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**Natur Park Schöneberger Südgelände
and Berlin's Urban Nature**

Abstracts and notes

in order of speaking
at the conference,
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Thilo Folkerts

Berlin: the emergence of an urban nature

Over the last fifty years or so, Berlin has developed a much-noted idea of urban nature that among cities represents a development of its own kind. Here, the invention of a distinctly urban idea of nature is a matter not only of urban ecology, but also of an open-space culture as a way of life that has become part of the city's essence. Berlin's urban nature is a field of research and, in particular, a field trial of urban life with a broad temporal and spatial dimension. What may be termed as "Berlin open space mixture" has, by overlapping and combining aspirations and expertise in diverse disciplines, translated wastelands into a web of coexisting and interacting vibrant open spaces. In the wake of this co-production, a design attitude and approach developed that has become formative in defining the characteristic of this open space mixture. In practically every project there is evidence of a highly specific response to the local circumstances, the integration of citizens and civic-mindedness, and a decidedly sensitive treatment of the sites' ecological factors, especially their regularly encountered spontaneous vegetation. A minimalist design regime is almost mandatory in view of the challenges presented by the enormous footprint of the sites. This has resulted in a rather cautious economy of intervention of the designs. Beyond individual signature projects, Berlin's urban nature constitutes a broader culture of public space that transcends disciplinary, typological, and functional boundaries. As, in a time of dynamic urban development, the city is currently facing the challenge of redefining its culture of open spaces, it is important to preserve and further develop this broad culture of embracing urban nature as a way of life.

Thilo Folkerts was born in Neuenhaus, Germany in 1967. He studied landscape architecture at the Technische Universität Berlin (TUB), taught as an assistant professor at the Chair of Landscape Architecture at the ETH in Zurich, Switzerland, from 1999 to 2002, and as invited professor at the School of Landscape Architecture at the Université de Montreal, Canada, in 2006, at TUB in 2008 and at the Academy of the Arts in Stuttgart from 2011 to 2014. Teaching engagements in Alghero, Erfurt and Berlin as well as in many international workshops. Primarily, however, Thilo Folkerts has since 1997 been working as a landscape architect and designer. His office 100Landschaftsarchitektur (www.100land.de), founded in Berlin in 2007, has realised landscape and garden designs, and experimental works on the concept of the garden. Projects were implemented in Quebec, Le Havre, Craonne, Lausanne, Basel, Zurich, Rome, Sardinia, Kortrijk, Brussels, Berlin and many other places. In 2014 he was a fellow at the German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome. Since 2020 he has been member of the Scientific Committee of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche. In addition to working as a landscape architect who designs, experiments and constructs, he pursues his interest in the unique language of gardens as teacher, author, and translator.



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Ingo Kowarik

Natur Park Südgelände: the discovery of urban nature in Berlin and its role as cornerstone for new parks

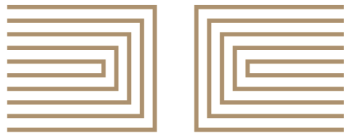
Political and economic upheavals often trigger transformations of urban land uses. In walled West Berlin, many areas destroyed during World War II or abandoned afterwards were not used again until 1989. There, a previously unknown, novel urban nature developed, which has been researched more intensively than in any other city worldwide by the 'Berlin School of Urban Ecology' since 1970. As a result, despite some opposition, wild nature also became the subject of urban nature conservation, citizens' movements and far-sighted urban planning and design. On a former railroad area, the Natur Park Südgelände has been conceived since 1992. This is the first major park project in Berlin that focuses entirely on the novel wild urban nature and incorporates its surprisingly high dynamics into the conception. Newly added artworks create fascinating contrasts to the wild nature. They are part of the visible design as well as paths and other facilities for visitors. The 'invisible design' includes the created spatial structure of forests, groves and clearings, in which many relics of the technical landscape remain visible. This spatial structure appears largely natural, but was carved out of wild nature and is maintained to this day through continuous maintenance to prevent complete reforestation. More than twenty years after its opening in 2000, the Natur Park Südgelände is considered a successful role model for other important parks in Berlin and far beyond. The example shows that wild nature on abandoned urban-industrial sites offers great opportunities for a forward-looking green development of cities. The recipe for success was a combination of ecology, nature conservation, design and art, involving neighborhoods and many stakeholders from the urban community.

