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Laissez-Faire or Sensitive Policymaking: The Legacy of Creative Clusters on Brownfield Sites in Berlin

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Abstract

With his saying "Berlin—poor, but sexy!" former Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit framed the motto for a decade of transition in which the German capital became a Mecca for artists, media industries, and creative people from all over the world. Building on a longstanding tradition of tolerating diversity and as a centre of high culture and bohemians, the city developed a new cultural-political identity from a deep transformation crisis after German unification and the extensive loss of its industrial base. In conjunction with a blossoming of temporary uses in a wide variety of vacant properties, often abandoned production, infrastructure, or storage areas, an intense creative scene unfolded. Since the 2010s, this scene has been massively threatened by displacement due to the changed real estate market situation. Over the years, the city has tried to counteract this situation through cultural policy initiatives and niche projects for bottom-up initiatives, with limited success. Against the backdrop of accelerated development of former brownfield sites and funding cuts in urban cultural policy, the question currently arises as to what place subculture can occupy in urban policy in the future. Based on official documents, books, scholarly articles, project websites, newspaper articles, and own observations, this article attempts to evaluate the respective policies in the city over time, to place them in the context of approaches to a more land-security-oriented policy, and to make clear what role the re-used spaces and buildings from the industrial age play in this.

Keywords

adaptive re-use; artist-led regeneration; Berlin; creative clusters; Germany; industrial heritage; socio-cultural centres

1. Introduction and Research Design

This article deals with an essential facet of economic structural change in Berlin, the German capital known for its multi-layered high and subculture (Krätke, 2002). It shows that the architectural legacy of industrial urbanisation has not only been preserved to a considerable extent despite extensive wartime destruction but has also played a special role in the development of creative clusters due to the economic weakness of the divided city and its consequences for cultural policy. For a long time, these were strongly characterised by socio-cultural and artist initiatives, but are increasingly being supplemented by private sector-driven real estate development projects that understand and use culture as an important part of their profit-maximising strategies. The article examines how the public sector has had a moderating, stimulating, and accentuating influence on creative clusters through the interplay of urban development, land, and cultural policies. It looks at how policy changes have affected location patterns, competition between culture-related projects and the balance between high culture and subculture, and the significance of repurposed industrial buildings in particular. It then asks how urban policy has dealt with the challenges of property development and what effects this has had. The main arguments are, firstly, that the variety of industrial heritage buildings available have allowed politicians to dispense with the systematic promotion of creative clusters and instead support individual projects in terms of urban development and cultural policy, thereby achieving a highly differentiated variety of creative locations over the decades. Secondly, the city's reluctance in terms of land policies has meant that the emerging location pattern was strongly determined by the initiative of creative professionals and developers, for whom rights of disposal over property were a key factor for the feasibility of concepts. Thirdly, urban policy accepts that tensions in the property market could mean that diversity, recognised as key to the city's attractiveness, could gradually fall victim to an increasing commercialisation of culture and the enforcement of conventional, financially viable uses.

The following is based on more than two decades of research into the spatial characteristics of tertiarisation in Berlin (see Altrock, 2003, 2014; Altrock & Fan, 2023). In addition to analysing the scholarly literature on industrial heritage, conversion measures, artist-led regeneration, the creative scene and creative clusters, official documents from the Berlin Senate, the House of Representatives and the districts, self-portrayals of creative locations and projects, newspaper articles, and blogs were looked into (see Supplementary Material for an overview of key documents). The phasing used to systematise urban development, land, and cultural policy is essentially linked to government terms, but in combination with economic conditions and the general real estate climate, it stands for distinguishable orientations of the policy field examined here. Due to the dramatic political changes, it is usually possible to draw a clear timeline, although this only applies with certain restrictions to the last phase transition. As the mentioned cases were or have been in development over a longer period, they were categorised according to the period in which key decisions for the conceptual design were made.

2. Urban Development, the Creative Class, and the Role of Reutilised Industrial Buildings

The creative class has played a major role in the scholarly debate and the practice of urban development. In the definitions used for this purpose, the creative sector encompasses film, art, media, design, architecture, fashion, advertising, and several other industries (Evans, 2009, p. 1026; see also Biehl, 2020). The definition encompasses both commercial and non-commercial industries, the latter covered by public support for culture in Berlin including film, dance, theatre, music, literature, museums, art, heritage, and

public libraries and archives (Der Regierende Bürgermeister von Berlin, 2014; Senat von Berlin, 2006). For cities, related hopes for a successful economic transformation, the strengthening of urban attractiveness and competitiveness, an enrichment of urban diversity and changes in urban development processes are related to a broad set of policies. With those, cities pursue both economic and socio-cultural objectives (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Stern & Seifert, 2010) that have been received both euphorically and critically (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Mould, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2020; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2009; Watson & Taylor, 2017).

