

Berlin

I refuse to work. I refuse to start, or to end. I refuse the drive toward appearance, toward appearing. I refuse the name, any name. I refuse to gather, or to assemble. I refuse the central idea, whatever it may be. I refuse all this that determines the voice. I refuse to enter. I refuse the road to everywhere. I refuse the society of crisis. And I refuse the deep unease. I refuse the day of communications and the night of distressed readings. I refuse the order by which all productions are made instrumental, especially this one. I refuse to document or disseminate. I refuse the economy of time and the electrical current. I refuse, and instead, I search for the divergence, the echo-world, and the impossible practice – the practice of hesitation and festivity, of repair and transience – *you cannot reach me, I am already elsewhere*. A practice of dispersal and loneliness, of fugitive labors and whispered desires. Through such means, I refuse.

OFFICE
FOR
ANIMAL
DREAMS

Sound of Creativity – Walking around Moritzplatz

At first sight Moritzplatz is a thoroughly unimpressive place. Barely even a place, it is more a fragmented assemblage of diverse buildings and some open green spaces around a roundabout. Aside from the permanent hubbub of traffic and the hammering of a construction site in the background, it is silent, a very silent place. But it wasn't always this way. Moritzplatz is an enigmatic example of the continuously changing imaginaries and realities of urban space. Looking closer, you can see one of the most active and expanding sites in today's Berlin. At Moritzplatz, Berlin's contemporary urbanities as well as its history are spatially and symbolically represented in a very condensed way. It is the "creative hub" in the capital of creativity at the beginning of the 21st century. So why does Moritzplatz appear as it does? How does creativity impose itself on the city? And does it have a sound?

Creativity as a *leitmotif* of urban development

Sharon Zukin's critical analysis of collaboration between the real estate investment market and artistic practices in New York in the 1970s, showed how "Loft Living" had manifest implications on the city.¹ The 2000s saw the invention of a new urban milieu able to rescue cities in crisis, the "creative class".² Here, creativity became a top-down political instrument of strategic urban development.³ The idea of creativity has been exploited in the design and rebranding of cities. "Creativity is the new black"⁴: more than a trend in the globalized competition of cities, this is a new hype that seems to incorporate itself easily into neoliberal processes of urban transformation and a new economic era, an era that pushes the parameters of flexibility and innovativeness. Art and cultural

practices have become part of a neoliberal economic imperative. In times of austerity politics, new forms of networking and co-working, as well as other decentralized forms of organization with shallow hierarchies, are invented in order to even out scarcity of resources. Creativity, hence meaning productivity and innovation, incorporates a do-it-yourself activism and other alternative consumer cultures as a developing tool for a prosperous urbanism. Though this model for the ideal city is not new, it is a powerful discourse, a perspective on the creative potential of cities with huge influence on urban politics. This perspective is reproduced by politicians to create an open urban culture which grows by attracting ever more creative heads. It produces certain clusters or "creative milieus"⁵ of different actors and activities, of productivity and consumerism linked to certain geographical locations. "Creative people, in turn, don't just cluster where the jobs are. They cluster in places that are centers of creativity and also where they like to live" (Florida 2004: 7).

Sound as a hinge

As an experimental method, I use historical data and explorative ethnographic tools to wander through urban space. These *dérives* are localized to Moritzplatz. While reading historical sources and sourcing old postcards, I try to imagine the sound of the places, the active resonance of the environment. "Walking" through Moritzplatz, I listen to the everyday soundscapes of the changing space.

Even though cities are strongly characterized and shaped by their sounds, there are not very many studies exploring the acoustic environment of cities,⁶ and even less studies that follow an auditory

historical approach.⁷ In the 1980s R. Murray Schafer stated that every space has a specific soundscape. Through their practices, urban actors produce the acoustic characteristics of a place. At the same time, the sonic environment created through social practices can be considered an indicator of social and urban conditions.⁸ Focusing on sound as a tool of research, I try to comprehend acoustic situations as manifestations of urban-cultural or spatial contexts – to grasp them within the current framework of the creative city discourse, and the way this discourse performs the city. Sound can be used to transport ideas, to create communities, to include and exclude people. Sound can be considered an everyday practice, a mediator for politics and a marker of presence in public space. Sound is a hinge connecting the individual and the environment, the social and the collective.⁹ Exploring aural architectures and acoustic arenas of a city,¹⁰ we come closer to understanding negotiations and conflicts, processes and practices that define, organize, control and create urban space.

Sound of productivity

Imagine a walk around the area of today's Moritzplatz about 200 years ago. In the beginning of the 19th century, this southern suburb had only a few houses, some windmills and many gardens, cultivated by recently arrived migrant families from Bohemia and France. The sounds of nature were interrupted only by mechanical sounds such as church bells, working craftsmen and carriages on cobblestones. After the first tenement houses in 1823, a series of urban planning and development programs – one of them designed by Peter Joseph Lenné in 1840 – were

implemented on Luisenstadt (as it was then called). More and more craftsmen's workshops – mostly lumberjacks and carpenters – settled around Moritzplatz, as well as workers in the early manufacturing industries.¹¹ With increased traffic and more and more tools of the industrializing society, the noise became denser and the soundscapes intensified. The growing neighborhood was soon characterized by textile printing factories, as well as the fast-growing industrial and productive trades. Dense tenement buildings and the typical "Kreuzberger Mixtures" of housing and production space were integrated in a series of narrow backyards. Overcrowding produced not only smokes, smells, and challenges for hygiene, but also a blustering cacophony of this active neighborhood echoing through the backyards. Alongside generally bad working situations, these cramped living conditions and the strict eviction policies of owners led to the first rent strike at Moritzplatz in 1863, causing a street battle of splintering glass, bursting woods, beating batons, screams and uproar between police forces and the poor inhabitants of the neighborhood.¹²

By the end of the 19th century, the first huge warehouse of Berlin opened in the highly dense neighborhood, solidifying its central function in the new modern metropolis. Soon initial housing proved too cramped. Former tenement houses were demolished and replaced by new, bigger consumer temples such as the impressive warehouse *Wertheim*. There were still 24-hour soup kitchens in the basements, corresponding with the shifts of workers who also shared beds with one another. The place turned into a bustling city square, with about 18 tram lines, warehouses, restaurants, theaters, dance clubs and a ballroom, some facilities with a capacity of over 1000, and

each with an in-house orchestra. The piano factory, "Bechstein", was built next to the warehouse, as well as other industries for musical instruments and devices producing sound: Doorbells, cash registers, and car horns. While the world was being restructured through the mechanical reproduction of images, this was also the beginning of the era of the technological reproduction of sound itself.¹³

In the early 20th century, Ritterstrasse became a "Golden Boulevard". It was the export center, a kind of permanent international fair, a hotspot of showrooms for modern industrialized goods such as electrical devices, metal refining, lamps, sewing machines, fashion, musical instruments and other luxury items. Nowadays, only the area of Aqua Butzke, an old sanitary enterprise, and the Pelican House remain as evidence of that extremely lively and bubbling neighborhood. Due to all this beating, knocking, shrillness, hammering, and general uproar, there were plenty of complaints about noise nuisances and sound disturbance, for example by artists who felt distracted by the artificial industrial and urban soundscape of the growing metropolis. To this end, an entrepreneurial pharmacist invented Orhopax, "the best rest for your nerves".¹⁴

As described by David Harvey, capital made manifest in a physical landscape as a result of the political and economic development of society.¹⁵ And further, we can dwell on a certain urban soundscape marking the beginning of modern consumerism, urban leisure and the "creative city" itself.

Sound of destruction

This extremely active urban environment changed with the Nazi system as the owners of warehouses and ballrooms were

forced to leave the country. Former ballrooms were transformed into camps (*Bettenlager*) for forced laborers working for war industries. As most manufacturers soon had to produce for the Nazi war, the soundscape was transformed by the machinery of industrial metal production. Maps of that time show the swathe of destruction left by bombs targeted at the war industry between Moritzplatz and Hallesches Tor.¹⁶ Sounds of war, bombs, sirens, screams, collapsing houses.

The ruins of the former urban center were not removed until many years later. Even in the late 1950s the site was marked by the debris of former palaces of consumption, which was cleared only gradually. The sounds of moving rubble, collapsing structures and demolished buildings must have shaped the area, accompanied by the sound of construction as urban planning strategies of the 1960s and 1970s completed the destruction of the few remaining buildings that had survived the war. New housing projects for lower middle class people arrived, and a massive new concrete structure, as the Berlin wall directly intersected the northwest sector of Moritzplatz. Thus the place shifted from being a vibrant and modern commercial hub in the 1920s to its complete destruction during WW II, from a central border crossing of East/West Berlin during the Cold War to becoming a dead urban site post-1989.

Sound of periphery

A former center of production and consumerism, the center of the modern city and urban leisure turned into a periphery. A forgotten place next to the Berlin wall – at the inner Berlin checkpoint at Heinrich-Heine-Straße you could hear the sounds of motorcars waiting to be checked

before crossing the border. And there was the muffled sound of the concrete wall. What kind of resonance does a wall have? Is there any sound from the other side? Since the division of the city – and even more so in the shadow of the wall – the traffic island surrounded by its few post-war buildings was pushed out of view, relegated to the margins of urban life.

