scar on modernity,” forced into existence a new kind of memorial that frees both the victim and the aggressor from the oppressive system of classification that restricts the parties to diametrically opposed roles in history (Akcan 158). In order for designers to be able to create structures that would conform to the idea of the counter-memorial, they had to create new visual styles that would tell the stories without getting in the way or imposing too much on the visitor.

![Figure 2. Jüdisches Museum Berlin](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

© Personal photograph by author, 2012.
The new building of the Jewish Museum is dominated by the concept of the “void.” The space is dominated by questions of what has been and what could have been. Lines are hard, colors stand in stark contrast to one another, and it is impossible to look down the length of the exhibition hall because of the purposefully convoluted structure of the building. Richard Crownshaw suggests that the voids that run throughout the exhibit serve to interrupt the stories, prevent them from reaching their logical conclusions, and visibly remind the visitor that the road from the past to the present is not seamless (Crownshaw 218). Although the void interrupts the narrative of the exhibit, it also is responsible for provoking remembrance in the style of a memorial. Libeskind himself noted that, “No Jewish museum at this location would pass muster without memorial rooms of this kind. In the end, it is not just a matter of simply exhibiting a few beautiful, valuable exhibits here.” (Rauterberg 112). In a way, Libeskind has managed to present a counter-monument that focuses the visitor on the main narrative of the exhibit while constantly reminding them of the uneven and sometimes broken path that must be followed when tracing German Jewish history.

**PART IV: MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE**

The *Neue Wache* is a “traditional” memorial that has been used by various German governments in order to draw attention to the past for political reasons while reinforcing the victim-aggressor dichotomy and the Jewish Museum tries to avoid outright. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, dedicated in May 2005, hybridizes the two. Instead of imbuing the site with an overly ambiguous sense of mourning, the memorial that designer Peter Eisenman has constructed is extremely specific. The memorial covers a large field approximately 5 acres in size. Constructed along the Tiergarten very close to the “Führer Bunker,” the Reichstag, and formerly the Berlin Wall, the space that was used is highly symbolic ground. Eisenman’s design has met with much criticism. While some seek to “normalize” Germany and see the construction of even more memorials as unnecessary, others believe that it is absolutely necessary to continue memorializing the past so that it is not forgotten (Grenzer 105). Some claim that for a memorial that is supposed to commemorate a very specific group of people, the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, Peter Eisenman’s construction is too abstract. The response to such an argument has been that the memorial is intentionally left abstract so as to elicit within the visitor, “a somatic, corporal form of memory, based not primarily on reflection but on emotional experience” (Harjes 142). As opposed the *Neue Wache* that relies upon invented memories in order to elicit a response, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe seeks only to inspire genuine emotions of disorientation or loneliness in heart of a visitor.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe requires a visitor to physically walk into the depths of the stone in a manner reminiscent of descending into the depths beneath the old building of the Jewish

![Figure 3. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Berlin. © Personal photograph by author, 2012.](image-url)
Museum in order to rise out into the new. The experience is highly disorienting and unnerving in both instances. It is easy to lose oneself among the rectangular, coffin-sized stone pillars and to get separated from a group. For a memorial that requires the participation of a visitor, the construction is vital to the emotional impact. Memorials are built to remind the collective consciousness of the events of the past with the understanding that those who have not experienced those events can never truly understand them. Unlike the Jewish Museum, the designer of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe constructed the memorial with the purpose of calling attention to the conspicuous absence of the victims as a result of the actions of the perpetrators. It thus does not fill the characteristics of a counter-memorial despite the fact that it attempts to inspire the same kind of self-reflection through emotional experience.

**CONCLUSION:**

**SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES**

The *Neue Wache*, the Jewish Museum of Berlin, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe all share common traits and yet differ from each other in subtle but significant ways. Fundamentally, as sites of memory, they all are meant to evoke a sense of emotion. The memories of the *Neue Wache* are those conjured by the first Chancellor of the reunified Germany who sought to reunify the nation under a single emotion of mourning. The Jewish Museum and Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe seek only to inspire a visitor to feel their own emotions. The memorialized subject of the *Neue Wache* is intentionally left vague so as to make it easier to adopt the imposed emotion. The Jewish Museum makes a point of specifying the subject of remembrance as German Jews. The museum does not focus on the Holocaust, but since the period of time is so significant in the timeline of German Jews, artistic counter-memorialization is employed to add emotional context to the narrative of the exhibit. Finally, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe employs the methods of the counter-memorial in its stark, disillusioning presentation that inspires introspection, but makes no attempt to hide the fact that the purpose of such inspired emotion is to profoundly impact the visitor through experience and to induce the revelation of the true extent of the Holocaust’s terror.

The timeline of post-reunification memorialization provides a rough guide to the evolution of the collective consciousness during the reunification process. Monuments of the past were meant to glorify leaders, regimes, or ideologies, but they began to change in nature after the Second World War. In East Berlin memorials commemorated the victims of the War, but rhetorical twisting ensured that the ideology central to the monuments. When they faced reunification, the politicians seized upon memorials as potential tools to direct reunification. In the place of contrived emotion stood the counter-memorials that aimed to avoid the imposition of one single, massive narrative of the past. In avoiding the issue, however, counter-memorials had the potential to draw more attention than before to the original versions of the past that were being avoided. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe represents a new type of memorial that employs some of the same rhetorical structures of the counter-memorial while rejecting the notion that the monolithic narrative of the past can or should be ignored. The end result of the multiples phases of post-reunification memorials is a general map of Berlin’s collective consciousness that follows the sinuous road toward true cultural reunification and acceptance of national history that has yet to come.

**References**


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PART I: SOCIALISM, A MISUNDERSTOOD CONCEPT?

Socialism for Americans is one of the most misquoted and most misunderstood concepts in the world. Yet, socialism has also been one of the most important movements to shape the history of the 20th century and indeed mankind. A further examination of socialism is then required within a particular context: Berlin. What better modern day city could we ask for then Berlin? As a city that was split by “socialism” and then brought back together, we must ask what role does it still play? Through the examination of the history of socialism in Berlin, as well as Germany as a whole, we will show that socialism can be expressed in a myriad of ways, contrary to the American perspective.

In American terms, socialism is essentially a synonym for communism, which is in itself a synonym for anti-American. However, the definition of socialism in America has become a mere political tool that has in many ways escaped the constraints of reality. Socialism is an economic system characterized by social ownership and control of the means of production and cooperative management of the government. As we can see, this is a relatively vague statement that while offering some concrete goals offers no specifics on how to obtain them or as to the proper implementation of said goals. Therefore, we must recognize socialism as a blanket term that encompasses many varied trains of thought. To dispel the myth of equating socialism with nothing but communism, let us then properly define communism. Communism is a revolutionary socialist movement to create a classless, moneyless and stateless social order
structured upon common ownership of the means of production. While we can clearly see how it falls under the category of socialism, it offers up some specifics that are excluded from the definition of socialism. It offers up specifics such as being revolutionary, calling for a moneyless society, and a classless society. While communism is the form of socialism that Americans have been taught the most about, it is not, nor has it ever been, the most prevalent expression of socialism in Berlin or Germany.

