



Time After Time: A History of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and its Relationship with Urban Space

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the history of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and its relationship with Berlin's urban space. Specifically, it explores the way in which the Biennale's dialogue with the city of Berlin is forged through the use of physical urban spaces as exhibition venues from 1998-2018. Divided into four chapters, it outlines the value of examining the Berlin Biennale within the context of the global rise of biennials; it explores the relationship between the Berlin Biennale and the socio-political context of the city of Berlin; it traces the history of the Berlin Biennale's approach to the urban from the first until the tenth Biennale editions; and it argues how urban space is engaged with conceptually and practically through a process of finding, accessing and securing urban space vis-à-vis the curatorial vision. This dissertation makes an academic contribution to the disciplines of Art History and Architecture and to the fields of Biennial, Urban and Curatorial Studies, and to the cultural sector, by responding to recent calls to investigate the problematics of the biennial model and address a largely overlooked facet of biennial making and research: the contemporary art biennial's relationship with urban space. It draws attention to the biennial's struggle for access to physical urban space as both a creative source and physical site for contemporary art amidst the city's increasing privatisation and commercialisation, and thus highlights the urgent issue of access to urban space that concerns all innovative event-based cultural producers in cities around the world.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Conceptual Framework: The Whole World in One Place, At One Time

In May 2011, I worked for six weeks as a steward for the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Mike Nelson was the exhibiting artist and I, along with four other colleagues, was tasked with invigilating the architectural installation Nelson had painstakingly created for his solo show. Simply entitled “I, Imposter”, the interior of the original temple-style architecture of the British pavilion, with its columns and marble flooring, was completely transformed by Nelson into a Turkish inn. He created a dilapidated, dusty and dark space clad in concrete where low wooden beams forced the visitor to crouch so as not to bump their head when walking through the narrow corridors. A labyrinth comprising various passages leading to dead-end rooms surprised the visitor with their contents: sometimes a photography lab where a dim red light revealed hundreds of pinned-up photographs hanging up to dry; or a storage space for broken factory machinery, their oily stench filling the stuffy hot room; or a suddenly abandoned workshop, radio blaring and tools covering a wooden workbench. If the visitor made it to the end of the labyrinth, the passage opened out into a narrow concrete and tiled courtyard at the centre of the pavilion where sunlight flooded the space and blinded the eyes.

It was my second time at the Venice Biennale, but unlike my first visit in 2009 as a visitor, this time I was not only present for the grand vernissage and unveiling of the artwork for the press, VIPs and then the public, as an employee, I had access to the behind the scenes inner workings of a Biennale exhibition. As a young and emerging independent curator, the experience was unforgettable and, as someone who had begun to work internationally by organising artist residencies and projects in other countries, it was vital to gaining an understanding of how the international art world functioned. I had never worked at a major international arts event before. There were, of course, negative aspects too. The hours were long, the weather was hot, and dealing with an incredibly high volume of visitors in this cramped and dark space was intense. However, overall, it was an exciting time for me – conversing with well-known artists and discovering how they made elaborate works of art, rubbing shoulders with art collectors, directors and biennial “super-curators”, playing host to a plethora of visitors from around the world and engaging in nightly exchanges with the other pavilion stewards over Aperol spritz. At the centre of it all was contemporary art. And not just any contemporary art, but the latest, never seen before artworks by often young or up-and-coming artists set against the backdrop of the romantic urban pseudo-ruin that is the island city of Venice.

What struck me most about my experience working at the Venice Biennale was the feeling that suddenly, the whole world had become accessible in one place at one time.

Never before had I seen so many artists and artworks from so many different countries, nor met so many cultural workers from around the globe. Rather than satisfying my curiosity, my experience in Venice sparked questions about how these strange event-exhibitions functioned in other places and how they could simultaneously help me understand, while at the same time contributing to, the (dis)connect between the local, urban and global cultural spheres. I then undertook a curatorial residency in Istanbul in 2013 during the thirteenth Istanbul Biennial. It was here that I met various biennial curators, directors, education staff and guides from Istanbul and elsewhere and learnt that, more than anything, biennials are about the production and display of contemporary art in particular places, in short: that place matters.

Throughout history, contemporary art biennials have been established in response to various political, social, artistic and economic situations, with the very definition of a biennial signifying a variety of different formats ranging from annuals, biennials, triennales, quintennials, decennials and so on reasons (Efthymiou et al. 2018, p. 12). What unites them is a desire to challenge the confines of traditional art spaces and institutions. They are thus defined by their episodic structure and exhibition of artwork beyond the physical walls of arts institutions, whether in public or non-typical art exhibition spaces. The biennial's spacio-temporal structure is celebrated for its flexible approach that extends beyond the traditional paradigms of time and space that enables an array of curatorial and artistic responses to changing cities and their contexts (Doherty, 2004; Hanru, 2005). However, with now more than 300 biennials worldwide, over time they have also become homogenous institutions (Holmes, 2009; Basualdo, 2010) both contributing to and shaped by a global network of art production. It became quite clear to me that, in order to understand biennials, one has to understand this paradox of a simultaneous attachment to both the local and the global.

In 2015 when I embarked on this research, criticism was mounting from academics, artists and members of the public about the sponsorship, timing or location choices of recent major metropolitan biennials. For example, the thirteenth Istanbul Biennial in 2013 was criticized for making a spectacle of the Occupy Gezi protests at Taksim Square, the nineteenth Sydney Biennale in 2014 came under fire for receiving sponsorship from Transfield Holding – a company linked to the cruel treatment of Australia's detained asylum seekers, and in the same year, *Manifesta* was questioned as to the appropriateness of its location in St Petersburg shortly after oppressive anti-homosexual laws were introduced in Russia. At the time, such criticisms framed the discourse of international conferences such as "Biennials: Prospect and Perspectives, Biennials in dialogue 5" at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe and the International Biennial Association's conference "Why Biennial? Why Associate?", both in 2014. These events demonstrated that issues regarding the economic, ethical and social sustainability, and therefore the integrity, of the biennial model were in need of urgent address. However, despite such calls for further discussion, and despite growing discontent from arts groups in my home city of Berlin

about the lack of financial support and physical spaces for artists to live and work in the city (Haben und Brauchen, 2015; Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015), there was, at the time, very little literature exploring what role a publicly-funded major arts event such as a biennial might play in exacerbating or ameliorating these problems and concerns (Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo, 2010, pp. 14–17; Green and Gardner, 2016, p. 4; Efthymiou *et al.*, 2018, p. 2).

Additionally, very little research had been conducted into the relationship between the contemporary art biennial and the urban despite the fact that biennials across the globe were often charged with the task of responding to their host city's changing urban situation (Doherty, 2004; Hanru, 2005). The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art was no exception, and when deciding on a case study for my PhD, it struck me as distinct in the way in which it was positioned by its producers as a biennial that simultaneously grew out of and suffered from a lack of physical space for the presentation of contemporary art in Berlin. Furthermore, its producers prided themselves on creating the *only* biennial in the world that changed locations and venues according to the needs and desires of the exhibition, suggesting that not only was this response highly pragmatic, but highly artistic too (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010). It was soon clear to me that the Berlin Biennale, which developed during a time of rapid social, urban and architectural change for the city, stood out as a fascinating case study for the development of a major international contemporary arts event inextricably intertwined with the processes of regeneration and gentrification that have occurred since the fall of the Berlin Wall; changes that have contributed to the aesthetic identity of the city and continue to play a major role in current discussions about the use of the city's urban space today.

In fact, in May 2015, in my first analysis of the Biennale's website, I was struck by a declaration from the Biennale producers claiming that it was a biennial "in dialogue with the city". It struck me as curious that a biennial that wasn't an architectural biennial had such a strong focus on urban space as a frame for exhibition making. And that despite, or perhaps because of the fact that the producers began and continue to operate in a rapidly changing city where the Biennial struggles to find, access and secure physical urban spaces, urban space continues to serve as a key focus for the Berlin Biennale.

1.2 Research Questions and Chapter Breakdown

The context of my own personal and professional desires as a contemporary art curator to understand the relationship between the local and global spheres of cultural production; a demand from the cultural sector to investigate the problematics of the biennial model and its relationship to society at large; and a lack of existing research into the relationship between contemporary art biennials and urban space, advances

the following central research question: Why is urban space considered desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers? This dissertation answers that question through examining the history of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and its relationship with urban space. Specifically, it explores the way in which a dialogue with the city of Berlin is forged through the use of physical urban spaces as exhibition venues from 1998–2018. The findings are laid out through four main chapters: “The World in the City through Biennales of Contemporary Art” (Chapter 2); “Setting the Stage for Berlin’s First Biennale for Contemporary Art” (Chapter 3); “Mapping the Berlin Biennale from 1998–2018” (Chapter 4); and “The Berlin Biennale: Curating Renewal in a City in Continuous Flux” (Chapter 5). After the Conclusion, an Appendix at the end of the dissertation describes the research methods employed to arrive at the research findings and provides a list of interviews.

The Berlin Biennale did not emerge in isolation, but in the context of other global contemporary art events that the producers were clearly cognizant of. Thus, in order to understand the Berlin Biennale, we need to understand (art) biennials in general. The second chapter in this dissertation, “The World in the City through Biennials of Contemporary Art” provides an account of just that. It is divided into three sections: “The Proliferation and (Ir)relevance of the post-1989 Contemporary Art Biennale, Producing and Projecting the World in the City”, and “The Berlin Biennale as a Case Study”. The first section of this chapter, “The Proliferation and (Ir)relevance of the post-1989 Contemporary Art Biennale”, reviews and reflects on the field of biennial studies from an art historical perspective. Rather than aiming to provide a definitive review of all research conducted on biennials, the chapter instead draws on research useful for contextualising the Berlin Biennale as a case study within a global context. Exploring the biennial model as a prolific format of exhibition making within the cultural sphere, the spatio-temporal properties of biennials are highlighted as a factor distinguishing the biennial from their museum counterparts.

The second section, “Producing and Projecting the World in the City”, introduces the various rationales for the creation of biennials throughout history, and denotes the year 1989 as a turning point for the history of biennial making. It explores how the biennial model produces and projects the world in the city through its interconnected links with globalisation, temporality and the urban. This chapter section does this in three ways: (1) by defining globalisation of the international cultural sphere as a process contributing to and in turn shaped by the production of biennials; (2) by arguing that the biennial speaks of the present day, the past and the future from the position of the present and thus has become representative of contemporaneity of the cultural sphere; and (3) by claiming that it is through the biennial that the city is conceived as a globally-connected node for cultural transaction.

Finally, with regard to its global contextualisation outlined in the first section, the third section of this chapter entitled “Conclusion: The Berlin Biennale as a Case Study” concludes Chapter 2 and introduces the case study of this research project – The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art – and the research questions that sit at the heart of this study: Why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers? This central question links to a desire to unravel the meaning behind the Biennale producers’ own claims as a biennial “in dialogue with the city” and seeks to explore their motivations for engaging in the use of urban space as a contemporary art, rather than an architectural biennial, operating in a rapidly changing city. This question then raises further related questions: (1) when, why and how did the Berlin Biennale’s self-proclaimed dialogue with the city begin? (2) Why and in what ways did the Berlin Biennale producers continue to use urban space as exhibition space? (3) How and why has that use of urban space changed over time? These questions have driven the research process and are answered through the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter Three, “Setting the Stage for Berlin’s First Biennale for Contemporary Art”, begins by asking what the Biennale’s mandate – a self-appointed “dialogue with the city” – actually means. Outlining three distinct factors, this chapter explores how far back this dialogue can be traced as well as what or who instigated it: (1) the socio-political developments that took place in the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and 1996 when the production of the first Berlin Biennale began; (2) the culture of *Zwischennutzung* (interim use) of physical urban space; and finally (3) the establishment of the Biennale’s host organisation, the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW). Geographically, this chapter focuses on one particular area of Berlin, that of Berlin-Mitte, and more specifically the Spandauer Vorstadt. One must, of course, acknowledge that there were various changes within the cultural sector across the city during this time, and that, like with any other metropolitan arts sector, networks transcend neighbourhood boundaries. There are, however, several reasons for focusing on this area in particular: firstly, the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, located in this part of the city, always had been and to this day continues to be the organising institution of the Berlin Biennale. Secondly, the political processes that reassessed the ownership and managed the use of urban space, allowing places such as KW to develop in this area, were specific to this part of Berlin. Thirdly, Mitte was also the site of intense urban development after the fall of the Wall, largely due to government policies that repositioned this part of the city as the new centre of a reunited Berlin. Lastly, Mitte was also the place where much of the rapid professionalization of Berlin’s art scene took place after the fall of the Wall, where studios (such as those housed in KW), commercial contemporary art galleries and temporary exhibitions took up residency alongside, and some argue in contribution to, gentrification of the area.

The first section of Chapter 3, “Berlin’s Socio-Political Climate 1989–1996”, explores the political and social climate in Berlin after the fall of the Wall which saw Berlin being

repositioned symbolically as the political and physical reunification of the city took place. Rapid and large-scale urban development processes sought to reinvent the image of the city according to a particular ideology of the post-modern capital city in a bid for participation in global city competitions. This section of the chapter outlines the profound impact of these political and urban developments on the city's arts sector: a decline in funding for cultural institutions in general shortly after the fall of the Wall was followed by political campaigns that provided financial support to selected "high" culture while largely ignoring the rapidly developing grassroots scene.

In the second section of Chapter 3, "Zwischennutzung", I explore how a culture of interim use of urban space (Zwischennutzung) developed from a long existing tradition of re-appropriation of urban spaces by marginalised groups in the city of Berlin. This section explores the ways in which Zwischennutzung worked – the types of interim uses and how the city officials managed them – as well as the implications of such processes, such as opportunism, creative experimentation and the desire to fill gaps in the existing arts infrastructure versus colonisation of urban space. The formation of physical gaps within the urban landscape, in the form of empty buildings, coincided with an excess of time brought about by slow urban management policies provided a fertile ground for the interim creative use of urban space which in some cases even developed into permanent arts infrastructure.

The final section of Chapter 3, "The Establishment of the KW" describes how the Berlin Biennale's original organising body, KW, was established and remained from the early 1990s onwards as a permanent part of Berlin's contemporary arts infrastructure. This last chapter section follows the history and trajectory of KW – the people involved, the urban space it claimed for itself and the professionalisation of the institution. In particular, it highlights key institutional events and changes essential to the conceptualisation of the first Berlin Biennale such as the exhibition *37 Räume*, infrastructural changes and its internationalisation.

Chapter 4, "Mapping the Berlin Biennale from 1998–2018" introduces the case study of this thesis: the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art with regard to both the local and international context. This section thus provides an overview of the Biennale's relationship with urban space and how its self-proclaimed "dialogue with the city" manifests for each edition over its twenty-year history. Unlike many other studies of biennials that compare single editions of different biennials with each other, this case study examines the chronology of one single biennial by comparing each subsequent edition with the next. Hence, this chapter does not focus on each individual exhibition of each Biennale edition, nor does it critique individual artworks within each exhibition, but rather, it combines approaches from the fields of both art history and urban studies to explore how and why certain physical urban spaces were used over the Biennale's history and how that use has changed over time. A map accompanies this chapter,

illustrating the way in which the Biennale has used Berlin's urban space as exhibition space from its inception in 1998 until 2018. Colour coded to indicate which spaces were used for which edition, it allows the reader to understand how the Berlin Biennale has engaged different parts of the city for its different editions and how that use has changed over time.

Chapter 4 is divided into ten sub-sections that reflect the ten editions of the Berlin Biennale chronologically from 1998–2018. Named after the edition's thematic title, each section provides details about the Biennale such as the curator chosen for that edition, the exhibition venues used, and a map showing the geographic positioning of that edition within the city of Berlin. Each edition is then further contextualised according to the following aspects: the developmental milestones of its host organisation (either KW or the Berlin Biennale e.V.); the thematic aims, scope and scale of the exhibitions; and what relationship the former two aspects had on the conceptual or practical approach to urban space in Berlin. Beginning with "Berlin/Berlin" as the first Berlin Biennale, the first sub-section is a little longer than the others, in order to fully explore the Biennale's beginnings along two main lines: the onset of the Berlin Biennale producers' desires to secure a place in the international biennial network, and their approach to urban space through communicating "Berlin-ness". This chapter thus argues that the Berlin Biennale developed in awareness of other global contemporary art events which had a profound impact on its relationship with urban space.

In particular, it sheds significant light on the research questions asking what kind of urban space the Biennale producers used, this research demonstrates that over its twenty-year history, the Berlin Biennale largely relied on "non-typical" exhibition spaces. In contrast to "dedicated exhibition spaces" – which can be, for example, purpose built exhibition venues such as museums, galleries and some arts project spaces – "non-typical exhibition spaces" can be defined as those originally intended as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residences such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets. While the use of non-traditional spaces is a strong trend throughout the Biennale's history, we can also see that its use of such spaces was far more common for earlier editions, and that producers began using an increasing number of dedicated exhibition spaces, particularly in the recent editions from 2012–2018, thus prompting further questions as to why so many different kinds of urban spaces were used as exhibition venues.

Entitled "The Berlin Biennale: Curating Renewal in a City in Continuous Flux", Chapter 5 demonstrates how the Biennale's temporal rhythm has, since its inception, presented a fundamental challenge for biennial producers when acquiring and securing spaces in order to fulfil curatorial visions regarding exhibition narratives. The chapter is divided

into two main sections. The first section entitled “Lifecycles, Actors and Space: Producing the Berlin Biennale”, describes the process that has remained largely unchanged over the Biennale’s history, by which venues within Berlin’s urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions. This section explores the Biennale’s lifecycle and how time and tempo are defined by it. It outlines the people involved and what they do as a team of Berlin Biennale producers, while distinguishing the Biennale’s actors (incoming curators, permanent staff) and non-actors (funders and the public). Here, I show a hierarchisation of personnel that positions the incoming curator at the top where curatorial vision subsequently dictates how each edition engages with urban space. Lastly, this section explores what kind of spaces in the city are engaged with through the categorisation of non-typical versus dedicated exhibition venues (as described in more detail in “Appendix I: Research Methods”).

Chapter 5’s second section, “Time After Time: Bi-annual (Re)Negotiations of Urban Time, Economies and Knowledge”, then argues that because Biennale producers operate within a city in continuous flux, the curatorial visions that are the driving force behind the venue search process are in fact constantly renegotiated in the face of a complex and changing matrix of the resources of time, money and knowledge. These resources, in turn, influence the actions of a range of Biennale actors such as incoming curators, permanent staff, artists and funders. This finding suggests that despite internationally standardised biennial practices claiming that the biennial curator sits at the top of the exhibition-food-chain, biennial curating in urban space is a highly mediated process. These processes are outlined in three chapter sub-sections: “Urban Temporalities”, “Urban Economies” and “Urban Knowledge”.

Firstly, in “Urban Temporalities”, the temporal rhythms of the city and global cultural sphere are contrasted with that of the Berlin Biennale, demonstrating the fundamental challenge for the Biennale producers when acquiring and securing spaces to fulfil curatorial visions. The Biennale as a cultural event produced within urban space plays a major role here. It claims the urban as a mediator between local and global rhythms. “Urban Economies”, the next sub-section, explores how such temporal limitations are inextricably linked to financial limitations. In this section, I unpack how the Biennale creates a kind of urban economy where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by the Biennale producers to “buy their way” into temporarily accessing public and privately controlled urban space. However, by adopting such strategies the Biennale ultimately plays into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas typical to a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation where symbolic and real capital are traded as part of the consumption of contemporary art and architecture.

Lastly, the section “Urban Knowledge” investigates how knowledge is exchanged between existing staff and incoming curators in order to find, access and secure physical

urban space. However, this is not a balanced exchange: while the curator's overall vision drives the direction of the Biennale and sets a precedent for which spaces should be considered, this vision is mediated by the permanent staff in a number of ways, including, most significantly, guiding incoming curators to select new or undiscovered spaces that have not been used before for a Berlin Biennale exhibition. Here, I suggest that the Berlin Biennale does this out of a necessity to carve out a unique identity within the global cultural sphere, despite the challenges that being out of temporal sync with the city of Berlin's escalating real estate costs presents to the Berlin Biennale producers.

The dissertation concludes with a summary chapter, providing an overview of the central arguments of the thesis through a chapter breakdown, stating the methodological and knowledge contributions to the disciplines of Art History and Architecture, and the fields of Biennale, Curatorial and Urban Studies, giving an outlook on further research following on from the findings of this project. The "Appendix I: Research Methods" describes the transdisciplinary approach of this thesis that fuses methods from art history and urban studies and the benefits, challenges and limits that arose during this process. The chapter is divided into four sections: "Desk Research", "Fieldwork", "Ethical Considerations" and "Analysis".

The "Desk Research" section outlines two main contributions to my socio-historical and spatial understanding of my subject of focus – the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998–2018. Firstly, it describes how art historical and urban studies literature was reviewed, with a particular focus on the history of the Berlin Biennale and biennials in general. Secondly, it illustrates my process of map making of each Berlin Biennale venue over its twenty-year history. The "Fieldwork" section builds on the foundations that the desk research provides by detailing the way in which data was collected through site visits to all the Berlin Biennale's former exhibition venues and informal and in-depth interviews with a variety of Berlin Biennale actors. The "Analysis" section explores the three analytical tools employed in this research. Firstly, it describes the way in which urban studies provided guidance for an analysis of the Biennale's exhibition venues, particularly in the creation of venue categories and analysis of spaces based on their architectural histories, function and aesthetics. Secondly, this section describes how the Grounded Theory Method from the discipline of Sociology inspired the collection, coding and analysis of recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors to understand the relationships between these actors and what processes take place as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making. Thirdly, the "Analysis" chapter section describes the process by which the Berlin Biennale catalogues were analysed using codes derived from the interview analysis. The final part of the "Research Methods" chapter outlined the challenges and ethical considerations for the desk research, fieldwork and analysis methods. It demonstrated how I overcame a lack of access to archival material when conducting desk research; how ethical considerations and lack of access to interview subjects were

navigated for the fieldwork; and how I found solutions for the method of set of logistical challenges that Grounded Theory Method posed for the research timeline.

This dissertation answers the central research question “Why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers?” by examining: how global influences encourage all biennials of contemporary art to produce worlds in the city (Chapter 1); how the stage was set locally for Berlin’s first Biennale for Contemporary Art (Chapter 2); why certain types of urban space was used by the Biennale through a mapping of its exhibition venues from 1998–2018 (Chapter 3); and why finding, accessing and securing urban space vis-à-vis the curatorial vision is so significant for the Berlin Biennale practically and conceptually. This dissertation presents the results of four years of research motivated by a combination of personal and professional desires as a contemporary art curator working and living in Berlin. Underpinning each step of the research process has been my longing to understand the relationship between the local and global spheres of cultural production, particularly through the paradoxical exhibition model of the Biennial which claims an attachment to both. In doing so, it makes an academic contribution to the disciplines of Art History and Architecture and to the fields of Biennial, Urban and Curatorial Studies, and the cultural sector, by investigating the problematics of the biennial model and addressing a largely overlooked facet of biennial making and research: the biennial’s relationship with urban space.

2. Biennials of Contemporary Art: Making the World in the City

Berlin as a cultural capital, where also the contemporary art also plays a very big role, needs, somehow a space or an event...which is not galleries, which is not institutions, and which is not small project spaces and things, to make a bigger announcement, also for curators to say: what could contemporary art be today here in Berlin, you know?

(Regus, 8/7/2016, line 58)

2.1 Introduction

The Berlin Biennale did not emerge in a bubble, but through its producers' awareness of other global contemporary art events. To understand the Berlin Biennale, we need to understand biennials in general¹. The first section of this chapter reviews and reflects on the field of biennial studies from an art historical perspective. Rather than aiming to provide a definitive review of all research conducted on biennials, the chapter instead draws on research useful for contextualising the Berlin Biennale as a case study within a global context. Exploring the biennial model as a rich and reproductive format of exhibition making within the cultural sphere, the combined spatial and temporal properties of biennials are highlighted as a factor distinguishing the biennial from its museum counterparts. Introducing the various rationales for the creation of biennials throughout history, the year 1989 is considered to be a turning point for the history of biennial making. It is here where one can identify the crucial dual role that biennials

¹ Contemporary art biennials are referred to within art historical literature as both biennial(s) and as biennale(s). Both are interchangeable and refer to a biennial's temporal structure as a regular, recurring event; however the latter term implies a reference to the Venice Biennale, often considered the first large-scale exhibition to be carried out with this frequency (more information on this history can be found in the following pages of this chapter). In this dissertation, the term "biennial" will be used to describe biennials in general, while the Berlin Biennale will be referred to either as "the Berlin Biennale" or "the Biennale". For other individual biennial cases referred to, the specific title of the exhibition will be used with respect to the individual choices of that particular organisation or event.

play as both contributors to and victims of a globalisation of culture. This chapter also explores the links between globalisation, temporality and the contemporary art biennial. The biennial serves as a case study for exploring processes of producing and projecting the world in the city where urban space plays an important role through the conceptualisation of the city as a globally-connected node for cultural transaction. Finally, with regard to its global contextualisation outlined in the first section, the second section of this chapter introduces the case study of this research project – the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art – and the research questions that sit at the heart of this study.

2.2 The Proliferation and (Ir)relevance of the Post-1989 Contemporary Art Biennale

What is a Biennial?

In this section, a review of the literature on the field of biennial studies explores the biennial model as a rich and reproductive format of exhibition making within the global cultural sphere and highlights their combined spatial and temporal, or spatio-temporal properties, as a factor distinguishing the biennial from their museum counterparts. To date there are more than 300 biennials worldwide, the majority of which take place in cities, and all created for a variety of reasons (Efthymiou et al. 2018, p. 12). What they have in common is their regular episodic event format, where each biennial edition displays typically new productions of contemporary art through the staging of multiple exhibitions across multiple sites. Many biennials don't in fact take place every two years as their name suggests; the term biennial has now become an umbrella description for *any* large-scale temporary exhibition taking place every two, three, or even five years. While sharing key features, no two biennials are the same. Their proliferation, particularly since 1989, has been widely noted within the international cultural sphere: "To discuss the relevance of biennials is to discuss the basic conditions of today's art sector where, whether accepted or marginalised by the biennial system, all actors from artists to critics, curators, and even the public, are defined by their proliferation" (Misiano & Zabel 2003, pp. 92–93).

To chart the individual reasons for the conception of every biennial ever created is a task that falls outside the scope of this research. However, identifying the different reasons for their instigation can help us understand the broader context for the case study of this research – the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. As with the various ways in which biennials are perceived, the rationale for their creation – whether political, economic, ecological or social, or driven by forces within or outside the cultural sphere – are all shaped by the times from which they emerged. It is, of course, essential to point out that the reasons for the creation of many biennials are complex, and cannot usually be attributed to a single factor. The following is not a definitive list by any means but an illustration of the various reasons for the creation and persistent use of the biennial model within our cultural landscape.

Firstly, it is worthwhile asking: what *is* a biennial? There is a large variety of biennials which “could equally well have been categorized according to the art world – for example, [as] avant-garde biennales, biennales for new media art, or for paintings, prints, or sculpture” (Bydler 2010, p. 388). In a sense, all biennials are avant-garde because their primary goal is to celebrate the latest trends in whatever sub-discipline or geographical positioning of the arts they promote. Biennials are hybrid permanent and temporary structures existing as “an alternative to both the collection and the temporary exhibition, while at the same time having some features of both” (Smith 2016, p. 3). The biennial’s visual identity is significant; each “cultivates its (protean) image through press material, catalogues, guided tours, posters, and pamphlets” (Bydler 2010, p. 388). Yet, despite their proliferation and high level of visibility within the cultural sphere, they are largely under-researched (Filipovic et al. 2010, pp. 14–17).

Based on the way in which they are organised, curator René Block describes four biennial models (Block 2010, pp. 387–388 as cited by Bydler). First, there is the Venice Biennale model (founded in Italy in 1895) based on the grand world exhibition and which focuses on national representation. Second, there is the Sydney Biennial model (founded in Australia in 1973) that represents smaller-scale biennials organised around a curatorial theme. Third are biennials like the Gwangju Biennial model (founded in South Korea in 1995) that select artists irrespective of their represented countries. Lastly, there are biennials such as Manifesta (founded in Rotterdam in the Netherlands

in 1996) that continuously change location and their curatorial team (Bydler 2010, pp. 387–388).

There are differences, too, between biennials that develop from a grass-roots activity and those that could be described as top-down biennials. Grass-roots biennials are those that are developed by a community of artists and curators, have little or no municipal support and funding, lack an organisational infrastructure and often must find physical sites for each edition. Their central goals are to draw international attention to an existing local arts infrastructure, as in the case of the first Berlin Biennale, or for the benefit of a local community of artists such as the Ghetto Biennial in Haiti, hosted by the artists' collective, Atis Rezistans, who create a "chaotic, amorphous, de-institutionalised space for artistic production that attempts to offer a vibrant creative platform to artists from wide socioeconomic classes" (Ghetto Biennale, 2019). Top-down biennials by contrast, are often led by a municipality or major arts organisation with ample funding, and are usually situated within an established arts infrastructure. Their development tends to be driven by a focus on promoting an existing institution (often as a "project arm" of a museum or gallery) or the actual host city or town.

It is precisely because of its temporal and ephemeral structure that the biennial is able to function in a variety of ways and respond flexibly to its present time and geographical location. They are communicators of meaning, "a container of artworks, but also a mass medium in itself, and must as such establish a social space, that is, a place where meanings, narratives, histories, conversations, and encounters are actively produced and set in motion" (Sheikh 2010, p. 158). In this way, the biennial serves the cultural sphere as a counterpoint to globalising forces (Basualdo, 2010; Hoskote, 2012) whether positioning itself as a platform for political art (Marchart, 2008) or suggesting a model for a new political world order (Groys, 2009). The biennial can also be credited with the increased visibility of innovative socially engaged, pedagogical and discursive art and exhibition practices (Ferguson and Hoegsberg, 2010).

Biennials can be positioned within a hierarchy of other cultural institutions but also distinguished from them altogether due to their spatio-temporal structure:

We may situate it, logically, in between concrete institutions, such as museums, and supplementary ones, such as Kunsthallen and online sites. Indeed, biennials have evolved into internally diverse displays that occasionally, but regularly, spread themselves out across the range of exhibitionary venues of the city that hosts them, occupying each site, making each site different from what it normally is, while also connecting them, at least for their duration. Biennials, therefore, may be considered structural – they have become fundamental to the display of contemporary art. (Smith, 2012a)

The differentiation between the institutional nature of a biennial and that of other arts institutions is largely due to the temporality of their public visibility within a city. One on hand, the museum is where “contemporary art is slowed down” in the sense that it displays art “*having been contemporary*”. On the other is the biennial, the place to see “the art being made in the world right now” (Smith 2016, p. 4 original emphasis). The biennial is thus a crucial platform for the continuous development of how contemporary art is framed, “fundamental for the production, dissemination and discussion of contemporary art, and, most importantly, for the exploration of what art can actually do” (Hal & Almeida 2014, p. 10). Unlike the museum, a biennial’s temporariness can symbolically and structurally support the most experimental and newest forms of art. As is the case with the Berlin Biennale, most biennials were founded in response to non-existent or weak local art institutions unwilling or unable to support the experimental contemporary cultural production: Biennales “perceive themselves as temporary punctual infrastructures that remain forever contemporary and unburdened by collecting and preserving what the vagaries of time render simply modern” (Filipovic 2010, p. 326).

The biennial as an institution can thus be considered as something of a paradox. It is precisely its recurring spatio-temporal structure that surpasses the museum by responding more flexibly and experimentally to today’s culture that also renders it an “unstable institution” (Basualdo, 2010; Hlavajova, 2010): “Their ability to resonate is almost always accompanied by a degree of fragility, be it institutional, financial or political” (Hal & Almeida 2014, p. 10). Biennales, like all other arts institutions, require a

sustainable infrastructure (human resources, funding, and physical space) in order to support a continuous two-year exhibition cycle. Today, when even the most permanent of arts institutions cannot be considered completely safe from political or economic changes that threaten their very existence, it seems that the temporariness of biennials puts them at even more risk.

The biennial model persists despite these infrastructural challenges because of the level of public attention it receives in comparison to other forms of presentation of contemporary art. In a relatively short amount of time, biennials have become, “one of the most vital and visible sites for contemporary art and the production, distribution, and generation of public discourse around it” (Filipovic et al. 2010, p. 15). Others argue even more strongly that they have become *the* major vehicles of contemporary art for a wider public than museums could ever imagine (Smith, 2012a). Biennales have brought a plethora of artistic practices to a broader audience of otherwise sporadic museum- or gallery-goers: “The biennials are a sort of *democratic* alibi for contemporary art. There is something for everybody. They attract attention, appeal to a large and mixed audience, and create contacts in nations that have no modern or contemporary art museums” (Bydler 2010, p. 398). It is precisely because of the biennial’s relationship with the city that such a resonance is possible. The biennial offers the public an escape from their normal urban daily or weekly routine by making it possible to experience art staged in space and at times where and when that would not normally be possible:

[Biennials] are cosmopolitan (of the city) in this basic sense; and in the broadest, international sense, that is, linking what is, in effect, the art produced in a number of cities. In being exceptional yet recurrent events in a particular city, yet deploying a form that is used in many other cities, biennials take on some of the character of festivals: crowds of people gathered to have a good time, to be entertained by art, to participate in an occasion on which behaviours apart from the norm is expected, to be spectators at a carnival, yet secure in the promise that normal life will resume when the circus leaves town. (Smith 2016, p. 7)

The spectacular element of the biennial format described above stands accused of infiltrating and dominating the museum sector, encouraging a relentless competition for

financial resources and the public's attention, and pushing both the museum and the biennial to "the verge of burn-out and domination by crude financial targets, as elephantine ambitions overwhelm all other criteria" (Bonami & Esche 2005, pp. 6–9). Here, cultural competition exists within the city and, due to the replication of the biennial model internationally, between cities too. A so-called "biennial fatigue" has thus overshadowed the discourse where academics and industry professionals alike bemoan the oversaturation of the international cultural sphere where "every conceivable cultural context was to host some form or variety of these exhibitions" (Enwezor 2003, pp. 94–119). Most criticised is a "streamlining of contemporary art into a "globally homogenous commodity" (Bydler 2010, p. 398) where the biennial format is internationally replicated ad nauseam as "theme A, with subthemes a, b, c and d, x number of artists, y number of works each, in z amount of space" (Smith, 2012a).

A Brief History of Biennials

To understand what led to this oversaturation and homogenisation, it is important to understand the historical legacy of the biennials that have gone before. It is a history where the urban features strongly in its conceptualisation and functioning. The following illustrates how biennials throughout history have been produced for a variety of reasons, with the period around 1989 serving as a key turning point in the history of biennial making. It is here where one can identify the crucial dual role biennials began to play as both contributors to and victims of a globalisation of culture.

Biennials are descendants of the range of art or industry-specific trade fairs and international expositions and that spread across the globe from the late 18th century, such as the Great Exhibition of London in 1851 (Jones, 2010; Rocas, 2010). The political climate at the time – marked by the empire, the nation-state and colonialism – produced expositions that brought selections of the world's newest cultural, scientific and technological offerings to metropolitan centres across Europe. These temporary, large-scale exhibitions enabled a nation to secure its own position as culturally significant within a growing global network of cities. Evolving from the exposition as an art specific event whereby nations could present their finest artistic representations of the time was the Venice Biennale, founded in 1895 as the first art biennial. While Venice remains

one of the few biennials to keep such a format promoting national representation today, the fundamental remaining feature of these world fairs is a “spatial experience of urban renewal” that is still present in today’s biennials (Roces 2010, p. 57). Even as early as 1895, the selection of an urban location to house the national exposition was a deliberate manoeuvre to position the city of Venice, rather than Rome as an important “cosmopolitan centre of the liberal arts and free speech” (Roces 2010, pp. 57–76). It is no coincidence that many biennials today are named after the cities they take place in.

It was also the Venice Biennale that first introduced aesthetic uses of non-gallery urban sites that we see in so many of today’s biennials: the former-urban/industrial/military site as a new kind of gallery for contemporary art. In the 1980s, when the curators of the Venice Biennale pushed for the Arsenale and Corderie (rope making factory) to be opened up for exhibitions in addition to its inherited Giardini site, it inspired a raft of similar approaches to aging urban spaces at biennials such as Johannesburg, Gwangju, Istanbul and Havana (Roces 2010, pp. 74–75). These spaces offered a postmodern experience to the visitor that was simultaneously “uneven but dynamic” where “objects gave way to environments and performative provocations” (Roces 2010, pp. 74–75). We will return to the theme of the aesthetic uses of urban space in biennials in the following chapters, but for now, let’s explore the ways in which the biennial has evolved since this time.

Bydler suggests three broad categories within which one can examine biennials along historical lines. Firstly, there are capitalist-philanthropic enterprises initiated at the end of the 19th to the mid-20th centuries, such as the Venice Biennale, the Carnegie International in the USA in 1896, and later Sydney, Australia in 1973 and Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1951. Secondly, there are those initiated by events during the post-Second World War period, marked by bloc politics or reactions against such alignments (Bydler 2010, p. 388). Examples of this second category include the establishment of Documenta in Kassel, Germany in 1955, post-war iterations of the Venice Biennale, the international biennials of graphic arts in Krakow in Poland in 1966, Ljubljana in Slovenia in 1955, the Havana Biennial founded in Cuba in 1984, and Dak’Art in 1989 in Senegal. Lastly, there are more flexible and event-oriented biennials that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s, such as the Istanbul Biennial in Turkey – although it was actually

founded in 1987 – Gwangju in South Korea in 1995, the nomadic biennial of Manifesta, founded in Rotterdam in 1994 and Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates in 1993 (Bydler 2010, p. 388).

Biennials stem from artistic, political, municipal/state or alternative origins (Tallant, 2013). Biennials with “artistic origins” are those that have developed out of an existing arts infrastructure, whether they were instigated by arts institutions, arts workers or sought to highlight the existing arts infrastructure on an international stage.

“Institutional” biennials include the Carnegie International instigated by the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Whitney Biennial by the Whitney Museum of American Art in the USA (founded in 1932), the Taipei Biennial by the Taipei Museum of Fine Arts in the then Republic of China (founded in 1992) or the Shanghai Biennial by the Shanghai Art Museum in China (founded in 1996). These stand in contrast to those of the Athens Biennale in Greece (founded 2007) and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India (founded in 2012) established by artists, curators and art critics working in the local art scene.

Lastly, there are biennials incorporating an artistic reaction to, or synthesis with, the former global ideologies of Cold War bloc politics of East and West, by changing international perceptions of the cultural production stemming from these locations.

Examples include the Havana Biennial, the Istanbul Biennial, the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil (founded in 1951), the Sydney Biennial in Australia and the Moscow Biennial in Russia (founded in 2005) (Tallant, 2013).

“Political” biennials are those “that are primarily initiated as a reaction or response to significant political events” (Tallant, 2013). Examples include documenta “initiated after the Nazi dictatorship to reconcile the German public life with international modernity” and also in part to rival the GDR’s Dritte Deutsche Kunstausstellung in Dresden in 1953 (Hughes 2005, p. 136); Manifesta, a nomadic European biennial which was largely inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and “the subsequent redrawing of Europe’s geographical and political map” to bring together East and West (Hughes 2005, p. 148); the now defunct Johannesburg Biennial in South Africa (1995) which was instigated at the start of a new post-apartheid regime, and signified the end of a cultural boycott towards South African artists; and the Gwangju Biennale described as a

“political memorial” marking the beginning of the democratization of South Korea (Tallant, 2013).

Biennials with “municipal or state origins”, while not dealing with significant international or national political events, highlight the local political influences that sparked their beginnings (Tallant, 2013). For example, the Lyon Biennial in France (1991) was instigated after the French Ministry of Culture decided to move the Paris Biennial to Lyon in the name of “artistic decentralization”; the Singapore Biennial in Singapore (2006) was an initiative of the local National Arts Council (NAC) to spearhead the developments of the arts in Singapore; the Thessaloniki Biennial in Greece (2007) was created by politicians in Northern Greece in reaction to the announcement of the arrival of the Athens Biennial in the south of Greece; while the Tirana Biennial in Albania (2001) was the brainchild of former artist, mayor of Tirana and now Prime Minister Edi Rama (Tallant, 2013).

Lastly, biennials with “alternative” origins describe relatively recent phenomena such as ecological or anti-biennials (Tallant, 2013). “Ecological” biennials, such as the Echigo-Tsumari Triennial in Niigata Prefecture in Japan (2000), were instigated to “revitalize the region, provide disaster recovery and improve the lives and spirits of the people” after floods, earthquake and heavy snowfall; similarly, *Prospect* in New Orleans in the USA (2008), was initiated to reinvigorate the city after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Other alternative biennials include the anti-biennial movement, which coincided with claims from within the cultural sector that the biennial model had grown tired and stale (Tallant, 2013). A spate of biennials after the mid-1990s hijacked the biennial label, exploiting its notoriety and ability to attract funding and public attention for a variety of uses. Examples include the Emergency Biennial that began in Grozny, Chechnya, in 1995. This on-going travelling biennial initiative by independent curator Evelyne Joannou invites artists to donate art works to create a collection which will become the foundation of a museum in Grozny (Tallant, 2013). By contrast, the Sixth Caribbean Biennial that took place in the Dominican Republic in the year 2000 was created by the artist Maurizio Cattelan and curator Jens Hofmann as a critique and parody of traditional biennials. This biennial saw a number of artists flown to the Dominican Republic for a time but without actually showing any artwork (Tallant, 2013).

Many biennial scholars denote the 1980s, and in particular 1989, as a turning point for the history of biennial making. Curator Charles Esche identifies five features that distinguish the post-1989 biennial from those staged before. Firstly, biennials of the post-1989 era display “a symbolic recognition of the art of the geopolitical periphery” (Esche, as cited in Osborne 2015a, p. 179). While Havana preceded, and potentially instigated, this movement we can find other examples in biennials such as the aforementioned Manifesta, Johannesburg and Gwangju Biennials (Hughes, 2005). Secondly, biennials after 1989 demonstrate “a shift towards thematic curatorial authorship” (Esche, as cited in Osborne 2015a, p. 179).

Biennials are thus now responsible for a major shift in the history of exhibition making, signifying the rise of the curator as *creative* exhibition author, as opposed to its more pragmatic brother, the exhibition *maker* (Brenson, 1998; O’Neill, 2006, 2012; Buren, 2010; Martini and Martini, 2010 my emphasis). For example, this is evident in the popular curatorial model adopted by biennials that see a main exhibition theme conceptualised by the chief curator which is articulated through existing or newly-commissioned works of numerous invited international artists. Following Esche, a third key feature of post-1989 biennials is their task to pose “socio-political questions” complementing a fourth feature that emphasises “debate and a strong discursive or pedagogical dimension” (Esche, as cited in Osborne 2015a, p. 179). For example, Catherine David’s extensive programme of events, symposia and workshops in her *100 Days of Documenta* in 1997. Lastly, and despite the field of biennial studies lacking research that approaches the biennial from both an art historical and urban studies perspective, the post-1989 biennial features “a demographically based cultural self-definition in terms of ‘the political and social mix of the cities that host them’” (Esche, as cited in Osborne 2015a, p. 179). In other words, and as we have seen in the above brief history of biennials, while international political and social shifts have influenced the development of biennials, they are ultimately a cultural phenomenon that transpired from the urban. Cities are overwhelmingly not only their geographical location, but help define them ideologically.

2.3 Producing and Projecting the World in the City

The reasons for these post-1989 biennial shifts are revealed by exploring how the biennial produces and projects the world in the city through its interconnected links with globalisation, temporality and the urban. This chapter section does this in three ways. Firstly, globalisation of the international cultural sphere is defined as a process contributing to and in turn shaped by the production of biennials. Secondly, it argues that the biennial speaks of the present day, the past and the future from the position of the present and thus has become representative of contemporaneity of the cultural sphere. Thirdly, it claims that it is through the biennial that the city is conceived as a globally-connected node for cultural transaction.

Globalisation

In 2010, George Baker declared that in order to understand biennials, we need to rigorously define “globalisation” itself (Baker 2010, pp. 447–448). He, along with other scholars, suggests that globalisation should be viewed as a process and different to the term “global”, similar to how we distinguish “modernisation” from “the modern”. Charlotte Bydler elaborates further on this process, “whereby relations of mutual influence or dependence join particular events and phenomena around the world” (Bydler 2010, p. 385). The global changes of the 1980s, such as advances in technology and economic developments, coincided with intellectual and epistemological shifts that were fundamental for the worldwide proliferation of the biennial model (Bydler, 2004, 2010; Basualdo, 2010). Because the circulation of art practices was tied to a global division of labour, when digital technology eased the accumulation of wealth, and new financial centres opened in once financially peripheral parts of the world, this, “in turn, affected international cultural tourism and art markets” (Bydler 2010, p. 382). Simultaneously, the cultural sector was also going through a process of intellectual change, where ideas of global “centres” and “peripheries” were also being challenged. This meant that the technological and economic developments brought “safe, reliable, and affordable infrastructure – both physical and for telecommunication – [which] enabled geographically far flung relations to be entertained within a minimum of time and effort” (Bydler 2010, p. 382).

Reflecting the way in which cultural producers embraced these changes are the recent statistics demonstrating the dramatic increase of biennials established during this time. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s there was a rise in the number of biennials established worldwide, which has continued to the present day (Efthymiou et al. 2018, p. 13). The ease with which biennials could be produced and replicated throughout the world contributed to a pluralization of voices within contemporary art that strove to decentralise the art world and end a generalised Western art hegemony (Bydler 2004, p. 383). The biennial has contributed immensely to re-mapping the globe of so-called “art centres”, challenging hitherto pre-existing geo-cultural constellations and shifting balances of power (Obrist 2010a, p. 6). Curator Okwui Enwezor illustrates how such re-mappings are,

[...]one way to engage in the limits and blind spots of the professional site of contemporary art. I believe that large-scale exhibitions are seriously addressing these issues, even if we may never be in complete agreement about what they add to the critical discourse of globalisation. (Enwezor et al. 2003, pp. 153–154)

Particularly, biennials are valued for their potential for transforming previously dubbed urban peripheries of the art world, into new art world centres. Not only can the biennial serve as a catalyst for new cultural production within a city, on a wider scale, it can “include a plurality of centres...and can also form a bridge between the local and the global” (Obrist 2010b, p. 6). However, with such activity comes the expectation for biennial producers to deal with the important question of how a biennial’s focus on a particular place can also “produce knowledge that is able to transcend its own conditions and languages and that can circulate beyond its own location” (Rogoff 2009, pp. 106–115). Globalisation thus presents the biennial as a double-edged sword: on one hand, the ease at which biennials could spread throughout the world contributed to a pluralisation and decentralisation of the art world. On the other hand, however, the changes that globalisation brought also homogenised and standardised the cultural sector.

The expectation that biennials should be able to speak to both an international audience and a local one is precisely because, as products of globalisation, they have become “distributed events essential to reflecting contemporary art’s contemporaneity within their own local environment and across the world” (Smith 2016, pp. 1-2). The expectation of a biennial to be internationally distributed is also seen negatively as simply part of globalisation’s related processes of financialisation and Americanisation (Baker 2010, pp. 447-448). This analysis of biennials implies that their role in the globalisation of the cultural sphere is a kind of franchising of contemporary art through different urban outposts. Here, the biennial’s role as both a contributor and victim of globalisation is revealed: on one hand, the international replication and distribution of the biennial model allowed the creation of a “dense field of mobility between artists, curators, gallerists, critics, collectors and visitors” (Smith 2016, pp. 1-2). On the other hand, this geographic and demographic contraction of the art world led to a homogenisation of the cultural sphere through the international standardisation of the production of the display of art for an international art-going public (Bydler 2010, pp. 382-383).

This kind of networked atlas of cultural activity, whether pluralising or homogenising, is exactly what enables the biennial to survive. While the accelerated processes of globalisation in the 1980s accentuated such activity, the local-global network structure of the biennial can be traced to its late 19th century nationalistic and colonial roots (Jones 2010, p. 72). Despite a desire to distance today’s biennials from out of date approaches to the interpretation of culture from this time (Jones 2010, p. 72; Smith 2016, p. 4), strategies of a (false) totalisation of the globe still prevail (Baker 2010, pp. 447-448). Totalisation is a process of globalisation understood as a worldwide or exhaustive enumeration and classification of cultural objects, such as artwork or biennials (Bydler 2010, p. 385). It describes a style of curating that is often associated with biennial production: a style that all too often attempts to be encyclopaedic, that tries, through the display of contemporary art, to present the world in the city. In the case of biennials, artworks are inserted *into* (in order to complete) a picture of *the* world (Jones 2010, p. 71).

In this way, the biennial, as Osborne suggests, presents itself as a hegemonic model within a new kind of global art history that feeds a collective fantasy providing comprehensive artistic coverage of the globe, through a kind of world system of art. “It is a powerful, self-actualizing institutional fantasy. Within this system, the biennial would appear as the dominant form, articulating the relations between itself and other elements ...‘over-determining’ these other elements and the relations between them, whilst being determined in its own development by them in turn” (Peter Osborne, 2015, p. 177). Such desires of “mapping” the world through biennials only reinforces their reputation as Western cosmopolitan colonisers (Baker, 2010; Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo, 2010) whose enlightenment project,

[...]secures a kind of nationalism in the very act of transcending it. The founding of a biennial pledges to renew knowledge perpetually, stakes a claim for the cosmopolitan urban centre to re-join a wider international community (the common phrase is “put our city [back] on the map”), and makes a pedagogical promise to visitors to bring them the world (in the form of an encyclopedic and renewing art exhibition). (Jones 2010, p. 76)

Contemporaneity

Temporality is a key aspect to the production of the renewing exhibition format of a biennial. As this chapter section argues, the biennial speaks of the present day, the past and the future from the position of the present and thus has become representative of contemporaneity of the cultural sphere. With a cyclical event-based structure that prioritises newness and constant self-invention, the biennial creates and fulfils expectations that they are at the edge of the present and taking us into the future. The biennial can thus be defined as exhibition format representative of contemporaneity in two ways: it frames an art produced in, or that speaks to our *actual* present time; and, brings together different historical times in the present.

Biennials are often claimed as the most appropriate vehicle for presenting the art of our present (Smith 2012a, p. 3). To fulfil this expectation of reflecting an up-to-date view of

artistic interpretations of the current world, newness and constant self-invention become prioritised parts of the biennial production process. Newness, in the sense of the biennial, is practiced through the invitation of new curators for each edition, the new themes they are invited to develop, the newly-commissioned artworks on display, and new venues that frame that work. Smith (2016) explains that it is the biennial's preference for showing almost entirely new or recent work that contributes to its spectacular event format and plays the role of the anticipation builder. It is precisely their temporal structure, their "regularly timetabled openness to contemporaneity – to art to come, whatever it may be" that distinguishes them as more able to reflect the present than other arts institutions (Smith, 2016, p. 3).

The biennial producers evoke newness by making sure that each edition is different from its predecessor, and its competitors. This process is crucial for the recurring, repetitive arts event to stay relevant to the contemporary circumstances (Smith 2016, p. 3). The challenge for biennial producers then, lies in the task of realising a set of internationally-accepted temporal standards: to produce exhibitions that not only speak to the viewer of the present day, but also speak to the future from their position of the present. Only in this way can the biennial fulfil expectations that they are the most representative exhibition format for contemporaneity on the edge of the present and capable of taking us into the future (Smith, 2012b; Griffin, 2013; Osborne, 2013).

The biennial's association with contemporaneity has become so strong that their producers now stand accused of "overwriting" their own history in the face of keeping their reputation as innovators (Hlavajova 2010, pp. 295–296). The positioning of each biennial edition is often conceptualised as "separate, independent, unrelated, eccentric, disparate curatorial projects that are in fact often brought to life through a principal of opposition to previous editions or even through a strategic denial of what has been done before" (Hlavajova 2010, pp. 295–296).

The conceptualisation of the biennial here reiterates O'Neill, Buren and Brenson's arguments of the biennial as a facilitator of the curator as *creative* exhibition author (Brenson, 1998; O'Neill, 2006, 2012; Buren, 2010 my emphasis). While the biennial model can be celebrated for its ability to promote the generation and realisation of new

curatorial ideas and productions, such expectations also unrealistically imagine the biennial curator to be all-knowing: they must apply a universal knowledge of international contemporary art in order not replicate previous exhibition themes.

Just as globalisation brought about a contracting of the art world through the biennial, the biennial exhibition brings together different times (histories) in one place in the present. It frames an art produced in, or that speaks to our *actual* present time, as well as art from a variety of pasts. Since 1989, the emergence of biennials has been characterised by two by-products of globalisation that bring together “different social times – as a *historically actual* temporality”: the intertwined, features of artistic “contemporaneity” and geo-political “globality” (Peter Osborne, 2015, pp. 175–176). In this way, the biennial reflects a “global” artistic interpretation of the world delivered to and viewed by the public in actual, or real time. The biennial makes use of the time-space compression that globalisation produces to enable the viewer access to the present and many different kinds of pasts through the display of contemporary art. As Smith explains, “If we are contemporaries with the artist, the artwork makes its claim upon us in the name of our times, that is, our shared temporality. If we are not contemporaries with the artist, the artwork invites the possibility of such a sharing – in a past time, or an imagined other time” (Smith 2012b, p. 144). In the next section, we explore the city as the physical and symbolic site of these temporal sharings of contemporaneity.

The Urban

This section argues that the city is conceived through the biennial as a globally-connected node for cultural transaction. However, expectations to curate for both local and international audiences creates an uncomfortable disconnect between global and local spheres, and ultimately plays into the hands of neoliberalist creative city branding agendas. As Paul O’Neill and Claire Doherty have documented, since the beginning of the 1990s, the role of the curator generally had changed to that of a “linchpin in negotiations between artist and place” (Neill & Doherty 2011, p. 3). This role change was signalled by curators becoming more active in the production of artworks, a greater

consideration of the need to work from an informed, embedded position within society, and a responsibility to account for the spending of public funds on artworks that should be locally as well as internationally significant (Neill & Doherty 2011, p. 3). Biennials, more specifically, were not excluded from this shift and saw a turn towards experimental formats or the laboratory model with a raft of public events such as seminars, schools, investigative projects, public demonstrations and performances (Rogoff 2009, pp. 106–115). If producing a biennial means to curate with respect to the specificity of a place, and as the majority of biennials take place within cities, curating biennials is to respond to the specific urban conditions of those places.

Thus, biennials are trapped in a paradox: by their very nature of functioning internationally (whether intentionally or not), they also jeopardise their relationship to any particular place. This problem surfaces because biennial curating inherently involves the fundamental dual challenge of meeting expectations of putting a city on a map for an international and professional audience whilst serving the needs of a local public. As curator and writer Anne Szefer Karlsen describes this seemingly impossible task: “As a curator, you are frequently asked to bring the world as represented through art and artists to a place, and to be able to see the place in question in a way that is valuable both to the local art scene and audience as well as to their international equivalents” (Karlsen 2014, p. 75). Globalisation’s promise of increased communication flows may have provided professionals with real-time updates on art trends around the world, but it has also underscored the separation between the international and professional cultural sphere from its local context (Bydler 2010, p. 382; Boyadjiev 2003). In the biennial producers’ desire to create global, spectacular events some describe as “the penis envy of globalisation” (Boyadjiev 2003, p. 124), risk driving a wedge between producers from within the cultural sphere and the local audiences who host them, after the party’s over: “The professionals go home or go to the next site of action. Whereas the local audience is, most likely, left with a frustrating feeling that the globalized (art) world was here, to be sure, but has just left in order to manifest itself elsewhere” (Boyadjiev, 2003, p. 124).

Many biennials thus respond to this dilemma thusly: either through supporting their city’s local arts infrastructure through strengthening ties with global art networks, or

through tying the biennial “strictly to a certain location, to link its production and contents to the location and hope that someone will come around” (Wulffen 2003, p. 197). Embracing the local in this way allows biennial producers an opportunity to explore innovative ways of working that respond to globalisation by being culturally and artistically significant in the local, yet transcend established power relations between these locales and other places (Hanru 2005, p. 57). For example, the biennial can function as a laboratory for the democratisation of the arts for a wider public through experimental artistic and curatorial practices, that give a discursive space for voicing public concerns about local urban issues such as citizenship rights (Groys 2009, p. 61; Hoskote 2012). However, despite these positive tropes of the biennial, how biennial producers conceive of their local public, and their particular concerns for a largely international public, must be analysed and criticised. “One must ask what assumptions of place and participation are at work, what notions of subjectivity, territoriality and citizenship are invoked. And one must ask in what way participation is valued in terms of cultural consumption and legitimation” (Sheikh 2010, p. 157).

One could also question whether a biennial’s thematic engagement with urban issues such as creative city branding, urban development, gentrification and the right to the city (among others) can be taken genuinely, or whether they are automatically undermined by the biennial’s negative association via contributing to these processes (Gielen, 2009; Hardt, 2009). The biennial, as we explored above, is a model of exhibition making replicated and distributed across more than 300 (mostly) cities worldwide which rapidly developed into a brand in and of itself. There is no doubt that a hierarchy exists in the international biennial network where “art worlds outside the urban network remained marginal in terms of globalisation. The unity of the global art village was maintained at the price of the subordination of quirky, heterogeneous local art worlds, which were considered as being less enlightened and prestigious than their international counterparts.” (Bydler, 2010, p. 393). Thus, through employing the city as its main site of production, the biennial ultimately plays into the hands of neoliberalist creative city branding.

As the number of biennials increases worldwide, competition to remain attractive and relevant becomes fierce. One of the ways in which a biennial can seek to retain its

relevance within the cultural sphere is to utilise the city as a key part of the marketing of a biennial:

The uniqueness of a particular place and culture is not only a question of nationalism and nation-branding, though, but also a means of establishing capital as well as increased revenues through (art) tourism. Biennials are, in this way, part of the experience economy, with the whole experience of the city and the exhibition being the commodity rather than the singular works of art displayed. (Sheikh 2010, p. 155)

Drawing on urban scholar David Harvey's concept of monopoly rent, Sheikh highlights how biennials have to brand themselves not only to achieve cultural hegemony, but also to extract both symbolic and real capital. Thus the biennial brands itself through images of the city in two ways: "partly the city as attraction and allure, giving context and value to the biennial, and partly the glamour and prestige of the biennial branding and upgrading the otherwise nondescript or even negative image of the city, region, or country" (Sheikh 2010, p. 156). The biennial not only cultivates its national and international audiences by emphasising the uniqueness of place, but also establishes a connection between this and other places (Sheikh 2010, pp. 156–157)

Ironically, the increasing "filling up" of the world with biennials is now actually contributing to the way in which some cities define themselves (Biennial Foundation et al. 2014, p. 17). Examples of this can be seen in the raft of post-1989 biennials that were launched in line with new political-economic demands to open cities for business through a range of corporate, municipal, national and regional development projects and property markets (Enwezor, 2003, p. 18; Peter Osborne, 2015, p. 180). In this way, the biennial is geared to "the game of capitalist distribution, consumption, and promotion...[becoming] a catalyst of financial investments, popular interest, and global networking" (Hlavajova 2010, p. 298).

This chapter section explored how the biennial produces and projects the world in the city through its interconnected links with globalisation, temporality and the urban.

