

Branding Berlin

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ABSTRACT (English)

This dissertation examines the urban, cultural, and political transformations in post-Wall Berlin through multi-disciplinary analysis of documentary films, literature, art, and urban branding in relation to what I call “nostalgia for Babylon” that signifies a contemporary longing for the pre-gentrified Berlin of the 1990s, and constitutes a collective reaction to the current branding and gentrification practices in the New Berlin.

The films I examine in detail include *Berlin Babylon* (dir. Hubertus Siegert, 2001), *In Berlin* (dir. Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari, 2009), *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (*The Path We Do Not Take Together*, dir. Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann, 2009), and *Mauerpark* (dir. Dennis Karsten, 2011). They represent the first examples of this emerging nostalgia – significantly different from both *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the former East) and *Westalgie* (nostalgia for the former West) as often portrayed in German feature films and literature. By documenting the rapid transformation and gentrification of Berlin, these films capture both the ways in which these changes took place, and the nostalgic sentiments many Berliners feel about the city’s post-Wall history.

Connecting the films with Berlin’s urban and architectural history, city marketing campaigns, art exhibitions, and works of literature allows for an in-depth and simultaneously a broader inter-textual and inter-medial analysis of Berlin’s culture. This approach pushes disciplinary boundaries and develops a methodology for analyzing cities and culture in the post-Fordist creative economy.

I examine branding as a cultural phenomenon, not just an economic or marketing one, as well as an over-arching urban-governance practice of the Berlin Senate that encompasses economic and urban development strategies, social policy, and cultural transformations.

As Berlin is being rebranded as a creative center, many Berliners have begun to voice a sense of nostalgia for the Babylonian voids, no-man’s-lands, and abandoned buildings throughout the city’s formerly divided center. This “nostalgia for Babylon” is a lens that allows us to see beyond the gentrified surface of the city and its rebranded image of newness and hipness, and to think more critically about how urban identities and cultures are constructed and consumed.

ABSTRACT (French)

La présente thèse examine les transformations urbaines, culturelles et politiques qu'a connues la ville de Berlin après l'effondrement du Mur à travers une analyse multidisciplinaire du cinéma documentaire, de la littérature, des arts et de la valorisation de marque urbaine par rapport à ce que je nomme la « nostalgie de Babylone », une réaction collective à la valorisation de marque actuelle et au phénomène de l'embourgeoisement de la nouvelle ville de Berlin.

Parmi les films que j'analyse en détail se trouvent *Berlin Babylon* (Hubertus Siegert, 2001), *In Berlin* (Michael Ballhaus et Ciro Cappellari, 2009), *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (Dominik Graf et Martin Gressmann, 2009) et *Mauerpark* (Dennis Karsten, 2011). Ces films représentent les premiers exemples de cette nostalgie émergente qui se distingue grandement de l'*Ostalgie* (la nostalgie de l'ancienne Allemagne de l'Est) et de la *Westalgie* (la nostalgie de l'ancienne Allemagne de l'Ouest), qui sont souvent représentées dans la littérature et dans le cinéma allemands. En documentant la transformation et l'embourgeoisement de Berlin, ces films saisissent les deux façons dont ces changements procèdent et les sentiments nostalgiques que plusieurs Berlinois éprouvent pour l'histoire de la ville depuis la chute du Mur.

C'est l'association de ces films avec l'histoire urbaine et architecturale, les campagnes de publicité urbaine, des expositions d'art et des œuvres de la littérature qui rend possible une analyse en profondeur et, en même temps, intermédiaire de la culture berlinoise. Cette approche repousse les frontières disciplinaires et développe une méthodologie qui nous permet, dans une économie de création postfordiste, d'analyser aussi bien des villes que des cultures.

J'examine la valorisation de marque non pas seulement en tant que phénomènes économique ou de marketing, mais en tant que phénomène culturel et en tant que pratique de gouvernance urbaine du Sénat de Berlin, qui comprend des stratégies de développement économique et urbain, de politique sociale et de transformations culturelles.

Alors que Berlin se positionne comme un centre créatif, plusieurs Berlinois ont commencé à exprimer de la nostalgie des vides babyloniens, des no man's land et des bâtiments abandonnés dont le centre de la ville divisée était parsemé. Cette « nostalgie de Babylone » est un prisme au travers duquel nous pouvons voir au-delà de l'espace embourgeoisé de la ville et de son image de ville nouvelle et branchée. Elle nous permet aussi de penser à la façon dont les identités et cultures urbaines sont construites et consommées.

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PREFACE

The New Berlin

The mood in the early 90s was reminiscent of the 20s:
a positive sort of life on the edge.
But instead of a fin-de-siècle atmosphere,
there was now a pure sense of starting afresh –
anything was possible. (Henner Merle)¹

Since its post-reunification re-construction, the “New Berlin”² has been conceptualized in current scholarship in terms of borders,³ memory,⁴ *Heimat*,⁵ *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*,⁶ urban marketing,⁷ and gentrification.⁸ My study examines Berlin’s branding, urban-economic development and its search for a post-Wall identity by focusing on manifestations of nostalgic longing in documentary films and other cultural products. I examine Berlin’s transformation not only in terms of the re-construction projects that filled Berlin’s skyline with cranes and high-rise buildings, and swept its neighbourhoods with multiple gentrification waves, but also in terms of the re-conceptualization of Berlin’s urban imaginary and newly-branded identity, which has given rise to what I define as nostalgia for Babylon – the pre-reconstructed Berlin of the 1990s that gave rise to the Techno, art, and other cultural scenes. Twenty-

¹ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland: Wild Years Revisited 1990-1996* (Berlin: Gestalten, 2014), 209.

² It was first hailed as “the New Berlin” by the 1999 marketing campaign, announcing the official arrival of both the German government from Bonn and the newly reconstructed Mitte (formerly located in East Berlin). As Janet Ward explained in her article, “Berlin, the Virtual Global City,” in *Journal of Visual Culture* (Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004, pp.239-256), 248: “The motto ‘Das Neue Berlin,’ a 1920s phrase re-used by the *Berliner Festspiele*, was subsequently adopted by the city marketing company ‘Partner für Berlin’ as a product in and of itself.”

Throughout the 1990s, *Partner für Berlin* organized a series of city marketing campaigns entitled “Das neue Berlin” between 1997 and 1999 that replaced the 1996 campaign series “Berlin wird” (Berlin is becoming) and coincided with “Schaustelle Berlin” campaign, all of which were eventually replaced by the “be Berlin” campaign in 2008.

³ See, Janet Ward (2004, 2011); Hito Steyerl (1998); Katharina Gerstenberger (2008, 2011).

⁴ See, Andreas Huyssen (1997, 2003); Karen Till (2005); Jennifer Jordan (2006); David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (2012).

⁵ See, Alexandra Luedwig (2011); Paul Cooke (2005, 2012).

⁶ See, Svetlana Boym (2001); Paul Cooke (2005); Dominic Boyer (2006); Nick Hodgins (2011).

⁷ See, Claire Colomb (2012).

⁸ See, Hartmut Häußermann (2000, 2002); Stefan Krätke (2000); Andrej Holm (2006, 2013).

five years after the fall of the Wall, the reunited, New Berlin has culturally reinvented itself, perhaps providing a blueprint for urban and cultural identity rebranding for other creative capitals. Berlin had the unique economic and political advantage and substantial amount of federal funding to rebuild and reconceptualise its problematic voids⁹ and unwanted traces of the past. Since becoming a capital again, Berlin succeeded in establishing a positive reputation as a trendy, creative, and affordable European capital. Yet its efforts to reconstruct itself have been highly contested by both long-time Berliners and newcomers. Berlin does not fit into what some scholars have defined and ranked as “global cities” that have the ability to generate and retain global financial and economic power.¹⁰ Other scholars, such as Stefan Krätke, have pointed out that Berlin must be identified as a “globalizing” and a “first-rank global media city.”¹¹ It also constitutes what Richard Florida terms a “creative center,”¹² and what Sharon Zukin has defined as “landscape of power” and “liminal space,” both consuming and producing cultural capital, which is increasingly overpowering its “vernacular” places.¹³ In the process of transforming itself into the cultural and media capital of Germany, Berlin is not only facing global challenges to compete in a globalized, post-Fordist economy, but also local discontent resulting from rapid gentrification, loss of authenticity, and the disappearance of certain landmarks, trend-spots, histories, and traces. These tensions and contradictions between global and local forces are not unique, and as Zukin reminds us, with each new generation and gentrification wave, and in each new gentrifying city, we need to continue asking “whose city” and “whose culture”¹⁴ are being re-imagined and re-branded. Following

⁹ As Claire Colomb noted in *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (London: Routledge, 2012), 240: “Berlin is a city full of ‘voids’ – vacant or disused plots which have resulted from war damage, Cold War division, planning decisions, demolitions by successive political regimes and deindustrialization. Such ‘voids’ account for 14.4 per cent of Berlin’s green and open spaces or 3.4 per cent of the city’s total area.”

¹⁰ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City. New York, London, Tokyo*, Second Edition. (Princeton: University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Stefan Krätke, “City of Talents? Berlin’s Regional Economy, Socio-Spatial Fabric and ‘Worst Practice’ Urban Governance” in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Volume 28.3, September 2004, 511-29), 522, 519.

¹² Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹³ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 1-2.

Zukin's ideas on urban transformation in our effort to understand the conflicts and challenges that Berlin's re-construction has sparked, we have to take into account the many competing narratives of what and who constitute the New Berlin and its search for a new identity.

Since the ancient polis, cities have existed with collectively preconceived identities that have been established and expanded throughout history, strengthened by economic power, or re-constructed after devastations of war. The relatively recent notion of city branding – a much more strategic, economic, and even ideological process than Haussmann's aesthetic and pragmatic modernization of Paris, or the City Beautiful movement in North America – affects not only architectural, urban, and spatial transformation, economic investments and gentrification, but also the social, political, and cultural life of the city. With the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in Europe and North America, cities have become more competitive than ever in an effort to sustain their economies in the global market. Krätke identified the new islands of economic growth in the New Berlin as the “so-called ‘knowledge-intensive’ and innovation-driven activities like the software industry, bio-technology, medical engineering, the pharmaceutical industry, and research and development services,” as well as the Berlin media industry.¹⁵ The transformation of cities into creative centers not only impacts urban-economic development policies, but social-cultural policies as well, as demonstrated by the “be Berlin – be diverse”¹⁶ Senate initiative that promoted cultural diversity in Berlin after Mayor Klaus Wowereit's second re-election and the launch of the “be Berlin”¹⁷ urban marketing campaign in 2008. According to Krätke, Berlin “demonstrates that knowledge-intensive activities and the creative economy are a most important resource of urban economic development. Creativity and talent thus depend on the dynamic interplay of economic, socio-cultural and spatial factors, and have the potential to become a central

¹⁵ Stefan Krätke, “City of Talents?” 515: “The ‘knowledge-intensive’ economic activities cover a slightly broader range of activities than, for example, Howkins’ (2001) definition of the core industries of the ‘creative economy’.”

¹⁶ Be Berlin – be diverse, <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/beberlinbediverse/> (accessed August 2013).

¹⁷ Be Berlin, <http://www.be.berlin.de/> (accessed August 2013).

basis of successful urban development in the future.”¹⁸ By adopting elements of Florida’s creative theory for its branding strategies, Berlin became a testing ground for cultural identity renegotiations in the digital age of start-ups and the creative economy.

Numerous factors have significantly contributed to Berlin’s international appeal: its consistent funding of culture, creativity, media, and technology,¹⁹ its gentrified neighbourhoods and the relatively affordable rents, its urban marketing and cultural rebranding campaigns, as well as its vast memorialization projects that both pay tribute to and make visible many of the traces of its traumatic history. Together these strategies have transformed the formerly divided city into a culturally vibrant capital, renowned for its art, music, film, fashion, and literary scenes.²⁰ While Berlin’s turbulent past is being actively worked through and commemorated, as Klaus Wowereit highlights in the documentary film *In Berlin* (2009),²¹ its reunited identity is being rebranded in a way that not only creates an economically viable and culturally vibrant urban center, but also a much more positive and tolerant ideological framework that re-inscribes the virtues of diversity, openness, and freedom into Berlin’s cultural DNA. For almost a decade, the city has been rebranding itself as the cultural capital of freedom

¹⁸ Stefan Krätke, “City of Talents?” 527.

¹⁹ According to the former Cultural Secretary of the Berlin Senate, André Schmitz, “Wir haben eine seit Jahren steigende Kulturförderung. Wir legen einen immer stärkeren Schwerpunkt auf infrastrukturelle Förderung, gerade für die alternative und freie Szene.” Quoted in “Wirtschaftsfaktor Kunst und Kultur, André Schmitz, Staatssekretär für Kultur im Berliner Senat, im Gespräch über die Bedeutung von Kunst und Kultur in Berlin,” in *Berlin Boxx, Business Magazin* (November / Dezember 2011, 18-19), 19.

²⁰ By 2010, Berlin had 42% more cultural enterprises than in 2000. According to in *Berlin Boxx, Business Magazin*, “And the winner is... Berlin! Kassenschlager Kunst und Kultur” (November / Dezember 2011, 10-17), 10-11: “Im Jahr 2010 erwirtschafteten 29.000 Unternehmen, das sind 42 Prozent mehr als im Jahr 2000, mit 223.000 Erwerbstätigen 22,4 Milliarden Euro. Das heißt: 14 Prozent der Berliner Beschäftigten schufen 15 Prozent des Gesamtumsatzes der Berliner Wirtschaft. Die Rede ist nicht von einer der traditionellen Branchen – wie so mancher bei diesen Fakten glauben mag – die Rede ist von der Berliner Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft, einem der wachstumstärksten und bedeutesten Wirtschaftszweige unserer Stadt. [...] Als Wirtschaftsfaktoren sind Kunst und Kultur erst in den letzten 20 Jahren, seit dem unumkehrbaren Wandel zur globalen Dienstleistungsgesellschaft starker ins Bewusstsein gerückt.”

²¹ In 2011, the Berlin Senate spent 64 million euros of its annual cultural budget on “Museen, Gedenkstätten und Erinnerungskultur” (museums, memorials, and commemorative culture), for details see, Berlin Haushalt 2010/2011, http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-kultur/bibliotheken/haushaltsplan_20102011.pdf?start&ts=1271063134&file=haushaltsplan_20102011.pdf (accessed March 2012).

and creativity, generating identity-branding slogans such as “Be open, be free, be Berlin!” It has also proven to be a fertile ground for entrepreneurial ventures spanning from the Techno-era underground clubs and events to present-day digital and media start-ups.²² Understanding the social, political, economic, and marketing strategies of this elaborate re-branding project, as well as the cultural applications of these strategies and transformations manifested in art, literature, and film, allows us to uncover the networks behind this image of the city, and to question the ways in which urban and cultural identities are constructed.²³

Cultural analysis of urban rebranding is particularly pertinent today because more and more cities face economic, social, and cultural restructuring under the conditions of globalization, the decline of the Fordist economy and manufacturing industries, and the dawn of the creative economy. Urban sociologists such as Sassen, Zukin, Harvey, and Florida, to name a few, have traced the ways in which globalization has imposed new social and economic pressures on cities to construct a compelling and

²² This economic spur can be traced back to the Senate’s promotional campaigns of the *Media-Spree*, providing tax breaks and selling prime real-estate along the Spree River to media companies in order to entice them to move their headquarters to Berlin. This became a highly contested practice as the rapid gentrification of the river banks caused the closure of popular bars, such as *Kiki Blofeld*, and other interim-use leased enterprises that had become iconic since reunification. The promotion of *Media-Spree* also coincided with the marketing campaign “Berlin wird” (Berlin is becoming), deliberately leaving open and ambiguous what it may become.

For more on *Media-Spree*, see: Friederike Meyer, “Seeking New Shores: Why Berlin has faltered at the Spree” Architects Chamber Berlin, (ed.), *Building Berlin: The Latest Architecture In and Out of the Capital* (Berlin: Braun Publishing, 2012, 175-179), 175: “In the euphoria that followed reunification, a large number of properties with a variety of ownership structures were sold off quickly. Some were even re-conveyed to their original owners. The Treptowers were built, as were the Ver.di union headquarters, an Ibis Hotel, and EnergieForum Berlin. The first of the major investors – Universal Music and MTV Networks, which in 2001 moved into a former warehouse, known as the “Eierspeicher”, and another building on the East Harbour – even received subsidies from the City of Berlin. It was not long before the term “Media-Spree” was coined. Investors, property owners, and politicians had formed an association whose purpose was to broker space, arrange contacts with proprietors and public authorities, advice interested investors, and organize marketing. They produced glossy brochures depicting the maximum volume of construction feasible under the development plans, and they beat the drum at real estate fairs.”

²³ My analysis of Berlin’s cultural and economic transformations can also serve for comparative analysis of other cities in the process of re-conceptualising themselves. For an example on Detroit’s rebranding, see Richard Florida’s article, <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/05/how-detroit-rising/1997/> (accessed August 2013).

competing image for and of themselves, in order to attract capital in the post-Fordist global economy.²⁴

Miriam Greenberg's study, *Branding New York* (2008) presents New York City as a model for contemporary urban branding practices since the 1970s,²⁵ and establishes a prime example of understanding city branding as a major driving force of urban, economic, social, and cultural lives of cities. By looking closely at the ways in which the New Berlin has adapted several branding strategies of cities like New York and Amsterdam, my study de-constructs the intersections between branding and culture, which, as Zukin reminds us, are always intertwined.²⁶ My study builds on urban branding and links it with my interpretive analysis of cultural products generated in Berlin during that time.

In this new, creative, global economy, cultural capital and value have been utilized as means to produce economic growth.²⁷ In many emerging creative centers, culture, and by extension creativity, have been enlisted in the service of economic development and are promoted and funded as such.²⁸ Culture has always been commodified and "used for urban regeneration,"²⁹ but in the creative economy, it is also globalized, diversified, and digitized. While global cities such as New York, London,

²⁴ As early as 1989, urban sociologist David Harvey "called attention to the rise of 'entrepreneurial' urban strategies," noting that 'the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative and safe place to live or visit, to play and consume in,' as festivals, spectacle and display, cultural events and the arts were increasingly appropriated as "symbols of a dynamic community." See David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation of Governance in Late Capitalism" in *Geografiska Annaler* (71B, 1989, 3-17). Quoted in Jamie Peck, "Struggling with the Creative Class," in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Volume 29.4, December 2005, 740-770), 761.

²⁵ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

²⁶ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

²⁷ David Hesmondhalgh has traced this economic practice back to 1982/83 with a UNESCO report on cultural industries, the cultural rebranding of Glasgow and Bilbao in the 1990s, Charles Landy's 2000 pamphlet on creative cities and creative clusters, and Richard Florida's concept of the creative class. For more, see: David Hesmondhalgh, "Cultural and Creative Industries" in Tony Bennett and John Frow (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis* (London: Sage, 2008, pp.552-569), 554.

²⁸ For example, in Montreal, the Economic and Urban Development Department has been mandated to promote local fashion since 2009 (<http://www.modemontreal.tv/en/about-us>), while the Berlin Chamber of Commerce and Industry not only supports local start-ups (http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-wirtschaft/erfolgreich_gruenden_en.pdf?start&ts=1319113118&file=erfolgreich_gruenden_en.pdf) but also promotes fashion (<http://www.businesslocationcenter.de/fashion>). This blurring of the distinctions between cultural and economic value of fashion is a common practice in many emerging creative centers (all accessed January 2014).

²⁹ David Hesmondhalgh, "Cultural and Creative Industries," 555.

and Tokyo possess a concentration of financial capital, as Sassen established in 2001, amassed through the gradual restructuring of their manufacturing industries into global financing corporations and trade centers, cultural or creative cities such as Berlin, Montreal, and Detroit³⁰ are in various stages of the process of re-branding and re-constructing themselves in response to the rapid economic decline of their manufacturing industries, gradually reconfiguring themselves into centers of creativity, media, art, and digital technology. In this category of cities, Berlin is a compelling and fascinating case study and model, one which offers insight into the making, manufacturing, and branding of cities in the twenty-first century, according to 2.0 design and innovation practices.³¹

My study of Berlin's reconstruction of its post-Wall identity brings together research from different disciplines to better understand its gentrification, urban marketing, filmic representations, and nostalgia. I argue that it is precisely in the bridging of these disciplines that the blueprints of the New Berlin's re-creation can be traced. Having adopted the policy of creative economy since 2008, Berlin's Senate generated the unprecedented "be Berlin" campaign, which has permeated its cultural, economic, and by extension through the "be Berlin – be diverse" initiative, even social spheres. As a result of rapid gentrification and branding that have radically transformed Berlin since 1999, nostalgic sentiments began to emerge in contemporary Berlin culture in general, and in documentary films produced after 2009 in particular, which direct their nostalgic longing not to the divided cities of East and West, as *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* had done, but rather to the voids of the pre-gentrified "Berlin Babylon" of the

³⁰ See Jordan Garland's film *#aDetroitFilm*, <http://asdetroitsown.com/> and for more information, <http://m.clickondetroit.com/news/uniquely-detroit-adetroitfilm/29939532> (accessed November 2014).

³¹ See Anne Balsamo, *Designing Culture: The Technological Imagination at Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2: "The emergence of the creative industries has garnered significant attention from cultural critics, whose evaluations of the political implications of this new formation, which gives rise to new class identities (the no-collar worker), new work practices (e-lancing), and new organizational forms (Jelly work events), are all over the map. I call attention to these examples as evidence for my claim that whether it manifests through the launch of new national initiatives, as popular cultural movements, or new work practices, innovation has become the dominant zeitgeist of the early twenty-first century."

1990s, as it was often referred to at the time.³² In this study, I argue that this nostalgia for Babylon is a direct response to the urban-economic transformation, branding, and gentrification of the New Berlin. The documentary films selected in this study are perhaps the first visible evidence of a shift in the direction of nostalgic projections in the New Berlin after 2009.

Understanding these processes of cultural, architectural, spatial, and social transformation of an urban center marked by a very turbulent past, allows us to delve into the very mechanism of urban identity construction, and to examine what it tells us about the culture of cities in a globalized, technologically advanced, and branding-savvy world. Berlin's rapid transformation from its Babylonian voids and open spaces of the early 1990s into the gentrified New Berlin suggests that the branding and marketing efforts of the Berlin Senate were in fact successful in attracting not only tourists, as the previous urban marketing campaigns had done in the early 1990s, but also creative professionals and international investors, who aided in transforming the city into a creative center. Branding the New Berlin as the "capital city of knowledge and culture," has demonstrated, as Janet Ward pointed out, "how branding can literally build a new economic reality into being, by means of industries whose products and services are located primarily in the electronic realm."³³ Thus, branding, as the very means of transformative energy, lies at the center between the "landscape of power" and the "vernacular" places, the disappearance of which brought on a new wave of nostalgic longing in Berlin. I investigate the ways in which these disappearing places conjured a new wave of nostalgia, which until now has been overlooked. My project unpacks the ways in which this nostalgia for Babylon has occurred, how that process continues to take place, and the insight it provides for understanding the re-construction and branding of the New Berlin.

³² See the anthology by Nadja Caspar, *et al*, eds. *Dokumente aus Babel: Berliner Momentaufnahmen* (Münster: Waxmann, 2000); Thomas Knauf's essay "Ab durch die Mitte: Liebesversuch" (Straight through the Middle: Love Experiment, 1996); and other authors noted in Katharina Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin: The German Capital in Post-Wall Literature* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008).

³³ Janet Ward, "Berlin, the Virtual Global City," *Journal of Visual Culture* (Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004, 239-256), 251.

INTRODUCTION

Research Questions, Methodologies, and Cultural Analysis

The concept of culture, no matter how difficult
it is to pinpoint, is an essential approach
to an understanding of human self-knowledge – of human identity –
as well as human social interaction and co-action. (Hans Gullenstrup)³⁴

Following Hans Gullenstrup's definitions of culture and cultural analysis, this study retains an understanding of culture as essentially tied to identity formations and relations. To investigate the various transformations in a city with an identity as complex as Berlin's, I ground my methodology in interdisciplinary cultural analysis.³⁵ The key research questions guiding this study include: what are the ways in which Berlin's post-Wall identity has been constructed, marketed, projected, represented, and consumed? What role does the broad spectrum of cultural products that range from documentary films, to art, architecture, and literature, play in this collective process of constructing and manufacturing of Berlin's cultural identity?³⁶ My study of post-Wall Berlin retains an awareness of its different cultural

³⁴ Hans Gullenstrup, *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-cultural Understanding* (Aalborg University Press, 2006), 50. Also see Gullenstrup's definition of culture, 35: "The concept of culture can be understood as an indication of the system of processes underlying the current meaning creation which creates the mutual relations and experiences of identity and solidarity in a given culture."

³⁵ As outlined by the University of Amsterdam's Graduate School of Humanities' Program in Cultural Analysis, this approach involves an "interdisciplinary analysis of culture at large," emphasising "textual, visual and historical details in the context of the social, political or aesthetic movements [...] and the ways in which identity, difference and otherness are negotiated across the cultural spectrum." University of Amsterdam, Cultural Analysis, <http://gsh.uva.nl/ma-programmes/programmes/content28/cultural-analysis.html> (accessed August 2013).

³⁶ As Godfrey Carr and Georgina Paul explained, "The notion of 'culture' has always played a central role in Germany's self-perception. As early as the eighteenth century, a time when the idea that Germany may one day be a unified political entity was still a distant dream, the concept of *Kulturnation* (cultural nation) became an important idea around which a German national identity could begin to coalesce. In the unification treaty of 3 October 1990, culture was once again invoked as an important tool in the reconstruction of a national German identity, described in Clause 35 in the following terms: "art and culture – despite the different development of the two states in Germany – a basis of the continuing unity of the German nation. In the process of state unification of the Germans on the path to European unity, art and culture have an independent and essential contribution to make." Godfrey Carr and Georgina Paul, "Unification and Its Aftermath: The Challenge of History," in *German*

histories and an understanding of its present political, economic, social, and cultural developments. Isabel Hoving defines cultural analysis as not only related to culture and identity, but also to space.³⁷ This connection to space allows me to foreground events, trends, and transformations in post-Wall Berlin culture, as well as the implications of its many urban and spatial re-conceptualizations. To carry out this type of analysis of contemporary Berlin, I draw on four distinctive fields of scholarship: cultural history, urban cultural studies, urban branding, as well as documentary film theory.

Cultural history focuses on the historical narratives reflected in cultural texts, as well as their connection to social, political, and cultural meaning in a particular historical context. This approach asks why certain events occurred at the time they did; what else was happening at that time, and what the correlation between the different events can reveal about their nature and meaning. As defined by Peter Burke, cultural history mainly focuses on interpretations of “the meaning of past practices and representation.”³⁸ By comparing key events in Berlin’s urban politics, architectural re-construction, urban marketing campaigns, cultural events, and its artistic and filmic representations of the 1990s and 2000s, this study employs cultural history to draw out important interconnections and themes that provide insight into the gradual transformation of the formerly divided city into what Hubertus Siegert called “Berlin Babylon,” and ultimately into the New Berlin. Cultural historians, including Andreas Huyssen, Brian Ladd, Janet Ward, and Karen E. Till, have provided several valuable studies of Berlin’s post-Wall transformations that focus on its history and topography. Their work transcends disciplinary boundaries to include analysis of art, literature, film, and urban marketing campaigns. My study builds

Cultural Studies: an Introduction, ed. by Rob Burns (Oxford: OUP, 1995, pp.325-48), 328. Quoted by Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (New York: Berg, 2005), vii-viii.

³⁷ Isabel Hoving, “Three Local Cases of Cross-Atlantic Reading: A Discussion on Space and Identity” in Mieke Bal (ed.) *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretations* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1999, 203-218), 203.

³⁸ Peter Burke, “Cultural History” in Tony Bennett and John Frow (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis* (London: Sage, 2008, 107-123), 119.

on their foundational work, incorporating the cultural history of nostalgia in post-Wall Berlin, which diverges from both *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*, and which I describe as nostalgia for Babylon.

While cultural studies generally focus on the relationship between culture and society,³⁹ as well as cultural trends, events, and texts in relation to matters of ideology, nationality, class, race, and gender, urban cultural studies tend to focus on issues of space, gentrification, public spheres, accessibility, and increasingly on creativity strategies as a force behind urban transformation. Drawing on critical theories from Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, and Sharon Zukin, this study looks at the ways in which urban space is both constructed and represented in contemporary Berlin. Focusing on urban space allows us to examine the ideologies behind the negotiations and contestations of city spaces (such as Mauerpark in Prenzlauer Berg), historical structures (such as the disappearing Berlin Wall), new architectural developments and policies, as well as the waves of gentrification and its discontents. Furthermore, this approach allows us not only to see the changing pattern in branding strategies over the past twenty-five years, but also the extent to which branding has affected other facets of cultural production and entered the every-day vernacular language and spaces of Berlin.⁴⁰ While urban marketing studies have largely been conducted by sociologists such as Hartmut Häußermann, Claire Colomb, and Stefan Krätke, historians such as Janet Ward have made connections between urban marketing and art.⁴¹ Examining such interconnections between culture and marketing in greater detail allows us to recognize shifts in cultural patterns. Moreover, this study analyzes the power structures proposed by Richard Florida's creativity theory and adapted by Mayor Klaus Wowereit for his vision of the New Berlin. In doing so, my project engages with a core question posed by David Hesmondhalgh in

³⁹ Ien Ang, "Cultural Studies" in Tony Bennett and John Frow (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis* (London: Sage, 2008, 227-246), 231.

⁴⁰ For example, the slogan of the nation-wide social marketing campaign "Du bist Deutschland" that circulated in German media in 2005, leading up to the 2006 FIFA World Cup, had made its way into a modern adaptation of Schiller's play *Die Räuber* staged in Nürnberg in 2005, while the "be Berlin" marketing lingo can be found in a short story by Maik Martschinkowsky, entitled "Gentrivacations" in *Lost in Gentrification: Großstadtgeschichten* (Berlin: Satyr Verlag, 2012), 110-113.

⁴¹ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 302.

his work on “Cultural and Creative Industries,” namely: “what does the boom in creativity and the creative industries tell us about the relations between culture, society and economy at the beginning of the twenty-first century?”⁴² Consequently, when we look at cultural products and cultural history in relation to space, branding, and the creative economy, we can detect emerging patterns in image and identity construction, as well as representations of this process. Finally, this leads us to questions of representation.

Film and media studies are well-established fields within cultural analysis. Tom Gunning has proposed “seeing film as a cultural product,” as both “a result of and as an agent in social and cultural processes.”⁴³ German film scholars including Paul Cooke, David Clarke, Jaimey Fisher, Brad Prager, and Barbara Mennel have provided many comprehensive studies on contemporary German cinema’s spatial, historical, and nostalgic turns that ground my analysis of urban transformations and nostalgia in contemporary Berlin. Simultaneously, Berlin has gained a leading role within German film studies, both as the birthplace of the *Berliner Schule* genre,⁴⁴ and as a popular location for international historical and fiction films, as well as a growing corpus of documentary films. As a center of both production, with its concentration of film schools and studio Babelsberg, and of consumption of film with the *Berlinale*, *Achtung Berlin*, and many other film festivals, the New Berlin draws in both German and international filmmakers, as well as film scholars. However, while there is a growing number of documentary films about contemporary Berlin, the available scholarship on them is very limited, and so far no comprehensive study on Berlin documentary films has been undertaken. In examining documentary theory as developed by scholars such as Bill Nichols and Stella Bruzzi in relation to post-Wall Berlin documentaries, I organize the films around the thematic foci relevant to my project. Understanding the

⁴² David Hesmondhalgh, “Cultural and Creative Industries,” 563.

⁴³ Tom Gunning, “Film Studies” in in Tony Bennett and John Frow (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis* (London: Sage, 2008, 185-203), 186.

⁴⁴ For more on *Berliner Schule*, see Marco Abel, *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School* (Rochester: Camden House, 2013).

ways in which contemporary Berlin is represented in documentary films allows us to see how cities are constructed, narrated, and visualized. The Berlin documentary films selected for this study allow us to trace the transformations of the New Berlin, attesting to the differences between the divided Berlin and Berlin Babylon in the immediate aftermath of the *Wende*.

Chapters Overview

In his study of Berlin's cultural topography, Andrew J. Webber argues that the city's identity has always been constructed in relation to other cities, such as Babylon, Athens, Chicago, Vienna, and Istanbul, to name a few.⁴⁵ With this comparative approach in mind, my study focuses on Berlin's Babylonian allegory, re-applying it to nostalgia for the pre-gentrified city of voids of the 1990s.⁴⁶ I identify key elements that constitute this nostalgic turn in contemporary Berlin manifested in several documentary films produced after 2009. These films engage with Berlin's transformations since reunification, with its space, history, and its Babylonian nature – that is, its contested identity. Simultaneously, this study incorporates significant post-Wall cultural events and city marketing campaigns that contributed to the cultural changes in the New Berlin, as well as the ways in which Berlin's new identity has been constructed, communicated, and commodified.

Part one is a cultural-historical overview of Berlin's post-Wall cultural production of film, literature, advertising, and art in light of utopian longing and nostalgia. Chapter 1 allows me to establish a cultural-historical timeframe that sets up the other chapters of my study, all of which are divided both thematically and chronologically, and supported by theoretical frameworks around Berlin's urban space, branding, and nostalgia. Each chapter incorporates analysis of specific documentary films that portray

⁴⁵ Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20.

⁴⁶ Hubertus Siegert defined Berlin of the 1990s as "Babylonian" marked by restless construction. See Siegert's remarks on the *Berlin Babylon* DVD cover (2001): "Der babylonische Charakter der ganzen Berliner Unternehmung. Es scheint eine Zivilisationsfabel seit Babylon zu sein, dass jeder Zeit Bauherrn, Baumeister und Bauleute bereit stehen, eine als leer empfundene Innenstadt sofort mit Bauwerken jeder Dimension zu füllen. Die Angst vor der Leere steigerte das rationale Geschäftsgebaren der Immobilienbranche in Berlin zu rastloser Tätigkeit."

the transformations of Berlin into a gentrified, creative center. Chapter 2 focuses on the post-Wall Berlin documentary film corpus, and outlines why I chose documentary films as a major category of inquiry of contemporary Berlin culture. This chapter provides an overview of post-Wall documentary films, which I divide into four distinct categories, highlighting films that capture the various transformations in Berlin since reunification. Establishing the links between cultural, economic, and political events that took place in Berlin over the past twenty-five years in the first part of my study allows me not only to construct a more comprehensive cultural-history of the city during its most transformative years, but also to address the Babylonian metaphor commonly evoked in literature, art, fiction and documentary films produced in Berlin throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. These Babylonian allusions reveal the creative freedom and utopian desires expressed collectively in Berlin during the first few years after the fall of the Wall. As I will show in the first chapter, many writers, artists, and filmmakers (de Picciotto, Siegert, etc.) used this reference to Babylon not only because of Berlin's sandy sub-terrain and its historical and grandiose architectural ambitions, but also because the dismantling of the Wall and the temporary deregulation of property ownership laws⁴⁷ after 1989 produced a number of open spaces and creative possibilities, previously unavailable on either side of the Wall. The rapid emergence of creative sub-cultures, such as the Techno scene, in the newly-accessible liminal spaces also carried connotations of Babylonian transgression, hedonism, and utopian unity. As DJ Tanith, one of the protagonists of *Mauerpark* (dir. by Dennis Karsten, 2009) summed it up in the documentary film *Sub Berlin* (dir. Tilmann Künzel, 2009), "because the Techno scene was new for both East and West Berliners, it was seen as a space of unity."⁴⁸ The subsequent nostalgia for Babylon that emerged in the reconstructed New Berlin, recruited its temporal and spatial objects of desire from this period in Berlin's early reunited history. My

⁴⁷ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), "On the Ruins of the Rome of the Modern Age – Berlin Since 1989. Interview with Benedikt Goebel (city historian) and Philip Oswalt (architect)," *Berlin 89/09: Art Between Traces of the Past and Utopian Futures*. (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für modern Kunst, Fotografie, und Architektur, September 18, 2009 – January 31, 2010), 152.

⁴⁸ *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor*, dir. Tilmann Künzel, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9E59b3rli0> (accessed January 2014).

main argument is based on this cultural shift in the nostalgic manifestations that can be traced to the short-lived utopian desires and aspirations for freedom and creative self-determination that flourished amidst the voids of Berlin's post-Wall topography of the early 1990s. By contrast, the post-1999 New Berlin was marked by the gradual disappearance of voids and open spaces, rapid gentrification and city branding, as well as the selling of its real-estate to international investors and developers. Thus the consequent emergence of nostalgia for Babylon can be explained as a reaction to the un-processed transformations in the city fabric and urban identity since the official government move from Bonn to Berlin in 1999.

After mapping out the cultural-historical transformations in Berlin and in documentary representations in the first part, I focus on urban topographical transformations in post-Wall Berlin. Chapter 3 examines the spatial transformations in Berlin throughout the 1990s, connecting them with theoretical conceptions of space and place by scholars such as Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, as well as Sharon Zukin's distinction between "landscapes of power" and "vernacular" places, and her analysis of gentrification as related to the New Berlin's transformation and commodification. Chapter 4 looks at the most vivid filmic representation of Berlin under construction in the 1990s, provided by Hubertus Siegert's film *Berlin Babylon* (2001). The film documents the many city-wide construction projects, highlighting the melancholy atmosphere created by the fragmented and disjointed landscape. Siegert's film not only locates the contested spaces of the re-constructed Berlin, it explores the complexity of the Babylonian metaphor through architectural debates, historical footage, and allegorical juxtapositions. My analysis of Siegert's film allows me to set up the main distinction between the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s and the post-1999 New Berlin represented in the other documentary films in this study.

The third part deals with branding and identity formations. Chapter 5 examines post-1999 New Berlin's branding, creativity, and urban marketing projects, many of which have long entered into the cultural narratives of the city. This section also addresses the ways in which cultural policy, branding, and city marketing campaigns in the New Berlin are linked to Richard Florida's creative-class theory, adapted by Mayor Klaus Wowereit in his second re-election speech, a significant element for understanding the type of urban identity that was being constructed. In Chapter 6, I look closely at the film *In Berlin* (dir. Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari, 2009), that documents the New Berlin after reconstruction, as the Babylonian city of voids has been transformed into a "place to be" for the creative classes.⁴⁹ While structured visually and aesthetically as an homage to Siegfried's *Berlin Babylon*, *In Berlin* focuses on the arrival of the creative classes in the gentrified New Berlin, and portrays a wide range of old and new Berliners in their respective communities, neighbourhoods, and places of work. These two films illustrate a clear dichotomy between the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s and the New Berlin after 1999. Comparing them allows me to trace not only the urban and architectural transformations, but also the cultural and ideological changes in the city's identity.

The last part of this study examines nostalgia in post-Wall Berlin. Chapter 7 locates nostalgia for Babylon in documentary films produced after 2009, linking it to the trajectory of scholarship on nostalgia in the German context. Here, I outline the existing scholarship on both *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*, and position the emerging nostalgia for Babylon as witnessed in several documentary films, not as a reaction to either *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*, but rather as a reaction to gentrification and branding of the New Berlin. Chapter 8 examines the theme of nostalgia in relation to the short film, *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (*The Path We Do Not Walk Together*, dir. Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann, 2009) that engages with contemporary nostalgia both in its theme of disappearing architecture and its form of

⁴⁹ The Creative Class, according to Florida, are "global workers who have the good fortune to be compensated monetarily for their creative output." Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.

pre-digital, celluloid film medium. The film is part of the compilation *Deutschland 09 – 13 kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation* (*Germany 09 – 13 Short Films about the State of Nation*), itself an homage to the New German Cinema's omnibus film, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1979) that presented glimpses of German society in light of West-German terrorism thirty years earlier. *Der Weg* links the theme of disappearance of old, unwanted buildings, and the replacement of historically problematic ones by the New Berlin's "architecture of transparency." Simultaneously, the filmmakers argue for the superiority of celluloid over digital film, in its ability to capture time, space, light, and colour, thus establishing a vital link between the materiality and ephemerality of film stock with that of the urban fabric. Thus nostalgia is inscribed not only onto certain buildings and spaces in Berlin, but onto the very film material used to document, represent, and preserve them. This is significant because it shows the permeability of this nostalgia that is presented by Graf and Gressmann as both the message and the medium.

Finally, Chapter 9 focuses on a different example of nostalgia for Babylon that can be seen in Dennis Karsten's film *Mauerpark* (2011), which follows several protagonists who frequent the park in the gentrified Prenzlauer Berg in the course of one summer. Several of the characters express nostalgia for Berlin's unclaimed open spaces of the 1990s and the alternative lifestyles created in these spaces. Their park has become home to a cultural scene, as it was the last un-gentrified area of Prenzlauer Berg, not unlike the open spaces that served as artistic and cultural laboratories in Mitte in the 1990s. This film combines the themes of Berlin's transformation, gentrification, and the ephemerality of its spaces, and calls for a more mindful treatment of public space. Together these documentary films offer a new take on Berlin's cultural history, topography, gentrification, branding, and nostalgia, as well as the city's search for a post-reunification identity. The nostalgic sentiments expressed in these films represent a reaction to the branding and gentrification of the New Berlin and call for a re-examination of the ways in which the city has been re-constructed and re-branded after the fall of the Wall.

I conclude this study with several propositions on how we can make sense of Berlin's post-Wall transformations. While blogs such as hackthesystem.com⁵⁰ have listed many reasons why everyone should move to Berlin, and while other media messages generated from the re-constructed and gentrified city invite creative professionals from around the world to come to Berlin and to "be" creative and start their businesses there, these messages are also the medium through which branding has been facilitated. Florida's vocabulary of the creative economy has remained at the core of the New Berlin's economic and cultural self-fashioning. My project examines the intersections and tensions between the nostalgic views of the past and the branded images of Berlin's present and future. It seeks to understand what role nostalgia plays not only in slowing down perception and looking back to reflect on things past, but in the dynamic drive for economic development and commodification of urban space.

⁵⁰ Maneesh Sethi, "7 Reasons You Should Move to Berlin Today" Hack the System blog, <http://hackthesystem.com/blog/7-reasons-you-should-move-to-berlin-today/> (accessed August 2013).

PART 1 – Cultural History of Post-Wall Berlin

Chapter 1 –From Utopian Longing to Nostalgia: Berlin Films, Literature, and Art

Every city needs something similar –
free creative space that gives people the chance
to discover themselves and their talents. (Stefan Schilling)⁵¹

Berlin im Oktober 2000. Und jetzt wieder Weltstadt!
Berlin soll groß werden, am besten größer,
immer aber wichtig sein, mindestens Ton angeben.
Sehr viele Sehnsüchte heften sich an diese Stadt,
die dabei zwar Stadt bleibt, vor allen Dingen aber zur
Leinwand wird für alles andere, was der Name auf sich zieht.
Und Berlin lädt sich wieder auf mit Image-kampagnen,
die Verheißungen sein sollen, mit New-Economy-Energien
und altbekannten Beschwörungen, die nur eines sagen wollen:
Hier neu. Hier anders. Es wird gebaut an diesem anderen.
Es wird gesucht und irgendwo im Alltag, Tag und Nacht, etwas erwischt davon.
All das gelingt Berlin leicht, weil es an so vieles erinnert,
weil es so vieles war und ist und immer noch birgt.
(Petra Sorg and Henning Brüns, *Sehnsucht Berlin*, 2000)⁵²

As the editors of the short essay and fiction compilation *Sehnsucht Berlin* (Longing Berlin, 2000) recognized in their preface, the changes that Berlin underwent in 1990s and 2000s were accompanied by a significant amount of projected longing, and simultaneously by forward-looking urban and cultural image- and identity construction. These two modes of reflection and construction define post-Wall Berlin and much of its cultural production. In order to understand the rapid cultural, social, economic,

⁵¹ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland: Wild Years Revisited 1990-1996*, 215.

⁵² Petra Sorg, Henning Brüns (eds.), *Sehnsucht Berlin* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 2000), 7: “Berlin in October 2000. A world city once again. Berlin shall become big, preferably bigger, but always important, or at least setting the trends. A lot of longing is projected onto this city, which remains a city, but also becomes a projection screen for everything that the name attracts. And Berlin is filling itself again with image-campaigns that imply new-economy energies and well-known promises that communicate only one message: new here, different here. That difference is still under construction. It is still sought daily and sometimes caught. Berlin accomplishes this easily because it reminds us of so much, because it was so much, and has still so much to reveal” (my translation).

and topographical transformations of post-Wall Berlin, it is helpful to divide its cultural history into two phases, pre-1999 Berlin Babylon and post-1999 New Berlin. The years 1989 to 1999 in Berlin were largely characterized by the removal of the Wall from the city's core, the creation of vast open spaces and voids in its place, followed by extensive re-construction projects in response to the *Bundestag's* vote to transfer the capital from Bonn to Berlin in 1991. This time was accompanied by debates about memory, history, and borders,⁵³ as well as by the first urban marketing campaigns that aimed to construct a new image for the reunified city, and at the same time attract tourism and generate revenue and investments. After the creation of the marketing agency *Partner für Berlin – Gesellschaft für Hauptstadtmarketing GmbH* in 1994,⁵⁴ responsible for capital city marketing, the initial series of events labelled "Baustellensommer" (summer of construction sites) that included events at Potsdamer Platz, such as dance, light, and laser shows, it gradually evolved into the elaborate and much quoted campaign series "Schaustelle Berlin" (exhibition site Berlin) that spanned from 1996 to 2005. The first ten years after reunification were also characterized by elaborate institutional reorganizations, as the Berlin Senate merged the administration of all cultural institutions (museums, theatres, opera houses, concert halls, galleries, etc.) of the former East- and West-Berlin.⁵⁵ During this time, what distinguished

⁵³ See: Pierre Nora, 1989; Andreas Huyssen, 2003; Karen E. Till, 2005, Jan Assmann, 2006; Janet Ward, 2011.

⁵⁴ The *Partner für Berlin* organization evolved from the ill-fated *Berlin 2000 Olympia GmbH*, created in March 1991 for Berlin's official bid for the 2000 Olympic Games, which went to Sydney, as well as out of the *Lenkungsgruppe für Standortmarketing* (Steering Group for Location Marketing) set up by the Berlin Senate in 1992 for the creation of a new agency for Berlin marketing. *Partner für Berlin* gradually expanded from its original 17 partner organizations from the both public and private sectors to over 160. In 2005, *Partner für Berlin* merged with the *Wirtschaftsförderung Berlin International* to create *Berlin Partner GmbH*, which is in charge of city marketing campaigns in Berlin to this day. For more, see: Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁵ See, Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 77-78: "The executive power in Berlin is shared between the mayor who is elected by the House of Representatives and the Senate (*Senat*), i.e. the government and administration of the Land. The Senate is organized in sectoral departments which are politically led by a Senator appointed by the Mayor. Each Senator leads his or her own administration independently – within the policy orientation voted by the House of Representatives – and is politically accountable for the decisions made in his or her field. The Mayor is a 'first among equals' who steers government policy in close cooperation with the Senators, plays a mediation role within the ruling coalition and represents Berlin to the outside world. The *Senatskanzlei* (Senate Chancellery) is the administrative team of the Mayor. It is in charge of the political coordination of the Senate's work, of cooperation with the Federal government and other German *Länder*, of media and public relations, of

representations of Berlin most was the iconoclastic, self-ironizing symbol of its construction crane-filled skyline. 1994 was the year that construction at Potsdamer Platz began – the symbolic ground zero of post-Wall reconstruction projects, charged with contentious debates about re-appropriations of this space. That same year, filmmaker Hubertus Siegert began filming the various construction projects in Mitte for his documentary film *Berlin Babylon* (2001). In 1994 the German federal government cancelled the subsidies that made up 30% of the city's budget.⁵⁶ Along with the mass exodus of many former East and West- Berliners,⁵⁷ as well as the increased unemployment throughout the 1990s,⁵⁸ the city's income tax revenues dropped, all contributing to the massive debt accumulation, and eventually to Mayor Wowereit's 2003 proclamation of Berlin as "poor but sexy."⁵⁹ In 1995, Johannes Gross coined the term

relationships with the EU, of the representation of Berlin abroad and of relations with partner cities. It is also responsible, since the mid-2000s, for cultural policy. It therefore plays an important role in the place marketing and representational activities."

⁵⁶ See, Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 223: "The cessation of Federal government's subsidies to Berlin in 1994 and the integration of Berlin into the system of financial redistribution between German *Länder* in 1995 led to a net loss of income amounting to 30 per cent of the city's budget between 1993 and 1994. Additionally, the steady decline in Berlin's GDP between 1996 and 2005 led to decreasing tax income, while the sharp increase in unemployment fuelled the increase in social and welfare expenditure. The generous tax write-off schemes for real-estate investors which had been put in place by the Grand Coalition in the early 1990s contributed further to the shrinking of the public authorities' tax income. Combined, these trends led to a rapid increase in the city's debt, which rose from €10 billion in 1991 to €40 billion in 2001 and €55 billion in 2004."

⁵⁷ See, Janet Ward, "Berlin, the Virtual Global City," 245: "All of Berlin's global image-making must compete with, and yet also compensate for, the hemorrhaging of the city's industry in both its western and eastern parts after the loss of special Cold War-era state subsidies in the former, and the end of GDR manufacturing in the latter. Even though one-third of all Berlin residents are new since the fall of the Wall, the population has not grown. As Germany's most populous city covering the largest terrain, Berlin was losing 20,000 inhabitants a year in the late 1990s."

For more recent population numbers see: Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2013, <http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/basiszeitreihegrafik/Zeit-Wanderungen.asp?Ptyp=400&Sageb=12007&creg=BBB&anzwer=8> (accessed May 2013).

⁵⁸ See, Stefan Krätke, "City of Talents?" 512: "From 1991 to 2001, Berlin's traditional industries lost more than 150,000 jobs; the parallel increase in 'service sector' jobs could in no way compensate for this loss of manufacturing jobs. Thus, we have growing unemployment of industrial workers in the region. The decline of Berlin as an industrial location is due not only to the closure of production sites in the eastern part of the city, but also to a very large extent to the structural weaknesses of the industries in the western part of the city, which for decades used the special Berlin subsidies to expand the assembly line production of simple mass products."

⁵⁹ See, Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 222: "The year 2001 marked a turning point in Berlin's post-unification history: the Grand Coalition which had ruled the city for a decade lost power to a new 'Red-Red' coalition between the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Left Party (PDS, from 2007 renamed Die Linke). This was a consequence of the exposure of a large-scale financial scandal involving Berlin's public authorities."

“Berlin Republic” to signal the changes that would accompany the government move to Berlin,⁶⁰ and promise a hopeful future based on values of democracy and freedom. Characterized by both spatial and ideological openness, as well as by immense creativity and creation of cultural scenes, this period was marked by utopian imaginaries that can be traced in music, art, photography, and films produced in Berlin at this time. As Dimitri Hegemann, the creator of *Tresor* Techno club explained in the documentary film *Sub Berlin* (2009),

Das war so eine Art Anarchie, die war unglaublich günstig für sub-kulturelle Strömungen und kulturelle Anarchisten und Kulturunternehmer, weil zu der Zeit in diesen zwei Jahren von 1990 bis 92/93 hatten die Behörden andere Probleme als irgendwelche Clubs zu schliessen. Das war fantastisch! Das war paradiesisch!⁶¹

This celebratory anarchic spirit of the early 1990s is precisely what some Berliners, including Hegemann, are nostalgic for today in the new, gentrified Berlin.

By contrast, 1999 marked the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the completion of major construction projects such as the Reichstag, the government quarters, and Potsdamer Platz. It prompted the official move of the federal government from Bonn to Berlin, and thus the official start of the Berlin Republic in the new capital, made explicit by the city marketing campaign announcing the arrival of the New Berlin (“Das neue Berlin ist da!”). With the election of the Red-Green Coalition government of Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and Joschka Fischer (Green Party) the previous year, a new generation of politicians and officials heralded by sociologist Heinz Bude as “Generation Berlin,”⁶² took over the governance of the Berlin Republic in Berlin’s newly re-constructed Mitte. Moreover, 1999 marked the exposure of the CDU donations scandal, which led to the loss of Helmut Kohl’s political

⁶⁰ Margit M. Sinka, “Heinz Bude’s Defining Construct for the Berlin Republic: The Generation Berlin” in Carol Anne Constabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, Kristie A. Foell, *Berlin, The Symphony Continues* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 187-204), 194.

⁶¹ In *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor* (dir. Tilmann Künzel, 2009), Dimitri Hegemann tells the story of finding the basement of the former Wertheim department store vault and opening the *Tresor* Club in 1991 without any legal permissions from the Senate. “It was a kind of anarchy that was so favourable for sub-cultural movements and cultural activists because during that time in the two years between 1990 and 92/93 the authorities had other problems than closing down illegal clubs. It was paradise!” (Video subtitles).

⁶² Heinz Bude, *Generation Berlin* (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2001).

influence and paved the way for Angela Merkel's party leadership.⁶³ Pertinently for my project, 1999 can be seen as the year in which nostalgia resurfaced in German culture – first in the form of *Ostalgie*, as for example, in Thomas Brussig's short novel *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (*At the Short End of Sun Alley*, 1999), followed by Leander Haußmann's filmic adaptation that same year, and subsequently by *Westalgie*, in works such as Florian Illies' *Generation Golf* (2000), and Sven Regener's *Herr Lehmann* trilogy (2001-8), the first part of which was adapted by Leander Haußmann in 2003.⁶⁴ These works draw extensively on references to lifestyles and products that marked the affluent society of West Germany and the subsidised, leisurely existence of West-Berlin in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The proliferation of these popular artistic works point to the nostalgic undercurrents of both the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s and the New Berlin after 1999, characterized not only by what Linda Shortt identified as "the dynamics of memory contests,"⁶⁵ but by competing nostalgias for the former East and West that point to the collective longing for disappearing histories, and the need to process the rapid and drastic transformations that took place on both sides of the Berlin Wall after 1990.

Two dominant streams become apparent in the course of the two decades after reunification in Berlin culture: namely, utopian desires and nostalgic longing. Brad Prager, in an essay on the "Re-emergence of Utopian Longing in German Cinema" (2010) provides a useful summary of the history of utopian desire in German culture and more recently in German film, including the New German Cinema and after. In contemporary German cinema, Prager identifies utopian impulses in Tom Tykwer's *Heaven* (2002), and in Yüksel Yavuz's *Kleine Freiheit* (*A Little Bit of Freedom*, 2002) as manifested in romantic

⁶³ Michael Gehler, *Three Germanies: West Germany, East Germany, and the Berlin Republic*. Transl. by Anthony Mathews, (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 267.

⁶⁴ Anthony Enns, "Post-Reunification Cinema: Horror, Nostalgia, Redemption" in Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch (eds.), *A Companion to German Cinema* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 110-133), 115-16.

⁶⁵ Linda Shortt, "Reimagining the West: West Germany, Westalgie, and the Generation of 1978" in Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (eds.), *Debating German Identity Since 1989* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011, 156-169), 156.

relationships, rather than in landscapes of division and reunification.⁶⁶ This corresponds with David Clarke's reading of the 1990s post-reunification films, such as Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* (1998) and Wolfgang Becker's *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle* (*Life is All You Get*, 1997), which he describes as set in the Deleuzian *espace quelconque* or "any-space-whatever" of postmodern, empty, alienating landscape of post-Wall Berlin, where the only possibility of meaning, identity, and belonging can be found in interpersonal connections and relationships.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Barbara Mennel makes the important link between the utopian aspirations of the West-Berlin squatting and revolt culture, the subsequent "lack of utopia" in the Berlin Republic, and the nostalgic impulses of post-*Wende* films, such as *Was tun, wenns brennt?* (*What to Do in Case of Fire*, 2002) and *Herr Lehmann* (2003).⁶⁸ She identifies the "nostalgia for a leftist West German past" in these films, marked not by the revolt era of 1968, but rather by the "lesser-known, anarchist, and creative alternative scene of West Berlin's 1980s."⁶⁹ This *Westalgie* is part of what she describes as the "nostalgic turn" in popular cinema,⁷⁰ which in part emerged as a counter-measure to the numerous literary and cinematic manifestations of *Ostalgie*, as identified in *Sonnenallee* (1999) and *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) – both of which prescribe a union of friendship or romance as the solution to the protagonist's respective experiences of loss.

⁶⁶ Brad Prager, "Glimpses of Freedom: The Reemergence of Utopian Longing in German Cinema," in Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (eds.), *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010, 360-385), 369.

⁶⁷ David Clarke, "In search of home: filming post-unification Berlin," *German Cinema Since Unification* ed. by David Clarke (London: Continuum, 2006, 151-180).

⁶⁸ See Barbara Mennel, "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory: The Kreuzberg of the 1980s in Contemporary German Film" in *The Germanic Review* (2007), 62: "Yet the nostalgia that motivates *Was tun, wenns brennt?* and *Herr Lehmann* projects an ideological fantasy of a time and place devoid of commodification, celebrating the immaterial values of friendship, antibourgeois utopian living contexts, non-hierarchical working relationships, sexual liberation, and anti-consumerism. Whereas these values are disavowed as immature and appropriated for contemporary commodity culture, the nostalgia for a relational and affective politics nevertheless points to a lack of utopian politics in contemporary national culture."

⁶⁹ Barbara Mennel, "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory," 57.

⁷⁰ Barbara Mennel, "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory," 61.

As the cultural historian Svetlana Boym asserted, “the twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia,”⁷¹ confirming that utopian and nostalgic longing are indeed closely linked. Berlin’s nostalgic turn can be seen as having emerged in response to the systematic gentrification of the city, the gradual disappearance of its open spaces, and the increasing impossibility of utopian dreams, desires, and longing in a more globalized and re-constructed city. The New Berlin after 1999, while heralded as open, free, and creative by the *Berlin Partners* marketing agency, proved to be a less fertile ground for utopian dreams than the divided cities, or the Babylonian city of voids of the early 1990s. By the second decade after reunification, with the arrival of the New Berlin, the most common denominator among all the films of the nostalgic turn, such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and even films such as *Sommer vorm Balkon* (*Summer in Berlin*, 2005), was an acute sense of longing, which in mainstream cinema is often resolved through interpersonal relationships. Thus, many of the post-reunification films reveal a gradual shift from collective utopian ideas, previously found in a community or ideology, to a more individual sense of utopia, found in a private union between like-minded individuals, where the idea of utopian possibilities of existence could still be kept alive. For example, Andreas Dresen’s *Sommer vorm Balkon* ends with the two female protagonists recommitting to the support network they have created within their friendship, despite all economic and emotional setbacks that life in the New Berlin throws at them. The last image of the film shows that their cozy balcony overlooking Helmholtzplatz in Prenzlauer Berg is obstructed by scaffolding as their building is being refurbished and gentrified. The audience is left wondering what will become of the two women in the gentrified city, and whether they will be able to afford to remain in Prenzlauer Berg indefinitely.

2009 marked another shift within the nostalgic turn, as the year marked the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall with an internationally-broadcast celebration, entitled “Fest der Freiheit” (Festival of Freedom), bringing together state leaders, former East- and West-Berliners, and a

⁷¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.

whole generation of Berliners who had come of age with no first-hand experience of pre-unified Berlin.⁷² Along with numerous exhibitions dedicated to the theme of reunification,⁷³ personal testimonies and narratives of how the fall of the Wall shaped people's lives were collected and presented in the media, inviting a collective reflexivity not only on the past, but also on the meaning and significance of German reunification.⁷⁴ Many of the German films released that year were documentary films, including *In Berlin* (2009), *The Invisible Frame* (2009), and *Deutschland 09* – a compilation of short films that included both fiction and non-fiction films by Germany's leading filmmakers. Many of these documentary films featured elements of nostalgia for Babylon, where Babylon stands as a metaphor for unreconstructed Berlin between 1990 and 1999. In order to understand what this nostalgia means and how there can even be nostalgia for spatial emptiness and voids, we first have to examine the process of transformation of Berlin's divided Mitte, which had remained quiet, "wie ein Dornröschenschloss"⁷⁵ (as sleeping beauty's castle) until 1989, as Ulrich Gutmair observed in his memoir, entitled, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin: Der Sound der Wende* (*The First Days of Berlin: The Sound of Reunification*, 2013). We also have to look closely at the thwarted hopes and utopian desires of artists and entrepreneurs of the post-*Wende* pioneer phase in the first few years after the fall of the Wall.

⁷² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 256-57: "The final highlight of the thematic year was the official festivities which were held between 7 and 9 November 2009 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Fall of the Wall. A 'Festival of Freedom' was staged around Brandenburg Gate on the evening of 9 November,, attended by German political leaders, heads of states and of government of the former Allied countries, and selected actors from the Peaceful Revolution (e.g. Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Walesa and the East German human rights activist Mariann Birthler). The event, covered by more than 2000 international journalists, was broadcast all over the world and attended by a quarter of a million people."

⁷³ See: Andreas Ludwig, "Representations of the Everyday and the Making of memory: GDR History and Museums" in Davind Clarke and Ute Wölfel (eds.), *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 37-53), 50: "21 special exhibitions in Brandenburg alone and 25 in Berlin, 11 out of 12 Berlin boroughs performed their own local activities, some remembering the events of 1989/90, others searching for the traces and relics of the divided Berlin, especially involving younger people, as in the Youth Museum Schöneberg's project *Berlin halb und halb* (Berlin half and half)."

⁷⁴ "Erzählen Sie Ihre Mauergeschichte!" (Tell us your Wall story!) was the title of a public art project by Anne Peschken und Marek Pisarsky conceptualized for the twentieth anniversary celebrations, in which a large mobile buoy travelled across the city to the places along the now invisible Wall, where people's stories took place, and displayed their personal narratives in their original setting.

⁷⁵ Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin: Der Sound der Wende* (Stuttgart: Tropen, 2013), 10.

The first few years following the fall of the Wall, from 1990 to about 1994, were a time of seemingly limitless possibilities, mobility, and creativity, when “property ownership was unclear and public authorities didn’t yet work properly,”⁷⁶ which is crucial for understanding both the utopian and anarchic impulses and the subsequent nostalgic turn in reunified German culture. In his memoir, Gutmair described this time as a “turbulent transition, marked by constant demonstrations, art happenings, and parties,” confirming that in the vacuum between the political systems something was emerging that was close to what the “utopianists of the nineteenth century called anarchy, an order that seemed to function almost without authority.”⁷⁷ Today it may be hard to imagine what the sudden openness and freedom manifested by the fall of the Wall meant for people on either side of the Iron Curtain. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, each of the divided cities had fostered vibrant underground cultural scenes in music, art, film, and fashion, made subversive and avant-garde, radical and rebellious by the restrictions and lack of mobility imposed by the Wall. Within the avant-garde scenes of both East- and West-Berlin, the emerging punk culture expressed the rebellious and anarchic sentiments during the last decades of the Cold War. Marco Wilm’s documentary film *Comrade Couture: Ein Traum in Erdbeerfolie* (*Comrade Couture: A Dream in Strawberry Foil*, 2009) captured this punkish, anarchic creativity of East-Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg district of the 1980s, its underground fashion scene, as well as the protagonists’ subsequent nostalgic sentiments and attempts to recapture the past feelings and creativity that have been subdued in the new, gentrified Berlin. Similarly, Ulrich Gutmair, who had moved to West-Berlin in October 1989, only a month before the Wall fell, appears to be haunted by the disappearance not of West-Berlin, but of the Babylonian landscape of “Brachen” (voids), the Love Parade, and the artists’ community at *Tacheles*, with the graffiti on its facade asking Berliners “how long

⁷⁶ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), “On the Ruins of the Rome of the Modern Age,” 152.

⁷⁷ Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin*, 17: “Ostberlin befindet sich in einem turbulenten Übergang, der von ständigen Demonstrationen, Kunstaktionen und Partys geprägt ist. Im Interregnum zwischen den Systemen hat sich ein Zustand etabliert, der dem nahekam, was Utopisten im 19. Jahrhundert als Anarchie bezeichnet haben, eine Ordnung, die fast ohne Herrschaft zu funktionieren scheint.”

is now?” – which for him summed up the spirit of *Wende* and the city in transition.⁷⁸ In his memoir, Gutmair laments the disappearance of the Babylonian city that created the “art scene” and the “excessive party culture,” the fact that the former anarchy has become a marketing ploy to lure tourists, investors, and entrepreneurs, and that the early nineties seem like a dream, reflected in the “sound of reunification” comprised of break beats, House and Techno, but also of construction noise.⁷⁹

After the initial euphoria of unity subsided, Berlin was not yet a very safe “place to be,” with high unemployment and population mobility (akin to that in Detroit over the last two decades), violent outbursts against foreigners in the former East, Eastern European mafia mobility, and the drug scenes forming around Berlin’s vibrant nightlife. This often gloomy and unsafe atmosphere influenced the mood of many films set in post-Wall Berlin of the 1990s, such as *Ostkreuz* (1991), *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle* (1997), *Nachtgestalten* (1999), and later *Knallhart* (2006). Brian Ladd famously called this Berlin of the 1990s “ghostly,” referring to both its ghosts of the Nazi past, and the ghostly emptiness left by the dismantled Wall in the city’s core. The West-Berlin city officials in charge of reunited Berlin sought to cover and fill the empty spaces and abandoned buildings as quickly as possible, creating subsidies for corporate investors and interim-use leases for buildings whose future use had not yet been determined. But while the federal officials in charge were busy establishing institutions such as the *Treuhand*, responsible for appropriating and selling former GDR industry and manufacturing businesses,

⁷⁸ Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin*, 27.

⁷⁹ Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin*, 23-24: “Die lebendige Kunstszene und die exzessive Feierkultur, an der alle teilhaben können, ist in den Jahren nach der Wende in Mitte entstanden. Aber die Stadt, in der all das passiert ist, scheint verschwunden zu sein. Berlin hat sich eingerichtet mit dem Mythos der jungen, wilden Stadt, dem jedoch unter der Hand und schleichend die Geschäftsgrundlage entzogen wird. Die Anarchie von damals ist zum Standortfaktor im Wettbewerb um Touristen, Investoren und Unternehmen geworden. Auf den Brachen stehen Neubauten. Die Stadtmitte gehört schon lange nicht mehr den Hausbesetzern, den Ravern und Künstlern, die sie nach der Wende zum Leben erweckt haben. Die Clubs sind anderswo hingezogen, die meisten bieten professionelles Entertainment. Die frühen neunziger Jahre erscheinen wie ein Traum, an den man sich morgens nur noch vage erinnern kann, der aber als Soundscape immer noch im Ohr ist. Der Sound der Wende, das sind die Beats von Breakbeat, House und Techno, aber auch der Pressluftschlämm und der Schuttrutschen, die komprimierten Tonfolgen der Modems, die Daten in Töne verwandeln, der Gesang der Nachtigallen zur besten Ausgehzeit und der Lärm der Lerchen am Morgen, die Gespräche am Rand der Dancefloors, auf den Vernissagen und in den Bars.”

and while the Berlin Senate was subsidizing investors and selling off real-estate in the city center to Daimler, Sony, and other multi-national corporations, many sub-cultural creative communities and enterprises began to emerge, fueled precisely by the temporary lag in regulations of property-ownership laws for empty industrial buildings in the former Eastern districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, and along the Spree River.

In addition to topographical transformations, vibrant night life and avant-garde creativity, the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s was also marked by migrant cultures, multiculturalism, and linguistic transitions. Among the many post-Wall Berlin writers narrating their experience of the newly reunited city, the Rumanian author Carmen-Francesca Banciu described her experience of this time as transformational, stating, “aber die Welt hat sich geändert. Und ich mich mit ihr. Doch nicht mit derselben Geschwindigkeit.”⁸⁰ Arriving in reunified Berlin as a Rumanian immigrant, she expresses the loss of her first language as marked by feelings of nostalgia and sadness,⁸¹ while writing primarily in German. At the same time, she equates her own conflicted identity with that of the Babylonian Berlin:

Berlin ist noch nicht Berlin. Als ich hier ankam, wusste ich das nicht. Ich glaubte, hier auf festem Boden zu sein. [...] Ich bin ein Teil von Berlin. Ich bin noch nicht ich. Ich messe mich mit mir selbst und der Welt. Ich hinterlasse Spuren. Sie sind auch ein Teil von Berlin. Von dem Berlin, das Berlin werden soll.⁸²

She converts her feelings of nostalgia and loss of her old Rumanian identity, into a cosmopolitan and bridging experience of “becoming,” which both she and the city experience in the course of reunification, and which is a common trope in Berlin literature and marketing campaigns of the 1990s. This concept of becoming can be read as utopian because it opens up ideas of future self-determination

⁸⁰ Carmen-Francesca Banciu, *Berlin ist mein Paris: Geschichten aus der Hauptstadt* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 2007), 43: “But the world had changed. And I changed with it. But not at the same speed” (my translation).

⁸¹ Carmen-Francesca Banciu, *Berlin ist mein Paris*, 45.

⁸² Carmen-Francesca Banciu, *Berlin ist mein Paris*, 51-53: “Berlin is not yet Berlin. I didn’t know that when I arrived here. I believed to be on stable ground here. [...] I’m a part of Berlin. I am not yet me. I measure myself with myself and the world. I leave traces. They are also part of Berlin. Of the Berlin, which has yet to become Berlin” (my translation).

and a creative construction of identities. Banciu's emphasis on bridging multiple identities and languages contributes to the Babylonian nature of Berlin at this time, as well as its search for a unified and unifying identity amongst the different languages, histories, and memories of its inhabitants and spaces.⁸³ Similarly, the Russian-born author Wladimir Kaminer described the first few years after the dismantling of the Wall as the "gold rush years," in his autobiographical collection of short stories, *Russendisko* (2000), vividly re-staged by director Oliver Ziegenbalg in collaboration with Kaminer for the film adaptation in 2012.⁸⁴ Since relocating from Moscow in 1990, Kaminer has been writing about the transformations in post-Wall Berlin, and contributes to its cultural and musical scenes with his *Russendisko* musical events, having established himself as a Russian DJ before becoming a Berlin author.

The social mobility spurred by the fall of the Wall brought not only Russians and Eastern Europeans to Berlin, but also West-Germans and Western Europeans who contributed to the transformation of reunified Berlin into the Techno capital of the world, contributing to the multi-culturalization of Berlin's music, art, and literary scenes. The Love Parade, perhaps more than any other cultural movement of the 1990s, symbolizes utopian dreams in the reunified Berlin Babylon. In her autobiography, entitled *The Beauty of Transgression, A Berlin Memoir* (2011), artist, musician, fashion designer, and author Danielle de Picciotto, who was the co-founder of the Love Parade, and is one of the protagonists of *In Berlin* (2009) and *Sub Berlin* (2009), describes the gradual transformation of the gloomy, melancholy, and rebellious West-Berlin⁸⁵ into the post-reunification "party metropolis" during

⁸³ Carmen-Francesca Banciu, *Berlin ist mein Paris*, 152-53: "Ich bin keine rumänische und auch keine deutsche Autorin. Was bin ich denn? Ich bin nicht nur die Summe meiner Spracherfahrungen. Ich bin von einer Welt in die andere gesprungen. Hin und her gesprungen. Immer wieder. Über eine immer kleiner werdende Spalte. Ich habe eine Brücke gebaut. Wie ein Bogen. Dieser Bogen ist ein Raum, gefüllt mit Erfahrungen. Ich habe das Erlebte verinnerlicht. Ich habe mich erweitert. Ich bin mehr als die Summe dieser beiden Erfahrungen. Die Summe dieser Erfahrungen in Europa."

⁸⁴ Commentary on the *Russendisko* DVD (2012).

⁸⁵ See Robert Hobbs, "Marking Time: Frank Thiel's Photographs" in Frank Thiel, *A Berlin Decade 1995-2005* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006, 15-30), 15: "Situated in the midst of the GDR, West Berlin in the eighties was still a Mecca of capitalist opulence, and it was known for its radical demimonde of artists, gays, asylum seekers, and refugees. The city's occupants were not only freed from constraints of military service, provided they stayed

the Techno revolution. This transformation was in part possible due to the creativity of the people living there at the time, but also due to the availability of numerous abandoned industrial sites, studio spaces, and apartment buildings in Mitte, after the mass exodus of East-Berliners for West Germany.⁸⁶ De Picciotto and her then-partner DJ Motte (Matthias Roeingh), owner and DJ at the well-known club *Turbine Rosenheim*, travelled to London in 1988 to visit a rave club, and came back to Berlin to stage the first Love Parade on Kurfürstendamm in West-Berlin in the summer of 1989, only a few months before the Wall fell. In the next few years, the Techno wave and the Love Parade expanded and captured not only national, but global imaginations, and gradually replaced the anarchic punk culture of the 1980s with a colourful and playful style of Techno and Electro music and fashion culture of the 1990s. De Picciotto describes Motte's enthusiasm for the new music, saying that "for him life was a celebration and music its communication, this new 'Techno music' was what he had been waiting for all his life and he wanted to share the experience with everybody."⁸⁷ She describes the first Love Parade as "true anarchy" that consisted of a "small truck, a record player, and crowds of policemen," which had "managed to traumatize the whole city."⁸⁸ She notes that "today, now that similar dance parades and street spectacles have become common, it may be difficult to imagine what a scandal the Love Parade was back then,"⁸⁹ both for the conformist inhabitants of the formerly divided cities, and for the West-Berlin artists and musicians. At the time, she claims, "it had been customary to be seriously meaningful, intellectually avant-garde, politically and culturally highly informed, or dramatically drug addicted in Berlin. And now, suddenly, brightly colored people of all sexes were screaming, 'Let's have fun!'" and

there long enough, but they also enjoyed federal subsidies and tax breaks, enabling them to become immersed in an exciting and radical international outpost, celebrated for its permissiveness as well as its openness to new ideas."

⁸⁶ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression, A Berlin Memoir* (Berlin: Gestalten Verlag, 2011), 75-76.

⁸⁷ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 56.

⁸⁸ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 57.

⁸⁹ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 57.

their city stood speechless.”⁹⁰ This Techno utopia not only allowed the city to earn “millions thanks to the Love Parade, finally having something to attract thousands of fun-loving tourists, spending much more money in clubs, bars, hotels, and stores than those who went to see the somber historic landmarks,” but also functioned as a cultural platform, allowing artists, DJs, and musicians to “originate projects within the event, promoting the idea that art and music can have a social influence.”⁹¹ But much like the new, re-constructed Berlin, the Love Parade soon became commercialized and stripped of its original anarchic spirit of celebrating individuality and freedom. De Picciotto and Motte moved on to other artistic endeavours. Significantly, De Picciotto is featured as one of the creative protagonists of *In Berlin* (2009), while both Kaminer and Motte appear as protagonists in *Mauerpark* (2011). As representatives of the Babylonian Berlin, they comment on the systematic gentrification of Prenzlauer Berg, the gradual disappearance of Berlin’s voids, and the ultimate threat to creative sub-cultures that have been forged in these spaces.

