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Dissertation Abstract

While Berlin is currently promoted as a flourishing "Green City" and "Europe's Nature Capital," debates about immigrant segregation and unemployment stress the emergence of troubled neighborhoods and ghettos in the city's body. In this context "urban nature" emerges as a category across a whole set of registers: 1) as guideline for urban planning, 2) as a way of describing urban conflicts around immigration, race and inequality, and 3) as everyday form of experiencing and reshaping the city.

Based on fifteen months of fieldwork in Berlin, this dissertation engages several ethnographic sites – multicultural gardens, forest schools, urban parks, and a post-unification era nature park at Berlin's fringes – to examine how natural landscapes become sites of contestation over national belonging and race. Drawing on participant observation and interviews with several immigrant and refugee communities, as well as environmentalists, public officials, foresters, and East and West German nature lovers, this project asks: how are social inequalities and notions of belonging reconfigured in conflicts over the creation, use, and management of green spaces?

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Introduction

Let me begin with an arrival story – or rather, a story of escape: a wild chase through the woods.

It was the summer of 2006. I had just begun my doctoral research and took a trip to Berlin. Embarking on a project to study the spatial dynamics of racial and ethnic inequalities in Berlin, I expected to conduct research in several urban neighborhoods. Yet instead, one day, to my own surprise, I found myself in the forest, at the edge of the city.

Leaving Berlin by train, the city dropped off abruptly like the edge of a cliff into an open sea. The skyline of communist era apartment buildings dwindled in the distance. The train flew past a flat landscape dotted with meadows, pine forests and agricultural fields. Small rows of allotment gardens, suburban homes and wind wheels were scattered in-between. As the forest grew thicker, derelict buildings perched alongside weedy train tracks. Berliners sometimes call it the "Wild East," or "Wild Brandenburg": tucked in between Berlin and the Eastern border to Poland, the March Oder region in Brandenburg is one of the most sparsely populated regions in Europe. Tourist brochures praise the region's small nature park – founded as a gift of national unity right after the fall of the Berlin Wall – as a "nature paradise" of deciduous forests, moors, bogs, lakes and meadows. Yet I was not on my way for a vacation. I was heading to one of the many refugee camps located in the Brandenburg countryside at the edges of Berlin. Several refugees had told me stories about these "homes" in the German "bush": they were refugee shelters, located in former military barracks in the middle of the forest. Many

asylum seekers from Africa lived in these camps, just a few kilometers away from Berlin. Because of increasingly restrictive asylum and immigration policies, people lived there in legal limbo for many years, without permission to work or travel to Berlin.[1]

When I first planned my trip, Mike, a former asylum seeker from Kenya who had lived in the *Heim* (home)[2] for years, gave me the following advice: "When you visit the camp for the first time, do not go in immediately, but take a break and sit on a rock. Look at the forest. Look at the buildings. Look at the fence and the surroundings and imagine the lives of the people living there." Mike was convinced that just sitting down and SEEING and FEELING the place would tell me more than actually talking to people in the "Heim". He advised me to do the same when entering the building—just to sit somewhere and watch the walls and the hallways and to not talk to people right away. Yet my first attempt of following Mike's advice failed miserably.

When I got off the train station near Friedwalde,[3] the train station seemed deserted. The cobblestone platform was crumbling. Barely legible, the station's signposts and timetables had faded. Leaving the station, I rode my bike past long stretches of birch, beech and pine forests, and green meadows. I passed a small village and then turned onto an old military road, leading into a dense forest. A small sign read "Bog 2a: 2 kilometers," marking my destination. On my trek through the woods, I passed abandoned farm buildings, a few idle trailers on a meadow, and a derelict train station. Further in the forest, a bouquet of wilted flowers decorated an oak tree, commemorating

[1] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of EU and German asylum policies as well as the residency law.
[2] *Heim* is the German term for home, as well as asylum.
[3] In order to protect the anonymity of my informants, I use pseudonyms for both people and villages.

a motorcycle accident at the side of the road. After a four-kilometer long stretch through the forest, I arrived at the barracks. I stopped in front of a rusty gate. A big fence surrounded the *Heim*, and a sign read: "Use at your own risk." The place seemed deserted. Following Mike's advice, I put my bike to the side and looked for a rock to sit on. Yet as I just settled down on a small tree stump for a moment of silent observation, suddenly, I heard heavy stomps in the distance. My heart stopped. Then I recognized the contours of two huge animals approaching the gate, running towards me, grunting viciously. "Wild boar!" I said to myself. I had heard many stories of a growing boar population overrunning the Berlin countryside. In a hurry, I hopped on my bike and rode off as fast as I could.

*

This dissertation embarks on a journey through the woods. It takes you on a walk through various forests, parks, meadows, gardens, swamps and spaces of rubble. Travelling through these "nature spaces", it offers an ethnography of national belonging and racial formations in Berlin. Engaging with several ethnographic sites in Berlin and its peripheries, I explore how "natural" landscapes in the city and its peripheries provide a powerful language for remaking the nation in a new Europe.

That day in the forest, I did not have the time to sit on a rock for a short meditation as Mike had advised me. Nevertheless, it was here, on my way through the forest, as I pedaled away with a racing heart that I gained a first sense of what it might mean to live at the margins of the forest while facing restrictive asylum policies and everyday racialization. It was not until later that I found out that my senses had been

tricked. The two animals I took for wild boar were no wild beasts, but watchdogs, belonging to one of the social workers at the refugee home. Although equally terrifying, they were kept on long leashes, unable to run after by passers. Nevertheless, their presence was enough to scare me. In a moment of confusion, I had hurried away.

In the March Oder park, a bounded space of nature, aspiring to naturalize the nation at the edges of the city, I encountered something more tangible and odd, yet no less powerful at work, than spatial segregation and racial exclusion: I encountered a feeling of dis-place-ment and cognitive dissonance in the middle of the forest. My encounter with the wild boar provoked fear and a breakdown of categorical ease: what constituted "nature" and who belonged in this place? This feeling of disorientation in "nature" gave me a glimpse of the ways in which racial and national formations work through people's relation to the environment and through struggles over who gets to belong where, what natures and communities are seen as being outside of the national body. It thus provided me with a sense of an entangled politics of nature, nation and race that in a strange way echoed Simon Schama's history of nationalism and racism in Germany as a track through the woods.[4] Later, when I spoke to Kenyan refugees living in the *Heim,* they conveyed a similar sense of puzzlement in the forest to me. Not only

[4] For Schama, the cultural and material history of the forest in Germany forms a track through the woods, a *Holzweg* - and thus something like a one way street – that nevertheless needs to be entered, if one wants to confront the complex histories of nationalism and genocide (Schama 1995). In *Landscape and Memory*, Schama provides a history of German nationalism in the forest – a history that stretches from the Germans' resistance against the Roman Empire's emphasis on city life and civilization, to the Napoleon wars, and a critique of French enlightenment rationality with its oppression of nature. It continues with a discussion of Romanticism, and a patriotic celebration of the forest as a key element in blood and soil ideologies during Nazism and their racial geographies of the "Aryan race" (as the people of the forest and the Jews as the people of the city). Finally, it ends with the Green movement and discourses around *Waldsterben* (dying forests) and contemporary artistic challenges and parodies of the forest mythology.

had they run into wild boar and watch dogs, they also told stories of encounters with antelopes, lions and other critters. And yet, unlike me, they were not able to run away. Rather, for them, the forest, just outside of the city of Berlin, had become a wall– a space of fairy tales gone awry – a space of encampment and unhomelyness, a space of encounters with strange creatures. Even after they left, the forest often would come back to haunt them. One day, when he still lived in the *Heim* near Friedwalde, Mike rode through the forest and was attacked by several neo-Nazis.[5] He fought them back and was able to escape. After filing a lawsuit, he managed to receive permission to leave the countryside and move to Berlin on a temporary visa. But still, the forest would not let him go. Over the years, he developed a heart defect – the daily stress of being in limbo in the forest while facing the specter of violence had started to wear on him. He was not the only one.

These stories and my experience in the forest that summer, running into the watch dogs aka wild boar, thus prompted me to think about a whole set of questions. They incited me to explore how racial formations become embodied and reside in our environment – and thus, in Ann Stoler's words, "in the corroded hollows of landscapes, in the gutted infrastructures of segregated cityscapes [..] in the microecologies of matter and mind" (Stoler 2008)[6].

Yet, not only had the forest become a space of unhomelyness in Berlin's peripheries. As I returned to Berlin for research in the following years, I witnessed an abundance of controversies around nature and immigration in the city and its

[5] See my discussion of Neo-Nazism and right wing racism in this region in Chapter 5.
[6] See Stoler's (2008) analysis of an ecology of ruins and ruination, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

peripheries. Whereas many of the refugees saw the Brandenburg forest as prison and jokingly referred to it as the "bush" while desiring to live in the city, others – both immigrants and German Berliners – sought out "nature" in the city as a space of freedom and refuge from the city's social divisions. In a context of proliferating debate about ghettoization and the emergence of parallel immigrant worlds, Berlin's parks and green spaces had become sites of contestation over appropriate uses of urban nature and the limits and possibilities of multiculturalism.

Thus, what became key to my research was the following observation: as nature returns to the city, cultural norms about nature play a central role in the remaking of citizenship and national belonging. Two decades after German re-unification, we can see a proliferation of public debate about nature in Berlin. In it, nature is re-configured materially and symbolically. While Berlin is promoted as a flourishing "Green City" and "Europe's Nature Capital," debates about immigrant segregation and unemployment stress the emergence of troubled neighborhoods and "ghettos" in the city's body. In this context, "nature and wilderness" emerge as categories across different registers: as guideline for planning and conservation policies, as a metaphor to describe urban conflict and marginalization in the city and its edges, and as both a site of exclusion and refuge from everyday life.

Based on fifteen months of fieldwork in Berlin and its hinterlands, this dissertation examines how natural landscapes become sites of contestation over national belonging, citizenship and race. I engage several ethnographic and historical sites – spaces of rubble, multicultural gardens, urban parks, forests and a post-unification era

nature park at Berlin's fringes – to trace the ways in which natural landscapes in and around Berlin provide a powerful language for remaking the nation in a new Europe. Drawing on participant observation and interviews with Turkish and Southeast Asian immigrants, with African refugee communities, as well as environmentalists, foresters, public officials, urban planners, and nature lovers, I ask how current forms of (urban) marginality, racial inequality and citizenship are reconfigured in conflicts over the use, experience and management of green spaces.

How do practices of experiencing and tending to "natural" environments create new forms of belonging, of home and community? To what extent do these practices reconstruct the nation through nature? To put the question more broadly: who gets to make certain environments their home? Who defines what counts as nature in the city and its peripheries? And who inhabits nature in what ways? What are the ecologies of belonging that bind people to particular environments and displace them in others? How do histories of the nation shape the ecologies of a city and its peripheries?

Tracking these questions, the following chapters offer insights into a shifting "ecology of nationhood" (Comaroff 2001): through them, I hope to show how the nation gets remade through "wilderness" and nature, and how some human and non-human bodies – people, plants, animals, landscapes and "things" – are situated out of place, and outside of the national body. And yet nature is more than simply a metaphor. Rather, the stories about natureculture that I trace provide a line of flight (Deleuze/Guattari 1986) in the usual stories about nature in cities. I argue that beyond utopian and dystopian spaces of urban wilderness, parallel worlds of clashing cultures

and ghettos, a whole set of communities, practices and transnational connections have emerged that go beyond bounded cultures and nature. In order for these not to get edited out of view, we need to rethink nature and culture in the city.

Nature, Race and National Belonging in Berlin and its Countryside

There is perhaps no better place to explore these questions than in Berlin. Throughout Berlin's history, natural landscapes and urban nature[7] have played a key role in the formation of the modern nation. In addition, Berlin has been constructed as a city at the focal point of world history, and place-making policies and activities have had an important symbolic significance in this. Yet despite Berlin's fraught history of imagining and (re-)constructing the nation through urban and rural landscapes, the city has also always been a hub of migration and cultural diversity.

Berlin's very name tells us a story of nature in the making. Signifying "a swampy place" or a "bend in the river", its story involves the straightening and un-straightening of rivers, the draining of swamps and the domestication of nature – but also struggles over who gets to inhabit and colonize urban nature. [8] As Berlin expanded in the 19th and 20th century, "nature spaces" such as parks and city forests provided important resources

[7] Following Gandy (2006), I use the term urban nature in two senses: on one hand it refers to the urbanization and material transformation of nature in cities, and thus to concrete material manifestations of nature such as parks, gardens and urban ecosystems. On the other hand, the term describes shifting ecological imaginaries about the city.

[8] Many people assume the name Berlin is associated with the animal on the city's coat of arms, the Berlin bear, and the German diminutive *Baerlein*, little bear. Yet Berlin's etymology is more likely to derive from the city's natural history and its Slavic origins. From the 6th century onwards, Slavic fishermen such as the Heveller Wends established several settlements in a region that would later become Berlin. Hence one origin story of the city's name is that it stems from the Slavic term *Brl*, which means marsh, swamp or damp place (McDonogh 1997: 4) In the following centuries, Slavic fishermen fought against repeated efforts of German military colonization – and ultimately they lost. Another origin story refers to the Rhenish and Dutch colonists in the 12th century: they called their settlement *to dem Berlin*, which means "a bend in the river" (Pundt 1972: 5).

for "balancing" increasing class divisions and fostering social integration in the city.[9] With 30% of its urban space encompassing forests and parks, Berlin has the highest percentage of forest land among European metropoles (Weisspflug 1999). This is the effect of a long history of preservation policies, and especially the "enduring forest policy" (*Dauerwaldvertrag)* of 1915. As a result, today, there is an abundance of open spaces – such as urban parks, city forests, abandoned lots and nature parks – both in Berlin and its surroundings.

During fascism in the mid 20th century, the city came to stand as anti-nature and was racially purified: whereas the Nazis idealized the countryside as pure space of the German nation, they imagined the city as a site of ugliness, full of social ills and dangerous racial mixing. In an attempt to rid the city of "foreign elements", the fascist regime segregated and killed its enemies.[10] At the end of WWII, the city's experience of urban breakdown created an awareness of the fragility of urban infrastructures and security from nature. At the same time, the city government called the destruction of the city forest located in the "Tiergarten" (Animal Garden), the city's biggest and oldest

[9] Even before Berlin officially became one integrated city in 1920, this policy aimed at preserving the forest areas in and around the city on a large scale – and it is still valid today. The rationale for preserving the forests was that they both provided necessary water resources for the city as well as a space of recreation for the bourgeoisie and the working classes, and thus contributed to avoiding social conflicts and unrest. It was also at this time that restaurants opened up in the city forests and offered hot water to workers while allowing them to bring their own sandwiches (Weisspflug 1999). Yet the forest also has a long history of militarism. From the mid 18th century on, the Prussian state financed almost half of its military and war actions through forestry in Berlin-Brandenburg. Furthermore, Nelson (2005) shows how the different capitalist and socialist regimes have not only shaped forest management approaches but also the cultural meanings of trees in post-WWII East and West Germany (Nelson 2005).

[10] The Nazi regime also deeply transformed Berlin's built landscape – attempting to write its power into stone and carve a 'living space' for the racial elite in a newly ordered Europe. This reconstruction was made possible through the regime's industrial projects and closely related systems of death and work camps, some of them located in the surrounding countryside, just outside of Berlin (Till 2005).

park, "the biggest scar left behind by the war on the city landscape"[11] and made its reconstruction one of its top priorities. During the division of the city of Berlin, and the – at least partial – physical severance of the city's infrastructures, forests and parks (particularly in West Berlin) offered a space of leisure for local residents who found themselves surrounded by the walls of the Cold War.[12]

In a "unified" Berlin, these natural spaces take on new meanings and social lives. The reassignment of space since 1989, as well as the city's fiscal crisis, has created many ecological gaps and open spaces – from the former "death zones" in between the borders of the cold war, to abandoned lots and ruins left behind by struggles over what dreams, pasts and futures might come to matter in the making of this metropole.

Today, Berlin prides itself on being the "greenest city" in Europe. In recent years, city officials, environmentalists and travel agents have promoted Berlin as a flourishing "Green City" and "Europe's Nature Capital". Many experts point out that there is a bigger diversity of plants, insects, reptiles, mammals, and birds in Berlin than its surrounding countryside, as well as in many other rural or urban areas throughout Germany (Riechelmann 2004). [13] TV shows and news reports with titles such as "Wilderness in Berlin" report an abundance of wild animals (especially wild boar) in the city. As a result of urban sprawl, increasing traffic, deforestation, over fertilization, and consolidation of farmland, many wild animals, as well as plants, flee the rural areas and

[11] „Die Linde am Großen Stern", Telegraf, March 18, 1949, translation B.S.
[12] As one informant, who was a forester for many years in West Berlin's largest urban forest, the Grunewald, told me: "the Berlin wall would not have lasted if it hadn't been for the city's forests".
[13] In the 1980s, botanist Wolfram Kunick's study on "species diversity" in German cities chronicled an increasing number of plant species in Berlin's urban area, by far outnumbering species in the surrounding countryside (Riechelmann 2004: 12).

conquer the city, so the story goes. Furthermore, after the immense expenditures in the wake of the construction boom in the 1990s, the city of Berlin plunged into a fiscal crisis. As a consequence, many of Berlin's urban parks have not been fertilized. Together with abandoned lots and urban wastelands, they provide attractive habitats and corridors for many plants and animals.

As the city's abundant green spaces, its parks, vegetation and diverse wild life receive much public attention, urban nature has become popular.[14] In this context, new practices of tracking and cultivating urban ecology emerge. During Berlin's annual "Urban Nature Day", thousands of residents tour the city to discover nature: they search for weeds on Berlin's sidewalks, learn about forestry in the city, follow the tracks of wild boar, or listen to the songs of nightingales while touring the city's parks at night.[15]

As nature returns to the city, debates about immigrant segregation and unemployment stress the existence of troubled neighborhoods and "ghettos" in the city's body. Today, increasing poverty and segregation shape many urban neighborhoods in

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[14] This emergence of urban nature's popularity goes hand in hand with a rise of beautification projects and environmental initiatives to preserve "natural" urban spaces in the city – ranging from planting trees, creating new parks and urban gardens, to maintaining forest schools to teach city children about the city's forests. This turn to urban nature can be seen as the outcome of a variety of factors: the increased traction and popularity of environmental initiatives and movements, the commodification of nature and strategies to market the city and "sell nature" for urban consumption, and the desire for pastoral views of nature as refuge from social ills (Lyons 2004; Davis 1999). In his book *Selling Seattle*, James Lyons describes the increasing desire to make America's cities – such as Seattle – more "natural" as a response to ecological pollution and environmental destruction, but also as testament to the lure of escape from an increasing fragmentation of urban life and a sense of social crisis. "Nature" thus functions as refuge and as attempt to articulate local pride, reconnect to "origins" and reformulate a sense of homogenous ethnic and racial community (Lyons 2004). Nature sells. As Jennifer Wolch puts it, too often "a romanticized wilderness [is] used as a means to peddle consumer goods, sell real estate, and sustain the capital accumulation process, reinforcing urban expansion and environmental degradation" (Wolch 1998: 128).

[15] Organized by the city, as well as NGO's, environmentalists, foresters, wild life specialists and other nature lovers, "urban nature day" has been celebrated in Berlin each year since 2007. Since then, it has become more popular, adding more events and sites each year. In 2009, 20,000 Berliners participated in the event. For a more detailed discussion of the emergence of "urban nature day" see Chapter 2.

Berlin. Within mainstream media, these neighborhoods are now labeled as "ghettos", "problematic or troubled districts", "social hotspots" or "parallel societies" (Schnur 2004: 109).[16] In particular, Turkish and other Muslim immigrants are made responsible for high levels of crime and for failing to "integrate" into German society. In addition, they are considered not to have a sense of belonging to the urban environment and are stigmatized on the basis of their residence in certain neighborhoods at the same time.[17] These metaphors of ghettos and social hotspots stress disconnection and invoke images of a lurking danger: the danger of fire breaking lose and creating havoc, the threat of wilderness imposing itself on the civilized city.[18] Thus in the midst of a celebration of Berlin as city of nature and as a cosmopolitan metropole without walls, tropes of spatial and ethnic division persist.

These tropes of disconnection and division also inform public policies. One public response to urban spatial divisions have been national and EU based development and "integration" projects that aim at fighting racial segregation, poverty and urban decay. Attempting to "integrate" immigrants into German society through language classes, educational measures and measure to reshape urban environments such as

[16] For a more detailed discussion of the genealogy of debates about ghettos, see Chapter 2.
[17] Berlin is the city with the largest Turkish population living in an urban area outside of Turkey. In the 1950s and 1960s, Germany adopted the so called "guest worker policy" with Turkey and other Mediterranean countries. This policy granted temporary work permits for migrant laborers in Germany. Since the 1970s, many migrant workers decided to stay permanently. Today, they and their children often still do not have German citizenship since, until recently, German citizenship law has primarily been based on *ius sanguinis* ("right of blood").
[18] Nature metaphors abound. The image of the "urban jungle" is yet another trope in some of these debates: as inhabitants of this jungle, "bad immigrants" and people of color are often portrayed as animal-like, cast as beasts of prey, and the "ghetto" becomes their cage (as can be seen for example in recent media coverage on German-Ghanaian soccer star Kevin-Prince Boateng in Berlin). In other contexts, people of color are "naturalized" as inhabitants of nature spaces – such as zoos: in 2005, the Augsburg zoo hosted an "African village", a market of "African crafts" and performance as a fund raising event, setting off a heated controversy (Glick-Schiller et al. 2005).

neighborhood beautification projects, these policies follow a logic of civilizing populations – cast as spatially and racially other – into national political, social and economic norms (Silverstein 2006: 289). In so far that these policies and Germany's contemporary "integration industry" (Nghi Ha 2010) are not directed towards all immigrants but towards people of color and non-Western migrant laborers,[19] they echo former missions of civilizing savages and the urban underclass – both in Europe's colonies, as well as in the metropole (see Stoler 1995, Silverstein 2006). In addition, as Paul Silverstein has pointed out for France, plans to reintegrate Europe's "hot spots" have been likened to the Marshall Plan for rebuilding war-struck Europe.[20] For European policy makers, what once were the ruins of war have now turned into the racialized ruins of Europe's urban peripheries and immigrant neighborhoods.