On the one hand, "place-making by design" building on iconic architecture, "urban allure" and locally embedded ethnic, heritage, cultural, and creative quarters (Evans, 2009, 2015; Goldberg-Miller, 2019; Roodhouse, 2006) create branding opportunities and are sometimes used to revitalize industrial districts fallen into disuse. While Rosenstein (2011) claims that cultural development policies neglect neighbourhood-related needs and are rather focused on the central city, creative uses may contribute to the revitalisation of urban districts, increasing local attractiveness (Ooi & Stöber, 2010) and applying artist-led strategies in alternative revitalisation processes (Nedučin & Krklješ, 2022). However, despite the boom of creative uses, their outright promotion at a higher-scale in the context of "creative hubs" is by no means the rule and it remains open to what extent policymaking can contribute to inventing or stabilising creative clusters (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023; Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2006).

On the other, the role of artists and creatives in the development process is often criticised. For example, artists are described as a "development tool" (Bain & Landau, 2019, p. 422; Jakob, 2013), and culturally-driven renewal is often linked to gentrification (Andres & Grésillon, 2013; Cameron & Coaffee, 2005; Lloyd, 2010; Miles, 2020; Whiting et al., 2022; Zukin, 1982, 1987), albeit without always demonstrating the causality behind this (Altrock & Fan, 2023; Grodach et al., 2018).

Gradually, artists' contributions are discussed in a more complex and context-related manner: "Artists can play different roles: They participate directly or indirectly in gentrification processes, but they can oppose to such dynamics opening the debate for desirable urban development and rethinking models for growth, aligning themselves with local communities" (Pradel-Miquel, 2017, p. 14). Their potential impact on social innovation as small-scale developers and in the context of neighbourhood development is increasingly acknowledged (Bain, 2018; D'Ovidio & Cossu, 2017; García et al., 2015; Grodach, 2011; Rius-Ulldemolins & Díaz-Solano, 2023), reflecting their diversified strategies between cooperation and resistance to urban development policies (Borén & Young, 2017) and their linkages with small-scale manufacturing (Grodach et al., 2017).

In the context of industrial heritage, the strategy of adaptive re-use has been analysed in numerous case studies (Loures, 2015; Mieg & Oevermann, 2014). The conversion into cultural spaces is a revitalisation strategy in many places (Arbab & Alborzi, 2022; Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018; Duarte & Sabaté, 2013; Fossa, 2014; Mackrodt & Kalandides, 2014). It is positively recognised from a heritage conservation perspective (Harfst et al., 2016), while its impact is questioned (Andres & Golubchikov, 2016).

Many of these observations resonate in the literature on Berlin. One focus of the analyses is on documenting the limits of political influence and the precarious status of creatives as part of a protest movement in underused spaces based on individual cases. Although the leeway creatives had in times of

economic stagnation in the liberal climate of the city is generally taken for granted, there is a lack of analyses shedding light on the tense relationship between profit-oriented creative industries and socio-cultural initiatives in the context of transforming the rich industrial heritage (Colomb, 2012; Jakob, 2010; Novy & Colomb, 2013; Plevoets & Sowińska-Heim, 2018; Shaw, 2005) and taking temporal embeddedness and social learning into consideration (Bain & Landau, 2022).

Whether the subsequent use of an industrial site should be labelled a creative cluster here depends on its definition. If the demands for complexity, diversity, and cross-user interactions associated with a cluster are realised on a site depends on its size, but also its environment and the property management approach. In the following, we look at complex, functionally mixed re-use approaches on former industrial sites, regardless of their size, which are characterised by a relevant proportion of cultural uses.

In this context, it can be observed firstly that even smaller properties are often characterised by a variety of different stakeholders. Secondly, they form elements of creative clusters at the micro level of the plot as part of their development—either as a result of an initiative by a collective of users from the cultural sector or targeted profiling marketing by a property owner. Thirdly, several properties of this kind sometimes also form recognisable clusters at a higher-scale, referred to as cultural and/or trendy districts and perceived as such. However, the object of urban policy and funding programmes are usually individual providers and users, while districts with a cultural focus are addressed indirectly via the promotion of urban development qualities, for example, in area-based urban regeneration. Fourthly, depending on the location, environment and operator structure, there is a wider range of utilisation approaches that also develop different focal points over time. For example, one can distinguish between early socio-cultural locations with a high public impact through cultural events and training courses and later commercially oriented special properties characterised by users from the creative industries with a high proportion of office space and less public impact. How this diversity has evolved and changed over time in interaction with local politics is examined in the following section.