Svetlana Boym identified this time in Berlin between 1989 and 1999 as characterized by “both the euphoria and anxiety of transition.”⁹² Significantly, as Boym pointed out in her study on nostalgia, “at that time, East German police no longer had power over the city and West German police had not yet taken control, so Berlin’s abandoned center became a kind of utopian commonwealth of alternative culture with Oranienburger Strasse at its core.”⁹³ It was in this mixed atmosphere of endings and beginnings, of transitions and dismantling, of openness and yet-unforeseen future structures that the Techno movement, the Love Parade, and its many artistic and entrepreneurial ventures erupted in the voids. This sudden outburst of creativity continues to echo to this day.⁹⁴ During her visit to Berlin in

⁹⁰ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 58.

⁹¹ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 58.

⁹² Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 175-76.

⁹³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 204. (*Tacheles* was located in Oranienburger Strasse.)

⁹⁴ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 175: “Just as another participant of the Love Parade dropped by to get a postcard to send to his friends, saying simply that he had been here and that the party was now, I caught myself in a nostalgia for the present. I thought that one day the Palace might be restored, the young men with daisies on

1998, Boym noted that the slogans of the Love Parade “had none of the political divisiveness of the traditional youth movements of the past: ‘Peace, Happiness, Pancakes’ and ‘One World, One Future,’” and that “the participants of the parade crisscrossed the former territory of the Wall with happy indifference, as if walking in a weightless cosmic zone, shaking to a subdued Techno beat.”⁹⁵ It is precisely this “weightless cosmic zone” temporarily occupied and reinvented by the participants of the Love Parade and the Techno movement that later became the object of nostalgia for Babylon. De Picciotto’s account of Berlin’s “Babylonian state of life,” in the early 1990s, which was about non-conformity and “breaking down boundaries, building new bridges, discovering something untouched, unnamed, unpredictable,” carried out by a group of “ever-changing, multilingual pioneers,” is inextricably linked with the creative scene of West-Berlin, and is not without hints of *Westalgie* for the “feelings of community” that existed among the members of the art and music scenes established in the 1980s.⁹⁶ Throughout the second half of the book, de Picciotto expresses her difficulties adjusting to the increasingly fragmented and commercialized life in the New Berlin, and identifies the initial closure of the *White Trash Fast Food* restaurant and the *Tresor* nightclub in 2005 and 2006, as well as the subsequent repopulation of Berlin by “hipsters” as an end of an era.⁹⁷ Despite her sense of increasing “displacement” and the fear of losing the very values of “liberty of the mind” and artistic expression that have been forged in the “unusual, shut-off situation in the 1980s, [...] in spite or because of constricting surroundings,” and later in the Babylonian, experimental years of the early 1990s, she manages to find hope and strength in the uncompromising music of *Einstürzende Neubauten* (and in her romantic union with its band member Alexander Hacke, also a protagonist of *In Berlin*), which, for her, keeps the utopian dream of non-conformity alive in the New Berlin. At the end of the book, she concludes,

their cheeks and cropped green hair would become office managers in some glass building on the Potsdamer Platz while Berlin Story would lose its lease for the space and the hand-made dollhouses of the common urban past would vanish in the attics of private forgetting.”

⁹⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 174.

⁹⁶ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 261-62.

⁹⁷ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 263-64.

I had been watching the surface of the city changing and not understood that the truth lies beyond the facade. As long as I stayed close to this character trait, maintaining my sense of integrity and inquisitiveness, the city I had known when I first arrived in the 1980s would continue existing as a metaphor, and I could find happiness anywhere. I finally understood that happiness did not require living in a certain city but having a certain state of mind.⁹⁸

In her attempt to come to terms with the New Berlin, De Picciotto constructs a metaphor of a “Berlin state of mind” to encapsulate her utopian dreams. She describes her transference of utopian ideals from a geographical and temporal location to a metaphorical state of mind, which she identifies with non-conformity and individuality, which to her also represents Berlin’s Babylonian character of multilingual diversity and creativity. This transference from collective to individual utopian possibilities became especially acute after the completion of the major construction projects at Potsdamer Platz (1998) and the government quarters (1999), the arrival of the New Berlin, as well as the following years of the financial scandal and crisis that lead to the election of Mayor Klaus Wowereit (SPD) in 2001.⁹⁹

Somewhere in the transition from the Bonn to the Berlin Republic, and from Berlin’s Babylonian years of voids, construction sites, and underground clubs, to the more official, regulated and gentrified New Berlin, nostalgia burst out into the open both in the former East- and West-Berlin.

Another key element of the Babylonian Berlin was its active protest culture.¹⁰⁰ Its manifestations in film and literature provide further evidence that utopian and nostalgic longing are linked, and help us understand the emergence of nostalgia for Babylon. While German feature films of the 1990s and early 2000s envisioned the possibilities of utopian impulses and escapes through romantic relationships,

⁹⁸ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 277.

⁹⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 225-26. “By the end of the 2000s, three-fifth of the city’s debt of €50 billion covered ‘the social costs of the real estate and banking activities of Berlin’s politicians.’” [...] “In 2010 the debt of the *Land* of Berlin amounted to approximately €60 billion. The budget of the city stood at €20 billion. 12 per cent of which used each year to pay the interests of the debt. The drastic measures for budget consolidation meant that in 2007 a budget surplus was registered for the first time since unification, but this did not last long: from the following year onwards the budget was in deficit again. The long-term prospects for the city’s finances are not set to improve significantly in the years to come, in part due to the continuous lack of strong economic growth as well as the forthcoming phasing out of Federal funding programmes supporting East German *Länder* such as *Aufbau Ost* (its end in 2019 will represent a planned loss of income of one-tenth of the city’s budget).”

¹⁰⁰ See the anthology by Matthias Bernt, Britta Grell, Andrej Holm (eds.), *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013).

documentary films, such as Hito Steyerl's *Die leere Mitte* (1998), and short fiction, as for example Inka Bach's "Besetzer" (Squatters, 1997) recorded the ephemeral and short-lived protests of the young squatters at Potsdamer Platz in June 1990, actively opposing Daimler-Benz's acquisition and reconstruction of the former death strip.¹⁰¹ Both Steyerl and Bach present Potsdamer Platz through a historical lens, referring to events and structures that were there before the war, and the subsequent transformation of the area into a "dead island."¹⁰² Steyerl interviewed squatters at Potsdamer Platz, who had set up tents and protest banners against the commercial use of the former no-man's land.¹⁰³ She filmed the squatters without revealing their faces or identities, so in many of the shots, we merely see the space they are occupying or their backs, as they voice their contempt for Daimler-Benz and Berlin's becoming a capitalist center. Similarly, in her short story, Bach described the appearance of black Mercedes company cars with Stuttgart license plates (home of Mercedes Benz and Porsche headquarters) at Potsdamer Platz in the early 1990s.¹⁰⁴ Steyerl even provides archival material that links Daimler to the arms industry and forced labour camps during the Holocaust. Both Steyerl and Bach are interested in the concept of borders, physical and symbolic, as well as in the border-crossers from Eastern Europe who make their living at the illegal bazars and souvenir stands in the voids, and "who live in old cars and caravans on the eastern side of the former Potsdamer Station, where the *Vaterland*

¹⁰¹ Peter Schneider's novel *Eduards Heimkehr* (2000) also takes up the themes of squatter and the dispute for ownership of real-estate in the New Berlin, as well as the trope of Potsdamer Platz as the empty heart of the Berlin Republic.

¹⁰² Inka Bach, "Squatters" in Lyn Marven (trans.) *Berlin Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 106-124), 107. (Originally published in German: "Besetzer" from *Bahnhof Berlin*, ed. Katja Lange-Müller. München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1997).

¹⁰³ See Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 302: "Freedom is now simply going to be sponsored – out of petty cash," Hans Haacke's installation in a former Wall watchtower, as part of the group exhibition "The Finiteness of Freedom" 1990. As part of a group exhibition the month before German unity formally came into effect in October 1990, conceptual artist Hans Haacke, responding to the under-market price paid by the then Daimler Benz for land at Potsdamer Platz, sounded a note of satirical alarm about the instant rebranding of Berlin by placing a Mercedes-Benz sign atop a defunct watchtower in the former no-man's-land of the Wall near the Heinrich-Heine checkpoint."

¹⁰⁴ Inka Bach, "Squatters," 114.

Haus used to stand, raising plants and children in between the wrecked cars.”¹⁰⁵ Steyerl’s film analyzes the concepts of marginality and exclusion of foreigners, Jews, and *Gastarbeiter* (foreign workers) throughout German history. She shows the protests of unemployed German construction workers, who demonstrate (not always peacefully) against Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s regulation of employing low-wage foreign construction labourers. Her film shows the process of the transformation of Potsdamer Platz from marginality to centrality,¹⁰⁶ and the contested claims to these spaces now divided by the less visible walls of class boundaries and the metal fences of capital. The squatters in Steyerl’s film voice their disbelief at the fact that there are no places left where people with alternative lifestyles can squat without getting evicted. As Sharon Zukin’s work on the transformations of urban centers reminds us, it is important to examine questions of accessibility to the city and the marginal voices that often influence a city’s culture.¹⁰⁷

In the final segment of Steyerl’s film, entitled “Utopie,” the female voice-over narrator informs us that: “Im Juni 1990 rufen die Besetzer eine Sozialistische Republik auf dem Todestreifen aus. Danach verliert sich ihre Spur.”¹⁰⁸ The squatters’ utopian vision of a “Free Socialist Republic at Potsdamer Platz,” where people who are expats of both East- and West-Berlin can come together and live an alternative lifestyle is juxtaposed and visually superimposed with images of construction and the *Info Box* (erected in 1995) at Leipziger Platz.¹⁰⁹ Steyerl shows the ephemerality of their squatting existence and protests by

¹⁰⁵ Inka Bach, “Squatters,” 116.

¹⁰⁶ See Barbara Mennel, “Shifting Margins and Contested Centers: Changing Cinematic Visions of (West) Berlin,” *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital*. Eds. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, and Kristie A. Foell (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004, 41-59).

¹⁰⁷ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ “In June 1990, the squatters announce the founding of a Socialist Republic in the death strip. Afterwards their traces are lost” (Film subtitles).

¹⁰⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 150: “The [INFOBOX] building designed by the architects Schneider and Schumacher at a cost of DM10 million, was erected in three months on Leipziger Platz (adjacent to Potsdamer Platz). It took the shape of a bright red rectangular structure elevated on black stilts and was named INFOBOX. [...] The INFOBOX acted both as container for a series of exhibitions presenting the plans and projects of each investor at the site, and as an observation platform which allowed visitors to gaze upon the construction process under way at Potsdamer Platz. [...] Immediately after its opening on 16 October 1995, the INFOBOX became an extremely

superimposing the image of the red *Info Box*¹¹⁰ that was erected in the same space where their tents stood just a few years later. This superimposition also signals that the 1990s and early 2000s mark the gradual eradication of the West-Berlin squatting culture and mentality, which have largely been replaced by the branding culture and the creative economy of the New Berlin. While the film presents a rather bleak portrait of the Berlin Republic under construction, it nonetheless ends on a hopeful, perhaps even utopian note, referencing Siegfried Kracauer in the voice-over narration, quoted over images of holes in the chipped Berlin Wall, narrating that “Kurz vor seinem Tod schreibt Siegfried Kracauer: Es gibt immer Löcher in der Wand, durch die wir entweichen können und das Unwahrscheinliche sich einschleichen kann.”¹¹¹ The possibility of escape, as well as the possibility of change that can seep through the visible and invisible cracks in the walls of established systems of oppression, were clearly manifested in the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s. The Wall, itself a former symbol of oppression, is re-appropriated by Steyerl as a projection screen of utopian possibilities of freedom and escape. As Brad Prager reminds us, utopian impulses tell us more about the present than about the future,¹¹² and that “utopia is not an agenda but is instead a glimpse of something better – a sublime intuition that appears yet cannot be integrated into our everyday world,” and thus always

popular attraction not only for urban planning and architecture professionals, but also for a wider audience of foreign tourists, Germans and Berliners curious about the future look of the area. By January 1997, 2 million visitors had visited the INFOBOX – and average of 2,500 visitors per day; by December 2000, when it closed down, there had been a total of 8.6 million visitors.”

¹¹⁰ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 214: “The Info Box showcases the image of the future Berlin without any glimpse of anticipatory nostalgia. The Info Box, a cheerful red steel structure on stilts, features a promising exhibition: “See the city of the Future Today.” [...] Its existence is predicated on its obsolescence. The Info Box will disappear (or will be disassembled and reassembled at another site, as the practical Berliners would not like to waste anything) as soon as the dreams of corporate paradise come true and the “Future” promised in the exhibit becomes the present. Dreams here are understood practically, as grids from the future, not as figments of imagination or mere virtualities. [...] Perhaps in 2001, the Info Box will become a nostalgic fetish, and its own little model will be exhibited in the Tacheles of the future. It will be a collector’s item, like the old tram stranded in the sculpture garden. Today, the Info Box does not draw attention to itself, but rather invites you to look beyond itself and yourself. It provides plenty of interactive entertainment, but little reflection and insight into the current discussion of urbanism and Berlin identity.”

¹¹¹ “Shortly before his death Siegfried Kracauer writes: There are always holes in the wall, we can slip through and the unexpected can sneak in” (Film subtitles).

¹¹² Brad Prager, “Glimpses of Freedom: The Reemergence of Utopian Longing in German Cinema,” in Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (eds.), *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010, 360-385), 360.

remains aesthetic.¹¹³ As some of the protagonists of *In Berlin* (2009) and *Mauerpark* (2011) demonstrate, the short-lived utopian desires of the inhabitants of the voids of Berlin Babylon, the avant-gardists, musicians, artists, and activists of the 1990s, have now, over the course of the past twenty-five years, been transformed into nostalgia.

Gentrification became a key factor in the transformation of Berlin Babylon into the New Berlin. In the conclusion of her discussion of *What to Do in Case of Fire*, Barbara Mennel refers to the post-*Wende* social mobility of squatters from the former western part of Kreuzberg, to the newly acquired eastern part of Prenzlauer Berg:

At the happy end, the characters find themselves at the new center of Berlin, having left behind Kreuzberg. This move reflects part, but not all, of the real story of the generation of squatters from the 1980s. In the development of unified Berlin, the unwritten story of the generation that squatted in Kreuzberg did not stop with the fall of the Wall. A great many of those involved in the alternative movement in Berlin left Kreuzberg after unification and moved to Prenzlauer Berg in the former East. By bypassing the 1990s, the film avoids confronting the role played by the former squatters, who displaced East Berlin working-class residents of Prenzlauer Berg and, through their departure, turned Kreuzberg into a neighbourhood of primarily Turkish-Germans, branded by the media and politicians as “a Turkish ghetto.”¹¹⁴

Of course, today, Kreuzberg is no longer a “Turkish ghetto” and Prenzlauer Berg no longer houses West-Berlin squatters. In the process of the city’s transformation into a reunified capital of the Berlin Republic, the colonization of Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, and Friedrichshain by West-Berlin squatters, which is explored as one of the thematic threads in Peter Schneider’s novel *Eduards Heimkehr* (Eduard’s Homecoming, 1999), also became a short-lived phenomenon, as they were gradually replaced by West-German and Western European young urban professionals a decade later. As Sebastian Lehmann, the editor of *Lost in Gentrification* (2012), a collection of short fiction about the New Berlin, noted, “gentrification devours her own children”¹¹⁵ by displacing them as the rents become unaffordable.

¹¹³ Brad Prager, “Glimpses of Freedom,” 380.

¹¹⁴ Barbara Mennel, “Political Nostalgia and Local Memory: The Kreuzberg of the 1980s in Contemporary German Film” in *The Germanic Review* (2007), 73.

¹¹⁵ Sebastian Lehmann, Volker Surmann (eds.), *Lost in Gentrification: Großstadtgeschichten*. Berlin: Satyr Verlag, 2012), 17.

While the many authors of this anthology identify different waves of gentrification in Berlin, and simultaneously attempt to mythologize their own role in the history of Berlin's transformation into a cultural capital, with titles such as "We built this city, we built this city on rock'n'roll," they are, in fact, several generations of gentrification waves away from the initial, creative "pioneer phase" that endowed the city with its "cultural capital"¹¹⁶ and its vibrant sub-cultural scenes. On the one hand, their statements, such as "Eine Stadt muss auch für jene sorgen, die weniger zum Bruttosozialprodukt beitragen: Arbeitslose, Migranten, Rentner, Geringverdiener und viele andere. Eine Stadt darf nicht handeln wie ein renditeorientiertes Unternehmen oder gar ein Hedgefonds,"¹¹⁷ confirm the general discontent of both old and new Berliners with the governance practices in the New Berlin. Many of these unemployed, migrant, retired, and under-employed inhabitants were interviewed in Dennis Karsten's *Mauerpark* (2011) and voice similar views as those expressed in Lehmann's anthology. On the other hand, the stories collected in Lehmann's book reveal that the young generation of new Berliners seems to be less concerned about the welfare of minorities and marginal groups, but more about their own comforts and stability.¹¹⁸ They are part of what de Picciotto referred to as the "hipsters" whose arrival in the New Berlin marked the end of an era for her and the previous generations of creative Berliners. The young authors' laments at the disappearance of night clubs and beach bars along the Spree, and their mocking "occupation" of construction sites that prevent their water-access along the river,¹¹⁹ can be described similarly to what Rainer Werner Fassbinder saw happening in *Die Dritte*

¹¹⁶ Sebastian Lehmann, Volker Surmann (eds.), *Lost in Gentrification*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Sebastian Lehmann, Volker Surmann (eds.), *Lost in Gentrification*, 19: "A city has also to provide for those who contribute less to the gross national income: unemployed, immigrants, retired and low-income earners, and many others. A city cannot act as a profit-oriented corporation or an investment fund" (my translation).

¹¹⁸ The notion of the city as corporation was also satirized by Wladimir Kaminer, in his "Eine Vision für Berlin: Meine erste Rede als Bürgermeisterkandidat," *Ich bin kein Berliner: Ein Reiseführer für faule Touristen* (München: Goldmann, 2007), 212.

¹¹⁹ Maik Martschinkowsky, "Gentrivacations" in *Lost in Gentrification: Großstadtgeschichten*. Berlin: Satyr Verlag, 2012), 110-113. In this short story, two students who recently moved to Berlin set out to spend a day in a beach bar by the river, along the *Media Spree* construction sites, and find that the beach bar has been replaced by a construction site overnight. In mock protest, they decide to spread out their beach towels in the middle of the

Generation (*The Third Generation*, 1979) of RAF terrorists, as a carnivalesque and grotesque parody of the original first wave. Their utopian dreams, if there are any, consist of “Wellness-machen” (spa-leisure) at a beach bar, and “being” the New Berlin.¹²⁰ Maik Martschinkowsky’s short story “Gentrivacations,” as well as other works in this collection, presents the New Berlin’s systematic gentrification with humour and irony, poking fun both at the leisure-seeking new Berliners, and at the city marketing discourse that has entered the vernacular communication of Berliners, as the construction worker call out to the “occupying” leisure-seeking Berliners who block him from doing his job to go and to “be Berlin!” somewhere else.

Post-Wall Berlin literature seems to be divided between those who moved to Berlin before 1999 and often identify themselves as the creative pioneers, and those who moved there after 1999, in some cases not by choice, but nonetheless see their aim to “civilize”¹²¹ and repopulate Berlin’s new and re-constructed Mitte. Increasingly, the members of the latter group produce works that satirize their experiences in the new, but still “barbaric” Berlin, as for example the authors of the two volumes, edited by Claudius Seidl, former culture editor of the *Spiegel*, who moved to Berlin in 2001, entitled *Hier spricht Berlin: Geschichten aus einer barbarischen Stadt* (*This is Berlin Speaking: Stories from a Barbaric City*, 2003) and *Schaut auf diese Stadt: Neue Geschichten aus dem barbarischen Berlin* (*Look at this City: New Stories from the Barbaric Berlin*, 2007). The short texts in these volumes are often written in first person, primarily by West-Germans with full-time corporate jobs and company cars (with Frankfurt licence plates¹²²), who often complain about everything that is “wrong” with Berlin in comparison to Hamburg

construction sands, only to be forcefully removed by a tractor, whose driver mockingly greets them with the slogan: “Be Berlin!”

¹²⁰ Maik Martschinkowsky, “Gentrivacations” in *Lost in Gentrification*, 110-113.

¹²¹ Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Schaut auf diese Stadt: Neue Geschichten aus dem barbarischen Berlin* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007), 13.

¹²² Georg Diez, “Staatsmacht,” Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin: Geschichten aus einer barbarischen Stadt*. (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2003), 18.

or Munich.¹²³ They find Berlin “uninhabitable,”¹²⁴ full of construction and renovation sites, too noisy, with too many unemployed people who have no money but too much time,¹²⁵ and who don’t seem to understand why they – the working professionals – are always in a hurry and expect better service. The authors satirize the rebellious stance of the old-Berliners,¹²⁶ the wind, which like many other things in this city are seen as “a personal insult,”¹²⁷ the “pretentious creativity”¹²⁸ of the artists, party-people, and anyone who frequents the Kastanienallee in Prenzlauer Berg (many of whom are portrayed in Karten’s *Mauerpark*), as well as the generally “unpleasant manners”¹²⁹ and the lack of world-openness of Berliners. It appears that with the arrival of the New Berlin and its new Berliners, utopian impulses that sparked the Techno wave, established the Love Parade, or created multicultural events like *Russendisko*, are increasingly on the decline. As Seidl’s volumes and other works set in the New Berlin attest; generally, utopian aspirations have either been replaced by satire (Kaminer, Brussig) or by nostalgias (*Ostalgie*, *Westalgie* and nostalgia for Babylon). After 2009, this transformation of utopian dreams into nostalgia becomes apparent in several documentary films discussed throughout this study.

Along with literature and film, contemporary art from this time also demonstrates a fascinating mix of utopian and nostalgic longing. In time for the commemorations of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 2009, the *Berlinische Galerie* put on an exhibition entitled “Berlin 89/09: Art Between Traces of the Past and Utopian Futures” (2009-2010), which featured numerous works of art that dealt with the issues of Berlin’s spatial transformations, utopian ideas, and nostalgic longing. Sophie Calle’s contribution to the exhibition was her 1996 photographs of empty spots in East-Berlin created by the removal of old East German memorials and symbols, presented together with

¹²³ Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 1.

¹²⁴ Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 15.

¹²⁵ Nils Minkmar, “Martwirtschaft,” Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 120-121.

¹²⁶ Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 142.

¹²⁷ Georg Diez, “Der Wind,” Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Schaut auf diese Stadt*, 108.

¹²⁸ Claudius Seidl, “Die Wohnung,” Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Schaut auf diese Stadt*, 49.

¹²⁹ Claudius Seidl, “Wolfskinder,” Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Schaut auf diese Stadt*, 182.

descriptions of the removed objects as remembered by residents and passers-by.¹³⁰ The descriptions of the missing monuments showed a divergence between historical reality and individual perception. Moreover, Calle's interviews also revealed sentiments of nostalgia, making it clear that the "removal of these relatively unappreciated monuments still represented a painful negation of decades of the residents' own lives."¹³¹ This is a telling example of the replacement of state-mandated political and utopian idealism by a collective nostalgia or *Ostalgie*.



Sophie Calle, Berlin Monuments 1996

Furthermore, the exhibition featured 25 photographs by Arwed Messmer, entitled "Potsdamer Platz Anno Zero" that captured its voids and emptiness before its reconstruction began between 1994 and 1995. The photo captions, composed by the writer Annett Gröschner, verbally reconstruct the Potsdamer Platz of the 1920s, while the images point to the absence of the buildings that are described in the captions.¹³² Thus, the emptiness in Messmer's photographs is not only heavily burdened with the history of its erased past, but also demonstrates the process of its transformation into a construction site, and subsequently into a commercial center in the near future. One can argue that because of this transience, Messmer's voids are far from empty, and are not only palimpsests, but also reservoirs of future significance as well. In comparison, Frank Thiel's contributions to the exhibition were

¹³⁰ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 51.

¹³¹ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 51.

¹³² Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 81.

photographs of the massive construction at Potsdamer Platz after 1995 that capture the transient nature of this space, “inscribing a dialectic relationship between ideology and aesthetics into his photos, and thus avoiding any trace of sentimentality.”¹³³ Thiel’s photographic documentation of the construction of the New Berlin captures the “formation of new German political space,” as well as the “simultaneous process of destruction and construction.”¹³⁴ Unlike Messmer’s elaborate captions, Thiel’s photographs have very unspecific titles, such as “Stadt 1/09 [Berlin]” (1996), “yielding images that require narration in order to be fully understood, [...] needing to know about the site and its history – as with the Reichstag, for example.”¹³⁵ Together, the photographs of both artists create a similar effect as Steyerl’s superimposition shots (from the squatters in the voids to the construction zones and the *Info Box*) in *Die leere Mitte* (1998). And as in Steyerl’s film, we are left searching for meaning in the transitory images of the superimpositions in the disappearing, and perhaps even utopian, spaces in-between the void and the construction site, avidly aware of all the things absent from this space, as well as all the things that could have been there, and will be built in the following years. This multi-layered perception of empty and uncompleted urban space, with its many past, hypothetical, and future tenses is also a marker of the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s, which later spurred nostalgic sentiments once these spaces have been radically transformed.

¹³³ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 87.

¹³⁴ David Moos “Utopian Construction? The Work of Frank Thiel,” in Frank Thiel, *A Berlin Decade 1995-2005*, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006, 9-13), 9.

¹³⁵ David Moos “Utopian Construction? The Work of Frank Thiel,” 10.



Arwed Messmer 1994, and Frank Thiel, 1996

In his other photographic work, Thiel's own nostalgic lament in light of the gradual disappearance of GDR heritage can be seen both in the choices of his locations (*Café Moskau* and *Kosmos Cinema* on Karl-Marx Allee, the debris of the Palace of the Republic, and the GDR guards at *Neue Wache*, etc.), as well as in his "personal notes penned about the destruction of the *Palast-Hotel*, the preeminent hotel in the GDR, [...] suggesting that it might better have been a heritage site rather than razed to make way for 'more profitable buildings.'"¹³⁶ In the process of creating the New Berlin with its re-construction of Prussian architectural heritage as decreed by the Berlin Senate and the *Baudirektor* Hans Stimmann,¹³⁷ and the subsequent destruction of much of GDR heritage and architecture, Thiel's photographs become visual evidence of the gradual decay and eliminations of unwanted histories and buildings. Similar to the documentary footage of decaying buildings to be gradually demolished in the Berlin Republic, collected by Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann in their short film *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (2009), Thiel's photographs focus on the dilapidated surfaces, facades,

¹³⁶ David Moos "Utopian Construction? The Work of Frank Thiel," 11.

¹³⁷ See Daniel Purdy, "Berlin Mitte and the Anxious Disavowal of Beijing Modernism: Architectural Polemics within Globalization" Katharina Gerstenberger and Jana Evans Braziel (eds), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 249-272), 250: "Berlin imposed a uniform design code, while Beijing allowed a pluralism of styles. [...] In the 1990s, both countries were faced with the possibility of introducing global architectural styles into their city centers, yet Hans Stimmann, the *Baudirektor* for the Berlin Senate, expressly rejected what he presented as the earlier forms of architectural internationalism. [...] In Berlin, the Senate expressed a clear desire to end the process of what was characterized as the imposition of foreign Modernisms, whereas Chinese planners expressly encouraged the incorporation of imported (Post-) Modernisms. [...] Berlin planners presented their critical reconstruction of traditional Prussian architecture as a local defense against globalization."

fragments, debris, and walls of unwanted architectural structures. Both the short film and Thiel's photographs remind us of author Hans Magnus Enzensberger's statement that "a national history assumes the ability to forget everything not in accord with it,"¹³⁸ which as the many German filmmakers and artists attest, is not only true of the oppressive regimes of Germany's past, but also of the New Berlin's attempts to "normalize" and to re-brand itself. In contrast to the photographs of GDR architectural fragments and surfaces, and the gradual disappearance of GDR history from Berlin's new Mitte, the photographs Thiel took of the reconstruction of the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz, express the process of becoming, reminding us of the 1996 marketing campaign "Berlin wird!" (Berlin is becoming), and Andreas Huyssen's much quoted observation, "but 'becomes what'? Instead of a proper predicate, we get a verbal void. Indeed, this phrasing may reflect wise precaution... Nobody seems to know exactly what Berlin will become."¹³⁹ With the filling of its Babylonian voids, the New Berlin became what Sharon Zukin termed a "landscape of power," in which the increasing disappearance of "vernacular spaces" is causing a great deal of contestation and nostalgia.

Perhaps the most utopian conceptual work in the exhibition, entitled "Baut Tatlin" (Build Tatlin, 1993) was by Norbert Kottmann, consisting of a white sign with text and an image of the famous tower, set up on a wooden framework and photographed in the empty voids of Potsdamer Platz, advocating the construction of the un-built tower proposed by the Russian avant-garde architect Vladimir Tatlin in 1919 for a "Monument to the Third International." Tatlin's tower was meant to symbolize a "breakthrough into a new age – albeit a failed breakthrough."¹⁴⁰ Kottmann's sign proposed the tower to be used as the "Parliament Building for the United Nations of Euroasia," thus transforming the yet-to-be-defined open spaces of Potsdamer Platz into a site for architectural and social utopias, and

¹³⁸ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "The Great Migration," *Granta* 42 (winter 1992), 9. Quoted in David Moos "Utopian Construction? The Work of Frank Thiel," 12.

¹³⁹ Robert Hobbs, "Marking Time: Frank Thiel's Photographs," 15, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 109.

simultaneously capturing “something of the sense of social optimism that was generated and became widespread with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, and the accompanying end of the Cold War.”¹⁴¹ Kottmann’s art project demonstrates a great deal of irony, not only proposing to build a monumental structure associated with Soviet communism amidst the future headquarters of Western capitalist corporations, albeit re-purposing it from celebrating communist ideology to housing the UN parliament, but also juxtaposing a tower that was never built with both the temporary emptiness of the site and the towers to be erected here in the next few years. Interestingly, I.M. Pei’s annex to the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* at Unter den Linden includes a glass stairwell structure that resembles Tatlin’s tower.¹⁴² Echoing the appropriation of Potsdamer Platz by the squatters who wanted to proclaim a socialist republic in its voids in Steyerl’s film, Kottmann’s tower also hints at the utopian dreams projected onto this space in the form of a modernist tower of Babel – an ancient symbol of uncompleted building projects and utopian grandeur.

Finally, Tobias Hauser’s 2002 art project, entitled, “Walden am Leipziger Platz” depicted his reconstruction of the legendary wooden cabin of the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau, originally built in 1845 in the woods near Walden Pond, close to Concord, Massachusetts. Dwarfed against the backdrop of the now-completed skyscrapers at Potsdamer Platz, and by the surrounding emptiness at Leipziger Platz, the reproduced cabin underscored the scale and the disconnection of the new skyscrapers from their surroundings. Hauser’s art project coincided with the twenty-first World Congress of Architecture, which was held in Berlin in 2002,¹⁴³ perhaps drawing attention to the discrepancies between the architectural visions of investors and the various utopian dreams of the inhabitants. Both the form and the concept of the wooden cabin are not without hints of nostalgia for a

¹⁴¹ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 109.

¹⁴² German Historical Museum, http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauen/baubilanz/en/deutsches_hist_museum.html (accessed April 2013).

¹⁴³ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 127.

simplicity of time and space, just as the regulation of both was reinstated in the former death strip. The breakthrough into a new age, and a new millennium, seems to have been achieved, as the completed towers (of the capitalist Babylon) attest, yet the fragmented emptiness around them has not yet been filled, and the needs and desires of the inhabitants have not been addressed. The temporary presence of the wooden cabin underscores the paradoxes inherent in this site: the layers of histories, as well as the un-lived utopian desires projected onto this site, can never really be repressed; they merely transform into other forms of longing, such as nostalgia. This nostalgia became more apparent as the construction at Potsdamer Platz was completed. One of the protagonists of *In Berlin* (2009), Peter Schneider, discusses the former emptiness of this space, pointing out the significance of the layers behind the now-completed and commercialized urban spaces.



Norbert Kottmann 1993, and Tobias Hausser 2002

As the art works in this exhibition, as well as several fiction and documentary films, and literary texts attest, Berlin's post-Wall culture has been marked to a great extent by two dominant streams, comprised both of utopian and nostalgic longing. Berlin's re-construction came to be regarded as the "Babylonian chorus of competing opinions" that started with the debates "regarding the future layout of Potsdamer Platz, which had suddenly become the centre of the city again."¹⁴⁴ Potsdamer Platz came to symbolize one of the most contested spaces of the New Berlin. Its re-construction has preoccupied

¹⁴⁴ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), *Berlin 89/09*, 81.

much of the literature,¹⁴⁵ as well as a whole range of documentary and fiction films of the 1990s and 2000s. Moreover, transformations in the nostalgic turn leave us with the question, what does it mean to have a different type of nostalgia – not *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie* – manifested in Berlin culture and documentary films after 2009? One can assert that this nostalgia for Babylon emerged as a reaction to Berlin's rapid gentrification and branding projects. It is also evident that nostalgia has more to do with the present than the past. So, in order to understand it, we have to look at the ways in which Berlin's cultural identity is currently constructed and communicated through urban branding and represented in mainstream culture. By 2009, nostalgia for Babylon began to manifest itself in Berlin documentary films. What these multiple nostalgic turns in Berlin culture tell us about the New Berlin is that the waves of transformation, gentrification, and branding feed and sustain a perpetual sense of longing, and inadvertently point to the un-lived utopian dreams and desires that erupted there during Berlin's Babylonian years. The following three parts of this study provide analysis of Berlin's urban space, branding, and nostalgia, in order to understand the re-construction of Berlin's new, re-branded identity. The next chapter outlines the corpus of documentary films produced in and about post-Wall Berlin, which I categorize into four distinct rubrics that help us understand the ways in which the various transformations in Berlin have been documented and represented.

¹⁴⁵ See Katharina Gerstenberger's chapter on the literary texts that deal with Potsdamer Platz after reunification in *Writing the New Berlin: The German Capital in Post-Wall Literature* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008).

Chapter 2– Post-Wall Berlin Documentary Films

You could have filmed post-war movies in any of those streets.
All those ruined facades with their bullet holes –
you immediately felt you'd been catapulted back several decades.
It had its own special charm. (Cem Ergün-Müller)¹⁴⁶

Indeed, Paul Rotha writes in 1935, because social contradiction and
the technical means of cinema conspire to obscure the truth,
documentary is used to 'express a meaning within a meaning.'
It is impossible even now to separate the critical potential of
documentary from this analytical function. (Johathan Kahana)¹⁴⁷

The Berlin documentary film corpus produced after the fall of the Wall deserves closer attention and examination. Documentary film theorists, such as Bill Nichols, Michael Renov, and Stella Bruzzi, have provided specific categories, or modes, for organizing films within the documentary genre. I apply these categories to post-Wall Berlin documentaries to detect specific patterns of representation. While my study focuses primarily on films that explore questions of space and topography in post-Wall Berlin, I also provide a brief overview of documentary films that portray other facets of life in the reunited city. The growing body of films that take post-Wall Berlin as their primary focus has grown exponentially after 1999, and then again after 2009. This can perhaps be explained by the changes in the city's urban-economic development, as the very act of documenting became a way of making sense of the rapid changes and disappearances witnessed during that time. In a way, documenting can be seen as a way of engaging, preserving, questioning, affirming, and even mourning the transformations evident in the New Berlin. I chose documentary films as the primary objects of inquiry for this study for two reasons. Firstly, documentary films have an immediacy of representation and engagement with the city and its various neighbourhoods, as well as its rapid transformations that very few fiction films and literary works

¹⁴⁶ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland*, 99.

¹⁴⁷ Johathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.

provide. Secondly, the documentaries selected for this study were the first visible evidence of an emerging nostalgia for the pre-gentrified Berlin of the 1990s. Thus, by looking at documentary films and their ways of representation and documentation, we can analyze Berlin's cultural history or urban-economic development and detect certain patterns, such as nostalgic sentiments, unfulfilled desires and longings, unprocessed feelings of loss, as well as elements of future-determination and power struggles that help us understand the underlying forces that make up the New Berlin.

To begin examining Berlin documentary films, I first provide a brief history and theory of the documentary film genre. Carl R. Plantinga traced the origins of the documentary genre to 1914 in his study, *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (1997), explaining that

The term *documentaire* was widely used in France in the 1920s, and Edward S. Curtis used the terms "documentary material" and "documentary works" in relation to moving picture nonfictions as early as 1914. Nevertheless, John Grierson is widely thought to have been the first to use the term "documentary" in English in relation to Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1926) in 1926.¹⁴⁸

According to the British film producer John Grierson's definition, "a documentary was meant to describe things from actual life objectively and realistically – as opposed to the subjectivity of films that represent a fictitious reality."¹⁴⁹ Grierson described documentary film as "the creative treatment of actuality" and summarized his theory in the so-called "first principles," claiming that the documentary must be "dramatic, not merely instructional, in order to promote a common pattern of thought and feeling among audience members," and insisting that the documentary "must have a social purpose, educating the masses and enabling them to better understand their place in society and the public institutions that organize their lives."¹⁵⁰ As Lewis Jacobs summarized in his work, *The Documentary Tradition* (1979),

¹⁴⁸ Carl R. Plantinga, *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 26.

¹⁴⁹ Maartje van den Heuvel, "Mirror of visual culture," in *Documentary Now! Contemporary strategies in photography, film and the visual arts*. Frits Gierstenberg, Maartje van den Heuvel, Hans Scholten, Martijn Verhoeven (eds.) (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 108.

¹⁵⁰ Carl R. Plantinga, *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*, 27.

What has come to be called “documentary” developed slowly over a period of almost thirty years, from 1894 to 1922, emerging finally as an original model distinct from all other types of motion pictures. The documentary film came to be identifiable as a special kind of picture with a clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events, as opposed to staged scenes of imaginary characters and fictional stories of the studio-made pictures.¹⁵¹

Almost immediately after its beginnings, city films began to emerge in the 1920s, with films such as *Man With a Movie Camera* (1927), *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), and *A Propos de Nice* (1930), whose “expressivity” and “artfulness as a function of its purely photographic properties was now allied with the possibilities of editing to create explosive effects – cerebral as well as visceral.”¹⁵² After Walter Ruttmann commissioned an original music score for his *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) from the composer Edmund Meisel, the concept of the “city symphonies” emerged, which combined the “industrial enterprise of the modern city with the classical musical form that demonstrates the capacity to organize and coordinate many individual expressions into a whole.”¹⁵³ Ruttmann’s film is divided into five acts, chronicling the life of the city in the course of 24 hours. It starts with an image of water, followed by a train speeding through the country side, approaching Berlin (we see a sign marking 15km to the city), and arriving at *Anhalter Bahnhof* (we see another sign announcing the destination: Berlin). The film shows different locations, as well as people in various stages of work, leisure, and mobility. The final scenes of Berlin’s nightlife-segment conclude with fireworks, and the final image of the film is the *Funkturm* radio tower with a search light illuminating the sky over the city. To this day, filmmakers documenting Berlin often use elements that Ruttmann introduced, such as the 24-hour format (appropriated by the makers of *24h Berlin* in 2009) or the city symphony genre (*Berlin: Sinfonie einer Großstadt*, 2002), observing “real people and real events”¹⁵⁴ to understand the rhythm, diversity, and the lifestyle patterns of the city.

¹⁵¹ Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition*, Second edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 2.

¹⁵² Michael Renov (ed.), *Theorizing Documentary* (New York, Routledge, 1993), 33.

¹⁵³ Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13-14.

¹⁵⁴ Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition*, 2.

By the 1960s a new style of filmmaking emerged called *cinema vérité*, also known as observational cinema and direct cinema, which deviated from the practices set in motion by the documentary founders, and broke dramatically with “then-standard documentary practices of advance planning, scripting, staging, lighting, re-enactment, and interviewing,” as well as the use of the large, heavy 35mm equipment, in favour of the lighter 16mm technology, made more popular and accessible after its military deployment during the war.¹⁵⁵ Patricia Aufderheide (2007) summarized the advantages of the new film style, highlighting that

Cinema vérité filmmakers took lighter, 16mm equipment into places that had not been seen before—the interiors of ordinary people’s homes, on the dance floor with teenagers, back rooms in political campaigns, backstage with celebrities, on line with strikers, inside mental hospitals—and filmed what they saw. They took huge quantities of filmed footage into editing rooms, and through editing they found a story to tell. They used the innovation of sync (for “synchronized”) sound—for the first time they could record image and sound simultaneously in 16mm— to overhear ordinary conversation, and they mostly did away with narration.¹⁵⁶

Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz noted in their edited volume, *Observational Cinema* (2009), that “the observational turn was part of a more general shift in postwar cinema. Beginning with Italian neorealism and continuing in subsequent decades as a central tenet of documentary practice, the commitment to observation was counter-posed to what had gone before.”¹⁵⁷ They explain that the term “observational cinema” appeared during the 1970s, emerging from a dialogue between anthropologists and documentary filmmakers.¹⁵⁸ Namely, in 1972, when the anthropologist Roger Sandall introduced the term “observational” as a description of a certain kind of documentary; but it was with the publication of an article by Colin Young three years later that “observational cinema” was coined to designate “films that represented a significant break with earlier anthropological approaches toward the

¹⁵⁵ Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*, 44.

¹⁵⁶ Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*, 45.

¹⁵⁷ Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (eds.) *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film and the Exploration of Social Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), x.

¹⁵⁸ Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (eds.) *Observational Cinema*, ix.

recording of social and cultural practice.”¹⁵⁹ Sandall wrote that to “observe” involved “attending to the world – actively, passionately, concretely – while, at the same time, relinquishing the desire to control, circumscribe or appropriate it.”¹⁶⁰ In her study on the *New Documentary* (2006), Stella Bruzzi claims that with the introduction of reality TV shows such as *Big Brother*, which used observational techniques differently than traditional documentaries because of their “emphasis on entertainment, fast editing and the intercutting between alternate stories or personalities, and a prominent voice-over,” observational documentary “has not been rendered obsolete by the advent of more interactive and reflexive modes of non-fiction television and film.”¹⁶¹ Many of the Berlin documentaries discussed in this study employ observational documentary techniques (*Berlin Babylon*, *In Berlin*, and *Mauerpark*), several can be seen as essay films (*Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* and *Die leere Mitte*) and some can be seen as employing the poetic mode (*Cycling the Frame* and *The Invisible Frame*). But before discussing Berlin documentary films in greater detail, it is useful to examine the established modes of documentaries.

Bill Nichols (2010) identified six principal modes of documentary filmmaking.¹⁶² Firstly, he lists the “poetic mode,” which stresses visual and acoustic rhythms, patterns, and the overall form of the film, emphasizing visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages, and formal organization. In this mode, style counts as much as content; the form helps to reveal what the world feels like from a particular perspective. This mode bears close proximity to experimental, personal, and avant-garde filmmaking.¹⁶³ Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann’s film *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (2009), as well as Cynthia Beatt’s two films, *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009) fit this mode with their cyclical, repetitive, and rhythmic structure, slower pace, and

¹⁵⁹ Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (eds.) *Observational Cinema*, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (eds.) *Observational Cinema*, 5.

¹⁶¹ Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary*. Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 120.

¹⁶² Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*. Second Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 31.

¹⁶³ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 31.

contemplative voice-over narrations. Secondly, the “expository mode” speaks directly to the viewer with a voice-over, emphasizing verbal commentary and an argumentative logic. According to Nichols, this is the mode that most people used to associate with documentaries in general, and is commonly found in educational films. None of the films selected for this study employ this mode exclusively. Thirdly, the “observational mode” looks on as social actors go about their lives as if the camera were not present, emphasizing a direct engagement with the everyday life of the subjects. As mentioned above, most films in this study employ elements of this documentary mode. Fourthly, the “participatory mode” allows the filmmaker to interact with his or her social actors and to participate in shaping what happens before the camera, using interviews as a primary mode of narrative, and often coupled with archival footage to examine historical issues. For example, Marco Wilm’s film *Comrade Couture* (2009) fits this mode of documentary, as the filmmaker actively participates in the making, narrating, and documenting practices of his film. The fifth, “reflexive mode” calls attention to the conventions of documentary filmmaking, increasing our awareness of the constructedness of the film’s representation of reality. Graf and Gressmann’s *Der Weg* (2009) employs reflexive elements to question the materiality of the film medium as well as the materiality of urban architecture. And finally, the sixth, “performative mode” emphasizes the filmmaker’s own involvement with a subject, rejecting notions of objectivity in favour of evocation and affect.¹⁶⁴ *Comrade Couture* (2009) has elements of this mode, as the filmmaker is also one of the main protagonists of the film, interacting both with the audience (through voice-over narration) and the other protagonists of the film. Within these six documentary modes, there can also be different styles and categories of films, and one of the most commonly used styles in many of the Berlin films is the “personal portrait documentary,” which, as Nichols points out, privileges the “voice of social actors (people) who speak for themselves rather than as representatives of a cause or issue,” while presenting individuals as “unique, distinctive, mythic, and charismatic,” and relying “heavily on style to engage or

¹⁶⁴ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 31, 149-153.

involve the viewer.”¹⁶⁵ Both *In Berlin* (2009) and *Mauerpark* (2011) are primary examples of this category of films, as well as *Sub Berlin* (2009), *We Call It Techno* (2008), and *24h Berlin* (2009).

The growing corpus of documentary films that take Berlin and Berliners as their focus can perhaps be explained by the city’s now widely recognized status as *Schaustelle* (display/spectacle site), which has gradually replaced its 1990s status as *Baustelle* (construction site).¹⁶⁶ Berlin is the place where urban and cultural identities continue to be renegotiated. In terms of scholarship on recent Berlin documentaries, many studies position the films hierarchically, as competing against each other in terms of quality or accuracy, rather than examining them as cultural products within a larger analysis of culture. For example, in his 2011 study of post-reunification film, Nick Hodgkin briefly summarized his criticism of what he calls “successful documentaries,” such as *Berlin – Sinfonie einer Großstadt* (2002) and *Berlin Babylon* (2001) as having “been accused of lacking the critical impetus of the period’s earlier documentaries – Jürgen Böttcher’s *Die Mauer* (The Wall, 1991), Heide Reidemeister’s *Lichter aus dem Hintergrund* (Lights from Afar, 1998) and Hito Steyerl’s *Die leere Mitte* (The Empty Centre, 1998) – and [as] failing to represent a sustained, historically specific reflection of developments within the city’s urban space.”¹⁶⁷ While Hodgkin’s study mentions these few documentary films set in Berlin, he does not provide a detailed analysis of them, but rather focuses on fiction films and the representations of the East after reunification. Barbara Mennel (2004) and Christina Gerhard (2007) examined Hito Steyerl’s film *Die leere Mitte* (1998) and the ways in which it “take[s] marginality to the center of the Berlin Republic.”¹⁶⁸ Janet Ward (2011) highlighted Samira Gloor-Fadel’s documentary film, *Berlin-Cinema*

¹⁶⁵ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 250.

¹⁶⁶ For a detailed discussion of the concepts of *Schaustelle* and *Baustelle* see: Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin: Borders, Space and Identity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 306.

¹⁶⁷ Nick Hodgkin, *Screening the East: Heimat, Memory and Nostalgia in German Film since 1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 132.

¹⁶⁸ Mennel, Barbara. "Shifting Margins and Contested Centers: Changing Cinematic Visions of (West) Berlin." *Berlin: The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital*. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, and Kristie A. Foell (eds.) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004. 41-59), 48. Quoted

(1998), as “an overt homage” to Wim Wenders’ vision of Berlin, in which “we are shown immediate *Wende* footage of children playing along the spaces of the voided *Mauerstreifen*, the ruined landscape where the Wall used to be,” which Ward links to “nostalgia for the unformed spaces left behind by the dismantled Wall.”¹⁶⁹ The film documents reunited Berlin streets, voids, trains, construction, people biking in the voids, and Wim Wenders on location, shooting scenes from his *Wings of Desire* sequel, *Far Away, So Close* (1993) (filming a scene with Otto Sander and Nastassia Kinski inside U-Alexanderplatz). One of the featured shots in the film is a biker riding towards the Brandenburg Gate, from East to West, which at the time was still open to traffic passing through the Gate before the re-construction of Pariser Platz began. The significance of this movement through the formerly inaccessible Gate is also documented in *The Invisible Frame* (2009), in which the protagonist Tilda Swinton enters Pariser Platz through the Brandenburg Gate at the end of her journey, a space that was inaccessible to her twenty-one years earlier in *Cycling the Frame* (1988).

Other articles on Berlin documentaries and the significance of Berlin’s spaces can be found in Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel’s edited volume, *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture* (2010). Similarly, in her chapter from *A Companion to German Cinema* (2012), Julia Knight reminds us that

In 1991 the Goethe-Institute toured a package of [five documentary] films made during the year or so following the opening of the Berlin Wall. *November Days* (Marcel Ophus, 1990), *In the Splendour of Happiness* (Johann Feindt and Helga Reidenmeister, 1990), *Locked Up in Time* (Sybille Schönemann, 1990s), *Last Year in Germany* (Lars Barthel et al., 1990), and *Last Year – Titanic* (Andreas Voigt, 1991). All five films undertook an exploration of East Germany in light of the recent opening of its borders with West Germany. They are informed either by the realization that what was happening during 1989-1990 was history in the making, as it were, and should therefore be documented as it happened and / or by the desire to examine what had happened in order to establish causes and responsibility.¹⁷⁰

in Christina Gerhardt, “Transnational Germany: Hito Steyerl’s Film *Die leere Mitte* and Two Hundred Years of Border Crossings” in *Women in German Yearbook* (Vol. 23, 2007, 205-223), 216.

¹⁶⁹ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 134.

¹⁷⁰ Julia Knight, “German Identity, Myth, and Documentary Film” in Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch (eds.), *A Companion to German Cinema* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, .82-109), 82.

This growing interest in documentary films that portray the transformations in Berlin reveals not only a curiosity, but a deeper need to understand the changes that took place in Berlin since the fall of the Wall. In the last twenty-five years, documentary films became the primary medium to capture and export the visual and narrative representations of these transformations.

While my focus in this study is on specific Berlin documentaries that focus on the topographical and cultural transformations in the city, in the remaining section of this chapter, I divide post-Wall Berlin documentaries into thematic subgroups to provide more insight into the kinds of films produced in Berlin after reunification. Because no comprehensive study of post-Wall Berlin documentary films exists yet, I devised the following categories based on thematic and stylistic patterns evident in the films themselves, guided by the above-mentioned modes of documentary conventions. The post-Wall Berlin documentary film corpus can be organized into four main subgroups, which I label thematically as “topographical documentaries” that deal with the transformations in the city’s urban and architectural landscape; “narrative-portrait documentaries” that represent the new inhabitants of the New Berlin, “documentaries of artistic communities” that document the creative professionals living and working in Berlin; and “Kiez-documentaries” that represent Berlin’s different neighbourhoods (*Kiez*) and communities, as well as their diverse inhabitants.

Topographical Documentaries

The first category that comprises a rich collection of “topographical documentaries” engages with the many social, cultural, and spatial transformations in post-Wall Berlin. Starting with the 1990s, films such as *Die Mauer* (dir. Jürgen Böttcher, 1991) and *Die leere Mitte* (dir. Hito Streyerl, 1998),¹⁷¹ and early 2000s films, such as *After the Fall* (dir. Eric Black, Frauke Sandig, 2000),¹⁷² presented Berlin voids, construction sites, and the elaborate wastelands in the city center left by the dismantling of the Berlin

¹⁷¹ *Die leere Mitte*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffg4EafY7al> (accessed March 4, 2012).

¹⁷² *After the Fall*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHM7cwpYdWE> (accessed February 20, 2012).

Wall. In his study, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (2005), Jeffrey Skoller examined Daniel Eisenberg's film *Persistence: Film in 24 Absences/Presences/ Prospects* (1997), noting that,

Part of the reconfiguring of Berlin as a unified city includes the erasure of much of the evidence of the forced division. Immediately after reunification, statues, monuments, and military installations were dismantled. The empty areas surrounding the Berlin Wall were rebuilt. The film carefully documents such sites in anticipation of the receding and eventual erasure of the period of the city's division. The film attempts to stand as a counter-memory to the construction of whatever master narrative may emerge in the current German effort to reconstitute its national identity as a single unified nation.¹⁷³

Eisenberg's film echoes Sophie Calle's 1996 photographs that captured the missing symbols and removed monuments from Berlin's public spaces. This anticipation of the erasure of traces of division is documented in the films of the 1990s and can also be found in narratives of construction of the New Berlin (such as *Berlin Babylon*), as well as in Cynthia Beatt's narrative of retracement of the Wall in *The Invisible Frame* (2009). Much like *Berlin Babylon*, *After the Fall* documents the voids and construction sites of Berlin at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s. In the film, construction cranes are paired with swarms of birds flying through the empty construction sites and voids of the former death strips, as Brian Ladd narrates,

50,000 new buildings¹⁷⁴ have gone up in Berlin in the last decade. The city has exploded. This is an attempt to catch up after decades in which Berlin was a city in moth balls. After the war and division and the Wall. Before the war, Berlin was the third most popular city in the world. Now it has fewer inhabitants than it did then and it is no-where near the largest city in the world. So what we're seeing is a desire to retrieve what was lost in those decades. [...] The biggest construction site is a former death strip. I remember climbing up the platforms on the Western side of the Wall, and gazing out over the open space that marked the end of things in my Berlin. As open spaces are vanishing now, the Wall has vanished, and sometimes it's hard to imagine that such a thing could have been here.

The motif of climbing up the viewing platform to gaze over the Wall is revisited by Cynthia Beatt's protagonist Tilda Swinton in both *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), while the vanishing open spaces are examined in Dennis Karsten's *Mauerpark* (2011). As Ladd and the filmmakers

¹⁷³ Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 89.

¹⁷⁴ For more current statistics on Berlin's reconstruction, see <http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/> (accessed February 20, 2012).

of *After the Fall* remind us, in the years following reunification, there was a strong desire to forget, and by eliminating the traces of the Wall itself, to repress not only the difficulties of division, but those of reunification as well:

I can't imagine Berlin trying to wipe away entirely that episode of its past, the existence of the Wall, by getting rid of every trace of the Wall. That to me is very much about forgetting, but there is a very powerful desire to forget going on here. On the other hand, how do you preserve the Wall in a way that is meaningful to anybody? You can keep a piece of the concrete there, but that in no way enables visitors to come and sense what it was like to have the Wall through the city, what it was like to have to cross this border, what it was like to have border guards and search lights, and escape attempts, and death in the middle of Berlin. I don't think there is any way to reproduce that except perhaps on a Hollywood film set, and that's something entirely different.

The post-Wall desire to forget the past as portrayed in *After the Fall* (2000) in many ways explains Beatt and Swinton's contemplation of the disappearance of the Wall and all its accompanying structures in *The Invisible Frame* (2009).

Die Mauer (The Wall, 1991), on the other hand, depicts the Berlin Wall around the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz in the months following November 9, 1989. We are shown iconic images of tourists and Berliners chipping away from the Western, graffiti-covered side of the Wall, contrasted with images of industrial machines and construction cranes dismantling and demolishing the cement structure. Key historical moments, such as the official and ceremonial lifting of the first piece of the Wall near the Brandenburg Gate, and the former Pink Floyd member Roger Waters's concert production "The Wall, Live in Berlin,"¹⁷⁵ which was the first international event staged in the no-man's-land of Potsdamer

¹⁷⁵ Based on the music by Pink Floyd from their studio album "The Wall" (1980), the concert, or rock opera, as it was referred to, was conceptualized by Roger Waters, and included musicians such as the Scorpions, Joni Mitchell, Sinéad O'Connor, Brian Adams, Ute Lemper, Van Morrison, Cyndi Lauper and performances by Jerry Hall, Tim Curry, Albert Finney, Rupert Everett, Rundfunkorchester and Chor Berlin. The stage design featured a 25 meter (82 foot) high wall that stretched 80 meters (591 feet) across the stage. Most of the wall was built before the show and the rest was built progressively through the first part of the show. The wall was then knocked down at the end of the show. In front ran a long two lane wide forestage, wide and strong enough to accommodate limousines, motorbikes, military trucks and the Marching Band of the Combined Soviet Forces. As the set designer, Jonathan Park explained in the "Behind the Scenes" footage of the concert DVD, the no-man's-land of Potsdamer Platz had not been utilized since 1945, and had to be mine-searched before the concert. Grenades and Hitler's bunker were excavated, while a remaining piece of the Berlin Wall backstage was used as a security fence. Two construction cranes behind the stage assisted with the maneuvering of the giant puppets of the "teacher" and the "pig" and

Platz on July 21, 1990, are shot from the sidelines. The dismantling of the Wall is shot from the Eastern side, where no official media cameras were set up, and where no crowds were assembled to witness the historic event. “The Wall” concert was shot from the roof top of a near-by residential building, where the chimney cleaners were busy at work, overlooking the massive crowd assembled in the former death strip.



The Wall concert by Roger Waters (*Bundesarchiv*)

The film’s aesthetics combine the techniques of direct cinema (*cinéma vérité*), observing, rather than reproducing action, but at the same time engaging with passers-by when they address the camera directly, which lends the film a participatory mode. The use of archival footage is integrated into the film because at the time of filming it was being projected onto the Wall before its demolition. Thus we have a superimposition of black-and-white archival footage of the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, footage of the many escape attempts, and even archival footage of Nazi Berlin, shown projected onto

two smaller cranes (cherry pickers) were on stage with cameras, foreshadowing the landscape of cranes in Berlin’s skyline and at Potsdamer Platz. With the performance of the song “Another Brick in the Wall” the stage crew began to reconstruct a wall out of over-sized Styrofoam bricks, which makes us question, what does it mean to symbolically rebuild a wall at Potsdamer Platz in 1990 right after the Wall was torn down? Symbolic reconstructions of the Wall are a recurrent theme in Berlin, repeated with the domino Wall pieces during the Festival of Freedom in 2009. For more about the concert, see http://www.rogerwaters.org/about_berlin.html (accessed February 2014).

the soon-to-disappear Wall of 1990. This representation of the Wall as a historical screen, positions it both as an urban palimpsest and a cinematic one. The film becomes a historical record documenting a time and space that no longer exist in the New Berlin. The film also captures the mass euphoria and awe of people in Berlin witnessing history first-hand. It simultaneously transmits and mediates it to those who were not there in person and to the generations to come. Its contemplative and observational style allows the audience to engage with the images, and thus with history, in a significant way, which simultaneously politicizes the aesthetics, and at the same time allows us an alternative view of history – the one not presented on CNN, not narrated by reporters or politicians, not presented for global, instant consumption, but rather is a marginal view from behind the official cameras. The film documents places that are in the process of disappearing. It ends with a slow panning shot of the disjointed, graffiti-covered pieces of the Wall waiting to be shipped off to various parts of the world, sold to amusement parks and museums around the globe. The camera is literally slowly taking leave from the Wall, ultimately allowing it to disappear, while retaining images of it as a historical and cinematic record.

Another key example in this category of topographical documentaries is *Berlin: Sinfonie einer Großstadt* (dir. Thomas Schadt, 2002). Schadt's homage to Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927) was shot in black-and-white, on 35mm film. Reversing Ruttmann's first and last image sequence, Schadt's film opens with images of fireworks at the Gendarmenmarkt, and closes with fireworks and an image of water. Schadt also commissioned music composers Iris ter Schiphorst and Helmut Oehring to create a new score. The city symphony continues as several scholars of post-Wall Berlin have noted,¹⁷⁶ but the subtle replacement of the definite article "der" (of *the*) in Ruttmann's title with the indefinite article "einer" (of *a*) in Schadt's film, invites us to contemplate the very changes that created the New Berlin. Post-Wall Berlin of 2002 is a very different city from that of the roaring 1920s of the Weimar Republic; it is a wounded and broken city; a city in the process of rebuilding itself. It is also

¹⁷⁶ Carol Anne Constabile-Heming (ed.) *Berlin, the Symphony Continues* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

one (“eine”) city again, after the 28 years of enforced division. Schadt gives us snapshots of the city’s transformations and the people who inhabit the emerging New Berlin. In many ways, Schadt’s film can be seen as a precursor to *In Berlin* (2009), in that both films show glimpses of the cultural and political life of the city. For example, Schadt includes images of the Love Parade, a fashion show at Bebelplatz, as well as Chancellor Schröder welcoming Arab delegates to the newly constructed *Kanzleramt*. But unlike the self-narrated portraits of Berliners we get in *In Berlin*, Schadt’s film only gives us visual images of the city’s inhabitants, as well as a few images of voids and construction sites (the Holocaust Memorial is still an empty lot) symbolic of post-reunification Berlin. Schadt’s privileging of the musical score, the modern symphony, over narratives of the protagonists is significant not only because it adheres to the original city symphony films that were created before the advent and mainstreaming of sound films,¹⁷⁷ but also because it documents the early years of the New Berlin, just after the arrival of the federal government, but before the city was transformed by gentrification and international branding campaigns.

But perhaps the most evocative example in this category of films is *Berlin Babylon* (dir. Hubertus Siegert, 2001), which embodies the quintessential metaphor of a mythological, Babylonian city that anchors my analysis of post-gentrification culture and nostalgia, and which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. Filmed throughout the 1990s, Siegert’s film is almost the opposite of Schadt’s symphony, focusing primarily on the images of voids and construction sites, rather than the vitality and rhythms of the city and its inhabitants, as Schadt’s film does. *Berlin Babylon* presents the city as mostly empty, abandoned, and even ghostly, while Schadt’s film shows people, transportation, social and cultural events, liveliness, and mobility. This comparative view of the two films allows us to recognize Siegert’s film as stylized and aestheticized in a particular way that constructs a metaphor for Berlin under construction, a place quite different from that presented in other documentaries. However, in her

¹⁷⁷ For a history of sound in film, see <http://www.cinematheologymagazine.com/pdf/dion%20sound.pdf> (accessed February 2014).

chapter in *Berlin, The Symphony Continues* (2004), Evelyn Preuss outlined a hierarchical comparison between what she understands as “critical” documentaries of the 1990s,¹⁷⁸ and Siegert’s and Schadt’s films of the early 2000s, which she believes “assume an arresting political acquiescence,” and “abandon the entrenched critique that German film put forward throughout the 1990s.” She claims that both films can be understood as city symphonies, and that both suggest “a harmonization between the depicted historical, social and political contradictions.”¹⁷⁹ Moreover, she believes that “while German films of the 1990s focused on individuals’ perspectives and behaviors, *Berlin Babylon* and *Sinfonie* combine abstraction and fragmentation with myth and metaphor in order to reinvent grand narratives.”¹⁸⁰ Preuss’ understanding of Siegert’s metaphor is rather limited as she links it to “Ruttman’s film through the Babylon topos that dominated Weimar culture and film, and associates [it with] the legendary ‘Babylon’ movie theatre, which opened the same year Ruttman’s symphony was released.”¹⁸¹ As my analysis of Siegert’s film will show in the next part of this study, *Berlin Babylon* is not a city symphony, and its Babylonian metaphor is much more complex than Preuss’ interpretation would allow.

¹⁷⁸ Evelyn Preuss, “The Collapse of Time: German History and Identity in Hubertus Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001) and Thomas Schadt’s *Berlin: Sinfonie einer Großstadt* (2002)” in Carol Anne Constabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, Kristie A. Foell, *Berlin, The Symphony Continues* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 119-142), 123: “The documentaries that portray Berlin’s urban landscape articulate an even more pronounced critique, as they directly address the post-unification debates. In his 1991 *Die Mauer* (The Wall) Jürgen Böttcher literally projects history – in for of film – onto the Berlin Wall, while he records in real time its dismantling by citizens, tourists and demolition crews. Following a young East German photographer through the wastelands and over the construction sites of Berlin, Helga Reidemeister’s 1998 *Lichter aus dem Hintergrund* (Lights from Afar) asks disturbing questions regarding the state of democracy and the perspective of the individual in unified Germany. Similarly, the 1999 *Nach dem Fall* (After the Fall) by Frauke Sandig and Eric Black investigates the significance of the Wall and its vanishing through the perceptions of Berliners and others involved with its history.”

¹⁷⁹ Evelyn Preuss, “The Collapse of Time,” 123.

¹⁸⁰ Evelyn Preuss, “The Collapse of Time,” 135.

¹⁸¹ Evelyn Preuss, “The Collapse of Time,” 136.



Film stills: *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009)

Cynthia Beatt's two films *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), can also be categorized as topographical documentaries, following the protagonist Tilda Swinton as she cycles along the traces of the Berlin Wall in 1988 and then again along its remnants in 2009. The first film draws attention to the materiality of the Wall, including the watchtowers, guards, and graffiti, while the second film highlights the disappearance of all these structures from the New Berlin's topography. In the same vein as Brian Ladd, the author of the much-quoted *Ghosts of Berlin* (1998) does in the documentary *After the Fall* (2000), Swinton moves through Berlin on bicycle, seeking out the physical and emotional remains of the Wall. In Beatt's first film from 1988, the year before the Wall fell, Swinton attempts to understand the "normalcy" of everyday life in West-Berlin in close proximity to the Wall. She climbs up on several viewing platforms along the stretch of the Wall to look over into the East, contemplating watchtowers and border guards, and trying to reconcile the paradox of living next to this artificial, but deadly border. By the time Beatt and Swinton teamed up again twenty-one years later, the Wall had completely vanished and its conceptual re-tracing and re-imagining became the premise for the second film. Both films mix a direct-cinema approach with minimal interference from the filmmaker with a more poetic and essay-film mode, enhanced by Swinton's voice-over narration of her thoughts,

observations, recital of poems,¹⁸² and brief interactions with local inhabitants. As Dirk Verheyen explained, in 1996 the Berlin Senate launched a formal idea and design contest to commemorate the Berlin Wall, entitled *Geschichtsmeile Mauerstreifen* (Historical Mile of the Wall Zone), partly inspired by the Freedom Trail in Boston.¹⁸³ Simultaneously, a hiking and biking trail was designed along the entire 160-kilometer trajectory of the border system, incorporating memorials for the Wall's victims, which was completed in 2005.¹⁸⁴ As Verheyen noted, the project of memorialization of the Wall began even before its disappearance:

Even before its collapse, the Wall had acquired undisputed status as a monument, at least in the West, making its almost complete disappearance perhaps all the more surprising. Yet as an object of souvenir hunters, as a reminder of recent trauma, and as a clear obstacle to the city's infrastructural reunification, its demolition was, in hindsight, all but guaranteed. Today's discussion in Berlin about the Wall as a monument has taken place on at least two levels. On the one hand, there has been controversy over the preservation, if possible, of several segments that are still standing, in the context of the creation of largely formal memorial sites. On the other hand, the years after German reunification have witnessed a lively debate about appropriate methods of memorialization in general, focused on the commemoration of victims, the removal of East German Wall-related memorials, the possibility of marking the former course of the Wall in the city's pavement (*Mauer-Markierung*), the future of the Museum at Checkpoint Charlie, and so forth.¹⁸⁵

The repeated act of cycling along the traces of the Berlin Wall calls to mind both Andreas Huyssen's much-quoted metaphor for Berlin as a palimpsest, as well as the three repeated sequences of Tom Tykwer's Lola running through reunited Berlin, each time learning something new that helps her advance the narrative. In Beatt's films, Swinton stops at the *Oberbaunbrücke*, the border between Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, which was closed for 28 years of division, and which Tykwer's Lola

¹⁸² The end credits of *The Invisible Frame* list the following poets and works: "Gedichte und Gedanken: Tilda Swinton; Cynthia Beatt; Robert Louis Stevenson, *An Apology for Idlers*; William Butler Yeats, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*; Anna Akhmatova, *Untitled*."

¹⁸³ Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories? Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 253.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Cramer, *Berliner Mauer-Radweg* (Berlin: Verlag Esterbauer, 2004). Quoted in Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories*, 253: "Among the key champions of this project has been Michael Cramer, a long-time representative of the Green Party in Berlin's assembly and himself both a bicycle enthusiast and the author of a book about biking along the former Wall trajectory. The decision in favor of this project, co-financed by funds provided by the city, the federal government, and the European Union, and most recently estimated to cost some 4.7 million Euros and slated for completion by late 2005, was made by Berlin's Abgeordnetenhaus in 2001."

¹⁸⁵ Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories*, 206.

symbolically crossed on screens world-wide in 1998. Towards the end of her journey in the first film, Swinton comes across a note on the Wall near the *Gropius Bau* that reads, “Berlin wird Mauerfrei” (Berlin will be wall-less), which it indeed becomes a year later in 1989.



Film stills: *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), Oberbaumbrücke

In *The Invisible Frame* (2009), which premiered at the *Arsenal Kino* at Potsdamer Platz on November 8, 2009, during the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall, Swinton contemplates the disappearance of the Wall, along with its watchtowers, border guards, and the death strip:

All these odds and ends, these bits of walls, watchtowers, binoculars, uniforms and photographs, they are like the archeological remains of some long, long, long dead civilization. Sort of pre-thirteen-hundred. Sort of Byzantine. So far, pre-historic, that there is no way of understanding how it all worked. But it was twenty years ago! Where is it all? Where are the people, the men in these watchtowers? Why must we guess everything? It's all underground, it's like a trap door that was just shut, and a carpet has been rolled over it. Vanished underneath it, acres and acres of shame, unwritten history. Such a bad idea. Everything will come out in the wash. [...] This Wall, this ex-Wall, this manifestation of the ghost Wall. It was here. It felt so much more invisible than it is now. It has my attention in a way that it never did before. One can really taste the brutality of it all, in the way it was built up, because one sees that what divided was just space, just land, just streets, and just people, families, and communities, and a nation.

Beatt and Swinton put the very invisibility of the Wall itself into question. When Swinton climbs up a viewing platform in a field with nothing to view over, we notice that much like the abandoned train tracks she encounters along the way in the first film, the original function of the viewing platform has

disappeared. Later in the film, standing at a crossroad, she holds a map, not knowing which way to go next. “Where am I now?” she asks, “Am I in the East or in the West? Does it matter? Why does it matter? Because it means a history, a point of view, and it means a perspective.” Swinton’s questioning of the space and its representation on the map echoes Doreen Massey’s notion that space is the “co-constitutive product with relations/interactions [we] are also helping to produce,” which we are “altering a little, moving it on, producing.”¹⁸⁶ Swinton’s own subjective and at times disoriented experience of this transformed space demonstrates Massey’s notion of relationality of space, which I examine in more detail in Chapter 3.



Film stills: *The Invisible Frame* (2009), crossroads

Significantly, Swinton ends her trip by biking through the Brandenburg Gate, and walking her bike to Pariser Platz, which was cut off by the Wall in the first film. In *Cycling the Frame*, Swinton stands facing the Wall in front of the Gate, while tourists are seen on top of the viewing platform next to the Gate, looking over the Wall. In the second film, she bikes through the Gate onto Pariser Platz, and turns to look at the gate from the East side. Beatt and Swinton demonstrate through both films that the Wall’s disappearance does not in fact make it invisible. The theme of disappearing structures is also taken up by Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann in *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (2009), another

¹⁸⁶ Doreen Massey, “Travelling Thoughts,” in *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Angela McRobbie, and Paul Gilroy (London: Verso, 2000, 225-231), 225, 226.

topographical film, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 8 that catalogues the disappearance of old, ruined, and unwanted building in Berlin and the rest of the country.



Film stills: *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), Pariser Platz

Narrative-Portrait Documentaries

In contrast with topographical documentaries, and similar to what Bill Nichols called “personal portrait documentary,” there is a growing rubric of films that can be categorized as “narrative-portrait documentaries” that depict the re-constructed New Berlin through the accounts of both old and new Berliners, and that range from average-length films such as *In Berlin* (dir. Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari, 2009), which I discuss in Chapter 6, to elaborate 24-hour-long collection of portraits of the city’s inhabitants in *24h Berlin* (dir. Volker Heise, 2009). The motif of capturing the city in the span of 24 hours goes back to Ruttmann’s symphony, but in Heise’s real-time format of 1440 minutes of edited segments and portraits in the course of one day there is the advantage of multiple camera and editing teams, including over 400 people who worked on this production on the day of shooting.¹⁸⁷ By following the different protagonists through the course of their day, the film draws on influences from

¹⁸⁷ *24h Berlin* (dir. Volker Heise, 2009) <http://www.zeroone.de/zero/index.php?id=464> (accessed March, 2012).

contemporary reality-TV shows, and may be referred to as what Linda Williams and Stella Bruzzi call the new documentary. This massive collection of observational documentary footage produced by 80 camera teams (including the *Berlin Babylon* director Hubertus Siegert, who shot the Tegel prison segment) was all shot in one day, on September 5, 2008, and then aired on German television (RBB), and subsequently released on eight DVDs in 2009. Twenty years after the fall of the Wall, Berlin was presented as a multicultural, vibrant, and technologically-savvy city, whose very diverse inhabitants go about their mundane and creative daily routines, and range from Mayor Klaus Wowereit, *BILD* editor-in-chief Kai Diekmann, West-German real-estate developer Harm Müller-Spreer, choreographer Sasha Waltz, DJ Paul van Dyk, gallery owner Gerd Harry Lybke, top chef Michael Hoffmann, hat designer Fiona Bennett, prisoner Kurt Lummert, homeless heroin-addict Mario Krüger, a prostitute named Sidney, as well as many other doctors, patients, social workers, police officers, shop-owners, musicians, businessmen, retired and unemployed people. The goal, according to the filmmakers, was to capture an “average day in the life of the city, its people, their daily routine, their hopes and dreams, their defeats and victories, from the outskirts to Mitte, East and West, business people and artists, immigrants and locals. The TV show holds up a mirror to life, as a wide testimony of contemporary reality.”¹⁸⁸ The film’s editing strategies connect otherwise completely unrelated characters into a web of urban protagonists; even the music of one scene carries over non-diagetically into another, thus making a subconscious link between the different narratives. This technique is what Linda Williams described as new documentary, borrowing from feature-film aesthetics to enhance the documentary form and narrative structure.¹⁸⁹

Thus, an impression is created that the many famous and average protagonists are not only connected, but are essential parts of a kaleidoscopic whole. Because the cameras remain so close to the

¹⁸⁸ Original text: “Mit dem Ziel, einen ganz normalen Tag im Leben einer Stadt zu erzählen: die Menschen und ihr Alltag, ihre Hoffnungen und Träume, ihre Niederlagen und Siege. Von den Rändern der Stadt bis in die glamouröse Mitte. Ost und West, Karrieristen und Lebenskünstler, Migranten und Einheimische. Das Fernsehprogramm als Spiegel unseres Lebens, als breit angelegtes Zeugnis unserer Gegenwart.”