Though there was the “Gallery at Moritzplatz” towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, when the artist group the “Neuen Wilden” or “Moritzboys” rediscovered the place as their field of artistic practices, making “fierce paintings” and Super 8 movies. However, aside from this episode nobody connected Moritzplatz with culture and creativity until far more recently. In 2010, Moritzplatz still sat behind in its ranking as a “problematic” place.¹⁷ Even though the urbanist Abdou-Maliq Simone focuses on urban peripheries of the metropolises of the Global South, the following words match the situation at Moritzplatz succinctly: “Various artistic experiments have attempted to affirm that something may be resuscitated from the debris on which this urban void is formed – a particular conjunction between the periphery and its image, so that when observers look upon wastelands, the anachronistic industrial zones, the decaying residential estates, warehouses, overgrown access roads and dilapidated infrastructure, they can actually see the materiality of those trajectories at work across time in the making of the city. The traces of concrete inhabitations, labour and sensuous gestures are scattered across the landscape – never complete in themselves, but available to being re-linked in circuits of significance. This is a provocation to a mode of imagining that constitutes a memory still un-thought, or that does not let itself be

thought.”¹⁸ The sound of this periphery seems to be a silent one.

Sound of the “maker-place”

So do former sounds linger? In recent years, Moritzplatz has become the host of several urban initiatives, manifestations of the often fuzzy ideas of Berlin’s creative sector. Framing the Moritzplatz traffic roundabout, you will now discover: BetaHaus – the largest co-working space of Europe, representative of supposedly newer and freer forms of work, host of the growing Berlin start-up scene and informational sharing economies; Prinzessinnengärten, an urban gardening project operating with a vision for green, sustainable and livable cities; and the Aufbau-Haus – a “creative hub” combining an art supplies department store with creative industries services and space for cultural activities. Apparently out of nothing, Moritzplatz has turned into a growing cluster creative industries celebrated by the stakeholders in the place’s transformation, as well as by visitors and urban planners. For some urban scholars who at the same time analyze and intervene in urban development, the “Model Moritzplatz” is a successful example of actor-centered urban planning.¹⁹

How does this creative place sound? Early December, a Friday morning walk around Moritzplatz. It is wet and freezing cold, one of those grey days, where the sound of traffic is sharpened and echoed by the facades, and there are no leaves on the trees to soften the noises. Heavy rhythms from construction sites, cutting metal, hammering, men shouting directions for the crane driver.

At the former piano manufacturers there is now a music store – a branch of the shop also marking another creative

hub, the Kulturbrauerei in Prenzlauer Berg. It is still about music. Nowadays mostly electronic devices and headphones. Here, not much sound is made. Notwithstanding the people in line at the cash point – mostly men with their technical music devices, cables, cords. The queue is irritated by the penetrating sound of a vacuum cleaner right next to them operated by a woman hurrying to dust the last spots of display stands in her cleaning shift. As if out of nowhere the loud hum of the vacuum cleaner is challenged by somebody testing a flute on the second floor. The whole building resonates with the wooden sound of the wind instrument played by an inexperienced player. What was the sound of the Piano manufacturer years ago?

Right next to the creative music store a low-budget supermarket: the rattling sound of the shopping carts, still-friendly employees asking permission to pass through with their huge carts to refill the shelves. The place is crowded, but only the sound of a wine bottle breaking on the stone floor and the vaguely aggressive muttering of the anonymous mass of customers belie this fact – accompanied by the never-ending beep of the till girl rapidly processing consumer items at the conveyor belt.

And then there is the “heart of the makerplace”, the Aufbau Haus with its supply store for all sorts of do-it-yourself activities. It, too, is strikingly quiet, people concentrated on the millions of small things to see, focusing on what to make and build with them. Only using the metal stairs produces a noisy clang, a reminder that there is more to see and buy on the next floor. Taking a rest on the concrete stairs outside, the modern architecture creates a kind of filter. You still hear the traffic of the roundabout of Moritzplatz,



but it is somehow dulled by the concrete shell of the building, which creates a vantage point to rest and observe. Or to think about the sound of the busy Moritzplatz decades ago.

On the other side of the street, Prinzessinnengärten is closed for the winter. In spring, the sound of chattering dishes and the designer snap of digital cameras combine with voices talking in all kinds of languages about urban gardening and other art projects to come. Now, silent winter sleep rules in the garden, not even interrupted by the snores of the packed plants.

Sound of creativity

Again: is there a sound of creativity passing through time? Comparing to former sites of productive industries, the sound of the urban creative industries are withdrawn, the production of noise is diverted elsewhere. The noises of the former modern city center were linked to a multitude of actors and activities, intermingled in anarchic soundscapes of urban spaces.

The spaces of the creative city nowadays tend towards the visual. They do not allure or provoke with aural signals. There are obvious differences between outside and inside, sharply separated by doors, fences, cashpoints. No sound travels across these material barriers. The sound of the “creative city” seemed to be branded, controlled and designed in certain areas. It seems there are separated islands of activity, addressing and attracting diverse actors, everybody in their acoustic arenas. Wandering and listening through historical and contemporary sites, these arenas can be related to the changing imaginaries of Moritzplatz, always on the cusp of urban realities, always incomplete. It is not more – not yet. A kind of void – and yet at the same time a utopian

place – where imaginaries and realities of ideal urban space merge. It is a place of ephemeral and tentative disorder – qualities that might open possibilities for new creativities.²⁰

Here again, we can adopt the ideas of AbdouMaliq Simone reflecting on peripheries: “This is an infrastructure about redirecting, speeding up or slowing flows down, of modulating the intensities and rhythms of movement, of translating multiple directions and flows in terms of each other. The periphery disappears from the version of how we have come to know it, and reappears across the city – in crucial ways, manifests as the city.”²¹

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Anna Bromley

mit Fotocollagen von Sandy Volz

Im Schlafsack, nach dem Tanz. Einige Schleifen und kontrafaktische Verhedderungen

Der folgende Essay von Anna Bromley nimmt eine biographische Spur auf und verbindet sie mit ihren Forschungen zu Gegenläufigkeiten des Schwindels und der Albernheit. In ihren Collagen defragmentiert Sandy Volz fotografische Abbildungen aus zeitgenössischen Modemagazinen und fügt sie zu neuen Bildern zusammen. Thematisch dreht sich alles um Verführung, Konsum, Sex und Gender. Für FREE BERLIN verarbeitet sie Fotografien aus der „Sybille“, der wichtigsten Modezeitschrift der DDR, und ließ neue Collagen parallel zu Anna Bromley's Text entstehen.

Selbst genähte Schlafsäcke waren einmal weit mehr als liebevoll gemachte Gebrauchsgegenstände. Mit ihnen zu handeln, das bedeutete, einen Mikrowiderstand zu praktizieren. Jetzt konnten ihre Käufer*innen sich betten, wo sie wollten. Wenn sie sich über die staatlichen Grenzen trauten (Visaschikanen, Abschiebungen, Republikflucht). Oder zumindest über die sozialen.

Dass der Schlafsack in der DDR zur Metapher wurde, lag an der offiziellen, utopischen Erzählung. Weil propagiert wurde, der Urlaub mit der Brigade im betriebseigenen Ferienheim schweißte zusammen und weil private Unterkünfte zu kostspielig waren, wurden Zelt und Schlafsack DAS DING. Deshalb stand Schlafsack für Pause von verordneten Kollektivitäten.¹

Der omnipräsenten Kontrolle allerdings (fünf Uhr morgens geweckt werden; Zeltschein, Personalausweis!) konnte die Schlafsackträgerin nur dann entgehen, wenn sie schwarz zeltete. Also lag der ultimative Thrill darin, mit Sonnenaufgang in die Ostsee zu springen und der Kontrolle einen Haken zu baden.

Schlafsack, Sackgasse, Kopfbahnhof. Rauskommen geht nur rückwärts. So gesehen, schränkt die Schlafsack-Sackgasse die Bewegungsoptionen ein, in „Beine voran rein, Arme voran raus“. In dieser Stülpung liegen wir später in den scheinbar endlosen Wahlmöglichkeiten einer Phantasie, die wir „den Westen“ nennen. Ein kühles, verständnisloses Territorium, bestückt mit Wohlriechendem und Raschelndem. Aus dem uns vorher Sendungen erreichten, in elegantes Papier gewickelt. Westpakete mit seifiger Westluft. Die sogen wir auf, während wir die abgelegten Kleider inspizierten, die uns in die Vorlieben der Westcousinen hüllen sollten. Dann wurden wir zur Person im weißen Anorak oder in

Jeans. Wurden Zwölfjährige in Cord, den wir verabscheuten. Doch dieser deutlich breiter gewebte Cord war Weststoff, in dessen makellos parallelen Tälern zwölfjährige Finger eine Spur aufnahmen.

Schlafsack, der nach draußen riecht. In dem immer etwas Sand hängt; als homöopathische Information für „Boden“, für den Notfall, wenn die Geschichte (sich) überdreht. Oder verdreht. Falls ihnen dann schwindelig wird, wenn sie ins Schlingern kommt. Wenn das Jahrmarktgefühl nach einem Taumel verlangt. Vielleicht müssen sie sich dann schnell hinlegen, Beine voran, wo auch immer.

Wie einmal, als sie ins Getümmel verführt wurden. Angezogen, abgestoßen, die Person im weißen Anorak, die Jeansperson, die Cordfinger. Aufgeschlagen zur Bevölkerung, der nur noch das Backpulver fehlte, damit sie zur Demokratie und vor allem zu ihrer eigenen Freiheit aufgehen sollten, schwankte die Umgebung vor ihren Augen. In Wirklichkeit geschah aber etwas Unabschließbares in ihren Ohren, oder in ihrer Hörigkeit.

