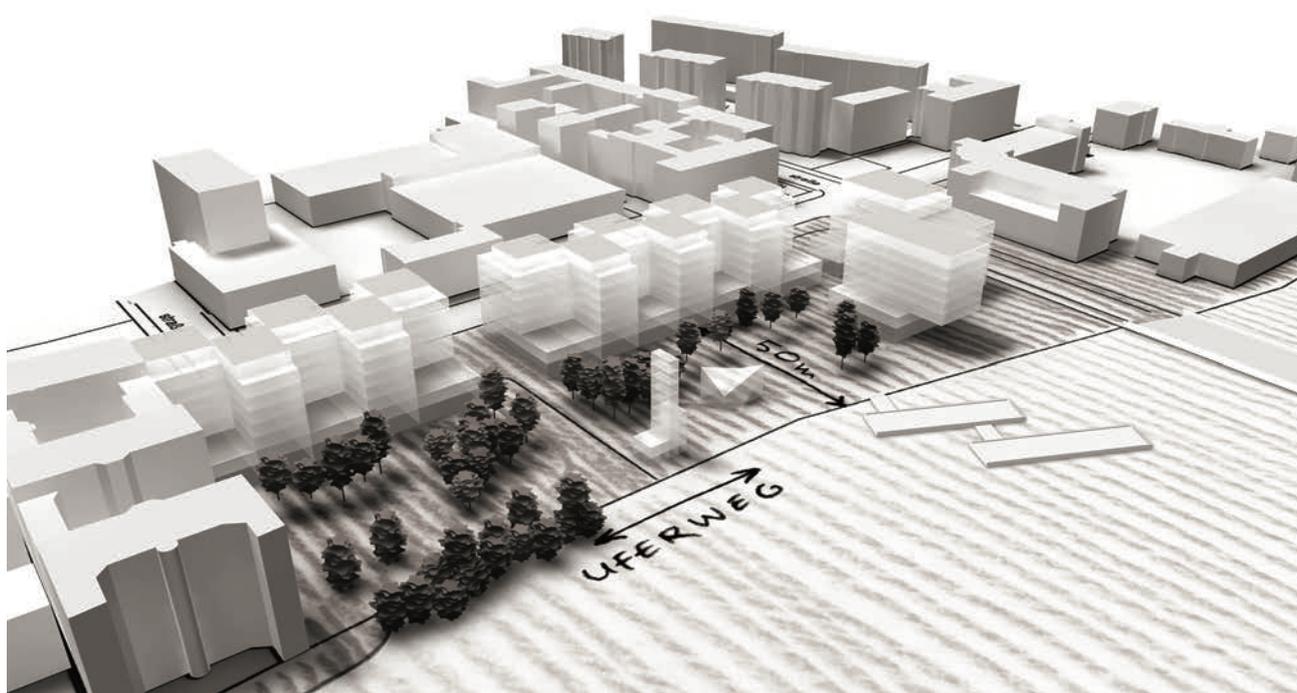


The Space Between People

Zapf Areal Berlin Start-Up Initiative



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Claims

The “Zapf Areal Berlin” could serve to create an urban environment with attractive and favourably priced residential, commercial and cultural spaces that would cater to the requirements of a heterogeneous Kreuzberg population.

A sustainable urban space with a broad and publicly accessible river bank that preserves urban diversity as an important locational factor for the Kreuzberg district.

The concept shows that new housing construction in Berlin can be more inspiring than monotonous townhouse-developments. It's on you to participate and co-design your neighborhood to prevent it from losing its character and becoming replaceable.

Abstract

The ‚Zapf Areal Berlin‘ start-up initiative introduces a concept for an urban development model project that pursues ambitious social, ecological and economic objectives, also in terms of sustainability.