¹⁸⁹ Linda Williams, “Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History and the New Documentary,” in *Film Quarterly* (46.3, 1993, 9-21).

protagonists – following them from their homes, through the streets, into their cars, into elevators, to their work, hovering over their shoulders at their desks – we get personal and intimate portraits of their lives. Scenes showing the Mayor on his public appearance appointments at City Hall, at Tegel Airport, and at a party in Tempelhof are linked to those of the DJs in Berlin’s famous night clubs *Tresor* and *Berghain*, and even to the scenes inside the Tegel prison, a brothel, and a gay sex club. Through the smooth editing technique and cross-cutting, the city’s various worlds are woven into one interconnected narrative portrait and presented to the viewer as a homogenous, authentic, up-close representation of Berliners. Like the angels in Wenders’ *Wings of Desire* (1987) who can hear people’s thoughts and follow them about their day, the many different camera teams of *24h Berlin* bring us as close to their protagonists as we can get. This type of constructed proximity, especially when prolonged over 24 hours, creates an illusion of intimacy and coherence, and allows the viewer to develop a relational identification with and emotional attachment to the protagonists. Thus we have a different type of symphony that constructs a narrative and observational representation of many individual expressions into one, reunified whole.

Documentaries of Artistic Communities

Related to the category of narrative-portraits are what can be sub-categorized as observational “documentaries of artistic communities” or of creative individuals living and working in the New Berlin. One example from this category is *Sehnsucht Berlin: The City Named Desire* (dir. By Peter Zach, 2009), which follows several artists, writers, musicians, and other recipients of DAAD stipends set up by the Academy of Arts, through their creative environments.¹⁹⁰ Witnessing their experiences and narratives,

¹⁹⁰ One of the protagonists, Peter Nestler (first director of the Berlin Artist’s Program at Academy of Arts, which was founded in 1960) remarks: “After the Wall was built, of course, a unique situation arose here. The population became lachrymose, whilst the public indulged in incredible megalomania. Then an old Berliner, Shepard Stone, the international program director of the Ford Foundation, came up with the idea of offering between four and six million of Ford Foundation’s funds for something new. It was intended to compensate for Berlin’s loss of political significance by increasing its cultural significance. But above all it was meant to promote a bridge effect, between

we get their perspective on the city and its cultural landscape. These protagonists are both connected and detached from Berlin and its changing topography. Their exceptional status as artists in residence allows them to engage and disengage with the city as much as they need to. Similarly, *Berlin Song* (dir. Uli M. Schueppel, 2010) is a portrait of musicians from all over the world working in Berlin today, who reflect on their relationship with the city and its transformations. Both films provide the artistic outsiders' point of view on the New Berlin, and their understanding of and (sometimes limited) critical engagement with its identity. Especially in *Berlin Song*, the protagonists are the consumers of the New Berlin brand that has been produced to attract creative talent and cultural capital. Most of the musicians portrayed in the film have come to Berlin around 2005, after the city's urban re-construction was mostly completed, and it began to market itself to the rest of the world as an open, affordable, and creative "place to be."¹⁹¹ Their perception of the city is based solely on this newly constructed image of Berlin as a cultural hub; a city of innovation, opportunity, and freedom for creative expression.

Another example in this sub-category is *Comrade Couture: Ein Traum in Erdbeerfolie* (dir. Marco Wilms, 2009), which documents a reunion of several members of the former East-Berlin (Prenzlauer Berg) underground fashion scene in their attempt to recreate one of their edgy fashion shows. In this film, we are invited to observe the protagonists' quest to find or recreate the no-longer produced materials used in the original fashion show: strawberry foil, used by GDR farmers to cover up strawberry crops, and old-fashioned GDR plastic shower curtains. One of the protagonists, the designer Angelika Kroker, described their fashion style as "an aesthetic of morbidity," and their costume creations as "opportunities to be free."¹⁹² Their stories reveal elements of nostalgia for their make-shift creativity and resilience in times of fabric shortages and STASI surveillance in East Germany during the 1980s. In

East and West Europe. [...] It was good that very famous people from the music scene were here: Elliott Carter, Stravinsky, Penderecki, and Ligeti all came. And they all had a strong effect, they made the program renowned."

¹⁹¹ "Berlin, the place to be" marketing campaign, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Czv087KVYRE> (accessed February 2013).

¹⁹² Marco Wilms, *Comrade Couture: Ein Traum in Erdbeerfolie*, 2009: Angelika Kroker: "Die Kostüme haben ihnen die Möglichkeit gegeben frei zu sein."

the film, director and protagonist Marco Wilms explains that “their dismal performances” celebrated the gradual GDR downfall, and that amid the GDR decay the members of the underground group were young and full of life, just as he was.¹⁹³ We also get a glimpse into the lives of the main protagonists after reunification. One of them, the hairstylist Frank Schäfer contemplates why their former edginess and rebellion has faded after reunification: “Ein Tiger, der im Käfig wohnt, ist viel gefährlicher als ein Tiger im Freien!” (A tiger that lives in a cage is much more dangerous than a free tiger.) Their collective effort to tell their stories of life in the walled-in city, and to recreate one of their artsy happenings, is marked with distinct sentiments of *Ostalgie* – nostalgia for the no-longer existent city, underground culture, and material culture of strawberry foil of East-Berlin that existed and thrived under a repressive regime. Wilms’ concluding remarks reconcile his sentimental longing for a “feeling of the past” with the new creativity of the New Berlin. He says, “Das alte Lebensgefühl kehrte nicht zurück. Dafür fand ich etwas neues, was mich irgendwie ans alte erinnerte. Die nächste Generation hat übernommen. Genauso jung wie wir damals. Und am Ende hatten wir einfach eine geile Party.”¹⁹⁴ The new generation has indeed arrived and is gradually replacing the older, nostalgic one in the creative scenes of the New Berlin.

Other films in this category include *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor* (dir. Tilmann Künzel, 2009), and *We Call It Techno* (dir. Maren Sestro and Holger Wick, 2008),¹⁹⁵ both of which are composed of interviews with various Techno DJs, entrepreneurs, and other members of the Techno scene. Both films narrate the story of Berlin’s reunification and its Babylonian years from the perspective of the newly emerging music and sub-culture. The protagonists of these films have witnessed the fall of the Wall and the early years of post-Wall Berlin, and therefore often express sentiments of longing for the open

¹⁹³ Marco Wilms, *Comrade Couture*: “Im Mitten des DDR Verfalls, waren sie jung und voller Leben. Wie ich.”

¹⁹⁴ Marco Wilms, *Comrade Couture*: “The old life feeling did not return. But instead I found something new, something that reminded me of the old. The next generation had taken over. Just as young as we were then. And in the end we had a great party” (my translation).

¹⁹⁵ *We Call It Techno* (dir. Maren Sestro and Holger Wick, 2008), <http://documentarystorm.com/we-call-it-techno/> (accessed August 2014).

spaces that spurred such creativity, and even nostalgia for the utopian spirit associated with these spaces. I discuss these films in more detail throughout this study and in relations to Dennis Karsten's *Mauerpark* in Chapter 9.

Kiez-Documentaries

Finally, there is a growing number of what can be described as observational "*Kiez-*documentaries," that is, documentaries set in a particular Berlin neighbourhood or community, accompanying several local inhabitants on their daily routines. In his analysis of *Prinzessinnenbad* (*Princess Pool*, dir. Bettina Blümner, 2007), a documentary film set in Kreuzberg, following and observing three teenage female protagonists, Fisher employs Doreen Massey's analysis of space and place, focusing, as she suggests, on "social practices and relations" of space, as well as the "*content*, not the spatial form, of the relations through which space is constructed."¹⁹⁶ Simultaneously, Fisher ties in Linda Williams' analysis of "new documentaries," which, she claims, depart from "the conventional *cinema verité* style of documentary films," to include "various stylistic techniques of feature films and the ways in which they make, and often openly manipulate, meaning."¹⁹⁷ The combined analysis of space (the pool) and the representational medium and style (the new documentary) allow Fisher to map out this public space in Lefebvrian terms of how it is produced and represented. Thus, the local Kreuzberg outdoor pool can be seen as a space of social relations (Massey), constructed by the protagonists who frequent it. Because they constantly return to this space throughout the film, Fisher notes, they enact how spaces are produced "not only by the simple physical space (Lefebvre's "spatial practice") or by planners' imagination of space (Lefebvre's "representations of space"), but also as lived

¹⁹⁶ Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (London: Sage, 2005), 101. Quoted in Jaimey Fisher, "Kreuzberg as Relational Place: Respatializing the "Ghetto": in Bettina Blümner's *Prinzessinnenbad* [Pool of Princessess, 2007]," Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 421-446), 431.

¹⁹⁷ Linda Williams, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History and the New Documentary," in *Film Quarterly* (46.3, 1993, 9-21), quoted in Jaimey Fisher, "Kreuzberg as Relational Place," 426.

“representational spaces” (Lefebvre), or relationally defined place (Massey).”¹⁹⁸ Linking theories of urban space with documentary theory also allows Fisher to examine the way in which both the protagonists and the audience relate to and engage with urban space, as well as the way in which meaning is constructed through repetitive occupation and representation of this space. This engagement with space also becomes significant in *Mauerpark* (dir. Dennis Karsten, 2011), in which the various protagonists filmed in the park over the course of one summer present it as a space of social relations and shape our understanding of this space as socially constructed through their narratives.

Another example is *Neukölln Unlimited* (dir. Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch, 2010), which follows three German-born teenage siblings of Lebanese descent as they search for work to support their family in order to escape deportation. Likewise, *Hasenheide* (dir. Nana Rebhan, 2010) presents various local inhabitants who frequent Neukölln’s public park, and together, through their interwoven narratives, form a kind of alternative community. These documentaries focus on portraits of diverse communities and/or public places (schools, pools, or parks) where the protagonists provide a glimpse into the New Berlin’s multicultural mosaic. Most of the films in this category do not feature any nostalgic elements because their protagonists largely focus on their present situations and environments, on securing a stable and comfortable existence, or on establishing their role in their community. However, *Mauerpark*, which can also be classified as a *Kiez*-documentary, does feature elements of nostalgia for Berlin of the 1990s, and is therefore one of my case studies in the last chapter. The post-Wall Berlin documentary film canon captures the re-construction and re-conceptualization of the New Berlin and allows us to recognize certain patterns and trends better than other media.

With the exception of Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001), the films selected for this study were released after 2009 – an important year in recent German history because it marked the twentieth

¹⁹⁸ Jaimey Fisher, “Kreuzberg as Relational Place: Respatializing the “Ghetto: in Bettina Blümer’s *Prinzessinnenbad* [Pool of Princessess, 2007],” Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 421-446), 435.

anniversary of the fall of the Wall. Throughout that year, Berlin facilitated the staging of many different cultural events, exhibitions, memorial projects, screenings, and public discussions on the experiences of the Wall. This collective self-reflexivity spurred a wave of cultural products, and specifically documentary films, that tackle the various implication of transformation in Berlin since 1989. Many of the documentaries I examine in greater detail in the next chapters came out during the gentrification phase of Berlin's contemporary urban re-development, after the 2006 FIFA World Cup hosted by Germany, after the launch of the "be Berlin" marketing campaign in 2008, and after the sweeping waves of gentrification and real-estate development in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg were set into motion. All these films engage in various ways with Berlin's transformations, its spaces, its history, its Babylonian mythology, and its contested identity. These films document the changes Berlin continues to undergo in its process of becoming a capital, a creative centre, and a globalizing city. In its rapid transformation from the marginality of a *Grenzgebiet* (border zone) to the centrality of a political and cultural capital of reunified Germany, Berlin has been diagnosed with growing and gentrifying too quickly by the filmmakers, architects, and cultural theorists.¹⁹⁹ Jonathan Kahana defined the documentary genre as a "transitional medium," that "carries fragments of social reality from one place or one group or one time to another, and in transporting them, translates them from a local dialect to a lingua franca."²⁰⁰ This understanding of transitioning media, translations, and transitions also echoes Sharon Zukin's understanding of the transformation of vernacular places by the landscape of power. Fittingly, Mark Shiel also identified modern urban space as transitional, and as "more and more defined and

¹⁹⁹ See Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 303.

²⁰⁰ Jonathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work*, 2. "The political force of documentary, whether in the service of reform, repression, or revolution, depends upon its ability to make an experience available for interpretation by an array of institutions and organizations, from government agencies and corporations to political moments and community groups. To put this another way, documentary is an essentially transitional medium: it carries fragments of social reality from one place or one group or one time to another, and in transporting them, translates them from a local dialect to a lingua franca. It collects the evidence of experience in the most far-flung precincts."

experienced in terms of flow.”²⁰¹ It is precisely in this transitional nature of both city spaces and the documentary medium of representation that new and emerging cultural transformations can be identified and analyzed.

²⁰¹ Mark Shiel, “Cinema and the City in History and Theory” in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, Mark Schiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), (London: Blackwell, 2001, 1-19), 11.

PART 2 – Transformations in Berlin’s Topography and Landscapes of Power (1990-1999)

Chapter 3 – Urban Space

It was an incredibly free and creative life.
There was so much space, so much room, so few
limitations imposed upon us from outside,
and we could use everything what surrounded us.
That made is possible for us to experiment to an incredible extent. (Uta Rügner)²⁰²

The key question that guides this part of my study is how we can make sense of the urban-economic transformations of Berlin in light of rapid re-construction and gentrification that took place after the fall of the Wall. To analyze these changes in the city’s fabric, I draw on scholarship on cities, cultures, spaces, scenes, and gentrification by Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Alan Blum, and Sharon Zukin. Since nostalgia in post-2009 New Berlin is a symptom of unprocessed feelings of loss and longing tied to the voids and spaces of Berlin Babylon, as I outlined in the previous chapters, then we need to understand the significance of these spaces, as well as their various representations. We also need to examine the forces that comprise these transformations, which have often been tied to the marketing and branding strategies devised by the Berlin Senate, and which I examine in the third part of this study. This section outlines the physical transformations in Berlin’s landscape, the gentrification process that transformed the Babylonian Berlin into the New Berlin, the various contestations that accompanied this process, as well as the representations of Berlin’s urban transformations in Hubertus Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001). Understanding these spatial transformations requires first and foremost an understanding of space: its conception, creation, use, and representation. Once we understand the meaning associated with these spaces and their transformations, we can also understand the nostalgia associated with them.

²⁰² Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland*, 54.

One of the first theorists to examine space for its own sake was Henri Lefebvre in 1974. In his much quoted book, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre established that space has always been connected with ideology.²⁰³ Thus, almost inevitably, space can easily become a site of conflict and struggle over ownership, practices, uses, and representations, which in the New Berlin has become an almost daily occurrence with various protests and demonstrations against further commercial and real-estate development and gentrification. In fact, the post-reunification history of Berlin is in many ways a history of contested spaces. Lefebvre proposed the premise that “(social) space is a (social) product,”²⁰⁴ which in turn leads him to conclude that space is an occupied entity and if not considered in relation to time, it is an empty abstraction.²⁰⁵ This link between space and time, or space and history, guides my approach to interpreting post-Wall Berlin because we can glean insight from cultural-historical analysis that focuses on specific locations and spaces, such as Potsdamer Platz for example, as illustrated by Hito Steyerl’s film, Inka Bach’s short story, and by the various artists and filmmakers who set out to capture Potsdamer Platz during its transformation. Furthermore, social space, according to Lefebvre, is not constituted by things, it is not a void to be filled with various contents, and it is irreducible to a “form.”²⁰⁶ He believed that social spaces “superimpose themselves upon one another.”²⁰⁷ Hito Steyerl visualized this type of superimposition in *Die leere Mitte* (1998), as she documented the re-construction of Potsdamer Platz, when the voids occupied by squatters were gradually replaced by construction workers and by the *Info-Box* in the mid-1990s, while their claims to the open spaces were quietly suppressed by corporate real-estate development strategies.

²⁰³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Transl. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 44.

²⁰⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26.

²⁰⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 12.

²⁰⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 27.

²⁰⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 86.

Lefebvre divided space into three much-quoted categories. The first category designates the perceived space of materialized “spatial practice of a society,”²⁰⁸ by which he means concrete spaces as they might be studied in geography or cartography.²⁰⁹ The second category deals with conceptualized space, as “representation of space,” that is, space as it is imagined by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers.” Finally, the third category consists of the lived “spaces of representation,” which are “lived through associated images and symbols,” and designate the space of “inhabitants” and “users,” as well as artists, writers, and philosophers.²¹⁰ Significant for all three categories of space is the “dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived space.”²¹¹ Contestations of space in post-Wall Berlin occur at the level of all three modes proposed by Lefebvre,²¹² and it is not surprising that these contestations are represented in many documentary films that make post-Wall Berlin their focal point. Lefebvre also engages with the imaginaries of space, such as “projections, symbols and utopias.”²¹³ Space, according to him, “unleashes desire” in an attempt to “lay claim to an apparently clear field,” but this desire often remains unfulfilled.²¹⁴ As shown in the previous chapters, utopian desires occupied the Babylonian voids and open spaces of Berlin until they were replaced by nostalgia. What the artists, writers, and filmmakers imagined for the newly opened spaces of Berlin in the 1990s is just as significant as what was eventually built there. Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari illustrate this notion in their film *In Berlin* (2009), when the architects of Graft architecture firm discuss their vision for the “Art Cloud,”²¹⁵ a futuristic structure

²⁰⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38-39.

²⁰⁹ Summarized by Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), *Spatial Turns*, 14.

²¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38-39.

²¹¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39.

²¹² See Temenuga Trifonova, “The Production of Space in the Franchise City Film,” in *Space and Culture* (16/1, 60-72, 2013), 61: “The spatial practice of a society (the perceived), its representations of space (the conceived), and its representational spaces (the lived). Representations of space are abstract, unlike representation spaces, which “have an affective kernel” and need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness.”

²¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 12.

²¹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 97.

²¹⁵ Art Cloud, <http://www.designboom.com/architecture/graft-architects-art-cloud-berlin/> and Graft Architecture: http://www.graftlab.com/en_index.htm?f=true#/chr343artcloud (accessed July 2014).

they envisioned to be erected in the space of the former Palace of the Republic – another contested space in post-Wall Berlin – which the Berlin Senate rejected in favour of the *Humboldt Forum*. The desires unleashed by the removal of the Berlin Wall and the voids were often utopian, as portrayed by the squatters in Steyerl's film and by the artists of the "Berlin 89/09" exhibition, and often contradictory to the visualizations of that space conceptualized by urban planners, politicians, and developers, and thus remained largely unfulfilled. Lefebvre explained that "spatial practice regulates life – it does not create it. Space has no power 'in itself,' nor does space as such determine spatial contradictions. These are contradictions of society that simply emerge in space."²¹⁶ Documentary films such as *In Berlin* and *Mauerpark* feature several protagonists who express nostalgic sentiments about the disappearances of certain open spaces in Berlin. This nostalgia can be interpreted as a call for a resolution of such spatial contradictions generated in the re-constructed New Berlin.

I propose a new way of using Lefebvre's spatial theory as a lens for the history of urban and political transformations in Berlin. The divided (pre-1989) Berlin can be interpreted as what Lefebvre called "dominated space," that is "space transformed – and mediated – by technology, by practice."²¹⁷ Dominated space, according to Lefebvre, "realizes military and political (strategic) 'models' in the field," and "does not merely express power – it proceeds to repress in the name of power."²¹⁸ This domination practice was particularly apparent during the Cold War, symbolized by the Berlin Wall and its surveillance structures, the presence and disappearance of which were documented in Cynthia Beatt's two films *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009). In the first film, the protagonist Tilda Swinton contemplates the implication of division both in an urban and a sub-urban setting, as well as the surveillance and border-guarding mechanisms in place. In the second film, she points out the disorientation and transformation of the same spaces after the removal of the Wall, and the paradoxes

²¹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 358.

²¹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 164-65.

²¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 358.

associated with experiencing and inhabiting spaces that used to be dominated by surveillance systems, death strips, and border guards, after all these elements have been removed.

By contrast, post-Wall Berlin (1989-99) or Berlin Babylon, as Hubertus Siegert called it, was marked by voids, empty spaces, construction sites, and make-shift enterprises, and can be seen as the Lefebvrian “re-appropriated space,” which was “put to a use quite different from its initial one”²¹⁹ by artists, filmmakers, writers, and independent entrepreneurs who opened beach bars, galleries, and Techno clubs in the voids. According to Lefebvre, the highest form of appropriation of space is the work of art.²²⁰ Berlin’s East Side Gallery is an example of such artistic appropriation of a former symbol of domination, itself recently under threat of disappearance because of imminent and expanding real-estate development. Its partial tearing down by real-estate developers in March 2013 demonstrated that in the New Berlin “artistic appropriation of space” has in turn been dominated and sometimes even over-turned (as in the case of *Tacheles*) by the “requirements of power”²²¹ and in this case by real-estate capital. One of the most-often interviewed Berlin entrepreneurs, Dimitri Hegemann, the founder of *Tresor* nightclub and a protagonist of both *In Berlin* and *Sub-Berlin*, has been notorious for finding abandoned places in Berlin and turning them into profitable entertainment venues. In both aforementioned films, Hegemann expresses his belief that it is important to preserve both the spaces and the entrepreneurial spirit discovered in the Babylonian voids of the 1990s. Empty space, as Lefebvre explains, “is actually merely a *representation of space*. Space is conceived of as being transformed into ‘lived experience’ by a social ‘subject’, and is governed by determinants which may be practical (work, play) or bio-social (young people, children, women, active people) in character.”²²² This premise underlies Lefebvre’s main argument that “(social) space is a (social) product.” The emptiness of the

²¹⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 167.

²²⁰ David Clarke, “Capitalism Has No More Natural Enemies: The Berlin School” in Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch (eds.), *A Companion to German Cinema* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 134-154), 139.

²²¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 165.

²²² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 190.

Babylonian Berlin, in Lefebvrian terms, is therefore a “representation” of space, and is contingent not only on that particular time and place, but also on its various representations. Thus, the same space may be represented as both “uncivilized” and “barbaric,” as Claudius Seidl described it in his anthologies, and simultaneously as a highly creative space as experienced and narrated by various members of the Techno scene in numerous documentaries. Appropriation of urban space has been referred to as “adaptive recycling” of space, as Richard Lloyd points out in relation to his analysis of the transformations of the Wicker Park neighbourhood in Chicago.²²³ Thus the practice of “appropriating” the voids and empty spaces of Berlin in the 1990s ultimately created contradictions that are then projected onto urban space. The various appropriation practices can be seen in documentary films such as *Die leere Mitte* (1998), *Sub-Berlin* (2009), *In Berlin* (2009), and *Mauerpark* (2011). The nostalgia we are witnessing in Berlin documentaries after 2009 is a way to articulate these spatial contradictions.

Finally, the re-constructed, creative, diverse, and globalizing New Berlin (1999-2009) can be interpreted as a “space of representation,” constituting lived, practised, inhabited space that is portrayed and marketed as a unified entity, with a new, branded identity. I look closely at this period of Berlin’s history in the third part of this study in relation to the Berlin Senate’s urban branding initiatives. Together these distinct historical categories of urban space in Berlin allow us to extrapolate the significance of a shift in the ways urban space is understood and represented – specifically, as it marks a shift from space to place. This is precisely the shift that occurs between the Babylonian Berlin, as represented in Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001) and the New Berlin, as represented in Ballhaus and

²²³ Richard Lloyd, “Neo-Bohemia: Art and Neighborhood Redevelopment in Chicago,” in *Journal of Urban Affairs* (Volume 24, N.5, 2002, pp.517-532), 524. Lloyd borrows the concept of “adaptive recycling” from J. Dickinson, “Monuments of Tomorrow: Industrial Ruins at the Millennium,” in *Critical Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment* (6, 359-380), and elaborates on it, by explaining that, “Historically, artists have proven innovative in their use of space; the spatial practices of artists in New York helped to initiate the market in living lofts and provide a model for similar strategies in Wicker Park. Beyond residence, these spaces become post-industrial sites for capital accumulation, housing boutiques, restaurants, nightclubs, recording studios, and office space for new media enterprises.” Similar practices can be seen in Berlin.

Cappellari's *In Berlin* (2009). This shift marks Berlin's transition from representations of an uninhabitable, empty, or construction-filled *space*, to a lived, inhabited, and practiced *place*.

This is where Doreen Massey's work on the relationality of space becomes very useful. Massey emphasizes the importance of the content of space rather than its form. For Massey, space is defined as something that is constructed through, and that is a "product of interrelations,"²²⁴ because according to her, all spaces "are always constructed out of articulations of social relations."²²⁵ This relationality of space becomes apparent in Berlin documentaries after 2009, where the New Berlin is presented as a practiced and relational space. Unlike Siegert's *Berlin Babylon* (2001), *In Berlin* (2009) focuses precisely on the ways in which Berlin places are socially constructed, animated, and practiced by the creative professionals who inhabit the New Berlin. Massey also takes up Lefebvre's notion of socially constructed space and redefines it as a "web of overlapping networks of social relations."²²⁶ She confirms that space is "the co-constitutive product with relations [and] interactions you are also helping to produce."²²⁷ She explicitly assigns the practice of production of space to the subjects inhabiting it and interacting within it, a process which Ballhaus and Cappellari show in their film by following various creative Berliners on their daily routines. Furthermore, Massey conceptualizes the identity of places as always "temporary,

²²⁴ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9. Quoted in Barbara Kosta, "Transcultural Space and Music: Fatih Akin's *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005), in Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, pp.343-360), 353.

²²⁵ Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," in *History Workshop Journal* (No.39, Spring, 1995, pp.182-92), 183.

²²⁶ John J. Su clarifies Massey's idea of the network, and places it in context with two other spatial theories: "Anthony Giddens identifies the recent interest in the spatial organization of social relations as a feature and consequence of modernity; Fredric Jameson, in contrast, identifies it as a feature of postmodernity and its shift away from modernity's preoccupation with time; Doreen Massey associates it with neither modernity nor postmodernity but globalization. All three concur, however, that the political, social, and economic forces that arise after World War II alter how places are perceived, making it increasingly difficult to define place in terms of "timeless identities" or a stable heritage. Developments in travel, electronic media, and capitalism now mean that locations are shaped more than ever by physically distant forces. As a result, space is increasingly defined as a web of overlapping networks of social relations spread across a broad range of locations, and places represent particular "articulations" of these networks, to use Massey's term." For more, see: John J. Su, *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 20-21.

²²⁷ Doreen Massey, "Travelling Thoughts," in *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Angela McRobbie, and Paul Gilroy (London: Verso, 2000, 225-231), 225-226.

uncertain, and in process,” reminding us that “the description, definition and identification of a place is thus always inevitably an intervention not only into geography but also, at least implicitly, into the (re)telling of the historical constitution of the present.”²²⁸ She sees the identity of a place as resistant to new importations, because “identity is always, and always has been, in process of formation,” even though “the identity of places is very much bound up with the *histories* which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant.”²²⁹ Just as nostalgia is tied to both the past and the present, as well as to identity, so is space. Significantly, Berlin documentaries produced after 2009 engage with similar attributes that Massey identifies as the relational, transitional, and historical nature of space. And it is precisely after this apparent shift in Berlin from space to place, from Berlin Babylon to the New Berlin, that nostalgic sentiments began to surface in relation to Berlin’s most recent history of gentrification.

While scholars such as Manuel Castels (1996) and Saskia Sassen (2001) insist that the “notion of place has become obsolete” in a world that is “increasingly defined by flow of information, transnational capital and people,”²³⁰ Alan Blum examines the notion of place from the point of view of scenes. For Blum, place is not obsolete; he redefines the relationship between the “global and local, the periphery and the center, the public and the private to demonstrate that the city and collective life are not dead.”²³¹ He explains that urban scenes are characterized by their theatricality, transgression, spectacle,²³² performance, as well as volatility, ephemerality,²³³ and impermanence.²³⁴ According to

²²⁸ Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” 190.

²²⁹ Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” 186.

²³⁰ Temenuga Trifonova, “The Production of Space in the Franchise City Film,” 61.

²³¹ Temenuga Trifonova, “The Production of Space in the Franchise City Film,” 64.

²³² Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 174: “If transgression is essential to the scene, it is not a transgressiveness of doctrine but transgression that lies in the nature of performance itself. The scene is transgressive not because it celebrates “countercultural” values or “lifestyles,” or marginal, esoteric doctrines or even subversive philosophies, but because its transgression resides in its exhibitionism and in the spectacle of its claim to mark itself off from the routinization of everyday life.”

²³³ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 168-69.

²³⁴ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 233.

Blum, “the scene has an invariably local character, combining instrumental with ceremonial elements” and by making private experiences public: the scene “is an occasion for seeing and being seen.”²³⁵ Furthermore, he claims that “social space is *theatrical* (insofar as it consists of scenes) and spectacular (insofar as the *anonymity* and *eventlessness* of urban life appear as a *spectacle* to the inhabitant of the city).”²³⁶ Post-Wall Berlin can indeed be interpreted not only as a web of networks of social relations (Massey), but also as a network of scenes, some self-generated, such as the cultural scenes, the various music scenes, and the art scene, while others, such as the media, technology, and start-up scenes were encouraged by initiatives devised by the Berlin Senate. As Claire Colomb found in her research,

The growth in cultural industries in Berlin was largely unplanned, that is, not the outcome of a strategy or of specific policy measures by the Senate. It has been facilitated by the availability of affordable working and living spaces, by a tolerant and liberal culture inherited from the 1970s and 1980s, and fed by pre-existing concentrations of cultural producers, artists and networks of alternative culture (e.g. the techno music scene). As the Berlin Senate became increasingly aware of the role and potential of the cultural industries in the local economy, it began to develop various programmes and policy initiatives to support new business start-ups, inter-firm networking, and encourage ‘creative clustering’ in under-utilized urban spaces. The targeted sectors included Information and Communication Technologies, film, TV and radio, print and digital media, music, fashion, design, art and architecture.²³⁷

These scenes, Blum concludes, “are calculated and reconfigured as opportune occasions for investment and the creation of consumers. Scenes are made and unmade under the insatiable drive for maximizing profit and minimizing loss, the drive of the logic of restricted economy,” in an “attempt to make its creativity profitable.”²³⁸ The interim-use leases that the Berlin Senate gave out in the 1990s and early 2000s to local developers and entrepreneurs to open bars, restaurants, clubs, and cultural centers in Mitte, along the Spree, and in other parts of the city, provided the necessary momentum in the cultural turn, which then set into motion the cultural economy of scenes.

²³⁵ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 171. Quoted in Temenuga Trifonova, “The Production of Space in the Franchise City Film,” in *Space and Culture* (16/1, 60-72, 2013), 62.

²³⁶ Temenuga Trifonova, “The Production of Space in the Franchise City Film,” 62.

²³⁷ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 232.

²³⁸ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 182.

The current debates about scenes and their disappearances in Berlin often focus on Mauerpark, which Dennis Karsten captured in his 2011 documentary. Karsten presents Mauerpark as a scene, reflecting precisely what Blum described as “the nucleus of Bohemian activity,” which is created, and then not only “transformed into opportunities for consumption (“commodified bohemia”) but often domesticated and made over into mainstream activities.”²³⁹ Gentrified Prenzlauer Berg can indeed be interpreted as a “commodified bohemia,” with Mauerpark as the last largely-unregulated public space available for sub-cultural appropriation. Blum’s definition of scenes, as based on their “evolution and decline” because of “their volatility and ephemerality,” and “their inevitable link to fad and fashion,”²⁴⁰ can also be applied to the various representations of Mauerpark. Increasingly, scholars such as Claire Colomb have noted the appropriation of subcultures and scenes into the mainstream cultural capital and branding mechanisms, explaining that,

The transformation of cultural consumption practices has been characterized by mainstreaming of what were previously considered ‘underground’ or ‘sub-cultures’. [...] The possession of ‘subcultural capital’ signals status in the form of ‘hipness’, which is based on a constant renegotiation and extension of the boundaries of legitimate culture to include new, previously illegitimate art and cultural forms (like street art and graffiti). In this context subcultures ‘can no longer be understood primarily as a cultural attack against the mainstream’ or as resistance to a hegemonic culture, but have become ‘niche markers’. [...] In Berlin, this has been exemplified by the gradual integration of the hedonistic techno and club culture, or the gay culture, into the imagery of city marketing campaigns and into the publications of the city marketing and tourism promotion organizations.²⁴¹

In post-Wall Berlin, (sub)cultural scenes appear and disappear in places such as Mauerpark, *Tacheles*, along the Spree, and even at Potsdamer Platz right after the fall of the Wall. The practice of commodifying subcultures, cultural spaces, and scenes is not particular to the New Berlin; Sharon Zukin theorized this process in terms of gentrification and liminality in relation to New York. Both New York and Berlin follow the same patterns in terms of gentrification, and Zukin’s approach is helpful for

²³⁹ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 182.

²⁴⁰ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 167-69.

²⁴¹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 238.

understanding the transformations that were set into motion in *Berlin Babylon*. Blum's conceptualization of scenes is directly related to Zukin's concept of "vernacular spaces."

Building on Lefebvre's conception of space and power relations, Sharon Zukin's study, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (1991) introduces the concepts of "vernacular spaces" and "landscapes of power," both of which stem from "deindustrialization and gentrification," as well as distancing from "production spaces and a movement toward spaces of consumption."²⁴² She uses the term "liminality" to describe a "metaphor for the extensive reordering by which markets, in our time, encroach upon space. On the micro-level, liminality is best reflected in the process by which a landscape of power gradually displaces the vernacular."²⁴³ Such displacement has characterized the New Berlin since its official beginning in 1999. Hubertus Siegert captured the initial beginnings of this process in *Berlin Babylon*, as the spatial voids were being transformed into construction sites. In North American cities, Zukin notes, "in the new era of capital reinvestment in the center, downtown emerges as a key liminal space."²⁴⁴ In Berlin, liminal spaces that have been most affected by gentrification can be found in Mitte, along the Spree, in Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain to name a few; and it is these spaces that have become the focus of many documentary films, including *Berlin Babylon*, *In Berlin*, and *Mauerpark*. Zukin and Lefebvre explained that urban cores survive by transforming themselves, and that they become a high quality consumption product for foreigners, tourists, and people from the outskirts. They survive because of their double role: "as place of consumption and consumption of place."²⁴⁵ Building on that in her analysis of gentrification, Zukin notes that "gentrification takes older cities into a new organization of consumption based on cultural capital."²⁴⁶ Berlin can be seen as a key example of this process, being an "older city" that was frozen in time during the Cold War, and re-constructed and re-

²⁴² Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 269.

²⁴³ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 269.

²⁴⁴ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 195.

²⁴⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*. Transl. and edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 73.

²⁴⁶ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 202.

conceptualised after reunification into a creative centre, taken over by a “market culture, made by real-estate speculators, institutional investors, and big-time international consumers,”²⁴⁷ while maximizing its cultural capital. This transformation becomes particularly apparent when we compare *Berlin Babylon* (2001) and *In Berlin* (2009), which document the transformation from a space of construction (Babylon) to a space of gentrification, creativity, and consumption of culture in the New Berlin.

In *The Cultures of Cities* (1995), Zukin deconstructs the concept of culture, which is traditionally considered to be an antidote to bureaucracy,²⁴⁸ but actually,

Culture is also a powerful means of controlling cities. [...] With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge. The growth of cultural consumption (of art, food, fashion, music, tourism) and the industries that cater to it fuels the city’s symbolic economy, its visible ability to produce both symbols and space.²⁴⁹

As I will demonstrate in the next chapters, branding of urban culture is an essential part of “the business of cities” that drives Berlin’s “symbolic economy.” Moreover, the marketing and branding strategies devised to promote it have contributed to the transformation of Berlin into a cultural and creative centre. According to Zukin, “the symbolic economy features two parallel production systems that are crucial to a city’s material life: the *production of space*, with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings, and the *production of symbols*, which constructs both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity.”²⁵⁰ Both systems are evidently at work in the New Berlin as the city had to increasingly rely on capital investment in real-estate development, while promoting itself as a place that offers commercial, cultural, and historical experiences to visitors and new inhabitants. Zukin argues that “the cultural power to create an image, to frame a vision, of the city has become more important as publics have become more mobile and diverse, and traditional institutions have become

²⁴⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 198.

²⁴⁸ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 1.

²⁴⁹ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 1-2.

²⁵⁰ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 23-24.

less relevant mechanisms of expressing identity. Those who create images stamp a collective identity.”²⁵¹ This is precisely the case in Berlin, as the Berlin Senate under the leadership of Klaus Wowereit, together with Berlin’s *Senatkanzlei für kulturelle Angelegenheiten* (Senate Bureau of Cultural Affairs) and the public-private partnership and marketing agency *Berlin Partners*, have generated a new, creative image for the New Berlin. Moreover, what is unique about Berlin’s rebranding strategy is that it relied heavily on the participation of local inhabitants, who have been repeatedly invited to contribute their success stories to the “be Berlin” marketing campaign – a participatory urban marketing platform – thereby fostering their own sense of belonging in the New Berlin. Zukin claims that “the high visibility of spokespersons, stars, and stylists for culture industries underlines the ‘sexy’ quality of culture as a motor of economic growth,” because “investing in the arts leads to more growth in other areas of the urban economy.”²⁵² Wowereit’s 2003 slogan for Berlin as “poor but sexy” can also be interpreted as the New Berlin’s attempt to mythologize itself as a new and young creative capital. Zukin’s conclusion in her study stresses that

What has changed since 1970 is our understanding of culture and its relation with the city. Earlier, men and women thought of “culture” as an amenity, a beautifying factor, a gloss on public life. [...] But culture today – a secular, generalized, visual culture – is more malleable and more ambiguous. [...] Culture is both a commodity and a public good, a base – though a troubling one – of economic growth, and a means of framing the city.²⁵³

This dual nature of culture as a commodity and a public good is at the very core of the New Berlin’s transformation from its Babylonian past to its creativity-driven present and future.

Finally, in her recent work, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2010), Zukin uses New York as a case study for a paradigm shift from a city of production to a city of consumption.²⁵⁴ A similar shift can be observed in Berlin. She identifies New York as a media center and

²⁵¹ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 2-3.

²⁵² Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 13.

²⁵³ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 112-113.

²⁵⁴ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 221.

“one of the first cities to undergo an extensive branding process, beginning with the Big Apple slogan and the ‘I ♥ New York’ public relations campaign of the 1970s,” and therefore as a “road map for other cities eager for a makeover.”²⁵⁵ Within the process of rebranding, she identifies the loss of authenticity as a major factor, reminding us that “if we don’t confront the question of what we have already lost, how we lost it, and what alternative forms of ownership might keep them in place, we risk destroying the authentic urban places that remain.”²⁵⁶ Many of the protagonists of Berlin documentaries question precisely this type of loss of authenticity in Berlin, for example, in *Mauerpark* (2011), as a result of a branding makeover and excessive gentrification of Prenzlauer Berg. Simultaneously, Zukin explains that “each form of commercial culture constructs a new form of authenticity that anchors the claim of new groups to live and work in that space. Consumers’ tastes, backed by other resources, become a form of power.”²⁵⁷ This type of turn-over of authenticity and assertions of new power can be witnessed in gentrified Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain today, where the former (Eastern) inhabitants claim that they no longer recognize their old neighbourhoods. Michael Nast captured this notion of displacement in the gentrified city in his book *Der bessere Berliner* (*The Better Berliner*, 2009):

Am Kollwitzplatz war alles ruhig, beschaulich, zu bescheiden. Aus irgendeinem Grund hatte ich das Gefühl, neben der Zeit zu sein. Irgendwie ausserhalb. Ich fühlte mich fremd. Ich war ein Berliner mitten in Berlin, in meiner Stadt. In meiner Gegend, die mir einmal ziemlich viel bedeutete, als ich jünger war. Dann begriff ich, warum ich mich hier so fremd fühlte. Ich war nicht mehr im Berliner „Szene-Bezirk“ Prenzlauer Berg. Ich war in einer Kleinstadt, irgendwo im Süden. Vielleicht in Baden-Württemberg. Das war es wohl. Das Gefühl hielt nicht allzu lange an. Aber es reichte schon.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City*, 26.

²⁵⁶ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City*, 27.

²⁵⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City*, 28.

²⁵⁸ Michael Nast, *Der bessere Berliner. Großstadtg Geschichten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009), 126: “At Kollwitz Platz everything was quiet, contemplative, too introspective. For some reason, I had the feeling to be outside of time. Somehow out of it. I felt like a stranger. I was a Berliner in the middle of Berlin, in my city. In my neighbourhood, that used to mean a lot to me once when I was younger. Then I understood why I felt so foreign here. I was no longer in Berlin’s trendy “scene neighbourhood” Prenzlauer Berg. I was in a small town, somewhere in the South. Maybe in Baden-Württemberg. That must have been it. The feeling did not stay too long. But it was enough” (my translation).

Moreover, Nast identified nostalgic sentiments in the childhood memories of his generation who still remember Berlin's dilapidated facades, some of which Siegert documented in *Berlin Babylon*, and who have since witnessed their renovation and gentrification:

Vor einigen Monaten unterhielt ich mich auf einer Geburtstagsfeier mit einer Zweiundzwanzigjährigen, die in Friedrichshain aufgewachsen war. Sie beschwerte sich im Laufe der Unterhaltung, dass immer mehr verfallenen Altbauten ihrer Gegend saniert werden. Durch die Restaurierungen verschwinden mit den verfallenen Fassaden auch viele Anhaltspunkte ihrer Kindheitserinnerungen. Dann sagte sie etwas Bemerkenswertes: „Sie sanieren unserer Gegend einfach die Seele weg.“²⁵⁹

This notion of “losing the soul” of the neighbourhood is akin to what Raul Zelik described in his novel *Berliner Verhältnisse* (*Berlin Conditions*, 2005) as the destructive force of gentrification, by coining the term “kaputtgentrifizieren” (gentrify to destruction).²⁶⁰ This in turn relates to what Zukin described as the crisis of authenticity and the conflict between the corporate city and the urban village:

We experience the conflict between the corporate city and the urban village as a crisis of authenticity. To understand the loss of the city that matters it is important that we take a close look at both historical origins in economic and demographic changes and new beginnings in cultural representations, especially media images and elected officials' rhetoric of growth. It is also crucial to look at the tastes and lifestyles of the upper middle class, for these dominate the cultural representation of cities today.²⁶¹

This is precisely how I approach interpretations of post-Wall Berlin in this study. To understand its urban-economic transformations and the subsequent nostalgic sentiments in Berlin documentary films, I look at its cultural history, media representations, branding and re-development rhetoric, and the lifestyle representations of its new, creative inhabitants. The link between urban redevelopment, branding, and nostalgia becomes increasingly apparent when we look at the representations of spaces and (sub)cultures in the New Berlin and its various neighbourhoods.

²⁵⁹ Michael Nast, *Der bessere Berliner*, 133: “A few months ago at a birthday party I was talking to a 22-year-old who grew up in Friedrichshain. During the conversation, she complained that more and more dilapidated buildings in her neighbourhood were being renovated. With the restorations, not only the broken facades were disappearing, but also many reference points of her childhood memories. Then she said something notable: “They are polishing the soul off our neighbourhood”” (my translation).

²⁶⁰ Raul Zelik's *Berliner Verhältnisse* (München: Heyne, 2007), 55. Quoted in Bastian Heinsohn, “Protesting the Globalized Metropolis: The Local as Counterspace in Recent Berlin Literature” in *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*. Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 189-209), 203.

²⁶¹ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City*, 223.

Just as the New Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg has effectively become a “brand name which can be found in local names, an apartment aesthetic in the interior design of houses, shops and restaurants.”²⁶² Both the New Berlin and neighbourhoods such as Prenzlauer Berg have been transformed into places of consumption, liminal places, and brands. Yet the active branding and marketing strategies in Prenzlauer Berg were initially rejected by its inhabitants in the early 1990s.²⁶³ But with the gradual transformation of the neighbourhood’s nearly 60,000 housing units, most built in the Wilhemine style around 1914,²⁶⁴ and largely deteriorated during the GDR years because of a political decision to withdraw all investment from the area, and because by 1990 10-20% of all housing units were empty and without proper amenities,²⁶⁵ the area was gentrified and commodified in three phases. According to Andrej Holm,

The first phase (1990 to 1995) was characterized by speculation, a property boom, and publically financed modernization. [...] The second phase of urban renewal (1996 to 1999) was characterized by privately financed modernization, tax reductions, and rent regulations. [...] The third and present phase of urban renewal, since 2000, is characterized by privately financed modernization, transformation of rental units into single-ownership dwellings, and displacement.²⁶⁶

Mauerpark (2011), with its expressions of discontent against condo-developers and gentrifiers, takes place during the third phase of development and displacement, after the neighbourhood has been re-branded. It is therefore important to look closely at gentrification and what it signifies in the New Berlin.

²⁶² Matthias Bernt and Andrej Holm, “Exploring the substance and style of gentrification, Berlin’s ‘Prenzlberg’,” in Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge (eds.), *Gentrification in a Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005), 118.

²⁶³ See Claire Colomb *Staging the New Berlin*, 280: “In Prenzlauer Berg, for example, attempts at ‘framing’ particular expressions of local culture for place marketing purposes were opposed by local residents who, in the early 1990s, fought to retain a local festival disliked by the authorities (the *Walpurgisnacht* celebration) and to control the spread of new cafes.”

²⁶⁴ Andrej Holm, “Urban Renewal and the End of Social Housing: The Roll Out of Neoliberalism in East Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg,” in *Social Justice* (Vol.33, No. 3, 105, Privatization and Resistance: Contesting Neoliberal Globalization, 2006, 114-128), 114.

²⁶⁵ Andrej Holm, “Urban Renewal and the End of Social Housing,” 115.

²⁶⁶ Andrej Holm, “Urban Renewal and the End of Social Housing,” 117-118.

The term “gentrification” was coined by the British sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to signal the displacement of a working-class urban population by the middle-class.²⁶⁷ As Matt Bolton summarized,

In the 1970s, this process took hold of New York’s Lower East Side, with galleries and studios flooding into the warehouses and lofts left empty by the city’s industrial decline (and what amounted to the bankruptcy of the city by its financial sector in 1975). Sharon Zukin argued that this amounted to an ‘Artistic Mode of Production,’ which forced out the last vestiges of light-industry in the city, paving the way for a post-Fordist economy of services, real estate and credit-based finance. The issues of class relations, which had underpinned the decline of New York as an industrial city, were in effect swept away by the arrival of a new ‘creative’ economy – an economy that was based as much on the consumption of the ‘artistic lifestyle’, as it was on the actual production of art.²⁶⁸

Similar to New York of the 1970s, the New Berlin adopted the creative economy along with large-scale re-branding and gentrification plans. As Zukin explained, “deindustrialization and gentrification are two sides of the same process of landscape formation: a distancing from basic production spaces and a movement toward spaces of consumption.”²⁶⁹ Andrej Holm defined gentrification as “a process of structural and economic upgrading, during which households with higher incomes displace inhabitant with lower incomes, and which is accompanied by a substantial change in the character and spirit of a neighborhood.”²⁷⁰ Japonica Brown-Saracino (2010) outlined the core debate at the center of contemporary gentrification scholarship as

between those who believe that gentrification is of public benefit and those who argue that such “benefits” are of tremendous cost for long-time residents. Those in the first much smaller camp suggest, that gentrification reversed decades of urban decay reintroducing crucial economic, cultural, social, and institutional resources to central city neighbourhoods (Florida 2002, Freeman 2006). They suggest that gentrification not only benefits gentrifiers but also many individuals who rely on the institutions that gentrifiers help revitalize, such as schools (Freeman 2006). The second camp counters that gentrification disrupts long-time resident’s social and familial networks, severs their ties to important institutions, from health centers to places of worship, and that in many cases it leads to loss of housing and business closure (Chernoff 1980, Zukin 1987).²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Matt Bolton, “Is Art Really to Blame for Gentrification?” Open Democracy, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net> (accessed October 2013).

²⁶⁸ Matt Bolton, “Is Art Really to Blame for Gentrification?” 2013.

²⁶⁹ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 269.

²⁷⁰ Andrej Holm, “Urban Renewal and the End of Social Housing,” 122.

²⁷¹ Japonica Brown-Saracino, *The Gentrification Debates* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 278.

The New Berlin serves as a key example in this debate, as the transition from a post-industrial city of voids to a creative capital continues to redefine the city's identity.²⁷² As one of the most-quoted gentrification scholars, Neil Smith (2002) explained, "gentrification is now a 'global urban strategy' linked to a new globalism and a related new urbanism," in which "neoliberal urban policy now expresses the impulses of capitalist production rather than social reproduction."²⁷³ Claire Colomb identified the turning point in Berlin's urban governance in the 1990s, starting with the leadership of Mayor Eberhard Diepgen and the Grand Coalition government, when a shift occurred towards "entrepreneurial urban politics," which included attraction of external capital and facilitation of private investment in real-estate.²⁷⁴ Berlin inhabitants continue to respond to these changes with protests against development projects such as *Media-Spree*,²⁷⁵ the deconstruction of the Palace of the Republic and the current construction of the *Humboldt Forum*, as well as the protests against the closure of *Tacheles*, *Kiki Blofeld*,²⁷⁶ and *Klub der Republik*, a bar in Prenzlauer Berg which used to house the remaining décor

²⁷² Angela McRobbie's forthcoming book *Be Creative? Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Polity Press) examines the consequences of the decline of social welfare in favour of neoliberal market values in the creative economy, and presents the New Berlin as one of the main case studies.

²⁷³ Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly (eds.), *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 163.

²⁷⁴ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 90: "The coalition between CDU and SPD formed after the Berlin elections of December 1990 governed Berlin for one decade under the leadership of Mayor Eberhard Diepgen. The Grand Coalition was united around a broad consensus to promote Berlin's transformation into a service metropolis of European or even global status. The premises of that vision had been initiated by the SPD in the previous 'Red-Green' coalition, through the decisions made with regard to the redevelopment of Potsdamer Platz as a high-profile business and entertainment district. The new mayor of Berlin explicitly advocated the shift to a new entrepreneurial urban politics, which would prioritize the attraction of external capital, investors and labour force to the city."

²⁷⁵ See Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 294-95: "The mobilization of a wide range of actors under the banner of the 'right to the city' reflects dynamics which have taken place not only in Berlin but elsewhere in Germany. In October 2009, a collective of Hamburg-based artists, musicians and social activists, gathered under the 'right to city' label (*Recht auf Stadt*, 2010), publishing a manifesto entitled '*Not in Our Name, Brand Hamburg*' (NiON, 2010), in which they attacked the city's growth and place marketing oriented policies, in particular the mobilization of the city's sub-cultural life and spaces in the policy narrative on the 'creative city'. The manifesto's publication sparked a lot of attention throughout Germany and beyond, both within the leftist movements and the mainstream media. The manifesto attacks Florida's policy recommendations and explicitly rejects the promotional slogans and images produced by Hamburg's city marketing agency, stating that 'a city is not a brand. A city is not a corporation. A city is a community... We claim our right to the city – together with all the residents of Hamburg who refuse to be a location factor.'"

²⁷⁶ Uwe Rada, "It can't go on like this: Of developers, cooperatives and the politics of housing," Architects Chamber Berlin, (ed.), *Building Berlin: The Latest Architecture In and Out of the Capital* (Berlin: Braun Publishing, 2012, 7-11),

scavenged from the dismantled Palace of the Republic. However, for the inhabitants of its new gentrified neighbourhoods such as Prenzlauer Berg, it is the “nicest place on earth [...] with the best kindergartens, the best schools, the best playgrounds, and the best *caff  latte*,” as Benedikt Goebel (city historian) and Philip Oswald (architect) remarked in an interview published in the “Berlin 89/09” exhibition catalogue.²⁷⁷ *In Berlin* present the views of both sides of the gentrification debate, the creative classes who benefit from gentrification and commodification of Berlin’s neighbourhoods, and the creative pioneers whose establishments, such as *Kiki Blofeld* and *Tresor* have been displaced by the re-constructed and rebranded landscape of power. Having outlined the intersections of space, power landscapes, and gentrification in post-Wall Berlin, I now turn to Hubertus Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001) for a closer examination of the representations of Berlin’s spaces and their transformations from Babylonian voids, to construction sites, and eventually to the rebranded, creative landscape of power.

10: “Spreefeld housing project on a 4,000-square-metre site along River Spree. The legal status of Spreefeld is that of a housing cooperative. [...] But there is one snag: the site of the Spreefeld project was, until last summer, home to the Kiki Blofeld beach bar. The first wave of pioneers, who occupied the long-derelict sites on the banks of the Spree, are now being pushed out to make way for the pioneers of social housing. It just goes to show that even modest development projects produce losers as well as winners. [...] Berlin is expanding, rents are going up, but there is no alternative to the old models of social housing in sight. There is a face-off between the social democratic model, represented by the city-owned housing companies, and private models developed by certain socially committed architects. The city of Berlin is apparently too hard-up to introduce a system of state subsidies for new housing such as that in place in Hamburg, but has also failed to adopt the Munich model, where investors are obliged to make a certain proportion of the apartments they build available as social housing. The result is that people in Berlin are largely left to their own devices.”

²⁷⁷ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), “On the Ruins of the Rome of the Modern Age,” 160. Oswald: “People work in the city and live outside the city in conventional metropolises. However, the reverse is true in Berlin: people live in Berlin and work outside of it, they commute to Hanover, Baunschweig, Cottbus, Frankfurt or Hamburg. [...] This is quite unique.”

Chapter 4 – Berlin Babylon

Berlin was transformed into the Babylon of the world.
Bars, amusements parks, honky-tonks sprang up like mushrooms. (Stefan Zweig)²⁷⁸

We discovered places and gave them a soul with our creative work.
We had everything – apart from money.
Nobody had any of that. But we had ideas. We had dreams. (Jochen Sandig)²⁷⁹

Berlin's allegorical relationship with Babylon – “the greatest of the Mesopotamian cities, called *Babylani*, or ‘the Gate of the Gods,’ the place from which the divinities were believed to have descended to earth”²⁸⁰ – can be traced back well before Hubertus Siegert's 2001 documentary film *Berlin Babylon*, and even well before the turbulent 1920s of the Weimar Republic, when references and comparisons to Babylon began surfacing in literature, film, and advertising.²⁸¹ References to Babylon in Berlin can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth-century's rediscovery of the ancient city of Babylon, constructed around 600 BC, excavated between 1899 and 1917, and installed in Berlin's Pergamon Museum in 1930.²⁸² Stefan Zweig's famous quote about Berlin's transformation into the “Babylon of the world” is in

²⁷⁸ Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964 (1942)), 313.

²⁷⁹ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland*, 85.

²⁸⁰ Joel Kotkin, *The City: A Global History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 5.

²⁸¹ Perhaps most notable example is Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), in which the main protagonist Franz “Bieberkopf is aligned with the immigrant Jews as expatriated ‘inhabitants of Babylon’ (21), introducing the leitmotif of Berlin as latter-day Babylon, a great city under the sign of ruin and expulsion.” (quoted in Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 207).

²⁸² See Joachim Marzahn, *Das Ištar-Tor von Babylon: Die Prozessionsstraße, Das babylonische Neujahrsfest*. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995): Ancient Babylon was known as a holy city, famous for its towers, Hanging Gardens, the processional street and the Ishtar Gate. The city spread over 16 square km. Inside the blue-tiled walls and majestic gates stood the Ziggurat of Babylon, a pyramid-like structure with multiple towers, including the highest tower of Babylon, which according to estimations took about 40 years to construct. The Persian conquest of 539 BCE marked the beginning of the decline of the city. By the time Herodotus visited the city in 500 BCE, he only found the remains of its former glories, and the city continued to decay. In 323 BCE, Alexander the Great planned to rebuild the temple tower of Babylon and ordered the demolition of the original tower. He died before the reconstruction of the new tower could begin. The remains of the temple tower resemble a square ditch-like imprint in the ground where the tower

reference to Weimar Berlin of the 1920s and 30s, but it applies just as much to the post-Wall Berlin of the early 1990s. One hundred years after the excavation of ancient Babylon, the Berlin Wall fell and set in motion unprecedented geo-political changes and mobility, but also massive re-construction of Berlin. We can interpret the excavation of ancient Babylon (1899-1917) and the re-construction of contemporary Berlin (1989-2009) as negative images of each other: the former was to retrace a long-lost ancient civilization; while the latter was to construct a new cultural and political capital out of the ruins of Europe's most contested Cold War zone of the twentieth century. The inscription found on the Ishtar Gate marked Babylon as a "sacred city,"²⁸³ while many Biblical and later literary references also denote it as the city of sin. More than any other European city, Berlin's reputation has been that of a city of decadence, city of terror, city of ruins, as well as the divided city. The practice of rehabilitating or "normalizing" its identity was incorporated into its re-construction and gentrification after Berlin became German capital again. Both Babylon and Berlin have been described as palimpsests;²⁸⁴ both underwent massive re-construction epochs, building layers on top of layers,²⁸⁵ both have been turned into ruins and disappeared under heaps of sand and mountains of rubble; and both have witnessed their respective golden ages and complete downfalls.

Unlike Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), which incorporates narrative and visual allusions to the Biblical Babylon in its portrayal of the dystopian city of Metropolis, a city of towers and hanging gardens, threatened to implode from inside by a revolt of workers seduced by the persuasion and charms of a machine-woman (Great Whore Babylon) conceived by a melancholy scientist, Siegfried's *Berlin Babylon*

once stood, and reveals its diameters. It is estimated to have been 90 meters high. The city's ruins lie in modern Iraq and were damaged by US marines after the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

²⁸³ Joachim Marzahn, *Das Ištar-Tor von Babylon*, 9.

²⁸⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: University Press, 2003).

²⁸⁵ Joachim Marzahn, *Das Ištar-Tor von Babylon*, 29. One of the inscriptions by King Nebuchadnezzar II on the Ishtar Gate of Babylon reads: "Von den Stadtmauern Imgur-Ellil und Nemetti-Ellil waren beide Tore Einfahrten infolge der Aufschüttung der Straße von Babylon immer niedriger geworden. (Deshalb) räumte ich diese Tore ab und legte ihr Fundament unmittelbar gegen das Grundwasser mit Asphalt und Ziegeln und ließ sie selbst aus Ziegeln mit lauterem Blaustein herstellen, auf denen Stiere und Drachen kunstvoll gebildet waren."

establishes a different, more secular, less apocalyptic connection to the ancient city. Siebert gave Babylon a new meaning in the context of post-Wall Berlin. For him, connecting Berlin to Babylon was a way of making sense of the landscape of ruins, voids, construction sites, and the emptiness of Berlin in the 1990s. By grounding his construction images in historical metaphors, archival footage, and cultural allegories, Siebert constructed a narrative around the gradual filling of the voids and no-man's-lands of the Cold War, and thereby created his own interpretation for reunified Berlin. Building on Siebert's metaphor of Berlin Babylon as a place of demolition and re-construction, architectural and historical debates, as well as negotiations of collective identities, I examine the film in relation to Berlin's most contested spaces. In the following chapters, I will emphasize various connections between Siebert's film and other Berlin documentaries that contain either direct or indirect references to *Berlin Babylon*, and extrapolate my argument that the New Berlin is increasingly nostalgic for the pre-gentrified Babylonian Berlin. This part of my study focuses on key spaces that make up the Babylonian Berlin and their representation in Siebert's film.

Throughout the 1990s, Berlin was better known as the largest construction site in Europe.²⁸⁶ Due to the decades of division, dilapidation, and demolition of buildings in close proximity of the Wall much of Berlin's historical center was also a "vacant lot."²⁸⁷ Old, ruined, and abandoned structures like the Reichstag had to be rebuilt, and many new buildings needed to be constructed around the Spree to house the new federal government offices. The vastness of Berlin's empty spaces, quite unusual for an urban, European city, was quickly overcompensated by rapid urban development that flooded the city with construction cranes, workers, and eventually with tourists. Siebert's film documented this period in Berlin's history. By calling it *Berlin Babylon*, he contextualized this particular time of the 1990s not only

²⁸⁶ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, "The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams" in Lily M. Hoffmann, Susan S. Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd (eds.), *Cities and Visitors: Regulating People, Markets, and City Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 201.

²⁸⁷ *Berlin Babylon*, dir. Hubertus Siebert, Philip-Gröning-Filmproduktion, 2001, opening prologue.

within Germany's past, but also within the larger history of world civilizations and urban construction, evoking larger themes of progress and decay, commemoration and innovation, and even the psychological needs for creation and destruction. Babylon in Berlin connotes both the ephemerality of time and the vibrancy of cultural heritage. As many of the musicians, artists, and writers associated with the Techno scene of the 1990s have noted, it also connotes a spirit of transgression, freedom, and creativity,²⁸⁸ made even more luminous when viewed through the lens of nostalgia. What becomes apparent in post-2009 Berlin documentary films is that nostalgia for Babylon is not nostalgia for a unity, community, or a search for "Mitte" that was so significant throughout the 1990s, but a nostalgia for the yet-unclaimed voids of pre-gentrified Berlin of the 1990s. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the concept of the "die leere Mitte" (empty middle)²⁸⁹ was a common metaphor for the gradual and often problematic reunification and re-construction processes that swept over the former East German states and Berlin. In a way, it is nostalgia for the very emptiness that once upon a time was problematic in itself. Babylon stands as a metaphor for pre-gentrified Berlin of the 1990s, onto which a post-gentrification nostalgia has been projected by filmmakers, artists, musicians and writers who have witnessed Berlin's transformation over the past twenty-five years. I examine this type of nostalgia further in the following chapters, but first, in order to understand what this nostalgia entails and why it is directed at this particular time in Berlin's past, we have to examine Siegert's film and the urban spaces he portrayed.

Berlin Babylon was conceptualized, directed, and produced by the Düsseldorf-born, but Berlin-based filmmaker and producer Hubertus Siegert. The film was his first feature-length documentary and was shot in Berlin over four years between 1996 and 2000. It premiered at the *Berlinale* Film Festival in

²⁸⁸ See the memoirs of Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression* (2011), and Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin* (2013), as well as documentary films, such as *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor*, dir. Tilmann Künzel (2009).

²⁸⁹ For more, see: Alexander Osang, *Ankunft in der neuen Mitte: Reportagen und Porträts* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999). Richard Herzinger, *Republik ohne Mitte* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 2001). Michael Kleeberg, *Ein Garten im Norden* (München: dtv, 2001). Franz Walter, *Die Ziellose Republik* (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2006). Christian Petzold (dir.), *Gespenster* (2005); and Hito Streyerl (dir.) *Die leere Mitte* (1998).

February 2001, and had a wide theatrical release in September 2001. The film documents many elaborate construction sites in Berlin's Mitte after the federal government's 1991 decision to move the German capital from Bonn to Berlin. It may be difficult to imagine now, but had Bonn remained the capital of reunited Germany, re-construction and gentrification of Berlin would never have happened so rapidly and on such a large scale; the city would not have accumulated such large debts and would not have needed strategic urban marketing campaigns to attract foreign investors, global capital, and creative talent to generate revenue; and perhaps most significantly, nostalgia for Babylon would not have been set into motion. This nostalgia is precisely a reaction to rapid re-construction and gentrification that Siegert attempted to "slow down"²⁹⁰ and capture in his film. Yet Berlin's Babylonian time of unregulated appropriation and creativity was very short-lived. As Siegert shows, by the mid-1990s construction all across the city was under way; and as the voids and emptiness began to be filled, the Moloch of the global metropolis sprung back into modes of production, consumption, and branding. Siegert's attempt to slow down this construction over-drive was also an attempt to capture the city "without its make-up," before it received its "face lift" and became gentrified.²⁹¹ Siegert called Berlin's rapid re-construction a "Babylonian civilization fable," in which the "fear of emptiness" propelled rational development into restless activity.²⁹² As the filmmaker states on the film website, the Babylonian Berlin was a city caught between the fear of emptiness and the manic need to come to terms with its past.²⁹³ Siegert's cinematic images leave the viewer with the impression that Berlin of the

²⁹⁰ See DVD cover and website, <http://www.berlinbabylon.de/> "Der Film versucht diese überschnelle Epoche zu verlangsamen" (accessed February 2014).

²⁹¹ See DVD cover and website: "Man muss sich beeilen, die Stadt noch ungeschminkt zu erleben, bevor sie ganz geliftet ist – und zugebaut."

²⁹² DVD cover: "Der babylonische Charakter der ganzen Berliner Unternehmung. Es scheint eine Zivilisationsfabel seit Babylon zu sein, dass jeder Zeit Bauherrn, Baumeister und Bauleute bereit stehen, eine als leer empfundene Innenstadt sofort mit Bauwerken jeder Dimension zu füllen. Die Angst vor der Leere steigerte das rationale Geschäftsgebaren der Immobilienbranche in Berlin zu rastloser Tätigkeit."

²⁹³ Film website: "zwischen der Angst vor der Leere und der Vollendungssucht der Vergangenheit überwinden will."

1990s was indeed a “city of voids,”²⁹⁴ an almost uninhabitable space, still-broken and not-yet re-constructed terrain, devoid of the amenities, comforts, and necessities we associate with contemporary global cities. As Janet Ward reminds us,

By the end of the 1990s, Berlin had 300 major construction sites (50 large-scale ones in Mitte alone, the downtown area most obviously affected by real estate’s investment in the East after the fall of the Wall). Real estate speculation caused Berlin office space to expand twenty times. For a while in the 1990s, building volume was at DM 27 billion, essentially making Berlin the largest building site in the world.²⁹⁵

While life in the city’s core in the 1990s could not have been comfortable, these voids have also been spaces of incredible creativity that attracted young artists, designers, musicians, and filmmakers to create the very sub-cultures that make Berlin one of the trendiest creative capitals, which the city marketers have capitalized on today.

Unlike films such as *Sub Berlin* (2009), *Berlin Babylon* does not document or narrate the creation of Berlin’s vibrant sub-cultures that emerged in the 1990s. Rather, Siegert’s camera takes on an observational role, following the architectural and urban-planning debates around the many re-construction projects throughout the city to give us an impression of what the pre-gentrified Berlin looked like. The film is a collage of aerial views shot with a spacecam attached to a helicopter; zoomscapes²⁹⁶ of major construction sites at Potsdamer Platz, the Reichstag, the government buildings at the Spreebogen, the *Hauptbahnhof*, the area around Alexanderplatz, Karl-Marx-Allee, as well as most main streets in Mitte, shot with a steadicam attached to moving streetcars and the *S-Bahn*. These images are combined with close-ups, medium shots, and several panning shots of industrial building materials, insides of dilapidated or abandoned buildings and courtyards in Mitte, *Brandmauern* (fireproof, windowless walls that separated rows of urban apartment buildings), voids, fences, cranes,

²⁹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, “The Voids of Berlin,” in *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 24, No 1, Autumn 1997, .57-81).

²⁹⁵ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 286.

²⁹⁶ Mitchell Schwarzer’s term from his *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004.

scaffolding, graffiti-covered facades and advertising billboards, all shot despite its inflexibility on 35mm film camera, rather than on video, for better visual and cinematic effect.²⁹⁷ It is important to remember that in the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s we are still in the pre-digital age of film, which will become significant in contrast with the newer films, all of which were shot on digital film, except for *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (2009) – an intentional aesthetic and thematic choice. Berlin's Babylonian years of 1989-1999 coincided with the urban marketing campaign "Schaustelle Berlin" (1996-2005) and many of the construction sites shown in Siegert's film also served as temporary exhibition and spectacle sites for tourists. Siegert's camera observes the construction sites as they were, thus capturing the experience of the *Baustelle* (construction site) as it was gradually transformed into the spectacle of *Schaustelle* (exhibition site).

The recurring trope of Berlin as *Baustelle* became a cultural and commercial phenomenon in films such as *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle* (dir. Wolfgang Becker, 1997). Among many literary examples, it has been satirized in Wladimir Kaminer's *Ich bin kein Berliner* (2007), highlighted by his catchy slogan: "Jede Baustelle eine Schaustelle – so nennt man das hier" (every construction site is an exhibition site – that's what it's called here).²⁹⁸ Intercut into Siegert's film are observational scenes portraying architects, urban planners, real-estate developers and Senate politicians discussing their vision of what the New

²⁹⁷ Film website: "Das Berlin Babylon-Konzept der Beobachtung war in der Hektik der Baustelle oft nur schwer umzusetzen, da Großeinstellungen eine extrem ruhige Kamerahaltung verlangen und die kleinen Spulen der Handkamera alle 4 Drehminuten ausgetauscht werden müssen. Es wurde nichts gestellt, nichts konnte wiederholt werden, der Zufallsfaktor spielte entsprechend eine große Rolle. [...] Für den blanken Inhalt des Films wäre Video vielleicht das bessere Medium gewesen, aber die Bilder hätten nicht die Auflösung und Intensität gehabt, die eine riskante Montage fürs Kino braucht. Das war für uns entscheidend. [...] Im Kontrast zu den beobachteten Szenen standen die aufwendig geplanten und choreografierten Stadtbilder wie die Steadycam-Fahrten, Aufnahmen aus der S-Bahn oder der Tram, die spektakulären Flüge mit der Spacecam oder die Aufnahmen von der Spitze des Fernsehturms am Alexanderplatz, in 300 Metern Höhe."

²⁹⁸ Wladimir Kaminer, *Ich bin kein Berliner: Ein Reiseführer für faule Touristen* (München: Goldmann, 2007), 19: "Unzählige Male war Berlin deswegen im Laufe der Geschichte dem Untergang geweiht. Doch nach jedem Brand, nach jeder Zerstörung bauten die Berliner ihre Stadt wieder auf, und zwar immer genauso wie früher. Man nannte das Sanierung. Mit der Zeit entwickelte sich daraus ein regelrechter Wiederaufbau-Tick, den sie bis heute nicht überwunden haben. Die Bauarbeiten dauern das ganze Jahr an und gehören längst zu den festen Sehenswürdigkeiten der Stadt: "Jede Baustelle eine Schaustelle" – so nennt man das hier."

Berlin should be. For the final cut of the film, the 30 hours of material filmed over four years were cut down to 90 minutes in 23 scenes.²⁹⁹ In selecting and editing his scenes, Siegert focused on several iconic spaces throughout the city, such as Alexanderplatz, *Tacheles*, the new government buildings, the Reichstag, Potsdamer Platz, and the Academy of Arts because, at the time, this was where the New Berlin was being forged. Not surprisingly, many of these locations were chosen by the city marketers to be exhibited as “Schaustellen” to the visiting public. By focusing on key locations throughout Berlin’s Mitte, Siegert’s film presents the topography of a city that is being transformed into a landscape of political, economic, and cultural power. According to Siegert, the basic idea for the narrative structure of *Berlin Babylon* was inspired by Arthur Schnitzler’s play *La Ronde* (1897), focusing on the characters, classes, and functions of the people involved and portrayed without any chronological order. Most of the characters are presented twice, allowing Siegert to focus on the question: “are they really making the city, or does a process called ‘city’ make them the professionals they want to be seen as?”³⁰⁰ In her study on *Post-Wall Berlin* (2011), Janet Ward described the Babylonian landscape of 1990s Berlin as follows:

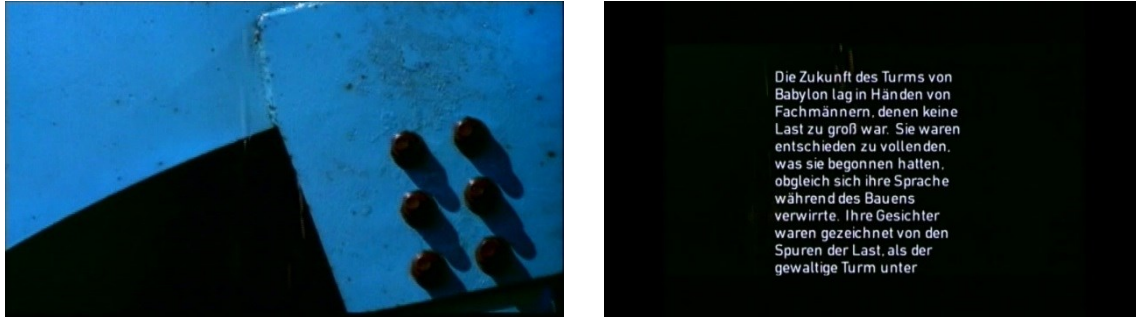
The naked, ruined tracts of land that the dismantled Wall first revealed to the New Berlin amounted to a visually powerful rendering of the psycho-spatial cost of the nation’s unity. These voids certainly served to inspire the reunified city’s obsession with building and becoming, but their first effect was that of creating an inverted topophilia. Reunified Berlin’s obsession with the un-built and the possibilities but not the results of the re-built became a selling-point. It is the spatial version of the *arm aber sexy* (poor but sexy) tagline for the city uttered by Mayor Klaus Wowereit. These disused spaces were not valued as sites of mourning or loss; they gained in significance as sites of play, transformation, danger, and discovery.³⁰¹

By looking closely at these sites, voids, spaces, structures, and *Baustellen*, we can piece together the process of Berlin’s post-Wall re-construction and understand its Babylonian nature, and consequently the nostalgia associated with it.

²⁹⁹ Film website.

³⁰⁰ Email correspondence with Hubertus Siegert, January 27, 2014.

³⁰¹ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 118.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001), opening shot and prologue

The film opens with a dark, industrial background, with drops of water running down onto industrial steel and metal. Names of architects appear on the screen against this backdrop – they are the protagonists of this tale. A prologue re-telling the story of the construction of the Tower of Babel informs us that,

The future of the tower of Babylon was in the hands of craftsmen who were not afraid to tackle a burden of any dimension. They were determined to finish what they had started even though their tongues became confused during construction. Their faces bore the marks of their gruelling ordeal when the mighty tower was completed under Nebuchadnezzar. The tower stood until Alexander the Great seized the city with the same verve as the town's high-spirited builders. He had the Tower of Babylon razed to the ground in order to build a new one. But when Alexander left the building site, it was a vacant lot.³⁰²

Siebert's epigraph draws immediate connection to ancient Babylon evoked in the film's title, to the Biblical story of the confused languages of the construction workers who built the Tower of Babel, to Alexander's unfulfilled ambitions to rebuild the tower, and to the emptiness that remains in its place to this day, which also stands as a metaphor for the voids and "vacant lots" of Berlin of the 1990s. We can infer from this prologue that both ancient Babylon and contemporary Berlin are connected by their layers of history, conquests, and architectural ambitions. Throughout the film, Siebert transfers the theme of confusion due to different languages onto the negotiations and conflicting visions of space in post-Wall Berlin. We are presented with various urban planning debates of that time, such as the future

³⁰² DVD subtitles.

of the Palace of the Republic, the demolition or preservation of GDR architecture, the construction of “architecture of transparency,” as well as the often conflicting visions of the architects within the local urban context. Siebert captures this heteroglossia³⁰³ of the architects, city planners, officials and investors, negotiating what is to be rebuilt and how. The star architects commissioned to rebuild Berlin, such as Renzo Piano, I.M. Pei, Helmut Jahn, Rem Koolhaas, etc. literally all speak different languages, but in the film they are all shown speaking English in public. The other city officials and architects speak German when they articulate their often competing visions for the New Berlin. Inadvertently, they all participate in creating a new literal and visual “language of the city,” which Roland Barthes interpreted in terms of semiology and psychoanalysis,³⁰⁴ but which can also be seen as contributing to the formation of a new identity for the city that has been mediated and branded by the Berlin Senate. This linguistic internationalization of Berlin is an early example of the transformations of the Babylonian city into a new creative centre.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001), Alexanderplatz and TV Tower

³⁰³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. By Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). For more, see <http://www.anthropology.emory.edu/FACULTY/Spitulnik/Linganth/dialogism.html> (accessed February 2013).