Firstly, it outlined, how the process of globalisation of the international cultural sphere both contributes, and in turn is shaped by, the production of biennials. Secondly, it argued that through striving to represent contemporaneity, the biennial speaks of the present day, the past and the future from the position of the present and thus prioritizes the production of newness. Thirdly, it argued that through the biennial's conceptualisation of the city as a globally-connected node for cultural transaction, it creates an uncomfortable disconnect between global and local spheres and ultimately plays into the hands of neoliberalist creative city branding agendas.

2.4 Conclusion: The Berlin Biennale as a Case Study

This chapter reviewed and reflected on the field of biennial studies from an art historical perspective, providing a framework for the following contextualisation of the Berlin Biennale as a case study within a global context. The proliferation and relevance of the biennial model was explored with their spatio-temporal properties highlighted as a factor distinguishing the biennial from their museum counterparts within the cultural sphere. Introducing the various rationales for the creation of biennials throughout history, the chapter demarcated the 1980s as a turning point for the history of biennial making and the dual role that biennials have played since as both contributors to and victims of a globalisation of culture. Lastly, this chapter explored how the biennial serves as a case for exploring processes of producing and projecting the world in the city where urban space plays an important role through the conceptualisation of the city as globally connected node for cultural transactions.

Within the global context outlined above, the case study of this research project – The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art – stands out as a useful case study within the wider biennial studies field precisely because its study and historical documentation is often omitted from the literature. This is rather curious, especially because not only did it emerge during the dramatic increase of biennial development in the 1990s, but also at the very geographical site of so much international social, political and cultural change. Furthermore, despite its temporal and geographical positioning, unlike its biennial counterparts in other parts of the world which focused on uniting European countries

after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or reconfiguring the global art world map, they focused inwards on the city itself. It is these facts, in addition to their self-proclaimed mandate in 2015 as a biennial “in dialogue with the city” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010) that helped formulate the research questions at the heart of this study that will be explored in the following chapters:

1. Why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers?
2. When, why and how did the Berlin Biennale’s dialogue with the city begin?
3. Why and in what ways did Berlin Biennale producers continue to use urban space as exhibition space?
4. How and why has that use of urban space changed over time?

In asking these questions, the Berlin Biennale offers itself as a fascinating and useful case for exploring a number of urgent issues. Firstly, its analysis makes a contribution to a field of research within art history still very much in its infancy. Despite the claims of overwhelming significance for the cultural sphere, its proliferation, and even oversaturation, the biennial still suffers from a lack of academic scrutiny. While the past decade has seen an increase in discourse about the biennial, much of the analysis has been produced by those active in their production. In 2010, the conference publication, *The Biennial Reader*, called on the field of art history to ensure that the biennial “must not remain unexamined, all the more so precisely because its relevance and critical currency are so profoundly contested” (Filipovic et al. 2010, p. 14). Despite these calls, it still took until 2018 for the first scientific survey of biennials to be conducted (Efthymiou *et al.*, 2018).

Additionally, despite the fact that most biennials are located in cities, there is a fundamental lack of research conducted on contemporary art biennials from fields of research such as urban studies. The observations one can make through a study of an urban biennial can be used as a way to explore “microcosm(s) of societies” (Harding & Blokland 2014, p. 19). This research does this in two ways. Firstly, the biennial is a case study into the effects of globalisation of the cultural sphere, specifically in that, despite biennials being accused of being irrelevant or out of date as an exhibition model, they have never been more in demand and persist as a major contributor to the global

cultural sphere. Surely, this says something about the kind of society we currently live in, where the framing of contemporary art through temporary and ephemeral exhibition models such as biennials seem to be more preferable than their more long-term and permanent counterparts found in museums and galleries. This raises fundamental questions too, about the way in which the public views and engages with contemporary art has changed due to global processes of globalisation.

Finally, the case study of the Berlin Biennale serves as an exploration of the jarring of two temporalities – that of the city and that of the biennial. The consensus that biennials adhere to a continuous cyclical format and yet still constantly reinvent its thematic and artistic content has brought a plethora of problems for the producers who organise them (Smith, 2012a). Through examining the Berlin Biennale, we discover that the increasing privatisation and commercialisation of cities' real estate poses real problems for the producers of biennials, and more generally for the population of cities in general. It raises questions about who has access to urban space for cultural production and under what conditions, a subject explored in depth in the following chapters.

3. Setting the Stage for Berlin's First Biennale for Contemporary Art

[es] war ein super Klima in Berlin, ja weil alles offenbar war, die Künstler kam, es war, es pulsierte derartig unglaublich, und das hat sich natürlich auch, das hat in der Stadt wahr genommen und dass hat man von aussen, also, die aussen Wahrnehmung von Berlin war magnetisch.

(Wiesel, 25/11/2016, line 28)

3.1 Introduction

My research began by asking what the Berlin Biennale's mandate – a self-appointed “dialogue with the city” – actually meant. How far back did this dialogue go? What instigated it? How did it manifest and was it the same today as it was when the Biennale started? The events that set the stage for the first Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art are outlined in this chapter in three ways: by the socio-political developments that took place between 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall and 1996 when the production of the first Berlin Biennale began; by the culture of *Zwischennutzung* (interim use) of urban space; and by the establishment of the Biennale's host organisation, the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW).

The political and social climate after the fall of the Wall saw Berlin repositioned symbolically as political and physical reunification of the city took place. Rapid and large-scale urban development processes sought to reinvent the image of the city to a certain ideology in a bid for participation in global city competitions. This section of the chapter outlines how these political and urban developments had a profound impact on the city's arts sector. A decline in funding for cultural institutions in general shortly after the fall of the Wall was followed by political campaigns that provided financial support to selected “high” culture while largely ignoring a rapidly developing grassroots scene.

A culture of *Zwischennutzung* of urban space developed from a long existing tradition of re-appropriation of urban spaces by marginalised groups in the city. This section explores the ways in which *Zwischennutzung* worked – the types of interim uses and how the city officials managed them – as well as the implications of such processes, such as opportunism, creative experimentation and the desire to fill gaps in the existing arts infrastructure versus colonisation of urban space. The formation of physical gaps within the urban landscape, in the form of empty buildings, along with the slow progress of urban management policies, allowed the short term creative use of urban space that in some cases developed into permanent arts infrastructure developments.

The KW was one such institution that remained as a permanent part of Berlin's contemporary arts infrastructure. This last chapter section follows the history and trajectory of the KW – the people involved, the urban space it claimed for itself and the professionalisation of the institution. In particular, it highlights key institutional events and changes essential to the conceptualisation of the Biennale such as the exhibition *37 Räume*, infrastructural changes and internationalisation efforts.

Geographically, this chapter focuses on one area of Berlin in particular, that of Berlin-Mitte, particularly the Spandauer Vorstadt. While it is acknowledged that there were various changes within the cultural sector across the city during this time, and that, as with any other metropolitan arts sector, networks transcend neighbourhood boundaries, there are several reasons for focusing on this area in particular. Firstly, as the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art is the organising institution of the Berlin Biennale, it is and always has been located in this part of the city. Secondly, the political processes that reassessed the ownership and managed the use of urban space, allowing places such as the KW to develop in this area, were unique to this part of Berlin. Thirdly, Mitte was also the site of much intense urban development after the fall of the Wall, due largely in part to government policies that saw a need to reposition this part of the city as the new centre of a reunited Berlin. Lastly, Mitte was also the place where much of the rapid professionalisation of Berlin's art scene took place after the fall of the Wall, where studios (such as those housed in the KW), commercial contemporary art galleries and temporary exhibitions took place alongside, and some argue in contribution to, the gentrification of the area.

3.2 Berlin's Socio-political Climate 1989–1996

While this dissertation cannot cover the history of the symbolic repositioning of Berlin in detail, it is important to chart how these changes impacted the political and physical landscape of the city in order to understand the context of the origins of the Berlin Biennale.

Urban historians Cochrane and Jonas believe that the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and fall of the Berlin Wall meant that the city took on a new symbolism. They argue that during an era of major restructuring of global politics, Berlin had to reposition itself, not only within the nation of Germany, but also within the global arena. This resulted in Berlin having to simultaneously reinsert itself into a changing set of regional, national and international processes, and reformulate itself as a united capital city (Cochrane & Jonas 1999, p. 146).²

The impact of the fall of the Wall on Berlin lasted for many years. Writing in 1999, Cochrane and Jonas demonstrate the lingering and perhaps unresolved questions of this major geo-political shift and the effect on the perception of Berlin's identity. Against the backdrop of the collapse of communism and what they saw as the apparent integration of Eastern Europe into what used to be called Western capitalism they point out, "The question remains whether Berlin is now an outpost of Western Europe (and the European Union) at the gateway to the East, or at the centre of a new Europe which stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals" (Cochrane & Jonas 1999, p. 147).

The fall of the Wall marked a turning point for Berlin to evolve from its status as a divided city within a divided country. Referring to urban scholar Elisabeth Strom's work, Claire Colomb points out that post-Wall Berlin was subject to a global interrelated

²For a more in-depth reading of Germany's "pivotal" role in the history of East-West European relations during the last century, see Henry Meyric Hughes, "When East was East and West was West: Art Attitudes in the Cold War". Hughes describes Berlin as the site geographically and ideologically trapped between East and West Europe during the Cold War and how relations between East and West Europe influenced the cultural sphere. Hughes's account of how artists from the East were ignored or overlooked by critics and arts institutions and festivals despite attempts to involve themselves in a globalising and opening international cultural sphere provides further insight into the context that post 1989 biennales such as the Berlin Biennale grew out of.

process of change: “the transition to a united city after a history of conflict and division, socialist to a capital city in a nation redefining its national identity; the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial or post-Fordist metropolis (Strom, 2001)” (Colomb 2012, p. 132).

However, unlike other cities experiencing similar changes, Berlin’s situation before the fall of the Wall would result in a unique set of circumstances setting it apart from its contemporaries. Historian Karen E. Till illustrates that Berlin had been set apart as a western European city since the 1950s due to its economic and geopolitical status. At that time West Berlin had already become post-industrial due to Cold War divisions. Companies left for safer investments elsewhere. While both East and West Berlin saw the subsidisation of high culture and shopping districts, Berlin was largely isolated from larger global economic structural changes (Till 2005, p. 53). Political scientist Margit Mayer elaborates on the impact that these Cold War divisions had for each side of the city after the Wall fell:

Berlin was an exception for a long time, because the situation here is the result of a subsidized economy, and the city did not have to evolve the structure of its production into a service economy as West German cities did. The service sector in Berlin existed only in the form of public services, and production and manufacturing were dominated by “extended work benches” – companies with their places of business in West Germany. This represented a big problem in the East after the fall of the Wall, and a majority of the industrial production there was “wrapped up”, which was associated with massive layoffs; and in West Berlin the subsidies disappeared. (Mayer 2004, p. 87)

During the 1990s, the city thus faced a unique set of challenges. Of all the Bundesländer (German states), Berlin experienced the slowest economic growth (Cochrane & Jonas 1999, p. 147) and federal funds earmarked to help integrate the city proved to be only temporary (Till 2005, p. 53). Urban scholar Janet Ward explains that these pre- and post-Wall challenges and the effects of trade exclusion meant that Berlin was still very much perceived internationally as peripheral and not central to global trade and politics (see Ward, 2004). The German reunification process sparked a debate about Berlin’s

position in the world economy and local politicians began to develop strategies for place-marketing within “a highly competitive global market place” (Cochrane & Jonas 1999, p. 147). Berlin began competing with and compensating for the past, literally reconstructing itself by embarking on one of the largest building projects in the world (Ward, 2004).

Rapid and large-scale urban development processes driven by planners, architects, and city promoters sought to reinvent the image of the city to a certain ideology in a bid for participation in global city competitions. As Till explains, while this kind of neo-liberal city development was similar to that seen in other European and North American cities at that time, the scale of renewal and construction in Berlin after 1990 was unprecedented. Quoting a public relations director, Till points out how rebuilding Berlin’s centre, the district of Mitte, was “an experiment of building an entirely new city from scratch, an experiment similar to and on the scale of Brasilia” (Till 2005, pp. 43–44). Till claims that between 1990 and 2005, when her book *The New Berlin* was published, hundreds of billions of dollars had been spent on urban development in Berlin. Furthermore, in 1994 there were more than 2,000 building sites, for which \$25 billion was spent on construction investment alone. While this scale of urban development is not entirely unique, Till points out that when it does occur, it is normally at urban edges in new suburbs and edge cities, rather than in European city centres (Till 2005, pp. 43–44).

The speed of urban development during the 1990s was also unique. As architect Jesko Fezer and art historian and curator Axel John Wieder explain, normally, such processes occur in other cities over a much longer period of time:

The evolution in Berlin was essentially more forced, faster, harder and more compressed – and, precisely for those reasons, more manifest and more contested. The intensity of the process of catching up on capitalization for the city region and the associated changes in social space occasionally meant that the intentions of the actors became openly ideological. (Fezer & Wieder 2004, p. 75)

However, it was not just ideological reasoning that led to rapid urban development. Architect Philip Oswald explains that such extensive urban development was needed at that time because so much of the city's essential infrastructure had to be built from scratch. This included a number of roads, the main railway station and an airport. The city also required office space – per capita it only had a quarter of the office space that Frankfurt had, and only a third of that of Munich (Oswald 1998, p. 5). Successive political regimes and deindustrialisation led to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, derelict or demolished buildings and the abandonment of industrial and infrastructural sites after the fall of the Wall, all contributing to a high number of vacant plots throughout the city (Colomb, 2012).

These vacant plots became the sites of the speculative (and dangerously overambitious) real estate boom from 1990–1993 (Colomb, 2012). The boom unfortunately coincided with a restricting of the real estate market. While the 1980s saw urban development led by investors who built to meet their own needs, such as in Germany's financial capital Frankfurt, Berlin in the 1990s became completely dominated by international investors in the form of real estate funds, life insurance companies and developers who invested in the real estate market for speculative reasons. Property was thus let or sold entirely on the basis of financial considerations (Oswald 1998, p. 5). Fezer and Wieder explain the politics behind urban redevelopment projects at the time as largely due to a lack of transparency. The Berlin Senate's representative for investors, Hanno Klein, had already started securing purchase options for properties and buildings in collaboration with the Senate Department for Building in West Berlin and the Building Administration of the GDR in early 1990, before the city was even fully reunified. He was replaced a year later by the Koordinierungsausschuss für Innerstädtische Investitionen (KOAI; Coordination Committee for Inner-City Investment), an informal decision-making committee comprising representatives of several Senate departments, the chambers of industry and trade, the Berlin district authorities and the Treuhandanstalt (the Trust Agency, a public privatisation agency). As the central authority for decision-making concerning large investments in East Berlin, their main activities involved settling open questions of assets relating to properties for planned large-scale projects and simultaneously seeking suitable investors. As Fezer and Wieder explain:

Completely unnoticed by the public, outside of parliamentary control and not accounted for in any constitution, the committee was supposed to produce in an accelerated manner, in “concerted action” – as its initiator, former Senator for Building Wolfgang Nagel (SPD) put it – the conditions necessary under western capitalism for international investors, at a time when the legal and institutional bases for this were still largely lacking in the east. (Fezer & Wieder 2004, p. 73)

In short, Fezer and Wieder believe the real estate boom blinded Berlin’s urban development protagonists. Politicians and investors had not taken Germany’s long-standing divided financial functions into consideration, and had put all their faith in Berlin’s successful bid to host the Olympic Games in 2000. The belief that Berlin would soon be an international metropolis to rival London, Paris or New York was shattered when Berlin lost the bid in 1993. “The gap between Berlin’s hybrid self-image and its sober perception by others could not have been more obvious” (Fezer and Wieder, 2004, p. 71).

While the reinvention of a city’s identity in the face of such economic need is understandable, the enthusiasm for urban development and real estate speculation did not come without warning. In 1992, the Berlin Senate had commissioned a report in which leading economists encouraged a more modest approach to Berlin’s urban development policies. Such advice was unfortunately ignored (Rada 1998, p. 71). And it was the speed at which Berlin embarked on its large-scale urban development during the 1990s that ultimately led to its downfall. There was no boom in the office sector, and thus no demand (Mayer 2004, p. 87). Colomb describes the feeling well:

After a short-lived period of economic and real-estate euphoria in the early 1990s, it became apparent that Berlin would not become an economic powerhouse of global importance on par with London or New York. (Colomb 2012, pp. 131–132)

Despite the real estate boom failure, a new image of the city had indeed been created through interrelated architectural policy and place-marketing strategies. Again, issues of temporality played a key part in defining these strategies. The pressure to keep up

with the expectations of city officials meant that architectural policy prioritised the speed at which a new project could be built, rather than striving for aesthetic harmony with the existing fabric of the city. Furthermore, such policy featured a cherry-picking of Berlin's Prussian past as a model for architecture and urban design (Oswalt 1998, p. 5).

So what did this new city image actually look like? It has been described as a "homogeneity of architecture" and of "Berlin-Prussian style". Block developments featured eaves at a height of no more than 22 metres; were divided – at least optically – into small individual housing units; and featured natural stone façades, upright windows and were "monolithic" and embodied "solidity" (Oswalt 1998, p. 4). These rules were used in every development situation, whether in the historical district of Mitte, at Postdamer Platz or – in a slightly modified version – in new housing estates on the outskirts of the city. They were also used to transform existing districts and to adapt them to fit into a homogeneous urban landscape as part of the "Planwerk innenstadt" (masterplan) (Oswalt 1998, p. 4). Critiques range from "stuck-on" to "confusing...yellowish, reddish, greyish and greenish façade facings made of granite, sandstone, travertine, brickwork etc." (Oswalt 1998, p. 6).

Fezer and Wieder see such homogenous architecture as "neutral" and flexible and in response to a demand. They claim such spaces can be put to many uses, "in anticipation of tax benefits for residential buildings or threat of vacancy" (Fezer & Wieder 2004, p. 23). However, the idea behind such a homogenous architectural design is seen by others as a desire to erase Germany's unsavoury history from the collective memory of the city and promote a process of "normalisation". Architect Philip Oswald states, "The 'Berlin style of architecture' is the post-modern concept of a decorated shed for a globalized real estate market which reduces architecture to the role of styling the consumer item building with the help of stereotyped images" (Oswalt 1998, p. 5). Till agrees that this architectural form of neotraditionalism as "a post-modern urban development typified by the search for past authentic forms to imagine better futures", was a way to deal with both the past and the future (Till 2005, p. 48). The process of developing a new architectural policy for the city as one where planners and other groups sought "usable pasts", such a past being the time before the Cold War and before National Socialism.

These architectural policies of the city did not go uncontested. An intense public debate on “reurbanisation” took place in Berlin during the 1990s, especially in terms of what kind of urban form and architectural norms should guide the redevelopment of the city. Through intense marketing events and image campaigns targeting an internal and external audience of Berliners, visitors, and potential investors, Berlin authorities could turn the demise of the urban development euphoria into a positive by capitalising on a new image for Berlin: one of urban futures (Colomb, 2012).

Pseudo transparency of the construction process and highlighting the aesthetic qualities of a city under construction appealed to those who saw Berlin as a transitioning city they could participate in developing. Fezer and Wieder explain that the timing of these place-campaigns was key:

When the collapse of the Berlin real estate market was already looming on the horizon, and several large projects had stalled, the marketing agency for the capital, Partner für Berlin (Partners for Berlin), with its program Schaustelle Berlin (Showplace Berlin) and advertising slogan ‘Berlin wird...’ (Berlin is in the making, or getting there), promoted open excavation pits at building sites as symbolic of spectacular development space, in order to appeal to the potential of private initiatives and spontaneous, creative action that could drive forward new possibilities.” (Fezer & Wieder 2004, p. 75)

Other actors such as the tourism promotion agency Berlin Tourismus Marketing, the Senate Department of the Economy, the Mayor’s office, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the local media participated in generating and disseminating a discourse on the city of Berlin, in order to attract tourists and investors or generate the support of local residents for a particular urban vision (Colomb, 2012). Till vividly illustrates what this looked like from her field notes:

In the 1990s and after 2000, just as the visitor gazed at past Berlins depicted in historic photos, sketches, ruins, and buildings, so the future city was literally being built up around him or her....These planning visions, marketing representations, and architectural fragments were sites through which the “new”

was visualised. When removed from historical contexts and displayed in a city in transition, those sites appeared as exhibitions that displaced the present-past and recent-past from the representational frames of the contemporary city.” (Till 2005, p. 33)

Yet campaigns such as “Das neue Berlin” (The New Berlin) were heavily criticised for depicting Berlin as a cultural cosmopolitan metropolis, for attracting “people, ideas, and investments from other places” (Till 2005, p. 52), yet ignoring existing migrant communities (Till 2005, pp. 54–55; Rada 1998, p. 72; Mayer 2004). Like the urban development process and the style of architecture adopted for it, such place-marketing campaigns imagined a particular image of the city based on an idea of potential future citizens, such as foreign ambassadors and educated professionals, rather than those who actually existed there in the present.

The impact of these political and urban developments had a profound impact on the city’s arts sector infrastructure.³ Boris Grésillon’s work on Berlin as a cultural metropolis illustrates a city of two sides “that had been ignoring each other” that were forced after the fall of the Wall, to confront each other in the face of reunification (Grésillon 1999, p. 284). One of the first consequences of the collapse of the GDR was the closure of East Berlin cultural institutions, which were often politically oriented. West Berlin was not immune to the changes affecting the city at this time, as financial crisis brought about the cutting of subsidies to cultural facilities. However, areas in Berlin’s former east, such as Prenzlauer Berg, saw the opening of a plethora of new small theatres, jazz and rock clubs, and art galleries (Grésillon, 1999).

As with the political impact on the urban development of the city, it is necessary to take into account the period before the fall of the Wall in order to understand the post-Wall cultural landscape. The four Cold War decades (1949–1989) had a varied impact on the cultural sphere. Despite being “trapped” between East and West and thus regarded as

³ Berlin’s arts infrastructure is defined here as the various artists, curators, cultural managers, club owners, DJs, musicians etc. as well as organisations such as Verein (legal associations), galleries, project spaces, studios, informal and formal networks. For the purposes of this dissertation, the arts infrastructure will be used to talk about those that support contemporary artists of all kinds, and the spaces they inhabit.

somewhat provincial, West Berlin had during this time occupied a special position within Europe as a city of refuge or transit for artists escaping the pressures of communist regimes and who vastly contributed to the cultural life of the city (Grésillon, 1999; Hughes, 2005). Foreign occupation and the division of the city impeded any claim to the status of cultural metropolis during this time; however, East and West Berlin competed for international recognition of their cultural facilities. Grésillon explains that when the Wall fell in November 1989:

...the city was astonished to discover the extraordinary density of its own cultural facilities, many duplicated in East and West – two orchestras and radio choirs, two large concert halls, two ‘national’ libraries, two great museum complexes, three operas – and equally aghast at the massive funding required to sustain such a cultural inheritance. (Grésillon 1999, p. 286)

Thus, the city saw a decline in funding of all cultural institutions shortly after the fall of the Wall. Political campaigns provided financial support to selected “high” cultural institutions while largely ignoring a rapidly developing grassroots scene. Operas, large theatres and the symphonic orchestras were prioritised by both federal and city authorities in the midst of what has been described as an identity crisis. The urban development of Mitte can also be attributed to political intentions to revive this historic area of the city. The new Senator for Culture Ulrich Roloff-Momin, nominated in 1991, became personally involved in preventing the closure of iconic East Berlin institutions such as the Volksbühne and the Maxim Gorki Theater (Grésillon, 1999).

Many West Berlin cultural institutions that had relied on government subsidies and regular audiences closed in the summer of 1993. At the same time, the so-called “fringe scene” flourished in the east, in districts such as Prenzlauer Berg or Mitte, which due to cheap rents, attracted many artists and cultural workers. This trend continued with many contemporary art galleries traditionally located in other parts of Germany and West Berlin, relocating to the newly fashionable Mitte. Grésillon makes his own position very clear, by describing the redevelopment of the Spandauer Vorstadt in Mitte as a revitalisation:

A rather dull neighbourhood of decaying facades under the GDR, it regained life and colour after the Wall came down: colonized and gentrified by students, artists and a trendy café culture. Its true ascendancy, however, came in 1996 with the successful refurbishment of the Hackesche Höfe, a large complex of internal courtyards constructed in early twentieth-century art nouveau, and the rapid concentration of contemporary art galleries along the Auguststrasse. (Grésillon 1999, p. 292)

Art historian Peter Herbstreuth elaborates further, denoting a shift that had occurred in the perception of Mitte compared to other parts of the city well-known for their art production and display. He cites Prenzlauer Berg as the counter-culture centre of East Berlin with a well-developed scene of fringe music, literature and art activities. The plethora of empty apartments in the area between Torstrasse and Oranienbergerstrasse and between Friedrichstrasse, Chauseestrasse and Rosenthaler Strasse were seen as “free of any burdens of the past” for new cultural workers to make their mark (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 45).

Since reunification, urban policy in Berlin has been shaped by a growing interest in culture, with a number of projects in Berlin (as well as other cities such as Hamburg) promoting cultural consumption through attractions and events (Novy and Colomb, 2013). In 1998, the new German chancellor Gerhard Schröder introduced a more central role for federal government to fund and support cultural institutions. Again, the theme of cosmopolitanism appears here through the promotion of international cultural exchange, avant-garde art and “the establishment of cultural institutions, international architecture, and global corporate culture” (Till 2005, p. 149). That same year, the Berlin Senate voted for a culture budget of DM 760 million, which was then a significant amount of money for a European city (Grésillon 1999, p. 288).

The above account of the socio-political context of Berlin after the fall of the Wall until the mid-1990s states that the Senate and other city officials failed to financially support the grassroots cultural sector. The next section of this chapter focuses on how this negligence not only allowed the temporary utilisation of the various empty urban spaces throughout the city by the cultural sector, but actively encouraged it. This

tolerance for temporary use not only allowed for a flourishing of Berlin's contemporary art sector in Mitte, but also set Berlin apart from other European capital cities.

3.3 Zwischennutzung

A specific kind of cultural politics was responsible for a unique use of urban space in Berlin in the 1990s. At its centre was a culture of *Zwischennutzung* (interim use) of urban space developed from a long existing tradition of re-appropriation of urban spaces by marginalised groups in the city.⁴ *Zwischennutzung* refers to the process whereby individuals or groups in the city of Berlin used temporarily vacant buildings or plots. Temporary use by cultural workers and artists was particularly prevalent in the neighbourhood of Mitte between the fall of the Wall in 1989 and well beyond the first edition of the Berlin Biennale in 1998.

As mentioned above, the former division of the city by the Berlin Wall, extensive damage during World War Two, the demolition of unwanted buildings and the abandonment of industrial sites are historical and political reasons for the large number of vacant urban spaces. Furthermore, an important aspect that makes Berlin unique compared to other European cities is the fact that empty spaces are also the result of the slow resolution of conflicts over the restitution of property back to their original pre-GDR or even pre-Nazi era owners in the 1990s (Oswalt, 1998; Colomb, 2012). Also unusual is that these vacant spaces are not only found on the fringes of the city, but also in the central areas (Colomb, 2012).

⁴ The term *Zwischennutzung* has various definitions and is now an umbrella term for a variety of temporary uses of urban space. While it is beyond the scope of this research to delve into the politics of such terminology, it is important to note that publications like *Urban Catalyst* (Oswalt, Overmayer and Misselwitz, 2013) and *Temporary Urban Spaces* (Hydn and Temel, 2006) were instrumental in developing terms such as *Zwischennutzung* in order to make local governments aware of such activities and aim to incorporate them into their urban planning processes. However, often the associated neoliberal language used to describe the actors involved in *Zwischennutzung* processes, such as "urban pioneers" found within the discourse, lends itself well to stereotypical notions of such actors belonging to a "creative class" that repositions Berlin as a so-called Creative City.

However, Berlin has a much longer tradition of a variety of interim uses of urban space. Since the 1970s, temporary users of such spaces have consisted of marginalised groups, youth or artists. Colomb describes occupations of various kinds:

In the 1970s and 1980s the former West-Berlin district of Kreuzberg had become a pocket of radical social movements (e.g. gay, student, antimilitary, punk, and squatting movements), of countercultural initiatives materialized by squats and alternative living projects. In the 1990s, the underground techno music scene was heavily reliant on disused buildings and sites for its clubs and parties. As Shaw (2005) emphasized, the existence and development of underground and alternative urban cultures, in Berlin and elsewhere has been indissociable [sic] from the availability of such vacant or abandoned spaces. (Colomb 2012, p. 135)

After reunification, the city of Berlin became the site of a wave of so-called uncontrolled urban practices such as flea markets, car boot sales, beer gardens, sports grounds, waterfront beaches, community gardens and techno clubs (Colomb, 2012). Specific to Mitte was the squatting scene, Polish markets, and clubs and bars (Oswalt, 1998). Fezer and Wieder echo Grésillon's comments about how the east of the city became a desirable space for marginalised and alternative groups from the West, and how such activity was initially tolerated due to the period of almost lawlessness after the fall of the Wall:

In April 1990, 20 empty residential buildings on Mainzerstrasse and adjacent streets in the district of Friedrichshain were squatted, largely by West German groups. These squats, as well as more than a hundred others during the period just after the fall of the Wall, made use of the free space in East Berlin that resulted from the undefined state of the law and the building industry and were, initially, tolerated. (Fezer & Wieder 2004, p. 74)

Particularly in Mitte's Spandauer Vorstadt, these spaces were undesirable and affordable, thus many students and artists of all kinds from other parts of Germany and internationally, began to rent or illegally squat vacant spaces to live in or establish galleries, bars, clubs and offices. Attracted to the opportunity to be where a major

historical event had occurred, but also in a city that had largely become politically open and free, illegal activities such as squatting were initially tolerated because of the power vacuum the city had experienced shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his catalogue for an exhibition of Berlin-based artists at New York's MoMA PS1., Berlin Biennale founder Klaus Biesenbach reflects on this time in Berlin:

The energy and chaos caused by the collapse of one political system, bordering to another, by two cities melting into one, was the catalyst and stimulus of much that happened during the last ten years. (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 1)

During this time of political instability and legal uncertainty, the illegal squatting of buildings had become normalised. Ben de Biel, photographer, activist and one of the former owners of one of the first nightclubs in Mitte *Ständige Vertretung*, recalls how spaces were claimed:

At night we sat out on the street in front of certain buildings. If no lights were on in an apartment for three nights in a row, then we'd break in, look around inside, and, depending on how nice it was, we'd install a new lock. (Dax & Defcon 2015, p. 7)

Another photographer, Ali Kepenek, describes how such claims on various spaces in the area caused a rapid development of the cultural scene at the time:

Due to the transition, nobody really knew who a building belonged to, and so you just squatted and opened up a club for a year or two months. If you didn't keep yourself constantly informed, you didn't know what was going on after two weeks or a month, that's how fast things changed. All of a sudden, there were so many new locations. You didn't have to go this bureaucratic way and get a permit first, but they just cropped up and disappeared again, something I found pretty exciting at the time. (Kepenek 1999, p. 36)

Such temporary uses were not seen as useful to the urban planning policy of Berlin and were a "taboo" (Oswalt et al. 2013, p. 7). Local policy-makers initially left out such

grassroots activity from the official promotional discourse of the urban elites: “they were perceived as irrelevant, marginal, or not economically useful in the dominant language of place marketing and interurban competition.” (Colomb, 2012).

However, in the 1990s, so-called *Zwischennutzung Verträge* (Interim Use Contracts) were awarded to many cultural workers in Mitte by city officials such as the Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Berlin-Mitte (WBM or the Berlin Mitte Housing Association), who had continued to manage the majority of Mitte’s properties during the GDR until today (Dax and Defcon, 2015). Time was an important factor – because the process to determine ownership took so long, artists and other cultural operators could enjoy the use of these spaces, when normally they would have been evicted. As Colomb explains, “In conventional urban development processes, the time gap between the end of a previous land use and the beginning of a new one is supposed to be kept as short as possible. But political, environmental, and economic factors can stretch this interim period for a long time, when as in Berlin, development does not occur for a variety of reasons” (Colomb 2012, p. 133).

In fact, it is largely the work of one woman in particular, Jutta Weitz, who worked for the WBM at that time who is now attributed to be of the most important figures of the development of Mitte’s art scene after the fall of the Wall (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, p. 147; Koebel 1999, p. 64). Motivated by a desire to not “want to wait until a situation arose that would have led to an eviction”, and where legal possibilities existed, it was Weitz’s initiative that established the interim rental contracts with cultural workers making use of this stretched time and allowing the area to flourish:

First every single case had to be examined by the newly created Office of Unresolved Property Issues. There were houses with ten different applicants, all claiming that it was theirs. They had to go house by house and review the different registries and inheritance records. So I went to all the occupied houses one by one to introduce myself as an employee of the WBM. On the other hand, I spoke with former owners. (Dax & Defcon 2015, p. 13)

Jutta was also motivated by personal reasons: she “didn’t want the area she too loved in to be dominated by video rental stores and sex shops. Her sympathies lay above all with the old established businesses and the new colourful tribes that arrived with their utopian thinking.” (Steglich 2015, p. 33). Historian Peter Herbstreuth believes Weitz cared about “creating a lively mixture” for Mitte, acknowledging that such activities were the catalyst for the long-term strategies to make Mitte attractive to future investors, something that would otherwise have been difficult due to its status as a landmark protected area (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 45). Others such as Biesenbach suggests she had an interest in promoting projects that “seemed appropriate to this crazy situation, projects that were manic, over the top, dreamlike, ambitious, or simply different” (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9). It was precisely these personal ties with the area that facilitated the coming together of former GDR activities with the new activities brought in by Western actors in this geographic area of Berlin.

This was, in effect, the beginning of the professionalisation of the post-Wall art scene – the fact that galleries or artists initiatives were competing against other businesses such as bakers, carpenters, shops and accountants, suggests that they had to be more business-like if they wanted to stay and survive long term. Former founder of Kunsthaus Tacheles, and current director of at Radialsystem, Jochen Sandig recalls Weitz’s participation in the Culture Office’s round table initiative, where cultural workers and artists from the area would meet on a regular basis. He cites this kind of collaboration with the municipality, along with the *Zwischennutzung* rental contracts they awarded, as necessary for the establishment of Kunst-Werke and the now well-known Auguststrasse gallery mile (Sandig 1999, p. 54). If there were vacant WBM buildings with commercial spaces, she searched for groups for them and systematically spread the word that a place was available for the price of heat and electricity or very low rent (Dax & Defcon 2015, p. 13). As Weitz states, “Jeder, der in Mitte einen Gewerberaum anmieten wollte, konnte sich in der Gewerberaumabteilung der Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Mitte bewerben” (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, p. 147). Another key actor, Dolly Leupold was also instrumental in helping find spaces for cultural workers in the area. Not only did she set up a physical office for many cultural projects and activities, it was also a space for cultural workers to come to her with any

requests for advice on acquiring funding or space for their activities (Steglich 2015, p. 34). A true network of unbureaucratic and effective support and collaboration emerged:

If someone was looking for spaces from Dolly, she'd ring Jutta. If someone wanted help with something in the cultural scene, Jutta rang Dolly, who was in close contact with the heads of the cultural administration. (Steglich 2015, p. 34)

Weitz is adamant that this was not part of a government initiative to "revitalise" the area. "Ich habe einfach versucht, für jeden – und mit ihm zusammen – den passenden Raum zu finden. Das galt gleichermassen für Tischler, Finanzdienstleister, Versicherer oder Ärzte sowie Bäcker, Betreiber von Geschäften, Boutiquen oder alle Arten von Büros." (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, pp. 147–9). However, it was not Weitz's decision alone to make. The former city Finance Minister Jutta Bartel was part of the selection committee for deciding on applications for buildings, with applications decided upon on a case-by-case basis. "Nötig waren dafür Angaben zum Nutzungskonzept, zur Person des Bewerbers und zu Raumvorstellung wie etwa Grösse, Ort, Miethöhe etc." (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, p. 148).

The overriding deciding factor was whether or not any proposed use of the buildings would infringe on the rights of returning building owners, a regulation instigated in 1990 by the Senate on all building contracts for commercial use. The price of the rent depended on the condition of the building, the proposed use from the applicant, any guidelines of the eventual owners, on what investment in the property the applicant could make, on the length of the contract, the status of the neighbourhood, the regulations of the chamber of industry and commerce and other specific rules pertaining to the property (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, pp. 148–9).

The reason why there was an overwhelming number of applications from artists was largely due to the combination of large numbers of artists already (or soon to be) living and working in the area and the ease of applying for space:

The advantage for the artists in these processes was that no large investments were necessary for studios and working spaces...artists from the eastern and

western parts of the city, but also from the whole of Germany, were often there faster than anyone else after the fall of the Berlin Wall and made efforts to find space. (Dabrowska-Diemert, 2010, p. 149, author translation)

Geographically, what made the Spandauer Vorstadt in Mitte unique at this time was the concentration of creative activity in such a small area. This is reflected by the high number of Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahmen (ABMs or job creating measures) awarded by the Job Centre at the time. Additionally, the restitution of property also distinguished Mitte from its neighbouring former eastern neighbours – there was far more property to be resolved here, and because it was the former, and soon to be re-positioned, centre of Berlin, it was the focus of local and federal government to make sure the area would be revitalised (Maechtel, 2018b).

Zwischennutzung contracts were also a way to legally, but unbureaucratically, distribute space and time for creative projects to the various cultural workers in the area. However, short term-rental contracts of usually one to five years were potentially a high risk option for the temporary user who might have to move out at short notice (Dabrowska-Diemert 2010, p. 149). It is here that the KW emerges as something of an exception to the rule in terms of the acquisition of space and the awarding of Zwischennutzung contracts. Offered a much longer contract of twenty-five years, the KW was thus able to establish itself as a more permanent institution than many others in the neighbourhood (Biesenbach 2016; Sandig 1999, p. 54). Helpful too, was the fact that the KW was also a recipient of Arbeitsbeschaffungsmassnahme (job centre contracts) awarded at that time to artists and cultural workers to allow them a basic income so that they could regularly work on their projects (Maechtel 2018a, pp. 27–28), a case that will be covered in the next section of this chapter.

Yet the opportunism and creative experimentation that Zwischennutzung brought, was seen by some in the area as a form of colonisation of urban space. The Zwischennutzung of urban space is often discussed as the transformation of so-called “forgotten spaces” into spaces where newcomers or existing residents could make something of their own. As musician Gudrun Gut describes:

Young people began pouring in from the West to the eastern part of Berlin. You could try your luck. Anyone could do what they wanted. That was the feeling. Every day something new and improvised was born. (Dax & Defcon 2015, p. 7)

Others such as gallerist Gerd Harry (or “Judy” as he was known) Lybke describes how the emptiness of the urban landscape allowed newcomers to stake a claim of land for themselves and reinvent themselves anew:

At that time [1991] Auguststrasse was still completely empty, there were no galleries to speak of. Anyone could go there and stake a claim and say, here I am. Then it didn't matter where he came from, from what social class, whether he was young or old, had money or not. You could achieve something simply by stating that you were this or that, that you planned to do this, that or the other. You reinvented yourself, your ideas and what you did each day. (Lybke 1999, p. 41)

Some went a step further, feeling as if they had a duty to fill in gaps in the underfinanced and under representative contemporary art sector. The art dealer and cultural manager Mathias Arndt recalls a distinct lack of a professional arts infrastructure and that “everything had to be invented anew” (Arndt 1999, p. 6). Others believed that the existing museums and galleries simply didn't show enough young international artists (Chouakri 1999, p. 15; Kepenek 1999, p. 36). Those who had expected existing institutions such as the National Gallery to promote Berlin-based artists and keep up with contemporary art developments were disappointed (Schilling 1999, p. 64; Schulte 1999, p. 66). As gallerist Thomas Schulte explains:

Of course, now we have a museum for contemporary art, the Hamburger Bahnhof. But we have no clear and understandable concept regarding acquisition politics. Compared to Berlin, in London, the Serpentine Gallery and the Tate Gallery under Nick Serota, in New York the Museum of Modern Art and P.S.1, etc., many more things have transpired that have been relevant to the time, Here, they flung themselves into the arms of the nineteenth century, and that's where the understanding of art still resides. (Schulte 1999, p. 66)

Yet others saw these attitudes as arrogant and felt that the former East Berlin was being colonised by the West. Artist Andrea Scrima elaborates:

There was something very disturbing about the wave of people that flocked to Berlin in the first few years after the Wall came down. At first, it was hard to tell them apart from the initial wave of souvenir seekers with their hammers and chisels, hacking away at the Wall. They more or less stormed the east – oblivious to the atmosphere they were helping to destroy and to the fact that they were manifesting the colonisation already well underway by bringing the clubs and boutiques and sushi bars along with them – and left a pervading odour of opportunism in their train. And the strangest thing was, they had a kind of heroic attitude, as though they were pioneers in savage territory...a lot of people set out to make their fortune, and a lot more have lost out, have fallen by the wayside and gotten trampled over. (Scrima 1999, p. 71)

Peter Herbstreuth explains that some just felt things were moving too fast. His more diplomatic view acknowledges that with the opening of borders the order of things was disrupted:

For those who moved to Berlin, the changes could not go quickly enough. For the locals, everything was moving much too fast. Some saw the fall of the Wall as a loss. All aspects of life were eventually touched by the change. Nothing remained as it was before. For the situation of art and its distributors, that meant the chance for a new start. Berlin is accessible and is being rebuilt. Whoever is able to, is allowed to join in. Everything is possible. (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 42)

At some point, spaces became more difficult to access and retain, and while professionalisation was welcomed by many artists, others felt the sting of a rapidly gentrifying area where urban development schemes seemed to feed off the success of the arts sector and the attraction it was receiving from local and international audiences. Grésillon demonstrates how the rapid development of the gallery scene in

Mitte dovetailed with private urban development projects. With the 1996 inauguration of Hamburger Bahnhof and several well-known artists and gallery-owners choosing to locate in Berlin, the city began to compete with Cologne, Germany's traditional art capital, and at the European level (Grésillon 1999, p. 86).

While access to space was supported by the WBM, those who prevailed were those who were able to financially sustain themselves. In the late 1990s, the discourse shifted to acknowledge that the pioneering era was over (Lybke 1999, p. 41) and there was a need to professionalise and make money (Pflumm 1999, pp. 49–51). Others spoke of the disappearance of spaces and the visible changes Mitte saw at this time:

Free spaces always mean possibilities. And in Mitte, you simply see at least one possibility disappearing every day. Things are gradually getting out of balance, coming unhinged....Everything becomes chic, beautiful, and rich: whereas all the rough edges, everything inspiring, is disappearing. It's turning into a museum. Mitte is increasingly turning into a museum of the nineties, a time where everything seemed possible." (Hillje, 1999, p. 27)

As ownership claims began to be resolved and artists were being asked to pay higher rents, the freedom experienced in the early 1990s seemed to decline. Since 1989, some of Berlin's cultural temporary users survived, some transformed and some simply disappeared (Colomb, 2012).

3.4 Establishment of the KW

This last section of this chapter follows the history and trajectory of the KW – the people involved, the urban space they claimed for themselves and the transformation of the group into an institution. In particular, it highlights key events and changes that enabled a professionalisation and internationalisation of the KW that was essential to the development of the Biennale. The KW emerged at this time as an organisation which took upon itself to develop an ambitious and international program of contemporary arts activity for the benefit of younger artists in the city. It saw itself as providing space

and funding for the production and display of contemporary art, something that, at that time, was vastly overlooked by the state. Yet it also acted in response to the thirst of the international cultural sector to know more about and connect with the thriving creative scene in a newly opened Berlin. On the one hand, the kind of *Zwischennutzung* that the KW embodied was largely positive, as it did indeed fill a gap in terms of the lack of space for production and display of, particularly experimental, cross-disciplinary contemporary art, and it created an atmosphere of constant activity (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 146). Yet the opportunism and creative experimentation that *Zwischennutzung* brought was seen by some in the area as a form of colonisation of urban space, and even more so through the staging of internationally promoted exhibitions such as *37 Räume*, which became a catalyst for other events such as *Club Berlin* at the Venice Biennale and *Hybrid Workspace* at *Documenta X* in Kassel, that would ultimately pave the way for the first Berlin Biennale.

The development and establishment of the KW is attributed to a group of artists and curators who were living and working in Berlin. However, one person emerged as the organisation's self-appointed eventual director: Klaus Biesenbach. Biesenbach was a former medical student from Munich who moved to Berlin in 1990 (Koebl 1999, p. 66). At the age of twenty-three, he began working at the Cultural Office of the former GDR as an unofficial intern whilst running a nameless project room on Krausnickstrasse in Mitte (Jovanovic 2016, p. 6). Biesenbach later moved his project room to the "Likörfabrik" (liqueur factory) at Auguststrasse 91, an old warehouse formerly used by the Stasi (Wiesel *et al.*, 1999, p. 9). "But there was no telephone and no infrastructure, just empty rooms. So I spent most of my time in the municipal Culture Office" (Wiesel *et al.* 1999, p. 9). Biesenbach and others describe a sense of community amongst cultural workers of all kinds striving to develop contemporary arts activities in the new borderless city and the support provided to them by the WBM:

My situation was shared by other people trying to start something new. In that sense, the Culture Office, the Apartment Building Association (WBM), and all the people with ideas were closely connected in that first year. (Wiesel *et al.* 1999, p. 9)

In 1990, a significant event occurred that resulted in the development of the KW, one of the longest lasting cultural institutions to develop from *Zwischennutzung* in Mitte. The Culture Office instructed Biesenbach to take on an old empty margarine factory to house artists' studios allowing him and his friends to make a claim on a unique urban space in the city (Figures 1-3). Unlike all the other large commercial complexes in Mitte, the building was the only one in the area not controlled by the Treuhand, but rather belonged to the Apartment Building Association. The building has a long and interesting history. It was originally built in 1794 as a baroque residence for Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm II's valet. In the 19th century wings were added to the sides, as well as the Quergebäude (buildings at the end of the cobbled courtyard). Shortly after, two wells and a garden were added. In the second half of the 19th century the rear building served as a wool factory, while the front building was used for meetings for "orientalists". After 1900 it was used as a factory for various things: electrical heating appliances, window fittings, screws, book printing, small power-motors and dress-making. A number of small enterprises were also present: a labourer, a tailor, a sign painter, a seamstress and a white-collar worker, among others. All the buildings were owned by a lamp factory that went bankrupt in 1933. In 1935 it was bought and used as a margarine factory until 1952 when it was taken over by the GDR and nationalised in 1955, as was standard practice at the time. Margarine continued to be made there until the 1980s. Later in the 1980s, parts of the building were used to store electronic appliances and storage for a fish merchant (Mears 2006, pp. 201–204).

After the Wall fell, the assets of the GDR were liquidated and the building became empty. The front and sides of the building became very run down and a tree in the courtyard was growing into the buildings (Mears 2006, pp. 201–204) (Figure 1-3). It was WBM officer Jutta Weitz who notified Klaus Biesenbach when the last company moved out so that he and others could move in (Loock 1999, p. 40).

Jutta Weitz...came by and urged, "It will be a 'gym' otherwise. Please – a 'gym' or how we say in German, a *Fitnessstudio*. We would like this meaningful, important building to become a cultural institution." (Biesenbach, 2016)



Figure 1: KW Façade, 1991. Photo: Thomas Platow, Landesarchiv Berlin



Figure 2: (top) KW from courtyard looking at right wing, 1991. Photo: Thomas Platow, Landesarchiv Berlin

Figure 3: (bottom) KW from courtyard, 1991. Photo: Thomas Platow, Landesarchiv Berlin

Thus, the margarine factory's transformation into a new cultural centre, appears to be an integral part of a greater plan of the WBM's to capitalise on the utopian thinking by Biesenbach and his peers in the name of culturally and economically revitalising the Spandauer Vorstadt. Biesenbach and his peers – actress Alexandra Binswanger, architecture student Clemens Homburger, law student Alfonso Rutigliano and communications design student Philipp von Doering – formed the KW Verein (association) in 1991, agreed to renovate as much of the space themselves as they could and were offered a much longer contract of twenty-five years (Biesenbach 2016; Sandig 1999, p. 54).

It seems that what set this group apart from others in the area was precisely the mixture of people with a range of business skills appropriate for developing a solid business plan, who were convincing enough to lead the WBM to support them with such a long lease. That, and perhaps as Biesenbach suggests, looking the part too:

Everyone was astonished that we didn't run around with dreadlocks or Mohawk hairdos, as was the fashion in that neighbourhood at the time. Alexandra Binswanger and I looked almost conservative. I think that was the main reason we were offered a 25-year lease on the 'Margarinefabrik'. (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9)

The Verein members cleared the building of waste and made it watertight for artists' studios (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9). Klaus Biesenbach along with artists Rainer Görss, York der Knöfel, Peter Moors and Olaf Nicolai then lived and worked in the habitable parts of the building and Fredrich Loock, the owner of the gallery Wohnmaschine – the only other gallery in the immediate area at the time (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 46) – built a carpenter's workshop in the sheds behind the Quergebäude (Mears 2006, p. 205). They had very little money, and one of Biesenbach's first tasks was to raise money for 60 tonnes of coal to heat the studios during winter (Jovanovic 2016, p. 6). Biesenbach explains that a few months after they moved in, the German reunification process began and the GDR had ceased to exist. He and his colleagues very quickly ended up “directors of an abandoned ruin in East Berlin with no staff and no budget and no legal contract to even use the building” (Jovanovic 2016, p. 6).

The KW describes the main building they were using at the time, at Auguststrasse 69, as having twenty studios (divided into two larger spaces, the rest smaller spaces) and exhibition spaces. Initially, they invited Allerlei Rau, a theatre performance group to take one floor, artist Rainer Görss another floor, leaving the last floor for exhibitions (Biesenbach, 2016). Later, artists such as Monica Bonvincini, Thomas Demand, Irike Grossarth and Sabine Hornig were invited to move into the studios (Mears 2006, p. 205), and for some time during 1991, commercial gallerist Judy Lybke also ran a branch of his commercial gallery Eigen + Art from within the KW (Lybke 1999, p. 41).

Residential apartments for invited artists in residence were also a part of the building complex. The main building housed an archive, workshop and media office which was considered as the core of the KW at this time. This archive was intended to offer artists, employees, and visitors the opportunity to consult current art publications, while the media office fostered the exchange of and access to information from the “art world” such as advertisements and dates of events. The workshop provided both technical installation of exhibitions and support for artists’ production (Kunst-Werke, 1992).

The KW also had two additional physical spaces described as “branches”: Biesenbach’s former project space the Likörfabrik at Auguststrasse 91 and a building on Krausnickstrasse. These were used as exhibition spaces and “project apartments”. The KW also seem to have used other spaces on a temporary basis for particular exhibitions, such as Peter Moors’ show in 1991, which spread across three venues – Biesenbach’s former project space on Krausnickstrasse, the Liqörfabrik at Auguststrasse 91 and Wohnmaschine on Tucholskystrasse 36 (Brehme, 2016b). Other exhibitions in the early years of the KW were the new works of Andreas Rost and Peter Moors in 1991, Joan Jonas and Aura Rosenberg in 1992, and *Sans Frontieres: an Art in Ruins* installation by Glyn Banks and Hannah Vowles with the support of DAAD in 1992 (Brehme, 2017).

Space was not the only thing shared between the KW and other cultural workers. Other collaborations allowed the KW to develop ambitious programming. While historian Peter Herbstreuth has suggested that the KW functioned in the beginning as a kind of “art club” (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 46), and judging by the type of low-budget photocopied flyers advertising the KW’s events in the early 1990s it does appear like one, the level of

intellectual engagement and professionalism was high. The KW labelled itself the “Kunst-Werke Institut für zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie” and took it upon itself to develop discursive programming for the benefit of younger artists in the city. One example of this is the KW’s first exhibition at Auguststrasse 69 in 1992 called *Ankunft*, a show that featured the work of students from the Hochschule der Künste Berlin such as Valie Export, Leiko Ikemura, Christina Kubisch, Christiane Möbus and Maria Vedder. Financial support for this event from Philips Consumer Electronics indicates this was a cultural organisation the business world saw as professional enough to invest in.

In 1992, the KW existed as an arts organisation in a state of transition between its anti-establishment style art club and a professional contemporary arts institution with Klaus Biesenbach as its clear leader. The name of the institution was indicative of the kind of organisation they aspired to be:

Kunstwerke, like *Gaswerke* or *Wasserwerke*, like an institution providing the city with something, but not electricity, gas, or water – but art. As *Kunstwerke* could also mean “works of art”, we decided to put in a dash to make it clear that it wasn’t works of that but art *station*, like power station. (Biesenbach, 2016)

What’s interesting to note is that many documents produced by the KW from this time are not written from any one author, but simply from Kunst-Werke. It would appear as if naming individuals was not important, but rather the collective identity of an arts institution was, as seen here in a letter sent from the organisation to the press:

The spatial neighbourhood and the coexistence of studio and exhibition building determine the form of the Kunst-Werke. However, one does not want to indulge in the illusion that such an institution could already – as with a village context, so to speak - be a breeding ground or even a guarantee for interesting art production. (Kunst-Werke, 1992, author translation)

In other words, despite their professional conduct in rallying other cultural workers to be a part of a city-wide arts event in the hopes of drawing international attention, it also contradictorily implies that they didn’t want to be seen as a professional white cube

space for exhibiting work for visitors. It suggests that instead, the spaces that they were using – the abandoned ruins of Mitte – should be seen rather as functioning laboratories for contemporary art *for artists*.

But who decided which artists should be involved? The KW described the people involved in the organisation at this time as “members and guests” comprising art historians, exhibition makers and organisers who were all responsible for events, planning and concepts. It elaborated on this by stating that they concentrated on thematic offerings such as exhibitions, performances, symposia and exchange programmes with a focus on “the confrontation of east and west art” (Kunst-Werke 1992, author translation). The KW developed a selection process to determine which artists would be invited to use these spaces. The two larger studios would be offered every three years and the smaller ones every year. A curatorium, or management committee, comprised a group of invited curators and art critics such as Sabine Vogel, Peter Funken, Thomas Wulffen, Skate Helgason and Bojana Pejić, who would “discuss what it means to start an arts institution, to install art in a decrepit building, to be a non-commercial gallery etc. in Berlin” (Biesenbach, 2016). They met once a week and invited a selection of artists to exhibit work, based on how they related to the KW’s thematic focus. The successful applicant was chosen based on their submission of an application form and documentation material, and if successful, the KW would then invite them for a specific project or to work there for a year. Additionally, the KW also invited other curators, art historians, exhibition makers and artists to apply in writing to use the KW for their own projects (Kunst-Werke, 1992).

These functions set the KW Verein apart from other organisations in the area. Many saw them as impenetrable and closed off from the wider community of artists not directly involved in the KW. “Aus dem undurchsichtigen Konstrukt ‘Kunst-Werke e.V.’ – auch entschlossenen Interessenten gelingt es nicht, dem Verein beizutreten – leuchtet er scheinbar un(an)greifbar heraus” (Schwerfel 1998, p. 32). Despite their early squatted beginnings, similar to other nearby cultural organisations such as Tacheles or KuLe, what set them apart was their devotion to becoming *the* organisation for contemporary art in Berlin. They “took the direct route to institutionalisation and into an art business they didn’t question and where they expected to play an important role” (Koch 2015, p. 141).

In short, by including or excluding artists from their studio and exhibition programming, they fostered a hierarchisation of the Berlin art scene that was typical of West European cities but largely foreign to the many East German artists living in the area at the time (Brehme, 2018).

Somehow it all got more professional. Kunst-Werke had a lot to do with this, which, in my opinion, was a pretty negative development. Because they didn't understand anything, because they just came and said: we've got money, we'll give you an exhibition. People weren't prepared for that. There was an incredible tension when people started getting taken out of groups and were being promised an artistic career. The groups fell apart partially for this reason. (Kahrs 1999, p. 35)

It seems as though the goals of internationalisation and professionalisation were actually the goals of one man, rather than a collective, resulting in the collapse of the KW's structures. "The Margarinefabrik, which was originally squatted by ten individuals, quickly adopted the mission proposed for it by Klaus Biesenbach, who rapidly lost all his allies down his path" (Koch 2015, p. 141). Biesenbach too agrees that,

In the beginning, it was an important experiment, but increasing institutionalization, recognisability, and professionalization wore down and dissolved the curatorium. But it had been essential for our development... Very quickly I became the person who stood for the Kunst-Werke. There were always people who thought that was good and others who thought it was the worst thing that could happen. And also this polarization made the Kunst-Werke important. It was a statement. It meant we were doing things that mattered. (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9)

Others agree. However disliked, Biesenbach's leadership of the KW, his ability to improvise, persuade and negotiate was essential for getting investors and politicians on board. Taking full advantage of the ease at which influential people could be reached at that time of political uncertainty, he "would often call the offices of very important people, like the mayor or the cultural commissioner or the other potential big donors,

out of the blue from a phone booth in West Berlin” (Biesenbach, 2016). “And he did it at a time when it suddenly became vital for art institutions to find new ways of sustaining themselves economically” (Herbstreuth 1998, pp. 46–47).

By 1994, the KW’s professionalism and connections with the international art world began to be utilised for the inspiration and benefit of younger artists based in Berlin. Internationally-renowned curators such as Uta Meta Bauer and Hans Ulrich Obrist, as well as artists such as Rikrit Tiravanija, were invited to participate in events such as *Never Mind the Nineties*, a discussion series that ran from September 1994 to February 1995 organised by Biesenbach and Katharina Sieverding with the Hochschule der Künste Berlin. The series sought to introduce artists who had been working for about five years, and was part of the *When Tekkno Turns to Sound Poetry* event financed by the Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten Künstlerinnenprogramm (Senate Department for Cultural Affairs Women Artists' Programme), Stiftung Deutsche Klassenlotterie Berlin (DKLB, German Lottery Foundation of Berlin) and Pro Helvetia. Herbstreuth fondly recalls how the discussion series contributed to the KW’s wider programme of exhibitions that “created a sense of constant activity – it mobilized interests, set off emotions and concentrated the hopes and demands of different groups and lobbies for influence and territory” (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 46).

However, as ambitious as the programming was, the KW team was still operating in a state of precariousness. Ownership disputes of Auguststrasse 69 continued until 1995:

It turned out that the building was not the property of the former communist state. It wasn’t clear who it was owned by. That was quite a blow: normally we would have had to move out. But then WBM gave us rental contracts for each individual apartment. Everything was legal again. So the Kunst-Werke actually emerged from a chain of misunderstandings and ideas and inklings and suspicions. (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9)

Recruiting the help of prominent lawyer referred to as ‘Mr. Knauthe’, who had offered pro bono support for ownership disputes for artist initiatives, Biesenbach managed to track down and win over the support of the owners of the margarine factory. In 1995,

the DKLB bought the building from its previous owners to house the KW. As the building was also still in a dilapidated state and in need of renovation, it was awarded DM 8.5 million (Schwerfel 1998, p. 32) along with additional funds from the city of Berlin (Land Berlin) as part of the city planning programme (Städtebaulicher Förder Programme), and from the Society for the Protection of Landmark Buildings (der Stiftung Denkmalschutz) (Mears 2006, p. 205). It is unclear exactly when renovations began; however documentary photographs indicate that it was sometime after 1997 and was completed in time for the opening of the first Berlin Biennale in 1998. The existing complex was extended with two new buildings: Café Bravo, a glass pavilion, designed by the American artist Dan Graham, and realised in cooperation with the architect Johanne Nalbach, and the 400 square-metre exhibition hall in the rear wing, designed by Berlin architect Hans Düttman. Upon its reopening in the fall of 1999, the KW had 2,000 square metres of exhibition space on five floors and several studios in the side wings (Mears 2006, p. 205).

