

LEARNING FROM BERLIN

Housing renewal and sustainable development



TEN



Photographs: John East and URBED

Special thanks to Reiner Nagel, Head of City Planning and Open Space and his colleagues at the Senate Department for Urban Development and Neil Corteen, Berlin Profile

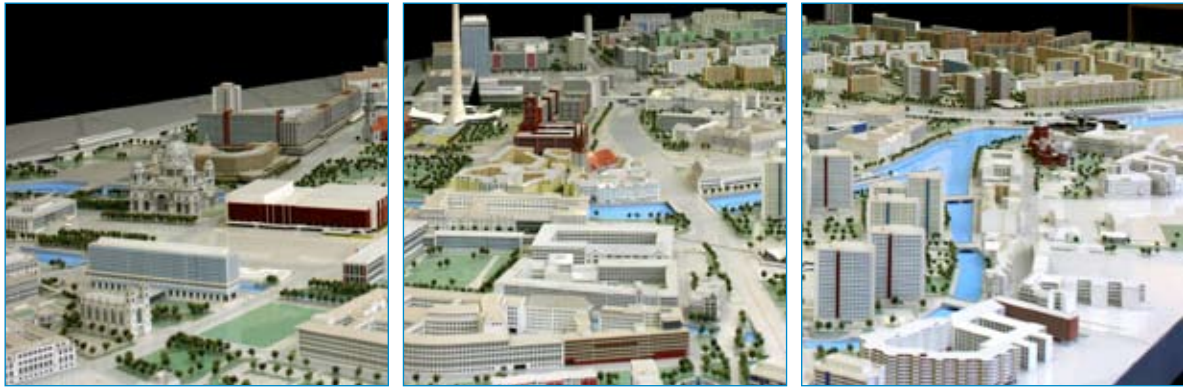
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PARTICIPANTS

TEN

TEN is a small group of senior local government officers in London who have met regularly over four years to share ideas and exchange knowledge on how to achieve urban renaissance. Using the principle of *looking and learning* they visit pioneering projects to draw out lessons that can be applied in their own authorities. In the process the members develop their skills as urban impresarios and place-makers, and are able to built up the capacity of their authorities to tackle major projects. The study tour to Berlin involved the following:

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2007, with a general theme of how to develop housing that looks good and is sustainable, members of the TEN Group spent two days in Berlin and Potsdam. The study tour made use of previous research URBED had undertaken into the regeneration of the Kreuzberg inner city areas (see Appendix A), and Nicholas Falk's visit to Berlin in 2002 to speak at the European Spatial Development Perspective conference. Pat Hayes's experience of working in Berlin some years earlier was very helpful. We were thus able to see how Berlin is changing. We also drew help from a former URBED consultant Neil Corteen who lives and works in Berlin in preparing the briefing, and guiding us around interesting developments in Berlin.

This report summarises the background and structure of the tour, before presenting the main conclusions under four themes:

- integrating transport and development
- achieving and maintaining a first-class public realm
- renovating existing estates
- and promoting sustainable new communities.

I. SUMMARY OF THE TOUR

Briefing

The group stayed in a hotel in one of the inner suburbs in what was formerly East Berlin. The tour started with a two hour introduction to planning and development in the city from Reiner Nagel, Berlin's Head of City Planning and Open Spaces, who came two years ago from Hamburg. He used the large 1 in 500 models of central Berlin, including one prepared in the old German Democratic Republic days, to explain the challenges and change



Spree River and the Fernsehturm Tower



City Models "Urban Development - Planning Models, Projects" Exhibition

in philosophy that had taken place once it was realised that Berlin was not going to grow as first envisaged. He then presented the current strategy and with his colleague answered searching questions.

City centre

In the afternoon we visited **Potsdamer Platz**. Named after the city of Potsdam, 25 km to the south west, it marks the point where the old road from Potsdam passed through the city wall of Berlin at the Potsdam Gate. Potsdamer Platz is one of the most popular attractions of the New Berlin. The former Postdamer Platz was only a small part of the site now bearing its name. The original square was badly damaged in the Second World War and subsequently became the junction of the American, British and Soviet sectors, and cut through by the Wall, the wasteland decayed into a no man's land in the heart of the city. After the fall of the Wall the area around Potsdamer Platz became the biggest building site in Europe.

From Potsdamer Platz we went on a walking tour of central landmarks like the **Reichstag** (with its new dome by Norman Foster) and the **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe**. The group were impressed by how well the new parliament buildings fit in with the old, and how the River Spree is turning into an interesting waterfront.

Inner city renewal

We also visited the mixed district of **Spandauer Vorstadt** which is part of Mitte borough. Priorities for the regeneration of the district were identified:

- To balance central living and commercial area
- To renew historic buildings
- To enhance the character with new and better use of old
- To meet the user's needs for the open spaces and play areas