³⁰⁴ Roland Barthes, “Semiology and Urbanism,” *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, 191-201), 191, quoted in Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5: “Roland Barthes suggests that psychoanalysis might deserve a place amongst the diverse requirements in the portfolio of the urban semiologists – geography, history, architecture, etc. And he goes on to indicate that the ‘language of the city’ that interests him is to be understood semiotically, like the sign-system of the language of dreams in Freud.”

Following the establishing close-up shot of metal surfaces and the prologue, we then see a helicopter aerial-shot moving towards Alexanderplatz and its TV Tower – Berlin’s well-established and highly marketed urban symbol, perhaps positioned here as its very own Tower of Babel – a shot that was re-created in High Definition in Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari’s *In Berlin* in 2009. Reaching 368 meters high and completed in 1969 in East Berlin, the TV Tower has become a symbol of reunited Berlin, infinitely reproduced for touristic consumption, but simultaneously satirized as a symbol of *Ostalgie*, as for example in Jens Sparschuh’s *Der Zimmerspringbrunnen (Indoor Fountain, 1995)*. The establishing helicopter-shot zooms in on a construction worker on top of the TV Tower looking down onto Alexanderplatz. This first location is also a link to Babylon via Alfred Döblin’s text, which is literally engraved on two buildings there.³⁰⁵ While named after the Russian Tsar Alexander I, Alexanderplatz also carries allusions to Alexander the Great, and thus to Babylon and its demolished tower. Andrew J. Webber summarized the historical significance of Alexanderplatz as follows:

Over the last century, it has been the object of a succession of architectural and topographical remodellings, proposed or actual, with designs from Mies van der Rohe for the 1929 competition, various GDR planning collectives in the 1964 competition, and Daniel Libeskind in 1993. Like Potsdamer Platz, Alexanderplatz was associated from the beginning of the city’s boom-time in the late nineteenth century with the new urban dynamics of change and exchange. It featured one of the earliest Skladanovsky films of Berlin attractions, *Leben und Treiben am Alexanderplatz* (Life and Activity on the Alexanderplatz, 1896), as a crossroad for multiple forms of transport and commercial activity. In its Weimar heyday, as seen in Döblin’s novel, it epitomized the marketplace, Berlin as aspiring capital of capital, as embodied in the palatial Tietz department store; but it also exposed the underside of the market dynamic: criminality and economic depression.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ The quotes from Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* on the facade of the former *Haus der Elektroindustrie*, also known as the Alfred-Döblin-Haus, reads: “Wiedersehen auf dem Alex. Hundekälte. Nächstes Jahr, 1929, wirds noch kälter. (Döblin).” Another quotation reads: “Eine handvoll Menschen auf dem Alex. Am Alexanderplatz reissen sie den Damm auf für die Grundbahn.” For more, see <http://www.bilderbuch-berlin.com/ddr/alexanderplatz/> (accessed August 2013).

³⁰⁶ Also see Andrew J. Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 188-89: “If Berlin is allegorized as the catastrophic biblical city of Babylon – the monstrous fleshpot speaking in tongues and built for a fall – then the Alexanderplatz of the novel’s title, a place of sex and other traffic, of cultural fluidity and linguistic variety, and of constant building, is its allegorical stage, its *Schauplatz*.”

Siegert invites us to partake in the “urban imaginary”³⁰⁷ of Alexanderplatz; to witness it both as “representational” and as “represented space.”³⁰⁸ He shows us panning shots of the view from the top of the TV Tower: the still-intact Palace of the Republic, Old National Gallery and behind it the Pergamon Museum on the Museum Island – Berlin’s cradle of the remains of actual Babylon. In many ways, Berlin carries Babylon within itself, both figuratively, through its legacy of reconstructions, and literally, housing the remains of the Ishtar Gate and the Processional Street inside the Pergamon Museum. We also see Alexanderplatz, the Volksbühne, the *S-Bahn* station Hackescher Markt next to a construction site void across from the Hackesche Höfe. We are indeed in Berlin’s Babylon; and it is not a particularly inviting place. The colour palette is mostly grey; the weather is damp; the streets are empty; many buildings appear to be abandoned. We are in what Brian Ladd famously deemed the “ghostly city” of reunified Berlin.³⁰⁹ The advantage of starting his narrative from Alexanderplatz, particularly from the top of the TV tower, overlooking Berlin’s “aspiring capital of capital” (Webber) in Mitte, allows Siegert to visually apply the Babylonian metaphor to Berlin from the first scene. By connecting his metaphor to the images of the Pergamon Museum and the remains of the ancient Babylon housed there, as well as to Weimar’s allegorical Babylonian heritage still engraved at Alexanderplatz, Siegert cements his metaphor with literal and symbolic significance. The stage is set for the protagonists and their narratives to unfold.

³⁰⁷ James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). According to Donald, cities have an urban imaginary, made up of historical, material, and textual representations.

³⁰⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33.

³⁰⁹ Brian Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin* (Chicago: University Press, 1997).



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Pergamon Museum, and Chancellery construction site at Spreebogen

The first construction site portrayed is that of the new chancellery, where the architect Axel Schultes is shown at work. We see aerial views of the Spreebogen construction sites of new government quarters, under way since 1991, when Berlin became German capital again. Siegert begins his narrative with this particular construction site because after becoming the future seat of the German government, this space is the landscape of future political power in Berlin. Siegert then shows us more aerial views of Berlin's yet-unreconstructed Mitte, at Unter den Linden, the Opera, Humboldt University, and the still-intact Palace of the Republic. The streets are largely empty except for a few parked cars. There is no traffic. There are only very few pedestrians and cyclists. The empty city seems to be de-populated like a ghost town. This is a very different city than the one we know today (as shown in *Mauerpark*, *In Berlin*, and *Sinfonie einer Großstadt*). We see close-ups of facades: chipping paint, graffiti. We see a squat in the city center, of which there are almost none left today, as well as dilapidated staircases and inner courtyards, ghostly, devoid of people. Similar images of architectural ruins awaiting demolition or reconstruction are presented in *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (2009). These are transitional and ephemeral spaces and structures, many of which have been transformed or demolished by now. These are the spaces and structures that made up the Babylonian Berlin. But Siegert's camera remains near the surface of these buildings on purpose. It does not engage with the inhabitants of these ghostly buildings, it does not seek out the underground and counter-cultural scenes that are being established

in those seemingly uninhabitable spaces. Siegert's focus remains on the conceived (representation of) space, rather than the lived and inhabited (represented) ones.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Squat in Mitte and dilapidated, ghostly facades

One of the most contested spaces in post-Wall Berlin was *Kunsthaus Tacheles*, a half-ruined former department store, converted into a cultural center and squat by local artists, who established their studios, a cinema, clubs and cafes – rented from the city, as Siegert's film informs us, for the symbolic amount of 1DM per month. In 1999, Siegert filmed a conversation there between the former Building Senator and Manager of the Development Group Fundus, Wolfgang Nagel, and the City Building Supervisor, Barbara Jakubeit. Through Siegert's observational filmic style, we become privy to their conversation about the future of *Tacheles*. Jakubeit asks the developer about the commercial plans for this block, to which Nagel replies, "it will stay." Both Svetlana Boym and Janet Ward have documented *Tacheles'* gradual transformation and its looming closure over the years.³¹⁰ In her 2001 discussion of Berlin and the ruin of *Tacheles*, Boym remarked that,

³¹⁰ See Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 313-14: "Even the apparent opposite of the new Potsdamer Platz, namely the Kunsthaus Tacheles, has become a victim of its own commodification. Initiated by squatters during the *Wende*, this countercultural arts initiative in a ruined Wilhemian arcade building (the Friedrichstrassen-Passage) on East Berlin's Oranienburger Strasse rose to fame for its alternative installations and performance art and for epitomizing the voice of a more honest engagement with Berlin's disunity. After being purchased by Fundus in 1998, the structure's crumbling, ruinous condition was literally propped up. Fundus planned to turn both Tacheles and the mostly empty city block in which it stands into a massive neo-traditional New Urbanism project by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Prater-Zyberk (better known as the American architects of Seaside, Florida). Fundus wanted to rename this area Johannsiviertel, a mixed-use collection of retail, offices, penthouses and a hotel, all clustered

Tacheles is an inhabited ruin that is already aestheticized, estranged, reimagined. ... The ruin and the self-governing anarchic artistic establishment do not fit into the new Berlin “normalization.” Tacheles is nostalgic for the bohemian island Berlin and for the time when the East dreamed of the West, which in turn was dreaming of the East.³¹¹

Tacheles was at once a ruin of war, a site of memory, an unintentional memorial of division and reunification, a nostalgic manifestation of the alternative culture and artistic communities of the 1990s, as well as a commercial tourist magnet, capitalizing on its own legacy, and a contested protest ground in the battle against commercial gentrification. After years of rumored closure, *Tacheles* was finally forced to shut down in September 2012,³¹² not without massive protests and general discontent by the artistic community and local inhabitants, and protest slogans such as “Ihr habt die ganze Stadt verkauft” (you have sold off the whole city) plastered on the building’s facade.



Tacheles, 2011, by K.Sark

This scene in Siegert’s film is significant, since at the time of filming in the 1990s no immediate demolition threat lingered for two reasons: firstly, the Senate Coalition had not yet been deposed after revealing the massive debts and financial scandals that took place after reunification. Secondly, the

around *flanerie*-inducing courtyards and squares. In late 2008 the decade-long agreement between Fundus and the Tacheles association with its symbolic 1 DM (50 euro cents) rent per month came to an end, and Tacheles became a squat once more.”

³¹¹ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 208.

³¹² See closure of *Tacheles*, September 2012: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjn9sZiS3K8&feature=related> (accessed November 2012).

Senate had not yet developed an effective plan to market the city internationally, and thus no foreign investors were yet interested in buying the land on which *Tacheles* stands.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) *Tacheles*, front and back

Siebert's film shows us the early planning stages, the "exploratory phase" of gentrification and redevelopment of Friedrichstrasse and Oranienburger Straße in the 1990s. As Siebert explains on the film's website, "building in the inner city always has to do with the destruction of the old."³¹³ Sharon Zukin's analysis of contemporary transformation of a city's downtown core is useful here:

In the new era of capital reinvestment in the center, downtown emerges as a key liminal space. [...] Visually the redevelopment process eliminates or incorporates the segmented vernacular into a landscape of power. Since the 1970s, downtown has graphically mapped the forms of social control that we have identified as part of the inner landscape of creative destruction. [...] As downtown expands its landscape of economic power, vernacular landmarks lose meaning and vanish.³¹⁴

Tacheles (a vernacular landmark) and Friedrichstrasse (capital flow) are as close to "downtown" as it gets in Berlin. From an urban governance point of view, *Tacheles* was always considered a temporary or transitional space, a war ruin left abandoned during the years of division, and later occupied by artists.

The landscape of power in Berlin has always consisted of contested spaces – during the Cold War, during

³¹³ Film website: "Mit der Geschichte vom Turm von Babylon als Einstieg in den Film wollte ich diesen Schleier der Erwartung lüften. Wer etwas abreißt, muß erstmal was besseres bauen, und wer auf alte Fundamente baut, muß die Herausforderung bewältigen, die sie aus der Vergangenheit mitbringen. Angesichts des überbordenden Hauptstadt-Marketings schien es mir gut, die Dinge aus größerer historischer Ferne anzugehen. Auch das Benjamin-Zitat ist eine Ecke im Film, um gegen den Routineblick auf das 'Neue Berlin' anzukommen: weil Bauen in einer Innenstadt hat eben immer mit Zerstörung von altem zu tun."

³¹⁴ Sharon Zukin, "Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyland," in *City Reader*, ed. by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, pp. 197-207), 197-98.

the 1968 protests, and after the fall of the Wall – and it continues to either incorporate and transform them (as with Mauerpark and Potsdamer Platz) or eliminate them (as the disappeared traces of the Berlin Wall). Perhaps what is important to remember is that even though Berlin used to be an “island” – cut off from the rest of Western Germany during its division, and in many ways existing with gaps, pockets, and spaces that allowed for creative and alternative existence, it never ceased to simultaneously be a landscape of power. Thus, the only way that places such as *Tacheles* and Mauerpark can survive long-term in the globalized urban economy is by generating real-estate revenue.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Brandenburg Gate on November 8, 1989, and demolition of GDR *Neubauten*

The *Tacheles* sequence is followed by archival images³¹⁵ of the Brandenburg Gate in 1989 with people running through it, climbing on top of the Wall and filling up all of the voids next to it. Almost twice the size of the Ishtar Gate of Babylon, the Brandenburg Gate also channelled many ceremonious processions, ultimately becoming the symbol of reunified Germany on the night of November 9, 1989. Siegert has a keen interest in places that are symbolic both historically and architecturally. Berlin’s new post-Wall history and its nostalgic turn both begin here, with people climbing atop the previously inaccessible Gate. As previously mentioned, this historical site also gained significance in Cynthia Beatt’s two films, *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), both of which open and close with

³¹⁵ This is the first introduction of archival footage in the film. Siegert uses it again at several points in the film to highlight the historical significance of a particular location. In his end titles, he credits the following institutions for providing archival film materials: Archiv der Deutschen Wochenschau GmbH Hamburg; Imperial War Museum London; Landesbildstelle Berlin; Progress-Filmverleih GmbH Berlin.

the Brandenburg Gate. In Siegert's film, the archival footage of the dismantling of the Wall is followed by images of a shredding machine set up to recycle the broken-down slabs. Siegert juxtaposes these shots of the Wall demolition with images of collapsing new buildings – the socialist apartment blocks, as they crumble in slow motion, creating a visual link with the soundtrack provided by the band, whose name, *Einstürzende Neubauten* (Collapsing New Buildings), commemorates this process of systematic demolition in Berlin. In the history of Western architecture, demolition of (intact) buildings usually accompanies large-scale gentrification projects, such as Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris, or some kind of socio-political failure of urban development, as for example, the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis between 1972 and 1976.³¹⁶ In Berlin, *Neubauten* or *Plattenbauten* were the high-rises of Eastern-bloc apartment buildings erected in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s throughout East Berlin, originally considered more innovative than the half-ruined and dilapidated old buildings (*Gründerzeit Mietskasernen*). However after reunification, many of the socialist *Neubauten* were demolished in the 1990s and early 2000s. Berlin's re-construction after the Wall consisted not only of construction sites, cranes, and design of new buildings, but also of the demolition of old, ruined, unwanted ones. This theme of disappearance of traces of division is revisited by the narrator of *Der Weg, den wie nicht zusammen gehen*, who called this disappearance of buildings in Germany "architectural euthanasia."³¹⁷

Among Siegert's protagonists of building directors, urban planners, and politicians, are also international star architects, who have been invited to rebuild and reinvent Berlin's topography. Siegert first introduces I.M.Pei, who became famous for his Louvre Pyramid in Paris, and is shown at the official ceremony marking the expansion of the German Historical Museum, for which Pei designed the new wing with a staircase that resembles Tatlin's tower. Helmut Kohl's presence at the ceremony lends it an official aura of importance. These events mark not only Berlin's gradual transformation, but signal the

³¹⁶ *Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (dir. Chad Freidrichs, 2011), <http://www.pruitt-igoe.com/> (accessed February 2014).

³¹⁷ Dominik Graf, Martin Gressmann, *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen*, in *Deutschland 09: 13 kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*. Herbstfilm Produktion, 2009.

level of importance that architectural transformations play in Berlin's topography and politics. Star architects supply the city and the buildings they design with aesthetic, commercial, and cultural value, thereby elevating the value of the whole district, or sometimes even a whole city, as with Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Zukin explained this phenomenon, noting that

As cities try to lure new capital investment, they refashion their commercial districts by commissioning new buildings and urban plans. [...] Seeking to restore – or create – a vernacular lustre, local interests hire “name” architects, whose reputations should minimize financial risk. [...] Superstar architects create a standardized form that they move from place to place. They also create buildings that look stupendous from a distance – on the city's skyline – but fail to fit in with local “context.”³¹⁸

This strategy of creating buildings designed specifically to *not* “fit in with local context” can be witnessed throughout Berlin's center. Not surprisingly, one of the international architects we meet in Siegert's film is Rem Koolhaas,³¹⁹ commissioned to design the Dutch embassy in Berlin, and quoted in Marc Augé's *Non-Places* (1992) for proclaiming: “Fuck the context!”³²⁰ In the film, Koolhaas³²¹ presents his model for the Dutch embassy while discussing the “Berlin building dogma of the 1990s” that stipulated building restrictions of an intact building-block and building practices according to the principles of “openness and light.” Daniel Purdy (2011) compared Berlin's urban redevelopment with that of Beijing, noting that,

³¹⁸ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 47.

³¹⁹ Siegert includes an interview he conducted with Koolhaas on the film website, <http://www.berlinbabylon.de/medien/Koolhaas.pdf> (accessed August 2013).

³²⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. (New York: Verso, 1992), XVI.

³²¹ See Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 303: “The new Berlin has become for Koolhaas ‘a Chinese city.’ Koolhaas, who knows of what he speaks with his OMA firm's involvement in rapidly designing a new global-urban Asia, believes that any city that builds beyond a certain speed ends up sacrificing a certain form or authenticity. The changes in demographics of Berlin's trendiest and now most transformed Mitte borough reflect this sense of an overnight (American/Chinese) selling-out of its identity. Mitte has traded its former East German locals for the ministerial, chattering, entrepreneurial classes, who are often West German or indeed foreign (of all Berlin's districts, Mitte has the highest proportion of foreigners, at 28.7 percent) – as well as the young subculture-seeking generation, until gentrified rents pushed them away from the new center. [...] Even bohemians get older, however: in 2010, high rents and complaints by family-oriented neighbors prompted Knaack and Magnet, two of Prenzlauer Berg's trademark nightclubs, to move on the better (cheaper) Szene near the Spree river in a still-dingy part of Kreuzberg. Yet the city's enduring poverty in relation to West Germany – with one in five adults and one in three children on welfare, joblessness at its recent ‘Improved’ rate of 14 percent (cushioned by work subsidies, but still nearly double the national rate), and only 13 percent home ownership – makes for a sobering re-grounding of the initial projections for population growth and wealth for building the New Berlin.”

Berlin imposed a uniform design code, while Beijing allowed a pluralism of styles. In the 1990s, both countries were faced with the possibility of introducing global architectural styles into their city centers, yet Hans Stimmann, the *Baudirektor* for the Berlin Senate,³²² expressly rejected what he presented as the earlier forms of architectural internationalism. [...] In Berlin, the Senate expressed a clear desire to end the process of what was characterized as the imposition of foreign Modernisms, whereas Chinese planners expressly encouraged the incorporation of imported (Post-) Modernisms. Berlin planners presented their critical reconstruction of traditional Prussian architecture as a local defense against globalization. [...] The 1990s debate over how to rebuild Berlin Mitte centered on the building codes instituted by the Berlin Senate.³²³

These Senate-regulated building codes are what Koolhaas refers to in the film as “dogma.” In May 1999, a resolution was passed by the Berlin Senate and the House of Representatives that made an inner-city planning and design concept known as *Planwerk Innenstadt* a standard to which inner city Berlin boroughs are obliged to abide in partnership with the Berlin Senate.³²⁴ In the film, we find out that the Dutch Embassy was granted the permission to be built as a freestanding building, thus ignoring the “context.” Koolhaas’ embassy model was presented inside the re-constructed *Parochialkirche* in Mitte, itself a war ruin, appropriated for multi-functional usage. In Siegert’s film it became the location of re-negotiations of future visions for Berlin’s architecture and development. Siegert draws attention to this with mere editing and location choices. The future vision for Berlin is literally conceptualized within its ruins. The Koolhaas scene is juxtaposed with Helmut Jahn’s speech inside the yet-uncompleted Sony Center, at the inauguration of the construction of the Sony dome, in September 1998, in which Jahn talks about a “vision of the forum – a type of city space on the verge of the twenty-first century.” The construction of the Sony Center is not only accompanied by several official ceremonies, but also marketed to tourists in the temporary exhibition space in the *Info-Box*, as part of the “Schaustelle” campaign, which literally placed the yet-uncompleted construction sites on display for local and foreign

³²² Siegert documented State Secretary Hans Stimmann in his film debating the preservation of GDR architecture in Mitte and Friedrichshain.

³²³ Daniel Purdy, “Berlin Mitte and the Anxious Disavowal of Beijing Modernism: Architectural Polemics within Globalization” in Katharina Gerstenberger and Jana Evans Braziel (eds.) *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 249-272), 250, 259.

³²⁴ William J.V. Neill, “Berlin Babylon: The Spatiality of Memory and Identity in Recent Planning for the German Capital,” in *Planning Theory and Practice* (Vol. 6, No.3, September, 2005, 335-353), 340.

consumption, and in which the star architects, Renzo Piano, I.M. Pei, Rem Koolhaas, and Helmut Jahn are all part of the seductive marketing spectacle. This is an example of what Hartmut Häußerman referred to as “festivalization of urban politics.”³²⁵ The different foundation-stone laying ceremonies presented throughout the film signify new beginnings, the process of Berlin’s gradual becoming, and the emerging of the New Berlin.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Palace of the Republic and construction workers

Another highly contested site in post-Wall Berlin was the Palace of the Republic, which at the time of Siegert’s film was still intact. Siegert introduces this site indirectly, by showing us images of construction workers pouring cement on the roof of the new Foreign Ministry,³²⁶ located next to the

³²⁵ Quoted in Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 197-98.

³²⁶ Carol Anne Constabile-Heming, summed up the history of the Foreign Ministry in her chapter “Berlin’s History in context: The Foreign Ministry and the Spreebogen Complex in the Context of the Architectural Debates” in Katharina Gerstenberger and Jana Evans Brazier (eds.) *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 231-247), 241-43: “The *Haus am Werdeschen Markt* became the home of the Federal Foreign Office in 1999. Though considered by many to be “doubly burdened” through its association with both the Nazi and the Communist dictatorships, the building played witness to several important historical milestones. [...] The *Werderscher Markt* remained a center of finance, becoming the seat of the *Preussische Bank* in 1846 and then the *Reichsbank* in 1876. The *Reichsbank* quickly outgrew its original space, and by the end of 1932, planning for its expansion began. [...] in 1933 this was the “first large-scale building project under the direct influence of the Nazi regime.” In 1949, the GDR Finance Ministry occupied the space until the SED Central Committee took over in 1959. From this point until 1989, the building housed the locus of power in the GDR; it was here that domestic and foreign policy decisions were made and regulations impacting everyday life of the GDR citizens were passed. In 1995, the German federal government decided once and for all to locate the Federal Foreign Office in the building. The Berlin architect Kollhoff won the European-wide competition for the renovation contract. [...] Kollhoff sought to make the building’s history an integral part of his design; at all costs, he wanted to avoid suppressing the history. [...] Rooms used by the Foreign Office were kept as they had been during the SED period, including the

Palace, in close-ups and medium shots. The repeated images of craftsmen and construction workers at work echo Ruttmann's city symphony. But Siegart's focus on the materiality of construction, its surfaces, metal, steel, construction equipment, tools, and the physical labour is a break from the city symphonies genre, and presents Berlin in a mix of states, going from manic restlessness, to melancholy emptiness and quiet greyness. The people we see in Siegart's film, both the hands (construction workers) and the brains (architects, developers, and politicians) rarely interact with each other. As Fritz Lang's iconic film suggests, they may be missing the mediator, the heart, which at the time in Berlin's notoriously "empty" Mitte was not easy to find amongst the construction sites and voids. He also chose not to include the construction worker's demonstration against Helmut Kohl's government de-regulations of cheap foreign labour in 1997, captured in Hito Steyerl's film of 1998.³²⁷ Instead, Siegart's camera lingers on the surfaces of the buildings. Siegart's use of archival footage of the war-damaged Berliner *Stadtschloß* (city palace) from 1950 and the footage of its demolition, allows us to perceive the multiple layers of its historical significance. The footage confirms that each regime not only constructs, but also demolishes buildings and spaces as it sees fit. Siegart's images of the *Schloßplatz* in the late 1990s show the *Lustgarten* in front of the Berliner Dom fenced-in under construction; the large parking lot in front of the

Central Committee meeting room. In addition, the transparency effect that the open atrium afforded plays well with the German government's chosen *modus operandi*, namely, that diplomacy is open, not secretive."

³²⁷ For more on the construction workers' protests, see Christina Gerhardt, "Transnational Germany: Hito Steyerl's Film *Die leere Mitte* and Two Hundred Years of Border Crossings" in *Women in German Yearbook*, Vol. 23, 2007, 205-223), 207-208: "The film cuts to shots of a demonstration taking place in contemporary Berlin in 1997 in which German workers and construction labor unions, such as IG BAU, are angry with Chancellor Helmut Kohl for permitting the use of foreign labor to rebuild the Reichstag after reunification, while a high proportion of German construction workers remain unemployed. The present-day German construction workers complain that the foreigners were hired at a fraction of the cost or at the minimum hourly wage. An article published at the time of the demonstrations affirms the film's assertions, pointing out that the foreign construction workers, who were mainly from Greece, Italy, and Portugal, were usually paid 30% less than their German counterparts would have been paid. To be sure, "the protests of the Berlin construction worker are not represented in the dominant discourse around the Potsdamer Platz," as Barbara Mennel argues in her article about *Die leere Mitte*. Steyerl, in her discussion of the contemporary Reichstag, underscores the state's profit-driven use of foreign labor. Yet she not only mentions the construction workers of the contemporary Reichstag, she also weaves in a narrative about the construction of the first Reichstag. She thus presents the viewer not only with present-day examples of xenophobia in the workforce at the Reichstag construction site but also follows this thread back to a similar backlash against foreign labor as a result of the construction of the Reichstag in the late 1890s."

Palace of the Republic is almost empty. Here, Siegert filmed a discussion between the Reconstruction Supervisor Josef P. Kleihues and State Secretary Hans Stimmann about the infamous debate of “Schloß” vs. “Palast.” The immanent demolition³²⁸ of GDR ruins of modernity, just as the demolition of war ruins during the GDR regime, is presented as part of the creation of the New Berlin and mirrors the endless reconstructions of Babylon. The controversy of demolition practices, especially of former GDR buildings, is exemplified by the controversial history of the *Stadtschloß*. As Zukin explained in *Landscapes of Power* (1993),

For a long time, demolition signified improvement. But the destruction in the early 1960s of Pennsylvania Station, a railroad terminal of the grand era whose soaring glass dome was replaced by a mundane office building, dramatized the loss of a collective sense of time that many people felt.³²⁹

The publically-contested de-construction of the Palace of the Republic was a political decision to recreate the historical city center. Ironically, the only surviving piece of the original palace, the balcony from which Karl Liebknecht proclaimed the Communist Republic of Germany in 1918, is mounted on the adjacent building which now houses the European School of Management and Technology at Schloßplatz 1, where the former GDR *Staatsratsgebäude* (Ministry of the Interior) used to be. Siegert, much like Graf and Gressmann in *Der Weg* (2009), is interested in the conflicting discourses of de-construction and re-construction precisely because the ideological parallels are strikingly similar. He

³²⁸ See Robert Hobbs, “Marking Time: Frank Thiel’s Photographs,” 15, 26: “In 1998 [the Palace of the Republic] was stripped to its skeletal core to undergo comprehensive asbestos abatement, which was completed in May 2003. (Earlier Thiel had documented the destruction of the neighboring Palast-Hotel, which also exemplified for him seventies-style East German architecture.) [...] Because tearing down the building and leaving its site as a park would jeopardize the foundations of neighboring structures, the monumental skeletal core, which employed almost all the steel and concrete produced in the GDR during the three years it was built, has remained standing until the demolition of the Palast could be decided by a majority vote of the Bundestag, which was obtained on January 19, 2006. [...] It was within this building that the first freely elected parliament decided in favor of the reunification of Germany.”³²⁸

³²⁹ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyland*, quoted in Nicholas Greco, “The Berlin Wall: Bowie, U2 and the Urban Real,” in *Culture of Cities ...under construction*, ed. by Paul Moore and Meredith Risk (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2001), 94.

invites his audience to pause their gaze on what seems to be a banal image of cement-pouring at the construction site of the new Foreign Ministry, and to contemplate the city's surfaces and materiality.



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001), Potsdamer Platz

Potsdamer Platz before and after its reconstruction plays a significant role in *Berlin Babylon* and *In Berlin*, as well as in other films, literature, and art as shown in the previous chapters. Once Berlin's busiest intersection in the 1920s with the first traffic light in Europe, Potsdamer Platz was turned into an urban desert and a death strip during the Cold War, notable for what was significantly not there,³³⁰ as for example the Café Josty, shown in Walter Ruttmann's city symphony, but destroyed during the war and re-constructed as one of the cafés inside Helmut Jahn's Sony Center. The re-appearance of the re-constructed Potsdamer Platz was continuously deemed unrecognizable, not to mention highly contested, as Knud Kohr noted in his short story "Invalidenstrasse" (2005):

Mir geht es wie dem alten Mann in Wim Wenders' Film *Der Himmel über Berlin*, der über die Einöde der Mauer stolpert und fragt: "Hier war doch mal das Zentrum von Berlin! Wo ist das alles geblieben?" Aber umgekehrt. Denn ich schaue die Fassaden hinauf und denke: "Hier war doch mal der Hund begraben! Wo kommt das alles her?"³³¹

Wim Wenders captured the postmodern wasteland of Potsdamer Platz in his *Wings of Desire* (1987), and along with the famous scene of Homer and Cassiel walking through the voids of Potsdamer Platz,

³³⁰ Brain Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin*, 115.

³³¹ Knud Kohr, "Invalidenstrasse," in *Hauptstadtbuch* (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2005), 85: "I feel like the old man in Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*, who stumbles over the no-man's land around the Wall and asks, "Here used to be the center of Berlin! Where did it all go?" But in reverse: I look up at the facades and think, "Here used to be a wasteland where the dog was buried. Where does all this come from?" (my translation).

Wenders also filmed several scenes inside the Esplanade Hotel's *Kaisersaal* (Imperial hall), which Helmut Jahn incorporated into the structure of the Sony Center, moving it from its original location and encasing it in glass.



Film stills: *Wings of Desire* (1987), and *Potsdamer Platz*

During the massive reconstruction phase in the 1990s, Daimler-Benz agreed to keep the remaining turn-of-the-century building of a former restaurant, the Weinhaus Huth, the only other original building at Potsdamer Platz, in its original place, which the author Peter Schneider draws attention to in one of the scenes of *In Berlin*. After the widow Huth sold the building to the city of West-Berlin in 1967, it was used for social housing until 1989, and then bought by Daimler-Benz in 1990. For decades, the Weinhaus was an oasis of squatters due to its proximity to the Wall, described in Inka

Bach's "Squatters" (1997) as "recognizable from near and far by the small, eight-pillared tower on its roof."³³²



Weinhaus Huth at Potsdamer Platz, *Bildarchiv*

The Weinhaus can be read as another Babylonian relic, adorned with its own small tower, and miraculously preserved through the years. After the Wall, the formerly marginal Potsdamer Platz became central again, and squatters, illegal vendors, punks, prostitutes, and other marginal inhabitants were replaced by corporate executives and construction workers. Bach writes, "these men drive Mercedes, almost all of the cars have an S on the number plate and are in dark colours."³³³ The letter "S" on the licence plates of the new owners of the Weinhaus stands for Stuttgart in Baden-Württemberg, the home of Mercedes Benz and Porsche (and of the current young urban professional inhabitants of Prenzlauer Berg). In her short story, Bach describes the transitory nature of Potsdamer Platz, weaving together its historical, mythological, cinematic pasts with its stark realism:

The time of the Wall on Potsdamer Platz is over. Built-up excess pressure escapes. Construction fences are put up and block the view of the wide lawn. The grass where Curt Bois stood and shouted, 'I can't find Potsdamer Platz. Here – this can't be it!' In summer young couples used to sun themselves between the rubble and the dandelions. A gentleman dressed in white kneeled down in the open, bent over till his forehead touched the ground, facing East, facing Mecca. An older Turkish woman climbed the hazel tree opposite the Philharmonic to gather nuts. The cars with prostitutes from Tiergartenstraße and their clients stopped in the cul-de-sac between Haus Huth and the Staatsbibliothek, where a house once stood at Potsdamer Straße 9, where Theodor Fontane used to live [...] The lindens in front of Haus Huth are protected. They are the only thing that still indicates the old route of Potsdamer Straße, where the

³³² Inka Bach, "Squatters," 113-114.

³³³ Inka Bach, "Squatters," 113-114.

Staatsbibliothek was at right angles. And the traces of the tram tracks which had been covered with sand by the GDR border guards and which have now been laid bare by the wind.³³⁴

Bach describes the Babylonian time at Potsdamer Platz as “in between times,” and the make-shift spaces that appeared in the voids as “in between worlds”; she reminds us of the

Sometimes close to a hundred traders from the East, themselves border-crossers, come over every Friday evening in tiny cars full of wares, which they also sleep in; a lively, animated babble of voices, palavering, haggling in front of the Haus Huth, emptying vodka bottles, suddenly silence, running away when the police vans come, which chase them across the grass, herding them on ahead. A few moments later they are standing in groups back in their old positions. Babushka dolls, ten for twenty marks. After the Polish junk market had to vanish, the remaining groups on a Friday night are also driven away.³³⁵

Similar representations of Potsdamer Platz bazaars and car-habitation from this time can be found in the film adaptation of *Russendisko* (2012), which portrays some of the make-shift communities and spaces created in these voids.

The construction of Potsdamer Platz began in October 1994 on the Daimler side, and in October 1996 on the Sony side. In her short story, Bach provides a description of the beginning of the construction phase and describes the workers’ quarters set up during the early construction years for the foreign guest workers:

Between the blue and yellow containers and the blue and yellow site caravan, the workers; they wear blue and yellow hard-hats. Some of the containers which are stacked up in threes have curtains, behind which there are bed frames, places to sleep for the workers who stay overnight on the building site. Babble of voices, scraps of Polish. There are no pubs, the nearest pizzeria some way away in Stresemannstraße, usually empty.³³⁶

Like Siegert’s film, Bach’s short story presents post-Wall Berlin as a Babylonian space caught in a twilight zone somewhere between history, myth, and reality. But unlike Siegert, who is more interested in the portrayal of spaces and surfaces, Bach draws up descriptions of people inhabiting these spaces, legally and illegally. Siegert’s camera circles over the large construction site at Potsdamer Platz until the image becomes distorted from the circulation motion – the space and images are rendered unrecognizable in

³³⁴ Inka Bach, “Squatters,” 120-21.

³³⁵ Inka Bach, “Squatters,” 116.

³³⁶ Inka Bach, “Squatters,” 120.

what Deleuze termed the postmodern “any-space-whatever.”³³⁷ In one scene, we see cranes, sunset, night, under-water construction workers. We are shown the same site three weeks later, then three months later, witnessing the iron framework of the buildings grow taller; and finally two years later, in April 1999, when the high-rises of the Deutsche Bahn and Daimler-Benz were completed. We see the architect Renzo Piano on a visit through the corner offices of the Daimler building, remarking, “It will take time to become real, it’s too new.”



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Potsdamer Platz two years later

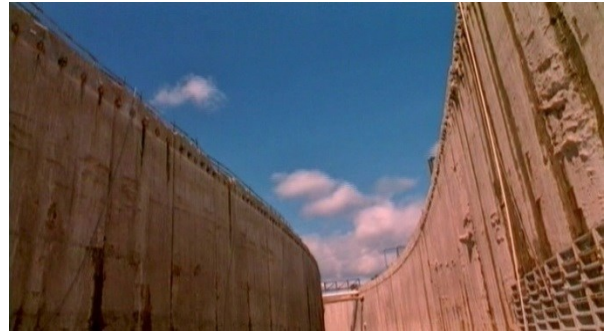
James Donald pointed out that “in the modern city, space is experienced as time.”³³⁸ Siegart shows us Potsdamer Platz in the various stages of its construction, destruction, and re-construction, at three points in time, as well as a flashback to the wasteland before the construction began, and a flash-forward to its completion, cutting to the opening ceremony of Potsdamer Platz and fireworks shown in time-lapse photography. Siegart cuts from the “Grand Opening” of Potsdamer Platz in October 1998 to images of it “years earlier,” providing a flashback to evoke the Cold War significance of this no-man’s-land. With this fragmented visual representation of Potsdamer Platz, Siegart shows that this contested space is not to be taken for granted in the way the architects re-envisioned and re-constructed it anew. He presents us with an empty wasteland and some construction equipment around Potsdamer Platz. It

³³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 111-122. The term refers to representations of postmodern, industrial, unrecognizable, and interchangeable urban landscapes. In his essay in *German Cinema Since Unification* (2006), David Clarke applied it to filmic representations of post-Wall Berlin of the 1990s.

³³⁸ James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 77.

looks uninhabitable, almost apocalyptic, devoid of humanity and slightly resembling the lunar surface.

The unfinished Potsdamer Platz, the “empty” heart of Berlin’s Babylon is being transformed into a site of postmodern shopping arcades, festivals, museums, casinos and theatres of the New Berlin. Siegart seems to suggest that we need to understand the different layers of this space, their significance, in order to fully grasp the meaning of “newness” which Renzo Piano and Helmut Jahn planted here.³³⁹



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Wasteland at Potsdamer Platz and tunnel of *Hauptbahnhof*

Through this non-linear editing technique, the film “conjures up the imagery of a city swept backwards into the future, uneasily aware of the rubble of the past but wanting to escape at speed.”³⁴⁰ This allusion to Walter Benjamin’s “Angel of History”³⁴¹ is made literal in the next scene through the voice-over narration by Angela Winkler (who also returns as a protagonist of *In Berlin*), against the backdrop of “an

³³⁹ See Robert Hobbs, “Marking Time: Frank Thiel’s Photographs,” 15, 23: “Of central importance to many of Thiel’s images and certainly of crucial significance to the stability of Berlin architecture is the problem of the sandy soil on which the city is built and the groundwater that remains a huge challenge to all builders. While constructing buildings on sand is certainly a well-known biblical metaphor, Thiel deemphasizes this moralistic association in favour of the pragmatics of creating structures capable of withstanding the pressures of the city’s high water table and sandy soil: “Because Berlin is literally built on sand, the ground water level is high. This [makes] it... very difficult to build a building with more than one basement. You have to block off the ground water on all sides of the excavation. The forces are enormous. So [the foundation] needs quite some amount of construction to withstand this pressure to avoid water... flooding the excavation.”

³⁴⁰ Hubertus Siegart quoted on the DVD cover and website.

³⁴¹ Ronald Beiner, “Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy of History,” in *Political Theory* (Vol. 12, No.3, August, 1984, pp.423-434), 431. Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” were written in early 1940 after Benjamin had been released from an internment camp in France, and became the very last of his writings. Only several months later Benjamin would be on the run from the Gestapo, as the Nazis occupied France. He left the manuscript with Hannah Arendt, who relayed it to Adorno in America for publication in 1942.

open railway tunnel construction for the new *Hauptbahnhof* with a thunderstorm approaching”³⁴² in time-lapse photography. The clouds get darker when the narrator mentions the storm, followed by a close-up of the sun obstructed by rapidly moving clouds:

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.³⁴³

The construction of the *Hauptbahnhof*³⁴⁴ tunnel is presented as a symbol of industrial progress and innovation, as well as a means of connecting the New Berlin more efficiently with the rest of Germany and Europe, thereby furthering Berlin’s transformation into a globalizing creative center. Just as Benjamin, Siegart is interested in the “constellation of the past and present, with the moment of recognition in which past and present mutually illuminate each other.”³⁴⁵ Siegart achieves this illumination with his editing: the angel sequence is preceded and followed by two cuts to an empty void, the first one to the no-man’s-land at Potsdamer Platz, and the second one to the site of the future Holocaust Memorial (completed in May 2005). Both the *Hauptbahnhof* and Potsdamer Platz symbolize progress, while the future site of the Holocaust Memorial symbolizes history, memory, and destruction. It is significant that this is the only instance in the film that the observational mode is interjected with voice-over narration. Unlike the later films, Siegart prefers to let the images of his film speak for

³⁴² Email correspondence with Hubertus Siegart, January 31, 2014: “What you see during the ‘Angel’ is actually an open railway tunnel construction for the new central station with a thunderstorm approaching. In the final bang we get to see the empty site of the later Holocaust Memorial with Potsdamer Platz in the back.”

³⁴³ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*. Ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 257.

³⁴⁴ The construction of *Hauptbahnhof* was entrusted to the architect Meinhard von Gerkan, who is also the architect of the new Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport and Tegel Airport.

³⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*. Ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 255, quoted in Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989), 79.

themselves, complemented by conversations and debates that take place on the construction sites. By inviting a well-known German actress to read the “Angel of History” over images of a time-lapse generated storm, Siegart breaks with his own established observational pattern in favour of a more essayistic and poetic documentary mode.

As outlined in the previous section, 1999 represents the official beginning of the New Berlin, as the marketing campaign proclaimed, “Das neue Berlin ist da!” (The New Berlin is here), as well as the final arrival of its “Generation Berlin” of politicians, civil servants, and other members of the creative class.³⁴⁶ Siegart’s film shows us the inauguration of the new Reichstag dome on April 19, 1999, when the architect Norman Foster referred to the significance of that site in his opening speech, followed by *Bundestagspräsident* Wolfgang Thierse’s remarks and the recital of the Lord’s Prayer. Thus, by documenting the ceremonies of the official openings of Berlin’s new architectural achievements and political new beginnings, *Berlin Babylon* also documents the symbolic birth of the New Berlin and the final transformation of the Bonn Republic into the Berlin Republic. Berlin is thus presented as a “space-time formation, through which contemporary dreams of national futures are imagined,” as Karen E. Till pointed out.³⁴⁷



Film still: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Love Parade at the Victory Column

³⁴⁶ See: Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 6: “By 1999, 7,000 employees constituting most of the sections of the German government finally if rather reluctantly, had arrived in the rejuvenated capital.”

³⁴⁷ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 193.

Towards the end of the film, Siegert includes images of an ocean of dancing bodies during the Love Parade gathered around the Victory Column, formerly located in West-Berlin, perhaps another reference to Babylon and its notorious tower. This parade footage is very brief, but significant because it is the only reference to the vibrant sub-cultures created in the voids of Berlin while the construction was underway, as well as to the immense popularity of post-Wall Berlin as a place of freedom, openness, and creativity. Conceived as a political peace demonstration in West Berlin in the summer of 1989, just before the fall of the Wall, by DJ Motte and Danielle de Picciotto, the Love Parade became one of the symbols of the Babylonian Berlin's culture of freedom and creativity. It lasted over ten years, from 1989 until 2003, and grew from 150 participants in 1989 to one million participants in 1997. The Love Parade reappeared in Berlin during the FIFA World Cup in 2006, but ultimately was banished from the landscape of power, as the construction and gentrification projects neared their completion. This scene, more than any other depiction of construction sites and voids, contextualizes the later films' nostalgia for Babylon. In Zukin's terms, Siegert is showing us an example of a temporary reclaiming of the landscape of power by the vernacular culture, which is what nostalgia for Babylon is all about.

The last scene of Siegert's film takes us to the remains of the Prussian Academy of Arts at Pariser Platz in October 1998, which used to house Albert Speer's planning center and design halls, and where the model for the city of Germania was created and exhibited. As explained in an earlier scene in the film, Pariser Platz was not destroyed during the war, but rather in the Cold War, and the only remaining structures were the Brandenburg Gate and the remains of the Academy. In an essay from 2004, Elizabeth Janik's research reveals how controversial the establishment of a unified Academy had been.³⁴⁸ In Siegert's film, the new architect Günter Behnisch and the architectural historian Werner

³⁴⁸ Elizabeth Janik, "The Symphony of a Capital City: Controversies of Reunification in the Berlin Music Community" in Carol Anne Constabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, Kristie A. Foell, *Berlin, The Symphony Continues* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 143-163), 153: "Establishment of a new, unified *Akademie der Künste* required the approval of both the Berlin and Brandenburg governments, the securing of which was by no means assured. Skeptics of the merger argued that acceptance of former GDR artists ought to be made contingent upon an

Durth explore Speer's ghostly ruins. They have been given the task of integrating the old building into the new design for the Academy. Onsite, Behnisch explains:

Der Wunsch der Berliner in der letzten Generation wieder eine geschlossene Stadt zu haben ist die Reaktion darauf, dass sie 50 Jahre noch in einer zertrümmerten Stadtlandschaft gelebt haben. Aber warten Sie mal die nächste Generation ab, die fangen an zu schreien: Wer hat den bloß sich das alles vorgestellt? Alles wieder zugebaut. Das sieht ja aus wie die Stadt des 19-ten Jahrhunderts. Ist ja ganz klar, dass das passiert.³⁴⁹

This new generation of Berliners has arrived; their concerns and criticisms of "over-building" in Berlin are well documented in *Mauerpark* (2011). The choice of the Academy for the closing of Siegert's film may seem odd, yet we have to consider that the mandate of the Academy of Arts is to consult the *Bundesrepublik* in matters of art and culture, to promote arts, and through its archival collections to oversee the preservation of cultural heritage.³⁵⁰ Significantly, this war ruin was to become the seat and managing institution of Berlin's past, present, and future art and culture.³⁵¹ For a film that concerns itself with architectural policies, materiality of construction sites, surfaces and facades, and the gradual disappearances of voids, rather than the narratives of people inhabiting those spaces (as in *Mauerpark* and *In Berlin*), it makes sense to end the film at the yet-unreconstructed Academy of Arts. Siegert, who studied both history and art history before becoming a filmmaker, recognizes the underlying significance of places and voids such as this one, and the role they play in the identity formations of cities.

investigation of their political backgrounds by the "Gauck authority" responsible for administering the records of the Stasi, the East German secret police. [...] The *Akademie der Künste* weathered the political stresses of the Wende in time to celebrate its 300th anniversary in 1996 as a single institution. An extensive exhibit of the Academy's history, accompanied by the publication of several volumes of previously unpublished material from the Academy's archive, encouraged artists and their public to reflect upon their cultural and political past."

³⁴⁹ "The desire of Berliners of the last generation to have a completed city is a reaction to the fact that they had to live in a half-ruined city-scape for over 50 years. But just wait until the next generation starts to scream: who on earth imagined all of this? Everything is over-built again. It looks like the city of the nineteenth century. It's clearly coming" (my translation).

³⁵⁰ Academy of Arts website, <http://www.adk.de/de/akademie/aufbau-aufgaben> (last accessed April 2012).

³⁵¹ Elizabeth Janik, "The Symphony of a Capital City," 154: "These imperatives received powerful physical expression in May 2000, when ground was broken for a single, new academy building on the site adjacent to the Brandenburg gate (and Berlin's former east-west border) where the Prussian *Akademie der Künste* had stood before 1945. The Academy's most challenging work of construction, however, has barely begun: determining the future direction and goals of an elite, state-supported assembly of artists in the Berlin Republic of the 21st century."



Film stills: *Berlin Babylon* (2001) Academy of Arts and the last shot of the film

The last shot of the film presents the view from Pariser Platz, from the back of the ruined Academy's vacant lot, over the void next to the Brandenburg Gate, where the Holocaust Memorial will be constructed, with the nearly-completed high-rises at Potsdamer Platz in the background at sunset. Tellingly, the closing song, entitled "Befindlichkeit des Landes" (The State of the Country) by *Einstürzende Neubauten* reveals a sense of melancholy and loss, perhaps a feeling of disconnectedness from one's city, as well as incomprehension of the rapid transformations beyond human scale. The lyrics of the closing song remind us that melancholy hovers over the new city and over the country:

Über dem Narbengelände / das langsam verschwindet / so nur Phantomschmerz bleibt / Es dringt kaum hörbar ein fieses Lachen / aus der roten Info-Box / und in den Gräbern wird leise rotiert / Alles nur künftige Ruinen / Material für die nächste Schicht / Mela, Mela, Mela, Mela, Melancholia / Melancholia, mon cher / Mela, Mela, Mela, Mela, Melancholia / schwebt über der neuen Stadt / und über dem Land / Über den Schaltzentralen / Über dem Stoppelfeld aus Beton / Über den heimlichen Bunkeranlagen / die nicht wegzukriegen sind / Marlene go home! / auch über dem Marlene-Dietrich-Platz / die neuen Tempel haben schon Risse / künftige Ruinen / einst wächst Gras auch über diese Stadt / über ihrer letzten Schicht. / Was ist die Befindlichkeit des Landes?³⁵²

The song describes the disappearing voids that retain a phantom-like pain, while laughter can be heard coming from the red *Info-Box* at Potsdamer Platz – all destined to become future ruins, construction material for the next layer of the Babylonian Berlin. Melancholy hovers over the old bunkers and over the newly constructed Marlene-Dietrich-Platz at Potsdamer Platz. The newly-constructed temples already show cracks, in a process of becoming contemporary ruins, grass will grow over this city, over its

³⁵² *Einstürzende Neubauten, Die Befindlichkeit Des Landes* (2000), http://www.neubauten.org/pages/lyrics/silenceissexy/track_008.html (accessed January 2013).

last layer. That, according to the *Einstürzenden Neubauten*, is the state of the country. Both Berlin and Babylon have witnessed grass grow over their monumental structures and architectural marvels.³⁵³ This cyclical nature of urban re-construction is presented in Hito Steyerl's film, when she asks the squatters at Potsdamer Platz: "Was wolltet ihr anders machen auf diesem Platz, im Todesstreifen, und wie stellt ihr euch diesen Platz in 1999 vor?" (What would you do differently in this place, in the death strip? And how do you imagine this place to be in 1999?) The squatters reply, "Da liegt hier alles in Ruinen, und Menschen wie wir leben hier wieder."³⁵⁴ (Maybe everything will be in ruins here, and people like us can live here again.) The squatters' utopian vision comes out of the landscape of destruction, ruin, and emptiness, before Potsdamer Platz was rebuilt and the voids were filled with commercial and entertainment venues. The state of Berlin Babylon described by the *Einstürzenden Neubauten* is unfinished, contradictory, fragmented, and because of constant lack of stability also in fear of being overturned into rubble again. Yet this unfinished Berlin Babylon is also a place of immense creativity, culture, and cultural heritage. It is thus its contradictory nature that distinguishes Berlin Babylon as a time and place of construction and destruction, of creativity and commercialization, which in the New Berlin after 2009 are remembered with a sense of nostalgia.

The West-Berlin band *Einstürzende Neubauten*, whose previous album *Silence is Sexy* (2000) also included themes of architecture and construction in Berlin, provided a soundtrack that conveyed a particular sound of Berlin in the 1990s: industrial, experimental, at times atonal and unsettling indie rock music. Their 1996 album *Ende Neu* featured a song entitled "Den Schacht von Babel" (The Shaft of

³⁵³ The Biblical quote from Isaiah "grass will grow over your cities" has become another common trope in reference to Berlin. For example, it could be found in a quote by Anselm Kiefer next to Richard Long's "Berlin Circle" piece from 1996 at Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Modern Art: "Rubble is the future. Because everything that is, passes. There is a wonderful chapter in Isaiah that says: grass will grow over your cities. That sentence has always fascinated me, even as a child. This poetry, the fact that you see both things at the same time. Isaiah sees the city, and the different layers over it, the grass, and then another city, the grass, and then another city again" (2005).

³⁵⁴ *Die leere Mitte*, dir. Hito Steyerl. Distributed by the director, 1998.

Babel)³⁵⁵ about the construction of a tunnel, rather than a tower of Babel that has obvious allusions to the famous tunnel under the Berlin Wall in divided Berlin, and to a note by Franz Kafka about digging the pit of Babel, quoted in Hito Steyerl's essay "The (W)hole of Babel" (2000).³⁵⁶ Songs from the *Berlin Babylon* soundtrack, such as "Godzilla in Mitte," "Glas," "Architektur ist Geiselnahme" (Architecture is Hostage-Taking), and "Die Befindlichkeit des Landes" (The State of the Country) which were first released on the album *Silence is Sexy* the previous year, were layered with construction sounds and gaps of silence. Both Siegert and the band put the driving forces behind Berlin's redevelopment under scrutiny. Particularly the song entitled "Architektur ist Geiselnahme," played over images of voids, provokes contemplation: who is being taken hostage by architecture? The public? The city? History? And why? Both the song and the film seem to suggest that architectural re-construction policy and gentrification have replaced traditional ideological power with the landscape of power, where the public spaces of consumption overtake and overpower the vernacular spaces of production.³⁵⁷

Significantly, the sound recording for the whole film was done at Studio Babelsberg's Ambient Recording Studio.³⁵⁸ The legendary film studio was re-established in 1992 on the same grounds where the UFA (1912) and DEFA (1946) film studios operated, and also carries a reference to the mythological

³⁵⁵ For album info and lyrics, see <http://www.neubauten.org/ende-neu> (accessed January 2013).

³⁵⁶ Hito Steyerl, "The (W)hole of Babel," 2000, http://www.haussite.net/set.php?page=http://www.haussite.net/haus.0/PROGRAM/INFO_2001/hito/hito_E.html (accessed January 2013): "In the early 1920s Franz Kafka wrote an enigmatic note: 'What are you building? I want to dig a passage. A progress has to happen. My position is too elevated. We are digging the pit of Babel.'" The startling twist in Kafkas short fragment, is the transformation of the metaphor of the tower at Babel into the image of a hole in the ground. Instead of constructing a monumental presence, he suggests the active creation of an absence, which has to be excavated in order to advance things and to enable progress. The disaster at Babel, as most people will know, caused the loss of an universal language common to all mankind. Kafkas intriguing excavation project hints at the possibility that the dream of universal communication, would rather be achieved by digging a hole rather than erecting a monumental tower. Both projects yield very different results. Whereas a tower provides an elevated point of view and an overall picture of a certain territory, a subterranean passage provides no general outlook at all, but merely the faint possibility to make a connection."

³⁵⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyworld*, 197.

³⁵⁸ DVD end credits.

Babylon in its title. Moreover, the soundtrack's industrial sounds also mimic the topographical fragmentation of Berlin. As Jonathan Kahana pointed out in his study of documentaries,

Sounds are not perceived, as Christian Metz pointed out, the same way that images are. We always know exactly in what direction we are looking: images have a clear location (the screen) and source (the thing in the world that the image resembles). But it is never quite as clear where a sound is coming from or what produces it. The aural object loosens the bonds between the subject and what it perceives, suspending, as Metz says, the "adverse spectacle" of subject and object.³⁵⁹

The soundtrack imitates the disembodiment and disjointedness of the Babylonian Berlin. This disembodiment of the industrial sounds and the silences of the voids convey a sense of unease and disorientation. Some of the close-ups of industrial construction sites make Berlin not only unrecognizable, but at times it hardly seems to resemble a city at all. What we are witnessing in the re-constructed Berlin is a gradual patching-up of this disembodiment, a filling-in of the emptiness and voids. Bringing our attention back to a more emotional landscape, Siegert seems to suggest that the melancholy originates in the materiality of the city itself – in the metal, cement, and glass that make up its urban fabric.

Sigmund Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia is useful here, in that he defines mourning (*Trauer*) as the process of dealing not only with the loss of a loved person, but also with the loss of some "abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on."³⁶⁰ Mourning passes with the elapsing of time needed for the "work of grief," while in melancholia, on the other hand, the loss is not clearly defined and is more unconscious. Melancholia doesn't pass with the labour of grief and has less connection to the outside world. Melancholia refuses to acknowledge loss, and in this sense "preserves" its lost objects as psychic effects.³⁶¹ For a resolution

³⁵⁹ Jonathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 148.

³⁶⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 237-258, http://www.barondecharlus.com/uploads/2/7/8/8/2788245/freud_-_mourning_and_melancholia.pdf), 243 (accessed January 2013).

³⁶¹ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 182.

of melancholia that is more thorough than any mania can provide, Freud suggested that “a verdict of reality” must be accepted for melancholia to become mourning, and for the attachment to the lost object to be severed.³⁶² In Siegert’s film, the Babylonian Berlin is constructed as a melancholic city, where the rapid construction may have interfered with the due course of the mourning process for Berlin’s multiple turbulent pasts. Freud observed that in some cases, melancholia can be found paired with mania, in which the ego has gotten over the loss of the object, and having been liberated from the suffering of that attachment, is ravenously looking for a new object to attach to.³⁶³ Siegert presents Berlin’s Babylonian years as a record of fluctuations between collective melancholia and mania, for example in the way he presents the official opening ceremony of Potsdamer Platz, in the accelerated and fast-forward mode of time-lapse photography. This representation echoes de Picciotto’s description of Berlin’s melancholy in her memoir, where she writes, “in Berlin the poignancy of sadness and despair constantly touched all of us on either side of the Wall, casting a shadow over our existence. This melancholy was an ingredient of everyday life, Germany still rent by a common sense of guilt.”³⁶⁴ Janet Ward also noted the melancholy mood paired with the “perpetual construction motion” in Siegert’s film, emphasizing that,

Berlin Babylon’s strength as a movie lies in how the energy of the editing techniques simultaneously belies the urban melancholy that it acknowledges. Viewers focus the exciting processes of building on, over and under the former voids of Berlin. The Berlin of the 1990s is celebrated by the film for its constant building-cum-demolition; sometimes the city is seen at rest but most often it is filmed at sites of perpetual construction-motion.³⁶⁵

Yet, as the film shows, mania is not a solution to melancholy, because as both the film and the soundtrack attest, melancholy remains unresolved by the manic transformations, hovering over the city and over the country. Siegert does not provide answers to what keeps Berlin Babylon in its melancholy state, but it may have to do with its very fragmentary, disjointed, disembodied nature. It is not

³⁶² Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 192.

³⁶³ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 254.

³⁶⁴ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 65.

³⁶⁵ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 308.

surprising that the manic efforts to fill the emptiness of Berlin's Babylonian voids have now found an escape in nostalgia³⁶⁶ because "nostalgia enhances the sense of connectedness to others."³⁶⁷ While the film began with an abstract close-up shot of an industrial construction site and a prologue referencing the Tower of Babel, it ends with a view of the new glass towers at Potsdamer Platz, erected in the midst of the slowly disappearing voids of war and division. This open ending is fitting because after all, as Johanne Sloan noted, "the identity of a city emerges not as an enduring essence but as something to be constantly renegotiated."³⁶⁸ Siegert's Berlin is unfinished; it is and always remains, as the 1996 city marketing campaign proclaimed, in the process of becoming.

The order of scenes and locations presented in Siegert's film is not linear. He jumps back and forth between construction sites and landmarks of former East and West Berlin, while the filming chronology jumps back and forth between 1998 and 1999.³⁶⁹ Reminiscent of the wrapped Reichstag by Christo and Jeanne -Claude in 1995, Berlin of the 1990s was about to re-emerge from the veil of reconstruction as a new city adorned by international "architecture of transparency." What *Berlin Babylon* does not show us is the gold-rush mentality, which Wladimir Kaminer called a "Zeitloch" (a hole in time),³⁷⁰ produced by the economic and social conditions of post-Wall Berlin of the 1990s. As he noted in his book *Liebesgrüße aus Deutschland (Greetings from Germany, 2013)*,

³⁶⁶ In her book *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (London: Routledge, 2007), Susannah Radstone looked at nostalgia in light of mourning and melancholia, referencing the study, *The Inability to Mourn* (1975) by Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, that draws upon "Mourning and Melancholia" by Freud (1917). She looks at nostalgia in the German context, in light of narcissism, stating that "*The Inability to Mourn* takes this understanding of narcissism, melancholia and mourning as the basis for its analysis of post-war Germany's malaise. Fascism, with its ideology of the master-race, encouraged a collective secondary narcissism which fed upon primitive fantasies of omnipotence." However, she does not provide an analysis of post-reunification cultural engagements with nostalgia and does link them to new constructions of identity (163-64).

³⁶⁷ Krystine Irene Batcho, "Nostalgia and the Emotional Tone and Content of Song Lyrics" in *The American Journal of Psychology* (Vol. 120, No.3, Fall 2007, pp.361-381), 376.

³⁶⁸ Johanne Sloan, *Urban Enigmas: Montreal, Toronto, and the Problem of Comparing Cities* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2007), 3.

³⁶⁹ Siegert provides the locations and filming dates on the film website, <http://www.berlinbabylon.de/berlinbabylon6.html> (accessed August 2013).

³⁷⁰ Wladimir Kaminer, *Ich bin kein Berliner*, 90.

Die Ostberliner hatten in jenem Sommer [1990] die einmalige Gelegenheit, etwas zu erleben, das es so nirgends auf der Welt mehr gab: Sie genossen die Vorzüge beider Systeme, ohne ihre Nachteile zu spüren. Als Wohnungsmiete zahlten sie noch immer 16,50DM, in den Kaufhallen lagen aber schon Berge von Bananen, und man konnte laut auf Honecker und die Kommunisten schimpfen.³⁷¹

Siebert does not present this side of the Babylonian Berlin. Other films such as *Russendisko* (2012) and *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) recreate this temporary gap in the economic and social structure that Berlin experienced in the early 1990s. The Babylonian Berlin offered open spaces that became available to young, creative people who moved to Berlin at a time when most Berliners were leaving it for greater economic prosperity in the West, leaving behind their furnished apartments right in the inner city districts of Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg.³⁷² This temporary gap and openness spurred a wave of spontaneous entrepreneurial creativity that has been cultivated in Berlin ever since. However, this unregulated period was brief; once the venture capitalists, real-estate developers, and marketing directors caught up with this creative wave, Berlin's spaces and economy became regulated again. Siebert provided a documentation of the topography in which this process took place, a record of Berlin "in the 90th year of the 20th century," as the title phrase states at the beginning of the film, presenting us with different kinds of contested spaces, many of which have been in the process of disappearance as the New Berlin was emerging. Many of these spaces can be described as what Nicholas Greco called the "urban real," in that they constitute "elements of a modern city which are industrial in nature,

³⁷¹ Wladimir Kaminer, *Liebesgrüße aus Deutschland* (München: Goldmann, 2011 (2013), 12: "In the summer of 1990, East-Berliners had the unique opportunity to experience something that did not exist anywhere else in the world: they enjoyed the advantages of both systems, without experiencing their disadvantages. They still paid 16.50DM rent, but the supermarkets were already filled with heaps of bananas, and one could openly speak out against Honecker and the communists" (my translation).

³⁷² See Wladimir Kaminer, *Russendisko* (München: Goldmann Verlag, 2000), 28-29: "Der Prenzlauer Berg galt damals als Geheimtipp für alle Wohnungssuchende, dort war der Zauber der Wende noch nicht vorbei. Die Einheimischen haften in Scharen nach Westen ab, ihre Wohnungen waren frei, aber noch mit allen möglichen Sachen voll gestellt. Gleichzeitig kam eine wahre Gegenwelle aus dem Westen in die Gegend: Punks, Ausländer und Anhänger der Kirche der Heiligen Mutter, schräge Typen und Lebenskünstler aller Art. Sie besetzten die Wohnungen, warfen die zurückgelassene Modelleisenbahn auf den Müll, rissen die Tapeten ab und brachten die Wände durch. Die Kommunale Wohnungsverwaltung hatte keinen Überblick mehr. [...] "Zwei Monate später fand die Geschichte der Besetzung des Prenzlauer Bergs ein Ende. Die KVV erwachte aus ihrer Ohnmacht und erklärte alle zu diesem Zeitpunkt in ihren Häusern Lebenden für die rechtlichen Mieter. Sie sollten ordentliche Mietverträge bekommen. Zum ersten Mal stand ich in einer 200-köpfigen Schlange, die ausschließlich aus Punks, Freaks, scheinheiligen Eingeborenen und wilden Ausländern bestand. Laut Mietvertrag musste ich 18,50DM für meine Wohnung zahlen. So ging mein Traum in Erfüllung: ein eigener Lebensraum – von 25 Quadratmetern."

embedded with a rich history of physical hardship.”³⁷³ It is precisely in these transitory spaces that its current cultural capital was forged. Berlin Babylon created the Techno scene and its notorious *Tresor* club, the now-banished Love Parade, as well as *Tacheles* that became home of the independent Berlin art scene and housed the very first *Russendisco* event in Berlin. It also established Mauerpark and many beach bars in Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain that caused massive protests when they were forced to close.

Berlin’s Babylonian years have become legendary only a little over a decade after the beginning of the New Berlin. While the 1990s were marked by construction sites, voids, overspending and accumulation of a massive debt, they were also a time of new beginnings and incredible creativity. As William J.V. Neill remarked in his 2005 article on *Berlin Babylon*, in Siegert’s film “not just a city is being rebuilt, but German identity itself.”³⁷⁴ According to Joel Kotkin, there are three crucial factors that determine the overall health of cities: “the sacredness of place, the ability to provide security and project power, and last, the animating role of commerce. Where these factors are present, urban culture flourishes. When these elements weaken, cities dissipate and eventually recede out of history.”³⁷⁵ In other words, in order to flourish, Berlin not only needed to remain a landscape of power, but also become a creative city, which the Berlin Senate made its mandate since 2001. In Berlin Babylon this “sacredness” may have been transferred onto its cultural capital, projects of memorialization, and the touristic attraction of historical sites. Kotkin also noted that by the early twenty-first century, the focus of urban centers began to shift from factory jobs towards such ephemeral concepts such as fashionable, “hipness,” trend, and style as the keys to their survival.³⁷⁶ The following chapters outline Berlin’s “survival” strategies as a hip and creative center. By branding the very sub-cultures that

³⁷³ Nicholas Greco, “The Berlin Wall: Bowie, U2 and the Urban Real” in *Culture of Cities ...under construction*, ed. by Paul Moore and Meredith Risk (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2001), 93.

³⁷⁴ William J.V. Neill, “Berlin Babylon: The Spatiality of Memory and Identity in Recent Planning for the German Capital,” 335.

³⁷⁵ Joel Kotkin, *The City: A Global History*, xxi.

³⁷⁶ Joel Kotkin, *The City: A Global History*, 152.

emerged in the voids of Berlin's Babylon to attract the creative talent and investors, and by gentrifying and commercializing the very spaces and voids that produced that culture, Berlin began to gradually sell off its Babylonian heritage and freedom that ignited there in November 1989. This process has not gone unnoticed, and can be traced in several documentary films after 2009, and the one common denominator in these films is nostalgia for Babylon.

PART 3: Transformation in Berlin's Symbolic Economy and Branded Identity (1999-2009)

Chapter 5 – Branding, Creativity, and Diversity

How are identities constructed amidst the processes of globalization and fragmentation, especially when part of the image of place is increasingly produced for actual or potential visitors? Identity almost everywhere has to be produced partly out of the images constructed for tourists. (John Urry)³⁷⁷

The crazy thing is that in the reconstruction debate people repeatedly talk about the recreation of identity. As if Berlin didn't already have an excess of historical identity. [...]

The idea of wanting to preserve a single, fixed identity over the course of 700 years is of course completely ridiculous from a historical point of view, as in modern times one always has a number of competing concepts of identity and constructs. Thus, we have to be more relaxed and willing to allow different concepts of identity to exist. (Philip Oswalt)³⁷⁸

In this part of my study I focus on urban marketing, branding, and creativity strategies in post-Wall Berlin. I begin by looking at works of theorists such as Jib Fowles, Melissa Aronczyk, Miriam Greenberg, and Mihalis Kavaratzis in order to explore the key distinction between marketing and branding, as well as the ways in which Berlin has adopted the branding strategies of Amsterdam and New York. I then outline the history of urban marketing campaigns in post-Wall Berlin, and the institutional, economic, and political forces behind them, with the help of studies by Claire Colomb and Janet Ward. But in order to understand the complexity of Berlin's branding project, we need to look closely at the conceptualization of the "be Berlin" campaign and the "Be Berlin – be diverse" initiative, both generated by the Berlin Senate under the leadership of Klaus Wowereit in his attempt to transform Berlin into a

³⁷⁷ John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995), 165.

³⁷⁸ Guido Fassbender and Heinz Stahlhut (eds.), "On the Ruins of the Rome of the Modern Age," 156.

creative center.³⁷⁹ Understanding the practices of Berlin's branding not only allows us to deconstruct the transformation process from Berlin Babylon to the New Berlin, but also to see the deeper implications of this process in the formation of Berlin's new identity. Mapping out the inter-connections between creativity discourse, urban marketing, and social initiatives like "be Berlin – be diverse" that have promoted and funded cultural diversity in Berlin since 2009, allows us to deconstruct the process of Berlin's construction as a brand. Many cities implement place marketing strategies through city marketing campaigns and internationally-broadcast events in order to sustain themselves in a globalized economy and to maximize economic growth.³⁸⁰ I argue that Berlin has gone beyond mere place marketing and staging of its architectural and cultural transformations (Colomb), but rather, similarly to the scale of transformations experienced by New York City since the 1970s (Zukin, Greenberg), has re-branded itself into a creative center on an unprecedented scale in only twenty-five years.

The distinction between branding and marketing is vital for understanding how Berlin's transformation differs from other cities. David Gilbert, in his essay on "Urban Outfitting" observed that "certain cities are among the strongest and longest-established of global brands; and city names themselves have become an integral part of branding."³⁸¹ Similarly, in her chapter on "Fashion-branding the city and city-branding fashion" Agnès Rocamora found that "like fashionable styles, [cities] are subject to trends; they lose and gain value in the currency of fashionable places. [...] and are enacted, performed, and spectacularized."³⁸² By virtue of its economic, cultural, architectural, and political revival, Berlin is currently in style, and the process of its "enactment, performance, and spectacularization" is orchestrated by the Berlin Senate itself, which distinguishes Berlin from other

³⁷⁹ Be Berlin – be diverse, <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/beberlinbediverse/> (accessed January 2014).

³⁸⁰ For example, see MTL Moments, <http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/blog/category/fashion/> (accessed March 2014).

³⁸¹ David Gilbert, "Urban Outfitting: The City and the Spaces of Fashion Culture," in Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.) *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis* (London: Routledge 2000, 9, 14). Quoted in Agnès Rocamora, *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 79.

³⁸² Agnès Rocamora, *Fashioning the City*, 84-85.

European and North American cities. As Alan Blum asserted, “the ‘identity’ of a city is forged through the work of making a difference in the grammar of cities, of making a different kind of city.”³⁸³ In post-reunification Berlin, this difference in grammar or urban structure is particularly apparent through gentrification, urban marketing, and cultural identity branding, in an effort to construct a creative center.

Marketing, which is often used interchangeably with branding, and advertising, is defined by the American Marketing Association as the “activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”³⁸⁴ Branding, on the other hand, is commonly defined as “the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products.”³⁸⁵ As Robert Misik (2007) summarized, a commodity has to be filled with “brand values” that communicate the “essence and personality” of a brand through a “brand statement” that plants its roots in the consciousness of the consuming public.³⁸⁶ By contrast, advertising refers to “paid-for messages that attempt to transfer symbols onto commodities to increase the likelihood that the commodities will be found appealing and be purchased.”³⁸⁷ In his work on *Advertising and Popular Culture* (1996), Jib Fowles explained that there are two varieties of advertisements: “*simple*, where all the content pertains directly to the commodity being sold (as a classified ad) and *compound*, where, besides the commodity information, there exists non-commodity material (the symbolic elements that constitute the appeal),” and that “the task of the advertisement is to get consumers to transfer the positive associations of the

³⁸³ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 30-31.

³⁸⁴ American Marketing Association, <http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/DefinitionofMarketing.aspx> (accessed February 2014).

³⁸⁵ Small Business Encyclopedia, <http://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/branding> (accessed February 2014).

³⁸⁶ Robert Misik, *Das Kult-Buch: Glanz und Elend der Kommerzkultur* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Aufbau Verlag, 2007), 23.

³⁸⁷ Jib Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 13.

non-commodity material onto the commodity.”³⁸⁸ The New Berlin’s branding practices include marketing, branding, and compound advertising strategies, in an effort to promote and re-align the new, re-constructed, and gentrified city with values of creativity, diversity, and innovation. In this chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which Berlin has implemented branding strategies since the fall of the Wall.

In their anthology, *Blowing Up the Brand* (2010), Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers stress that “branding is a form of communication that ‘does work’ (i.e., creates value),” and that the “brand is a site of (inter)activity, an interface between production and consumption, and as such, one that demands new forms of media literacy.”³⁸⁹ Jefferson Pooley’s contribution to the same anthology focuses on the “yearning for individual self-fulfillment through authentic experience,” which highlights the role of subjectivity and the ways in which “consumer culture invites us to perform the self through brand attachments.”³⁹⁰ This intersection of branding and subjectivity is strongly evident in the “be Berlin” campaign, which was built on the participations of Berliners who were encouraged to identify with the city through their personal success and creativity stories. In her work on national identity branding, which can also be applied to city branding, Melissa Aronczyk (2009) found that “the brand is meant to present the nation’s distinct and unique value among diverse international publics: investors, tourists, migrants, workers, scholars, arts and sports franchises.”³⁹¹ These strategies of nation branding also apply to post-Wall Berlin. Aronczyk outlined the most common branding strategies as follows:

To assemble, in the early stages, a number of different groups – business interests, government parties, civil society actors, and citizens – in a “grassroots” – style approach to the creation of the new national identity. The premise is that in order to be effective, the brand must be the conceptual product of all of its “owners” or “stakeholders,” as national constituents are called in this context. Moreover, implicating individuals from multiple levels of society in discussions about how to define the national self appeases

³⁸⁸ Jib Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 11.

³⁸⁹ Mehita Iqani, “Branding in Everyday Life,” – Review of Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers (eds.), *Blowing Up the Brand: Critical Perspectives on Promotional Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), in *Reviews in Cultural Theory* (2.1, May 15, 2011), <http://reviewsinculture.com/?r=58> (accessed February 2014).

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Mehita Iqani, “Branding in Everyday Life.”