**PART II: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

The most prevalent expression of socialism in Berlin and Germany is and has been the Social Democratic Party. The party was founded in 1863 and called for the socialist utopia, the same as Marx. Yet they believed in the need for revolution and accepted a mixed economy for a period of time. The party began to split in early 20th century over disagreement on the notion irreconcilable class conflict and support for World War I. The most important aspect of the breakup of the SPD was the establishment of the German Communist Party. During the years of the Weimar Republic, socialism became expressed in more varied ways, as the establishment of the Communist Party shows. Changes also happened within the SPD itself. The SPD took on an anti-revolutionary during the German revolution and feared a Russian style upheaval and the civil war in started. The early years of the Weimar republic were characterized by social tensions between the communists, the SPD, and the old guard. On several occasions violent clashes occurred and soviets were declared. Throughout the Weimar Republic, the German Communist Party continued to poll at 10% in the national elections. The history of socialism during the reign of the Nazis is one of repression and violence. While underground groups existed, socialism no longer truly played a role in Berlin or Germany as a whole (Guttsman).

While Socialism was expressed in the East of Berlin since the end of World War II, it was not really a choice. Socialism did not truly come back willingly onto the political field until the student movement in West Berlin in the 1960s. The student movement was a wide-ranging movement that took place across all of Western Europe and America, but there were many specific issues at hand in Berlin and Germany. The students had key issues behind which they rallied: the hypocrisy of Germany’s Nazi past, changing society for more democracy, reforming the university curriculum, stopping the war in Vietnam, reducing the influence of the right-wing press, and stopping the planned emergency legislation. This legislation in particular was of great concern as it severely curtailed their rights to freedom of expression and demonstration. The visit of the Shah of Iran in 1967 became a huge catalyst for the student movement. The shooting of a student and the protests and university occupations that followed were for many outside of Berlin there first exposure to the concerns of the students (Socialist Worker Online). However, by the 1970s the student movement had become a fractured one. The movement would soon fall into irrelevancy. The next period of socialism in Berlin we shall examine is that of modern day Berlin. As a city that was once split between a “socialist” and “capitalist” system, the politics of Berlin should prove as an interesting example, especially when we realize which political parties are in power today.
PART III: THE GRAND RED COALITION
AND ITS END

What we discover when we examine Berlin is that we have a modern day city-state that has been ruled by what can be called a socialist coalition since its reunification. Let us then examine the last state election that took place in Berlin. The election of 2011 proved to be an interesting one for Berlin. The SPD was able to win a majority of the seats, as it typically does, but none the less still lost seats. All 141 seats were up for reelection, with the results as following: SPD with 48 (28.3%), CDU with 39 (23.4%), Green with 30 (17.6%), The Left with 20 (11.6%), and the Pirate Party with 15 (8.9%) (Berlin Bureau). There is only one party here, the CDU, which we could claim to exclusively be right wing, or without tendencies that would cause us to toss it under the blanket term of socialism. Let us then examine the remaining political parties and see how each one in its own way is an expression of socialism.

The Social Democratic Party is a mere shadow of what it was pre-World War II. It no longer advocates for the social utopia as espoused by Marx, but has vey decisively taken the option of the Third Way. It is comparable in many ways to the Labor Party of the modern day United Kingdom, which the American reader may be more familiar with. Both parties share a storied socialist history, but in recent years they have drifted significantly towards the center and today operate in the center-left. However, since the immersion of “The Left” party in 2007, the SPD has undertaken a new party platform, the “Hamburg Program”. This marks a break in the slide towards the center as the platform is, “critical of unfettered capitalism and contains several references to ‘democratic socialism’” (Smith). Indeed, it is a rebuke to their 2010 Agenda, which pioneered the Third Way, at the cost of welfare programs, since, “the Social Democrats, [who] have always seen themselves as the guardians of social justice, not only damaged its image with many voters through Agenda 2010 – it also lost tens of thousands of members and its very identity” (Smith). The party over the years became more embracing of capitalism and in turn lost, arguably, its identity. Through their new platform, the party hopes to reclaim some of its identity, while still keeping a foot planted in the center. The SPD of today, when compared to its origins is a party that lies much further to the right on the political spectrum, but when compared to the SPD of the 90s it is a party that, “believe[s] more in the state, are more critical of capitalism, more in favor of redistribution of wealth, [and] more populist” (Smith). It is truly a party that is at odds with itself in many ways. It certainly espouses many of its old virtues and sees itself as the party of social justice, but finds itself torn between what it was and what it has become.

The party that had been the partner in the “Red Coalition” that governed Berlin until 2011 was born out of frustrations with the SPD. The Left, as its name implies, is a left wing party that is far more embracing of socialist values then the modern day SPD is. The party is also a very young one, having only existed since 2007. The party itself is a result of the merger of, “the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) – the successor to the communist party that ruled East Germany – and WASG, a group of trade unionists and disgruntled former SPD members based in western Germany” (Smith). We can already see in its membership another more “radical” reflection of socialism in its ranks, communism. This has presented a complication for the party, as it must ask itself does it represent democratic socialism or communism? Of course though, even when we speak of democratic socialism, we do not speak of it in today’s terms. The manner in which it is used here is more akin to the platform of the SPD prior to World War II. While we can certainly place the party to the left of the modern day SPD, we cannot strictly define the socialism it
espouses as, “the party has failed to reconcile its two identities. Does it want to be pragmatic, broad-based governing parties like it is in eastern German states, or does it want to be a radical political sect like it is in the west? Does it favor reform or does it want the ‘revolutionary Realpolitik’ Lötzsch (the Party leader) is now calling for” (Berg & Pancur)? Time is yet to tell and all we can do for now is wait.

The Green Party as its name implies is a very issue driven party, with that issue of course being the environment. While the party certainly lies on the left of the political spectrum, an odd occurrence has been taking place as, “the Greens are being increasingly embraced by voters on the right, successfully tapping into a German strain of conservationist conservatism by opposing highways and the demolition of old buildings” (Kulish, Greens Gain in Germany). The party has also taken a strict anti-nuclear stance since its inception and since the tragic earthquake in Japan the debate has become more relevant in Berlin and Germany as a whole.

However, the talk of the 2011 elections was not the gains by the Green Party or the grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU, but the emergence of the German Pirate Party. Relatively new on the political scene in any sense, this was the first year that the Pirate Party fielded candidates in the Berlin elections. The party platform is mainly focused on internet freedoms though the party, “has broadened its initial platform, which focused on file sharing, censorship and data protection to include other social issues, advocating the Internet as a tool to empower the electorate and engage it in the political — and legislative — process” (Kulish, Pirate’s Strong Showing). The party advocates the right of the individual on the Internet over that of both the government and the corporation in the protection of their private information. That being said, there is still much to be seen from the Pirate Party and if they can truly expand from what is really still a single-issue party to a broader party that would be able to attract more members.

CONCLUSION

Within context of Germany’s history and more importantly Berlin’s, we have dispelled the American myth of socialism being equitable solely with communism. Germany throughout the course of its history over the past two centuries showed how wrong this supposed compatibility actually was. To call the SPD an equivalent to the Marxist-Leninism that took root in Russia would, as we have shown, be a logical fallacy. Berlin today, however, provides the greatest example of the variety of socialist ideologies in the world. While all of these parties may share the same root, they are separately blooming flowers, with Berlin as such as important metropolitan providing a myriad of parties. Socialism, despite the fears that it stirs up in America of collectivity and conformity, has been shown in actuality to be a very personal expression of one’s opinion. In the end, however, I fear that socialism will continue to remain hidden behind a red vale in America, so long as it continues to have the same effect as it does with a bull.