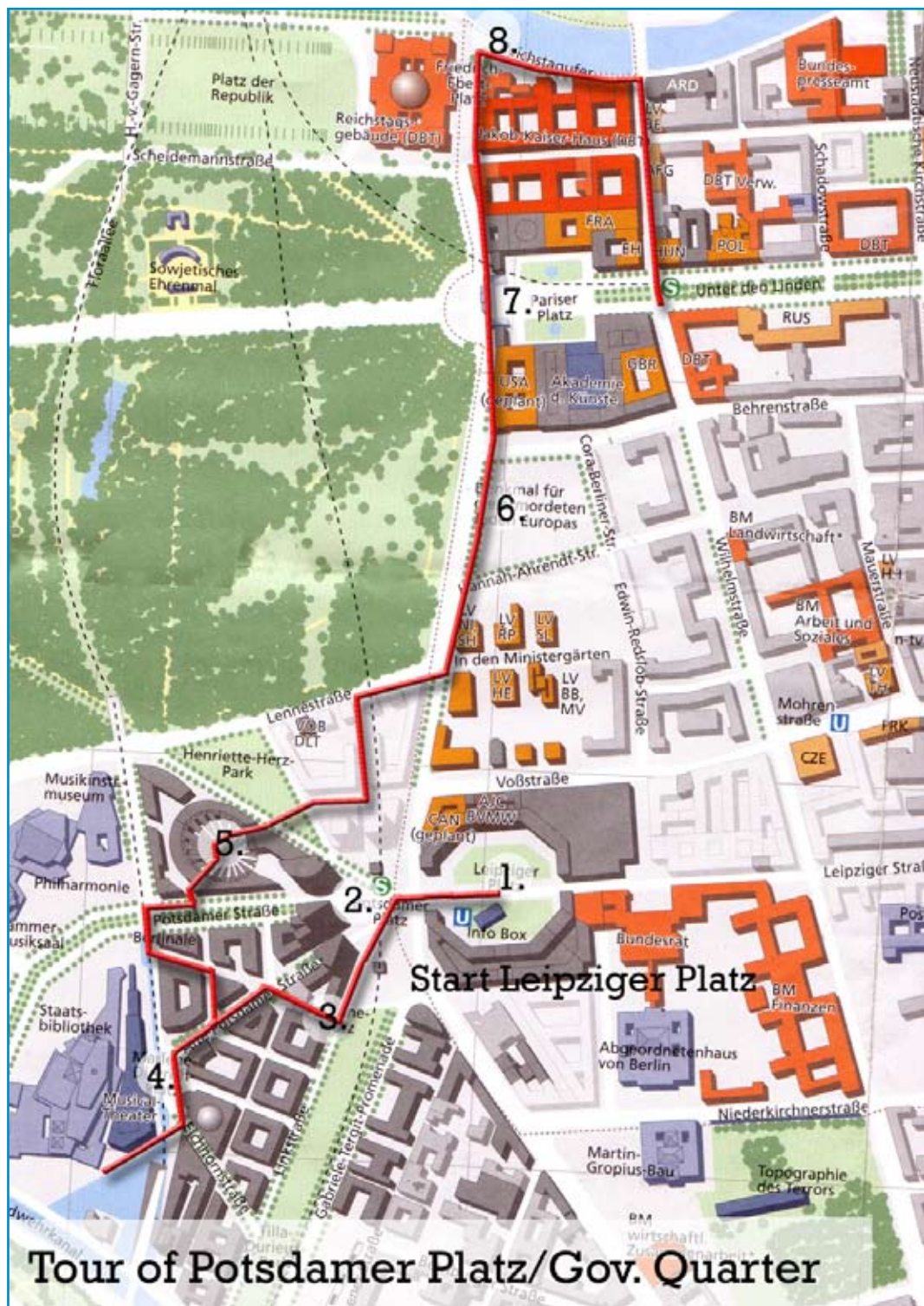
Potsdamer Platz



Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe



Reichstag



- Main points of interest:
1. Leipziger Str
 2. Potsdamer Platz
 3. Fontane Platz
 4. Marlene Dietrich Platz
 5. Sony centre
 6. Memorial to the Murdered Jews
 7. Brandenburg Gate
 8. Reichstag and river promenade

- To create more space through selective development and better use of existing such as roof conversions
- To create a more attractive place to live and work for a wide variety of tenants, in particular families.

Regeneration has prioritised the redevelopment of existing buildings to today's living standards, the reuse of vacant plots and upgrading of public facilities and infrastructure, as well as retaining and enhancing the areas character and enabling a mix of residential and commercial usage. Most activity so far has been concerned with renovating and improving what exists and has included:

- Improving the image
- Greening courtyards
- Creating pocket parks
- Creating localised employment
- Expanding the district heating systems
- Improving the physical environment including: services, paving etc.

72.6% of the buildings have been renovated and modernised, and 416 new properties built. The social infrastructure has been expanded to cater for the needs of families resulting in three new/renovated schools, a new and a renovated kindergarten, a new school activity centre, sport hall and cultural centre. The group were particularly impressed by the way child friendly open spaces formed the heart of small neighbourhoods.