3. Berlin: A Metropolis Undergoing Structural Change and the Rise of a Creative Subculture

3.1. Historical Background

The German capital has a long tradition of subcultural re-use of historic buildings. This can be traced back to the interplay of its role as an industrial metropolis in the early 20th century, the decline of its industrial base since the division of Germany, its long-lasting importance as a centre of the international subculture, and its special tradition of urban renewal (see Industriekultur Berlin, n.d., for a rich introduction). Rapid industrial urbanisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries made Berlin the outstanding industrial centre of Germany. This growth was based, among other things, on the textile industry, the food industry, locomotive, vehicle and mechanical engineering, the electrical industry, and the media and film industries. These industries are associated with significant architectural and typological interventions, some of which still shape the image of the city. For example, the textile industry often established itself in multi-storey factories in the backyards of residential buildings, while the mechanical engineering industry built large factory complexes on the outskirts of the city, and the electrical industry finally developed independent factory districts. Up until the 1920s, many innovative multi-storey complexes, now listed buildings, were erected. Given the economic stagnation of the divided city between 1945 and 1990, they experienced a partial

decline, while the economic structural change was delayed overall so that especially the larger factory complexes continued to be used for a long time.

3.2. Development of the Creative Sector and the Role of Industrial Heritage

Given the weakness of the tertiary sector in the divided city, the roots of the creative sector in the second half of the 20th century can be traced back to the interplay of several factors. Firstly, urban development, particularly in the western part of the city, aimed to promote business start-ups, alternative tertiary uses, and educational infrastructure. Secondly, urban development efforts to raise the city's profile as a cultural metropolis played a key role, in capitalist West Berlin as a policy of strengthening soft location factors and in socialist East Berlin as a centralised approach to promoting high culture. Thirdly, countercultures emerged in both parts, supported by non-profit socio-cultural initiatives in West Berlin that aimed to improve the general living conditions in neighbourhoods, and civic approaches beyond state cultural production in East Berlin (Bodenschatz, 1987; Kimmel, 2018; Maechtel, 2020). For a long time, the city's attractiveness for the creative-artistic milieu was due to low property prices and the large amount of space available in vacant manufacturing buildings. As early as the 1970s and 1980s, these buildings took on a special significance, being used for low-threshold re-utilisation for creative uses in a broad sense, partly by public companies, partly by artists and citizens' initiatives (Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen & STERN Berlin GmbH, 1991).

Since the reunification in 1990, structural change has accelerated significantly, but was slowed down by a longer phase of economic stagnation from the end of the 1990s to the mid-2010s. In addition to underused commercial and warehouse space, vacant ports, airports, railway stations, post office buildings, electricity, gas, and power plant sites gradually became the scene of adaptive re-use as part of a neoliberal reorganisation of urban infrastructure (Suwala et al., 2021). However, this also encompassed historic manufacturing buildings, excluded from simple redevelopment strategies due to their compact design and heritage value. Structural change is embedded in changes in lifestyles and the accompanying new consumption and production patterns, as well as corresponding global investments reflected locally in a wide variety of places (Mackrodt & Kalandides, 2014; Schmidt et al., 2014; Schroeder, 2020).

4. Location Patterns and Political Strategies in Berlin

In Berlin, a complex network of creative locations with different profiles and varying degrees of stability has emerged. The sometimes interacting and contradictory political strategies do not show a clear spatial pattern and can only be understood by considering the historical context (see Arandelovic & Bogunovich, 2014, for an attempt to recognise this complexity). The main lines of urban development policy, cultural policy, and the transformation of former industrial sites since the mid-1970s will be presented in Tables 1 and 2. The complexity of the events makes it impossible to provide even an approximately comprehensive description of the total picture, which can only be mentioned briefly here. It has concerned the trend towards tertiarisation of companies in the secondary sector on site, subsequent use of production sites by other production companies, or a more conventional tertiarisation without explicit reference to creative clusters. This can include numerous projects of subsequent use by hotels, retail, and sometimes also housing. Culturally relevant strategies go clearly beyond the promotion of "classical high culture" (museums, theatres, concert halls, public broadcasting) and include the valorisation of both industrial heritage and historical infrastructure building (see Table 1 and the overview in the Supplementary Material).