It is to be realized in a privileged location by the River Spree in the centre of Berlin. The site is currently in commercial use, which prevents the public from accessing the banks of the river. But the current owner is planning to sell its property here and move locations. Besides a new public space by the Spree, the potentials comprise over 130 apartments and an area of 20,000 m² for businesses, cultural and public facilities. By involving local residents in the planning process, for the use of the buildings as much as the open spaces, the new structures are to be integrated in the quarter and offer urgently required room for cultural and social infrastructures.

Planning around the River Spree

The project is situated in a central riverside location in the middle of Berlin where an industrial area with port facilities had emerged in the 19th century. During the Cold War this section of the Spree marked the border between East and West, which marginalized the properties along its banks.

Following re-unification a framework plan by the Berlin Senate had earmarked the northern bank for development with compact town quarters, while retaining the commercial spaces on the southern bank.

An urban scheme created after the turn of the millennium defined a uniform development for the public space and was later extended to urbanize the southern Kreuzberg bank. Both banks were to be linked better and to be provided with a 10m wide riverside promenade each.

But what was most of all met with scepticism by the public were the marketing efforts of the property owners, who had joined forces in the private association called „Mediaspree“, predominantly aimed at office buildings for the „new economy“. Twenty years after the fall of the Wall, one is now forced to concede that the estimated demand the land development plan had been based upon was much too high, and that the opportunity for involving local residents in the planning process had been missed.

Citizens' Involvement

In 2008 the local population's desire for having a say manifested itself in the successful referendum „Spreeufer für Alle“ (Spree banks for everyone), demanding a public strip of land along the riverside of up to 50 m in width, the eschewal of high-rises, and a pedestrian bridge in the vicinity of the former „Brommybrücke“ bridge.

The referendum, however, is not legally binding for the Berlin Senate. Although the latter has hence promised investors planning certainty, only a small number of the possible developments have been realized so far. Land speculation has in turn promoted a varied culture of interim use, which contributes to Berlin's image as an international centre of culture and creativity.

Kreuzberg Mix

In particular the district of Kreuzberg is a community made up of residents from many nations, a creative scene and neighbourhood culture, larger industrial businesses, as well as smaller service and media companies. Investments in highly priced real estate projects in the inner city districts of Berlin have seen strong growth in recent years, furthering the spatial and social divide. Frequently mono-functional use only serves special interests in most cases and threatens the urban qualities, particularly in a multifaceted district like Kreuzberg.

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Urban Development Context

The surrounding quarter features mixed uses as well as a highly heterogeneous population and commercial structure. The quarters directly adjoining to the north and west are a tourist attraction and entertainment districts. The urban space is being upgraded from 2006 to 2013 by an urban development assistance programme of the Berlin Senate.

Diverse Uses, instead of Monofunctionality

The development concept is aimed at implementing diversity and locally appropriate uses by involving the public in the planning processes. This combination of inner-city life and labour, includes novel residential concepts for various lifestyles, space for culture and social facilities, as well as experimentation, craft and artists' studios. This way the social equilibrium and mixed use will stabilize the quarter in the long term.

Besides the expansive open space along the bank of the Spree, new buildings with a floor-space index of 2.1 are planned along the Köpenicker Strasse and Brommystrasse. The construction costs can be spread over a longer period of time by developing the area in stages, and there is an option of accommodating interim uses in the existing company buildings. The planning also encompasses the neighbouring property, currently used by a supermarket. This is to be integrated in one of the new buildings in the final stage.

Another demand voiced by the referendum concerns a pedestrian bridge across the Spree as an extension of Brommystrasse. This connection to the tourist attraction "East-Side-Gallery" on the opposite bank would further contribute to the revival of Köpenicker Strasse, which is already in progress from the eastern entertainment district around Schlesisches Tor.