Main station

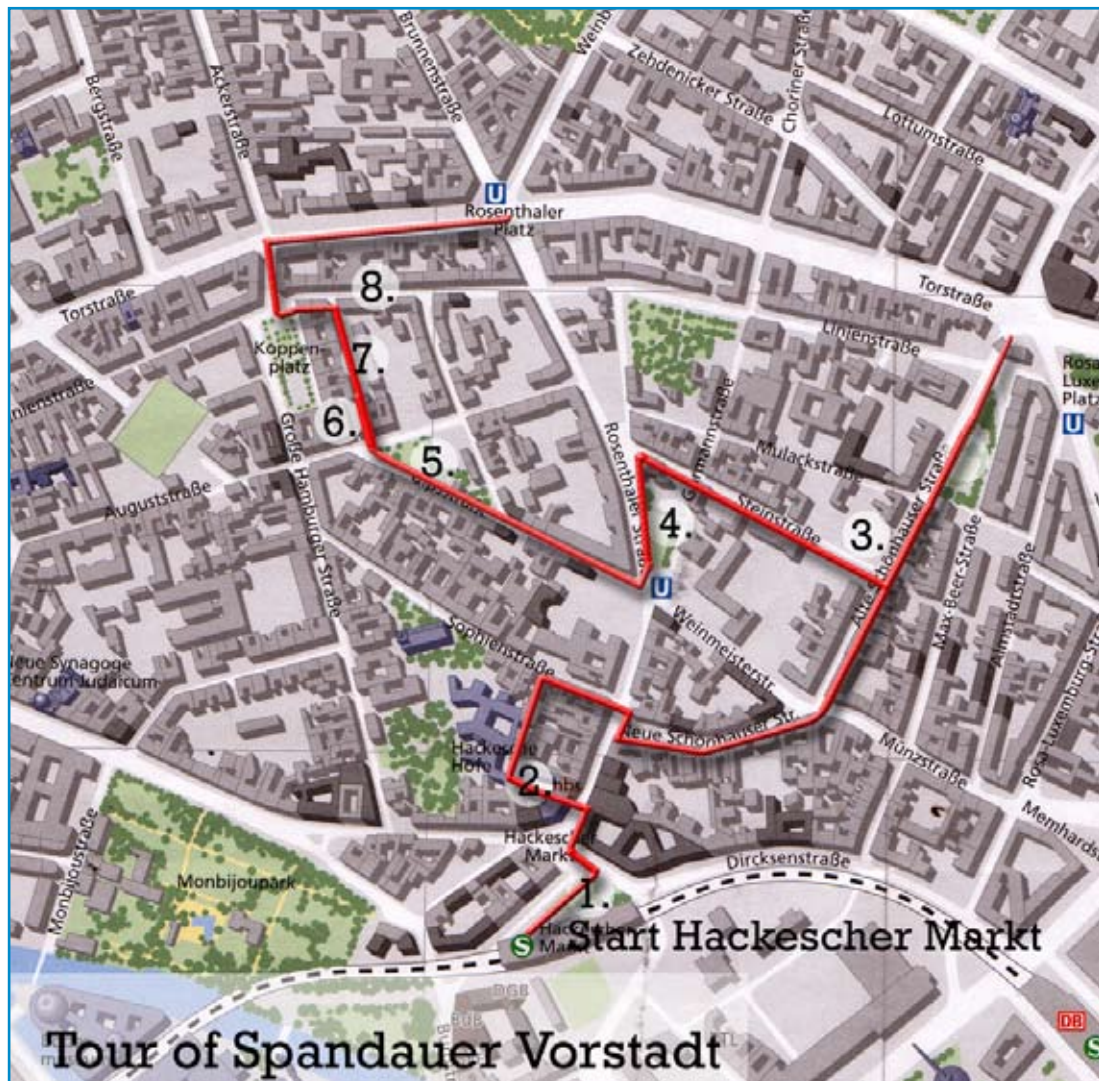
Using a combination of the underground and fast overhead suburban trains (the S Bahn), we also visited the **Hauptbahnhof**, the superb new one billion euro multi-level railway station, which a few of the group had glimpsed when they arrived on an excellent sleeper train from Brussels. We finished the day with a memorable dinner at a good restaurant in a cooperatively run housing complex in **Prenzlauer Berg**.



Spandauer Vorstadt



Hackescher Markt



Main points of interest:

1. Remodelled urban open space at Hackescher Markt and the new building complex "Neuer Hackescher Markt" The former market area and adjacent vacant land was used as a parking area for many years until the mid 1990s when it was redeveloped to build twelve new buildings with 18000m² of space using the Berlin type of development with central courtyards. The central area is purely residential with 90 units.
2. Restored historical mixed use block culture at Hackescher Höfe A historical building with eight inter connected courtyards, which now forms an anchor point for the areas tourism and culture base. 65 businesses have established themselves here, along side 80 renovated apartments and 23 new apartments.
3. Public/private housing, Alte Schönhauser Allee/ Stein Str The area was cleared to make way for new housing during the GDR times, but the plans were never realised. The complex has 111 units, 46 of which are social housing. The project was divided between 4 architects to guarantee variety, with the premise to follow the building lines of the existing street structure and a diverse roof line.
4. Local playing facilities on previous traffic junction at Alte Schönhauser Allee
5. Reclamation of open space on Gips Strasse This decision was made to keep this parcel of previously developed land free from new development to create some open space.
6. Part of infrastructure for district heating works
7. Upgrading nursery and primary education facilities
8. Major renewal of services and street surfacing

Estate renewal

The following day we hired a coach to enable us to see **Hellersdorf**, one of the many East German suburban system built housing schemes with more than 400,000 apartments that are undergoing renewal. By taking a transect through the suburbs we could also see how the Eastern part of the city appears to be coping with economic and political change. The general impression was of well-cared for places, with little of the graffiti that was so evident five years ago. Coloured render has transformed the once grey concrete housing estates. The group saw the range of facilities provided around the main square, which included a college, medical centre and town hall, as well as the usual shopping centre.

Of greatest interest were the renovated neighbourhoods, with their abundant structural planting and extensive children's play areas. These are overlooked by blocks of flats that had been made to look individual through plenty of colour, new entrances, and in some cases elaborate balconies and roof treatments.

New eco-suburb

The highlight of the second day was visiting the recently completed new suburb of **Kirchsteigfeld**, a 60 hectare urban extension of Potsdam 25 km south west of Berlin with some 7,500 inhabitants and over 2,600 high density homes in an abundant and highly permeable landscape network¹.

Kirchsteigfeld was developed by a single master developer Groth Gruppe, which is uncommon in Germany as the volume housebuilding industry in Germany does not exist. To maintain a high degree of involvement the local authority formed



Hellersdorf



Kirchsteigfeld

¹ Kirchsteigfeld - A European Perspective on the Construction of Community, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University of California, 2001

a legal partnership with the developer. Groth Gruppe held a workshop for 10 invited architects to design the scheme. The successful architect was then asked to prepare the B-plan. To ensure consistent design quality the architect retained a long term involvement with the project. It was designed between 1991 and 1993 by architects Rob Krier and Christoph Kohl, and individual buildings were designed by several architectural firms from Central Europe and the United States. It was built between 1993 and 1998 and is one of the largest housing projects undertaken in the former states of East Germany.