Curiously, as debates about integration and ghettoization grow more acute[21] urban nature and the city's green spaces become a central site where questions of belonging take shape. For many Berliners – both immigrant and German – the city's

[19] According to immigration law (the German Settlement and Residence Act), so called integration courses, aiming to teach German language and culture to immigrants, can be required for immigrants from non-European countries – whereas they are not mandatory for Westerners, such as US nationals (see Nghi Ha 2010: 164).

[20] In fact, during the 1995 election, President Jacques Chirac pledged to come up with a "Marshall Plan for the banlieues" (Silverstein 2006: 302).

[21] For example in fall 2010, the publication of Berlin's former finance minister and German Federal Bank board member Thilo Sarrazin's book, "Germany does away with itself" (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*) hit a nerve and triggered a heated national debate about the state of multiculturalism in the country. Sarrazin encountered strong criticism across the political spectrum for his claims that most Muslim immigrants are not willing and in fact, are *not capable* to integrate into society. However, the publication of his book changed some of the terms of the debate by insisting on nature, immutable difference and even biology – and by making statements about IQ's, genes, and reproduction – something which up to that point, had largely been a taboo in post-Nazi Germany. As public opinion increasingly became supportive of Sarrazin for putting a finger on some of the problems facing the nation, immutable nature returned to the debate about immigration, and the economic flailings of the nation were blamed on its border crossers. In response, just a few weeks later, German chancellor, Angela Merkel, declared the death and failure of multiculturalism in Germany. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed genealogy of integration policies and debates.

green spaces, its urban parks, forests and gardens are sites of hope for creating a more cosmopolitan city and for fostering multiculturalism and "social integration". In the past years, many so called "multicultural gardens" have emerged across the city: through gardening practices people hope to change the urban environment and lay roots in neighborhoods that are marked as problematic or "troubled". Thus, while debates about increasing urban segregation and ghettoization abound in the city, Berlin's many parks, open spaces, and city forests offer a place of refuge and hope for many people who seek to escape the city's ethnic and social divisions.

Other spaces become objects of controversy around "a clash of cultures", as well as exclusion. Especially Berlin's parks are sites of intense contestation over the boundaries of multiculturalism and the protection of nature. For instance, the city administration has begun to closely monitor "wild barbecuing" and its traces. Concerned with environmental pollution, the city has thus targeted Turkish immigrants in particular for having the "wrong" relation to nature and no sense of connection to the environment they live in.

Yet marginalization manifests itself differently at the edges of Berlin. While new integration policies have been implemented in order to fight an increasing segregation in the city, the Brandenburg countryside around Berlin – with its many lakes, rivers and forests – is both a trap and a refuge for different populations. In recent years, small refugee communities – from a wide range of countries such as Kenya, Cameroon, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey – have found themselves living in isolated shelters in the forests of Brandenburg around Berlin. This is a consequence of post-unification asylum

and immigration policies that first put up new shelters in cities, and then as a response to xenophobic attacks on these shelters in the 1990s, relocated many refugees to new "homes" in rural East Germany – often on the grounds of former military barracks or industrial sites or forests situated in nature parks.

The sparsely populated Brandenburg countryside, in which these refugees now live, was previously inaccessible to West Berlin. Currently struck by increasing unemployment and depopulation, this region is marketed as ideal place of recreation for city residents and tourists.[22] Refugee activists and advocates have struggled against invisibility, immobility and isolation in the forests of Brandenburg for years. But it has not been until recently that the countryside has moved to the fore of public attention. In response to several violent attacks on immigrants, refugees and citizens of color, a heated debate around so called "no go areas" and the dangers of tourism in the former East erupted in the past year.[23] Thus, whereas historically, the German countryside and the forest have been imagined as mythical symbol of the German nation and as retreat from urban ethnic conflicts, policy makers, journalists and politicians, have begun to discuss racism as not just urban phenomenon.

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[22] The relationship between the city of Berlin and the surrounding countryside of Brandenburg changed dramatically after the fall of the Berlin Wall. During the Cold War, the outer border to East Berlin cut off connections between West Berlin and the countryside. This had profound consequences for both human and non-human of traffic between East and West. While networks for electricity were separated, it was never possible to separate the sewer network for financial and practical reasons (Book 1995: 184). West Berlin thus used the hinterland in the East for waste deposition and waste water management, which for a long time was a source of conflict between the East and West German governments. As West Berliners' travels to the countryside were highly regulated, travel to the Eastern countryside became especially popular among them after 1989 (Book 1995: 184). Tourism flourishes as former military grounds and mining areas are transformed into nature preserves and recreational areas. Furthermore, as Brandenburg is mainly characterized by agriculture, the GDR's legacy of large farms and fields persists today and accounts for most of the agricultural landscape in East Germany.

[23] For a more detailed discussion of this context, see Chapter 5.

Together, these developments in Berlin and its countryside represent different poles of integration and isolation, marginalization and belonging in Germany; they constitute opposite strategies of managing xenophobic fears, racial exclusions and creating home and belonging in Germany and Europe. Finally, they also speak to a fraught history of imagining and (re-)constructing the nation through urban and rural landscapes. In Germany, nationalism has been constructed via the metaphor of home and homeland, *Heimat* – the idea that Germans are rooted in the land and in their environment, through relations of blood and agricultural ties to the land. Thus nature has been a key site through which to embody what it means to be German. In this context, not only have forests played a key role in the German national imagination (Schama 1995), but also the protection and regulation of rural and urban nature more generally has entangled discourses of environmentalism with ideologies of the nation (Rollins 1995, Brueggermeier et al. 2005).

Today, in a context of increasing spatial divisions, cultural notions of place and nature thus inform ideas about racial difference. In the following chapters, I use the term "racial geographies" (Brown 2005) to refer to the ways in which racial practices mark not only bodies but also geographical territories (Moore et al. 2003) in contemporary debates about immigration. But even more than that, the current talk on integration, the clash of cultures and the end of "multiculturalism" that is so pervasive not only in Germany but throughout Europe, testifies to the persistence of bounded notions of "culture", the nation and nature. In Berlin, cultural norms about what counts as desirable nature of the city shape who gets to be a legitimate urban citizen and come to serve as the basis for

immigrant racialization. Yet beyond utopian and dystopian spaces of urban wilderness, parallel worlds of clashing cultures and ghettos, a whole set of communities, practices and transnational connections have emerged that go beyond bounded cultures and nature. Thus, the question of what bodies belong and are at home is reshuffled in Berlin's green spaces and its peripheries.

Travelling through different landscapes in the city and its edges, the following chapters describe different ways of seeing nature in Berlin. They show how neighborhood gardens become sites of hope for projects of integration and rootedness in the urban environment; parks are contested as "savage space" and spaces of ethnic pride, and forests turn out to be spaces of unhomelyness. Attending to the remaking of nature and urban ecologies in these different sites, this dissertation stresses how belonging is routed not only through place but also through nature. I argue that we might change the terms of the debate if we understand belonging not as something given, but instead as the practice of making connections and being connected (Simone 2010: 137). Perhaps, then, "ecology" is less "about a naturalization of politics – [as if one wanted to treat humans like plants and animals]" – and more about "the recognition of the immense complexity of what it means for an entity – human or non-human – to have a voice, to take a stand, to be counted, to be represented, to be connected with others" (ZKM 2005: 21). In this spirit, this dissertation begins with the insight that a clash of cultures and integration – as well as the mono-naturalism and culturalism persistent in thinking about urban and rural environments – are poor tools to think with.

Instead, we need to search for different ways of thinking about the heterogeneity of life in today's cities – among humans and non-humans.

With this goal in mind, my analysis offers three concepts: rubble ecologies, the unhomely and rewilding. I track "rubble ecologies" and "ruderal practices" to draw attention to the unexpected human and non-human heterogeneity of life that emerges in cities – beyond homogenous notions of nature and culture – and beyond modern schemes of order. The notion of the unhomely (*unheimlich*), traces practices of making and unmaking home; it directs our attention to the affective dimensions of displacement, to contingency and the traces of violence in the postcolonial and postsocialist worlds that make up Europe's landscape. Finally, I attend to "rewilding" as both a strategy of making nature matter and making alien – and thus the wild as a place from where to begin to analyze racism and nationalism in the context of contemporary global capitalism. With these three analytic concepts, I hope to offer an alternative to notions of "bounded or parallel worlds" – so persistent in contemporary thinking about diversity in Europe's urban environments.

Thinking with Rubble Ecologies: Ruderal Practices, the Unhomely and Rewilding

Wars and catastrophes rip open the illusion of the security of cities – from unwanted migration of people and goods, to its control over nature and life. In Germany, fascism created this nightmare of urban destruction. As the Nazis attempted to "cleanse" cities of Jews and everyone else who did not fit into their racial and political ideology, they created cities of death in the countryside. Then, towards the end of the war, Berlin, like

many other German cities, was heavily bombed. Much of the urban built environment and infrastructure was destroyed as thousands of people had lost their homes or fled elsewhere.

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I show how the experience of urban breakdown after WWII challenged the fantasy of domestication of nature in Berlin. After the war, images of a feral city and Berlin "gone wild" abound. Yet soon planners and policy makers were busy re-ordering nature in the city and erasing the traces of fascism and war. In this context, non-native, so-called ruderal plants (such as sticky goosefoot) proliferated in the city for the first time. Growing in the war's rubble, they were deeply ambivalent indicators of a city coming back to life. When West Berlin botanists, surrounded by the Berlin Wall and cut off from the countryside, began to research these plants, they tracked the emergence of rubble or "ruderal ecologies": the unexpected cosmopolitan plant life growing in "disturbed environments", such as alongside roads, train tracks, on waste or rubble. Although ruderal plants were strangers, they were not considered a nuisance by the botanists but as integral to urban nature. The botanists therefore developed an urban ecology of ruderal communities that offered "a view into the heterogeneity of cities and into the possibilities of reshaping their environments. And it provide[d] insights into the uniqueness of cities, in which plants and animals play a big role" (Sukopp 2003a: 43, transl. by author). Not only did Berlin's specific political situation thus change how science was done (see Lachmund 2003), but plants and scientists collaborated in reshuffling post war cultural imaginaries about the city, nature

and the nation by drawing attention to the unexpected diversity of life – beyond a nationalist nostalgia for "new life emerging out of ruins".

Drawing on this history, the idea of rubble ecologies and their open-ended landscapes threads throughout my dissertation: it offers a lens to look at urban environments as nodes of heterogeneous nature-cultural collaboration. Ruderal practices draw our attention to the multispecies lives that happen along train tracks and routes that go elsewhere, and the communities that thrive – and struggle – in highly "disturbed" places where people, animals, plants and "things" meet.[24] Thinking with rubble ecologies, I trace landscapes and practices that emerge at the edge of formalized urban/rural spaces – ranging from immigrants who plant gardens – hidden in courtyards, at the side of parks or in between walls –, to barbecue smoke that triggers debates about urban wilderness, to stories about antelopes and a sense of the *unheimlich* as it unfolds in military ruins converted to refugee homes at the forest edges of Berlin. Following these ruderal practices, I ask how national, racial and European boundaries are remade through nature.

Thinking with rubble ecologies, I hope to generate stories that are different than the usual stories about ghettos and parallel worlds in today's cities – stories in which mixing and cultural hybridity are either overlooked or become a problem. Rubble ecologies grow on the ruins of war; they emerge rather by chance and accident and they entail illegal border crossings – often unnoticed in "big" history. Their roots/routes

[24] They thus open up a view of cities to multispecies frameworks and a sense of contingency of life – something that, as Jennifer Wolch has pointed out, is often not part of the story about cities (Wolch 1998).

reach out in the cracks of power and grow in the gaps of formal institutions, official memory cultures and modern schemes of order.

But this does not mean they have no patterns. To the contrary, rubble ecologies are deeply fraught and they emerge out of histories of violence. The social and material worlds that emerge out of them are thus deeply ambivalent: they tell a story about the lives that are both destroyed and enabled through destruction.[25] With these multiple readings, it becomes clear that landscapes are far from evident: they are not simply "material evidence" of the past and they are often much more ambivalent than humans want them to be.

Taking rubble ecologies seriously cannot mean to simply "reinterpret" landscapes or dig for their deeper meaning. Rather it means to "resituate and recombine" (Till 2005: 95) and to put different stories that don't seem to "fit" together – in an attempt to do justice to the complexities of urban relations and imagine new possibilities for the future.[26] In this sense, if, we understand ruins in a broad sense as the very urban environments we live in – built on environmental destruction, segregated neighborhoods

[25] As both Berlin botanists and writers such as W.G. Sebald have shown, there is a deep ambivalence in the ways human relate towards plants as signs of life and death/apocalypse (Sukopp 2003a: 11), as well as forgetting.his sense of human powerlessness vis-à-vis the plants' strength and their proliferation has been expressed in fables and in urban fairy tales – and is also present in some popular narratives about the plants emerging after the war (see Sukopp 2003).

[26] In her book, *The New Berlin*, Karen Till describes "digging practices" organized by local groups, such as the History Workshop Berlin, at the former Gestapo site at the beginning of the 1980s. Challenging overgrown grass on a former site of planned mass murder – and thus the German saying "let us grow grass over it" – the digging activity, like many other memorial cultures of the time, started from the assertion that the landscape is material evidence of different phases of national history (Till 2005: 96). Thus heaps of rubble overgrown with grass stood as symbols of repression and postwar forgetting (65/79). Attending to these practices, Till draws on both Foucault and Benjamin to instead highlight open ended landscapes: for Foucault, "the archeologist, has to pay attention to waste, ruins and rubble, and abandoned spaces and left over matter that have no place in dominant systems of meaning" (Till 2005: 95). Yet even further than an "archeological method" of digging up "what's there", Till suggests a method of resituating and recombining in order to imagine otherwise.

and histories of nationalism – and if, as Anna Tsing points out, "ruins are now our gardens" (Tsing 2009), then the question is: which ruins and which nature can we live with? Whose natures materialize in the process of displacement, dwindling economies and post-industrial landscapes? Who gets to inhabit them? And what new communities—human and nonhuman—emerge out of them? These questions set the stage for a whole set of other ecologies, communities, and transnational connections – the planned as well as unexpected natures in the cracks of neatly bounded nature spaces, in the gaps of debates about the utopian and dystopian spaces of urban wilderness, parallel worlds, clashing cultures and urban ghettos.

Yet rubble ecologies cannot stand alone as a guiding metaphor for this dissertation.

In chapter 5, I ethnographically track and theorize the "unhomely" to shed light on the ways in which racial formations, in Ann Stoler's spirit, connect people to environments and affective geographies of displacement: at the forest edges of Berlin, the "unheimlich" emerges as a sense of anxiety of invisible forces (Masco 2006) of racial power, violence and lives gone off tracks. As I show in this chapter, the "unhomeliness" of the forests of Berlin and Brandenburg point to a world of the unhomely – and thus to the affective dimensions of what it means to be a stranger and considered "out of place".[27]

Finally several chapters explore the trope of wildness and what I call rewilding – a practice of 1. making or becoming "close-to-nature" or "natural"; 2. untaming or

[27] See Chapter 5 and my discussion of Freud and Bhabha's notion of the unhomely as cognitive dissonance and as affective dimension of displacement, of not having a home.

becoming out of control, and 3. making and becoming "alien". Following re-wilding practices, I explore how efforts to make nature matter in times of collapse and economic crisis articulate with images of otherness and with new practices of exclusion, as well as with their negotiation. Rewilding thus describes relations of racial inequality, economic transformation and environmental discourse;[28] and includes a process of un-domesticating, escaping from cultivation. It therefore involves unpredictability, transgression and disregard vis-à-vis authenticity. Yet wilding always has two sides.[29] Within Western imaginations, invoking the wild, is always an act of romantic admiration and conveying a sense of fear and horror. In Chapter 6, I also use wilding to refer to something internal: wilding can be inside people in so far that it refers to the process of throwing people's lives off track.

In her work, Deborah Rose Bird has asked what it means to write in a place and time of invasion, racism and violence. For her, an ethics of decolonization and an engagement with the past and the present needs to include the natural world. Thus, the "wild" is one place from where to begin to figure out how to confront racism and nationalism: in fact, she redefines the "wild" as the process of colonization and destruction itself: "Wild people (colonizers) make wild country (degrading, failing).

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[28] Several recent publications engage the trope of the wild and wilderness to signify both relations of ethnic division, economic transformation and environmental discourse in Europe. For example, in her book, *Wild Sardinia*, Tracey Heatherington explores how environmental narratives draw on images of otherness in Sardinia (Heatherington 2010). In a different vein, in her analysis of "wild capitalism", Krista Harper elaborates on two meanings of the term "wild" as they get articulated in Hungarian environmentalist's critiques of wild capitalism: wild refers both to nature and the market after socialism, and thus to wild and precarious economic circumstances, as well as a renewed attention to nature (Harper 2006) .

[29] Similarly, wilding draws on violence: the urban dictionary defines "wilding" as "a slang term that refers to the practice of marauding in bands to terrorize strangers and to swagger and bully", See: http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=wilding, retrieved April 21, 2011.

Colonization and the wild form a matrix: settler societies and their violence. […] Violence is central both to conquest and to progress" (Rose 2004: 4). Yet in the face of this, as Rose puts it "alternatives arise unexpectedly in relationships among people and between people and place. Alternatives are entangled in the midst of the wild, and may depend on the wild even as they resist it" (Rose cited in Haraway 2007).

Tracing ruderal practices alongside neatly landscaped gardens and parks, or the unhomely landscapes at the forest edges of Berlin, I follow Rose's commitment to describe the possibilities amid the "wild". Exploring rubble ecologies, unhomely landscapes and rewilding I hope to give insight into what might be at stake in the social and material remaking of Berlin. These stories point us to the imaginative and generative worlds that survive as well as the livelihoods and bodies that are ruined in today's urban landscapes. Through them, we can see the open ended character of the landscapes that enter this dissertation: to some, nature becomes a site of nostalgia, for others, it is a practice of rehabilitation and possibility, and then again for others, it offers an unhomely home in which one's life is put on hold.

These are the topics of the chapters to come.

Theoretical Interventions

Highlighting how human relations to the natural environment play an important role in emerging practices of citizenship, this dissertation creates a dialogue between disparate perspectives on globalization, race and migration in Europe and the study of nature, landscape and power. At the same time, this project develops an analytical framework that goes beyond the usual kinds of stories about cities – and about Berlin in particular –

stories that tend to focus on buildings, people and wars and the remaking of the nation. I thus not only examine how human relations to nature and place reshape definitions of (national) belonging and difference. I am interested in exploring how to write about a politics of race and national belonging in urban contexts without imagining the city as solely human habitat – but also as a place of (sometimes unexpected) collaboration and encounter between humans, plants, animals and their environments.

This dissertation therefore draws on and contributes to three bodies of literature: 1) anthropological and social scientific perspectives on race, immigration and citizenship in Europe; 2) an emerging scholarship that does not treat the study of the social dynamics of cities as separate from environmental concerns but rather troubles distinctions between the "city" and the "countryside", between "nature" and "culture", and between the "urban" and the "natural"; and finally, 3) disparate literatures on the city of Berlin.

Beyond Race and the Nation: Inhabiting Europe's Margins and Centers

In her essay *Europe's Dream*, Hito Steyerl draws attention to the margins and borders of Europe. Steyerl paints a complex picture of a divided and segregated Europe, *seen from the perspective of many different Europes* (Steyerl 2001: 1). These perspectives include various stories – stories about departures for a better life; the dreams of cleaning ladies, babysitters, mothers, daughters; asylum seekers doing the badly paid 'labor of love'; intellectual traditions created in exile and the travels of plants and their entanglements in histories of plunder. Europe, in these stories, is less an abstract idea than a dream: the

dream of equality, democracy, freedom and prosperity. Yet this dream can turn into a nightmare at any point in time:

> Europe's dream remains important in two senses: on the one hand as a democratic, universalist utopia, on the other hand as a Eurocentric nightmare of imperial demands with a long tradition of colonialism and racism (Steyerl 2001: 1).

With these juxtapositions, Steyerl not only brings into focus Europe's "people without history" – migrants and ethnic minorities who have lived in Europe all along, but also the *longue durée* of racism and colonialism in Europe, as well as the often invisible histories of connection, travel and inequality that are an inherent part of Europe.

This sense of heterogeneity emerging out of the *longue durée* of migrations, racisms, and colonialism, as well as the porous and shifting boundaries of Europe as they can be seen from the perspective of multiple Europes – both from its margins and centers – guides my analysis. It is in the notion of the unhomely that I try to grasp this sense of heterogeneity: the perspective of multiple Europes, the ways in which histories of colonialism and racism haunt its dreams, and the conditions of homelessness it continues to create. It was at the edges of Berlin, in the forest – that space of mythmaking around the German nation – that I learned about the unhomely: a cognitive dissonance, a sense of homelessness, as it comes into being in the experience of everyday racisms, of being in limbo at the edges of a European metropole, and as it emerges in a landscape in which the value of objects, of personal histories and imagined futures has ruptured.

The unhomely thus also points to historical ruptures: the past two decades have radically altered the political landscape in Europe. The end of the Cold War opened up

new possibilities to re-imagine and re-make Europe into a new economic and political identity, while borders were drawn and redrawn all over this "new Europe" – especially through immigration and asylum laws and the expansion of the EU to the East.[30] At the same time, migration and global capitalism have challenged and reshaped existing ideas about the homogeneity of Europe and the nation state. Thus the question of how to talk about Europe itself today – as supranational entity, as a region, or as composed of distinct parts – has become increasingly contested. In the past two decades, many ethnographies have analyzed the creation of borders in Europe – be they national, regional, urban, rural, ethnic, or the borders between East and West. They have thus shed light on the ways in which Europe's external and internal borders get entangled with inequalities of race, class, and nation. By doing so, they have offered new possibilities for an anthropology of Europe that does not assume its boundaries in advance. My dissertation draws on and contributes to such an anthropology. In particular, I engage with anthropological and social scientific literature on race and national identity and scholarship that analyzes the spatial dimensions of racial inequalities in European cities.