Kommentatorin 1:

Vorderhand scheint es beim Schwindel so, als schwanke die Umgebung vor dem Auge. Tatsächlich aber entsteht Schwindel über sensorische Prozesse in den Mittelohrkanälen. Viele beschreiben Schwindel als Bewegungsgefühl, wenn der Körper in Ruhe ist. Nur Kinder, Pubertierende und Tänzerinnen suchen diesen aufwirbelnden, sensorischen Kitzel von sich aus. Vielleicht bringt das englische Attribut *light headed* auf den Punkt, warum Schwindel eher mit dem Alldruck des Bodenlosen konnotiert wird. Die Erwachsenen-Aufgeklärten suchen diesen halbbohmächtigen Schwellenzustand seltener. Sie wollen sich im Griff haben, denn darüber identifizieren sich

Aufgeklärte. Sie wären nicht ganz beieinander, mit schwindenden Stabilitäten, dann müssten sie noch (Kinder, Pubertäre) oder wieder (nach dem Tanz) zu sich kommen. Das Zu-Sich-Kommen macht verletzlich, es ist ein *Zwischenmit*², das mit uns dreht und schwankt. Dann befällt uns, mit den Worten der Philosophin Anne Eusterschulte: „ein alles hereinziehender, sich steigernder Taumel, der Hören und Sehen sowie Selbst und Umraum vergehen lässt.“³ und der die Weltwahrnehmung durchlässig macht, „für Tiefenschichten [...] geschichtlicher Erfahrungen, die nicht länger dem Register topographischer Vor- und Nachzeitigkeit folgen.“⁴

Oder, mit Friedrich Nietzsche, ein lustvolles Sturzgefühl.⁵ Beim Stürzen, so wie Nietzsche es uns vorschlägt, handelt es sich um einen stufen- und endlosen Positionswechsel. Und über die Beziehung von Schwindel und Positionswechsel stellten Armen Avnessian und Anke Henning folgende Überlegung an: „Das Schwindelgefühl der Wahrnehmung geht also auf die Notwendigkeit eines Überzeugungswandels im Sinne eines Positionswechsels zurück. [...] Kommt es aber zu einem [...] Positionswechsel [...], sind die Sinnesorgane, die gemäß der neu gefundenen Regel das phänomenale Weltbild ausführen, nicht voll funktionsfähig [...] – das meint also, wenn wir sagen: „wir erkennen die Welt mit neuen Augen.“⁶

Kommentatorin 2:

Wenn also kritisch reflektiert wird, dann muss das Risiko in Kauf genommen werden, dass sich die eigene Position drastisch verschiebt. Da ist die Lust des Schwindels, als Lust am Schwinden immer mit von der Partie. Wenn Avnessian und Henning ein „die Welt mit neuen Augen sehen“ in den Blick nehmen, beziehen sie es auf das Lesen literarischer Texte

und auf sprachphilosophische Lektüren. Ich frage mich, ob soziale Kommunikation ebenso ein Lesen ist, aus dem heraus auch „mit neuen Augen gesehen“ werden kann. Schließlich sind auch hier Vorstellungsbilder am Werk. Und wenn deren Codierungen und Konventionen aufgewirbelt werden, sich in Transitionen verheddern, in kolonialen Überschreibungen oder in Migrationserfahrungen verknäulen – wenn das Draußen der Geschichte(n) sich umspült; dann legt sich darüber; der Schwindel.

Beschleunigung; her damit! Sie wollen dem rasanten Durchqueren von Windungen ausgesetzt werden. Gas geben muss schon sein. Und ja bitte: Polka-Drehungen! Tänzer*innen sollen uns in ihren Griff nehmen, oder eine Geschichte mit ihren Pirouetten, gern auch die Geschichte ganz selbst mit ihrem Verfertigen und Verhandeln von staatlichen, kontinentalen, digitalen Territorien.

Die Jeansperson, die Cordperson und die weiße Anorakperson wurden von einer aufgefordert, die sich allen als „nachholende Modernisierung“ vorstellte. Praktischerweise interessierte auch sie sich für Schlafsäcke. Sie fand aber nur die federleichten, winzig klein zusammenrollbaren Modelle gut, die von der Seite an Kim Novaks Haarrolle aus Vertigo erinnern.

Privatunterkünfte gab es für alle, die etwas aus sich gemacht hatten. Das, was sie „den Osten“ nannten, entspann sich als territoriale Ressource, in der Geerbtes legitim in selbst steigernden Grundbesitz übergang und in der Cliques von Bewegungsmanagern darauf spekulierten, dass Geschichte sich schrieb und sie kühlen Gewissens abpinseln könnten.

Leichter gedacht, als getan, denn „History will break your heart.“⁴⁷ Indem sie Körper ein- und ausschreibt, ist sie eine

somatische Angelegenheit, ähnlich dem heartbreak, der meist auch einen körperlichen Zusammenbruch einschließt. Schwindel scheint hier eher das kleinere Übel zu sein, trotz seiner Einbildung von rotierenden, schwankenden, oder stürzenden Umgebungen, die auch den Körper affizieren. Häufig sind es gerade unterschätzbare Symptome, die strukturell Kaputttes markieren. Stellen wir uns vor, Schwindel sei ein politisches Gefühl, als kritisches Gewahrsein⁸, das informiert ist, von spezifischen Zusammenhängen, und das unterrichtet, über Zusammenhänge, die uns einflüstern, sie schritten fort, wenn allein ihre kühlen Akkumulationen sich bewegen und fortlaufend die Bilder des Bei-Sich-Bleibens und der glückenden Fügung aktualisieren.

„Zusammenwachsen, was zusammen gehört“⁹ meinte ein Überwuchern. Und anders, als gemeinhin angenommen, hält sich der Schwindel gar nicht „ganz oben“ auf. Vielmehr sucht er jene auf, die sich etwas vormachten und das Darüberhinaus in den Windungen ihres Gleichgewichts verschwinden ließen¹⁰. Inzwischen hörte die Nomenklatura nie auf, Trenchcoats zu tragen, während sie am „unteren Ende“ stillgelegt wurden, Noch lange legte sich Schwindel über sie und ließ ihnen zu Ohren kommen, dass für Erwachsene keine selbst genähten Schlafsäcke mehr zu finden seien; nur noch für Babies. Nicht mal unter der Hand wären sie zu beschaffen, in der nächsten utopischen Erzählung, die besagt, dass die Jeansperson, die Cord- und die Anorakperson sich die Freiheit nun nehmen könnten, das selbst zu machen, wonach ihnen ist.

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7. „History Will Break Your Heart“ war der Titel der Standard Bank Young Artist Award Exhibition von Kemang Wa Lehelere im Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth, Südafrika, 28.07.-06.09.2015.
8. Vgl. zum Schindeln als kritisches Gewahrsein im medizinischen wie kognitivem Sinn: Eusterschulte (2014), S.242.
9. Am 10.11.1989 sagte Willi Brandt am Brandenburger Tor in Berlin: „Nun muss zusammenwachsen, was zusammen gehört.“
10. Vgl. zum Schwinden des Darüberhinaus, Eusterschulte (2014), S.252.







About the refugee movement in Kreuzberg / Berlin

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Falling into a trap and beginning to struggle

This is Napuli Paul Langa. I am from Sudan and I would not like to mention which part of Sudan I came from, South or North, all of this is just politics. I would like to share with you my entry into and my experience of the refugee movement at Oranienplatz, Berlin. When I came from Sudan, traumatized from being tortured for 4 days because of my activism there, I had escaped from the intelligence services and I left everything behind: My work as a human rights activist in the Sudanese organization for Nonviolence and Development (SONAD) and my studies at Ahfad University for Women in Khartoum. I left to save my life from the government and it took long to come to Germany. So when I arrived in Germany and applied for asylum in Braunschweig – that is exactly when I fell into a trap. I realized that I lost my rights and dignity when I sought asylum – it is better not to seek asylum in Germany, though you would have problems.

I saw that people were going crazy in the *lager*, which is located in the middle of nowhere, so I decided that I will not end this way. I was asking several questions that no one among us in the *lager* could answer. Then I suggested “let us all come together to discuss and find answers to these questions”, in order to put an end to all the problems we have in the *lager*, for example the obligation of residency, privacy, food and so on. That is why I came to join the Refugees’ Bus Tour right after one month of my application for asylum in September 2012. This motivated me a lot to fight from my heart, to see change happen.

So from different *lagers* or camps in Germany we came together through our local discussions or actions that were thinking about how to end the food voucher and isolation system that is a product of capitalism. We declared that we intend to fight the laws and policies that violate our freedom and dignity. Responding to the suicide of the Iranian asylum seeker Mohammed, refugees had built the first protest camp in Würzburg in early 2012 where he had died. Then other camps followed in other cities and after that the movement started to move from Würzburg to Berlin, by foot and through a bus tour. I myself joined the bus tour which visited dozens of *lagers* throughout Germany in order to inform other refugees about the movement. We were able to expose the isolation of refugees, and we invited them to leave their *lagers* or camps to join our bus tour and the march to Kreuzberg in Berlin. The refugees covered a distance of 600 km in 28 days. In Potsdam the bus tour group met with the group that had walked and went together from there to Berlin. The march reached Berlin on the 6th of October 2012. From that time

I became much more communicative also because of the bus tour group. They recommended that I should make speeches or talk to people, and since then I often gave speeches.