Table 1. Cultural policy and creative uses in Berlin since the mid-1970s.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Period	Before 1990	1990–2001	2001–2015	Since 2016
Social environment	Division of the city and emerging alternative culture	Becoming the capital	International appeal during the crisis	Refugee immigration and multiple crises
Economic environment	Economic stagnation and moderate tertiarisation	Short-lived unification boom	Economic stagnation, debt crisis, and austerity policy	Growth and tightening of property markets
Urban regeneration policy	Transition from area redevelopment to careful urban regeneration and public funding	Transfer of careful urban regeneration to East Berlin and mobilisation of private capital	Socially-integrative regeneration, the emergence of temporary uses, and gradual regulation and location policy	Stabilising socially-integrative regeneration in the face of increasing polarisation
Important cultural policies	Festivalisation (750th-anniversary in 1987), high culture as a soft location factor	Consolidation and marketing of high culture	Active marketing of Berlin's creative image ("poor, but sexy!")	Expansion and completion of the museum landscape in the city centre
Role of creative uses	Gradual project-related acceptance of socio-cultural initiatives	Expansion of socio-cultural initiatives and gradual increase in importance of creative industries	Emerging interim uses and private sector initiative (Media-Spree)	Targeted promotion of experimental spaces

Table 2. Creative locations on former industrial sites in Berlin since the mid-1970s.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Period	Before 1990 (mainly West Berlin)	1990–2001	2001–2015	Since 2016
Socio-economic environment for creative locations	Low purchasing power, small-scale art scene, and the gradual establishment of subculture	Unification-related property boom and subcultural development in the eastern part of the city	Extensive vacancies and a favourable environment for niche uses and Berlin as an internationally renowned creative metropolis	Significant tightening of property markets and accelerated realisation of brownfield sites
Types of brownfield sites	City centre multi-storey factories and isolated factory sites	Larger factory sites and isolated centrally located multi-storey factories	Neglected small-scale craft, production, and storage areas	Larger factory sites, small-scale craft, production, and storage areas on the outskirts

Table 2. (Cont.) Creative locations on former industrial sites in Berlin since the mid-1970s.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Development of creative locations	Property purchase, squatting, and letting to prevent squatting	Squatting and public project development	Establishment of temporary uses and a few larger complex site developments	Creative uses move into a few remaining niches, including peripheral locations
Significant types of subsequent use	Socio-cultural centres in the neighbourhood context	Socio-cultural centres, clubs, bars, event spaces, and complex cultural centres	Office locations for the creative sector, clubs, bars, and event spaces	Office locations for the creative sector, profit-oriented, or cultural uses instrumentalised as part of branding, art, and exhibition centres
Owner	State of Berlin, public redevelopment agencies, and initiatives	State of Berlin and public property developers	Foundations and private and public developers	Private developers
Forms of organisation	Association	Association and non-profit limited liability company	Association, non-profit limited liability company, and co-operative	Non-profit limited company
Important examples	Ufa-Fabrik (1974), Mehringhof (1979/1982), Fabrik Osloer Straße (1979), and Regenbogenfabrik (1981)	Brotfabrik (1986/1991), Pfefferberg (1990/1999), Arena (1995), Kulturbrauerei (1996), and RAW (1999)	Königstadt-Brauerei (1995/2003), Backfabrik (2002–), ExRotaprint (2007), and Malzfabrik (2009–)	Kindl-Brauerei (2011/2016), Bötzow-Brauerei (2011/2019), Bockbrauerei (2015–), and Bärenquell-Brauerei (2021–)
Challenges	Demolition policy, precarious legal, and economic situation	Short-lived unification-related property development boom	Property disposals	Significant rise in property prices and displacement of precarious uses from the city centre

4.1. Phase 1 (Before 1990): Special Support for Subcultural Initiatives

A central root of the creative re-utilisation of production buildings lies in pre-unification West Berlin. In the course of economic decline and the cultural devaluation of the old inner-city buildings near the Berlin zone border, increasing vacancy rates could be observed, to which the subcultural scene, active beyond Berlin at the time, reacted, particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Numerous occupations of large Wilhelminian-style building complexes with residential and commercial buildings as well as former multi-storey factories, tenancies granted to avert squatting, or the purchase and development of vacant properties resulted in partly complex, self-managed, and functionally mixed re-uses. They were consolidated

in various legal organisational forms and often represented an explicitly socio-cultural claim (van Schipstal & Nicholls, 2014; Vasudevan, 2015). The best-known of these are maybe the Mehringhof, the Regenbogenfabrik, the Ufa-Fabrik, and the Fabrik Osloer Straße (see Table 2 and Supplementary Material for details about the mentioned cases), all of which still exist and are of supra-local significance for the cultural scene. Over the years, users and projects based in them have been supported by the Berlin Senate in a variety of ways, which has contributed significantly to their long-term stability, as has the contractual security of property use.

The protection by the Berlin Senate of some of the mentioned initiatives took place as part of the development of "careful urban regeneration" with the help of an International Building Exhibition (IBA) from the early 1980s as a reactive measure to pacify the squatter scene, which could claim to publicly denounce the demolition of reusable buildings in times of scarcity of affordable housing and emerging criticism of newly built large housing estates of the post-war period (Bodenschatz, 1987; Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen & STERN Berlin GmbH, 1991). The public sector's tolerance of the initiatives was linked to the promotion of maintenance and modernisation measures in self-help, and support for socio-cultural projects with a neighbourhood focus, which had developed reactively over a transitional phase of several years from the initially demolition-oriented renewal policy of the early 1960s (see Supplementary Material for further examples in this context).