Local authorities generally provide infrastructure before plots are developed but in Kirchsteigfeld Groth Gruppe provided technical infrastructure on behalf of the local authority. The developer has also retained a long-term interest as the landlord of rental properties which possibly contributed to creating a very attractive place to live.

In-line with current best practice surface water is channelled into a Sustainable Urban Drainage System. The system starts with water draining from courtyards into swales where it either soaks away, evaporates or is retained within the system. It then flows along verges into minor streets. It is then collected into a stream that forms part of a formal linear park from where it flows into a retention basin before flowing into the drainage network in surrounding rural area. Each element of the system creates the potential for wetland ecosystems, with planting selected to reflect the pattern of water retention².

At Kirchsteigfeld's core stands a church, one of the first built in Eastern Germany since World War II, it was designed by

The German Bebauungsplan (B-plan)

B-plans must set out the use for land and buildings, designate land on which development may take place, and areas reserved for infrastructure. The B-plan can also address issues such as:

- plot size
- building lines
- building heights
- roof forms
- areas for communal facilities
- affordable, sheltered or assisted housing
- areas for private and public open space
- maximum number of dwellings
- ecological requirements

Source: The B-plan in Germany, Katja Stille, Senior Urban Designer with Tibbalds, article published in Urban Design magazine, Winter 2007, issue 101



Kirchsteigfeld

² Biodiversity by Design, URBED, TCPA and ALGE for TCPA, 2004

Italian architect Augusto Romano Burelli. A community centre, a further education college as well as three schools plus some 20 shops (a number of which were empty) make it more like an eco-town than a suburb. Most streets are lined with three to five story apartment buildings with colourful facades. Communal gardens inside each block, provide further green spaces, with access to parking tucked discreetly to the side. Kirchsteigfeld is linked by three new tram lines to other places, including the historic town of Potsdam.



Historic landscape

The tour ended with a chance to walk round the historic town which had once been the capital of Prussia under Frederick the Great. We also saw the beautifully Sansouci Park, and some visited the palace, while others went to see some of the modern architecture. By the time we reached West Berlin and Kurfürstendamm (a three mile long and grander version of Oxford Street), the heavy rain marooned the group in the magnificent department store of **Ka We De**, which provided a fascinating contrast to a visit largely spent in what had been the Eastern sector.



2. CONTEXT

Berlin, though capital of the largest and most prosperous nation in Europe, is very different from London in a number of ways:

- Berlin is located in the far Eastern part of Germany, a long way from most other major cities. It is on a route leading from Budapest and Prague through to Warsaw, and on the vast plain which stretches through to Moscow.
- It became the capital of Prussia, and then the capital of Germany when the nation was forged in 1871.



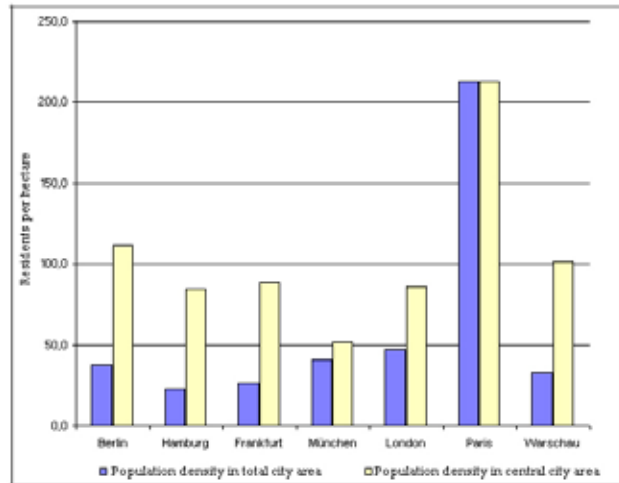
Kirchsteigfeld

- After the Second World War the capital shifted to Bonn, and the city was run as four separate sectors, with West Berlin as an isolated island within Eastern Germany.
- When reunification took place, and the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 (known in German as die Wende [the turnaround]), it was re-designated the capital of a united Germany. However with a population now of only 3.75 million compared with Germany's population of 82 million, it can not exert the same influence over the country that it once did.
- The city is made up of 12 centres and some 200 neighbourhoods. The density in the centre is similar to London, but only half that of Paris. As the chart shows residential densities are a little higher in the central area but less overall. 30% of the area is given over to parks and water (similar to London). The wider region, which includes Brandenburg, is less than 6 million, and is largely farm land and forest.
- The superb public transport system means that people use cars less, and in Germany as whole there are twice as many railway lines per head of the population. Though car ownership is higher than in the UK cars are used less.
- Before the Wall fell, both West and East Berlin had been supported as 'showcases' of the capitalist and socialist regimes. Now subsidies have been withdrawn, Berlin is having to live within its means.

Capital challenges

Despite its exceptional history, Berlin faces some of the same problems as London, and even more so places like Greater Manchester that have to support a mass of facilities with a static population. The study tour brought out a number of challenges, from which lessons might be learned, particularly for East London:

- Reunification led to the collapse of the old East German economy, and the closure of many of its factories. With the



Spandauer Vorstadt



Potsdamer Platz

wall down, many left East Berlin for the West in search of a better life. Unemployment rocketed (currently 15.6%).

- The first priority was to raise the standard of living in what was East Germany to those in the west this included making the old East German neighbourhoods more liveable, and to deal with the problems created by excessive amounts of unattractive blocks of flats.
- Another challenge was to physically unite the two halves of the city such as the separate transport systems and a huge swathe of vacant land through the centre left by the demolition of the wall. A whole new city centre has been built at the 'neutral' area of Potsdamer Platz, to complement the existing centre around the Kurfürstendamm in the West and Alexander Platz, its Eastern equivalent.