Oranienplatz Resistance

From there we continued our resistance with our tents at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg, Berlin. It is well known that Oranienplatz is regarded as the political symbol of the struggle in the street, also to be visible. Anyhow, after thirteen days of the movement, the group started to have different opinions on political strategies. The group who organized the hunger strike went back to Munich, South Germany, where the group called themselves Non-Citizens. The other part remained in Oranienplatz, committed to keep Oranienplatz as a politically vocal point. Although the group split, both groups are strongly connected to each other.

The success of Oranienplatz made visible our struggle, especially in the public, and gave us the power to negotiate with the government officially, which before then was not possible. We stood up to be visible and it happened. We stood for our rights and we opened the tents to everyone.

We organised many actions: We occupied a vacant school, we occupied Brandenburg Gate, we went on demonstrations and hunger strikes, we occupied the tree at Oranienplatz, we occupied the roof of the school at Ohlauerstrasse, we occupied the parliament in the district of Kreuzberg, we occupied the federal office of the Green party, we occupied the church, we occupied the UN office, we occupied embassies. We also distributed flyers on a daily basis, and our story occupied the media during these actions. We became subject to police brutality and many people were arrested and we responded by organizing spontaneous demonstrations at the prisons in which our friends had been arrested, for example after the action at the Nigerian embassy.

Underlying all these actions were three demands: Abolition of the *lagers*, abolition of the obligation of residence (“Residenzpflicht” in German language), which forbids us to leave the city where we are accommodated so that refugees are to move only 40 kilometers and not more, and the cessation of deportations. We had great impact on German Parliament and the Committee on Internal Affairs were forced to meet with us because of our hunger-strike. During the meeting, the two major right wing parties spoke out against our demands.

However, there were also some members of parliament supporting human rights and our demands. From 2013 to 2014, the obligation of residence was loosened in some federal states,

whereby for example those who seek asylum in Berlin can now travel in Brandenburg, too.

The Occupied School

We used the occupied school at Ohlauerstrasse and Oranienplatz for the recognition of the refugee movement as a political institution. We worked to bring more refugees to join our struggle and to expand it. Right here there are things that are important, but not urgent and then there are important things that are urgent: Our struggle is both, important and urgent.

We have managed to enlarge our solidarity network. We received a lot of support from the German society in terms of food, clothes, financial and legal support. For example, there are students giving free German classes to refugees at the occupied school in Kreuzberg, and there are doctors and lawyers.

When we occupied the empty school, it was six o'clock in the morning. The former mayor of the district Kreuzberg, Berlin came and he stopped the interference of the police and gave us 3 days. After 3 days our stay was extended to 2 months and he came up with a plan that we should cooperate with several organizations for this project. We said no, if they are in solidarity with us they should not think to come to the school. The purpose of the occupation was the very cold weather and we had families and sick people who needed to be in a warm place. So we organized the school as a place for sleeping, and everything concerning our political activities should take place at Oranienplatz. A few weeks later we had the problems with the police mainly due to violations of the residence obligation which we broke by ignoring it. We thought "let them write to us hundreds of letters". Some of us were deeply threatened to be deported. Although there was this threat, the movement had no fear of it, some had already been deported to where they had first landed because of Dublin III.

Lampedusa in Berlin and the Eviction of Oranienplatz

Around March 2013 a group from Lampedusa arrived in Berlin. Lampedusa is an island in Italy where the peoples who are escaping from Libya are put before given the permission to stay in Italy, that's why we called them "Lampedusa".

Lampedusa is a synonym for Europe's borders, for the immigration rules and regulations of the European Union, for the European policy on asylum, for the colonial heritage which established a global, geopolitical and social divide that becomes

obvious there. The immediate consequences of this historical development are the boats from the African continent that arrive almost every day.

Lampedusa is also a synonym for the borders which continue within the European Union. Each country has its own national policy on asylum, whose laws and restrictions restrain the rights of refugees. Lampedusa is not only a synonym but also a concrete place where the life-threatening consequences of European policy on asylum become very obvious. But the Lampedusa activists do not accept this treacherous situation.

The clearing of Oranienplatz tents that took place on the 8th of April 2014 was not done as voluntarily as claimed by politicians or the Senate, that is obvious. The Kreuzberg district mayor, Monika Herrmann, and the Senator of Integration of the State of Berlin, Dilek Kolat, had affirmed that the Oranienplatz refugees had agreed to the voluntary evacuation – but this does not correspond to the facts, the refugees argue the opposite.

On the 18th of April, the refugee camp was evicted from the Oranienplatz / Berlin-Kreuzberg. According to an agreement between the Senator Dilek Kolat with a part of the refugees, mainly the group of Lampedusa who had already moved from Oranienplatz to a Caritas house in Wedding.

They were cheated to believe and sign the agreement with Dilek Kolat, hoping that they would have everything which was written in the agreement as she had told them. She said that if you remove the tents in Oranienplatz then I will apply what is written in the agreement. So there were clashes with us, the refugees who were staying in Oranienplatz and wanted to stay.

On that day, at around 2 pm, I could deny the clearance by occupying a tree for five days. The police and security services prevented me from all attempts to contact or to be supplied with food. They prevented hunger strikers also from sleeping during the night. I demanded a conversation with the integration Senator, Dilek Kolat, from the SPD to point to the promises. The promises were, for example, the toleration of the Lampedusa group, the transitional housing to Berlin, and the stopping of deportations, which were the reasons for refugees to accept the offer of the Senate. We also demanded to bring back our meeting place and the info point to Oranienplatz which they told me that it is impossible. After all I succeeded to bring the meeting place back.

But Dilek Kolat did not respond to our claim for an unlimited right to stay. The Senate declared that the promised review of individual cases would begin only after the clearance of Oranienplatz – which was not possible for me to accept. At that

moment we mainly demanded to get back the political space for refugees that we had at Oranienplatz. At the same time, we divided ourselves for the transnational march to Brussels.

The Freedom March to Brussels

The idea for the march to Brussels started to take shape in spring and summer of 2013. Two of us went on a transnational tour to six European countries. We started from Oranienplatz/Berlin on June 26, 2013. During the whole tour we experienced no real obstacles. We passed through Germany, Austria, Italy, France, crossed Switzerland, again France, and then Belgium. On Wednesday the 10th of July, one of the supporters joined the tour in Brussels. We then briefly visited the Netherlands and went back to Berlin. We wanted to collect common demands from refugees in EU-countries, for example, against Dublin II and III, deportations, Frontex and so on.

Until May 18th, 2014, the group of activists believed that if a small group can do it, we can do it all together as well. So we went on a six-week march over more than 500 km. Our March for Freedom started in Strasbourg and while we were crossing the borders of Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium, we examined the key institutions of the EU asylum policy on-site.

The march quickly formed a band, every day marching through at least two villages, and for a while we were accompanied by two ponies. Even if people did not always know at the beginning what we wanted, they soon understood it without words that our goals were their goals. We come from war zones bringing no problems. In the villages of Alsace-Lorraine, Saarland, Luxembourg, and Wallonia we met friendly people who made their public spaces, community centers and halls available to us. About thirty times we changed the cities with tents, kitchen and luggage. The convoy consisted of six or seven vans. We left every place cleaner behind than we had found it.

The march was a traveling conference. We moved from town to town on a daily basis and sometimes we marched together with the local people from the villages. In our camps we held information events, we showed documentaries and we danced or practiced how to survive police raids unharmed.

Besides some harmless flirting with Members of the European Parliament, it came to police attacks, arrests, and detention. After attempting to attend a conference of EU Interior Ministers in Luxembourg, we spent an entire day providing victims of pepper spray attacks and dog bites and trying to free arrested activists. In Brussels we held a sit-in outside the police station,

after several protesters were arrested in front of the German embassy.

We want the freedom for work, to go everywhere without permission. For example in Brussels there was this family from Romania that paid a truck driver 1000 euros in order to be smuggled into Belgium – even though they may actually travel freely as EU members. But because they are homeless, their government gave them no IDs. Belgium may at any time arrest them indefinitely.

Colonialism and Imperialism

All these problems above have to do with colonialism, capitalism, racism, and imperialism, as well as the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 which formalized Europe's claim of Africa. European powers arbitrarily divided up Africa between themselves and started administrating their new colonies. Seventy years later they bequeathed to native Africans countries that looked remarkably different from how they looked in 1880. These countries are the poorest in the world today.

To judge the impact of colonialism on development in Africa simply by looking at outcomes during the colonial period is a conceptual mistake. Post-independence Africa looked nothing like it would have done in the absence of colonialism. Indeed, in most cases post-independence economic decline in Africa can be explicitly attributed to colonialism because the types of mechanisms that led to this decline were creations of colonial society. In Africa we had three types of colonies: Those with a centralised state at the time of the scramble for Africa, such as Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Rwanda, and Swaziland. Those of white settlements, such as Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and probably Angola and Mozambique as well as colonies which did not experience significant white settlement and where there was either no significant pre-colonial state formation (like Somalia or South Sudan) or where there was a mixture of centralised and un-centralised societies (such as Congo-Brazzaville, Nigeria, Uganda and Sierra Leone).

In the former, the assumption that the patterns of pre-colonial development could have continued, if there would not have been colonialism is sufficient to argue that these countries would be more developed today without the European colonialism. Colonialism not only blocked further political development, but indirect rule made local elites less accountable to their citizens. After independence, even if these states had a coherence

others lacked, they had far more predatory rulers. These polities also suffered from the uniform colonial legacies of racism, stereotypes and misconceptions.