³⁹¹ Melissa Aronczyk, “Research in Brief: How to Do Things with Brands: Uses of National Identity” in *Canadian Journal of Communication* (Vol. 34 (2009), 291-296), 291.

those who would criticize the practice's potential for elitism. [...] Indeed, the ultimate responsibility for the brand's success or failure lies neither with the consultants nor with the state, but with its citizens, who "live the brand" and embody its values and are castigated for being poor cultural ambassadors if they do not.³⁹²

All these strategies can be found in the process of branding Berlin, specifically through the "be Berlin" campaign. After the creation of the marketing agency *Berlin Partners*, comprised of different businesses interested in promoting Berlin's economy, the Berlin Senate assembled a group of specialists to conduct research on the practices of identity branding in May 2007. By August of that year, the Mayor invited the "Berlin Board" made up of "sixteen leading personalities from academia, business, culture, media, politics, science and urban planning to make recommendations for Berlin's future place marketing," and to put out a call for proposals which received more than 300 entries.³⁹³ By designing a campaign that invited Berliners to "live the [Berlin] brand," to identify with, and to "be" Berlin, the Senate succeeded at mobilizing the very human and creative capital of Berlin inhabitants for the cultural and symbolic reconstruction of the New Berlin.³⁹⁴

Miriam Greenberg's work on *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis was Sold to the World* (2008) reveals many striking parallels with the way in which the New Berlin has been branded. In her study, Greenberg developed a methodology of "urban social research that combines analyses of political economy with those of the 'symbolic economy,' seeking to understand the interpenetration of culture and power in an urban context."³⁹⁵ I draw on her formula of deconstructing the crossings of culture and power for my study of post-Wall Berlin. Greenberg traces New York's transformation from a

³⁹² Melissa Aronczyk, "Research in Brief: How to Do Things with Brands," 293.

³⁹³ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 259.

³⁹⁴ See Berlin's improved image, <http://blog.inpolis.com/2011/03/09/berlins-worldwide-image-has-allegedly-improved-how-does-that-relate-to-the-beberlin-campaign/> (accessed February 2014).

³⁹⁵ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 20. It may be difficult to imagine today, but as Greenberg explains, between 1967 and 1972 New York experienced a "corporate exodus" with companies moving their headquarters out of the city. The city failed to attract business travellers and its tourism dropped by 15%. Combined with "the purposeful deindustrialization of New York's still thriving port district" and the elimination of 30,000 blue-collar jobs, the city's transformation into a global financial center was not a smooth one. (See Greenberg, 106, 125).

manufacturing urban center to a post-Fordist, neo-liberal global city, focusing on the fiscal crisis years in the 1970s and the subsequent re-conceptualization and re-branding of the city as a consumer commodity. After a total financial and social collapse in the mid-1970s, President Ford's refusal to bail the city out, and the protest campaigns of the New York Police Department urging tourists to stay away from "Fear City," the city underwent several re-branding waves that "constituted a process of both the real and symbolic commodification of the city," and marked a shift towards a "consumer- and investor-oriented vision of New York."³⁹⁶ This shift not only transformed the city's global image, but radically altered its identity and turned it into the global capital it is today. Greenberg identifies several factors that made up the transformational forces behind the branding mechanism: the World's Fair of 1964-65 that "was the first to coordinate coverage among New York's dominant television, film, and magazine industries and to broadcast a compelling, corporate-sponsored, 'global city' image to the world."³⁹⁷ The founding of *New York* magazine in 1967 that "artfully repackaged" the city "as a unique and hip place to live, work, and shop for young, social-climbing urbanites," followed by the "Big Apple" city marketing campaign, sponsored by the real estate-led Association for Better New York in 1971, the completions of the World Trade Center; two international media events: New York City's celebration of the US Bicentennial, and its hosting of the 1976 Democratic National Convention; and finally the 1977 "I ♥ NY" campaign launched by the New York State Department of Commerce.³⁹⁸ Together these events, campaigns, and magazine images and messages communicated "a cleaned-up vision, presenting New York as a safe and exciting city for the 'average' white, middle-class consumer."³⁹⁹ This combination of "media and marketing with neoliberal restructuring"⁴⁰⁰ proved to be a successful formula which the

³⁹⁶ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 6, 10-11.

³⁹⁷ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 11.

³⁹⁸ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 162.

³⁹⁹ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 11.

⁴⁰⁰ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 14.

Berlin Senate translated into the post-millennial, reunited, and re-constructed Berlin. Much like the often criticized “be Berlin” campaign,

I ♥ NY represented none of this messy, everyday reality that New Yorkers lived through at this time. Rather, the PR campaign sought to tap into people’s collectively held mental representations of New York as a better place, and to communicate this through the use of media. In the process, it hoped to distract attention from, and make people forget, the material reality. [The campaign logo designer Milton] Glaser wistfully recalled the uplifting effect of the campaign, not only on tourists, but on New York’s beleaguered inhabitants. To him, New York was largely a state of mind, and a good marketing campaign was enough to change that state of mind.⁴⁰¹

With its catchy symbol and logo, the “I love New York” campaign managers created more than a vision for tourists to consume. As Greenberg explained,

The symbol of love signified empathy, even solidarity, among New Yorkers and between them and the rest of the world. It implicitly expressed the anxiety that New York, and all that it represented, might cease to exist, and at the same time voiced the hope that, through love, it could survive. In this sense, I ♥ NY tapped into what Fredric Jameson would call (just two years later) the underlying “utopian impulse in mass culture,” an impulse easily exploited to legitimate political ends.⁴⁰²

By contrast, the “be Berlin” campaign was not initially constructed around a utopian impulse or the emotional needs for empathy and solidarity. Rather, it was a pragmatic and imperative call for action, to “be” part of the very creative forces that were forging a new city and its symbolic economy. While initially “be Berlin” focused on success stories of local Berliners, it later began to tap into the utopian longing and desires generated by the city’s cultural and sub-cultural scenes, promoting the city as a trendy haven for creative talent. New York provided the Berlin Senate with a successful model for its branding strategies, coupled with the advantages of new media technologies – online and social media and messages, as well its bilingualism, allowed it to circulate faster and farther around the globe than any other urban marketing and branding campaign.

In his work on city marketing, Mihalis Kavaratzis (2007) identified urban branding as an attempt to “create associations with the city; associations that are emotional, mental, psychological, moving

⁴⁰¹ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 206.

⁴⁰² Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York*, 207.

away from the functional-rational character of marketing interventions.”⁴⁰³ The New Berlin, as a globalizing city that went through significant economic, political, and cultural transformations as a result of the fall of the Wall, has indeed been successful at re-branding its image and identity, and at marketing itself as a globally connected media and start-up capital.⁴⁰⁴ The advantages of reconstructing a whole city in the new millennium not only include the benefits of cutting-edge technological and infrastructural advances, but also the expertise of experienced specialists in marketing, branding, and media. The “be Berlin” campaign appears to have been partially modelled after other successful international campaigns,⁴⁰⁵ such as “I amsterdam,”⁴⁰⁶ which was created in 2004 by the public-private partnership called *Amsterdam Partners*.⁴⁰⁷ As one of the most innovative centres of advertising and design, Amsterdam introduced a new approach to city marketing, opting for a versatile slogan that served as an umbrella brand, standing for Amsterdam’s main benefits and values. It was easy to remember, and offered “great potential for people to identify with it.”⁴⁰⁸ This is an example of the *compound* type of advertising that Fowles referred to, where the symbolic elements that constitute the appeal of the city (art, tulips, cheese, entertainment, innovative design, etc.) are utilized to transfer the positive associations and values that the city wants to promote. The most innovative aspect of the Amsterdam campaign slogan was that it was “developed having in mind the residents of the city. Only the existing

⁴⁰³ Mihalīs Kavaratzis, “City marketing: The Past, the Present and Some Unresolved Issues,” in *Geography Compass* (1/3, 2007, 695-712), 704, 706: “In general, city marketing is commonly employed as a response to certain new conditions evident in cities throughout the world; conditions that are thought to be generated by the forces of economic, political and cultural globalization. They are commonly associated with the increased mobility of investment capital, with the easier relocation of companies, with the decreasing influence of the nation-state, the radical development of the knowledge or information-based society and increased global connectivity.”

⁴⁰⁴ See David Knight, “Berlin Startups: SoundCloud Blazes Lonely Trail to Top,” *Spiegel Online*. November 1, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/soundcloud-growing-globally-unlike-other-berlin-tech-startups-a-931320.html> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁰⁵ For other city branding campaigns, see Maël Meralli-Ballou, “Tour d’horizon des marques métropolitaines” in *Éthos de Métropole*. November 22, 2010, <http://echosdemetropole.caue69.fr/index.php/tour-dhorizon-des-marques-metropolitaines/> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁰⁶ I amsterdam: <http://www.iamsterdam.com/> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁰⁷ Mihalīs Kavaratzis and G.J. Ashworth, “Partners in coffeeshops, canals, and commerce: Marketing the city of Amsterdam,” in *Cities* (Vol.24, No.1, 2007, 16-25), 21.

⁴⁰⁸ Mihalīs Kavaratzis and G.J. Ashworth, “Partners in coffeeshops, canals, and commerce,” 23.

residents could arguably feel that they ‘are’ Amsterdam and this could be very important for the whole marketing effort.”⁴⁰⁹ Thus by inviting the inhabitants to identify with their city, and the tourists to want to identify with the symbolic value that the city represents, the campaign created a direct link between the city’s identity and its inhabitants’ and visitors’ desire for belonging, identification, and pride in their urban environment. This is achieved in two simultaneous steps: by communicating the “values and benefits” of the city – all the hip and creative aspects people celebrate and want to identify with in a city – and by creating a slogan that invites them to participate in that city’s cultural life, and thereby also to represent these values and benefits through this identification process. This process is not unproblematic; it is highly manufactured, and can even be exploitative and exclusionary, marginalizing anyone who is not interested in identifying or representing the city brand. Taking Amsterdam’s marketing campaign as a starting-point and inspiration, the Berlin Senate together with the marketing agency *Berlin Partners* generated the “be Berlin” campaign, which took the hitherto existing branding practices to another level.

As the Senate’s public relations representative Richard Meng stated in the promotional book entitled, *be Berlin – Gesichter der Hauptstadt (be Berlin – Faces of the Capital, 2008)*, the campaign that was launched on March 11, 2008 was like no other:

Es ist ein spannender 11. März 2008, an dem der Regierende Bürgermeister mit seiner Grundsatzrede eine Kampagne startet, wie es sie noch nie gab: *be Berlin*. [...] Andere Metropolen haben längst mit griffigen Sprüchen und öffentlich wirksamen Aktionen begonnen, weltweit für sich zu werben und – in der Sprache der PR-Leute ausgedrückt – ein “Markenprofil” zu entwickeln und damit die eigene Marke zu stärken. [...] “I am Amsterdam,” “I love New York” einige der anderswo geprägten Slogans haben sich als besonders griffig erwiesen und sind richtig popular geworden. Aber ein Slogan allein macht noch kein Profil. Es reicht nicht, eine vielleicht schöne, aber eben oft seelenlose Sprachformel zu entwickeln und sie auf Plakate zu drucken. Schon gar nicht in Berlin.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ Mihalios Kavaratzis and G.J. Ashworth, “Partners in coffeeshops, canals, and commerce,” 24.

⁴¹⁰ Richard Meng, Sprecher des Berliner Senats, “Die Stärke kommt von innen – be Berlin, eine Imagekampagne, wie es sie noch nie gab” in Berlin Partner GmbH (eds.), *be Berlin – Gesichter der Hauptstadt*. (Berlin: Palmedia Publishing Services, 2008, 8-13), 8: “It was an exciting day on March 11, 2008, when in his opening speech the Mayor launched a campaign that has never existed before, entitled be Berlin. Other metropolitan cities have long begun to promote themselves world-wide with catchy slogans and publically effective strategies, and to develop what is called a “brand profile” in PR-language, to strengthen their brand. “I am Amsterdam,” “I love New York”

Meng's statement demonstrates Berlin Senate's awareness of the already established branding practices, as well as the intention to take identity branding further, not only by giving the campaign a "soul" or personality by linking it directly to Berlin inhabitants and their sense of belonging, but also connecting it to their creativity and diversity. The campaign goals were to "motivieren, aktivieren, anstiften" (motivate, activate, and instigate), while the content of the campaign came directly from messages and stories submitted by Berliners and initially comprised a slogan that functioned as a call to action (*Aufforderung*).⁴¹¹ The imperative voice of "be Berlin" is closer to contemporary advertising slogans such as Nike's "Just do it" and Apple's "Think different," and differs from earlier-established positive association strategies with a city as a brand, as in the "I ♥ NY" campaign of 1977 and the "I amsterdam" campaign of 2004.⁴¹² The imperative mode of the slogan was fitting for a city that was "unfinished"⁴¹³ and, in many ways, still a *Baustelle* (construction site), in a perpetual state of "becoming" ("Berlin wird") and staging itself as a "Schaustelle" (exhibition site) spectacle.

However, the Berlin Senate's branding efforts also generated a lot of criticism. Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb have noted the "ideological and cultural role of urban marketing policies in softening painful processes of urban restructuring and transition to a new post-industrial urban economy," reminding us of David Harvey's view of urban marketing as the "mobilization of spectacle," and a tool for "urban conflict management to mask an increasing socio-spatial segregation,

are a few of the slogans that have proved to be particularly catchy and popular. But a slogan alone does not make a profile. It is not enough to develop a nice, but often soul-less concept formula, and to print it on posters. Especially in a city like Berlin" (my translation).

⁴¹¹ Richard Meng, "Die Stärkte kommt von innen," 10: "Die Inhalte kommen von den Berlinerinnen und Berlinern selbst, sie prägen das Image der Stadt. Den Rahmen dafür liefert ein Slogan, der als Aufforderung zu verstehen ist."

⁴¹² For more on the campaign, see "I Amsterdam – The campaign to re-brand Amsterdam" in *This is Not Advertising* blog, November 5, 2012, <http://thisisnotadvertising.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/i-amsterdam-the-campaign-to-re-brand-amsterdam/> (accessed February 2014).

⁴¹³ Richard Meng, "Die Stärkte kommt von innen," 13.

questions of power distribution and social justice.”⁴¹⁴ As demonstrated in Ballhaus and Cappellari’s film *In Berlin*, even the launch of the “be Berlin” campaign was upstaged by police workers’ demonstration against the municipal governments’ cuts in social spending. Häußermann and Colomb also stressed that “criticisms have also been raised about the amount of public money invested in public-private partnerships responsible for economic promotion, urban marketing, and other promotional activities in Berlin.”⁴¹⁵ The participatory nature of the campaign and its production as a spectacle was “directed at local population as a potential tool to (re)create a sense of local identity, soften conflicts over new developments in the city, or stimulate the endogenous economic development potential.”⁴¹⁶ Häußermann defined the branding practices in Berlin as “festivalization of urban politics,” a set of practices that have characterized German (and European) cities since the 1980s, marked by an urban policy “dominated by the staging of large-scale cultural/sports events and flagship developments.”⁴¹⁷ After reunification, Berlin began to mobilize its symbolic economy – which Zukin defined as the “mobilization of cultural resources and the politics of urban re-imaging within contemporary capitalist urbanization processes” – to generate capital investment and to attract talent and creativity.⁴¹⁸ Despite the serious criticism of the “be Berlin” campaign and its entrepreneurial governing practices, the Berlin Senate under the leadership of Klaus Wowereit continued to re-conceptualize the city in terms of creativity, talent, media, technology, culture, tolerance and diversity.

⁴¹⁴ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, “The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams” in Lily M. Hoffmann, Susan S. Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd (eds.), *Cities and Visitors: Regulating People, Markets, and City Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 215.

⁴¹⁵ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, “The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams,” 215.

⁴¹⁶ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, “The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams,” 210.

⁴¹⁷ Hartmut Häußermann and Claire Colomb, “The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams,” 210.

⁴¹⁸ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 3.

Florida's Berlin

The New Berlin's decision to adopt Richard Florida's creative theory can be traced back to Wowereit's inaugural speech at the House of Representatives at the beginning of his second term in 2006,⁴¹⁹ as well as his "be Berlin" campaign speech at City Hall in March 2008,⁴²⁰ shortly before the press-launch in front of the City Hall captured by Ballhaus and Cappellari in their film. In his 2008 speech Wowereit outlined his vision for the New Berlin as follows:

Ich stelle mir 1.000 Frauen und Männer aller Altersgruppen vor, die an einem Weltkongress der Kreativen in Berlin teilnehmen, der im Jahr 2019 seinen 10. Jahrestag feiert. Berlin ist das Eldorado für all jene, die ein inspirierendes Umfeld suchen, um auf die richtigen Ideen für ein erfolgreiches Projekt zu kommen. Die Designer der Stadt beliefern die weltweit größten Unternehmen mit ihren Ideen. Und in Berlin gelingt es in vorbildlicher Weise, die Kreativwirtschaft mit allen Branchen zu verknüpfen. So wird Berlin nicht nur zum Mekka der „Kreativen Klasse“, sondern schafft mit der Kreativwirtschaft auch Perspektiven für alle.⁴²¹

Wowereit's vision for Berlin as a "mecca of the creative class" and of the "creative economy" is grounded in Richard Florida's theory and vocabulary. While Florida's theory has been widely criticised, "his ideas have had a spectacular resonance amongst urban policy-makers,"⁴²² and Wowereit's speech is a prime example of its popularity at that time. Part of the Mayor's vision for the New Berlin also included the establishing of a new "Willkommenskultur" (welcome culture) that "dismantles discrimination and facilitates equality,"⁴²³ which became the focal point of Berlin's cultural policy after 2009, and was manifested in the form of the "be Berlin – be diverse" initiative.

⁴¹⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 233.

⁴²⁰ Klaus Wowereit's campaign launch speech, <http://www.berlin.de/landespressestelle/archiv/2008/03/11/95999/> (accessed February 2013).

⁴²¹ Klaus Wowereit's campaign launch speech 2008: "I imagine 1000 women and men of all age groups taking part in a global congress of creativity in Berlin that will celebrate its tenth year in 2019. Berlin is the Eldorado for those looking for an inspiring environment to come up with the right ideas for a successful project. Berlin-based designers supply global enterprises with their ideas. And Berlin manages to set an example of linking the creative economy with all fields. So Berlin not only becomes a mecca of the 'creative class,' but also establishes opportunities for everyone through the creative economy" (my translation).

⁴²² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 231.

⁴²³ Klaus Wowereit's campaign launch speech, <http://www.berlin.de/landespressestelle/archiv/2008/03/11/95999/> (accessed February 2013).

According to Florida and other urban economists, there is an evident shift in global economy and urban geography away from economies based on industry and manufacturing towards what Florida called the creative economy.⁴²⁴ Moreover, with the decline of “old-school urban-economic development – based on business subsidies, convention centers, sports stadia and shopping malls,”⁴²⁵ Florida believed that in order to be economically prosperous and generate economic growth in today’s post-Fordist economy a city has to become a high-tech creative center. In order to become a creative center, a city has to attract talented, skilled professionals – the creative class. And in order to attract the creative talent, a city has to be attractive based on tolerance, openness, and creativity.⁴²⁶ Thus, technology, talent, and tolerance are the 3 T’s outlined by Florida as the prerequisites of urban and economic prosperity. As Stefan Krätke summarized, Florida’s creative class consists of three distinct occupational groups:

One group consists of the ‘highly creative’ occupations (the ‘super-creative core’), which include natural scientists and engineers, information scientists, economists and social scientists, the medical profession (physicians), architects, academic staff and related occupations. A second group is called the ‘bohemians’. It comprises various occupational groups in the sphere of the arts (writers, visual and performing artists, photographers, musicians, designers, etc.), as well as artistically creative occupations in media, entertainment and sports. A third group of the creative class, Florida calls ‘creative professionals’. This heterogeneous group includes those in certain highly qualified occupational groups such as technicians, consultants, organizational experts, mediators and brokers.⁴²⁷

Florida does not explain how the hierarchy among the different groups affects the relations between the members of the creative class, nor how their very presence affects cities in terms of gentrification.

Krätke examines the “class struggle” within Florida’s creative class and applies it to the New Berlin, highlighting that

⁴²⁴ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁴²⁵ Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Volume 29.4, December 2005, 740-770), 760.

⁴²⁶ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 7.

⁴²⁷ Stefan Krätke, “‘Creative Cities and the Rise of the Dealer Class: A Critique of Richard Florida’s Approach to Urban Theory,” in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Volume 34.4, December 2010, pp.835-53), 837.

The classical pioneers of gentrification are in large part made up of people with low economic and high cultural capital, i.e. low-income bohemians, artistically creative people, highly qualified young people at the bottom of the labour market food chain, etc. These people are subsequently dislocated in the gentrification process by more affluent groups of the same creative class, i.e. those high-income urban professionals who prefer to live in the inner-city scene districts in order to establish their Yuppie and Bobo (Bourgeois-Bohemians) lifestyles and, in particular cases, to take part in a locally concentrated and networked professional milieu. [...] In Berlin, for example, the most prominent scene district before 1990 was Kreuzberg; during the 1990s (following the reunification of the city) this function was taken over by the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. In the last decade, the scene of artists, bohemians and students relocated to the districts of Friedrichshain and (again) Kreuzberg, from where it has recently started to move on to the north of the Neukölln district.⁴²⁸

This is currently the case in Prenzlauer Berg, where the dislocated artists, musicians, and students have voiced their discontent at the *Schwaben*- and yuppie take-over of the entire neighbourhood.⁴²⁹

Florida believed that creative centers are not thriving for such traditional economic reasons as access to natural resources or transportation routes, but rather because creative people want to live there, and to have “abundant high-quality experiences, an openness to diversify of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people.”⁴³⁰ This conception of urban economic transformation was incorporated into Wowereit’s vision for the New Berlin as of 2008. However, Florida’s theory does not stipulate how to avoid conflict within the practices and spaces of the new creative economy. His understanding of creativity is based on “the ability to generate new knowledge or to convert existing knowledge into economically successful applications,”⁴³¹ as well as the emphasis on “social interaction, authenticity and identity,” which together generate the “power of place.”⁴³² This relates to Sharon Zukin’s conception of liminality and the landscape of power in the process of urban transformation from places of production to places of consumption. As Michael Storper and Allen J. Scott (2009) have noted, the basic notion behind the creativity theory

⁴²⁸ Stefan Krätke, “Creative Cities and the Rise of the Dealer Class,” 842.

⁴²⁹ For more on *Schwabenhass*, see Jan Fleischhauer, “S.P.O.N. – Der Schwarze Kanal: Hass auf die Schwaben,” in *Spiegel Online*, 03.01.2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/die-schwabenveraechter-von-heute-sind-oft-die-schwaben-von-gestern-a-875546.html> (accessed February 2014).

⁴³⁰ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 36.

⁴³¹ Stefan Krätke, “Creative Cities and the Rise of the Dealer Class,” 835.

⁴³² Michael Storper and Allen J. Scott, “Rethinking human capital, creativity and urban growth” in *Journal of Economic Geography* (9, 2009, 147-167), 149.

refers back to the classics of urban sociology, notably Tönnis (1887, 1957), to the effect that there is something about a climate of openness in cities that frees individuals from the chains of tradition or anxieties about being judged, and that encourages people to be more imaginative and inventive. Florida draws on this notion, and Jacobs' (1969) extension of it, to claim that a particular group – the 'creative class' – will converge in places where diversity and tolerance abound.⁴³³

Quoting Jane Jacobs' conception of cities, Florida reminded us that "a dynamic city, according to Jacobs, integrates its hinterland and becomes a full-blown 'city-region.'"⁴³⁴ Berlin-Brandenburg is increasingly becoming such a "city region," especially with the future completion of the Berlin-Brandenburg Airport and the Technology Park in Berlin-Adlershof.⁴³⁵ Klaus Wowereit has always supported Berlin's growth and expansion into a city-region, and even in his last speech at the House of Representatives in November 2014, he encouraged his followers and fellow representatives to embrace population growth in Berlin and to accommodate the social challenges that accompany that growth.⁴³⁶ In his research on innovation and economic growth in world centers, measured by patents granted worldwide, Florida found that the leading metropolitan regions in the world have formed around Tokyo, Seoul, New York, and San Francisco; while Toronto, Vancouver, Seattle, and Berlin, among others, also stand out.⁴³⁷ This is similar to Saskia Sassen's assessment of Berlin as a "second tier" global city, and Janet Ward's interpretation of its "beta" city status according to GaWC (Globalization and World Cities Research Group and Network) of 125 contemporary global cities, which ranks cities according to their representation by advanced producer services in law, accounting, banking/finance, and advertising.⁴³⁸ Florida noted that in the spring of 2000, *The Economist* ran an article titled, "The Geography of Cool," highlighting the connection between bohemian enclaves in places like New York, London, and Berlin,

⁴³³ Michael Storper and Allen J. Scott, "Rethinking human capital, creativity and urban growth," 150.

⁴³⁴ Richard Florida, *Who's Your City?* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2009), 43.

⁴³⁵ For more on Adlershof, see <http://www.adlershof.de/en/willkommen/> (accessed February 2014).

⁴³⁶ Klaus Wowereit, Abschiedsrede Nov. 27, 2014, <http://www.rbb-online.de/politik/klaus-wowereit/Beitraege/wowereits-letzte-rede-im-abgeordnetenhaus.html> (accessed November 2014).

⁴³⁷ Richard Florida, *Who's Your City*, 25.

⁴³⁸ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 282. In 2010, Berlin, along with Montreal and Vancouver ranked in the second "beta" category of global cities. For more see, <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t.html> (accessed February 2014).

and their abilities to “attract people, harness their creativity energy, spawn new innovations and generate economic growth.”⁴³⁹ Although Berlin has been recognized as a creative center and a media capital, it also continues to demonstrate complex struggles over contestations of space, urban development, de-construction of certain public buildings such as the Palace of the Republic and structures such as the East Side Gallery.

As outlined in the previous chapters, Berlin’s bohemian culture and creative scenes developed in the open spaces left by the dismantled Wall. Tolerance and diversity were encouraged by way of the Love Parade and other festivals such as the Pride Parade and the Carnival of Cultures. Talent followed with the discovery of affordable rents, interim-use leases, and new (sub)cultural enterprises. Technology has been summoned by way of *Media-Spree*, the Google Research Institute and international start-up conventions, such as the Berlin Web-Week.⁴⁴⁰ But as Krätke explained,

Florida’s theory lends itself to being used not only in a positive sense to foster the openness, tolerance and other socio-cultural attraction factors of cities and regions, but also to serve as a justification for urban restructuring measures in favour of certain functional elites within the neoliberal model of society, such as for gentrification projects and real-estate development for the socially selective enhancement of the attractiveness of city centers.⁴⁴¹

This inequality inherent in Florida’s creative economy is increasingly manifesting itself in the gentrification practices of the New Berlin. Furthermore, Florida’s conception of the creative urban economy is rooted in the belief that hard work and entrepreneurial labour (creativity and talent) will allow any individual to partake in the making of her or his own professional destiny, and simultaneously benefit the economic or commercial prosperity of the city (and its creative capital). This approach to

⁴³⁹ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 113. Also see, <http://www.economist.com/node/303114> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁴⁰ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of *Berlin Partners*, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011: “Berlin wants to be the digital capital, we help organizing the Berlin Web-Week, we are building a platform. Berlin is the start-up capital, we attract venture capitalists from the Silicon Valley. The prices for programmers and office space are cheaper in Berlin than in San Francisco. Google is opening a Research Institute with Berlin universities, to research internet and society. Deutsche Telekom has big labs here. Microsoft – we are working on it. Large corporations (like Nokia) buy smaller start-ups that originate here and thus move the whole corporate office to Berlin. These businesses make Berlin interesting for investors. We see that in IT and bio-technology.”

⁴⁴¹ Stefan Krätke, “Creative Cities and the Rise of the Dealer Class,” 836.

labour typically celebrates the select few, privileged to achieve a certain level of self-actualization and economic success, neglecting to admit the hierarchical structure and reliance on the countless labourers who support the success of the few. Moreover, the rhetoric of creative cities neglects to take into account that not all cities can become creative centers simultaneously, and that when global cities like New York and creative clusters like San Francisco are created through the influx of creative talent from else-where, other cities, like Detroit, for example, experience a drastic decline in population, revenue, and economic sustainability.⁴⁴² The relationality of cities is not taken into account in any long-term analysis, and neither are the effects of haemorrhaging creative talent in one city for the sole benefits of another.

The structural and social problems of the creative economy have also been summarized by Andrew Harris and Louis Moreno in their UK-based “Creative City Limits” research network,⁴⁴³ and outlined by scholars such as Angela McRobbie (2012, 2013), Claire Colomb (2012), Johannes Novy (2012), and Jamie Peck (2005), to name a few. However, as Matt Bolton (2013) pointed out, by 2002, the construction of a creative economy had become an avowed policy goal of governments across the globe.⁴⁴⁴ For the average mayor, as Jamie Peck noted, there are few downsides to making the city safe for the creative class – a creativity strategy can quite easily be bolted on to “business-as-usual urban-development policies.”⁴⁴⁵ In fact, Peck explained that “creativity plans do not disrupt these established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they *extend* them.”⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, Peck sides with Krätke’s criticism of Florida’s creative theory, stating that “urban

⁴⁴² Not surprisingly, all the recent literature on Detroit’s revival as an environmentally-friendly urban garden and creative hub is written by native Detroiters, all of whom currently live and work in New York. See, for example: Mark Binelli, *Detroit City is the Place to Be: Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

⁴⁴³ Andrew Harris and Louis Moreno, Creative City Limits, www.creativecitylimits.org (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁴⁴ Matt Bolton, “Is Art Really to Blame for Gentrification?” *Open Democracy*, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net> (accessed October 2013).

⁴⁴⁵ Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 760.

⁴⁴⁶ Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 761.

creativity strategies facilitate and extend the ‘third generation’ forms of gentrification, in which the (local) state assumes an increasingly active role in ‘rethinking the city for the middle classes,’” and that discourses of creative competition “serve to enroll cities in more far-reaching forms of cultural commodification and artistically inflected place promotion, targeted at a new audience.”⁴⁴⁷ The Berlin Senate and Klaus Wowereit’s resolution to adopt Florida’s creative theory for its urban re-development and branding practices are largely responsible for the gentrification wars in the New Berlin. Thus, it is important to examine Berlin’s various urban marketing and branding strategies in more detail.

Berlin’s Urban Marketing Campaigns

Claire Colomb has traced the history of urban marketing in Berlin back to the early eighteenth century, when Berlin became the capital city of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1701.⁴⁴⁸ In post-Wall Berlin, she identified 1991, the year Berlin was voted to become the capital of reunited Germany, as well as the year of Berlin’s bid for the 2000 Olympic Games, as the beginning of “an intensive spate of coalition building and marketing activities,” albeit “troubled by protests and opposition.”⁴⁴⁹ She believes that the Olympic bid suited “the ambitious agenda of the Grand Coalition to turn Berlin into a metropolis of European, or even global, significance.”⁴⁵⁰ In October 1992, the Berlin Senate set up a “Steering Group for Location Marketing” (*Lenkungsgruppe für Standortmarketing*), mandated to “prepare a marketing strategy for the city as a whole to improve its position in the European (even global) inter-city competition for investments and jobs.”⁴⁵¹ The Steering Group recommended the creation of a new

⁴⁴⁷ Jamie Peck, “Struggling with the Creative Class,” 762.

⁴⁴⁸ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 39.

⁴⁴⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 90: “Berlin’s bid came to an end in September 1993 when the international Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that Sydney had been selected for the 2000 Games.”

⁴⁵⁰ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 94.

⁴⁵¹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 116: “The committee comprised the Senators for the Economy and for Science and Research, the spokesperson of the Senate Chancellery, the executive directors of the existing promotional companies inherited from the pre-1989 period (Messe Berlin, Berliner Wirtschaftsförderung, BAO-Berlin Marketing Service) and the presidents of the Chamber of Trade and Industry and Chamber of Crafts. There were no public officials representing the Departments for Construction or Urban Development.”

agency responsible for the overarching marketing of Berlin to a variety of audiences.⁴⁵² After Berlin lost the Olympic bid to Sydney, the marketing agency *Olympia GmbH* was transformed into a new company, *Partner für Berlin – Gesellschaft für Hauptstadtmarketing GmbH* (Partners for Berlin – Association for Capital City Marketing). By 1995, *Marketing 2000 GmbH*, which represented the private sponsors of the Olympic bid, also officially merged with *Partner für Berlin* (PfB). PfB expanded rapidly and integrated new partners every year, growing from 17 partners in 1994 to 160 in 2011. The first partners were big German corporations such as *Deutsche Bank*, *Commerzbank*, *Siemens*, *Deutsche Telekom*, which were then followed by media firms, real-estate companies and semi-public utility and transport service companies.⁴⁵³



“Schaustelle Berlin” program and brochures from 1997 and 2002

The first series of marketing campaigns, entitled “Baustellensommer” (the summer of construction sites) took place every summer between 1994 and 1998 and included artistic and cultural events staged in and around construction sites.⁴⁵⁴ The first “Schaustelle Berlin” campaign was launched in the summer of 1996 as a two-month series of events at Potsdamer Platz and around Friedrichstrasse

⁴⁵² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 118.

⁴⁵³ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 119.

⁴⁵⁴ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 154.

organized by Pfb in partnership with the Senate,⁴⁵⁵ and lasted until 2005 – the year before the FIFA World Cup hosted by Germany. Karen E. Till summarized the “Schaustelle” campaigns as follows:

According to one marketing spokesperson who described summer tours to the construction sites, “Berlin is a large architectural exhibition. Each and every year things change. Normal tours might show you similar things, but they do not go into depth. We [Partners for Berlin] tell you who is constructing what and what lies behind it. Other sightseeing tours in cities are always superficial. I don’t have to do a tour a second time in Munich, but in Berlin I have to do it again and again because things change so fast” (interview, 2000). [...] The cover of a 1997 brochure for these summer tours and events, called *Schaustelle Berlin*, or Showcase Berlin, depicted young people (Germany’s future?) watching the spectacle of construction, a landscape somewhere between Berlin’s imagined dusk and sunrise.⁴⁵⁶

This practice of construction site tourism, described as “festivalization of urban politics” by Hartmut Häußermann,⁴⁵⁷ and as “spectacularization of the building process” by Ute Lehrer, which she claims “created the illusion that residents were able to participate in the transformation process,”⁴⁵⁸ was geared at both local Berliners and tourists. In 1997, the first “Das Neue Berlin” (the New Berlin) campaign to promote the capital city status was launched, culminating in 1999 with the slogan “Das Neue Berlin ist da!” (The New Berlin has arrived!) that promoted the symbolic date of birth of the New Berlin and the official opening of Norman Foster’s Reichstag dome. The phrase “the New Berlin” has since become so common-place in all references to contemporary Berlin that it is hard to imagine that it was designed by a marketing agency, and is thus first and foremost a construct, as well as an identity-branding tool. In 1999/2000 the Berlin Senate also introduced the “Berlin: Offene Stadt. Die Stadt der Ausstellung” (Berlin: Open City, City of Exhibition) platform, which integrated events organized by *Berliner Festspiele* into the city-wide exhibition and events program. These campaigns were generated

⁴⁵⁵ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 193.

⁴⁵⁶ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin*, 193.

⁴⁵⁷ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 197-98.

⁴⁵⁸ Ute Lehrer, “Zitadelle Innenstadt: Bilderproduktion und Potsdamer Platz,” in *Berlin: Global City oder Konkursmasse?* Ed. B Albert Scharenberg (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2000, 95-110), 108. Quoted in Bastian Heinsohn, “Protesting the Globalized Metropolis: The Local as Counterspace in Recent Berlin Literature” in *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*. Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (eds.), (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010, 189-209), 194.

by the Senate's Grand Coalition, also known as the "tourism coalition,"⁴⁵⁹ under the leadership of Mayor Eberhard Diepgen.⁴⁶⁰

Following the exposure of a large-scale financial scandal that involved the Grand Coalition government, Klaus Wowereit was elected Mayor in 2001. As Stefan Krätke explained,

The financial crisis had been actively produced by the former urban government in setting up a large public financial corporation (the 'Bankgesellschaft Berlin') which speculated in real estate bonds related to investments in East German housing and commercial property. This business policy failed, leaving the city with an unexpected financial burden of 30-35 billion euro. Thus, the major part of the city's total debt burden, which amounts to roughly 50 billion euros today, represents the social cost of the real estate and banking activities of Berlin's politicians.⁴⁶¹

Berlin's debt gradually continued to increase to over 60 billion euros, despite severe cuts in public expenditure and the increasing selling-off of its real-estate to outside investors. In his 2001 inauguration speech, Wowereit announced the creation of an agency for urban marketing and economic promotion of Berlin.⁴⁶² The summer of 2003 brought the poster campaign "Mir geht's Berlin" (I feel [like] Berlin) to seventy German cities, intended to promote tourism and Berlin's unique individuality.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ Hartmut Häussermann and Claire Colomb, "The New Berlin: Marketing the City of Dreams," 216: "The local government of Berlin has been facing endemic financial difficulties since the beginning of the 1990s, culminating in a political crisis in the spring of 2001 leading to the resignation of the governing mayor. The increasing financial crisis of the city will force the public administration to rely more heavily on private initiatives. In this perspective the "tourism coalition" described above can be interpreted as a pioneer arrangement foreshadowing a new type of urban regime which is already emerging in Berlin. Such a regime will exchange the dominant role of the public administration in a traditional system of hierarchical government for a system of decentralized coordination between different public and private actors."

⁴⁶⁰ Eberhard Diepgen was Mayor of West Berlin from 1984 to 1989 and of reunited Berlin from 1991 to 2001.

⁴⁶¹ Stefan Krätke, "City of Talents," 525-26.

⁴⁶² Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 195, 197: That year, a *Telekom* ad covered the Brandenburg Gate during its renovation, draping the former symbol of the border between East and West in *Telekom*'s slogan "Wir verbinden" (we connect).

⁴⁶³ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 335.



Klaus Wowereit and the “Mir geht’s Berlin” campaign of 2003

That same year, in an interview with *Focus Money*, Wowereit defined Berlin as “arm aber sexy” (poor but sexy), initiating perhaps the most quoted description of Berlin since Karl Scheffler’s pronouncement of it as a city fated “always to become and never to be.”⁴⁶⁴ In 2005, Berlin received the UNESCO “City of Design” Award,⁴⁶⁵ and in July of that year Pfb and *Wirtschaftsförderung Berlin International* (Economic Development Berlin International) merged into *Berlin Partners GmbH* to serve “four categories of clients: potential investors, Berlin firms, its own private partners, and the Berlin Senate.”⁴⁶⁶ According to its website, *Berlin Partners* trace their origins to 1950.⁴⁶⁷ Its stockholders include investment banks, the

⁴⁶⁴ Karl Scheffler, *Berlin. Ein Stadtschicksal* (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1910), 219.

⁴⁶⁵ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 336: “The power of Berlin to lead other cities culturally was accidentally enhanced by its decades of having had to provide double everything as a divided city: witness present-day Berlin’s seven universities, twenty technical colleges, eighty research institutes, three opera houses, fifty theatres, and over hundred and seventy museums. As if to illustrate this, in 2005 Berlin received a UNESCO “City of Design” Award specifically for its strength in fostering cultural industries. *The New York Times*, for one, is buying the product, recently calling Berlin a “cultural capital not just of Europe, but of the world”; and *The Economist* praised Berlin for its central role in establishing Germany’s dance boom.”

⁴⁶⁶ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 227.

⁴⁶⁷ Berlin Partners, <http://www.berlin-partner.de/?id=4&L=1> (accessed February 2014): “Today’s Berlin Partners has its roots in three groups founded in 1950, 1977 and 1994 respectively. BAO BERLIN International GmbH (BAO) was founded in 1950 as a 70-percent subsidiary of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It first operated under the name Berliner Absatz-Organisation GmbH, later as BAO BERLIN - Marketing Service GmbH. BAO BERLIN’s aim was to counteract West Berlin’s insular nature, which resulted from the Berlin Wall and the city’s unique political situation. BAO BERLIN promoted sales of Berlin-made products on the West German market, and created economic ties between West Berlin and the rest of the Federal Republic. The city’s business promotion activities emerged from the Berlin Senate Department for Economics with the formation of the *Wirtschaftsförderung Berlin GmbH* (WFB; known in English as: Berlin Business Development Corporation) in 1977. The move was intended to clearly show investors that the city had a separate institution dedicated specifically to their needs and interests. A

Chambers of Industry and Commerce and more recently *Berlin's Technology Foundation*.⁴⁶⁸ With the consolidation and creation of a strong marketing agency, Berlin was preparing to transform its image and identity even more, especially with the ensuing global media attention during the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Be Berlin

The “be Berlin” campaign came into being in the aftermath of the 2006 World Cup hosted by Germany and Berlin – a pivotal moment in the discourse of post-reunification national and civic identity formations.⁴⁶⁹ The World Cup provided the kind of incentive that the Olympic bid aimed but failed to generate earlier,⁴⁷⁰ spurring the completion of the *Hauptbahnhof* and other infrastructural re-constructions, and generating a positive mood that was captured in the documentary *Deutschland, Ein Sommermärchen* (*Germany, A Summer Fairy Tale*, dir. Sönke Wortmann, 2006).⁴⁷¹ As a result, in March

number of large companies took the initiative to found *Partner für Berlin – Gesellschaft für Hauptstadt-Marketing GmbH* (PfB; in English: Berlin Partners Capital City Marketing) in 1994 as a way to develop professional tools for marketing the city through a public-private partnership with the state of Berlin. The number of companies actively involved in the Berlin-Partners (PfB) network has grown continuously. Whereas there were 17 founding members in 1994, there are now more than 170 partner companies supporting the capital's business network. As part of a first step towards creating a central port of call in Berlin both for Berlin-based companies choosing to expand their international operations and for investors coming to Berlin, the BAO and the WFB merged in September 2003 to form the *Wirtschaftsförderung Berlin International GmbH* (WFB). The next step followed in July 2005, when the PfB and the WFB joined forces and became *Berlin Partners GmbH*. The outcome is a model unique in Germany: A public-private partnership commissioned by Berlin's government to promote growth in our city.”

⁴⁶⁸ Berlin Partners stockholders, <http://www.berlin-partner.de/en/ueberuns/stockholders.html> (accessed in 2010 and February 2014): *IBB – Investment Bank Berlin* with 45% of shares in 2012 and 31.5% in 2014, *Berlin Partners Holding – Capital City Marketing Ltd.* holding 40% in 2012, and 28% in 2014, *Berlin Chamber of Small Business and Skilled Crafts* (HWK) with 5 % in 2012 and 3.5% in 2014, *Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce* (IHK) with 5 % in 2012, and 3.5% in 2014, *UVB Confederation of Employers and Business Associations of Berlin and Brandenburg* with 5 % in 2012 and 3.5% in 2014, and more recently also *TSB Technologiestiftung Berlin* holding 30% of shares in 2014.

⁴⁶⁹ For more on the World Cup and national identity, see Katrina Sark, “Fashioning a New Brand of “Germanness”: The 2006 World Cup and Beyond” in *Seminar* (Vol. XLVIII, Nr. 2, May 2012), 254-266.

⁴⁷⁰ In the aftermath of Germany winning the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in July 2014, Wowereit announced his plans to put forth another Olympic bid, and simultaneously discussed Berlin's economic recovery in an interview with RBB. See Boris Hermel, “Ich kann die Ungeduld verstehen,” RBB-online, 20.07.2014, <http://www.rbb-online.de/politik/beitrag/2014/07/sommerinterview-regierender-buergermeister-klaus-wowereit-berlin.html> (accessed July 2014).

⁴⁷¹ *Deutschland, Ein Sommermärchen* (dir. Sönke Wortmann, 2006), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mZYrfPSy74> (accessed February 2014).

2007, *Der Spiegel* announced on its cover “Berlin: Comeback of a World City.”⁴⁷² As Christoph Lang, the PR representative of *Berlin Partners* pointed out, a campaign of this magnitude and participatory nature would not have been possible before 2006:

Berlin had large debts, the mood in Berlin prior to 2006 was not great. There was high unemployment and a weak economy. It was difficult for the municipal government to set aside money for such a campaign back then. The inhabitants have to reflect the image of the city; if we had said the city is great, and people on the street were jobless and miserable, it would not have worked. The mood of the city has to reflect the image campaign. In 2006, the mood in the city changed (*Deutschland, Ein Sommermärchen!*), the public morale was very positive, and after the municipal elections, it was clear: now or never!⁴⁷³

This mood was measured by asking business enterprises, as well as the *Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce* for their assessment polls, and in May 2007 strategic planning for the campaign began. The Senate set funding aside from the dual-budget of 2008/09; *Berlin Partners* devised a strategy to measure the image of Berlin in other cities around the world, and found that Berlin had a strong creative image, but a weak economic one. The initial campaign preparations were accompanied by the “Berlin Board” think-tank that met four times a year to exchange ideas, and to design a “Dachmarkenkampagne” (umbrella brand), conceptualized as an investment in the future, not only for economic growth through a positive image, but also promising an influx of creativity.⁴⁷⁴ The main themes of the campaign focused on Berlin as a place of “freedom and creativity,” a city of the future and of opportunities (“Berlin schaut nach vorn / Stadt der Chancen”), and its main focal areas included economy, science, culture, and urban development.⁴⁷⁵ The goal of the campaign was to attract more inhabitants and tourists, but especially more businesses that would settle in Berlin and create more jobs. The campaign set out to showcase what scientific, cultural, and social opportunities Berlin had to offer. As a participatory platform, the

⁴⁷²“Berlin: Comeback of a World City,” in *Der Spiegel*, 12 (19 March, 2007).

⁴⁷³ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of *Berlin Partners*, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011 (my translation).

⁴⁷⁴ Berlin Partners, *Hauptstadtkampagne “be Berlin”* (unpublished PowerPoint Slides, 01.03.2011). Original Text by Berlin Partners: “Weil eine Dachkampagne ein wichtiger Orientierungspunkt ist für das Selbstbild einer Stadt und ihre Darstellung in aller Welt. Deswegen ist eine Dachmarkenkampagne eine echte Zukunftsinversion, die sich nicht nur wirtschaftlich rechnet durch den Aufbau eines positiven Images, sondern auch einen ideellen Gewinn verspricht.”

⁴⁷⁵ Berlin Partners, *Hauptstadtkampagne “be Berlin”* (unpublished PowerPoint Slides, 01.03.2011).

three-part slogan (“be this... be that... be Berlin”) invited everyone to express their feelings about Berlin (for example: be city, be change, be Berlin!).⁴⁷⁶

On March 11, 2008, Klaus Wowereit announced the launch of the “be Berlin” campaign and his vision for the future of Berlin in an official ceremony at the City Hall. The campaign was the Senate’s response to Berlin’s bankruptcy after the financial crisis, its cuts in social services, its strained economy and credit-financed re-development.⁴⁷⁷ Indicatively, that same year the Sony Corporation sold the Sony Centre to Morgan Stanley after its official opening ten years earlier in 1998. During the “be Berlin” campaign launch several workers’ unions went on strike and threatened to shut down the city’s operation, which prompted Wowereit’s opening preface of congratulating Berliners on their solidarity and their ability to make the best of every situation (“Auch das ist Berlin: Das Leben nehmen wie es ist und das Beste daraus machen”).⁴⁷⁸ In his speech, Wowereit claimed that many cities and countries have marketing campaigns, most of which are invented by advertising executives and marketing agencies, but Berlin does it differently by building its campaign on the people of Berlin and their diversity and internationality (“Die Menschen sind Berlins größte Stärke, egal woher sie kommen”). Berlin politicians and planners recognized relatively early that in today’s global economy, (talented) people, or what Florida termed the high-human capital of the creative class, are the driving force behind economic growth. The long-term goal, according to Wowereit, was to bring Berlin to the top of its potential (“Berlin an die Spitze zu bringen”).

At the time of the campaign’s launch, more than a quarter of Berliners were unemployed, which Wowereit also highlights in his speech. The campaign was meant to tell the stories and to showcase examples of Berliners and their success. Wowereit invited all Berliners to participate: “Seid mit ganzem

⁴⁷⁶ Be Berlin Campaign, <http://www.be.berlin.de/> (accessed January 2014).

⁴⁷⁷ Janet Ward, “Berlin, the Virtual Global City,” 245.

⁴⁷⁸ Klaus Wowereit’s “be Berlin” launch speech, <http://www.berlin.de/landespressestelle/archiv/2008/03/11/95999/> (accessed January 2014).

Herzen Berliner. Macht mit! Ihr alle seid wichtig. Auf Euch kommt es an" (Be Berliners with all your heart! Participate! You are all important and you all matter in this campaign.) He invited Berliners to share their success stories in relation to the city, in time for the media attention that would be generated by the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall the following year in 2009. The goal of the campaign was to present Berlin as an international, multicultural, and open city, where people like to live. The long-term goal was to make Berlin competitive in areas of innovation, technology, and science. Initially, "be Berlin" was an appeal to make Berliners virtual ambassadors of their city ("Werden Sie Botschafter: Berlin hat viele Geschichten – grosse und kleine. Und was ist Ihre Geschichte?"). From a marketing point of view, this was a highly effective strategy – rather than politicians or marketing executives, the people of the city were invited to speak on the city's behalf. After all, people listen and relate to other people's stories, and more pertinently, as Florida's statistics showed, talent attracts talent.⁴⁷⁹

In his 2008 speech, Wowereit made reference to the upcoming anniversary of the fall of the Wall, and November 9, 1989 as a day that transformed the whole world and made Berlin the symbol of that transformation ("Dieser Tag hat die Welt verändert und Berlin ist das Symbol dieser Veränderung"). At the time, Berlin was about to stand in media spotlight for a second time after the 2006 World Cup, and both the Senate and Wowereit were anticipating media questions about its transformation ("Was hat diese Stadt aus ihrer Freiheit gemacht? Wo ist Beispielhaftes entstanden? Wie sehen die Berlinerinnen und Berliner die Zukunft ihrer Stadt?"⁴⁸⁰). Wowereit acknowledged that the marketing campaign was designed not only to "sell" Berlin as it is, but to generate more transformations and reforms in the city. "Be Berlin" was also presented as a call to action, encouragement, and innovation to spur investment ("Appell zum Handeln, eine Ermutigung, neue Wege zu gehen. Und nach meinem

⁴⁷⁹ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 33.

⁴⁸⁰ Klaus Wowereit's "be Berlin" launch speech, <http://www.berlin.de/landespressestelle/archiv/2008/03/11/95999/> (accessed January 2014).

Verständnis soll Politik den Rahmen schaffen, damit die Initiative gelingt und damit es sich lohnt zu investieren"). According to Wowereit, this meant more openness to the world, more cultural and linguistic diversity. It also meant consciously working against discrimination, and offering equal opportunities to all. Wowereit's speech echoed Florida's creative theory again, when he referred to creating the right conditions in order to attract talent to Berlin from all over the world ("Wenn wir die Talente aus aller Welt gewinnen wollen, dann müssen wir ihnen Bedingungen bieten, die besser sind als anderswo [...] Erst dann wird es uns gelingen, Topleute zu halten"). From this speech, it becomes apparent that Berlin was being re-conceptualized and steered towards becoming a creative center designed to attract the creative classes. Berlin was not only to become a city of sustainable energy ("Stadt der erneuerbaren Energien"), but also a leader in environmental development. This too is in line with Florida's creative economy and environmental quality.⁴⁸¹ Thus the "be Berlin" campaign was not only an invitation to engage with Berlin's national and international image and role, but also a call to re-conceptualize Berlin's fundamental identity and understanding of itself as a transformed city. Wowereit acknowledged the work-in-progress nature of the city and the campaign itself, taking pride in the fact that more was happening in this "unfinished" city than in many "finished" cities ("in dieser 'unfertigen' Stadt bewegt sich viel mehr als in den vielen 'fertigen' Metropolen").

The timing of the campaign launch could not have been chosen better. When it comes to building an image of the future, in the context of a globalizing capital and creative center not only for Berlin and Germany, but perhaps also as a blueprint for other creative centers, it was important to start on a high note, yet still relatively early enough in the urban and economic re-development of the city. After the 2006 World Cup, after the completion of the major construction sites, including the *Hauptbahnhof*, and after steering the global media spotlight onto Berlin, the scene was set to attract foreign investors and businesses to Berlin, but also to lay out future directions and goals. Hence, the

⁴⁸¹ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 58.

campaign was created with a highly participatory platform as its engine, navigating towards a future outlined by Florida's three T's of technology, talent, and tolerance.⁴⁸² Its launch in 2008, right between two highly publicized events that put Berlin into the global media spotlight (the World Cup and the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall), shows just how carefully and strategically Berlin's urban, economic, and cultural re-development was planned and executed. Not only did "be Berlin" invite identification with the city as the preceding campaigns had done, it literally called for participation and for action.



"Be Berlin" campaign posters, 2008

After its official launch in 2008, the campaign unfolded in several phases. The first phase focused on personal stories of local Berliners, celebrating and promoting their creativity and diversity. One of the most publicized examples was of two students of the Rütli School,⁴⁸³ one of the most notoriously unruly and violent schools in Neukölln with a migrant majority, that was about to be shut down in 2007. But local Berliners got involved and made the school into a community project, creating a new campus, new workshops, and a community center; they printed T-Shirts, re-branding the Rütli

⁴⁸² Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 37: "To attract creative people, generate innovation, and stimulate economic development, a place must have all three. I define tolerance as openness, inclusiveness, and diversity to all ethnicities, races, and walks of life. Talent is defined as those with a bachelor's degree and above."

⁴⁸³ Rütli School, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,409876,00.html> (accessed January 2014).

name as a positive, creative, and trendy concept. The “be Berlin” campaign showcased the two students, who took the initiative of creating the Rütli fashion label, as prime examples of Berlin’s creativity, diversity, and success.⁴⁸⁴ The campaign’s emphasis on selective portrayals of positive success stories was initially aimed to present Berlin’s potential creativity and talent to its own local population, and simultaneously promote the values of creativity and talent through local examples. The second phase of the campaign included a contest entitled “Message for Berlin” that called for personal three-part slogans by Berliners. Over 2000 messages were collected, with select ones printed on T-Shirts, postcards, and stickers (for example, “be German, be Turkish, be Berlin”). By March 2009, during its third phase, the campaign went international with the slogan “Berlin is the place to be” (“the place to be for science,” “the place to be for conventions,” etc.), initiating the “Berlin Days” international tours, promoting Berlin in cities like Copenhagen, New York, Istanbul, London, Brussels, Warsaw, Shanghai, and Melbourne. As of 2009, Berlin’s artists and designers (its creative talent) began to accompany Wowereit’s delegation on the “Berlin Days” around the world. For example, a Berlin fashion school went to Copenhagen to exhibit their designs and organized a fashion show there, while a Berlin art gallery was being showcased in New York. The campaign provided not only international visibility, but also public relations and marketing platforms for artists and designers (websites, brochures, and newsletters) to foster and strengthen international creativity networks. These initiatives and trips strengthened Berlin’s international image as a creative hub where its cultural capital was beginning to fuel its symbolic economy.

⁴⁸⁴ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of Berlin Partners, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011.

On June 2, 2009 the “be Berlin” *Stadtladen* (city shop) opened, serving as a souvenir shop to promote Berlin-made designs, as well as a temporary exhibition and event space. In November of that year, *Time Magazine* published an article on “Hip Berlin, Europe’s Capital of Cool,” documenting the gradual process of the appropriation of its sub-culture and the rise of creativity in Berlin, and demonstrating that within a year of the campaign’s launch Berlin’s self-fashioning as a creative center had circulated and was echoed internationally. That same year, commissioned by the Berlin Senate, the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin’s private university and a leading European policy school, published its *Berlin Study*,⁴⁸⁵ providing statistical data on life in Berlin. Two thousand Berliners over the age of fourteen were asked about Berlin life-styles, neighbourhoods, economic, cultural, and social issues, tolerance, employment, immigration, integration, economic conditions, identity, East-West relations, and diversity. Moreover, the Study provided ten portraits of selected Berlin immigrants to form a “realistic representation and profile of the city.”⁴⁸⁶ The authors of the Study found through their statistical data and interviews that “Berliners think of their city as open, cosmopolitan, international, creative, and tolerant;” that “Berlin is considered to be the capital of a new Germany, and a globalized, cosmopolitan society,” and that “Berlin can be a model for other German cities.”⁴⁸⁷ In the earlier conducted “Roland-Berger-Study” (1999) commissioned by the *Baden-Württemberg Stiftung*, Berlin ranked at the top in the tolerance category, eighth (out of ten) in the talent category, and ninth in the technology category.⁴⁸⁸ Overall, at the time, Berlin was ranking fifth among German cities, behind Munich, Stuttgart, Hamburg, and Frankfurt. By 2009, the authors of the *Berlin Study* discovered that “Berlin had more artists than any other German city.”⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, they observed a process taking place in Berlin that they referred to as “culturalization of city politics,” claiming that culture became an important vehicle of urban

⁴⁸⁵ Hertie Berlin Study, <http://www.hertieberlinstudie.de/> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁸⁶ Klaus Hurrelmann, Michael Zürn (eds.), “Vorwort,” *Hertie Berlin Studie* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2009), 13.

⁴⁸⁷ Klaus Hurrelmann, Michael Zürn (eds.), *Hertie Berlin Studie*, 298, 304.

⁴⁸⁸ Roland-Berger Study, <http://www.bwstiftung.de/index.php?id=134> (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁸⁹ Klaus Hurrelmann, Michael Zürn (eds.), *Hertie Berlin Studie*, 308, 309.

development, not only as a conceptual and identity-constructing element, but as an economic factor. Echoing Florida's theory, they emphasized that creative enterprises such as clubs, galleries, and exhibitions attract more creativity, tourists, and investors.⁴⁹⁰ According to the director of the *Hertie Foundation* in Berlin, Michael Knoll, the original conception of the study goes back to 2006,⁴⁹¹ the World Cup year. By 2009, the Senate's efforts to gather data on Berlin and to generate and strengthen its public profile had reached a steady momentum.

In May 2010, Berlin volunteers were asked to submit stories of their public engagement on the "be Berlin" campaign webpage, entitled "Zusammenleben in Berlin" (Living together in Berlin). A total of 204 stories were picked and the selected authors were featured on the billboards covering the Victory Column scaffolding in August and September 2010. By September 2010, the campaign focus shifted to Berlin as an industrial city ("Berlin – the place to be for future industries," and "Ich bin ein Berliner") showcasing Daimler, Bombardier, Siemens, and BMW as Berlin-based industries, to present Berlin as an industrial, innovative, and business-friendly location. Moreover, as Christoph Lang noted, "Berlin wants to be the center for electric mobility." That year, *Berlin Partners* published "The place to be – be Berlin" brochure, proclaiming Berlin as an "open space for new ways of thinking," and "creative diversity," stressing that

⁴⁹⁰ Klaus Hurrelmann, Michael Zürn (eds.), *Hertie Berlin Studie*, 2009), 310.

⁴⁹¹ Michael Knoll at Hertie School Berlin, personal interview, June 20, 2011: "Die ursprüngliche Idee für die Berlin Studie kam von Björn Böhning – Leiter Politische Planung für Grundsatz Angelegenheiten (SPD). Er wollte einen Überblick, um zu sehen, wie diese Stadt funktioniert. Vorgänger Studien waren: *Politische Milieus* (2004-05), *Jugendstudie* (Bildung). André Schmitz (damals die rechte Hand von Klaus Wowereit, jetzt Staatssekretär für kulturelle Angelegenheiten der Senatskanzlei) hat selber eine Stiftung, die Schwarzkopf Stiftung. Er kannte die Hertie School und Stiftung, und er wollte für Böhning's Idee eine Studie entwickeln. Daraufhin haben wir ein Workshop im Sommer 2006 zu Berlin organisiert (mit Stadtplaner, Architekten, Politiker, etc.), dann kam die Idee eine ausführliche Studie zu machen. Klaus Wowereit schlug vor es im Format der *Jugendstudie* zu machen. Fragebogen (2000 Berliner per Telefon befragt) über Intergration (wie funktioniert es in Berlin?), Ost-West Spaltung, Internationalität, Familie, etc. In der Form, als Bevölkerungsbefragung, ist es die erste Studie. Wir haben vor sie alle 4-5 Jahre zu erneuern. Wir haben in der Zwischenzeit eine *Frankfurt am Main Studie* gemacht. Und wir werden das auch für das Ruhegebiet machen. Das spannende ist Vergleichsdatei zu haben, so dass man die Entwicklung sehen kann. Neben den quantitativen Befragungen haben wir auch qualitative Interviews geführt, die die unterschiedlichen Lebensfelder auch repräsentieren sollen. Die Studie wird von Journalisten viel benutzt."

In the course of its rapid development, Berlin has transformed itself from a location for traditional industries into a dynamic service and technology metropolis. The worlds of politics, business and scientific research work in close collaboration here to strengthen the region's advantages as a business location and to tap innovative fields of the future.⁴⁹²

The brochure highlighted major events and milestones in the city's recent history, such as the 2006 FIFA World Cup, Barack Obama's speech to Berliners at the Victory Column, proclaiming that "history proved that no challenge is too great for a world that stands as one" on July 24, 2008, and the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in November 2009. Similar publications were produced annually both by *Berlin Partners* and by the Senate, providing statistics and data on economic growth, cultural achievements, and diversity events, all of which showcased Berlin's social and cultural transformations.⁴⁹³



"Be Berlinternational" campaign, 2011

In April 2011, the "be Berlinternational" campaign was launched, focusing on its multicultural and international inhabitants (out of 191 world countries, 190 are represented among the 3.4 million inhabitants of Berlin).⁴⁹⁴ Berliners with international backgrounds who shaped the intercultural life of the city were invited to share their stories of engagement on the campaign website, drawing attention

⁴⁹² "The place to be – be Berlin" brochure (Berlin: Berlin Partner GmbH, 2010), 4, 3, 11.

⁴⁹³ Berlin: A Success Story, http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/rbm-skzl/berlin_a_success_story.pdf?start&ts=1352113756&file=berlin_a_success_story.pdf (accessed February 2014).

⁴⁹⁴ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of Berlin Partners, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011.

to their work achievements. More than 200 multicultural Berliners submitted their stories on the website. 140 finalists were selected and featured on billboards covering the scaffolding around the opera building at Unter den Linden. Even within its multicultural agenda, the campaign continued to showcase Berlin-based talent and creativity, gradually incorporating representations of industry and technology, thus continuously highlighting the three T's of technology, talent, and tolerance as its strengths and values. The gradual internationalization of the campaign reflected the strategic internationalization of the city. In 2012, the "be Berlin" website provided a retrospective of the campaign achievements, commemorating its four years of work, summarizing its history and progress, and emphasizing its success at developing Berlin's international "brand profile."⁴⁹⁵ Increasingly, Berlin was presented as a place where differences came together and could be productive together. This practice of "transculturation" in the New Berlin is what Mary Louise Pratt described as a "contact zone," a process in which "groups of various cultures come into contact and change the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."⁴⁹⁶ The campaign aimed to highlight productivity generated out of differences.⁴⁹⁷ Thus from the beginning, the campaign was not only based on marketing (TV spots and large billboards), but also on public relations, as well as collaborations with artists, designers, and average Berliners. The municipal elections in the fall of 2011 reaffirmed Klaus Wowereit as Mayor of

⁴⁹⁵ Be Berlin website, <http://www.be.berlin.de/en/campaign/> (accessed April 8, 2012): "In the summer of 2007, when Berlin's government commissioned Berlin Partner GmbH with developing and implementing a strategy for an image campaign, a study by TNS Infratest market research showed that the national public considered Berlin to be "full of life" and the international public thought of it as "a city with great potential." The capital, however, had no clear profile to speak of, and international survey participants still considered other cities to be much more attractive as places to live and work. As a result, our goal was to transform Berlin's strengths into an opportunity – and, most importantly, let Berliners themselves speak on behalf of their city. And our strategy worked. As shown by a recent TNS Infratest study, Berlin's image among international survey participants as a business location and an attractive place to live and work is now significantly stronger than in 2007. The city has developed a very clear brand profile, not least thanks to the impressive commitment shown by thousands of Berlin campaign 'ambassadors.'"

⁴⁹⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7. Quoted in Barbara Kosta, "Transcultural Space and Music," 358.

⁴⁹⁷ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of Berlin Partners, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011.

Berlin for the third time, and at the time, the campaign had still two more years of planned and funded projects. According to Lang,

an urban marketing campaign can reflect a sense of identity and strengthen it, but it can never create it from scratch. I like to compare it to surfing. A surfer cannot produce a wave, but it takes a lot of skill and talent to see and recognize the wave, and then to ride it. It's the same with our campaign. We caught the wave at the right time, and touched a nerve. And we were often surprised how well it was received, and how accurately it responded to the public sentiments. We don't create the Berlin image, we see it and we build on it. Someone came up with the idea to open a beach bar on the Spree – it was not us, we just use it as one of the images for Berlin.⁴⁹⁸

The effective circulation of the “be Berlin” campaign depended, for the most part, on the continuous integration and appropriation of various success stories of creativity and diversity provided by local entrepreneurs and creative talents. Because the campaign provided free, wide public exposure, people who wanted to promote their talents, brands, and success stories gladly contributed and participated. This explains the self-generating and widely-circulating reach of the campaign and its unprecedented transformative power. Furthermore, this kind of integration of cultural and entrepreneurial creativity into the campaign structure was also evident during the release of the *In Berlin* (2009) documentary film, when both filmmakers and several of the film's protagonists posed for the campaign posters.⁴⁹⁹



Michael Ballhaus, Ciro Cappellari, and Nele Winkler posing for the “Be Berlin” campaign posters, 2009

⁴⁹⁸ Christoph Lang, press spokesman of Berlin Partners, personal interview, Berlin, May 10, 2011.

⁴⁹⁹ Be Berlin, premiere of *In Berlin*, <http://www.sei.berlin.de/kampagne/premiere-in-berlin#> (accessed February 2014).

As Claire Colomb noted in her study, the “be Berlin” campaign marked a “shift away from the depiction of the built environment towards the portrayal of individuals as the markers and symbols of a place, as the components and producers of its ‘brand’”. In the depiction of Berlin as a meeting point for ‘creative individuals’, ordinary Berliners were construed as ‘creative’ in their daily life and activities.”⁵⁰⁰ This is precisely the shift that is apparent between the Babylonian Berlin and the New Berlin, which Ballhaus and Cappellari documented in their film. The emphasis of the campaign on creativity and diversity was evident from its very beginning. According to Colomb,

the campaign featured characters who had previously been completely left out of the city marketing imagery, in particular Berliners from an ethnic minority background. [...] In 2008, out of the hundreds of testimonies posted on the ‘be Berlin’ website, eighteen persons were selected to feature in an image campaign displayed on the city’s walls and in the printed media. Apart from the expected testimonies from scientists, artists, or successful entrepreneurs, one of the eighteen posters displayed a youth worker from Arab origin, with the caption “Fadi Saad is Berlin. The city lives through people like Fadi Saad. As neighbourhood manager in Neukölln, he is changing Berlin.”⁵⁰¹

Not surprisingly, by 2009 a Senate initiative was launched responsible for funding and promoting diversity, multiculturalism, and intercultural education in Berlin.

Be Berlin – Be Diverse

Created in November 2009 by the *Senatkanzlei für kulturelle Angelegenheiten*⁵⁰² (Berlin Senate’s Cultural Department), and borrowing its title from the “be Berlin” campaign, the “be Berlin – be diverse” administrative organization was mandated to promote diversity and intercultural education, to better represent the 820,000 Berlin inhabitants with migrant or post-migrant background, and to allocate funding to artists in Berlin.⁵⁰³ It was responsible for creating a cultural infrastructure, including a job market in the cultural sector; for promoting cultural education, providing funding and stipends for

⁵⁰⁰ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 263.

⁵⁰¹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 262. For more campaign images, see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/be-berlin/3470638810/in/photostream/> (accessed February 2014).

⁵⁰² Berlin Senate, cultural department, <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/index.de.php> (accessed February 2014).

⁵⁰³ Be Berlin – be diverse, <http://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/beberlinbediverse/> (accessed February 2014).

cultural institutions, youth projects, as well as stipends for multicultural artists, designers, musicians, and film-makers based in Berlin; and for organizing cultural diversity events, stressing that immigration themes were no longer presented as problematic issues but as cultural heritage.⁵⁰⁴ Torsten Wöhlert, the PR representative of the Senate's Cultural Department at that time, explained that "be Berlin – be Diverse" was mandated to oversee cultural management by allocating public funding to theatres, museums, art galleries, etc., and thereby to direct cultural politics ("politische Steuerung") towards diversity.⁵⁰⁵ The organization was conceptualized in connection with "be Berlin," with the hopes that some of the campaign's funding budget would be extended to "be diverse," but no funding was made available through the campaign.⁵⁰⁶ The organization then formed a partnership with the *Hertie Foundation*, and together they organized public events, including theatre performances and film screenings, to promote diversity. In 2009, the same year as the *Hertie Berlin Study* was published, "be diverse" organized its first symposium on diversity and produced a brochure for "better business practices to promote diversity,"⁵⁰⁷ which speaks directly to Richard Florida's mandate that "cities must begin to combine their goal of providing a better business environment with strategies aimed at improving their diversity and tolerance."⁵⁰⁸ In his welcoming speech at the symposium launch, the Senate's Culture Minister André Schmitz defined Berlin of the twenty-first century as "weltoffen" (open to the world), multilayered, contradictory, and diverse.⁵⁰⁹ He quoted multiculturalism, anti-discrimination, and cultural diversity policy and funding initiatives in Canada, US, and Britain, as examples for Berlin to follow.

⁵⁰⁴ Torsten Wöhlert, Pressesprecher Senatskanzlei Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, personal interview, May 5, 2011.

⁵⁰⁵ Torsten Wöhlert, Pressesprecher Senatskanzlei Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, personal interview, May 5, 2011.

⁵⁰⁶ Torsten Wöhlert, Pressesprecher Senatskanzlei Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, personal interview, May 5, 2011.

⁵⁰⁷ Be Berlin – be diverse Symposium, https://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-kultur/bediverse/symposium_auswertung_u_dokumentation.pdf (accessed February 2014).

⁵⁰⁸ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 139.

⁵⁰⁹ André Schmitz, "Be Diverse" opening speech, https://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-kultur/bediverse/be_diverse_er_ffnung.pdf (accessed February 2014).

The following year, “be diverse” published a report on local institutions with “Best Practice Examples” of promoting intercultural initiatives and projects in public institutions. The leading institutions included *Bibliothek Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg*, *Rundfunk-Orchester und -Chöre*, *Museum Neukölln*, *Kreuzberg Museum*, and *Neuköllner Oper*. In September of that year, the Mayor gave a personal introduction at the film premiere of *Shahada* (dir. Burhan Qurbani, 2010) at *Filmtheater Friedrichshain*.⁵¹⁰ The film narrates the fates of three German-born Muslims in Berlin that collide as they struggle to find a middle ground between faith and modern life in contemporary Western society, and was nominated for the *Golden Bear* at the 60th *Berlinale* Film Festival.⁵¹¹ In the spring of 2011, *Türkisch Gold*, a play by Tina Müller was performed at the *Deutsches Theater*,⁵¹² followed by a public discussion panel on cultural diversity with representatives from different cultural institutions and artistic disciplines. The discussion topics ranged from definitions of multiculturalism to aesthetic values of culture, to the common agreement that “Bildungsbürgertum bricht ab, Immigration nimmt zu, der Kanon müsste erweitert werden” (the cultural elites are disintegrating, immigration is increasing, and the [cultural] canon has to be expanded).⁵¹³



Cultural diversity discussion panel at *Deutsches Theater* in April 2011, photo by K.Sark

⁵¹⁰ *Shahada* trailer, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_8Q5RWijfQ (accessed February 2014).

⁵¹¹ For more on *Shahada*, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahada_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahada_(film)) (accessed February 2014).

⁵¹² *Türkisch Gold* at *Deutsches Theater*, http://mobil.deutschestheater.de/english/schedule/turkish_gold/ (accessed February 2014).

⁵¹³ Cultural Diversity panel at *Deutsches Theater*, http://www.deutschestheater.de/spielplan/spielplan/was_haben_die/ (accessed February 2014).

That spring, the *Comedy Theatre* on Kurfürstendamm also presented a play entitled *Achtung Deutsch!* (Warning, German!), which by way of humour constructed and de-constructed stereotypes of multiculturalism and of what it means to be German.⁵¹⁴ That same year, a volume of essays, entitled *Multikultur 2.0: Willkommen im Einwanderungsland Deutschland* (Multiculturalism 2.0: Welcome to the Immigration Country Germany) edited by Susanne Stemmler was published.⁵¹⁵ The volume is a collection of essays and discussions that came out of a congress on multiculturalism hosted by the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* (House of World Cultures) and featured contributions from Arjun Appadurai, Kwame Anthony Appiah, David Hollinger, Navid Kermani, Claus Leggewie, and Hito Steyerl to name a few. The topics of the essays ranged from immigration reforms in Germany in the early 2000s to definitions of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism, provided by Claus Leggewie, who imported the term “Multi-Kulti,” as well as Mark Terkessidis’ critical analysis of social diversity in the context of globalization.⁵¹⁶ All these events and publications flooded the New Berlin at that time, making diversity an omnipresent buzz word, manifested in all types of cultural productions.

The following year, in the spring of 2012, “be diverse” organized a discussion evening at the *Komische Oper*, where the theatre director Barrie Kosky gave a talk on “Blackface, Jews, Kangaroos, and *Kaiserschmarrn!* A personal view on Australian and European Interculturality.” In September of that year, *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* hosted an event entitled “Verso e Reverso da Diversidade Cultural” or “Warum Vielfalt kein Obstsalat ist!” (Why diversity is no fruit salad), including a performance by the creative directors Wagner Carvalho and Tunçay Kulaoğlu. In October 2013, “be diverse” organized a

⁵¹⁴ For more on *Achtung Deutsch*, see <http://suitesculturelles.wordpress.com/2011/04/13/achtung-deutsch-what-makes-someone-german/> (accessed February 2014).

⁵¹⁵ Susanne Stemmler (ed.) *Multikultur 2.0: Willkommen im Einwanderungsland Deutschland* (Gottingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011), 13.

⁵¹⁶ Mark Terkessidis, “Was ist Interkultur?” in Susanne Stemmler (ed.) *Multikultur 2.0: Willkommen im Einwanderungsland Deutschland* (Gottingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011, 222-230), 222: “In meinem Verständnis von Interkultur geht es also nicht wie im Multikulturalismus um die Anerkennung von kulturellen Identitäten, die Relativität unterschiedlicher Perspektiven oder das Zusammenleben der Kulturen, sondern das Ziel ist die Veränderung der charakteristischen Muster, die aktuell mit der Vielheit eben nicht mehr übereinstimmen.”

panel discussion on contemporary art at the n.b.k. (*Neuer Berliner Kunstverein* – New Berlin Art Association), inviting Susanne Gaensheimer, the director of Frankfurt’s Contemporary Art Museum, artist Marina Napruskina, the recipient of a stipend from the Senate, Janos Can Togay, the director of the *Collegium Hungaricum*, and Michael Knoll, director of *Berlin Hertie Foundation*. The panel discussion revolved around the question whether contemporary art was still marked by a Western worldview, despite its internationality.⁵¹⁷ Such events further demonstrate that the promotion of ethnic and cultural diversity in Berlin increased between the 1990s and 2000s, particularly during Wowereit’s tenure as Mayor, as the Senate’s views on migration and integration began to reflect the creative city agenda.