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ABSTRACT

Upon entering the neighborhood of Wedding, a northwestern neighborhood in Berlin, one will find the “Afrikanisches Viertel” (The African Quarter). From a flâneur’s perspective, there is nothing particularly unusual or distinct about the neighborhood of Wedding from any other neighborhood in Berlin. However, upon closer examination one would find that there are, in fact, many distinguishable aspects about Wedding. These tokens of uniqueness are hidden in the neighborhood’s street signs. What allows for the creation and existence of an “Afrikanisches Viertel” in the German capital city of Berlin is not the overwhelming population of African people, but rather the overwhelming number of African nations and places that are represented in the street names within the neighborhood. With politicized, anti-Fascist street naming being particularly symbolic in post-World War II Berlin, it would seem as though the reason for naming streets in one particular neighborhood after colonizers and colonized nations of Africa would be a move towards widespread egalitarianism. However, these street names have been in place since the very beginning of the 20th century, which is perhaps one of the most interesting albeit stumping questions regarding the street names of the African Quarter. This essay will evaluate the many ideas behind and reasons for the very worldly street names of the African Quarter in Berlin and apply them to the modern-day demographics and social sphere in Wedding. The paper will be divided into three sections, which will look at historical street naming and street name alterations in Berlin, ideological implications for street naming in Wedding and Berlin as a whole, and current-day Wedding, respectively.

PART I: A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

In Brian Ladd’s book, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape, he states, “Street names are among the most obvious elements of a city’s historical identity” (Ladd 208). This is, perhaps, the best place to start with regards to explaining the mysterious street naming of Wedding. In 1899, twenty-five streets in the neighborhood of Wedding were given names that represented African countries, cities, and rivers, centers of colonial power, as well as colonial leaders (Haruna). As such, the street names in the African Quarter serve as acknowledgments of this often overlooked aspect of German colonial history. In spite of the fact that there were multiple amendments to street names, more so in former East Berlin than in the former West, in which Wedding is a district, the street names in Wedding have remained unchanged. As such, the street names in this neighborhood often go unrecognized because they
were unaffected by the more popularly discussed, post-World War II street name alterations.

Throughout Berlin, the street signs serve as indicators of Germany’s history, and as one weaves left and right throughout the city, different people, events, and places from history are both referenced and remembered. Much of Berlin’s street signs experienced a drastic change in the history that they represented shortly after World War II in the early 1950s, at which point the idea was to erase certain aspects of German history and redirect a newly emerging German history along a path that strayed from its past. In the 1970s, “[t]he wish to forget the past motivated East Berliners to write to their new city government and ask that all these names be changed back, ‘so that we are not continuously and painfully reminded of the forty lost years’” (Ladd 209). This initial sentiment of easing the hurt of painful memories went through a series of transformations as Berlin’s history drew closer to November 9th, 1989. While forgetting history has not been an issue within the urban landscape and culture of Berlin, the symbolic representation of German memory has been and still is an issue that has persistently plagued Berliners. An example of this issue is the renaming of Otto-Grotewohl-Straße, “Few people spoke out in favor of keeping the name Otto-Grotewohl-Straße […] But some East Berliners questioned whether the weight of tradition was sufficient to justify restoring the original name […] [honoring] the militarist King Friedrich Wilhelm I,” which resulted in, “[…] the district council of Mitte […] [calling] it Toleranzstraße,” (Ladd 213). This example is one of many similar instances when indecision amongst Berliners has led to government officials taking matters into their own hands replacing history with the future.

This replacement is certainly a motion away from the heavily nationalistic nature of the Weimar and Nazi eras, “[…] [O]ne moves through zones of German triumph and atonement” and “its cosmopolitanism is inscribed in the generosity of its street-naming […]” (Wood). This is a quality that is largely representative of Berlin’s approach to history and the re-telling of history because of the city’s highly unconventional monuments and the patchwork-quilt nature of the cityscape that commands one’s view of the city. In this way, this lack of uniformity contributes to the development of Berlin’s collective identity, particular its political identity that emerged out of the former GDR capital in the East whose street names represented, “[…] three political traditions, the heritage of former times: the dynastic or Prussian tradition, the national, pan-German tradition and the national socialist tradition […]” (Azaryahou, “Street Names and Political Identity: The Case of East Berlin” 582). As such, renaming processes that have changed Adolf-Hitler-Platz to Theodor-Heuss-Platz are representative of the city’s desire to relinquish a history of patriotic traditionalism to allow for its emergence as culturally diverse world capital metropolis.

PART II: WHY STREET SIGNS?

True, there are many vehicles through which a city’s people and government can commiserate over and then press on from a shared history that is tumultuous and complicated, so why represent this departure from history in street signs? In Ghosts of Berlin, Brian Ladd suggests that it is because, “Street names can be ephemeral, rootless, and inoffensive in a way that buildings and monuments perhaps cannot” (214). Whereas the roots of buildings and monuments lie beneath the earth and concrete of a city, its streets bear no roots, if only routes. As such, roots can be imposed upon streets in order to assign a direction to the past that can only lead to the present. Through this method of representation it becomes impossible for the city’s inhabitants to forget history, while still making it tolerable to live with the difficult elements of the past.
Upon visiting the Topography of Terror, George Packer of The New Yorker recounts, “after a few minutes of wandering [...] among the Nazi display boards, it seemed that one could do worse than treat the city with the darkest history on earth as a place for the living,” which responds to his initial observation that, “The streets of Berlin have aggressive names.”

The streets have aggressive names, but the city has an infinitely more aggressive history.

Street naming in Berlin is as much a unifying (or rather, reunifying) act as much as it is divisive. This polarizing effect is yet another convention of the Berlin identity. When visiting Berlin, one will periodically encounter small bricks in the sidewalk that indicate that the Wall used to bisect the portion of the city that one is walking through. Seeing these small plaques are both orientating in the sense that they remind an observer of where they would be standing in the Berlin of the past. However they are just as disorienting in the sense that when one visits Berlin nowadays they do not think about the city as divided. In effect these plaques remove one from the unified Berlin they thought they were walking and leave them in a curious middle ground between past and present. This divide is felt not only by visitors who do not inhabit the city, but also by the residents of Berlin. Christiane Wilke states that when, “Talking about cities, schools, and streets in East Germany, you have to translate between old, new, and very old,” and that, “Beneath the surface, we East Germans of different generations speak different languages. We need to remember names that are no longer and names that are not yet,” as an act that she considers to be “crucial.” Here, history creates divides not only amongst people but also creates language barriers that are indicative of the lack of cohesiveness in Berlin’s collective identity.

Reassigning different street names throughout Berlin is largely representative of the city government’s attempt at creating a newly configured collective identity that emerged after World War II and then reemerged after the fall of the Wall. Looking at street naming in this way depicts the act as a “city text,” which, “[...] provides the toponymical grid that makes the city geographically intelligible,” however, “[...] a city-text is not intended to be read as an entirety whereas its eventual reading as a text does not involve any obligation to a prescribed order” (Azaryahu, “The Power of Commemorative Street Names” 324). Azaryahu continues by suggesting that it is rare for acts such as reading street signs to be symbolic of some deeper meaning, however, “street names as commemorations that celebrate and canonize a certain version of history [compel] the evaluation of the semiotic structure of a city-text as a historical narrative” (324). Berlin’s street naming serves as a historical narrative of the city as well as the nation’s political history, which shows that, as a city-text, the reading of Berlin’s historical narrative is one that cannot easily be read in its entirety. By extension, this shows that Berlin’s collective identity is very fragmented and would be virtually impossible to tie together in a harmonious fusion of multiple eras of history.

