

Urban planning pressures on “Zwischennutzungen”/ “temporary uses” with special reference to Tempelhof airport. AESOP – Prague

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Keywords: Urban decline, temporary uses, governance

INTRODUCTION

On the 25th may 2014, a referendum proposed by the organization 100% Tempelhofer Feld stopped the official development plan intended by Berlin’s Senat on the former Tempelhof Airport. The huge space of 380 hectares located in the heart of Berlin became a “no building land zone”. This situation is a good illustration of pressures, tensions and conflicts about vacant spaces and their uses in a period of transition between shrinking and growth in the new capital of Germany. This presentation seeks to analyse critically the use of ZN made by the local authorities to manage vacant spaces. The first part of the presentation provides a brief discussion about the urban context in Berlin, between shrinkage and growth. The second part will focus on vacant spaces in shrinking cities with the pragmatic tool called *Zwischennutzungen* (ZN), which we will translate as “temporary uses” for the moment. In the final section we will discuss this Tempelhof case study, which illustrates these divergences about vacant spaces and ZN in Berlin. In the conclusion we will propose certain questions for future research about urban planning and vacant space in times of crisis.

1. From shrinkage to growth.

After reunification, Berlin experienced a big rise of its population. Expectation was at its peak.

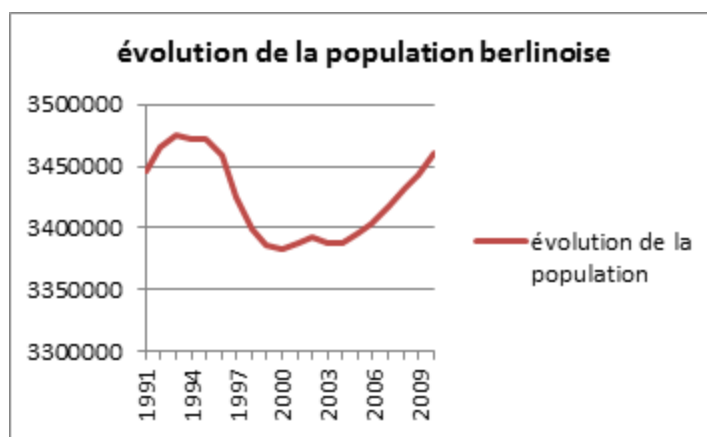
“The hype around an emerging "new Berlin" raised high expectations about anticipated population growth (up to 5 million over the next ten years), the settlement of headquarters of large international corporations, and the overall opportunities for the investment and economic development. Overoptimistic growth forecasts by many urban and economic research institutes decisively influenced public discourses and urban planning processes. A strategic

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study "on the way to the commercial capital Berlin," launched by the local government in 1992, predicted that Berlin would soon play in the same league as London, Paris or even New York, and rise to a global city status." (Bernt, Grell, & Holm, 2013, p. 23)

However the population increase was very brief. Since 1993 Berlin has become an obvious example of a shrinking city, "an urban area — a city, part of a city, an entire metropolitan area or a town — that has experienced population loss, economic downturn, employment decline and social problems as symptoms of a structural crisis." (Martinez-Fernandez, Audirac, Fol, & Cunningham-Sabot, 2012). The population began to shrink. Economically, Berlin remained very weak after the Reunification, and suffered from a "de ökonomisierung" (Hannemann, 2003) like GDR as a whole.



This situation was reinforced with the administrative dismantling of GDR and the will to erase the GDR administration within the city. At the same time, with a rising number of ownership-transfers added to a financial crisis of the city...It became difficult for Berlin to put in place a land strategy. At this time vacant spaces proliferated and their duration extended. They took a huge place in Berlin and became part of the daily landscape of the city. A lot of spontaneous and grassroots uses, today very famous, appeared, for eg. the beach bar YAAM on the banks of the river Spree.

By the turn of the 2000s, we can observe a small improvement in the city population. This regrowth of population was a result of an urban policy, which promoted the attractiveness of the city and its underground culture. This growth is essentially based on tourism (Novy, 2013) and the capacity of the city to become a "creative city" through certain *Zwischennutzungen* / temporary uses. Colomb notes a "gradual integration of temporary uses of space in Berlin's official place marketing discourse and in the economic development policies set up to promote Berlin as "creative city" post-2000"(Colomb, 2012, pp. 146–147). Nevertheless Berlin's situation is still weak: the bank scandal in 2001 ruined the city, and according to Bernt (2013, 16) "Berlin is until today not only the German city with the highest unemployment but is also on a European scale the only capital whose GDP lies below the national average".