Current anthropological scholarship has highlighted the historical contingencies and affective dimensions of the social construction of race (Dominguez 1986; Harrison 1995, Visweswaran 1998, Hartigan 1999), as well as the negotiation of racial, ethnic, and

[30] With growing EU expansion, all members of the EU, except Ireland and the UK have become part of the Schengen Area and are required to adhere to regulations implemented in the Schengen Treaty in 1985. The treaty aimed at eliminating border controls with other Schengen members while strengthening border controls with non-member states. This had far reaching consequences for EU immigration and asylum policies, temporary visa regulations, the implementation of cross-border police and judicial co-operation (Pieper 2008).

gender formations in national, transnational and global contexts (Brown 2005, Gilroy 2004, 2005 Anderson 2009, Clarke/Thomas 2006). While these approaches often focus on the U.S. and Latin America, the study of race in continental Europe has remained rather marginal to the field (Harrison 1995). Yet more recently – in the context of the war in Yugoslavia, the rise of xenophobic violence against immigrants and people of color in many European countries in the 1990s, and anti-Muslim sentiments after 9/11 – there has been considerable debate within anthropology and the social sciences more generally on how to conceptualize race and how to analyze increasing racial and ethnic inequalities in Europe.[31]

Emphasizing the enduring power of race and racism in Europe *and* its historical specificity, I understand race to not have an intrinsic, fixed meaning that is always tied to notions of bodily difference and the nation in a certain way. Rather than answering in advance *how* race matters, my project explores how racial difference and national belonging is made through conflicts over urban and rural landscapes. Throughout the

[31] Earlier historical and social scientific research (Gilman 1982, Mosse 1985, Balibar/Wallerstein 1991), as well as approaches within Black Cultural Studies have addressed the study of race, nation, and migration in Europe (Gilroy 1987, Hall 1996). Whereas these approaches tend to highlight the relationship between racism and nationalism, there is no consensus about how race, nation and ethnicity have been articulated in the past, as well as in the present. One key *recent* concern has thus been the question of whether contemporary migration policies and discourses that assume an inassimilable "cultural other" can appropriately be labeled with the category of racism (Stolcke 1995, Glick-Schiller 2005, Bunzl 2005, Balibar 2004, Silverstein 2005a). Some scholars have argued that recent Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments constitute social formations separate from racism since they move beyond the nation state and do not construct biological difference (Bunzl 2005). In contrast, others have emphasized the continuing *and* shifting role of ideas of racial difference and the nation – and its logic of blood and belonging – in shaping European supranational *and* national practices (Glick-Schiller 2005). In this view, nation-building projects remain dependent on the attack of fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers, as much as new forms of state control in the so-called War against Terror nourish a fear of Islamic bodies as a threat against 'national security'. Similarly, Stolcke (1995) proposes the term "cultural fundamentalism' to propose that current forms of exclusion are both new and old: old because they continue to rely on a homogenous concept of the nation state, and new because racism has been discredited and culture has become the key trope through which to imagine human difference (Stolcke 1995).

following chapters, I engage race "as an axis of power, or as a kind of body politic" (Brown 2005: 72), that articulates with the politics of nature, nation, gender and class in historically contingent ways and that stretches across different terrains. In this sense, racial formations are not only historically shifting and mobile (Omi/Winant 1994), but they also go beyond the boundary of the skin: they can fabricate and imagine inner selves, social bodies, and environmental milieus (Moore 2003: 31).

Growing social divisions in many European cities and their edges, the riots in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 and 2007, as well as increasing anti-Muslim sentiments after 9/11, have made the question of how to confront the spatial dynamics of social and ethnic exclusions more urgent than ever. Many anthropologists have thus ethnographically examined the spatial marginalization of immigrant communities in European metropoles, as well as immigrant and ethnic minorities' challenges to citizenship and claims to urban space (Sawyer 2006, 2002, Silverstein 2004, Pred 1997, Çağlar 2001, Glick-Schiller 2006, Kosnick 2007, Mandel 2006). These ethnographies thus provide important tools to analyze the "geographies of race" (Brown 2005) at work in contemporary cities in Europe. While these studies highlight the importance of ethnographic attention to the spatial dimensions and historically shifting forms of exclusion, they tend to say little about a) how ethnic exclusions manifest themselves differently in the countryside and b) how the remaking of urban and rural nature spaces shapes contemporary conflicts around national identity and belonging. My work addresses this lacuna by examining how social inequalities and notions of belonging are reconfigured in conflicts over the creation, use and management of "nature spaces" in

Berlin and its edges. By doing so, my research is in conversation with studies of racism in rural contexts (Neal 2002, Chakrabarty/ Garland 2004), with histories of the construction of national imaginaries through landscape (Baucom 1999, Wise/Wise 2005, Schama 1995), and with scholarship that traces how "nature work" (Jerolmack 2007) can serve as the basis for racialization and become a site of articulation for ethnic identities and senses of belonging (Jerolmack 2007; Elder/Wolch/Emel 1998).

Finally, by combining an analysis of post-cold war formations with questions of migration, this dissertation is committed to an analytical framework that connects the study of post-socialism and the "West" with postcolonial perspectives. The end of communism has introduced intense and accelerated cultural, economic and political changes throughout the world.[32] Since then, both postcolonial theory and postsocialist scholarship have generated rich reflections on the "West", on Eurocentric categories of thought (Verdery 1997), and the reworkings of capitalist and imperial formations after the Cold War. [33] In a commitment to "thinking between the posts" (Chari/Verdery 2009), my research shares the premises of work in the anthropology of postsocialism,

[32] Caroline Humphrey has cautioned not to take the category of postsocialism for granted, and to instead attend to the heterogeneous historical trajectories that fall under the category of "postsocialism" across the world (Humphrey 2002). Yet as ethnographers have shown, postsocialism continues to be a useful category of analysis as long as it serves as allegory to shape people's subjectivities, memory and cultural practices and as long as its cultural forms continue to provide a foil from which to evaluate global capitalism (Berdahl 2009; Rofel 1999, 2007; Verdery 1999).

[33] Anthropologists of Eastern Europe have examined the cultural, economic and political dimensions of the transition from socialism. By showing how Western concepts such as the market, liberal democracy, and the economy do not describe what is actually happening in the East, but are instead ideological vehicles, they have deconstructed central categories of European experience (Verdery 1997): they have traced the idea of the recommodification of land and labor in Hungary (Lampland 1995), the "social poetics of economic practice" in Russia (Caldwell 2004: 6), the idea of the economy as invisible actor and the transformation of property in Transylvania (Verdery 2003). In these ethnographies, Europe (and thus the "birth place" of much anthropological theory, Asad 1997) emerges as a looking glass to reflect back upon anthropology (Herzfeld 1987).

postcolonial studies (Stoler 1995, Gilroy 2004) and subaltern urbanism to develop comparative and transnational frameworks for analyzing contemporary urban life under globalization and liberalization (Roy/Al Sayyad 2004).[34] By attending to the "nature work" of different migrant, as well as East and West German communities across Berlin, this dissertation contributes to an anthropology of Europe that "provincializes Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000) – an anthropology that crosses its own disciplinary and geographic boundaries, and that connects the study of European cities – and the dreams and nightmares connected to their worlds – with an attention to the everyday economies of survival of people who don't easily get to call Europe their "home".

Nature and the City

For a long time, there has been a division of labor in the study of cities: social scientists and anthropologists have tended to study cities as social spaces, while scientists (sometimes including geographers) have focused on the material environment and the physical aspects of the city. As Dierig et al put it: "Whereas the "social" aspect of the city emerged as an object of knowledge in the social sciences" [..] the physical environment became the focus of the natural scientific studies of the city" (Dierig et al. 2003: 9). In a similar vein, much urban theory has focused on the city as a solely human habitat. By ignoring nonhuman life, urban scholars have assumed cities and modern urban life to be separate from nature – therefore reproducing a logic of capitalist urbanization that

[34] Subaltern studies have provided important impulses to situate the production of global cities (Sassen 2001, Harvey 1989) within a larger framework of unequal relations between the West and the "rest". By attending to transnational migrant networks, the circulation of international migrant labor, as well as the dynamics of delegating the urban poor to certain sectors of informal work in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, these scholars have destabilized the Euro-American centeredness of much urban theory (Baviskar 2007, Simone 2006, Mbembe 2003).

associates cities with progress and the conquest of culture over nature (Wolch 1998: 119). Correspondingly, we can trace the disappearance of animals, plants and environments in many tenets of modern social theory: whereas theorists such as Durkheim and Levi-Strauss chronicled the (symbolic) role of animals and nature in rituals, myths and everyday life, this view disappeared in the writings of 19th and 20th century theorists, such as Marx, Toennies and Weber, who focused on "advanced" capitalist societies, and their formal economic, social and cultural institutions (Jerolmack 2007: 875). The city became the locus of culture, independent from the "nature" of the countryside, its resources and labor (Williams 1973). Thus today, much urban social analysis – as well as popular discourse - continues to leave out the natural world, or treats nature simply as a background of urban social life (Jerolmack 2007: 875), and as "a physical place to which you can go" (Haraway 1992: 66).

Berlin – a city where urban research has flourished throughout the past centuries and has boomed after the collapse of the eastern bloc – is certainly no exception in this regard. For scholars in the humanities and social sciences, Berlin has been a city under constant revision. It has occupied a central location in the study of the formation of national identity and the making of empire – and thus in the formation of modern Europe. Architects, historians, literary critics, sociologists and anthropologists have thus focused on the history and cultural politics of the Prussian empire, the Weimar period, fascism, the Cold War, and German re-unification; they have studied the history of social movements in the city; the aesthetics of the constantly changing urban environment; the formation of urban imaginaries in film and literary productions; and they have traced the

politics of memory, national identity, citizenship, immigration, and urban poverty in pre and post-Wall Berlin.[35] Berlin's streets and buildings thus hold grafts of various national imaginings and bear traces of efforts to manifest this city as the focal point of world history (Boyer 2001: 424). Dominic Boyer has invoked the metaphor of shifting sands to not only point to the fact that Berlin and its surrounding state of Brandenburg are built on swampy ground that is mostly composed of sand, but also to refer to the constant material revision and historical erasure and becoming that has shaped all aspects of life in this city for a long time (Boyer 2001).

Although these stories about Berlin as a city under constant revision tell us a lot about the reconstruction of urban landscapes, they say remarkably little about the shifting sands themselves. Little do we learn from past scholarship in the social sciences about the ways in which non-human worlds have shaped the remaking of this city and its significance for nation building. As Esterhazy, the rabbit protagonist of a children's story by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Irene Dische, notices on his travels through Berlin: Berlin's newspapers (as well as the many books written about this city) are full with humans, buildings and above all, the Wall, but no rabbits (Enzensberger/Dische 1994).

Curiously, and largely unnoticed by many social scientists[36], Berlin also became a field site for ecological research in the post war period. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, via the story of a plant, sticky goosefoot, and other rubble ecologies, I show that not only did Berlin emerge as a city at the focal point of "world history" (often a Eurocentric

[35] For a discussion of this literature, see the following section in this introduction.
[36] There are certainly exceptions. Most recently scholars in the history of science, geography, environmental history and sociology have attended to the nature of the city in Berlin: for example, Jens Lachmund has traced the history of urban ecology in post war Berlin and other German cities (Lachmund 2005).

one), but also as a place of urban ecological knowledge production. Drawing on this history of urban ecology, the dissertation develops an analytic framework that goes beyond the usual stories about cities – stories that focus on buildings and people in the remaking of the nation.[37] Throughout the following chapters, I engage with different nature spaces in Berlin and its peripheries. In them, I trace how concepts of the city, culture, nature and difference come to life and function as key nodes for the construction of national meanings and racial inequalities. By exploring how people bring their attachments to nature and place as they migrate and how they reshape nature spaces in Berlin, I emphasize the cosmopolitan and transnational trajectories of nature in the city. From this view, we follow nature's "roots and routes" (Clifford 1997): Berlin's environments are remade within transnational encounters *and* the boundedness of national imaginings. In James Clifford's words, this is a way of moving beyond "gardens where the word culture derived its European meanings" (Clifford 1997: 3) and to instead study "the cultural processes that complicate, cross and cross-up national boundaries and communities" (ibid: 10) without assuming that these could ever exist entirely outside of a hegemonic national and capitalist order. In this sense, the "nature spaces" I revisit are deeply entangled with exclusionary practices and displacement of various populations, while creating possibilities for new forms of sociality. These range from democratic uses

[37] There are fraught histories that we inherit by engaging the ecology of the city. First of all, there has been a tradition in the social sciences, beginning with the Chicago school's ecological model of urban form in its analysis of poor and immigrant communities. However, as Hovorka (2008) points out, ecology functioned as metaphor for urban analysis here – whereas actual physical environments were hardly the focus of analysis. Secondly, there are fascism's legacies of constructing racial and class difference through natural metaphors and landscapes.

of public green space and seeking refuge from social divisions on one hand, to increasing isolation and bureaucratic surveillance on the other hand.

How does one write about the reconstruction of the nation while not imagining the city as simply human habitat? This question drives the following chapters' analytical ambition. Asking about what gets to count as nature in the city, and who comes to define and inhabit it, I hope to contribute to efforts that bridge a divide between nature and culture in the study of cities in particular and social theory more generally.

In recent years, scholars in geography, sociology, environmental history, eco-criticism and urban studies have begun to trouble distinctions between the "city" and the "countryside", between "nature" and "culture", and between the "urban" and the "natural" (Cronon 1996, Bennett/Teague 1999; Heynan et al. 2006, Haraway, Isenberg 2006; Price 2006; Wolch 1998). For example, approaches in environmental history have integrated a consideration of nature into their analysis of urbanization, by showing how cities draw natural resources from the countryside (Cronon 1991, 1996).[38] Environmental justice scholars and feminist political ecologists have traced how class, race and gender inequalities have shaped people's relation to urban environments and how these are renegotiated in struggles over food security, urban agriculture and other ecological resources in cities (Rocheleau/Ross 1995; Hovorka et al. 2009). Others have shown the "geographic specificity of pollution" (Di Chiro 2003: 215) – especially in regard to the disproportionate numbers of health hazards and unequal distribution of environmental

[38] Seen from the perspective of this scholarship, the study of the social dynamics of cities cannot be treated separate from environmental concerns. Or as Gray Brechin and William Cronon note, to understand the political impact of a city requires getting rid of the usual anthropocentric view and to seek those views that are edited out of the record by those who write it (Brechin 1999: xxii, Cronon 1991).

toxins and hazardous wastes in communities of color in the U.S. (Di Chiro 2003, Bennett 1999).

The following ethnography draws on this scholarship by emphasizing how conflicts over human relations to urban nature shape social inequalities and inform understandings of community and belonging. As I trace urban nature practices such as gardening and producing food in public spaces, I employ analytical strategies developed by geographers who have examined how cultural practices of relating to nature in the city that depart from a white norm are considered as "out of place" and thus come to serve as the basis for racialization of certain groups of immigrants and people of color (Elder/Woch/Emel 1998). [39] At the same time, I examine how practices of relating to nature come to function as sites of resistance to racialization and as articulation of a sense of belonging (Griffith et al. 2002, Jerolmack 2007).[40] While doing so I try to work against a use of an abstract notion of "cultural difference' as a category to explain human-nature relations different from a white norm.

[39] For Elder/Wolch/Emel (1998), this marks a shift from previous, but no longer legitimized, forms of 'beastialization', in which people of color are no longer directly compared with animals. Rather stories about the cruel treatment of animals– such as illegal hunting practices, the killing of animals for religious ritual or the eating of pets –tend to characterize people as 'beastly' and claim their inferiority as human beings.

[40] In his work on Turkish pigeon handlers in Berlin, Colin Jerolmack how animal practices and attachments to nature spaces in the city create a sense of connection both to place in Berlin as well as a sense of connection to home in Turkey, and thus as a base for ethnic identities among Turkish immigrants in Berlin (Jerolmack 2007). Jerolmack furthermore illustrates that ethnographies of race and ethnicity have been anthropocentric and rarely engaged with how "nature work" (876) plays a role in shaping ethnic identities – how it serves as the basis for racialization, but also become sites of articulation for immigrant identities and senses of belonging. While Jerolmack and others show how urban residents' constructions of nature are shaped by histories of racism and exclusion, they do run the risk of reifying cultural and ethnic difference by focusing on the ways in which animal practices and animal-human relations "vary" according to communities of people labeled in racial or ethnic terms.

Inspired by recent scholarship within geography, I argue that attending to nature in the city does not simply add another layer of analysis, but provides a crucial entry point for understanding urban relations. As Jennifer Wolch, Alice Hovorka and others have shown, attending to the everyday strategies of survival of both humans and non-humans, is key for developing an "ethics of caring" (Wolch 1998: 123), for figuring out how to relate to each other and create more livable urban environments.[41] These scholars contribute to re-naturalizing (Wolch 1998: 125) the city by focusing on human-non-human relations and by outlining the contours of a "transspecies urban theory" (Hovorka 2008; Wolch 2002) – an urban theory that takes non-humans seriously and attends to webs of difference *and* connection across lines of class, race, gender and species. Nature, in this view is not "out there" but part of cities – a "zoopolis" in which humans and non-humans have co-existed (however violently) all along. This "re-naturalized zoopolis" both re-enchants the city and brings back the memory of its horror.

On a more general level, my research draws on theoretical insights developed by anthropologists, historians and cultural geographers interested in the relationship between nature, landscape, place and power. First, rather than treating place as pre-given, as simple context in which to analyze cultural practice, scholars have shown that places are both productive *and* reflective of social relations and imaginations (Massey 1994,

[41] In her essay "Zoopolis", Jennifer Wolch argues that the ignorance towards the day to day survival strategies of both humans and non-humans in much urban theory and planning has affirmed existing class, gender, and North-South hierarchies – and has led to the destruction of livable urban environments (Wolch 1998: 124). For Wolch, animals are not simply "good to think with" as Levi-Strauss put it, but "indispensible to learning how to think in the first place, and how to relate to other people" (Wolch 1998: 123).

Basso/Feld 1996, Gupta/Ferguson 1997, de Certeau 1984, Harvey 1989). Scholars following this trend have emphasized how places become sites of struggle over social inequalities such as race, national identity or gender (Gregory 1998, Gregory/Sanjek 1994, Hartigan 1999, Brown 2005), or they have traced the ways in which rural landscapes[42] – and especially European landscapes, such as German forests and rivers, or the English countryside – have constituted key sites through which to imagine the nation (Baucom 1999, Wise/Wise 2005, Schama 1995).[43] This dissertation is in conversation with this work in so far that it emphasizes struggle and dialogue in particular landscapes – and thus how populations positioned at the margins of the nation experience *natural and rural landscapes* and construct their subjectivities through them.[44]

Secondly, my research draws on work in STS, environmental studies, anthropology and feminist theory that rethinks the nature/culture divide more generally. I understand nature not as given, but as a way of assembling political order (Latour 2004) – a process in which we cannot assume the actors to be only humans, and in which "all of the humans are not "us" however defined" (Haraway 1992: 67).[45] In this spirit, recent ethnographies have pushed beyond a framework of human impact *on* the environment

[42] The concept of landscape has a complex history. As Schama points out, the word entered the English language together with herring and bleached linen: "landschap, like its Germanic root, Landschaft, signified a unit of human occupation, indeed a jurisdiction", it thus referred to the human use and design of the landscape (Schama 1995: 10)

[43] See also Scott (1998) who traces how scientific forestry produced new forms of knowing and shaping nature in the German countryside. Scott argues that German forestry created a calculable, uniform and abstract forest – a vision and reality that ignored other, everyday social uses of the forest such as collecting food, hunting and gathering, as well as using the forest as a place of magic, worship and refuge (13).

[44] I see Williams (1973) as a partial exception to this literature since he shows how, during the development to agrarian and industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th century in England, literary imaginations of rurality erased the social lives and struggles of peasants and other rural residents.

[45] Latour's actor network analysis challenges social theory's confidence about who counts as social actor (Latour 2004). This opens up a sense of agency in which humans do not have all the power but "the world kicks back" (Barad 1998) and interferes with human schemes (Latour 2004, Mitchell 2002).

and on place, and have instead developed a multispecies framework (Tsing 2005, Kohn 2007, Raffles 2002, Kirksey/Helmreich 2010). This framework can be made useful for reconsidering the relationship between geographies and the work of racial ideology and thus for rethinking a social construction framework: it is not enough to ask how racial and colonial subjectivities are articulated through imaginations of nature and place, or how racial forces rework nature, bodies and the material environment.[46] Instead we need to ask about the ways in which naturecultures are produced and how place and nature-making practices are simultaneously practices of constructing national and racial subjectivities.

Engaging with these reformulations of nature, landscape, culture and race, I explore an "analytic of the cultural politics of race and nature" (Moore/Kosek/Pandian 2003: 2) – an analytic that refuses to assume race and nature as matters of common sense, but instead attends to the ways in which racial and national discourses mark human beings, non-humans and geographical territories with the force of their distinctions (ibid.).[47] My work contributes to such an analytic by asking the following question: in what ways do racial discourses and ideas about the nation and citizenship not only provide a "critical medium through which ideas of nature operate", but also how do racialized forces "rework the grounds of nature itself" (Moore/Kosek/Pandian

[46] Within these various formulations of nature, culture and race, the legacies of romanticism – that have also deeply shaped anthropology – reemerge.

[47] Pushing such an emergent analytic even further, Moore et al. suggest the term "landscapes of affect" to account for the ways in which race and nature stretch across different terrains (and beyond the boundary of the skin): they both fabricate and imagine inner selves, social bodies, and environmental milieus (Moore 2003: 31). These affective landscapes point to the links and emotional reverberations between different geographical imaginaries – e.g. the ways in which planning regimes that marginalize particular communities might be connected to racial fears (ibid.).

2003: 3)? The following chapters provide a reflection on the nature/culture divide that has been so central to definitions of race: they engage a notion of nature (and place), not as mere environment, as well as a notion of race as more than just a problem of social relations (Moore/Kosek/Pandian 2003: 2). By doing so, I follow Latour's call to move beyond the modernist imaginaries and institutions of mononaturalism and multiculturalism – and thus monolithic notions of singular nature, prevalent in political ecology, on one hand and anthropology's attention to the multiplicity of cultures (and thus to multiculturalism) on the other hand. [48] The challenge of any study of a politics of difference in urban nature-cultures is to combine approaches in science studies, and geography with postcolonial and critical race theory.