**PART III: AFRICA IN WEDDING**

The reality in Wedding speaks to this fragmented collective identity within Berlin. This is not to say that Wedding is an example of a negative result of Berlin’s general lack of cohesiveness in both urban geography as well as symbolism. The reality of the situation in Wedding is that, although the district flies under the radar in relation to other Berlin districts, the neighborhood is actually blossoming into a multicultural utopia, marrying the urban environment of Berlin with cultures of many other nations of the world and many eras in history. In recent years Wedding has become a multicultural center where Turks, Arabs, Africans, Germans, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Atheists, Blacks, and Whites can live...
together peacefully as well as a center for the majority of the African population living in Berlin (“Afrika Im Wedding”). It is also an area in Berlin where Germany’s colonial history is remembered, as most of the street names there are representative of German colonies in Africa as well as important events, places, and people within the framework of colonial history in Africa (“Afrika Im Wedding”). These descriptions paint the neighborhood of Wedding as a model for the cosmopolitan, world capital that Berlin is striving to become.

The number of African people from Angola, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, and Nigeria that are living in Berlin has increased over the past ten years due to the very low rent prices in the city (Haruna). Upon arriving in Berlin, many African people look for housing in Wedding almost immediately because they have friends who recommend for them to move there and they know that they will have support from a larger African community in Wedding (Haruna). Hadija Haruna quotes historian, Ursula Trüper, who offers this explanation for why the streets in Wedding are named as they are, “It is simply to bring the residents together,” and according to Haruna’s interviewee, Kingsley Arthur, a priest living in Wedding, he sees Wedding as an example of a functional, multicultural Berlin.

**CONCLUSION**

*Wedding* is currently an example of the idea that for every positive, there is a negative. There has recently been an upsurge of support to change the names of many of the street names in the city that are considered to be offensive. The argument is that Germany’s colonial history has been largely ignored because of the horrors of the Nazi regime, however, it is interesting to note that these movements to change the street names, “[…] coincide with the 125th anniversary this year of the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884/85, at which European powers divided Africa up into colonies by drawing arbitrary boundaries” (Crossland). At this point it is important to raise several questions. Why does it take a monumental day in history for people to begin protesting for the change of Wedding’s street names? Is this just another act of symbolism? It is notable that the same nations that were lined with arbitrary boundaries now label streets, which do not act as boundaries, but as routes and the roots to pathways of freedom.

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ABSTRACT

“Er? Sie? Es? oder Mann?: Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Germany” is a study of gender in 2012 Berlin. It evaluates gender and sexuality in relation to politics, art, history, community outreach, and academics in modern day Germany. There is a clear focus on the city of Berlin and its status as a pioneering city in the queer movement.

“Er? Sie? Es? oder Mann?: Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Germany” offers the idea that the progress that has been and continues to be made in Berlin will continue to spread to other Western nations and will promote a more excepting global community.

PART I: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE END: ELIMINATING HOSTILITY AND THE SYSTEMS ON WHICH IT IS BUILT

The struggle against §175, a law specifically criminalizing male-male sexuality, “sparked the formation in Germany of the world’s first homosexual emancipation organization, Magnus Hirschfeld’s Scientific-Humanitarian Committee” (Halle 207). Hirschfeld’s committee was founded in 1897 in a remarkably different Germany than exists today. The committee and by 1919 the Institute for Sexual Research, also organized by Hirschfeld, were looking towards science and research to eliminate hostility towards homosexuals. Although a great deal has changed over the past 115 years, the struggle to eliminate hostility remains. From the very beginning of the Gay, Women, and Queer Rights Movements, Germans have taken a leading role, attaining the legal rights they deserve years before their other Western counterparts. Because of its revolutionary past and groundbreaking present, it is clear that Germany, and specifically contemporary Berlin, can be referenced as an image progress and what is likely to follow in other Western nations. This progress can be seen within the study of gender, sex, and sexuality.
The words ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are very often used interchangeably but in order to understand the societal perceptions of each, one must first understand the difference between the two. Sex is defined as “either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions” (“sex” n.1). Sex is a strictly biological term, referencing only the physical nature of a body. Gender, on the other hand, is “the state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and difference, rather than biological ones,” and further, “the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex” (“gender” n.). Gender is related to sex through societal perceptions of which behaviors, actions, and roles a particular sex should perform. As is made obvious through the Oxford English Dictionary’s definitions, sex and gender are typically confined to the binary systems of male/female and masculine/feminine. Furthermore, these assigned sexes and genders are often inextricably linked with an assumed heterosexual identity (Mills 85). In reality, there are vast spectra of gender, sex, and sexual identities. In relatively recent history, dramatic strides have been made towards the acceptance and normalization of atypical identities.

**PART II: LIVING INSIDE OF GERMANY BUT OUTSIDE OF THE BOX: SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES**

Before diving into the strides that certain German societies are taking away from the heteronormative binary system, it is vital to understand at least the more common gender and sexual identities. The Gender Equity Resource Center, a community run by University of California at Berkley, offers definitions and explanations of nearly all ordinary identities. The most common gender identity is cisgender. A cisgender individual is one whose gender identity is traditionally considered appropriate to their sex. An example of this would be a female identifying as feminine rather than masculine. All other gender identities fall under the all-encompassing term genderqueer. Bigenders or pangenders indentify as both masculine and feminine, and although they can have any assigned sex, they identify as both man and woman. Genderless or agender individuals identify as neither man, woman, or other. Genderfluid individuals move between genders, meaning that at any given time they may identify with any specific gender or multiple genders simultaneously. Third gender or other gender is a term used for those who do not place a name to their gender but have a unique gender identity that is neither man nor woman. Transgender individuals are those whose gender does not traditionally match their assigned sex. The primary queer sexual (as opposed to gender) identities are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans*. (The asterisk is used to imply that trans* encompasses transgender, transsexual, and other transitional identities.) Less common identities include pansexual, pomosexual, asexual, autosexual, polyamorous people, and BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, and Masochism). Pansexual people feel attraction towards people of all genders and sexes. Asexuals lack sexual attraction and/or interest in sexual activity. Autosexuals are self-reliant for sexual pleasures. Polyamorous people are those who have more than one intimate relationship at a time. Lastly, BDMS participants are those who partake in unconventional sexual practices associated with bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism (LGBT Resources). People with these identities have been ostracized throughout history, but the study and progress of gender/queer theory counters hatred. Berlin and the greater German state have been at the forefront of this battle throughout modern history.