2. Vacant spaces in Shrinking Cities, an opportunity materialised by the pragmatic tool “ZN”?

As said previously, one of the spatial results of the phenomenon of shrinking cities is the growth of vacant open spaces; this constitutes a common denominator to Shrinking Cities. In a way, “less is more” Bauhaus Dessau (i.e. being a shrinking city means less inhabitants, less economy, and more and more vacant spaces within the city), but this saying “less is more” also means more space for alternatives or informality and a paradigm shift in urban planning, from consumption to production. Nowadays, vacant spaces are no more seen as a disease in the city, but are eventually opportunities (Andres, 2006; Janin & Andres, 2008) in an era where ideas of recycling-land appear with for instance the “second hand space project” (Ziehl, Oßwald, Hasemann, & Schnier, 2012), or “do-it-yourself” urban design (Douglas, 2014), or “urbanism light” (Urban Catalyst, 2003).

In this way, at the turn of the century, scholars (Bürgin & Cabane, 1999; Freitag & Werner, 1999; Mellauner, 1998; Seidemann, 1998) developed research about a pragmatic tool called “*Zwischennutzung*” which allows/permits the management of the vacancy and the time gap between different uses. The concept of ZN did not originate in Berlin, but, rapidly, the German government embraced it as a possible solution for shrinkage (BBSR, 2004). At the same time, with the help of a European fund, a study focused on *Zwischennutzungen* in five European countries; **Germany**, Finland, Denmark, Austria, and Italy and give ZN a European visibility. (Urban Catalyst, 2003). This was followed by a study by Berlin State which adopted the concept for Berlin and its municipality under the term of “pioneers” (Stadtentwicklung, 2007).

The expression of *Zwischennutzung* is constructed from *Zwischen* which means « between » and *Nutzungen* for « use(s) », it is characterized by informal uses (like mini-golfs, pedagogical areas, community gardens, theatres, bars...) in vacant spaces, by ownership-property which stays in the same hands, by users, who are usually informally organized local inhabitants. However, behind this simple definition lies hidden tensions and conflicts about different conceptual aspects of temporality, informality and spontaneity, and future plans for the area. In relation to this last point, according to Urban Catalyst’ study (2003), there are 8 different types of ZN depending on the relationship with the next use: stand in, impulse, consolidation, coexistence, parasite, subversion, pioneer, displacement. This detailed and comprehensive typology is interesting, because we can observe some specific aspects carefully selected in the definition of ZNs by the different authorities. For instance, it is obvious that the Berlin Senate is focusing more on pioneer ones in order that they impulse new uses or strategies. The definition given by the German government is also very focused on temporality and preservation of next use: ZN are “A new means of designing and utilizing blighted urban sites that does not require a change of owner or additional planning permits. This preserves long-term options

for building out the site while permitting temporary uses that improve the quality of urban amenities.” (BBSR, 2004)

Colomb (2011) explains this divergence because “From the early 2000s onwards, however, the creative, unplanned, multifaceted, and dynamic diversity of such « temporary uses of space » was gradually harnessed into urban development policies and city marketing campaigns. New images and narratives began to be integrated into Berlin’s official promotional discourse – including sites, places, activities, and people which had been left out of the promotional imagery of the 1990s.” (Colomb, 2012, p. 132). She links this focus on the Senate with the emergence of theories about the creative class (Florida, 2004). At this time, Berlin developed a political discourse on creativity in the city and promoted ZN to a comparative advantage in the international competition. It is also interesting to note, that the Senate’s definition of ZN mentioned them as a new tool, whereas in reality this kind of uses was already existing since the 90s.

At the same time, we can observe a tension in the term itself, and also in the translation usually proposed ; “temporary uses” (Oswalt, Overmeyer, & Misselwitz, 2013). Indeed, translating ZN as temporary use(s) not only dilutes its meaning, it results in the concept losing its meaning. Gstach (2006, p.16) explains that the border between a permanent use and temporary use cannot be the characteristic to define ZN because the time gap can be very different and the border between the two uses can be very unclear. Also, the situation is more complex: according to Haydn and Temel 2006 “Temporary uses are those that planned from the outset to be impermanent. We understand the idea of temporality to be determined not, as its literal meaning would suggest, by the duration of use: temporary uses are those that **seek to derive unique qualities from the idea of temporality. That is why they differ from lasting uses, not because they want to prepare their location for something other that will last longer.**” (Haydn & Temel, 2006, p. 17) Following this idea, Till goes one step further and proposes another semantic with the term “interim-use”;