Even in the early 1990s, an anti-racism poster campaign “We are Berlin,” initiated by the city’s Deputy for Foreign Affairs, portrayed a mix of portraits intended to signal ethno-cultural diversity and the mosaic of multi-cultural groups of the city.⁵¹⁸ At that time, no particular claims were made regarding the relationship between different ethnic groups and the city, merely hinting at the idea of intercultural harmony, with the main intention of this “multicultural branding effort” to include immigrants and those targeted by the “foreigner” label in the “symbolic construction of an urban community.”⁵¹⁹ Since Wowereit’s tenure as Mayor, more strategic efforts have been made to open the city to investors, tourists, and the creative classes, while its “cultural diversity was presented as both consumer item and evidence of a tolerant and world-open habitat in which creatives can thrive.”⁵²⁰ As Colomb noted, annual events and festivals such the Carnival of Cultures and the Turkish Parade promote “spectacles of identity,” which serve a dual role: “they provide the raw material for creating a brand name for the city

⁵¹⁷ “Zeitgemäße Kunst?!” https://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-kultur/bediverse/nbk_doku.pdf?start&ts=1385023415&file=nbk_doku.pdf (accessed February 2014).

⁵¹⁸ Kira Kosnick, “Conflicting Mobilities: Cultural Diversity and City Branding in Berlin” in Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Eleonore Kofman, and Catherine Kevin (eds.), *Branding Cities: Cosmopolitanism, Parochialism, and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2009, 28-41), 30.

⁵¹⁹ Kira Kosnick, “Conflicting Mobilities,” 31.

⁵²⁰ Kira Kosnick, “Conflicting Mobilities,” 37.

by catering to contemporary 'life styles' and to the demands of media and global travel, and they aim to facilitate formations of community and solidarity and allow for participation in local, national, and transnational social spaces."⁵²¹ Berlin's marketing of diversity became explicit after 2008 and the launch of the "be Berlin" campaign, and increased with the annual events organized by the "be Berlin – be diverse" initiative. Colomb believes that the timing of these practises was not a coincidence, given the publication of Thilo Sarrazin's controversial book in 2010, in which he stated that "Germany's post-war immigration and integration policies had failed," followed by Angela Merkel's statement in October 2010 at a CDU youth meeting, that "Germany's experiment with multiculturalism had utterly failed."⁵²² Both Colomb (2012) and Kosnick (2009) have highlighted the ways in which Berlin's diversity marketing has failed to generate any serious social change; however, given the Senate's allocation of cultural funding and its influence on the expansion of the cultural canon, its branding efforts have had a noticeable impact not only in regards to Berlin's international brand profile, but on its social policy as well.

Berlin's branding practices have generated a great amount of criticism, largely focusing on the commodification of the city and escalating gentrification of its artistic and open spaces. The "be Berlin" campaign prided itself on promoting economic and cultural growth, yet many long-term consequences

⁵²¹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 248. Also see, Kira Kosnick, "Conflicting Mobilities," 38-39: "An example of cultural diversity is the annual Carnival of Cultures, which draws over a million visitors each year, designed as a platform on which to exhibit the cultural riches of the city's immigrant groups and local cultural organizations.[...] The carnival and the cultural institutions responsible for its organization receive funds not from the city budget reserved for the support of culture, but from the office of the Commissioner for Integration and Migration of the Berlin Senate. Most of the funding for the carnival is obtained through commercial sponsors. [...] The House of World Cultures, a gift of the US government and sponsored by the federal government because of its perceived importance as a showcase cultural institution for Germany's capital, has for half a century had the task of presenting non-European cultural developments in the fine arts, literature, film, theatre, and music, and engaging them in a public discourse with European cultures. [...] The dominant shift from multiculturalism to cosmopolitan imaginings of the city has meant that mobility has become an increasingly central dimension of cultural capital related to urban diversity. Recent productions by artists and cultural activists with labor migrant backgrounds have begun to respond to these shifts. The *Beyond Belonging Festival* produced by independent producer and cultural activist Shermin Langhoff offers an example of young migrant artists challenging both urban policy makers and a Berlin arts establishment that afford them no place in their cosmopolitan branding efforts."

⁵²² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 249.

remained largely unaccounted for: for example, the rise in housing prices and the cost of living due to gentrification that have been displacing various sub-cultural and artistic communities that made the neighbourhoods attractive in the first place. Credit-financed overbuilding (Ward) and the financial scandals of the 1990s had left the city's budget in constant deficit and growing debt. Moreover, the "be Berlin" campaign itself is not without controversy, as Andrea Horn and Marc Arroyo, the creators of the "Just Be Berlin" contribution to the campaign contest of October 2007 claim. According to their blog, their campaign design with the slogan "just be.rlin" was designed to communicate diversity, internationality, and cosmopolitanism of the city. The designers claim that the city of Berlin used their concept and ideas without acknowledging their work and contributions to the official campaign.⁵²³



"Just be.rlin" campaign proposal designed by Andrea Horn and Marc Arroyo, 2007

While such business practices are not uncommon in the corporate and advertising worlds, it may be more difficult to adjust to the New Berlin's "city-as-enterprise" governance mode, which underpins most forms of its branding efforts and has provoked "strong attacks on public administration, public services and public provision of social infrastructure, often regardless of the political colour of the governing parties."⁵²⁴ These entrepreneurial governing practices have not gone unnoticed by writers and filmmakers, as the authors of *Lost in Gentrification* (2012) have noted, or as Wladimir Kaminer satirized:

Mit Hilfe der Politik wurden die Gewinne privatisiert, die Verluste dagegen verstaatlicht. Aufgrund eines solchen Geschäfts hat zum Beispiel die Stadt Berlin einen Schuldenberg abzutragen, an dem die Bewohner völlig unschuldig sind. Die Politiker und Bankiers, die für ihn verantwortlich sind, leben inzwischen schuldenfrei auf Hawaii. In einer so stark verschuldeten Stadt war der Job des Bürgermeisters bisher

⁵²³ Just Be Berlin, http://justberlin.marcarroyo.com/?page_id=5 (accessed February 2014).

⁵²⁴ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 266.

darauf reduziert, regelmäßig Steuern als Zinszahlung für bestehende Schulden zu überweisen. Sollte einmal etwas in der Staatskasse übrig bleiben, bekam es die Oper. Da ist nichts zu machen, niemand will uns helfen, klagte der Bürgermeister. Aber statt sich wie eine beleidigte Leberwurst aufzuführen, sollte die Stadt sich die Regel des Gegners zu eigen machen und sich in eine Firma verwandeln. Am besten eine Aktiengesellschaft, deren Aktionäre die Einwohner sind.⁵²⁵

Not without irony, Kaminer, too, posed for the “be Berlin” campaign posters and was profiled on the campaign website as one of Berlin’s international creative talents.⁵²⁶

The transformation of the city of voids into the city-enterprise is an essential characteristic of the New Berlin, evident in several documentary films selected for this study. Deconstructing the process of manufacturing Berlin as a successful brand also reveals some deeper implications for the formations of Berlin’s new cultural identity. After all, as Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack (2007) have pointed out, “brand designers aim to manufacture how we experience a product or a place through their affective use of narrative and image,” since branding a city is “both a rational and an emotional engagement with place, aesthetics and everyday life.”⁵²⁷ Having outlined the cultural history of Berlin’s branding and marketing strategies, and the ways in which Berlin’s branding not only re-shaped its symbolic economy, but its social politics as well, I now turn to Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari’s documentary film *In Berlin* (2009) to examine the ways in which the re-constructed and re-branded city has been represented on film, and how Berlin’s branding has sparked nostalgia for the pre-gentrified city of voids.

⁵²⁵ Wladimir Kaminer, *Ich bin kein Berliner*, 212: “With the help of politics, the profits were privatized, while the debts were taken on by the state. Because of such management, for example, the city of Berlin has accumulated a mountain of debt, which the inhabitants have nothing to do with. In the meantime, the politicians and bankers responsible for this debt live debt-free in Hawaii. In such a heavily indebted city, the job of the Mayor was hitherto reduced to transferring tax money as interest payments each year. If there happened to be a surplus in the city budget, the opera would get it. There is nothing to be done, no one wants to help us, the Mayor complained. But instead of acting like an offended sausage, the city should play by the rules of the opposing side and turn itself into a corporation. Preferably a hedge fund, whose stock holders are the city inhabitants” (my translation).

⁵²⁶ Wladimir Kaminer profile on “be Berlin” website, <http://www.be.berlin.de/kampagne/geschichten/wladimir-kaminer> (accessed February 2014).

⁵²⁷ Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City: Film and Identity on the Pacific Rim* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 3, 45.

Chapter 6 – In Berlin

We were in a realm of possibilities where dreams could come true.
 Each day was a fresh adventure.
 We were possessed by the collective urge to create something new.
 We encouraged, inspired, and challenged each other.
 For a brief and precious moment, different rules applied. (Jochen Sandig)⁵²⁸

Today, half of Berlin's tourists come from abroad,
 and their numbers continue to grow every year.
 Forecasts already predict that the city, which currently counts
 25 million overnight visitors, could soon catch up with
 Paris (37 million overnight visitors), thus making it second only to London. [...] Cinderella Berlin offers an inestimable advantage over these princess cities:
 it gives all newcomers the feeling that there is still room for them,
 that they can still make something of themselves here.
 It is this peculiarity that makes Berlin the capital of creative people
 from around the world today. (Peter Schneider)⁵²⁹

In Berlin (dir. Michael Ballhaus and Ciro Cappellari, 2009) takes up the story of Berlin a decade after *Berlin Babylon*, portraying the re-constructed and gentrified city, in which the ghosts and voids of the 1990s have been replaced by narrative portraits of the creative classes. The film presents the New Berlin as an increasingly hip, trendy, and creative place, rather than as the often indistinguishable postmodern and industrial “any-space-whatever,” as it appears in Siegert’s film. In fact, here we see the process of Berlin’s becoming “the place to be.”⁵³⁰ Unlike *Berlin Babylon*, *In Berlin* focuses on the ways in which Berlin places are socially constructed, animated, and practiced by its inhabitants and their creativity. We are shown Berlin as a representational (lived) space, rather than as representations of (conceived) space, as it existed in *Berlin Babylon*.⁵³¹ By selecting specific protagonists – artists, musicians, politicians,

⁵²⁸ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland*, 55.

⁵²⁹ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. Transl. by Sophie Schlondorff (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 7-8.

⁵³⁰ Reference to the city marketing campaigns: “Berlin wird” (Berlin is becoming) from 1996, and a sub-campaign of the “be Berlin” campaign from 2010: “Berlin the place to be.”

⁵³¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38-39.

entrepreneurs, fashion designers, photographers, actors, as well as shop owners and students⁵³² – *In Berlin* situates the creative classes as the focal point for the New Berlin. Portraying famous and average, long-term and new Berliners in a way that establishes relationality (Massey) between them and the city spaces, the filmmakers presented Berlin as a lived-in, practiced, and creative place. When Claudius Seidl, who moved to Berlin in 2001, described Berlin as “uncivilized” and “troublesome” (*mühsam*) in his edited volume of short stories, Berlin was still “unfinished” and appeared “unliveable” to all those who moved there not always by choice.⁵³³ By 2009, when *In Berlin* was released, all of the protagonists identify the New Berlin as the “most interesting place in Germany.” Even though the major construction at Potsdamer Platz and the government quarters were completed by 1999, most of the residential and infrastructural re-construction and gentrification was not finished until the 2006 FIFA World Cup and after; so by 2009, the city had only just begun becoming the “place to be.”

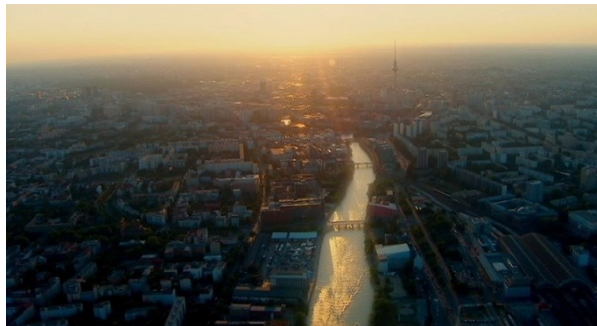
In the film, we see the protagonists in their homes and at work, in the streets, in their cars, at public events, at social gatherings, and of course, in various locations throughout the city that carry personal meanings for them. Thus, in the film, we also witness Berlin as a “product of cultural exchanges,” and are invited to observe the ways in which its “spaces frame and structure subjectivities and identities.”⁵³⁴ In the New Berlin, this specifically entails identification structures according to the creativity theory, which stipulates openness, creativity, and diversity, as well as the three T’s of technology, talent, and tolerance, as the foundations of Berlin’s post-industrial creative economy. Fittingly, Ballhaus and Cappellari captured the unveiling of this cultural and urban branding enterprise,

⁵³² Some of the well-known protagonists include the actresses Angela Winkler and her daughter Nele, writer Peter Schneider, architects Lars Krückeberg, Thomas Willemeit, and Wolfram Putz, Mayor Klaus Wowereit, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, fashion designers Doreen Schulz and Clara Leskovar of c.neon, the founder of the *Tresor* nightclub Dimitri Hegemann, DJ Jeff Mills, artists and musicians Danielle de Picciotto and Alexander Hacke, and many others.

⁵³³ Claudius Seidl (ed.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 15.

⁵³⁴ Barbara Kosta, “Transcultural Space and Music,” 345.

summed up by the campaign slogan: “be unique, be diverse, be Berlin.”⁵³⁵ Ultimately, what we witness in this film is the replacement of the Babylonian Berlin with the New Berlin that has been re-branded according to the principles of the creative theory, as well as the subsequent emergence of nostalgia for Babylon in response to the transformations of urban space and the disappearance of certain cultural places and scenes. Promoted by *Berlin Partners* after its theatrical release, *In Berlin* can be seen as both a product of and an agent in (Gunning) the urban branding mechanism that marks the cultural politics of the New Berlin. This, in turn, requires us to rethink how cities are documented, and how culture is mobilized in constructing an urban identity designed to maximize capital flow.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) opening helicopter shot approaching Alexanderplatz

While many similarities can be found in the ways the two films portray the city, ultimately *In Berlin* marks a shift in its documenting practice, by constructing a vision of the New Berlin through the narratives of its protagonists. The opening scene has several referential ties to *Berlin Babylon* – the film begins with the musicians Alexander Hacke, the bass-player of *Einstürzende Neubauten*, and his girlfriend Danielle de Picciotto, the co-founder of the Love Parade, in their recording studio, rehearsing a piece of music that is simultaneously also part of the film’s soundtrack because it carries over, non-diegetically, into the next scene. The next scene re-constructs the iconic helicopter shot, approaching Alexanderplatz at sunset, also a direct visual reference to the opening of *Berlin Babylon*. We see the

⁵³⁵ Be Berlin, <http://www.be.berlin.de/> (accessed February 2013).

same views from the helicopter space-cam down onto the Spree River and the *S-Bahn* train tracks as in *Berlin Babylon*, but unlike Siegert's 35mm film camera, *In Berlin* was filmed in high definition with a Sony F23 digital multi-frame rate camera.⁵³⁶ Thus, not only does the city look pristine and polished now, but so does its digital reproduction. Unlike the faded, grey colours of the Babylonian Berlin, here we have a vibrant palette with rich blue tones of the city, and a warm, shimmering yellow of the setting sun that fills the horizon. As the protagonists are introduced in their respective environments, we get a different portrait of the city than ever before: it is summer, the sky is blue, the sun is shining, the streets are filled with people, the buildings look restored and renovated. Before seeing any details of the topographical and architectural transformations, our impression of city is already quite different than at the beginning of *Berlin Babylon*. By situating the protagonists amidst their respective social environments, rather than privileging urban space as the focal point, the filmmakers construct a more vibrant portrait of the city. The opening credit sequence that introduces the protagonists of the New Berlin reminds us of the 2005 social marketing campaign "Du bist Deutschland" (You are Germany) popular in the year leading up to the 2006 World Cup,⁵³⁷ but instead of addressing German audiences to inspire a sense of responsibility and pride of being German, the protagonists of *In Berlin* convey a certain "hipness" and "coolness" that comes with being part of a creative class or a new generation of New Berliners. Furthermore, unlike Siegert's almost empty city, the protagonists of the 2009 Berlin depict it as the place where everything is happening; where average Berliners are living side by side with foreigners from all over the world, celebrities, politicians, artists, musicians, fashion designers, writers, and architects, and together they are collectively representing the New Berlin as a successful brand. This narrative construction of the New Berlin marks a shift in the documenting practices, from observational to narrative-based. In shifting

⁵³⁶ Technical details for *In Berlin*, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1293743/technical> (accessed February 2013).

⁵³⁷ Du bist Deutschland, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=bq_MRWewv80 (accessed February 2013).

the focus to practiced places and narratives, *In Berlin* presents us with the people who in fact “are,” or are presented to “be” the New Berlin.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Beate Gütschow and the Topography of Terror

The first scene introduces the female photographer, Beate Gütschow, taking pictures of the now completed government buildings at Spreebogen, which was also the first construction site shown in *Berlin Babylon*, as well as Tilda Swinton’s first stop at the start of *The Invisible Frame* (2009). The first protagonist in this film does not narrate her experience of the city; she documents it through the medium of digital photography, serving a reflexive function that highlights both the medium (digital) and the message (reconstructed topography). In a later scene, Gütschow is shown digitally manipulating the photographic images she took of Berlin’s industrial and commercial buildings and some of its open, still unconstructed spaces, in preparation for a photo exhibition. Reminiscent of Frank Thiel’s photographs of Potsdamer Platz and the Reichstag under construction, in her images *Berlin Babylon* is still present, but it is now digitally resized, re-arranged, and reproduced. These segments show us how digital technology allows us to see the city as we want to see it, to manipulate the photographic and filmic images to reflect our own vision. Expanding the possibilities of digital film medium, Ballhaus and Cappellari employ a different narrative and digital-editing technique: the split screen, with a close-up of the protagonists on one side, and a wide-angle shot of the location on the other side of the screen. Through editing, we get to see Berliners in and literally side-by-side with their urban environment, rather than the vast

empty spaces or construction sites that filled the whole screen of *Berlin Babylon*. The pacing is different too; unlike Siegert's lingering panning shots that allowed to fully take in and contemplate the wastelands or construction materials, Ballhaus and Cappellari have a faster, more rhythmical narrative structure, in that each location and each protagonist get approximately the same screen time. This calculated scene division creates the impression of even, uninterrupted narrative flow, and thus allows the audience to develop an equal closeness with all of the protagonists. Moreover, the innovative digital aesthetics mirror the top-notch architectural achievements that now adorn the New Berlin. The digital mediation of the city in 2009 is quite different from the 1990's analog material conditions of both the film stock and the materiality of construction and building surfaces that Siegert documented in his film. The 2009 digital Berlin is less concerned with the material conditions of its construction, but more with its own vision of what it is becoming. Through the digital documentary medium, we are shown that Berlin is increasingly becoming an attractive and desirable city, while the film's protagonists reveal how this desirability is constructed and communicated through their narrations.

The theme of attractiveness of the city (or initial lack thereof) recurs throughout the film, and is addressed by the Lübeck-born Peter Schneider, author of *Der Mauerspringer* (*The Wall Jumper*, 1982), who was raised in Freiburg and still identifies as a southern-German, even though he moved to West-Berlin in 1962, right after the construction of the Berlin Wall. Schneider is shown at a book reading, where he reads: "Den ersten Eindruck den die Stadt einem Süddeutschen wie mir mitteilte war die Abwesenheit des Schönheitssinns."⁵³⁸ This absence of a sense of beauty in Berlin was captured in *Berlin Babylon* with its fragmented and disjointed landscape, and in other Berlin films of the 1990s, such as *Ostkreuz* and *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle*. In a later scene, standing near the remains of the Berlin Wall at the Topography of Terror, Schneider explains:

⁵³⁸ Peter Schneider: "The city's first impression on a southern German like me was the absence of a sense of beauty." (DVD subtitles).

Diese Häßlichkeit ist vom grossen Charakter und von grosser Schönheit. Ich liebe Berlin grade deswegen, weil es keine harmonische Stadt ist. Es ist eine zusammengewürfelte Stadt, die nie fertig war, mit ihrer ganzen Geschichte, und auch jetzt nicht fertig ist, und nie fertig werden kann. Irgendwie wollte man diese Wunde [die Mauer] nicht nochmal richtig zeigen, wie sie war, obwohl sie über dreißig Jahre die Stadtgeschichte beherrscht hat. [...] Es ist jetzt die einzige Stadt, finde ich, in Deutschland, wo die Teilung auch mental überwunden ist. Die einzige Stadt.⁵³⁹

By evoking a sense of coming to terms with the past through a new aesthetic appreciation, Schneider traces Berlin's "ugliness" to a new kind of beauty, characterized by its peculiar disharmony and a sense of always being "unfinished." This is similar to the "beauty of transgression" that Danielle de Picciotto described in her memoir, which she first found in West-Berlin and then in the Babylonian Berlin after the fall of the Wall. Simultaneously, Schneider constructs an understanding of Berlin's beauty which the city's fragmented and wounded topography would seemingly disallow. The film seems to suggest that this type of insider's understanding of Berlin's beauty is what characterizes the (new) Berliners who moved there by choice. Similarly, in another scene, the Kiel-born and California-educated architect Wolfram Putz refers to the gradual dismantling of the aesthetically unpleasing Palace of the Republic and the peculiar collage of architectural styles in Mitte (Wilhemine buildings, new glass buildings, and the occasional remaining ruins), saying, "Berliner haben gelernt das schön zu finden, und langsam finden die Touristen das auch schön. Aber wenn man darüber nachdenkt, ist es nicht wirklich schön."⁵⁴⁰ For the majority of new Berliners presented in the film, the division of the city that Schneider referred to appears to have been overcome not only with the help of a brand new image of Berlin as a hip cultural hub, where the new inhabitants can benefit from and contribute to its legendary cultural heritage of non-conformity, avant-garde edginess, and creativity, but also from a renegotiation of an understanding

⁵³⁹ Peter Schneider: "This ugliness has great character and great beauty. I love Berlin precisely because it is not a harmonious city. It's a city that has been thrown together, that has never been completed because of its history, and even now is not finished, and can never be finished. Somehow, one refused to reveal the wound [the Wall] as it used to be again, even though it controlled the city's history for over thirty years. Now it is the only city in Germany, I believe, where the division has been mentally overcome. The only city" (DVD subtitles).

⁵⁴⁰ Wolfram Putz: "Berliners have learned to find it beautiful and eventually the tourists learned to appreciate it as well. But when you really think about it, it's not beautiful."

and appreciation of a different kind of beauty, one rooted in personal and collective histories and inter-relations rather than in topographical aesthetics.

The film explores this insiders' view of Berlin further through the narratives of Danielle de Picciotto, who explains: "Wenn man sagt ich bin Berliner, bedeutet das das Gleiche wie, ich bin eigen, ich bin unkonform."⁵⁴¹ De Picciotto came to Berlin just before its Babylonian years, co-organizing the first Love Parade in 1989. The nonconformity she refers to originated during that particular time. Throughout the 1990s, Berlin avant-gardists of the music and art scenes managed to utilize the liminal spaces in Mitte, and eventually influence and transform cultural tastes and aesthetic values with their work, thereby pushing the limits of conformity. In the New Berlin, this non-conformity and avant-garde creativity has been recruited into the branding mechanism and consequently into the mainstream commercial culture. Both in her autobiography *The Beauty of Transgression* (2011), and in her graphic novel *We Are Gypsies Now* (2013), de Picciotto expressed her sense of displacement because of the increasing commercialization of Berlin, and in fact, both she and Alexander Hacke sold their house in Wedding to pursue a life on the road, touring the world, and distancing themselves from the New Berlin.⁵⁴² But in Ballhaus and Cappellari's 2009 film, both de Picciotto and Hacke are presented as celebrating Berlin's cultural life that they portray as both avant-garde and glamorous. In a later scene, we see de Picciotto present a video art project to Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier during a public photo-op, after which the two are shown launching the event together at a bar in the *Kulturbrauerei* in Prenzlauer Berg – a vernacular place that has been gentrified and integrated into the landscape of power. In many ways, the film frames the creative struggle in the New Berlin, focusing on the Babylonian artists, entrepreneurs, and spaces that survived commercialization and gentrification. Simultaneously, Berlin's outgoing, public message continues to invite creative and entrepreneurial talent

⁵⁴¹ Danielle de Picciotto "To say I'm a Berliner is the same as saying I'm peculiar; I'm nonconformist."

⁵⁴² See interview with Danielle de Picciotto, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGy-hZOHC4> (accessed February 2014).

to “be” Berlin and to contribute to Berlin’s creative economy. In 2009, *Berlin Partners* announced in their promotional material about Berlin’s music and art scenes that, “here you can be whatever you want because Berlin is the place to be for individuality,” thereby incorporating its Babylonian sub-culture and mythology into the mainstream branding discourse and prompting international media reactions like the *Time Magazine*’s November 2009 headline “Hip Berlin, Europe’s Capital of Cool.”⁵⁴³

The film aims to present this type of creative individuality and “coolness” that make Berlin so “hip.” It is presented as a place that not only emerged from its voids and construction sites as a creative city, but even managed to forge a new aesthetic appreciation of unconventional beauty that mixes avant-garde creativity with commercial success.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) De-construction of the Palace of the Republic

The film portrays other artists and creative professionals who have established themselves in the landscape of power of the New Berlin. The architect Wolfram Putz, who, together with his partners of *Graft* architecture firm proposed a futuristic design, entitled “Art Cloud” for the site of the nearly-dismantled Palace of the Republic, is shown climbing the skeletal structure of the remaining Palace. In a later scene, Putz describes the locational re-branding that is gradually taking place in the New Berlin:

Man redet plötzlich davon, dass man in Berlin gut ausgehen kann, dass es diese illegalen Bars gibt, dass es diese Musikszene gibt. Jetzt seit einigen Jahren Kunst, Kunst, aus Deutschland, Kunst aus Berlin. Und das hat im Grunde eine Adresse für diese Stadt ausgebildet, die über dieses plakative Bild einer historischen

⁵⁴³ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 239.

Stadt, hier war der Regierungssitz, hier ist das Schlimme passiert. Das ist neu allegorisiert, neu definiert, und hat sozusagen eine neue Sehnsucht für viele Leute im Kopf. Das Brandenburger Tor war nicht das Tor eines touristischen Preußischen Architekturbildes, sondern der Hintergrund des Fußballfestes oder der Hintergrund der Love Parade.⁵⁴⁴

While the cultural and creative impulses that gave rise to this “new allegorization” of the city started in the Babylonian Berlin, as for example with the Techno and art scenes, the process of generating a “new type of longing” for these vernacular sub-cultures, spaces, and symbols is part of the cultural rebranding of the New Berlin. Shifting attention away from the historical and authoritarian past towards sub-cultural scenes (Love Parade) and locations (*Tresor*) that have contributed to the cultural and symbolic capital value of the New Berlin, positions its Babylonian past as the focal point of a new kind of longing (for the newcomers) and nostalgia (for the locals). As becomes apparent in the film, this shift in the rhetoric of memory and longing does not conflict with or substitute a focus on history, but rather co-exists with it.

As the Mayor Klaus Wowereit, who was born in West-Berlin, explains in a scene at the official opening of Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum at Unter den Linden, near Pariser Platz, history in Berlin is being “worked through.” When asked by reporters to comment on the inclusion of the wax figure of Adolf Hitler in the museum, Wowereit replied:

Leider gehört auch die dunkle Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus zu dieser Stadt Berlin. Die verdrängen wir nicht, die winken wir auch nicht aus, wir machen aktive Gedenkarbeit für die Opfer und vor allen Dingen auch als Mahnung für die Zukunft.⁵⁴⁵

By addressing history in politically correct terms and by investing into educational and commemorative projects and sites, the New Berlin can simultaneously memorialize and capitalize on history, while

⁵⁴⁴ Wolfram Putz: “Suddenly you began to hear that Berlin has a good nightlife, all those illegal bars, a music scene. And now more recently it’s art. Art from Germany, art from Berlin. That established Berlin as a location that extended beyond the image of the historical city, the capital, or site of a terrible past. It allegorized and defined the city anew and created a yearning in people’s minds. The Brandenburg Gate wasn’t a touristic, Prussian architectural icon, but rather the backdrop for the soccer festivities or the Love Parade.”

⁵⁴⁵ Klaus Wowereit: “But that dark chapter of the Nazi past is also part of the city of Berlin. We don’t suppress it, we don’t detach it. We keep the memory alive, for the victims and for the future.”

attracting more tourists than any other German city.⁵⁴⁶ Berlin enjoys the rare advantage of attracting tourists both because of its Babylonian cultural capital and because of its historical heritage of the “lieux de mémoire.”⁵⁴⁷ The practice of capitalizing on history and the places of memory can be compared to capitalizing on construction sites during the “Schaustelle” urban marketing campaigns (1996-2005). Both represent the economic backbone of the re-branded vision for the New Berlin. The wax museum is a telling location for this blending of history and commerce. At Madame Tussaud’s, working through history becomes an entrepreneurial project, constructed for easy consumption in an international museal franchise. This scene shows us that the New Berlin seems to be operating according to Doreen Massey’s understanding of place identity, which stipulates that “the identity of a place does not derive from some internalized history. It derives, in large part, precisely from the specificity of its interactions with ‘the outside.’”⁵⁴⁸ In the case of the New Berlin, these interactions are constructed and communicated through international events and urban marketing campaigns. In the creative economy, history and urban space can and have been utilized by marketing strategists. Even in the early days of city marketing – the earliest going back to the opening of the *Info-Box* at Potsdamer Platz in 1995 – the campaigns of the 1990s not only had an “economic rationale, promoting the shift to a global (or European) service metropolis, but also a political objective, fostering the acceptance of Berlin as the unthreatening capital city of the newly united German Federal Republic.”⁵⁴⁹ Moreover, the marketing campaigns from the 1990s onward proved to be successful because growth in tourism, and now also population, continues to rise. Colomb’s research confirms the commodification of history at Potsdamer Platz:

The opening statement of the *Infobox* catalogue, by the then mayor Eberhard Diepgen, begins with a reference to the historical myth of Potsdamer Platz and evokes places and traces of the everyday life of

⁵⁴⁶ See Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 126: “By the late 1990s, Berlin was the first tourist destination in Germany and the third most visited city in Europe after Paris and London – a rank it has maintained to date.”

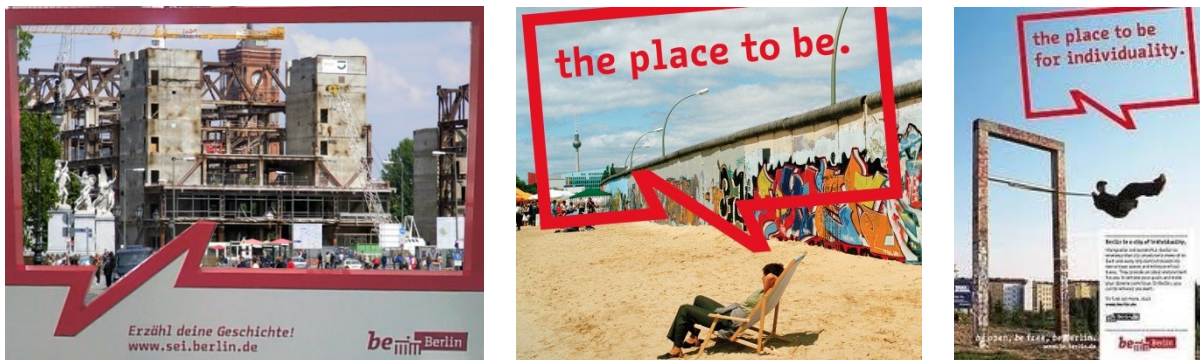
⁵⁴⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” in *Representations* (26, 1989), 7-25.

⁵⁴⁸ Doreen Massey, “A Place called home?” 169.

⁵⁴⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 183.

the square in the 1920s: the famous café Josty, the ‘legendary pea soup’ served in a local restaurant... This nostalgia for the past repeatedly appears throughout the *Infobox* catalogue, amidst celebrations of cutting-edge technologies and glitzy pictures of contemporary high-rise architecture.⁵⁵⁰

This locational branding, commercialization of history, and commercialization of nostalgia go back to Berlin’s Babylonian years, but in the New Berlin they are also tied to the creative economy. As Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack have observed in their work on Shanghai’s urban branding and nostalgia, the city also struggles with “the weight of development it is currently undergoing in its new guise as an international centre of finance. Nostalgia thus competes with the aesthetic of the *brand new*, the *globally scaled*. But it also complements and contributes to its perverse attraction. As the older buildings and laneways (*lilong*) disappear, so their very absence becomes potent and piquant to the city’s brand promise.”⁵⁵¹ Similarly, the very disappearance of Berlin’s voids feeds the mythical allure and the symbolic economy that is generated to attract human and financial capital to the New Berlin.



“Be Berlin” campaign posters, the place to be for individuality, 2009

The film captures not only Berlin’s architectural and cultural, but social and political transformations as well. In a key scene filmed during the launch of the “be Berlin” campaign in front of City Hall, we are shown a confrontation between the Mayor and the protesting police workers, demanding a wage-increase in the summer of 2008. The campaign was thus upstaged by striking

⁵⁵⁰ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 159.

⁵⁵¹ Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 6.

Berliners. Wowereit's tenure as Mayor of Berlin since 2001 was not an easy one. Claire Colomb compiled a detailed account of Berlin's governance, and the extent of financial fraud that took place in Berlin's Babylon of the 1990s.⁵⁵² Following a major financial scandal that deposed the previous Grand Coalition, the SPD took over the management of a city that was near bankruptcy, and quickly had to devise a marketing strategy to attract foreign investments to regain financial stability. At the time, more than a quarter of Berliners, as Wowereit tells us in the film, were unemployed and living on state subsidies. Prior to reunification, federal subsidies used to sustain the majority of West-Berlin economy, which were withdrawn in 1994 and created an annual 30% deficit in the city budget after 1995.⁵⁵³ Moreover, the decline in Berlin's population and its GDP between 1996 and 2005 also led to a drop in tax revenue, as well as to increased social and welfare expenditure. The Grand Coalition's shift to entrepreneurial urban governance in the early 1990s established generous tax breaks for real-estate investors, which further sunk the city's budget. By 2010, Berlin's debt had grown to approximately 60 billion euros, while the city's budget was only 20 billion, 12% of which was used annually to pay the interest. After his election in 2001, Wowereit's government implemented massive cuts in public expenditure that affected "welfare payments, public services, education, research and culture" and "pursued the transfer of public services to private organizations," which was initiated by the Grand

⁵⁵² See Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 90-92: "The coalition between CDU and SPD formed after the Berlin elections of December 1990 governed Berlin for one decade under the leadership of Mayor Eberhard Diepgen. The Grand Coalition was united around a broad consensus to promote Berlin's transformation into a service metropolis of European or even global status. [...] The new Mayor of Berlin explicitly advocated the shift to a new entrepreneurial urban politics, which would prioritize the attraction of external capital, investors and labour force to the city. [...] Various measures and policies were implemented by the Grand Coalition in the first half of the 1990s to facilitate the process of private investment in real estate. [...] Public subsidies managed by public redevelopment agencies were combined with tenant protection and rent cap measures to encourage renewal without displacement, under the influence of an active tenants' movement which campaigned under the motto 'Wir bleiben alle' ('We are all staying'). In the second half of the 1990s, public subsidies were decreased and rent caps were gradually abandoned. Housing renewal methods shifted in favour of privately financed modernization by professional property developers."

⁵⁵³ See Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 224-226. "The long-term prospects for the city's finances are not set to improve significantly in the years to come, in part due to the continuous lack of strong economic growth as well as the forthcoming phasing out of Federal funding programmes supporting East German *Länder* such as *Aufbau Ost* (its end in 2019 will represent a planned loss of income of one-tenth of the city's budget)."

Coalition in the 1990s.⁵⁵⁴ Thus the economic transition from Berlin Babylon to the New Berlin was marked by municipal mismanagement, financial corruption, and eventually by bankruptcy. Wowereit's 2003 assessment of Berlin as "poor but sexy" was not an exaggeration. As Wowereit explains in the film, a mental switch needed to occur before any social and financial reforms could be implemented:

Ich bin ja damals angetreten, 2001, in einer schwierigen Situation. Die Stadt war förmlich am Ende, finanziell, aber auch mental. Und was ich versuchte war zuerst einen Mentalitätswechsel zu bekommen, nämlich dass deutlich wird, Berlin kann nicht immer von anderen was fordern, sondern muss selber erstreben um die eigene Situation zu verbessern. [...] Mir wäre es natürlich lieb wenn Berlin wirtschaftlich so stark wäre wie London oder wie Paris, aber der Nachteil ist dann wieder, da kann ein normaler Mensch nicht leben.⁵⁵⁵

In the film, Wowereit is presented as the politician in charge of implementing and overseeing the vision for the city's bumpy transition from the Babylonian to the New Berlin. This vision, and, through it, the answer to Berlin's financial problems, was devised in the form of the "be Berlin" campaign, that first set out to engage local Berliners in the construction of a positive image for the city, and then immediately proceeded to attract foreign investment and creative talent. Staging large-scale international and cultural events, such as the 2006 World Cup, and the 2009 Festival of Freedom also contributed to re-envisioning Berlin and attracting capital flow. In the film, Wowereit is first presented in his office at City Hall, then in his car, stopping by a flower shop with his partner of twenty years, Jörn Kubicki, and finally arriving at a dinner party at the house of the artistic director of *Berliner Festspiele*, Joachim Sartorius. The film equates Wowereit's personal and political narratives with life in the New Berlin, where anyone can "be" what-ever they want to be,⁵⁵⁶ and Wowereit is presented as a distinguished member of its creative class.

⁵⁵⁴ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 225.

⁵⁵⁵ Klaus Wowereit: "When I took office in 2001, the situation was difficult. The city was financially but also mentally at an end. What I tried to do first was to produce a mental change, namely to make clear that Berlin can't continue to live off others, but has to work on improving its situation by itself. [...] I would love to see Berlin as economically strong as London or Paris, but the downside is that a normal person can't afford to live there" (my translation).

⁵⁵⁶ Wowereit's public coming-out statement during his first election campaign in 2001 was "Ich bin schwul und das ist auch gut so." (I'm gay and that's a good thing), and is also the title of his autobiography.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) the “Be Berlin” campaign launch

In the significant scene of the “be Berlin” campaign launch and simultaneously the demonstration against Wowereit’s budget cuts, we witness the ceremonious unveiling of the large poster hung from the City Hall facade that proclaims: “Sei einzigartig, sei vielfältig, sei Berlin” (be unique, be diverse, be Berlin), which, at this point in the campaign, is directed primarily at local, German-speaking Berliners to inspire and celebrate their participation, creativity, and diversity. But the local Berliners we see in the film are not interested in the campaign or its message; they want higher wages and publically-funded social services back, which, ironically, Berlin’s run-down budget and growing debt cannot accommodate without future foreign investments that the campaign was designed to attract.⁵⁵⁷ In this scene, Wowereit is presenting the young woman who is the author of the campaign’s slogan with flowers and campaign souvenirs. Capturing this double irony of Berlin’s cultural and social politics also draws attention to the unintentional aspects in documenting practices. While the filmmakers were invited to film the campaign launch, they also documented the demonstration that

⁵⁵⁷ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 225: “The city of Berlin thus had to tackle its debt without Federal help. The new Red-Red coalition consequently adopted a strict programme of ‘fiscal discipline’ with the aim of attaining a balanced operating budget (excluding interest payments) by 2006. This involved massive cuts in public expenditure affecting welfare payments, public services, education, research and culture. In 2005 public expenditure per head was 89 percent of its 1995 level. The number of employees in the public administration fell from 145,000 in 2001 to 114,000 in 2006 (against 207,000 in 1991). The new governing coalition pursued the transfer of public services to private organizations (e.g. *Kindergarten*) and intensified the reforms of the local public administration which been initiated by the Grand Coalition.”

managed to upstage it. Once again, the film stands as a product of and an agent in the urban branding mechanism that marks the cultural politics and transformations of the New Berlin.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) police demonstration during the campaign launch

In an interview on the DVD extra features, the Berlin-born cinematographer Michael Ballhaus and the Argentinian-born filmmaker Ciro Cappellari address the making of the film and this particular scene. When asked whether the film was made to be a promotional advertising film about Berlin, Cappellari replied:

Die 'be Berlin' Kampagne, die zufällig in diesem Film ist, wir wussten gar nichts von dieser Kampagne. Wowereit hat uns einen Termin gegeben und zwar dort, und dann haben wir diese Szene gedreht, und uns interessierte dass gerade die Polizei protestierte gegen ihn. Und dann haben wir uns um diese Kampagne gar keine Gedanken gemacht. Im Nachhinein, wenn der Film fertig geworden ist, ist diese Kampagne auf uns zugekommen, dass sie in dem Film einen repräsentativen Film über die Stadt gesehen haben, und das freute uns. Ich finde das auch sehr legitim, dass diese Kampagne auch diesen Film benutzen möchte. Das ist für uns auch in Ordnung. Wir hatten nicht den geringsten Gedanken einen Werbefilm über Berlin zu machen.⁵⁵⁸

The fact that the filmmakers were invited to the campaign launch points to Wowereit's intention to showcase his branding project, but the accidental upstaging of the event by the police protest shows that the New Berlin also struggles with social and financial difficulties. This gap between intentional and

⁵⁵⁸ Ciro Cappellari: "The 'be Berlin' campaign is inadvertently in the film; we didn't know anything about it. Wowereit gave us an appointment, namely there, and we shot the whole scene. We were actually interested in the fact that the police were protesting against him. We didn't think much about the campaign. Afterwards, when the film was done, the campaign representatives came to us claiming that they saw a representative film for the city, which made us happy. I think it's appropriate that the campaign wants to use this film. It's fine with us. But we never intended to make a promotional advertising film about Berlin" (my translation).

unintentional documenting brings out the conflicted, not yet completed narratives of Berlin's becoming. Significantly, after the film's official release, the film was also incorporated into the promotional material of the "be Berlin" campaign, as the final image of the official trailer included on the DVD confirms, ending with the announcement, "With kind support of the city marketing campaign Be Berlin – Discover Berlin and all its stories!"⁵⁵⁹



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) final image of the film trailer and the various people (film crew, press, campaign managers, protesters) gathered in front of City Hall on the day of the campaign launch in 2008

After the film's release the campaign strategists recruited the film, both filmmakers and some of the protagonists into their promotional material for the campaign.⁵⁶⁰ Even though the film was not intended as a promotional film, it is difficult not to see it as part of the greater branding project of the New Berlin. The inclusion of the film into the campaign also points to the campaign's omnipresence in the New Berlin's cultural life. The film was used to promote the New Berlin abroad (through the Goethe Institutes around the world), establishing the "interaction with the outside" (in Massey's terms), but it also managed to retain its art-film aspirations, having premiered at the 2009 *Berlinale* Film Festival in February, followed by a wide release in May of that year.⁵⁶¹ Thus, even without the intention on the part of the filmmakers, both the film, and the campaign captured in it, are parts of the larger branding

⁵⁵⁹ *In Berlin* trailer, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6RBqaAg9cM> (accessed February 2013).

⁵⁶⁰ Be Berlin, "In Berlin Premiere" <http://www.sei.berlin.de/kampagne/premiere-in-berlin> (accessed February 2013).

⁵⁶¹ *In Berlin* release info, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1293743/releaseinfo> (accessed February 2013).

project that constitutes the New Berlin. Much like the filmic shift away from the urban, incomplete spaces of *Berlin Babylon*, to the narrative portraits of the new Berliners, there is a similar turn evident in the marketing campaigns that marked a shift away from “the depiction of the built environment towards the portrayal of individuals as the markers and symbols of a place, as the components and producers of its brand.”⁵⁶² This is where the film and the campaign truly overlap: both focus on Berliners who are transforming and constructing the city through their creativity and talent. This creative construction is very different from the material, industrial, and urban construction documented in *Berlin Babylon*. The focus here, both in the campaign and in the film, is shifted to collective cultural identity construction and the making of a place into a brand.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Dimitri Hegemann and Jeff Mills at *Tresor*

Culture, undoubtedly, affects economic growth,⁵⁶³ but so does diversity. As Florida explained, “talent powers economic growth, and diversity and openness attract talent.”⁵⁶⁴ As I outlined in the previous chapter, part of the cultural re-branding of the New Berlin also included the marketing of diversity. The changing attitudes to ethnic and cultural diversity in Berlin are not only reflected in the marketing campaigns, but to a large extent are propelled by them. Diversity has been the new buzzword in Berlin’s cultural politics since 2008, and the film attempts to reflect that by including several Turkish-

⁵⁶² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 263.

⁵⁶³ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 5.

⁵⁶⁴ Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*, 139.

German and foreign protagonists, but does not provide a critique of who is included and excluded from Berlin's creative classes. One of the protagonists is the Turkish-born film student Hakan Savas Mican, who explains that he identifies as a foreigner, a Turk, who has been living in Berlin for ten years. In the film, he interviews other Turkish-German Berliners in their daily environments, including an unemployed Turkish-German boxer with no formal education and a criminal record. Mican provides statistics, claiming that one quarter of Berliners have migration backgrounds, which amounts to about 860,000 people. The other Berlin-born Turkish-German protagonist, Ercan Ergin, is a shop-owner in Wilmersdorf, who informs us that he feels quite at home both in Wilmersdorf and in his neighbourhood in Wedding. Just as the campaign did, the film presents creativity as the common denominator between local and foreign Berliners. Besides the Turkish protagonists, another foreigner is the Detroit-born Techno DJ, Jeff Mills who relocated to Berlin in 1992 to become the resident DJ at *Tresor*.⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, filmmaker Ciro Cappellari, who is originally from Buenos Aires and moved to Berlin in 1984, was invited by Michael Ballhaus to contribute a different perspective to the film, as Ballhaus explained in an interview included on the DVD. Not surprisingly, 2009 was also the year when the Senate initiative "be Berlin – be diverse" was launched to facilitate diversity-themed events and to manage funding of a variety of artistic projects that promoted ethnic and inter-cultural diversity in Berlin.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Doreen Schulz and the c.neon fashion show at *Kunstgewerbemuseum*

⁵⁶⁵ In 2000, Jeff Mills created a Techno score for *Metropolis* which was released as an album. He also performed the score live at public screenings of the film. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvBd1X1Qk-g> (accessed February 2013).

Another type of diversity is presented in the film through the examples of former East-German protagonists, such as the journalist Maybrit Illner and fashion designer Doreen Schulz, both of whom have successful careers in the New Berlin, and can be described as members of the creative class. Doreen Schulz teamed up with her fashion-schoolmate Clara Leskovar, a native of West-Berlin, to establish the fashion label *c.neeon*. Maybrit Illner, who started her career as a sports journalist for *Fernsehen der DDR*, and after reunification switched to work as a political journalist for ZDF in 1992, identifies herself as a citizen and an exile of a state that no longer exists. She gives us a tour of the apartment building she grew up in, which happens to be one of the towers at Frankfurter Tor, on Karl-Marx-Allee in Friedrichshain – one of the most prestigious buildings in East Berlin. In *Berlin Babylon*, Siegert showed the architectural debates around the preservation of GDR buildings, and not all of them are heritage protected as the buildings on Karl-Marx-Allee. Here, we are given the narrative of someone who used to inhabit this space when it was part of another state, and who explains the strangeness and the paradox of revisiting this environment as a citizen of the New Berlin.



Film stills: abandoned train tracks in *In Berlin* (2009) and *Cycling the Frame* (1988)

But perhaps most unexpectedly, amidst the different portrayals of the New Berlin's branding and creativity, we also get elements of an emerging sense of nostalgia for Babylon. Standing next to abandoned train tracks, overgrown by grass and reclaimed by nature – a recurrent image from the divided-Berlin that is also referenced in Cynthia Beatt's *Cycling the Frame* (1988) – Peter Schneider

reflects on the romanticism of Berlin's voids with a hint of nostalgia – a nostalgia caused by the systematic erasure of such places:

Ich liebe dieses Gelände sehr. Solche Orte wie dieser haben etwas romantisches. Sie zeigen irgendwie etwas, was aus der Zeit herausfällt, was nicht in die Zeit gehört oder keine Zeit hat. Und ich finde es wichtig, dass es solche Orte in der Stadt gibt, wo man nicht ein geschichtliches Wesen ist, mit Absichten und Wünschen und Profitinteressen, und an morgen denkt, sondern wo man einfach gleich unmittelbar ist mit dem Unendlichen, sagen wir es doch mal so pathetisch.⁵⁶⁶

Describing such voids as “romantic” and “timeless” at a time when Berlin is in the process of rapidly branding and transforming itself into a globalizing creative city is unexpected and even paradoxical. But this paradox reveals a new type of collective nostalgia that is specifically tied to Berlin's urban spaces. While the desire to preserve the voids of Berlin is a post-reunification phenomenon, Schneider's fascination with ruins, broken facades, bullet holes, and firewalls goes back to at least his 1982 Wall-novel:

Tatsächlich mag ich an Berlin, was diese Stadt von Hamburg, Frankfurt, München unterscheidet: die Ruinenreste, in denen mannshohe Birken und Sträucher Wurzeln geschlagen haben; die Einschusslöcher in den sandgrauen, blasigen Fassaden, die vergilbten Werbegemälde an den Brandmauern, die von Zigarettenmarken und Schnapsorten sprechen, die es längst nicht mehr gibt.⁵⁶⁷

The awe with which Schneider and others have described the wounded city prior to reunification, was common even before *Westalgie* emerged as a cultural response to *Ostalgie* after reunification. Thirty years after his novel, the idea that there are unclaimed, abandoned, un-gentrified urban spaces created by the Cold War and the Wall has fascinated and captured the global imagination. In another scene in the film, Schneider appears at Potsdamer Platz in front of Weinhaus Huth, formerly the only intact structure of the no-man's-land, and explains the significance of this place:

⁵⁶⁶ Peter Schneider: “I love this place. Places like this are romantic in a way. They show something that has fallen out of time, that doesn't belong in time or has no time at all. I think it's important that such places exist in the city, where you're not a historical being, with intentions and wishes and interest in profit, thinking about tomorrow, but rather where you're simply at one with eternity, to put it in melodramatically.”

⁵⁶⁷ Peter Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2003, 1982), 7: “I like Berlin precisely for the ways it differs from Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich: the ruins, in which tall birches and bushes have planted roots; the bullet holes in the grey, faded facades; the advertising murals on the fire-walls that display long-forgotten cigarette and liquor brands” (my translation).

Das ist für mich ein symbolischer Ort, dieses alte Haus aus dem 19. Jahrhundert, Ende 19-tes Jahrhunderts, das Weinhaus Huth, und es war noch bis zur Wende das einzige Haus was hier gestanden hat in einem Umkreis von einem Quadratkilometer. Das war die größte Brache hier in Berlin. Und da muss man wieder wissen, dass der Potsdamer Platz in den zwanziger Jahren der verkehrsreichste Ort Europas war. Hier wurde die erste Ampel Europas eingeweiht, wenn man die alten Bilder sieht. Und wir stehen sozusagen auf diesen Skeletten von Häusern und Schuttbergen. Ich habe damals diesen Renzo Piano gefragt, könnt ihr denn nicht einfach mal ein größeres Areal einfach freilassen. Da hat er mir erklärt, ökonomisch geht das nicht. Wenn du als Investor etwas gekauft hast, da gibt es keinen Gedanken an die nächste Generation. So sind halt die Gesetze des Marktes.⁵⁶⁸

Reassigning new symbolic value to Berlin's post-reunification topography runs as a recurring theme through all the documentary films selected here. The experience of standing atop the "skeletons and rubble mountains" can only be perceived, acknowledged, and valued by someone who knows, either first-hand, or through reproductions, the significance of such places. As Inka Bach described in her short story "Squatters," in the years when the construction of Potsdamer Platz was just beginning,

Photographers have climbed to the top of the Haus Huth, right to the tower. They are holding in their hands old photographs of the Platz when it was covered in buildings, trying to locate the Haus Vaterland, the Volksgerichtshof, the Vox-Building, thereupon they photograph the emptiness, aiming confidently. The Weinhaus, where women were indulged, drank champagne in white furs and bodies decorated with rubies, is to become a real wine house again, even if the new buildings swallow up the tower.⁵⁶⁹

The act of photographing the Babylonian emptiness, with a mentally-superimposed image of the buildings that are no longer there, as well as with a projected image of the construction sites and then the towers to be erected here, presents Potsdamer Platz in multi-dimensional time-space continuum,⁵⁷⁰ much like Siegert does in his film through the use of editing and time-lapse photography. *In Berlin* does it too, by inserting one still image of the wasteland of Potsdamer Platz with the remains of the Esplanade Hotel in the background, as Schneider describes his conversation with Renzo Piano, against

⁵⁶⁸ Peter Schneider: "For me this is one of Berlin's symbolic places. This old building from the late 19th century, is Weinhaus Huth. Until reunification it was the only building that stood here in a radius of one square kilometer. Potsdamer Platz was the biggest empty lot in Berlin. You have to remember that Potsdamer Platz in the twenties, was the most congested intersection in all of Europe. Europe's first traffic light was installed here. We are standing, so to speak, on these skeletons of buildings and rubble piles. I asked Renzo Piano "can't you just leave a larger open space?" He told me that wasn't economically possible. If an investor buys something, there's no thinking about the next generation. That's the law of the market."

⁵⁶⁹ Inka Bach, "Squatters," 118.

⁵⁷⁰ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin*, 193.

the backdrop of the completed Potsdamer Platz of 2009. In his collection of essays on the New Berlin, Schneider explored this further by quoting Renzo Piano,

“You create a space not for life with its unpredictable, biological rhythms, but for virtual life.” Can’t something be left unfinished, I asked, some small part of the construction area set aside for the ideas and revisions of future generations? The financial constraints of a large-scale project like this are despotic, Piano replied. They don’t allow for leaving openings. It would be expecting too much of him as an architect to leave untouched any part of an area he had been hired to develop.⁵⁷¹

Schneider articulated the very contradictions between the capitalized, gentrified, developed, and virtual spaces of the New Berlin, and the open voids available for re-appropriation in Berlin Babylon.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Potsdamer Platz void in the 1990s and Weinhaus Huth in 2009

The question of leaving a part of the void at Potsdamer Platz as a memorial site has come up on multiple occasions in Berlin’s re-construction history. As Andreas Huyssen explained, “the void in the center of Berlin will have been filled. But memories of that haunting space from the months and years after the Wall came down will linger. The one architect who understood the nature of this empty space in the center of Berlin was Daniel Libeskind, who in 1992 made the following proposal:”

Take the open area at the Potsdamer Platz. I suggest a wilderness, one kilometer long, within which everything can stay as it is. The street simply ends in the bushes. Wonderful. After all, this area is the result of today’s divine natural law: nobody wanted it, nobody planned it, and yet it is firmly implanted in

⁵⁷¹ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. Transl. by Sophie Schlondorff (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 35-36.

all our minds. And there in our minds, this image of the Potsdamer Platz void will remain for decades. Something like that cannot be easily erased, even if the whole area is developed.⁵⁷²

The notion of voids as something to be protected and memorialized has become a recurring theme in the New Berlin. Yet in a globalizing economy, voids are often conceived of as temporary, make-shift, undeveloped and un-capitalized spaces. Leaving a void un-capitalized (either for profit or for memorialization) is simply unimaginable today, and yet it continues to haunt many imaginations and to fuel nostalgic longing in the gentrified landscape of Berlin.⁵⁷³ Libeskind also made a point of reminding us of Berlin's non-commercial value:

I believe that Berlin, like any city which deserves to be called that, is no commodity. It is not something which can be bought in a store like a refrigerator, washing machine, or computer. A city is something which you really need, like the air we breathe. That quality is something which you can't always say of commodities.⁵⁷⁴

This reminder that a city is not a commodity has been embraced by many anti-gentrification protestors and writers,⁵⁷⁵ satirized by Wladimir Kaminer,⁵⁷⁶ and generally found resonance amongst the skeptics of Berlin's branding project. This critique goes against the creative economy which the Berlin Senate embraced as the solution to all of Berlin's social and economic problems. With the fall of the Wall, urban space in all of Berlin has been rebranded as a commodity, and re-conceptualized for global consumption. But for many Berliners, the voids remain infused with historical and mythological significance precisely because they emerged out of the collapse of the Wall, in places of the former death strip and no-man's-lands. It is not surprising that several of the film's protagonists (Peter Schneider, Gerke Freyschmidt, and Dimitri Hegemann) appear to be nostalgic for these Babylonian

⁵⁷² Daniel Libeskind, "Daniel Libeskind mit Daniel Libeskind: Potsdamer Platz" (1992), in *Radix-Matrix: Architekturen und Schriften*, ed. Alois Martin Miller (Munich, 1994), 149. Quoted in Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin," in *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 24, No 1, Autumn 1997, 57-81), 73.

⁵⁷³ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now*, 152: "In Berlin, it seems, in the end everything becomes either art and/or memorial, irrespective of whether you're dealing with the Holocaust, World War II bombardments, or the division of Germany. And maybe that's a good thing."

⁵⁷⁴ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 313.

⁵⁷⁵ Sebastian Lehmann, Volker Surmann (eds.), "Einleitung," in *Lost in Gentrification*, 19.

⁵⁷⁶ Wladimir Kaminer, *Ich bin kein Berliner*, 212.

voids. As nostalgia theorists Christine Sprengler,⁵⁷⁷ Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille⁵⁷⁸ have noted, nostalgia is based on more than just selective memory. The nostalgia that Schneider expresses in the film is not so much for authenticity or cohesion, but specifically for urban spaces that disappear due to re-construction and gentrification. Thus nostalgia for Babylon is not about the desire to go back in time, but about the longing to preserve essential parts of Babylon within the New Berlin.



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Dimitri Hegemann and his abandoned spaces

Other expressions of nostalgia in the film are presented by Dimitri Hegemann, who came to West-Berlin in 1978 from the small town of Werl in Nordrhein-Westfalen, and began organizing musical and cultural events, such as the Berlin Atonal Music Festival (1982-1990) that featured, among others, performances by *Einstürzende Neubauten*. In 1991, he founded the *Tresor* night club in Leipziger Straße, next to Potsdamer Platz, in the basement of a former Wertheim Department Store vault, which became known as the mother-ship of Techno culture, and has been documented in the film *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor* (dir. Tilmann Künzel, 2009). Shortly after, Hegemann established the record label *Tresor Records*,⁵⁷⁹ and invited Techno DJs from Detroit to work as resident DJs in his club. In 2005, the original *Tresor* club had to shut down due to the re-development of Leipziger Platz. After a two-year interruption, the club reopened in 2007 in a new location inside a former energy plant (22,000 square

⁵⁷⁷ Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe props and Technicolor aesthetics in contemporary American film* (New York: Berhahn Books, 2009).

⁵⁷⁸ Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (eds). *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

⁵⁷⁹ *Tresor*, <http://tresorberlin.com/history/> (accessed February 2013)

meters) in Köpenicker Straße in Mitte. In the film, Hegemann explains: “Was mich so fasziniert ist, glaub ich, eine Sehnsucht nach diesen Orten. Ich kann da auch nichts dafür, ich finde die Orte nur, oder einen großen Teil wie *Tresor* oder andere Orte in Berlin.”⁵⁸⁰ We begin to notice a recurrent theme of “longing for places” by *Wahl-Berliner* (Berliners by choice) who have first-hand experiences of contributing to the construction and crafting of its Babylonian legacy and cultural capital. As one of the creators and supporters of the Berlin Techno scene, Hegemann was also celebrated and profiled by the *Berlin Partners* marketing specialists in their “be Berlin” promotional material. In an interview from 2011, Hegemann states,

In der ganzen Welt sprechen junge Leute über diese Orte, die in ingerndwelchen vergessenen Räumen ruhen und in denen andere Wege gegangen werden. Berlin braucht diese Freiräume und sollte sie schützen. Das Amorphe, das Unfertige in diesen Ruinen bietet optimalen Nährboden und sind die richtigen Experimentierfelder. Das ist auch meine Mission, solche Orte zu Kulturräumen zu wandeln.⁵⁸¹

This transformation of ruins and voids into “cultural places of experimentation” reflects the transformation of Babylonian spaces into places “to be” in the New Berlin. These transformations used to take place either illegally or unregistered in Berlin’s Babylon, but continue in a more legitimized and commercial capacity today, mostly in new locations.⁵⁸² Places that are swept up by gentrification, such as *Tacheles* in Mitte, *Kiki Blofeld* at Mediaspree near Ostbahnhof, and *Klub der Republik* in Prenzlauer Berg, become almost legendary through the media attention given to their closure protests.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Dimitri Hegemann: “What fascinates me is the yearning for such places. I can’t help it, I just discover such places, whether it’s the *Tresor* or other places in Berlin” (DVD subtitles).

⁵⁸¹ Hegemann’s profile, “Berliner Clubszene: Grenzlose Vielfalt und Internationalität,” in *Berlin Boxx, Business Magazin* (November / Dezember 2011), 27. “Young people around the world talk about these places that rest in some forgotten spaces, and where alternative possibilities can be created. Berlin needs such free spaces and should protect them. The transformational, the unfinished in these ruins offers an optimal fertile ground for experimentation. That’s my mission, to transform such spaces into cultural places” (my translation).

⁵⁸² An example of commercialization of these places is the limited edition of *Tresor* honey, made from beehives installed inside the night club, and available only for a limited time, <http://tresorberlin.com/2012/12/tresor-honig/> (accessed February 2013).

⁵⁸³ See, Anne Lena Mösen, “Das Kapital and the clubs” in *Exberliner*, August 5, 2011, <http://www.exberliner.com/articles/das-kapital-and-the-clubs/> (accessed February 2013).



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) Gerke Freyschmidt at *Kiki Blofeld* and scouting for new locations

In the film, Gerke Freyschmidt, the manager of *Kiki Blofeld*, is shown scouting for a new club location and climbing inside a graffiti-covered abandoned old building. He explains: “Es ist schade, dass alle anfangen jetzt so dem Geld hinterher zu laufen. Und eigentlich so wie nach dem Krieg ohne Sinn und Verstand Sachen verkaufen oder irgendwo bauen. Das ist schade.”⁵⁸⁴ His Berlin is not a commodity; even after the closure of *Kiki Blofeld*, he continues to scout for locations to open another make-shift *Zwischennutzungsraum* (temporary use) bar, which he eventually managed to do, but further north.⁵⁸⁵ The difference, as we can deduce from the narratives of the protagonists, lies in who among the creatives is better able to adjust to the real-estate market transformations in the New Berlin, and to turn their creativity into sustainable and profitable value. A whole culture was created in the so-called temporary-use spaces and voids of Berlin Babylon, including flea markets, beer gardens, urban beaches, open air bars, community gardens, and alternative living projects, and as Colomb reminds us,

This did not happen out of the blue: in the 1970s and 1980s, the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg had become a pocket of radical social movements and countercultural initiatives, of squats and alternative living projects. In the 1990s the techno music sub-cultural scene was heavily reliant on disused buildings and sites to locate its clubs and rave parties. Research commissioned by the Senate in 2004-2005 found almost a hundred temporary leisure, entertainment, social, sports or gardening projects located at disused sites or buildings in Berlin. [...] The first beach bar in Berlin, *Strandbar Mitte*, opened in 2002. [...] The appropriation of those spaces is often made with little financial investment, minimal intervention and

⁵⁸⁴ Gerke Freyschmidt: “It’s too bad that everyone’s starting to chase after the money. And, as was the case after the war, it lacks common sense, it’s just mindless selling and building. It’s too bad.”

⁵⁸⁵ See Timo Kather, “Clublegende “Kiki Blofeld” kehrt zurück,” in *Der Tagesspiegel* 01.04.2014, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/bald-in-berlin-oberschoeneweide-clublegende-kiki-blofeld-kehrt-zurueck/9698644.html> (accessed July 2014).

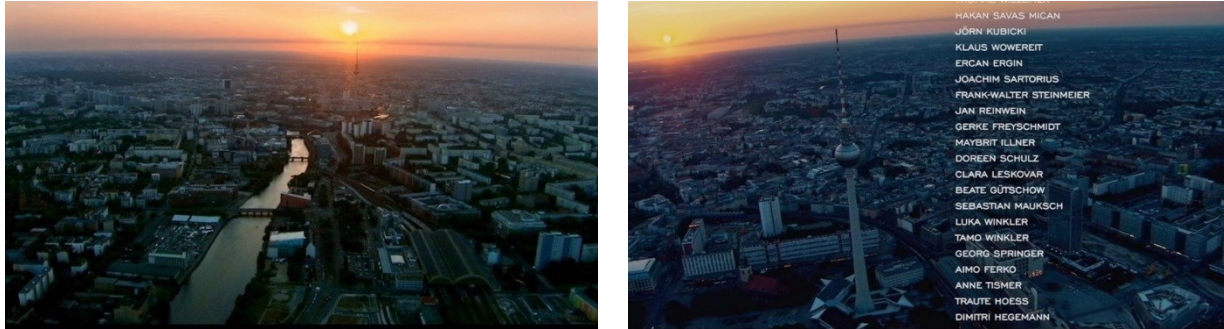
a high degree of recycling of existing structures – a form of ‘urbanism light’. And the active participation of the visitors or consumers of the site is encouraged – a process of ‘co-production of place’.⁵⁸⁶

Freyschmidt’s search for a new club space allegorizes the figurative longing for the sub-cultural scenes of the past, which in the New Berlin are simultaneously commercialized, pushed out of the inner city districts (or as in the case of the Love Parade, out of Berlin), and amalgamated into the larger branding enterprise.

Both *Berlin Babylon* and *In Berlin* begin and end with the music of *Einstürzende Neubauten* and Alexander Hacke. At the beginning of *In Berlin*, we see Hacke at his studio, and in the closing scene of the film he is on stage with the band at *Columbia Halle* in Tempelhof, with a show entitled “Palast der Republik.” The film ends on a very interesting sound note: the song “Ich warte” (I’m waiting)⁵⁸⁷ signifies that the story of the New Berlin is unfinished and to be continued, perhaps anticipating even more sweeping changes, which, historically and economically, we know are coming (as predicted by Benjamin’s Angel of History, Karl Scheffler’s observation of the “ever-becoming” nature of Berlin, and the nearing completion of the Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport that will undoubtedly spur a new phase in Berlin’s economic life). The final song is also presented in the split-screen format, and carries over into the final scene of the film. Once again, the same helicopter shot over Alexanderplatz, but now with the sun almost set. This cyclical narrative structure brings us back to Berlin’s Babylon, with its tower, topography, architecture, images, and music. Berlin may have been transformed by branding and gentrification, but it still carries Babylon’s cultural heritage at its core (literally and figuratively). Thus the two films present the city not only as a palimpsest or a space-time continuum, but as a refractor where multiple images of its contested spaces at different times converge and shed light upon each other.

⁵⁸⁶ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 241.

⁵⁸⁷ Einstürzende Neubauten, “Ich Warte,” from *Alles Wieder Offen*, 2007, <http://www.neubauten.org/alles-wieder-offen> (accessed February 2013).



Film stills: *In Berlin* (2009) closing scene

The end titles are superimposed over images of Alexanderplatz, and allow us to take in the view of Berlin's notorious tower and the now re-constructed city below it, as the helicopter circles around it. This sequence leaves us with the lyrics of final song, originally released in 2007 on the album entitled "Alles wieder offen" (Everything Open Again), and begs us to ask the obvious question: what is Berlin waiting for?

Ich warte warte warte weiter / bis es Zeit ist zurückzugehen
 Ich warte in den Zwischenräumen / vorgeblich ungeschützt
 Ich warte auf die neue Sprache / die die mir dann nützt
 Ich warte auf die Dopamine / die innerlich versprochen sind
 Ich warte auf die Vorstellung / dass der Film endlich beginnt [...]
 Ich warte auf meiner Eisbergspitze / am Ende der Physik / auf Novemberhitze
 und auf Dinge dies nicht gibt [...]
 Ich warte auf die eine / die ihren Namen wohl verdient / immer da war immer recht hat
 auf die eine die die Sonne ausgräbt / das Gesetz der Gräber aufhebt.⁵⁸⁸

Amongst the mundane list of things of daily life in the city (cleaners, waitress, newspaper) the narrator of the song is actually waiting to be able to go back in time ("bis es Zeit ist zurückzugehen"), having been waiting in the spaces in-between ("in den Zwischenräumen"), and for a new language that can be useful ("Ich warte auf die neue Sprache / die die mir dann nützt"). Could the New Berlin be merely an in-between space, according to the Babylonian musicians? A little later in the song, we find out that the narrator is also waiting for things that do not exist ("auf Dinge dies nicht gibt"). All these nostalgic

⁵⁸⁸ For full song lyrics, see Einstürzende Neubauten, "Ich Warte," from *Alles Wieder Offen*, 2007, <http://www.neubauten.org/alles-wieder-offen> (accessed February 2013).

elements amount to a very similar tone that the protagonists have expressed in their identification with and longing for Berlin's pre-gentrified spaces. The last stanza of the song also demonstrates allusions to Benjamin's Angel of History, as the narrator describes waiting for someone who is only identified by the feminine indefinite article "eine," and who can "dig up the sun and lift the law of the graves" ("auf die eine die die Sonne ausgräbt / das Gesetz der Gräber aufhebt"). Benjamin described his Angel of History in similar terms as having his face turned toward the past, while being propelled forward by the storm of progress, and as having the capacity to awaken the dead and make whole what has been broken.⁵⁸⁹ Thus by revisiting the Angel of History through the musical allusions from the New Berlin of 2009, we are, inevitably, also brought back to revisit Berlin Babylon.

This longing for the ability to go backwards while being propelled forwards and for things or spaces that gradually cease to exist is a common theme in all the films in this study. While the films present Berlin as a refractor, they also make us re-think our own perceptions of and relationality to Berlin. In "The Return of the Flâneur" (1929), Walter Benjamin makes a useful distinction between native authors and outsiders writing about cities:

If we were to divide all the existing descriptions of cities into two groups according to the birthplace of the authors, we would certainly find that those written by natives of the cities concerned are greatly in the minority. The superficial pretext – the exotic and the picturesque – appeals only to the outsider. To depict a city as a native would call for other, deeper motives – the motives of the person who journeys into the past, rather than to foreign parts. The accounts of a city given by a native always have something in common with memoirs.⁵⁹⁰

Almost all the filmmakers and most of the protagonists of recent Berlin documentaries, and in fact the majority of inhabitants of Berlin today, can be described as outsiders, but in the process of "being" and becoming Berliners, many of them "journey into the past" and sometimes reveal elements of nostalgia and longing in their accounts and narratives of the city. What is particularly interesting is the notion of a

⁵⁸⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257.

⁵⁹⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Return of the Flâneur" in *Selected Writings II 1927-1934*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp.262-267), 262.

collective nostalgia that is not tied to *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*, but to the unclaimed spaces, as exoticised and contained now as the Ishtar Gate of Babylon inside Berlin's Pergamon Museum.

PART 4: Nostalgia for Babylon (2009-now)

Chapter 7 – Nostalgia, Longing, and Identity

If we reject outright the literature of nostalgia,
we fail to understand something important about ourselves;
we fail to realize how we can make our loss into a gain. (Judith Wright)⁵⁹¹

In this part of my study I examine post-Wall nostalgia that emerged in response to Berlin's branding, gentrification, and commodification of its cultural scenes and spaces. I trace several scholars, writers, and filmmakers' attempts to understand the spatial transformations of the city in relation to nostalgia's impact on culture, artistic communities, and the type of city the New Berlin is becoming. I analyze the phenomenon I term nostalgia for Babylon, identifiable in Berlin culture after 2009, and what it reveals about the un-processed, unfulfilled desires and utopian longing ignited by the fall of the Wall and fuelled by the promise of cultural and economic freedom in the unreconstructed city. Although the different nostalgias in post-Wall Berlin emerged from unfulfilled utopian desires, it is important to distinguish between the nostalgias of the divided East and West Berlin from that of nostalgia for Babylon in order to understand contemporary urban and cultural identity transformations. While *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* have been identified as responses to reunification and many socio-political changes, I interpret nostalgia for Babylon as a reaction to gentrification and branding of the New Berlin. Drawing on the work of nostalgia theorists, such as Svetlana Boym, Dominic Boyer, and Christine Sprengler, I examine nostalgia in the context of post-Wall Berlin and its manifestation in documentary films. Despite the many conflicting interpretations of German nostalgia, it is possible to arrive at a working definition of post-Wall nostalgia in Berlin as characterised by longing (*algia*), rather than a return home (*nostos*). This

⁵⁹¹ Judith Wright, Introduction, *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1965, xviii). Quoted in Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2011).

longing evolved from utopian desires; it is characterized by its present-ness rather than the past; it aims to reflect on, rather than restore a certain past; and, as I will show here, it is ultimately connected to identity construction and future-determination. Significantly, what nostalgia for Babylon reveals is not only that the Berlin Senate under the leadership of Klaus Wowereit has been successful in transforming and re-branding the city into a creative center, but also that the process of working through nostalgia allows for a deeper understanding of cultural identity, and, most pertinently, can reveal what has been neglected or lost in the process of such extensive transformation as evident in post-Wall Berlin.

Since it was first coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in 1688, the term nostalgia has been interpreted in many different ways, most of which signify a sense of longing related to identity, or a type of belonging. For example, Andreea Deciu Ritivoi (2002) defines the term nostalgia as a translation of the German word *Heimweh* (homesickness) into Greek words *nostos* meaning return, and *algia* meaning longing,⁵⁹² defining it as “a constant search for the self, an effort to define and redefine identity by pondering its prior stages of manifestation and by finding connections between the past and the present, as well as anticipating the future.”⁵⁹³ By his definition, the term implies a dialectical relationship between the past, present, and the future, as well as a strong focus on individual identities. Roger Aden (1995) provides another fitting definition, suggesting that “nostalgia indicates an individual’s desire to regain some control over their lives in an uncertain time.”⁵⁹⁴ Aden, too, locates the meaning of nostalgia in the present, rather than the past, and encourages us to question what it tells us about the culture that produced it. By taking this multi-dimensional definition of nostalgia as my guiding principle, I look at nostalgia for Babylon both in historical terms and in terms of what it tells us about the current culture of post-Wall Berlin.

⁵⁹² Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, *Yesterday’s Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2002), 15.

⁵⁹³ Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, *Yesterday’s Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*, 10.