One might ask why gender, sex, sexuality, and the all-encompassing study of queer theory are so important in relation to Germany, particularly the
German language. Why is it especially significant that German people are working towards a more inclusive environment? The answer can be found, in part, within the structure of the language itself. The German language is one of the most grammatically gendered modern languages. “For those languages with a grammatical-gender system, where gender is a morphological feature of the language, sexism is much more embedded than it is in English” (Mills 30). German contains the genderization of nouns, meaning that not only pronouns differ based on gender, but also male and female characteristic nouns and, therefore, all objects are categorized as masculine, feminine, or neuter. Because of this intense association between nouns and gender, German people have remarkable gendered perceptions. A survey conducted by Hellinger and Pauwels in 2007 shows that even with the reformed use of generic pronouns, visualizations remain overwhelmingly male (Mills 156). It is only when women are pointedly referred to that there seems to be roughly equivalent visualization of women and men. As women become more and more incorporated into the work force, there is actually a conscious resistance to adopting affixes that refer specifically to female workers. For example, der Lehrer is translated as “the teacher” whereas the female equivalent, die Lehrerin, is translated as “the female teacher” (Mills 88). Male examples are considered the norm while practically identical female examples are denoted as exceptions to the norm. Although there have been a great deal of linguistic reforms and a great many more attempts at reform, the German language is particularly difficult to disassociate with gender. Even in cases of intentional ambiguity, perceptions remain predominantly masculine, negating any effects that the ambiguity struggled for (McConnell-Ginet 48). This means that profound reforms must be found in other places if German society wishes to incorporate its queer members.

**PART III: “ICH BIN SCHWUL, UND DAS IST AUCH GUT SO”: QUEER PRESENCE WITHIN GERMANY’S POPCULTURE**

Compensating for inequalities reinstituted through language, although a remarkably difficult task, is handled beautifully within Germany. Berlin specifically has been a pillar city in the formation of a society of gender and sexual equality, as can be seen through the prominent queer community, various outreach programs, and the strong academic environment. That does not mean that there is a complete acceptance of these minorities; rather, it means that Berlin is at the forefront of legal and societal reform movements. Since the 1980s, there has been fairly widespread acceptance of queer groups in Germany. In the mid-1980s homosexuality became an obvious presence in popular television programs and films (Hake 183-4). In August of 1987 the East German Supreme Court affirmed, “Homosexuality, just like heterosexuality, represents a variant of sexual behavior. Homosexual people do therefore not stand outside socialist society, and the civil rights are warranted to them exactly as to all other citizens” (Oberstes Gericht der DDR). Same-sex unions have been legal in Germany since 2001 offering the rights associated with inheritance, alimony, health coverage, immigration and name change as well as the right to divorce and demand a settlement. In 2004 previsions were made to grant nontraditional couples the rights to refuse to testify against a spouse, to qualify for state pensions, and to adopt stepchildren (“Same Sex Marriage in Germany”).
Germany has also become known for its wide acceptance of unconventional genders. Since the early 1990s anti-discrimination laws have passed throughout Germany in order to protect individual’s rights and dignities. Germany is the first country in the world to include ‘gender identity’ in its anti-discrimination laws (Lisetto-Smith). These revolutionary amendments set the stage for the rest of the world to follow and even pressured other Western nations to make progress. Although great legal strides have been made to counter heterosexual and male privileges, same-sex couples continue to be robbed of the tax advantages that heterosexual partners receive and women/genderqueer people face economic inequalities (Lisetto-Smith). There is also some debate over whether or not Germany is stringent enough in complying with the Treaty of Amsterdam, a European treaty that protects individuals persecuted based on their sexual orientation but attempts are being made to ensure the civil liberties and rights of all German people (“Same Sex”).

Germany’s reforms go beyond governmental and legislative decisions. The queer community has consistently used different artistic mediums to expresses personal identities and broaden acceptance among the general population. One of the most popular art forms in contemporary Germany is film. One particularly noteworthy film is Rosa von Praunheim’s Not the Homosexual Is Perverse, but the Situation in Which He Lives (Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt) 1971. This film is “commonly credited with setting off the modern gay liberation movement in Germany. The film premiered at the Berlinale in 1971 and sparked such controversy among both heterosexuals and homosexuals that the debates led directly to the formation of homosexual action groups” (Halle 208). Although this is only one film, it offers an example of many films as well as other art forms. Art is made visible to the entire community in a way that research may not be able to. Although a piece of art may be coined ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ it is still presented to an entire society rather than exclusively to a subgroup. Artistic representations of the queer community introduce the larger society to queer identities within a safe and comfortable environment. Queer art, whether intentionally presented or not, has a serious impact on everyone that comes in contact with that popular culture. Arts are open, vividly introducing themselves to the public. They do not have to be sought out by only those that wish to experience them. They reach the public in ways that little else can.

Artistic groups have traditionally been more open and accepting of nontraditional people. They have been able to use their fame to spread their messages. Similarly, politicians are constantly found in the spotlight attempting to extend their political agendas. Politics, however, has not always been open to individuals holding queer identities.
sexual orientation does not play as great a role in electability as in the United States. Berlin’s mayor, Klaus Wowereit, is an openly gay man. Some other prominent homosexuals in German government include Volker Beck, a member of parliament in the Bundestag, Gerhard Schick and Michael Kauch, also a representatives in the Bundestag, and Guido Westerwelle, the acting Foreign Minister. Assumption are often made that gay politicians will push a strictly homosexual agenda, but each of these examples can offer proof otherwise. Having queer individuals hold political and economic power sends a message to the world that the German people can collectively look past sexuality in the political spectrum. Germany, having one of the most stable economic and political systems in Europe, once again sets the stage for queer movements throughout the world.

It is fairly obvious that examples of queer individuals can often be found throughout Germany’s political and artistic arenas as well as within popular culture. The question then arises as to why Germany, and more specifically Berlin, is so advanced in comparison to other Western societies. One variable that needs to be considered is the network of both public and private institutions based on or directed towards the queer community. In Berlin alone, there are many organizations within the queer community and working towards the expansion of knowledge regarding queer identities. Some of these institutions include the Lesbian and Gay Federation of Germany, the Federal Centre for Health Education, The German AIDS Foundation, the Institute for Queer Theory, and the Schwules Museum. There are numerous other resources designed for the queer community including everything from counseling to credit cards. All of these institutions, groups, and resources work towards breaking gender binaries and countering the repressions of heteronormative society. One might ask if these institutions stem from the fact that Berlin is a liberal and open community or if these institutions actually contribute towards Berlin becoming a ‘more queer city.’ Obviously both answers could be rooted in truth, but focusing on some specifics could offer greater insights into Berlin, and Germany’s, past, present, and future as an accepting community.

**PART IV: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: MUSEUMS, INSTITUTES, AND CENTERS**

The most revolutionary distribution of information regarding queer identities occurred with the founding of the Schwules Museum. The Schwules Museum, often referred to as the Gay Museum, was first postulated in 1984 when the first public exhibit on gay topics was exhibited at the Berlin Museum. This exhibit, Eldorado – History, culture and everyday gay men and women in Berlin from 1850 to 1950, was the culmination of the research done by three gay students studying at the Free University. Eldorado was wildly successful and controversial, actually breaking records with its 45,000 visitors. It was clear that the public was extremely interested in gaining a better understanding of queer history. Eldorado would not be a one-time exhibit, but merited a permanent home in some sort of ‘gay’ museum – and so the Schwules Museum, the first-ever queer museum, was born. The Schwules Museum has contributed to the growing acceptance of queer people in Berlin as well as throughout Germany. It is now home to a permanent exhibit entitled “Self-Awareness and Endurance: 200 Years of Gay
History,” but also exhibits many temporary exhibits throughout the year. The effects these exhibits have on the larger community were made obvious not only through record-breaking turnout in 1984 but also through public grants and allocations in the recent past. In 2009, the museum received a two-year grant from the cultural funds of the Berlin Senate in order to broaden its focus from predominantly male homosexuality to various queer identities (“Schwules Museum”). The strength of three students in 1984 has had a remarkable influence on the entire city of Berlin, country of Germany, and global community. The Schwules Museum is a clear example of a queer institution expanding knowledge beyond the confines of the queer-identifying community.