37 Räume

The exhibition *37 Räume* is a key event in the KW's history primarily for its aesthetic appropriation of empty spaces within the Spandauer Vorstadt and the turning point for its internationalisation. In the summer of 1992, *37 Räume* transformed thirty-seven empty rooms in different buildings - such as private apartments, schools, shops and a hotel along Auguststrasse and its surroundings - into exhibition spaces. Taking place between the 14th and the 21st June in 1992 daily from 3–7pm (Babius, 1992; Quappe, 1992; BAK, 2016), it was seen as both a catalyst for other events, such as *Club Berlin* at the Venice Biennale and *Hybrid Workspace* at *Documenta X* in Kassel that ultimately paved the way for the first Berlin Biennale as well as representing, for some, a form of colonisation of urban space.

There are conflicting narratives of who and how *37 Räume* was conceived. Biesenbach claims the exhibition developed out of the KW's regular curatorium meetings (Biesenbach, 2016) and, in the exhibition catalogue, attributes to himself and curator Brigitte Sonnenschein the project's conceptualisation and organisation (Biesenbach, 1992). However, critic Marius Babias claims that *37 Räume* was conceptualised not by

Klaus Biesenbach, but by Hamburger Bahnhof's then-director Wulf Herzogenrath, who asked the Kunst-Werke to organise it (Babius, 1992). What is clear is that the exhibition was very deliberately presented and promoted to an international audience. For example, in an address to other Berlin cultural workers written on the 2nd February, 1992, the KW Verein explain how funding acquired by the KW from the Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten (Senate Department of Cultural Affairs) was available for the production of a brochure highlighting the city's contemporary art activities during that year's Documenta exhibition in Kassel. The letter detailed that a number of events including *37 Räume* were being organised in parallel with *Documenta IX* in Kassel, and encouraged other Berlin-based gallerists and museum directors to get on board.⁵ The brochure allowed other arts organisations to list their own events taking place at that time and was distributed in 100,000 copies to "Museum curators, art historians and journalists, and last but not least, artists from all over the world" to Berlin (Kunst-Werke, 1992 translation by author).

The brochure seemed to have the desired effect. While both international and national press coverage of the exhibition are rather scarce, the level of international exchange between art world professionals and attendance to the exhibition brought the recognition as an international arts organisation that Biesenbach was after:

In one week, we had 35,000 visitors...So many international players, critics, and artists participated, visited, and learned more about Berlin. It was the first time so many art insiders who came to Kassel to see Documenta could visit all of Berlin, including the art scene in the East. (Biesenbach, 2016)

The success of the event was well captured by local Berlin press, with the entire group of events referred to in the brochure awarded the name "Documenta in Berlin" (Babius, 1992).

⁵ In the letter from KW sent on 20th February 1992, *37 Räume* is not actually named. Instead, addressees were informed about an exhibition named *Interim Zwischenräume (Interim Temporary Spaces)* that was to take place from Wednesday 17th June. Other documents referred to an event planned for around the same time entitled *Stadtraum-Aktion 37 Räume*.

It was again thanks to the support of Jutta Weitz and her colleague Falk Jesch from the WBM that made the use of the thirty-seven spaces along Auguststrasse possible. Special thanks are given in the catalogue to the WBM and the various owners of the spaces, such as the Sehbehindertenschule (Auhustrasse 14–16) and the residents of Augustrasse. Conrad Beckmann and Christina Standtke are listed as co-ordinators while Micha Kapinos and Philipp Weiss are listed as “space organisers” (Biesenbach, 1992). Biesenbach appointed a curator for each space, who had free rein to develop the exhibitions however they wished (Loock 1999, p. 40; Herbstreuth 1998, p. 46; Wiesel et al. 1999, p.9). The exhibition had a low budget with every curator receiving only DM 1,000 to cover all their costs, and it seems to have suffered logistical difficulties from the numbers of people involved. As one anonymous organiser described, one week was more than enough time for such a project, otherwise it would have been “like herding cats” (Quappe 1992, author translation). Biesenbach introduced the exhibition in the catalogue forward, summarising the history of Auguststrasse and highlighting its significance as the site of Jewish migration from Eastern Europe and the emptiness of the buildings during the end of the 1980s. It is this occupation of empty urban space that he emphasises as a key part of the exhibition’s conceptualisation:

Ideen und Konzepte zur aktuellen Kunst, zur Debatte über anderen soziale Wirkung werden erprobt – nicht in musealer Abgeschlossenheit, sondern mitten in der Stadt, in Läden, Wohnungen, Hotelzimmern, einer Schule... (Biesenbach 1992, p. 7)

The exhibition catalogue is mostly in German and is not a documentation. Rather, it acts as an additional artwork, comprising of texts written by curators, and what appear to be notes and photographs that (presumably) thematically connect with the artwork on display. Furthermore, a map tucked into the pages of the small paperbound booklet guides visitors to the area and the exhibitions, illustrating which curators and artists have occupied which spaces on and around Auguststrasse (Figure 4). While images of the work in situ are scarce, they demonstrate the interaction of a variety of contemporary artwork with urban space in new ways, with some dealing with relevant socio-political themes such as the joining of east and west. There are no artist or curator biographies. The curators retreat into the background – their names are printed along

the bottom of each “entry” or each exhibition documented, but the artists here take priority. What’s unfortunate for the researcher is that because there are few documentary photographs of the works in situ, it is hard to tell exactly what works were where, from what materials they were comprised and how they interacted with the spaces used, unless described by the artist or curator (Biesenbach, 1992).

The exhibition featured a range of international artists such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Valie Export, Yoko Ono and Mike Smith, as well as artists who had made Berlin their home (Biesenbach, 1992, 2016). Documentary photographs and local press reports showed that the exhibition featured mainly conceptual and experimental contemporary art, many room-installations comprised found objects; some digital work was displayed on projections straight onto exposed brickwork and peeling wallpaper. Some works responded directly to their surroundings, for example minimal-club’s installation featuring live chickens in a pen in the window of the building on the corner of Tucholsky and Auguststrasse referred to the building’s former life as a GDR Konsum (supermarket). Other exhibitions focused less on drawing from the history of the actual spaces and more on how such spatial opportunities gave curators the freedom to curate politically relevant shows. Gabriele Horn’s (who would later become director of the KW), and Beatrice Stammer’s exhibition that was comprised of over sixty female artists stands out.

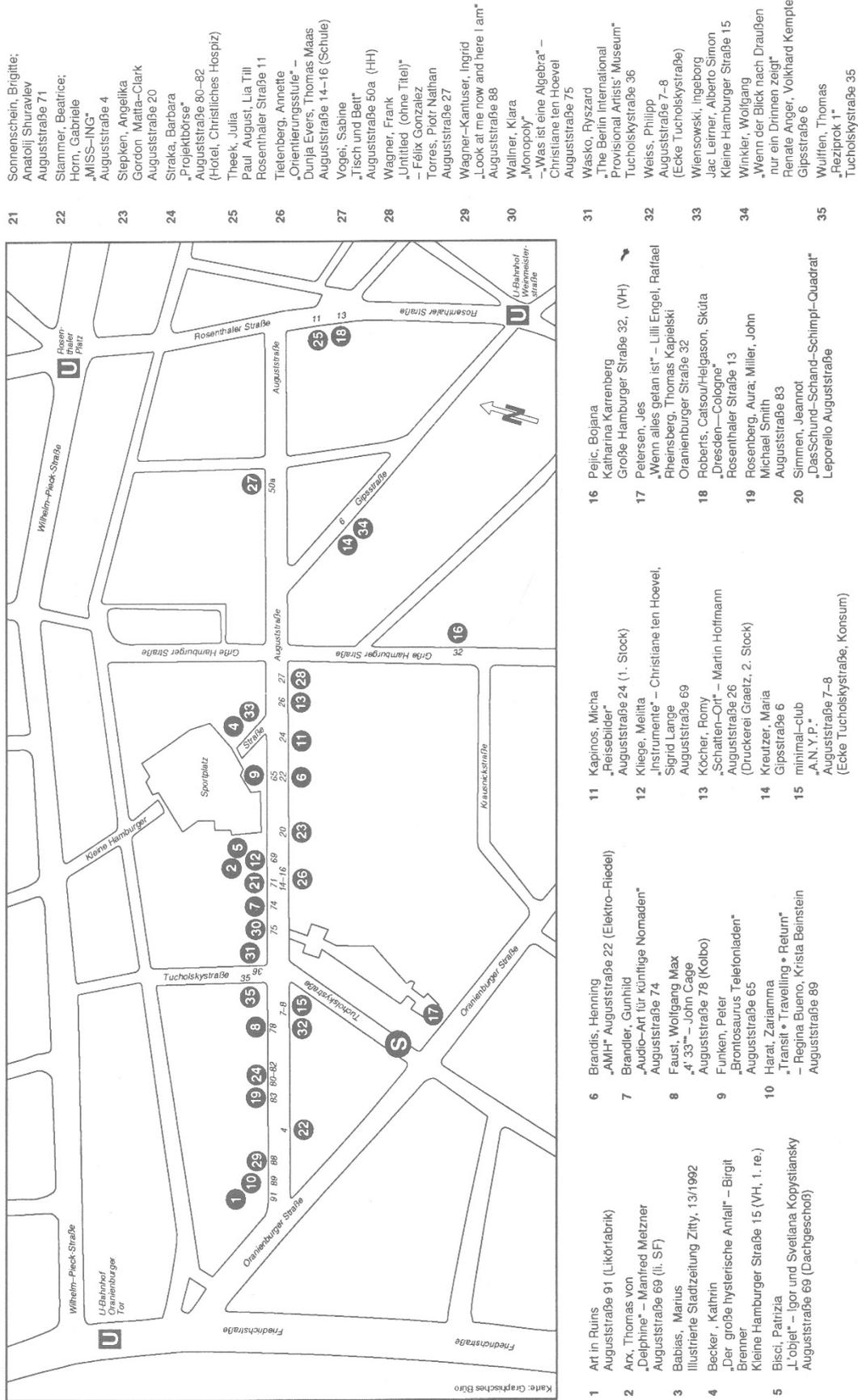


Figure 4: 37 Räume, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin 1992. Image: Courtesy KW Institute for Contemporary Art

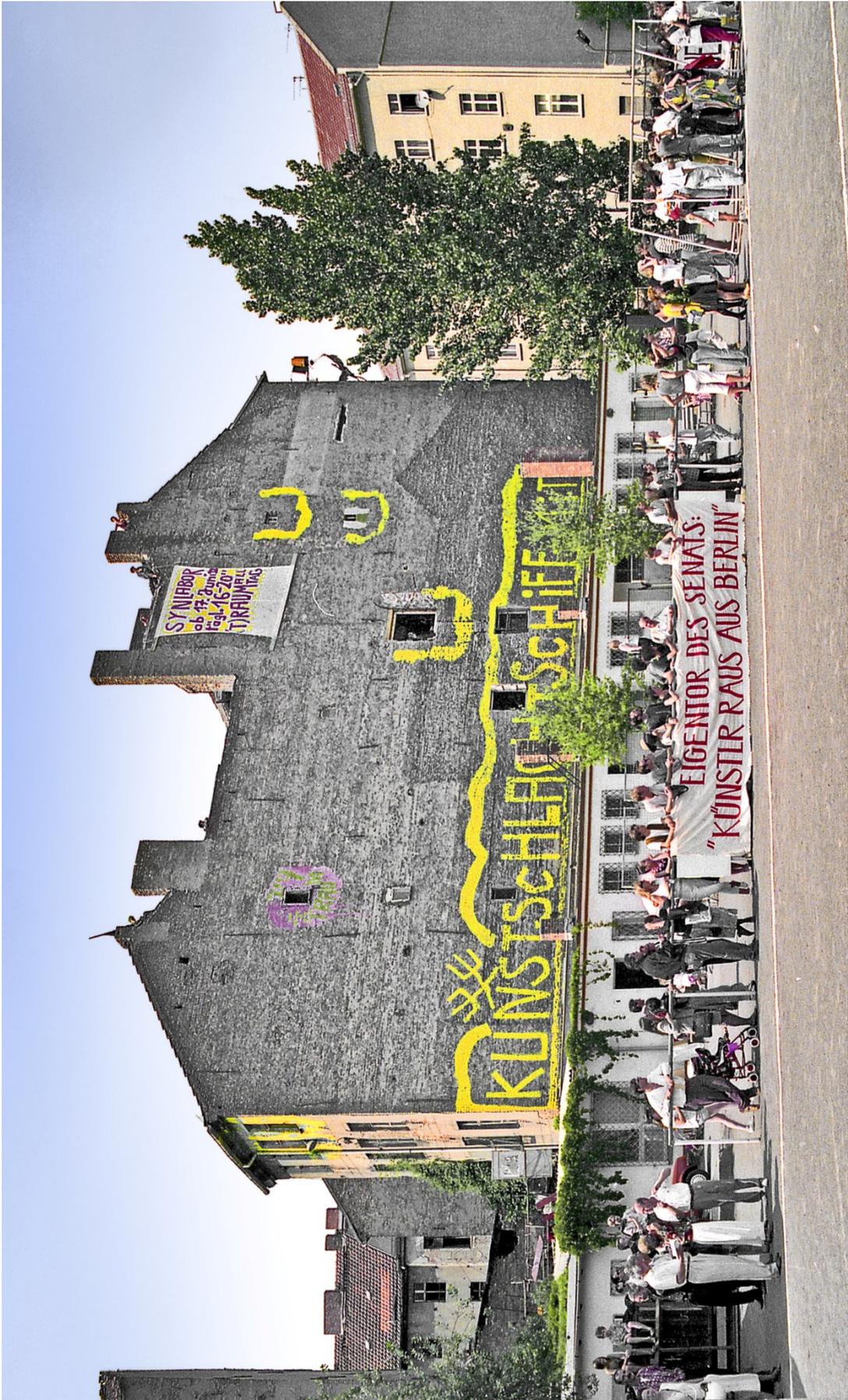


Figure 5: 37 Räume Football Match. Photo: Klaus Bädecker, 1992.

It is also important to note the durational, festival nature of the exhibition. With various concerts, performances and happenings running parallel to the exhibitions, as we can see in Figure 5 it even featured a football match between Berlin artists and “Kunstvermittler” (art interpreters or in other words, curators) in the street, or as it was dubbed at the time, “im Kunstschlachtschiff Mitte” (art battleship Mitte) (Quappe, 1992). This kind of festival format and high level conceptual art was for Berlin at the time experimental when compared with other events that were happening in the cultural sector at the same time. During this tumultuous and uncertain time after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many arts institutions sought to reflect on the reunification of the two Berlins and on an opening out of the city to other international influences, however in far more subtle ways. For example, at the same time as *37 Räume*, Berlinische Galerie staged an exhibition of DDR photography from the Damröse Collection, the Neue Nationalgalerie featured a Hermann Glöckner retrospective while the Bauhaus Archive of Design featured an exhibition titled *Early Cyprus* (Babius, 1992). Through *37 Räume*, the KW stood out as an institution perhaps more interested in internationalisation and in importing a very Western idea of cultural exchange, that was, at times, accused of being insensitive to the still very raw collapse of the German Socialist regime.

The KW’s use of urban space for *37 Räume* signals a shift in approach for the institution: once seen as a necessity for the production of contemporary art, the decrepit crumbling buildings of Mitte were transformed into exhibition spaces, and were presented simultaneously with the art work itself, with their historical and symbolic value necessary for the contextualisation, or framing, of the work. By utilising vacant spaces, the exhibition took the city as a frame for viewing contemporary art, something the organisers saw as distinct from what was taking place in official art spaces such as museums. The goal was the “social impact” of art, suggesting the *importance of the relationship between urban space, art and its public* – the crystallisation of the dialogue with the city that would continue later on through other events and eventually the Biennale. We can see just how important the imagery of urban space was for the conceptualisation of these exhibitions in the few publicly available documents such as the *37 Räume* catalogue and the extensive press coverage by *Zitty*, Berlin’s city magazine. Knowing their public would have a natural curiosity for the former eastern

parts of the recently reunited Berlin, meant that the exhibitions ultimately became a kind of spectacle, not of artwork, but of the urban space it temporarily inhabited:

For many, it was the first chance to take a look at Mitte, to explore the otherwise empty apartments and buildings. At the same time, art was always competing with reality, because reality was so present, provoking and seductive.

(Biesenbach 1999, 9)

However, this framing *revealed* the mundane and everyday spaces of former GDR Mitte, as a spectacle for a largely international art public, something that brought criticism from local residents and the press. Thousands of people were described to have “trotted through open spaces throughout the entire street. Tenants at the end of their wits hung a sign on their apartment door: *“Heute keine Kunst. Drei Ostler”* (Koch 2015, p. 142). While most press coverage of the event celebrated the experimental nature of using urban space in this way (Quappe, 1992; BAK, 2016), the perhaps unintentional result was that some critics focused more on the actual buildings as a way to comment negatively on the standards of life in GDR Mitte. As Andreas Quappe from the *Berliner Zeitung* commented, “Der Charme des Verfalls in den Hinterhöfen spielt den auch oft die Rolle des Hauptakteurs. So grau, so bröckelig, so spartanisch: Hier haben Menschen gewohnt?” (Quappe, 1992).

Others, such as Marius Babias, criticised the exhibition as potentially playing into the hands of real estate speculators who had started to buy up large parts of East Berlin:

The (ruinous) charm of Auguststrasse, where the project "37 Rooms" is mainly realized, clogs the view of social problems. The ownership situation in the future government district is unresolved and illegal occupations are the order of the day. In empty apartments, the radio is left on at night and the lights are turned on to deter squatters. Telephone services are tapped for free. Speculators buy up claims for repossession en masse. The housing association Berlin-Mitte is left with nothing but ghouls. At a rent of five Marks per square metre, preference is still given to cultural workers...Are the artists the avant-garde of the expected

boom? Decoys for speculators and investors? Stakeholders of a business game?
(Babius, 1992, p. 70, author translation)

The KW seemed to invite criticism of their use of urban space – Babius’ article in *Zitty*, accompanied by photographs of the empty spaces before the work was installed, was actually included in the listing of “exhibitions” in the *37 Räume* catalogue. However, any reflections on the negative aspects of their use of urban space for the exhibition, and the marketing of the exhibition to an international audience, seem either ignorant or inconsiderate of the effect that others like Babius foresaw. Fezer and Wieder recall the very tangible effect that the exhibition had on the transformation of the Spandauer Vorstadt into the “gallery district” thus associated with the gentrification of Mitte (Fezer and Wieder, 2004).

The large number of curators involved, as well as the types of curators (curators had to be “freelance” and were not allowed to be associated with any arts institutions), was also the subject of much criticism. According to Quappe, only five of the thirty-seven curators had a connection with the local area of Mitte (Quappe, 1992). Babias also argues that the audacious act of inviting curators, rather than artists, was a sign of the reign of the curator to the detriment of the art – a negative trend of the international art world that Berlin had finally caught up with:

With some delay, the post-fashionable fairy tale of the end of art has also spread to Berlin. The guiding principal, according to which art is a cripple who is handed a crutch by its mediator has electrified contemporary art. (Babius, 1992, p. 70, author translation)

Babias’ argument is reinforced by the fact that it is not the artists’ names that are listed first in the exhibition catalogue, but rather those of the curators. Whether one views the use of too many “non-local” curators as a negative international trend or not, the fact that the local and national press covered *37 Räume* as an art world event demonstrated that the KW was now recognised as more than just an old margarine factory run by some young people interested in contemporary art. Instead, it would be recognised as a “site for art” both locally and internationally (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 9). In fact, the

transformative effects of *37 Räume* were not just limited to the KW. As Herbstreuth describes, it “made an event out of the area. It put Auguststrasse on the map in the art world” (Herbstreuth 1998, p. 46).

Club Berlin

If *37 Räume* was the event that put Auguststrasse on the art world map, then Club Berlin was the event that took Mitte to the art world itself. *Club Berlin* was a hybrid exhibition-event curated and financed by the KW for the Venice Biennale in 1995 and was significant as the event that led to the conceptualisation of the first Berlin Biennale. Taking place at a former opera house in Venice, it again used the durational style format for a seventy-two hour non-stop event between the 7th and 9th June. It featured the work of 150 Berlin-based artists of all kinds, including DJs and computer hackers (Thiel, 1995). The idea was not so much to show individual artworks, but to capture the counter culture that blossomed in Berlin during that time, a culture that blurred the boundaries of traditionally divided art disciplines. Described by Biesenbach as a “marathon music video performance” (Biesenbach, 2018), and by one television documentary as a “mega-party” (Thiel, 1995):

[the exhibition] was carried by Mercedes Bunz, Daniel Pflumm, Monica Bonvicini, Dan Graham, Katherina Sieverding, Angella Bulloch and many more artists. No sleep for three days and three nights, videos, experimental music, installations, talks, performances and screenings parallel to the opening of the official biennial. (Jovanovic, 2016)

A dilapidated, sandstone baroque building with a balcony and an ornate façade with its grand interior was overtaken by a nocturnal setting of video art, multi-coloured lights and crowds of people either lounging in red bean-bags designed by artist Angela Bulloch or hanging by the DJ desk. At the bar one could sip experimental cocktails created by young superstar artists like Marina Abramović and rub shoulders with *Documenta X* curator Catherine David to the thump of the latest techno beats. Outside, a

large queue formed in the tiny alley between the opera house and its neighbouring building, visitor numbers having been restricted due to safety reasons (Biewendt, Bugno and Cornelissen, 1995; Thiel, 1995). These scenes are reminiscent of a typical Berlin nightclub and convey in quite clear terms the image of Berlin that the KW wanted to project: Berlin and the Mitte-art scene as young, hybrid, alternative and cool.

Like many of the KW's early events, it's unclear to determine exactly who was involved in the conceptualisation of the event and how many artists exhibited. Net-art artist Pit Schultz organised one of the first internet congresses there (Jovanovic, 2016). Klaus Biesenbach appears as the "organiser"; however, in one video documenting the event, four very young men and women looking bored, lazing closely next to one another on a red bean-bag, are referred to simply as "Club Berlin". They describe the exhibition as "keine Ausstellung sondern einfach ein Club. Kann man selbe entscheiden was es mit Kunst zu tun hat." (Biewendt, Bugno and Cornelissen, 1995). And whether or not the event could be considered art or not "is not really important." (Thiel, 1995).

However, it was important to the KW that the event was conceived as an art event. The event was deliberately staged in Venice to coincide with the activities of the Venice Biennale and to be received by an international art world audience. While it was presented as experimental and alternative to the traditional national pavilions of the Venice Biennale, it was a way for Biesenbach to stake a claim for the KW through reviving a part of the Venice Biennale that represented a younger generation of artists:

I went to the Venice Biennale in 1993 – it was my first Biennale. There used to be a more emerging, younger artist exhibition there called Aperto. In 1995, we – the artist and curators from "post-wende" Berlin [after the reunification in Germany] – thought we should all be involved. But in 1995, it was a very conservative Biennale and the director, Jean Cölar, was like, "I'm not doing Aperto". So, with no young art section, we made it ourselves. (Jovanovic 2016, p. 2)

Most importantly, all the people who would become sponsors and supporters of the Berlin Biennale, such as major patron Eberhardt Mayntz, were also there (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 10). Biesenbach describes how the idea for the Berlin Biennale came about:

When we went back to Berlin, we realised it would have been much easier to showcase such emerging art in Berlin. Because the city didn't have a large-scale institution that regularly focused on international contemporary art, we had to create something new. (Biesenbach, 2018)

Embarking on such an ambitious project as *Club Berlin* was also quite a risk for the KW, as Biesenbach recalls. It was the turning point at which the KW went from experimenting in hiding in Berlin to being visible as participants on the international art world stage (Wiesel et al. 1999, p. 10). Yet it was a risk that paid off with Biesenbach being invited to be a jury member of the Golden Lion Prize at the following Venice Biennale in June 1997. It was there that Biesenbach met and awarded prizes to major international artists such as Pipilotti Rist, Thobias Rheberger and Fabrice Uber, who would feature as part of the exhibitions of the first Biennale in Berlin two years later (Kreuzer and Lederer, 1998).

Hybrid Workspace

Under mounting pressure from international and local peers to capture the moment before it had passed, Biesenbach as the KW's self-appointed new director, capitalised on the momentum of the successfully received *Club Berlin* by founding the Berlin Biennale Association and assembling an organising team in 1996. Biesenbach took advantage of the opportunity to piggyback off *Documenta X* in Kassel in 1997 by organising a Berlin Biennale pre-event that would present and receive feedback on their ideas for the Biennale for an international arts audience (Brehme, 2016c, 2016d; Biesenbach, 2018). *Hybrid Workspace* was initiated by *Documenta X* curator Catherine David, Biesenbach and invited co-curators Nancy Spector and Hans Ulrich Obrist. The event was largely conceived by theorist, activist and net critic Geert Lovinck and international net circle *net-time* co-founder Pit Schultz, along with Alexander Branczyk, Susanne Dietze, Micz

Flor, Heike Foell, Thomax Kaulmann and Thorsten Schilling; it was staged at Kassel's Orangerie. Another hybrid event-exhibition, it ran for ten days during the last part of Documenta in September 1997 and constituted a forum, film screenings, seminars and discussions for artists, theorists, activists and web designers (Kreuzer and Lederer, 1998).

The space itself was designed by German architect Eike Becker – a clean white cube interior with a small platform stage, working desks with computers and red lounges – and done so specifically for the eleven different invited groups to exchange with one another about the accessibility of the internet, architecture and urbanism and its intersection with other issues such as migration, racism, cyber feminism and independent media (Documenta, 1997; Schultz, 1997). Described by the Documenta as a “laboratory” (xplicit, 2019). Biesenbach describes the space as a way of “imagining the space of the internet” in a physical manifestation. “How would that look? Like a news or TV studio? Or a stage? Like a projection surface with moving walls and furniture or wheels? All of these visions became reality in its design.” (Biesenbach, 2018). Through the architectural design they tried,

to keep the different functions, visual worlds and situations equally co-existing. Similar to the symbols and signs of screen surfaces, the different spatial elements can be deconstructed and rearranged. Projection stands, platforms, surfaces and tables create interfaces between the real and the virtual. Multifunctional audio and video equipment is integrated into the movable projection stands. The Hybrid WorkSpace awaits the visitor, depending on their use, darkened or illuminated, animated or empty, full of images or sounds, loud or silent. (xplicit, 2019, author translation) (Figures 6 and 7)

But most importantly, it was to this group that Biesenbach, Spector and Obrist presented *Hybrid Workspace* as an event that would continue as part of the first Berlin Biennale. Thus, this collaboration with Documenta was not only a way to inform potential visitors about their conceptual framework for the first Berlin Biennale – the

rapid urban and ideological transformation that was currently taking place in Berlin – but also to use it as a key marketing activity to ensure that Berlin’s forthcoming first Biennale would be cemented in the minds of cultural professionals.

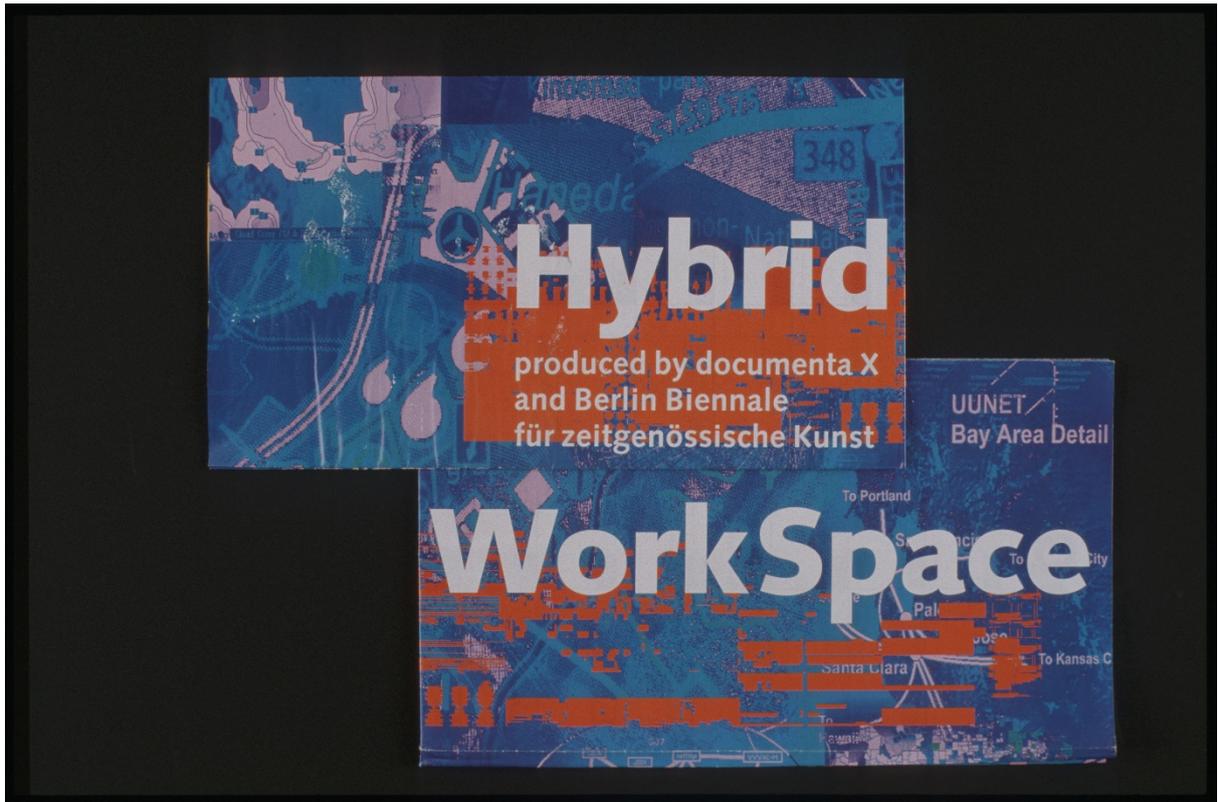


Figure 6: (top) Hybrid WorkSpace poster. Photo: documenta archive copyright 2012

Figure 7: (bottom) Hybris WorkSpace at documenta X, 1998. Photo: documenta archive copyright 2012



Figure 8: Hybrid Workspace at documenta X, 1998. Photo: documenta archive copyright 2012

Compared to its predecessor events, *37 Räume* and *Club Berlin*, *Hybrid Workspace* stands out as an example of a more sophisticated conversation about the urban development processes in Berlin that had taken off at an unprecedented rate. As described in the first part of this chapter, back home in Berlin, top-down, undemocratic, and closed urban development was forging ahead to realise a vision for the new city centre: a pastiche of resurrected Prussian values recreated through architectural design, renovation, and, through the razing of GDR buildings, not to mention the bombastic architecture of nearby Potsdamer Platz being realised through Europe's largest building site. The *Zwischennutzung* activities of organisations such as the KW, not to mention various other sub-cultures and migrant groups within the city were not seen as useful to the official urban planning policy of Berlin (Oswalt et al. 2013, p. 7) as they were deemed "irrelevant, marginal, or not economically useful in the dominant language of place marketing and interurban competition." (Colomb 2012, p. 132). *Hybrid Workspace* began a critical discussion of these processes that would continue in the first Berlin Biennale planned to open the following year in 1998.

3.5 Conclusion

The Biennale's self-appointed mandate – a "dialogue with the city" – traces back to a number of key events that set the stage for the first Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. They were outlined in this chapter in three ways: by the socio-political developments that took place between 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall and 1996 when the production of the first Berlin Biennale began; by the culture of *Zwischennutzung* (interim use) of urban space; and by the establishment of the Biennale's host organisation, the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW).

The intertwined temporalities of the urban development and cultural spheres played a central role. The power vacuum after the fall of the Berlin Wall resulted in the slow resolution of conflicts over empty property and the relaxed attitudes to bureaucracy facilitating cultural appropriation of urban space in the 1990s, allowing cultural organisations in Mitte's Spandauer Vorstadt such as the KW to develop. This can be contrasted with the rapid urban development processes driven by planners, architects and city promoters to reinvent the image of the city to a certain ideology in a bid for

participation in global city competitions. On an official level, these processes initially largely ignored (and were criticised by) the grassroots arts scene that the KW was a part of, leading them to carve out a space for themselves as providers of physical urban space for contemporary art in the largely abandoned, former eastern parts of a newly reconfigured city. However, most significantly, what was instrumental for the KW's survival was the support from local politicians and bureaucrats keen to transform this part of the city into a new cosmopolitan city centre.

The KW's activities *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace*, were an opportunity not only to capture the moment of young, experimental art and share it with the world, but also an opportunity to carve out a piece of Berlin for themselves. To create another image of Berlin, a counter image in defiance of the official city vision for a new generation of artists. The city offered at this time a new beginning for many who had just made Berlin their home. It was highly malleable, full of possibility, hope and promise. Moving towards the future and shaping Berlin, however, meant professionalism and internationalism. Responding to an increasing desire from the international cultural sector to know more about and connect with the thriving creative scene in Berlin was not a common dream, but the dream of a few. One wonders if the level of internationalism that events such as *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace* fostered, would have occurred anyway or if they were indeed accelerated through the activities of the KW, as many suggest.

For all of these activities – *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace* – the city's urban space emerges as a significant part of the Berlin art scene discourse created and promoted by the KW. While *37 Räume* spectacularised the mundane street, and *Club Berlin* exported the hedonistic creative and club lifestyle of the city, *Hybrid Workspace* contributed more sophisticated conversation about the urban development in Berlin that had taken off at an unprecedented rate. However, the framing of these transformations of urban space were only possible by engaging the public, and to do so was only possible by *revealing* the mundane and everyday as a spectacle for an international art world audience. These activities sparked the beginning of an aesthetic trend that, while criticised at the time, would continue in future iterations of the Berlin Biennale. We can view the conceptualisation of the first Berlin Biennale, and it's

precursor events, as part of a genuine push by Biesenbach and his peers to carve out a piece of Berlin for themselves and create a counter image of Berlin in defiance of the official city vision. And what better way to communicate this alternative vision to an international audience than through a biennial.

Exhibition venues of the Berlin Biennale (1998 - 2018)

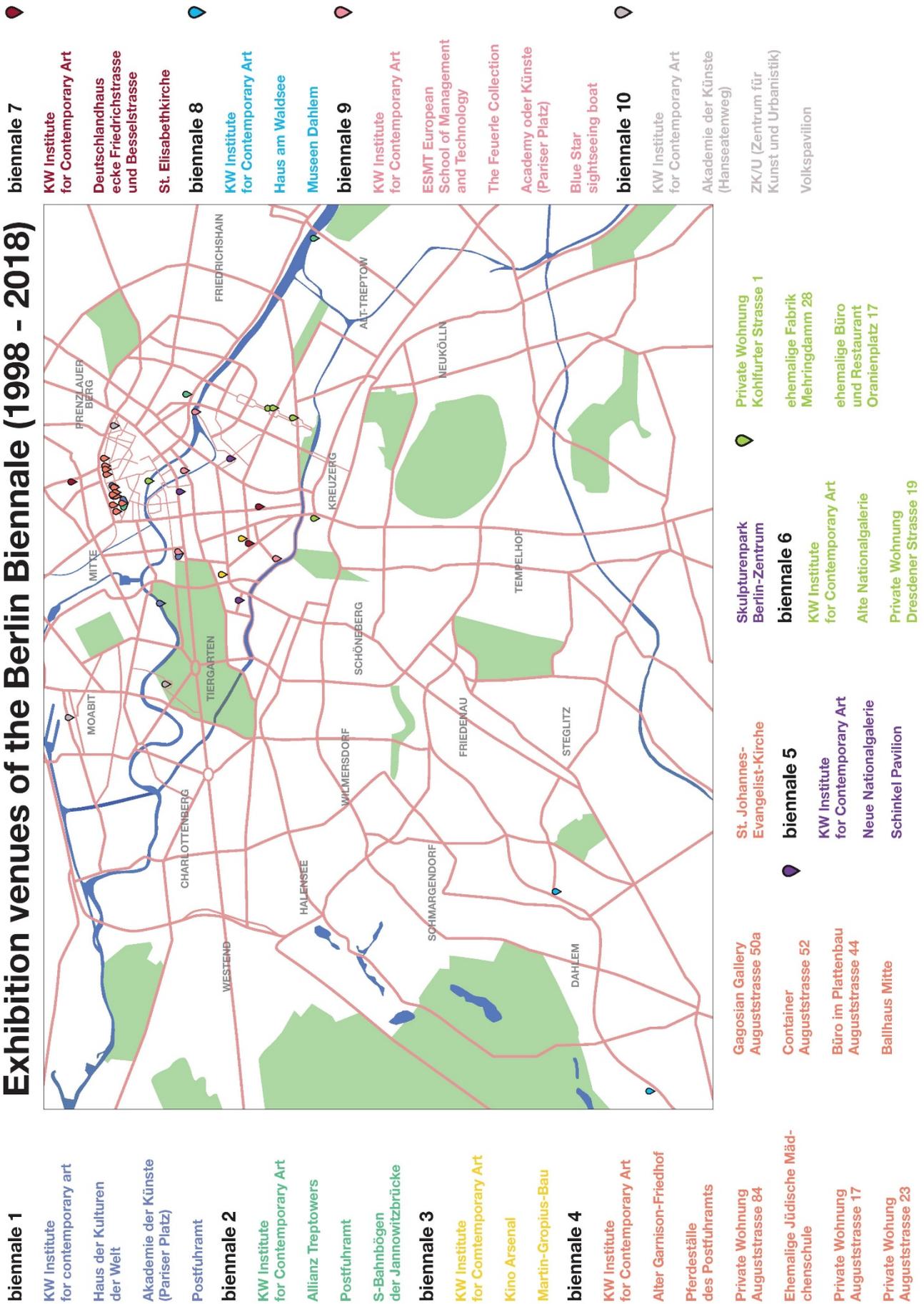


Figure 9: Exhibition Venues of the Berlin Biennale (1998-2018). Image: Kate Brehme, 2019

4. Mapping the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art from 1998–2018

The Berlin Biennale is the forum for contemporary art in one of the most attractive cities for art. Taking place every other year at changing locations throughout Berlin it is shaped by the different concepts of well-known curators appointed to enter in to a dialogue with the city, its general public, the people interested in art as well as the artists of this world.

(The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the case study of the Berlin Biennale with regard to both the local and international context and thus provides an overview of how its relationship with urban space, or “dialogue with the city”, manifests for each edition over its twenty-year history. Unlike many other studies of biennials that compare single editions with each other, this case study examines the chronology of one single biennial by comparing each subsequent edition with the next. Such an approach allows for a better understanding of a biennial as both an institution and as an event that makes a contribution to both local and global cultural spheres over time. Furthermore, again differing from other biennial studies, this analysis does not focus on each individual exhibition, nor does it critique individual artworks within each exhibition, but rather, combines approaches from the fields of both art history and urban studies to explore how and why certain physical urban spaces were used over the Biennale’s history and how that use has changed over time.

This chapter is divided into sub-sections that reflect the ten editions of the Berlin Biennale chronologically from 1998 to 2018. Within the edition’s thematic title, each section presents details about the Biennale such as the curator for that edition, the exhibition venues used, and a map of the geographic location of that edition within the city of Berlin. Each edition is then further contextualised according to the following

aspects: the developmental milestones of its host organisation (either KW or the Berlin Biennale e.V.); the thematic aims, scope and scale of the exhibitions; and what relationship the former two aspects had on the conceptual or practical approach to urban space in Berlin.

Why *map* the Berlin Biennale? The process of mapping proved useful for visualising how Berlin's geography and various physical urban spaces have been used by the Biennale over its twenty year history. Primarily, I undertook a mapping of the Biennale in order to understand the space-time configuration of the biennale and secondly, because such an analysis on the biennale had never been conducted before, despite the Biennale's own long-held engagement with urban space both pragmatically and conceptually. The series of unique maps that accompany each sub-chapter describing each Berlin Biennale edition, provide the reader an insight into my own research journey that forms the basis of this dissertation. As you can see, the map *Exhibition Venues of the Berlin Biennale 1998-2016* (Figure 9), depicts the biennale's entire history of exhibition venues as it is mapped through time and space, and can be found at the beginning of this Chapter. Ten additional maps demonstrate the "clusters" of venues that were employed for each Biennale edition (see Figures 10, 23, 27, 30, 44, 48, 55, 62, and 67). Each venue is colour coded and grouped according to its Biennale edition from the 1st in 1998, until the 10th in 2018. The mapping process began by locating and charting each exhibition venue on a freely accessible online map, then compiling clusters of venues according to the biennale edition they were used for. A large scale map containing all exhibition venues was then created.

Next, I conducted site visits to all the former Berlin Biennale exhibition venues. This served two purposes: a) it allowed me to confirm their actual addresses and eliminate any discrepancies between the digital information and what existed in reality and identify any changes since the time of the Biennale's use of the venues; and b) it allowed me to physically experience and thus understand each site first-hand and record its various architectural qualities such as its architectural style and condition, which was later followed up by desk research into its history, symbolic value, the demographics of the surrounding area, and its intended and actual function and use at the time of each Biennale. I thus developed a system of classification for these venues: "dedicated

exhibition spaces” – which can be, for example, purpose-built exhibition venues such as museums, galleries and some arts project spaces – and “non-typical exhibition spaces”, spaces that can be defined as those originally intended as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residencies such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets. You will find images of each exhibition venue here, alongside their corresponding maps, grouped according to the biennale edition they were part of, in order to aid the reader in understanding what the visitor experience of urban space for each biennale edition would have been like.⁶

Mapping the Berlin Biennale in this way provides insight into the spatio-temporal relationship of the Berlin Biennale in a number of different ways, as articulated throughout this chapter. Firstly, it provides a visual interpretation of where within the city exhibition venues were used by the Biennale, for which editions, and at what point in the biennale’s twenty-year history. For example, we can see in Figure 9 how, the Biennale has ventured out beyond Mitte and Kreuzberg into neighbourhoods such as Alt Treptow (Berlin Biennale 2 in 2001) or Dahlem (Berlin Biennale 9 in 2016), or where and at what point in time spaces were used and re-used such as the Kunst-Werke in Mitte’s Augustrasse (Berlin Biennales 1-10, from 1998 to 2018) or Akademie der Künste (Berlin Biennales 1 in 1998, and 9 in 2016). Secondly, it reveals what roles particular types of spaces have played throughout the biennale’s history. For example, examining the use of space over time, it is evident that non-typical exhibition spaces play a significant role within the Biennale’s history over its twenty-year history, of the thirty-eight spaces the Biennale has used for exhibitions, more than half can be classified as non-typical (see Appendix: Research Methods). We can also see that the Biennale’s use of such spaces was far more common for earlier editions, and that it began using an increasing number of dedicated exhibition spaces, particularly in the recent editions from 2012 to 2018. Lastly, examining the findings of the mapping process in conjunction with the Biennale’s documentary ephemera such as archived websites, pamphlets, maps and the exhibition catalogues, reveals a more complex rationale behind the use of certain spaces over time. In particular, it sheds light on how and why

⁶ Where venues have undergone drastic transformation, archival images resembling what they would have looked like at the time of that particular biennale edition have been used.

Biennale producers engaged in the symbolic value of non-typical and dedicated exhibition spaces for both practical and ideological purposes throughout the Biennale's history, and demonstrates that the Berlin Biennale's relationship with urban space did not develop in isolation, but with an awareness of other local and global events.

The results of my research processes of mapping, site and document analysis are brought together here in this chapter in a highly visual way, to demonstrate how and why the Berlin Biennale's self-proclaimed "dialogue with the city" (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010) began and evolved over time. The first sub-section, *Berlin/Berlin: The First Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art* is a little longer than those it precedes, in order to fully explore the Biennale's beginnings along two main lines: the onset of Biennale producers' desires to secure a place in the international biennial network, and their approach to urban space through communicating "Berlin-ness". For example, during the mid-1990s in particular, biennials were becoming prolific as hybrid event-exhibitions and communicators of meaning (see Chapter 1). Biennales evolved from the grand exhibitions of the 19th century, and thus have always been important for making cities culturally significant as part of global cultural networks (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, as temporary institutions, unlike their museum counterparts, biennials had at this time cemented their position within the global contemporary art circuit as far more flexible in terms of responding to the zeitgeist (see Chapter 1). Viewed in light of the socio-political context of post-Wall Berlin (see Chapter 2), it appears that a biennial was the perfect format for the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW) to capture and internationally promote the vibrant developing art scene of Mitte as well as claim a stake in the development of Berlin's urban (creative) identity. The first Berlin Biennale initially used non-typical exhibition spaces as a substitute for the more conventional white cube exhibition space, allowing producers to deliberately thematise, reimagine and internationally export Berlin's urban space – a trend that would continue throughout the Biennale's history in a variety of ways.

4.2 Berlin/Berlin: The First Berlin Biennale

30 September 1998–3 January 1999

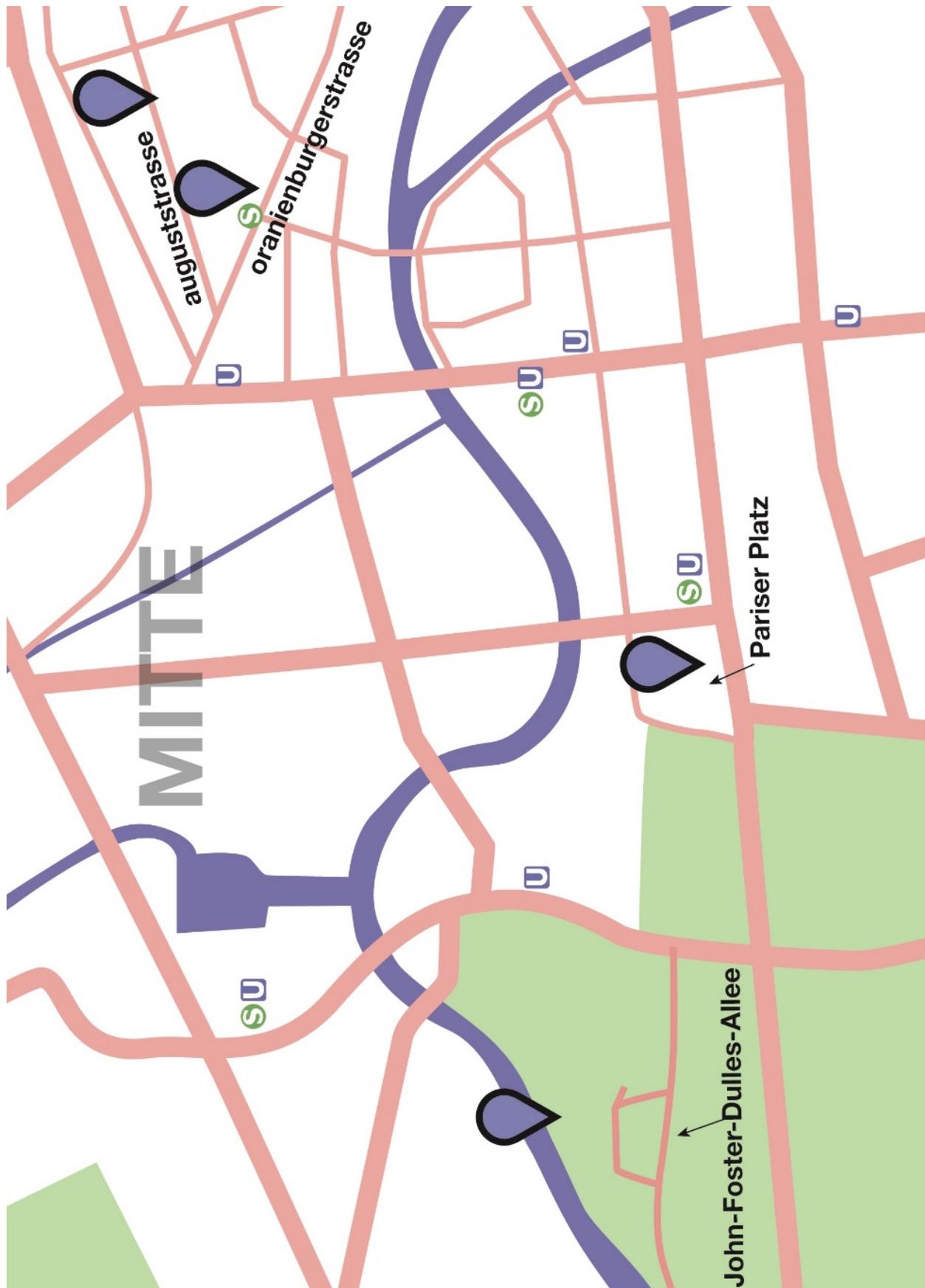


Figure 10: Map of the Exhibition Venues of the First Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 11: (top) Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.
Figure 12: (bottom) Postfuhramt, Oranienburgerstrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 14: (top) Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz, Mitte, 1995. Photo: Sibylle Sack-Hasper, Akademie der Künste Archive

Figure 13: (bottom) Haus der Kulturen der Welt, John-Foster-Dulles Allee, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

Securing a Place in the International Biennale Network

Many reasons brought about the first Berlin Biennale. Firstly, KW director Klaus Biesenbach took advantage of the momentum built by KW's earlier projects in the early to mid-1990s such as *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace*. The organisation of a hybrid exhibition-event was an unquestioned and logical next step for Biesenbach: "because the city didn't have a large-scale institution that regularly focused on international contemporary art, we had to create something new" (Biesenbach, 2018). Secondly, there were practical reasons such as the availability of internationally renowned artists living in Berlin at the time, and a raft of financial supporters who had been involved in the KW's previous activities (Biesenbach, 2018). Lastly, creating Berlin's first biennale for contemporary art was an opportunity for KW to claim to be the organisation responsible for producing and representing Berlin's contemporary art at an international level (Biesenbach, 2018).

However, the Biennale would ultimately have to prove itself amidst a sea of more established city biennials worldwide. It needed to make a name for itself by standing out. Thematically and geographically, other biennials at the time tended to explore uniting east and west Europe or extending beyond Europe. Responding to major world events such as the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the Tiananmen Square protest, the collapse of the Soviet Union not to mention the rise of previously marginalised voices within international contemporary art discourse, many biennials of the 1990s sought to do away with old fashioned notions of centres and peripheries, east and west, north and south (Vanderlinden and Filipovic, 2005, p. 13; Green and Gardner, 2016, p. 4). During this time, a spate of biennials arose, created primarily for city marketing purposes, of which the Berlin Biennale is often categorised (Lapp, 2001). However, while its creators were certainly interested in putting Berlin on the international art map, and while they focused thematically on the urban issues and the aesthetics of the city, they were not a top-down government initiative as many other biennials of this period were (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, what sets it apart from other biennials organised by arts institutions that popped up around the same time, such as the Whitney Museum or the Shanghai Art Museum, was the fact that the Berlin Biennale's infrastructure was far less sophisticated and professional (Ruthe, 1998b).

With this international public in mind, and in order to carve out their own niche amongst the sea of other city-based biennials worldwide, the first Berlin Biennale for contemporary art bucked the trend of most biennials of this era by taking their own city in its then transitional state as its debut theme. The title “Berlin/Berlin” reflects the ideological clash and coming together of the two Berlins of the former East and West Germanys after the physical reconfiguration of the city after the fall of the Wall, but also the layers of temporality held in one physical location: that of the past, former divided Berlin and that of the new future oriented and reunited Berlin (Biesenbach, 2018). Conceptually, and harmonising with the media discourse at the time, the Biennale reflected on the city as a both physical and ideological construction site, taking a critical view on the fallout of the failed official New Berlin campaign of the mid-1990s. The Biennales’ exhibitions were based on an interdisciplinary approach intended to reflect “the city’s hybrid cultural landscape” featuring more than seventy artists comprising architects, designers, writers, musicians, choreographers, fashion designers, theatre directors and cinematographers who were then based or at least temporarily living in Berlin (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015f).

Most of the work was produced specifically for the Biennale, was experimental and often defied disciplinary categories. Video, sound, performance and installation pieces featured heavily. The Biennale also featured a major event entitled *Congress 3000*, curated by Daniel Haaksmann that took place at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) (Figure 14) running nightly from 10pm to 6am between the 1st and 4th of October, featuring discussions, readings, film screenings and DJ-events. The Berlin Biennale’s selection of artists, style of works and focus on the theme of the urban demonstrate clear links with the previous KW events of *Club Berlin* or *Hybrid Workspace*, which also celebrated multi-disciplinary works (Kannenberg, 1998; Preuss, 1998; Ruthe, 1998b; Landbrecht, 2010, p. 213; Biesenbach, 2018)

Infrastructurally, the first Berlin Biennale can be compared to other biennials of this era (see Chapter 1) as a hybrid – partially grassroots in terms of its organisational structure and focus on local artists, but also top-down due to its legitimisation through federal funding. The young ages and lack of experience of the producers involved, its low

budget, as well as the struggle for official arts spaces (Jovanovic, 2016) combined with the focus on an already existing arts community in Berlin, indicate just how grassroots the Biennale was. For example, while Klaus Biesenbach appointed himself the director of the Biennale, his invitation of two internationally renowned curators can be understood as a sign of his insecurity in tackling the task of curation on his own. He drew on the advice and reputations of Hans Ulrich Obrist and Nancy Spector who, unlike Biesenbach, both had experience working on biennials and major exhibitions such as the first Manifesta biennale and the Venice Biennale in 1997, respectively.

Similarly, the fact that it was a generational show – an exhibition largely featuring the work of young, usually emerging artists of roughly the same age, mostly or partially based in Berlin at that time – is attributed to it being the only way they could actually realise the Biennale on the given budget and time scale (Jovanovic, 2016). However, this also had advantages for the artists and the Biennale itself. Participating in the Biennale was a big deal for many artists – especially as many of the artists were quite young, it was an opportunity to launch their careers and create work they would otherwise not be able to (Dragset, 20/1/2016, line 1; Hohenblücher 17/11/2016, line 30; Musacchi, 24/11/2016, line 38-42). During this peak period of biennial making, they were often thought of as one of the main ways artists could cement their careers as professionals through the international exposure they would receive:

The first Berlin Biennale in 1998 was a revelation of the Berlin art scene. As such, it had, at least, an effect on the international public, as this Biennale was the prelude to a worldwide interest in a generation of artists who - born in the 1960s - embodied a young, experimental and international Berlin. As a tribute to the city and its artists, it is still seen today and beyond as the first large-scale exhibition presentation that poured the atmosphere of departure of the 1990s into the form of a sensational group exhibition. (Landbrecht, 2010, p. 213, author translation)

The confidence the Berlin Biennale producers placed in young, experimental artists was regarded as a positive radical departure from the usual structures of most biennials at the time (Landbrecht, 2010, p. 215) while others heralded the Biennale for

transforming an old fashioned art scene into a laboratory for experimentation (Jessen, 1998; Ruthe, 1998a; Tiefenberg, 1998).

This offer for local, young artists through the first Berlin Biennale also was a strategic move for KW. The Biennale opened the same day as the internationally controversial exhibition *Sensation* at Hamburger Bahnhof (running from 30 September 1998–30 January 1999). This internationally touring exhibition introduced the Young British Artists such as Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin and Matt Collishaw, to the international art world. They shocked and amused with daring and highly conceptual art works, often made from every-day or found materials. It was exactly these kinds of shows that became well known as the “generation” style of exhibition making – a survey of young and avant-garde contemporary art that spoke not only to the latest trends in contemporary art production, but about society itself. This kind of work was seen as being reflective of the “television” generation, or generation X, often playful, provocative and ironic (Kuhn, 1998). The same can be said of many of the artists exhibiting at the first Berlin Biennale such as the more internationally renowned artists Pipilotti Rist, Christoph Schlingensiefel and Wolfgang Tillmans. Jonathan Meese for example, wowed audiences with his evocative Marquis de Sade-Raum installation, reminiscent of a male teenager’s bedroom: dark, cavernous with walls plastered in posters of pop-stars and illuminated by dingy coloured lights (Figure 15). Conversely, however, the Berlin Biennale also gave KW the opportunity to assert itself as a key place in the production of experimental contemporary art in Berlin, and its presentation on the international biennial stage:

I think KW at the time was the challenging contemporary art institution that was internationally oriented and really experimental, sometimes politically challenging and at the same time housed in a total ruin without an endowment or a budget ... I think the Berlin Biennale stood for a whole generation of artists living and working in the city. (Jovanovic, 2016)

However, just how grassroots and “without a budget” they were is questionable. The majority of the Biennale’s funding came from private sponsorship such as companies

like GASAG (Berlin Gasworks Association) and DG Bank with Biesenbach successfully acquiring a further DM 2.5 million by the Hauptstadt Kulturfonds des Bundesministeriums des Innern (Capital City Fund from the Federal Ministry of the Interior) and additional funding from the Stiftung Deutsche Klassenlotterie, Berlin (German Lottery Foundation) (Babius, 1998; Rauterberg, 1998a). While such funds legitimised the Biennale as an officially supported German cultural event, when the show eventually opened later than originally planned, the producers faced heavy criticism; it was argued that it wasn't professional enough in comparison to other large-scale federally funded international arts events. Criticism also declared the Biennale was not actually a real biennial (Tiefenberg, 1998), it was not original enough (Kannenbergh, 1998); it did not deal with critical themes; it was too shallow and too market-oriented (Rauterberg, 1998b). The latter criticism came as little surprise, given that the majority of its funds came from the private sector: Biesenbach had established the Berlin Biennale Verein together with real estate property developer and main Berlin Biennale patron at the time, Eberhard Mayntz, as well as art philanthropists and collectors Erika Hoffmann and Raymond Learsy (Jovanovic, 2016). The fact that Biesenbach selected these people to be part of the Biennale's beginnings suggests (a) a very strong connection with the commercialisation of the art world right from the start of the Biennale, and thus (b) a desire to distinguish the Biennale as an international art market-oriented event. This, along with the official funding the Biennale received, would be the final feature distinguishing KW from its more socially-oriented neighbours such as the artist collectives Botschaft e.V or KuLe that squatted nearby buildings.

As this chapter section has demonstrated, the first Berlin Biennale emerged for a variety of reasons. Without the actions of its main protagonist Klaus Biesenbach taking advantage of the momentum built by KW's earlier projects in the early to mid-1990s, or the availability of financial supporters and internationally renowned artists living in Berlin, he would not have been able to position it as *the* organisation responsible for producing and representing Berlin's contemporary art at an international level. It developed as a hybrid arts event – grassroots in the sense of its support for young and experimental artists, yet supported by official state bodies and commercial interests. However, while successful in getting the first Biennale off the ground, despite infrastructural challenges, the producers would still have to prove the Biennale capable

of standing out amidst a sea of more established city biennials worldwide. The following section describes how producers did just that, by taking their physical urban surroundings and theme of Berlin/Berlin to communicate a sense of “Berlin-ness” through the Biennale.

Approaching Urban Space: Communicating “Berlin-ness” Through the Biennale

The first Berlin Biennale took the city as both a platform and theme, and sought to provide a snapshot of living in the recently reunified city. However, as we will discover in the following chapter section, some of these decisions to engage in urban space were out of a necessity to respond pragmatically to a fundamental lack of resources. On one hand, the Biennale demonstrated a flexibility to use this as an opportunity to respond in creative ways along urban themes: the curators commissioned mostly young, Berlin-based artists, many of whom created site-specific artworks that either drew on the historic nature of the spaces in which they were housed or reflected themes in their work such as urban development specific to Berlin. Together, they re-invoked a style of exhibition making and approach to urban space that sprang from KW’s beginnings in the early 1990s and provided a counter narrative to official city marketing narratives where a multi-disciplinary, young creative art scene reflected artistic, and sometimes critical, responses in Berlin to city development. However, on the other hand, the framing of these exhibitions through the Biennale’s catalogue, was at times problematic and undermined these efforts. It communicated a particular type of (at times, superficial) Berlin identity, a sense of “Berlin-ness” linked with an experiencing the physical urban fabric by the biennale visitor.