"Rather than focus on temporary *land use* per se (*Zwischennutzung*), a planning concept that designates parcels of property according to zoning codes and development strategies, I argue that a more appropriate concept is *interim spaces*. First, the concept of interim spaces recognizes space as relational rather than seeks to stabilize urban space through boundaries (...). Second, if spaces are understood as relational, then the German term *zwischen* is more accurately translated as "interim" for my purposes than the English "temporary" (land use, in the sense of technical planning). The notion of interim allows for the dynamic and open-ended sense of in-betweenness, interventions, and unexpected possibilities. Interim suggests a fluidity of temporality, rather than an understanding of time measured and designated as insignificant or as located between the "real" times of before development and after development. Urban

appropriations of "wastelands" enliven public space and offer new possibilities to imagine a neighborhood." (Till, 2011, p. 106)

In spite of this discordance, one group of scholars and studies about ZN wants to see this tool as a way to manage vacant spaces. For urban catalyst "In the context of the research of Urban Catalyst it becomes crucial to integrate the informal and the formal more effectively. This means on the one hand to formalize the informal: to analyze and understand the unplanned patterns behind self-organized activities, deduct prototypes, models and tools from these investigations, formalize them and make them available to all stakeholders. On the other hand, formal procedures of planning, administration, management etc. have to be critically examined and ways and strategies to be found, how existing practices can be de-formalized, de-institutionalized, adapted and changed." (Urban Catalyst, 2004, p25) The role of local authorities seems very important at this point. In this context, the closure in 2008 of the Tempelhof Airport located in the heart of the city can be the very first large experimentation of the use of ZN by the Senate to manage transition and promote Berlin as a leading creative city. Tempelhof became the test and the showcase of the creativity in Berlin. The slogan "Tempelhof Freiheit", Tempelhof Freedom is in this way, also significant.

3. The case of Tempelhof; an illustration of divergences and contradictions about vacant spaces and ZN in Berlin.

The airport closed in 2008 because of the creation of a new airport; Berlin Brandenburg international (BBI) in Schönefeld. This closure created de facto a huge vacant area of 380 hectares, located in the heart of Berlin, right in the middle, bordered by several districts: Neukölln, Tempelhof-Schöneberg and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg which were very marginalized and considered as deprived areas during the Wall period. All these districts were shrinking. This airport was also famous, being used for the vital Berlin Air lift during the 2nd world war.

Considering this historical and challenging urban context in the neighborhood of TP, ZNs seemed at first glance a good way to encourage and organize community participation, and a way to create community capacity building within the surrounding areas.

At the start, the opening of Tempelhof with different ZNs, was based on a big participative program. Within this context, the ZN was a way to encourage the appropriation of urban landscapes, a way to create community capacity building. Indeed, we can read on the official website of Tempelhof: "The spontaneous and unplanned use of open spaces is characteristic of Berlin. Until now, these informal intermediate and pioneer uses were not involved in the formal planning process to any great extent. The State of Berlin is looking to change this status with its new "pioneer process" – an open process

that, if successful, will transform TempelhoferFreiheit into a model location for participative urban development. » <http://www.thf-berlin.de/en/get-involved/>

In this large space, 3 areas have been specifically dedicated to ZNs.



Source: www.berlin.de

All kinds of people can get involved: there is a webpage for the submission of projects and a large variety of uses emerge in the field with the ZNs; an educational garden for children, community gardens, mini golfs...