This situation is addressed by a car-free public square providing a link to the gastronomic and commercial facilities of the neighbouring properties to the west. This square will be framed by an ensemble of buildings offering spaces for cultural and social amenities. As they tend to attract more visitors, these uses are oriented towards Brommystrasse and hence shield the residential areas from possible noise immissions at night. In the ground floors and first floors of the buildings, spaces are included for businesses,

shops, studios, nightclubs and bars, which would coalesce with the neighbourhood to create a new quarter. Along Köpenicker Strasse, a floor space of 17,000 m² is available from the second storey up for apartments. These are not grouped around an inner courtyard in the customary manner, but each come equipped with balconies and views of the Spree, as well as a sun-drenched southern facade. Keeping the bank free therefore benefits all future residents.

Flexible Lifestyles

The residential concept caters to the district of Kreuzberg, with various housing types addressing a heterogeneous population. The offers range from flats for singles with common rooms through to large, multi-generation residential communities.

The residential concept is oriented towards Kreuzberg, where new forms of communal living have evolved since the 1970s. The number of one-person households is steadily growing in the whole of Berlin, and hence also the space required per person, which has an impact on the rents. Once several smaller flats share large, communal living rooms and kitchens - while providing the option of renting extra rooms in addition to one's own private apartment in a flexible manner - the space required overall will be reduced, along with the costs.

Variable Use

Having a cooperative building association own the building instead of many individual owners has the advantage that changes of use can be implemented without complications. If their requirements change, users can move within the building and individual units can be merged without difficulty. If whole floors are owned this is only possible in individual cases. The building association model nonetheless offers a hereditary and permanent right of residence that would also be acceptable as a mortgage.

Publicly Accessible Open Spaces

The residents can avail themselves of private balconies and shared patios. All the property's areas accessible on a ground floor level can be used by the public and are hence also available to local residents. Cultural and social facilities in the buildings as well as the public spaces are designed to address a broad spectrum of users.

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Economic and Ecological Construction

Berlin already offers a number of innovative solutions for inexpensive development where the user is provided with a basic finish, having the option of deciding on further additions individually as required.

The typology proposed here features a combination of conventional and timber construction. The lower floors are made from site concrete and thus offer deep, flexible ground plans. All the storeys above are entirely assembled from prefabricated, highly insulated wood elements. The timber construction saves energy and emissions in production (so-called grey energy) whilst ensuring short construction periods, good recyclability, and a healthy room climate. A 'passive house' standard is aspired to, the rainwater is used, the roofs are planted with greenery, and as little of the area is sealed as possible. The energy requirements are to be met by renewable energy. The energy-related optimization of the buildings furthermore decisively contributes to keeping the operating costs as low as possible.

Car-Free Traffic Concept

The good range of public transport and car sharing agencies in the vicinity facilitates the eschewal of conventional private transport. Not needing a private car saves energy and leaves more space for other uses within the building and/or eliminates the high costs of creating an underground car park.

Thanks to the mixed use of the building many destinations can be reached on foot without depending on a car, which will help to reduce the traffic volume.

Cooperative Building Association

If the rents are to be kept down in the long term, a cooperative building association virtually suggests itself for such a project. In this case all the residents are co-owners and hence not interested in rent increases. The real estate is not dedicated to making profit, but purely and simply to the purpose of living and/or working in. As association members the tenants enjoy an irrevocable and permanent right of residence, or can also purchase individual flats if the association is property-oriented.

Responsible Investment

The start-up initiative cooperative building association „Zapf Areal Berlin“ is addressed at private individuals interested in co-designing Kreuzberg as association members, as well as companies wishing to involve themselves as part of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme. Involving local residents in the planning ensures that the most urgent needs of the neighbourhood can be met, as well as the project's future integration in the quarter. Further grants may be available for financing the construction costs via state support programmes for cooperatives and ecological construction.

Hereditary Lease Model

The land is to be bought via an existing or yet to be established foundation with long-term investment perspectives, which will then lease it to the building association, to prevent land speculation in the future. This way the building loan will only embrace the cost of creating the buildings, and not the purchase price of the land.

To stay informed visit

www.TheSpaceBetweenPeople.org

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