Ethnographies of Germany and Berlin

Exploring how different kinds of boundaries between Germany and its others, between city and countryside, between East and West as well as Europe and the "rest" are constructed through place, nature and landscape, my research creates a dialogue between disparate literatures on Germany and the city of Berlin. I draw on work of anthropologists, such as Daphne Berdahl, who have traced the physical and discursive life of postsocialism – its changing sense of place, its sounds and smells, and the ways in which people negotiate increasingly malleable *and* persisting boundaries, through an

[48] For Latour, mononaturalism and multiculturalism are both sides of the same coin: "culture" and multiculturalism is defined against a background of a unified and given nature; whereas mononaturalism risks reducing culture to mere representation (Latour 2004: 47). Thus nature becomes an unmarked category, while culture is marked. Whereas Latour's work has been generative in multiplying the actors in the politics of nature and in figuring out how to move beyond a monolithic notion of nature as a given reality, his work has fallen short of helping us to explore alternatives to multiculturalism's urge to think of cultural wholes, and continuing power relations in a postcolonial world.

attention to material things and practices in rural regions in former East Germany (Berdahl 1999, 2009). Similarly, Uli Linke provides an important analysis of how notions of the body and its placement in particular kinds of physical public spaces and natural landscapes continue to be haunted by racialized tropes of blood and the "pure" white body, as well as by concepts of the nation as a community of descent (Linke 1999a, b). My project also draws on work that addresses the politics of race, memory and historical representation in both Nazi and post WWII Germany (Campt 2004).

The city of Berlin has been intriguing within the field of German studies, since it is both part of what traditionally gets associated with the "West" as much as it is post-socialist and part of the EU. Above all, Berlin has become a globalizing city and a hub of migration from immigrants across the world – it is a node of encounter between postcolonial and postocialist worlds. In this sense it provides a rich site from which to explore the creation of ethnic, national and European boundaries. For the past two decades, Berliners have been juggling competing historical and cultural identifications and commitments. They are interpellated into debates of *Wessies* versus *Ossies* (West and East Germans), accusations of xenophobia against non-German immigrants, former socialist ideals of egalitarianism, and global capitalist dreams about a "New Europe". Yet many ethnographies of Berlin have singled out one set of these issues, for instance, by tracking continuing cold war divisions and identities in pre- and post-unification Berlin through analysis of intellectuals and media markets (Boyer 2001b), the Berlin police (Glaeser 2002), or changing notions of kinship, the state and nation (Borneman 1991). Moreover, recent research on the "New Berlin" has mainly focused on the metaphorical

construction of history and memory in built landscapes – such as studies of place-making and the politics of memory (Till 2005, Huyssen 1997), the symbolic reconstruction of Berlin as capital (Binder 2001), or the historical relationship between national identity and architecture (Ladd 1997). Only rarely is this scholarship in conversation with ethnographies of identity formation in immigrant and refugee communities or poor neighborhoods (Bendixsen 2005, Çağlar 1995, Häusermann 2002, Knecht 1999, Mandel 1996, 2008, Pecoud 2002, Soysal 2001) – and thus communities that are not part of grand narratives about Berlin as a city under constant revision. In order to address the complexities of multiple borders – old and new – and the ways people come to inhabit various margins of the city, the nation and of Europe, my approach goes beyond an analysis of a single immigrant community, or the construction of white German spaces (Linke 1999a, b), in which histories of immigrants remain invisible. It is this complexity of heterogeneous borders and histories that constitute not only the "New Berlin", but also the "New Europe".

Exploring these heterogeneous histories, requires asking how both people, non-humans and environments deviate from homogenous conceptions of nationhood through the creation of cross-cultural and transnational connections (Çağlar 2001, Pratt Ewing 2006),[49] as well as including rural landscapes in one's analysis and looking beyond

[49] In her critique of current debates on ghettos in Berlin, Ayşe Çağlar argues that the metaphor of the ghetto limits the visibility of immigrants' spaces to ethnic neighborhoods and inscribes ethnic and racial difference onto urban space (Çağlar 2001: 606). Although these discourses tend to emphasize Turkish immigrants' homeland ties as proof of their inadequate commitment to German society, they ignore the often multilocal ties among Turks – such as the Kurdish, Islamic and Alevi networks that criss-cross Europe and link it to Turkey, or the recent trends in popular cultures among second and third-generation

the borders of the city. By doing so, my research, fills a gap in recent research on the "New Berlin" that has mainly focused on national identity, place-making and the politics of memory in Berlin's built environment (Till 2005, Ladd 1997). Therefore, the following chapters not only track migrant strategies that challenge official notions of immigrant neighborhoods as "ghettos" (Çağlar 2001), or analyze the making of white public spaces through practices of leisure and consumption in urban parks (Linke 1999a). They also trace racial geographies as they come into being in struggles over nature spaces – and thus how both *perceptions of place and nature as well as their very materiality* are structured by racial inequalities and a sense of national belonging.[50] The following case studies provide an alternative history that goes beyond the boundaries of buildings, the nation, and the city.

A Note on Methods

This dissertation does not follow the usual rules of ethnography to immerse oneself and study one particular community or bounded object. In the past two decades, the emergence of "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1995) has allowed anthropologists to follow a particular group or practice across different ethnographic sites – sometimes stretching across continents and centuries. And although this dissertation is situated in several communities and locations in Berlin, it is more than "multi-sited". Instead, it

German Turks that mix elements from Black, Asian and world pop music styles, or the multiple media networks that aim at Turkish immigrants in Germany and across Europe.

[50] Here, I draw on a body of scholarship in environmental history that tracks continuities and changes in landscape planning and environmental policy and their significance for reconstructing the nation after the war (Zeller/Lekan 2005; Lekan 2004; Blackbourn 2006; Brüggemeier 2005). Yet I push this scholarship further by paying attention to how cultural imaginaries of nature, the nation and the city have shaped the management of urban nature, as well as by showing that nature does not always work to solidify the nation but also to create other possibilities.

tracks the cultural politics of race, nation and nature across different sites and communities. Throughout, I am committed to ethnographic curiosity for particular social worlds and detailed description while piling up stories that, at first glance, might not seem to "fit." Yet I argue these multiple stories are necessary to understand the different worlds of connection and disconnection at stake in the remaking of the nation through "urban natures".

In the following chapters, we therefore encounter various kinds of actors: plants, botanists, gardeners, barbecuers, food vendors, fire guards, antelopes, lions, crows, rabbits, tourists, bunker junkies, refugees and foresters. Furthermore, while at first sight, the chapters engage with carefully landscaped nature, they move through different places while following the roots and routes of the remaking of nature, race and space in Berlin: rubble spaces, gardens, geçekondu, courtyards, parks, bunkers, Indian villages, forests and refugee camps. With this rhizomatic practice, fieldwork becomes less a matter of dwelling in one place than a series of encounters, movements and travels (Clifford 1997). Hence, the method is "not to blur but to juxtapose, distinct forms of evocation and analysis" (Clifford 1997: 12), and thereby to shed light on the heterogeneity of cosmopolitan natureculture relationships.

As Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway have pointed out, the goal is not to pose nature as analytical unit or goal of action, but to look for co-evolution and co-constitution - "without stripping the stories of its brutalities as well as multiform beauties" (Haraway 2003: 27). Similarly, urban theorists such as AbdouMaliq Simone have called attention to the disparate social worlds that emerge alongside urban

institutions – the "emotional fields" that people build in the city to be connected and create a sense of physical connection to place (Simone 2004: 12).[51]

Following these approaches of juxtaposing and generating multiple stories, I try to account for the fact that cities are full of wonders. If we look closely across different domains, we'll find practices that are much more interesting and strange than the homogenous entities of particular ethnic communities, systems of kinship, formal economies or institutions.

Tracing these multiple kinds of stories, I do not retain a hygienic distance to them in order to critique different kinds of failures of nationalism and racism in nature narratives. Instead, I too get interpellated by these stories and try to create connections by showing how they can teach us something important about the co-constitution of humans and their environments in nation building projects as well as their transgression. This way of storytelling is then perhaps less a "method" than a strategy, and it is less an aesthetic choice than a political one: it's a way of tracing and creating connections, creating alliances across different orders and across "irreducible difference" (Haraway 2003: 49) – a way of reading stories against their grain, instead of discarding certain stories as (ideologically) inappropriate (Haraway 2003).

In it all, my own identities as fieldworker returning "home" – not *from* the field but *to* the field – as German, as white woman, as researcher from California, or as grandchild of refugees of war, are not fixed, but come to matter differently in various

[51] Simone applies Mbembe's account of mobile forms of sovereignty to an analysis of urban life here (Simone 2010): he analyses urban practices as "a patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights to rule." Describing intertwined agendas, infrastructures, enclaves and individual ways of making a livelihood, he tracks how they are perceived by urban inhabitants in African and Southeast Asian cities today (Simone 2010: 306)

encounters, and in my writing about them. Throughout this dissertation, I try to locate these positionings as much as possible and be reflective about the blind spots and limits they create.

Mapping the Terrain

Chapter 1, ***Rubble Ecologies***, sets up the historical framework for the chapters to come. It focuses on a historical moment of intensification in which nature became visible as an urban practice: the destroyed city after fascism. When large parts of Berlin's built environment were destroyed after the war, so called ruderal plants – plants growing in the rubble – flourished in the city and prompted botanists in West Berlin – surrounded by the Berlin Wall and cut off from the surrounding countryside – to study plant migration in the city. Tracing the history of rubble plants, this chapter illustrates how they inspired a way of seeing nature in the city that both spoke to and departed from cultural imaginaries of bounded nature and the nation in post-war Berlin. Chronicling the dispersal, associations and succession of non-native plant associations, we can see the myriad transnational connections and movements that composed a central element of the ecology of the post war city.

The perspective of "rubble ecologies" provides a mode of attention that will guide my analysis in the subsequent chapters: as I follow contemporary efforts to reshape nature and green spaces in the city and its edges, the notion of rubble ecologies incites me to go beyond the limits of bounded nature spaces and the city. Thus, I attend to practices and connections that emerge alongside bounded locales and ecologies, as

well as strategies of survival in the cracks of official economies, state policies and planned use of urban nature.

Chapter 2, ***On Gardens and Ghettos*****,** moves from the ruins of war to the gardens of today's Berlin. Taking an ethnographic look at current popular forms of experiencing and cultivating urban nature in Berlin, I draw on my fieldwork in two sites: 1. participant observation and interviews with nature lovers, tour guides and organizers during Berlin's "urban nature day" and 2. interviews with Turkish immigrants and Germans who participate in so called "multicultural gardens", as well as owners of allotment gardens and immigrants who secretly cultivate garden plots. Analyzing my observations and interviews, I situate emerging practices of cultivating urban gardens in a historical context and a current moment in which immigrants are seen as being out of place. Attending to garden stories, I show how different forms of care for urban nature provide heterogeneous tools for creating a sense of belonging to place, as well as for negotiating existing ideas about urban citizenship and Europeanness. I argue that while people often hope to wall out history and social conflict through care for urban nature, history keeps creeping back into them. Thus, there is no single story to be told about gardens - gardening practices don't always have the anticipated effects. Instead, as Shiho Satsuka points out, "nature is not just a unifying tool for building nation states, but also has potential for opening up other points of view" (Satsuka 2004: 19).

The next two chapters focus on two city parks that have recently become sites of cross-cultural dialogue, as well as controversy over the boundaries of multiculturalism and the protection of nature in Berlin. In the last few years, these two parks, the

Tiergarten and the Preussen-Park, have both been at the center of media and city government debates over "wild barbecuing" by Turkish and Southeast-Asian immigrants. Using a comparative method, I consider local representations of "wild barbecuing" by Turkish and Southeast Asian immigrants and ask how these representations are entangled with stereotypes about specific immigrant communities, and thus with different histories of immigration to socialist East Berlin (Vietnamese immigrants), as well as to West Berlin (in the case of Turkish and Thai immigrants) during the city's division (Bui 2001, Mandel 2008). At the same time, both these chapters attend to the unexpected social worlds that bubble up in green spaces of the city: in them, I investigate immigrant attachments to place and nature amid their respective experiences of displacement and migration and ask how these attachments negotiate official understandings of civic participation and uses of green space as a public resource.

Chapter 3, *The Thai Park*, traces the (informal) food economies of a park: it tracks practices of economic collaboration and exchange among Southeast Asians who prepare and sell food at a small park, the so called "Thai Park", in former West Berlin. In a current political climate of austerity, unemployment, and precarious labor, the Thai park's cooks and gamblers follow a recipe on how to make a living in difficult times that diverges from and is not easily recognizable within neo-liberal state formulas on how to live frugally on unemployment. Transcending intended and planned economies of green space and public welfare, the Thai park's informal economies generate forms of social life that manage to circumvent local notions of urban order and rework uneven global forces by performing ethnicity and place and thus creating a sense of "Thai space".

In contrast to the Thai Park, Turkish immigrants' "wild barbecuing" has become the object of much policing in recent years. **Chapter 4,** ***Barbecue Area***, therefore explores the question why barbecuing has become a charismatic object of controversy and control, animating both anxiety and pleasure throughout Berlin – and as far as Istanbul. Tracing media and public officials' responses to the "savage practice" of barbecuing in Berlin's parks, I first analyze how park and city officials' ideas about the "appropriate uses" of urban parks, are entangled with stereotypes about Turkish immigrants, with ideas about bodies and practices "out of place", with current debates about ghettoization and integration in Berlin, as well as with notions of what constitutes a European, modern city and its proper urban citizens. Secondly, I explore immigrants' and local environmentalists' strategies of inhabiting and remaking "green space". Here, I ask about the ways in which barbecuing creates a sense of place in the city that is connected to experiences of migration, displacement and marginalization. In light of these different meanings, I argue that barbecuing is less an activity with deep cultural meanings, than a ritual that functions as a busy intersection (see Rosaldo 1993: 17) – a ritual that exposes competing notions of citizenship and conflicting paradigms of inscribing and negotiating difference via contemporary urban public landscapes throughout Europe.

Whereas the previous chapters focus on efforts to create a sense of belonging and home through nature spaces, the next two chapters highlight the "unhomeliness" of nature. Both these chapters turn their attention to a post-unification era nature park at Berlin's edges – the March Oder Park – in order to explore how racial inequalities and

strategies of managing marginalization manifest themselves differently in the former socialist countryside. Located in a region that is struck by high unemployment and depopulation, this park has been reconfigured as an eco-tourist destination and has also become the home for refugees from Africa who find themselves living in isolated part government-, part private-run shelters in the forest.

Chapter 5, ***The Unheimlich,*** addresses the unhomely landscapes that emerge out of different forms of postcolonial and postsocialist displacement. The chapter first situates the park within a historical framework of changing relationships between Berlin and its countryside, the transformation – and militarization – of the rural East German landscape during the Cold War, and the present emergence of new economic and racialized peripheries in Europe. At the same time, the chapter draws on interviews and participant observation with various actors who live and work in the March Oder park. Tracking East German, tourist, and African refugee views on the landscape, I attend to how people's respective experience of postcolonial displacement and postsocialist transition shapes their sense of the landscape as "unheimlich" (unhomely) and informs oppositional identities at the edges of Berlin.

Finally, **Chapter 6,** ***(Re)Wilding***, traces a shifting politics of nation and race at work in the making of the "East" and the March Oder region as a space of nature and "wildness". More specifically, I attend to the trope of wildness and what I call "(re)wilding" – a practice of re-making and making up place: 1. making or becoming "close-to-nature" or "natural"; 2. making or becoming out of bounds, and 3. making and becoming "alien". Following these (re)wilding practices, I ask how attempts to make

nature matter in times of collapse and economic crisis articulate with new practices of exclusion, but also with efforts to challenge these. Engaging with several ethnographic vignettes, I track "(re)wilding" practices across different sites and actors: the park and the history of German efforts to create national unity in nature; local re-enactments of the East as a space of otherness and the "wild"; East German conceptions of wild capitalism and forests spun out of control; and refugee narratives about racialized exclusions and lives gone off track. As I follow these rewilding practices, things don't turn out to be what we would expect them to be: a forest stops "making sense", a refugee home becomes an ostrich farm, train trips go nowhere, a nature park turns into "the bush", and a region in the East of Berlin becomes the "Wild East" – an odd safari wilderness where cowboys, Indians, migrants and adventurers meet. Together with the other chapters, these stories offer us glimpses of a shifting "ecology of nationhood" (Comaroff 2001): through them, we see how the nation gets remade through "wilderness" and nature, and how some human and non-human bodies – people, plants, animals, landscapes and "things" – are situated out of place, and outside of the national body.

Chapter 1

Rubble Ecologies

Sticky goosefoot, or *Chenopodium botrys L.,* is a yellow-green flowering, annual plant.[52] Covered with sticky, glandular hairs, the plant grows between ten to eighteen centimeters high. It has a strong aromatic scent and can be used for flavoring in cooking. Sticky goosefoot is a temperature dependent plant that favors a Mediterranean or Sub-Mediterrannean climate with warm summers. It originated in southern Eurasia and the Mediterranean and usually grows in so called "ruderal" spaces – on sandy and stony soils at the side of riverbanks, beneath boulders and talus slopes, in wine growing areas, as well as on waste (Sukopp 1998: 9). At the beginning of the 16th century, the plant was imported from Constantinople and cultivated in gardens throughout Europe – mainly for use in controlling moths and for medicinal purposes.[53] In the course of the 19th century, with increasing industrialization, urbanization, and the expansion of transport routes, sandy and gravelly spaces proliferated throughout urban centers, allowing sticky goosefoot to spread beyond cultivated areas and becoming their secondary habitats in many warmer regions in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East.[54] In Southern Europe,

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[52] Also commonly called Jerusalem oak, feathered geranium or Ambrosia, not to be mixed up with the scientific name *Ambrosia artemisiifolia L.,* a ragweed that causes hay fever.

[53] Interview, Sukopp, August 2009. Sticky goosefoot has pharmacologically active elements and is anti-asthmatic and anti-catarrhic. In the past, it has been used against headaches and is mentioned in homeopathic literature (Sukopp 1971: 7). In the Netherlands the plant was cultivated into a cultivar called "Green Magic" and has a delicious nutty flavor. For its uses in Greek mythology, as well as South America, see Small (2006: 300).

[54] Today, sticky goosefoot thus grows in many areas throughout the world –from rubble spaces alongside newly built roads in Afghanistan, to sandy and stony places at roadsides, riverbeds, cultivated land, and between sea level and 7000 feet high mountains, as well as Canada, among boulders and waterless riverbeds and fallow lands in Russia, in rivulets and mountain creeks in Greece, in swamp and ruderal

sticky goosefoot also grew to be an unwanted "weed" in vineyards.[55] In addition, the plants' seeds entered central European cities via trade and transportation – through package material from goods from Southern Europe and the Middle East (Müller 1950; Sukopp 1971). Yet due to the colder climate, the plant was only able to grow sporadically north of the Alps. Thus, today, this species can only be found in larger groups in a very few locations with warm summers – such as industrial sites in the upper Rhine floodplain, or on burning spoil and mining heaps in Lille in the Ruhr area (Sukopp 1998, 1971).[56]

Curiously, sticky goosefoot has a long history in chilly Berlin. In the years after World War II, large rubble spaces dotted Berlin's heavily bombed center. With their dry and sandy soil, the blasted landscapes of the war provided a habitat for sticky goosefoot – and other "non-native" plants – to flourish throughout the city for the first time. The plant's steady presence posed a riddle to West Berlin botanists and prompted them – surrounded by the Berlin Wall and cut off from the surrounding countryside – to study plant migration and the ecology of so called "ruderal plants" in the city.

The term "ruderal" comes from *rudus*, which is the Latin term for rubble; it is a common botanic term. Hence, the term is specifically used for plant species that grow spontaneously in gravelly and sandy spaces but also in ruined, abandoned or "disturbed" human/non-human landscapes: alongside train tracks, roads, industrial sites, or waste disposal areas. Ruderal plants grow independently of *mycorrhizae* and are thus only

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spaces in Hungary, as well as in fallow grounds and rubble in Italy, and on whine hills and in gardens with sandy and dry soil in Spain, as well as in Iran, Turkey and Italy" (Sukopp 1971).

[55] Interview Sukopp 2009.

[56] The species has also been "naturalized" in South and North Africa, as well as North and South America and Australia.

"symbiotic" with the rubble and "human" landscape. Even more, they depend on an "edge effect" and the juxtaposition of contrasting environments in one ecosystem.

When botanists studied the ruderal plants in Berlin's rubble after the war, they developed a way of seeing "nature" in the city that both spoke to and departed from postwar cultural imaginaries about the city, about nature and the nation. At the same time, the emergence of urban plants as a scientific object of study triggered the proliferation of the field of "urban ecology" and impacted environmental policies in a traumatically reeling city. This chapter traces the unexpected history of "ruderal" or "rubble ecologies" and a mode of appreciation for the heterogeneity and contingency of urban nature that emerged out of this history.

What follows is both a story of ruination and wonder. The history of sticky goosefoot is tied to both the history of Berlin and a larger history of urbanization, migration, trade, and climate change throughout Europe – and it is linked with the catastrophe wrought by fascism in the 20th century. After the war, city planners and landscape architects were busy reconstructing the nation by transforming the built environment and greening over the traces of war.[57] In this context, rubble plants were deeply ambivalent indicators for a city coming back to life. Yet Berlin's historical and political situation – the division of the city and the persistent presence of huge areas of

[57] Much scholarship on postwar Germany has focused on the role of architecture and city planning for re-imagining the post-fascist nation. At the same time, there is a rich body of scholarship in environmental history that tracks continuities and changes in landscape planning and environmental policy and their significance for reconstructing the nation after the war (e.g. Brüggemeier at al. 2005; Lekan 2004; Zeller 2005). In this context, not much attention has been paid to how cultural imaginaries of nature, the nation and the city shaped the management of urban nature. In this chapter, I will argue that following the history of rubble plants provides glimpses of a different story that goes beyond the boundaries of buildings, the nation and the city.

devastation in Berlin's center – ironically offered an opportunity for a different mapping of the city. Ruderal plants thriving in the bombed city center stood in contrast to both Nazi and post-war desires of spatial ordering because they were unexpected newcomers and unsettled ideas about communities in place. Tracing these ruderal ecologies botanists developed an eye for the contingent histories and global connections that shape a landscape – without erasing the traces of violence against humans and non-humans inherited in these landscapes. Thus, following the history of sticky goosefoot provides glimpses of a more "weedy" history of Berlin – a history that unsettles the boundaries of the nation and a postwar European history that focuses on humans.