4.2. Phase 2 (1990–2001): The Dream of the "Service Metropolis" and the Transformation of Pre-Reunification Cultural Policy

The urban development policy of the Berlin Senate, completely changing after the reunification, initially focused on an explicitly internationally oriented policy of urban competition, in which Berlin was to be profiled as a "service metropolis," in view of the structural change in the economy in the former socialist East Berlin, still strongly characterised by the secondary sector, and the location factors for office space in the capital. As Berlin had become the seat of parliament and government again, those location factors had significantly improved. The focus here was not least on the development of the city centre, the renewal of historic districts, the preparation of large-scale service locations on inner-city conversion sites, and housing construction on the periphery to accommodate the expected growth. Transferring "careful urban regeneration" to East Berlin resulted in a smaller number of socio-cultural complexes comparable to the previous era due to changes in subsidy policies, the rapid suppression of a new squatter movement, and the different urban fabric. A considerable number of large factory complexes, still in use for their original purpose until 1990 but subsequently fallen out of productive use, were quickly utilised for the development of office complexes in the city centre, while other re-use concepts (retail and university) were prepared and implemented in the periphery. To prevent the speculative sale of industrial sites, only triggered by a short-term sharp rise in property prices, the so-called "industrial site protection concept" (*Industrieflächensicherungskonzept*) was adopted in 1993, intended to prevent the re-use of such sites outside certain preferred locations and thus avoid property speculation (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umweltschutz, 1993). Despite the abandonment of larger former production sites, some of which have considerable heritage value, there has been less re-use as socio-cultural centres or other creative clusters (Oevermann et al., 2016). Some of the newer cultural centres in former smaller factories can be traced back to conversion approaches before reunification, such as the Brotfabrik in the northeast of the city.

When it became apparent around the mid-1990s that the growth hopes and some of the plans for new office services had been dashed, economic and demographic stagnation set in—in parallel with an economic crisis at the end of the 1990s in Germany as a whole. Nevertheless, major property development projects from the early 1990s were still being completed. In their shadow, due to the special ownership situation, creative clusters with different profiles were established at some locations in larger vacant historic industrial buildings such as the Pfefferberg, the Arena, and the Kulturbrauerei, each of which had a larger proportion of event uses, but also accommodated other cultural and leisure uses. They were the result of various initiatives and management constellations ranging from associations to commercial project development by the state-owned Treuhand Property Trust.

4.3. Phase 3 (2001–2015): Poor, but Sexy—A City in the Process of Re-Profiling Between Austerity Policy and Niche Uses

At the beginning of the 2000s, this stagnation led to the replacement of the conservative-led "grand coalition" that had ruled during the 1990s with a left-wing coalition government under the Social Democratic Party of Germany Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit. The worsening debt crisis in Berlin's budget led to considerable savings efforts by the public sector, and Wowereit, responsible for the state's cultural policy, increasingly focused on marketing the city's creative potential under the internationally known slogan "poor, but sexy!" The flourishing design industry was politically supported and "culturepreneurs" enjoyed comparatively great freedom to develop suitable, affordable spaces, and concepts for creative pioneer uses (Lange, 2011). From the end of the 1990s, the economic downturn created opportunities to establish interim uses in numerous places, in the context of which other derelict plots of land or buildings were re-used for socio-cultural purposes, sometimes under precarious conditions. The Socially Integrative City regeneration programme introduced in 1999, widely implemented in Berlin, supported such interim uses almost from the outset. In the early 2000s, the private Media-Spree initiative established an entrepreneurial approach to the commercial redevelopment of neglected residual sites in the former border strip of the divided city (see Bader & Scharenberg, 2010; Novy & Colomb, 2013). Its redevelopment projects in close proximity to the city's creative subcultural districts were in direct competition with potential recreational uses along the Spree riverbank and interim uses established there. A referendum in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district revealed the enormous resistance of the local population to the massing of property projects that was seen as a "takeover." Here, the clash of diametrically different understandings of creative neighbourhoods (beyond a supposed political opposition between support for high culture and subculture) became apparent: On the one hand, the legacy and further development of the local "scene," hardly perceived as profit-oriented and manifested in socio-cultural centres and a small-scale variety of gastronomy and entertainment in the time before reunification, and investments in office complexes in prime riverside locations driven by global media corporations; on the other, urban policy was forced to focus both on the growth of the commercial media industry in the competition between cities and not to jeopardise an essential resource of the newly gained attractiveness with the creative diversity of its urban society. The resulting contradictions of simultaneously promoting globalised creative industries and local initiatives, especially acting as "urban pioneers" temporarily re-using vacant lots and industrial buildings became noticeable only to some extent due to the low economic dynamism (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2007; Shaw, 2005). In addition to stabilising individual projects like Holzmarkt, gradual displacement by higher-value uses was to be compensated for by relocating temporary uses to the area of the abandoned inner-city Tempelhof airport (Hilbrandt, 2017). Even in this

context, it became clear that the main threat to precarious creative uses was much more pronounced in significantly underutilised areas than in listed industrial buildings.