Another extremely noteworthy institution is the Institute for Queer Theory. Founded in 2006, the Institute for Queer Theory works towards developing research, constructing new theories, and spreading information on gender and sexuality throughout Germany and internationally. “Committed to social change, the institute aims at transforming a normative order, which relies on the sex/gender binary and on dominant heterosexuality. It is its goal to develop non-hierarchical and de-normalizing ways of organizing gender and sexuality. In these as in other fields of social difference, it supports non-normative forms of cultural representation and political participation” (Engle). The institute attempts to answer questions concerning how sex, gender, and sexuality are related causing the starkly privileged heteronormative binary system. The ultimate goals it to remove privileges and develop a society based on gender, sex, and sexual equality. The Institute works through academics, research, politics, and social communications to market its ideas. Unlike the Schwules Museum, the Institute for Queer Theory is primarily a resource for the queer, academic community, although it is developing to include a broader audience. This is a prime example of broadening acceptance through detailed research and academics rather than public exposure. In combination with the exposure that often comes from the arts, media, politics, and museums, education is key to overcoming prejudices.

One final example of reform in the academic community can be seen in the Center for the Promotion of Women and Gender Studies. The main goal of the center is to “promote and secure the institutionalization of women’s and gender studies at the Free University in Berlin” (“Center”). With Berlin as a central force in the queer rights movement, educational opportunities are vital to continued progress. The center offers various lectures, colloquia, and conferences to students of the university as well as the general public. It sponsors various events related to gender and specifically the dismantling of male privilege and the drive towards gender equality. The center places an emphasis on continued education. All over the world, including in Germany, there is a connotation associated with feminism, women’s studies, and gender studies. Institutions like the Center for the Promotion of Women and Gender Studies attempt to counter the connotations and draw young people into education and research relating to gender. Education is the biggest weapon against bigotry and inequality and the Center for the Promotion of Women and Gender Studies consciously attempts to counter those inequalities.
CONCLUSION

It is evident that inequalities exist in all cultures. It is widely known that queer individuals face a unique form of discrimination because their identities are often thought of as a choice. They are a hidden minority, facing bigotry and prejudice often unbeknown to those insulting them. Germany has always been at the forefront of reforming gay and women’s liberation movements, but until the early 1990s each minority group faced uphill battles independently. This is when the queer movement really began. “It opened up significant new possibilities or organization between and among once disparate communities, women, men, homosexuals, heterosexuals, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered, S/M activists, fetishists, AIDS activists, sex workers and so on…” (Halle 210). Just as other countries have followed in Germany’s footsteps through art, film, legislation, politics, museums, and education, it can be postulated that these countries will continue to progress towards gender, sex, and sexual equality. If one asked why the study of gender and sexuality is so important within the context of German society the answer is clear; contemporary Berlin likely offers an image of the future of all western societies.

References


ABSTRACT

After living in New York City for the past two and a half years, here at Fordham, I have been able to travel around our city and bask in all that it has to offer. One of the most memorable spots of New York City, which a majority of visitors will most likely agree, has to be Times Square. It is the epicenter of advertising in New York City, and one of the greatest in the world, housing the world’s tallest billboard. Looking around three hundred and sixty degrees, every building’s façade is covered with some form of advertisement, most of which are massive television screens scrolling some big name brand across it. When thinking about advertising in a city, my first thought would be Time Square and the form of advertising used in that specific area, but what I don’t think of happen to be the countless other forms of advertising, some almost as blatantly big and showy as the ones found in Time Square, while others are subtle and relatively unnoticeable. My class, Berlin Tales: A Cultural History of Germany’s Kiez and Metropolis, traveled to Berlin during the Spring of 2012 in order to get a firsthand experience of the city that we learned so much about. Our class discussed the historical background of the city, in which art, film, photography, architecture, and social movements were all key topics. Having the ability to travel to a major travel destination meant that we were going to be tourists in Berlin, and possibly the targets to advertising in the city, much like tourists in New York. I took this opportunity to study the different styles of advertising (not the content, but rather the physical aspect) present in both cities, while trying to draw conclusions on their effectiveness. I would like to look into these different styles while keeping in mind the historical context of the city, in which older buildings from World War II are still present and pose a barrier for advertising agencies who want to open up to the modern city of Berlin.

PART I: THE CITY OF BERLIN

A city is not only developed by its inhabitants, but also by tourists who travel to the city in order to explore and experience it. These people, targeted by advertising agencies in popular areas of the city, directly help the city through the capitalist expansion of goods. Advertising is a part of any city, and is a way to entice prospective customers into buying products or visiting certain areas, which in turn also raises revenue. This paper discusses the differences and similarities between the advertising in Berlin and New York.

New York City has advertisements that are generally incorporated into the city’s architecture. Times Square is the epicenter of advertising in New York City, and one of the greatest in the world,
housing the world’s tallest billboard. Looking around three hundred and sixty degrees, every building’s façade is covered with some form of advertisement, most of which are massive television screens scrolling some big name brand across it. Even though New York City has a large focus on advertisements that are plastered to the sides of buildings in a large scale form, they are in the transition of also incorporating street furniture, a very popular European form of advertising, sponsored by Cemusa, a Spanish company (McGrath).

The transition across the Atlantic Ocean to Berlin, Germany, in terms of advertising, is very distinguishable. Berlin is a city that values its architectural history and significance. Buildings and structures in the city, still reminiscent of World War II are preserved, while newer buildings are started to be built, spurring a slow modernization. The advertisement in a city revolves around the availability of space, in which marketing ploys can be applied. The Berlin advertising is mainly focused around street furniture, which is comprised mostly of pillars and display cases, which severely limit the size and availability of projects. The Berlin advertising agencies are looking to bring innovations to their existing furniture, making them into more user friendly places of interest, which brings the targeted group closer to the advertisement.

Berlin is a city that values its architectural history and significance. Buildings and structures in the city still reminiscent of World War II are preserved, while newer buildings are started to be built, spurring a slow modernization. The advertisement in a city revolves around the availability of space, in which marketing ploys can be applied. In the old city of Berlin, there are strict limitations that prevent advertising companies from doing so. The city itself also has a poor history with advertisement, one that started before World War II, but lasted all of it. “Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels (the former an untalented painter, the latter an uninspired poet) produced a brilliantly conceived ad campaign, first in the test-market of Berlin, later for all of the German Empire, on behalf of their ‘client’, the National Socialist Party and its program” (Baginski). In the wake of the damage that they created, advertising companies moved away from Berlin and into a couple other large cities in order to start targeting a new crowd. The advertising in this city came in many shapes and sizes, littered throughout the streets. Structures known as Advertising Pillars (Figure 1) were visible in most parts of the city, while Display Cases and Billboards were also scattered in Berlin. While these three styles of advertising were the most prominent, Berlin also uses their bus stops, public toilets, benches, and vending kiosks for promotional purposes (WALLAG Home).