Like other species of urban plants[58], sticky goosefoot indicates changes in material and social environments – and their unintended consequences. Not unlike matsutake mushrooms, sticky goosefoot, point our attention to "unintended consequences of human action—and thus also to open-ended landscape histories" (Tsing 2010: 1). Such open-ended landscape histories go beyond national histories of progress and decline. And they can contribute to more complex understandings of community and the possibilities and risks of current urban naturecultures. Moreover, sticky goosefoot lures us into a world of "rubble ecologies" – a world that is abundant in surprises and nightmares.

[58] In fact, tracing its story, sticky goosefoot turns out to be something like a bio-indicator – for the city's history and trade, the vast scale of urban destruction after the war, and the closely connected effects on the city's ecology, including changes in soil, temperature increases and the urban climate. Like sticky goosefoot, lichen on tree bark has been an object of study in urban ecology. Lichen growth differs in response to air pollution. A lichen free zone in city centers is usually followed by zones where growth of lichen increases – usually towards the edges of a city. Thus in cities such as Berlin and Leipzig, lichen growth has served as a way to map and document changes of air quality across time (Sukopp 1998: 10).

A Natural History of Destruction

The frenzy of military technology of World War Two brought a nightmare of destruction upon many cities across the globe. For their part, Nazi Germans fought a war on all sides: in the East, the West and against Jews, and everyone who did not fit into their ideology of racial purity and attempt to take over the world. In an effort to exterminate all its enemies from cities, the fascist regime segregated and killed in ghettos and created "cities of death" (Shaw 2006: 52) in the extermination camps – often located in the countryside or the outskirts of cities. Throughout the war, area bombing against civilian populations became yet another common tool of urban destruction. The idea of bombing cities from the air did not originate in this moment, but drew on techniques already tried out by the British and German military in World War I (Diefendorf 1993: 4, Lindqvist 2001).[59] In 1939, after Japan had staged attacks on Chinese cities two years earlier, Germany began with aerial bombings of Warsaw, as well as London, Rotterdam and Coventry in 1940 (Dower 1986: 39). As part of Hitler's plan for the "Germanization" of the East, a large part of the Jewish population in Warsaw and many other European cities were murdered and deported to concentration camps; Warsaw was razed to the ground in the process. By 1942, as genocide was rampant across Europe, the "Allies" radically changed their initial condemnation of aerial bombings and responded with air raids indiscriminately bombing Japanese and German cities, sending firestorms

[59] In the 1920s, air power theorists and military strategists such as Billy Mitchell in the US and Guilio Douhet in Italy promoted bombing as a future technique to destroy the "nerve centers" of the urban industrial societies of their enemies (Diefendorf 1993: 5).

through Dresden, Berlin and Tokyo, and dropping atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[60]

Between 1943 and 1945, many German cities turned into rubble during thousands of air raids. Like the German bombings in Poland, the Allied bombings in Germany were aimed at the train and road network, the civilian population and its "morale", and later increasingly at industrial production facilities in an effort to bring the Nazi war machinery to a final halt (Orlow 1999: 200). In his book, *A Natural History of Destruction*, W.G. Sebald describes the trauma of death, genocide and destruction inscribed into cityscapes all over Germany during and after the war. Rather than tell an abstract history of destruction, and thus follow "a tendency to make the real horrors of the time disappear in abstraction" (Sebald 2004: 50) – a prevalent tendency after the war – Sebald traces the outlines of a "natural history of destruction". In detail, he describes the management and technology of the bombs dropped on German cities, and the multispecies lives and deaths that followed them: the walls of searchlights, the roars of aircrafts, the hollow thuds of bombs, pressure waves breaking window glasses in houses miles away form the detonation, doors tearing from their frames, a sea of flames and trails of firestorms raging through streets, the air reaching the force of a hurricane, ripping out trees by their roots, and driving "human beings before it like living torches" (Sebald 2004: 27). Housing structures collapse, sewage lines burst, the asphalt on the streets melts, people's bodies are torn and burnt. During one of the many bombings in Berlin, the water in the canals caught fire, smoke rose to eight thousand meters – and

[60] As Sebald points out, the origins for the decision of area bombing on the part of the Allies clearly also lay in their interest to regain their imperial power in Europe, Africa and Asia (Sebald 2004: 15).

people died and went mad from what they saw. In the Berlin zoo – like many other European zoos, imagined as a sign of imperial power and an imitation of paradise – a third of the animals died – deer and monkeys escaped from the zoo, birds flew away through broken glass roofs, and there were rumors of lions loose on the prowl (Sebald 2004: 91, 92)[61] – an exodus of human and non-human refugees throughout a city twisted in rubble. In the end, as Sebald tells us, the rats and "huge and iridescent green flies, such as had never been seen before" move into the city – the "repulsive fauna of the rubble" (Sebald 2004: 35).

When the bombings and battles ceased and the fascist regime was put to a halt, mountains of rubble from bombed buildings became an integral element of the urban landscape in many German cities. In fact, cities became almost synonymous with rubble. As Sebald, remembers, "few things were so clearly linked in my mind with the word city as mounds of rubble" (74). Yet the inferno of death and fire, and the "necropolis" that came with it, would only be remembered, as Sebald shows us, in order to encourage the will for reconstruction. That the smell of decay that lay over the city resembled the air emanating from the basements of Warsaw just a few years earlier, nobody seemed to notice.

City of Rubble

As the capital of Germany, Berlin was heavily bombed, especially between 1943 and 1945. Thousands of people died during the bombings – civilians and soldiers on the

[61] Not only the zoo, but also the Berlin Botanical Garden and Museum were largely destroyed – and with it, large collections of Germany's colonial botany (Zepernick 2002, Lack 2002).

ground, in the air and on all sides of the war (Diefendorf 1993: 16/17).[62] Toward the end of the war, Berlin lay in rubble. Almost fifty percent of the built environment had been destroyed,[63] including much of the (above ground) train system, as well as the road and electricity network and parts of the sewage system. Many people lived in make shift shelters in the rubble or in temporarily set up refugee housing by the occupying Allies.[64] Trees in parks and urban woodlands had burnt down during the bombings – the ones that remained were later cut down for use as firewood during the following winters because of the shortage coal. Much of the Tiergarten, Berlin's largest park, overgrown with dense woodlands before the war, had thus turned into an odd landscape of charred tree stumps and logged down trees. Because food was scarce as well, many Berliners started to grow vegetables – such as potatoes – in large open spaces all over the city – and especially in the Tiergarten and other parks. Berliners also became savvy plant experts, participating in community events like "*Aktion Wildgemüse*" ("action wild vegetables")[65], and sorting out edible plants, like dandelions, chickweed – and perhaps also sticky goosefoot – growing in the rubble (Botting 2005: 171). At the same time, images of occupied Berlin as feral city abound.

> "Wild boar "ravaged" the city's outskirts in herds fifty strong, and were avidly hunted by hungry civilians with bows and arrows or by bored GI's with burpguns. Likewise, British Tommies volunteered to help Berliners (now

[62] Between 1940 and 1945, hundreds of air raids were conducted over Berlin. In 1943, the US military built "German Village" and "Japanese Village" in Utah, in preparation of the following air raids against Berlin and Tokyo and other Japanese cities – as well as in preparation for the Cold War and the demonstration of the Western Allies' military power vis a vis Russia (Davis 2002).
[63] In an attempt to "order" the rubble, numbers of its volumes abound, see e.g. Diefendorf (1993), or Till (2005) on estimates of 75 million cubic meters of rubble.
[64] In Berlin, like in other German cities, many lived in the bombed ruins of houses amid the rubble, and other makeshift shelters such as abandoned military barracks, or so called Quonset (or Nissen) huts supplied by the Allies (Diefendorf 1993: 131).
[65] Also, in German, the synonym for weeds.

> subsisting on less than 1000 calories a day) track the three species of starving deer that had taken refuge in the Spandau and the Köpenick forests. Hard on the heels of the deer were their ancient predators. Signs were hastily posted on the autobahn: BEWARE OF WOLVES!" (Davis 2002: 384).

Amid these images of Berlin "gone wild", another "wild" and rampant sentiment unfolded: numbness. As Sebald points out, in the destroyed cities after the war, there was a kind of "taboo, like a shameful family secret", "a tacit agreement, equally binding on everyone, that the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself in was not to be described." (2004: 10).[66] Sebald describes the social and natural life in the rubble of the ravaged cities, as well as the deadening and numbness of the senses after fascism – a sense of reconstruction that, instead of pausing to consider the catastrophes fascism brought about, seeks to "move on" as quickly as possible. This sense is illustrated in many scenes – for example in Alexander Kluge's story about Frau Schrader, a woman employed at a cinema, who sets out to clear the rubble immediately after the air raid, amid death and destruction, hoping "to clear the rubble away before the two o'clock matinee" (Kluge cited in Sebald 2004: 41). Then there are scenes of apathy and anesthesia amidst a population living in ruins – people walking through the streets as if nothing had happened and the city had always looked like that – and the aimless wandering of millions of homeless people seeking shelter in the ruins reaching up several floors behind burnt out facades (Sebald 2004: 35-37, 47).

This sense of towering numbness already found its correlate during the war, when Nazi officials had created plans for reconstructing Germany's capital once the war

[66] Following this sensibility, many war historians, with a few exceptions of literary accounts, described the events in a detached mode, "curiously untouched by the subject of their research" (Sebald 2004: 11), creating a sanitized knowledge of human suffering amid the rubble cities.

would be over. After its destruction, they imagined to revitalize the urban landscape – and by extension, the nation – through nature.[67] Hitler and other Nazi officials had despised Berlin because of its crowded working class tenements, its multi-ethnic communities and leftist political tradition. Within fascist environmental discourse, Germans' alienation from nature was a result of urbanization and the dense living conditions of multistory working class apartment buildings (the "*Mietskasernen*") a manifestation of a "Jewish spirit" (Davis 2002: 383). Furthermore, Nazi racism declared war not only against humans but also against undesired forms of nature – "justifying racist ideologies as a form of ecology, a doctrine of blood and soil" (Ackerman 2007). In this context, landscaping became a tool of ethnic cleansing.[68] Thus in fact, some "Nazi ideologues actually welcomed the thousand bomber raids and firestorms as a ritual cleansing of the "Jewish influence" of big city life and the beginning of a mystical regeneration of Aryan unity with nature" (Davis 2002: 383).[69] Others, like Albert Speer, Hitler's key architect in Berlin, were fascinated by ruins and, in their imperial nostalgia, envisioned them as monuments to the greatness of the German empire (Diefendorf

[67] Before the bombings, Speer and other Hitler architects also created elaborate plans for rebuilding Berlin into what they imagined to be the "world capital" of "Germania" and ridding it from its current "foreign" and communist elements. Architects and engineers used stones and tiles manufactured in concentration camps such as Sachsenhausen, North East of Berlin, to rebuild the Nazi city (Till 2005: 41).

[68] See Wolschke-Bulmahn (2005) on the central role of landscaping discourses and gardening ideals in Nazi "Germanization" efforts and the expulsion and extermination of Jews and Poles; for a discussion of divergences in the blood and soil ideology, see Bassin (2005).

[69] From this perspective, industrialization and urbanization led to a deteriorization of the countryside and a disfigurement and erosion of Germany's "national character" (Lekan 2004: 4). Landscape preservationist movements, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, therefore articulated a cultural politics in which the nation was imagined through "natural landscapes". This legacy of imagining the nation through nature continued throughout different phases of German histories as Germans reinvented the border of its political community as "natural": in the context of authoritarian constitutional monarchy (during the "Second Empire"), parliamentary democracy (the Weimar Republic) and racist dictatorship (Nazism) (Lekan 2004: 5). Yet as Lekan points out, this ethno-racialist discourse of an embattled "homeland" (Heimat) always existed side by side with more democratic and pluralist understandings (Lekan 2004: 6).

1993: 3).[70] Thus, after the first bombings in 1943, many officials already proposed to "regenerate" the urban landscape by clearing the rubble and planting trees. These greened cities with forests and gardens would replace the crowded and "decadent Jewish metropolis" and reestablish a new rootedness to the land (ibid.).

Still during the war, after each bombing raid, the rubble – and thus any signs of defeat – was quickly cleared from the streets to be piled up in heaps all over the city (often by forced labor) – until the bombings became so frequent and it was impossible to catch up with the destruction (Diefendorf 1993: xvi). As the defeat of the Nazi regime came within closer reach, plans for Germany's reconstruction proliferated among the occupying Allies. For example, the Morgenthau Plan developed by the US Secretary of the Treasury in fall 1944, envisioned the "pastoralization" of the entire country in order to prevent Germany to gain industrial power again and starting another war (Orlow 1999: 208, Sebald 2004: 40). Likewise, in Berlin and many other cities, initial voices cast doubts whether it was going to be possible, or whether it would be worth it, to reconstruct the destroyed cities. Some suggested to build new cities underground to protect them from future wars (Diefendorf 1993: 11). Others thought that Berlin in particular could never be reconstructed because it was so badly damaged and instead, it should be preserved as a reminder of the insanity of Prussian militarism and the Nazi regime (Tadder cited in Ladd 1997: 174). And again others, suggested to green the ruins with trees and meadows and to rebuild cities in the countryside (Schildt 2002: 145).

[70] Speer expressed his imperial "romance with ruins" (Diefendorf 1993: 4) in his memoirs, writing about the value of ruins, in which the traces of empire would still be recognizable: "after generations of neglect, overgrown with ivy, its columns fallen, the walls crumbling here and there, but the outlines still recognizable" (Speer in Diefendorf 1993: 4).

Reconstructing the City, Nature and the Nation

Despite all these considerations, soon after the war and the initial political reordering of Germany, plans for "pastoralizing" Germany were abandoned because American and British officials thought it would create "planned chaos" and disrupt the international economic system and the economic power of the West (Orlow 1999: 208). [71] In 1947, the Marshall Plan for the economic recovery and political reconstruction of Western Europe was put into practice. Reconstruction efforts thus began in the immediate years after the war, and in many cities, the rubble and its removal were at their center. And with it, the management of "urban nature" became key to a national discourse of reconstruction.

During this time, the city of Berlin, like the rest of Germany, was divided into four sectors. The three sectors of the "Western allies" (French, American and British) formed West Berlin and the Soviet sector formed East Berlin. With growing tensions between the Western Allies and the Soviet government, and the rise of the Cold War, West Berlin was increasingly cut off from the surrounding Soviet controlled countryside. Ultimately, the two German states of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were founded in 1949 and traffic between East and West Berlin was limited and highly regulated. [72] Thus, Berlin's border status would complicate

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[71] In particular, U.S. officials argued that if put into practice, the Morgenthau Plan would have given Russia "continental hegemony" (Orlow 1999: 208).

[72] When tensions rose between the allies and the Western allied zones imposed currency reform across West Germany and also in West Berlin in 1948, the Soviet government introduced a blockade of all access routes to West Berlin. In the following years, during what became known as one of the first major international conflicts of the Cold War – the "Berlin airlift" – French, British and American allies flew hundreds of planes into Berlin to provide food and other supplies as all the land routes were cut off. The aim was to enable "freedom" for Berlin and to further accelerate Germany's recovery, seen as central to American security and an integral part of an orderly and soon to be "prospering" Europe (Orlow 1999). Ultimately, the two German states of the federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were founded in 1949, which led to further tensions between the Western and Soviet powers.

"reconstruction" and the clearance of the rubble took much longer than in other German cities.

Not unlike during the Nazi regime, the rubble was an eye-sore for public officials and urban planners after the war. Yet the destruction of the city also provided an opportunity to redesign the city – and to erase traces of Nazism as well as "open up" what many considered to be too densely built cities before the war.[73] Using biological metaphors of (pre-) Nazi urban planning, the goal for many architects and planners was thus to create more "organic" and "healthy" cities that would have a low density and could accommodate increasing traffic and transportation. From these perspectives, the city's body was analogous to the human body: e.g. the urban traffic system resembled the human cardiovascular system. As Karen Till points out, as soon as 1947, "fears of the past were encoded in competing urban-planning designs for a "new world class city" that demonstrated the 'inner necessity after [..] Auschwitz and Stalingrad, to completely redefine Berlin" (Till 2005: 41). Not unlike Frau Schrader, setting out to clear the rubble before the two o' clock matinee, planners (in agreement with the occupying powers) thus tried to erase the traces of the war as quickly as possible. Almost immediately after the war, the municipal administration set up by the Allies in Berlin created a "Plan for De-

East Berlin became the capital of East Germany, while Bonn was declared capital of West Germany. In the 1950s, traffic between the Eastern and Western parts of the city was limited and in 1961, at the height of cold war tensions, the Berlin wall was built. The division severed the movement of people between the two parts of the city as well as their infrastructures – yet was never able to do so completely.

[73] In this sense, postwar urban planners were in line with urban imaginaries during and before the war: they regarded Berlin's densely populated worker's housing and tenement barracks as responsible for social tensions and left wing politics (Schildt 2002: 143, 144). In addition, many planners who had been practicing during the war, continued their jobs after, and postwar urban reconstruction drew on their experiences from planning "Germanized" cities in Poland (Schildt 2002: 143). See also H.B. Reichow (1948).

Rubbling" the city (*Enttrümerungsplan*) and hired thousands of workers and asked volunteers to clear the streets from rubble. But even more than that, many streets and buildings that were only partly destroyed were marked as "public hazard" and deliberately demolished in order to get rid of some of the material remnants of the fascist regime.[74] In the rubble, urban planners thus conjured up dreams about both the past and the present. In the process, the remaking of the built and natural environment became a key element in "moving away from the past" towards a brighter future.

In the following years, as the city grew divided into two parts, both East and West Berlin developed a complicated infrastructure to clear the city of rubble. And with it came a whole new set of rubble technologies and vocabularies. The city's canals and the remaining train network – as well as make shift trains –became transport routes for the rubble from the city center to so called "rubble clearance machines" that recycled the rubble into building material for new buildings and streets. One of the trains in East Berlin was called the "Rubble Express" (Keiderling 1999a: 40). During the Berlin airlift, some of the rubble was also used to build new runways at the Tempelhof airport where Western Allied planes landed to bring supplies into the city cut off from any ground transport networks and the surrounding countryside (Diefendorf 1993).

On both sides of the border, the rubble was considered ugly – a "left over burden" of the war – and its clearance considered a necessary obstacle to enable economic recovery (Keiderling 1999b: 39). In the early 1950s, both municipal

[74] This approach was supported by the Western Allies and the U.S., in particular. See Till (2005: 42) on different approaches to redesigning and rebuilding Berlin in the respective states of West and East Germany: urban planners and architects deployed different architectural forms, land use and building materials to make the political ideas of democracy and socialism come to life.

governments created long range reconstruction plans for Berlin, and "de-rubbling" became increasingly refined and mechanized in the following years (ibid). In East Berlin, the Soviet led government introduced so-called "Reconstruction Sundays", encouraging the local population to help clear the city of the rubble. As part of its "de-rubbling" efforts, the city of East Berlin even challenged the city of Leipzig for a competition to see which city would be the quickest in getting rid of its millions of cubic meters of rubble. [75] In West Berlin, unemployed Berliners – many of them women from all social classes – volunteered or were hired by the Allied powers as cheap labor to clear away the rubble. Thus when unemployment increased, municipal governments saw "de-rubbling" as a possibility to support the unemployed (Keiderling 1999a 40). Soon, these so called "rubble women" would enter the national imagination as heroic figures. [..] In addition, the city initiated various campaigns to closely track the "successes" of clearing the rubble and to call on Berliners to help make room for reconstruction. Even the city's emblem, the Berlin bear, lured Berliners into the world of reconstructing the city and clearing it form the rubble – for example, via a poster published in 1952 (Keiderling 1999a).

Although a part of the rubble was recycled, a lot could not. And the question of how to dispose of the rubble, was especially tricky in West Berlin, where it was impossible to move the rubble to the outskirts because the city was politically cut off from the countryside. And so there was the question what to do with the rest of it. The rubble reminded people of the death and destruction of World War Two. Thus, piling up

[75] The local media in East Berlin favored to recycle the rubble instead of just dumping it on hills, while critiquing the fact that most of the rubble was not reused. For example in 1952, the "Berliner Zeitung" featured a headline: "Rubble Stones are floating on the Spree River" outraged that much of the rubble heading to the dump to become rubble mountains was being wasted and could still be used for building materials (see Keiderling 1999a: 41).

the rubble, "greening" it, and letting trees and meadows grow over it, was an attempt to erase the traces of this history and "regenerate" from the Nazi past. As Lachmund puts it, "the creation of new green spaces – especially in those places that had been destroyed during the war – was a key part of urbanists' approach of "reconstruction" after the war" (Lachmund 2003: 238).

> "Greening, [..] was a relatively easy way to some sense of order in the labyrinth of ruins and rubble. Ruins carried the burden of undesired memories of death and destruction. Greening, in contrast, resonated perfectly with the self-image of a society seeking to separate itself from its Nazi past and [..] to prepare itself for economic growth and wealth." (Lachmund 2003: 238).

In fact these landscaping practices of greening the rubble, as well their cultural imaginaries, were on par with what National Socialists had already envisioned after the beginning of the bombings of German cities. Continuing this "greening desire", both the Eastern and Western municipalities had workers collect the rubble into heaps and ultimately landscaped them into so called "rubble mountains" – that could be integrated into existing parks and green spaces. Thus, the city government created several rubble dumping grounds next to urban forests and parks and planted dense vegetation on them, so they would later appear as "natural" (Lachmund 2003: 238).[76] Buried beneath were not only the shreds of thousands of buildings, bur also often the material remnants of Nazi militarism.[77] Visions of progress through greening materialized in a landscape of gloomy mountains. As Berlin lies in a former ice age melt water valley and is mostly flat,

[76] These "natural landscapes", then were imagined to lift the city above the wreckage and what some considered the "rubble psychosis" (*Trümmerpsychose*) of people after the war (Lachmund 2003: 238). Lachmund quotes a visitor to Berlin in 1952: "The public gardens, green lawns, the trees and bushes that exist here everywhere in front of and between [the rubble] give the impression of a miracle as they cover the rubble like a green veil" (Gollwitzer quoted in Lachmund 2003: 238).