Ingo Kowarik is a landscape planner and urban ecologist. After training as a landscape planner at Technische Universität Berlin, he has also worked with his office ÖkoCon on other wasteland sites in Berlin besides the Südgelände. From 1992 to 1999 he was professor of applied plant ecology at University of Hannover, and then professor of ecosystem science and plant ecology at the Institute of Ecology at Technische Universität Berlin. His main areas of scientific expertise include urban ecology, nature conservation, and research on non-native plants. From 2002 to 2021, Ingo Kowarik served as the honorary Berlin State Commissioner for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management, supporting many projects for the development of a biodiverse green Berlin.

Rita Suhrhoff

Natur Park Südgelände: design, maintenance, development

Rita Suhrhoff has been employed by Grün Berlin GmbH since 1994, initially as a park manager in the Britzer Garten. Since 2002 she has been responsible for the Natur Park Südgelände, where she manages the park operations, and is involved in a wide range of development processes. Before joining Grün Berlin GmbH, Rita Suhrhoff worked in public administration at the Steglitz district office of Berlin, among other positions. Her responsibilities at the interface of construction and nature conservation included decision-making authority on building applications within the framework of the tree protection ordinance. Rita Suhrhoff is a graduate engineer (FH) in the field of land management, she studied at the Technische Fachhochschule Berlin. Prior to that, she completed an apprenticeship as a gardener in the field of tree cultivation.

**Klaus Duschat**

The role of the art of ODIOUS in Natur Park Südgelände

ODIOUS is an art collective founded in 1982 by Gisela von Bruchhausen, Klaus Duschat, Klaus H. Hartmann, Gustav Reinhardt, Hartmut Stielow and David Lee Thompson. Its members exhibited together and individually. Since 1989, the group has consisted only of Klaus Duschat, Klaus H. Hartmann, and David Lee Thompson, who left the group in 2004. Since 2014, Klaus Duschat has been the last active representative of the group. The name ODIOUS (literally 'repellent') alludes to the fact that the artists used industrial materials that they found in scrap yards, for example. A number of ODIOUS projects were created in public spaces. Among others: *Zeit-Wege-Zeit*, Britzer Garten, Berlin 1984; *Planters*, Platz vor dem Neuen Tor, Berlin 1999; *Goethegarten*, in the Palmengarten, Frankfurt am Main 2001; *Fasanengarten*, in the Schlossgarten, Blankenburg 2002-2003. For years the group ran a joint studio, since 1996 in the Südgelände, Prellerweg. Sculptural work and projects in the Natur Park Südgelände began in 1998 and are still continuing.

Anna Lambertini

Hybrid, cosmopolitan, inventive. Nature of 'urban wilderness'

Urban Wild refers to the heterogeneous and multi-scale mix of different forms and structures of spontaneous vegetation that has freely grown in urbanised territories, colonising interstitial empty spaces, city walls, roadsides and awaiting spaces such as marginal areas, abandoned places, post-industrial sites, disused infrastructures, and so on.

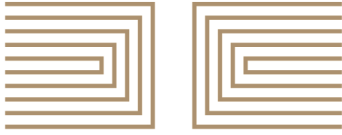
It is a type of clandestine and cosmopolitan plant population that provides habitats favourable to the establishment and spread of urban fauna, determining higher biodiversity. Thanks to the work of researchers and passionate enthusiasts who, particularly during the 20th century, have systematically investigated the urban flora of various cities with interest and attention, it is now possible to recognise in the *Urban Wild* not only an expanded field of observation, but also a fertile field of interdisciplinary design exploration, at the intersection of botany, urban ecology, conservation biology, landscape architecture, garden culture, art, eco-activism, and more.