PART II: THE CITY OF NEW YORK

The advertising scheme in the Big Apple was mainly, well – big, with certain areas of the city seeing more action with advertisements than others, such as Madison Square Garden where large paintings...
can be seen directly across the street from MSG (Figure 2) (Jump). While advertising agencies cover the sides of buildings with paintings, drapes, or television screens, what more could a city ask for in terms of advertising? Well, New York City requested that there be even more advertisements, but in more eye-level places. As of 2006, New York City invested in a Spanish advertising company, which was briefly mentioned before, called Cemusa. This deal means that New York City has developed an international project that looks to incorporate “advertising-friendly, outdoor ‘furniture’ that will replace existing civic structures, like bus-stop shelters and newsstands, and create new ones, like freestanding public toilets” (McGrath).

Figure 2. Advertising Wall Painting, New York City. © Personal photograph by author, 2012.

**PART III: INNOVATIONS**

The advertising industry has been seeing a lot of changes in the way that they inform consumers, from the rise in technology to the desensitizing of media. New York’s advertising has been less innovative recently, and more expansive, looking to cover as much surface area of the city with some brand name. The Berlin advertising agency, Wall AG, has been providing the city streets with technology new and innovative ways to advertise, looking for ways not to expand from where they already are, but to create something new from what they have already have. One recent project, rightly named “BlueSpot,” is a multi-functional ground terminal that can be accessed by anyone. This terminal will provide the user with internet access, but more importantly for tourists, it will provide suggestions of stores, restaurants, and other places of interest. The name is a not-so-clever derivation of the Bluetooth technology, in which the terminal uses in order to send texts and updates (optional) to its users (WALLAG Innovations).

Another future endeavor being taken on by Wall AG, is to provide the city with a way to move forward, but at the same time still be able to view the past. Without being able to build a time machine, the closest that the Berlin agency was able to get is called the Timescope. The Timescope will be a small pillar with what looks to be a pair of futuristic binoculars on top. When the user looks through, the place that they are looking at in the Timescope will be converted into times once past, such as Berlin during World War II (WALLAG Innovative Street Furniture). This innovation could lead to a faster modernization of Berlin, and a move away from their historically protected buildings.

**CONCLUSION: A COMPARISON**

Both of the cities that we discussed in this paper, Berlin and New York, have similar qualities in their advertising, but also have developments and present techniques that are fairly different. New York City provides its inhabitants with over-sized, flash in your face advertisements, which may seem to be not that great of a technique, but leaves an image in your mind. Berlin on the other hand is more passive with their advertisements, yet more innovative, allowing their U-Bahn riders to watch an advertising film on the...
wall of the subway tunnel by using projectors (Williams).

When talking about the effectiveness of advertisements, the ones in Time Square that are suggesting a certain store, restaurant, or popular tourist trap seem to be very effective, but only to the people who care to look at them, which seem to be mainly tourists. This can be seen in the newer renditions of Berlin advertising, such as BlueSpot. Its effectiveness will come from how user friendly the interface is and how often the user actually listens to the suggestions. Unfortunately, I was unable to access one during my stay.

References


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PART I: THE BERLIN WALL

“Get me a piece of the wall” was the last message I received from a friend before my trip to Berlin on March 9, 2012. I laughed at this request, but still made sure to get a small piece of Die Berliner Mauer for my very Irish American friend. I did not, however, laugh at him because he wanted a piece. I laughed because it reminded me of the first time I had gone to Berlin. All I wanted was a piece of Die Mauer. This brought me to my first question: why are Americans so obsessed with the Berlin Wall? When I arrived in Berlin, I sensed that there is something odd in the way in which Berliners, and all Germans for that matter, treat Die Mauer. In many cases, it has been used as a piece of art and, in other cases, it has been completely destroyed with only small cobblestones marking its once occupied space. These thoughts and reflections led me to my second and main question: what does it mean to memorialize the Berlin Wall?

A blockade was first built by the Soviet Union in 1948, which cut off access to West Berlin. The Western Allies were forced to provide food and supplies to the West Berliners through the Berlin Airlift. By 1949 two separate German States came to power. The West was lead by the Federal Republic, a democratic state. The East was controlled by the communist dictatorship of the Democratic Republic, or the SED (Burkhardt). Between August 12 and 13 of 1961 a crude wall of barbed wire was erected to form a barricade between East and West Berlin. Construction workers soon replaced the wire with hollow cement blocks (Burkhardt). “The Wall cemented the political division of Germany and Europe; it became a worldwide symbol of the Cold War, which split the world politically into an eastern and a western

© Kunst in Stadtraum, Berlin.

ABSTRACT

A recent trip to Berlin, lead to questioning the memorialization of the city, specifically the Berlin Wall. The process of memorialization is very contended, especially in a city like Berlin, which has a rich and controversial history. By surveying the inner checkpoints of the Wall, one can get a sense of the various methods of memorialization. Many questions surround how and why these sites are remembered in certain ways. With an understanding of the historical background of the Berlin Wall and each crossing, one can conclude that memorialization is questionable, but, in some cases, necessary. Hundreds of memorials cover the streets of Berlin. While many have become important symbols of Berlin, memorials of the Berlin Wall remain unnoticed, misunderstood, and disputed.
hemisphere – and a symbol of the failure of a dictatorship that was only able to secure its existence by walling in its population” (Burkhardt).

In January of 1989 the arms race was officially ended. With this agreement all citizens were given the right to move freely from one country to another. In May, the Hungarian and Austrian border was taken down. However, citizens of the GDR were still not permitted to leave. By September, people of the GDR could leave through the Austrian border in order to reach Western Germany. The SED was able to stop citizens who planned to reach the Hungarian and Austrian border through Czechoslovakia. But by the end of the month occupation of the German embassy in Prague put pressure on Honecker, who decided to allow the refugees to flee. Honecker was no longer able to handle demonstrations against the SED and was replaced by Krenz. This replacement improved nothing for the SED. They were forced to sign an agreement, which led to the fall of the Wall on November 9th 1989 (Burkhardt).

**PART II: THE CHECKPOINTS**

Perhaps the most notable sections of the wall are the border crossings themselves. The inner city had seven checkpoints. Each checkpoint served a different purpose and each has a different history. When the wall was first taken down on November 9th, 1989, and in the following months, the main goal was to completely destroy and remove the pieces. Since then projects have been developed in order to memorialize these checkpoints. Many are completed and some are still under construction. These memorials are often criticized. Simply put “Berlin is a memorialized place. How could it be otherwise?” (Beaudry). Memorials are everywhere in Berlin dating back hundreds of years. It would be unlike Berliners to leave the Wall unmemorialized. But where does one start?

At the most northern inner city border crossing, at Bornholmer Straße, there are several indications of memorialization. This checkpoint once served as a crossing for citizens of West Germany, who wished to enter into East Berlin. On the east side of the bridge about a 100 meter stretch stands of the old wall. On either side of the Bösebrücke, which stands above the S1 and S2 train, is a small plaque dedicated to the opening of the bridge on November 9, 1989. That night 20,000 people were able to cross for the first time in over 30 years. In a place that marks the exact border between the former East and West is a chair called “Mind the Gap.” This serves as a constant reminder of the once divided and now unified Berlin (Senate Chancellery). It is a simple way of catching one’s attention, but unless someone took the time to question the chair, they would have no idea that it was a memorial. Perhaps the intentions of the artist were to memorialize the space, but if it is not recognized, than does it successfully serve as a memorial? Is it still a memorial even if no one knows what it is or why it is there? These questions arise at all of the checkpoints and will be explored later.