During the economic crisis, further decentralised creative centres were able to establish themselves on former industrial sites due to the lack of pressure from the real estate industry in the context of an urban policy that was generally more focused on the promotion of creative clusters, but which had only limited financial scope for action (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2006). At the same time, commercial re-use concepts in the creative spectrum were established very slowly in a few individual cases. This ambiguous constellation is exemplified by the proximity of the former Königstadt Brewery, gradually developed by a co-operative from 1995 and into this period for a wide range of uses between crafts and culture, and the profit-oriented Backfabrik complex, which could not be completed for several years. Commercial, cultural, and social facilities come together at the ExRotaprint site, gradually developed by an association since 2007, whose ownership has been secured through the work of charitable foundations. However, the city's international fame was certainly embodied most prominently by the cultural and entertainment cluster RAW (Borufka, 2017). It is well-known internationally not the least for its abundance of bars and clubs established on a former railway repair workshop already at the end of the preceding period and "saved" by considerable public planning interventions against private redevelopment efforts.

4.4. Phase 4 (Since 2016): Property Boom, Re-Profiling of the "Service Metropolis," and the Role of the Media and Creative Industries Against the Backdrop of Tight Property Markets

The increasingly tense property market situation since the end of the 2000s fundamentally changed the development environment for brownfield sites. In the inner-city, they were gradually redeveloped into office and residential districts, but previously unattractive sites were now mobilised by private investors for a variety of uses. Less densely built-up residual areas on the edge of the city centre and areas on the periphery were included to a greater extent. Owners of extensive manufacturing sites, such as the Siemens Group, designed their complex restructuring into multifunctional urban neighbourhoods, resulting in several projects currently being prepared or implemented. The Berlin Senate responded by subsidising the allocation of artists' studios and "experimental spaces" for creative uses outside of the market (Der Regierende Bürgermeister von Berlin, 2014; Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt, n.d.). The range of events is epitomised by the subsequent use of different former brewery sites. The KINDL brewery was partly converted into a top-class art centre by Swiss philanthropists. The Bötzow-Brauerei, having previously suffered extensive war damage and long vacancy, was converted into a Berlin representative office by a German hidden champion, incorporating cultural offerings. The multifunctional re-densification and "second transformation" of the former Bockbrauerei, which had long been used for small businesses and some creative uses and is now partly redeveloped, is accompanied by heavy local criticism (see Wem gehört Kreuzberg, 2024) yet securing future creative uses (see Bünger, 2023). The revitalisation of Bärenquell brewery on the outskirts, which had fallen into disrepair following failed attempts to convert it into a DIY store, as well as Malzfabrik, a site already slowly started in the previous period, are other revitalisation efforts of sites that had long been off the agenda of developers. For all their differences, almost all are characterised by the extensive use of private capital, the support of the public sector due to great planning, and the architectural importance of complementary buildings, multifunctionality, and the accommodation of cultural uses (see Supplementary Material for more information).