The three selected exhibition venues – the KW on Auguststrasse (Figure 11), the former Postfuhramt on Oranienstrasse (Figure 12) and the dilapidated building of the Akademie der Künste at Pariser Platz (Figure 13) – were presented as the “perfect backdrop” to reflect “the transition and diversity of Berlin.” (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998, p. 3). They were perfect because they were buildings that were all undergoing some kind of transition or transformation themselves. However, the use of these buildings as the site for the Biennale’s exhibitions was largely due to the fact that

these kinds of spaces were all the organisers had access to given their resources. While there was some federal financial support for the Biennale, unlike other biennials instigated around the world at this time (see Chapter 1), Berlin's Biennale was not a government initiative in line with creative city agendas, thus space and other resources were not provided by city officials, but had to be sought out and applied for by the organisers (Biesenbach, 2006; Jovanovic, 2016).

While KW's renovations were complete at the time of organising the Biennale, further exhibition spaces were sought to house all the work envisioned for the exhibitions. Reflecting on the production process, Biesenbach explains how despite the numerous negotiations in order to secure what he describes as "an established institutional location" for the exhibition, many agreements fell through and their initial plans couldn't be realised (Biesenbach, 2006, p. 10). Biesenbach's reluctant embrace of the non-typical exhibition space suggests that their use was not desirable. Like many of Berlin's cultural actors of the 1990s, the producers selected spaces that the Biennale felt it had no choice but to make do with. To build on the growing momentum of KW's previous successful events such as *Hybrid Workspace* that promised so much to the *Documenta X* audience the year previously, the Biennale producers had to find other spatial opportunities.

Biesenbach, however, turned this spatial crisis into an opportunity. The framing of the first Berlin Biennale through the catalogue presents these exhibition venues as *deliberate choices* for a biennial to take place, as well as thematising the unfinished, under-construction city of Berlin:

As befitted a biennial in upheaval, the dilapidated ruins of the former Akademie der Künste in Pariser Platz and the former Postfuhramt (post office depot), as well as the KW were used as exhibition venues. (Biesenbach, 2006, p. 10)

Here, unlike in similar previous exhibitions such as *37 Räume*, when contextualising the artwork on display, much more prominence was given to the history of the venues and to their current physical condition as "transitional spaces" (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998, p. 3). For example, in particular, the Akademie der Künste (AdK),

near the Brandenburg Gate, had been lying in ruins for some time after the fall of the Wall. The Biennale would have secured its use before renovations were set to take place between 2000 and 2005 (Akademie der Künste, 2018). The 18th century baroque mansion saw much damage during World War Two, first damaged in air raids in 1941. As a result of the division of Germany and the erecting of the Berlin Wall just metres away by the GDR government in 1961, the damaged parts of the building were abandoned and the only part of the building to be preserved was the series of exhibition halls. Figure 13 depicts the Akademie der Künste in 1995, around the time that the Biennale organisers would have begun considering it for use for the first Berlin Biennale. As we can see in the image, the building still bears the scars of war and dilapidation; its façade of brick and plaster work crumbling and being propped up with wooden struts and its entrance badly decorated with a make-shift tin canopy. How visitors would have walked over the ground where the original façade was, and how AdK was sandwiched between Hotel Adlon and a construction site. As we can see in Figure 13, visitors would have had to squeeze between the baustelle of the new DZ building to get into the building.

The use of such spaces would no doubt have reminded Berliners of, as well as introduced an international audience to, the historical layers of such spaces. The AdK building is as much a symbol of the Enlightenment and the celebration of art as a science in as much as it is associated with its later Nazi occupation and violent GDR border controls. In 1933, many of its key members were excluded, left the Academy and went into exile after the implementation of the Nazi policy of “Gleichschaltung” (forcible coordination). The building is infamous as the office and architectural model presentation space for Albert Speer, who since 1937 had been Hitler’s Generalbauinspektor (First Architect) and perhaps less well-known for its “Grenzverletzerzelle” (cells for border violators) that were later incorporated in the Throne Room, during the reign of the GDR. In 1971, it was the site of the death of the prisoner Dieter Beilig, shot while attempting to escape East Germany. The fact that the Biennale was able to use the space in the interim period before its renovations is temporally significant – its short-lived occupation of the building pre-empted renovations that would restore and rejuvenate the building and reunify the Academy that had splintered into opposing East and West groups during the GDR. Similarly, the

Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) was also a space symbolic of cultural reunification. A West German cultural institution gifted by the American allies during the Cold War to ensure international cultural exchange at the time, it was used by the Biennale after the Berlin Wall fell; it would have been made recently available for the first time to East Berliners. This flamboyant building seemingly emerging from the green surrounds of the Tiergarten is lovingly referred to as “the pregnant oyster” by many Berliners due to its modernist arched awning that extends to the ground on both sides of the building like a shell. Visitors are welcomed into the oyster’s belly via a dramatic concrete walkway over a large basin of water, which becomes a staircase to the building’s upper level. The former 1957 Congress Hall designed as a symbol of ‘freedom’ in the ‘island city’ of Berlin made the ideal setting for the decadence and hedonism of *Berlin 3000*.

As we can see by the Map for the first Berlin Biennale (Figure 10), all three exhibition venues were also geographically positioned in central Mitte and at the heart of the rapid urban development occurring in the city. Their symbolic nature as transitional spaces is something the Biennale visitor no doubt experienced too, travelling between Auguststrasse and Tucholskystrasse in the Spandauer Vorstadt where KW and the Postfuhramt were located, with its still visible remnants of historical Berlin and then onto the AdK at Pariser Platz or the Haus der Kulturen der Welt on John-Foster-Dulles-Allee, the site of the new Government district in the making. It was a site of transition from old to new, and from a once divided city to a new national capital.

The 1713 Postfuhramt (Post Office Depot) building (previously known as the Kaiserliches Postfuhramt) was a residence for postilions – the private carters who drove passengers and mail on behalf of the Post Office. After 1766, it was the posting station with living quarters of the royal postmaster, who took over all transit duties of the postal service. Postal operations finally ceased in 1995 and from 1997 onwards contemporary art exhibitions have been held on the premises. Just around the corner from the KW in the Spandauer Vorstadt, the process of gentrification of the area had already begun at this time. The site history doesn’t seem to play an obvious role in the way the works were framed in the catalogue, as was the case with the Akademie der Künste and Haus der Kulturen der Welt. The space is, however, symbolic of the change

brought about by transition over the centuries, which artworks in the first Biennale seemed to speak to. Elmgreen and Dragset's hyper realistic *Wishing Well/Powerless Structures*, Fig. 66 installation created for the first Biennale in 1998, was embedded into the street right outside the venue and starkly contrasted against the Renaissance-style yellow brick façades with its red and blue decorative elements, moulded bricks, cornices and terracotta ornaments, highlighting the obsolescence of the kinds of services that buildings like the Postfuhramt originally provided (Figure 16).

Unlike KW, which due to its then-recent renovation had largely been transformed into a typical "white cube" exhibition space, the two other exhibition venues (Postfuhramt and Akademie der Künste) were left largely untouched, thus suggesting that while the renovated white cube was the more desirable space for the Biennale, the space in transition could also serve as an interesting aesthetic frame within which to present artwork (Frisch and Dorn, 1999) (Figures 17 and 18). For example, Walter Musacchi's architectural installation that both framed the individual exhibition locations and linked them together visually, provided a practical and aesthetic solution for using sites that were still undergoing construction (Figure 19). As we can see in Figure 19, Musacchi's plywood walkway lies across the KW's cobbled courtyard, weaving between the sleek, mirrored glass facades of artist Dan Graham's newly constructed Café Bravo and the stark white Prussian style KW buildings. It forms a connecting line, leading visitors down a path enabling them to find the artwork displayed inside. "In a city that's full of construction sites surrounded by the same material, and likely to remain so for at least a decade, it is an obvious and somewhat awkward metaphor that is nevertheless effective." (Allen and Eichler, 1998, p. 1).



Figure 15: Jonathan Meese Marquis de Sade-Raum installation view at the first Berlin Biennale. Photo: Andras Siebold/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 1998.



Figure 16: Elmgreen & Dragset, Wishing Well/Powerless Structures, Fig. 66, 1998, Plastic, glass, halogen spotlights, water, coolant, blank coins, 20 x 140 x 140 cm, Installation view, Berlin/Berlin, 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998. Photo: Studio Elmgreen & Dragset



Figure 17: (top left) KW courtyard after renovation in 1998. Photo: Unknown photographer, Berlin Biennale and KW Archive.

Figure 18: (top right) KW back building interior after renovation in 1998. Photo: Unknown photographer, Berlin Biennale and KW Archive.

Figure 19: (bottom) Dan Graham's Cafe Bravo and Walter Musacchi's plywood walkway in the KW courtyard at the First Berlin Biennale. Photo: Andras Siebold/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 1998.

Berlin Biennale artists' responses to Berlin's city development were both artistic, and sometimes critical, and thus contributed to the creation of a counter-narrative to official city marketing narratives. However, the framing of these discourses through the Biennale's exhibition catalogue was at times problematic and undermined these efforts. As the catalogue provided a key interpretation device for visitors to the first Berlin Biennale, it is worth exploring it in depth. The first Berlin Biennale catalogue looks and feels like any other major city biennial catalogue of that time (if not even today): Four-hundred pages long, the catalogue features a sleek black cover with a modern-looking graphic in white and green, stylised and clean digital illustrations of two hands emerging from two opposing corners of the book, both holding onto what looks simultaneously like a plastic bank card and a speech bubble (Figure 20). The two cards meet in the middle, implying a transaction of discourse and possibly even money. Inside, the typical foreword, sponsors' list and introduction to the Biennale are positioned at the front, however the style then changes into an alphabetised listing of 600 Berlin addresses for the city's architecture, bars, bookstore, libraries, clubs, galleries, memorials, hotels, culture, literature, fashion, museums, restaurants, theatre (Babias *et al.*, 1998) (Figure 21). The catalogue also draws on the aesthetics of urban space to frame the artwork on display, and in some cases, blends that frame seamlessly with the artwork (Figure 22). In the catalogue, the curators emphasise that they are not trying to replicate a "hide and seek" experience for the viewer (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998, p. 3). The very fact, however, that the catalogue was designed by well-known Paris design firm M/M as a self-proclaimed guide to aid the visitor in their discovery of the city of Berlin, I think demonstrates otherwise.

Entries for people and places of interest along with their geographical location are listed alongside essay entries by leading scholars such as architectural historian Philip Oswalt who wrote on themes such as the role Berlin has played in major international events such as "the Modernist movement of the 1920s, WW1, WW2, National Socialism and the Holocaust, the cold war and the collapse of socialism, capitalism and revolt" (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998, p. 4). Different conceptualisations of the urban are also represented in the catalogue through text and images, particularly through the publishing of photographic work of, or made, in Berlin, texts evoking imagery of Berlin, juxtaposed to pictograms of well-known Berlin icons such as the GDR

Trabis and the Ampelmann designed by Stephan Müller (Figure 21). The juxtaposition of these images renders them indistinguishable from one another in a wash of images of contemporary life in Berlin. As any good tourist guidebook does, it evokes the visual idea of “Berlin-ness” as a distinct culture with a specific history and style, yet at the same time, a melting pot of different nationalities, a wild, dirty, unfinished city in transition still coming to terms with the remnants of its past layers of history as one of the key sites of divided east-west country.

Standing empty, voids waiting to be filled, scarred by both the ravages of time and fallout from surrounding construction sites, these buildings offer the perfect backdrop for an exhibition investigating Berlin as a spatio-temporal zone that is determined as much by time as it is by its geographic coordinates. (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998, p. 3)

These emotive descriptions of the physical urban space the first Berlin Biennale used place not only the artwork but also the city on display for the Biennale visitor. The catalogue suggests that in order to comprehend the artwork on display, one must understand the complex nature of Berlin’s past through a direct experience of moving through its physical urban fabric, however under-construction it may be. Such directions were successful in guiding visitors not just to view the artwork on display, but also to experience the architecture they were housed within, and the urban area of Mitte in general. Visitors to the Biennale described that to get from one venue to another, they had to pass through the city and experience “the urban schizophrenia of decrepitude, redevelopment and the ideologically charged architecture of the post-war modern era” as well as the “New Berlin” frequently criticised by the Biennale in the catalogue (Landbrecht, 2010, p. 215). But while the catalogue provided information on the related past and present socio-political contexts of each of these venues in order to contextualise these experiences, such presentations, however critical of urban development as some were, failed to explain why the past is so important for the reader’s framing of the work on display. This appears curious and contradictory considering the Biennale producers’ claims for the need to move forwards and focus on the present and future Berlin (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998). Furthermore, while the Biennale producers invited critical voices that opposed the

association of KW/the Biennale with the gentrification and city branding of Berlin, at no point do they, as Biennale producers, reflect on their own role in this process (Biesenbach, Spector and Ulrich-Obrist, 1998).

To conclude, the first Berlin Biennale took the city as both a platform and theme, and sought to provide a snapshot of living in the recently reunified city. However, decisions to engage in urban space were not always out of a necessity to respond creatively, but rather pragmatically to a fundamental lack of resources. While the Biennale producers demonstrated a flexibility to use this as an opportunity to respond in creative ways along urban themes by commissioning site-specific artworks that engaged in their site's historic nature or urban development specific to Berlin, the framing of these exhibitions through the Biennale's catalogue undermined efforts to build a genuine counter city marketing narrative. It communicated a particular type of (at times, superficial) Berlin identity, a sense of "Berlin-ness" linked with an experiencing of the physical urban fabric by the Biennale visitor. The reimagining and international export of Berlin's urban space through the first Berlin Biennale would become a trend that would continue throughout the Biennale's history in a variety of ways, which we will see unfold in the following chapter sections.

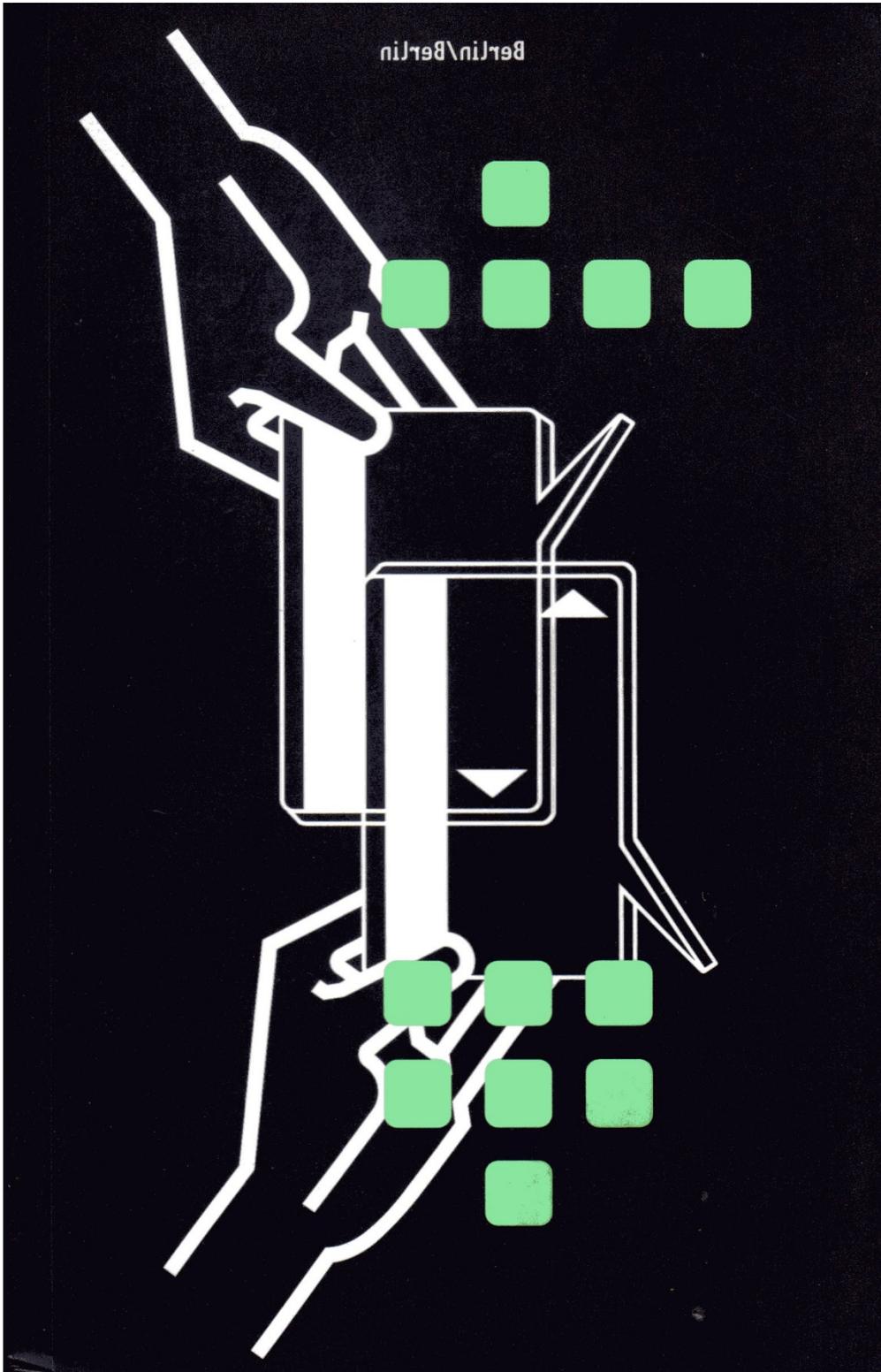


Figure 20: Front Cover of "Berlin/Berlin" the First Berlin Biennale catalogue, designed by M/M Paris and Stephan Müller (aka Pronto), edited by Babias, M., Bismarck, B. Von, and Fioretos, A. published in 1998 by Hatje Cantz.

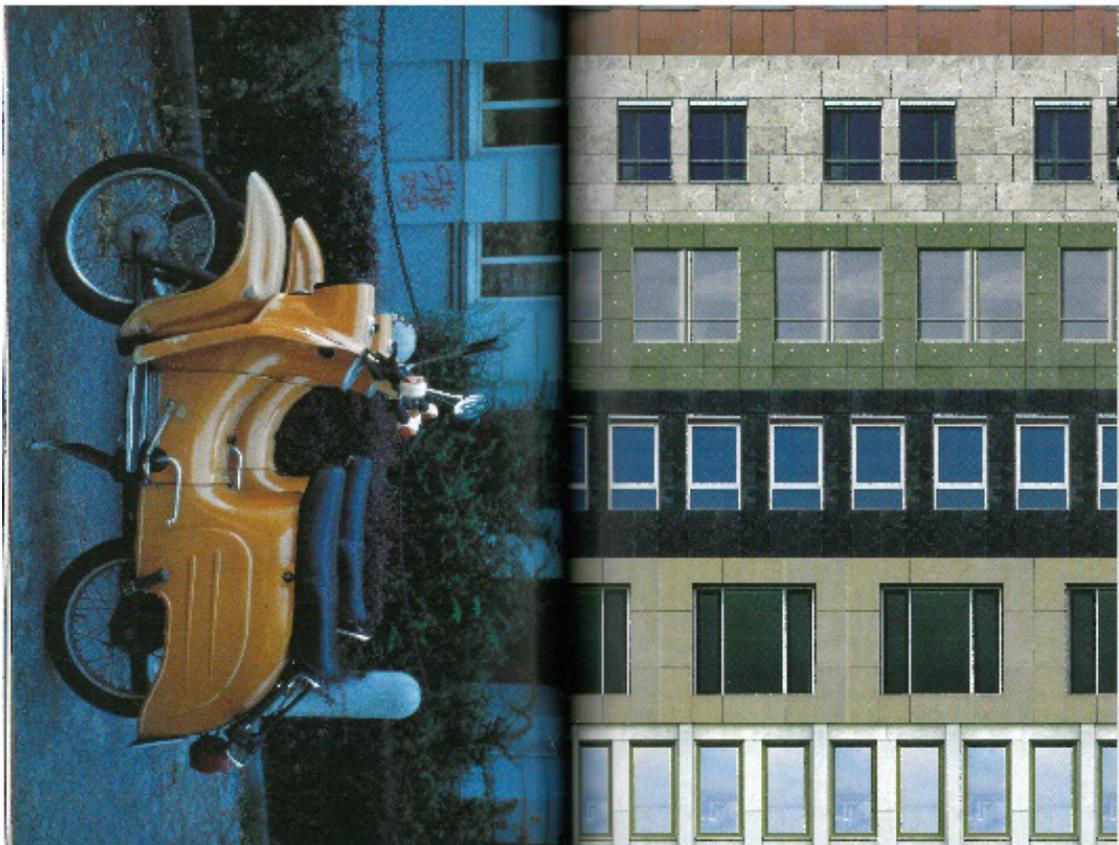


Figure 21 (top) Pages 176-7 of "Berlin/Berlin" the First Berlin Biennale catalogue; layout by M/M Paris and pictograms by Stephan Müller (aka Pronto), edited by Babias, M., Bismarck, B. Von, and Fioretos, A. published in 1998 by Hatje Cantz.

Figure 22: (bottom) Pages 211-2 of "Berlin/Berlin" the First Berlin Biennale catalogue; featuring Gabriel Orozco's "Until You Find Another Yellow Schwalbe" (1995)(left), and an untitled work by Our House (right).

4.3 2.: The Second Berlin Biennale

20 April–20 June, 2001

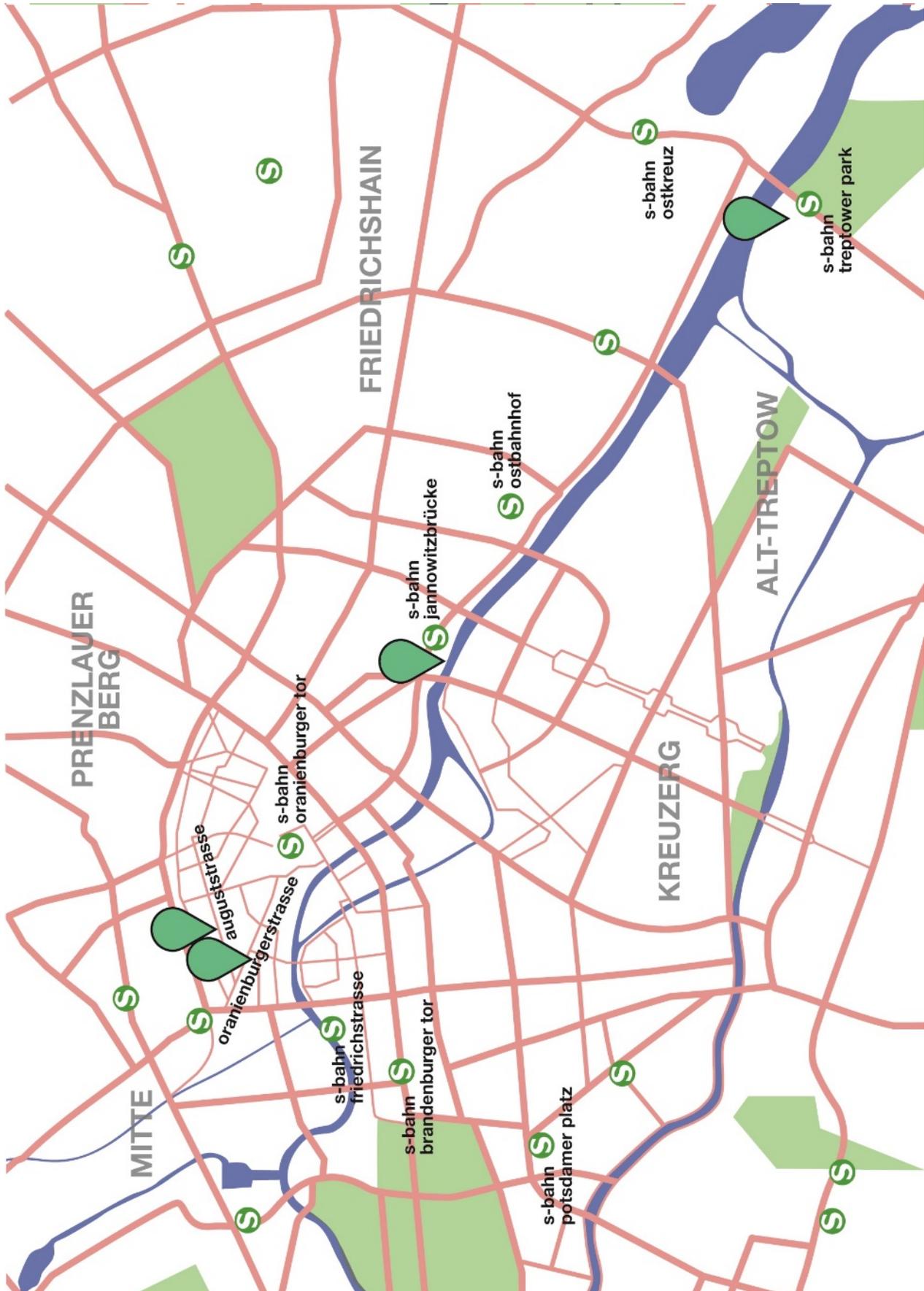


Figure 23: Map of the exhibition venues of the second Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 24: (top) Allianz Treptowers, Treptower Park. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.

Figure 25: (bottom) S-Bahn Arches at Jannowitzbrücke. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

The second Berlin Biennale is distinct from the first for its new model of curating. Biesenbach's stepping away from curating the second Biennale to take on a curatorial position at MOMA in New York marked a significant change for the Biennale. It proceeded to follow the lead of many other biennials around the world by adopting a new operational mode that saw them invite international curators. This was a significant change as it speaks to the desire on behalf of the Biennale organisers to seek outside voices to interpret the city and its art scene through their response to it. However, the second Biennale, like the first, experienced funding issues and wasn't realised until three years after the first edition had taken place. Despite receiving more international press coverage than its predecessor, it suffered criticisms that its approach to urban space largely mismatched the overall Biennale theme.

For the Biennale as an institution, international press coverage of the Berlin Biennale had greatly increased by the second edition.⁷ This was partially due to the fact that a year after the first Berlin Biennale opened, an edited version of the exhibitions was staged by Klaus Biesenbach at MOMA's PS1 in New York. Accompanying the exhibition was not a catalogue, but rather a magazine-style publication called *Children of Berlin* that featured interviews with various artists, musicians, actors, gallerists and arts funders from the Berlin art scene, largely from the Mitte area, juxtaposed alongside artists' photographs featuring Berlin's various construction sites. The image of "Berlin-ness" that was once created by the Biennale, was now re-created and exported for a New York audience, complete with an advertisement for the forthcoming second Berlin Biennale on the last page. In the magazine, edited excerpts of interviews recall some nine years later the emotional experiences of living in Mitte in the very early 1990s, very deliberately framed for an international audience. The magazine evokes a situation that was really only made possible by a unique set of urban conditions that had very rapidly disappeared and now no longer existed.

⁷ Visits to the Berlin Biennale's press archive indicate that the Biennale doesn't have any press records for the first Berlin Biennale. The author found several press articles in national and Berlin-based newspapers and magazines, but only three reviews in international art-specific publications at the time the Biennale launched. By comparison, the second Berlin Biennale featured a significant increase in national press coverage but most significantly a larger number of international press reports compared to the first edition (Brehme, 2016a).

The increasing international press attention may also have been due to the appointment of a new and well-known curator from The Netherlands, Saskia Bos. Perhaps it was also due to the fact that the producers had succeeded in pulling off a second edition after all – thus establishing the Berlin Biennale’s position as an ongoing internationally received arts event. This was a point highlighted by the Biennale’s main patron Eberhardt Mayntz: “After the first Berlin Biennale for contemporary art now there is the 2nd Berlin Biennale – what began as a project is already becoming an institution” (Mayntz, 2001, p. 1).

The second Berlin Biennale’s exhibitions featured the work of fifty (including very young) international artists from more than thirty countries in the form of installations, film and video works that either engaged with the public or called for other types of interaction. Saskia Bos’s curation was driven by a desire to bring to Berlin a kind of institutional critique of a market-driven contemporary art world rather than focus on solely Berlin-based artists. She thus selected artistic contributions that forged a more direct dialogue with the public and a “communal experience based on mutual forms of exchange” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015a).

Bos’ reasoning for selecting certain venues is not explicitly elaborated in this edition’s catalogue, however her approach to urban space was a critique of the underlying power structures of Berlin’s urban development, a subject that will be explored in depth for the remainder of this section. For the second edition of the Berlin Biennale, in addition to the previously used KW and former Postfuhramt (Figures 11 and 12), two non-typical exhibition venues quite different in architectural style and function from the first Biennale, were transformed into temporary exhibition spaces: the Treptowers office building, built and owned by the Allianz insurance company (Figure 24) and the arches under S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke, an abandoned space that had previously been used by commercial galleries and bars (Figure 25).

The use of these spaces demonstrated firstly, a physical shift outwards from Mitte into more suburban areas of the city (Figure 23) and secondly, an aesthetic shift away from the more dilapidated style of space such as the Akademie der Künste. As we can see in the map, this biennale edition focused more on the east of the city, beginning with the

KW and its neighbouring Postfuhramt in Mitte and extending out past Friedrichshain to where the arches under S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke are and into Treptow where the Treptowers are (Figure 23). For the visitor, traversing quite large distances between the venues beyond Mitte, it would have quickly become apparent how other parts of Berlin were also not immune to largescale investment building. The arches under S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke straddled the border between Mitte and Friedrichshain and would have at the time of the Biennale's use, overlooked vast swathes of no-man's-land left over from the fall of the Berlin Wall. The architecture of the arches are in keeping with the 1882 industrial style of the S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke of which it is a part. Positioned directly below the in-use S-Bahn rail line, a series of arches form a red brick viaduct positioned between Holzmarktstrasse and the waters of the Spree. In a similar fashion to the previous Biennale edition, visitors would have had to find the entrance (marked only by the numbers 40-50) by traversing a narrow path off the main Holzmarktstrasse. The exhibiting artists each had an arched room to themselves, with dramatically curved ceilings, light flooding in through metal-framed windows or doors on both walls and a view out onto the water only meters below. As well as being aesthetically similar to the non-typical spaces used in the first edition, the arches also had symbolic value as a physical manifestation of the previously divided city. S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke once served as a railway hub of the city that later became a "ghost station" during the GDR era: because of its location exactly at the border between East and West Berlin, trains simply ran through without stopping here. The Jannowitzbrücke U-Bahn station, situated underneath the S-Bahn station, played a historically significant role: just two days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, on 11 November 1989, the U-Bahn station was reopened as a border crossing point, located on the mezzanine between the U-Bahn and S-Bahn.

By geographical and aesthetic contrast, the Treptowers sit on the River Spree, near S-Bahnhof Treptower Park and are positioned at the intersection of the three Berlin districts of Treptow, Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, and Treptower Park (Figure 23). As we can see in the photograph, its distinctive high-rise of steel and glass façade sets it apart from all the of the spaces the Biennale had used up to this point. Architecturally and historically significant as the first of the River Spree high-rises to be built at the end of the 1990s, the Treptowers were constructed on the site of a former electrical

appliance factory complex, which was originally built in 1926 by AEG. The Treptowers complex consists of four buildings and is the result of an architectural competition held in 1993 and won by the architect Gerhard Spangenberg and carried out by a partnership of architects Schweger and Reichel + Stauth from Brunswick. , The Biennale used the ground and first floors of the main tower, the central feature of the complex which literally towered over the nearby Treptower Park and the neighbouring residential properties.

By using the Treptowers as one of the exhibition venues for the second Biennale, Bos drew attention to a space that symbolised wealth, prime commercial real estate and art's role as a commodity. Significantly, the Treptowers housed the Allianz's own art collection of over 500 artworks by foreign and German artists, from wall drawings, sound and light installations, paintings, sculptures and photographs. However, any attempts at criticising the financial power structures underlying the rapid development of buildings such as the Treptowers were undermined by reports that the Biennale was only able to use the Treptowers precisely because of a sponsorship deal carved out with management in their bid to attract future tenants (Lapp, 2001). Furthermore, the use of these spaces was reported as being disjointed and irrelevant to the overall theme of the exhibitions (Lapp, 2001). The second Berlin Biennale focused on engaging the city as a laboratory for experimenting with art as a vehicle for social exchange: "The art space is a free space, allowing people to reflect but not to solve the problem there and then ... the biennale is also a creative practice, a laboratory, an opportunity for the production of meaning." (Bos and Fletcher, 2001, p. 13). However, the link between how these art spaces, used as laboratories that could instigate change was unclear and actually criticised as a choice of space for leaving visitors to start afresh each time they entered a new space, or connecting well to the artwork on display: "There is nothing distinctive about many installations of art in these old offices, and some appear as if they were leftovers from older exhibitions in the same place" (Lapp, 2001). The rooms in the non-typical exhibition spaces of the Jannowitzbrücke or Postführamt were labelled "grotty" with the overall approach to using such spaces now considered overdone (Lapp, 2001).

Distinct from the first Biennale for its new model of curating, the second Berlin Biennale marked a significant change for the Biennale's history. While triumphing over similar funding challenges to the first edition, it benefited from an outside voice that encouraged the development of the young Berlin art scene. However, despite receiving more international press coverage than its predecessor, it suffered criticisms that its approach to urban space was passé and largely mismatched to the Biennale edition's theme of art's role in social exchange.

4.4 *Komplex Berlin: The Third Berlin Biennale*

14 February–18 April, 2004

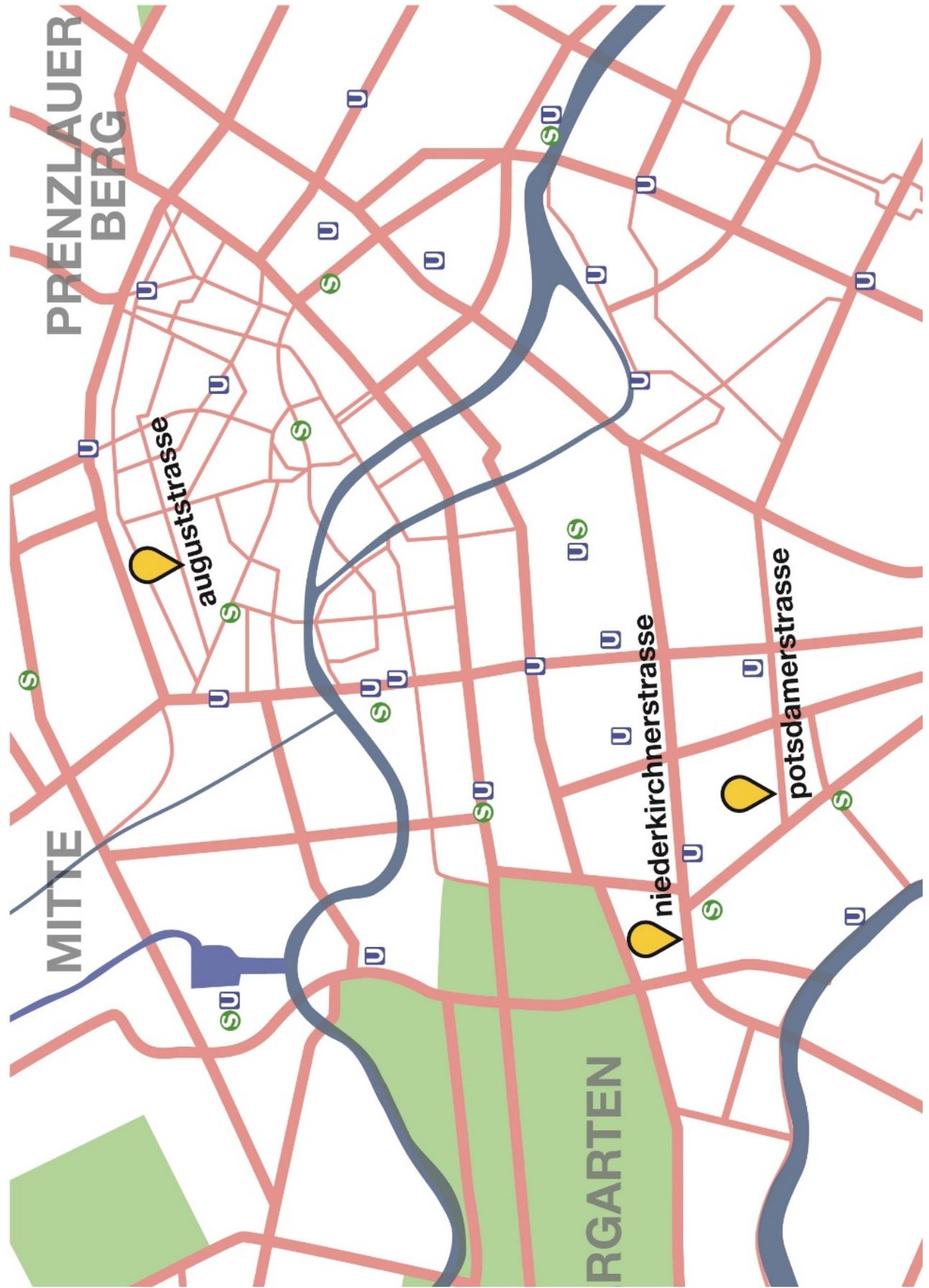


Figure 26: Map of the exhibition venues of the third Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 27: (top) Martin Gropius Bau, Niederkirchnerstrasse, Mitte
Figure 28: (bottom) Kino Arsenal, Potsdamerstrasse, Mitte. Photos: Kate Brehme, 2016

The third Berlin Biennale saw major changes to its infrastructure, such as new leadership and increases in funding that would have a profound effect on the Biennale's long-term sustainability and identity as a professional and internationally reputable arts event. With the use of a completely new constellation of venues, its approach to urban space developed too, both in terms of how the histories of certain spaces matched the overall theme of the Biennale, and in terms of how venues could be used to boost the Biennale's reputation.

Like its predecessor, the third Berlin Biennale was staged a year later than originally intended, again due to financial issues. Two major changes for the Biennale as an institution signal a turning point in its history. Firstly, the appointment of Gabriele Horn as successor to founding director, Klaus Biesenbach, who would go on to direct both the KW and the Berlin Biennale until 2016. Gabriela Horn's background as an active and influential member of the arts scene in Berlin, having directed the former Staatlichen Kunsthalle at Budapester Strasse and who, at the time, worked as a Visual Arts Officer for the Senat, was an asset to the Biennale. However, as Wendland points out below:

In order for her to be able to join the organization of the Biennale alongside Klaus Biesenbach in 2000, she had to be officially put on leave. That only worked when the Biennale – as politically intended - was to become a showcase for Berlin culture. (Wendland, 2016, p. 23, author translation)

The appointment of Horn as the new director of the Biennale thus served the practical purpose of bringing both stability and consistency to the organisation. Horn's knowledge of how Berlin's cultural politics worked undoubtedly increased access to much-needed resources such as money and contacts, for both KW and the Biennale. However, such a close connection to cultural politics also implied a willingness on behalf of the Biennale producers for it to play an integral role in the Senat's agenda to promote Berlin as a creative city.

The second major change was the announcement in this Biennale edition's catalogue that the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Cultural Foundation) would take over from the Biennale's main funder, the Hauptstadtkulturfonds, for the preparation of the fourth edition due to open in 2006 while also increasing their budget to 2.5 million Euros. We see here the beginning of another trend that emerges in the Biennale's history – that of self-reflection. In his introductory essay in the third edition catalogue, Klaus Biesenbach announced that the Biennale was “now a part of the city”, suggesting that the success of remaining in the city for three editions and having secured federal funding for the fourth, the Biennale could now be considered a more permanent event on the city's cultural calendar (Biesenbach, 2004, p. 8). From this edition onwards, similar essays written mostly by Biesenbach and Horn, usually featured in the introductions of the catalogues, would regularly reflect on the progress of the Biennale and compare the first and subsequent editions.

For this edition's exhibitions, the Biennale was able to secure the high profile international curator Ute Meta Bauer, well known for her work as Artistic Director of the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and as professor of theory and practice of contemporary art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria. Meta Bauer presented fifty artists, writers, filmmakers, cultural producers at KW and Martin-Gropius-Bau (Figure 27). In addition, thirty-five film pieces were shown at Kino Arsenal (the Arsenal cinema) (Figure 28). The third Berlin Biennale explored “the creation of a temporal space of discourse by fostering connections between local players of art and knowledge production” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015b). This emphasis on local actors thus signifies an emphatic return to the theme of the city of Berlin, particularly its histories of the 1990s and pre-1989 from both East and West and the development of Berlin's cityscape. This resulted in a selection of spaces that for the first time, did not reproduce the architectural aesthetic of neglected or so-called “forgotten” buildings in the city's former east, and instead cut across the city on a north-south axis (Figure 26).

With much of the accompanying interpretation material contributed by a large number of urban historians and sociologists, Meta Bauer's Biennale implied, like the first, that in order to understand Berlin's present, the Biennale visitor needed to be able to understand its past. In the same vein, the exhibitions reflected on issues of site-

specificity, “particularly in terms of comparing Berlin’s idiosyncratic topography to similar conditions in other European metropolises” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015b). This was approached through the use of five specially designed core “hubs” within the exhibition spaces – migration, urban conditions, sonic scapes, fashions and scenes, and other cinemas. These hubs can be understood to be representative of the areas of Berlin life that had seen the most change since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Bauer, Horn and Gau, 2004, p. 11; The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015b). In this way, the Biennale illuminated the connections between certain urban spaces with their attached, local socio-political issues to an international audience. The selected spaces of Martin Gropius Bau and the Kino Arsenal are well established and highly symbolic spaces that simultaneously allowed Meta Bauer to link with a twenty-year slice of the city’s history that she was engaging with and lent to the development of the Biennale as an internationally recognised and recurring arts event. Biennale producers could, thus, tap into the layered histories of each space to frame displayed artwork according to Meta Bauer’s theme of the city’s complex and densely-layered histories since the fall of the Wall.

Both exhibition venues of the Gropius Bau and the Kino Arsenal were considered representative of “diverse epochs and neuralgic zones in the history of Berlin.” (Biesenbach, 2004, p. 9). As seen in Figure 27, the Martin Gropius Bau was purposefully designed as a Renaissance-style house for arts and crafts by architect Heino Schmieden. This three-storey sandstone and red-brick quadratic temple is lavishly decorated in ornate sandstone and terracotta reliefs and a series of golden mosaics and coats of arms of the German states. Its architectural style and decoration was intended to bring together the various facets of arts and crafts at the time. Ceremoniously opened in 1881, it has had a long and varied history including housing the Museum of Prehistory and Early History and the East Asian Art Collection after World War One and was in close physical proximity to Hitler, Goebbels and their National Socialist Party when they used the building next door (the now destroyed School for Industrial Arts and Crafts) for their state security and police operations from 1932 until 1945 (Till, 2005, p. 75).

Subsequently, in the 1990s, the Gropius Bau also became the subject of heated debate about restoration and commemoration of Germany’s National Socialist past in (Till, p63-

66). During the GDR, the Gropius Bau was inaccessible to the public having been partially blocked by the Berlin Wall and undergoing various repairs to damage it received during World War Two. The Biennale benefited from its recent restoration and the re-opening of the building in 1999/2000, funded by the German Federal Government (Berliner Festspiele, 2017). Gropius Bau can thus be said to be a site of significance not just because of its history as a long-standing dedicated exhibition space, but also as a rediscovered space for Biennale visitors – perhaps in a similar fashion to the Postfuhrant or the arches at S-Bahnhof Jannowitzbrücke.

The Biennale's use of the Kino Arsenal by comparison, draws on a rather different history and architectural aesthetic (Figure 28). The link between the geographic location of the Kino Arsenal and the themes of the third Berlin Biennale is perhaps somewhat more arbitrary. It is clear that Meta Bauer's extensive film program demanded the use of an actual cinema, rather than a gallery space. Additionally, thematically she drew on the Kino Arsenal's reputation as an organisation with a history of preserving and showing avant-garde film, hosting Berlin's international film festival, the Berlinale, and holding regular film and discussion events since the 1970s (including their own use of the Martin Gropius Bau for such events). However, one cannot ignore the fact that the Biennale had engaged the use of the Kino Arsenal a short while after it moved to its new location in the Sony Center at Potsdamer Platz in the year 2000. As we can see in Figure 28, the Kino Arsenal is embedded into the ground floor façade of the Sony Center which, designed by renowned international architect Helmut Jahn, is a complex of buildings featuring a kind of citadel-style light flooded centre. At 103 metres tall, glass office towers surround smaller buildings with glass façades, creating sophisticated light reflections and light refractions.

The Center's site carries historical significance in recent German history on many levels. Most of the original buildings were destroyed or damaged during World War Two. From 1961 on, most of the area became part of the no-man's-land of the Berlin Wall, resulting in the destruction of the remaining buildings. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the square became the focus of attention again, as it had now suddenly become a large (some 60 hectares), attractive location in the centre of a major European capital city (Deutsche Welle, 2008). As part of a rather controversial top-down redevelopment effort for the

area, the Sony Center sat at the heart of what was then Europe's largest construction sites. Next to a mix of shops, restaurants, a conference centre, hotels, luxurious rented suites and condominiums, offices, an IMAX theatre, a Legoland Discovery Centre, and a "Sony Style" store, visitors to the third Berlin Biennale must have found it difficult to see the traces of the Kino Arsenal's history (Management, 2017). This can be read as Meta Bauer deliberately confronting Biennale visitors with the controversial nature of urban development.

What is clear is that there was a deliberate attempt by the Biennale to use venues with "forged links to international developments within art" (Biesenbach, 2004, p. 9). Meta Bauer declared the previous edition's use of the Postfuhramt as "anachronistic" (Babius and Bauer, 2004, p. 49) and no longer appropriate for an international biennial. She reinforces the Biennale's self-proclaimed duty to fulfil Berlin's need for exhibition spaces of a certain quality to serve as "...an adequate apparatus and the corresponding base for contemporary art..." (Bauer, Horn and Gau, 2004, p. 12). In Meta Bauer's view, there were still "far too few 'prestige' spaces being made available for contemporary art to make its mark in Berlin". Even in 2004, in Berlin "...the presentation of art clearly lags behind its production" (Babius and Bauer, 2004, p. 49). Helped by the recent renovation of Gropius Bau with its new air-conditioning and redesigned north entrance as the main entrance, the use of more established and dedicated exhibition venues such as the Gropius Bau were seen by others as a kind of professional stepping-up: "In a way, it is nice that the biennial is changing its rooms and buildings now. Because of the availability of the Gropius Bau now, which is supposed to give more status to the biennial than just the Kunst-Werke and Postfuhramt and some of the smaller off-off spaces that we had" (Hal, 2003, p. 206).

Lastly, the use of these spaces being – situated at the tourist hot-spots of Kreuzberg and Potsdamer Platz, respectively – also suggests a shift for the Biennale: it demonstrates its ability and willingness to acquire spaces firmly positioned within Berlin's offerings of international cultural tourism and thus itself benefit from that growing market. If earlier editions had, at least thematically, rejected participating in such city-marketing schemes, by time of the third Berlin Biennale, it seemed to embrace them in terms of the access to the international audiences these schemes generated. Again, like the first

Berlin Biennale, some efforts were made to reflect on the speed of such processes as gentrification, commercialisation and privatisation that the city had seen from within its own location of Mitte. For example, the changing characteristics of Augustrasse from a densely-populated street full of “urban life” to a “nearly empty” space, is attributed to a period of attempted gentrification where “essential luxuries – products of Western societies – are not the result of genuine luxury, but rather of denial” (Biesenbach, 2004, p. 9). Despite the Biennale’s acknowledgement of these processes and their geographic positioning at the centre of it all, there is a lack of specificity about who is to blame for such gentrification and it falls short of actually reflecting on its own relationship with or its own role in those processes. Here, urban issues such as gentrification and displacement of citizens are reduced to mere exhibition themes. An opportunity to examine how the global biennial model contributes to negative urban development is completely missed.

The third Berlin Biennale saw major changes to its infrastructure, such as new leadership and increased funding that had a profound effect on the Biennale’s long-term sustainability and identity as a professional and internationally reputable arts event. With the use of a completely new constellation of venues, its approach to urban space developed too, both in terms of how the histories of certain spaces matched the overall theme of the Biennale, and in terms of how venues could be used to boost the Biennale’s reputation. While Uta Meta Bauer’s approach to urban space drew heavily on the complex layers of history within the city, and despite the emergence of a more self-reflexive approach as an arts institution, there was a lack of more (self) critical positions on urban development processes.

4.3 Of Mice and Men: The Fourth Berlin Biennale
25 March–5 June 2006

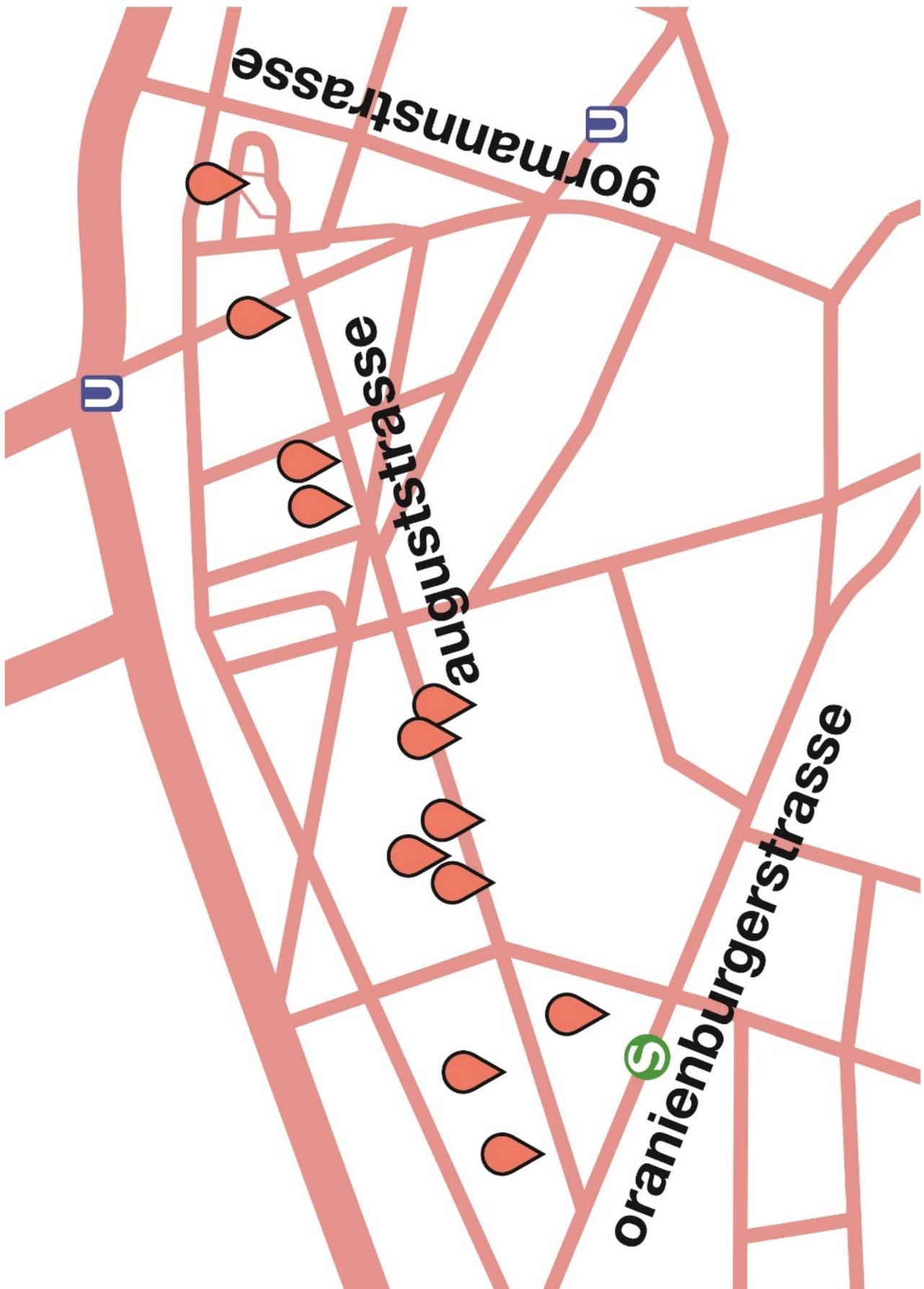


Figure 29: Map of the exhibition venues of the fourth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 30: St Johannes Evangelist-Kirche, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 31: private apartment at Auguststrasse 84, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

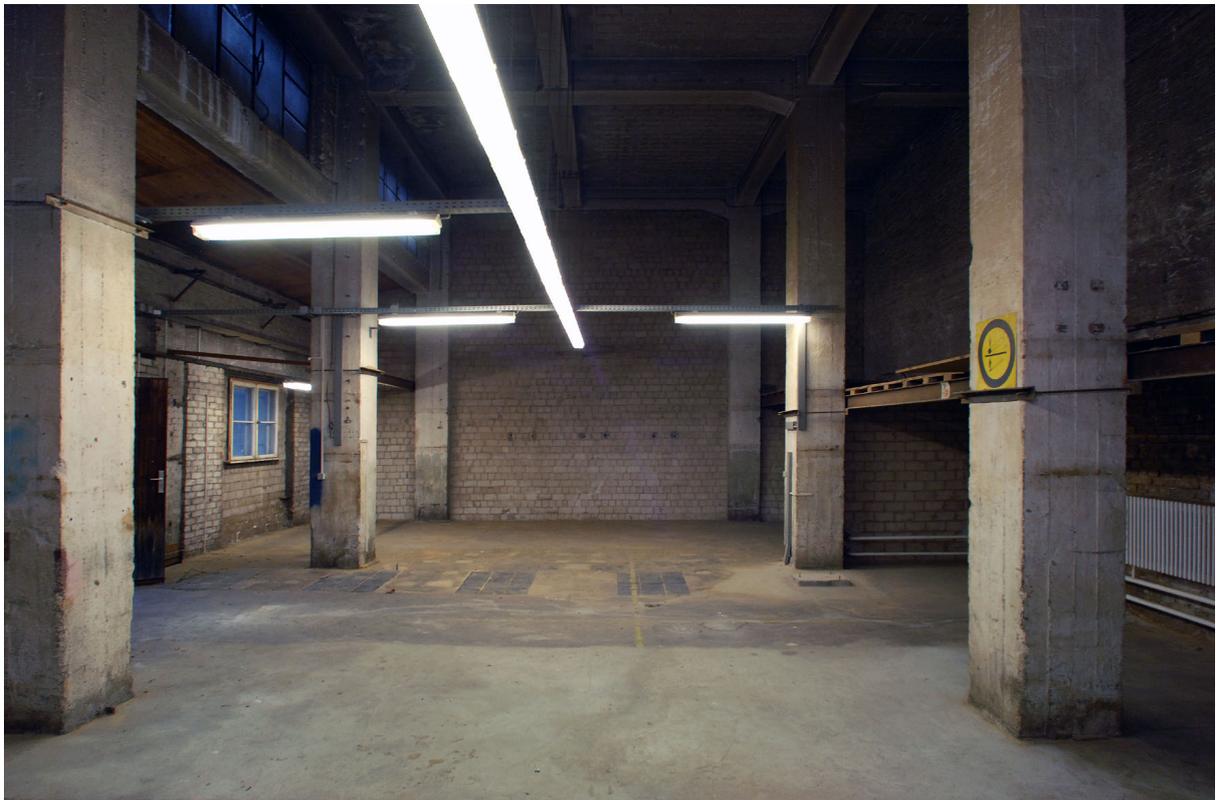


Figure 32: (top) Pferdeställe des Postfuhramts, view from Auguststrasse. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016
Figure 33: . (bottom) Pferdeställe des Postfuhramts, interior view. Photo: Uwe Walter/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2006.



Figure 34: Jüdische Mädchenschule, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 35: Apartment at Auguststrasse 17, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 36: Apartment at Auguststrasse 23, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 37: Ballhaus Mitte, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 38: Gagosian Galerie, Auguststrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 39: (top) Office at Auguststrasse 44, Mitte, view from Auguststrasse. Photos: Uwe Walter/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art 2006..
Figure 40: (bottom) Office at Auguststrasse 44, Mitte, interior view. Photo: Uwe Walter/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art 2006.



Figure 41: (top) Alte Garnisonsfriedhof, view from corner Auguststrasse. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.

Figure 42: (bottom) Alte Garnisonsfriedhof, view from inside cemetery. Photo: Uwe Walter/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2006.

With the Kultur Stiftung des Bundes awarding funding for the fourth and fifth editions in 2006 and 2008, new expectations arose for the Biennale to fulfil its new role as a “cultural beacon” within the German cultural landscape:

Berlin has few original, institutionally guaranteed locations for contemporary art...[the biennial] offers the city of Berlin and its guests a great chance for the permanent rejuvenation of its self image and the way it is perceived internationally as regards art. (Volkers, 2006, p. 8)

It is clear that the Biennale’s new funder recognised the Biennale producers’ efforts to fill a gap in the provision of physical space for displaying contemporary art. However, it also came with the expectation that in receiving such funds, the Biennale should also play a strong role within cultural politics as a contributor to the constant renewal of Berlin’s image as a creative city. To fulfil such expectations, the Biennale had to professionalise. From the fourth Berlin Biennale onwards, changes to the website, to its marketing language, and to its organisational structure as a whole point to its professionalisation. The secured funding resulted in more staff and time to put towards researching and securing spaces for the exhibitions. More staff were recruited and labour divided and shared, and thus time was bought for conducting research for the individual exhibitions (interviews with Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 4; and Horn, 19/7/2016).

As with the previous edition’s catalogue, the fourth also featured an essay by Biesenbach, reflecting on (and often glorifying) the origins of the Biennale, this time deliberately drawing a line between it, KW, and *37 Räume* thus framing this particular Biennale, and reinforcing its identity as an arts event with the privilege of opening up previously unseen spaces. Co-curator Ali Subotnick drew attention to what was seen by many curators as a major drawcard for curating a Berlin Biennale edition: “the idea of a biennial which could change location according to the needs and atmospheres of the show was just too tempting to resist.” (Spector *et al.*, 2006, p. 57). Visitors and the press largely celebrated the resemblance of the fourth Berlin Biennale to KW’s previous exhibition *37 Räume*, thus signifying a turning point in the Biennale’s history: the Biennale’s engagement in the aesthetics of the non-typical exhibition space crystallised

this identity for the Biennale and set it apart from its international biennial counterparts (Cecchinato, 2013, p. 14).

Curation saw a two-fold change compared to previous editions: the choice of curators was for the first time conducted by a selection committee. The committee selected the artist Maurizio Cattelan, curator Massimiliano Gioni and writer Ali Subotnick to curate the fourth Berlin Biennale. The three gained notoriety for their theme inspired by John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* that saw the curators positioning the city as a story teller, where each building had its own tale to tell. As we can see in Figure 29, the Biennale exhibited work across multiple venues along a single street in Mitte – Auguststrasse – thus allowing the public access to otherwise privately owned spaces such as apartments, and non-typical spaces such as a church, a school and a cemetery. The selection of spaces of such variety of function and style and in such close proximity to each other, would have encouraged the biennale visitor at the time to experience this part of Mitte as a vibrant village; an experience highly reminiscent of the KW's *37 Raume* exhibition fourteen years earlier in 1992 (see Figure 4). The histories of each of these spaces were researched and described in detail in the exhibition catalogue, emphasising not the actual artwork, but rather the exhibition context – the city of Berlin, and in particular, the Biennale's key site: Auguststrasse. Here, the histories for each of the locations featured prominently. Images accompanying these articles depicted these venues in their earlier forms and their present state then.