The border crossing at Chausseestraße and Liesenstraße was used by West Berliners entering East Berlin. However, it was not until 1963, two years after the construction of the Wall, that individuals could cross the checkpoint. This was only permitted during the Holidays. Later, retired individuals or those who
were visiting because of emergency were permitted to pass at any time. Today, there is only a small section of wall remaining. To memorialize those who fled, jumped, walked, and crossed the border there are 120 life-sized images of rabbits on a wall at this former checkpoint. They serve as a peaceful sign of those who wished to free themselves during the time the Wall stood (Senate Chancellery). Here the artist’s intentions are affective. The rabbits truly do appear as a peaceful and silent work of art.

Just south of Chausseestraße is the checkpoint at Invalidenstraße. Invalidenstraße was not very well known. This was evident in how difficult finding this checkpoint was. About 100 meters from the site of the checkpoint stands a wedge that appears to be a descending wall. It represents the breaking down of borders (Senate Chancellery). This is a beautiful depiction of the destruction of the wall. One can walk to the top and just feel the gravity of this site and its history pull him or her down. It symbolizes destruction as well as rising out of the rubble. Unfortunately, the wedge is a street away from the former checkpoint. The checkpoint itself only bears a plaque stating its history. The choices made to memorialize Invalidenstraße seem to reflect its history. The park in which the wedge stands is quiet and mostly deserted. The checkpoint was not particularly popular either. The process of memorialization of this, and many other lesser known sites, represents their silent yet significant existence.

Checkpoint Charlie is one of the most well-known and remembered checkpoints along the Berlin Wall. The third of the three American military checkpoints was located on Friedrichstraße. Because of its international history, this checkpoint has attracted much attention. In order to honor the American allies, who helped protect West Berlin, Checkpoint Charlie has many memorials. The Berlin Wall History Mile info board is an installation which lines both sides of the street just beyond the replica of the first guardhouse created by the Museum Haus am Checkpoint Charlie. An untitled piece stands high above the ground showing a Soviet soldier facing the West and an American soldier facing East. Within walking distance is a memorial for Peter Fechter, the first person to be killed while attempting to cross the border (Senate Chancellery). Checkpoint Charlie is full of tourists all of the time and has been built up as a shrine to the American “heros.”
The border crossing at Heinrich-Heine Straße was used to inspect all goods and postal transport between East and West. Just below the street was the U-Bahn station for U6 and U8, which ran underground transporting West Berliners north and south. Stations along this train route were in East Berlin and were closed during the time of the Wall. Today there are memorial plaques remembering a time when the doors were shut to many of the stations (Senate Chancellery). Many people pass these plaques daily. They probably go unnoticed, but for those who experienced train rides during the time of the Berlin Wall they have significant meaning. Someone may come across the plaque and will gain knowledge of this site, but otherwise it does not draw much attention.

The Oberbaumbrücke served as a checkpoint for pedestrians, who wished to cross the border over the Spree river. Today it is a high traffic zone, but one cannot miss the massive extent of wall which has been made into the artful East Side Gallery. Facing east are many murals and facing west is a free space for visitors to be creative or just sign their names (Senate Chancellery). The choice to turn the Wall into a piece of art is controversial. While it bears many paintings depicting unification, the fact that the Wall itself still stands seems counteractive. If one wishes to destroy something than the obvious choice would be to destroy it rather than using it for some other purpose. The East Side Gallery gives an opportunity for people to express themselves, but it does not appropriately memorialize the many people who drowned crossing the river.

The most southern checkpoint, Sonnenallee, is unknown compared to the other inner city checkpoints. The pieces of art chosen to represent this crossing share its quiet yet important history. Two telescopes, one facing east and one facing west, stand at the site of the checkpoint. These appear to be normal tourist telescopes but when one looks at the image the word “Übergang” is displayed. The word Übergang, or Crossing, stands as a reminder of what this space used to be (Senate Chancellery). Übergang also translates as on the verge of change (TU Chemnitz). This double meaning places importance on taking the time to look through the telescopes. One can recognize that this space was once a crossing, but also that it is a place of change and is continuously changing.

**CONCLUSION:**

**WHAT IS MEMORIALIZATION?**

Simply defined a memorial is “something designed to preserve the memory of a person, event, etc., as a monument or a holiday” (Dictioanry.com, LCC). The process of memorialization is one where a symbol, physical or not, is chosen to represent a person or event. As one can see, each checkpoint is most certainly memorialized, but all in unique and separate ways. Memorials in forms of plaques, statues, sculptures, paintings, etc. populate every street in Berlin. The decisions behind them, and the meanings themselves, are often misunderstood and
criticized. When it comes to the Berlin Wall, memorialization is difficult. As previously mentioned, when the Wall first fell, it was almost completely destroyed. It was not until several years later that decisions were made on what should be done about this historic time in history. For many Berliners it was about moving on. The destruction of the Wall opened up – literally and symbolically – the city and unified it. Today many memorials remind Berliners that there was once a divided Berlin. This memorialization seems to keep people in the past, unable to move forward. But there is also a fear that if memorials were removed it would be an injustice to the history of Berlin itself.

The memorialization itself is fairly questionable. As mentioned many of the structures designed to memorialize the Berlin Wall often go unnoticed. While the artists effectively blended their work into the surrounding environment, they did not allow the pieces to collect the appropriate attention. I feel that a memorial needs to have some presence in the space it occupies. While I believe there should not be hundreds of signs pointing a tourist in the right direction, there should be some indication or guide to finding and understanding the history of the sites. A memorial cannot be considered a memorial unless it causes someone to think about history or connect with the piece in some way.

In the case of Berlin, I believe, that it is foreigners, who wish to see the Wall memorialized. For example, Checkpoint Charlie, the American checkpoint, is the most visited and decorated checkpoint. The history of this crossing is known all over the world and makes the Americans heroes of the Cold War. While many Americans today will argue that we are its heroes, the situation is more complicated than that. Heroes, of what exactly? It begins with our misconception of the time of the Berlin Wall. The Soviet Union claimed to have built the wall to keep fascism out (Burkhardt), but it appears to have just penned in East Germans. Out of nearly 5,000 who attempted to or successfully crossed the border 125 died in a 30 year period (Corbett). While the death rate appears low, the high number of successful attempts shows that many people wished to cross the border in any means possible, even risking their lives. This success also could leave one feeling that the strict stereotypical behavior of Soviets, believed by many Americans, may not be accurate.

Today, foreigners continue to visit memorials, which hold different meanings to Germans and especially Berliners. The memorials of the Berlin Wall are meant to please not only Berliners but foreigners as well. The allied forces held a major part in the history of West, as well as East, Berlin. I do not believe Americans had a hand in the creation of all memorials along the Berlin Wall, but I do feel that sites like Checkpoint Charlie are covered in tributes to America. While this may not be the case for the hundreds of other memorials in this city, I believe that it certainly is a major factor in the reconstruction and remembrance of Die Berliner Mauer.

References


