Transformations of Public Space in Berlin After 1989

Dr. Dominik Bartmanski  
Technische Universität Berlin  
Fakultät VI: Planen Bauen Umwelt  
Institut für Soziologie  
Office hours: by appointment

Dr. Irit Dekel  
Bard College Berlin  
i.dekel@berlin.bard.edu  
Office hours Tuesdays 11:00-12:00  
in BCB Campus and by appointment

Description

Is Berlin ‘new’? Is it still ‘haunted’ by the ‘ghosts’ of its history? What makes it an ‘experimental urban laboratory’ and a ‘cultural center’ of contemporary Europe? Why is it perennially ‘unfinished’? And why do sociologists and lay observers alike tend to see these features as defining modern Berlin? How does the capital marketing campaign ‘be Berlin’ since 2008 reflect larger issues of urban renewal, commercialization of the public sphere, the concurrent rise of creative classes and gentrification processes? What does that campaign (and other related projects) reveal and what do they conceal? This course will focus on urban change, design and activism in Berlin after the fall of the wall 1989. The theoretical focus will be on the construction of social and political meaning and their material manifestation in urban spaces. In this seminar, we read literature of general kind (for instance, Simmel, Foucault, de Certeau, Auge, Zukin, Latour), in conjunction with some specialized texts by experts (Ladd, Löw, Till, Novy, Colomb, and others), allowing us to apply the general concepts related to urbanity to specific contemporary cases of urban change. The special emphasis is on Berlin, with comparative regional perspectives. Students will have the opportunity to engage in hands-on qualitative research projects for their assignments, whereby a training in social scientific research methods can be performed.
Obligations

Active participation in class discussions and presentations 20%

Reading assignments connected to developing project 30%

Final project in urban exploration: students can choose, in communication with instructors, whether to choose a set of concepts from the class readings and do analysis with them of an urban phenomenon or find a site and through its exploration find the appropriate tools and concepts for analysis (submit by 20.12.14) 50%

Meetings

Session 1 on 16.10: Introduction and the Background, walking pace

Reading the Classics


2. Hessel Franz excerpts from “In Berlin” (Spazieren in Berlin).


Visuals about the “New Berlin”.

Assignment 1: Exploring the trope of “getting lost” in Berlin. Describe it in a paragraph, provide links and in 3-5 observations, and deliberate in what sense can an individual or a group get lost in it; whether or not there is a shared experience of getting lost in Berlin, and if yes to what extent and in what sense. Use the concepts and tools from the first meeting reading list to be shared in class in the second meeting (10%)

Session 2 on 30.10: Production and meanings of urban space: travelogue

Readings II:


2. Lefebvre Henri 1974 The Production of Space chapter 2: “Social Space”.


4. Ladd Brian 1997 The Voids of Berlin: introduction and chapter 6 “Capital of the new Germany”

Assignment 2: Topos-related projects: Please take the space in which one may get lost from the first assignment and ask yourself and colleagues: how is this space ‘produced’, known, appropriated and circulated? How ‘local’ is it? Write a list of five open interview questions to ask people going through this space about their experience in it (10%).

Session 3 on 6.11: Topographies of Change

Readings III:
4. Cupers and Miessen 2006 “Spaces of Uncertainty”

Additional reading in German

Assignment 3: how has your space changed during the past 5, 10, 25 years and further back into history? Who were the agents or catalysts of this change? Is it a place of uncertainty? A hetero-topus? How? Find three academic articles or chapters that discuss this space and and consider them in your discussion (10%).

Session 4 on 20.11: Consumption and atmosphere of urban sites

Readings IV:
3. Urry, John “consuming places” chapter 1: “time and space in the consumption of place”
5. City of Stone volume I (excerpt art work discussion in class)

   Additional reading in German


We will analyze parts of the interviews in class. Please transcribe them and come to class prepared to discuss two main examples through which the place’s specific experience meets the expectations and knowledge of people about it.

**Session 5 on 27.11: Iconicity and change in urban environments in Kreuzberg Museum**

Readings V:

3. Mubi Brighenti Andrea "Urban Interstices. The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between"
4. City, history and exclusion exhibition in *Kreuzberg museum*

**Additional reading:**


Discussion of projects

**Session 6 on 13.12: Final presentations and recapitulation**

Projects presentation by students + Final Recap

Held in the “Factory” of the Bard College Berlin Campus