[77] Some former sites of Nazi crimes were also bulldozed over and abandoned, with weeds overgrowing them, such as the former Gestapo headquarters in the city centre (Till 2005).

most of its elevations today are rubble mountains. And there are fourteen of them altogether. The highest among them, is located at the edges of a large urban forest, the Grunewald, in former West Berlin. It is 114 meters high and contains 12 million cubic meters of rubble (Keiderling 1999a,b).[78] Oddly enough, its name is Devil's Mountain (*Teufelsberg*).

The notion of new life emerging out of ruins thus became a popular imagery in narratives of national reconstruction after the war – turning the rubble into an object of national nostalgia. The rubble women who had removed much of the rubble, were celebrated as the new heroes of the nation, enabling German society to recover from the horrors of the war and the Nazi regime. The idea of "rising from ruins", "*Aus Ruinen auferstanden*" even became the East German version of the national anthem in 1949. In the 1950s, West Germany depicted the following image on its fifty cent coin: a kneeling woman stooping over to plant an oak seedling – thus commemorating the "rubble women" as well as women reforesting the logged down urban and rural forests after the war. [79]

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[78] The mountain is estimated to contain the rubble of 400,000 buildings, including a former Nazi military technology college. After the disposal of debris came to an end in 1972, the rubble heap was covered with soil and thousands of trees planted on it. Today, the mountain is higher than any other hill in Berlin. During the Cold War, the US National Security Agency built a listening station on top of the hill to spy on East German military conversations. Rumors about the history of the mountain abound. A friend of mine who grew up in West Berlin told me they would joke as kids that the building was not a spy station but a huge condom factory because of the shape of its odd tower. Wikipedia claims that during the Cold War, the US military found out that the listening abilities on top of the mountain would increase during a certain time period each year, and that they found out that a ferry wheel set up each year near the mountain during the German-American fair was responsible for it. And so the ferry wheel was set up for a longer time. To make things even more weird and gloomy, in 2008, Devil's Mountain, formerly owned by the military, was bought by David Lynch who planned to build a university for meditation on top of it.

[79] Despite fascist praise for the "German forest", close to 50 % of the country's forest reserves were logged down during the Nazi regime in order to make "autarky" possible. After the war, forests continued to be logged heavily for firewood as well as for reparations to the occupying powers (especially in East

This notion of "rising from ruins" also was a key image in planners' and gardeners' discourse in Berlin – and it was often shared by botanists themselves, as is illustrated in the following by botanist Cornel Schmidt in 1950: "nature instead of waiting for permission, has pushed itself forward in the city and has thereby achieved what several city councils have failed to achieve: rubble heaps have disappeared, at least to the eye" (Lachmund 2003: 239). Thus, "greening" the rubble was a major element in the cultural imaginary after the war (see also Lachmund 2003: 235). Yet the greening of the rubble was a "return of nature" and a form of "greening" that was carefully managed. Neatly ordered, the rubble and the emerging green landscapes covering it became part of Germany's "economic miracle" and a sign of progress.

Today you can find postcards of the blasted landscapes of post war German cities juxtaposed with an image of the newly rebuilt, modern city. These postcards create an image of "reconstruction" as if this had not been the horrifying end of a collective catastrophe, or the "last words on the insanity of the Nazi regime" (Sebald 2004: 47), but rather the dawn of a bright future of the shiny modern German city. As Sebald remarks, the very banishing of these memories were, the prerequisites of the following "economic miracle" in Germany: a numb following of professional instincts, an unquestioning work ethic learned in totalitarian society, and the use of "foreign labor" (Sebald 2004: 12). Thus, in the postwar years, the huge scope of devastation in German cities occupied

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Germany). In addition, the extremely dry summers after the war led to increases in the bark beetle population (Borkenkäfer), ultimately destroying more forests while many officials proclaimed a "national catastrophe" of diminishing forests in 1947 (Schleich 2011).

relatively little space in German cultural imaginaries – except to mobilize efforts for reconstruction and forgetting.

Yet despite all the management, the detailed rubble clearance infrastructure, and the willingness to forget, the rubble had its own life. Underneath the rubble, you could still sense the traces of death. Moreover, the removal of the rubble was a vast undertaking and for many years, the rubble was there to stay. In Berlin, reconstruction took much longer than anywhere else in Germany for many reasons: on one hand it didn't seem worth much to invest into a politically divided and isolated city. On the other hand, there were many rubble fields situated along the new borderzone between East and West Berlin, off-limits for reconstruction (see Lachmund 2003: 238). Thus, stubbornly, huge rubble fields dotted the city for decades. And unexpected critters, plants and experiences grew out of them all over the place.

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Sebald's "natural history", like Lisa Yoneyama, in her book *Hiroshima Traces*, illustrates that the memory of the bombings does not have to neatly fit into neither a nationalist story of victimization or of heroic reconstruction, but that ruins can lead us to question the automatism of progress and attend to the traces of history in the present (Yoneyama 1999: 81).[80] In this sense, ruins and their weedy, blasted landscapes do not necessarily

[80] In her book, Lisa Yoneyama shows that official memorializations of Hiroshima in the city's "bright new memory scape" have ignored Japan's imperial past. Following preservation debates around ruined buildings, she argues that the removal of ruins has functioned as an erasure of painful memories and all "clues through which one might be invited to think everything from the beginning, .. to critically reflect on how the present is situated vis a vis its history" (Yoneyama 1999: 81). Against a belief in the automatism of progress, Yoneyama listens to other ways of remembering the nuclear bomb – memories that go beyond a nationalist story. She follows the traces of a past that "exist in fragments and in palimpsest form", and thus the historical trajectories of what is now "available to us as reminders of destruction" (Yoneyama 1999: xi).

have to become a site of forgetting or nostalgia for a lost home, but they can be seen as providing a space from which to contemplate about the unhomely: the condition of not having a home and communities being out of place, as well as the cognitive dissonance that comes with both temporal and spatial displacement.[81] As Sebald shows, even the flowers and trees making their way through the rubble shared the traces of destruction. He remembers playing in the ruins of war as a child:

> "By the 1950s the plot of land, where a few handsome trees had survived the catastrophe, was entirely overgrown, and as children, we often spent whole afternoons in this wilderness created in the middle of town by the war. I remember never feeling at ease going down the steps to the cellars. They smelled of damp and decay, and I always feared I might bump into the body of an animal or a human corpse" (Sebald 2004: 76).

In addition, you could tell the date of a building's destruction from the plants growing among the ruins:

> "It was a question of botany. This heap of rubble was bare, naked, all rough stones and recently shattered masonry … with not a blade of grass in sight, whereas elsewhere trees were already growing, pretty little trees springing up in bedrooms and kitchens" (Sebald 2004: 39).

And furthermore, many trees and bushes had an unhomely second flowering:

> "In contrast to the catastrophes creeping upon us today, nature's ability to regenerate did not seem to have been impaired by the firestorms. In fact, many trees and bushes, particularly chestnuts and lilacs, had a second flowering in Hamburg in the autumn of 1943, a few months after the great fire. If the Morgenthau Plan had ever been implemented, how long would it have taken for woodland to cover the mountains of ruins all over the country? Instead, and with remarkable speed, social life, that other natural phenomenon, revived. People's ability to forget what they do not want to know, to overlook what is before their eyes, was seldom put to the test better than in Germany at the time" (Sebald 2004: 41).

[81] For a more detailed discussion of the unhomely, see Chapter 5.

Against this trend of numbness and overlooking what is before one's eyes, a few botanists in post war Berlin bothered to pause and attend to the unexpected. Intrigued by the diversity of plants, West Berlin botanists began to closely study the rubble. Attending to the abundance of plant life in the rubble, they developed an "art of noticing" (Tsing 2010). But this abundance – like the second flowering of the lilacs and chestnuts in Hamburg – was not simply a sign of "regenerating nature", but the outcome of a much more messy, ambivalent and radically changing urban ecology.

Traces of Rubble

Today, the blasted landscapes of the war have become rather invisible in Berlin. And yet, they entered my field via many routes: taking a stroll in the Hasenheide Park, in Neukölln, I walked on their remnants climbing up one of the city's "rubble mountains" – a seventy meter high pile of debris, now carefully landscaped into the controlled nature of urban greenery. The bombed landscapes were also the stuff of my neighbors' childhood memories – memories of the night when the streets "melted" during one of the bombing raids, while his family was hiding at a friend's apartment from persecution of the Nazis. When I sat with Nursen, a Turkish friend who had immigrated to Berlin from Istanbul in the 1970s, on her balcony in Neukölln, we peeked at the bombs' traces: the wall of the building across her apartment was dotted with grenade holes; birds were nesting in them in the spring. Walking in that same neighborhood, along the canal, you pass 19th century apartment blocks that sit right next to 1950s and 1960s style "modern" buildings – as well as a few open lots perched in between buildings, now greened over as little parks or gardens, or cemented into parking lots. Attending to these structures of

time and spatial gaps, you can still get a glimpse of what the post war landscape might have looked like.[82] In other parts of Berlin, the traces are less subtle and have become part of official memory cultures and tourism: in former West Berlin, tourists flock to search the ruins of the war symbolized by the bombed tower of the memorial church (*Gedächtniskirche*), or they search out the remnants of the Nazi past in the razed foundations of the former administrative Gestapo headquarters, first landscaped over in the 50s, then excavated in the 1980s and now called the "Topography of Terror".[83] But more hidden, beneath the city's visible surface, there is another layer of the history of war. Some estimate that there are still thousands of unexploded bombs lurking below the ground in Berlin, as well as in the surrounding woodlands. Several times a year, construction workers stumble across them as they dig up the ground – occasionally a bomb explodes.[84]

But most of all, the rubble entered my fieldwork via one particular person: Herbert Sukopp. Sukopp is a well-known urban ecologist – sometimes even referred to as the "father of urban ecology" – and he also is a public figure among

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[82] After the war, official attempts to forget the Nazi past resulted in a landscape of abandoned fields, as well as massive destruction of buildings. As Till (2005) points out, debates about these erasures in the 1980s and 1990s emphasized the material remains of the Nazi past. Thus, "looking for traces" and "digging" for material leftovers of fascism became important practices of memory work. Thus, landscapes grew to be "central characters in stories that symbolize the past as well as the future" (Till 2005: 67).

[83] See Karen Till's *The New Berlin*, and Jennifer Jordan's *Structures of Memory*, for a detailed discussion of cultures of memorialization around the Nazi past in both East and West Berlin. Jordan distinguishes between an anti-fascist and social-realist tradition of remembering in the two Germanys. Till discusses the trajectories of the "Topography of Terror" in detail, as well as the politics of sites such as the Holocaust Memorial or smaller "memorials" such as the "stumbling stones" set on cobblestone sidewalks in front of the former residences of Jews who were deported to the death camps.

[84] NPR, June 6, 2010. More recently, there have been several fatal accidents in which bomb disposal experts died, raising concerns that the bombs become more unpredictable with increasing age. Also, there has been concern in Berlin that many houses in East Berlin were built on top of unexploded bombs, and that there is a lot of unexploded ordnance – from bombs and artillery – in the ground near one of the city's airports (Tegel). As Brian Ladd has pointed out, unexploded ordnance is threatening to make a mockery of "metaphors about an 'explosive past" (Ladd 1999: 175).

environmentalists, ecologists and bureaucrats in Berlin. I first met Sukopp during a conference titled "Sundew and Tree of Heaven" organized by the Berlin Senate on the future of urban nature in Berlin. The conference was the opening event for Berlin's first "Urban Nature Day" in 2007, and also the official celebration of eighty years of nature conservation in Berlin, featuring presentations by environmentalists, bureaucrats, historians and city planners on both the past and the future of urban nature in Berlin.[85] When I encountered Sukopp again in several other urban planning workshops organized by the Humboldt University, as well as another event during Berlin's "Urban Nature Day", he drew my attention to the botany of the rubble landscapes after the war. Intrigued, I arranged an interview with him.[86]

As we sat in Herbert Sukopp's room at the Institute for Ecology at TU Berlin, I began our conversation by asking him how he became interested in studying rubble spaces. He immediately responded with a question back, or rather, he corrected my question, in a patient and calm, yet assertive tone: "well I think the question should be instead: how could I have studied ANYTHING ELSE than rubble spaces?"[87] Quickly, he reminded me that in the post war years, the rubble was everywhere in Berlin and could hardly be overlooked.[88] Sukopp was born in Berlin in 1930 and grew up in a

[85] See conversation between Sukopp and Nils Franke.
[86] In fact, when I told him about my dissertation project, he insisted I consider ruderal ecologies, pointing out that my research would otherwise miss an important aspect of unplanned "urban natures" in Berlin.
[87] In fact, Sukopp began studying urban spaces – in his own words – "from the outside to the inside": when he finished his dissertation in 1958 on the marshes at Berlin's edges and the effects of waterworks and groundwater reduction on them, he turned his attention towards the river and lake shores near the city. At this point, he also had already begun his studies of rubble spaces closer to the city center (Interview, August 2009).
[88] Interview, Sukopp, August 2009. "Da ganz Berlin eine Trümmerflache war – zumindest, die Innenstadt, ist die Frage eigentlich wichtiger, warum ich nichts anderes gemacht habe."

landscape blasted by the bombings. The rubble fields were scattered throughout the midst of the city and they were part of his childhood and adolescence. And they constituted the "dead eye" of Berlin.[89]

As the city lay bare in front of everyone's eyes, plants flourished everywhere. For Herbert Sukopp, it would have been rather odd if scientists had ignored the many plant communities that emerged in a landscape blasted by bombings – and continued as if nothing had happened. Instead, the city's blasted landscapes became an unexpected research site for many ecologists and botanists.[90] But most of all, for Sukopp, the rubble spaces were what was "new, unknown/unfamiliar and exciting" (*weil das das neue, unbekannt und spannende war*). Whereas Berlin botanists used to travel "at least" to the Baltic Sea, or the Harz mountains, or as far as Brazil, suddenly, paying attention to the city seemed like something worthwhile.

Even more importantly, when the division of the city intensified, West Berlin botanists, found themselves increasingly isolated from the surrounding countryside. And with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, they were in fact, literally walled off from it. The botanists – both scientists and hobbyists – thus began to turn their view towards plant life in the city. This was not "nature out there" or nature neatly separated and domesticated in parks and zoos.[91] Sukopp and others thus first sporadically explored

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[89] The term was introduced by a geographer to refer to the area of forty square kilometer in the city center in which most of the built landscape had been destroyed (Fels 1967 cited in Sukopp 2007: 62).
[90] This history also echoes the almost simultaneous proliferation of ecological research funded by the US Atomic Commission to explore the bombed atolls after WWII – and its blasted ecological systems theory.
[91] This was not the first time that botanists and other ecologists researched plant life in the city. In the 19th century, many investigated urban flora already as part of the natural history tradition. And Schouw used the expression "plantae urbane" – urban plant – for "foreign" plants growing near towns and villages (Sukopp 1998: 10, 2007). In 1827, Chamisso traced the characteristics and environmental conditions of

the rubble fields in the early 1950s. Inspired by reports from other botanists, as well as ornithologists on unexpected plant and wild life in bombed German and Austrian cities,[92] they began to research many of the city's rubble areas that spread throughout Berlin more systematically.

For Sukopp, collaborations and a sense of secrecy were crucial elements in this endeavor. And while he and other scientists, who worked at the Institute for Applied Ecology in West Berlin, played an important role in initiating research, they closely cooperated with hobby botanists who also were members of the Botanical Society.[93] But collaborations did not only cross the lines of science and lay knowledges but also political borders and actual walls. As the border between East and West Berlin became less and less permeable, exchange between botanists on both sides of the wall at times took on a sense of secrecy. Although West Berlin botanists conducted most of the

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flora and fauna in human settlements (Sukopp 2003: 15, and b: 299). Furthermore, since the 19th century, botanists had done research in so called "ruderal places", the composition of their flora and the "spontaneous invasion of alien species" (Lachmund 2003). This was also at a time when cities were described as organisms, their parks and gardens being the lungs (Sukopp: 2008: 83, see also Gandy)

[92] A few years earlier, botanists already had studies the proliferation of "alien" ruderal vegetation and unexpected bird life in bombed sites in Britain: after the bombings botanists noticed the new "fireflowers" adapted to burned landscapes, rubble and the gravelly spaces of railway embankments: the Sicilian Oxford ragwort, rosebay willowherb, Canadian fleabane and "escaped" cultivars such as the Peruvian *Galinsoga parviflora* (Davis 2002: 382).

[93] The Botanical Society was founded in 1859. When Sukopp initiated his research, the Society was called the Botanical Society of the Province of Brandenburg and was only later renamed to Botanical Society of Berlin and Brandenburg. There is a much longer history of hobby natural historians and civic natural historical societies in Germany. For example, in the early 19th century, many urban societies – both scientists and hobbyists – ventured out to the immediate countryside to research nature. This pursuit of natural history – as a recreational activity – was tightly linked with patriotic ideas about the "nature of the fatherland". Yet, as Denise Phillips shows, the cultural dynamics of popular natural history ventures were far from fixed. In fact, leading naturalists' ties to liberal political dissent in the 1840s influenced and added another layer to the cultural meaning of popular pursuits of natural history (Phillips 2003). Thomas Lekan argues similarly and sees both racial nationalist as well as democratic and pluralist understandings in late 19th century landscape preservationists' efforts to popularize nature protection through outdoor activities and school reform (Lekan 2004: 6).

research on ruderal vegetation[94], exchanges about this research continued across the border: Sukopp and his colleagues sent their research results to individual botanists in the East, who were not monitored by the state police, or they mailed them to friends in other East German cities, who then forwarded the information on to East Berlin.[95]

But even beyond these secret exchanges, and despite all the "scientific data" the botanists generated, for Sukopp, there were clearly subversive elements to his and others' research: by turning their view towards the rubble, instead of away from it, they collided with official planning schemes that tried to cover up the traces of the war as soon as possible. (And at a later point, they would also bump up against bureaucratic views on nature conservation.) When in the field, their activities of conducting research were not recognizable within the usual conventions of moving in the city and the rubble spaces: most people ignored them or took them for homeless people, or for people looking for scrap metals or picking herbs – all common activities in these spaces at the time. Only children were curious enough to ask them what they were doing.

Thus, this time, it was not the scrap metal searchers resembling botanists in W.G. Sebald's account of the destroyed cities after the war, but the botanists who, in fact, were mistaken with scrap metal gleaners:

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[94] Interview Sukopp, August 2009. Sukopp pointed out to me that the botanists in East Berlin could not freely choose their research sites and were mainly sent to the countryside. According to his view, this was also in line with the official East German approach to conservation at the time: i.e. to focus on nature conservation areas and parks. Thus, the East Berlin botanists focused on those more bounded "nature reserves", whereas the West Berliners were "digging in the dirt" and thus exposed also – at least to some degree – the pollution in the city and the decline of species diversity in some urban spaces. One exception is a dissertation about East Berlin rubble spaces in the early 1950s. Sukopp commented the – in his eyes – exceptional status of that thesis: "this was when things were not that regulated yet and they had not realized what they brought onto themselves at that time."

[95] Interview Sukopp, August 2009.

> "Others could be seen between the ruined dwellings, now deprived of their purpose, searching for buried remnants of household goods, here salvaging a bit of tin, or wire from the rubble, there picking up a few splinters of wood and stowing them in the bags they wore slung around them which resembled botanical specimen containers" (Sebald 2004: 47-48).

Not unlike the scrap metal searchers or herb pickers, the botanists gleaned their insights from a world of rubble. And instead of seeing the rubble fields as urban wastelands, they re-envisioned them as "another country" – in a city numb amidst "national reconstruction" and an urge to "move on". This "other country" was rich in – botanical – traces leading to a different, more "weedy" history of the nation, of nature and the city. And it was plants like sticky goosefoot that incited botanists to notice a world of rubble ecologies – a world that went far beyond this individual, tiny plant. A heterogeneous world of plant life, movement and migration – but also of rubble, waste and destruction. How did the history of Berlin look like from the perspective of sticky goosefoot and its rubble ecologies?

As the botanists followed these traces in the rubble, they gained insight into a whole array of historical and environmental shifts and a diversity of urban environments that resulted from a history of global connection AND destruction. With their spontaneous take-over, the weeds were not what the Nazis had dreamt of: they were unexpected strangers and they provided a glimpse of the contingency of life in cities – and life on earth. Their stubborn presence thus provoked scientists to not see the city as artificial or non-nature per se, but to re-imagine life beyond the ordered and domesticated nature of national reconstruction – AND beyond nostalgic yearnings for wilderness. The rubble plants can be read as indicators of a different history of the war,

the city and "nature": a history in which things don't get rebuilt and nature is neatly re-ordered without pause; a history that does not coincide with the borders of the nation and a history and present in which humans are not always "in control". Although the rubble plants did to some degree fit into the greening desires of the time, they were more ambiguous than what humans wanted them to be.

The "dead eye" of Berlin

Researching the rubble flora, Sukopp and his colleagues discovered a city bustling with plants from all over the world. The rubble vegetation was abundant in "spontaneous newcomers", "alien" or "nonnative invasive species" (see e.g. Sukopp/Wurzel 2003) from warmer regions in the Mediterranean, Asia and the Americas. These newcomers – usually considered weeds – grew in unexpected places across the city and formed unlikely communities with other plants and critters. For example, one former bombed area, the so called Lützowplatz, turned out to be home to 100 plant and 200 insect species – a much larger number than in adjacent city parks, and containing an even larger diversity than in the surrounding countryside (Davis 2002: 385).