The Biennale's exhibition featured artworks by more than sixty mostly German or Germany-based artists from four different generations. It "unfolded like a novel: a story with various characters and personalities disclosing their private fates and universal fears" that loosely posed questions about birth and loss, death and surrender, sorrow and nostalgia. The venues were thus selected to speak to the shared human experiences of every-day life (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2006). The Biennale used an approach that tapped into the histories and aesthetics of the buildings and served as a revealer of so-called "forgotten" spaces where, once again, the city was also on display for the Biennale visitor (Cattalan, Gioni and Subotnick, 2006, pp. 83–4). Described as "a sort of collage, where artworks are displayed in environments that are images in and of themselves", visitors were encouraged to travel through "a variety of settings and

experiences, opening doors onto forgotten buildings and hidden sites, discovering art in the spaces where we usually work, eat, play and pray” (Cattalan, Gioni and Subotnick, 2006, pp. 83–4). Rather than simply juxtaposing the aesthetics of the architectural ruin with an array of contemporary art, the visitor’s ability to experience the former urban daily life of this street was of paramount importance to the curators. Thus, curators left many of the spaces “untouched” so that “visiting the exhibition would feel like opening up a series of time capsules.” (Cattalan, Gioni and Subotnick, 2006, pp. 83–4).

The visitor would have begun their discovery with the 1859 St Johannes Evangelist-Kirche, a red-brick Neo-Romanesque church bordered on both sides by apartment buildings (Figure 30). At time of the Biennale in 2006 it was being used as a church but also, possibly because of failing parishes, increasingly for cultural purposes. The next building was located at number 84, an apartment built in 1896 for wealthy bourgeoisie who lived in the front of the building, with lower classes residing in the back (Figure 31). There was a grocery store on the ground floor in the early 1900s, which was later used for storage and from the 1990s it was a bar. At the time of the Biennale’s use it was used for residential use. Typical of other residential buildings in the area of the Prussian era (for example, the KW), the beige rendered façade of the building had been recently renovated at the time of the Biennale’s use, restoring and celebrating the decorative geometric plaster work framing the many narrow windows. Crossing to the other side of the road was the *Pferdeställe des Postfuhramts* (the post office stables of the Postfuhramt building used in the first and second Biennales). As we can see in Figure 32 entering under the bricked archway from Auguststrasse, the visitor would have seen the octagonal tower of the main Postfuhramt building ahead, before turning right to the former stables. Originally used for the Postfuhramt’s 250 horses crucial for distributing the city’s post from the late 1800s until the second half of the 19th century, it is unclear if the *Pferdeställe* was also used as at the time of the Biennale in 2006 as artists’ studios, occasional art exhibitions and sports activities in the same way as its neighbouring building of the Postfuhramt (Mears, 2006, p. 112). As we can see in Figure 33, in the interior of the stables, the white brick high ceiled stables are supported with grey concrete pillars and illuminated with fluorescent lighting.

The next building used by the Biennale along Auguststrasse, situated across from the KW (Figure 11), was the Jüdische Mädchenschule (Figure 34). This former private Jewish girls' school was built in 1927/28 by Alexander Beer and was one of the last Jewish building projects built in Berlin before the Nazis took power. The modern L-shaped, five-storey brown-brick building had a number of classrooms, a washroom, three playgrounds and a flat-topped roof garden. The school closed on the order of the government in 1942 and from this site, many Jewish people were deported and later killed in concentration camps. Until the end of the war, the building was used as a military hospital and from the 1950s it was used by the GDR as the Bertolt-Brecht-Oberschule. After a restitution process to return such Nazi-confiscated buildings in Berlin back to their Jewish owners after the fall of the Wall, the school was returned to the Jewish community in 1996 but it subsequently closed that same year due to low enrollment numbers (Mears, 2006, pp. 121–125; Brewer's Berlin Tours, 2016).

The next two venues along the street were the private homes of Auguststrasse residents. Firstly, Auguststrasse 17, an apartment in which the fourth Berlin Biennale artist Norbert Schwontowski actually lived (Figure 35). Built in 1865 it is of the same period as many of the other ornate Prussian style apartments, however much more paired down and simplistic in style. It later became a part of a complex comprising the Jewish hospital/children's home. From 1941–43, the Gestapo operated a collection point from the neighboring building (14–16) and deported many of the women and girls from this building to concentration camps. One of the largest deportations to Auschwitz from Auguststrasse 17 occurred on 12 January 1942. After the war it was occupied by the Soviets who used it for administrative offices. In 1992, the Red Army moved out and the building was rented out as apartments. The second apartment, Auguststrasse 23, was at the time the home of a Berlin-based journalist working for Kunst + Kultur (Mears, 2006, p. 253) (Figure 36). As we can see in the image, the building retains much of its original Prussian style, however at the time of the fourth Biennale its exterior was decayed, crumbling and flaking. It was built in 1837 for a locksmith, Johann Lochmülle, and was later bought by a butcher Wilhelm Josef in 1885. While it is unclear what happened between this time and the creation of the GDR, during the GDR the cow stalls were turned into a laundry owned by Friedrich Westerhold. In 1990, his business closed due to a lack of customers. However the building continued on as a residency for

Westerhold, a restoration service run by Westerhold's colleague Ulrich Bonzio and a meeting place for cultural professionals (Mears, 2006, p. 253).

The infamous Ballhaus Mitte, better known as Clärchen's Ballhaus, was next, a dancehall that was opened in 1913 by Fritz Bühler (and known then as Bühler's Ballhaus) (Figure 37). The name changed to Clärchen's Ballhaus after Fritz Bühler's wife took over the business when Fritz was killed in World War One. The building had a long and colourful history due to its unique infrastructure: until 1940 popular music was played to audiences on a ground-floor hall; a mirrored hall upstairs was used as a ballroom and there was a bowling alley in the cellar. In the mid-1940s, when the Nazis announced a ban on public events not related to the war effort, the ballroom remained open by hosting knitting circles and tea parties. After World War Two, the ballroom was closed and the bowling alley was used for storing coal. The front part of the building was badly damaged by during World War Two and was torn down. Clärchen Bühler continued to run the business until 1967, when it was handed to her stepdaughter Elfride Wolff. Her son and his wife took over the business in 1990, and it seems they would have allowed the use of the venue for the Biennale; however, again, it is unclear if the space was indeed being used as a ballroom and restaurant at the time (Mears, 2006, pp. 263–265). What we see in Figure 37 is the remaining rear building, its right and left wings curving forward towards its now disappeared front house. Still grand and elegant in retaining its early 1900s style, however, as was the case with many of the buildings in the fourth Biennale, its façade bears the traces of war and decay.

Across the road in front of Auguststrasse 52 was a somewhat strange addition, a shipping container on the street featuring the work of solo artist Erik van Lieshout. Behind it and a little further along the street at number 50a (Mears, 2006, p. 277) was Gagosian Gallery, a small gallery space which the Biennale curators had opened in September 2005 with an eight-part exhibition series, just six months prior to the opening of the Biennale (Figure 38). It was these two spaces that perhaps brought the Biennale theme back into the then present with the presentation of a collaboration between project spaces and independent curators from Berlin, focussing on local art production. The original storefront space of the gallery was used by various artist and artist groups for their own exhibitions while the cellar was used by the Berlin Biennale.

This three-storey building originally dates from 1830 for a manufacturer, Johann Christoph Börnicke, and while it is unclear exactly when, the ground floor was turned into an electrician's shop. In 1994 it was opened by Alexander Schröder and Thilo Wermke as Galerie Neu. After the space was renovated in 1996, Galerie Neu moved out and Mierzwa Gas und Wasser Installation moved in. They later moved into the rear of the building where they have remained since and it is unclear if the shopfront was occupied at the time of the Biennale's use (Mears, 2006, p. 277).

Interestingly, the venue at Auguststrasse 44 hints at the Biennale's own beginnings (Figures 39 and 40). A typical GDR "Plattenbau" (prefab) office built in 1985, the first floor housed one of the central janitorial offices of the Berlin Mitte Housing Authorities (WBM) – a local housing association that was essential for finding the vacant buildings for KW and its neighbouring cultural initiatives in the early 1990s. As we see in Figure 39, it would have appeared quite visually distinct from its neighbouring Biennale venues due to its mundaneness. With no sign drawing attention to its existence, the brown and orange tiled façade would have beckoned the Biennale visitor to discover not so much how people would have lived in the past, but also how they would have worked during East Germany's much more recent past. Concluding the tour of Auguststrasse was the final venue of the Alter Garnisonsfriedhof (old garrison cemetery) (Figures 41 and 42). Created between 1701 and 1706 for Prussian officers and their families, and as the site of the mass burial of soldiers and civilians during World War Two, it stands as a symbol of the horrors and finality of war. It also embodies its more recent history as a contested site at the centre of debate of the Berlin authorities' plans to level the cemetery and build a park (Mears, 2006, pp. 289–291; Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen, 2016). As we can see in Figure 42, the Biennale used a building that appears to be a modernist addition to the cemetery, possibly used as an office or for storage purposes. Nestled partially below ground the visitor at the time would have accessed the entrance via a small staircase leading down below ground level.

The fourth Berlin Biennale stands out in its twenty-year history for deliberately highlighting the Biennale's identity as one that actively seeks to draw on the meanings of Berlin's urban space:

Berlin has a long tradition of co-opting and transforming existing buildings and structures into venues for temporary art shows...learning from this experience, the curators recognize the specificity of Berlin's art scene and the vast quantities of unoccupied space. That space is both a blessing and a curse: it offers up exciting and fresh venues for presenting art, however it also symbolizes the failures and consequences of the city's powerful and persistent memory and history. (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2006)

Here the Biennale producers acknowledge a key way in which they engage with urban space that lies at the heart of this research: time and time again, the Biennale uses its temporal structure to access fleetingly available spaces and taps into those spaces and their histories to help frame the artwork on display. However, the producers fail to acknowledge that to use such "empty" and highly-charged spaces is still a curatorial choice – rather than the "curse" they make it out to be. For example, the fourth Biennale brings to light the individual and complex histories of each of these spaces in a very evocative way. At the same time, there is something perverse about the revealing of these histories for the international art community: the demise of the dense population of the Auguststrasse area, although acknowledged as problematic by Biesenbach in the previous edition's catalogue, is not explored and indeed it is actually celebrated for its contribution of vacant buildings to the Biennale (Biesenbach, 2004). The histories of these spaces reveal a far more complex story, not only of the past atrocities of the Nazi regime or the spaces fallen into disrepair due to the fall of the GDR, but of present-day contested ownership battles, the pushing out of tenants who could no longer afford the rising rents and the spreading re-appropriation of buildings which had lost their original purpose precisely because of a diminishing population. Thus, the way in which these empty spaces are (re)presented reinforces a narrative of a failed city full of spaces that speak only of previous layers of histories, not the present-day contestations taking place during the actual Biennale production or exhibition run.

4.4 *When Things Cast No Shadow: The Fifth Berlin Biennale*
5 April–15 June, 2008

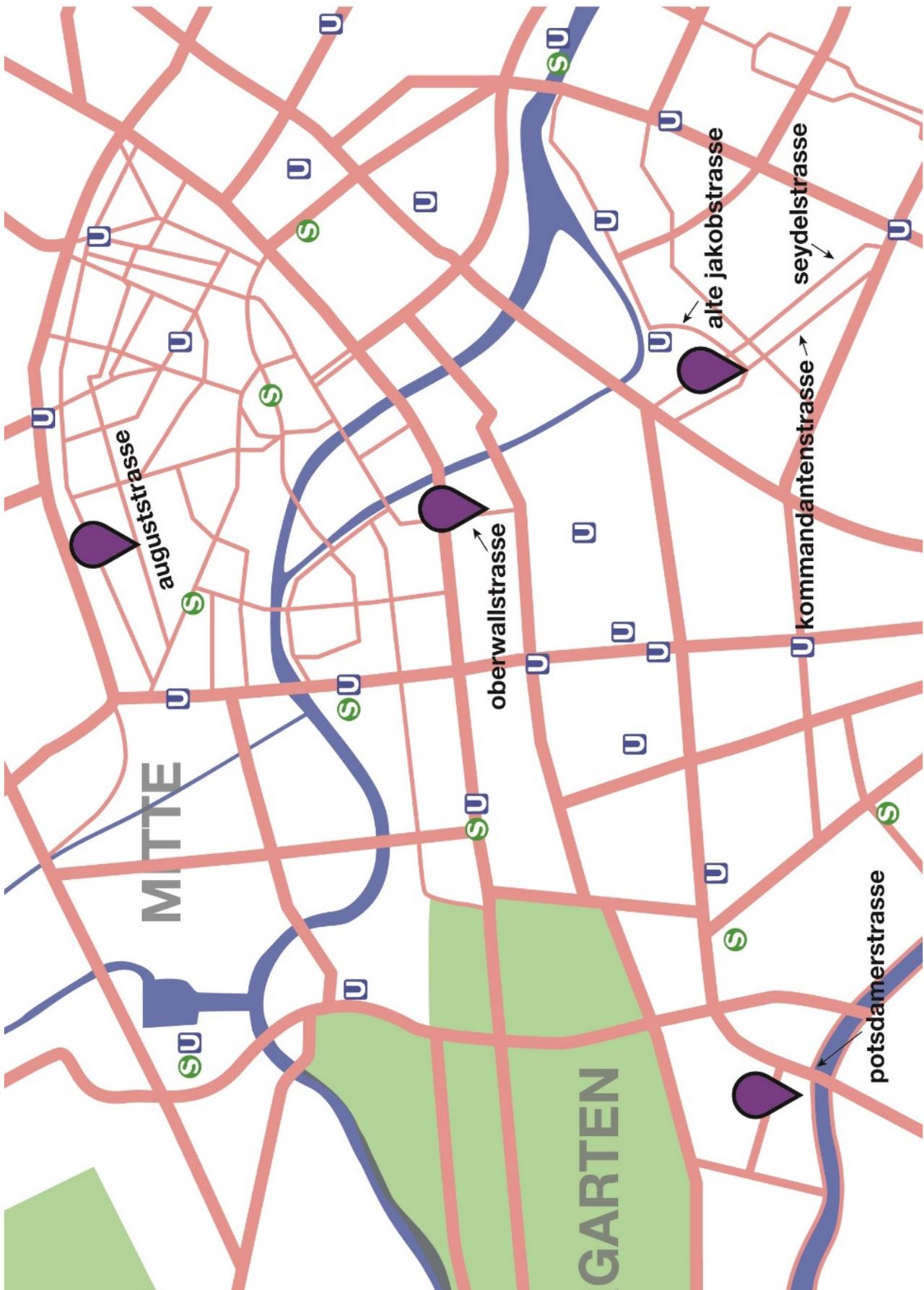


Figure 43: Maps of the exhibition venues of the fifth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 44: : (top) Neue National Galerie, Potsdamerstrasse, Mitte. Photo: Andrea Carolina Flores Martinez, 2010.

Figure 45: (bottom) Schinkel Pavillon, Oberwallstrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.



Figure 46: Skulpturenpark Berlin Zentrum, between Alte Jakobstrasse, Seydelstrasse and Kommandantenstrasse, Kreuzberg. Photo: Ludovic Balland/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2008

The fifth Berlin Biennale celebrated the Biennale's ten-year anniversary by announcing the Kulturstiftung des Bundes' decision to continue funding the Biennale for two further editions (2010 and 2012). Following the success of the fourth edition, the selection committee appointed a young curator, Adam Szymczyk, known for his work as chief curator at Kunsthalle Basel, who then invited curator and biennial scholar Elena Filipovic to co-curate the Biennale.

Their exhibition *When Things Cast No Shadow* consisted of two parts: one took place by day, the other by night. The daytime part of the fifth Berlin Biennale presented mainly new productions by fifty artists spanning four generations shown at four different venues—KW (Figure 11), Neue Nationalgalerie (Figure 44), Schinkel Pavillon (Figure 45) and Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum (Figure 46). The Biennale night program entitled “Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours” (My nights are more beautiful than your days) consisted of a total of sixty-three evening events – lectures, talks, performances, concerts, workshops, film and video screenings – by an additional 100 artists and cultural producers staged at various additional locations throughout the city such as the theatre Hebel am Ufer. Szymczyk and Filipovic envisioned the night program as a platform that offered participating artists and thinkers from a variety of fields the possibility to experiment and improvise beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of the gallery (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015c). Both intended to give insight into the ways in which artists dealt with the legacy of previous generations, modernity or various exhibition formats with many of the participating artists conceptualizing and building their commissioned artworks explicitly in response to the venues (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015c).

Building on the legacy of the previous Biennale editions, the fifth once again used the catalogue to highlight the histories of the exhibition venues in order to frame the contemporary artwork on display there. The focus for this edition was on the theme of exhibition formats and the temporary within the context of “Berlin's historical and cultural stratifications and the urban cartographies of the city.” The venues for the fifth Berlin biennial were chosen specifically with this theme in mind. Looking at the map of the fifth Berlin Biennale we see a geographical departure from the village-style zoom-in on one particular street (Figure 43). Instead, the venues selected for the fifth Biennale

are situated firstly along a north to south axis from Mitte to Kreuzberg, then back west into Mitte, all spaces occupying areas close or even along the former Berlin Wall. Symbolically, they demark the spaces where culture has been used in political battles historically and at the time of the biennale. For example, the Neue Nationalgalerie, an icon of post-war architecture built by Mies van der Rohe between 1961 and 1968 symbolized “state prestige and art’s facility in the East/West cultural war” (Horn, 2008, p. 21). Of the two smaller galleries, Schinkel Pavillon at the Kronprinzenpalais Unter den Linden, was chosen as “a major reference to the conflict around “modernity” in the socialist GDR”, while the KW represented, “both historically and spatially, transformation, dynamism, reorganization, and development” (Horn, 2008, p. 21). Only the Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, was defined differently, as an “urban wasteland where the Wall once ran between the city’s East and West sectors”(Horn, 2008, p. 21).

This edition marked a significant departure in the Biennale’s history: the increased use of dedicated exhibition spaces. This was a deliberate move by the curators to distinguish themselves from the iconic previous fourth edition:

In our choices, we hoped the visitor would move throughout Berlin, but not necessarily towards buildings whose histories are manifest in their peeling paint or picturesque state of ruination. Instead, we wanted to work with very distinct possibilities for the display and interaction with artworks, proper to each venue. (Szymczyk and Filipovic, 2008, pp. 586–587)

The use of Mies van der Rohe’s iconic Neue Nationalgalerie was emblematic of this approach. Located near S-Bahnhof Potsdamerplatz, near the Sony Center and facing the River Spree, the 20th century modernist glass pavilion was the last major construction completed by the architect. As seen in Figure 44, the fluid, rectangular, seemingly floating open space framed by its elegant steel roof stands as an embodiment of modernism. Symbolic as one of the few spaces purpose built for the display of contemporary art in Berlin, Szymczyk’s use of the Neue Nationalgalerie drew from its history as a space built during the Cold War era by a West Berlin Senate eager to display its sense of modernity and Western internationalism (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2017). The site is also significant for its location near the recently redeveloped

Government and (state-supported) cultural district, thus reinforcing the notion of the Neue Nationalgalerie being a space designed for the display and mass-consumption of contemporary art and high culture.

The Schinkel Pavillon by contrast, offered a slightly different architectural history to the Biennale. As we see in the map, the gallery is located in the garden of the Kronprinzenpalais (Crown Prince's Palace) off Unter den Linden in Mitte and as seen in Figure 45 features an octagon-shaped hall with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a panoramic view of Berlin's historic centre including the iconic Museum Island. Built in 1969 by Richard Paulick (perhaps best known as chief architect of Karl Marx Allee) it quickly became a favourite spot for GDR General Secretary Erich Honecker and his cocktail parties (Schinkel Pavillon, 2017). After re-unification it was developed by entrepreneur Stephan Landwehr as a space to show art in 2006/2007 together with artist Nina Pohl. In 2007 the Schinkel Pavillon Verein was founded by Pohl and began a program showcasing often local experimental contemporary artists (Schinkel Pavillon, 2017).

In addition to this shift in thematic approach to urban space that saw more dedicated exhibition venues being used, another kind of shift occurred within the fifth Biennale: for the first time in the Biennale's history, the theme of temporary use of urban space, gentrification and the role that the art sector (including the Biennale) plays in that process, made a deliberate appearance in these exhibitions and the accompanying catalogue. About half of the fifth Biennale catalogue is dedicated to essays and other material which describes the histories of certain venues or urban issues. While essays such as "Perspiration, or the New National Gallery between Cold Fronts" by Bettina Visman and Jürgen Magner seem similar to the essays in previous catalogues that illuminate the history of this particular Berlin Biennale venue, other material and articles take the reader on a more urban ethnographic journey to the exhibition sites with the inclusion of newspaper articles, a pamphlet from groups protesting the erection of Mies van der Rohe's gallery, images describing the changes to the site of the Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, street directory records and maps from the surveyor's offices. But it is Pelin Tan's "Can Spaces be Fully Capitalized? Art and the Gentrification of Non-Places" that demonstrates the Biennale's willingness to engage in what were at

the time, pressing urban issues. The essay analyses and provides a historical background of the Skulpturenpark and other Berlin art projects dealing with the urban transformation of urban voids as part of the gentrification process thus drawing a direct link between the production of art and its role in gentrification processes.

It was thus the use of the Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, that truly engaged in the symbolic nature of the site as a space representative ideologically and practically of the ongoing debates surrounding gentrification. Once a militarized zone dividing East and West Berlin, after the dismantling of the Wall in 1990, a demographic “standstill” occurred due to unclear property rights and ownership of the space. As illustrated in Chapter 3, although most vacant plots in the city had been bought and redeveloped, the real estate speculation process saw many investors misjudge the market, leaving some spaces, such as the Skulpturenpark, languish in a state of ambiguity, leaving them ripe for use as “wild” parking lots, garbage dumps, and in this case, temporary cultural, or counter-cultural playgrounds (Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, 2016). As we can see in Figure 46, this strip of land, sandwiched between Alte Jakobstrasse, Kommandantenstrasse and Seydelstrasse, at the intersection of Mitte and Kreuzberg, surrounded by pre-fabs and recently renovated Prussian apartments and home to mounds of dirt and rubble, had become overgrown with grass, weeds, trees.

The non-profit artist collective KUNSTrePUBLIK e.V. began managing the site in 2006 by negotiating permissions with the then sixty-two various landowners depending on the needs of each project or legal necessity. At the time, the lot was surrounded by six- to eight-storey residential and office buildings covering approximately 5 hectares and hosting “various artistic and cultural activities” (Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, 2016). The area was partially fenced, and due to a lack of construction was used for more than twenty years as a dog run, picnic area and playground (Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, 2016). The fact that the fifth Biennale collaborated with a local artist’s collective which was critical of urban development processes indicates a real change of mindset for the Biennale to acknowledge the more pressing urban development issues of the city. In this way, the Biennale was able to benefit from the reputation of the Skulpturenpark as one of the city’s last remaining examples of post-Wall cultural *Zwischennutzung*, (interim use) and speak to its own developmental roots. However, the use of the Skulpturenpark

can also be viewed as part of a continuing curatorial obsession with the “charm of the riotous and uncultivated remains” of the city that only reinforced images of Berlin as a city in which there were still free spaces (Landbrecht, 2010, p. 225).

The fifth edition thus marks a significant departure in the history of the Biennale’s approach to urban space in two main ways. Firstly, the increased use of dedicated exhibition spaces was a deliberate move by the curators to distinguish themselves from the iconic previous fourth edition, focusing on dedicated exhibition spaces in order to match their theme of exhibition formats, the temporary and purpose-built architecture for contemporary art. Secondly, for the first time, the theme of temporary use of urban space, gentrification and the role that the art sector (including the Biennale) played in that process, made a much stronger appearance in these exhibitions and the accompanying catalogue.

4.5 *What is Waiting Out There: The Sixth Berlin Biennale*

11 June–8 August 2010

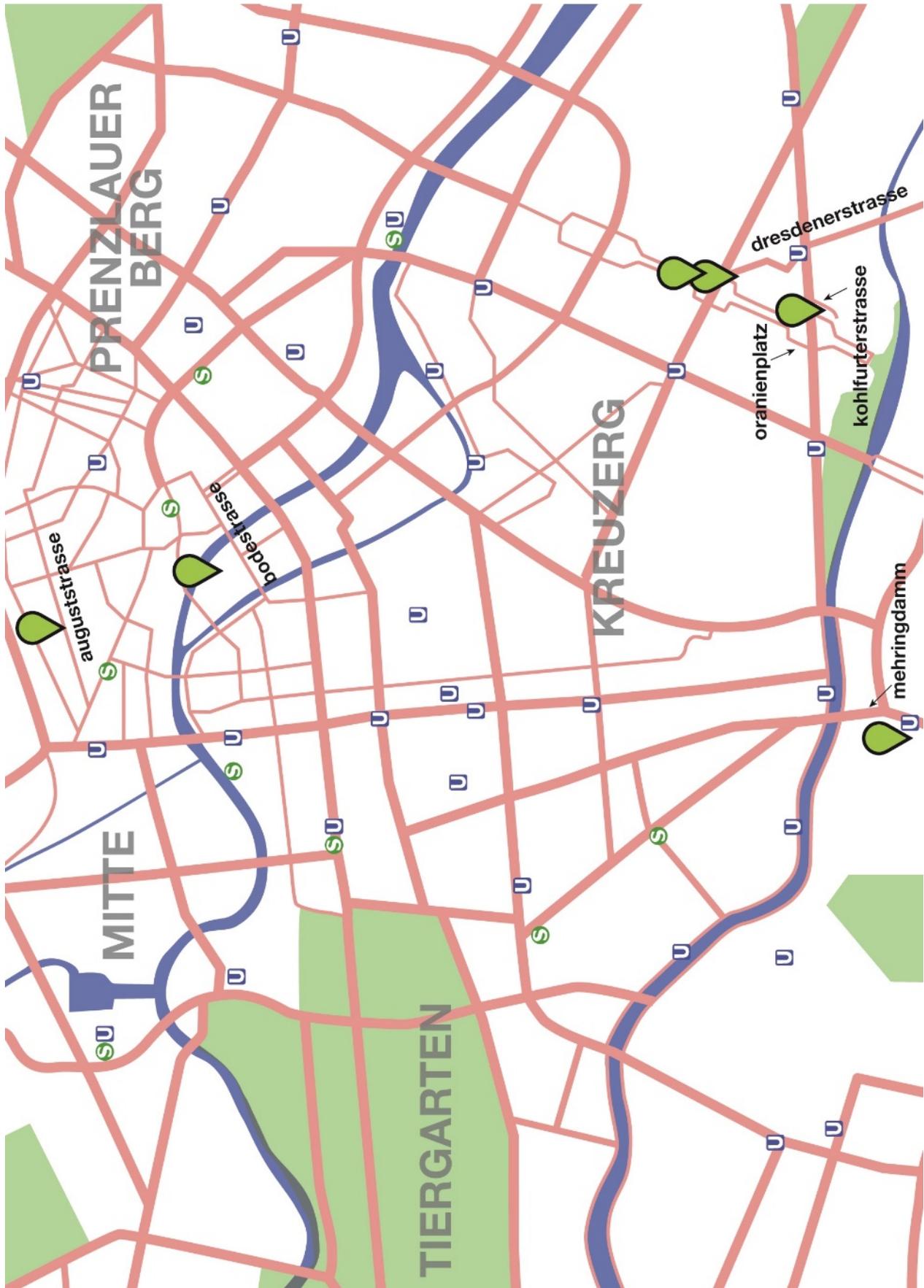


Figure 47: Map of the exhibition venues of the sixth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 48: (top) Alte Nationalgalerie, Bodestrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

Figure 49: (bottom) Apartment at Kohlfurter Strasse 1, Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 50: Apartment at Dresdener Strasse 19, Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 51: Oranienplatz 17, Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 52: (top) Mehringdamm 28, 10961, Kreuzberg, 10961. Photos: Christian Sievers/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010
Figure 53: (bottom) Mehringdamm 28, 10961, Kreuzberg, interior view. Photo: Christian Sievers/Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010

The sixth Berlin Biennale saw several major changes. Firstly, its overall theme responded to pressing global issues in a way never before seen in the Biennale's history. Secondly, and perhaps building on a discourse that had begun in the previous edition, there was a noticeable shift towards more self-reflection and institutional critique in the sense of the Biennale producers' own relationship with urban development processes.

The development of the sixth edition would have begun shortly before the global financial crisis of 2008. Indeed, the notion of speculating on the future of this unfolding crisis features as a main theme with work from over forty international artists, more than half of them producing new work that sought to reflect and make visible "the multiplicity of ways in which art appropriates and produces the many different realities of our contemporary times" (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015d). Kathrin Rhomberg, the former director of the Kölnischer Kunstverein, opened up her curatorial process by organising the exhibitions of this edition in collaboration with other artists. Marcus Geiger designed the exhibition architecture in close collaboration with Rhomberg herself. A solo exhibition with works by George Kuchar – created in collaboration with Marc Siegel – was presented in a warehouse space in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Beyond the physical boundaries of the exhibition venues, Michael Schmidt's photo series *Frauen (Women, 1997–1999)* was on view on billboards in public spaces both during the run-up to and throughout the Biennale. Marion von Osten chose the e-flux journal as a space for her artistic contribution and edited one issue of the magazine. *La monnaie vivante/The Living Currency/Die lebende Münze* (after Pierre Klossowski), a three-day event was curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc and produced in collaboration with the theatre Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) and the Centre d'art contemporain de Brétigny (CAC Brétigny). Over the course of the three days, *La monnaie vivante* constantly changed its appearance as it juxtaposed contemporary and historic perceptions of the body in visual arts with notions from dance, music and theatre. During this event the audience at HAU played an active part in an open-ended performative process.

The exhibition venues were not so much chosen on the basis of their histories but saw a return to the idea of using Berlin – and particularly the area of Kreuzberg with its multicultural identity – as a platform for making ideological connections between Berlin and the wider world. On the invitation of Kathrin Rhomberg, the American art historian

Michael Fried curated an exhibition produced in cooperation with the Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery) and the Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin) (Figure 48). By showing a selection of drawings and gouaches by the 19th century Berlin realist Adolph Menzel (1815–1905), contemporary art was juxtaposed with an art historical position that served to contextualize the sixth Berlin Biennale's theme of perceptions of reality. While the world class collection of Menzel's work provided a conceptual anchor to the theme of reality, the use of the Alte Nationalgalerie served as a symbol of wealth, elitism and colonialist collecting during the Prussian era. The initial impetus for the construction of the Alte Nationalgalerie was a bequest to the Prussian state in 1861 by the banker and consul Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Wagener, whose collection featured works by Caspar David Friedrich, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, painters from the Düsseldorf school, and history painters from Belgium. The basic architectural concept for the Alte Nationalgalerie – a Schinkel-inspired temple-like building raised on a plinth decorated with motifs from antiquity – came from the king himself.

The use of the Alte Nationalgalerie thus seems to have clashed geographically, aesthetically and symbolically with that of the other venues located in Kreuzberg, comprising residential and commercial spaces. In examining the Map of the sixth Berlin Biennale the Alte Nationalgalerie appears isolated in its position on the Museum Island in Mitte (Figure 47). The remaining venues – two private apartments (Figures 49 and 50), a former department store (Figure 51), and a complex of warehouses (Figures 52 and 53) – were clustered quite far south, deep within the suburb of Kreuzberg. The exhibition catalogue directed viewers to identify Kreuzberg as an area of the city with a strong history of migration. Rather than drawing attention to the specific histories of each venue, their collective status as places of change was highlighted. The warehouses and apartments were described as part of a “logical” decision befitting the Biennale's theme: “Characterized by migratory aspects and dynamics, everyday transactions are transnational and typify life in Kreuzberg.” (Horn, 2010, p. 34) and treated as significant as sites of transition, full of potential for Berlin's possible societal futures (Fahrenholz and Völkers, 2010).

The sixth Biennale used the two residential apartments – one at Dresdener Strasse 19, and one at Kohlfurter Strasse 1 – both featuring single artist exhibitions. Very little is known about the history of the five-storey 1990s apartment on Kohlfurter Strasse, it's beige façade with metal balconies curving around the corner of the street, a collaged mural of graffiti and tags brightening its base. It is fairly typical of the style of 1990s inner-city residential apartment blocks built after the Fall of the Wall across Berlin (Figure 49). By contrast, the Dresdener Strasse building appears to be a renovated Prussian style apartment building with a dark blue painted shop-front on the ground floor. Historically, this shop was run as a tea bar by a group of Kurdish men (Ashraf, 2014) and at the time of the sixth Biennale appears to have been a Turkish café (Figure 50). The venue at nearby Mehringdamm 28 was located within a complex of privately owned commercial buildings (Figures 52 and 53). The site is merely described in the catalogue as a “warehouse” but actually comprised two buildings where two artists exhibited solo exhibitions. As we can see in Figure 52, the complex is set back from the main road of Mehringdamm, a major artery running through Kreuzberg. The visitor entered from through the grey metal gateway between the yellow, presumably 19th century brick building on the left and the modern white plaster and steel building on the right. The two exhibitions would have been located one after the other in the yellow brick building, seen here in Figure 53. The lack of information given about this building would have encouraged the Biennale visitor to discover a hidden and normally non-public part of the city once more, but not via its national socialist past or Cold War history, rather, its modern, seemingly dull everyday-ness, rendered interesting through the insertion of contemporary art.

The use of privately owned space was noticeable too in the way the Biennale appropriated and presented the sixth venue – the 1913 heritage protected five-storey office building at Oranienplatz 17 (Figure 51). The architectural elements and rich history of this space as first the former headquarters of the Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft (AEG), and then the “Cabarett-Café Oranien-Palast”, the Deutsche Privat Telefongesellschaft, the clothing chain C&A and finally its use by the Partei Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland, was largely ignored in the catalogue description. Instead, Biennale director Gabriele Horn expressed her joy at a deal made with a Berlin-based lawyer who made the building available to the Biennale at a time

when space was increasingly difficult to obtain (Horn, 2010, p. 34). What is striking, is that despite the building's dramatic and slightly imposing style – an elegant neo-baroque inspired sandstone façade perched on the corner of Oranienplatz – does not seem relevant for the interpretation of the exhibition inside.

Thus the sixth Biennale is a rather strange edition in terms of its approach to urban space. On one hand, the need for the Biennale as an institution to respond to pressing global issues seemed to override the desire to delve into the histories or heady symbolism of each venue. On the other hand, it still seemed to cling to the need to fulfil visitor expectations of discovering the city through non-typical exhibition venues. It is here that a conflict for the identity of the Biennale emerges: that of an increasing struggle to maintain its identity as a reoccurring exhibition event able to tap into a plethora of unusual and undiscovered exhibition spaces in a city where such spaces were increasingly inaccessible. These concerns are for the first time in the Biennale's history, made clear to their own public through the catalogue. Director Gabriele Horn recalls the possibilities of the fourth Berlin Biennale, held in 2006, when the entire event could be housed in vacant buildings along a single street in Mitte. She says, "In subsequent years, it has proven ever more difficult for the Berlin Biennale to find empty buildings or vacant spaces for use in the city center" (Horn, 2010, p. 24). Here she implies that this location of Kreuzberg was perhaps not solely chosen for its strong identity as a multicultural area, but a geographical substitute that maintaining a close proximity to Mitte.

The sixth edition also signalled a shift towards more self-reflection and institutional critique in the sense of its relationship with urban development processes. Surely spurred by the outward gaze of Kathrin Rhomberg's curatorial vision, catalogue essays such as "What is at Stake is the Actual Participation of Artists in the Public Debate", recording a conversation between Joanna Mytkowska, Slawomir Sierakowski and Artur Zmijewski, indicate a more sophisticated, tuned-in Biennale, eager to involve themselves in wider, international debates about the relevance of its own presence within society. A series of essays commissioned by e-flux as part of this Biennale all questioned Berlin's identity as a city, the art scene in Berlin and provided a refreshingly direct counter-narrative to the Berlin Biennale. For example, Marion von Osten's

editorial, “In Search of the Postcapitalist Self” explored Berlin’s identity as a city, the art scene in Berlin and the Biennale’s positioning within that scene. Sebastian Luetgert’s “Down and Out in All the Wrong Places” traced the Berlin Biennale and the Berlin art scene in the 1990s and how it related to gentrification. However, it was Natascha Sadr Haghigian’s “What’s the Time, Mahagonny ?” that dealt the Biennale its most scathing analysis:

From its inception, the Berlin Biennale was clearly a collaborative effort between local initiatives seeking to promote Berlin as the future capital of the creative class, and an international art crowd eager to throw their seeds onto this seemingly virgin land. But this virgin land was in fact a habitat to many species, the kind of species found on what are called wastelands, uncultivated lands. So the international art “community” came to do their version of white-water rafting on these lands before their developer friends began bulldozing, partitioning and selling it off. (Haghigian, 2010, p. 6)

This selection of contributions from writers like Haghigian is significant for what was a long overdue self-acknowledgement of the Biennale producers’ desire for the unconsecrated space as part of a larger trend towards site-specificity within contemporary art (Haghigian, 2010, p. 17).

The sixth Berlin Biennale thus demonstrates the impact of both global and local changes on its approach to urban space. By prioritising pressing global issues over the histories of each venue, non-typical exhibition venues were still heavily used, but in a rather patchwork, non-coherent way. Noticeable too was the shift towards more self-reflection and institutional critique in the sense of Biennale producers’ own relationship with urban development processes. It comes as no surprise then, that following the discourse of institutional critique that the sixth edition introduced, the seventh Berlin Biennale reveals an even larger shift in the Biennale’s history.

4.6 *Forget Fear: The Seventh Berlin Biennale*

27 April–1 July, 2012



Figure 54: Map of the exhibition venues of the seventh Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 55: (top) St Elisabeth Kirche, Invalidenstrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016
Figure 56: (bottom) Deutschlandhaus, Stesemannstrasse, Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 57: Street corner Friedrichstrasse/Besselstrasse, Mitte/Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

The seventh Berlin Biennale was distinct from all its predecessors due to the producers' efforts to tackle institutional critique head on and even to embrace it as a main theme. It was a different edition because the exhibition and event programs were politically radical in nature, having the effect that built urban space seemed to take a back seat and allow controversial artworks to take centre stage in public space.

The seventh edition was curated by artist Artur Zmijewski and curators Johanna Warsza and Russian street art group, Voina. Zmijewski had already introduced various concepts for the seventh Berlin Biennale in an essay featured in the sixth edition catalogue. Entitled "What is at Stake is the Actual Participation of Artists in the Public Debate", it recorded a conversation between Joanna Mytkowska, Slawomir Sierakowski and Zmijewski – all were artists involved in the Polish magazine *Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique)*. Inspired by the Occupy movements of 2011, Zmijewski's realisation of the Biennale sought to challenge the very foundations of the Biennale as a cultural institution through inviting various political groups to occupy the Biennale hub venue, KW (Figure 50):

Throughout the duration of the 7th Berlin Biennale, representatives from these different international groups practiced their forms of protest and strategies of involvement on the ground floor of KW. While the institution initially only offered the space, over the course of the exhibition this partnership grew into the desire not only to address the visitors of the exhibition as members of society, but also to transform the institution as a mediator between art and society into a "horizontal" structure. (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015g)

This so-called transformation allowed the Biennale producers to congratulate themselves for having chosen artist Zmijewski as the curator and in doing so, having "once again demonstrated itself as a space for action and experimentation" and "negotiated art as a tool for social transformation by presenting a range of attempts of influencing politics directly" (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015g). Finally, they claimed that opening the Biennale to the public free of charge – "a novelty that helped to reach audiences who normally do not respond to art institutions" – was a gesture that brought them the highest press coverage ever (The Berlin Biennale for

Contemporary Art, 2015g). However, the experimental nature of the seventh edition came at a cost: director Gabriele Horn talked about working on this edition as a highly challenging situation where they used “art as a tool for political processes, and of abandoning the customary strategies and working methods of an art institution” at the behest of their selected curator –something they had never done before (Horn, no date). In this way, the producers pushed both KW and the Biennale as institutions to their limits and placed them under scrutiny, allowing them to become “a forum for negotiating what art may do, what art is, which borders should perhaps not be crossed, what an institution and its sponsors can support, and at what point it becomes harmful, out of place, and questionable—both politically as well as artistically.” (Horn, no date). Making themselves even more vulnerable, rather than hide how challenging this situation was, the Biennale producers decided to use it as an opportunity to demonstrate their identity as an open, reflexive and malleable institution.

Examining the exhibition and events programme for this edition reveals just what kind of challenge this was: a sprawling program seemingly devoid of structure in comparison to previous editions. It is clear that unlike all the previous editions, exhibitions in a traditional sense were not a priority for Zmijewski, but instead actions and interventions took centre stage. The Biennale provided a platform for various events and a number of site-specific works were installed throughout the city. Curators sought “practitioners, people who with their every public action practice politics.” (Zmijewski and Warsza, 2012, p. 17). Many of the events organised dealt with prickly topics such as a recorded seminar organised by the Institute for Human Activities in the Congo to discuss issues of gentrification affecting that country; an event at HAU for the First International Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland to discuss a call for three million Jews to return to Poland; and the New World Summit organised by Dutch artist Jonas Staal at Sophiensaele that brought together political and legal representatives of organisations marked on international terrorist lists. The curators also sought to bring about real social and political change beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries of the Biennale: for example, the public was encouraged to make contributions through an online WikiArt page that’s still in existence today, while a newspaper entitled *Self # governing* by Marina Naprushkina communicated scenarios

of an alternative future to the citizens of the country Belarus and was distributed all over Europe as well as secretly to hundreds of homes in Belarus.

The exhibitions took place in the St Elisabeth Kirche on Invalidenstrasse in Mitte (Figure 55), the Deutschlandhaus on Stresemannstrasse in Kreuzberg (Figure 56) and on a street at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and Besselstrasse where Mitte and Kreuzberg meet (Figure 57). Similar to the fifth and sixth editions the venues are positioned along a north to south axis and reached easily and quickly via public transport (Figure 54). Both the St Elisabeth Kirche and Deutschlandhaus are spaces originally intended for other purposes – a church and a leisure centre respectively – and have since been reappropriated for various cultural and political uses. Like the sixth edition, the way in which these spaces were represented in the catalogue is somewhat pared down compared to previous editions. As we can see in Figure 55 the St Elisabeth Kirche is a simple yet elegant two-storey stucco-clad neo-classical temple featuring a portico entrance on Invalidenstrasse supported by six Doric pillars and cornices that divide the plastered outer wall into a base and two upper zones. The side walls are divided by two rows of rectangular windows. The history of the St Elisabeth Kirche, which entails its design by Karl Friedrich Schinkel in 1828 on behalf of King Friedrich Wilhelm III, its almost total destruction during WWII and its status as a ruin for decades thereafter, is omitted.

It was only the Deutschlandhaus that was referred to in terms of its historical identity. Originally named the Europahaus, as we can see in the Figure 56 that it is a rectangular flat-roofed five-storey red sandstone and plaster-rendered Expressionist-style building, with geometric decorative elements framing the middle windows on the first floor of the right side. Built in 1926 it was part of a larger complex that housed the "Europa Tanz Pavillon" ballrooms and cafés, the Hofbräuhaus "Augustiner-Keller" and the "Europa-Palast" cinema with 2000 seats. Damage caused by WWII was not repaired until the early 1960s, when the five-storey northern part of the Europahaus with the Dance Pavilion was removed. The federally owned house was designated as a "national carer for East German culture" and given as a domicile to an organization of expellees. After the Wall was built, the building was one of the first places refugees from the GDR came to go. In 1974 it was given the name "Deutschlandhaus", which still stands on the

façade today. The Landsmannschaften des Bundes der Vertriebenen (Federal Association of Expellees) had their offices in the Deutschlandhaus until the end of 1999 when their financial support was stopped. It was appointed as the location for the Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung (SFVV) (Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation) by the Federal Government. At the time of the Biennale, the Deutschlandhaus was scheduled for renovation work the following year and eventual repurposing as a centre for exhibitions, documentation, and information of the (SFVV). The seventh Biennale curators describe the significance of the space's history for their exhibitions as,

a reservoir of repressed German memory. It is a mouthpiece for the official historical narrative stemming from the controversial question of commemorating Germans displaced during and after the Second World War. We confront this state-supported history with self-organized, subjective, popular reconstructions of historical events performed by Polish re-enactment groups. And we present what many Germans want to avoid seeing—a staging of the 1945 Battle of Berlin, complete with military uniforms and equipment. (Warsza, 2012)

The exhibition venues and their contemporary values, particularly their politically charged values, framed the artwork on display here. This was certainly also the case with the work on display at the fourth venue – the street corner at southern end of Friedrichstrasse and Beselstrasse (Figure 54). The photograph in Figure 57 was taken from the middle of Freidrichstrasse facing South and shows the street corner of Beselstrasse on the left. As we can see, this area is dense with cafes, office buildings, some car and bicycle traffic and cars parked along each side of the street. At the time of the seventh Berlin Biennale it was just busy and more visibly marked the transition of gentrification spreading southwards down Friedrichstrasse from Mitte into Kreuzberg; as it is today, a large part of the street was filled with expensive boutiques and restaurants. Its southern end, however, an area located on the former periphery of West Berlin, was at the time, home to various social housing projects where unemployment rates were high, and where up to 70 percent of the population had migrant backgrounds (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2012). Looking at this photograph, it is not hard to imagine how shocking artist Nada Prlja's *Peace Wall* - a two-storey tall plywood

sheet erected over metal scaffolding skirted by red and white plastic traffic fencing the width of the entire street – was perceived by local residents. With minimal signage interpreting the artwork, and possibly perceived by international Biennale visitors as a construction-site barrier, Prlja's work cut off Friedrichstrasse by blocking traffic but allowing the passage of pedestrians via the adjacent footpath. In this provocative work, Prlja's wall, in the words of the Biennale curators, sought to "visualize social and economic inequalities, the existence of 'parallel societies' in the city, and the positions of the advantaged and under privileged." (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2012).

The process of getting permission to erect the work was blocked by different interest groups and community members, including school authorities and private and public bodies, simultaneously feeding into the controversy (and publicity) of the piece, and hammering home its objective of raising discussion about who has the right to the city. But interestingly, while there was a strong emphasis on public artworks throughout this Biennale edition, the site of Prlja's work was the only site in a public space that was considered and listed as an "exhibition venue". For example, the Biennale featured a number of other extremely evocative pieces that formed strong responses to the socio-political urban landscape within which they were situated. Firstly, Lukasz Surowiec's *Berlin-Birkenau* displacement of several hundred birch trees from the Auschwitz-Birkenau area to Berlin. Secondly, the artist activist group Centre for Political Beauty erected billboards and a website to call for the arrest of German arms manufacturers for their supply of weapons used against citizens in the Arab Spring. Neither of these sites was listed as official exhibition venues on the seventh Berlin Biennale website nor in the archived summary on the main Berlin Biennale website. This lack of framing of these events suggests either a hierarchisation – that these urban interventions were not as important or official as Prlja's *Peace Wall* – or alternatively, and perhaps what would make sense in terms of the overall Biennale theme, that it was necessary to rethink the way urban space was used to frame works in order to take a new perspective on the political issues of citizen rights to urban space that the Biennale was dealing with.

There is very little reference to the venue choices in the catalogue. This may be because the catalogue appeared as an addition to the Biennial, rather than as a documentation of

works exhibited, events that took place and a biography of spaces used. Rather, the catalogue questions Berlin-specific issues such as gentrification and questions the existence of the Biennale itself. “Citizens of Culture” focuses on how the Polish art sector movement Citizens for Culture could be a good model for “Haben und Brauchen”, one of the city’s art scene’s collectives who were fighting for better living and working conditions for Berlin’s artists and cultural workers. Joanna Warsza comments on how one of the events organised by Haben und Brauchen “brought together representatives of artist-run spaces, private galleries, and public institutions, [where] someone asked if Berlin still needs its Berlin Biennale. Opinions were diverse: some saw it as international exposure for the city, while others claimed that biennials and gallery weekends took place there non-stop, yet others proposed that the money be distributed among the numerous local artist-run spaces. Hortensia Völkers, the Artistic Director of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the principal funding body of the Berlin Biennale, said: “If the Berlin Biennale is no longer an appropriate format for the needs of the artistic community in Berlin, then create a lobby and fight for alternatives.” (Zmijewski and Warsza, 2012, p. 180).

The seventh Berlin Biennale is distinct from all its predecessors due to the producers’ efforts to tackle institutional critique head on and even embrace it as a main theme of the Biennale. It is a different edition because the exhibition and event programs were political in nature, having the effect that exhibition venues and their contemporary, politically-charged values frame the artwork on display or take a back-seat in order to allow controversial artworks to take centre stage in public space.

4.7 {}: The Eighth Berlin Biennale

29 May– 3 August 2014



Figure 58: Map of the exhibition venues of the eighth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 59: (top) Museum Dahlem, Animallee, Dahlem. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2019

Figure 60: (bottom) Haus am Waldsee, Argeninischeallee, Zehlendorf. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2019

If there was any inclination that the Biennale would indeed dissolve amidst widespread public criticism, such fears were soon quashed by the announcement by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes in 2013 to continue funding the Biennale in 2016 and 2018 for the ninth and tenth editions. KW closed for renovations between February and April in 2013 while preparations for the eighth edition got underway. The desire for the Biennale to appear to be global or international in nature was very prominent in this edition as was signified by the selection of Canadian/Colombian heritage curator Juan A. Gaitán, described as “...a world citizen of high artistic sensibility and political consciousness as curator” (Grütters, 2014, p. 10). Gaitán’s intentions were to use the Biennial as a platform for critiquing the classic colonialist museum, thus continuing the thread of institutional critique opened up in the previous two editions, now in a far more subtle manner. This Biennale was distinct from its predecessors as the first to venture the furthest out from the city centre than ever before.

While the seventh Berlin Biennale was also very politically relevant within its time and tapped into global issues, it was the eighth that sought to explore “different readings of history and the mechanisms of its current representation” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015e). And while this edition also delved into the histories of space within the city and its cultural identity, this time it emphasised how a modern city could reconcile (if at all) with its colonial past. This Biennial edition seemed miles away from the Biennials of the early years (1998–2010) that really obsessed over the memories of space in a romantic and nostalgic way. Thus, returning to a more pragmatic style of interpretation more familiar to the fifth and sixth editions, the eighth Biennale catalogue had two main sections: (1) contributions from the artistic team based on their personal interests (image-architecture and the image and globalisation); (2) documentation of the work on view and biographies of each artist preceded by brief historical information on each venue.

The eighth Biennale differed from its predecessors by using entirely dedicated exhibition spaces. The KW in Mitte (Figure 11), the Ethnographic Museum in Dahlem (Figure 59) and the Haus am Waldsee in Zehlendorf (Figure 60) and were the physical sites enabling Gaitán to tap into Berlin’s spaces of colonial representation through houses of cultural power. Originally planning an exhibition in response to the under-

construction Humboldt Forum, the practicalities of finding a dedicated exhibition space large enough to house the planned exhibitions forced Gaitán to select spaces far from the Biennale hub at KW: Dahlem (Interviewee 2, 4.3.2016). Fifty-eight artists from all over the world presented work, again, many of them new commissions that responded “to the historicisation that can be noticed in Berlin and in other cities.” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015e). In particular, it focused on how Berlin could be considered representative of a greater tendency to incorporate “biased historical narratives in the contemporary city, through its architecture, urban planning, monuments, and spatial distribution of tourism, commerce, and cultural capital.” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2015e).

Catalogue essays further reinforce the idea that historical connections ought to be made not only between the venues and the artworks on display, but also the histories of the geographical locations of these venues. In a slightly self-congratulatory fashion, the Biennale claimed responsibility for highlighting that, “...contemporary art isn’t limited to the usual neighbourhoods around Mitte, but also that a long and significant artistic tradition exists in other locations” (Grütters, 2014, p. 10), as if these locations or the institutes situated outside Mitte required the Biennale to (re)activate them for the public, and “invigorate the existing cultural infrastructure of Berlin’s south-western landscape” (Horn, 2014, p. 24). As we can see in the Map of the eighth Berlin Biennale, the venues specifically referred to here are located about an hour’s commute south-west from KW in Mitte: the Haus am Waldsee, a modern art gallery in Zehlendorf and the Ethnographic Museum at Museen Dahlem (Figure 58). Haus am Waldsee was originally built as a residential building for a textiles factory owner in the 1930s, but has been operating as an art gallery for modern and contemporary art exhibitions since the 1950s (Horn, 2014, p. 26). The Ethnographic Museum at Museen Dahlem by contrast is a purpose built space designed specifically for housing the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation’s ethnographic collection (Horn, 2014, p. 25). Because both spaces were used primarily for the display of art and heritage exhibitions for some time before the eighth Biennale, are considered dedicated exhibition spaces.

In Haus am Waldsee, the exhibited works were meant to highlight the building’s original function as a 1920s designed private villa and ask the visitor to engage with the space

and its surroundings as an “allegory of the untimeliness of the Romantic landscape.” (Gaitán, 2014, p. 40) (Figure 60). And romantic it is, with its peaked and dark grey tiled roof, beige façade with green shuttered windows, nestled amongst green leafy trees and secure behind a grand beige rendered brick gate. The visitor enters the three-storey villa via a small flight of steps under a pillared portico. Aesthetically, the space is symbolic as a temple for modern art, hidden off the beaten track luxuriating in its lush and green natural surrounds. However, the space is also representative of the elitist power structure of the 19th century – it was at this time that a swathe of similar villas were built far from the increasing industrialisation and pollution of the city of Berlin. Those who could afford to escape the unhygienic conditions in the city did so (Horn, 2014, p. 26).

With the aim of addressing spaces of colonial power, it is clear why Gaitán sought to engage with the Museen Dahlem. In 1906 plans were developed by the Royal Prussian Museums to erect a large complex in Dahlem, consisting of four large buildings, one for each of the non-European geographical regions of the globe: Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. Construction began in 1914, the architect Bruno Paul was commissioned to build the structure to house the Asian collections. The work was stopped, however, because of the First World War and was only completed in 1921. The architect Fritz Bornemann developed plans for an extension to the Bruno Paul building, which was erected from 1966 to 1970. The Bornemann building faced onto Lansstrasse with, as we can see in Figure 59, an uncompromisingly modernist pavilion that contrasted sharply with the older neo-classical Bruno Paul structure, with its main entrance on Arnimallee. Within this hybrid 1914 neo-classic and 1970s modernist building, the artworks exhibited as part of the eighth Berlin Biennale were installed throughout the existing collections of the Ethnographic Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, and allowed the visitor to choose whether to remain within the contemporary art presentation or to undertake short excursions into the museums’ historical holdings (Gaitán, 2014, p. 40). Furthermore, the use of this space allowed Gaitán to tap into the at that time raging debates related to museum building and urban development.

At the time of the 8th Berlin Biennale, the [ethnological] collections can be found in the city’s villa- and forest-rich southwestern periphery. However, within a few

years, these collections will move into the Humboldt-Forum. In this new location, they will be situated directly in the capital city's symbolically and politically contested centre. There they will become both a tourist magnet and a catalyst for questioning Prussian colonial history, the legitimacy of state museum politics, and Berlin's relationship to the non-European world – as much in twenty-first century as in the nineteenth century. (Völkers and Fahrenholz, 2014, p. 12)

The use of the Museen Dahlem thus provided an elegant way of dealing with the politics of central city space and the touristification of Prussian history without actually requiring the Biennale to be in that space.

While the use of Haus am Waldsee and Museen Dahlem may have been completely legitimate in terms of examining their historicisation, the Biennale producers undermined their own use of these spaces by drawing the visitor's attention to how difficult it was to acquire any space for the eighth edition. The producers' use of urban spaces in Berlin's outer suburbs of Zehlendorf and Dahlem is conveyed as "itself an expression of the rapid transformation of Berlin's centre" (Horn, 2014, p. 24). Never before is a geographical hierarchy of Berlin's urban space for the purposes of the consumption of contemporary art made clearer by the Biennale. Producers claim that the main Berlin Biennale venue must "compete for its position of centrality" (Völkers and Fahrenholz, 2014, p. 12). Excerpts like these express a feeling of negativity for having to use peripheral spaces that seems to stem from an awareness that this lack of centrality could be disappointing for the viewer. Furthermore, artist Olaf Nicolai's essay, "Szondi/Eden" in which a fictional account of a curator conducting a site visit of an abandoned ex-GDR shopping mall in Lichtenberg is described, adds to the sense of frustration felt by producers at the loss of previously untapped non-typical exhibition spaces (Nicolai, 2014).

The eighth Berlin Biennale set itself apart for its strong desire to appear international in nature. Having continued the thread of institutional critique opened up in the previous two editions, its focus on urban space symbolising Germany's ties with colonialism as manifested in the city brought yet more political inquiry to the Biennale theme. However, in the Biennale's ongoing struggle to find spaces adequate for the exhibition

venues, for the first time ever, it used venues in locations on the periphery of the city, exposing a perceived geographical hierarchy of Berlin's urban space by the Biennale producers.

4.8 *The Present in Drag: The Ninth Berlin Biennale*

4 June–18 September 2016

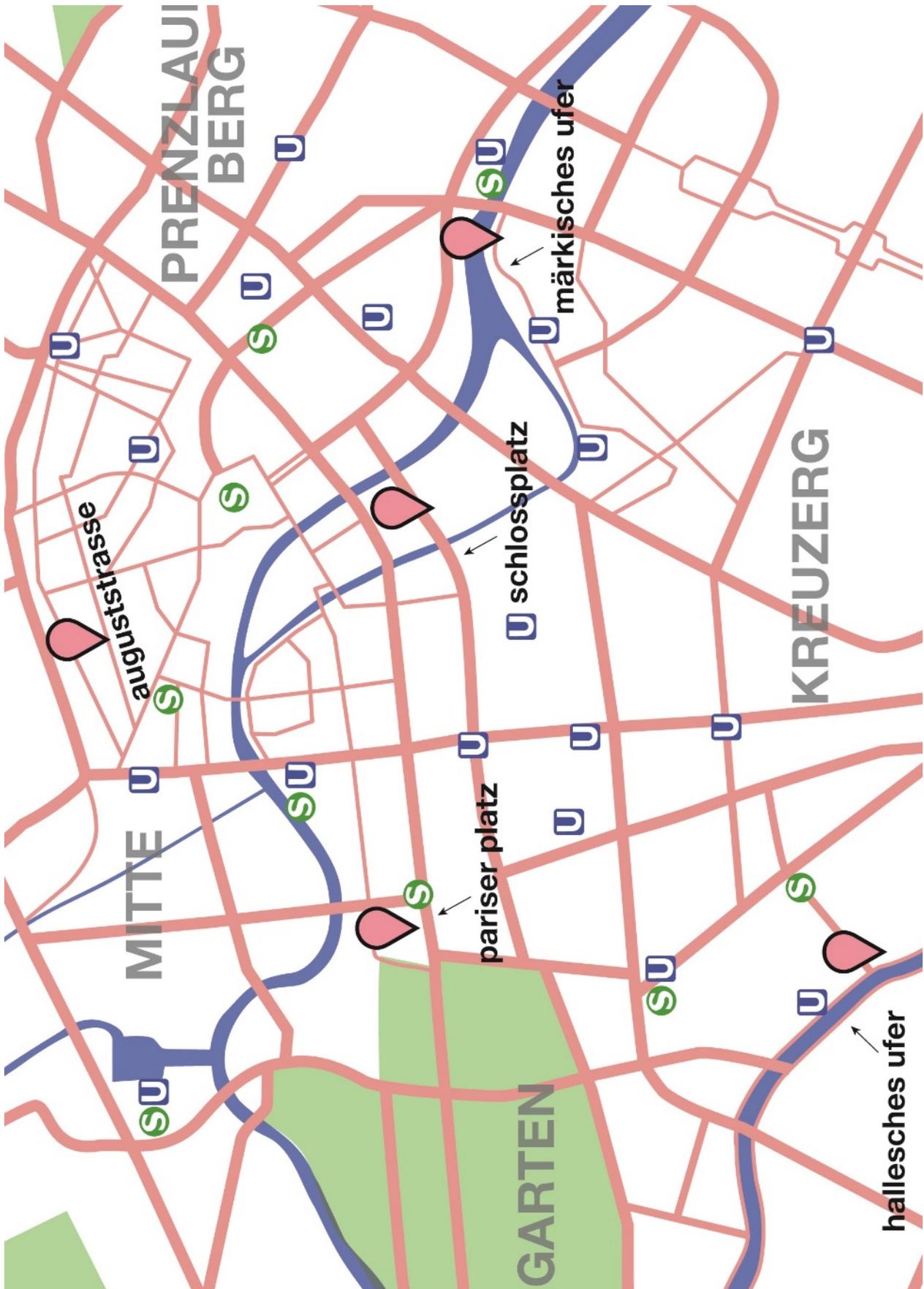


Figure 61: Map of the exhibition venues of the ninth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 62: (top) Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016
Figure 63: (bottom) European School of Management and Technology, Schlossplatz, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016



Figure 64: (top) Blue-Star Sightseeing Boat, Märkisches Ufer, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016
Figure 65 (bottom) The Feuerle Collection, Hallesches Ufer, Kreuzberg. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016

The ninth Berlin Biennale saw a major boost to its infrastructure, and a radical aesthetic departure from the previous editions. It took inspiration from the Biennale producers' struggles to find exhibition venues and used spaces symbolic of the much-despised commercialisation and touristification of the Biennale's home ground of Mitte.