This category of project (in the wider sense of 'more or less defined purpose, regarding something that one intends to do or initiate') is more actual than ever, but complex and ambiguous, and the human community and urban societies are invited to consider it with renewed ethical engagement, ecological knowledge and inventive abilities, beginning with a deep reinterpretation of the relationship between human and non-human.

The *Urban Wild* is in fact a prolific field of experimentation of techniques, practices and poetics for the regeneration and reinvention (*in visu, in situ, in actu*) of parts of cities and entropic areas, but it represents, above all, a sharp scientific, cultural and practical challenge, which asks us to get rid of the now unusable opposing dualisms like uncultivated/cultivated, urban/natural, alien/native, and to rediscover the deep meaning of words that we use to describe the present world. It is an invitation to decolonise our imaginaries and construct alternative ones.

From this point of view, Natur Park Schöneberger Südgelände stands out as a founding experience. Reflecting on the process that led to its realisation and to the designation of a dismissed railway site as a 'Nature and Landscape Reserve' (*Landschafts und Naturschutzgebiet*), allows to suggest the *cultivation of the wild* and *creative management* as hopeful concepts of contemporary landscape project.

Anna Lambertini, architect, landscape architect and PhD in Landscape design, is associate professor of Landscape architecture in the Department of Architecture of University of Florence, where she is coordinator of the Master's degree in Landscape architecture. She also teaches at the École Euro-Méditerranéenne d'Architecture, de Design et d'Urbanisme in Fez (Morocco). She is a member of AIAPP/IFLA and scientific director of the magazine *Architettura del Paesaggio*. She has been a member of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche Scientific Committee since 2016. The main focus of her theoretical and applied research is the dimension of everyday landscapes (historical and contemporary places) and in particular the role of urban natures, the design and inventive management of open spaces, the merging of art, garden culture and landscape architecture. She is the author of around 140 publications, her latest being: *Firenze attraverso i giardini* (Edifir, Florence 2020).



Norbert Kühn

The contribution of spontaneous vegetation in today's and future cities. The case of Berlin

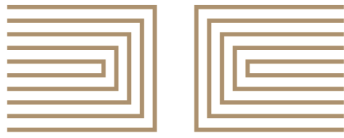
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Spontaneous vegetation is unplanned and comes into being of its own accord. It adapts to the diverse and different conditions in the city. The basic prerequisite for their establishment is that they can also tolerate the special urban climate. Urban climate is characterised by the climate island effect, which occurs particularly in areas of enclosed development and can vary greatly depending on the urban structure. Urban centres have fewer species due to habitat deficiency, high disturbance and extreme site conditions, but these are clearly heat-selected and drought-resistant. The best-known example is certainly the Tree of God (*Ailanthus altissima*), but Robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and Ash-leaved Maple (*Acer negundo*) are also typical of such situations.

Berlin occupies a key position in the perception and valorisation of urban vegetation. The division of the city and the isolation of West Berlin left numerous remaining areas. They served as study sites for urban ecology. Thus, this form of vegetation was studied early on, its ecological value recognised and documented – at a time when urban nature was not yet appreciated by the people. The staging of this nature in parks like the Südgelände has contributed a lot to making urban nature visible. Today, fallow land, successions and spontaneous vegetation are generally recognised and valued as part of the urban green provision. In Berlin alone, eleven different parks have been created according to this concept and integrate urban wilderness areas. New parks such as *Tempelhofer Feld*, the *Park am Nordbahnhof* and the *Park am Gleisdreieck* are the best-known examples.

These places will also be important in the future to see how spontaneous vegetation develops in times of climate change and which species will then be added. The climate equivalency of a city like Berlin is already about 500 kilometres to the south-west. This means that the historically documented environmental potential of Berlin no longer corresponds to today's urban conditions. Spontaneous vegetation thus clearly shows us what kind of vegetation will prevail in a city like Berlin in the future. A closer look at spontaneous vegetation as part of Novel Ecosystems can already provide answers to questions of the Anthropocene.