Figure 1: Herbert Sukopp in a young robinia forest at Lützowplatz, 1952, courtesy of Sukopp

Surprised by the rich diversity and lush vegetation developing in the rubble, the botanists created elaborate plant lists. For example, a tree from China, *Ailanthus altissima* or *Glandulosa* (or Tree of heaven)[96], and the North American tree *robinia pseudo- accacia* (Black Locust), and the herb *Solidago giganteana* (Giant Goldenrod) appeared widely in Berlin for the first time.[97] The Tree of heaven had been imported from China during the era of Frederick the Great and planted as decorative tree in gardens and parks in Berlin since 1780. But only after the war – 170 years after its introduction – was it now growing widely throughout the city center. Similarly, robinia (or Black Locust) had been planted

[96] Native to northeast and central China and Taiwan; in Mandarin, it's name is chouchun. Tree of heaven has also been the subject of a famous book. The 1943 novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, written by Betty Smith, centers around several characters living in New York. In the book, the tree of heaven, figures as symbol for immigrants like them. It grows in abandoned lots and wastelands despite an inhospitable environment and the most unlikely circumstances.

[97] Botanists had already reported on a similar development of explosive growth of *Sisymbrium irio* (in the mustard family) during the Great Fire of London in 1666 – hence it was given the name "London Rocket" (Sukopp 2007: 62).

in Europe since 1623, but did not thrive Berlin until this time (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 68-9).[98] But also other plants like, mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)[99], the two *Chenopodiacae* of Eastern origin, saltwort and wormwood (*Salsola collina*, *Artemisia scoparia*) and a grass species of North American origin, Lindheimer's millet (*Panicum lindheimeri*) appeared widely in the rubble (Sukopp 2003b).

These plants thrived after their seeds had found their way into the city via diverse transport routes. Some of them had crossed the city with the traffic of troops and refugees during and after the war, as well as via packaging material from imported goods. In addition, many seeds of steppe plants had entered the city through hay, transported on wagons by the Russian and Ukrainian army, for their horses.[100] Other seeds' routes remained unknown. Yet what all of the plants had in common was that they were so called "ruderal plants", preferring dry sandy and gravelly soils and a warm climate during the summer. Usually, their seeds would have remained dormant, unable to sprout and invisible. Yet the huge rubble spaces – in addition to a whole set of other political and environmental dynamics, as the botanists would later find out – provided ground for the seeds to take hold and to germinate. Thus they also became visible to botanists.

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[98] *Robinia* trees were first introduced to Europe through the gardener Robin in the Botanical Gardens in Paris. In Berlin, they are called "Akazie" or "falsche Akazie". Adapting easily to Berlin's sandy soil, they were planted in the gardens of Britz and also along railroads as a protective strip to prevent sparks from trains (running on coal) to spread to the larger pine forests and create forest fires (Interview Sukopp 2009).
[99] Mugwort is a tall plant in the wormwood family. In the past, mugwort has been used as a magical herb to chase away evil spirits. In her book about war-time Warsaw, Diane Ackerman recalls Polish farmers hanging up branches of the herb to scare away witches from milking their cows, and Warsawians wearing mugwort garlands and tying sprigs of mugwort to doorways to keep away evil. Most noteably, the plant also featured as decoration at a secret Midsummer's Eve celebration during German occupation (Ackerman 2007: 108). Furthermore, mugwort in Ukranian, means chornobylnik and its name is connected to Chernobyl, which means "the place where mugwort grows".
[100] Interview Sukopp 2009.

One of the plants that attracted much of the botanists' attention was sticky goosefoot, *Chenopodium botrys*. Originally imported as a spice and medicinal plant from Constantinople, the plant had spread as an unwanted "weed" on wine hills in Southern Europe. In Berlin, it had made a short appearance during the Berlin Trade Exhibit, when botanists took notice of a few "escapees" dispersing in the city center at that time. Yet, this dispersal was only temporary and the plant did not appear until after the war when it flourished widely across Berlin's bombed areas for decades – unlike in many other German cities, where much of the rubble was cleared by the late 1950s, and with it, ruderal plants decreased in numbers (Lachmund 2003: 240). Thus, from the mid 1950s on, the plant kept Berlin botanists, like Sukopp, in awe: surprised at the plant's spontaneous growth, they studied its ecology in detail, and tried to explain the riddle of why it, like many other ruderal plants, appeared so widely in Berlin and only sporadically in a few other places North of the Alps. And above all: Why had it taken several decades after the plant's introduction, until sticky goosefoot spread more widely in Berlin?[101]

In the course of their research, the botanists produced meticulous accounts of the plant's tissue production (how fast it grows and when, its sprouting strength, the growth of its roots), the moisture and composition of the soil (and the role of sand versus rubble, including nitrogen and ash content in the soil), the effects of light on its growth and its water regimes. Furthermore, they studied its habitats, its associations and the successional dynamic of the ruderal vegetation it was part of (Sukopp 1971: 16). The habitat of sticky goosefoot – rocky debris, riversides, and sandy places – turned out to be

[101] Other plants, like robinia and Ailanthus altissima took even 100 to 180 years (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 72).

a very specialized environment with little competition (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 68). In addition, the plant tends to have a high seed production, yet for the seeds to germinate, a whole set of very specialized conditions are necessary. Studying sticky goosefoot, the botanists tracked the plants' dispersal in Berlin – and especially its appearance throughout the city center, as well as a few locations in the city's peripheries. The highest density of sticky goosefoot occurred in the "dead eye" of Berlin – the largely destroyed city center. Before the war, this area had had been the most densely built up areas of Berlin. And it also coincided with part of the border between East and West Berlin after the war, as well as with the boundaries of the former, medieval city wall.

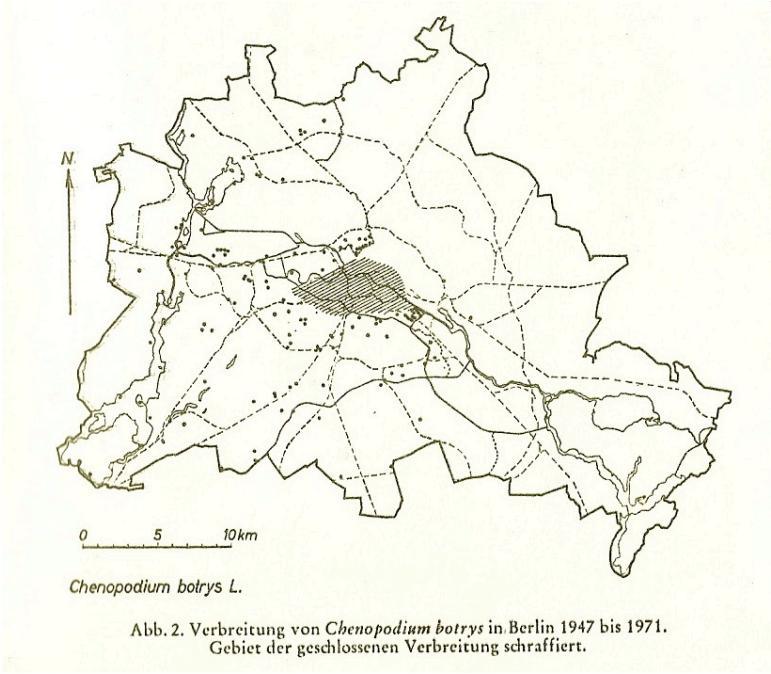

Figure 2: Distribution of sticky goosefoot, *Chenopodium botrys L.*, in the "dead eye" of Berlin, 1947-1971 (Sukopp 1971)

Upon further study, both the specific characteristics of sticky goosefoot and its agglomeration in the "dead eye" of the city center emerged as indicators for a whole set

of social, economic, and environmental dynamics in the city. Therefore, the "dead eye" revealed a secret. Increasing trade, migration and traffic during the city's industrialization had created a diversification of habitats and introduced new seeds into Berlin; the bombings of the war, had created a vast landscape of rubble spaces, the division of the city, as well as the desire to forget during reconstruction, led to a proliferation of abandoned spaces and forgetting – especially in the "dead eye". But also increasing climate change and pollution changed the city's temperatures, its soil, water and air. All of these factors contributed to the proliferation of sticky goosefoot and other rubble plants in the "dead eye" of Berlin – and their interaction made it possible for the plants to "naturalize" in the city.[102] What emerged out of it was an unusual urban vegetation that gave further clues about the heterogeneity of urban ecologies – a heterogeneity that opened up new possibilities for rethinking the city.

Species Diversity and the Cosmopolitan Nature of the City

Tracking the changes in the urban flora amidst the "dead eye" of post war Berlin, Sukopp and his colleagues developed an eye for plant life in "disturbed places": the vegetation growing in rubble fields, along railways, roads, and ports, in ruins, along walls and waste areas. This vegetation was marked by a surprising species diversity. In reference to his research on this peculiar diversity of plant life in the rubble – as well as initial studies on urban flora at the beginning of the 20th century – Sukopp argued that processes of urbanization did not necessarily lead to more monotonous urban

[102] See Sukopp's definition of "naturalization". One of Sukopp's students, Ingo Kowarik, later termed the ruderal fauna and flora later as "fourth nature" (see Kowarik 1992).

landscapes. To the contrary, he concluded, that the "development of ruderal flora 'essentially runs parallel to the size and intensity of trade and industry; it is a direct standard of the technical culture" (Naegelli and Thellung cited in Sukopp 2008: 84).[103] This sense for the diverse ecologies of ruderal spaces and their ecosystems incited the botanists to reconsider previous notions of the city as artificial and to challenge a dominant view – not only in urban planning schemes and cultural imaginaries of the time, but also held widely within the discipline of ecology – that separates cities from nature and simply sees cities as artificial and a cultural product. As Dierig et al. point out: "When botanists in post-war Germany represented the city as an eco-system with its own peculiar vegetation and flora, they blurred the widespread distinction between the "artificial city" and the "natural country" (2003: 11). Thus, while ruderal plants also were deeply ambivalent figures, indicating environmental destruction and climate change in cities, their presence interfered with widely held assumptions about cities as non-nature.

But the rubble plants did not only inspire the botanists to unsettle nature/city divisions. They also pointed beyond the boundaries of the nation by drawing attention to the global interconnectedness and heterogeneity of the nature of cities. The descriptive science of adventive floristics[104] and phytosociology[105] enabled the botanists to develop a

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[103] For earlier studies on urban and ruderal plants in cities, see for example Schouw's work on plant geography and his term "plantae urbanae", e.g. *Onopordum acanthium*, and *Xanthium strumarium* (Schouw cited in Sukopp 2008: 81).

[104] Especially the work of Swiss botanist Thellung influenced the development of adventive floristics, a descriptive rather than theoretical science, defined as the study of non-native (adventive) or alien plants (Sukopp 2008: 82).

[105] Phytosociology was a second theoretical paradigm that framed some of the botanists' research. Phytosociology was based on the idea that "plants settle according to the environmental conditions given at a specific site and will associate with each other in the form of stable vegetation units, or so called plant associations" (Lachmund 2007: 246). Popular in Germany during fascism and after the war, certain tenets of phytosociology and the grouping of plant associations into taxonomies also played an important role in

sociology of plants: it offered them the perceptive tools to study plant associations and to ask how plants travel and form communities with each other, while creating associations in contrasting environments. Although, the botanists thus made use of the vocabularies of "foreigners", invaders and guests – and thus engaged 19th century natural and social sciences' geographic imaginations of connecting plants and people to a world of nations, borders and immigration, their view on ruderal ecologies also transcended these clear-cut categorizations.[106] In fact, Sukopp and his colleagues did not necessarily see ruderal plants as unwelcome intruders – and instead even argued for their protection (Lachmund 2007). But even more than that, the rubble ecologies themselves pointed beyond clear categories. In particular, they did not easily fit into the classificatory schemes of the scientists who grouped plant associations into orderly taxonomies. As Lachmund has shown, the methods of "sample surveying" and creating taxonomies did not grasp the complexities of rubble ecologies: "The plants that appeared in the rubble of the cities presented a motley group of species of different origins that hardly could be brought in line with the existing taxonomic entities of phytoscociology" because they often all belonged to different plant communities while occupying one single rubble

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vegetation engineering and highway planning during Nazism, as well as in the reconstruction of parklands and greening of rubble heaps after the war (Lachmund 2007: 246; see also Zeller 1996).

[106] In fact, the research on the rubble spaces made use of a whole spectrum of different theoretical frameworks, ranging from ecosystems theory, to adventive floristics, and phytosociology (Lachmund 2007). Botanists working with Sukopp, such as Scholz, organized some of their floristic inventories of rubble spaces according to the classificatory practices of adventive floristics and categories such as "neophytes", "adventive plants", "foreigners", "guests" and "naturalized".

heap (Lachmund 2007: 246). As a consequence, the botanists had to adjust their frameworks and theorize the unexpected.[107]

During a time in which immigration to Germany and West Berlin increased significantly – especially the high demand for "foreign labor" during the 1950s and 1960s reconstruction period – Sukopp and his colleagues thus opened up a view on the ecology of cities as the outcome of global connection. They concluded that "modern cities are characterized by their worldwide connections and are uncoupled (disassociated) from the local surroundings with the consequence that the concept of a cultural landscape is only partly relevant". As a result, Berlin's urban ecosystems differed from those in their hinterlands, and species diversity in certain areas in the city was often greater than in the surrounding countryside where monocultures of farming and forestry prevailed (Sukopp 1998: 9).[108] Moreover, the ecological characteristics of a city were also shaped by other cities and rural landscapes across the world (Sukopp 2003a: 40). From this perspective, the city appeared as a new type of environment different from its surroundings (Sukopp 1998: 4): this environment was cosmopolitan, heterogeneous in its ecosystems and not separate from technology, urbanization, trade and movement: "The cosmopolitan character of many urban plants is a tribute to the ubiquity of humanity's modification of

[107] Forcing the scientists to pay attention, to rethink their assumptions, the plants thus also entered what Haraway would call a "dance of relating" (Haraway 2008: 25) and surprise, in which the scientists "became with" the rubble and the plants. For example, the composition of the rubble often did also not fit the rectangular sample areas that botanists created for their surveys (Lachmund 2007), thus compelling the scientists to rearrange their fieldwork methods. Furthermore, while Sukopp and his colleagues tracked succession patterns of the rubble plants and their associations – and thus the temporal development of the rubble vegetation by visiting them over a long period of years – they differed in their opinions on what kinds of successions to expect, and the plants remained somewhat unpredictable in their succession schemes (Lachmund 2007: 248).

[108] Today, in Germany, the countryside is often characterized by the monocultures of modern agriculture, genetically modified crops and factory farming (see e.g. Sukopp 2003: 21).

environmental conditions and to our efficiency as agents of dispersal" (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 68).

Yet ruderal spaces were only one of many urban ecosystems. Instead, due to many different land uses, the city consisted of a heterogeneous mosaic of different ecosystems – some of which were more viable/livable than others. This insight of the heterogeneity of urban ecosystems also involved a critique of landscape ecology in geography, which studied the "economy of nature" and thus the "ecological aspects of a mainly cultural and harmonic landscape" (Sukopp 2008: 87).[109]

The ruderal flora or what Sukopp and others called "cosmopolitan urban plants" and "urban spontaneuous flora" stood in stark contrast to the kinds of "natures" the fascist regime had imagined to emerge after the war. Although the Nazis had been fascinated with "wilderness", only certain kinds of "wild things" – that were in line with the dominant racial ideology – were allowed. Undesired aliens had to be "weeded out" (Zeller 2005). Nazis admired "wildness" – defined as untouched nature, free of human contact and intervention – and promoted this kind of wildness in their environmental policies, and especially the protection of native wild animals, and plants. In contrast, the city was imagined as anti-nature, full of social ills. It was a space of undesired and dangerous racial mixing, a space of degeneration and decline in moral value. Similarly,

[109] As Sukopp points out, urban ecology developed methodologically out of landscape ecology. Thus, from this new perspective in ecology, landscape ecology took on a different meaning as the "investigation of several adjacent ecosystems" (Sukopp 2008: 87).

the degeneration of the natural world was considered to be a product of contact with humans, urbanization and miscegenation (Sax 1997: 13).[110]

With their abundance of non-native plants, ruderal spaces turned out to be a different kind of nature than the "native" nature purged of all foreign influence that Nazi planners had imagined for cities after the war. Nor were they the "nature in the city" that Europeans had been dreaming of: they were neither neatly landscaped gardens of empire, rich in exotic plants, bearing the promise of paradise. Rather they were escapees from European gardens of colonial landscaping, or they were smuggled in via packing materials or took a ride on the boots of refugees and soldiers crossing Berlin. And they were signs of a nightmare of destruction that fascism had brought across Europe– as well as indicators for environmental changes in cities. And as Sukopp put it at one point, the unexpected "marginal ecologies" of ruderal plants "may be the prevailing ecosystems of the future" (Sukopp in Davis 2002: 385).

Cities as heat islands

After tracing the successive settlement of sticky goosefoot and other ruderal plants for years, Sukopp noted in the 1970s that the "naturalization" of these "most recent migrants [..] seems to be secured in the city" (Sukopp 1971: 11).[111] The reasons for this were first of all, a significant change in urban habitats through the bombings of the war

[110] Within Nazi ideology, the difference between southern and northern populations (both human and non-human) was seen as a difference between wildness and domestication. In this sense, nature became the "realm of absolute order, as opposed to the anarchy brought on by civilization" (Sax 1997: 6). On the history of the Nazi cult of wildness and the creation of wildness through eugenic controls – which can be compared to the bounded and human-produced wildness of safari parks, and urban zoos, see Sax (1997).
[111] "Auf dem Trümmerschutt konnten sich viele Jüngsteinwanderer so reichlich vermehren, so gewaltige Samenmengen erzeugen und so weit ausbreiten, dass ihre Einbürgerung in der Stadt gesichert zu sein scheint" (Sukopp 1971: 11).

and the presence of vast rubble fields for decades thereafter. But their continued presence also originated from and thus served as an indicator for climate change in cities. Although the percentage of heat resistant plants among ruderals is high, they react sensitively to changes in temperature and only establish stable populations in cities with a warmer (summer) climate (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 68). For example, despite sticky goosefoot's high seed production, a whole set of very specialized conditions is necessary for the seeds to germinate, "involving the quality and intensity of light, the photoperiod and storage of seeds" (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 68). Similarly, Robinia (or *Robinia pseudacacia*) and tree of heaven (*ailanthus altissima*) are dependent on urban wastelands and industrial sites with a warm microclimate. Therefore, the distribution and life cycles of sticky goosefoot and other rubble plants gave scientists hints of the complexities of urban climates. This research then connected to other questions about the ecology of cities, such as the study of the city's ecosystems, as well as conditions of the urban climate, and pollution of air and soil.

First, the distribution patterns of sticky goosefoot, tree of heaven (and robinia) adhered to the different temperature zones across the city (Sukopp 2003a: 33). Like sticky goosefoot, tree of heaven grows in the warm zones of the inner city, and thus can be found there much more frequently than at the urban fringe or in the surrounding countryside of Brandenburg (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 69). Second, by tracking the life cycle of some of these plants – and thus the different starting points and phases of budding, leafing, flowering and fruiting – one could determine different "temperature regimes" throughout the city, with flowering phases sometime starting more than a week

earlier in the inner city than at the edges of the city.[112] Sukopp and other ecologists thus observed a longer vegetation period in high-density areas in Berlin's center (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003). In contrast to the surrounding countryside, the climate in the city center was generally much warmer: by the 1970s, there were much less frost days during the winter (159 in the city, vs. 197 at Berlin's edges), and the air temperature in the city was 1.5 degree Celsius higher than in the countryside (Sukopp 1971: 11). Thus Sukopp argued that in addition to the war-time destruction, the "size of the city created an urban climate that offered the possibility for a temperature dependent plant such as *Ch. Botrys* to flourish". Yet, "in the non-destroyed city [before the war] the wide dispersal of such a plant had hardly been recognizable – although migration, trade and the import of cultivars had literally laid the seeds for it in the past centuries. It was thus not until the destruction of the city in WWII, which created huge rubble areas in the city (in Berlin forty square kilometer), "that a new characteristics of the urban proliferation of certain plants became visible (Sukopp 1971: 12)".[113] Concluding on the wide dispersal of sticky goosefoot and Tree of heaven, Sukopp wrote: "The dynamics of the plant mirrors the dynamics of the city" (Sukopp 2003a: 33).

From this perspective, cities emerged as "heat islands" on earth: urban centers generally have a higher temperature than their surroundings – sometimes up to 12 ^{0}C. This is a consequence of a whole set of climatic features that create a "green house

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112 For example, the flowering phases of *Tilia euchlora*, linden, turned out to be eight days earlier in the inner city than at the edge of the city (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 70, see also map of temperature zones in Berlin). Another example is the leafing of *Aesculus hippocastanum*, or horse chestnut, which shifted from April 5 to March 5 between 1808 and 1980 in Geneva (ibid.).

113 Translation by author. The German original reads "[…] die erst solche charakteristischen Züge der Pflanzenverbreitung erkennbar werden liessen" (Sukopp 1971: 12).

effect" across the city (Sukopp 2003a: 18): due to traffic, power stations, industry and heated buildings, levels of air pollution are higher (especially carbon particles and trace gases). Because cities are rough surfaces, solar radiation is less direct and there are five to fifteen percent less hours of sunshine. In addition, wind speeds tend to be reduced in many locations. Humidity is lower but the annual mean precipitation is up to twenty percent higher. Because of the ubiquity of pavement, water tends to not trickle down into the soil but run off quickly (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003). But this "green house effect" also has a temporal dimension: comparing data over a time span of centuries, cities appear to have become hotter in the course of industrialization. For example, since 1800, Berlin expanded tremendously from a city of 170,000 inhabitants to 3.7 million in 1910. And with it, the urban climate warmed vis a vis the countryside by 0.2C around 1800, by o.7C in the 1830s, by 1.4C in the 1890s and by 2C in the time period between 1961 and 1980 (Sukopp/Wurzel 2003: 72). At the same time, frost days decreased in the city significantly in these years to be less than 64 days (vis a vis > 102 days in the countryside). Sukopp/Wurzel thus assumed that the spreading of nonnative ruderal plants in Europe was promoted by the slow climate warming – on earth in general, and cities in particular – beginning in the 19th century.[114]

[114] Robinia was first observed in 1924 but did not spread until after the war, and Ailanthus has a similar history, and is now only frequently found in the warm urban center in Berlin. Thus climate change can be an explanation for the time lag between a species' first introduction into a region and its spreading or 'naturalization'. In contrast, Sukopp/Wurzel note that low winter temperatures –which are frequent in Berlin – can also limit "invasions" and a wide spread of certain non native plants (2003: 69).

