Spree Media Front
Critics on Berlin's Waterfront Development Policy

Mastering the City:
Management of Urban Development Projects
Submission date: 31 July 2009. Total signs: 7,055

Inhalt
Introduction p. 01
Protests p. 01
Critics p. 02
Conclusions p. 05
Sources p. 06
Spree Media Front
Critics on Berlin's Waterfront Development Policy

Introduction – This writing deals about the critics of Mediaspree. Latter is one of Berlin's biggest investor oriented developments. It also seeks the establishment of media companies along the Spree waterfront with the realisation of the related infrastructure. Beforehand the area was unused or used as temporary location. Now offices, lofts, hotels and further new construction is build or planned.

The planning are mainly from the 1990s, but mostly unrealised because of Berlin scarce economical resources. The government sees great opportunities for redevelopment in the area. Meanwhile the current users, inhabitants and criticiser fear a deprivation from the highly valuable waterfront land and a top-down policy of urban development.

Protests – First critique was that the development had the governmental recognition of a public-benefit association, even though it only accepted owners and investors as members. Several demonstrations against them occurred. The official common inspection on the water by the investors was interrupted because of a 'boat' demonstration. In occasion of the citizens' decision about the development around 5.000 people joined the 'Spreeparade', and 8.000 the 'Megaspree' demonstration. Latter took place on 11 July 2009. After first approaches of finding compromises between government and citizens, the government broke the communication because it was subjected to damage compensation towards the investors.
Political – Mediaspree was counting that Financial and Industrial capital will follow the government into the capital. This did not happen. Capital prefers to stay in Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Essen or Köln (better established market, economic culture, international connections, etc). Even the lobby-agencies (service providers for the government) did not move to Berlin and are acting from abroad, having only a sub-branch in the city. The same happens with the media industry, they only settle an 'Hauptstadtstudios' in Berlin, while the headquarters and production are still in Köln, Hamburg and Munich.

Economical – During the city development, a great pression has been forced upon large industrial areas (Entwicklungsgebiete Wasserstadt Spandauer See, Rummelsburger Bucht/Stralauer Halbinsel, Alter Schlachthof). As a consequence the remaining factories have been oust. Alternative sustainable work, has not been realized. New institution (like O2) are offering only restrict workplaces with low salary (too low to afford the new living costs in the upgraded surroundings).

Ecological – The ecological sustainability, according to the 'Nachhaltigkeitsagenda' of Berlin have been scarcely realized. During the planning the investors have been freed from the 'Ablosesumme' for parking. The idea of a pedestrian friendly area largely failed. On the contrary the bus service has been reduced.

Urban Design – The ground-plan lacks of transparency. The building are not opening to the public and there are only few break through from the street to the river. Several buildings are facing their 'Backside' towards the waterfront. The buildings are mainly mono-functional. The waterfront is turned into Private ownership. The land owner becomes the decision-maker also for open spaces. The site is 'normalising', turning into a common place.
'Spreeufer für Alle' – This initiative was founded because of the fear of the investor's disinterest for the inhabitants and social spaces (cameras have already been placed along the site as well as a private security in cooperation with state police has been founded). They criticised: the inefficient high rise buildings (their heavy basement and atmospheric impact); the lack of public space, use and accessibility of the waterfront; replacement of alternative culture and identity with consumerist culture. They asked for: establishment of cultural institution instead of media companies; erasing of the enclosing wall, narrowing the adjacent road and keep the riverbank free; affordable housing; connection of the riversides through a pedestrian bridge.

**Surroundings** – The new functions increase the transit traffic, create new street borders, and convert public space in parking lots (some thousand have already been implemented). Housing is upgraded in the surroundings for new, well gaining customers (Rummelsburger Bucht). Rising rents and living costs, privatisation of houses ('Cerberus'). The government was often unwilling to set a 'Mietobergrenzen'. The new housing constructions consists mainly of lofts and apartments (average of 180 sqm). Housing typologies that are unaffordable for the today (Berlin's average) inhabitants.
02 - Below: accessible waterbank area (not in scale). Above: current situation of those areas
Conclusions – Waterfront developments require long term concepts (15-20 years), much more than a legislation term, and after the initial input, the financial autonomy has to be achieved. They also have to be better embedded into the city (socio-economical) structure. Until now none of Berlin's 'Wasserstädte' (Oberhavel and Rummelsburger Bucht) could achieve economical autonomy. The area is over-layered with different developments that are badly coordinated (Mediaspree / Rummelsburger Bucht / Wasserstadt GmbH / Stadtumbau West / Media Spree e.V. / Urban II / Agenda 24 / A100 / Ostkreutz).

When Private Public Partnership has to be established, The communication between the urban planning authority, the investors and the public interest is a hard task. The government has not the financial resources nor the adequate personal to fulfil the task of attracting and then supervise the investors. A more competent intermediate has to be created that conducts the negotiation. The coordination with the surroundings and further projects has to be assured.

The development of offices and housing in Berlin is lasting since 1990, without real demand and interest for it. The consequence: vacancy, decrease of ground rent value. benefit for the small scale trade and service. Today's situation of the Spree waterfront is dominated by mono-functional office and housing units. There is a lack of cultural and recreational facilities (exception: 'Museumsinsel'). The government and the Deutsche Bahn AG, got in possession of the largest part of the waterfront (not only Spreebogen) creating even more borders. Also half of the Berliner lobbies are settled along the waterfront. Connection to the backside of the waterfront, multi-functionality, accessibility and use of the water should be improved. Recreation activities (like bathing, boats, canoe, etc) are missing in the inner city and should be considered in future. This could assure more local identity and sustainable development.
Sources:


Roger Keil: Urbanismus nach dem Mauerfall: Berlin im Kontext eines Jahrzehnts städtischen Wandels

Carl Wechselberg: Transformation und Peripherisierung – Die alte und neue Ökonomie Berlins


Klaus Brake: Metropolenpolitik Berlin: Anregungen aus der BerlinStudie

Harald Wolf: Zur Kritik der Berliner Metropolenpolitik