Self-Organised Protest

Right now we achieved a lot with regards to our three demands but our struggle will never stop until we are satisfied. Oranienplatz and the school are one thing. The occupation of Oranienplatz was forced to end, the school was evicted in a way and the promise from the Berlin Senate was a lie. They lied to silence us, but on the other hand they pushed our movement to be known more, so now it is in the media itself.

In the refugees movement we do work through certain structures. For example, we do not have power over one another or so-called leaders. It depends on, for example, the refugee group meetings that make the decisions; open meetings in which everybody shares whatever ideas they have; supporter group meetings; financial groups; media groups; infrastructure groups; action groups; legal groups; kitchen groups and so on. This principle of voluntary participation makes it easy for everyone to choose in which group she/he fits in.

We had difficulties as well in our movement due to clashes of different interests, either strategically or tactically, as well as different demands, from several sides: Between refugees and refugees, between refugees and supporters, and between supporters and supporters. These clashes gave the government the chance to try to divide us. For example, with the Lampedusa group at Oranienplatz it became clear that the asylum seekers in Germany face different situations. The politicians used this for their divide-and-rule strategy at Oranienplatz, just like politicians did it in the colonies in Africa, as I mentioned above. In particular, even though the Green party has been talking the good things and against police actions, in terms of the refugee struggle at Oranienplatz they did not walk their talk at all. At the end, they ordered the police to evict Oranienplatz.

Of course, problems among us in the movement have been solved through meetings, discussions, resolution groups or with close friends if possible. Even though we did not solve all the problems above, the mentioned methods have been very helpful. In general, the refugees and the supporters are like sisters and brothers in my point of view. In understanding that together we have to fight against the system, we take each other's hands and walk hand in hand.

For example, refugees are aware of what the EU does, including Germany. Ask for the reasons why people flee! Clearly it has a connection to imperialism and capitalism. The asylum laws are racist and colonial. Fight these laws. And not only in Germany, fight Europe wide, fight together also with the working classes and social movements and so on.

We learn a lot from the past. Right now we try to communicate strongly to unite all refugees together, refugees in different places or *lagers*: Collect phone-numbers, emails, use internet pages together, exchange and empower one another and build up infrastructure, focus on the political fight, organize conferences, workshops and so on. The struggle for human rights has to be based on the development of social relations.

Look at animals that were displaced during the first civil war and the second civil war in south Sudan. Animals ran to the neighboring countries automatically. What about human beings then? Sudan is an example. The colonizers brought to Sudan selfishness, hatred, fight and divisions, which pushed people to go into exile. You can see now, we are refugees. But we fight this to the end.

From my experience there is always a possibility, nothing is impossible. Gandhi said: "be the change you want to see in the world". So for you right now and right here do not be part of the problem. Rather, oppose!

I call upon us, my sisters and brothers: Let us fight together for every one of us to have the right to live, not just to survive.



Prinzessinnengarten & The Neighborhood Academy



Prinzessinnengarten. Photo: Marco Clausen.

An excerpt from “Cultivating a different city” by Marco Clausen, from *Prinzessinnengärten. Transforming Wasteland into an Urban Garden* (2014):

Nomadisch Grün launched Prinzessinnengarten as a pilot project in the summer of 2009 at Moritzplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg, a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century. Along with friends, activists and neighbours, the group cleared away rubbish, built transportable organic vegetable plots and reaped the first fruits of their labour.

Imagine a future where every available space in big cities is used to let new green spaces bloom. Green spaces that local residents create themselves and use to produce fresh and healthy food. The result would be increased biological diversity, less CO2 and a better microclimate. The spaces would promote a sense of community and the exchange of a wide variety of competencies and forms of knowledge, and would help people lead more sustainable lives. They would be a kind of miniature utopia, a place where a new style of urban living can emerge, where people can work together, relax, communicate and enjoy locally produced vegetables.

Here, exclusively agricultural crops are cultivated, locally and organically. The garden as a whole is mobile. The bar, kitchen, workshop and storage facilities are located in disused and converted shipping containers. Crops are planted in raised beds made from stacked crates or in rice sacks. A method of cultivation that is independent from the ground below, combined with the use of food-grade materials, allows for organic farming in a city where the lands available are usually either paved or contaminated.

The Prinzessinnengarten rents the land at Moritzplatz from the city. Income is generated through the garden’s restaurant and the sale of vegetables, as well as from funds that the garden acquires for the implementation of various educational projects, from the construction of other gardens, consulting services, fees for images, presentations and guided tours, and donations in form of planter and garden sponsorships. Nobody owns their own bed at the Prinzessinnengarten.

Many people are involved voluntarily in order to make a place like this possible. As a framework for the different social, educational and economic activities here, the non-profit company Nomadisch Grün was established with the primary aim of making the garden a place of learning. Since we are mostly amateurs and beginners, the emphasis is mainly on informal learning. Skills are gained through practical experience and the sharing of knowledge.

Lately, more and more is being heard about gardens that have little to do with the typical ideas of green in the city or with parks, front gardens or allotments. Through such gardens and their participants, terms such as urban gardening, urban agriculture, community gardens, city farms or guerrilla gardening have found their way into common usage. This phenomenon can be observed in the most varied of forms in many cities around the world. Community gardens and urban farming projects are especially widespread in North America. The appearance and size of these gardens as well as the motivations and ideas of the gardeners may vary greatly in detail. What these gardens have in common, alongside the focus on local food production, is that they are developed as community projects and on their own initiative. In addition, gardening is not only understood as a pleasant pastime, with the garden as a private retreat. The alternative use of urban land, self-sufficiency and community work are also generally associated with wider societal issues. Through practical activity, this new garden movement takes up issues like biodiversity, healthy eating, recycling, environmental justice, climate change and food sovereignty. Urban gardens practically demonstrate an ecologically and socially different approach to urban spaces and their inhabitants, enable the social empowerment of marginalized communities, and are places where opportunities for local micro-economies and other economic models are being tested. In an unobtrusive and pragmatic way, such gardens raise the question of how we want to live in our cities in the future.

— Interview with Marco Clausen, April 2016:

Free Berlin: Prinzessinnengarten is such an inspiring expression of self-organization, as well as the repurposing of urban space. Can you give us an overview of how the garden started, and what some of the main questions have been?

Marco: Firstly, I would like to emphasize that Prinzessinnengarten is organized and maintained by a diversity of people and a diversity of viewpoints in terms of what’s important in the project. It’s this diverse cosmos of opinions and passions that gives so much to the project and all we do together. I’m happy to share with you my own experiences, and viewpoints, but I just want to highlight that I’m one of many working here.

When we started around 2008 we thought of a mobile garden, for different reasons, because we didn’t know if this would work – there was no example for this kind of place in Berlin at that time and also urban gardening was only marginally discussed. It was nothing that existed in the general perception in the city yet. Robert Shaw, co-founder of Prinzessinnengarten, brought the idea from things he observed happening in Cuba since the 90s. So we thought about translating this idea to a Berlin context, and keeping it mobile in case we had to move. That was the model we developed, and also wrote as a business plan because we are self-funded through our own activities. We don’t receive any funding from the city for our core activities. We then approached different landowners in the city, focusing on the city center. There was a lot of land in the center of the city that was unused at that time, which is something very unique to Berlin. And which also created a culture of doing things with very little money, often informally and without permission so that you could try out things. The club culture, for instance, was born within this context. The main purpose of this garden was supposed to be educational and social, and we wanted to finance this through economic activities, such as through a bar or restaurant.

We approached the borough of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. We learned from the mayor that the boroughs had to transfer their land to a real estate company created by the city of Berlin: the Liegenschaftsfonds. The mayor eventually sent us to the Liegenschaftsfonds, and gave us a tip to ask about Moritzplatz. This was not necessarily our first choice, as it seemed like there was not so much happening here. It was not such a nice looking place as well, and the garden site was quite exposed to the street. But at that moment we felt a lot of pressure to start, so we negotiated with the Liegenschaftsfonds, and they said we could try it out, but we had to pay 2300 euro a month in rent which was of course a lot of money. After we had already planned the garden for half a year we took the risk and signed the lease for one year. We started in June 2009. There was a lot of work to do, as there was tons of trash and no infrastructure for water or electricity. It was crucial to motivate neighbors and other volunteers to help us start. By now we have built up a core group that takes care of the garden and enables open educational activities. To finance the staff, other costs and the non-profit work, we also deployed commercial activities, for example with the gastronomy or by building other gardens. We manage now for seven years, working full-time on this.

That was the situation in 2009, and one reason why the Liegenschaftsfonds was open for discussion was that there was a major crisis in real estate in 2008, which effected Berlin dramatically. They couldn't sell the way they were selling before, which often included selling whole packages to international investment firms to pay for the city's debts or interest on these debts. There were already plans for developing Moritzplatz, with the construction of the Modulor building. Hence there was interest in investing in the area, and my guess is they thought having a garden was better than an empty lot.