Shortly before the previous Biennale opened in May 2014, it received a triple funding boost going forward: first, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes announced it would continue to fund the Biennale for its ninth and tenth editions in 2016 and 2018, respectively. Second, the Senat would double KW's ongoing annual funding from 250,000 Euros per year to 500,000 Euros. This increase in funding allowed the Biennale to break away from its host KW and to finally have its own distinct director, rather than one shared with the KW. In July 2016, Krist Gruijthuisen was appointed director of KW. He brought in a new team of curators while Gabriele Horn remained director of the Berlin Biennale. Third, the Biennale itself also received financial support from the Senat for the first time in 2016. The funding was awarded for the explicit purpose of extending the ninth Berlin Biennale for an extra month to coincide with Gallery Week Berlin (Regus, 8/7/2016, line 42-46). This funding boost can thus largely be understood to be an attempt by the city of Berlin to promote the local contemporary art scene on an international level. It can also perhaps be seen as an acknowledgement of the decreasing availability of "empty" spaces in the city that previous editions had so easily made use of (Horn, 2016, p. 30).

The ninth Berlin Biennale was an apparently divisive edition: critics either celebrated or blasted the 2016 curatorial team – New York-based artist collective DIS (Lauren Boyle, Solomon Chase, Marco Roso and David Toro) – for their generational show that featured an overwhelming display of digital art and bucked the trend of aestheticising the Berlin architectural ruin. Entitled *The Present in Drag*, this Biennale sought to demonstrate the conditions defining the post-contemporary. It was staged at five exhibition venues across the city and featured over 170 events with 288 contributions from contemporary art, music, hacktivism, design, politics and economics. Artist collectives featured strongly in the line-up. In the catalogue, a separate preface was given to introducing the exhibition venues, as if to get their point across and preface the exhibition with a disclaimer for their choices for audiences who might be expecting something different.

Boldly stating that they were not in a position to occupy abandoned spaces or contribute to gentrification, DIS's approach to urban space was to embrace spaces that drew attention to Berlin's increasingly commercialised city centre, and highlighted the changing nature of cities as spaces at risk of being rendered inaccessible for cultural production and consumption:

Berlin is a site of projection and fantasy. It is the city of Berlin whose history, like its bullet-ridden facades, exists in the limbo of the now. Pariser Platz is the nexus, The Brandenburg Gate, the face of the nation and the last standing structure on the site after WWII, is now flanked by loitering secret service agents, snipers looming above Starbucks, newlyweds posed in front of reconstructed pre-war buildings, hidden glass atriums, and networked power formations. (Boyle *et al.*, 2016, p. 36)

As we can see in the Map for the ninth Berlin Biennale, most of the exhibition venues for this Biennale were situated in Berlin's central Mitte district, an area much frequented by tourists with its monuments and souvenir shops (Figure 61). The Biennale returned to the Akademie der Künste (AdK) at Pariser Platz, which had by this time undergone a radical transformation. We can see in Figure 62 how its refurbished state features a modern glass façade designed by Behnisch & Partner with Werner Durth to encircle what remained of the former Prussian exhibition hall. The AdK, rather than the KW was used as the main hub of the ninth Biennale, however rather than using the dedicated exhibition spaces, areas such as foyers, corridors and balconies were used to display the artworks. Visitors could reach the two other venues - the European School of Management and Technology (ESMT) at Schlossplatz (Figure 63) and the Blue-Star sightseeing boat operated along the River Spree by Reederei Riedel (Figure 64) – by foot or by hopping onto the tour boat at various “hop-on hop-off” locations along the River Spree throughout Mitte. The final exhibition venue was the then recently opened Feuerle Collection (Figure 65), a private art collection made public, located on Hallesches Ufer in neighbouring Kreuzberg. Taken together, the use of these spaces and their neighbourhoods forced viewers, and particularly for visitors who had experienced the first few editions, to confront themselves with the immense touristification of this part of “new” Berlin that had steadily intensified since the mid-1990s.

A fifteen-minute walk away from the AdK was the next key venue, the ESMT. Sitting across from the Berliner Stadtschloss (City Palace) then being re-constructed, the international non-profit business school is located in a building erected for the highest level of the GDR government: an architectural hybrid of Berlin's GDR and Prussian past with, as we can see in Figure 63, an impressive modern façade typical of 1960s GDR architecture. Inside, wooden panelling, sweeping staircases and panoramic windows featuring stained glass depictions of the history of the German workers' movement jar with the clinical looking signage and television flat screens that indicate current German stock exchange rates. Once again, DIS used the non-spaces of the building such as foyers, hallways and unrenovated conference rooms to house their selected work. Simon Denny's fictitious corporate *Blockchain Visionaries* (2016) expo-style installation also pointed to an imagined future where companies employ blockchain technology and enact supranational economic schemes. Whether intentional or not, looking through the tall glass windows opposite Denny's work directly onto the Stadtschloss reconstruction site made it clear just how far apart such imaginings were from Berlin's reality of investment into national re-imaginings.

The theme of tourism was evoked through Korakrit Arunanondchai and Alex Gvojić's video installation on the Blue-Star sightseeing boat, as seen in Figure 64. Slowly sailing up and down the River Spree, visitors could choose between sitting on cheap plastic chairs upstairs listening to an audio guide by music producer Aaron David Ross on the wildly decorated deck or hide away watching an hour-long film on a bean-bag below. Upstairs, the decor of fake grass and flowers, real soil and mud being overcome by crawling plastic wires and tubing referenced the film downstairs, a narrative about human extinction and the collapse of our natural systems. In a similar vein to previous editions such as the seventh and sixth, the ninth Biennale catalogue was not concerned with framing the artwork on display through the histories of the ESMT or the Blue-Star sightseeing boat, but rather through their present day function.

By contrast, the last venue, the Feuerle Collection, and its architectural history did very much provide a loaded canvas for the interpretation of the work on display. As we can see in Figure 65, the former World War Two telecommunications bunker is a simple 1940s four-storey rectangular concrete bunker with a smaller modern dark grey

rectangular pavilion perched on its roof. The few windows found on the ground floor of this unwelcoming building feature vertical metal bars with the entrance is hidden in a recess on its left side. The works exhibited in the Feuerle Collection echoed the history of the building itself, by exploring the theme of technology, but by exhibited works here that dealt with global commodities and corporate transparency they also tapped into the symbolic value of the present function of the building as a private art gallery owned by the wealthy art and antiques collector Désiré Feuerle.

DIS also extended their Biennale beyond the temporary use of built urban spaces and made use of online platforms that remain today. The Biennale website acted as a mini exhibition in and of itself with a special section called Fear of Content. Here, essays were published regularly in the lead up to the opening such as Natasha Stagg's "Trends and Their Discontents", Boris Groys' "Cosmic Anxiety" and Armen Avanessian and Suhail Malik's "The Time Complex: Postcontemporary". Also included was a Berlin Biennale anthem, produced by artist and musician Ashland Mines and artists such as Hito Styerl and Isa Genzken, amongst many others. The highlight of these off-site projects for me was BlindWiki, a smart phone app created by artist Antoni Abad that featured audio descriptions or sounds of various places throughout the city. It was developed through a series of participatory workshops with artists with and without visual impairments and drew attention to how and who the city as a physical urban landscape excludes.

A series of artworks that also functioned as an advertising campaign was spread across the city, on the website and on official Berlin Biennale merchandise, produced by artist Babak Radboy as part of his role as Not the Director of the Berlin Biennale – a position that saw him act as quasi artistic consultant to DIS. Whether online or on the streets of Berlin, the posters advertising the Biennale in U-Bahn and train stations or hanging as banners from the exhibition buildings themselves were almost undistinguishable from the various Adidas, Nike or online dating posters that normally adorn the city. These ninth Berlin Biennale images merged seamlessly with the aesthetic of the works themselves, leaving the viewer struggling to tell the difference between a marketing poster advertising the Biennale and an artwork within the Biennale. DIS's selection, commissioning and curation of such work that blur the boundaries between commodity and critique of commodity, drew attention to the power of the advertising image.

With a major boost to its infrastructure, and a radical aesthetic departure from the previous editions the ninth Berlin Biennale took inspiration from the Biennale producers' struggles to find exhibition venues and used spaces symbolic of the much despised commercialisation and touristification of the Biennale's home ground of Mitte.

4.9 We Don't Need Another Hero: The Tenth Berlin Biennale

9 June–9 September 2018

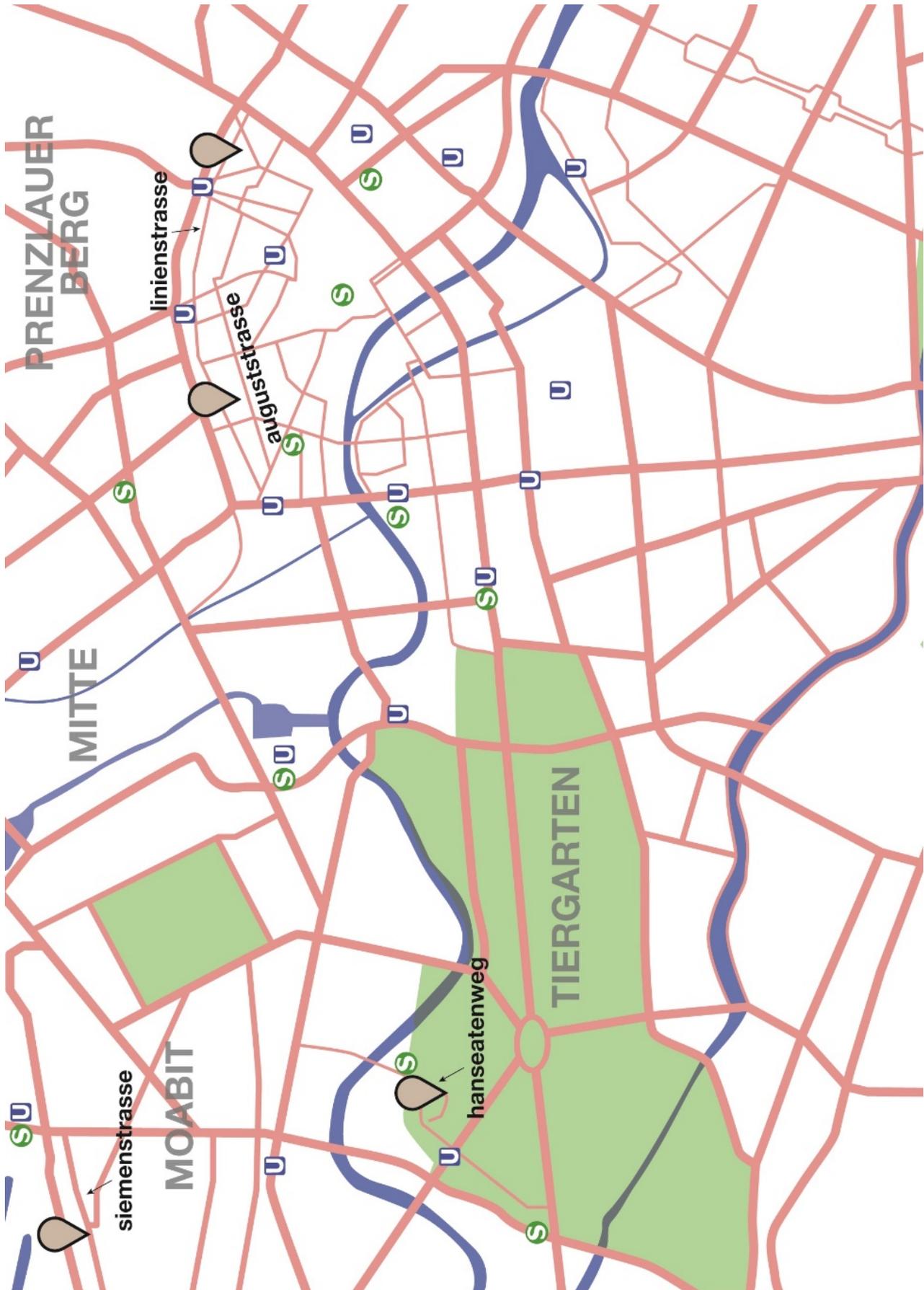


Figure 66: Map of the exhibition venues of the tenth Berlin Biennale. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 67: (top) Akademie der Künste, Hanseatenweg, Tiergarten. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2019

Figure 68: (bottom) Volkbühne Pavillon, Linienstrasse, Mitte. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2019



Figure 69: Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, Siemensstrasse, Moabit. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2019

The tenth Berlin Biennale distinguished itself from its predecessors in three ways. Firstly, producers made a point of celebrating the twenty-year history of the Berlin Biennale as an institution and the coinciding of this with its tenth edition. Secondly, it featured for the first time in the Biennale's twenty-year history that the curatorial team comprised entirely of curators of colour. However, the communication of their efforts to be in dialogue with the world somewhat undermined the Biennale producers' efforts to give representation to diverse voices. Lastly, the Biennale returned to using dedicated exhibition venues and spaces, albeit this time for all of their exhibitions.

It was a time of fundamental change for both the KW and the Berlin Biennale. The Berlin Lottery awarded additional funding to KW allowing it to close from October 2016 to January 2017 for renovations. In December, the KW also celebrated its twenty-five-year anniversary. The Biennale also benefitted again from extra support from the Senate Department for Culture and Europe for its tenth edition (Horn, 2018, p. 15) and in November 2017, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes announced an increase in funding of three million Euros per Biennale edition from 2018 until 2022, thus providing funds for the planning and development of the eleventh and twelfth edition. This was a significant boost in funding – while rents had been skyrocketing all around the city, the Biennale's budget had remained at 2.5 million Euros per edition since the fourth edition in 2006 (Horn, 2018, p. 15).

The tenth Biennale exhibitions featured over 150 works by forty-six artists and collectives, including numerous commissions, and were exhibited in four exhibition venues, as we can see in the Map of the tenth Berlin Biennale, along a West to East axis (Figure 66): the KW (Figure 11), Akademie der Künste at Hanseatenweg (Figure 67), Volksbühne Pavillon on Linienstrasse (Figure 68), and ZK/U – Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Center for Art and Urbanistics) on Siemenstrasse (Figure 69). A co-production with HAU Hebbel am Ufer saw two performances as well as a multi-day exhibition project with discursive events and seminars staged at HAU2, however, this was not categorised as an exhibition venue by the Biennale. The tenth Biennale borrowed the title of Tina Turner's famous song "We Don't Need Another Hero" to reinforce its theme of rejecting the desire for a saviour. Instead, it explored the "political

potential of the act of self-preservation, refusing to be seduced by unyielding knowledge systems and historical narratives that contribute to the creation of toxic subjectivities” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2018). The curatorial team was interested in complicating, rather than simplifying configurations of knowledge and power (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2018).

A change for this Biennale edition compared to its predecessors was how the producers perceived themselves as an organisation that no longer looked inwards through a process of being in dialogue with the city, but rather, “Starting from the position of Europe, Germany, and Berlin as a city in dialogue with the world.” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2018). However, such attempts for dialogue with the world are undermined by the language used in the catalogue. As with the eighth edition, we see the words “global” being used to describe both the Biennale event and even the curators who made up the tenth edition team (BB10 catp.11). Such vague labels leave the viewer to ask themselves if what they really mean is “non-Western” or “non-white”?

A focus of this edition was the wide-ranging mediation program, which “created opportunities for encounter, exchange, and uncertainty” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2018). Experimental and participatory formats featured learning or “unlearning” as its theme and strove to address blind spots within the art history canon and its relationship with society. Thus, collaborations between the Biennale and a number of social enterprises gave the impression that interaction between participants, works of art, the curatorial team, and exhibiting artists as well as the neighbourhoods surrounding the venues took place. For example, launching before the Biennale began in July 2017, the public program “I’m Not Who You Think I’m Not”, prominently featured a collaboration with the independent educational initiative Each One Teach One (EOTO) e.V. in Berlin, a community-based education and empowerment project in Berlin for the interests of black, African and Afrodiasporic people in Germany and Europe.

The catalogue offered comprehensive material not only on the participating artists but also featured texts by influential writers and scholars on themes such as blackness, apartheid, queerness and intersectionality such as Binyavanga Wainaina, Bongani Madondo, Jota Mombaça, Maryse Condé, Peggy Piesche. This edition emphasised the

Biennale's ability to act as a local stage for global discourses where "exhibition venues were chosen not only because of their historic relevance but also because of what they represent today" (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2018). Rather than their aesthetic or symbolic value, it is their present-day function that is highlighted by the Biennale producers. For example, the Akademie der Künste on Hanseatenweg is the sister building to the Akademie der Künste on Pariser Platz in Mitte. Located in the Hansaviertel, and designed by Berlin architect Werner Düttmann, who would later become the Academy's President, it forms part of a former West Berlin's urban ensemble "Interbau 1957" completed in 1960, the modernist style long rectangular building features a glass and red-brick entrance, with its larger second storey complete with grey pebble-dash cladding seeming to gracefully hover above it. Having been created by a number of famous European architects. As we can see in the Figure 67, Being associated with the Akademie der Künste on Pariser Platz it shares its history of Nazi persecution of members and reunification of the Akademie itself. However, Ngcobo focused instead the historical and present day function of the Akademie der Künste as a cultural archive. For Ngcobo, the building is symbolic as a West European institution of knowledge production and collecting that "...provides us a space to contemplate the narratives that have shaped it and its future in the city." Ngcobo also scrutinised the negative aspects of those narratives and the ways in which they were founded through "the lineage of its executive membership system" and "the hierarchical nature of historical construct" (Ngcobo, 2018, p. 21).

Similarly, the ZK/U was not used to frame work within its history as a former railway station or site of Nazi deportation of Jews in 1942. Rather, it was used because of its present-day purpose as an exhibition program and residency space for international artists focusing on a range of urban issues. As we can see in Figure 69, the yellow-brick 1870s industrial train station building still features the large arched windows and passenger platform that would have once been used by passengers. To the left of this building is what appears to be an old shed, possibly used for repairing or housing trains or carriages inside. Much of the and interior design from the 1870s is still intact, with renovations transforming the building on the platform into smaller white-cube spaces for artist studios and exhibition spaces. The Biennale actually housed a number of artists there as residents who then exhibited their work in the studio spaces, "starting

from their own subjectivities and how these subjectivities are performed or interpreted in different parts of the city” (Ngcobo, 2018, p. 21). However, despite ZK/U claiming to provide opportunities to tap into urban issues through their residency program, discussions surrounding gentrification of former-industrial spaces via their reappropriation as arts venues, such as the ZK/U themselves seem to have been ignored (Zentrum fuer Kunst und Urbanistik, 2020).

This is also the case for the Volksbühne Pavillon situated next to the well-known Volksbühne Theatre. As we can see in the Figure 68 this small, 1960s style white plasterboard and glass bungalow style pavilion is easily overshadowed by its larger sibling of the Volksbühne theatre to the left. This tiny venue featured a provocative performative piece by Las Nietas de Nonó whose resulting set and props such as masks, and “skins” of female bodies—figures made of vegetable leather – remained in the space on display. While the catalogue alludes to the fact that the work related to the history of the location, it doesn’t clarify how the space contextualises the work in any specific way. The Pavillon’s former use as a space for grassroots artists’ projects, as the Volksbühne’s bookshop and box office were not directly linked. Neither was the associated history of the adjacent Volksbühne Theatre as theatre of “the people”, with working-class connections, where the arts triumphed against politically violent actions. Nor was the more recent controversy of the 2017 occupation by the local Berlin arts community, who protested against the alleged insensitivity of new director Chris Dercon, whose international and conservative style of programming was considered a threat to the experimental legacy of the theatre (Mayer, 2017; Slawson, 2017).

Perhaps the apparent lack of an obvious connection between the curatorial themes and the approach to urban space is merely a matter of communication. Elaborating in a text based on a recorded and edited discussion amongst the curatorial team, Ngcobo illuminates what is often a key problem for Biennale curators, the ability to transmit often complex associations between curatorial concepts and the individual locations in which they are hosted (Ngcobo *et al.*, 2018, p. 34). For Ngcobo and her team, the connections between the artwork and exhibition venue is always clear. For example, the Akademie der Künste is “where we create conversations about silenced pasts and the hierarchy of historical constructions” (Ngcobo *et al.*, 2018, p. 34). The KW Institute for

Contemporary Art marks “a moment, a crucial point in the history of the institution, and to consider the ways institutions think about the construction of their future” (Ngcobo *et al.*, 2018, p. 34). And lastly, while the work staged at the ZK/U spark a “dialogue with people who use the centre as a public space and also works with programs organised by the ZK/U...We stage these beginnings – they are critical for all of us – but from there on, things can go in all sorts of directions”(Ngcobo *et al.*, 2018, p. 34).

This kind of description of their approach to urban space seems to offer very little to its reader, let alone the visitor. One gets the feeling that to understand those connections, one has to do some digging around, has to do some independent research into the “locations” and “social dynamics” mentioned. Perhaps this indicates a shift for the Biennale as it heads into the next twenty years: A shift away from a highly mediated guiding of visitors’ perceptions through the symbolic or historical nature of the architecture and other spaces it engages with, and towards a more nuanced approach. Curator Nomaduma Rosa Masilela elaborates further on this point: “This issue of biennials having to explicitly relate to a local context is something worth problematizing...How limiting to not be able to see oneself in another’s experience...To say, ‘Oh, this does not relate to Germany or Berlin,’ simply because it’s not spelled out within the work in a familiar or familiarly homogenous way” (Ngcobo *et al.*, 2018, p. 39). The tenth edition thus marks a departure from its predecessors in another way: this edition served as a counter-point to the expectations of the Biennale itself, or the Biennial’s public, that the link between space and curatorial themes must always play a central role.

The tenth Berlin Biennale distinguished itself from its predecessors in three ways. Firstly, the edition marked the twentieth-year of the Berlin Biennale as an institution. Secondly, it featured for the very first time in the Biennale’s history a curatorial team comprised entirely of curators of colour. However, the communication of their efforts to be in dialogue with the world somewhat undermined the Biennale producers’ efforts to give representation to diverse voices. Lastly, the Biennale returned to using dedicated exhibition venues spaces, albeit this time for all of their exhibitions, in a way that sought to uncover not the forgotten spaces of Berlin, but the buried inequalities of established dedicated exhibition spaces.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the case study of the Berlin Biennale with regard to both the local and international context and thus provided an overview of how its relationship with urban space or “dialogue with the city” manifests for each edition over its twenty-year history. It examined the chronology of one single case study of a Biennale by comparing each subsequent edition with the next. Each edition was contextualised according to the following aspects: the developmental milestones of its host organisation (either KW or the Berlin Biennale e.V.); the thematic aims, scope and scale of the exhibitions; and what relationship the former two aspects had on the conceptual or practical approach to urban space in Berlin. Beginning with the slightly longer section on the first Berlin Biennale, its beginnings were explored along two main lines: the onset of Biennale producers’ desires to secure a place in the international biennial network, and their approach to urban space through communicating “Berlin-ness”.

It argued that the Berlin Biennale did not develop in isolation, but with an awareness of other global contemporary art events which had a profound impact on this relationship. It is clear that the Biennale model was the perfect format for KW to capture and internationally promote the vibrant developing art scene of Mitte as well as stake a claim in the development of Berlin’s urban (creative) identity. Key to this identity is the way in which the Berlin Biennale has used physical urban space over time. The first Berlin Biennale initially used non-typical exhibition spaces. In contrast to “dedicated exhibition spaces” – which can be, for example, purpose built exhibition venues such as museums, galleries and some arts project spaces – “non-typical exhibition spaces” can be defined as those originally intended as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residencies such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets. These spaces were used as a substitute for the white cube exhibition space, allowing producers to deliberately thematise, reimagine and internationally export Berlin’s urban space through the first Berlin Biennale – a trend that would continue throughout the Biennale’s history in a variety of ways. Indeed, over its twenty-year history, of the thirty-eight spaces the Biennale has used for exhibitions, just over half can be classified as non-typical. While the Biennale’s use of

such spaces was far more common for earlier editions, it began using an increasing number of dedicated exhibition spaces, particularly in the recent editions from 2012 to 2018.

The history of the Berlin Biennale from its first edition in 1998 to the tenth edition in 2018, has seen various institutional changes along with local and global events that have influenced its approach to urban space. It began as an institution that used whatever space it could get its hands on in order to latch onto an accelerating and growing contemporary art scene for its first edition. It then took until the second, with its invitation of an international curator, and its aesthetic and geographic departure from Mitte ruins to suburban high-rise, to cement its place in the international biennial circuit. The third's ability to participate in the international cultural tourism sector by using blockbuster museum venues secured a much-needed boost in funding for the internationally successful fourth edition that capitalised on the nostalgia of Berlin's past. The fifth signalled perhaps one of the largest changes of all for the Berlin Biennale that would spark a trend continuing to the tenth edition – a thematic desire for, and pragmatic need to use dedicated exhibition spaces. The beginning of institutional critique would also grow and develop through the sixth edition, until reaching boiling point in the seventh edition, where built urban space would take more of a back seat and allow controversial artworks to take centre stage in Berlin's public space. A radical aesthetic departure would see the ninth edition make use of spaces symbolic of the much despised commercialisation and touristification of the Biennale's home ground of Mitte, while the tenth presents a turning point for an institution once interested in dialogue with the city, now more concerned with a dialogue with the world from its position within Berlin.

Over the past twenty years, the Biennale has evolved into an established, re-occurring institution where its producers have embraced and then promoted the identity it had earlier carved out for itself in the 1990s, through the use of highly charged and “unique” open, public and private spaces throughout the city. Driven by the thematic intentions of invited curators, these spaces have been used in a variety of ways to enhance the thematic and aesthetic formal elements of exhibition making. Firstly, the framing of contemporary art with architecture allowed for unusual spatial juxtapositions –

sometimes harmonious, sometimes grating – between the colour, texture, pattern, line and form of artworks and the buildings or public spaces that housed them. This extended beyond visual aesthetics too – other sensorial elements come into play too, with auditory or tactile perceptions of these spaces further enhancing the work. Secondly, by tapping into the symbolic or historic values of architecture, the Biennale producers were able to create thematic linkages between the works on display within individual spaces and between the different spaces contained within one biennial.

When understanding the different iterations of the Biennale as making up one continuous history, it becomes clear that there was and is no overarching rule or consistent framework for engaging in urban space in one particular way. In fact, it appears that its difference in approach to urban space from one edition to the next is its strength. Its ability to renew itself every two (or so) years is the temporal element that makes a biennial such a significant form of contemporary art production and display within cities. While the Berlin Biennale no longer perpetuates the notion that there are still free spaces left in the city, however, it still faces the challenge of acquiring and securing spaces in order to fulfil curatorial visions. This is what I will explore in the following chapter.

5. The Berlin Biennale: Curating Renewal in a City in Continuous Flux

I think this search for the venues or to find a solution for the venues is actually a big part also in shaping the concept and idea for the Berlin Biennale.

(Wagner, 14/11/15, line 74)

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored how and why urban space was used as a frame for developing and realising different exhibition narratives for each Berlin Biennale edition. This examination of the different iterations of the Biennale as one history demonstrated that Biennale producers consider the difference from one edition to the next, as its strength. However, the desire for renewal every two (or so) years is the very temporal rhythm that has, since its inception, presented a fundamental challenge for Biennale producers when acquiring and securing spaces in order to fulfil curatorial visions of exhibition narratives. This chapter explores this problem by delving deeper into the case study of the Biennale and firstly, describing the process that has remained over the Biennale's history, by which venues within Berlin's urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions. It then argues that because Biennale producers operate within a city in continuous flux, the curatorial visions that are the driving force behind the venue search process must be constantly renegotiated against the complex and changing matrix of resources such as time, money and knowledge. These resources in turn influence the actions of Biennale actors such as incoming curators, permanent staff and funders, suggesting that despite internationally standardised biennial practices claiming that the biennial curator sits at the top of the exhibition food-chain, biennial curating in urban space is a highly mediated process.

The section "Lifecycles, Actors and Space: Producing the Berlin Biennale" illustrates the production process of the Berlin Biennale, in terms of how venues within Berlin's urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions, which

has stayed more or less consistent over the Biennale's history. This section explores its lifecycle and how time and tempo are defined by the Biennale. It outlines the people involved and what they do as a constellation of Berlin Biennale producers as defined by Berlin Biennale actors (incoming curators, permanent staff) and non-actors, (funders and public). It demonstrates a hierarchisation of personnel that sees the incoming curator holding a position at the top where curatorial vision, subsequently dictates how each edition engages with urban space. Lastly, this section explores what spaces are engaged with through a categorisation of non-typical versus dedicated exhibition venues as described in the methodology chapter.

The second part of this chapter, "Time After Time: Bi-annual (Re)Negotiations of Urban Time, Economies and Knowledge" analyses how curatorial visions must be constantly renegotiated against the complex and changing matrix of resources such as time, money and knowledge which in turn influence the actions of Biennale producers. In "Urban Temporalities" the temporal rhythms of the city and global cultural sphere are contrasted with that of the Berlin Biennale, demonstrating the fundamental challenge for Biennale producers when acquiring and securing spaces to fulfil curatorial visions. The Biennale as an urban product plays a big role here. It claims the urban as a mediator between local and global rhythms. "Urban Economies" explores how such temporal limitations are inextricably linked to financial limitations. In this section, it describes how the Biennale creates a kind of urban economy where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by Biennale producers to "buy their way" into temporarily accessing public and privately controlled urban space. However, adopting such strategies also mean that the Biennale plays into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas typical to a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation. Lastly, the section "Urban Knowledge" explores how knowledge is exchanged between existing staff and incoming curators in order to find, access and secure physical urban space. However, this is not a balanced exchange. While their overall vision drives the direction of the Biennale, and sets a precedent for which spaces should be considered, this process is mediated by the permanent staff in a number of ways, including, most significantly, guiding incoming curators to select new or undiscovered spaces that have not been used before. It hypothesises that the Biennale does this out of a necessity to carve out a unique identity within the global cultural sphere; however, because the

Biennale operates within a city in continuous flux, does so at the risk to the Biennale's very sustainability.

5.2 Lifecycles, Actors and Space: Producing the Berlin Biennale

In terms of how venues within Berlin's urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions, the Berlin Biennale's production process has remained consistent over the Biennale's twenty-year history. To understand the complexities of this process, we must understand the lifecycle of the Biennale, the actors responsible for producing it, and the kind of space they engage with. In short, a Biennale takes place every two years and features a main or "hub" exhibition at the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW), and between two and five additional exhibitions in other locations within the city. These are temporary exhibitions that last approximately three months each, and artwork is installed within or created on site specifically for these spaces. For each new edition, Biennale producers must firstly identify or find suitable spaces for these exhibitions, gain access to these spaces to assess their suitability, then secure their use for installing, displaying and dismantling the Biennale exhibitions.

Biennale Lifecycle

The production of the Berlin Biennale adheres to the internationally standardised practices of biennial making by maintaining a two-year cycle (see Chapter 1). Within this period there are two major production phases: "production time" that consists of selecting and hiring the curator(s) for that edition, and realising their proposed exhibitions through finding venues, finding additional funding, developing education and event programmes and commissioning and installing artwork. This generally takes place over a period of two years. The "exhibition run" time generally takes place for a period of nine weeks at the end of that two years and often overlaps with the start of the next production phase. The exhibition opening, usually planned for the European summer months of May or June, is treated as a hard deadline. Any issues or problems that arise during the "production time" must be resolved before the "exhibition run".

The cycle repeats with the organisation of each new Biennale edition beginning almost immediately after its predecessor has opened to the public.

Biennale Actors

What enables the Biennale to sustain this lifecycle are its producers. Berlin Biennale producers are defined in this research in two ways: as Biennale actors, employed by the Biennale with a direct contribution to the production process and non-Biennale actors, people not employed by the Biennale but who have a stake in the Biennale's existence. A closer examination of these two types of actors reveals their complex relationships with each other. For example, Biennale actors can be further divided into two sub-groups comprising what can be described as permanent and incoming staff. Permanent staff are those who are involved in the production of several Biennale editions over time, for example the Biennale director, project or exhibition managers and assistants, education staff, and architects. By contrast, incoming staff are those who are invited to work for the Biennale for the temporary two-year production period of a single Biennale edition, such as curators and their assistants, and the artists whom they invite.

The permanence of a team of staff that remains in place for subsequent Biennale editions is necessary for supporting the incoming staff. If all the team members were temporary, the Berlin Biennale wouldn't function as existing knowledge or experience wouldn't be passed along to the next team (or it would, but it would slow the whole process down, and given the two-year timeframe, would not be sufficient enough time to produce the Biennale). Non-Biennale actors, on the other hand, can be defined as people who don't work directly for the Biennale but have a stake in the production of it. These include members of the Biennale's board, the Biennale's funders and even the Biennale's own public. While not direct instigators of the production process, their role is significant to the finding, accessing and securing of venues for the Biennale's exhibitions; another key point that will be explored throughout the sections below.

Naturally, over the Biennale's twenty-year history there have been various changes in terms of the numbers of actors, the definitions and expectations of different roles, and the people who occupy these positions. For example, existing staff tend to stay on for at

least four Biennale editions, with many taking on different tasks or even positions within the team (Gogoll, 28/06/2016, line 2; Horn, 19/07/2016; Weitzel, 19/7/2016, lines 2-6, Mayer 5/8/2016). This constellation of Biennale and non-Biennale actors has been in place since the inception of the first Berlin Biennale in 1996; however, the second edition marked a turning point in 1999 when the concept of incoming curators was introduced (see Chapter 3). This infrastructural shift suggests the point at which the Berlin Biennale began to participate in a culture of “renewal” instigated with the peak of international biennial making in the 1990s (see Chapter 1). With expectations for Biennale producers to continuously create something new and different every two years, this approach to biennial making can be attributed to the development of the curator as *creator*, rather than simply *exhibition maker*, a position that emphasises the creative and innovative approaches to curatorial practice (see Chapter 1). In other words, by inviting a new curator every two years, the Berlin Biennale fulfils the expectation to continuously create something new and different. Each new curator is invited to develop a new theme, commission a series of new artworks from artists and, in the case of the Berlin Biennale, stage a number of exhibitions in new venues.

Biennale Spaces

Spatially, for each new edition producers generally plan a main or “hub” exhibition at KW, and between two and five additional exhibitions in other venues within the city. Artwork is installed within or created on site specifically for these venues, but to do so, Biennale producers must firstly find additional spaces, gain access to these spaces to assess their suitability, then secure their use as venues for the period of installing, displaying and dismantling the exhibitions. Biennales are conceived as typically large-scale art exhibitions – a fact that requires the pursuit of large or large quantities of space in order to create ambitiously scaled exhibitions (Filipovic, 2010, p. 326). It appears as though Berlin Biennale producers consider that their “own” venue of the KW has never, over its twenty-year history, been adequate, hence the reason why they need to source additional venues elsewhere. The inadequacy of the KW in terms of its size and also its suitability as a venue for displaying contemporary art can be summarised by the recent curatorial team, DIS, from the ninth edition in 2016:

Lauren: Well, there weren't any art spaces.// You know? And because you're kind of like, maybe not like contractually, bound to use KW, but you are. You know? Because of money, you are. So like...

Kate: As in, it would make sense to because it's free?

Lauren: Because it's free and like, we have the staff and the team's here and da da da, just like, I don't even know what kind of excuses you'd need to get rid of it, to not use it. You know? But then, there's no other gallery spaces that will give you a space really for that long, so then this becomes like, your white cube, you know. Which is like (...)

Marco: It's an old building, you know it's got vibes, cracks. It's pretty difficult to show contemporary art here. I don't know if you have seen the previous biennial....And it's not an optimal space for contemporary art. Because it's difficult, that's all.

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, lines 102-107)

The Berlin Biennale uses additional venues that vary according to their architectural style, function and condition. However, they can be defined along two broad categories that take into account their architectural function at the time of the use by the Biennale as either “dedicated exhibition spaces”, spaces that are intended for the display of contemporary art, and “non-typical exhibition spaces” which are not. On one hand, museums, galleries and arts institutions are considered “dedicated exhibition spaces”. On the other hand, non-typical exhibition spaces can be defined as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residencies such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets. Berlin Biennale producers identify that these different types of space have different characteristics such as location, size, symbolism and historical significance that contributes positively or negatively to its potential use as an exhibition space.

The permanent Berlin Biennale staff invite incoming curators to make exhibition proposals with Berlin's physical urban space in mind. For incoming curators, the Berlin Biennale holds the expectation that the city's physical urban space can function as an ideological space of potential: the potential to realise new and ambitious ideas or to work with particular artists. The history of the Biennale itself, and how previous curators have engaged various types of physical urban space in Berlin also feeds into the ideological purpose of the Berlin Biennale:

Lauren: We understood that a lot of people use the Berlin Biennial as a vehicle to see some space they have never been to or whatever. You know, it's part of the formula.

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, line 96)

The incoming curator is given "always the most possible freedom" to realise their vision and thus becomes the key driver of each edition (Horn, 15/12/2016, line 38). However, as elaborated on in the sections that follow, because all Berlin Biennale producers, whether actors, non-actors, permanent or incoming staff, operate within a city in continuous flux, realising new curatorial visions to the expected two-year temporal rhythm years presents a fundamental challenge for acquiring and securing venues.

5.3 Time After Time: (Re)Negotiating Urban Time, Economies and Knowledge

Urban Temporalities

The temporal limitations on the Berlin Biennale are due to both global and local influences. As a globalised event, the Biennale's timing within the calendar year needs to maintain a sense of cooperation with other major art world events. However, competing against such global rhythms are local ones symptomatic of a city in continuous flux that set certain limitations on how space is found and secured for use as exhibition venues. Curatorial visions must accommodate for the mundane realities of time-consuming tasks like seeking permissions for using and modifying physical urban spaces so that they can be used as exhibition venues. In this way, such conflicting temporalities render

urban space as an unknown entity; an uncertain yet essential element of the Berlin Biennale's production process.

During the production of the Berlin Biennale, there is not just one temporality, but several: that of the Biennale itself, that of the city and that of the global art sphere. Each has their own tempo and fluctuations. For example, the rate at which urban development occurs in the city seems to accelerate and takes place much faster than the rate of the Biennale and its producers' task of finding venues. This is a drastic change from Berlin's post-Wall years when everything seemed stagnant and cultural workers had their pick of any number of abandoned apartments and factories within which to live and work (see Chapter 2). The global art sphere calendar too is fast paced. With over 300 biennials taking place worldwide, theoretically, one could visit a biennial exhibition opening somewhere in the world every week (see Chapter 1). To maintain a sense of cooperation with the other biennials featured in this calendar of events, and to be conceived of as part of a global biennial network, the timing of the Biennale needs to synchronise with it, rather than compete against it (Gabriela Horn, lines 15–16). The opening week is considered an integral temporal facet of the Berlin Biennale. For example, the Berlin Biennale exhibition opening is timed to take place not at the same time, but rather shortly before or after the openings of other major international arts events such as the Venice Biennale, Manifesta or Art Basel that also open in the European summer (Horn, 15/12/2016, line 4; Regus, 08/07/2016, line 42).

However, the Biennale also needs to function to the schedule of the local Berlin arts sector. Producers need to be mindful that the opening of the Biennale doesn't coincide and therefore compete with local events such as Berlin Art Week (Regus, 08/07/2016, line 42). It thus needs to carve out its "own time":

Gabriela: ...because sometimes you have a kind of imploding situation, so this is a fact. People cannot manage to see everything and then they are getting frustrated and say: OK we cannot manage to see the galleries in one day and the whole Berlin Biennial in a second day. There is not that much time. They spend a weekend or they spend four days, especially also the professionals so, it's always like: I'm going to Berlin, I have two days, I have maximum three days to see

everything and to meet people also and to meet colleagues from the international sphere.

(Horn, 15/12/2016, lines 15–16)

The need to keep the Biennale from overlapping with other events is largely because producers recognise that it also serves as an opportunity for its public to see other arts events or exhibitions taking place at the same time in the Berlin art sector – it functions as a gateway event. Adapting to a global calendar is a way to intercept global cultural tourism flows, meaning that Berlin becomes a stopover destination part of a larger international cultural experience. In this way, the Biennale claims the urban as, what Henri Lefebvre refers to, a mediator between local and global rhythms bringing together the temporalities of the global art sphere with that of the local Berlin art sector in the condensed timeframe of the Biennale opening (Stevenson, 2013, p. 18). However, this raises the important question: who exactly is it a mediator for?

The Biennale producers' complicity with the temporality of the global cultural calendar speaks to a fear of being left out of a single spatial narrative comprising other biennial events in other cities worldwide (Massey, 2005, p. 77). This participation ultimately influences and shapes which public the Berlin Biennale primarily caters for: not the inhabitants of Berlin, but rather the international (potentially arts professional) visitor, otherwise the Biennale would take place at any other time during the year. While some might argue that even if it did take place at any time in the year, there would be enough other arts activities taking place in Berlin for cultural tourists and professionals to take advantage of, there is a clear strategy to place it before or after nearby similar international arts events in order to capitalise on visitors to those events, and offer something worthwhile experiencing for the international biennial network. This is further reinforced by the event nature of the Biennale's opening ceremony, a fashionable, festival-like evening of parties held across all of the exhibition venues, a model replicated at biennials around the world that serves as the perfect metaphor for the globalisation of the art world. Such events seemingly invite the international art world alongside their corporate sponsors to celebrate the opening day of the biennial with an evening of drinking, socialising and networking that perpetuate the false idea of complete and instant global connectedness (Massey, 2005, p. 82).

Competing against these global rhythms are local ones that set certain limitations on how space is found and secured for use as exhibition venues. While permanent staff have developed their own set of rhythms and deadlines for how the Biennale should function within the two-year cycle (as outlined above), time-consuming tasks like seeking permissions for using and modifying urban space influence and sometimes even threaten initially carved-out curatorial visions. The temporalities of a city in continuous flux due to accelerating urban development jar with the repetitive, cyclical nature of the biennial model. Thus, in full awareness of this, before the planning of production can begin, incoming curators are requested to communicate to permanent staff their imagined venues for these future exhibitions. As permanent staff member architect Marlene Schrecker explains, sometimes the initial curatorial visions that she must interpret in order to advise on how certain spaces can be used, can often be unclear:

Kate: But do the curators or the production team come with clear ideas?

Marlene: It's different (...) I think it is also dependent (...) I always find it very difficult, very abstract (...) at first I didn't understand anything when I read the first text, I thought: huh? what do they want anyway (laughing) where is the journey going? and (...) actually I'm beginning to understand it now that I see the product, what they want to convey. (Schrecker, 28/6/2016, lines 55–56, author translation)

These visions, once clarified to permanent staff, then need to be translated again to the non-Berlin Biennale actors who manage or own these potential exhibition venues. The next stage in the process involves introducing incoming curators to what kinds of physical urban space are available through discussions, showing them maps and an archive of images of different physical spaces in the city. At the beginning of the production of a new Biennale edition, production managers, their assistants and the incoming curators use information gathered through conducting and documenting city tours, site visits, and consulting maps and their own database of potential venues to identify which urban spaces can be considered for each Biennale edition (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50; Boyle and Rosso 9/9/2016, lines 2-10; Wagner, 23/4/2016, line

12). Again, Schrecker illustrates the precarious position the Biennale can find itself in by offering itself as a vehicle for realising curatorial visions in the urban space, when so much is dependent on the cooperation of other actors:

Normally, we do a round, together with Gaby Horn and other responsible persons on site. People are invited directly to this event, [people] who had to say something about it: the civil engineering office, the police, (...) a club or something, informing citizens, (...) and then it was about finding a company who could build it (...) it was also about the price and (...) the scaffolding company, then they had to prove the statics and then you have to submit all this and, yes, *then* it starts.

(Schrecker, 28/6/2016, line 70)

We will return to this process in detail below, but for now, it's important to understand Schrecker's point here that the timeline of a single biennale edition is not just dependent on others but also follows a certain order. This means then, that there are temporal implications of the process of finding, accessing and securing potential exhibition venues. Permanent staff have learned from previous Biennale editions that finding, accessing and securing venues takes a long time compared to other production processes and thus has a knock-on effect for the development of other parts of the process. Thus, they plan this phase of production right at the very beginning of the Biennale's two-year cycle:

So the first priority for each Berlin Biennale is to find the venues, because, once you have the venues, you can also choose the artists or you can commission artists, you have the plans and the idea of [where things will be and maybe how it will be related or not].

(Wagner, 23/04/16, line 2)

The team then has to plan the exhibitions from back to front in order to see if the envisioned exhibitions are even feasible, because each new venue must be assessed to determine its affordability within the Biennale budget, availability within the Biennale lifecycle and thus "usability" for the imagined exhibition:

And that is of course also a special attraction for the curators, and also for me now as an architect, to see these places first of all as usable within the vision (...) if I understand what they want in this way, to have the costs in view, and to be able to realize this in the time frame, one must therefore somehow bring many aspects under one umbrella: and that makes no sense if one knows that until it is finished, that costs two million [euros], that is not possible, or until that is so that one can use it, that takes half a year. So if you want to open in June and have the place in March, these are also aspects that you have to take into account.

(Schrecker, 28/6/2016, line 78, author translation)

As outlined by Schrecker, permanent staff members like her must work with incoming curators to consider and determine whether the desired spaces are affordable and available within the timeframe of the Biennale. Hence, the overall schedule of individual production tasks within each Biennale edition depends heavily on the type of space producers will be working with. The greatest challenge to this process over the Biennale's twenty-year history lies in seeking legal permission to use or modify physical urban spaces for the purposes of exhibition making. This is largely because the majority of the Biennale's venues have been non-typical exhibition spaces such as schools, churches, leisure, offices, factories, train stations, private residencies, vacant building plots and public streets, that do not normally serve the function of displaying contemporary art and receiving exhibition visitors. Every two years, the venues change and time must be planned to allow for,

negotiations and for permissions. Because permissions last at least six to eight months ... it can continue like crazy with all these things that are just around having to decide about the venues.

(Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 64)

The timing of gaining permissions for venues is crucial for securing a venue for the Biennale. It must be done early enough in the production process so that when permission is granted, it can be secured as an exhibition venue, ready for the space to be modified if necessary and for exhibitions to be installed. In some cases, the very fact that

permission must be sought to use a certain space for the Biennale, might render it unavailable. Depending on the state of the non-typical space – whether it is a heritage listed building, a space no longer in use or a public space – it might take too long to get the necessary permission and to secure the space for the exhibition production and thus render it useless for that particular Biennale edition.

Once decisions are made by the incoming and permanent staff on which venues to pursue, proposals are then drawn up for how the space will be used. This means that incoming curator(s) need to ensure that the artists they are working with also have a clear proposal for which areas of those spaces they want to use and how they will use them. This is a significant stage in the process of securing potential exhibition venues. Such proposals can determine whether or not permission for a space will be given by the space's manager or owner, or from relevant city authorities (Schrecker, 28/6/2016, line 32). For example, production manager Antje Weitzel describes the process of gaining permission to use the European School of Management and Technology for the ninth edition in 2016, as “very precise and nice, and so they accepted it from the beginning” (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, lines 48–50) (Figures 70-71).

As curator of the ninth edition Marco Rosso suggests, owners and managers of all kinds of spaces, have their own agenda that the Biennale must fit in with:

Marco: Yeah, what I'm trying to say is that they have prior priorities in all these spaces.

Kate: As in the owners of the spaces have their own priorities?

Marco: Yeah, I mean even in institutions.
(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, lines 99–101)

Rosso raises an important distinction between institutions, or dedicated exhibition venues, and non-typical exhibition spaces. While the majority of the Berlin Biennale editions have used non-typical venues, the process of acquiring permission to use space is one that applies to both dedicated and non-typical exhibition spaces and affects the

overall production schedule of the Biennale, no matter what kind of space it is. For example, what Rosso refers to above is that while dedicated arts institutions are often described as being easier to work with, in order for the Biennale to use them, the Biennale installation, exhibition run and de-installation timeline must fit in with dedicated venues already existing programmes. Often, their long-term planning of anywhere from between two and five years in advance renders them unavailable for the Biennale.



*Figure 70: Katja Novitskova, "Connectome Growth Potential" 2016, ESMT, ninth Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.
Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016*



Figure 71: (top) Simon Denny "Blockchain Visionaries" 2016, ESMT, ninth Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.

Figure 72: (bottom) GCC "Positive Pathways (+)" 2016, ESMT, ninth Berlin Biennale. Photos: Kate Brehme, 2016

Often, what is the most problematic for non-typical exhibition venues is the time it takes for bureaucrats to process the applications for permissions. For the Biennale to use such spaces for an edition, permission must be sought for its new temporary function as an exhibition venue:

So since spaces are used that are usually not intended for art, culture, (...) or vacant objects, (...) and we are in Germany, there are always administration authorities, that means you must have permits to have such [spaces] even if it's only for two or three months, it is then usually called a "change of use" application. (Schrecker, 28/6/2016, line 18, author translation)

What makes the process of finding, accessing and securing venues for the Biennale every two years even more challenging, is that this process has been subject to significant urban change over the Biennale's twenty-year history. Schrecker describes three major shifts in urban development that have impacted heavily on the amount of time it takes the Biennale to complete these tasks within the same time frame every two years. Firstly, since the end of the 1990s building regulations and their enforcement have become stricter, thus requiring Biennale producers to spend more time preparing and providing city authorities with more information about the proposed use of spaces. Secondly, there is an increased obligation for producers to request further permissions from the Environmental Department and the Police because of potential noise and traffic that high visitor numbers bring. Lastly, both state-led and private city-wide building restoration initiatives are transforming empty spaces into apartments, shops and offices thus reducing the numbers of buildings previously available to the Biennale (Schrecker, 28/6/2016, lines 26 and 30). Furthermore, the lack of transparency surrounding such transformations, a key characteristic of Berlin's urban development processes that began in the 1990s (see Chapter 2), complicates and thus slows down the Biennale producers' ability to find and access non-typical venues:

What you really learn about Berlin is also when you look in a lot of venues, even if they're empty for ten or fifteen years and not used, they are sold. It's like, what you see now or since five or seven years are deals which took place ten or fifteen years ago. It's just now that they're kind of getting a face. All this kind of

happened before... I think it was also a little bit different when there was Frau Weiz with the WBM, but this was also, Berlin was a different city. And it changed, really ... I would really say definitely since the early 2000s.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 54)

These changes reflect Berlin as a city in continuous flux where buildings are renovated and repurposed time and time again in an ongoing and accelerated process of urban development. The temporality of the city runs at a pace too fast for the regular two-year lifecycle of the Berlin Biennale thus hindering the Biennale producers' ability to find, access and secure venues in many ways. Production coordinator Jeanette Gogoll reflects on those impacts since she started working for the Biennale in 2010:

It's getting harder and harder to find those spaces, we had quite big problems also this time to really find spaces that are also available for such a long time.

(Gogoll, 28/06/2016, line 58)

Here, Gogoll suggests that the rate at which physical urban spaces in the city are being refurbished and repurposed is happening quicker, thus leaving fewer spaces available for the Biennale's installation, exhibition run and de-installation period. Furthermore, an improvement in the reputation of and the number of visitors to the Biennale mean that security measures that are linked to legal permissions to use certain spaces also increases the time required to get the necessary authorisations. Project manager Antje Weitzel refers to how these changes in urban development have coincided with the professionalization of the Biennale, and their heightened legal obligations and moral expectations to ensure the safety of the artwork and visitors alike:

... we just have to look that people cannot be hurt, of course, so no visitor can be hurt ... especially now days after all these sorts of catastrophes happening around Berlin with permissions, things are getting more strict. And nobody wants to make a mistake. So, of course you can improvise if nobody knows who is the organiser you can invite people to come to a run-down place and have a party there or whatever, but we cannot do stuff like this. We're too grown up for this.

(Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 60)

Being 'too grown up' suggests that Biennale producers feel the need to adapt, rather than simply ignore the tightening of law and enforcement that has increased over the years. Just as the first Berlin Biennale producers responded in reaction to the rapid social, political and urban change that began in the mid-1990s (see Chapter 2), Biennale producers today show us that they accept the intrinsic logic of Berlin as a city undergoing constant transformation of its physical urban landscape (Löw, 2009, p. 1). On a practical level, by maintaining a high level of professionalism and organization Biennale producers are able to adapt to this intrinsic logic of Berlin in order to continue to access and secure physical urban space for exhibition making. In doing so, Biennale producers use that intrinsic logic of Berlin as the city in continuous flux, as a way of creating an identity for the Biennale itself. By capturing these transient spaces for the three month exhibition period, they pause this process of urban development, even just for a moment, temporarily suspending the trajectory of these spaces becoming something else. By referring to the histories and present day use of these spaces (see Chapter 3), the concentrated space-time structure of the Biennale (Sassatelli, 2011, p. 18) highlights their transitional nature and reinforces Berlin's identity as a changing city.

The expanding divide between the temporalities of the Berlin Biennale and the city are a significant and growing problem for the Biennale. As a globalised event, the Biennale's timing within the calendar year needs to maintain a sense of cooperation with other major art world events. However, this creates a conflict between competing rhythms of the Biennale itself and its host city where the temporality of Berlin, subject to accelerating urban development, increasingly outruns the slower two-year lifecycle of the Biennale. The conflicting temporalities of the city and the Biennale thus render Berlin's urban space, as it is initially conceived by incoming curators, as an unknown entity; initially such spaces can function as spaces of potential, as future exhibition venues that fulfil their expectations. However, initial curatorial visions must accommodate the mundane realities of time-consuming tasks like seeking permissions for using and modifying physical urban spaces so that they can be used as exhibition venues. But despite these conflicting temporalities of the Biennale, the city and the

global sphere, the Biennale's dedication to urban space remains an essential element of the Berlin Biennale's production process.

Urban Economies

The limitations imposed on the Biennale and the incoming curators' initial visions by global and local temporalities are also inextricably linked to a set of urban economies. As demonstrated above, throughout the course of the Berlin Biennale's history, the city has undergone rapid urban development that has affected the amount of physical urban space available for the Biennale to use as temporary exhibition space. Such urban development has also had an impact on the cost of the types of spaces that the Biennale uses – dedicated spaces have become increasingly commercialised and over-priced whereas non-typical exhibition venues spaces require adaptation. Thus, the Biennale creates a kind of urban economy where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by Biennale producers to “buy their way” into temporarily accessing public and privately controlled urban space. However, adopting such strategies also mean that the Biennale plays into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas typical to a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation.

Money is a major influence on the production of the Berlin Biennale. It can lengthen the duration of the Biennale's exhibition run time, or even to add extra resources to aid the efficiency of production within the two-year lifecycle. Explaining how large budget increases the Biennale received for the production of the fourth edition in 2006, former production manager Renata Wagner explains,

... you can just make, like, much more new productions, you can have other spaces, you can have another duration, you can have more people for working on catalogue or for content etcetera, it's not comparable, it's like, it's a huge difference.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 20)

However, such budgetary increases for the Biennale are sporadic and have only occurred intermittently throughout its twenty-year history (see Chapter 3). It certainly doesn't match the speed at which property rental prices have increased in the city (Fields and Uffer, 2014; Wellner, Landau and Müller, 2015) and thus influences the ability for many people and cultural organisations, including the Biennale, to afford space in the city (Regus, 8/7/2016, line 64).

Most significantly is that the rise in the cost of real estate affects the type of urban space producers can secure for the Biennale's exhibitions. Non-typical venues in particular have become increasingly commercialised and over-priced or require costly adaptation (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 24; Gogoll, 28/06/2016, line 94). This is problematic for a biennial that tends to focus on using non-typical spaces such as former factories, railway stations, schools, offices and churches – many of which have become privatised or commercialised over the past twenty years (Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 64) Biennale producers use these spaces for practical reasons, because they are large enough to support a large number of artists or large-scale artworks (Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 56; Gogoll, 28/06/2016, line 74) and are geographically well placed within close proximity of each other to allow visitors to travel easily and quickly from one venue to the next (Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 64; Horn, 15/12/2016, line 16). However, having large spaces that are also centrally located simply cost more money now than when the Biennale began in the 1990s:

I think it's more depressing now because you don't have so big spaces anymore. You don't have anymore available in the center of the city. It means, either you have to find it in a completely different way or you have to drag the people further out.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 54)

What Wagner really means by the above statement is that it's depressing that these big spaces aren't accessible to the Biennale anymore due to the privatisation of such spaces. In this way, the Biennale producers' struggles for this access to physical urban space in the face of increasing privatisation of the city's real estate, represents their role in a larger fight for the right to access to the city as a space for continuing cultural

production (Kofman and Lebas as cited by Stevenson, 2013, p. 19). An important part of everyday life as mediated by urban space is to, as Lefebvre suggests, create fulfilling and creative experiences (Stevenson, 2013, p. 19), something that Biennale producers have claimed as their role in producing a biennial in “dialogue with the city” (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010). However, at the same time, the Biennale producers’ demand for affordable, large non-typical spaces within the city centre also creates a hierarchy of urban space. To “drag” people out of the city centre, suggests yet again, that the Biennale’s primary audience is conceptualised as international professional art visitors, rather than Berlin’s inhabitants who may actually already live in these areas. It also suggests that exhibitions outside of the city centre are not ideal for these visitor’s experience of the Biennale. The right experience of the city is one that takes place in the centre, rather than the periphery. It is in this way that the Biennale reinforces an image of “authentic Berlin” as an “inner city” as opposed to an “outer city” or “edge city” (Garreau, as cited by Harding and Blokland, 2014, p. 4). Hence, travelling to the outskirts, as one did during the eighth Berlin Biennale (see Chapter 3), for example, is not an authentic city experience.