In fact the grand plans did not work out quite as planned, and the need to reassess original plans may have some messages for London:

- Though half the government moved with about 12,000 jobs, the other half remains in Bonn, and understandably there is resistance to movement. The true impact of the move is hard to quantify as many auxiliary services, embassies and media based companies did move to the city but many of the anticipated larger company head quarters stayed away.
- The impact of competition from cheap imports from the East has shaken the confidence of German industry, and large companies have not opened up on the scale expected. The economy suffered with significantly lower growth than was expected. As a result Berlin is left with significant amounts of empty offices, and rents that are far too low to support further development.
- There are also issues with land ownership as much is owned by the Central Government and the German Railways, which has



Potsdamer Platz



One of the new parliament buildings

stifled development in some strategic areas.

- The other side of much lower property costs than in London has been the take-off of the 'creative economy', which now accounts for 20% of jobs, and which is operating internationally. Berlin has become the 'cool place' to be.
- Tourism adds another 7% of jobs and is growing at 20% per year, making Berlin Europe's third most visited city. A major aim now with a new international airport under construction is to make Berlin the gateway to Europe for tourists coming from Asia, which is a huge growth market. This could well divert tourists away from London as Berlin is two hours nearer, and much cheaper.

There are also major issues in achieving social cohesion:

- The substantial immigrant community of Turks, who are largely Muslims, have neither returned to Turkey nor become fully integrated, creating major issues of social cohesion concentrated in central western districts, few have chosen to move to the East since the wall fell.
- The Stadtforum recent report *Perspectives for Berlin* states 'Berlin has not yet overcome the consequences of German self-destruction of the last century. A traditional elite who decisively influenced urban life is lacking for the most part'.
- The city council itself has a debt of 16 billion euros, and owns relatively little land, thus limiting the scope for rapid growth or change, and making the financing of future development very difficult.

Scaled down ambitions

The failure of the collapse of communism and the Eastern Block to release a great economic upsurge (as was hoped) coupled with the shift of global power towards Asia, has led to a reassessment of Berlin's position, and the emergence of a new and



Hackescher Markt



Spandauer Vorstadt

more modest economic and spatial strategy:

- The population is fairly static at around 3.5 million rather than growing to 5 million as originally predicted. Instead of trying to plan for everywhere, the overall vision is quite simply of Berlin being a leading European city within a network of cities; this means creating more convivial places, like the Hackescher Markt area which we visited on our walk-about.
- The spatial focus is on 'Future spaces' which includes land along the River Spree (Berlin has more bridges than Amsterdam and Venice combined), major development sites such as alongside the new main railway station, 'the City's calling card', and the revitalisation of district centres around the city.
- Berlin sees itself as the centre of a development axis that mirrors the 'blue banana' that runs from London through Brussels and Paris to the Mediterranean. Its new five billion Euro international airport is expected to make Berlin the first port of call for visitors from the East.

Social city

There is also a new stress on a strategy for making Berlin more of a 'social city':

- Most people live in flats, and over 80% are rented (much higher than the German average of 40% though ownership in the cities is generally lower). Flats are let under controlled rents, and rents are only 70% of the German average, which makes building new housing relatively uneconomic. The city hopes to encourage more diversity through higher self ownership, cooperative self-build, and large private homes. The philosophy has become more 'bottom-up', with the city providing support, but not direction, and with a stress on 'urbanity'.
- Planning is seen as a cooperative process, with the aim of attracting the creative class,



Potsdamer Platz



One of the new parliament buildings



Hackescher Markt

including families, older people, and 'urbanites', and of exchanging experience with other places (something that in the past Berlin has not done very well).

- As well as being a dominant international creative city (with 1,200 businesses in the centre and 4,500 in the inner city), and the idea of a 'Creative Bridge' other economic generators are seen as 'Space for new ideas', aimed at appealing to the 'urban middle classes' and 'avant-gardes' through the increasing individualisation of society. An Agency for Temporary Uses is being set up to help achieve this.

- The incremental or 'step by step' process pioneered by STERN in Kreuzberg (see Appendix A) is being used more widely. Neighbourhood Management is being used to improve disadvantaged areas through '*continuous involvement in the improvement and development process*'. (The exhibit on page 15 provides some information from a Senate Department report on the process, which could offer some useful lessons for London.)

3. LESSONS FOR LONDON

From all that the group saw and heard, four major themes stood out:

Integrating transport and development

By concentrating new development around the main transport nodes, and resisting suburban sprawl, including out of town shopping centres, Berlin can offer a higher quality of life in which people spend far less time (and money) travelling to work. The city wants to make the most of investment by other agencies, such as the still nationalised (but soon to be privatised) railways. It was noticeable that neighbourhood centres in the East of the city were connected by both suburban rail links (S Bahn) and trams, though in the West the trams are absent



Spandauer Vorstadt



Potsdamer Platz

Neighbourhood Management in Berlin

Economic difficulties, increasing pauperisation, and migration of the middle classes have caused changes in the social structure of some of Berlin's districts, often worsened by ethnic problems.

Therefore, in 1999, the government of Berlin, in close co-operation with the concerned boroughs, has defined 15 'areas with special development needs'. In 2001, two more areas have been selected. In order to achieve a lasting improvement of the situation in those areas and to contribute to their stabilization, it was decided to implement a 'Neighbourhood Management' (NM) in each area. This was done within the framework of the program 'Districts with Special Development Needs - The Socially Integrative City' initiated by the national government and the governments of the federal states of Germany in 1999.

In these 17 neighbourhoods, about 227,000 people live altogether. The numbers of residents in each neighbourhood range between about 4,500 and 24,000 people. In each of the 17 neighbourhoods, a 'Neighbourhood Management Team' has been implemented for the urban development of the area. These neighbourhoods are focal areas of development for their boroughs.

The members of the NM Teams have a local office in their area, to which boroughs or housing companies contribute by providing rent-free office space or covering the costs for office equipment, supplies, or additional expenses. The offices are also available for activities of local residents and initiatives.