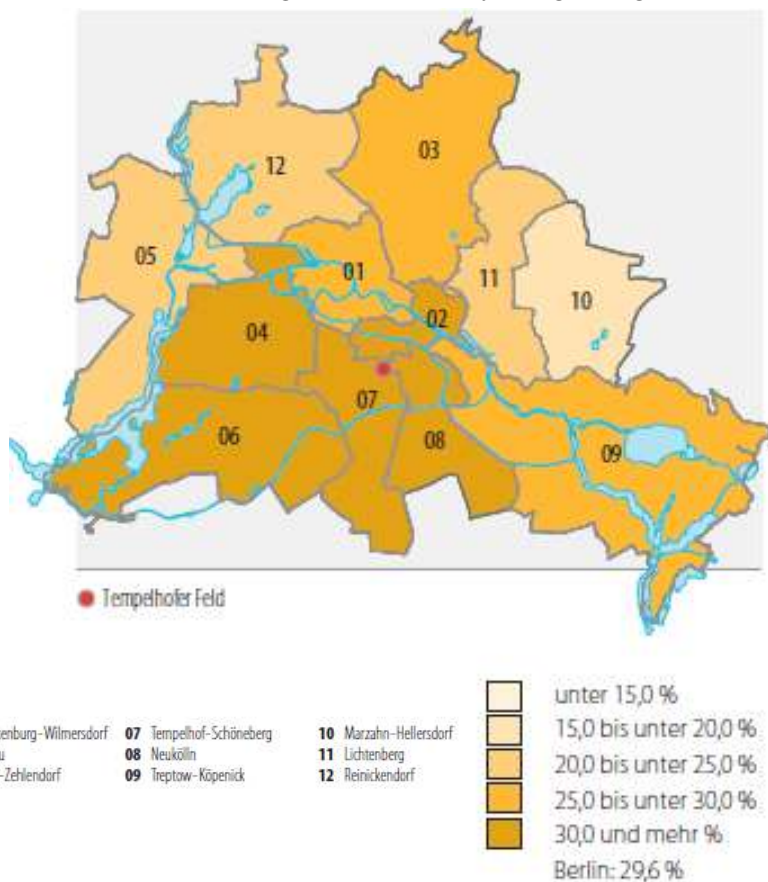
However, in the particular case of TP ZNs, they seem to be a way for the local authority to gain and keep control of the area, while waiting for a major project for investors. Indeed, we can observe that the ZNs are spatially very strictly and tightly bounded with a strict zoning of the field, and each ZN is allocated a specific area. There is also a very strict time restriction imposed on each project. . The different possible uses are also highly regulated and defined.

In fact, the ZNs are entirely determined and regulated by the development plan made by the local authorities. For the local authorities, they are not really a tool for a coproduction with the inhabitants or a way to think about the future of the site, they are just temporary uses. For the local communities these temporary uses are not a stepping board for planning what could be next.

At the end of the day, for the local authorities the ZNs seem more a way to occupy the place during a strictly limited time frame, waiting for a major permanent project. Indeed, Roskamm (2014) notes that between the closure and the opening of the field « it became obvious that the perception of the

Tempelhofer Feld had changed completely. Suddenly the area no longer possessed a 'huge potential' for Berlin urban development (as it was posted in the debate before the closure of the airport), but a place at risk of getting out of control.” (Roskamm, 2014, p. 66) As a result, for the local government, the area is no longer viewed as an opportunity but a source of fear. Fear of a permanent appropriation for good by the local community.

However, the future development plan of the local authority was stopped by an organization of citizens called 100% TPFeld. With the law system in Berlin and Germany, the organization was able to call for a referendum about the future of this area and put forward a draft law, which would prohibit any construction on this field. After several stages the referendum was organized on 25th May 2014. The draft law of the 100%TPFeld organization won by a huge margin.



Source ; Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg, 2014

The red point on the map is the former airport of TP. All of Berlin’s districts voted in favor of the law.

In the debate during the setting up of the referendum, the local authority failed to use ZNs as a means to promote the official development plan. On the contrary, there has been a close proximity between the organization 100%TPFeld and ZNs that we can for example observe with the sign on the photo.



Source : private photo

CONCLUSION

As we can see in this very particular case, the ZNs were set up by the local authorities while waiting for a big project according to a development plan. However, they encountered some resistance. The local communities found a way to reject the local authorities' plans, which stuck to the very limited definition of the ZN (just a "temporary use"). The inhabitants, with their vote, brought back the ZN to its larger definition. They made it clear that they want to be involved in the decision making process deciding the future of the area, the field. And they want it to stay as an open space, with informal uses, according to the larger definition. They are against the development plan which promotes new commercial and residential buildings.

This case study is a good illustration of the articulation between grassroots empowerment and local governance, and the conflicts that arise from having two different visions of a city. On one side for the local authorities, a growing and compact city minimising vacant and open spaces, to shape the capital city of the country, and ensure its position in Europe; and, on the other side, for its inhabitants, to keep the identity of Berlin as a city with lots of vacant and open spaces with spontaneous uses and informal users. The multifaceted aspects of ZNs and the different acceptations of their definitions studied in this paper reveal these tensions, as well as point out the failure of local governments to engage in the long term with bottom-up planning in a growth paradigm context.

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Sitography

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