

FOCUS ON OUTER BERLIN

Think Berl!n's Radikal Radial: Reshaping Berlin's radial streets

CORDELIA POLINNA, *Think Berl!n*

Berlin's large radial streets organise the city region. But many of Berlin's radial streets have been fighting against a loss of utility and attractiveness in the past decades. Local shops have had to compete with shopping malls, and busy traffic often makes the street an uninviting place. Many large buildings are abandoned, especially those dating from the 1960s and 1970s such as department stores, indoor markets, and some rather unattractive office buildings.

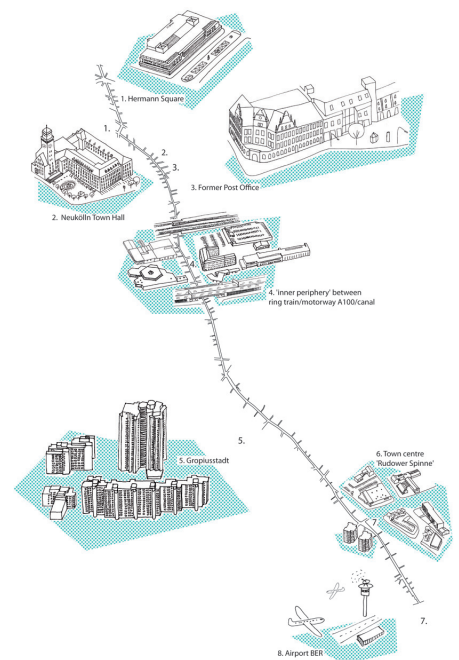
One of the most important projects of **Think Berl!n** so far has been developing an alternative concept for an International Building Exhibition (IBA) to be held in Berlin in 2020. Think Berl!n has proposed the concept '**Radikal Radial**' together with Harald Bodenschatz and the planning consultancy Machleidt&Partner to reshape Berlin's radial streets according to the challenges of sustainable mobility and the adaptation of existing urban structures to the needs of climate change. This process will only succeed when integrated approaches are being taken and when transport planning, the design of public spaces or the regeneration of local town centres are being looked at with concerted efforts.

WHAT COULD THE IBA DO?

Regarding the fact that the IBA has limited funds, it can only work through exemplary projects. Thus we suggest that two radial streets should be picked out – **Chausseestraße** towards the north and **Karl-Marx-Straße** towards the south. Many of the forementioned challenges, as well as urban design issues Berlin will have to deal with in the next decade, are concentrated along these two streets. The restructuring of Berlin's airports – the closure of Tegel and Tempelhof and the expansion of BER (*Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg Willy Brandt*) as a new single airport – will create economic dynamics along these two radial streets which the IBA could help to steer and balance in terms of urban design, sustainability and social implications.

Pilot projects along the two streets will promote sustainable mobility in a post-fossil fuel era and improve the connectivity between pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The intermodal hubs need to be improved in order to make more people choose public transport, cycling or walking instead of driving. Their full potential can be realized by making public spaces more attractive and by concentrating on other important facilities, such as libraries, located close to these 'knots'. Public spaces and parks should be upgraded and connected with other green and blue links. New ideas have to be tested, such as how to adapt some of the icons of the car-orientated era.

A good example of a place that needs new ideas is the tower-restaurant '**Bierpinself**' which was built as a landmark at an inner city elevated highway.



Projects along Karl-Marx-Straße

LET US INTRODUCE

The IBA can furthermore implement these types of model projects which demonstrate how local centres can be established through small interventions that strengthen the local economy. The exhibition will also have to develop ideas for restructuring large-scale retail in order to make it attractive and accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, and add more small-scale uses.

The biggest challenges will lie in defining urban design concepts for the areas outside the inner city, where peripheral structures of an 'in-between' nature begin. The experimental character of our proposal for an IBA project will propose new ideas to fill in and intensify the uses for areas made up of large scale retail units, drive-in restaurants and suburban housing developments.

The details of how this can be achieved are still open for debate as yet only a limited number of concepts of how to deal with traffic-dominated main streets exist – in Berlin, Europe and worldwide. Our proposal for the IBA will help to **unite spatial design with transport planning**. And it would focus on Outer Berlin, an important and a large part of the city, which has for a long time been neglected – not only in Berlin – but which is key in creating a sustainable city region. Our initiative Think Ber!n will keep on promoting 'Radikal Radial' amongst other projects in order for Berlin to once again become a centre for cutting-edge urban design. With or without the IBA the challenges at hand for enhancing our city's walkability, cycle-friendliness and other means for ensuring liveable and prosperous streets – especially in the outer city – remain one of the most pressing topics for cities today and require a solution.



The tower-restaurant 'Bierpinsel'

ABOUT THINK BERLIN :

We founded Think Ber!n in 2009 as a non-profit initiative of Berlin-based urban researchers, spatial designers and architects Cordelia Polinna, Jana Richter, Johanna Schlaack and Aljoscha Hofmann. It is our aim to bring forward the discussion on spatial planning and design quality in Berlin and connect academia with urban politics, different municipal levels and the civil society. In the past two years we have organised numerous events, have contributed to various publications and have come up with strategic ideas for an urban development programme.

See our website: www.think-berlin.de

BASED ON THE TEXT 'RE-THINKING BERLIN'S RADIAL STREETS' BY CORDELIA POLINNA WHICH APPEARED IN THE WINTER 2013 ISSUE OF 'URBAN DESIGN',

See the article here:

www.udg.org.uk/publications/urban-design-journal-issue/urban-design-125-%E2%80%93-winter-2013

FURTHER READING:

Hofmann, Aljoscha (2011), *Radikal Radial! - Re-Urbanisation of main streets*. In: Bettina Bauerfeind, Josefine Fokdal (Eds.), *Bridging Urbanities. Reflections on Urban Design in Shanghai and Berlin*, LIT, p. 87-91. Online at: www.pro-urbe.net/en/kategorien/radikal-radial-%E2%80%93-re-urbanisation-main-streets.