In the beginning we mobilized a lot of people to help us, friends, neighbors, people from all over Berlin, and most of

the work and activities done in the garden is based on voluntary work. So the place is built on this form of engagement. Soon after starting we focused on larger projects, collaborating with other institutions, such as the HAU or the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. And slowly the garden started to develop. We included the café, which brought people in and also helped provide a financial base. After a few months we received more and more media attention. Though we were not the first ones – there are allotment gardens, intercultural gardens, and urban agriculture everywhere in the world. But maybe we helped to make this more visible. And in general topics like organic food, neighborhood engagement, participation, recycling, DIY culture, gained more attention. I think we triggered some of this movement, but also gained from this overall engagement. Soon the garden became a platform for other initiatives, such as the bike workshop, beekeeping, and other cultural activities, screenings, etc. There was a lot of insecurity, and unpaid work, but that was what you might call the Berlin deal: Living costs were so low, and you had a lot of time to do things, there was not so much regulation and a high tolerance for doing things a different way, all of that was part of the identity of the city and encouraged people to do self-organized things, or in the form of informal or in-between uses, but also to tolerate different things. A lot of these things are changing I think. With the economic and cultural development of the city that we see now, a lot of the conditions that made such projects possible seem to be disappearing.

Free Berlin: And what has been happening since 2009? What kinds of experiences happened in relation to city politics and the real estate market since then?

Marco: At the beginning we had a large participatory project, which was funded by the government. We were trying out new forms of getting kids and teenagers involved in questions of neighborhood development. This ran the first year,

which helped us to survive. It also gave us another connection to the neighborhood, as well as a way for us to learn how inhabitants see the neighborhood. It also showed us the strength of this bottom-up initiative and activity. We set up a system of "junior guides" who were engaged in other youth spaces already, and they were paid to take over some responsibilities, such as talking to their peers. That was a very important step for us.

One difference to other community garden projects is that we're always looking for new ways of surviving, and new co-operations. But this also forced us to grow quickly, and we managed to renew our lease in 2010. There was still a lot of desperation at that time, about the real estate market. There was no planning, but only a neo-liberal policy of selling off. Berlin was in a long economic decline for over 20 years; it has no real industry. It had a lot of plans around the Media Spree, but all these plans were collapsing. There was a lot of resistance in the neighborhood, but also no investors. This changed around 2011 with the global real estate and financial "crisis", because then suddenly Berlin became very attractive as a harbor for money. Berlin real estate was more attractive for private people and businesses, and at the same time, it became a so-called growing city, and suddenly rents were rising. This greatly changed the situation with the market, and since the city was a major player in this market, they thought now is the time to go on with privatizing. By 2012 the garden had been well-established, but the city nevertheless decided it was time to sell the property – they had an investor from the creative industries interested in the property. We first tried to at least find a way to have some sort of participatory process, but that failed. At that point, we decided to make this a more public discussion, about what's going on, not just at Moritzplatz, but with privatization in general and the effects on this kind of alternative culture in Berlin. This policy of privatization effects a lot of projects, and so we felt these discussions were important to have publically. It was our hope

to formulate alternatives to privatization, because economically speaking, selling out to the highest bid is not necessarily the best deal for a city, especially if the prices are super low, such as before the crisis, and you don't have any influence on the planning.

We wrote an open letter about the problems the garden would have facing an overnight sell to an investor, but also trying to address issues of public and open space as well as gentrification in general. A lot of Berlin projects are recognized on a highly symbolic level, which supports Berlin tourism, but at the same time doing all this in a very precarious way. It was ok at a certain moment, but in a changing social and economic landscape you cannot take this for granted anymore. This is something we tried to address, and to ask that the city try and save these places, which make Berlin so attractive. We also put down some demands, such as having a real participatory process, as the public land belongs to everyone, so it should be an open and public process. But there was no one actually talking to us from the senate at this time. Before they used to, bringing people to the garden as a showcase of Berlin initiatives; but at this point, they stopped this conversation. In response, we launched a public petition, and gained around 30.000 signatures in 8 weeks, which also attracted a lot of media attention. I started to realize how little is known of what's going on, how decisions that will effect things in the future are made. We see the same in social housing now, as people realize that decisions are being made without an open discussion, to raise people's awareness. It's the same with real estate. I'd say that privatization is the worse thing you can do, even from an economic point of view; putting so much pressure on these valuable projects in Berlin means that you won't see them in 10 years, so people have to be aware of this, because decisions can be made better. And even for people in the parliament, information needs to circulate to them. This is why different initiatives tried to have public debates around

these issues. A lot of current crisis issues, such as around refugees and migration, require a deeper understanding and dialogue. Five years ago everyone that thought about these issues tried to voice their concerns in public, pointing out how this was an unsustainable way to deal with this, because we need these resources as a community, and if you sell them off you will have no instruments whatsoever to deal with coming change. This is why these public discussions are extremely important. Privatization of land lies at the heart of these issues, also when it comes to farming and rural areas, and also globally. Making land a commodity, putting it on a global financial market, is pushing out a lot of alternatives that we need in the future, to feed us in a self-determined way, for example. This is why this is not just an architect's problem, because it effects a lot of people.

Free Berlin: One of the questions that we're dealing with through this publication is the relation between creativity and capital, or to what degree creative ideas are instrumentalized to support urban development, especially in Berlin. How do you understand this relationship – or how does the project of Prinzessinnengarten negotiate this reality?

Marco: In 2012 we were able to get some support, from the people, and from the borough. What we didn't accomplish was to change the rules, which is a pity. What we made happen was a compromise, and we got a prolonged lease until the end of 2018. Back then, there was more optimism about this generally, and there was an outlook on the part of the city about real change in the civil society. And that would have been so clever at that time, as there were a lot of good ideas on the table about exploring different forms of ownership. One example being ExRotaprint in Wedding, also about mixed usages, of making places accessible for cultural uses and for small scale enterprises. These are extremely important for neighborhoods. Berlin could have been the city with a new

model, because there were so many people looking at Berlin as being different. But my feeling is that there is a huge problem in seeing this potential and in acting on it, and having strategies to at least keep some places, to protect them from a market that goes wild. Even without changing the overall policy, but by making some smart moves. You have this situation with great people with a lot experience on the ground, and then a huge fear to allow small exceptions to the rule. Because if you allow one project and it is successful, you don't know what happens next. We are extremely good on a symbolic level, but there are no instruments on a legal and economic level. We don't have any expertise in this yet.

Free Berlin: What do you think is going to happen in 2018?

Marco: Next to Prinzessinnengarten, a lot of projects happened all over Germany on urban farming, and you see this happening globally as well. There must be a reason for this. So maybe what we see are the seeds of a movement happening, trying to deal with far reaching issues when it comes to the question of how our cities will look in the future. Driven on one side by a huge pessimism on how things work, in the city and with farming and food production, and how the global system of capitalism deals with producing food or developing cities, that will serve the needs of not just the people today, and then also a concern for plants and animals, and even spiritual ideas and different philosophies, and the relation to nature, these come into play here as well. This is one thing that a lot of these projects are approaching, and which express belief in these possibilities of change: Taking care in a different way, of the neighborhood, and of community, taking care of nature, diversity and knowledge (exchange).

Thinking about 2018 for me is not really a horizon, instead I want to learn to think 2080, and this is important when it comes to thinking about terms like "sustainability". And this is why I think we

can be a partner for city planning. Planning is often done in a very limited way; maybe you cannot consider planning for under a 100 years real planning, this is maybe mere improvisation. The infrastructures we are still living on are more than 100 years old already, the transportation and water infrastructures, also the planning of the streets and trees. It is crucial to bring this longer vision of planning back into decision making. But you have to deal with the realities, which are far too often 2, 4 or maybe 10 years. We also have to build alliances: Right now in Berlin we and many others try to connect to other initiatives, to make bridges to other issues, such as social housing, migration and the situation in rural areas, because it's important to not only focus on one aspect of the city, like for example green spaces, but to see this as an integral part of all the things that matter in our daily life, such as work, housing, food, public space. We have to learn to see the city for what it is, a diverse entity of people and activities, also nature, a place where resources circulate through, as well as a point of arrival. It's important to have a greater view on this and to work, even if we focus on one question, in the context of a bigger picture. For example, if you talk about gardens in the city and see them as an instrument to bring a neighborhood together, you also have to address possible negative impacts like gentrification. If you talk about food, you have to talk about green spaces, but also supermarkets, schools, what families have to eat that depend on welfare money, or what migrants get to eat in refugee homes, and you cannot separate these things. We only get this picture if we exchange with one another, and also between the urban and the rural. Privatization is also an issue for farmers in Brandenburg, for people who rent flats in former social housing, as well as for small businesses. We have one issue in common and so we can create a common vision for what our neighborhood should look like. And this commonality also shows you what power people have to work together.

There is a huge demand for real estate right now. Before, when we started there was no demand at all; private developers, public housing companies, the political aim to build mass units for refugees, "affordable housing", cultural institutions, suddenly there is no piece of land in the city where there is not a conflict of interests. Then there is also the market. We put a price tag on everything because we privatize, we force housing and real estate to be dealt with on the market, and we're seeing an explosion in prices.

For 2018 everyone sees gold, when they are talking about this piece of land; the city wants to build as soon and as much as possible, so the pressure is growing also at Moritzplatz. People don't really know all of this, but what's going on right now is that the city is changing their policy in terms of real estate, but no one really knows where this is going.