5. Discussion

5.1. Location Differentiation, Stabilisation, and Gradual Questioning

Looking at the development of creative locations over the decades, a gradual differentiation and multiplication of what is understood as a creative cluster and of the locations in the city that are developed can be observed. It goes hand in hand with the emergence of diverse governance structures and complex actor constellations. First, a series of socio-cultural centres, legalised during the politicised era of the squatter movement via the IBA and similar strategies, is consolidating significantly over decades despite all the questioning. The reunification of the city leads to an initial push for further development in which regeneration policies are transferred to the eastern part of the city. The decline of the industry means that numerous vacant factories are available for new occupations and further socio-cultural initiatives. As expected, many are transformed conventionally without many creative uses, accommodating office space, retail centres, or a more complex functional mix. More significant are the Kulturbrauerei, the first appearance of a commercially orientated project development that nevertheless extends into the breadth of the social "demand" for small-scale art, which still exists today after certain restructuring. With the Arena, the Pfefferberg, and the RAW site, new concepts with a high proportion of entertainment and events are also established. They are supported by culturepreneurs gradually upgrading vacant properties and professionalising their offerings in a market-oriented manner. Design, media, and other focal points of creative production-orientated office services initially remain in the background. Interestingly, given the city's economic weakness, they continue to make a name for themselves into the new millennium and form the basis for the international image of the city, which initially becomes a cultural and party metropolis rather than a service centre. In fact, they can defy the first noticeable property realisation approaches—with support from the state, districts, and foundation capital, the resistance of the local population and the early securing of power of disposal over land and property. Although many emerging temporary uses are displaced soon, there is no clear trend towards property-driven displacement despite the tight budget situation of the city and the associated limited scope for public funding in the 2000s. Amidst the spotlight on cultural hotspots, private-sector investors succeed in preparing spectacular industrial monuments, in some cases very slowly, for a growing demand from the creative sector for unconventional office and event space. But even now, ExRotaprint is still a rather "alternative" project, strongly influenced by the art scene, which is able to revitalise a seemingly unattractive but historically significant inner-city industrial wasteland and remove it from the property market with the help of foundation capital. Only with the recent property boom, there is a surge in demand for the last available spaces, once again focusing on examples of industrial culture on a larger-scale. Ironically, however, even in the limited area of former brewery sites, there are still plenty of locations available for utilisation. The disadvantageous characteristics of these remaining sites in times of economic stagnation, which only have a small proportion of remaining structural substance that would be costly to renovate, are now an advantage for profit-oriented utilisation. In some cases, this leads to displacing previously established niche uses. Multi-layered utilisation concepts come into play here, using cultural uses and historical substance for simple location branding, but in other ones also for the creation of original and "unique" locations. With the subsequent use of a brewhouse as the KINDL centre for contemporary art in a "problem quarter," another philanthropist-based art project is now being created in an industrial monument, following other private art collections that have been the subject of much discussion in the city, further broadening the spectrum of subsequent uses related to the creative scene.

5.2. Between Laissez-Faire, Property Policy Support, and Location Marketing: Urban Development and Cultural Policy in Slow Transformation

Looking at the interplay of urban policy approaches over the period under review, an ambiguous picture emerges. The first phase was strongly characterised by social policy in the context of the IBA. In addition to the legalisation and medium-term stabilisation of squats with a socio-cultural focus, the IBA took up or developed further socio-cultural concepts from local initiatives and thus also contributed to the subsequent use of commercial properties. The urban cultural policy was explicitly geared towards branding and festivalisation in the context of the 750th-anniversary celebrations in 1987. The period after reunification saw a simultaneous promotion of high culture and subculture. The city was gearing up for an expected boom and restructured large development areas alongside numerous private re-use projects at key locations. Despite a targeted establishment of important university locations in industrial landmarks and a policy to preserve inner-city production sites, land policy support for creative locations was rather decentralised and limited. Without pronounced policies, creative clusters had emerged through the re-use of vacant inner-city properties, some of which were to be stabilised in the context of careful regeneration. In the economic crisis of the 2000s, neoliberal adjustment measures were accompanied by successful international branding underpinned by cultural policy, albeit without significant shifts in emphasis for the creative scene. The promotion of the "independent scene" continued, and the noticeable success of the creative industries attracted international corporations (Colomb, 2012, pp. 138). Despite the spectacular resistance of the local population to the Media-Spree initiative, temporary uses with a creative veneer and a focus on bars, clubs, and events spreading in many places were not immune to the long-term commercial valorisation of niche locations, especially those with low-density development. Nevertheless, individual projects were also secured against commercial property utilisation, as the re-use of Tempelhof airport for interim uses outside the hotspots of the city's creative scene demonstrates. The great supra-regional attention that Berlin enjoyed increasingly made foundations and philanthropists revitalise unusual properties off the market. Low property prices allowed an affordable entry into this field for a long time. Nowadays, however, soaring real estate prices put pressure on less densely built-up private developments of former industrial sites using culture-orientated branding strategies. The public sector supports site re-densification, as in the case of the RAW site and the Bockbrauerei. While displacement of creative uses is not solely attributable to this policy constellation, rising property prices are gradually destabilising creative and niche uses.

In summary, it can be observed that urban policy supports creative uses in a variety of ways, whether as an initiator of projects, a mediator, or a stabiliser. The everchanging priorities pursued in this context, which are based on a rather broad understanding of cultural policy, range from socio-cultural promotion at the neighbourhood level to support for artists and image building through creative spaces (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023). Cultural policy is only loosely linked to property policy or urban development policy. Only recently, the state's general land policy has gradually changed, using both leaseholds and concept procedures for the provision of public properties (Silomon-Pflug & Heeg, 2013). In the latter, it is not the highest bidder but the one with the most suitable concept for urban development according to predetermined criteria—one of which is usually a comparatively high proportion of socio-cultural uses and affordable housing—that is awarded the property. This is also intended to take into account less affluent users or protect them from being driven out of the city. However, the recent focus on economic sustainability in the development of cultural centres suggests that support for artists could be neglected in times of rising property prices.