⁵⁹⁴ Roger Aden, “Nostalgic Communication as Temporal Escape: When It Was a Game’s Reconstruction of a Baseball / Work Community,” *Western Journal of Communication* (59, 1995), 21. Quoted in Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 34.

Scholarship on nostalgia in post-Wall Germany until now focused primarily on *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*,⁵⁹⁵ their origins, their objects, and the correlations between them. As yet, little work has been done in terms of identifying any other nostalgia in Berlin. In this chapter, I present the literature on nostalgia, studies of *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*, post-communist nostalgia, cinematic expressions of nostalgia, and outline the ways in which my concept of nostalgia for Babylon relates to these studies. So far, the only reference to nostalgia for Berlin's voids has been provided in Janet Ward's study on *Post-Wall Berlin* (2011), in which she acknowledges the emergence of the "nostalgia for the unformed spaces left behind by the dismantled Wall."⁵⁹⁶ But Ward does not examine this nostalgia, nor distinguish it from *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*. She does, however, differentiate between the two nostalgias, which she claims "are different" because "by the mid-1990s, East Germans had lost 40 percent of their purchasing power, while West Berliners are yearning for the subsidy-filled era of the 1980s."⁵⁹⁷ At the same time, she is quite dismissive of what she identifies as "nostalgia over the demise of Berlin's voids," claiming that,

Critics' melancholy nostalgia over the demise of Berlin's voids is based on a somewhat selective memory of a dreamed-of authenticity and cohesion for the urban past – not only of the very patchiness and walled up separations of Cold War Berlin, but also of the city's pre-Wall (and especially, interwar pre-Nazi) era of rapid modernization. A balanced view needs to be found that does not condemn in advance infrastructural and superstructural renovation. Commercial development will have to accompany the city's long journey to growth.⁵⁹⁸

I believe Ward underestimates the nostalgia for the voids. Rather than dismissing it as a longing for "a dreamed-of authenticity and cohesion of the urban past," we can interpret this nostalgia for what the voids represented right after the fall of the Wall, namely a (utopian) promise of openness, freedom, and the potential of constructing a city on creativity rather than neo-liberal market values. In a way, it is not

⁵⁹⁵ See: Paul Cooke (2005), Roger F. Cook (2005), Dominic Boyer (2006), Barbara Mennel (2007), Heidi Schlipphacke (2010), Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (2010), Michael D. Richardson (2010), David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (2011), Nick Hodgkin (2011), Alexandra Ludewig (2011), Paul Kubicek (2011), Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (2013).

⁵⁹⁶ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 134: In reference to Samira Gloor-Fadel's documentary film, *Berlin-Cinema* (1998), which shows "immediate *Wende* footage of children playing along the spaces of the voided *Mauerstreifen*, the ruined landscape where the Wall used to be."

⁵⁹⁷ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 134.

⁵⁹⁸ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 320.

nostalgia for the past, but for the promise of a potential, possible, yet-unrealized future. The works of artists and entrepreneurs such as Danielle de Picciotto and Dimitri Hegemann, as well as the artists featured in the “Berlin 89/09” exhibition, demonstrate this crossing of utopian longing and nostalgia from that time. While calling for a “balanced view,” Ward’s study places emphasis on Berlin’s ranking and aspirations to be perceived as a global capital, without taking into account nostalgia as a crucial and constructive factor in the process of forging a post-Wall identity.

In her seminal study, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Svetlana Boym re-conceptualized the history of Western modernity – which George Lukács defined as marked by “transcendental homelessness” – as a history of nostalgia.⁵⁹⁹ She distinguishes between *restorative* and *reflective* nostalgia⁶⁰⁰ and defines it as a sentiment of loss and displacement, as well as a “defense mechanism in time of accelerated rhythms.”⁶⁰¹ Siegert’s *Berlin Babylon* (2001), released the same year as Boym’s study, demonstrates these accelerated rhythms and transformations in the Babylonian Berlin, while simultaneously engaging with its melancholy. Not surprisingly, as we can see in the post-2009 documentary films, nostalgia resurfaced as a reaction to gentrification of the New Berlin after the major construction was completed. But in 2001, Boym called Berlin “an anti-nostalgic city,” suggesting that,

In 1999, “Berlin is becoming” changed and became “New Berlin,” acquiring a logo: a red and blue geometric abstraction suggesting the opened Brandenburg Gate. The New Berlin is an anti-nostalgic city that displays its pride through the panoramic vistas from the glass cupola of the renovated Reichstag. The key word of New Berlin is *normalization*, not memorialization. The New Berlin is not my subject; rather, it is that Berlin-in-transition, the porous city where there were “always new cracks in the asphalt, and out of them the past grows luxuriantly.” (Peter Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 1998) That Berlin embodied the future of nostalgia with its many potential pasts and conjectural histories.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 22.

⁶⁰⁰ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49-50: “*Restorative* nostalgia evokes national past and future; *reflective* nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory. [...] *Reflective* nostalgia does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home; it is “enamored of distance, not of the referent itself.” This type of nostalgic narrative is ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary. Nostalgics of the second type are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance; the home is in ruins or, on the contrary, has been just renovated and gentrified beyond recognition. This defamiliarization and sense of distance drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future.”

⁶⁰¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii-xiv.

⁶⁰² Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 176.

Similar to Boym's understanding of the Babylonian Berlin, Siegert's film does not feature any elements of nostalgia, instead documenting the very process of "normalization" and re-construction, including the opening of the Reichstag. Yet, since the publication of Boym's study, the completion of the major re-construction, and the release of Siegert's film, the New Berlin has been increasingly marked by memorialization, and can no longer be described as "anti-nostalgic." In fact, later in the same study Boym claims that Berlin is "a laboratory for the memory work," citing the New Synagogue, the Palace of the Republic, and the Jewish Museum as contested sites of "longing without homecoming."⁶⁰³ This interpretation mirrors a general cultural shift in the New Berlin that includes nostalgia based on longing (*algia*), rather than a return home (*nostos*).

Boym acknowledges that "the main feature of Berlin in transition is a cohabitation of various nostalgias and a superimposition of Eastern and Western ways of commemoration."⁶⁰⁴ Her overarching argument is that "Berlin embodied the future of nostalgia with its many potential pasts and conjectural histories." She does not extrapolate what this "future of nostalgia" entails, which at the time of her visit to Berlin in 1998 (just before *Ostalgie* fully emerged in German literature and film) and at the time of the publication of her study in 2001 (just as *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* started to gain momentum) was only beginning to surface in what at the time appeared as an "anti-nostalgic city" of construction sites that favoured "normalization over memorialization." However, her observation does allow us to see nostalgia in Berlin as more complex than merely the act of looking back to one particular time and place. Rather, it incorporates not only Berlin's "potential pasts and conjectural histories," but also the potential, yet-unrealized future. Boym believes that "nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future. Consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our

⁶⁰³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 197.

⁶⁰⁴ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 197.

nostalgic longing.”⁶⁰⁵ As Boym rightly points out, in order to envision a possible future for Berlin, we have to take into account not only its various pasts, but also its various nostalgias, as well as the present conditions that trigger them into being.

Significantly, it is in the New Berlin after 2009 that nostalgia for the Babylonian Berlin, to which Boym referred to as “Berlin-in-transition,” surfaced and began to manifest itself in documentary films. This is not coincidental, since the re-construction, gentrification, and branding of the New Berlin is continuously threatening to replace and superimpose a new and polished image of a creative city over a very complex and multilayered terrain. Boym noted that a cinematic manifestation of nostalgia would consist of a “superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life.”⁶⁰⁶ This is a different superimposition than the one witnessed in Hito Steyerl’s film, *Die leere Mitte* (1998), in which the images of squatters are superimposed by images of construction workers, as Potsdamer Platz transitioned from no-man’s-land to a corporate construction site. Steyerl’s superimposition served to seek out the contradictions and contestations inherent in Berlin’s topography. Boym’s superimposition questioned the inherent contradictions that serve to fuel nostalgic longing, such as displacement, passage of time, and unresolved desires. These contradictions enable and justify each other, turning nostalgia into a useful reflexive lens. In accord with Boym’s understanding of nostalgia, the New Berlin stands at the very core of re-negotiating nostalgia in German culture. Finally, Boym also differentiates between “prefabricated nostalgia,” often found in Hollywood films such as *Jurassic Park* (1993), in which technology serves to reconstruct different otherwise inaccessible and even pre-historic pasts, and which tell us nothing about the future, and “creative nostalgia,” which she believes “reveals the fantasies of the age, and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born. One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is

⁶⁰⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi.

⁶⁰⁶ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii.

this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future.”⁶⁰⁷ While Boym’s vision of this future-ness of nostalgia is unspecified, it nonetheless paved the way for other scholars of post-communist and trans-national nostalgia to take her argument further and articulate it in terms of future-determination.

Building on Boym’s conceptualizations of nostalgia, Esra Özyürek’s study of nostalgia in contemporary Turkish culture stresses that “longing for a past became possible only by concentrating on a future that had yet to arrive.”⁶⁰⁸ This furthers Boym’s argument about the closely-connected relationship between the past and the future, and nostalgia’s role as a bridging mechanism – a process evident not only in contemporary German culture. In the process of rapid modernization and reconstruction, Turkey, like the New Berlin, experienced bursts of nostalgia when the spatial transformations became apparent and when the future roles and identities began to be re-negotiated. Özyürek explained that “what makes each moment of nostalgia unique is the role it plays in relation to the present,”⁶⁰⁹ thereby confirming the notion that nostalgia has the ability to tell us just as much about the present as about the past. Özyürek believes that “nostalgia can become a political battleground,” and that “what Michael Herzfeld (1997) calls ‘structural nostalgia,’ can serve as a resource for the marginalized. By creating alternative representations of an already glorified past, they can make a claim for themselves in the present.”⁶¹⁰ In the New Berlin, this political battleground started playing out in documentary films that communicate nostalgic sentiments from artists, writers, DJs, musicians, and other creative talent in a city where increasing gentrification is threatening their very existence and creativity. As the protagonists of *Mauerpark* reveal, their attempt to make a claim for themselves in Berlin’s gentrified present is not without nostalgic sentiments for the Babylonian city of voids and its sub-cultures, which makes nostalgia for Babylon, a “structural nostalgia” and therefore also a

⁶⁰⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 351.

⁶⁰⁸ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 9.

⁶⁰⁹ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, 31.

⁶¹⁰ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, 154.

mechanism of critique. To sum up, as Boym and Özyürek established, nostalgia functions not merely as a persistent lingering of the past, but carries inherent polarities and dialectic forces within itself that allow for a critical and reflexive treatment of the present and the future. In post-Wall Berlin, nostalgia can serve not only as a vital link between its Babylonian past and its over-gentrified future, but can also point to key elements, such as creativity and renegotiations of identity that have been neglected or exploited in the process of re-constructing and becoming.

Expanding Boym's conceptualization of nostalgia, Dominic Boyer, in a chapter from Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille's *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (2010), defines nostalgia as ultimately "a longing for the right of future-determination,"⁶¹¹ which also serves as a useful frame to examine nostalgia in Berlin. He analyzes nostalgia in contemporary Eastern Europe, which, just as Berlin, "suffered a mighty cultural displacement in the aftermath of the events of 1989-1990."⁶¹² Consequently, nostalgia in these parts of Europe is different from those where no such displacement took place.⁶¹³ This adds a new dimension to the established understanding of nostalgia as a longing for identity, belonging, or continuity. Boyer's reading of post-communist nostalgia pushes it beyond passivity, escapism, and desire for continuity, towards social and political empowerment through self-determination. Boyer takes Boym's insistence on the future-ness of nostalgia to a political level:

We should listen to nostalgia discourse more carefully. That is, we should take seriously the fact that nostalgia talk in many contexts means something more or other than resignation to "westernization" and melancholy for how much better or easier or younger life once was. I interpret much nostalgia talk in Eastern Europe as precisely the opposite of this – nostalgia's obsessional method of past insistence can

⁶¹¹ Dominic Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos: Nostalgic Eastern Europe as Postimperial Mania" in Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (eds.), *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 25: "What I think we are witnessing instead in Eastern European nostalgia are tropes of idealized pastness that set out to accomplish two very contemporary projects in communication and knowledge: 1) to signal and voice estrangement from the fact that post-Socialist transformation in Eastern Europe has been a process steered by social and political interests largely lying outside Eastern Europe, and 2) to make a claim upon a right of future self-determination."

⁶¹² Dominic Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos," 17.

⁶¹³ For example, the Viennese nostalgia for the time of Sissi, Strauss' waltz, Klimt's art, and the Secession movement is very different from any of the nostalgias that can be witnessed in Berlin.

also serve as a way of drawing attention to an emergent politics of the future that is by no means settled.⁶¹⁴

What we can witness in many post-Wall Berlin documentaries is not only a re-examination of the notion of nostalgia itself, but in accord with Boyer's argument, an engagement with nostalgia that draws attention to "emergent politics of the future," calling into question not only Berlin's process of "becoming" in the 1990s, but its claims and invitation to "be" Berlin. The Babylonian metaphor established by Siegert's film that depicts conflicted languages between city officials, urban planners, and architects, alludes to the massive re-construction project, in which assembling a collective identity can be equated to what Boyer calls "future-determination" of the city. From the theories of nostalgia presented here, it becomes apparent that there is no real way to conceptualize or construct a future identity without first understanding, deconstructing, and working through nostalgia.

Several German cultural studies scholars have traced the cultural history of nostalgia in the two Germanys prior to reunification and beyond. As Charles Maier put it, "until 1989, postwar German history had to be a process of learning how not to long," because "most German national traditions and symbols were irreparably contaminated by Nazi association, [and thus] the recovery of shared German pasts was often muted and made suspect."⁶¹⁵ Furthermore, in his chapter entitled "Remembrance of Things Past: Nostalgia in West and East Germany 1980-2000" (2003), Paul Betts notes that, "even the term nostalgia was dropped from West German encyclopedias during the 1950s and 1960s," while the ruling East-German Socialist Unity Party (SED) "officially denounced back-ward looking nostalgia as crass capitalist decadence and ideological cowardice in the face of the iron laws of Marxist historical progress.

⁶¹⁴ Dominic Boyer, "From Algos to Autonomos," 27.

⁶¹⁵ Charles Maier, "The End of Longing? (Notes Toward a History of Post-war German National Longing)," in the *Postwar Transformation of Germany: Democracy, Prosperity and Nationhood*, ed. John Brady, Beverly Crawford, and Sarah Elise Wiliarty (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 276. Quoted in Paul Betts, "Remembrance of Things Past: Nostalgia in West and East Germany 1980-2000," Paul Betts and Greg Eghigian (eds.), *Pain and Prosperity: Reconsidering Twentieth-Century German History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 178-207), 181.

In both countries, the cultural enunciation of nostalgia practically disappeared until the 1970s.”⁶¹⁶ Betts traces the resurfacing of nostalgic sentiments in “the West German longing for the Golden 1950s” during the late 1970s and early 1980s, which, he suggests, can be witnessed in Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s *BRD Trilogy*, and later in “East Germany’s post-1989 *Ostalgie* for the comfort and security of the old German Democratic Republic.”⁶¹⁷ He notes that common to both instances of nostalgia “is the impulse to assuage the perceived pains of the present through romanticizing earlier decades of economic progress and political hope,” and that “these nostalgia waves tended to center on pop culture relics from their respective economic miracles.”⁶¹⁸ Notably, considering Bett’s premise, nostalgia for Babylon differs in that it is not projected to a time of economic prosperity or miracles, but quite on the contrary, to a time marked by a lack of economic coherence and growth. If anything, it is nostalgia for a temporary gap in the economic system, which allowed for the creation of alternative artistic communities and cultural spaces, and facilitated the establishment of vibrant sub-cultures and scenes.

In an essay on German films of the 1990s, Anke Pikert (2010) compared the postmodern voids of the Babylonian Berlin to a new Zero Hour in German history:

The recurring urban scenes of young people, stranded and roaming in deserted building, echo postwar rubble films such as *Somewhere in Berlin* (*Irgendwo in Berlin*, 1946), which in turn, were influenced by Weimar street films. Drawing on these different traditions, *Ostkreuz* visually postulates another Zero Hour, commonly ascribed to the imaginary *tabula rasa* following the Second World War, but in contrast to the earlier projects, the historical referents of loss or change have almost completely disappeared.⁶¹⁹

The concept of “another Zero Hour” became a defining element of the Babylonian Berlin often described as anti-nostalgic, emphasizing its unrecognizable, industrial, or deserted postmodern landscape, portrayed in Siegert’s and other films of the 1990s. Siegert also equated this desolate landscape of voids with melancholia – a type of unresolved longing, and a persistent lack of the sense of

⁶¹⁶ Paul Betts, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 180-81.

⁶¹⁷ Paul Betts, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 182.

⁶¹⁸ Paul Betts, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 182.

⁶¹⁹ Anke Pikert, “Vacant History, Empty Screens: Post-Communist German Films of the 1990s” in Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (eds), *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 270.

belonging. Thus, the fall of the Wall is significant not only because it heralded a new historical era with the end of the Cold War, creating a multiplicity of German pasts (East and West) and a need to deal with a “double mastering of the past” (*doppelte Vergangenheitsbewältigung*),⁶²⁰ but also because it facilitated a new engagement with nostalgia. As the documentary films selected for this study demonstrate, the melancholy produced by an un-mourned past and rapid progression towards the future (captured in Siegert’s film) has been gradually replaced by nostalgia. However, with the resurfacing of nostalgia in German culture, first as *Ostalgie*, followed by *Westalgie*, and then by nostalgia for Babylon, different pasts and unfulfilled longings can begin to be addressed and worked through.

Other studies on nostalgia build their arguments on the polarization of the term itself. In her study of *Nostalgia After Nazism* (2010), Heidi Schlipphacke claims that,

Where nostalgia can function to recall past glories and virtues in nations such as France, Russia, or the United States, this emotion is generally associated with right-wing reactionary views of Nazism in Germany and Austria. Nostalgia insists on the primacy of the past over the present and of a perceived stability over change: home, nation, and family are privileged over the foreign and non-familial. [...] Nostalgia engenders forgetting, and German and, to a lesser degree Austrian cultures officially deplore the act of forgetting. [...] Perhaps the only officially sanctioned form of nostalgia in Germany is “Ostalgie,” the longing for the “unspoiled” state of East Germany.⁶²¹

Limiting the scope of nostalgia to connote “the primacy of the past over the present” misses a critical aspect of nostalgia that questions the relationship between the past and the present, as well as the relationship between (stifled) utopian dreams and nostalgic longing. In her study, Schlipphacke focused her discussion of nostalgia in the German context on the films of Tom Tykwer, underlining the trope of escape from the limitations of the traditional home, and a yearning for a new, global home.⁶²² Her use

⁶²⁰ Christa Hoffmann and Eckhard Jesse, “Die doppelte vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland: Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten,” in Weidenfeld, ed. *Deutschland. Eine Nation – doppelte Geschichte*. (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993). Quoted in Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories? Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 6.

⁶²¹ Heidi Schlipphacke, *Nostalgia After Nazism: History, Home, and Affect in German and Austrian Literature and Film* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 15.

⁶²² Heidi Schlipphacke, *Nostalgia After Nazism*, 13.

and understanding of the term nostalgia as “engendering forgetting” and as focused on the “home” and *nostos* or “return” is limited to what Svetlana Boym labeled *restorative* nostalgia, as opposed to *reflective* nostalgia, which focuses on *algia* or “longing,”⁶²³ and thus exemplifies the problem with some scholarship on nostalgia as precisely due to this limitation of the term itself. It is this view of nostalgia as hierarchical (past vs. present, remembrance vs. forgetting, *Ostalgie* vs. *Westalgie*) that limits our ability to view nostalgia as an integral part of understanding the present, rather than as merely pertaining to a particular time, place, or a community of people. By contrast, Michael D. Richardson (2010) foregrounds *reflective* nostalgia as more applicable to nostalgia in contemporary culture, and specifically to *Ostalgie*. He claims that,

Unlike retrospective nostalgia, *reflective* nostalgia can be ironic, inconclusive, and fragmentary. It does not reject critical reflection but incorporates it into longing, seeing the past in terms of multitude of potentialities and nonteleological possibilities of historical development: Finally, although *restorative* nostalgia, linked to a return home, tends toward unifying symbols to evoke a national past and present, *reflective* nostalgia is more concerned with individual and cultural memory. *Reflective* nostalgia recognizes what is known as “cultural intimacy” – the elements that make up a common social context – but the shared frameworks of collective or mutual memory allow for individual reminiscences and suggest multiple narratives.⁶²⁴

Richardson’s understanding of *Ostalgie* as *reflective* is part of a general attempt in German cultural studies to recuperate and understand *Ostalgie* not only as a way to escape the present by romanticizing the past, but as a way to examine the deeper social and psychological drives behind this phenomenon. Boym explained that *reflective* nostalgia has elements of both mourning and melancholia, and that it is “a form of deep mourning that performs a labour of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future.”⁶²⁵ Richardson’s interpretation of nostalgia can be applied to nostalgia for Babylon, which can also be described as “lingering in the ruins” and abandoned buildings of post-Wall

⁶²³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49.

⁶²⁴ Michael D. Richardson, “A World of Objects: Consumer Culture in Filmic Reconstructions of the GDR,” in Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (eds.), *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010, 216-237), 222.

⁶²⁵ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia*, 55.

Berlin; and it, too, is “concerned with the passage of time” and does not reject critical reflection.⁶²⁶ In fact, its very manifestation in the present can be seen as a critical stance, a signal that the passage from the divided past to the gentrified present has not been dealt with properly, and is a call for re-examination of the sweeping changes in the New Berlin’s social and urban re-construction.

Other scholarship on *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* also reflects the inherent contradictions of the concepts. Alexandra Ludewig (2011) links nostalgia in post-reunification film and literature to a search for *Heimat* and a sense of “rootedness [that] is shared and expressed by many who feel insecure, ostracized, or rejected in German society, for economic as well as ethnic and racial reasons.”⁶²⁷ She traces the emergence of *Ostalgie* to 1992, when the Dresden actor and comedian Uwe Steimle coined the term, in response to what she termed as the “unheimliche Heimat” (uncanny home) of reunified Germany.⁶²⁸ What followed throughout the 1990s, Ludewig claims, was the transformation of *Ostalgie* into an entire industry, which manifested itself as the “museumification of GDR everyday life,”⁶²⁹ but was also seen as “a source of emancipation, a basis for the elevation of one’s own past, which seemed to correspond with the perception of being morally superior to the citizens of the West.”⁶³⁰ This view of *Ostalgie* has been challenged by the editors of *Debating German Identity Since 1989* (2011), who argue that until now *Ostalgie* has been categorized “as a transitional phenomenon, that is, as an expression of an inability to ‘arrive’ in the West,” and who claim to “agree with Peter Thompson’s (2009) reframing of the nostalgic longing for the East in terms of a retrospective investment in the unrealized socialist utopian promise.”⁶³¹ From their introduction to the anthology, we can deduce that utopian dreams and unfulfilled possibilities of the GDR have been transformed by *Ostalgie* longing that is not devoid of

⁶²⁶ Michael D. Richardson, “A World of Objects,” 222.

⁶²⁷ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia: 100 Years of German Heimat Film* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2011), 14.

⁶²⁸ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia*, 314.

⁶²⁹ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia*, 314.

⁶³⁰ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia*, 319.

⁶³¹ Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (eds.), *Debating German Identity Since 1989* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 9.

critical consciousness. As the studies of Boym, Boyer, Thompson, and others demonstrate, recent scholarship of nostalgia foregrounds its tension between the past, present, and the future, and increasingly acknowledges nostalgic sentiments as avenues for mourning the loss of potential and future possibilities.

Westalgie, on the other hand, the editors claim, “emerged as a variety of historical nostalgia that communicates the historical discontent of those who have been left behind by the declining welfare state and a global economic crisis and who therefore fetishize a better past that seemed to promise a very different future.”⁶³² However, the danger in focusing on the “fetish” aspect of nostalgia is that the escapist past becomes the primary object of analysis, rather than the present. As demonstrated by the scholars of *Ostalgie*, nostalgic sentiments cannot be detached from their present context and future possibilities. In her chapter on *Westalgie* in the same volume, Linda Shortt examines the emergence of *Westalgie*, not only as a reaction to *Ostalgie*, but following Paul Thompson’s argument, as a reaction to the post-Cold-War socio-political transformations in the globalized world order, marked by instability, “fragmentation, change, and the disappearance of the grand narratives,” as a result of which “many people have been robbed of the ability to look forward or to believe in anything.”⁶³³ Moreover, Shortt positions the emergence of *Westalgie*, and particularly the “nostalgic longing for the safe political order of the Federal Republic” as a literary topos that “may be a response to the sea of change that took place in the second half of the 1990s, [when], as Herfried Münkler noted, the move from Bonn to Berlin and the switch from the Deutschmark to the euro eliminated the two political symbols of the West German order.”⁶³⁴ This is a common view of *Westalgie* as *restorative*, rather than *reflective*, accepted by many

⁶³² Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (eds.), *Debating German Identity Since 1989*, 9.

⁶³³ Peter Thompson, “Die unheimliche Heimat: The GDR and the Dialectics of Home,” in “From Stasiland to Ostalgie: The GDR Twenty Years After” Special Issue, *Oxford German Studies*, ed. Karen Leeder (38, No. 3, 2009, 278-87). Quoted in Linda Shortt, “Reimagining the West: West Germany, Westalgia, and the Generation of 1978” in Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (eds.), *Debating German Identity Since 1989* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011, 156-169), 159.

⁶³⁴ Linda Shortt, “Reimagining the West: West Germany, Westalgia, and the Generation of 1978,” 160.

scholars, but Dominic Boyer's work poses another challenging argument to the accepted relationship between *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*.

In his essay on *Ostalgie* (2006), Boyer defines it as "a symptom less of East German nostalgia than of West German utopia," not only confirming the link between nostalgia and utopian longing, but claiming that "the powerful and diverse *Ostalgie* industry of unified Germany reflects the desire of its West German owners and operators to achieve an unburdened future via the repetitive signaling of the past obsession of East Germans. But this incessant signaling is itself symptomatic of West Germans' own past-orientation."⁶³⁵ Boyer believes that "what is named *Ostalgie* is also a West German transference," not least because the best known *Ostalgie* hits were conceptualized and engineered by West Germans.⁶³⁶ He suggests that "we would do better to think and to talk about *Westalgie* in Germany rather than *Ostalgie*."⁶³⁷ His argument opens the discussion of the two nostalgias, regarding them as more correlated and tied to the present. Boyer paved the way for works such as Barbara Mennel's essay on political nostalgia (2007), in which she connects her analysis of *Westalgie* identified in the film *Was tun, wenns brennt?* (2002) with the present transformations in the New Berlin.⁶³⁸ She interprets the protagonists leaving behind the Kreuzberg of their rebellious youth by the end of the film and arriving in the newly re-constructed *Mitte* as both a sign of their maturity and as a metaphor of West-Berlin's incorporation into the Berlin Republic. Making a direct connection between West-Berlin's past and the New Berlin's present, Mennel uses nostalgia as a bridge to link the two. Boyer's and Mennel's works marked a shift in the study of nostalgia in German cultural studies, away from a singular focus on the past, towards a broader analysis of the psychological and socio-political motivations in the present, with nostalgia as a bridging mechanism of analysis. Significantly, Berlin documentaries produced after 2009,

⁶³⁵ Dominic Boyer, "Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany," in *Public Culture* (18:2, 2006, 361-281), 363.

⁶³⁶ Dominic Boyer, "Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany," 374-75.

⁶³⁷ Dominic Boyer, "Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany," 379.

⁶³⁸ Barbara Mennel, "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory: The Kreuzberg of the 1980s in Contemporary German Film" in *The Germanic Review* (2007, 54-77).

as for example *In Berlin*, have a distinct focus on the present – not least evident in the very form of the documentary medium, documenting the various transformations in the New Berlin. These films and many of their protagonists engage with the dualism of anxiety and longing, often expressed through nostalgia for the voids and emptiness of Berlin Babylon.

Other scholarship on nostalgia⁶³⁹ outside of German cultural studies provides useful definitions which link nostalgia to a search for identity or self-determination. As early as 1979, Fred Davis linked nostalgia to identity construction and suggested that “nostalgia is one of the means – or one of the psychological lenses – we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities,” and that the primary purpose of nostalgia is the continuity of identity.⁶⁴⁰ Davis described nostalgia as a “form of consciousness,”⁶⁴¹ that can be characterized by time, spontaneity, experience of the self, and a form of sociality, which “enhances the sense of connectedness to others.”⁶⁴² Nostalgia, according to Davis, facilitates “the feeling of order and continuity so as to cope with the unending onslaught of external and internal experiences.”⁶⁴³ His understanding of nostalgia as a coping mechanism led him to conclude that “nostalgia thrives on transition, on the subjective

⁶³⁹ Christine Sprengler outlined the history of the study of nostalgia in Western scholarship, noting that it was not until the 1960s that “nostalgia became entrenched as the word of choice to describe what was, by then, perceived as a national obsession with the material, visual and popular culture of bygone times.” As early as 1970, nostalgia was branded an industry, “one responsible for marketing and manufacturing products designed to satisfy consumers’ appetites for previous eras and, increasingly, the styles of previous decades. As nostalgia entered the academic sphere of inquiry, in the mid-1970s, it was charged with “falsifying the past; severing the past from the present; preventing historical continuity; fostering disillusionment with the present; hindering attempts to improve present circumstances; stifling creativity, innovation and progress; commodifying history; and exploiting emotions for profit.” By the 1980s and 1990s uses of nostalgia began to be “treated as inherent attributes of nostalgia itself. Her study demonstrates that more recent scholarship on nostalgia recuperates it from its limited definition and opens it up for critical and reflexive engagement with the past and with the present. For more see: Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film*, (New York: Berghahn Book, 2009), 28-61.

⁶⁴⁰ Fred Davis, *Yearning For Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The free Press, 1979), 44-45. Quoted in Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 34.

⁶⁴¹ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 79.

⁶⁴² Krystine Irene Batcho, “Nostalgia and the Emotional Tone and Content of Song Lyrics” in *The American Journal of Psychology* (Vol. 120, No.3, Fall 2007, 361-381), 376.

⁶⁴³ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 30.

discontinuities that engender our yearning for continuity.”⁶⁴⁴ His definitions also reveal a relational interplay between *reflective* and *restorative* nostalgia. Thus, nostalgia not only erupts from utopian longing, but also from a longing for continuity, which resonates with Svetlana Boym’s claim that nostalgia is prevalent after revolutions, and 1989 was seen as a peaceful revolution. But unlike most nostalgias, nostalgia for Babylon calls for a different kind of continuity of the artistic and entrepreneurial freedom that erupted in the voids and abandoned spaces of reunified Berlin. Davis questioned nostalgia’s role in our formation of consciousness, communities, and identity, asking “what are the *consequences* of nostalgic experience for society?”⁶⁴⁵ His philosophical engagement with nostalgia as a measure for questioning our modes of existence as social beings and our formations of identity is particularly useful for understanding nostalgia for Babylon and its connection to the branding of the New Berlin. As the city reinvents itself through urban marketing campaigns and new architecture, nostalgia can serve as a barometer for what has been neglected and left out, what needs to be revisited and dealt with, and what has been lost in the process. Thus, nostalgia cannot be dismissed as a pathology or an impediment to progress, but rather must be recognized as a symptom and a sign of cultural transformation, as well as a desire to find meaning in the inevitability of this transformation.

Other scholars of post-Wall nostalgia have also noted a link between nostalgia and identity. Paul Cooke, in his much quoted work, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (2005), examines post-reunification East German identity in relation to Stuart Hall’s concept of cultural identity formation, which undergoes constant transformation, and which, Cooke claims, “is particularly useful in our discussion of late 1990s culture because it illustrates the extent to which East

⁶⁴⁴ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 49.

⁶⁴⁵ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 97.

German identity cannot simply be conceived of as a 'defiant' reaction to a 'colonizing' western state."⁶⁴⁶ Cooke dismisses the West-German critic's interpretation of *Ostalgie* as "a dangerous form of selective amnesia" and a longing to rebuild the Berlin Wall.⁶⁴⁷ He examines GDR nostalgia in popular films such as *Sonnenallee* (1999) and *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), and the subsequent "*Ostalgie* craze" in TV shows and consumer culture⁶⁴⁸ in relation to Stuart Hall's interpretation of "productive hybridity."⁶⁴⁹ Examining Wolfgang Becker's representation of life in the GDR in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, Cooke claims that "the memory of the mother, and the value system for which she stood, should not be dismissed, but neither can they be kept alive artificially. They must, instead, be incorporated 'productively' into this reunified German family's collective self-understanding, as it attempts, along with the rest of the nation, to negotiate its future."⁶⁵⁰ Again, we see an understanding of nostalgic expression in terms of its hybrid capacity to draw attention not only to the past, but more pertinently to the future negotiations of identity.

Similarly, in his analysis of the "aura of nostalgia" in *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) and in Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987), Roger F. Cook analyzes the ways in which "common desires could evoke a shared sense of belonging and a need for collective narratives."⁶⁵¹ He claims that the "dual nostalgia wave in Germany" was produced by the Berlin Republic's failure to "produce the unified identity expected of it," and its "inability to forge an imagined community of Germans." However, he believes that "this very nostalgia may also provide impetus toward just such a unity."⁶⁵² Reframing our understanding of nostalgia from a "defense mechanism against the loss of cultural identity" to a "path

⁶⁴⁶ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: a Reader*, ed. by Padmini Moglia (London: Arnold, 1997, 110-21), 112. Quoted in Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (New York: Berg, 2005), 103.

⁶⁴⁷ Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (New York: Berg, 2005), 104.

⁶⁴⁸ Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification*, viii.

⁶⁴⁹ Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification*, 136.

⁶⁵⁰ Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification*, 136.

⁶⁵¹ Roger F. Cook, "Recharting the Skies above Berlin: Nostalgia East and West," *German Politics and Society* (Issue 74, Vol. 23, No.1, Spring 2005, 39-57), 41.

⁶⁵² Roger F. Cook, "Recharting the Skies above Berlin," 42.

to a collective identity” and a “notion of community,”⁶⁵³ Cook’s work, in line with that of other scholars, allows us to see nostalgia as a necessary tool in identity construction. Congruently, in his work on *Screening the East* (2011), Nick Hodgkin makes a link between nostalgia, memory, and identity “constructedness.”⁶⁵⁴ He states that, “if one accepts that identity is created, [...] one can begin to investigate the means by which culture (and that includes film) participates in its construction. The cultural narratives that films offer play a vital role in the discussion, and even in the shaping of identities.”⁶⁵⁵ He examines films such as *Sonnenallee* (1999), *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), *Kleinruppin Forever* (2004), *The Lives of Others* (2006), and the ways in which these filmic narratives may “come to signify how Germany’s others, the former GDR citizens, once lived.”⁶⁵⁶ For Hodgkin, “nostalgia is closely related to memory and offers a further inroad into identity.”⁶⁵⁷ Identity theorists claim that “identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.”⁶⁵⁸ Thus, identity is relational, which makes Berlin a particularly rich case study for contemporary identity formations.

Finally, in scholarship on cinematic nostalgia, we find similar attempts to recuperate nostalgia from its past-ness, passivity, limitations, romanticism, and fetish traps. Pam Cook’s work, *Screening the Past* (2005) established a productive tension between nostalgia and history. She explains that,

Rather than being seen as a reactionary, regressive condition imbued with sentimentality, [nostalgia] can be perceived as a way of coming to terms with the past, as enabling it to be exorcised in order that society, the individuals, can move on. [...] Nostalgia is predicated on a dialectic between longing for something idealized that has been lost, and an acknowledgement that this idealized something can never be retrieved in actuality, and can only be accessed through images.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵³ Roger F. Cook, “Recharting the Skies above Berlin,” 45.

⁶⁵⁴ Nick Hodgkin, *Screening the East: Heimat, Memory and Nostalgia in German Film since 1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 3-8.

⁶⁵⁵ Nick Hodgkin, *Screening the East*, 4.

⁶⁵⁶ Nick Hodgkin, *Screening the East*, 183.

⁶⁵⁷ Nick Hodgkin, *Screening the East*, 8.

⁶⁵⁸ William Connolly (1991:64). Quoted in Patricia M. Goff and Kevin C. Dunn (eds.), *Identity and Global Politics: Empirical and Theoretical Elaborations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 28.

⁶⁵⁹ Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), 4.

In line with her interpretation, nostalgic longing in the post-2009 documentary films lays bare the processes not only of Berlin's re-construction, but its own relationship with history. These films, too, employ a productive form of nostalgia based on a "dialectic between longing" and the acknowledgement that this longing "can be accessed through images," and in the case of Graf and Gressmann's short film, through the medium of celluloid film stock rather than digital film. Similarly, in her work *Screening Nostalgia* (2009), Christine Sprengler argues that nostalgia is highly prevalent these days because "it tells us something about our own historical consciousness, about the myths we construct and circulate and about our desire to make history meaningful on a personal and collective level."⁶⁶⁰ Making history meaningful has been a high priority in the Berlin Republic. Furthering the link between history and nostalgia, Sprengler calls for a re-examination of the ways in which "it brings to light aspects of our past neglected by historians' more traditional methodologies."⁶⁶¹ Thus, in contrast to those who considered nostalgia anti-historical and anti-memory, Sprengler re-appropriates it as an analytical tool for history, memory, and cinema. She identifies nostalgia primarily as a visual phenomenon, especially in fiction films, because it is "constructed and experienced primarily through the visual mass media including film, television, advertising, magazines, music videos and video games," and "its triggers are primarily visual in nature and derive from a canon of symbolic material objects, visual tropes and visual styles associated with media representations of the past."⁶⁶² However, in the documentary films selected here, nostalgia is not constructed through costumes, settings, and other devices used in fiction films, but through the narratives of the protagonists, and as in the case of Graf and Gressmann's film, through the choice of the film material itself. As in several other documentary films discussed in this study, nostalgia for Babylon is often presented through images of disappearing structures and spaces, absences and voids, and by questioning what these images signify today.

⁶⁶⁰ Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 3.

⁶⁶¹ Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 3.

⁶⁶² Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 61.

In sum, nostalgia in Berlin no longer stands for a conservative attachment to the past or a fear of forgetting. Studies on *Ostalgie* and post-communist nostalgia (Boyer) have examined identities that “suffered a mighty cultural displacement” as a result of a take-over by Western “forces of change,” as well as the ways in which the East was “retrieving security and autonomy” in memory.⁶⁶³ Similarly, studies on *Westalgie* (Mennel) contextualized nostalgia in light of the city’s re-construction and re-branding of itself as the Berlin Republic and the New Berlin. Scholars of both *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* agree that nostalgia is not an escape fantasy to a digitally-reconstructed past, but a productive “hybrid” lens that allows us to see present and future formations of identity. Furthering these discourses, I argue that the Babylonian spatial vacuum that emerged in Berlin in 1990, often referred to as “die leere Mitte” (the empty middle) or “Republik ohne Mitte”⁶⁶⁴ (republic without middle), spurred another type of nostalgia, which is a Berlin-specific phenomenon. It is not nostalgia for the former West or East Germany, or any other German past. Rather, this nostalgia is critical and reflective, having emerged from a vacuum in identity formation following German reunification that could neither be substituted by *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*, nor filled by the marketing messages and images designed to sell Berlin to global investors. Nostalgia for Babylon is not only a longing for a world that consisted of open spaces, spatial voids, *Brandmauern*, the clubs *Tresor* and *Dschungel*, and make-shift artistic communities like *Tacheles*. It is a call to consciousness in the present in regard to future-determination of the New Berlin. In 1966, Ralph Harper pointed out that “we cannot long for something we do not know; we know only what is in some way already experienced. However new an experience seems to be, if it fulfills longing it is recognized as familiar as well as new.”⁶⁶⁵ This sums up the relationship between the Babylonian and the New Berlin and their seemingly contradictory forces, propelling the city forward into the future, towards the new, while simultaneously looking back into the past with longing and nostalgia, in a quest for self-

⁶⁶³ Dominic Boyer, “From Algos to Autonomos,” 17.

⁶⁶⁴ Richard Herzinger, *Republik ohne Mitte* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 2001).

⁶⁶⁵ Ralph Harper, *Nostalgia: An Existential Exploration of Longing and Fulfillment in the Modern Age* (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1966), 20.

determination, identity, and belonging. As the documentary films in this study attest, the nostalgic return to the contested spaces of post-Wall Berlin is not merely about revisiting the past, but rather by way of questioning present socio-economic politics and identity constructions, an examination and determination of the future.

Chapter 8 – *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen*

Ethos is defined as the characteristic spirit, the prevalent tone of sentiment, of a people or community (Oxford English Dictionary). [...] Cities reflect as well as shape their inhabitants' values and outlooks in various ways. The design and architecture of their buildings reflect different social and cultural values. (Daniel A Bell and Avner de-Shalit, 2011)⁶⁶⁶

Cities can show and carry their history; they can make it visible, or they can hide it. (Wim Wenders)⁶⁶⁷

As established earlier in this study, 2009 was a key year in reflecting on German identity and history. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and ten years after the birth of the New Berlin, 2009 was the year that global media attention turned once more to Germany and to Berlin during the staging of the “Fest der Freiheit” (festival of freedom), which some scholars have referred to as a “carnavalesque re-enactment of a national homecoming of the German nation in Europe.”⁶⁶⁸ The re-staging of the fall of the Berlin Wall has been a recurring spectacle, first re-enacted by Roger Waters in his rock musical *The Wall*, staged in the voids of Potsdamer Platz on July 21, 1990, and again during the internationally-broadcast collapse of the Styrofoam domino slabs that marked the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 2009. The repetition of this spectacle facilitates the re-living of the grandiose event and the utopian visions of creative possibilities associated with it. The pleasure of re-living this experience of envisioning an open, hopeful future – a type of utopian longing – is the same kind of pleasure that is at the core of any nostalgia. In anticipation of this anniversary, many artists, writers, musicians, and filmmakers reflected on the changes and transformations in German and Berlin culture and topography

⁶⁶⁶ Daniel A Bell and Avner de-Shalit, *The Spirit of Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2.

⁶⁶⁷ Wim Wenders, “The Urban Landscape,” *On Location: Cities of the World in Film*, Claudia Hellmann, Claudine Weber-Hof (Munich: Bucher Verlag, 2006), 5.

⁶⁶⁸ Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (eds.), “Introduction,” in *Debating German Identity Since 1989* (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), 1-2.

since the fall of the Wall.⁶⁶⁹ A number of documentary films were produced that year, many of which had an international release.⁶⁷⁰ This chapter's analysis of the short film *Der Weg, den wir nicht zusammen gehen* (*The Path We Do Not Walk Together*, dir. Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann, 2009), takes up the theme of disappearance of historical traces and buildings, touching on elements of nostalgia that is very distinct from either *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*. Unlike *In Berlin* (2009), Graf and Gressmann's short film takes on a more experimental essay-film mode and a more melancholy tone of narrating topographical and architectural transformations, disappearances, and displacements in the re-constructed New Berlin and other German cities. Similar to Siegert's *Berlin Babylon* (2001), *Der Weg* focuses on the theme of construction and demolition, as well as on the materiality of buildings and facades. The filmmakers' deliberate use of Super-8 film stock for documenting the various disappearances, renovations, and re-conceptualizations of urban spaces signals a critique not only of the ways in which post-Wall Berlin and German topography have been transformed, but also of how these transformations have been represented and documented.

Set alongside twelve other short films, Graf and Gressmann's contribution to *Deutschland 09 – 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation* (*Germany 09 – 13 Short Films to the State of the Nation*) helped make the compilation an important cinematic document that brought issues of coming to terms with the reunified past into cinematic light. This short-film collection by Germany's leading filmmakers⁶⁷¹ presents different critical points of view of what Germany symbolized in a globalized world after twenty years of reunification. Drawing its inspiration from the collectively-made *Germany in Autumn* (1978),

⁶⁶⁹ U2 gave a free concert at the Brandenburg Gate on November 5, 2009. For more see, Kate Conolly, "New Berlin wall built for U2 gig to mark fall of old one," *The Guardian*, November 5, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/05/new-berlin-wall-u2-gig> (accessed July 2014).

⁶⁷⁰ For example: *In Berlin* (2009), *The Invisible Frame* (2009), *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor* (2009), *Eingemauert! Wie die innerdeutsche Grenze wirklich war. Walled in! What the Cold War Frontier in Divided Germany Was Really Like* (2009), *My Wall – Berlin Today Award, Short Film Competition* (2009), *Comrade Couture: Ein Traum in Erdbeerfolie* (2009), and *Sehnsucht Berlin: The City named Desire* (2009).

⁶⁷¹ Filmmakers include: Fatih Akin, Wolfgang Becker, Sylke Enders, Dominik Graf, Christoph Hochhäusler, Romuald Karmakar, Nicolette Krebitz, Dani Levy, Angela Schanelec, Hans Steinbichler, Isabelle Stever, Tom Tykwer und Hans Weingartner, <http://deutschland09-der-film.de/index.php> (accessed February 2014).

Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (2010) pointed out that *Germany 09* was a clear and deliberate attempt to establish a dialogue with the New German Cinema, and hence represented the “filmmakers’ drive to return to a politically charged discourse.”⁶⁷² I would add that through Graf and Gressmann’s contribution, the collection is also a critical engagement with history and nostalgia. Along with the thirteen short films selected for the official collection, the DVD and the film website include other short films submitted for the competition. The website introduces the film’s concept and the significance of the year 2009 as follows:

Über 60 Jahre nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs, 40 Jahre nach dem studentischen Aufbruch 1968, 30 Jahre nach dem "Deutschen Herbst" 1977, 20 Jahre nach dem Fall der deutsch-deutschen Grenze 1989 und mitten im gesellschaftlichen Umbruch der "Agenda 2010" auf dem Weg in die globalisierte Welt des 21. Jahrhunderts, findet sich eine Gruppe von Kino-Regisseurinnen und Regisseuren aus Deutschland zusammen, um aus ihren individuellen Blickwinkeln ein Panoramabild der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Situation der heutigen Bundesrepublik zusammenzusetzen. Jeder der beteiligten Regisseure interpretiert seine persönliche Wahrnehmung und eigene filmische Sicht auf das heutige Deutschland, abstrakt oder konkret, frei in der Wahl des Formates und des Inhaltes. Die einzelnen Beiträge konnten Kurzspielfilme, Dokumentarfilme, essayistisch oder experimentell sein.⁶⁷³

The historical and political reflexivity on Germany’s role in the globalized world is evident in the film’s title, its collaborative and collective structure, and its themes. For their segment, Dominik Graf, a native of Munich and the director of *Der Rote Kakadu* (2005), which portrayed a group of rebellious Rock-n-Roll youths in Dresden shortly after the Wall was built, teamed up with the cinematographer Martin Gressmann to reflect on the post-Wall architectural and ideological building practices in Germany and in Berlin of the last twenty years. Their film portrays a “documentation of disappearance” – a critical response to the building boom throughout Germany and Berlin of the 1990s and 2000s:

⁶⁷² Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (eds.), “Introduction,” *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010, 1-38), 16-17.

⁶⁷³ Film website, <http://deutschland09-der-film.de/index.php> (accessed February 2014): “Over 60 years after the end of the Second World War, 40 years after the students’ protests in 1968, 30 years after the “German Autumn” of 1977, 20 years after the fall of the Wall in 1989 and in the middle of the social upheaval of the “Agenda 2010” towards the globalized world of the 21st Century, a group of German directors came together to assemble their individual points of view of a panoramic picture of the social and political situation of today’s Federal Republic. Each of the participating directors interpreted his or her own personal perception and cinematic view of today’s Germany, abstract or concrete, free to choose the format and content. The individual contributions can be short films, documentaries, essayistic or experimental” (my translation).

Eine Bilderstrecke der Architektur dieses Landes, gedreht auf altem Super 8-Material, eine Dokumentation des Verschwindens: Alte Fabrikgebäude bei München, heruntergekommene Wohnhäuser in Frankfurt, Duisburg und Berlin, Gebäude kurz vor dem Verfall: „Wie Körper, die alle noch die Geister der deutschen Vergangenheit des Nachkriegs bewahren. Was alle Museen und alle vollrenovierten Patrizierhäuschen und alle historisch zurechtgeputzten Innenstädte und wiederaufgebaute Stadtschlösschen in Deutschland nicht erzählen können – diese Häuser und Orte erzählen es. Diese Körper aus Stein, jetzt zum Abriss freigegeben, weil wir andere Körper wollen. Nicht, dass all diese Häuser, diese alten Körper, besonders schön wären – sie sind wie alte Gesichter, sie haben Falten, Risse, Verfärbungen, sie sind welk und morsch. Aber die Behausungen der Geister zerstören, das hat noch immer Unglück gebracht.“⁶⁷⁴

The filmmakers document and capture many buildings and structures – described as “bodies of stone” – before they are replaced by new “bodies,” precisely because they have the ability to tell stories, which in some cases may be “ghostly.” The metaphor of bodies and ghosts applied to architectural structures echoes Siegert’s portrayal of dilapidated and ghostly facades in *Berlin Babylon*, and has been a Berlin literary and visual trope of the 1990s and 2000s that reveals a collective fascination with urban ruins of modernity.⁶⁷⁵ The personification of buildings and cities goes back to Aristotle, who likened cities to a “living organism, a body politic, in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” believing that the “common purpose of the city is to create and promote human flourishing.”⁶⁷⁶ As we have seen in Ballhaus and Cappellari’s film, over the course of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the voids and “ghosts of Berlin” have been gradually replaced by new structures populated by the creative classes, many of whom have moved to Berlin after the construction and gentrification was completed. The narrator of *Der Weg* reminds us of the historical significance of the old buildings and “bodies,” and similarly to Siegert’s project, attempts to slow down and contemplate the rapid re-construction process and the

⁶⁷⁴ See film website, <http://deutschland09-der-film.de/dominik-graf-der-weg-den-wir-nicht-zusammen-gehen> (accessed February 2014): “A range of architectural images across the country, shot on old Super-8 film stock, a documentation of disappearance: old factory building in Munich, run-down houses in Frankfurt, Duisburg and Berlin, buildings on the verge of collapse: “like bodies that still retain the ghosts of German post-war past. What is not told in all the museums, and fully renovated patrician houses, and all the historically reconstructed city centers, and rebuilt city palaces in Germany – is told in these buildings and places. These bodies of stone are now approved for demolition because we want other bodies. Not that all these houses, these old bodies, were particularly nice – they’re like old faces, they have wrinkles, tears, stains, they are withered and rotten. But destroying the abode of ghosts has always brought bad luck” (my translation).

⁶⁷⁵ Popularized by Brian Ladd in his *Ghosts of Berlin* (1997) and taken up by contemporary novelists, Chloe Aridjis (2009), Anna Winger (2008), Raul Zelik (2005), Norman Ohler (2002), graphic novelists Jason Lutes (2000, 2008), essayists Simon Burnett (2007), and photo journalist Arno Specht (2010).

⁶⁷⁶ Sharon M. Meagher, *Philosophy and the City* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 6.

different building ideologies (of representative architecture, or architecture of transparency) that accompanied this transformation.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) opening shots of dilapidated facades

The film opens with a collage of slow panning shots of abandoned, ruined, old buildings, or empty lots and construction sites in Munich, Duisburg, Frankfurt am Main, Essen, Köln, Düsseldorf, and Berlin, awaiting demolition or re-construction. The establishing shot displays the entire facade, then the camera zooms in on the building, and in some cases zooms out again for another wider perspective. This close-up view of the “bodies of stone” focuses on the materiality of the structures, while the voice-over narration provides the coordinates for the respective cities and locations. The slightly faded, yellow-grey colours of the Super-8 film stock reflect the worn and gloomy structures awaiting demolition. As in *Berlin Babylon*, Graf and Gressmann’s film portrays many close-up shots of abandoned, soon-to-be-demolished old buildings, as well as the construction of new, glass ones, magnifying the complex role of architecture and topography in several German cities and especially in post-Wall Berlin. Much as in *Berlin Babylon*, the depopulated, faded, and fragmented urban spaces are stripped of identifying marks, while the mood of the images is austere. The film features two main voice-over narrators who guide us through the visual representations of the urban spaces, and sometimes even overlap. The first voice-over is by a female narrator who provides factual information about the locations of the buildings (“an abandoned factory in Aubing, near Munich”) and a brief context for some of them (“there are

descriptions on the internet of how to break into the building to use it for parties”). The second voice-over narrator is male and provides more critical and philosophical observations about the building- and demolition practices in Germany, as well as about conceptions of history, memory, and nostalgia. His comparison of the old buildings to bodies is extrapolated with references to memories of childhood triggered by certain smells: “It is as if they [the buildings] contain a mixed odour of stew, lino, and polish that reminds one of childhood. Good childhood, bad childhood, whatever. It is our own, German childhood.”⁶⁷⁷ This nostalgic reminiscing over the familiar scents of childhood that accompany the old, disappearing buildings reveals a sense of mourning, a reluctance to let go of these referents, or at least a need to slow down the manic practices of replacing or re-constructing everything old with new. In addition, the soundscape of the film is layered with multiple voice-overs,⁶⁷⁸ including a disembodied, heteroglossia-filled narrative of five additional interview sound-bites provided by different narrators who interject their opinions, points of view, and factual information throughout the film, thereby adding to the narrative sound collage that complements the visual collage of urban images. Structurally, the film resembles two collages of image- and soundscapes aligned and layered over each other, mimicking the process by which magnetic sound and optical tracks were originally imprinted onto film stock.⁶⁷⁹

Unlike Siegert’s choice of the 35mm cinematic film, and Ballhaus and Cappellari’s crisp high definition digital film, Graf and Gressmann chose the Super-8 film, traditionally used by amateur and independent filmmakers. The old-fashioned screen ratio alone makes this documentary film stand out

⁶⁷⁷ DVD subtitles.

⁶⁷⁸ The narrators include: Dominik Graf, Reynold Reynolds, Jeanette Hain, Florian Krüger-Shantin, Klaus Sakelarides.

⁶⁷⁹ For more on sound recording see, <http://www.filmforever.org/chap2.html>: “Optical tracks are read by projecting a narrow beam of light through the film, causing a sensor to translate the varying intensity of the light into electrical signals that are further converted to sound. Magnetic (mag) tracks are recorded onto oxide stripes on the edge of the film, which are read by playback heads in the projector. Mag tracks work the same way as audiotape and look similar to tape, appearing as a dull, brownish coating on side of the film. [...] In 1973, Kodak introduced a Super 8 sound-on-film system, and cameras began to come equipped with microphones. Additionally, Super 8 film could also have sound stripes added after processing and have soundtracks recorded later (usually in the projector)” (accessed February 2014).

from the other widescreen short-films in the compilation. In an interview on the film website, Graf explained his choice of film stock, highlighting that

Heute ist ja durch die Digitalisierung alles Fotografische und Filmische per se schon sauber. Dieses grausige Defizit wird allmählich konstatiert, und nun macht man sich eine unglaubliche Mühe damit, um die Dinge, die Bilder dreckiger zu kriegen, damit man z.B. die Luft noch sehen kann, wie das im Film früher in den Clubszenen der Fall war. Nicht umsonst hat Tom Tykwer im Abspann von „Das Parfüm“ einen „Dirt-Manager“ aufgeführt, weil man gerade da, wo es um Riechen und Dreck geht, wirklich Tonnen von Dreck in dieses gesäuberte Material schmeissen muss. Auch das Filmmaterial passt sich also in gewisser Weise den Säuberungstaktiken der Investorenkultur an. Aber das alte Super-8-Material hat in sich schon eine Härte, und wie das im chemischen Prozess auf Licht, auf Lichtwechsel, auf ein Sonnenlicht wirkt, das plötzlich von links einfällt – das hat eine viel physischere Qualität als heutiges, hyperempfindliches Material. Und diese Qualität wenden wir auf diese alten Gebäude an, so dass man sie hoffentlich im Film fast riechen kann.⁶⁸⁰

The filmmakers' attempt to capture the "dirt" can be interpreted as a critique against the white-washing (the German word for gentrifying or restoring is *sanieren* – which echoes "sanitization" – the process of scrubbing and washing clean, to be made presentable and consumable again) and re-construction of the dilapidated buildings and facades, similar to Michael Nast's quote, "Sie sanieren unserer Gegend einfach die Seele weg"⁶⁸¹ (They are polishing the soul off our neighbourhood), and to Raul Zelik's concept of "kaputtgentrifizieren" (gentrify to destruction).⁶⁸² Unlike digital film, the old Super-8 film material has a more "physical quality," according to Graf, and it can capture light effects and "dirt" properties, which point to a desire to preserve and capture something fleeting, ephemeral, and situational through a particular choice of film technology. This "physical quality" is also translated onto the old buildings, establishing a direct link between the medium and the images portrayed. As Jeffrey Skoller noted in his study, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (2005), in the age of electronic

⁶⁸⁰ "Today, with the digitalization of all photographic and cinematic images everything is already clean per se. This gruesome deficit is becoming increasingly apparent, and one has to make an incredible effort to make things and images dirty again, so that, for example, you can see the air caught on film as in earlier club scenes. Not surprisingly, Tom Tykwer has listed a "dirt-manager" in the end credits of *Perfume* because when it comes to smelling and dirt, one has to throw tons of dirt into this material. In a way the film material adapts to the purging-tactics of investor-culture. But the old Super-8 material is in itself hard, and has a much more physical quality in the chemical process of light, changes in lighting, and sunlight effects, than today's hyper-sensitive material. And this quality we use on these old buildings, so that hopefully you can almost smell them in the film" (my translation).

⁶⁸¹ Michael Nast, *Der bessere Berliner. Großstadtgeschichten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009), 133.

⁶⁸² Raul Zelik's *Berliner Verhältnisse* (München: Heyne, 2007), 55.

and digital technology through which contemporary culture represents itself, working with the medium of celluloid film

has in itself become an act of reflection and reconsideration about relationships between pasts and futures. In the face of new media such as digital video and computer imaging, the motion picture image no longer signifies the “now” of technological progress and cultural expression; like the image of the railroad train in relations to the jet plane, film is now often seen as a periodized technology whose images signify an earlier moment in the development of the melting of modern technology and aesthetic expression. A reconsideration of the question of “newness” in relation to aesthetic exploration has become almost inherent to artists continuing to work with film.⁶⁸³

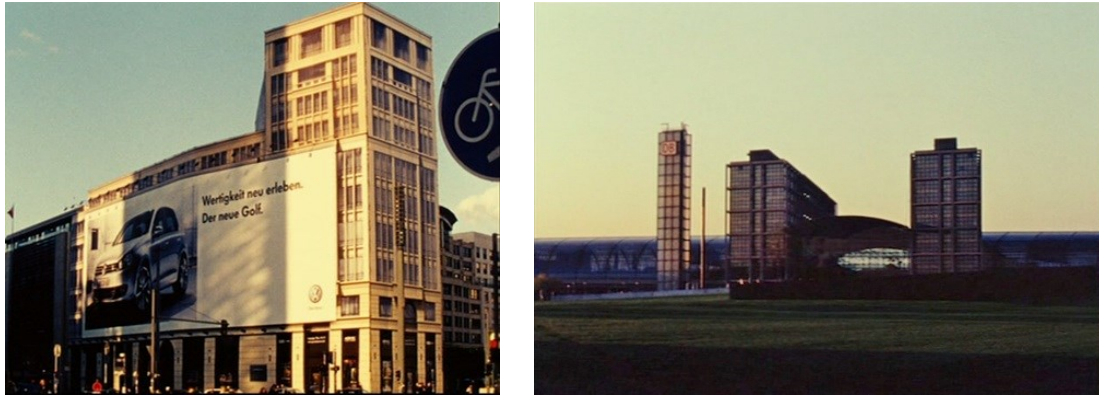
Graf and Gressmann’s short film stands out not only from the *Germany 09* compilation, but also from the larger corpus of documentary films produced after 2009 precisely because of their deliberate choice of film material. This choice can be indeed interpreted as “an act of reflection and reconsideration about the relationship between pasts and futures,” and by linking both the medium of representation and the urban spaces and structures represented, the filmmakers make a compelling argument for questioning the “newness” that is being constructed in the New Berlin. The Super-8 film allows for elements beyond the filmmakers control, such as sun- and light effects, to be captured by the camera and reproduced directly. By contrast, the digital image, which is made of numbers and pixels, is not bonded to the visual representations as film stock used to be, with the negative printed into its very material fabric. This disconnection of the medium from its message in the digital age, just as the disconnection between the new architecture of transparency from the unwanted architecture of Germany’s various pasts, is the problematic trend that the filmmakers have observed in post-Wall Germany and Berlin.

Graf and Gressmann’s choice of the representational medium further reflects the messages of the film, such as the theme of honesty of a city, as the narrator asks, “Häßlichkeit als Ehrlichkeit einer Stadt – gibt es das, die Ehrlichkeit einer Stadt?” (Ugliness as honesty of a city – is there even such a thing as the honesty of a city?). The narrator equates the purported “ugliness” of the city with honesty, and

⁶⁸³ Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxx.

the extensive re-construction process with a lack thereof. This self-reflexivity about both the city and the cinematic apparatus is quite different from the examples of manipulation of digital photography presented by Beate Gütschow's work in *In Berlin*. Yet, there is a similar tendency to reconsider the aesthetic values of beauty and ugliness in relation to urban space that several of *In Berlin's* protagonists expressed in relation to the city. In *Der Weg*, the empty wastelands and "Brachen" (voids and wastelands) and "ungenutzte Flächen" (unused grounds) are presented as "Erholungsgebiete für den Blick" (areas where the eye can rest), echoing nostalgia for the voids expressed by Peter Schneider at the abandoned train tracks of *In Berlin*. By contrast, the "new beauty," the narrator continues, "is light, glass, and transparency. Get rid of the small windows and those thick walls." This voice-over narration is aligned with images of the new office buildings at Leipziger Platz, some of which are still under scaffolding and under construction. Furthermore, the "representational architecture designed to move us emotionally," as well as the glass architecture of transparency that has been replacing old buildings and voids, are criticized as pretentious, when one of the voice-over narrators interjects, "Look, this apparent transparency of modern architecture is a lie. It has been stolen from modernity, and it claims, in the name of the state and the economy, a transparency which is actually total control." The theme of asserting control applies both to architecture and urban spaces, as well as to digital film technology where images can be fully manipulated in post-production, both of which practices the filmmakers call into question in their film. Moreover, the narrator's criticism echoes one of the most common expressions of discontent about the disappearance of Berlin's voids, namely that, once re-constructed and gentrified, these formerly unregulated and publically accessible spaces become controlled by private ownership and market values, and, as the protagonists of *Mauerpark* demonstrate, encroach on the very freedom celebrated here after the fall of the Wall. While Graf and Gressmann do not suggest to physically preserve old spaces and buildings, as the entrepreneurs Gerke Freyschmidt and Dimitri

Hegemann imply in *In Berlin*, the filmmakers perform a different kind of preservation ritual by capturing the buildings awaiting demolition on film, before they are replaced by more glass structures.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) New office buildings at Leipziger Platz and glass architecture of transparency at the
Hauptbahnhof

The concept and rhetoric of architecture of transparency can be traced back to Bauhaus modernism, but in the New Berlin, with the construction of the glass Reichstag dome, the Sony dome, and the new *Hauptbahnhof*, transparency also came to represent the symbolism and rhetoric of the new Berlin Republic, championing democratic values and virtues by way of architectural aesthetics. However, as Claire Colomb reminded us, transparency after all, “is only a metaphor. The experience of wandering through the glass dome is a fun distraction, a compliment to the architect and the tourists, not a revelation,” while extensive re-construction and gentrification go hand in hand with the project of “normalization” – a process of moving past difficult issues of the past, which, according to Colomb and Boym, is supposed to be an “antidote to both nostalgia and historical critique.”⁶⁸⁴ As shown in the previous chapters, nostalgia for Babylon emerged as a direct reaction to this process of “normalization” or re-branding and gentrification, which many documentary filmmakers call into question. Graf and Gressmann’s documentation of the disappearance of historical traces – most apparent through the

⁶⁸⁴ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia*, 217.

treatment of unwanted architecture and urban space – as well as their critique of the new glass architecture of the New Berlin echo the architectural debates of *Berlin Babylon* and the contestations of the protagonists of *Mauerpark*. Henri Lefebvre proposed the premise that space is socially constructed, but is concealed by what he described as “a double illusion,” which consists of “the illusion of transparency on the one hand and the illusion of opacity, or ‘realistic’ illusion, on the other.”⁶⁸⁵ The illusion of transparency, he believed, “goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps and secret places. Anything hidden or dissimulated – and hence dangerous – is antagonistic to transparency.”⁶⁸⁶ The realistic illusion, on the other hand, “is the illusion of natural simplicity.”⁶⁸⁷ Graf and Gressmann’s film looks critically at the New Berlin’s architectural dogma of architecture of transparency, placing it in the context of West Berlin’s urban re-development practices. The filmmakers demonstrate Lefebvre’s “double illusion” in practice in the New Berlin’s attempt to architecturally rebrand itself by erasing traces of multiple unwanted histories and their architectural manifestations. Thus, understanding space as socially constructed carries a political connotation and affects our perception of ownership, use, and representations of space. Lutz Koepnick summarised the re-construction ambitions in the New Berlin as follows,

Reminiscent of modernism’s hubris, post-unification urban planning has been obsessed with the idea of improving society by means of reorganizing public space. Architectural designs, according to this belief, have the power to articulate or cure the many painful memories of national history. They provide meanings that redefine the past’s place in the present and in doing so bring Germany back to the future.⁶⁸⁸

Accordingly, the film portrays the newly completed *Hauptbahnhof*, revealing the stakes of the transparency metaphor and how the process of re-construction remains a contested issue in the New Berlin.

⁶⁸⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 27.

⁶⁸⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 28.

⁶⁸⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 29.

⁶⁸⁸ Lutz Koepnick, “Forget Berlin,” in *The German Quarterly* (Vol.74, No.4, Sites of Memory, Autumn, 2001, 343-354), 351.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) *Bahnhof Zoo*

The glass structure of the *Hauptbahnhof*,⁶⁸⁹ which the filmmakers contrast with the former main train station of West-Berlin, the *Bahnhof Zoo*, is presented as a prime example of architecture of transparency. With its glass, bench-less, transparent structure and surveillance cameras, it was designed to generate a highly-controlled transit space, exemplary of what Marc Augé calls *Non-Places* (1992).⁶⁹⁰ Graf and Gressmann show archival footage of a conference summoned by the West-Berlin Senate and urban planners in 1982 for the future redevelopment and gentrification of the formerly infamous *Bahnhof Zoo*. The archival film footage is supplemented with black-and-white photographs taken during the smoking break in the hallway. We are informed that in the 1970s and 80s, the Senate would order the “Zoo tramps” of the marginal groups, such as drug addicts and dealers, male and female prostitutes, criminals and homeless people, to be sent to Wannsee during the *Berlinale* Film Festival, so that the foreign guests would not witness the poverty and drug problems of West-Berlin. At the time, the city officials were looking to devise long-term changes that would hide these unwanted segments of the population from the area altogether. This was eventually achieved with the completion of the new *Hauptbahnhof*, just in time for the 2006 World Cup, leaving the once notorious *Bahnhof Zoo*, which has

⁶⁸⁹ Some of the glass panels of the *Hauptbahnhof* have begun to break, for more see: Klaus Kurpuweit, “Deutsche Bahn flickt das Glasdach mit Holzplatten,” *Der Tagespiegel*, 23.07.2014, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/hauptbahnhof-berlin-deutsche-bahn-flickt-das-glasdach-mit-holzplatten/10237674.html> (accessed July 2014).

⁶⁹⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. (New York: Verso, 1992).

been captivating Western imaginaries through film and literature, such as *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (1981), as well as through music (U2's *Zooropa*, *Achtung Baby*, etc.), and which used to serve as the first point of entry into West-Berlin, and is now reduced to regional-train traffic and stripped of its importance as a social hub. This shifted both the transportation and the commercial traffic towards Mitte and away from Zoo, making it and the adjacent shopping streets around Kurfürstendamm mostly irrelevant to the global tourists. With the subsequent construction sites around *Zoo Fester* and the *Bikini Haus*, the whole area around *Bahnhof Zoo* became, as Potsdamer Platz before it, another Babylonian construction zone, re-imagined by contemporary developers and investors.

The filmmakers draw attention to the way certain unwanted histories and architectures have been disposed of throughout German history. One of the voice-over narrators explains in an interview sound-bite, "A kind of architectural euthanasia program has gripped post-Cold-War Germany. The destructive frenzy of a generation of investors and officials exposes the present as a new petty bourgeois dictatorship." As photographer Frank Thiel, who captured many buildings along Karl-Marx and Frankfurterallee in his images, remarked, "in the East, many older architects, who worked on the rebuilding of East Berlin's center, now witness the destruction of their life's work."⁶⁹¹ Graf and Gressmann's critique of architectural erasure continues, as another male voice-over narrator reports: "Demolish, gut, let go, reduce employment density, well-trained staff resources, competence team, logistics department... every dictatorship first changes the language, then the architecture. The second just takes longer than the first." The narrator suggests that in terms of urban planning and re-construction projects, Berlin has entered another kind of dictatorship. Its language now is that of creative economy. But as Colomb explained, this is not a new tactic:

The expression 'Das Neue Berlin' and its use in the public and media spheres to express a turning point in the city's history, is not a by-product of 1990s city marketing. Ladd (1997) and Till (2005) stress how each successive political regime since the nineteenth century envisioned a 'new' Berlin different from that of its

⁶⁹¹ Robert Hobbs, "Marking Time: Frank Thiel's Photographs," 15, 25.

predecessors and tried to imprint its vision of a 'new Berlin' in urban space, both materially and symbolically.⁶⁹²

The notion that the New Berlin may not actually be all that "new" is also reflected in Ward's study on *Post-Wall Berlin* (2011), in which she traces the contemporary gentrification and building projects all the way back to Albert Speer and the Weimar Berlin, claiming that "almost instinctively, the markers of modernity that were left unfinished in its broken planning history are being called upon again. The city is still answering the planning questions set forth in the Weimar and Nazi eras."⁶⁹³ All these links between the re-construction of the New Berlin and its previous building surges and Babylonian layers constitute various attempts to trigger a historical consciousness, which Graf and Gressmann accomplish through the use of voice-over narration and their choice of celluloid film, calling into question the constructedness of both the representational medium and the re-construction of the city.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) architectural bodies of stone and sinking ships

Paradoxically, this is where nostalgia comes into play. The main male narrator describes the old buildings that await demolition as sinking ships, crumbling monsters, and at the same time as beautiful – a sentiment that awakes a "sense of mourning." "But before we mourn," the narrator explains, "we feel something else. The ruin awaiting demolition is more beautiful than the past, and certainly much better

⁶⁹² Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 177.

⁶⁹³ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 212.

than what will take its place. These buildings are like sinking ships. The crew have fled to safety, leaving these rusting tankers, these crumbling monsters to await their doom.” The notion of “beautiful ruins” again echoes Peter Schneider’s nostalgia for the Babylonian voids he expressed in *In Berlin*. The feeling of “something else” that comes before the mourning process can take place, and that reveals a longing for something fleeting and ephemeral that is more beautiful than the past and better than the future, is, in fact, nostalgia. However, it is not a *restorative* nostalgia fixated on the (return of the) past, neither is it *Ostalgie* nor *Westalgie*, nor is it devoid of critical reflection or historical consciousness. Rather, it is more akin to “structural nostalgia”⁶⁹⁴ that allows for making a claim in the present, and echoes Svetlana Boym’s notion of “creative nostalgia”⁶⁹⁵ – a reflective acknowledgement of the past that allows one to focus more critically and creatively on the future. Unlike *Berlin Babylon*, where the city appears to be caught between the melancholy of its pasts and the mania of restless re-construction, *Der Weg* does acknowledge the need for mourning, for historical consciousness, and for nostalgia that was completely absent in Siegert’s film and in the “anti-nostalgic” Berlin of the 1990s. Moreover, as Christine Sprengler noted, there is a strong connection between nostalgia and historical consciousness, and there is significance in the myths we construct in our efforts to make history meaningful.⁶⁹⁶ Thus the filmmakers’ effort to bring attention to the complexity of feelings and longings association with the various demolition and re-construction practices of the New Berlin makes us conscious of the myths constructed there by the various story-tellers, such as the Berlin Senate, or the filmmakers, authors, and entrepreneurs who contribute to the construction of its post-Wall identity and culture.

In an interview on the film’s website, Graf explained, “Es geht darum, ein Gefühl zu vermitteln, dass das, was da weg soll, für einen letzten Moment seine ganze Würde noch einmal zeigen kann, wie

⁶⁹⁴ Michael Herzfeld’s concept (1997), quoted in Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 154.

⁶⁹⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 351.

⁶⁹⁶ Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 3.

ein Delinquent, bevor das Todesurteil vollstreckt wird. Eigentlich geht es um Wehmut" (The idea was to convey a feeling that what is planned for demolition can show all its dignity for one last time, like a criminal before the death sentence is carried out. Actually it is about melancholy and nostalgia).⁶⁹⁷ Graf uses the German word *Wehmut* to connote the nostalgic sentiment, which can be translated as melancholy, wistfulness, poignancy, and nostalgia. *Wehmut* in German is made up of two words *weh* (pain, ache) and *mut* (courage). Thus, it can be interpreted as the courage to reveal a cultural longing and pain in relation to the past, childhood, ruins, re-construction, and more recently gentrification and branding. The nostalgia evoked by the disappearance of buildings and voids is thus a necessary step in the mourning process, as well as in the assertion of subjectivity, identity, and self-determination. As Boym explained, "reflection on nostalgia allows us to re-examine mediation and the medium itself, including technology. [...] Nostalgia is about the virtual reality of human consciousness that cannot be captured even by the most advanced technological gadgets. Longing is connected to the human predicament in the modern world, yet there seems to be little progress in the ways of understanding it."⁶⁹⁸ With the documentary films produced after 2009, we begin to see the collective efforts to understand the longing and nostalgia in the New Berlin.

In the closing scene of the film, the impermanence of the buildings and structures is directly linked to the impermanence of the film material. In his criticism of how architecture has increasingly become "emotional" and "representative" since reunification, the male voice-over narrator concludes that perhaps it is "just a smoke screen behind which real German history is being disposed of." This echoes Siegert's understanding that the rapid re-construction and the fast-tracked transitioning from the Babylonian to the New Berlin, in what he referred to as the "building frenzy," generated a sense of mourning and a need to re-examine historical consciousness. Graf and Gressmann's film takes this

⁶⁹⁷ See film website, <http://deutschland09-der-film.de/dominik-graf-der-weg-den-wir-nicht-zusammen-gehen> (accessed February 2014), my translation.