To perpetuate this experience for each Biennale edition, the increasing unavailability of physical urban space requires the producers to allow more time to conduct research every two years to find new affordable venues (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50; Wiesel, 25/11/2016, line 26). As current project manager Antje Weitzel explains, maps, databases and lists of once available spaces that the producers have gathered over the Biennale’s history can become obsolete if the physical landscape of the city changes within the Biennale’s two-year lifecycle:

Antje: ... there’s a huge image archive. But at the same time, it’s not valid anymore. Some of the buildings don’t exist anymore and not in the state that they have been existing in then.

Kate: So you have to go through the existing archive and then kind of update it?

Antje: Yeah, or now I have my own archive and it's put on the server it's for each biennial you can look at it again, but at the same time, yes, things change so much in Berlin, like it's really changing a lot.

(Weitzel, 19/7/2016, lines 52–54)

Despite the challenges in finding non-typical exhibition venues, they are still seen as extremely desirable. Unlike dedicated exhibition spaces, there are no existing and potentially conflicting programming or curatorial visions for that space, thus making them temporally and physically more flexible and adaptable to the curator's vision. However, such transformations into temporary exhibition venues require a lot of money for installing and de-installing infrastructure:

I mean you can't afford to build in toilets in every space, or heating system, it's always a question so, of the circumstances of what the room and space can provide, if it's a totally empty space, for example, an empty shopping mall, which was also once a place that was visited. It's not that easy to maintain it and make it accessible for the public so then of course, it's also a budget question.

(Gogoll, 28/06/2016, line 94)

As described above, by production manager Jeanette Gogoll, the finiteness of the Biennale budget means that producers also must take into account what impact the cost of such infrastructure has on other considered venues. For example, if one venue requires extensive infrastructure, producers might not be able to invest the same amount of money in other venues (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 58). This has repercussions for the creative process of realizing curatorial visions and thus results in incoming curators being expected to take on often unexpected roles:

Marco: we are curators, we are not real estate agents ... I mean we are content aggregators call it whatever you want, but we are not real estate agents and we spent a lot of time as real estate agents.

Lauren: Yeah, a year.

Marco: Yeah, a year. Spending tones of time. More than doing studio visits.

Kate: OK really?

Marco: Yeah. So, that subtracted, I mean, in a certain way, what we wanted to do, and I mean, I enjoy more doing the other things.

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, line 180–4)

Here, the ninth Berlin Biennale curatorial team DIS recount the pressure they felt to perform the role of real estate agents, rather than curators, highlighting how the lack of availability of non-typical exhibition venues restricted their creative freedom. This is expressed through their disappointment of spending more time selecting venues than artists, suggesting that their expectations of biennial curating would see the time given to such activities reversed. During their venue search and selection process, many of DIS's initially desired spaces couldn't meet the availability or financial requirements of the Biennale lifecycle or budget. For example, a spate of private luxury apartments they considered were either too expensive or were owned or managed by individuals not prepared to rent out their space for the four-month Biennale period in case they missed an opportunity to sell the apartment. Other considered venues, such as the city's former Tempelhof airport, had during the course of their venue research period, been turned into temporary accommodation for refugees, others such as the Deutsche Bank headquarters at Pariser Platz were too difficult due to security issues. Even their confirmed dedicated exhibition venue of the Akademie der Künste at Pariser Platz announced that late-running renovations of their exhibition galleries would mean that DIS would not be able to use them for their planned exhibitions (Weitzel, 19/07/2016, line 14; Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, line 112).

However, such financial and temporal limitations can spur creativity by forcing incoming curators to find alternatives to their original curatorial vision. A series of compromises were found; instead of using conventional gallery spaces at AdK, DIS used the corridors, foyer spaces, meeting rooms and the balcony of the Akademie. This decision allowed them to offer a different experience to the Biennale visitor than the typical white-cube space. The spaces at AdK were spaces of transition where the public

normally passed through from one area to the next. By placing works in these spaces, visitors were subjected to unexpected encounters with often quite provocative pieces inspired by their surroundings. One such example was the virtual reality piece by Jon Rafman entitled *View of Pariser Platz* (2016) that created a truly immersive experience. Rafman's virtual reality game was located on the balcony of the AdK. Participants would wear a helmet that used 360 degree moving imagery, and looking out over the balcony, saw the real life tourists of nearby Pariser Platz morph into zombies before being swallowed up by a watery world of strange amphibian creatures and death. In an instant, a sense of physical precariousness was evoked as the virtual floor appeared to give way from underneath the participant's feet.

In addition, DIS took the opportunity to use a newly-opened private gallery at the Feuerle Collection. The location of the Feuerle in a busy tourist area near other former-bunker-cum-tourist-attractions fitted in well with DIS' curatorial themes of Berlin as a tourist capital, and the blurring between public and private spaces. Explaining how they felt about not being able to realise their curatorial vision in the originally planned spaces, DIS explain:

You didn't even have to be in these buildings. And that's something you realise when you develop the artists' projects and you like, get closer to what you're trying to say, you know? So a lot of the things that didn't necessarily go our way, you know, were clearly like, that was good, and we would have come to the decision to cancel them anyway ... But it was interesting that that moment had like, the moment that we lost our galleries, the refugee crisis happened we were looking again and we saw different landscapes, you know?

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, line 58)

Permanent staff agree too, that it is not important what kind of space is envisioned at the beginning of the process, but it is what is done with the space by the end of that process that matters (Wagner, 14/11/2016, line 60). There is no question that the economy of the Biennale and that of the city are increasingly out of sync: this situation highlights the increasing cost to producers of pursuing physical urban space in the city centre, and hence, the Biennale's participation in the struggle for the right to the city.

However, the limitations that such struggles impose on Biennale producers can become helpful or even creative guidelines that can force them to think more flexibly, and help further shape the theme of particular Biennale editions.

One of the other ways in which the Biennale has been able to bypass the financial obstacles of accessing physical urban spaces, is through using its network of contacts in the cultural, political and commercial sectors. These networks have, since the Biennial's inception, continued to play a significant role in the acquiring of spaces. As Schrecker illustrates, earlier in the Biennale's history the process of finding and accessing urban space on one hand, profited from Berlin's recently re-configured landscape full of "empty" spaces. On the other hand, in order for these spaces to be accessed and used by biennale producers for an interim period, the use of informal networks was necessary for gaining permission from owners and managers who controlled such spaces (Chapter 3).

...it's a few years ago now - Berlin was in an even more desolate situation where one could still find buildings: "do you know...?" and "do you have...?" and so on. (Schrecker, 28/06/2016, line 52, author translation)

As Schrecker describes, space could be found and acquired simply by having a conversation with your neighbours. In this way, the intimate and close-knit nature of the Berlin cultural scene that developed out of the village-like post-Wall environment proved essential to the first Biennale's venue search process. In some ways, the same dialogue between neighbours remains in Berlin today; because there are fewer and fewer affordable, particularly non-typical exhibition spaces, the emphasis has shifted to using professional networks to negotiate the use of dedicated exhibition spaces. Compared to earlier editions such as the first, second and third Biennales, in recent years it has been able to profit from their reputation and "With the institutions, because the Berlin Biennial has a good network, it's easier to have negotiations" (Weitzel, 19/07/2016, lines 48 and 50). Cultural Officer at the Berlin Senat Christine Regus describes how such negotiations take place:

I'm in the Beirat of the Biennale so they say, "we want to have clean buildings" then everybody thinks about, and I work on the Akademie der Künste, it is also part of what we fund, so you just talk together and say, "maybe that would be an idea" or you open a door or something like that. It's more quite practical. I mean, then it's not so big, Berlin, in the end. (laughing) Everybody knows everybody and one tries...

(Regus, 8/7/2016, line 70)

Regus is referring here not only to her current position on the Beirat (advisory board) of the Berlin Biennale, but also the fact that Biennale Director Gabriele Horn used to work for the Berlin Senat before taking the lead of the Biennale in the year 2000 (see Chapter 3). She highlights that Berlin is still a village-like city where the same people have worked together for many years and that such long-term alliances between the Berlin Biennale and the sphere of cultural politics in Berlin is advantageous for finding, accessing and securing spaces for Biennale producers. She implies that influential arts funders like the Senat have not only contacts within the wide range of dedicated exhibition spaces to which they provide funding, but are also in a position to grant the Biennale access to such contacts. Furthermore, such contacts within the Senat have proved helpful for granting the Biennale more time for its exhibition run. For example, in 2016 the Senat funded the Biennale for the first time in its history so the exhibition run could be extended to coincide with Berlin Art Week in September. Because the sale of tickets for the prolonged period would not be enough to cover the Biennale's production costs, the additional funding from the Senat was used to fill the gap in income (Regus, 08/07/2016, line 42).

Thus, by including the Biennale in the same time period as the Berlin Art Week, the Senat was able to create a cohesive and easily navigable set of arts events for its international cultural tourists that would also mean both events would benefit from increased exposure to visitors.

However, because the Biennale operates within an increasingly unaffordable city, deals like this with powerful non-Biennale actors like the Senat also mean building an increasing reliance on them to facilitate access to physical urban space in the city and

playing into neoliberal city marketing agendas. For the Senat, an internationally recognised event such as a contemporary art biennial can help promote Berlin as a “creative city” and thus benefit from the global wave of economic growth centred on the cultural, knowledge and digital industries it is a part of (Florida, as cited by Stevenson, 2013, p. 59).

Berlin is not a homogenous thing, so there are different scenes in Berlin and maybe different functions...But what I think is that Berlin as a cultural capital, where also the contemporary art also plays a very big role.

(Regus, 8/7/2016, line 58)

Through their use of such networks, the Biennale thus activates urban space through as a space of transaction of symbolic and real capital. While proving extremely helpful for gaining real capital such as money, time or exhibition venues, such transactions with contacts such as the Senat mean that they are helping sell a certain image of creativity specific to the placeness of Berlin: the framing of contemporary art through Berlin’s architecture. This creativity is a cultural experience for visitors to the city that can be consumed, become currency and a form of “capital – that supposedly can be measured, developed and then traded in an international marketplace comprised of cities eager to compete with each other on the basis of image, amenity, liveability and visibility (Richards and Palmer, as cited by Stevenson, 2013, p. 61). It is a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation that sees the placeness of Berlin, its cultural identity, as a place for producing and displaying contemporary art in temporarily available venues, used in producing the space of the neoliberal capitalist global (Massey, 2005, p. 101).

The limitations imposed on the Biennale and incoming curators’ initial visions by global and local temporalities are inextricably linked to a set of urban economies where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by Biennale producers to “buy their way” into temporarily accessing public- and privately-controlled urban space. Urban development has had an impact on the cost of the types of spaces that the Biennale use – dedicated spaces have become increasingly commercialised and over-priced whereas non-typical exhibition venues spaces require costly adaptation. However, using powerful contacts such as the Senat also put the Biennale at risk of

playing into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas where the image of Berlin as a creative city is (re)produced. By exchanging funding or access to physical venues with a contribution to the promotion of Berlin's creative city image, transforms the city into a space of transaction where symbolic and real capital are traded as part of the consumption of contemporary art and architecture.

Urban Knowledge

Over the course of the Biennale's history, through the production of each edition, a kind of collected urban knowledge is created through the exchange between permanent staff and incoming curators. As illustrated in the section "Urban Temporalities", incoming curators communicate their visions to the permanent staff while the permanent staff pass on their existing knowledge of this landscape to incoming curators. New knowledge is created each edition precisely because each curator has a different vision of what kind of artists and artworks they want to work with and subsequently what kinds of spaces would best fit the overarching themes that the work speaks to. This process relies on the subjective experiences of permanent staff, and their lived experiences of the city of Berlin. This knowledge is gathered through the production of the Biennale itself over several years. When permanent staff conduct and document city tours, site visits, and create maps and databases of potential venues, a kind of collective urban knowledge is built that allows them to keep track of which spaces have been used for previous Berlin Biennale editions and guide the next incoming curator(s) (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50).

However, this exchange of knowledge is not a balanced exchange. While the overall vision of incoming curators drives the direction of the Berlin Biennale, and sets a precedent for which venues should be considered for their planned exhibitions, the realisation of that vision is mediated by the permanent staff in three main ways, precisely in order to deal with the limitations of time and money as outlined above. Firstly, permanent staff oblige incoming curators to live in the city of Berlin, and thus embark on a *lived experience* of the city as part of their tenure with the Biennale. Secondly, permanent staff strive to balance the international perspectives that each curatorial vision brings, by shaping it through their *local knowledge* of the city of Berlin

resulting in incoming curators becoming dependent on permanent staff. It is in the final mediation of incoming curators by permanent staff that we begin to understand the rationale behind the Berlin Biennale's ongoing use of urban space in the city. Despite the challenges of finding and securing spaces to do so, permanent staff guide oncoming curators to select new or undiscovered spaces that have not been used before, in order to produce a cultural experience of urban space for the Biennale visitor that is charged with emotion and memory. It is this unique experience, facilitated by a directed coming together of artwork, place and public, that allows the Biennale to be recognised as a distinct arts event within the global cultural sphere.

When a new curator is invited to curate an edition of the Berlin Biennale, they are contractually obliged to reside in Berlin for the two-year duration of the Biennale lifecycle. Providing a living and an office space within which to work at the KW, as well as information about the city's history and networks connecting to the Berlin art scene, the Berlin Biennale's permanent team become the incoming curators' anchor to the city. Former project manager Renate Wagner explains the reasoning for embedding incoming curators on a long-term basis in the city this way is:

[so that] they are not like this kind of flying in curators that they really ... they have the apartment and the expectation to spend a lot of time in Berlin. They have an idea of how the city is operating, um, also how venues are working ... and this soft experience, you know.

(Wagner, 23/04/2016, line 18)

The expectations to acquire a "soft experience" implies that in order to make an informed response to the city of Berlin, and in a sense to know the city, is to *live* the city. A temporal distinction is made between "normal tourists" who experience the city for just a few days or a week, and those who "take this job and then they have to deal one and a half years with the city" (Wagner, 14/11/15, line 104). The long-term commitment of living in the city allows curators to experience, for example, the effects that urban development, such as increased rents, have had on the city's cultural sector:

... it's changed, because also the studio spaces are more expensive so if you now go and see younger artists they're far more out ... it's not like you walk across the street and go to the studio of the artist. It was like in Mitte, now they really have to make an effort to go somewhere else. And then they go back to Mitte and they see this touristic life here, in comparison to other parts of the city, so this is like moving through the city itself, with this research in both for artists and for spaces (...) you know this from your daily life.

(Wagner 14/11/2015, lines 86–90)

Wagner is referring here to how incoming curators, through their “daily life”, experience the effects of the gradual relocating of artists’ studios from the city centre to the peripheries due to rental increases throughout the city. She implies that when incoming curators travel through the city in order to carry out venue assessments or artist studio visits, they are also forced to understand the realities of living and working in the city as the permanent staff do – an experience only available through living in Berlin on a long-term basis. She, along with other members of permanent staff, suggests that the ability to form a meaningful curatorial response to the city is only possible through this kind of embedded temporal-geographic experience and cannot (and should not) be achieved if curators are residing here temporarily or somewhere else (Horn, 15/12/2016, line 24; Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50; Wagner, 14//11/2015, line 82).

Incoming curators are expected to reside in Berlin from as early on in the Biennale lifecycle as possible because the producers expect them to learn from the challenging experience of finding and securing urban space for exhibition making. Biennale producer Antje Weitzel explains,

... that's really important that they get a feeling of the city but also to understand ... it was very important that they learn themselves, that it's not just, we don't, that we can't say and it doesn't make sense, they have to experience also, we have to at least try to show them this is how it's working.

(Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50)

For permanent staff, the process of finding and accessing such spaces is deemed important for curators and permanent staff to learn from and experience, rather than just be informed about. It is part of the experience of working as a cultural producer in the city and *felt* in order to be understood. Curatorial team DIS, describe the process of knowledge exchange between permanent staff and incoming curators as a form of ongoing “organic” exchange where “they kind of see where our interests are, and they try and show us those spots that you know that might be of interest” (Boyle, 09/09/2016, line 26).

Such exchanges also offer permanent staff the possibility to communicate the symbolic nature of certain spaces from their perspective as people with a long-term lived experience of the city. Permanent staff members’ tacit knowledge gained from living and working in Berlin thus form the driving force behind the exchanges that take place with incoming curators. But what are these tacit knowledges? Berlin as a city is conceptualised by permanent staff members in a number of ways: as a new national capital flooded with newcomers (Wiesel, 19/7/2016, lines 25-28), as an alternative and pulsing city village (Hohenbülcher, 17/11/2016, line 10), as an art capital (Regus 08/07/2016, lines 30; Horn 15/12/2016, lines 6-8), as (once) culturally divided between east and west (Dragset, 20/1/2016, lines 16-18), and as gentrified (Wagner 14/11/2015 , 51). Issues related to Berlin’s identity and the socio-political and urban development impacts on it form a large part of exchanges with the incoming curators during the development of exhibitions. Their innate knowledge acts as a kind of compass for matching the incoming curators’ initial vision of desired physical urban space with what can actually be found and secured within a relatively short amount of time and within a limited budget:

I try to give the curators always the most possible freedom to realise their things and also to go in a kind of discourse with them.

(Horn, 15/12/2016, line 38)

Enabling incoming curators to realise their curatorial visions in this way forms a significant part of the identity of the Biennale as an event in dialogue with the city:

And I think that's also a beautiful thing, you don't have to agree with the perspective of Juan Gatain or Artur Zmijewski but that it is possible that someone is throwing that upon the city. If it's saying something about the city I don't know, because the city has so many voices, but maybe it's one perspective of it, and also it's worth looking on it.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 100)

What the above quote demonstrates is that permanent Biennale staff embrace the different interpretations of the city that incoming curators are able to realise. By enabling incoming curators to serve as an intermediary that bring "new impulses" to the city through the spaces that they are able to acquire for them (Regus, 8/7/2016, line 78), permanent staff can fulfill global cultural sector expectations of the Biennale to bring difference to each edition (see Chapter 1). In her role as director, Horn offers up Berlin as the perfect playground for curatorial experimentation precisely because of the plethora of different scenes and histories to which an incoming curator can connect (Gabriele Horn, line 38). However, it is important that incoming curators are not simply left to navigate this diversity on their own, but must be made aware of the city's history, and the significance of their role in engaging with certain places and their past events for a wider audience:

I think Berlin has [been] always a kind of, how do you say, a kind of, not only, but also a kind of reference. So mirroring the situation in Berlin to the international situation, and it does not mean that you have to focus on Berlin problems like, I don't know the airport construction site or whatever else or refugees or whatever else, but you are not an island, you are connected to the whole global world and some global problems you might see in Berlin as well and it's more like a mental, like getting the atmosphere of the city and not creating or inventing a biennial which is totally away from the Berlin situation.

(Horn, 15/12/2016, line 24)

Thus, permanent staff hold expectations on the way in which incoming curators should read and reproduce certain images of the city. While curators don't necessarily have to create specific Berlin narratives – simply creating exhibitions within Berlin's various

physical urban spaces is enough to connect to the city – their interpretation of the city must be relatable to a global context. This approach of balancing local and international discourses is true to many contemporary art biennials and in emulating other biennials in this way, allows the Berlin Biennale to maintain a legitimacy that sustains their position within the global biennial, if not larger cultural, sphere, without losing local relevance for their primary, global audience (see Chapter 1).

What becomes clear in analysing such knowledge transfers is that there is no such thing as a single autonomous curatorial vision. Because the majority of incoming curators are people who don't live and work in Berlin, once selected to curate the Berlin Biennale, their imagined venues that they will use to frame their concepts and artworks is, in the beginning, always unclear. Permanent staff thus become the gatekeepers to urban knowledge for incoming curatorial staff. In providing local knowledge about the history of certain venues in Berlin, as well as information about which venues are available to incoming curators on a temporal or financial basis, incoming curators thus depend greatly on permanent staff, especially if they do not already have experience with or contacts in the city (Wagner 23/04/2016, Boyle and Rosso, 9/9/2016, line 133).

... it depends if like, for example, Uta Meta Bauer, she clearly decided that she wants to work with institutional spaces and that's why the Berlin Biennale was at the Martin Gropius Bau and the Arsenale and the Kunst-Werke. If somebody comes with that, you look into all the institutional spaces. Or for example, as I said, for the fifth Berlin Biennale, Adam was from the beginning very much interested in spaces built in Berlin for art. So you look into what did the GDR build, what did West Berlin build etcetera. It depends really on the questions the curators are asking towards the city....it's also what you look into and then it's also things are coming together and you maybe have already an artist in mind and then you suddenly see the perfect space for the artist.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, lines 76–8)

While descriptions such as the one above give us the impression that a curatorial vision has been set from the start of the process and neatly followed through to realisation, it is in fact not – it is instead, a malleable vision mediated by permanent staff based on

their lived knowledge of the fluctuating economic and spatial physical fabric of city itself. If we take Wagner's description above of her experience as production manager working with a variety of incoming curators, we imagine that incoming curators' ideas are developed outside Berlin, in a space set aside from the city itself, rather than in symbiosis with it, which then has to be mediated (through the knowledge of the staff and the availability of venues) rather than be developed right from the outset within these limitations or from an informed standpoint.

In this way then, the Biennale can be taken as a unique case within the field of cultural production that challenges the stereotypical view of the biennial "curator as author" with full autonomy over their curatorial narrative. In a city in constant flux it makes perfect sense that the permanent Biennale staff guide curators towards spaces that will serve pragmatic needs such as being available and affordable. Without the permanent staff, the incoming curators would simply not have the time and resources to access urban space for their exhibitions. This dependency means that permanent staff also have the ability to persuade incoming curators to select certain types of venues that fulfil a certain collective identity of the Berlin Biennale.

Guiding incoming curators to be aware of the multi-layered identity of Berlin also helps distinguish the Biennale from its international biennial counterparts. Over its twenty-year history, a complex interaction between space, artwork and public has become central to the Berlin Biennale's identity. The specific placeness of *Berlin's* physical urban space cannot be experienced in London or New York, and when used as a frame for displaying new and often site-specific contemporary art, provide a unique experience for its visitors. The timing, delivery and amount of detail about exhibition venues Biennale producers communicate to their public reinforces this experience, as evidenced by the way that new Biennale editions are made public: after announcing which curator will curate each forthcoming biennale, the second most piece of information given is the announcement of the exhibition venues. The framing of exhibition spaces as important for the reception of the Biennale exhibitions is further emphasised through providing press and potential visitors with a kind of venue dossier for each Biennale edition a trend that was particularly noticeable since the fourth edition (see Chapter 3). In particular, the architectural histories of exhibition spaces

feature strongly in the web documentation and catalogues of all editions of the Biennale. Their histories are neatly packaged into a short, approximately 150-word description along with photographs, first communicated through press releases, the website and then eventually through the exhibition guide and catalogues (see, for example, Figure 73). Here, the venues themselves are just as significant for contextualising the exhibitions and the artwork being exhibited as the curatorial themes are. Press material in particular “supply a framework for viewing, if not the entire experience” to future Biennale visitors, guiding them to view Berlin’s physical urban space as part of an ongoing biennale narrative (Griffin *et al.*, 2003, p. 159).

18.3.2016 All venues - Berlin Biennale

RAILWAY ARCHES AT JANNOWITZBRÜCKE 	SCHENKEL PAVILION 	SKULPTURENPARK BERLIN_ZENTRUM 	SOPHIENSAALE
ST. ELISABETH-CHURCH 	ST. JOHANNES-EWANGELIST-CHURCH 	THEATERDISCOUNTERZEUGHAUSKINO IN GERMAN HISTORICAL MUSEUM 	

18.3.2016 All venues - Berlin Biennale

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http://blog.berlinbiennale.de/venue/venues

18.3.2016 All venues - Berlin Biennale

KOHLFURTER STRASSE 1 	KW INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART 	MARTIN-GROPIUS-BAU 	MEHRINGDAMM 28
NEUE NATIONALGALERIE, KULTURFORUM POTSDAMER PLATZ 	OFFICE IN PLATTENBAU 	OLD GARRISON CEMETERY 	ORANIENTPLATZ 17
POSTFUHRAMT 	PRIVATE APARTMENT, AUGUSTSTRASSE 17 	PRIVATE APARTMENT, AUGUSTSTRASSE 23 	PRIVATE APARTMENT, AUGUSTSTRASSE 84

http://blog.berlinbiennale.de/venue/venues

18.3.2016 All venues - Berlin Biennale

BERLIN BIENNALE

AKADEMIE DER KUNSTE 	ALLIANZ TREPTOWERS 	ALTE NATIONALGALERIE / OLD NATIONAL GALLERY 	ARSENAL CINEMA
BALLHAUS MITTEL, SPIEGELSAAL 	CHARITÉ 	COLLEGIUM HUNGARICUM BERLIN 	DEUTSCHLANDHAUS
DRESDENER STRASSE 19 	FORMER JEWISH GIRL'S SCHOOL 	FRIEDRICHSTRASSE/ BESSELSTRASSE 	GAGOSIAN GALLERY, BERLIN
HEBBEL AM UFER - HAU EINS 	HEBBEL AM UFER - HAU DREI 	HORSE STABLES OF THE POSTFUHRAMT 	HOUSE OF WORLD CULTURES

http://blog.berlinbiennale.de/venue/venues

Figure 73: Screenshots of the web archive of the berlin biennale exhibition venues from 1998-2016. Image: Kate Brehme, 2016

By emphasising the importance of urban space for the comprehension of the contemporary art exhibited there, the Berlin Biennale has been able to visually cement its identity as a biennial in dialogue with the city through individual episodes with decipherable themes that match the spaces used:

For the fourth Berlin Biennale it was a narrative, it was really a story from birth to death and it was told along a street. ... So the narrative and the content it was possible to unfold. (...) The fifth Berlin Biennale was looking into art spaces, like what does it mean, where are you allowed to present art and how can you present it in these spaces. And so they used the KW as for [that space] it was a former margarine factory site, it's an industrial area turned into a white cube with this new building then they used the latest building in Berlin which was built for art, which is the Neue Nationalgalerie and then they were looking in the possibility it's like, what is with public space. So they went to the Skulpturenpark. And so this is like, it was really also about content wise talking about what and how art can be presented ... And it's the same also for the last Berlin Biennale. If you look in the (...) works and also in the history research and ethnological content, it also makes sense to spotlight also Dahlem.
(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 62)

In this way, the Biennale engages physical urban space as a loaded or charged canvas for the exhibiting of existing or the commissioning of site-specific work. Whether they are non-typical or dedicated exhibition spaces, all urban spaces are activated by the Biennale as "art spaces" viewed in a different light from their original function. Different spaces evoke different feelings in the visitor and it is precisely through their juxtaposition with one another for the temporary duration of the Biennale that certain narratives are created. The city is both read and produced as a text, framing its aesthetic meaning and symbolism for others to read (Huysen, 1997; Pinder, 2005; Donald, as cited by Harding and Blokland, 2014, p. 4). Produced as a text by the existing architectural and other physical fabric of the city, and the histories they represent, and also produced by the Biennale visitor, who reads these spaces as a frame for the contemporary art on display and can choose how to traverse which spaces. These potential experiences are designed by Biennale producers:

... you also talk about like, how people move through the city, what is the perception, what if you go into that area etcetera. And then sometimes you also realise how concise, how things can also be manipulated.

(Wagner, 14/11/2016, line 62)

For example, in the case of the first Berlin Biennale, the catalogue and guide for the exhibitions were designed as a mock tourist-guide to the city with lists of bars, clubs, restaurants featured alongside essays about the city's history and, at that time, different scenes. While the guide was partially an ironic commentary on the city's top-down rapid transformation into a national and cultural tourism capital, the intention was for the Biennale's public to use the guide through which to navigate the exhibitions and artwork. The guide was complementary to the commissioning of artists such as the duo Elmgreen and Dragset, who created an outdoor installation created specifically for the space in front of the entrance to the Postföhramt (Figure 16). The placement of the work before the historic and crumbling Postföhramt located in the heart of a rapidly gentrifying Mitte was key to understanding the symbolic nature of the work as representative of the effect of this part of the city's transformation from a city of ruins to the new, and culturally from a city of socialism to capitalism:

... the work itself was very much about the change in Berlin that you felt. I mean it had been through a change and was maybe going through a second change with all the renovations and you know, maybe money being put into it, gentrification, or I don't know, and also at the same time you realised that these old wishes are not going to work anymore and sometimes it's also time to find new things yourself as well to wish for, so that's why we made this sealed wishing well, showing this conundrum in a way, some of these wishes that you have had are not going to work anymore and it's not possible to throw more of those in, you have to find maybe even a whole new set of ideals and dreams.

(Dragset, 20/1/2016, line 30)

The work thus captured the spirit of the time, spoke to and conveyed the feelings of a younger generation of international artists who lived and worked in the city, having

quickly found a new home in Berlin yet were all too aware of the disconnect between the official city imaginings and that of the lived reality.

The curators of the ninth Berlin Biennale, DIS, elaborate too on what kinds of feelings can be evoked by experiencing particular styles of architecture. In their case, the aesthetic appearance of buildings, for example the Academy of the Arts (Figure 62), was essential to conveying their overall vision exploring themes such as commerce, consumer culture, tourism, digital technology and branding and where the boundaries between these things blurred:

... it's kind of like the glass facades, architecture, you know. It was kind of notion of the new German state being this kind of honest transparent, you know, like democratic, like it had these kinds of, the architecture kind of embodies these goals and things. And that was interesting. That was interesting to us to think that that also looks like a corporate building and also looks like a mall ... you know?

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, line 44)

In particular, the non-typical exhibition spaces that were transformed into exhibition spaces, such as the European School of Management and Technology, the Blue Star Sight-seeing Boat, and even the foyer spaces within the AdK, were selected to not only form a certain narrative for the Biennale's public that spoke to the above themes, but also encouraged a new kind of Biennale public to experience the work:

[what] DIS was so much interested about was that the venues somehow facilitate that another public is usually going there and not only art public. So how can you have by accident, tourists going into the Berlin Berlinale?

(Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 14)

Despite KW remaining a firm part of the Biennale's swathe of exhibition venues, it was the AdK that was conceptualised as the hub of this Biennale's edition. Situated in the main tourist district of Berlin, the curators deliberately tapped into the historical and current day symbolism of Pariser Platz as a centre of government and financial power.

Nearby buildings such as the American Consulate, DZ Bank, Allianz Insurance company, the luxurious Aldon Hotel and monumental Brandenburger Tor, as well as the various individuals who actively engage in these spaces – bankers, rich hotel guests, tourists – contributed to the framing of the exhibition within AdK. But perhaps the most successful execution of this idea was the use of the ESMT and the Blue Star Sight-seeing Boat (Figures 74 and 75). While AdK is considered a dedicated exhibition space and regularly hosts an art-going public, the ESMT and Blue Star Sight-seeing Boat are not, and more importantly, because these spaces continued their normal operations for their own publics – international business and technology management students and teachers and sight-seeing tourists respectively – the biennial was able to interact with a completely different public, whether the public wanted to or not.

By placing contemporary art in spaces where contemporary art does not normally exist as selected and promoted by Biennale producers, for a limited amount of time, and by drawing thematic connections between the artwork on display and the embedded histories of its surrounds, the Biennale fulfils its role as a place specific, performative event (Sassatelli, 2011, p. 16). Such events allow the visitor an “unrestrained sensory experience” that, unlike their museum counterparts that rely on a passive experiences of distance to art objects on display, are celebrated for their “living” dimension that “more totally involve the person” in a more immediate and active participation to evoke authenticity of certain places (Sassatelli, 2016, pp. 16–17). Urban space is thus activated by the biennale as an emotional space for the viewer (Stevenson, 2013, p. 96) who are invited to connect with collective layers of memory of certain spaces (Massey, 2005, p. 119; Stevenson, 2013, pp. 105–107) as re-created through their own artistic lens.



Figure 74: (top) Korakrit Arunanondchai/Alex Gvojc, *There's a word I'm trying to remember, for a feeling I'm about to have (a distracted path toward extinction)*, 2016, view from Märkisches Ufer, Bluestar Sight Seeing Boat. Photo: Kate Brehme, 2016.

Figure 75: (bottom) Korakrit Arunanondchai/Alex Gvojc, *There's a word I'm trying to remember, for a feeling I'm about to have (a distracted path toward extinction)*, 2016, view from Bluestar Sight Seeing Boat, ninth Berlin Biennale. Photos: Kate Brehme, 2016

The key aspect of this evocative and sensorial relationship between space, art and public that is evident in all of the Berlin Biennale editions is the ability of the Biennale to render the city anew, for international and local publics alike. This idea of selling the *new* or *undiscovered* venue, has been a central feature of the Biennale's founding organisation, the KW when it staged *37 Räume* in 1992 (see Chapter 2). The way in which the exhibition conjured a spectacle of the mundane, through the "re-discovery" of "forgotten" urban spaces of the once divided city is a refrain that has continued throughout the Biennale's history (see Chapter 3). It has become firmly cemented as part of the Biennale's identity. Working on the catalogue of the first Berlin Biennale, Miriam Wiesel recalls encountering the spaces used for the first edition as a moving experience for both herself, the Biennale team and the Biennale's public:

That means you have (gasps in surprise)! People were all super excited about the venues. We were too, we were all totally excited about it, that was the first time you could get in: that was history. It was really beautiful. And that, well, that was also a continuity [for the biennale]. (Wiesel, 25/11/2016, lines 62 and 64, author translation)

Despite the many challenges facing Biennale producers in finding and securing affordable and available venues, when physical urban space is being considered to facilitate curatorial visions, venues that have already been used for previous Biennale editions, or even other contemporary art exhibitions in general, are considered inferior for the Biennale's planned exhibitions. Antje Weitzel explains how, as permanent staff member, she guides incoming curators:

... to show them a lot of things and introduce them to the city and introduce them to what has already been done. So it was also very important to tell them what has been already done. ... And also then other exhibitions are using it and then sometimes it's not so interesting anymore, depending on how it was used. (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 50–54)

Thus, the idea of using new venues, something surprising, something not seen before (or perhaps seen but not in a new Biennale edition context) is an important part of the

visitor experience and lends to the overall Biennale identity. And like exhibitions such as *37 Räume* that were largely created for an international professional art audience, Biennale producers too are aware of the attractiveness such “revealing” of forgotten spaces for a global audience. However, speaking about the use of the Museum Dahlem in Zehlendorf (Figure 59) for the eighth Berlin Biennale, Renata Wagner explains how the Biennale can also open up geographies of the city for people already living in Berlin:

... many, many people living in Berlin never went to Dahlem. To be true. It's a huge museum with unbelievable history of display, this will be soon gone, also the history ... many people never did go there. It was also showing that this is a big city and there are many things you should also sometimes be aware of or treasure.

(Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 62)

In the case of the ninth edition too, by using the ESMT in particular, curatorial team DIS were able to reveal an untapped history for a public who would not normally have a reason to visit the building. Because it was a private business school, the traces of its former Prussian and GDR use were inaccessible to non-students or teachers of the school outside of the Biennale's exhibition run time. Through using the space as an exhibition venue, the Biennale producers were able to contextualise the artwork on display within the themes of commerce and global business – in essence the symbols the building stood for – while also (re)revealing the layers of history of the space to a public who would not normally have gone there. As DIS posited themselves, for them, the space can be distinguished from their other venues because it was;

Marco: ... A location surprise that people don't know –

Lauren: Yeah. That was ours, I think.

Marco: That was like, wow.

Lauren_ Because Berliners, they kind of want to discover something.

(Boyle and Rosso, 09/09/2016, lines 89–92)

Biennales as *the* way in which people visit and experience contemporary art today, in order to stay relevant and contemporary to society, must speak the language of the new (Smith, 2012b; Osborne, 2014, p. 21). The Berlin Biennale does this through the recruitment of new curators every two years, through their commissioning of new artwork, and by presenting physical urban space as new, temporary exhibition venues. In this way, the Biennale, as its world exhibition predecessors have done before, has over its twenty-year history injected “new life” into the exhibitionary complex (Bennett, 1988, p. 93) and repeatedly fulfilled expectations with its use of “beautiful amazing old apartments, mystical spaces, old buildings” (Wagner, 14/11/2015, line 100).

However, in doing so, the Biennale also benefits from the experience economy by festivalising once forgotten, everyday urban spaces in both positive and negative ways: On one hand, the continued existence of the Berlin Biennale demonstrates a societal desire to celebrate the aesthetic and historical values of architecture for their ability to inspire innovative and sensorial contemporary art works for an individualised and often intimate experience. On the other hand, the Biennale also illustrates the pitfalls of the oversimplification and spectacularisation of architecture for mainstream, primarily global audiences. One can certainly draw parallels here between this century’s Berlin Biennale and the 19th century world exhibitions where “... cities increasingly opened up their processes to public inspection, laying their secrets open not merely to the gaze of power, but, in principle, to that of everyone” (Bennett, 1988, p. 78). These conflicting tendencies are caused by the same mechanism: a globalisation of the cultural sphere. The Berlin Biennale’s use of the built environment transforms the city into a space of transaction where symbolic and real capital are traded as part of the consumption of contemporary art and architecture. In building its identity and expectation over the past twenty years as a Biennale that constantly reinvents and reveals the new via Berlin’s physical urban space, Biennale producers have unfortunately created a conundrum for the sustainability of their production (Weitzel, 19/7/2016, line 14). With no signs that the temporalities of the city, the global cultural sphere and the Biennale itself will realign, one must ask how the Biennale will be able to sustain such a practice.

Over the course of the Biennale’s history, in order to navigate how Berlin’s urban space can be used despite the limitations of time and money, knowledge is exchanged

between existing staff and incoming curators. However, this is not a balanced exchange. Despite internationally standardised biennial practices claiming that the biennial curator sits at the top of the exhibition food-chain, biennial curating in urban space is a highly mediated process. While their overall vision drives the direction of the Biennale and sets a precedent for which spaces should be considered, this process is mediated by the permanent staff in three main ways. Firstly, permanent staff oblige incoming curators to have a lived experience of the city. Secondly, permanent staff strive to balance the international perspectives that each curatorial vision brings, by shaping it through local knowledge of the city of Berlin and allowing incoming curators to activate urban space as emotional space for the Biennale visitor. It is in the final mediation of incoming curators by permanent staff that we begin to understand the rationale behind the Berlin Biennale's ongoing use of urban space in the city. Despite the challenges of finding and securing spaces to do so permanent staff guide oncoming curators to select new or undiscovered spaces that have not been used before, in order to produce a cultural experience of urban space for the Biennale visitor that is charged with emotion and memory. It is this unique experience facilitated by a directed coming together of artwork, place and public that allows the Biennale to be recognised as a distinct arts event within the global cultural sphere.

5.4 Conclusion

What this chapter demonstrates is that the Berlin Biennale's claim to being in "dialogue with the city" is not just what is projected as an image but lies at the very heart of its production process. Producers can idealise what kind of spaces they want, however it is "the city" (in the form of the real estate market, the physical fabric and its layers of meaning) that speaks first and determines what the parameters are for producing the Biennale, and forces the producers to respond. This process of which venues within Berlin's urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions forms a large part, is one that has remained the same over the Biennale's history. Because Biennale producers operate within a city in continuous flux, the

curatorial visions that are the driving force behind the venue search process must be constantly renegotiated against the complex and changing matrix of resources such as time, money and knowledge. These resources in turn influence the actions of Biennale actors such as incoming curators, permanent staff and funders, and debunks claims that the biennial curator sits at the top of the exhibition food-chain. Rather, it demonstrates that biennial curating in urban space is actually a highly mediated process.

The section “Lifecycles, Actors and Space: Producing the Berlin Biennale” illustrated the production process of the Berlin Biennale, in terms of how venues within Berlin’s urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions.

Exploring the Biennale’s lifecycle and how time and tempo are defined by the producers, it outlines the people involved and what they do. Berlin Biennale producers comprise actors (incoming curators, permanent staff) and non-actors (funders and public) organised into a hierarchical structure where the incoming curator holds a position at the top. Their curatorial vision subsequently dictates how each edition engages with urban space; namely non-typical and dedicated exhibition venues.

However, the second part of this chapter, “Time After Time: Bi-annual (Re)Negotiations of Urban Time, Economies and Knowledge” reveals how such hierarchies are only superficial and that the concept of biennial curating – one guided by autonomous and unwavering curatorial visions – is subject to mediation by the Biennale’s permanent staff. Through an analysis of how curatorial visions are constantly renegotiated against the complex and changing matrix of resources such as time, money and knowledge it illustrated how such resources in turn influence the actions of Biennale producers. In “Urban Temporalities” the temporal rhythms of the city and global cultural sphere were contrasted with that of the Berlin Biennale, demonstrating the fundamental challenge for Biennale producers when acquiring and securing spaces to fulfil curatorial visions. The Biennale as an urban product plays a large role here, claiming its position from the urban sphere as a mediator between local and global rhythms that are out of sync with each other. “Urban Economies” explored how such temporal limitations are inextricably linked to financial ones. It described how the Biennale creates a kind of urban economy where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by Biennale producers to “buy their way” into temporarily accessing public and privately controlled urban

space. However, adopting such strategies also mean that the Biennale plays into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas typical to a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation.

Lastly, the section “Urban Knowledge” explored how knowledge is exchanged between existing staff and incoming curators in order to find, access and secure physical urban space. Its analysis revealed an unbalanced exchange where the realisation of original incoming curatorial visions is heavily mediated by the permanent staff in a number of ways. Whether obliging incoming curators to live in the city of Berlin, and thus embark on a lived experience of the city as part of their tenure with the Biennale or balancing out their international perspectives that each curatorial vision brings with their local knowledge, this relationship results in a dependency on permanent staff. Most significantly, out of a necessity to carve out a unique identity within the global cultural sphere, incoming curators are guided time and time again to select new or undiscovered spaces that have not been used before at a risk to the Biennale’s very sustainability.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation answers questions at the heart of my research investigating why producers of the Berlin Biennale consider urban space desirable as exhibition space by examining the history of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and its relationship with urban space. Specifically, it explores the way in which a dialogue with the city of Berlin is forged through the use of physical urban spaces as exhibition venues from 1998–2018. To summarise the key findings of this research, the Conclusion is divided into four sections that outline the central argument of each chapter: the value of examining the Berlin Biennale in the context of the global rise of biennials (Chapter 2); the relationship between Berlin Biennale and the City of Berlin (Chapter 3); tracing the history of the Berlin Biennale's approach to the urban (Chapter 4); and producing the Berlin Biennale: finding, accessing and securing urban space vis-à-vis the curatorial vision (Chapter 5). Finally, the Conclusion ends with a summary stating the methodological and knowledge contributions to the disciplines of art history and architecture, and the fields of biennial and urban studies giving an outlook on further research following on from the findings of this project.

6.1 The Value of Examining the Berlin Biennale in the Context of the Global Rise of Biennials

The field of biennial studies from an art historical and urban studies perspective, provides a framework for the global contextualisation of the Berlin Biennale as a case study (see section 2.4). When examining the various rationales for the creation of biennials throughout history, it is clear that the 1980s serve as a turning point for biennial making. The biennial model from that time onwards emerges as distinct from their museum counterparts due to their proliferation around the world and their spatio-temporal properties as more contemporary, hybrid exhibition events. In this way, we can identify how the biennial is both influenced by, and helps shape globalisation of the cultural sphere. Practically, the changes that globalisation processes brought to the international cultural sphere, such as the ease of travel of people and artworks, had a profound impact on the rise in biennial making and attendance. Conceptually, the concentrated event nature of the biennial model enabled the contraction of space and

time allowing it to present the world (via visiting international artists and curators) in the city.

Acknowledging the role of the urban within biennials is crucial for this understanding. While international political and social shifts and processes such as globalisation have influenced the development of biennial making throughout history, biennials are ultimately a cultural phenomenon that transpire from the urban, and capable of contributing to that process. Cities are overwhelmingly not only a biennial's geographical location, but help define it ideologically (see section 2.2). The urban space plays a most important role as conceived by biennial producers as globally-connected city nodes well equipped for cultural transaction with other cultural professionals and audiences based in cities around the world. Thus, the biennial contributes to the globalisation of the cultural sphere by replicating a hegemonic model of exhibition making that feeds a collective fantasy providing comprehensive artistic coverage of the globe, through a kind of world system of art. However, in order to remain relevant within this system (their primary audience of other arts professionals), biennials must prioritise continuing newness (of artworks and of curators), thus fostering an, at times, uncomfortable disconnect between global and local spheres, that can play into the hands of Neoliberalist creative city branding agendas (see section 2.3).

The overwhelming consensus that biennials adhere to this continuous cyclical format and yet still constantly reinvent their thematic and artistic content has brought a plethora of problems for the producers who organise them (Smith, 2012a). Yet, astoundingly, these problems are very rarely empirically investigated (Efthymiou *et al.* 2018). Thus, the value of examining one single case study of a biennial within the context of the global rise of biennials is that it allows for an in-depth exploration of such problems related to biennial making. In particular, the Berlin Biennale stands out as a useful case study within the wider biennial studies field precisely because its study and historical documentation is often omitted from the literature. This is rather curious, especially because not only did it emerge during the dramatic increase of biennial development in the 1990s, but also at the very geographical site of so much international social, political and cultural change, which is of course, the city of Berlin. Furthermore, despite its temporal and geographical positioning, unlike its biennial

counterparts in other parts of the world which focused on uniting European countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or reconfiguring the global art world map, the Berlin Biennale focused inwards on the city itself. It is precisely for the above outlined reasons, in addition to the Berlin Biennale producers' self-proclaimed mandate in 2015 as being "in dialogue with the city" (The Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010) that positioned the Berlin Biennale as a fascinating and useful case study for this research. Driven by my own personal and professional desires as a contemporary art curator to understand the relationship between the local and global spheres of cultural production (see Introduction); a demand from the cultural sector to investigate the problematics of the biennial model and its relationship to society at large (Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo, 2010, p. 14); and a lack of existing research into the relationship between contemporary art biennials and urban space, this question lies at the heart of the research: Why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers? In unravelling the meaning behind the Biennale producers' own claims as a biennial "in dialogue with the city", further related questions are raised and answered through the remaining chapters of this dissertation: (1) when, why and how did the Berlin Biennale's self-proclaimed dialogue with the city begin? (2) Why and in what ways did the Berlin Biennale producers continue to use urban space as exhibition space? (3) How and why has that use of urban space changed over time?

6.2 The Berlin Biennale and the City of Berlin

The Biennale's self-appointed mandate – a "dialogue with the city" can be traced back to a number of key events that set the stage for the First Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (see Chapter 2). They can be outlined in three ways: (1) by the socio-political developments that took place between 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall and 1996 when the production of the first Berlin Biennale began; (2) by the culture of *Zwischennutzung* (interim use) of urban space; and (3) by the establishment of the Biennale's host organisation, the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art (KW). The intertwined temporalities of urban development and cultural spheres played a central role in the socio-political developments that took place in Berlin after 1989. The power vacuum after the fall of the Berlin Wall resulted in a slow resolution of conflicts over the restitution of empty property. This, together with relaxed attitudes to

bureaucracy facilitating cultural appropriation of urban space in the 1990s, allowed cultural organisations in Mitte's Spandauer Vorstadt such as the KW to develop (see section 3.4). This can be contrasted with the rapid urban development processes driven by planners, architects, and city promoters to reinvent Berlin's image as a post-modern capital city in a bid for participation in global city competitions. The profound impact of these political and urban developments on the city's arts sector was clear: a decline in funding for cultural institutions in general shortly after the fall of the Wall, followed by political campaigns that provided financial support to selected "high" culture while largely ignoring the rapidly developing grassroots scene (see section 3.2). The result was that the Berlin Biennale's then organising institution, KW, carved out a space for themselves as providers of physical urban space for contemporary art in the largely abandoned, former eastern parts of a newly reconfigured city. However, most significantly, what was instrumental for the KW's survival was the support from local politicians and bureaucrats keen to transform this part of the city into a new cosmopolitan city centre (see section 3.2).

KW's activities, specifically *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace*, were an opportunity for producers not only to capture the moment of young, experimental art and share that with the world, but also an opportunity to define a part of Berlin's urban identity for themselves (see section 3.4). It allowed KW to create another image of Berlin - a counter image in defiance of the official city vision for a new generation of artists. At this time in the city's history, Berlin offered a new beginning for many who had just made the city their home. It was highly malleable, full of possibility, hope and promise (see section 3.3). Helping shape the future Berlin, however, meant KW needed to professionalise and internationalise. Responding to an increasing thirst from the international cultural sector to know more about and connect with the thriving creative scene in Berlin was not a common dream, but the dream of a few (see section 3.4).

In these three activities – *37 Räume*, *Club Berlin* and *Hybrid Workspace* – the city's urban space emerges as a significant part of the Berlin art scene discourse created and promoted by KW (see section 3.4). While *37 Räume* spectacularised the mundane street, and *Club Berlin* exported the hedonistic creative and club lifestyle of the city, *Hybrid Workspace* contributed a more sophisticated conversation about urban development in

Berlin that had taken off at an unprecedented rate at the time. However, the framing of these transformations of urban space, were only possible by engaging the public. To do so was, in turn, only possible by *revealing* the mundane and producing the everyday as a spectacle for an international art world audience. These activities sparked an aesthetic trend of using non-typical exhibition venues such as former factories, schools, apartments and offices in Berlin's East that, while criticised by locals and the press at the time, would continue in future iterations of the Berlin Biennale (see section 3.4). The first Berlin Biennale, and its precursor events, I argue, must be understood as part of a push by Klaus Biesenbach and his peers to carve out a "piece of Berlin" for themselves and create a counter image of Berlin in defiance of the official city vision. And what better way to communicate this alternative vision to an international audience than through a biennial.

6.3 Tracing the History of the Berlin Biennale's Approach to the Urban

Within the local Berlin and international context, the case study of the Berlin Biennale provides an example of how the Biennale's relationship with urban space manifests through each edition over its history. In answering the research question why and how has the Biennale used urban space over its history, the various Biennale editions can be distinguished by the following characteristics: the developmental milestones of its host organisation (either KW or the Berlin Biennale e.V.); the thematic aims, scope and scale of the exhibitions; and finally the relationship the former two aspects had on the conceptual or practical approach to urban space in Berlin. The Berlin Biennale did not develop in isolation, but in awareness of other global contemporary art events which had a profound impact on its relationship with urban space. It is clear that at the time, the biennial model was the perfect format for KW to capture and internationally promote the vibrant developing art scene of Mitte as well as claiming a stake in the development of Berlin's urban (creative) identity. Key to this identity of KW is the way in which the Berlin Biennale has used physical urban space over time. The Biennale's beginnings can be explored along two main lines: the onset of the Biennale producers' desires to secure a place in the international biennial network, and their approach to urban space through communicating "Berlin-ness".

The first Berlin Biennale initially utilised non-typical exhibition spaces. In contrast to “dedicated exhibition spaces” – which can be, for example, purpose-built exhibition venues such as museums, galleries and some arts project spaces – “non-typical exhibition spaces” can be defined as those originally intended as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residencies such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets. These spaces were used as a substitute for the white cube exhibition space, allowing producers to deliberately thematise, reimagine and internationally export Berlin’s urban space through the first Berlin Biennale – a trend that would continue throughout the Biennale’s history in a variety of ways. Indeed, over its twenty-year history, of the thirty-eight spaces the Biennale has used for exhibitions, twenty-one can be classified as non-typical. While the Biennale’s use of such spaces was far more common for earlier editions, it began using an increasing number of dedicated exhibition spaces, particularly in the recent editions from 2012–2018.

The history of the Berlin Biennale from its first edition in 1998 to the tenth edition in 2018, has seen various institutional changes along with local and global events that have influenced its approach to urban space: it began as an institution that used whatever space it could get its hands on in order to latch onto the accelerating and growing contemporary art scene for its first edition. It is the second edition – with its invitation of an international curator, and its aesthetic and geographic departure from Mitte ruins to suburban high-rise – which cements the Berlin Biennale’s place in the international biennial circuit. The third’s ability to participate in and contribute to the international cultural tourism sector by using blockbuster museum venues secured a much-needed boost in funding for the internationally successful fourth edition, which capitalised on the nostalgia of Berlin’s past. The fifth signalled perhaps one of the largest changes in all for the Berlin Biennale edition that would spark a trend continuing to the tenth edition: a thematic desire for, and pragmatic need to use dedicated exhibition spaces. The beginning of institutional critique would also grow and develop through the sixth edition, until reaching boiling point in the eleventh, where urban space in the form of buildings would take more of a back seat and allow controversial artworks to take centre stage in Berlin’s public space such as city streets. A radical aesthetic departure

would see the ninth edition make use of spaces symbolic of the commercialisation and touristification of the Biennale's home ground of Mitte, while the tenth presents a turning point for an institution once interested in dialogue with the city, now more concerned with a dialogue with the world from its position within Berlin.

Over the past twenty years then, the Berlin Biennale has evolved into an established re-occurring institution where its producers have embraced and then promoted the identity it had earlier carved out for itself in the 1990s. Central to this identity is the use of highly-charged and "unique" open, public and private spaces throughout the city. Driven by the thematic intentions of invited curators, these spaces are used in a variety of ways to enhance the thematic and aesthetic formal elements of exhibition making. Firstly, the framing of contemporary art with architecture allows for unusual spatial juxtapositions – sometimes harmonious, sometimes discordant – between the colour, texture, pattern, line and form of artworks and the buildings or public spaces that house them. This also extends beyond visual aesthetics, when other sensorial elements come into play too, with auditory or tactile perceptions of these spaces further enhancing the work. Secondly, by tapping into the symbolic or historic values of architecture, Biennale producers are able to create thematic linkages between the works on display within individual spaces and between the different spaces contained within one biennial.

When understanding the different iterations of the Biennale as making up one continuous history, it becomes clear that there was and is no overarching rule or consistent framework for engaging in urban space in one particular way. In fact, it appears that its difference in approach to urban space from one edition to the next is its strength. Its ability to renew itself every two (or so) years is the temporal element that makes a biennial such a significant form of contemporary art production and display within cities. While now, the Berlin Biennale no longer perpetuates the notion that there are still "free spaces left" in the city, it instead faces the challenge of acquiring and securing spaces in order to fulfil curatorial visions.

6.4 Producing the Berlin Biennale: Finding, accessing and securing urban space vis-à-vis the curatorial vision

The Berlin Biennale's claim to being in "dialogue with the city" is not just what is projected as an image, but lies at the very heart of its production process (see Chapter 5). Producers may idealise the kind of spaces they want for exhibition venues for a particular Berlin Biennale edition. However, it is "the city" (in the form of the real estate market, the physical fabric and its layers of meaning), that determines the parameters for producing the Biennale, and that forces the producers to respond to those parameters. This process in which venues within Berlin's urban space are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions forms a large part and is one that has remained largely the same over the Biennale's history. Because the Berlin Biennale producers operate within a city in continuous flux, the curatorial visions that are the driving force behind the venue search process must be constantly renegotiated against the complex and changing matrix of Berlin Biennale resources such as time, money and knowledge. These resources, in turn, influence the actions of Biennale actors such as incoming curators, permanent staff and funders. This debunks claims that the biennial curator sits at the top of the exhibition-making-food-chain. Rather, it demonstrates that biennial curating in the city is actually a highly mediated process.

Biennale exhibition venues are found, accessed and secured for the staging of temporary exhibitions at the beginning of every two-year Biennale lifecycle. This lifecycle, its time and tempo are defined by the Biennale producers comprising actors (incoming staff such as curators, and permanent staff such as directors, managers, coordinators, architects and assistants) and non-actors (such as funders and the public). Organised into a hierarchical structure where the incoming curator holds a position at the top, curatorial visions brought to the beginning of each Biennale edition by incoming curators, subsequently dictate how each edition engages with urban space (see section 5.2). However, such hierarchies are only superficial (see section 5.3). The concept of biennial curating as guided by autonomous and unwavering curatorial visions is in fact subject to mediation by the Biennale's permanent staff who must constantly guide curators according to limits on time, money and knowledge.

The temporal rhythms of the city and global cultural sphere must contrasted with that of the Berlin Biennale (see “Urban Temporalities”, in section 5.3). This contrast points at a fundamental challenge for the Biennale producers to deal with the lack of synchronicity between their production schedule, temporal expectations of the Biennial as a global event, and the availability of the city’s physical urban space when acquiring and securing spaces to fulfil curatorial visions. The urban can thus be conceived through the Biennale as a mediator between local and global rhythms that are out of sync with each other. Such temporal limitations are inextricably linked to financial ones (see “Urban Economies”, in section 5.3): the Biennale creates a kind of urban economy where various currencies such as money and contacts are used by the Biennale producers to “buy their way” into temporarily accessing public and privately controlled urban space. However, by adopting such strategies, the Biennale ultimately plays into neoliberalist creative city marketing agendas typical to a twinned economic-cultural process of globalisation where symbolic and real capital are traded as part of the consumption of contemporary art and architecture.

Lastly, knowledge is exchanged between existing staff and incoming curators in order to find, access and secure physical urban space (see “Urban Knowledge”, in section 5.3). An unbalanced exchange of knowledge between staff is revealed and demonstrates that the realisation of original incoming curatorial visions is heavily mediated by the permanent staff in a number of ways. (1) incoming curators are obliged to live in the city of Berlin, and thus embark on a lived experience of the city as part of their tenure with the Biennale; (2) the international perspectives that each curatorial vision brings is almost always balanced out by the local knowledge of permanent staff leading to; (3) a dependency on permanent staff. Most significantly, out of a necessity to carve out a unique identity within the global cultural sphere, incoming curators of the Berlin Biennale are guided to select new or “undiscovered” spaces that have not been used before, despite the challenges that being out of temporal sync with the city of Berlin’s escalating real estate costs presents to producers.

6.5 Contribution to the Field and Future Research Avenues

This dissertation contributes original methodological approaches, new knowledge and avenues for further research to a number of fields. Firstly, it demonstrates how a research method that combines data collection and analytical tools from different disciplines and fields of urban studies, art history and sociology to create a tailored approach that takes into account an historical and spatial understanding of the case study of the Berlin Biennale. Secondly, it brings new empirical biennial research to art history, curatorial studies and biennial studies, new perspectives to the discipline of architecture, and contributes to the field of urban studies by highlighting the role of culture in defining the urban. Lastly, this research offers avenues for future research along a number of themes, such as temporality and the conditions of cultural labour, continuing access to physical urban space for cultural producers and for the public.

This dissertation offers an original methodological contribution by combining analytical tools from art historical, urban studies and sociological approaches such as site analysis, grounded theory method and visual analysis. The research methods employed in this dissertation (see “Appendix I: Research Methods”), comprise (1) desk research; (2) fieldwork; (3) systematic analysis; and (4) an examination of challenges and ethical considerations, which provided a rich and rigorous framework for collecting and analysing data. This was particularly helpful as the field of biennial studies lacks empirical research that could be drawn on for this research project (Efthymiou *et al.* 2018). For example, through the desk research, while the review of art historical literature naturally supported my understanding of the Berlin Biennale and biennials in general, urban studies literature, particularly those pertaining to the history of the socio-political developments of the city of Berlin, brought unique perspectives to my case study. Furthermore, it opened out the discourse of biennials studies to include other voices to a field that is usually dominated by art historians or industry professionals. Similarly, also forming part of my desk research, the process of map making contributed to a spatial understanding of the specific focus of my case study – the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998–2018 – an approach that has not been used before in biennial studies.