There is a process now called a clustering process, where all the boroughs are forced to make a list of everything they own, and then they categorize every piece of land and building, and finally the senate or the parliament will decide what to do: Keeping, developing or selling. In the past they usually voted in favor of making money; and now the additional priority becomes giving land to public housing companies. This raises certain questions about affordable housing. Nobody really knows what consequences this will have for Prinzessinnengarten and the neighborhood around Moritzplatz. Besides some debate on the topic of "social housing", there is no real public discussions happening about this. With the elections coming up this fall, it seems that nobody really wants to touch this issue (of the future of Prinzessinnengarten). We still have the support of the borough, but it's becoming more difficult, as there are more interests involved.

The tendency in the Neighborhood Academy [launched in 2015 at Prinzessinnengarten as an ongoing activity], and within a network of like-minded initiatives, is to move away from discussing single projects and pieces of land, because

if you start doing this you will be out-competed by another interest; piece by piece there will always be the same results, so we have to start discussing on a broader scale. We have these single projects, but we need a larger vision: How much social housing do we need? How many community gardens do we need in a specific area? We first need to articulate a strategy. We need to identify what are the common interests, and then from there we can discuss projects in a bigger context.

My point of view is that we need to raise issues of ownership. For instance, most of the things from the 90s that I saw in East Berlin have not survived, a lot of it is gone, because we didn't discuss issues of ownership and long term use; the feeling was, first all of you, you're 25 and you don't care, and it also seemed like the situation would never change; there was a feeling of limitless possibility, and limitless space, and it gave the city a lot of freedom. But that has changed and now we have to find a way to secure and develop further what we started. This is what we discuss now with other groups, such as Kotti & Co, Stadt von Unten and ExRotaprint, focusing on issues of economic and legal matters, which are complicated but now so important. In my personal opinion, it would be great to have this piece of land as a model for how to do it a different way. The uses may change, as we don't know what the community needs in 10 or 20 years, which is why we need legal and economic frameworks that can carry and nurture this potential. My idea is to make this change first, to change the ownership in a more radical way than just a rent, but to have something more long-term; really figuring out creative legal ways to separate ownership from use, to allow people to live the way they want to live, and to take away the precarity derived from profit and speculation. This could be based on giving the ownership to a collective or community land trust, for instance, with a board with people from the neighborhood making decisions on the long-term use, and then you give the right of use to specific projects. In this way, you

define the value for the city and the neighborhood in a more strategic and sensitive way. I think this would be interesting, because in the future it is clear we'll need to rely more on forms of self-organization and common ownership models. The current so-called crisis for me reveals that we haven't done the right kind of thinking yet. We talk a lot about commons now, which also raises important questions: How to share resources on the long-term, and how to negotiate things and make decisions collectively – it's time now to actually work on this.

This is what we try to develop with the Neighborhood Academy, which was launched in summer 2015 and organized together with Åsa Sonjasdotter and Elizabeth Calderon-Lüning. The Academy in

Prinzessinnengarten is a self-organized open platform for urban and rural knowledge sharing, cultural practice and activism. For example, the Academy last year included a workshop on the issue of common land with 596 acres from New York, as well as work on farming in Brandenburg with the artist and activist Brett Bloom, including a discussion on land grabbing. We're currently building an experimental house on the grounds of the garden after a three year cooperative planning process together with Florian Köhl. It will be called "Die Laube" (The Arbour) and will serve as an ongoing platform for collective learning.



Neighborhood Academy: commons project with Paula Z. Segal from 596 Acres (New York), Anna Heilgemeir and Enrico Schönberg (Stadt von Unten). Photo: Marco Clausen.

On poetic relations: the work of the imagination

“We are realizing more and more that a poetic emotion lies at the origin of revolutionary thought.” – Jean Genet, Letter to American Intellectuals

He looks to the right; and then to the left; he thinks he has to decide – which way to turn; like a pressure, upon him, he thinks: I must decide; and yet, there is that sudden creeping feeling, a type of epiphany that arrives slowly, unexpectedly: he realizes he has already decided.

This is how things begin: realizing that things have already begun; and so he does not necessarily change direction, rather, he changes the way he thinks about decisions, about directions, and certainly, about work: What does it mean to work? To produce a work? What kind of labor is this? What does he labor at, there in the studio? And which he carries with him, onto the streets and into this city.

There is the memory: of how he found himself turning toward the creative act, toward the sphere of artistic activity, the making. And yet, it is so fragile, this memory; it is made up of so many threads and so many days and so many events: the dry dirt that crumbles under his steps as he climbs a particular hill, and

the sounds of his friends beside him, and the warmth of that golden light hitting him in the face, and the time he ran, and the time he slept in the field, and all the dead minutes swarming around him, along with the ones that suddenly jump forward, alive with desire and longing and restlessness and loneliness, not to mention the lazy hours, the fog-drenched winters, and the sounds of the seals from the ocean, and the ocean, like a never-ending enigma into which all his thoughts eventually would turn, drummed by the whispers and the taste of salt, and the endless rhythm, back and forth, soft and yet demanding, and this that would eventually drive him into a type of idea: the rhythm that could become a music, and that could become a voice – that voice, passing from deep inside and then outward, and in whose journey an array of friendships and possibilities would emerge: he, and her, they, and then always, something else – what I might begin to call the promise of something else: and which he decides to name “poetic relation,” at least for this moment, when he speaks, and tries to recall what drove him into work, the work, and creative activity.

I want to start with this idea of poetic relation, which I would emphasize

as a way of making decisions, finding directions, negotiating the materials of cultural activity, as well as nurturing forms of association and coalition, especially with and through the minor and the marginal. Poetic relation as an expression of an urgent imagination – it is a struggle for the impossible, an emancipatory desire, a tussle with the conditions that surround us. In this regard, it performs to not only develop a type of content, but to instigate conditions of possibility, futurity, fundamentally based on a production of instability, an event of rupture as well as care – in short, an insurrectionary modality aimed at finding routes toward imagining commons, often through uncommon practices. Those that may support new formations with the scattered and the lonely, the restless and the hopeful.

What is it that he labors at there in the studio? He starts to say: I labor at poetic relation.

There are three types of poetic relation I would like to map out and which may lend to the question of imagining and manifesting commons and uncommon practices. These I'd like to call: the weak, the radical, and the creole.

The weak

There are a number of sides to the weak that I want to consider. I might start with that of fainting: this moment of losing consciousness, losing stability. One is overcome with sensation; the body slips, things fade out, and one collapses. In this instant of weakness, where do the mind and body go? Where are we when we faint? I'm interested in fainting as the production of another kind of form; a sudden flickering or shiver that leads to a type of formlessness – we literally lose our form when we faint. The knees buckle, the head tilts back, and the shoulders, the hips, and our skeletal frame collapses. In short, we crumple. Left there on the floor, what kind of body is this? And is it possible to collect the pieces, to put them right again? Fainting introduces us to the subject of “weak form”: a form broken into parts, that remain connected and yet insist on a type of autonomy: weak form can never be relied upon. It is disloyal, erotic.

Weak form can also be extended, away from this moment of fainting, toward the topic of poor materials. Here we might take reference from the Arte Povera group, and their insistence on found materials, trash and debris, the ruinous and the everyday: such poor materials are used to both disrupt the value of the art object, as a rarefied form, as well as to insert another type of knowledge or discourse, what I would call “weak thought” (following Vattimo): poor materials are in fact rather transient, fragile, vulnerable; like the fainting body, they never quite hold up, and in this regard, the poetics of poor materials produce a discourse of weakness: a weak thought. How can we understand this weak thought, this poor material? I would say, it leads us toward a type of knowledge: the knowledge of the

idiot, which necessarily twirls itself around the master narrative and the stable body. From fainting, as the production of a weak body, a weak form, to poor materials, and the project of a weak thought, an idiot knowledge: What I'm tracing here is a question of subjectivity, of another figure – poetic relation is always a question of identities, bodies, and their relation to culture.

Finally, this other identity, this weak identity, I may characterize as one of fluidity; a body that faints, a body full of weak thoughts, is one that may move in and around the structures and major systems of the social; it is a minor body that, as it flows, writes itself. Here, I want to extend the question of the weak by posing a notion of fluid identity, one that finds description and support through the work of Hélène Cixous, and her “feminine writing,” or what she calls “writing the body.” For Cixous, the feminine is precisely a condition of flows and ruptures; it is another type of language, antithetical to the hard structures of the phallic, the masculine, which is also the seat of power and which drives the mechanics of signification; in contrast, the feminine is a productive overflowing that continually threatens and endangers the order of the powerful. Cixous says: “Write yourself: your body must make itself heard.” In this regard, I would emphasize writing as not only about producing language, but also as the momentum of expression itself; writing as the flow and flowering of being a meaningful body. It is the drive of the weak, where fainting, idiot knowledge, and fluid identity startle the vocabulary and structures of the rigid.

I faint; I lose myself; I do not know – is this not the beginning of the poetic in general, or I might say, the beginning of love?

If, as James C. Scott suggests, the dominant maintains its position through mastery and control, then the weak may give traction to expressions of emancipatory hope, imposing a surprising rupture onto the systems of the dominant.

The radical

I want to turn to the notion of the radical, and to consider this as a central element of poetic relation. There are certainly different entrances into this theme, but I want to focus on one particular aspect or direction. While “being radical” can often imply a position of individual rebelliousness, to evoke an image of a single figure standing out from the crowd, I want to highlight the radical as a question of collectivity, that is, of society. Radicality is fundamentally a position of challenging the status quo by insisting upon a notion of freedom – it is a struggle against limits. In this regard, radicality is a political expression or position aimed at the sphere of power. We may recall how in the late 1960s to be radical was essentially to be “anti-establishment”; the counter-culture was a culture of not only resistance, but of emancipatory organizing, one that sought to broaden the concept of the free (expressed through ideas of love, flower power, natural rights, communalization, self-determination, and the equal, etc.), and which the community organizer Saul Alinsky captured in his book *Rules for Radicals* (1971). (For Alinsky, radicality is a matter of organizing.)