Specific tasks of NM Teams are, amongst others:

- the activation of residents as well as tradesmen and craftsmen to participate in and contribute to the development process of their neighbourhood
- the networking of various pressure groups and participants, establishing co-operation between institutions, initiatives, enterprises, housing companies, et cetera
- assistance in the development of projects in the various edificial, social, cultural, and economic areas of activity.

Monthly or quarterly, the NM Teams hold a public forum with everybody concerned, affected, or interested, including institutions, experts, and the political parties represented in the borough councils. In addition, a number of public events on a variety of topics and projects take place. There are small workshops, mediation and planning projects, exhibitions, and media work. Each year, a steering committee arranges a program.

For the execution of smaller projects e.g. the support of street festivals, advertisement for certain projects, a neighbourhood newspaper, new playground equipment, planting - each team has an action fund of about 15,000 EURO p. a. available. These funds, and the activities made possible by them, have been an encouragement for many residents to become themselves active in and responsible for their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood management resulted in high spirits and new creativeness in the neighbourhoods. A committee of residents had the sole responsibility to decide what that money should be spent on. Decisions were made directly by the residents and local stakeholders, and in their responsibility.

Most funding has been spent on the lasting revaluation of urban area and housing environment, for social and ethnical integration, and for the support of cooperation and organization among neighbours. Furthermore, young people, who had already been excluded from the education and labour markets, were provided with new chances of access to job training and gainful occupation.

Source: Senate Department for Berlin

(possibly because the depots happened to be in the East when the Wall went up!). Passenger numbers for the S Bahn now match the numbers carried on the underground system. It covers longer journeys along the north/south, east/west axis and a circular route which was originally built to link ports and industrial areas. The whole system is very cheap and easy for a visitor to use, with very short waits. The new railway station is one of the best in the world.

Achieving a first class public realm

Berlin is a highly walkable city. Pavements are continually being upgraded, with common ducts for services underneath them to save having to dig up the road again and again. There is an abundance of large trees everywhere. Mature trees have been used in Potsdamer Platz and a lake has been provided above underground roads and parking. Hence the country seems to extend into the city, and there is a lot of concern about promoting biodiversity. There are few yellow lines, barriers, or a clutter of signs, and the pedestrian feels predominant (aided by the discipline of crossing roads when the little green man lights up). Somehow graffiti and vandalism, which were so apparent five years ago, have been checked in many areas including the very centre and satellite suburbs, possibly by a much larger maintenance force, and a general sense of communal responsibility. There are however still areas where graffiti is dominant. However the pavements at least are well-maintained, as all the services are laid in trenches and paving is recycled. The result is a generally good public realm, not just a few municipal highlights. This probably plays a large role in providing jobs for those without qualifications, and opportunities for voluntary work. However near the centre intrusive above ground pipes have had to be used to remove surplus ground water from building sites. Everywhere we went seemed safe.



Hauptbahnhof

Renovating existing estates

Flat living is the norm. Though some residential blocks in the Eastern sector have been demolished to bring supply more in line with demand, the overall policy has been one of renovation, and the trendiest places to live are now in the East, including the central areas of Mitte, with its many embassies. The application of brightly coloured render has been highly effective in changing the image of large estates, along with neighbourhood management programmes (see page 15). Individualised and secure entrances make each neighbourhood and block feel different. Rubbish is sorted for recycling into different bins and stored unobtrusively. There is no obvious division between tenures, which means that estates are relatively classless, though there must be huge differences between living in the old inner areas, and in the peripheral estates. Significantly it is the older areas of the East that survived the post war redevelopment which attract a lot of new people moving to the city, with Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg being particularly attractive and with one of the highest birth rates in the country.

Promoting sustainable new communities

Germany for years has been acting to contain and reduce energy consumption through the promotion of renewables. In line with other parts of Germany, such as Freiburg and Hanover, there are extensive areas of high density development that are putting sustainable development principles into effect. Large wind farms outside the City, and the use of Combined Heat and Power in central areas are quite common. Sustainable Urban Drainage systems means that rain water is left to sink into the soil, or to gather in lakes rather than overloading the sewers. A particularly interesting innovation has been development by cooperative groups, which now accounts for about 5% of housing. In the new 'high



Hellersdorf



density garden suburb' of Kirchsteigfeld, South West of Potsdam, some 80 architects worked to produce very individual looking blocks and open spaces. A single private developer took responsibility for land assembly, creating open spaces, and supervising the construction of roads and social facilities. The results were not only good to look at but residents told us they are great to live in.

Conclusions

The group only saw a fraction of what is going on, but enough to suggest that there is a lot to be learned from the way German cities are undertaking regeneration. There is also a real interest in sharing experience on a number of issues. There would be real value in comparable research into the economies of renovations and new development, and into the value of the public sector coordinating the basic infrastructure.



Kirchsteigfeld

Kreuzberg Case Study

Historic context

In the late 19th century there was a great influx of rural migrants to Kreuzberg. This led to the establishment of large housing blocks with several dark narrow courtyards. By 1910 the whole area of Kreuzberg had been developed. At the time, the masterplan did not take into account space for amenities like schools, churches and markets.

After World War II Kreuzberg was marginalized by the establishment of the Berlin Wall, which put the area on the edge of West Berlin.

The south east of Kreuzberg, which later became the postcode area SO 36, has been largely unaffected by the bombing of the Allies. In 1963 the Berlin Senate launched the first urban renewal program. It was based on the heavily criticised strategy of demolishing old buildings and replacing them with new ones. Under this scheme the centre of Kreuzberg became the largest renewal site in Europe at the time. However, the southeast area (SO 36) was declared an area, which would be renewed in a few years time. Hence, no public funding was made available for the area and private investors did not renew buildings as they expected them to be demolished. Consequently, the housing stock was in increasingly bad condition and those who could afford better housing moved out of the area leaving behind the poor. The area was also seen to be the perfect solution for foreign workers as they were seen as transient population.