In terms of the fieldwork, data was collected through site visits to all the Berlin Biennale's former exhibition venues and informal and in-depth interviews with a variety of Berlin Biennale actors. The multiple perspectives gained from speaking to a variety of Biennale producers as part of this approach to fieldwork thus makes a contribution to the fields of curatorial and biennial studies by guiding the discourse on biennial and exhibition making to take into account the often overlooked voices of essential actors such as artists, assistants and architects. It thus reveals a more complex picture of the practices of exhibition making, particularly those shaped by their specific location within urban space.

My analytical contribution to the field demonstrates that the two analytical tools employed in this research – site analysis and Grounded Theory Method (GTM) – are useful for providing a framework analysing both the physical sites and the Biennale producers' discourse on the Biennale's exhibition venues. In particular, the field of urban studies aided in the creation of venue categories and analysis of spaces based on their architectural histories, function and aesthetics. This used in combination with an art historical approach of visual analysis of those sites and the Biennale catalogue texts describing them, allowed for a deeper understanding of these sites and their meanings.

Secondly, GTM, originating in sociology and now common in many social sciences, provided the foundation for the collection, coding and analysis of recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors and of the Berlin Biennale catalogues to understand (a) the relationships between these actors and (b) what processes take place as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making. In light of the lack of empirical research on biennials, this dissertation thus offers a blueprint for a methodological approach that enables the exploration of the complexities of phenomena, actions and relationships within the cultural sector. It provides an example of how GTM can be used to generate theory from data sourced within this sector and provide an alternative and more scholarly perspective to the current biennial industry-based ones. In particular, the methodological approach of this research sheds light on how a biennial's relationship with its host city can be understood, how biennial producers relate and interact with one another, and thus provide valuable insights for

those charged with both the study and the organisation of biennials operating in urban space.

This dissertation brings new knowledge to a number of disciplines and fields of research. Firstly, it presents original empirical biennial research to the discipline of art history, and their related fields of curatorial and biennial studies. Secondly, it brings new perspectives to the discipline of architecture by discussing the role of physical urban space and its relationship with the production and display of contemporary art. Lastly, it makes a contribution to the field of urban studies by raising important questions for highlighting the role of culture within defining the urban.

Despite the claims of overwhelming significance of the biennial format for the cultural sphere, its proliferation, and even oversaturation, the biennial still suffers from a lack of academic scrutiny (Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo 2010, p. 14; Green and Gardner 2016, p. 4; Efthymiou *et al.* 2018, p. 4). While the past decade has seen an increase in discourse about the biennial, much of it is produced by those active in their production (Vanderlinden and Filipovic, 2005; Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo, 2010; International Biennial Association (IBA), 2014). In 2010, The Biennial Reader called on the field of art history to ensure that the biennial “must not remain unexamined, all the more so precisely because its relevance and critical currency are so profoundly contested.” (Filipovic, Hal and Øvstebo, 2010, p. 14). However, despite these calls, it still took until 2018 for the empirical study of biennials worldwide to be conducted (Efthymiou *et al.* 2018). Additionally, despite the fact that most biennials are located in cities, in reviewing the literature on biennials for this research, it soon became clear that there is a fundamental lack of research conducted on contemporary art biennials from fields such as urban studies. Furthermore, what analyses of biennials do exist tend to focus on single edition case studies, rather than investigations into the development of biennial institutions over time. This dissertation thus offers the disciplines of art history and the related field of biennial studies an in-depth analysis into the processes and meanings generated by one biennial over time as it evolves with its host city.

This dissertation also makes a contribution to the discipline of architecture. The case study of the Berlin Biennale is presented as an arts event and exhibition where the

values of architecture are bestowed, exchanged and come into conflict. As architecture has always been found in a space between its monetary and cultural values (Macarthur *et al.* 2019), this research offers insights into how different values of architecture as perceived by different Biennale producers intersect and affect one another. It contributes to a discourse on architecture that goes beyond its value as merely the infrastructure of culture (Macarthur *et al.* 2019), by examining what value it holds for those involved in the production and consumption of the contemporary arts exhibitions it frames.

The last contribution to knowledge that this dissertation makes is its contribution to urban studies. In particular, in addressing the ways in which the Berlin Biennale has sought a dialogue with the city throughout its history, this dissertation highlights the way in which culture can define the urban. It allows for a deeper understanding of the urban as not just a physical space used by biennial producers but as something conceptualised, (re-) imagined and projected by them throughout the two-year lifecycle of the Biennale. It is an understanding of the urban that acknowledges the various temporal planes that exist, sometimes in rhythm with each other, but more often than not, in conflict with one another – as seen through the accelerating tempo of the city against that of the Biennale lifecycle, against that of the global art sphere. Such conceptualisations of the urban through long-term and ongoing cultural productions such as the Berlin Biennale can be a way of exploring, as Harding and Blokland describe, “...microcosm(s) of societies” that illuminate both tangible and less obvious entanglements between the processes of globalisation and our cities (Harding and Blokland, 2014, p. 19).

Finally, this research offers avenues for future research along a number of themes, such as temporality and the conditions of cultural labour, continuing access to physical urban space for cultural producers and for the public. During the research process, it became clear when speaking to Biennale producers that the struggle to find, access and secure physical urban spaces for exhibition making had a direct impact on their labour conditions. Others, too, have written about the connections between the biennial model as a neoliberal product that participates in an international, cultural gig economy that I suspect is not very sustainable and excludes those without the capital to participate in

it. Further research is needed to investigate the role the biennial, and its adherence to the two-year cycle of renewal plays in perpetuating exploitative working conditions within the cultural field.

Other research that would also contribute to further investigation into temporality and the cultural field is research into the increasing privatisation and commercialisation of cities' real estate and the threat it poses for other kinds of (particularly independent) cultural producers to continue to access space in the city for contemporary art exhibitions. What this research makes clear is that while the Biennale is an institution that has struggled to find, access and secure space over the years, it still benefits from continued federal and state financial support. This research thus raises important questions about who *else* struggles to access to physical urban space for cultural production, either here in Berlin or indeed in cities elsewhere, and under what conditions.

There are also opportunities to build on this research by embracing a much broader definition of the Biennial producer, by exploring the role of the public. A significant finding of this research suggests that the production process of biennial making, with particular regard to its temporal lifecycle, prioritises a professional, international arts audience, rather than an immediate public. While recent biennials themselves have sought to bring these concerns to light (for example in Berlin the seventh and tenth Berlin Biennales, along with the thirteenth Istanbul Biennial) further research could be undertaken to examine how the urban as defined by its (biennial visiting and non-visiting) citizens is conceived and engaged with by biennials.

6.6 Conclusion

This dissertation presents the results of four years of research motivated by a combination of personal and professional desires as a contemporary art curator working and living in Berlin. Underpinning each step of the research process has been my longing to understand the relationship between the local and global spheres of cultural production, particularly through the paradoxical exhibition model of the biennial which claims an attachment to both. It presents answers to the questions at the

heart of my research investigating why urban space is desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers. It outlines my examination of the history of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art and its relationship with urban space. Specifically, it explores the way in which a dialogue with the city of Berlin is forged through the use of physical urban spaces as exhibition venues from 1998–2018. Summarising the key findings of the research, the Conclusion outlined the central argument of each chapter in four sections: the value of examining the Berlin Biennale in the context of the global rise of biennials (Chapter 1); the relationship between Berlin Biennale and the City of Berlin (Chapter 2); tracing the history of the Berlin Biennale's approach to the urban (Chapter 3); and producing the Berlin Biennale: finding, accessing and securing urban space vis-à-vis the curatorial vision (Chapter 4). In doing so, it makes an academic contribution to the disciplines of art history and architecture and to the fields of biennial, urban and curatorial studies, and to the cultural sector, by responding to recent calls to investigate the problematics of the biennial model and address a largely overlooked facet of biennial making and research: the biennial's relationship with urban space.

This dissertation posits that for the Berlin Biennale producers, its relationship with urban space, or in their words, being in dialogue with the city, is not just what is projected as an image of Berlin's urban space, but lies at the very heart of its production process. It is their dialogue with the global cultural sphere, with the city of Berlin, with their own history and their role in providing a physical space in Berlin for contemporary art, and a dialogue between that space, curatorial visions, contemporary art and its public. This dialogue can be understood as being both driven by, and as a contributor to the globalisation of the cultural sphere. It is driven by the way in which global cultural trends such as the rise of biennials in cities worldwide helped influence the first Berlin Biennale's producers – firstly in encouraging them to instigate a biennial in response to a growing momentum of the 1990s Berlin art scene, and secondly in motivating them to carve out a unique identity for themselves in the growing international biennial network. In this way, the urban plays a significant role for the Berlin Biennale: it is the physical site, the enabler for claiming a space for contemporary art production and its display, in a city lacking dedicated spaces serving this function. The urban is a conceptual site too, allowing the Berlin Biennale to use urban space as a communicator of meaning through tapping into the histories or aesthetics of a variety of

physical urban spaces throughout the city, thereby framing contemporary art in innovative and evocative ways, creating multi-sensorial experiences for the viewer. By re-framing urban space as “new” space within the context of the Biennale, it retains its uniqueness within an ever-growing international sphere of contemporary art biennials. In this way, the Berlin Biennale is not immune to the same criticisms applied to other biennials as contributing to a globalised world system of art where other hegemonic biennial models prioritise continuing newness (of artworks and of curators) and foster an uncomfortable disconnect between global and local spheres.

Most significantly, this research draws attention to what is perhaps the most pressing issue of all: so long as contemporary art biennials around the world continue to prioritise curating regular and renewing exhibitions, biennials such as Berlin, which seek their renewal through particularly non-typical exhibition spaces, will struggle against the increasing privatisation, commercialisation and rental increases of the city’s urban space. Thus, this research highlights a fundamental concern, not just for the Berlin Biennale, but potentially for all innovative event-based cultural activities produced in cities around the world, and their engagement of urban space as creative sources and physical sites for contemporary art.

Appendix I: Research Methods

Introduction

The Appendices section Research Methods describes the transdisciplinary approach of art history and urban studies methods utilised for this research and what benefits, challenges and limits arose during this process. It is divided into four sections: Desk Research, Fieldwork, Analysis and Challenges and Ethical Considerations. The Desk Research section outlines how I reviewed art historical and urban studies literature, particularly those pertaining to the history of the Berlin Biennale and biennales in general, as well as my process of map making which both contributed to a socio-historical and spatial understanding of my subject of focus - the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998-2018. The Fieldwork section describes the way in which data was collected through site visits to all the Berlin Biennale's former exhibition venues and informal and in-depth interviews with a variety of Berlin Biennale actors.

The Analysis section explores the two analytical tools employed in this research: site analysis and Grounded Theory Method. Firstly, it describes the way in which urban studies provided guidance for an analysis of the Biennale's exhibition venues, particularly in the creation of venue categories and analysis of spaces based on their architectural histories, function and aesthetics. Secondly, this section describes how the Grounded Theory Method from the discipline of Sociology inspired the collection, coding and analysis of recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors and of the Berlin Biennale catalogues to understand the relationships between these actors and what processes take place as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making. The final part of the Research Methods chapter outlines the challenges and ethical considerations for the Desk Research, Fieldwork and Analysis methods. It demonstrates how I overcame a lack of access to archival material when conducting Desk Research; how ethical considerations and lack of access to interview subjects were navigated for the Fieldwork; and how I resolved a set of logistical challenges that Grounded Theory Method posed for the research schedule.

My employment of these research methods roughly followed the chronology laid out in this Appendices section, however, there was a lot of overlap and working back and forth between desk research, working in the field and analyzing collected data, as is the approach of Grounded Theory Method. For example, while map making, site visits and the majority of the interviews were conducted in the first two years of the research process, the reviewing of literature continued throughout the entire research process. Similarly, and as described in full detail below in the analysis section, the analysis of interviews began before others interviews had been conducted. The reasons for this approach are described in full below. In short, many of the decisions I have made for certain methodological approaches were, rather ironically, the result of temporal conflicts between my own 4-year research timeline, that didn't always match with the 2-year lifecycle of my case study of the Berlin Biennale.

Desk Research

This section outlines how my review of art historical and urban studies literature and a process of mapping the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998-2018 contributed to a socio-historical and spatial and understanding of the Berlin Biennale and how it engages with urban space.

Literature Review

The literature review was crucial for firstly developing and answering the main and sub- research questions for this dissertation. It was through my initial exploration of the Berlin Biennale website archives that I discovered the Biennale's claim to being "in dialogue with the city" which led to my desire to answer my research questions: why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by BB producers? When, why and how did the Berlin Biennale's dialogue with the city begin? Why and in what ways did Berlin Biennale producers continue to use urban space as exhibition space? How and why has that use of urban space changed over time? Thus, my primary goal of the literature review was to identify the main actors involved in producing the Berlin Biennale, how it functioned as an institution, how it was instigated and developed, and how producers have approached urban space in Berlin over time since the Biennale began. Adopting a

transdisciplinary approach, I sought material not only produced by scholars and respected professionals from within the Fine Arts, Art History and Museum Studies but also from Urban Studies, such as architects, urban planners, urban historians, and political scientists in order to bring unique perspectives to the growing field of biennale and exhibition studies that is usually dominated by Art Historians or industry professionals. The main objectives of the literature review were to contextualise the case study of the Berlin Biennale through focusing on the themes of:

- The history of the development of the Berlin Biennale's host organisation the Kunst-Werke Institute of Contemporary Art from 1991-2018, and the Berlin Biennale e.V. from 1996-2018
- The Berlin art and cultural scene from 1989-1996 (up to the conception of first Berlin Biennale)
- Berlin's socio-political climate from 1989-1996
- The history of the development of biennales in cities worldwide after 1980

My literature sources for the history of the Berlin Biennale included the Berlin Biennale printed catalogue publications (editions 1-10), Berlin Biennale online documents such as archived and current webpages including programmes and press releases (editions 1-10), selected reviews, journal articles, essays, publications by art historians, artists, curators and art critics, podcasts, video casts and Facebook pages. These provided an overview of the Biennale's twenty-year history of who the directors, funders, curators and production team were, why the biennale was created, how the biennale as an institution was structured, how the biennale was funded, major institutional changes and what exhibition venues were used. Most importantly, performing the literature review also enabled me to assess and determine that the Berlin Biennale catalogues could also be used as data source for Grounded Theory Analysis along with my planned interviews.

My sources for exploring the history of Berlin between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the first edition of the Berlin Biennale in 1996 included journal articles, essays, publications by urban scholars, architects, art historians, artists, curators and art critics, along with Berlin Biennale archival material itself, such as essays dealing with social,

political or urban development issues produced as part of the Biennale's exhibition catalogues. Data was collected from sources held in the Press Archive and internal staff library of the KW, as well as the Archives at the Berlinische Galerie. These provided an overview of what context the Berlin Biennale grew out of as well as what kinds of thematic interests each Berlin Biennale edition dealt with. In particular, I focused on what national and local politics affected the art scene and the Biennale's development; the urban development of Berlin - specifically the Mitte neighbourhood where the biennale originated; and developments within Berlin's art scene.

Map Making

To visualise how Berlin's urban space had been used by the biennale over its twenty year history, I embarked on a process of mapping each exhibition venue the Berlin Biennale has used from 1998-2018. I firstly defined the parameters of "urban space" in terms of how the Berlin Biennale themselves defined their main exhibition venues as listed on their website. Exhibition venues are communicated quite clearly as distinct from other kinds of locations the Biennale engages with on the Biennale's website archive, such as spaces used for one-off events. As my research interest lay with venues that had been transformed and used by Biennale producers as exhibition venues, particularly because this seemed to be the way in which the Biennale distinguished themselves as a Biennale, other kinds of spaces that the Biennale used for events and educational activity were not included.

While it does throw up some interesting questions about what exactly distinguishes a biennale "exhibition" from an "event" and from whose perspective, an investigation into this issue was beyond the scope of this research. Selecting the exhibition venues only was helpful in terms of providing a limit of 38 different venues to analyse – a number deemed appropriate for the amount of time to conduct the research project that would also offer a rich source of data.

I initially created a Google map to chart where within the city of Berlin the Biennale's exhibition venues were found since its inception in 1998 until the time of writing in 2018. This proved useful for visualising how urban space had been used by the Biennale over its twenty year history (Figure 76). The Google map enabled me to create my own

unique map where I plotted the various Berlin Biennale venues throughout the city of Berlin. I also colour coded each venue in groups according to its Biennale edition from the 1st in 1998, until the 10th in 2018. The mapping method brought to the analysis a way to explore where within the city exhibition venues were used by the Biennale, for which editions, and how the geographical locations of the use of physical urban space have either remained the same or changed over time. For example, we can see how, the Biennale has ventured out beyond Mitte and Kreuzberg into neighbourhoods such as Alt Treptow (Berlin Biennale 2 in 2001) or Dahlem (Berlin Biennale 9 in 2016), or where and at what point in time spaces were used and re-used such as the Kunst-Werke in Mitte's Auguststrasse (Berlin Biennales 1-10, from 1998 to 2018) or Akademie der Künste (Berlin Biennales 1 in 1998, and 9 in 2016) (Figure 9).

While the Google map had the added advantage that it was accessible online and thus a very user friendly map when field visits to these venues were later conducted, and could be zoomed into and out of in order to understand the relationship between venues, for copyright reasons and on practical grounds of not being able to visually represent the data in a clear enough way, this map has been rendered into 11 more readable maps. A large scale version of the map (Figure 9) depicts the biennale's entire history of exhibition venues as it is mapped through time and space, and can be found at the beginning of Chapter 3. 10 additional maps were created to demonstrate the "clusters" of venues that were employed for each Biennale edition and are found at the beginning of each sub-chapter in Chapter 4, *Mapping the Berlin Biennale from 1998-2018*.

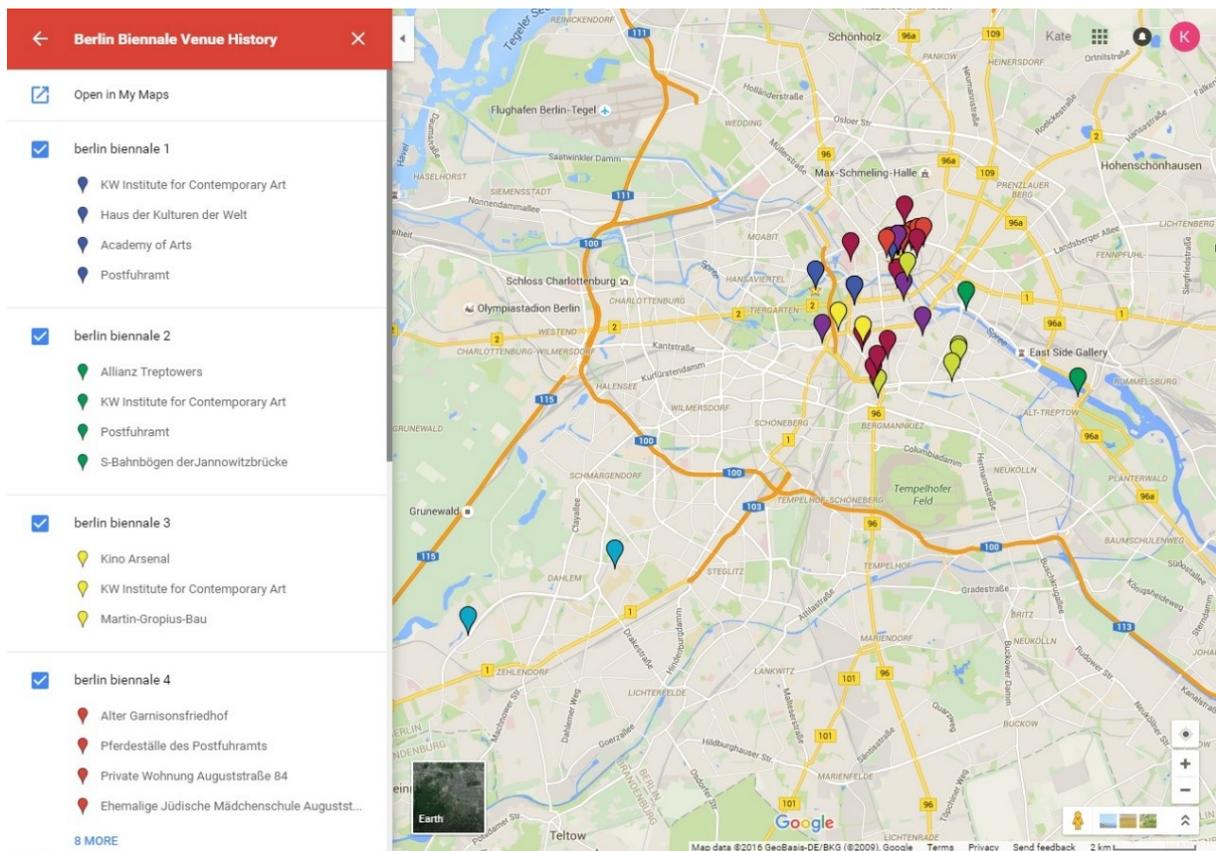


Figure 76: Google map of the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998-2018. Image: Kate Brehme, 2018

Fieldwork

The Fieldwork section describes the way in which primary data was collected through site visits to all the Berlin Biennale's former exhibition venues and informal and in-depth interviews with a variety of Berlin Biennale actors. In this way, the fieldwork enabled me to answer the research question of why urban space is desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers by asking direct questions to the people responsible for its production and gathering my own data on the spaces in question.

Site Visits

In order to bridge the information gap between the digital urban landscape of the maps and the real physical urban landscape of Berlin, I conducted site visits to all former Berlin Biennale exhibition venues. This served two purposes: a) it allowed me to

confirm their actual addresses and eliminate any discrepancies between the digital map and what existed in reality and identify any changes since the time of the Biennale's use of the venues b) it allowed me to physically experience and thus understand each site first-hand and record its various qualities. This process was helpful for getting past my own "taken for granted" interpretation of the city where I reside and understanding each venue's geographical location and proximity to other spaces either used by the Biennale in the past or other nearby spaces of significance. At each site, I photographically documented the venue's exterior and recorded data about its architectural style and condition, which was followed up by desk research into its history, symbolic value, the demographics of the surrounding area, and its intended and actual function and use at the time of each Biennale (Bereskin, 2016). I used a number of sources such as city databases, heritage lists, venue websites, public archives such as Berlin Landesarchiv and two private photography collections.

Of the 38 sites visited, 9 were visited during the exhibition run of a Berlin Biennale edition. This was helpful in order to have a direct experience of the Biennale's transformation of such spaces into exhibition venues, particularly in terms of gaining an understanding of the interiors of these spaces, and the juxtaposition of contemporary art with them.

Informal and in-depth interviews

I conducted a total of 18 interviews with a range of cultural workers related to the history of the Berlin Biennale. Of those 18 interviews, three were conducted to gather background information on the development of the Biennale's host organisation KW and the Berlin art sector in the 1990s to further supplement my Desk Research.

Interviews were conducted with:

- ❖ Ingrid Wagner, Referatsleiterin für die institutionelle Förderung von Künstlerinnen, Künstlern, Projekten und Freien Gruppen, Berlin
Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa (Head of Department, Institutional Funding of Artists, Projects and Independent Groups, Berlin Senat Department of Culture and Europe)

- ❖ Interviewee 1, (anonymised) artist resident at KW in the early 90s

Interviewed on 19/12/2018

- ❖ Conny Becker, Berlin based curator and writer

Interviewed on 5/7/2016

The remaining 15 interviews conducted focused on Berlin Biennale producers. Biennale producers are defined in this research in two ways: as Biennale actors, employed by the Biennale with a direct contribution to the production process and non-Biennale actors, people not employed by the Biennale but who have a stake in the Biennale's existence. A closer examination of these two types of actors reveals their complex relationships with each other. For example, Biennale actors can be further divided into two sub-groups comprising what can be described as permanent and incoming staff. Permanent staff are those who are involved in the production of several Biennale editions over time, for example the Biennale director, project or exhibition managers and assistants, education staff, and architects. By contrast, incoming staff are those who are invited to work for the Biennale for the temporary two-year production period of a single Biennale edition, such as curators and their assistants, and the artists whom they invite.

I decided quite early on in the research process that it was important to capture a wide range of voices as data sources. When reviewing the literature on the development of biennales in general, I realised that much of the documentation and analysis of contemporary art biennales was often written from the perspective of biennale curators, directors or art critics, and occasionally the exhibiting artists. It became quite clear after my first interview that the Berlin Biennale is produced not just by curators and directors, but by an entire team of staff who all play a role in the way in which urban space is conceptualised and approached for creating the Biennale's exhibitions. I also decided to limit my definition of producer to those who actually create/have created the Biennale, rather than a more conceptually broader definition that would take the Biennale visitor into account. While I acknowledge that a very argument can be made for the visitor's role in helping produce the biennale through their reception of and participation in it (as is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4), my research interests lay more with the production process of the Biennale and its relationship to urban space.

There were two objectives of the interviews. The first objective was to determine the facts about the history and production process of the Berlin Biennale:

- Why the biennale was created and under what (urban) conditions
- What major changes occurred and what their impact was
- How the biennale as an institution was/is structured

The second objective was to determine how and why, from the perspective of Berlin Biennale producers, certain biennial exhibition sites were used between 1998-2016:

- What kinds of processes and resources did the biennale producers use to find and secure venues
- What was the impact of time on these methods
- Was there a criteria spaces must adhere to

I began with preliminary informal, unrecorded interviews with two former (anonymous) Berlin Biennale employees who not only provided basic information on how the biennale worked and made suggestions for whom I should speak to, but also acted as gatekeepers and gave me access to further interview partners. They are referred to in the dissertation as:

- ❖ Interviewee 2, former (anonymised) Berlin Biennale employee #1
interviewed on 3/12/2015 and 4/3/2016
- ❖ Interviewee 3, former (anonymised) Berlin Biennale employee #2
interviewed on 3/12/2015

13 formal recorded in-depth narrative interviews were then conducted with:

- ❖ Lauren Boyle and Marco Rosso, part of artist collective DIS, curatorial team for the 9th edition of the Berlin Biennale, 2016
Interviewed on 9/9/2016

- ❖ Ingar Dragset, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998
Interviewed on 20/1/2016
- ❖ Jeanette Gogoll, production co-ordinator, 6th-10th Berlin Biennale, 2010-2018
Interviewed on the 28/06/2016
- ❖ Christine Hohenbülcher, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998
Interviewed on the 17/11/2016
- ❖ Gabriele Horn, Director of KW, 2000-2016, Director of Berlin Biennale, 2000-2018
Interviewed on the 19/7/2016 and 15/12/2016
- ❖ Cathrin Mayer, assistant curator for the 9th Berlin Biennale, 2016, curator KW, 2016-2018
Interviewed 5/8/2016
- ❖ Walter Musacchi, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998
Interviewed 24/11/2016
- ❖ Sean Patten, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998
Interviewed on the 2/12/2016
- ❖ Christine Regus, Referatsleiterin „Archive, Bibliotheken, Gedenkstätten, Museen und Einrichtungen bildender Kunst“, Berlin Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa (Head of Department, Archives, Libraries, Memorials, Museums and Facilitating Visual Art, Berlin Senat Department of Culture and Europe), active in Berlin cultural politics since early 1990s and on the Advisory Board of the Berlin Biennale
Interviewed on the 8/7/2016
- ❖ Marlene Schrecker, freelance architect, 3rd – 9th Berlin Biennale
Interviewed on the 28/6/2016
- ❖ Renate Wagner, production manager, 3rd – 6th Berlin Biennale
Interviewed on the 14/11/2015 and 23/4/2016
- ❖ Antje Weitzel, project manager, 7th – 10th Berlin Biennale
Interviewed on the 19/7/2016
- ❖ Miriam Wiesel, editor of the 1st Berlin Biennale catalogue and part of the extended curatorial team, 1998
Interviewed on the 25/11/2016

Analysis

The Analysis section explores the two analytical tools employed in this research: Site Analysis and Grounded Theory Method. Firstly, it describes the way in which urban studies provided guidance for an analysis of the Biennale's exhibition venues, particularly in the creation of venue categories and analysis of spaces based on their architectural histories, function and aesthetics. Secondly, this section describes how the Grounded Theory Method from the discipline of Sociology inspired the collection, coding and analysis of recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors and of the Berlin Biennale catalogues. These two analytical tools were essential for answering the research question why is urban space desirable as exhibition space by Berlin Biennale producers because it enabled me to a) understand how and what kind of urban space had been used over the Biennale's history and b) understand why Berlin Biennale producers make certain decisions as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making.

Site Analysis

A process of Site Analysis was employed to analyse the data collected from the Site Visits conducted earlier in the research project. After having collected visual information on each exhibition venue's architectural style, condition, history, symbolic value, the demographics of the surrounding area, and its intended and actual function and use at the time of each Biennale, I was able to systematically visually and historically analyse each space individually and then as a group pertaining to each Biennale edition. It also allowed me to determine any trends of the kind of spaces used over longer periods of time, such as over the entire course of the biennale's history.

What became evident from this analysis, was a stark difference between spaces that had been intended for the display of contemporary art, and those that had not. I thus developed two categories "dedicated exhibition spaces" – which can be, for example, purpose built exhibition venues such as the Neue Nationalgalerie – and "non-typical exhibition spaces". Because the majority of spaces used by the Berlin Biennale were non-typical exhibition spaces, I drew from urban studies literature on temporary use of

urban space in Berlin to help identify and create categories for these spaces. Thus, non-typical exhibition spaces can be defined in this research as those originally intended as public amenities such as schools, churches, leisure and entertainment centres; city infrastructure such as offices, factories and train stations; private residencies such as apartments; and non-built structures such as vacant building plots and city streets (Senatsverwaltung für Stadentwicklung Berlin, 2007). Below is a table that outlines these different categories (Table 1).

*Table 1 Berlin Biennale Exhibition Venues 1998-2018 Categorised by Type and Function.
Kate Brehme, 2019*

Edition	Building Name	Year Used	Typical art space/ non-typical art space	Original Function	Original function specifics	Use at time of Biennale
bb1- bb10	KW	1998 - 2016	both	private residency	late 1700s Prussian apartment, factory, art studios and gallery	contemporary art gallery
bb1, bb7, bb9	Akademie der Künste (Pariser Platz)	1998, 2012, 2016	both	private residency	early 1700s baroque mansion, academy of arts in 1900s	vacant (1998); contemporary art gallery (2012/2016)
bb1, bb2	Former Postfuhramt	1998, 2001	non- typical art space	city infrastructure	1730s/1870s post-office and residence for postal workers	vacant but used as exhibition space
bb1	Haus der Kulturen der Welt	1998	both	cultural center	late 1950s congress hall	cultural center/gallery
bb2	Allianz Treptowers	2001	non- typical art space	commercial property	1998 office for insurance company	office for Allianz insurance company
bb2	S-Bahnbögen der Jannowitzbrücke	2001	non- typical art space	city infrastructure	late 1800s train station storage space, vacant, galleries, nightclubs	unknown
bb3	Kino Arsenal	2004	typical art space	public amenity	2000s cinema run by charitable film foundation	cinema
bb3	Martin-Gropius Bau	2004	typical art space	art museum	late 1800s arts and crafts museum	art museum
bb4	Alte Garnisonfriedhof	2006	non- typical art space	public amenity	early 1700s cemetery for Prussian officers and their families.	dis-used cemetery
bb4	Pferdestalle des Postfuhramts	2006	non- typical art space	city infrastructure	1870s post-office stables	unknown, privately owned

bb4	private apartment Auguststrasse 84	2006	non-typical art space	private residency/commercial property	late 1890s apartment, grocery store, bar.	unknown
bb4	private apartment Auguststrasse 17	2006	non-typical art space	private residency	1865 apartment, part of the complex comprising the Jewish hospital/Children's Home.	residential
bb4	private apartment Auguststrasse 23	2006	non-typical art space	private residency/commercial property	1837 apartment, butchers, laundry, publishing and art industry.	apartment, commercial property and cultural space
bb4	street corner Auguststrasse 52	2006	non-typical art space	non-built space	street corner	street corner
bb4	Gagosian Gallery	2006	both	private residency/commercial property/art gallery	1830s apartment and shop, grassroots art gallery in 90s, business	unknown
bb4	former Jewish Girls' school	2006	non-typical art space	public amenity	late 1920s school for girls, GDR highschool, returned to Jewish community	vacant
bb4	Office Auguststrasse 44	2006	non-typical art space	city infrastructure	Built in 1985 as (first floor) central janitorial offices of the Berlin Mitte Housing Authorities (WBM), apartments	unknown
bb4	Clärchens Ballhaus	2006	non-typical art space	public amenity	1913 dance hall, band hall and bowling alley	dance hall
bb4	St Johannes Evangelist-Kirche	2006	non-typical art space	public amenity	mid 1800s church, university storage, cultural events	church and cultural event space
bb5	Neue Nationalgalerie	2008	typical art space	art museum	1960s contemporary art museum	art museum
bb5	Schinkel Pavilion	2008	typical art space	art gallery	1960s contemporary art gallery	art gallery

bb5	Skulpturenpark	2008	both	vacant plot	Prussian military site, farming land, tenement housing, during GDR Berlin Wall a demilitarised zone, after 1989 a parking lot, garbage dump, dog park, offices and residential buildings, sculpture park	vacant plot but run as a sculpture park by artist collective
bb6	Alte Nationalgalerie	2010	typical art space	art museum	late 1800s art museum	art museum
bb6	private apartment Dresdenerstr 19	2010	non-typical art space	private residency	19th century shop and apartment	unknown
bb6	private apartment Kohlfurterstrasse 1	2010	non-typical art space	private residency	19th century shop and apartment	unknown
bb6	Garage Mehringdamm 28	2010	non-typical art space	city infrastructure/ commercial	(date unknown) Taxi company garage	unknown
bb6	office/club/restaurant Oranienplatz 17	2010	non-typical art space	city infrastructure/ commercial/ residence	1913 offices for General Electricity Association, German telecom, then textiles factory, then C&A offices, communist party offices of west Germany during GDR, club and discount grocery, residency	residence of lawyer
bb7	Deutschlandhaus	2012	non-typical art space	public amenity	1927 leisure center, „nationalen Pflege der ostdeutschen Kultur“, center for GDR refugees, government offices.	unknown
bb7	street corner Friedrichstrasse / Besselstrasse	2012	non-typical art space	non-built space	street corner	street corner
bb7	St Elisabethkirche	2012	both	public amenity	1830s church	cultural purposes

bb8	Haus am Waldsee	2014	both	private residency/art gallery	1920 villa for wealthy businessman, cultural office of Zehlendorf, contemporary art gallery	art gallery
bb8	Museen Dahlem	2014	typical art space	ethnographic museum	1964 ethnographic museum	ethnographic museum
bb9	European School of Management and Technology	2016	non-typical art space	city infrastructure	1964 Staatsrat (National Council) of the GDR, headquarters of the East German government until 1989, temporary office of the German chancellor from 1999 to 2001, 2001-2004 used for events, exhibitions and congresses, from 2004 a non-profit business school	non-profit business school
bb9	Feuerle Collection	2016	both	commercial property	1940s Deutsche Reichsbahn telecommunications bunker, 1960s West German food storage bunker, vacant and used for raves, private art gallery from 2011	private art gallery
bb9	Blue Star Sightseeing Boat	2016	non-typical art space	commercial property	(date unknown) boat-tour business	boat-tour business
bb10	Akademie der Künste (Hanseatenweg)	2018	typical art space	art gallery	1960 purpose built art gallery	Modern art gallery, event space and archive
bb10	Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik	2018	both	art gallery/city infrastructure	1870s railway depot, 1944 deportation point for Jews	Contemporary artist's residency and exhibition space
bb10	Volkspavilion	2018	both	art gallery	Circa. 1950s/60s former box office and bookshop of the Volksbühne	project space or gallery in more recent years

As indicated in the table above, of the total 38 spaces used by the Berlin Biennale, 17 spaces were categorised as typical art spaces and 21 as non-typical art spaces. Three spaces – the KW, The Akademie der Künste in Pariser Platz and the Postfurhamt – were re-used spaces. I also detected that 10 could be classed as both typical and non-typical spaces. This is because, we could argue, that in a city like Berlin, and in-fact many cities, even the “dedicated” spaces for contemporary art that the biennale has used have all had periods where they were used as something other than what they were intended for. The Skulpturenpark, for example, doesn’t fit neatly into a category: on one hand, it was not purpose built for the display of contemporary art as such, due to the fact that the space itself at the time of the Biennale’s use, features no building but rather a vacant building plot. However, at the time of the Biennale’s use of this space, the Skulpturenpark was managed by an arts association, thus its intended use was for the display of contemporary art. Similarly, while many dedicated exhibition spaces have been purpose built for or appropriated by arts organisations of individuals, the majority of these spaces are not normally associated with *contemporary art*, per se. Cinemas, theatres and museums with ethnographic or other historical permanent collections are among the many dedicated spaces that don’t normally display the brand of experimental contemporary art that the Berlin Biennale is notorious for exhibiting. To help clarify this muddy situation, the dedicated space and the non-typical exhibition space can be distinguished thusly: at the time of the Biennale’s use, the function of the dedicated exhibition space is intended and used by the visitor as a space for displaying art. The non-typical exhibition space, on the other hand, is a non-intended space for displaying art, used temporarily for a particular Berlin Biennale exhibition and not normally associated with the display of contemporary art.

This analysis method proved extremely helpful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it allowed me to identify the various elements that made up the different kinds of physical urban space used by the Biennale’s producers. Secondly, it allowed me to understand the meanings of these spaces as places, each with their own identity and meaning. Together, these two crucial pieces of information enabled me to analyse the use of these various spaces against the Biennale’s given rationale (whether curatorial or practical) for using them.

Grounded Theory Method

My chosen method of sociological qualitative data analysis – Grounded Theory Method (GTM) - inspired the collection, coding and analysis of data from recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors and of the Berlin Biennale catalogues and web material. This method consists of the simultaneous collection and analysis of data and seeks to draw theory from the data itself, rather than seek evidence in the data to confirm a hypothesis. GTM is often employed within the social sciences and is commonly used to discover social processes or phenomena. For this research, it allowed me to understand the relationships between these actors and what processes took place as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making. In particular, I engaged GTM to collect and analyse data from the following sources:

- interview transcripts (ex- and current Berlin Biennale employees, board members, funders, other stakeholders)
- texts produced by the Biennale (catalogues, web material)

GTM is flexible in terms of what it considers data, for example, many things can be data from an interview transcript, a fieldnote to a visual image. Such data is coded by the researcher and different categories are assigned to describing different activities, events and thought processes of those participants. Grounded theory allows the researcher to move back and forth between categories and the data in order to develop theory.

Charmaz & Henwood consider this social constructivist approach as one that allows the researcher to move, quote, “toward abstract understanding rather than explanation and prediction” of the data, end quote (Charmaz and Henwood, 2008, p. 245). The main 3 principals of GT are: theoretical sampling, constant comparison of data to theoretical categories and the focus on the development of theory via theoretical saturation of categories rather than substantive variable findings. Her approach over all is quite realistic and flexible for those, such as myself who used it for different discipline (art history) than it is normally used within (the social sciences) (Hood, 2007, p. 163).

For example, I began with collecting data (recoding and transcribing interviews, cataloguing relevant catalogue and website texts) and began a process of open coding to

ensure the capturing of ideas and my own experiences of each piece of data (Figure 77). Web texts were saved as either word documents or pdfs while catalogue texts were scanned as pdfs. All were colour coded to correspond with various key code terms such as “dialogue with the city”, “urban change”, “urban development”, “identity”, “local”, “city”, “urban space”, “architecture”, and “temporality”, among many others, that were based on words or sentences found in the text that responded to the research question. The idea was to find out what was being communicated by Berlin Biennale producers about what was the “dialogue” the biennale has with the city, where is it, on what terms, and by whom? How was urban space/the city viewed by the Berlin Biennale? What were their reasons for choosing certain exhibition venues? What was the role of temporality in the curation of the Berlin Biennale? And what were the critiques or the counter narratives of their own use of urban space?

My own thoughts about and critique of what was being communicated by Biennale producers, as well as the suitability of my own codes were captured during memoing. The memos allowed me to reflect on the analytical process and the theory I was generating from the codes and categories found in the data. When I gathered more data from various other sources, I constantly compared these data with one another, until the end of the analysis, for example comparing coded transcripts with memos, codes with other codes, transcripts with codes, and so on. Eventually I reached a saturation point, when interviewees were no longer showing any new ideas, and thus embarked on a phase of focused or selective coding to refine my thinking.

I then embarked on a phase of axial coding, a process of creating different visual coding paradigms to examine how these codes were related to one another. This allowed me to create a framework for further analysing my data and generating theory. The coding paradigm is a way in which researchers can examine the relationships between codes created from the data (in my case, the data is interviews with Berlin Biennale production staff about their temporary use of Berlin’s urban space for exhibition making). Thereby, a general ‘paradigm model’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 99) is established which determines the analysis of action and interaction strategies of the actors as the main purpose of grounded theory. Special emphasis is laid on the intentions and goals of the actors in this process. The conceptual design of the coding

paradigm carries a broad and general understanding of action (Kelle, 2010, p. 203) as seen here in the diagram below (Figure 78). Categories developed during open coding were investigated in terms of how they related to: (1) phenomena at which the actions and interactions in the domain under study are directed; (2) causal conditions which lead to the occurrence of these phenomena; (3) attributes of the context of the investigated phenomena; (4) additional intervening conditions by which the investigated phenomena are influenced; (5) action and interactional strategies the actors use to handle the phenomena, and (6) the consequences of their actions and interactions (Kelle, 2010, p. 202).

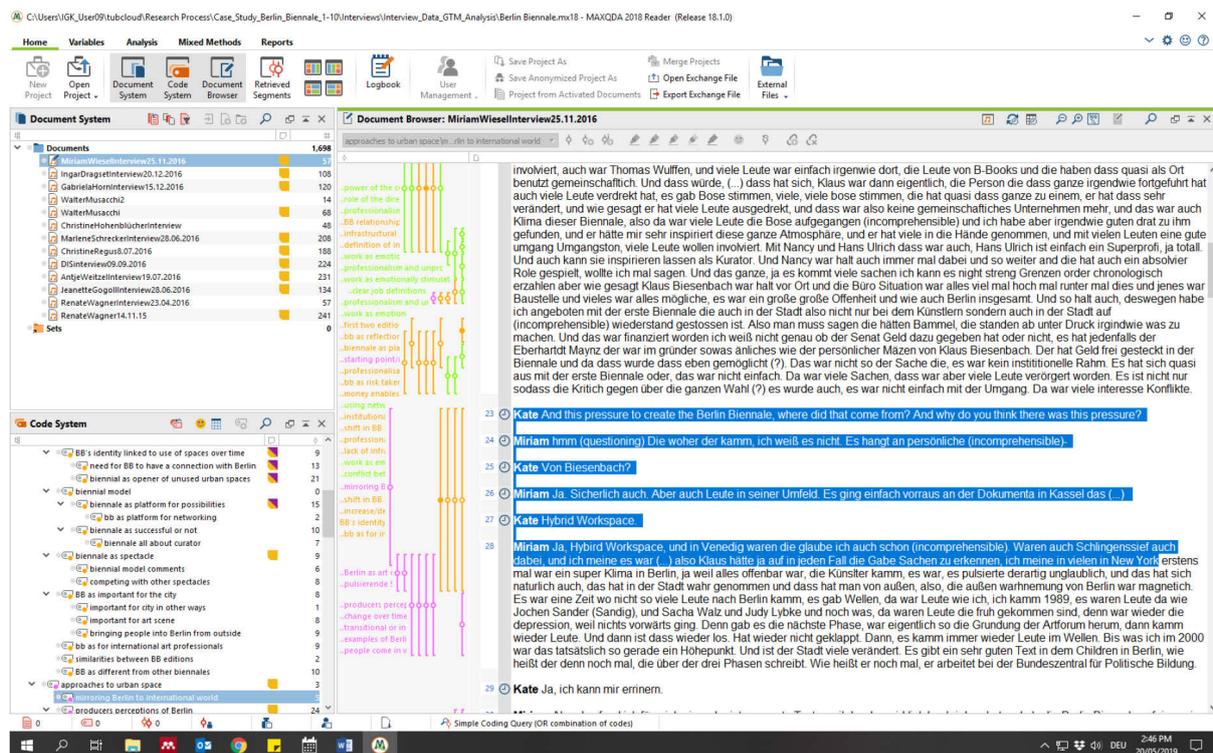


Figure 77: Screenshot of the author's coding system using MAXQDA software. Image: Kate Brehme, 2018

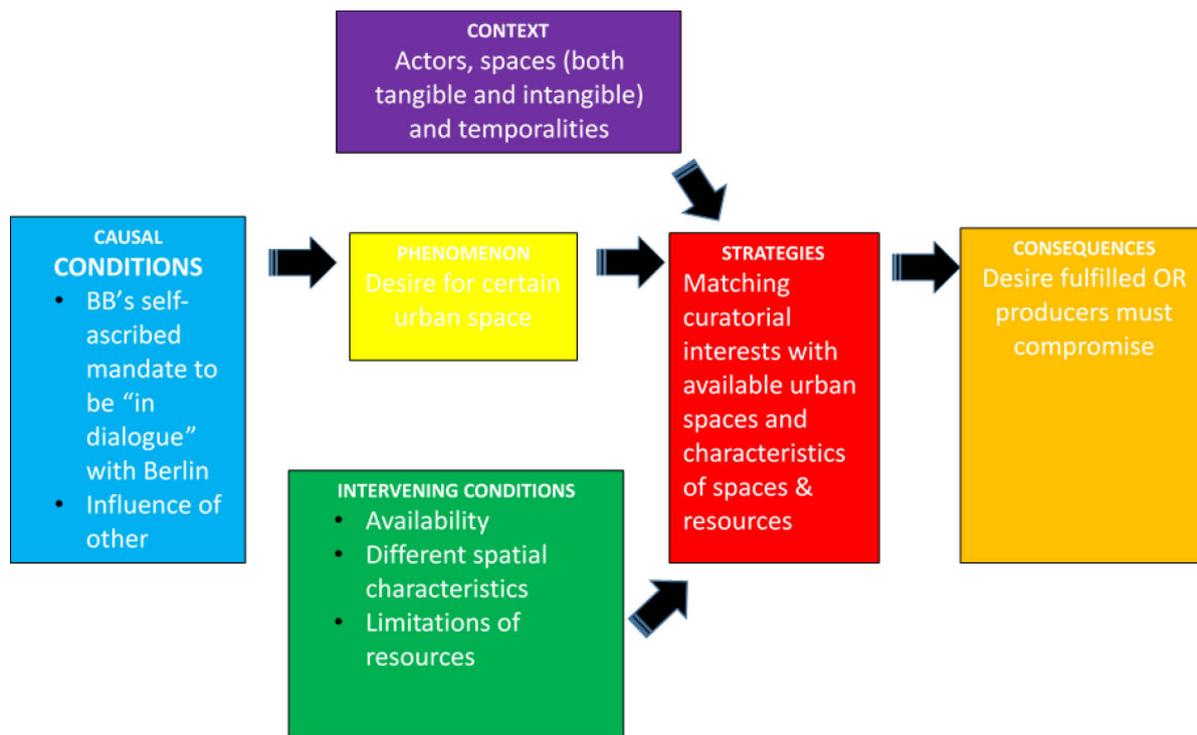


Figure 78: Code Matrix describing the actions, processes and relationships of Berlin Biennale producers and their approach to urban space. Image: Kate Brehme, 2019

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

The final part of the Research Methods chapter outlines the challenges and ethical considerations for the Desk Research, Fieldwork and Analysis methods. It demonstrates how I overcame a lack of access to archival material when conducting Desk Research; how ethical considerations and lack of access to interview subjects were navigated for the Fieldwork; and how the method of Grounded Theory Method posed a set of logistical challenges for the research schedule.

Desk Research

Accessing archival material, particularly related to the history of the Berlin biennale and its host organisation the Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art has been at times quite difficult. There were various reasons for the lack of access to information such as

explanatory and factual texts about the Biennale and the KWs development, images of the exhibitions as a whole or individual artworks in the context of their urban spaces, and the details of these spaces themselves. Firstly, while the KW and Berlin Biennale have a small publically available web archive, it is inconsistent with the amount and detail of information provided for each Biennale edition. For example, while the Berlin biennale website has a section specifically devoted to listing each exhibition venue used by the biennale over its history, curiously, only images of the facades of the buildings are included, not their interiors and what works have been exhibited within. Further photographs on biennial edition specific pages document artworks in situ and while they show some aspects of the interiors of these venues, there are no descriptions of which venues the artworks were installed within. This is the result of a lack of time or proper resources to document or archive events when they happened, particularly during the 1990s and early 2000s. As a result, the early editions of the biennial are not documented as well as the latter ones. A last issue related to the website was that over the course of this research, because the biennale is an ongoing and changing event, old information was often replaced by new on the biennale's "landing" and "about" pages. In order to overcome this challenge, I made sure to save website pages in hard copy versions as I encountered them.

Secondly, the two official archives that do exist – the Press Archive of the KW and the KW and Berlin Biennale organisational archives (official documents such as legal or financial reports, curatorial notes and plans, images etc.) have suffered the same fate. The Press Archive, while vast and detailed for the editions 2-9, has no record of the First Berlin Biennale and the organizational archives were at the time of data collection, stored rather haphazardly in unsorted boxes around the KW building. The Berlin Biennale catalogues helped to provide some of the details pertaining to which locations featured which artworks, however many of the catalogues do not actually document the Biennale editions, but rather feature pre-existing images of the exhibited artworks, similar artworks, completely new artworks designed just for the catalogue, and images of the exhibition venues, but without the installed exhibition. This is because most catalogues are produced right before the Biennale opens, thus denying an opportunity to document and print images of the actual exhibitions in time for the exhibition opening.

Thirdly, while current Biennale staff were very forthcoming with allowing access to what archives they could provide access to, appointments for visits to archives were often quite hard to get because of the nature of staff working to tight deadlines or because accessing current or previous exhibition details might breach the privacy rights of former participating artists or curators. The result was that the details of exactly who was involved, exactly what programmes entailed, people's actual responsibilities and development of the institution was hard to glean from the archival material alone.

Therefore, in order to overcome these challenges to conducting Desk Research, I sought sources from other archives such as the Berlinische Galerie, the Landesarchiv Berlin, private photography collections and conducted interviews with Berlin Biennale producers from the time that the Berlin Biennale was established helped bridge the gaps in factual information. Furthermore, as indicated above in the sections on Mapping and Site Visits, actually geographically mapping, visiting and photographing these sites myself, allowed for a much better understanding of the aesthetic and spatial qualities of the physical urban space used as exhibiting venues than the images and text provided by the official biennale archives.

Fieldwork

The challenges presented to site visits included a lack of access to the interiors of some of the exhibition venues, the changing nature of venues since the biennale and sometimes during the research process. For the interviews, the two main challenges regarded the availability and willingness of Berlin Biennale producers to participate in this research.

Firstly, in conducting site visits, it was not always possible to visit the interiors of (particularly former) exhibition venues that the Berlin Biennale had used. One potential criticism of the research could be the inconsistency of this approach. However, this is a typical problem presented to researchers investigating events before their time – it was simply not possible to experience all the venues in the same way because, as many were spaces normally used for other purposes, it was not possible to gain access to them

outside of the Biennale exhibition time. Therefore, I took advantage of visiting all the interiors of exhibition venues that were open to the public as part of the Biennale's exhibitions that fell during the same time period as the research, and where this could not be done for earlier editions, I visited the interiors of these spaces if they were made public for other events (such as the Jewish Girls' School on Auguststrasse or Haus der Kulturen der Welt), drew on my own past experiences of visiting these spaces (such as the Neue Nationalgalerie) or viewed documentary photographs, video footage and read press reviews to fill in the gaps in my knowledge.

Secondly, the physical fabric of many of the exhibition venues had changed over time, and in some cases, simply weren't there anymore. For example, both the Postfuhramt and the Neue Nationalgalerie were closed for long-term renovations at the time of their site visits and had scaffolding hiding their exteriors, while the Skulpturenpark has been replaced by new high rise buildings. Therefore, where I identified that buildings had been razed or drastically changed, efforts were taken to check archival material to try and understand the status and physical make-up of these sites at the time the biennale used that particular space. Because the focus of the research question was on the processes by which biennale producers decided on which sites within urban space and which external factors affected those choices, requiring a lived experience of the exhibition that took place there was not deemed essential so long as I could glean from other material the overall intention, and appearance of that particular exhibition in question.

When conducting interviews, the two main challenges regarded the availability and willingness of Berlin Biennale producers to participate in this research. As mentioned earlier in this chapter section, the busy schedules of the Berlin Biennale employees resulted in difficulties setting appointments for accessing the Biennale's archives. The same problem resulted in delays in accessing interview partners. For example, I had arranged interviews with current staff for January 2016 which were cancelled and postponed due to the fact that the current 9th biennale was in its final production phase. Eventually, these interviews were carried out. Attempts from October 2015 to April 2017 to arrange further interviews with the Founding Director Klaus Biesenbach,

Berlin-based Biennale board members and the Biennale's main funder Kultur Stiftung des Bundes had either been rejected or ignored. Some of the reasons for declining an interview stemmed from a desire of some people to focusing on the present rather than the past – perhaps a reflection of the culture of working in the contemporary art sector. For others, including those who did become interview partners but preferred to remain anonymous, nervous to talk about conflict or negative aspects of the Biennale's history or current production processes.

This raised concerns regarding the ethics of the interview process. What was helpful in overcoming this challenge were two key strategies. The first was to, in some circumstances, disclose my profession as a Berlin-based curator to some interviewees as a way to build rapport and trust. It was always made clear that the research was conducted as part of my research activities and not for my curatorial activities, however in being honest about my own position as a professional within the Berlin arts sector, it helped inform my interview partners that I was sensitive to the need for discretion. The second strategy was to obtain written permission from interviewees before any interviews were undertaken. All data from individuals collected as part of the research (private or sensitive information) were stored securely and not shared with any other parties. Furthermore, all interviewees were offered the opportunity to be anonymised and have the opportunity to redact their contribution at any stage in the research process. Some requested that some issues raised during the interview be kept “off the record”, which, along with any anonymizations were always granted.

Analysis

There were various challenges of using Grounded Theory Method within an art historical context. Firstly, there were limits on the amount of time I would have liked to have dedicated to processes such as open coding. GTM encourages researchers to move between interview/transcript/analysis/interview and allow the data to lead the researcher. This was not always possible when dealing with a “live” subject such as the biennale. With many of my interview partners continuing to work on the biennale or having moved onto other projects, there were often periods of waiting for interview

partners to become available, rather than allowing a more organic and seamless moving between data collection and analysis.

Secondly, the founders of GTM, Corbin and Strauss believed in “keeping a theory free mind” whilst coding – normally the idea is to perform a literature review after the data has been collected and analysed “Ideally, the search of literature comes after the construction of the theoretical framework...Undertaken after data analysis, reviewing the work of other researchers completes and enriches the research. Rather than verification, your job is to demonstrate how your work adds a new dimension, an element that heretofore was unknown.” (Stern, 2010, p. 123). With my time limit of 3 years to complete my doctoral research and dissertation, this approach was not realistic.

Lastly, as I lacked prior experience in using GTM and found very few examples of it being used in an art history context, I found solutions in simply adapting the methods used by other disciplines such as the axial code paradigm used by sociologists mentioned in the Analysis section above. Using such tools provided a simple and elegant way to organise my developing theories in a clear and structured way that, when grounded in data gained from the analysis of my source material, led to the development of my hypothesis.

Conclusion

The Appendices section Research Methods, divided into four sections, Desk Research, Fieldwork, Analysis and Challenges and Ethical Considerations, described the transdisciplinary approach of art history and urban studies methods utilised for this research and what benefits, challenges and limits arose during this process. The Desk Research section outlined how I reviewed art historical and urban studies literature, particularly those pertaining to the history of the Berlin Biennale and biennales in general, as well as my process of map making which both contributed to a socio-historical and spatial understanding of my subject of focus - the Berlin Biennale exhibition venues from 1998-2018. The Fieldwork section described the way in which data was collected through site visits to all the Berlin Biennale’s former exhibition

venues and informal and in-depth interviews with a variety of Berlin Biennale actors. The Analysis section explored the two analytical tools employed in this research: site analysis and Grounded Theory Method.

In particular, it firstly described the way in which urban studies provided guidance for an analysis of the Biennale's exhibition venues, particularly in the creation of venue categories and analysis of spaces based on their architectural histories, function and aesthetics. Secondly, this section described how the Grounded Theory Method from the discipline of Sociology inspired the collection, coding and analysis of recorded interviews with Berlin Biennale actors and of the Berlin Biennale catalogues to understand the relationships between these actors and what processes take place as part of their engagement with physical urban space for the purposes of exhibition making. The final part of the Research Methods chapter outlined the challenges and ethical considerations for the Desk Research, Fieldwork and Analysis methods. It demonstrated how I overcame a lack of access to archival material when conducting Desk Research; how ethical considerations and lack of access to interview subjects were navigated for the Fieldwork; and how I found solutions for the method of set of logistical challenges that Grounded Theory Method posed for the research schedule.

Appendix II: List of Interviews

Interviewee 1, (anonymised) artist resident at KW in the early 90s

Interviewed on 19/12/2018

Interviewee 2, former (anonymised) Berlin Biennale employee #1

Interviewed on 3/12/2015 and 4/3/2016

Interviewee 3, former (anonymised) Berlin Biennale employee #2

Interviewed on 3/12/2015

Conny Becker, Berlin based curator and writer

Interviewed on 5/7/2016

Lauren Boyle and Marco Rosso, part of artist collective DIS, curatorial team for the 9th edition of the Berlin Biennale, 2016

Interviewed on 9/9/2016

Ingar Dragset, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998

Interviewed on 20/1/2016

Jeanette Gogoll, production co-ordinator, 6th-10th Berlin Biennale, 2010-2018

Interviewed on the 28/06/2016

Christine Hohenbülcher, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998

Interviewed on the 17/11/2016

Gabriele Horn, Director of KW, 2000-2016, Director of Berlin Biennale, 2000-2018

Interviewed on the 19/7/2016 and 15/12/2016

Cathrin Mayer, assistant curator for the 9th Berlin Biennale, 2016, curator KW, 2016-2018

Interviewed 5/8/2016

Walter Musacchi, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998

Interviewed 24/11/2016

Sean Patten, exhibiting artist from the 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998

Interviewed on the 2/12/2016

Christine Regus, Referatsleiterin „Archive, Bibliotheken, Gedenkstätten, Museen und Einrichtungen bildender Kunst“, Berlin Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa (Head of Department, Archives, Libraries, Memorials, Museums and Facilitating Visual Art, Berlin Senat Department of Culture and Europe), active in Berlin cultural politics since early 1990s and on the Advisory Board of the Berlin Biennale

Interviewed on the 8/7/2016

Marlene Schrecker, freelance architect, 3rd – 9th Berlin Biennale

Interviewed on the 28/6/2016

Ingrid Wagner, Referatsleiterin für die institutionelle Förderung von Künstlerinnen, Künstlern, Projekten und Freien Gruppen, Berlin Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa (Head of Department, Institutional Funding of Artists, Projects and Independent Groups, Berlin Senat Department of Culture and Europe)

Interviewed on the 9/12/2018

Renate Wagner, production manager, 3rd – 6th Berlin Biennale

Interviewed on the 14/11/2015 and 23/4/2016

Antje Weitzel, project manager, 7th – 10th Berlin Biennale

Interviewed on the 19/7/2016

Miriam Wiesel, editor of the 1st Berlin Biennale catalogue and part of the extended curatorial team, 1998

Interviewed on the 25/11/2016

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