I want to highlight how radicality, while often appearing through individual acts, implies or requires a sense of solidarity: that one resists through a reference to others, to movements, to an idea even, and which grounds itself around the possibility of transforming society. To be

radical, I would suggest, is to make a claim onto the social order, and the relationships between power and people, by articulating another system. Radicality is thus always on the side of change and transformation. This is why, fundamentally, artists are at heart radical: the artist is a figure haunted by what's not there – by the possibility of what may still come, by what we can still do, or by what has never been thought before. And especially by a belief in the idea of freedom. We might say that art is the practice of freedom. Resistance, radicality, and rebelliousness are positions of dreaming, first and foremost (without dreaming, I might suggest, these are reduced to a level of hooliganism). Radicality is fundamentally aligned with the poetic, because it is based on knowing there is something missing, and something that may still be created. The artist attempts to materialize this other, to give it a shape, an almost impossible expression. Like the radical, the artist also appeals to others, even while being a stark individual; the artist searches for collaborators, alliances, for possible connections – that is, for meaning, for a meaningful act. It is precisely this drive, this imagination, that defines the radical: a drive which tries to link together the impossible with the real. To create a new society.

The philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis deepens this view onto the radical, and these questions of creativity. Specifically, he uses the term “radical imaginary” to identify how creation itself is always orienting us within a specific system by speaking toward what is not yet there; creation, in other words, is driven by lack, and is therefore based on a desiring production that must negotiate the borders of the permissible, of representation, by always going further. It forces an occupation precisely of the edge of the knowable.

In this way, the radical expresses a poetic relation specifically as an intervention onto the distribution of power, and it does so by creating solidarities: Is not the artist somehow creating solidarity with objects, with his or her materials, and through a synthesis of knowledge? With a diversity of references, and with others? They must work together, somehow, through a radical formulation, in order to produce this moment of impossible expression – the expression of poetic relation.

The creole

Finally, I want to turn to a third understanding of poetic relation, that of the creole. I'm drawing this term out from the work of Édouard Glissant, a Caribbean theorist working on issues of post-colonialism. The creole, in this sense, specifically relates to the colonial histories of the Caribbean, and those descendants of immigrants born on the islands, and at times, from mixed parents, usually of European and African descent. The creole captures a new indigeneity, and the emergence of local languages that mix European, African and indigenous Caribbean languages. In this regard, I want to use the notion of the creole as an essential and complex expression of hybridity and collage, yet specifically linked to the Diaspora, as the forceful scattering of people from their homeland. As other Caribbean artists and writers emphasize, creole, or *creolization*, is the formation of a cultural, lingual-politics by which to overcome the relation between master and slave, between a linguistic school and a mother tongue, between ideas of the cultured and the savage.

Glissant argues for a creoled position, and ultimately uses the term “a poetics of relation” to describe this. Here,

poetics is specifically an operation that draws disparate things into coincidence, joining what otherwise may not generally meet into a form of contact, collision. The creole is thus not only a simple mixing, but the production of a poetic relation, one that I may additionally describe through a notion of “the migratory”: a movement, a scattering, a diffusion that explicitly carries within it a struggle over homeland, of origin, and that delivers a complicated expression of otherness – the creole is necessarily the production of estrangement; facing the creole, we are left unsure of who we are seeing. The creole shimmers; it is a blurred image; a collage, a hybrid that ruptures the colonial project of language and national meaning by introducing an ambiguity of origin, a broken tongue. The creole is marked by multiple origins, it is essentially impure. And in this way, it generates the possibility of a future; it promises a flight toward new horizons by introducing the meaningfulness of new languages and new narratives.

In this regard, I want to pose the migratory – this scattering – as the basis for a particular form of production, a production of movement, of transience and the itinerant, one that continually reconfigures relations between the included and the excluded. I might describe this further by another term proposed by Glissant, that of “echos-monde,” or echo-world: A world of echoes that unsettles the fixity of origin, for we may never know for sure from where or whom an echo first began. Instead, the echo passes from one to the next, expanding as it goes, and dizzying the certainty of any singular perspective with a voice of displacement, a lyric from the future already present.

The collaged, the hybrid, and the migratory – these are forces of the creole, and methods of creolization, and which

leads us to a poetic relation of deep meaning. While the weak opens up an alternative path around the powerful, an identity of fluidity, and the radical argues for a future society, creating alliances through marginal imaginations, the creole expands our cultural languages, multiplying the narratives of nationhood and of belonging: Where we come from, and where we might go. It enables us to find ourselves amidst the complexity of this global life, as a process of being able to meet the other, even the other of oneself still to come.

Imagining otherwise

It is my intention to locate poetic relation as a work of the imagination, to consider how it may act as a generative and dynamic base for thinking and doing otherwise. I would emphasize that poetic

relation is precisely what's at stake in creative activity, and the project of the artist; it always carries these larger questions of marginal identities and fugitive knowledge, the politics of language and the cultural desires that point the way toward a future in the making – that carry the drive of hope. Isn't this what we do there in the studio? To tussle on the edge of a possible meaningfulness? To move closer to what feels so urgent, and to search for routes? A route toward what Edward Said calls "the permission to narrate" – to speak of other things, especially those that require a form of critical trespass; and to find the courage to be weak, to be radical, to be creole, all practices or vocabularies that may enable the project of imagining commons.

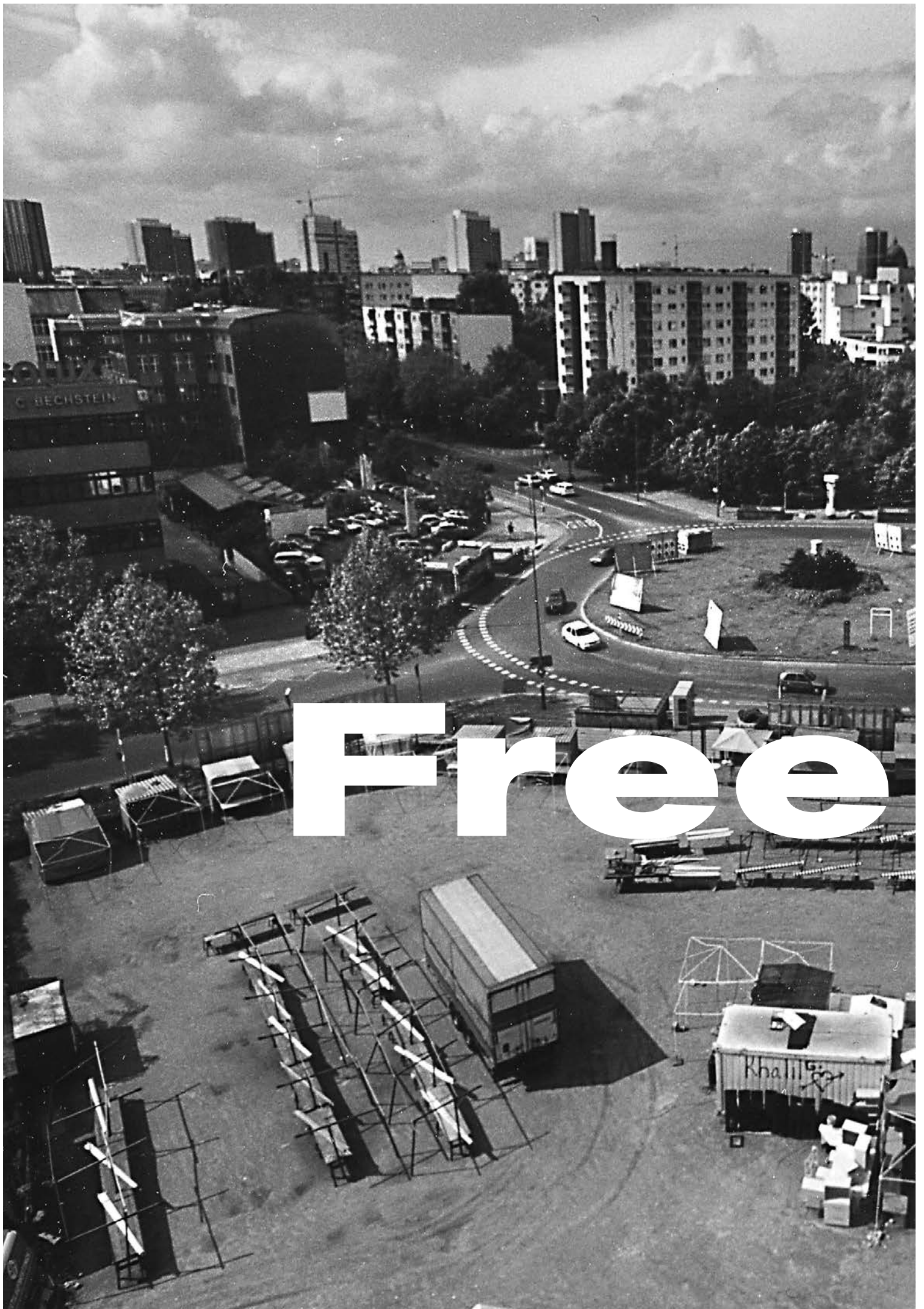
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