Following failed planning policy in the 1960s and 70s a large number of houses have been squatted, resulting in a large alternative, leftwing community. This was the seedbed for revolt against the political establishment and led to massive riots in the 1980s. Moreover, the local community protested against the local authorities' planning policy, which led to the establishment of the pressure group 'Verein SO36' in



The Berlin Wall had put Kreuzberg on the edge of the city for over forty years. When the wall was demolished in 1989 Kreuzberg was put in the centre of the city overnight.

1978. Following these protests the local authority reviewed its planning system and launched a competition called "Strategies for Kreuzberg" in 1983. As a result of this competition emerged the 'Twelve Principles of Careful Urban Renewal'. The most important message of the 12 Principles was community engagement. A major role was given to the 'Verein SO 36', which was now funded by the local authority.

In 1984 the Internationale Bauausstellung (Building Exhibition) was held in Kreuzberg. It not only served as a showcase of architecture but, more importantly had the task of managing careful urban renewal under the 12 Principles. 4,000 new flats were built, schools and youth centres were extended, courtyards were being greened and car traffic restricted areas were introduced.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall was demolished and overnight Kreuzberg was in the centre of Berlin. Consequently Kreuzberg became very attractive for investors, which results in rising rents. At the same time funds for urban renewal were being relocated to former East Berlin. As a result urban renewal in Kreuzberg came to a halt and many social projects, like the 'Verein SO 36' were no longer supported financially and closed down.



Typical historic building

Kreuzberg has sometimes been called the largest Turkish city outside of Turkey. In 1999, of its 146,884 inhabitants, 49,010 did not have German citizenship (of which the large majority was Turkish). However, in the upmarket areas such as Bergmann Kiez this is really no longer the case with a cosmopolitan crowd of students, young professionals and young couples. Especially in the eastern part of the borough, the streets have a distinct, almost oriental flair.

Kreuzberg in Profile

Population Density



Average size of flats in m²



Proportion of foreigners per 1000 population



Household income in Euro



Key to wards

- 01 Mitte
- 02 Kreuzberg
- 03 Pankow
- 04 Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf
- 05 Spandau
- 06 Steglitz-Zehlendorf
- 07 Tempelhof-Schöneberg
- 08 Neukölln
- 09 Treptow-Köpenick
- 10 Marzahn-Hellersdorf
- 11 Lichtenberg

Building development in Kreuzberg



Old inner city building quarters, construction predominantly prior 1948

Areas with special development needs (neighbourhood management)

Large housing estates and social housing complexes, construction after 1948

Guiding projects of urbanisation

Number of businesses in Kreuzberg 1998 - 2002

	01.01.1998	01.01.1999	01.01.2000	01.01.2001	01.01.2002	31.12.2002
All businesses	18.495	20.659	23.388	26.444	28.941	30.580
Craft businesses	1.979	2.324	2.728	3.128	3.421	3.448
Trade	6.079	6.691	7.440	8.228	8.806	9.186
Industry	406	426	461	479	486	479
Other services	10.031	11.218	12.759	14.609	16.228	17.465

Source: Statistisches Landesamt Berlin, 2002

In Kreuzberg most businesses are small to medium size in the service sector. The above table shows a very positive trend that the number of businesses in Kreuzberg is on the increase. In 2001 there was an increase of 2,497 businesses and 1,639 in 2002.

The 12 Principles of Careful Urban Renewal

In March 1983 the Berlin Senate formally adopted the 12 Principles of Careful Urban Renewal:

1. Renewal has to be planned in conjunction with the community and local businesses to ensure sustainability.
2. Planners, the community and local businesses shall reach agreement over renewal projects. Technical as well as social planning shall be coordinated.
3. The individual character of Kreuzberg shall be sustained by re-establishing trust and confidence. Damage threatening the structure of buildings must be repaired immediately.
4. New forms of living shall be made possible by carefully changing the outline of buildings.
5. The renewal of flats and buildings shall be made 'step by step' and gradually extended.
6. The built environment shall be improved by keeping demolition to a minimum and by greening of courtyards as well as designing facades.
7. Amenities as well as streets, public spaces and parks have to be renewed and extended according to the needs of the community.
8. Social planning must also work out stakeholder rights and property rights of the people concerned (i.e. solve the problem of squatting).
9. Decisions concerning urban renewal must be reached publicly and should possibly be discussed on the spot. Community involvement has to be encouraged.
10. For urban renewal to gain confidence strong financial support is necessary. Funds need to be made available quickly.
11. New forms of administration are to be developed. Administration and construction shall be kept apart.
12. Urban renewal following these principles must be ensured to go on after 1984 (the year of the International Building Exhibition).



Squatted house with poster calling for opposition

Hitherto, urban renewal meant large area demolition and new construction on the open land with the consequent destruction of historical buildings and structures. Although, not all development projects were bound by the twelve principles they marked a watershed in the planning policy of Kreuzberg. These twelve principles ensured that the experience of the community concerned formed the basis for planning decisions.

Below three initiatives will be introduced which were, or still are, part of the implementation of the twelve principles. Firstly, Verein SO 36 a former pressure group that later was supported by the municipality, is described. Secondly, the project Block 103 is taken as an example of environmentally friendly renewal. And, thirdly, the work of the urban regeneration agency S.T.E.R.N. is introduced.