⁶⁹⁸ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia*, 351.

notion even further by acknowledging the need to examine the role of nostalgia as well. The narrator's final remarks demonstrate the criticism of this practice of disposal of history, and simultaneously reveal the nostalgic sentiments about the film material that can capture the disappearing structures. He narrates, "All that remains are backdrops and city castles. Everything sinks: the buildings, the sun, the German Reichs, those of the Nazis and the Stalinists. Even these colours will sink. The wonderful colours of this film material. No film material in the world can make this wall look the same. Only this one. We know all about walls. Everything disappears. So what?" The link between the disappearing historical traces and the ephemeral properties of the film material highlights the impermanence of both, as well as that of ideological structures that used to contain and represent them. This is a poignant example of mobilizing nostalgia as a critical reflection tool to activate historical consciousness in order to avoid slipping further into another ideological or aesthetic "dictatorship" in the future.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) dismantling of the Palace of the Republic

The disposal of German history in Berlin is visualized and symbolized through images of the half-dismantled Palace of the Republic, the demolition of which began in 2006. The Palace's long demolition, documented in various films, including *In Berlin*, its gradual replacement by a new void and later by a new construction site of the *Humboldt Forum*, highlights the Babylonian, cyclical nature of construction, demolition, and re-construction in Berlin. Moreover, as Colomb explained, "the Senate funded the

installation of an observation platform, baptised, 'Palast Schaustelle,' which invited visitors to contemplate the technical performance involved in the complex demolition process. A webcam broadcast the spectacle of the demolition on the internet. This was a curious inversion of 'construction site tourism', involving this time the staging of demolition."⁶⁹⁹ Just a few months after the last remnants of the Palace of the Republic were removed a temporary exhibition hall was erected at *Schloßplatz* during the celebrations of the fall of the Wall, between October and November 2009, with a projected photo image of the former palace by Bettina Pousttchi, entitled *Echo*, covering its facade. The temporary hall housed an exhibition entitled, "Scorpio's Garden" curated by Kirstine Roepstorff, a Berlin-based artist from Copenhagen, which presented the works and performances of over 55 international artists for a subjective snapshot of Berlin's current art scene. The title of the exhibition metaphorically interpreted Berlin as a garden, "where images, ideas, and concepts find a favourable medium in which to grow, proliferate, and compete with each other."⁷⁰⁰ The zodiac sign of the Scorpio established the connection to Berlin's official birthday (the first mention of the city in a document dated October 28, 1237) as well as the day on which the Berlin Wall came down (November 9, 1989). By documenting the half-dismantled palace in their film, Graf and Gressmann provide a visual representation of the disappearance of this contested "city castle," awash in murky yellow and grey tones of a setting, or rather "sinking" sun. This yellow colour palette is different from the grey tones of *Berlin Babylon* and the crisp digital colours of *In Berlin*. Siegert's film documented the intact Palace amongst the voids around *Schloßplatz* and the construction of the new Foreign Ministry – another example of the aesthetic of architecture of transparency – and significantly not replaced by the futuristic glass structure nicknamed "die Wolke" (Art Cloud). By contrast, in *In Berlin* and in *Der Weg*, the half-dismantled Palace is about to

⁶⁹⁹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 216.

⁷⁰⁰ For more on "Scorpio's Garden" exhibition in Berlin, see <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/scorpios-garden-and-echo/> (accessed September 2014).

be replaced by another temporary void. Colomb also explained how contested the demolition of the Palace was in the gentrifying New Berlin, noting that,

For many East Germans who felt some sense of identification with the built environment of the former GDR, the determination shown by local and Federal authorities to erase East German buildings and symbols has been a source of anger, including for those who have no nostalgia for the former East German political regime as such. The GDR disappeared, but not the people who grew up in it, 'and for them, the places and the stones, the spaces and the buildings still carry meaning'. The Palast der Republik, in particular, became a symbol for the lost and denigrated cultural and social memories of a generation of East Germans, and its demolition generated a long and bitter conflict.⁷⁰¹

Graf and Gressmann's choice of ending their film – their “documentation of disappearance” – with images of the Palace bridges the fragmented topography of former East- and West-Berlin. In the New Berlin, as the narrator remarks, everything “sinks and disappears.” The Palace – one of the last Babylonian ruins in the New Berlin – is in its last stages of disappearance, after which it will only exist through representations, as its projected photo image on the temporary exhibition hall at *Schloßplatz* attested.



Film stills: *Der Weg* (2009) last images of sunlight reflected on a brick wall

⁷⁰¹ Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin*, 279.

The last images of the film focus on a brick wall, captured in the golden light of a sunset, as the narrator nostalgically notes that “no film material in the world can make this wall look the same. Only this one. We know about walls. Everything disappears.”⁷⁰² As Cynthia Beatt’s 2009 documentary film attests, the Wall in the New Berlin has indeed become an “invisible frame” – a former symbolic and literal structure of division – one that used to contain two opposing ideologies within their respective zones, but has since almost entirely disappeared. Again, rather than mourning the disappearance of the Wall, the narrator draws our attention to the representational medium of celluloid film and its ability to capture colours and light, as well as their atmospheric effects, in a way that digital technology cannot. The voice-over narration is followed by a colourful flash-out, with red, yellow, and white colours brightly filling the screen and leaving the viewer with the impression of a burning film negative. Reproducing the destruction of the film negative through over-exposure to light, the filmmakers situate the texture and identity of film itself as a ruin, as something susceptible to light and other elements, and as something that is extremely fragile against time. Thus, the film constructs the film negative to be seen as appropriating the half-demolished architectural site by staging its own medial and material ruin, disintegration, and disappearance. However, this also reveals the very constructedness of filmic representation, as the film that captures these images, colours, and practices is then recorded, preserved, mediated, and circulated digitally through multiply-reproduced DVDs.

⁷⁰² See “Trauer um die Mauer?” in *Prinz* (No.16, 8-21 November 1990, 26). Quoted in Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories? Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 221: “*Mauer-Nostalgie* clearly surfaced in the course of 1990. If we are to believe the polling data published by the popular magazine *Prinz* in the fall of 1990, 24 and 30 percent of *all* Berliners (in July and October 1990, respectively) admitted to have longed for the return of the Wall at some point since November 1989. In July 1990, 27 percent of West-Berliners and 17 percent of East-Berliners expressed some degree of Wall-nostalgia, with the percentages increasing to 34 percent and 23 percent, respectively, in the October 1990 poll. Also notable was the fact that in both polls, and in both parts of the city, those aged thirty or younger expressed a greater relative longing for the Wall than those over thirty years. Clearly the separate socialization experienced by young people in the divided city had left some deep-seated traces.”

Svetlana Boym coined the term technonostalgia to describe both the recovery of the prehistoric world by modern science on film (she uses the example of *Jurassic Park*), and the process by which film, and especially digital film, is able to recreate a particular historical period.⁷⁰³ She explains that

While nostalgia mourns distances and disjunctures between times and spaces never bridging them, technology offers solutions and builds bridges. [...] Yet fundamentally, both technology and nostalgia are about mediation. [...] Each new medium affects the relationship between distance and intimacy that is at the core of nostalgic sentiment.⁷⁰⁴

In Graf and Gressmann's film, technology is employed to demonstrate the necessity of exploring nostalgic longing in the process of transitioning from the Babylonian to the New Berlin. Both technology and nostalgia, or technonostalgia for the medium of celluloid film, are mobilized as an aesthetic strategy to comment on the social context of architecture, re-construction practices, and history. *Der Weg* captures nostalgia (associated with various disappearances and lack of mourning) by documenting it through antiquated film material. Whereas Boym believes that "technonostalgia does not reflect on itself,"⁷⁰⁵ Graf and Gressmann's film can be interpreted to re-conceptualize and re-appropriate the concept precisely by using technology to reveal the need for nostalgia as a necessary step between mourning and re-construction. Thus, technonostalgia in *Der Weg* is a mechanism for critique and critical reflection. Instead of using digital technology to manipulate images, the filmmakers revert to a more limited cinematic medium to get at the self-reflexivity of both the cinematic apparatus and the images portrayed. Rather than using digital technology and CGI (Computer Generated Images) in post-production to enhance images or to convey a certain emotional association with that image (which Siegert does with time-lapse photography in *Berlin Babylon*, and which Karsten achieves through non-diagetic music in *Mauerpark*), the filmmakers reverse the process of filmic construction in the digital age and produce a record of architectural demolition and re-construction, as well as technological mediation

⁷⁰³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 33.

⁷⁰⁴ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia*, 346.

⁷⁰⁵ Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia*, 33.

that questions the very notion of construction (or constructedness), representation, and nostalgia. In *Der Weg*, technonostalgia is about bridging the distance and the broken connections produced by both manic re-construction and melancholy representations.

In their film, Graf and Gressmann demonstrate that the whole country is filled with reminders of the obsolete, dysfunctional, and failed attempts of constructing ideological, economic, and functional narratives through architectural practices. Simultaneously, the film reminds us of collective resistance to mindless, quick, and commercial re-construction, as witnessed by the long public debates around the Palace of the Republic, the Holocaust Memorial, and even the new international airport.⁷⁰⁶ As the facades are being polished, re-constructed, white-washed and stripped of their former identity, there is an underlying sense of nostalgia and loss of orientation. This nostalgia is very distinct from either *Ostalgie* or *Westalgie*. It is a form of consciousness (Davis) that acknowledges the need for mourning and for critical reflection at a time of accelerated rhythms and transformations. This nostalgia emerged from the transition from the Babylonian voids to the glass architecture of the rebranded and gentrified New Berlin. By focusing the nostalgic sentiments on disappearing buildings and antiquated film material, the filmmakers can draw attention to the past without compromising their critical stance about re-construction practices and building ideologies of the New Berlin's present and future. Engaging with the *reflective*, rather than the *restorative* attributes of nostalgia, the film calls into question the process of re-constructing the New Berlin, as well as the construction of a reunified German identity. When asked about the significance of the film's title, Graf explained,

In den 70ern, 80ern hatte ich eher das Gefühl, ich gehöre in dieses Land. Und seit den 90ern habe ich das Gefühl, es wendet sich irgendwo hin, was nichts mehr mit dem zu tun hat, was ich mir von einem Heimatland vorgestellt habe. Es geht sicherlich um einen Moment, wo man mit seiner eigenen Identität – in meiner Generation jedenfalls, als Hinterher-68er – im deutlichen Widerspruch steht zu dem Land, in

⁷⁰⁶ For more, see "Hauptstadtflughafen BER: Pannen-Airport wird 440 Millionen Euro teurer" in *Spiegel Online*, 01.02.2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/hauptstadtflughafen-ber-kosten-steigen-um-440-millionen-euro-a-950515.html>, or <http://www.bz-berlin.de/service/flughafen-berlin-brandenburg/geheimplan-schoenefeld-soll-ewig-fliegen-article1802086.html> (accessed July 2014).

dem man lebt. Und nicht nur politisch, sondern auch künstlerisch: Wie die Filmbranche sich entwickelt hat, da finden sich ja die selben Veränderungs-Strukturen. Das Fernsehprogramm wird ja auch irgendwann mal so gesäubert und spiegelglatt sein wie der Berliner Hauptbahnhof. [...] Es findet kein Diskurs mehr darüber statt, welche Ästhetik eigentlich erhaltenswert, weiter entwickelbar ist und welche nicht. Man hat das Gefühl, es ist fast eine Taktik der Industrie, die einzelnen Künstler voneinander zu diversifizieren und zu jedem quasi zu sagen: „Such dir deinen eigenen Bereich. Mach dein eigenes Ding!“ Das treibt die Leute im Film in die Nicht-Kommunikation, Nicht-Auseinandersetzung, letztlich auseinander.⁷⁰⁷

In his response, Graf is mourning a sense of loss of an artistic community and a sense of belonging in a country that has been transformed by reunification, globalization, creative economy, and aesthetic practices (both in architecture and film). This diverging of the paths due to major cultural transformations echoes Danielle de Picciotto's second book *We Are Gypsies Now* (2013),⁷⁰⁸ a graphic novel that narrates her decision to dissolve her Berlin house and live "on the road" with her husband Alexander Hacke because they no longer feel a sense of belonging in the rebranded and gentrified New Berlin. All these sentiments of loss and longing, and an increasing lack of a sense of belonging, are largely unaccounted for in the rapid gentrification and "normalization" process in post-Wall Germany and Berlin. Nostalgia for Babylon, which becomes increasingly apparent in all forms of cultural production in post-2009 Berlin, is precisely a response to the unprocessed feelings of loss and a lack of belonging, projected onto the voids and pre-gentrified facades and buildings that generated the vibrant sub-cultures of the 1990s.

⁷⁰⁷ See film website, <http://deutschland09-der-film.piffl-medien.de/dominik-graf-der-weg-den-wir-nicht-zusammen-gehen> (accessed August 2014). "In the 70s and 80s, I felt like I belonged in this country. Since the 90s, I have the feeling it is turning into something that has nothing to do with what I have imagined as a homeland. I'm sure it's about the moment when one's own identity – at least for my generation of post-1968 – is in obvious contradiction with the country one lives in. And not only politically, but artistically as well. The way the film industry has evolved – you will find the same transformation structures there. The TV program will at some point be just as cleaned up and straight as Berlin's Central Station. [...] There is no longer a discourse about which aesthetic is actually worth preserving and developing further, and which is not. It seems to be almost a tactic of the industry to diversify the various artists from each other, as if telling them, "Find your niche. Do your own thing!" That forces the filmmakers into non-communication, non-confrontation, and essentially apart" (my translation).

⁷⁰⁸ For more see, <http://www.danielledepicciotto.com/literature> (accessed August 2014).

Chapter 9 – Mauerpark

There is a quotation – I believe it actually refers to the Spanish Civil War – to the effect that anyone who stares hope in the face can never subsequently forget it.

That person will search the entire world for more traces until they die.

This applied exactly to the feeling I had back then.

It changes how you think, it changes how you see the world.

This is something it shares with great art. If you experience truly great art, your life is transformed forever. Those times had a similar effect.

There was no going back to the everyday life.

It was like a LSD trip that flips your consciousness upside down. (Brad Hwand)⁷⁰⁹

In Berlin wohne ich am Mauerpark, einem Streifen Erde, auf dem früher die Berliner Mauer stand. Dort ist jetzt ein Flohmarkt.

Niemand weiß inzwischen mehr, wo die Mauer genau stand,

links vom Flohmarkt oder rechts vom Flohmarkt.

Der Mauerpark wird zwar in jedem Reiseführer der Hauptstadt erwähnt, bietet aber wenig Sehenswertes.

Er ist kein Park, und es gibt da auch keine Mauer,

es ist quasi eine unsichtbare Sehenswürdigkeit, typisch für Berlin. (Wladimir Kaminer)⁷¹⁰

Mauerpark (dir. Dennis Karsten, 2011) is a documentary film shot in Berlin's most notorious park in Prenzlauer Berg in the summer of 2009. It portrays diverse protagonists – artists, musicians, activists, performers, and visitors – who frequent the park and participate in its array of activities, such as mass-karaoke, flea-market, outdoor basketball and other recreational sports, performances, arts, music, etc. Through their narratives, the park is presented as the last public space in Prenzlauer Berg that has not yet been completely gentrified and allows for sub- and counter-cultural, unregulated creativity and leisure. Rather than focusing on spaces, facades, and disappearing traces as in *Berlin Babylon* and *Der Weg*, Karsten documents the narratives of the inhabitants of the now-gentrified Prenzlauer Berg who frequent the park on a regular basis. However, unlike the creative-class professionals and protagonists

⁷⁰⁹ Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland*, 84.

⁷¹⁰ Wladimir Kaminer, *Liebegrüße aus Deutschland*, 241: "In Berlin, I live near Mauerpark – a stretch of land where the Berlin Wall used to stand. Now there is a flea market. No one knows anymore where exactly the Wall used to stand, left of the flea market or right of the flea market. Even though Mauerpark is mentioned in every city guide for the capital, it offers very little to see. It is not a park, and there is no Wall; it is an invisible sight, typical for Berlin" (my translation).

of *In Berlin, Mauerpark* tells the stories of un- or underemployed and retired people, community workers and artists, former punks, international musicians and painters, jugglers, karaoke organizers, local youths, as well as the legendary Techno DJs Tanith and Motte, and the Russian-born author Vladimir Kaminer. The film is a snap-shot of the park in the course of one summer with diverse sounds, vignettes, performances, and narratives. The structure of the film is constructed from a collection of interviews and images of the park, and the various leisurely activities that take place there on the weekends. The film's three-act structure is divided thematically: the first act focuses largely on the history of the park; the second act presents the various activities that sprung up there and attract a variety of artists and musicians; and the third act addresses the discontents, criticisms, and longings of the protagonists in light of the future gentrification of the park. This chapter's analysis of *Mauerpark's* themes of history, gentrification, and longing focuses on the reactions of Berlin inhabitants to the spatial transformations in the New Berlin and Prenzlauer Berg that I outlined in the previous chapters. While many of the protagonists are critical of the looming gentrification of the park, through their narratives we also get a sense of the various longings associated with the complex re-construction and re-branding of the New Berlin. Karsten's film not only touches on all the themes discussed in this study, including spatial transformations, gentrification, and nostalgia for its Babylonian voids, but offers another glimpse into the elaborate web of Berlin's post-reunification identity mosaic. The film is one of the most illustrative documents to date of the subjective views about the urban re-development, gentrification, and its affects on Berlin's inhabitants that reveals a great deal about the ways in which the New Berlin has been transformed and re-branded. By drawing on theoretical work on urban cultural scenes by Will Straw and Alan Blum, this chapter looks at the ways in which the utopian and nostalgic impulses have been intertwined in the New Berlin and projected onto places such as Mauerpark.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) opening scene

The opening scene presents a view of the park from above the adjacent stadium. We can make out the *Fernsehturm* (TV tower) in the background, but it is blurry – only the center of the image, the park, is in focus. The first shot shows us the front entrance of the park along Bernauer Straße, the second shows the middle stretch of the park, and the third shot shows the back end of the park along Kopenhagener Straße. Each shot is focused only on the center of the frame. Right away, we get visually drawn into the microcosm of the park – the urban landscape of the New Berlin around it is not the focus of the narrative, but it does symbolically linger in the background and even encroach on the park. Once the setting is established, the camera begins to zoom-in on the people who gradually fill the park and gather around the amphitheatre where the mass-karaoke takes place. Here, Karsten presents us with the narratives of Berliners who frequent the park and live in the neighbourhood. The first protagonist, Frank, a retired and formerly unemployed Berliner, is introduced sun-bathing in the park. He tells us about the viewing platform that used to stand on the West side of the Wall for people to climb and look over into the East. Right away, we get a historical dimension of this space; as any other place in Berlin, this park has historical significance beyond its multiple present functions. Its history is tied to the Cold War, division, reunification, and finally to gentrification. The second protagonist, Michael, who used to be a scaffolding construction worker, continues the historical narrative of the park by recalling the border zone and his dismantling of the viewing platforms and throwing the debris into the no-man's-

land because he felt angry at being watched by the people on the West side of the Wall. The third protagonist, Horst, a community worker who clears the garbage in the park, and who used to live in Bernauer Strasse, recalls a person jumping from the roof of his building into the West after the Wall was built, accidentally missing the safety-net below. The narrative continues to alternate between the three speakers, connecting their stories into a narrative of the park's history, and locating their trajectories on either side of the Wall.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) the stadium behind the park and Wladimir Kaminer

Then Karsten introduces the comedic perspective of Wladimir Kaminer, who came to Berlin from Moscow right after the Wall fell, settled in Prenzlauer Berg's Schönhauser Allee, and has been writing about the city ever since. He sarcastically comments on Berlin's relationship (or lack thereof) to history:

This town makes nothing of its own history. The Vietnamese, for example, rebuilt and enlarged their war tunnels. Lots of Americans are interested in the details of the Vietnam War. They fly to Vietnam as tourists and want to see the tunnels, which the soldiers from North Vietnam had dug. But the American tourists don't fit into the tunnels because they were dug for Vietnamese soldiers. So the Vietnamese enlarged and extended them, added snack bars and amusements that the Americans are familiar with, so they wouldn't feel strange underground. And it works! That's the right way to handle the history of one's country! What do the Germans do? They dismantle everything. Throw the stones away, and pretend nothing happened.⁷¹¹

Kaminer's sarcastic comparison lightens the tone of the film and mirrors the humorous tone of his Berlin books, where he often ironizes the process of urban transformation in Berlin since reunification. In his

⁷¹¹ DVD subtitles.

book, *Ich bin kein Berliner: Ein Reiseführer für faule Touristen* (*I'm Not a Berliner: A City Guide for Lazy Tourists*, 2007), Kaminer describes Mauerpark as “the largest grill-site” of Berlin, with unconventional family units, multicultural and diverse characters, and many jugglers.⁷¹² Karsten juxtaposes Kaminer’s anecdote of “dismantling” history with the heavy history of division and reunification played out in this part of Berlin. Formerly divided between the Soviet and the French zones, the “Wall-park” was part of the no-man’s-land and the death strip that ran between Prenzlauer Berg and Wedding, established atop the stretch of land formerly designed for the freight trains of *Nordbahnhof*, which ceased to be operational in 1985.⁷¹³ The only remaining trace of division is the brick back-wall that still runs along the stadium and is covered in graffiti and street art. Shortly after reunification, the empty space of the former no-man’s-land began to be used by local inhabitants as a public park (similar to the squatters at Potsdamer Platz), and in 1992 the Senate approved the environmental petition to use the space as a park, commissioning the Hamburg landscape architect Gustav Lange with the design. The park was officially opened on November 9, 1994, commemorating the fifth anniversary of the fall of the Wall. After Berlin’s 2000 Olympic bid, the *Max-Schmeling-Hall* sports-centre was built just north of the stadium. Since 2004, the largely abandoned stretch of the park with the former train tracks was taken over by the interim-use flea-market and food stands. By opening the narrative of the park on a historical note, Karsten demonstrates that Mauerpark is not just any park, but has important ties to the history of

⁷¹² See Kaminer’s description of the park in his *Ich bin kein Berliner: Ein Reiseführer für faule Touristen* (München: Goldmann, 2007), 121-122: “Der größte Berliner Grillplatz befindet sich nämlich nicht im Westen, sondern direct vor meinem Fenster and der Grenze zwischen Wedding und Prenzlauer Berg. Eigentlich leben wir hier in einer paradisischen Landschaft, dort, wo früher die Mauer verlief. Heute ist an Stelle des ehemaligen Todesstreifens eine Parkanlage mit mehreren Kinderspielflächen entstanden. Es gibt also viel Grün vor unserem Haus. Wenn das Wetter gut ist, öffne ich alle Fenster, dann riecht es in der ganzen Wohnung – aber nicht nach Blumen, sondern nach Grillwurst.[...] Ungefähr in der Mitte unseres Grillplatzes verläuft eine unsichtbare Mauer, die West- und Ostgriller voneinander trennt. Die Bewohner aus dem Wedding grillen auf der westlichen Seite des Platzes. Es sind in der Regel große türkische Familien, bestehend aus zwei Männern, fünf Frauen und zehn Kindern. Das Grillen scheint bei den Westgrillern eine heilige Zeremonie zu sein, es gleicht einem Opferfest. [...] Auf der östlichen Seite grillen alte Studenten. Sie versammeln sich auch gerne in großen familienähnlichen Gruppen – fünf Männer, drei Hunde, zwei Frauen, ein Kind. Ihre Grillausstattung ist asketisch: ein paar Kisten Bier, eine Gitarre und ein Spielzeuggrill für Magersüchtige zum Preis von vier neunundneunzig. Sie sind ganz sicher keine Gourmets, dafür können ihre Frauen alle jonglieren.”

⁷¹³ For more information, see <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauerpark> (accessed August 2014).

division as well as the Babylonian history of creative sub-cultures. Simultaneously, Karsten introduces other protagonists who do not have memories or histories of the Wall. For example, Eldar, an Israeli painter who is working on a landscape painting of Mauerpark “for the second year in a row;” young basketball players Conny, Ali, and Omar, who come almost daily to the park and find it safe because “no one bothers you;” as well as two young female basketball players Eyi and Maike who prefer to be excluded from the basketball court when “the boys” play to avoid being condescended to because they play “like girls.” Karsten juxtaposes the narratives of the different generations that frequent the park – the young people who come to play sports and the older people who remember this park before the Wall fell. Through his editing, Karsten weaves their various narratives into a portrait of this urban space that has undergone significant transformations, presenting us with a diverse visual and narrative mosaic.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) Graffiti-covered back-wall and Dr. Motte

Following the history of urban division, the film’s narrative turns to the Babylonian years of reunification, as Karsten introduces several members of Berlin’s Techno scene, including DJ Tanith, who mentions the “Twenty Years of Techno” celebration at *Tresor*, and reminds us that “actually, it’s 21 years already. Since 1988, there was Acid House; I was a DJ in the *UFO Club*, and then at *Tresor* in 1991. Since the Wall came down, Berlin became a Techno city. And I was there from the beginning.”⁷¹⁴ In another documentary film, entitled *We Call It Techno*, (dir. Maren Sestro and Holger Wick, 2008), Tanith

⁷¹⁴ DVD subtitles.

traced the beginning of Berlin's Techno culture to 1990 with the "Tekknoizid" raves that preceded the first "Mayday" which took place in Berlin in 1991.⁷¹⁵ Another Techno legend, the "father of the Love Parade"⁷¹⁶ and native West-Berliner Dr. Motte (formerly known as DJ Motte), who is now known for "supporting initiatives to preserve cultural spaces in Berlin,"⁷¹⁷ refers to the free spaces of the former East Berlin where the Techno scene was born: "We were lucky that we got a second city after the Wall fell. That's why there were so many free spaces, and that's how the Techno scene developed. It was a parallel development, the free spaces, and the newly-emerging music." This exploratory time in Berlin's history, which Danielle de Picciotto, the co-founder of the Love Parade and Motte's girlfriend at the time, also referenced in her memoir as a time when Berlin's sub-cultures were forged in its voids and abandoned industrial sites,⁷¹⁸ has only recently begun to be explored in Berlin films and literature. Within the Berlin documentary canon, the exploration of Berlin's Babylonian sub-cultures can be traced to 2009 – the year that sparked collective reflexivity and examination of reunified identities. As shown in the previous chapters, spatial transformations play a particularly important role in the narratives and histories of Berlin's Babylonian years, just as they do in Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, both of which used to be in the former East and have now been completely gentrified.

The Techno scene emerged out of the liminal spaces of the Babylonian Berlin just before the reconstruction of Mitte and other central districts had begun. As Hito Steyerl demonstrated with the squatters at Potsdamer Platz, and as de Picciotto showed in her memoir, the displacement of the sub-cultural entrepreneurs and artists from Mitte and eventually other central neighbourhoods was a gradual process that coincided with the re-construction, branding, and gentrification of the New

⁷¹⁵ *We Call It Techno* (dir. Maren Sextro and Holger Wick, 2008), <http://documentarystorm.com/we-call-it-techno/> (accessed August 2014).

⁷¹⁶ See Dr. Motte's website, <http://www.drmotte.de/xclrmfst/#!2013/01/21/biography/> (accessed August 2014).

⁷¹⁷ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 285.

⁷¹⁸ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 75.

Berlin.⁷¹⁹ Diedrich Diederichsen, in his 1999 book, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte: Der Sound und die Stadt* (*The Long Way to Mitte: The Sound and the City*) referred to Berlin's Mitte as the center of the new capital of a new Germany, and at the same time also as the "black hole of subcultures."⁷²⁰ He stated that everything that was created in the post-Wall decade in terms of alternative lifestyles, art, music, fashion, counter-culture and political activism, was concentrated around the sub-cultural trend spots and "electronic utopias" of Berlin.⁷²¹ He described Mitte and Potsdamer Platz of the 1990s as theme-park "Metropolis,"⁷²² while the hopes that had been projected onto the new music that accompanied the urban transformations through the Love Parade and the newly emerging club culture ("the first German night-life scene that was not only connected to the international developments in music, but influenced them"⁷²³) were in many ways attempts at forging a common identity.⁷²⁴ Diederichsen takes Motte's link between Techno culture and urban space to another level by connecting it to social and cultural identity construction. This music culture of the Techno scene, according to Diederichsen, aspired to "reconceptualise the world, without relying on any recognizable sound-references as in the competing hip-hop culture,"⁷²⁵ as well as to break with all established cultures and create radical new beginnings. Diederichsen reminds us that the illusion of this type of new beginning is not only possible in art, but also necessary for the creative imagination, while in politics, it remains rather a far stretch,⁷²⁶ echoing Brad Prager's assertion that utopian impulses often remain in the aesthetic realm. He defines pop-music as a "cultural space, in which inner states and feelings are translated more directly into recognizable and

⁷¹⁹ This process culminated with the closure and eventual relocations of clubs such as *Tresor* in Mitte, *Kiki Blofeld* in Kreuzberg, and the closure of *Club der Republik* in Prenzlauer Berg.

⁷²⁰ Wikipedia defines a black hole as "a region of spacetime from which gravity prevents anything, including light, from escaping." For more, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_hole (accessed August 2014).

⁷²¹ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte: Der Sound und die Stadt* (Köln: KiWi, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999), 3.

⁷²² Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 31.

⁷²³ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 48.

⁷²⁴ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 32.

⁷²⁵ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 33.

⁷²⁶ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 33.

specifically coded signs,” and that “this process takes place in a public, urban setting.”⁷²⁷ His analysis of Berlin’s Babylonian era of Techno and new beginnings parallels other descriptions of this time, for example Slavko Stefanoski’s descriptions of the Love Parade,

Die Love Parade war ein Traum. Die Menschen saßen wie Blumen auf den Straßen. Es war eine Kultur, ein Traum von einer besseren Welt, durch Internet, durch Frieden, auch Sex. Das klingt vielleicht idiotisch, aber es war eine Bewegung, eine Weltanschauung. Wir haben im Zentrum der Welt gelebt.⁷²⁸

His portrayal of the Love Parade – the Techno scene’s most celebrated annual festival – as a dream, a movement, and a world view reveals just how influential and powerful the Babylonian parallel developments of free spaces and new cultural creativity was at the time. The utopian impulses of the early 1990s evident in Berlin music, art, literature, and culture have largely subsided in the New Berlin; however the need to narrate and document this utopian epoch has only increased, as the films, literature, and art works presented in this study attest.

Despite its lack of order and regulations, De Picciotto described the Babylonian time of the early 1990s as peaceful and marked by a strong sense of community and hopefulness:

Not being confined by the usual regulations the residents took over the responsibility of deciding how to go about things and although property was taken over, it was property that had no official owners. [...] The epoch of bedlam after the fall of the Wall was one of the last times in which I experienced true comradeship among a large mass of people, with nobody pushing or enviously watching others, curiosity and tolerance reigning strong, with a communal sense of having achieved the impossible and helping each other to acclimatize.⁷²⁹

She also described this time as a “Babylonian state of life” that “seemed to foster a certain state of mind,” and “in contrast to what advertising agencies preach, [Berlin was] about breaking down boundaries, building new bridges, discovering something untouched, unnamed, unpredictable,” and

⁷²⁷ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Der lange Weg nach Mitte*, 54.

⁷²⁸ Slavko Stefanoski, quoted by Ulrich Gutmair, *Die Ersten Tage von Berlin: Der Sound der Wende* (Stuttgart: Tropen, 2013), 207: “The Love Parade was a dream. The people sat like flowers in the streets. It was a culture, a dream of a better world, through internet, through peace, even sex. Maybe it sounds silly, but it was a movement, a world view. We lived at the center of the world” (my translation).

⁷²⁹ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 77.

attracting people who “were interested in nonconformity.”⁷³⁰ This is one of the main distinctions between the inhabitants of Berlin Babylon and those of the New Berlin, where very little is left that can be described as nonconforming. Her claim echoes Robert Park’s notion that “the city is a state of mind. [...] The city is not merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it.”⁷³¹ Berlin’s Babylonian spaces had a powerful and lasting effect precisely because they also represented conceptual voids that could be filled with creative ideas of individuals and artistic groups whose common interest at the time was centered on nonconformity. This emotional composition of empty urban spaces is at the heart of nostalgia for Babylon – it is not so much the disappearance and transformation of the physical spaces themselves that provokes longing, but rather the “states of mind,” the utopian possibilities, and visions of future-determination that were projected onto these spaces and voids, which now generate nostalgia.

At the same time as the Babylonian creativity and camaraderie developed in the 1990s, as de Picciotto described, Berlin was also being transformed by investors who “decided that it was time for the city to get rid of its uncomfortable past.”⁷³² This echoes Kaminer’s sarcastic remarks about the disposal and dismantling of historical traces. In the film Kaminer adds, “What I found here was a kind of anarchy, where the state was stepping back, and people were either doing nothing or building a new, alternative blueprint for their life. Huge empty spaces developed out of the collapse of the system and the fall of the Wall. That’s Mauerpark.” Kaminer’s portrayal of the Babylonian Berlin echoes Dimitri Hegemann’s description in *Sub-Berlin* (2009) of the early 1990s and the anarchic creativity sparked in the voids and abandoned spaces of the former East Berlin. Here Kaminer equates Mauerpark with the freedom culture of Berlin’s Babylonian voids. Moreover, creating alternative blueprints for life is a highly

⁷³⁰ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 261.

⁷³¹ Robert Park, *The City*, 1996. Quoted in Ausra Burns, “Emotion and Urban Experience: Implications for Design,” *Design Issues* (Vol. 16, No. 3, Autumn 2000, 67-79), 72.

⁷³² Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 159.

creative enterprise and usually happens after revolutions, social or individual upheavals, and emotional transformations. Thus the artistic and entrepreneurial creativity spurred by the fall of the Wall is perhaps one of the most powerful transformative forces in the cultural history of contemporary Berlin, generating new directions in music (Techno), film (*Berliner Schule*), art, fashion, architecture, entertainment, etc. Following Kaminer's description of Mauerpark at that time, another protagonist, Sylvio, explains the notoriety of the park during its Babylonian years:

In the late 1990s Mauerpark was a notorious place, always in the newspapers, and the police was always here, to bring order. *Walpurgis Night* riots were also notorious, which now quieted down. Before, it was survival of the fittest. No one really wanted to come here anymore. Especially not the people who newly moved here, and there were conflicts of interests. Now it has all blended in.

The gradual tapering off of the anarchic energy and violence of the Babylonian years can also be seen in the second act of the film, when Kasten introduces Olli, a former punk who now teaches juggling workshops for kids and adults. Through the narratives in the first act of the film, the protagonists present the different transformations of the park and by extension also of Berlin since the fall of the Wall. These transformations were not merely topographical, but social and cultural as well. The first act concludes with visual vignettes of people dancing to hand-drum beats (much like at the tam-tams in Montreal); the basketball players leave the court as the dusk sets in, and we see evening and night shots of the park, fire jugglers, and musicians. This first visual interlude is followed by the images of a sunrise, shot in time-lapse photography.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) punks and jugglers

The second act moves thematically from the history of the park to focusing on the diverse artists, performers, and musicians, their activities in and around the park, as well as the space and culture of the park as a scene. Narratively and chronologically, the second act moves the stories of the protagonists from Berlin's past to its present. We see the flea-market vendors arrive and set up their stands. Several street artists are covering rocks with golden foil. We see jugglers, a punk-couple kissing, and a bagpiper, before being introduced to Olli, the former punk who tells us: "I'm usually the first one here! I came to Berlin in 1980. I'm an original punk. I came for squatting and the music. Now I hold workshops for kids and youth, teach them juggling and a summer school program." Olli self-mythologizes his identity as the "original punk," taking us back to a time even before the Techno culture emerged, to the days of Punk culture and squats, all of which has now been incorporated into and sub-contained by the creative economy and branding mythology of the New Berlin and the gentrified Prenzlauer Berg.⁷³³ Karsten then introduces us to Leona, Tommy, and Natty, the English-speaking fuck-for-forests activists, who fundraise to preserve the environment by inviting people to send "naked photos or sex photos, or videos" for their website, and are "looking for sexy people in the park to talk to

⁷³³ The New Yorker Ralph Martin, who moved to the "creative capital of hipness" (p.13) of the New Berlin for love and wrote his book *Ein Amerikaner in Berlin: Wie ein New Yorker lernte, die Deutschen zu lieben*, (Köln: Dumont, 2009), described his first impressions of Prenzlauer Berg punks as follows: "Die erste Strassenszene, die mir auffiel, war eine Horde Punks mit Unmengen Piercings, die an der Ecke Eberswalder Strasse und Schönhauser Allee an einer roten Ampel standen und geduldig warteten, bis es grün wurde. Auch das war neu für mich: In New York gab es längst keine Horden von Punks mehr, und niemand, wirklich niemand – und am allerwenigsten einer von den paar übrig gebliebenen Punks – blieb an einer roten Ampel stehen (p.14).

and to flirt with.” Despite its gentrified appearance, the New Berlin, is still, somewhere at its heart, the “Hauptstadt des Hardcore” (the capital of hard-core), as Nils Minkmar put it in Claudius Seidl’s 2003 anthology.⁷³⁴ Simultaneously, we are shown Dr. Motte’s turn-table-sign that reads “Mauerpark is our park,” while he plays electronic music in the park and people dance in the middle of the day. Punk-jugglers, anarchic environmentalists, and Techno activists are all part of Mauerpark’s bohemian imaginary and its scene.

As part of an interdisciplinary research project entitled “The Culture of Cities” that focused on Toronto, Montreal, Berlin, and Dublin, Alan Blum and Will Straw developed new ways of theorizing urban (sub)cultures in terms of scenes. In his 2004 article on “Cultural Scenes,” Will Straw interpreted the notion of scenes “to account for the loose boundaries which surround urban cultural activity and the complex relationships of this activity to broader patterns of social life within cities.”⁷³⁵ He examines cultural activities such as music, which he believes “do not simply inhabit scenes, but work upon the social and institutional foundations of cities so as to produce distinctive complexes of knowledge and behaviour.” He noted that,

Scene designates particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them. Scenes may be distinguished according to their location, the genre of cultural production which gives them coherence or the loosely defined social activity around which they take shape. *Scene* invites us to map the territory of the city in new ways.⁷³⁶

Berlin’s Mauerpark can be described as a locational scene, frequented by different members of its various cultural, artistic, and musical scenes, as well as by newcomers and tourists. Furthermore, Straw found that “the most commonly identified scenes are those associated with music, for a variety of reasons. The production and consumption of music lend themselves more easily to a mobile urban

⁷³⁴ Nils Minkmar, “Nacktheit und Nachbarschaft,” in Claudius Seidl (hrsg.), *Hier spricht Berlin*, 27.

⁷³⁵ Will Straw, “Cultural Scenes,” in *Loisir et société / Society and Leisure* (Volume 27, numéro 2, automne 2004, 411-422), 422.

⁷³⁶ Will Straw, “Cultural Scenes,” 412

sociability than does involvement in other cultural forms.”⁷³⁷ Straw’s analysis of music scenes lends itself not only to understanding the role of (Techno) music in post-Wall Berlin, but also to the significance of cultural trend-spots such as Mauerpark – a meeting place for artists and musicians from the Punk, Techno, and contemporary music scenes (which, just like the New Berlin itself, are very internationalized). Much like Montreal’s disco culture of the 1970s, that according to Straw “was a *scene* in part because of the intense public theatricality that came to surround it,” and because it “produced new forms of cultural brokering, small-scale entrepreneurship and collaboration within social and professional networks that took shape on the fringes of the mainstream music industry,”⁷³⁸ so too was Berlin’s Techno culture of the 1990s marked by theatricality and performance (especially during the Love Parade), as well as by cultural brokering. Karsten evokes the entrepreneurial and performative spirit of the Techno era throughout the film. Presenting Mauerpark as a scene, which not only contains historical significance but also the heritage of cultural and subcultural scenes through his various and diverse protagonists, allows him to craft a more detailed portrait of this space that is undergoing continuous transformation.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) park as scene and the Israeli musician Gabriel

Music plays a key role in Karsten’s film, mediating not only the diverse sounds and music genres experienced in the park, but also contextualizing, complementing, and even guiding the narratives of the

⁷³⁷ Will Straw, “Cultural Scenes,” 413.

⁷³⁸ Will Straw, “Cultural Scenes,” 418.

protagonists. The whole soundtrack is composed by the international musicians who regularly perform in the park. We are introduced to Gabriel, a musician from Tel-Aviv, who performs in Mauerpark because “you can’t find a job in Berlin as a foreigner.” He resembles a modern-day hipster-punk, with his asymmetrical haircut, piercings, and large thick-framed glasses. He is a singer-songwriter, who performs to smaller audiences because he cannot compete with the bands that play with amplifiers in the park, and sings politically-charged songs. Gabriel is a freelance musician, rather than a member of the institutionally-employed creative class, as some of the protagonists of *In Berlin* (2009). If anything, he is a creative member of Berlin’s contemporary music scene, and as Straw noted, “scenes take shape, much of the time, on the edges of cultural institutions which can only partially absorb and channel the clusters of expressive energy which form within urban life.”⁷³⁹ Karsten’s film portrays the international musicians who are part of Mauerpark’s still-independent and still-ungentrified scene, and incorporates their music into the film’s soundtrack, thereby distinguishing them from the members of the gainfully-employed creative classes of *In Berlin*. Karsten also introduces Joe, the outdoor Karaoke organizer from Dublin and a former bike-courier, who attracts thousands of people to Mauerpark on the weekends to sing Karaoke at the open amphitheatre (nicknamed the Bear Pit) in the middle of the park. Throughout the remainder of the film, Karsten continues to introduce various musicians, demonstrating just how international the independent music scene of Berlin has become (as documented in *Sehnsucht Berlin – The City Named Desire*, dir. Peter Zach, 2009), and illustrating that by 2011 the New Berlin has indeed been transformed into the “Berlinterinternational” city that the urban marketing campaigns proclaimed it to be.

⁷³⁹ Will Straw, “Cultural Scenes,” 416.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) the fence separating the two sides of the park and Iban

At the same time, Karsten presents Fabian, a graffiti artist, who is creating street art on the brick wall of the park and informs us that “if you’re lucky the graffiti will stay for a week, if you’re not lucky only a day;” and Iban, who after talking to a Venezuelan junkie, states, “this is what Berlin is like. How many damaged people are we in Berlin?” Iban and the junkie are also part of the yet-un-gentrified Mauerpark. These protagonists echo Micha Schmidt’s description of the city in his short story, “Steffen geht über die Schönhauser” (“Steffen Walks Across Schönhauser,” 1999), where he describes Berlin as a city of addictions and longings:

Mein Berlin. Stadt der Süchte. Immer wieder komme ich zurück. Sehnsucht. Nach der Anonymität. Nach dem versteckten Sex. Nach den Menschen im Kaufhausgedränge, dem ich immer wieder entfliehe. Nach den alten Häusern im Prenzlauer Berg, nach der anderen Art zu leben...⁷⁴⁰

This mixture of addictions and longings for nonconformity and new ways of living is particularly characteristic of the Babylonian spirit celebrated in post-Wall Berlin. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s Berlin was able to accommodate such longing – perhaps more than any other European city – creating its sub-cultural scenes, its Babylonian mythology, as well as the expectations that the possibilities of forging new ways of living will always be available despite the dictates of market-

⁷⁴⁰ Micha Schmidt, “Steffen geht über die Schönhauser” in Jürgen Jakob Becker, Ulrich Janetzki (eds.), *Die Stadt nach der Mauer: Junge Autoren schreiben über Berlin* (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1999, 142-157), 150: “My Berlin. City of addictions. I keep coming back to it. Longing. For anonymity. For the hidden sex. For the people crowding in the shopping-centers that I constantly try to escape. For the old buildings in Prenzlauer Berg, for another way of living” (my translation).

economy. *Mauerpark*, especially in its third act, demonstrates what happens when these expectations of nonconformity and freedom are increasingly denied. The second act of the film concludes and transitions into the third act by way of a silent visual interlude, where the park is shown empty of people in the early morning.

The third and final act of the film focuses on gentrification of Prenzlauer Berg and the New Berlin, and the accompanying discontent and longing expressed by various protagonists. This act takes us from the present of the park's vibrant cultural scenes to its approaching over-gentrified future. The third act begins with a segment about garbage that overflows the park bins in the mornings. We see birds eating garbage, and garbage collectors come and get to work. Horst, the community worker who was introduced at the very beginning of the film, explains his job of clearing the park of garbage, and that he sometimes finds people sleeping in the park. Then Karsten shows different protagonists reflect on how clean or dirty the park is, and we are introduced to Joyce, a young woman, who describes Prenzlauer Berg as "tot-saniert" (gentrified to death), and states that she likes that at least Mauerpark is still a bit dirty. Another female protagonist, Nada, notes: "What I like about Berlin is that it is not as polished as Munich or other cities. I find that totally boring. That's why people come here because Berlin isn't boring."⁷⁴¹ The protagonists' remarks reflect the urban transformations that several Berlin authors have also observed in their books. For example, Annett Gröschner, a native of Prenzlauer Berg, described the difference between the former East and West Berlin neighbourhoods, and the transformations in Prenzlauer Berg as follows:

Am Savignyplatz fühlte ich mich heute noch so, als sei gerade die Mauer aufgegangen und ich käme aus dem Osten zu Besuch. Zwar sieht es mittlerweile am Kollwitzplatz auch nicht anders aus, aber der erinnert mich immer an die Mahnungen meiner Mutter, wenn ich mir als Teenager die Finger rot lackierte – man muss vorher den Dreck unter den Nägeln entfernen. Der Kollwitzplatz ist ein bisschen so wie dreckige,

⁷⁴¹ DVD subtitles.

aber rotlackierte Fingernägel, und meine einzige Hoffnung ist, dass niemand auf die Idee kommt, ihn ein für allemal rauszuputzen. Der Savignyplatz ist lackierter Nagel ohne Dreck.⁷⁴²

The transformation and gentrification of Prenzlauer Berg, its take-over by yuppies, *Schwaben*, and young families has been well-documented in contemporary literature and media. The urban transformation that Gröschner notes at Kollwitzplatz reveals a sense of resistance that echoes Nast's and Selig's notions of identity loss due to gentrification, as well as Joyce and Nada's comments in the film about liking Berlin precisely because it is not as clean and gentrified as other German cities. In a more ironic tone and with less attachment to the neighbourhood, the Bonn-born comedic author Anselm Neft in his book, *Die Lebern der Anderen: Geschichten aus der Großstadt* (*The Livers of Others: Stories from the Capital*, 2010) satirized to what extent Prenzlauer Berg has become the center of gentrified yuppie bohemia, writing,

Ich öffne das Bier und beginne meinen Frühschoppen. Neben mir höre ich, wie eine junge Mutter mit Handtasche einer anderen jungen Frau erzählt, dass sie gleich mit Johanna zum Dinkelkeksebacken im Bioladen müsste, sie aber bereits jetzt gestresst sei, weil danach noch der Termin beim Licht-Gestalt-Therapeuten und morgen schon das Früchte-Wichteln in der Kita am Kollwitzplatz auf dem Programm stünde.⁷⁴³

Neft ridicules the mundane daily reality of the new inhabitants who have populated the re-constructed, re-branded, and gentrified Prenzlauer Berg and New Berlin, and have made the original inhabitants feel like they no longer recognize or belong in their former neighbourhoods. The stress-factors that the young mother lists in Neft's narrative are precisely what Sebastian Lehmann, called "gentrification of lifestyle"⁷⁴⁴ in his introduction to *Lost in Gentrification* (2012). Karsten is one of the first filmmakers to address these issues of gentrification in a documentary film. His protagonists do not hold back their

⁷⁴² Annett Gröschner, *Parzelle Paradies: Berliner Geschichten* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 2008), 147: "At Savignyplatz [in Schöneberg], I still felt as if the Wall had just collapsed and I had come from the East for a visit. Although in the meantime, Kollwitzplatz [in Prenzlauer Berg] doesn't look any different, but I always remember my mother's warnings, when as a teenager I painted my nails red – one first has to clean out the dirt from under the nails. Kollwitzplatz is a little like dirty, but red-painted finger nails, and I only hope that no one intends to clean it out once and for all. Savignyplatz is a manicured nail without dirt" (my translation).

⁷⁴³ Anselm Neft, *Die Lebern der Anderen: Geschichten aus der Großstadt* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2010), 24: "I open the beer and begin my morning drinking ritual. Beside me, I hear a young mother with a handbag telling another young mother that she has to leave now to take Johanna to bake spelt cookies at the organic store, but that she is already stressed now because afterwards she has an appointment with the light-styling-therapist, and tomorrow she's planned fruit dehydration at the daycare at Kollwitzplatz" (my translation).

⁷⁴⁴ Sebastian Lehmann, "Einleitung: we built this city, we built this city on rock'n'roll," 16.

frustration and anger at the transformations that took place over the past several years and the continuing sweeping changes that are planned for the park, the neighbourhood, and the city.

Because throughout most of its Babylonian years Berlin was bankrupt, as de Picciotto noted in her memoir, and “could not afford the extensive overhaul it was going through,” the city officials had to come up with ways of attracting outside investors. As a result, in the course of re-branding and re-constructing the New Berlin, de Picciotto and other locals have expressed their discontent with the ways their city has been transformed:

financiers coming in from the outside had decided what the capital should look like, and, using its artistic reputation, created by countless unsubsidized, non-academic artists, they decided it could be turned into a reputable money maker, offering sightseers a decent level of comfort combining with the possibility of seeing “wild” artists, historic sites, or experiencing adventure in underground clubs. I felt we had become an urban safari tour advertised by travel agencies, exploited by restaurant chains, real estate, beer labels, cigarette brands, or advertising companies.⁷⁴⁵

In a way, the *Schaustelle* marketing campaigns and events were not much different from the viewing platforms set up to peek over the Wall into the East, spectacularizing the Babylonian sub-cultures and scenes, much like the West used to spectacularize the East. As gentrification projects continue to sweep over the city, the anti-gentrification protests increase (Karsten included footage of a protest against the gentrification of Mauerpark in the deleted scenes on his DVD), precisely because of the encroaching nature of the New Berlin’s mainstream landscape of power. In Karsten’s film, Bernd, a city official, explains the official land-development plans for and around Mauerpark:

the ‘Lange’ plan for the park was drawn up in 1993. Half of it has been completed. The fence marks the center line. That’s where the Wall was, that’s the border of the borough. That’s where the park ends now. On the other side the planning continues, and should have been completed by now. It’s the same size again as the Mauerpark now. Another six hectares. [...] Vivico’s plan is to create as many building plots as possible. Now there is a kind of compromise, where most of Mauerpark as it was originally planned will be realized, nonetheless there’ll still be a wall of buildings, fencing the park in. This would turn the park into a space for the apartment owners. That would make it into a traditional park, in the classical sense, quiet, green, and unspectacular.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁵ Danielle de Picciotto, *The Beauty of Transgression*, 236.

⁷⁴⁶ DVD subtitles.

This urban development and gentrification plan would mean the end of the park as we know it, and would transform the neighbourhood even further into a residential enclave for Swabian and Western creative classes.⁷⁴⁷ Bernd's account is interjected by Dr. Motte's explanation of Berlin's current economic and real-estate development practices:

This "free culture" that developed here, with the bars, cafes, market, and free space, is about to be built over. It's typical of a time when Berlin was still uniting, but now they are looking for ways to minimize costs. Public spaces cost the city money. So they don't let alternative culture remain, and instead sell the land to investors. Multinationals like finance companies or property funds, and all they care about is shareholder's dividends. They want to make profit and have the shares rise. These investors search the world for places with low property prices, invest in them, and after ten years sell them for profit.

Like many other creative members of Berlin's Babylonian sub-cultures and scenes, Motte and de Picciotto have first-hand experiences witnessing the urban spaces (like Mauerpark) and cultural scenes (like the Love Parade) that they helped develop being sold to international investors. To further demonstrate the growing discontent with Berlin's gentrification practices in the film, Karsten cuts to Nada, who explains that "all around where the Wall used to be, wonderful open places developed, where it's relaxed because it was the green space of the no-man's-land. All that is being greedily chewed up and I find that bullshit." Joyce adds, "They have to build over everything, don't they? I'm not really surprised. It's a pity. I'm curious about what will happen but I think the money will rule. It's probably all fixed already." Nada concludes, "I'd really like to throw some Molotov cocktails. I'd really like to get people to destroy the construction vehicles when they start building." The off-camera interviewer asks her, "You're quite radical aren't you?" She replies, "What they're doing is also radical. There are enough empty office spaces in Berlin, like the stupid *Allianz Building* at Treptower Park. It's empty, there's no one in it! There are certainly a lot of empty office buildings on Ku'damm too." Karsten's editing between Nada's and Joyce's remarks illustrates just how impatient Berlin's inhabitants have become with its re-

⁷⁴⁷ Felix Huby, in his short story, "Ein Blick zurück aus Berlin" in Horst Bosetzy (ed.) collection, *Die schönsten Berliner Zehn-Minuten-Geschichten* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2011, 104-110), 106, noted that Swabians are the second largest "ethnic minority" (170,000) in Berlin after the Turks.

construction and re-development. This segment is followed by several other protagonists discussing the future construction of condos around the park.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) Musical interlude and views of the voids in the park

At this point in the film, we have another brief visual and musical interlude in the narrative. But rather than signifying the beginning of another act or a thematic switch in the narrative, it is a deliberate slowing down and pausing in the narrative to allow the audience to digest what the protagonists are agonizing about, and to experience the park as it is, before it too will be transformed by gentrification. Robert Lee Fardoe's melancholy song "Moan" plays over images of the "other side" of the park where the future condos shall be built. Karsten shows us the un-groomed parts of the park: the road that separates the two sides, empty lots and spaces, former train tracks with trees and grass growing over them – similar to the ones Peter Schneider draws attention to in *In Berlin* – a fence, bikes left in the grass, an old bathtub and abandoned lawn chair. Karsten also shows us close-ups of nature that has reclaimed this urban space – a butterfly on a flower, bees, etc. Structurally, this interlude breaks the narrative three-act structure of the film; it pauses the narrative in the middle of the third act to allow for an emotional and contemplative pause. While the tone of the film remains objective and observational, this visual and musical interlude can be described as nostalgic, melancholy, and contemplative. The camera sweeps over the park spaces that are soon to be transformed, after several of the interviewed protagonists express their worry that the property adjacent to Mauerpark has been sold to developers

and voice their fear that the park's "free culture" is in danger of disappearance, as it has been in the rest of the now-gentrified Prenzlauer Berg. The British musician, Robert Lee Fardoe, who often performs in the park, provided the opening music at the start of the film, as well as the song that plays as the camera sweeps over that un-developed section of the park, allowing the audience a moment of contemplation about the park's, and Berlin's, future. The music is fitting, and deliberately evokes an emotional response, a certain longing, a consciousness of time, or a longing for the ability to make time stand still and prevent immanent changes. Through this non-diagetic music, the viewer is invited to engage with this space on an emotional level.

The film narrative resumes with Joyce revealing more about the new life in Prenzlauer Berg: "I find there are not enough spaces in Prenzlauer Berg for colourful people like me. I often feel swamped by children," echoing Neft's mocking description of the new inhabitants of Kollwitzplatz. DJ Tanith adds: "It was clear that things would change in the East. But that it would hit Prenzlauer Berg of all places, in this Disneyfied way, it didn't have to be like this. But the *SO36* club in Kreuzberg is also on the verge of being shut down." Equating Prenzlauer Berg's gentrification with Disneyfication echoes Sharon Zukin's conceptualization of the landscape of power and its encroachment on the central neighbourhoods' liminal spaces. Nada continues to express her dissatisfaction with the transformations in the New Berlin, claiming that "the people who used to be squatters and created the subculture, the ones who made the whole thing so interesting in the first place and brought so much life, they have all moved out." From her comments it becomes apparent that while the Berlin Senate has been busy attracting investors, re-branding the city, and inviting the creative classes to "be Berlin," the Babylonian creativity that sparked Berlin's cultural revival has been gradually de-placed from Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg. In one of the concluding scenes of the film, the protagonist Sylvio provides a counter-argument, saying that "now I like Berlin again, there were a few years where I wasn't sure, but in the last 5-6 years, since Berlin became an open, worldly city with a metropolitan character, I find it more pleasant again.

Multilingual, multi-layered, a nice meeting point. Berlin is inexpensive, fun, has free spaces, and the park is one such place within the city.” While Sylvio’s comment celebrates the transformations that took place in Berlin, he also reminds us of the value of openness and free spaces which Mauerpark represents. Karsten chose to end his park narrative on a positive and hopeful note. The closing sequence of the film shows people in the park, making music, lounging, standing, dancing, walking, hugging, singing. The evening falls, the night comes. Music and concerts continue to play late into the night throughout the park, perhaps being the strongest social glue of its current cultural scene.



Film stills: *Mauerpark* (2011) closing scenes of music and concerts

Janet Ward’s description of the park in many ways compliments Karsten’s film:

Today the Mauerpark’s reputation as a *Subkultur*-outlet for Berlin youth is enhanced by its very own graffiti wall (remnant of the former Hinterlandmauer, or inner Wall). At night it hosts unofficial parties, bonfires, grills, beer-drinking and drug trades, activities that the police have had trouble controlling. Its very imperfections and ugliness, according to the tidy standards of what constitutes appropriate urban public space for the boosterist New Berlin, contribute to its alternative value. [...]. Precisely because the Wall Park is a landscape “extension of the no-man’s-land character of the death strip” it has installed a sense of the uncomfortable past in the present that has so often been lacking in the city’s other new projects. The mutable border, then, can make instability and ugliness into something positive.⁷⁴⁸

Ward’s understanding of the park is heavily rooted in its anarchist, alternative, drug-dealing, garbage-filled and unsafe past, as seen from its gentrified, post-Babylonian present. In Karsten’s portrait of Mauerpark, it stands as a microcosm for post-Wall Berlin and its diverse, eccentric, creative and increasingly international inhabitants. The viewer is left to contemplate the ephemerality of Berlin’s

⁷⁴⁸ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 128-129.

open spaces and their looming uncertainty in the future. As Alan Blum noted, “the aura of impermanence suggests that the city is always on the verge of losing itself and, so, can always be approached as if poised for an ethical collision over the question of who and what it is, that is, by the question of its identity.”⁷⁴⁹ Questions of Berlin’s new identity are at the core of much of its cultural production precisely because of its rapid transformation and redevelopment. This process has been accompanied by a sense of longing and nostalgia, or what Ward referred to as “inverted topophilia:”

The naked, ruined tracks of land that the dismantled Wall first revealed to the New Berlin amounted to a visually powerful rendering of the psycho-spatial cost of the nation’s unity. These voids certainly served to inspire the reunified city’s obsession with building and becoming, but their first effect was that of creating an inverted topophilia. Reunified Berlin’s obsession with the un-built and the possibilities but not the results of the re-built became a selling-point. It is the spatial version of the *arm aber sexy* (poor but sexy) tagline for the city uttered by Mayor Klaus Wowereit. These disused spaces were not valued as sites of mourning or loss; they gained in significance as sites of play, transformation, danger, and discovery.⁷⁵⁰

Through the various protagonists of *Mauerpark*, we get different histories and different practices of space, as well as different longing associated with urban space. This is what Ward means by “topophilia” and the possibilities of un-built spaces.

Karsten documented Mauerpark as a vernacular place, threatened by the eradication of nonconformity in the new landscape of power, but as yet at a high-point of its un-regulated scene culture. As Blum and Straw have shown, urban scenes are characterized by their theatricality, transgression, spectacle, performance, ephemerality, and impermanence.⁷⁵¹ Through the protagonists’ narratives we also get to understand the emotional composition of urban spaces, the disappearance and transformation of which provoke longing, contestations, and nostalgia. If we interpret nostalgia as a way of coping with unprecedentedly fast-paced change, as well as a reflection on the present, then it becomes apparent that *Mauerpark* has documented the various ways in which this process has played

⁷⁴⁹ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 235.

⁷⁵⁰ Janet Ward, *Post-Wall Berlin*, 118.

⁷⁵¹ Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City*, 233.

out in post-Wall Berlin. The film combines the themes of Berlin's transformation, gentrification, and the ephemerality of its spaces, and calls for a more mindful treatment of public space. It focuses on the park's past (the history of the park) and future (the gentrification and condo-development around the park), which in turn enhances our understanding of its present, and leaves us conscious of its complex real and imaginary terrain.

CONCLUSION

When I DJ the Russian Disco night at *Kaffee Burger*,
 so many people from different countries come to join us.
 I don't even know most of the languages, but it's amazing!
 For me, this vision of a newly united Europe is the continuation of the Tower of Babel.
 The political and financial sectors haven't yet been properly figured out,
 but what's happening on the cultural level is great.
 Berlin has never been such a world metropolis as it is today.
 This is actually a Babylonian mission, what people have come up with here.
 (Wladimir Kaminer, Interview, 2014)⁷⁵²

Berlin's Babylonian mission, as Wladimir Kaminer called it, of transforming the two formerly divided and isolated cities of East and West Berlin into a re-branded, re-constructed, and internationalized New Berlin has essentially been accomplished. Babylon as a linguistic, architectural, and cultural metaphor for post-Wall Berlin continues to re-surface among its cultural production and discourse. The collective need to reflect back, either with nostalgic or utopian longing, on Berlin's Babylonian years right after reunification, perpetuates in the New Berlin, continually bursting its bubble of staged and re-branded newness, hipness, and creativity. For example, with the widely-distributed publication and accompanying photography exhibition of *Berlin Wonderland: Wild Years Revisited 1990-1996*, edited and curated by Anke Fesel and Chris Keller in 2014, long-term Berliners, newcomers, and tourists are presented with a bilingual and curated textual and visual collection of photographs and eye-witness accounts of the now-legendary and legendarized years of Berlin's post-Wall existence. As the editors explain, the book is an attempt to capture a city and an atmosphere that no longer exists. In his preface to the book, David Wagner called this Babylonian time and space the "wish-fulfilment zone," where everything was

⁷⁵² Amy Stupavsky "Questions for Wladimir Kaminer," in *Descant 166: The Berlin Project* (Volume 45, Number 3, Fall 2014, 158-160), 158.

possible, caught in a “frenzy of repurposing,” and where the “magic phrase was *temporary use*.”⁷⁵³ He goes on to describe the Babylonian Berlin as follows:

Mitte was in a gap. It became the magic city of the in-between. [...] There was dancing, there was dancing and drinking. And the eyes of the ruin-dwellers sparkled with happiness of those who are in the right place at the right time. [...] It was tremendous in the rubble, it was a gigantic playground. Then comes a minor shock: Was it really that long ago? Has Berlin really changed so much, or is it just a dream? [...] How long did it last? Nobody can say now. It gradually drew to a close and then it was over. So it's great to have these photographs. They are proof: the wish-fulfilment zone really did exist.⁷⁵⁴

As the rest of the book demonstrates, Berlin's Babylonian Wonderland was short-lived but highly creative. What the many publications, exhibitions, and representations of this time reveal, is that in the New Berlin, searching for the previous incarnations of its urban and cultural landscape is part of its contemporary cultural legacy. Thus, nostalgic and utopian longing, the two key ingredients of nostalgia for Babylon, are the cultural markers of contemporary Berlin identity.

In 1998, when Hubertus Siegert was filming the opening ceremony of the Sony Center at Potsdamer Platz, just before the official arrival of the New Berlin in 1999, Alexandra Richie wrote about the Babylonian Berlin of the 1990s that the city is a “great *tabula rasa*, an architect's dream.”⁷⁵⁵ As much as the Berlin Senate, *Berlin Partners*, and other advocates of Berlin's “normalization” process throughout the 1990s may have wanted it to be a *tabula rasa*, what the nostalgic turn in post-Wall Berlin reveals is that it was never actually a clean slate or a blank canvas at any point of its history, destruction, or reconstruction. In a 1999 interview, Volker Hassemer, then chief of *Partner für Berlin* and former Senator responsible for culture and later urban development, claimed that, “a new city without a wall has to be constructed... For the first time, the city has a chance to look ahead, after not having had a future for the

⁷⁵³ David Wagner, “The Wish-Fulfilment Zone,” in Anke Fesel and Chris Keller (eds.), *Berlin Wonderland: Wild Years Revisited 1990-1996* (Berlin: Gestalten, 2014), 5.

⁷⁵⁴ David Wagner, “The Wish-Fulfilment Zone,” 5.

⁷⁵⁵ Alexandra Richie. *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), xxiii.

past seventy years.”⁷⁵⁶ What was constructed after the Wall was, as Renzo Piano described it, a virtual city,⁷⁵⁷ not often accounting for the needs of the local inhabitants, but designed for creative classes and investors, who would settle in Berlin and help – with their work, taxes, and by preferably creating new jobs – to reduce the city’s enormous debt. But it was never quite clear who those creative classes are, how they would fit into the new city, and what the consequences of this rapid transformation would be. As Peter Schneider noted in his collection of essays and observations on the New Berlin,

In 2013, the city had generated a surplus of 750 million euros and was able to put forward a budget that would reduce the debt burden from 63 billion to 61.8 billion euros by 2016. Only 61.8 billion euros of debt left! Sober viewers like me asked ourselves why a city like Detroit with a debt of \$17 billion has to declare bankruptcy, while Berlin considers a debt burden four times as large a reason to celebrate!⁷⁵⁸

The question neither Schneider nor Wowereit asked was at what cost this budget surplus was generated. But Schneider gives us clues, explaining that

In 2012 alone, Berlin grew by some 45,000 inhabitants. Assuming continued growth of this magnitude, by 2030 the city will have roughly 250,000 more inhabitants – the equivalent of a whole new district. [...] But the city is already short some 100,000 apartments and has only hesitantly begun to tackle the construction of affordable new housing. Then there are the social problems associated with this growth. For, the number of persons aged eighty years and over is set to grow the most. [...] There is no doubt that what Berlin needs more than anything else are qualified immigrants who are willing to assimilate. [...] Berlin has also mastered a very different problem of integration better than most of the rest of Germany: overcoming the “Wall in the mind.”⁷⁵⁹

According to *Zitty* Magazine, the number of people who move to Berlin each year is over 150,000.⁷⁶⁰ The apartment wars in the New Berlin continue to be documented and publically debated. After West-German and international investors have bought up most of the profitable real-estate in Berlin, often forcing the local inhabitants out of their rent-controlled apartments in order to renovate and sell the

⁷⁵⁶ Allan Cochrane and Adrian Passmore, “Building a National Capital in an Age of Globalization: The Case of Berlin” in *Area* (Vol 33. No.4, Dec. 2001, 341-352), 344.

⁷⁵⁷ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now*, 35-36: According to Renzo Piano, “You create a space not for life with its unpredictable, biological rhythms, but for virtual life.”

⁷⁵⁸ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now*, 310.

⁷⁵⁹ Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now*, 311.

⁷⁶⁰ Stefan Tillmann, “Und er war gut so” in *Zitty* (Heft 19, 4 – 17 September 2014, 14-18), 16.

condos to national and international buyers, Berlin is facing a serious shortage of affordable housing. The degree to which this process has become exploitative and inhumane has been documented by animation and documentary filmmaker Kathrin Rothe in her film *Betongold: Wie die Finanzkrise in mein Wohnzimmer kam* (*Cement Gold: How the Global Financial Crisis Came into My Living Room*, 2013).⁷⁶¹ Initially, with the disappearance of East Berlin and the transformation of its districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, and now Pankow into gentrified, free-market economy playgrounds, many former East-Berliners identified themselves as a “generation” defined by a general sense of “absence.”⁷⁶² By 2014, this omnipresent and collective sense of absence is no longer limited to the former East. Many Berlin inhabitants reflect on what the city was like before its re-construction, often not without nostalgia, or even what has been described as imperialist nostalgia – “where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.”⁷⁶³

As I have shown with the help of contemporary Berlin documentary films, literary and art works, the nostalgic sentiments and utopian longing that emerged in the recent years represent a reaction to the branding and gentrification of the New Berlin, and call for a re-examination of the ways in which the city has been re-constructed and re-developed. What I identified as nostalgia for Babylon is often expressed in relation to disappearing, gentrifying, and transforming urban spaces and buildings, but is also intertwined with utopian desires and longing, which have always been contradictory to the values of market economy and economic sustainability. This nostalgia is different from *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie* and is often expressed along with a critical stance about re-construction practices and building ideologies in the New Berlin. It is a “creative nostalgia” (Boym) that is based on a “historical consciousness” (Sprengler), which allows for new conceptions of “future determination” (Boyer) and

⁷⁶¹ *Betongold*, dir. Kathrin Rothe, 2013, <http://www.betongold-der-film.de/> (accessed November 2014).

⁷⁶² Jana Hensel, *After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life That Came Next* (Transl. by Jefferson Chase. New York: Public Affairs, 2004, *Zonenkinder*, 2002), 163-164.

⁷⁶³ R. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth* (Boston: Beacon Books, 1989), 69. Quoted in Richard Lloyd, “Neo-Bohemia: Art and Neighborhood Redevelopment in Chicago,” in *Journal of Urban Affairs* (Volume 24, N.5, 2002, 517-532), 529.

attempts to make sense of the myths and identities we construct in the present. Nostalgia for Babylon is often expressed through referents and signifiers to Berlin of the 1990s, and its scenes, voids and no-man's-lands, abandoned and dilapidated buildings, many of which have been replaced by the gentrified, re-branded, and no-longer-so "poor, but sexy" glass structures of the New Berlin. As Berlin remains caught somewhere between nostalgia and exhilarating progress, we can continue to observe its representations of itself and its many different identities.

While Berlin's Cold-War identity was based on the oppositions and polarities between East and West, after reunification sociologist Heinz Bude (2001) attempted to construct a new, unified identity category of "Generation Berlin" for the Berlin Republic. With the launch of the "be Berlin" marketing campaign, the Berlin Senate under the leadership of Klaus Wowereit, invited local inhabitants, visitors, and investors to identify with the New Berlin, thus shifting identity politics away from generational or even national organization categories towards cosmopolitanism, internationality, multiculturalism, creativity, diversity, and talent, while simultaneously generating the largest unprecedented branding campaign that permeated all levels of social, political, economic, architectural, and cultural production and consumption mechanisms of the city. Nothing of that scale has been undertaken in Germany, or Europe, before, and perhaps can only be compared to the transformation of New York City from the 1970s "Fear City" to the post-Bloomberg, post 9/11, unaffordable global metropolis, documented in Miriam Greenberg's study (2008). However, unlike New York's urban re-development and gentrification that took place over the course of over 45 years, Berlin was transformed from its Babylonian voids to a creative center in under 25 years. This was no small achievement at a time when the global financial crisis was threatening to break the European Union apart and many Western countries were crippled by economic depression or collapse, while parts of Eastern Europe were still plagued by civil war. While Germany demonstrated pride in its organization, efficiency, and production standards, summed up by the headline of *Newsweek* Magazine from July 2014, after the German national team won the FIFA

World Cup in Brazil, which announced: “Welcome to the German Century,”⁷⁶⁴ Berlin celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Wall on November 9, 2014 with another internationally broadcast ceremony and commemorative events, and was facing a future under new leadership.

On August 26, 2014, Berlin’s Mayor of thirteen years, Klaus Wowereit, announced his resignation effective as of December 11, 2014 – three years after his third re-election to the Berlin Senate, two years after the first postponement of the Berlin International Airport, and six weeks after the World Cup celebrations in Berlin and the Mayor’s ensuing enthusiasm for the next Olympic bid.⁷⁶⁵ All the speculations on the reasons for his resignation in German media have pointed to his failed chairmanship over the defective airport, and by extension, as Stefan Tillmann pointed out in his article in *Zitty* (2014), Wowereit’s failure to recognize that Berliners could no longer stomach the “Trubel und Größenwahn” (hassle and megalomania) of the New Berlin.⁷⁶⁶ Despite giving Wowereit full credit for making culture, which used to be the last item on the Senate’s agenda, the focal point of discussion and one of the main drivers of Berlin’s economy,⁷⁶⁷ Tillmann also reminded us that during the 2011 municipal election, Wowereit no longer had a vision or program for the growing Berlin.⁷⁶⁸ While this lack of vision is not without irony, considering that in 2005 Wowereit was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, which named him one of “the smart big city bosses” who were “bringing new vision to urban life,”⁷⁶⁹ it is also not surprising considering the day-to-day life challenges, strikes, and problems that the city also faced throughout its post-Wall transition. As Markus Hesselmann noted in the title of his article

⁷⁶⁴ Rose Jacobs, “On Top of the World: This Could Be the Start of a Century of German Success,” in *Newsweek*, <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/07/25/top-world-could-be-start-century-german-success-259410.html> (accessed July 2014).

⁷⁶⁵ RBB interview, 2014, <http://www.rbb-online.de/politik/beitrag/2014/07/sommerinterview-regierender-buergermeister-klaus-wowereit-berlin.html> (accessed July 2014).

⁷⁶⁶ Stefan Tillmann, “Und er war gut so,” 15.

⁷⁶⁷ Stefan Tillmann, “Und er war gut so,” 16.

⁷⁶⁸ Stefan Tillmann, “Und er war gut so,” 18.

⁷⁶⁹ Markus Hesselmann, “Poor but sexy is not enough: the rise and fall of Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit” in *The Guardian*, 11 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/11/poor-but-sexy-not-enough-rise-fall-berlin-mayor-klaus-wowereit> (accessed November 2014).

on Wowereit for *The Guardian*, “Poor but sexy is just not enough,” quoting Marc Young of *Handelsblatt* Global Edition, the international online offshoot of Germany’s renowned daily business newspaper, without really explaining what either of them meant by “enough.” Hesselmann concludes his article acknowledging Wowereit’s role in elevating Berlin into the ranks of cities like London – which for many people in and outside Berlin is not a compliment – and simultaneously acknowledging the difficulties facing his successor in keeping up with the accompanying social and urban challenges:

Berlin’s future still very much depends on its ability to attract people and their ideas from all over the world, to keep fuelling the creative and digital industry that, alongside tourism, is the backbone of Berlin’s economy. Wowereit did his bit. Turning the short-term hipness of Berlin into the long-term global attraction of a place like Johnson’s London, however, is a challenge that, in the end, he left to his successor.⁷⁷⁰

While Berlin, under the tenure of Klaus Wowereit has experienced a profound transformation, into a creative center, even the term itself became criticized, and is becoming quickly outdated because it is essentially unsustainable as it lacks a real economic vision. But perhaps what we can learn from Berlin’s post-Wall transformations is that in a city’s quest for a new, re-constructed, and re-conceptualized identity, nostalgia can serve as a an important cultural and psychological lens that can shed light not only on the present conditions that trigger it into being, but also on the underlying longing and desire to find meaning in the inevitability of change.

⁷⁷⁰ Markus Hesselmann, “Poor but sexy is not enough: the rise and fall of Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit” in *The Guardian*, 11 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/11/poor-but-sexy-not-enough-rise-fall-berlin-mayor-klaus-wowereit> (accessed November 2014).

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