6. Conclusions

In Berlin, there is evidence to confirm common scientific assessments of the role of creative uses, art, and culture in urban development and urban regeneration policies accompanying sectoral structural change. Nevertheless, some of the findings in the literature appear to reflect the differentiated events only in an abridged form. There has been a change over time in what is referred to as "cultural use" and promoted at all, from the socio-cultural places in the 1970s to the cultural-economic factories in the 1990s to the temporary subcultural places in the 2000s ("urban pioneers") and the 2010s and now rather a narrowing down to artistic production. The city's diverse clusters represent an important, incrementally grown, creative infrastructural capital that is often not recognised in its full breadth and whose contribution to the city's cultural life is often too little perceived by politicians. There are clear signs of the instrumentalisation of art and culture for branding approaches. However, these are also linked to an explicit preservation and sustainable re-use of industrial heritage. Structural additions to it exploit opportunities for space-saving inner-city development and create attractive new locations for diverse user groups where traditional centres have lost vitality. Besides attractive spaces for an expanding creative industry, they also offer a variety of other services for different local user groups, ranging from intercultural understanding, the integration of young people into the labour market, decentralised cultural offerings, and spaces for the independent cultural scene to gastronomy, entertainment, and educational purposes. The various ownership and organisational constructs that have led to the stabilisation of non-profit initiatives, in combination with philanthropists' projects, provide a multi-layered addition to the multitude of conventional and creatively branded re-uses of historic industrial buildings.

In summary, urban development, land, and cultural policies tend to run side by side for long stretches rather than being coherently coordinated to stringently promote the creative scene (Ebert & Kunzmann, 2007). The fact that this leads to conflicts is shown not least by the repeatedly observed resistance to the instrumentalisation of art and culture for an urban policy characterised as "neoliberal" and the associated signs of displacement. The keyword gentrification is not always accurate at this point, especially as some of the locations affected are only subject to very indirect or long-term upgrading processes. The Senate and the districts, in cooperation with civil society actors, are repeatedly able to stabilise locations, projects, and initiatives in individual cases. If we analyse the criticism in the literature and from the "scene" in more detail, it becomes clear that niche users on remaining spaces are the long-term "main losers," but have still been able to a certain extent to switch to others, often more peripheral locations in cases such as the bar and club scene hardly touched on in this article or urban gardening projects. It remains to be seen whether the repeated success in stabilising socio-cultural projects means that Berlin's typical diversity of creative uses can be stabilised in the long term or even further enriched as in the past. In any case, there are several important prerequisites: a stable orientation towards existing buildings when dealing with industrial heritage, the enormous importance of local resources for the creative industries and tourism in the city, the still active counterculture repeatedly resisting simple profit-orientated transformations, the experience with alternative development concepts and their legal protection, as well as the social demand for a differentiated offer between high culture and subculture. While the orientation towards cultural heritage is not being questioned, resistance to profit-oriented conversions is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of increasing pressure on the property markets. At the same time, attempts are being made to counteract a loss of vitality in traditional sub-centres and brownfield sites by strengthening non-commercial uses. In addition to the Senate's support for artists' spaces, there are opportunities here to secure de-commodified spaces, in

particular through the districts, which are operated by the public, foundations, or non-profit organisations. These efforts have been partially successful in these milieus and should be seen as an important future task to promote alternative uses beyond entertainment and design studios at the neighbourhood level (see Land Berlin, n.d.).

I would suggest further discussing the overall picture sketched in this article as rent-gap seeking in an environment of strong heritage and socio-cultural policies, which seems to be typical for Berlin and many European cities. The extent to which a comparable scope for creative uses, which is nevertheless heavily dependent on property developments, can also emerge beyond the market depends largely on the general self-conception of a city and its most important governance actors. This applies in particular to the relationship between urban development and cultural policy and their respective instruments. As the Berlin case study clearly shows, the importance of industrial heritage for the preservation of historical monuments means that there is no further threat to the structural substance from profit-oriented developments. However, the iconic significance of some of the properties examined has increasingly narrowed the scope for developments beyond the market. Alternative projects with creative uses can establish themselves in individual cases, particularly if they can demonstrate a major significance for a small-scale urban district development and are supported in elaborate processes by the city, the districts, or municipal companies. Their long-term survival will also depend on the interplay between cultural policy, property policy, and urban development policy, especially since industrial heritage is seen as an important spatial resource for the cultural and economic development of the city.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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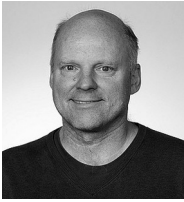
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