Urban Renewal Verein SO 36

SO 36 used to be the postcode area covering the south east of Kreuzberg, which gave its name to the pressure group Verein SO 36. This group was established in 1978 out of the opposition of the local community against the 'wholesale' regeneration policy of the municipality. However, it quickly became the main liaison between the local authority and the community and was then funded by the former. The aim was to

encourage the community to participate in the process of renewal of their neighbourhood e.g. by initiating and supporting self-help projects and unions. The community work of Verein SO 36 focused on living and rents, the development of rents for local business, traffic as well as drugs and poverty. Furthermore, Verein SO 36 offers advice regarding tenancy and counselling.

When the Berlin wall was demolished in 1989 the community work of Verein SO 36 became more and more important as Kreuzberg was suddenly in the centre of the city. This made it very attractive for speculation and led to a rise in rents. Verein SO 36 was commissioned to produce some studies regarding structural change resulting from the unification of former East and West Berlin. It found that signs of gentrification were apparent. This, it was argued will have significant structural implications because not only will the poor be forced out of the area but also the many small local enterprises and social projects will not be able to pay higher rents. The local authority has passed a bill to control rents. Because Verein SO 36 provided community advice it played a vital role in the implementation of this bill and hence in the protection of the community.

However, former East Berlin now also absorbed most regeneration funds



Left: Housing block after renovation

Right: Block 103 with roof garden

available so that Kreuzberg had to cut down its budget. This meant that many renewal projects were discontinued and Verein SO 36 was no longer funded and came to an end in 1995. Nevertheless some projects like the tenants advice centre are still continued today with the help of nongovernmental bodies.

Stattbau: Block 103

The municipal structural and ecologically model project Block 103 in Kreuzberg was one of the most successful and extensive construction plans of the “careful city renewal” in Berlin.

The house squatter movement in the early 80’s contributed to the growing consciousness of the problem and the international building exhibition (IBA) marked the official turning away from former city renewal concepts. Twelve ground rules for a “careful urban renewal” were passed. Central elements: participation of the affected parties, socially-compatible rehabilitation methods, preservation of the building substance. The rehabilitative contract for 12 properties in Block 103 and one in Block 104 between the Berlin Senate and the redevelopment company Stattbau stipulated these ground rules to be realised.

The rehabilitation contract was signed in 1983. In 1986 the building work began. In 1991 the buildings were largely restored. In this process exemplary ecological elements (energy, water, greenery, waste, building materials) were developed.

The energy concept for Block 103

In the energy concept for the 15 buildings in Block 103, four goals were pursued:

- Minimization of the energy need through thermal insulation, through the use of highly effective supply technologies and through individually responsible user behaviour.
- Low emission production of electric and heat energy.
- Low heating costs. Only under this condition were the inhabitants ready to give up cheap coal oven heating.
- Test run of an energy system with combined parallel operation of a solar generator, CHP and electricity grid.

For research purposes above all, a photovoltaic system was installed to cover around 4% of the entire electricity demand. The system converts 16% of solar energy into electricity in 213 monocrystalline solar modules which are mounted on an area of 240 m². On sunny days, the system produces 20 kW. Yearly it delivers



around 14,000 kWh of electricity, helping to reduce reliance on the electricity grid, especially during the midday peak in summer.

With the realized energy concept, CO₂ emissions were reduced by 25% as compared with the conditions before the rehabilitation. The primary energy consumption for heat was decreased by 36%, for electricity by 59% as compared with 1986. Last but not least, pollutant emissions have decreased considerably by converting from coal to natural gas. Sulfur dioxide emissions have been reduced by about a metric ton yearly.

In terms of the heating costs, the precept of the “careful city renewal,” social compatibility, was met. At 1.20 DM per square meter for heated living and tenant-use area, the heating price is 50 Pfennig under the rates of similar buildings.

S.T.E.R.N.

The urban renewal company S.T.E.R.N. was founded in 1986. The private limited liability company is concerned with the programmes of careful urban renewal in Berlin. Its contract with the Berlin government is extended on an annual basis. S.T.E.R.N. had an administrative role in the Block 103 project described above. Currently, it is primarily engaged in the renewal of former East Berlin districts like Prenzlauer Berg. Its co-ordination, steering and maintenance activities includes block and social planning, infrastructural

planning, advice and service for self-help projects, budget control for modernisation and renovation projects, and management of annual rebuilding programmes.

Over the last 13 years, they have transformed more than 80 whole blocks by involving the 56,000 residents of crumbling buildings in the re-design and reconstruction of the neighborhood.

S.T.E.R.N. has created hundreds of moderately priced apartments and co-housing projects (with a combination of private and shared living and working space) plus commercial space with, for example, renewable energy or grey water reclamation systems. The residents decide if they want their building powered by solar, wind or cogeneration, if they want daycare centers, roof gardens with grass growing on them, workshops, etc. Inside, ecologically-sound construction materials are used efficiently to suit their inhabitants' needs. As many of the original buildings as possible are preserved and most of the blocks have courtyard gardens, vine-covered walls and well-kept appearances.

You might notice S.T.E.R.N. by chance if you spot a wall covered with plants that filter the used water for the garden of a 35 person co-housing project. The residents pay a fairly low rent or trade work for rent, and they take turns making dinner and maintaining the common spaces.

S.T.E.R.N. is also a job-training program specifically for the construction trade. In this workfare project, a resident can work on the renewal of their own home, then stay on the crew as new projects get underway. Their creations include the preservation of landmarked structures, small industrial complexes, buildings for the aged, and even two neighborhood petting farms with swimming ponds for city-dwelling kids.

The S.T.E.R.N. group is now branching out into other parts of the city, including into East Berlin, where housing is in terribly dilapidated condition. They're aware that projects there may take more time to complete as the citizens are just starting to learn about the rights and obligations of freedom. For the first time in a generation, they are being asked to envision the ideal home and then work to bring it to fruition. The experience that S.T.E.R.N. gains in East Berlin will be used to make their techniques even more applicable throughout Europe.

Johannes Fräulin, URBED, 2003