Norbert Kühn, born in 1964, studied landscape ecology and architecture at Technische Universität Munich-Weihenstephan, followed by a doctorate at the Chair of vegetation ecology on the topic 'Renaturation of species-poor meadows'. From 1998, senior lecturer for field plant science and use at Technische Universität Berlin, since 2003 head of the Department of Vegetation technology and planting design. Member of national and international committees and advisory boards, from 2006 to 2016 chairman of the Karl Foerster Foundation. His main areas of work are: theory in planting design, extensive perennial use, designing with spontaneous vegetation, green space management, historical planting design, trees in climate change.



Juan Manuel Palerm

The wild nature of the wastelands. On Berlin: 'urban nature', architecture, art and the void as project material

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Conjugating the words Architecture of Public Space and Landscape in the field of the contemporary city would seem redundant if it were not considered the need to understand that the current city is outlined through very distant arguments, points of view and references, even contradictory to each other; and that therefore, we cannot refer to a single LANDSCAPE, much less 'urban,' nor obviously to a Public space project that responds to 'all landscape' as an absolute category or to an ecological and ideological conception.

We should ask ourselves, therefore: Is the Landscape project capable of building urban space? Are the conditions of the place and the notion of urban space linked to the processes of vegetation and ecology valid elements in the construction of Urban Nature?

The different approaches that we could propose on the 'idea of urban landscape' and 'Public Space,' would refer us to a cultural framework that is still to be resolved and that poses few incidents in the construction process of our territory. And solutions always refer to the procedures and instruments of control and regulatory compliance of possible planning.

With this reflection on Urban Nature, referring to Berlin and the Natur Park Schoenberger Südgelände, I intend to offer an analogical logic as a balance between experience and rationalisation, ecology and evolution, art and invention, between reason and history, between territory and place, Island -Metropolis as landscape and project.

The Park works as a device coupled to the evolution of the urban system in Berlin, working in accordance and in disagreement with it. The instruments that define it, free of direct visual or formal coding, constitute simple mechanisms and therefore that 'interface' relationship between Art and Environment capable of being understood in its reconditioning once the train station where it is located is obsolete, from its emptying and in his unemployment.

The formal response it offers remains open as a suggestion of multiple discordant possibilities, open as an overflowing investigation, open as a denial of excluding disciplines, open symbolically. As a metaphor for the new, a Landscape and Public Space that accepts its ephemeral and unstable condition.

From this premise, the architecture of the (urban) landscape admits all kinds of deformations and distortions of the principles considered basic such as geometry, measure, proportion. In its formal and material organisation, what we understand by composition is eliminated. Certainty is eliminated, being replaced by absolutely unpredictable sequences. The coherence of architectural oppositions is eliminated to replace them by random, by casual.

The public dimension has crossed the limits of its own spatiality defined in the Modern Movement (1960s and 1970s) to locate itself in territories where the rules of its conception are opposed to its own roles, making room for very diverse natures, surfaces and places. Natures, where architecture must offer answers. The hybridisation between a tectonic conception of space and its environmental and landscape response characterises this new dimension of the public sphere, a mix between persuasive instinct and order, security versus playful-festive alternatives, spaces to share, to meet, to enjoy based on activities imprecise... The static and monumental public dimension in a contemplative and representational key has disappeared; the singularity is in this hybridisation of urban nature.

Juan Manuel Palerm is full professor of Architecture at Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Visiting professor in many European universities, in the United States and in South America, he was also a contract professor at Luav University of Venice and at University of Trento, responsible for international seminars, workshops and Integrated Laboratories in Landscape Architecture. In 1986, with Leopoldo Tabares de Nava he founded the firm 'Palerm & Tabares de Nava Arquitectos,' with headquarters in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. In his works he pays particular attention to the aspects of the place and the territory, to the relationship between architecture and landscape, between natural and urban elements, as part of the architectural language, in search of a balance in the face of differences in scale and intervention environments. Project-Landscape relations appear constantly within the reflections on architecture and the studio's works, which have received international prizes and awards and have been published in numerous national and international specialised journals. Director of the 1st and 3rd Biennial of Architecture, Art and Landscape in the Canary Islands and of the Canary Islands Landscape Observatory, since 2014 he is president of UNISCAPE – European University Network for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.