



**Tiergarten, Landscape of Transgression
(This Obscure Object of Desire)**

International Symposium, 4 July 2015 in Berlin

Open Call - submission proposals: 20 March 2015



Organized by CUD Chair for Urban Design and Urbanization
TU Berlin, Professor Jörg Stollmann, Research Associate Sandra Bartoli
Concept and Research: Sandra Bartoli

We invite interested individuals from architecture, landscape architecture, art, urbanism, cultural studies, ecology as well as related disciplines to send a 250 word abstract and a 100 word biography to Sandra Bartoli (sandra.bartoli@tu-berlin.de) by 20 March 2015. The proposals will be subjected to an advisory board peer review.

The conference is organized by the Chair of Urban Design and Urbanization, Institute of Architecture TU Berlin, in cooperation with Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Depending on funding, grants for travel and accommodation will be made available.

Abstract

“If future norms of society will be dominated by the mantra of sustainability, convenience and security as opposed to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the question is where remains the space for the creative process of transgression” asked Rem Koolhaas during the opening of the Architecture Biennale in Venice in June 2014.

Koolhaas' question is a call to reconsider anew the urban realm and it is adopted here as a general thematic framework to view and explore Berlin's oldest park understood as a unique and idiosyncratic landscape of transgression. Tiergarten transgresses heritage, ecology, urbanism, and humanism, existing as a precious anomaly, a rogue model challenging questions for future environments in an ever expanding sea of urbanization. This transgression can become a key for a shift in established discourses about the city.

Proposals of conference papers can be about Tiergarten itself in order to explore a place that goes beyond the historical, ecological, cultural and human paradigms, or can take Tiergarten as a departing point for a new discourse about spaces of transgression in the urban realm. The conference aims to evaluate several aspects of urban spaces that question and expand the current discourse on sustainability, for instance unbridled plant growth and close proximity of species, the unmaintained, the incommensurable, the extraterritorial, the outlaw, the simultaneity of (contradicting) histories, to mention some.

The conference is divided into four thematic sections:

1) Transgressing Heritage - 210 hectares of forest, Tiergarten is at once artefact and primeval forest: Tiergarten existed as a swamp forest along the river Spree long before the city of Berlin was founded. It provides a lens for a model of simultaneous histories in which the entire history of Berlin is contained: marsh-wooded area of the glacial valley; designated royal hunting grounds; dense forest with carved-out Baroque rooms; landscape park; stage for Nazi parades; battlefield of World War II; a provider of firewood and farming land in post-war state-of-emergency; completely replanted in the 1950s; turned wild in the '70s and '80s. Tiergarten histories are multitude, by which the park becomes an instance that challenges practices of heritage. Its inception could hardly be pinned to a singular aesthetic time, such as the Berlin Baroque, Romanticism, and Neoclassicism. Rather, its true heritage may lie in the consideration and representation of all times at once. The efforts by the municipality in recent years to reconstruct Baroque elements such as the straight *Allées* and a formal water basin are in stark contrast with the entire park, its historical multilayered nature effortlessly resists this imposed inception. Thus, Tiergarten transgresses a specific line of heritage practice, by questioning notions of authenticity altogether within the specifics of a preservation praxis limited only by the reproduction of a specific time layer of alleged beginning.

2) Transgressing Ecology - Tiergarten, because of its impenetrability, relative solitude and lack of fundings for a manicured park, is a better host of biodiversity than many of the large, urban parks such as Central Park in New York or Hyde Park in London. This forest grown on a wetland of glacial origins inspired a young Humboldt to research and collect mosses and lichens. It was destroyed after the war, with the cutting of 200,000 old trees to procure fire wood during the strenuous winters of 1946 and '47. In the late '50s the replanting was led by the director Willy Alverdes who consciously took care of ecological aspects, envisioning a forest healing itself together with the morale of the Berlin population by interlacing layers of grasses, bush and trees in complex plant communities. Much of the massive and undisturbed vegetation growth resulted between 1960 until 1989, the area being contained on its east side by the Berlin Wall. Tiergarten opens questions on ecological awareness and management, raising the challenge of the juxtaposition of high biodiversity, intense use and heritage in the same landscape.

3) Transgressing Urbanism - Does Tiergarten transgress urbanism by existing as a platform of highly differentiated cultures of appropriation? Can it be inferred that this might be the only place where true urban existence is possible? Tiergarten is possibly the most public space in Berlin. Its constituent lack of functional zoning leaves all areas open to interpretation: Tiergarten is planned and constructed, but not divided into functions. Use and misuse often juxtapose, ephemeral and permanent. Contingency seems the only applicable paradigm to interpret this place, where use is never predetermined, but open and flexible, incidental to the numerous spatial and temporal qualities of Tiergarten. Practices of "commoning" in Tiergarten are very diverse and some very old: from one century of gay-cruising tradition, to naturism, to the voluntary monitoring of old trees and birds, to other practices of use like picnicking, playing, bird watching, harvesting, sleeping, nesting, digging holes, flirting, running, playing and the mass activities on the soccer fan mile (Fanmeile). From this point of view, a case-study of Tiergarten can contribute to the expansion of discourse on the definition of commons.

4) Transgressing Humanism - This place is much more than a park serving human necessity and pleasure: its autonomy from the strictly human is in fact far more complex. For instance, its considerable size not only reaches a critical mass which affects the entire climate of the city, but it is large enough to be perceived as "incommensurable". Orientation and control can be challenging. The scale of its biomass and the characteristic of incommensurability establish a level of autonomous existence for this place, which is also extraterritorial and therefore self-regulatory. That Tiergarten stands on its own rules is not a surprise. The qualities of its dense vegetation contribute to this autonomy. The characteristic unruly vegetation is not only due to a lack of funding, but has been also fomented in the '80s when thinning of the forest was opposed in the Berlin Senate with the political intention to re-establish an "Ur-wald". Tiergarten is shared by many: the animal realm encroaches with the human and vegetal, and sovereignty over the territories is often overlapping. Consequences of size, incommensurability and density ensue that the anthropocentric notion of a constructed park – as this is the case – can also coincide with an exceptional place of extreme autonomy and biodiversity. Under this light Donna Haraway's notions of "collaborative entanglements" of species and "trans-disciplinary biologies [...] a string figure tying together human and non-human ecologies" is key to understand the new role of Tiergarten. When does a human-constructed place go beyond the human and how necessary is this transgression?