Urban nature and the "plastic carpet"

Yet while some plants flourished in the context of changing urban climates others did not. The botanists thus not only tracked species diversity in the city, but also the degradation of urban environments – especially lakes, rivers, bogs and wetlands at the city's edge. For example, Sukopp had already noted a retreat of many species and the vegetation formation in his dissertation on the Berlin fens (Sukopp 1958). Studies of Berlin's nature reserves in the 1960s showed similar developments – a result of lower ground water levels, air pollution and human land-use. At the same time, the Havel river vegetation, and especially, the reeds on the river's banks were retreating due to heavy boat traffic in these years (Sukopp/Markstein 1989). In the 1970s, when international ecological perspectives increasingly put a focus on ecosystems, West Berlin ecologists also began to study ecosystems in the city – for example its forests and lakes, but also rubble spaces. Thus beyond the study of individual plants, the botanists mapped the ruderal spaces as "biotopes" and studied the assemblages of plants and animals in them. In addition, one needed to differentiate between different habitats within the city and rubble spaces therefore became only one type of many sites researched by urban ecologists.

Science historian Jens Lachmund has tracked the emergence of urban ecology in Berlin and thus also the botanists' research on rubble throughout Berlin's history (Lachmund 2003, 2004a, b). Through various practices of observation, they created a large body of lists, taxonomies, maps, graphs and charts to illustrate their findings, thus turning "rubble into knowledge". Thus, far from "mirroring" reality, these biotope

mappings had immense imaginative power and brought the notion of "urban nature" into life in the first place.[115] Maps, graphs, charts and drawings of plants and their habitats thus helped create a "new epistemic and political order of urban space" (Lachmund 2004a: 232) – an assemblage in which environmental expertise, science and administrative practices joined and co-constructed expert knowledges about urban nature.

Figure 3: Biotope Map of West Berlin, Sukopp 1990

Lachmund shows that, although Sukopp and his colleagues used a language of ecosystems to refer to the city as an object of ecological knowledge, they did not stick to

[115] See for example Kowarik 1992. Kowarik was Sukopp's student and also his successor as Berlin's Nature Conservation Commissioner (*Naturschutzbeauftragter*).

a rationale of systems.[116] Rather than speaking of closed systems that influence each other, they described the urban ecosystem as mosaic and as consisting of tangible structures that are often disconnected from each other rather than in direct contact (Lachmund 2007: 80). In 1968, Sukopp published a graphic that depicted a whole variety of landscapes – ranging from rubble heaps, railway areas, gardens, forests, dump sites, to so called filter beds and different types of built up areas – landscapes, that all impact the city's climate, soil, water, relief vegetation and flora and fauna.[117] Displaying different cross-sections of the city, this illustration produced an image of the city as ecologically heterogeneous and became something like an iconic representation of Berlin's urban ecology (Lachmund 2007: 80).

Yet for Sukopp, "urban nature" has been an ambiguous term. Emphasizing that cities are ecologically heterogeneous, he stressed that urban nature does not mean much per se during our conversation. And it certainly cannot be said to be flourishing in all respect. Thus, the term urban nature runs risk of romanticizing, like the term green has in the past. In fact, he had always been afraid of the word "green": "Green does not mean much. Green can also be a plastic carpet!"[118] Thus although he and his colleagues contributed significantly to making urban nature visible and turning it into an object of

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[116] This approach understands ecosystems to comprise of flows of energy and material (Lachmund 2007: 80). See also Sukopp on narrowness of systems approach.

[117] For example, the ground level in cities tends to be several meters higher than in the surrounding countryside because of centuries of import of goods and materials that sedimented in the older parts of the city. In contrast, the ground water levels decrease due to pavement and closed off surfaces. Furthermore, the soil becomes denser and dryer and especially the soil near industrial sites, roads and waste disposal areas is often polluted. Other built up environments provide refuge for fauna and flora: for example, the surfaces of many buildings are like cliffs and rocks to many birds and other animals (Sukopp 2003a: 19/20).

[118] Interview Sukopp August 2009. Sukopp also recalled chancellor Helmut Kohl's famous statement in defense of ignoring environmentalist concerns in the 1980s: "Germany is so green! When I fly over the country, I see green as far as I can see."

knowledge in the first place, Sukopp was critical towards the term, its commodification and administrative use.

From Rubble Ecologies to "Urban Wilderness"

Figure 4: "Nature Conservation in the City", brochure, Sukopp 1984, Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, Berlin

(*Tussilago farfara*, or foalfoot, coughwort, common ruderal plant)

By the 1990s, Sukopp and other botanists' curiosity for rubble plants had changed cultural imaginaries of urban wastelands and opened up possibilities for city planning and conservation practices in enduring ways. First of all, attending to new urban natures flourishing in the rubble, was at odds with the city administration's strategy of urban reconstruction to cover up the traces of war and genocide by greening them and creating

nicely landscaped parks on top of the fascist regime's ruins. In contrast to these sensibilities of the time, the botanists turned their view towards the rubble rather than away from it. And instead of following the prevalent notion of a pristine new "life emerging from ruins", they attended to unexpected "strangers", and traced the human non-human entanglements and the materialization of nature in a city haunted by the trauma of the Holocaust, war and destruction. They illustrated that the rubble flora and fauna were what nature was all about in a city – it mirrored the history of the city, the effects of its trade, transport, migration and connections across the globe – as well as its histories of destruction and environmental change. Thus, secondly, Sukopp and his colleagues would challenge urban planning practices that did not take environmental concerns such as species diversity and the destruction of landscapes into consideration. And as Sukopp later put it himself: this opened up possibilities for a "greening design that does not accentuate the contrast between nature and the city" (Sukopp 2003b: 308).

By the 1970s, they began to collaborate with other scientists, urban planners, policy makers, citizen groups and environmentalists to rally for the inclusion of ecological concerns into urban planning – and especially to include the conservation of urban wastelands into the city. For example, on a small triangular area and former rubble field, officially called the "Dörnbergdreieck", near the square "Lützowplatz", Sukopp and different groups worked together to prevent clearing the rubble space for the construction of a hotel.[119] Rather than making its removal and re-use into an economic

[119] Another site of research was one of the large rubble heaps at the edge of the city, Devil's Mountain, or Teufelsberg, which was forested in the 1970s, thus destroying the habitat for the rubble plants (Lachmund 2007: 244).

asset – paving the way to Germany's new "economic miracle"– the botanists, in this case, tried to preserve the rubble space, which, at this point, had partly grown into a small forest.[120]

Figure 5: Herbert Sukopp in the same robinia forest at Lützowplatz, 30 years later, courtesy of Sukopp

Although the botanists' efforts in the Lützowplatz were not successful in the end, they would have an impact on urban policies in the following years. Mapping biotopes became an especially important practice in this context: it made the heterogeneity of urban environments and climates visible, as well as their vulnerability, and thus produced, as Lachmund argues, the notion of urban nature in the first place. These

[120] One of the last areas where they conducted research was at the Leipziger Square. Before it was cleared in 2002, an architect built a little "Walden cabin" to somewhat ironically commemorate life amidst the urban wilderness. The cabin lasted a week until bulldozers razed it for the new construction (Interview Sukopp, August 2009).

visualizing practices then made it possible for certain spaces to get included into administrative and political decision making and to be protected against other kinds of land use (Auhagen/Sukopp 1983; Sukopp 2003a: 30).

The ecologists' move to see nature as an urban practice and to include cities into environmental agendas linked up with an internationally emerging discourse to redirect environmental policies towards urban environments and to emphasize nature in cities – expressed in Programs such as UNESCO's Man and Biosphere program (1971) or Agenda 21 (since 1992) (Lachmund 2004b: 244). In the context of this development towards urban conservation, Sukopp and his colleagues' work thus reshaped various relations between humans, plants, animals, climate, air, soil and water in Berlin and beyond. From this perspective then, "Urban Ecology provide[d] a view into the heterogeneity of cities and into the possibilities of reshaping their environments. And it provide[d] insights into the uniqueness of cities, in which plants and animals play a big role" (Sukopp 2003a: 43, transl. B.S.).

For example, the research on plants in post-war Berlin led to the creation of a "red list" for endangered "ferns and flowering plants" in Germany in 1974, and 1977/78 in Europe. Sukopp also successfully rallied against further environmental destruction by preventing the construction of a new power plant, rerouting highway-on ramps and by "re-naturing" of the Havel river.[121] After being a member of the "*Sachverständigenbeirat*" in the State Office for Environmental Protection, Sukopp became the Commissioner for Nature Conservation in West Berlin. During this time, he developed the first maps of

[121] Sukopp's work on the Havel river shore vegetation had especially shown the environmental impacts of heavy boat traffic and human use along the river.

biotopes in Berlin that later would be included in the Berlin Landscape Plan as well as the Species and Biotope Protection Program[122] and ultimately led to the mapping of 6000 biotopes in West Berlin. And in the 1999, drawing on Sukopp's work and the research on rubble plants in urban wastelands, ecologists and planners declared an abandoned nine acre railyard in the South part of the city as a nature reserve – one of 34 protected nature areas in Berlin (that comprise 2.2% of the cityscape).[123] A key component of the arguments of urban ecologists to include nature protection into the urban planning process has been the idea that civic society and the quality of human urban life is enriched by a diversity of nature and landscape (Auhagen/Sukopp 1983). As the Senate Department for Urban development puts it: "The main reason for environmental planning and the development of open space, is to improve the quality of life in a city" (SenStadt 2010).

Yet despite this growing influence, from Sukopp's perspective, ecological views were always somewhat "smuggled into" bureaucratic procedures. For example, when the first biotope map was published, the city administration knew little "what they had

[122] "Landschaftsplan und Arten und Biotopschutzprogramm" (see Kowarik 1995). Provincial and federal law in Germany requires the protection, preservation, development and restoration of wild animals, plants and their communities and thus also aims to conserve biotopes in urban planning (*Bundesnaturschutzgesetz*, 1976). This coincides with the idea that civic life is enhanced by rich diversity of species life surrounding it .

[123] In his discussion of the history of the railyard, Lachmund shows conflicting ideas of conservation and how they played out in the making of the place and its creation as a nature park: e.g. ecologists wanted to preserve the highest species diversity possible, which led them to argue for a maintenance of the park, such as mowing meadows and cutting back trees in an early succession phase. This maintenance approach in turn clashed both with ecologists' own interest in researching succession in the site, as well as with environmental and citizen's groups' desire to leave the "wilderness" in tact and to interfere as little as possible (some of whom called maintenance and decisions about what plants to leave and which ones to get rid of a form of fascism) (Lachmund 2004b: 251).

gotten themselves into", he stressed in our conversation.[124] In the long run though, Sukopp's work and the mappings of urban biotopes created new impulses for urban ecological research elsewhere,[125] while contributing to a "critique of urban planning as part of the modernist project of control and domination of others (human as well as nonhuman)" (Wolch 1998: 128). The botanists' research thus also contributed to an environmental framework that did not assume a pristine nature in advance. Rather their research questioned a view on urban nature that read environmental degradation through a nationalist lens by attributing industrialization and urbanization to an erosion of Germany's "national character" (Lekan 2004: 4). As Lachmund has noted,

> "the flora and fauna were not to be evaluated according to the norm of a pristine state of nature. Thus the way the urban environment had left its imprint on features of the flora and fauna was not considered a degradation of its natural qualities. In contrast, it was deemed to be just what nature is about in a city and it was meant to be preserved precisely because of these peculiar features" (Lachmund 2004b: 250).

Writing in a similar vein, Ingo Kowarik, a student of Sukopp, who later took the position of Berlin's Nature Conservation Commissioner, distinguishes between four forms of nature in the city, specifically promoting the "fourth nature" of urban wastelands to be

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[124] In our conversation, Sukopp used many puns to describe colliding views between bureaucrats and scientists (as well as between East and West German nature conservation): for example, Sukopp distinguished between *Sach-* and *Fachverständige* (which in English both means "expert"): the former term refers to people who are concerned with the thing itself, versus the latter term refers to people who are regulating it. Sukopp's other wordplay included "Schutzgebiet" (protective area) and "Schmutzgebiet" (dirty area): for Eastern environmentalists cities were seen as "Schmutzgebiet", were you produce and pollute without limits. Thus conservation, and the creation of "Schutzgebiete" was limited to "nature out there".

[125] With his research approach, he developed a method that became an important base for environmental impact studies (and further developed Jaakko Jalas' concept of "Naturlichkeitsgrad", (Kowarik 1995, Sukopp 2008 on "hemeroby": 85). See also the "fourth nature" concept by Kowarik (1992).

included into urban planning and conservation (Kowarik 1992).[126] Thus, by the 1990s, the rubble ecologists' curiosity for urban wastelands had impacted the city's planning practices and contributed to changing cultural imaginaries of rubble and urban wastelands.

Reprise

With all their metaphors of otherness and weediness, the scientists' curiosity for rubble ecologies constituted a first step towards recent moves of re-wilding or re-naturing cities in Europe.[127] Today, ruderal plants such as sticky goosefoot are not quite as widespread any more as they were in the postwar years. Especially after unification of East and West Berlin, many open spaces have been paved over. Some seeds of sticky goosefoot now lie dormant in the city's ground. Yet unlike in other European cities, they will remain a key part of the urban flora in Berlin. And most of all, their abundance after the war triggered a way of seeing nature that also popularized an appreciation of "urban wilderness" as it flourishes in derelict landscapes and post-industrial urban wastelands. Ruins have become tourist attractions, and, once again, Berliners venture out to search for weeds and "wilderness" in the city. This attention has also found its way into city planning

[126] Kowarik considers "fourth nature" to be the most common urban nature. The other three kinds are remnants of prehistoric landscapes, remains of agriculturally used landscapes and artificially created urban green spaces (Kowarik 1992, see also Lachmund 2004b: 250). The Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development incorporated this distinction into its landscape protection policies. See http://www.stadtentwicklung. berlin.de/umwelt/landschaftsplanung/stadtland/en/stadtnatur.shtml

[127] See e.g. the debates about "re-wilding" as a perspective in planning and landscape design in shrinking regions in Europe: Rink (2009), and Hofmeister (2009); on the re-naturing of rivers in Germany, see e.g. Kropp (2005). While Germans have been very successful at managing and "conquering nature", they also have become experts in re-naturing since the 70s.

practices and the conservation of urban habitats:[128] with more than thirty protected nature areas in Berlin the City Senate for Urban Development hopes to improve the quality of urban life by fostering the diversity of nature and landscape in the city (SenStadt 2009). In addition, "Sundew and Tree of heaven"[129] are appreciated as important features of the urban environment in Berlin and the city organizes an abundance of events promoting "urban wilderness". Yet while Berlin is promoted as a flourishing "Green City" and "Europe's Nature Capital," debates about immigrant segregation and unemployment stress the existence of troubled neighborhoods and "ghettos" in the city's body. In this context, the city's green spaces – its urban forests, parks and gardens – become sites of refuge and hope for creating a more cosmopolitan city. Traces of rubble and their cultural imaginaries can be found in all these new spaces of nature.

The question remains whether, not unlike after the war, these popular efforts of rehabilitating urban ecologies, will be yet another version of "reconstructing" the nation through nature and a form of re-wilding that forgets past and present racisms, exclusions and destruction, or whether they will rather be a step towards what Deborah Rose Bird has called "recuperation" – a step toward forging connections across difference and to be alert to the inherited social and environmental histories of urban (human/non-human) landscapes. This question will guide my analysis in the following chapters.

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[128] See Mike Davis on "Ghetto Geomorphology" and the conversion and reuse of today's urban industrial wastelands – not unlike the bombed landscapes of post war Europe (Davis 2002: 386ff).
[129] Hence the title of the 2007 conference, organized by the Berlin Senate on the future of urban nature– the opening event for Berlin's first "Urban Nature Day" and the official celebration of eighty years of nature conservation in Berlin.

Chapter 2

On Gardens and Ghettos

"To focus on the nature of a capital of a country is an excellent idea."[130] (www.wildesberlin.de, Chris Packham, BBC)

"Berlin – a green city? Everyone loves to say it these days. But what is it? It's just a pile of concrete after all." (Ilker, gardener in the Hasenheide Park)

"Nature does not value, nature creates home" (Müller 2009, translation, B.S.)

On a Sunday afternoon in early summer 2007, I, together, with a group of thirty Berliners, took a "tour of weeds" on the sidewalks in Kreuzberg, a district in former West Berlin. It was Berlin's first "urban nature day" and our tour guide, a German woman in her early forties, who lived in the area and cultivated a "wild herb garden" on her neighborhood's sidewalks, took us on a brief walking tour. Spreading over the area of two housing blocks, she had created about ten fenced-in beds that were usually inhabited by a few bushes and tended by the city. In these small plots, she had classified all the plants she found two years ago. In addition, she had planted several types of herbs she had picked in the countryside around Berlin. Touring her gardens, our group learned how to classify some of them – labeling the plants with yellow tags that were handed out at the beginning of the tour – and we also were instructed on how to grow and harvest

[130] The original reads: „Die Natur der Hauptstadt eines Landes in den Fokus zu nehmen, halte ich für eine exzellente Idee." (translation by author)

the herbs on the roadside. Certainly, this tour of "weeds" did not dwell on any invasive species rhetoric. Instead, it was a celebration of species diversity on the side of the road.

Suddenly, our tour was interrupted abruptly: an elderly man, sitting on the bench at a kiosk nearby shouted at us in surprise: "I don't believe it. There are thirty crazy people over here and they have been stomping around the bushes for two hours now, looking for herbs in the middle of this dirty street!?"

Both the "tour of weeds" and the man's surprise about them inspires my curiosity in this chapter. Whereas after the war, weeds growing in the rubble were both a source of national nostalgia and fear, in recent years, wilderness and urban nature have become popular and once again, fuel hopes for overcoming the nation's problems: especially in Berlin, the city's abundant green spaces, its city parks, its vegetation and diverse wild life, have received much public attention. Many tourist brochures market Berlin as a "Green City" and as "Europe's Nature Capital" –referring to the abundance of green space and waterways that covers 40 % of the city space. In this context, a whole set of new practices of tracking and cultivating urban ecology has emerged. In the summer of 2007, the city organized Berlin's first official "Urban Nature Day" (*Tag der Stadtnatur)* – a day during which thousands of Berliners, together with environmentalists, conservationists, foresters, ornithologists, wild life specialists and other nature lovers, tour the city, venture out to discover nature, while they search for weeds on Berlin's sidewalks, learn about forestry in the city, follow the tracks of wild boar, or listen to the songs of nightingales and starlings while touring the city's parks at night. Since 2007, "Urban Nature Day" has been celebrated each year, adding more and more events (up to

500, across 150 sites in the city), with a growing popularity of 20,000 Berliners participating in 2009. In addition, in the past decade, many of the city's green spaces have figured as significant spaces of cultural encounter and "social integration": following the motto "the forest is for everybody", there are currently six "forest schools" within Berlin's city limits that offer special programs for city children to get to know the forests of the city. Similarly, urban gardens have become sites of hope for social change and many Berliners engage in urban gardening practices: the city's many allotment gardens are more popular than ever, with a growing immigrant population using these spaces. And like in many other cities in Europe, "guerilla gardeners" venture out at night, secretly claiming public or abandoned pieces of land by planting vegetable beds or little flower gardens. But even more importantly, more than twenty so-called "intercultural" or "multicultural gardens" have been founded in the past decade all across Berlin. These projects turn urban wastelands and abandoned lots into gardens. They respond to social divisions in Berlin's neighborhoods and a context in which planners and politicians lament deteriorating urban environments, the emergence of "social hotbeds" and ghettos as well as immigrants' lack of "integration" into German society and culture. Offering space for Germans and immigrants alike to cultivate vegetable gardens in the midst of the city, they instead aspire to create a more cosmopolitan city and promote intercultural exchange and true "integration" of the city's immigrant communities: working in gardens, tending to nature and growing plants these projects hope to transform the ruins and blasted landscapes of today's ethnic divisions and segregated neighborhoods. Gardens, so is the hope, create new forms of social collaboration and inspire people to

look beyond and across hedges, fences and other social boundaries in the city (Wolf 2008). Thus whereas "rubble ecologies" and plants like sticky goosefoot formed an ambivalent cosmopolitan urban nature in the post war period, in the gardens of today's Berlin, the cultivation of plants once again serves as the basis for cosmopolitan dreams – in a context of contested meanings around national belonging and immigration, and the future of urban neighborhoods.

This chapter takes an ethnographic look at some of these popular and highly publicized – as well as less attended, everyday – forms of cultivating plants and preserving urban nature in Berlin. Drawing on interviews and informal conversations with Berliners – immigrants and Germans – who participate in so called "multicultural gardens", as well as owners of allotment gardens and Turkish immigrants who cultivate garden plots in public parks and other (public) spaces, I am interested in exploring different elements in the cultural politics of "nature" in the city. More specifically, I analyze the material and symbolic lives of gardens and the kinds of "natures" they produce: if growing plants and other gardening practices are attempts at reshaping the urban environment, into what kinds of social imaginaries and material lives of specific neighborhoods – neighborhoods that are marked as "problematic" or "troubled" in danger of turning into ghettos – do they intervene? How do different cultural meanings of "integration" – a key term shaping contemporary debates about immigrants and urban neighborhoods in Germany today – get articulated in gardening practices? How do urban gardening and other practices of reshaping urban ecologies and caring for "urban green space" articulate with experiences of marginality and displacement? And finally, in

what ways do relations between humans and plants reshape racial and ethnic boundaries and become the matter of cosmopolitan dreams?

First, I give a brief overview over current popular forms of urban gardening and situate the emergence of allotment gardens and intercultural gardens within a longer history of gardening and the creation of parks in Berlin. Intercultural gardens in particular, engage a logic of integration and therefore need to be seen in a context of current discourses around troubled neighborhoods, the emergence of "ghettos" and immigrant segregation in Berlin. Turning to the boroughs of Kreuzberg and Neukölln in the second part of the chapter, I show how these national discourses around immigration play out in two Berlin neighborhoods where I conducted my fieldwork: here, I show that models of both human and non-human diversity continue to shaped urban policy. In the third section, I track gardening practices and caring for "urban green space" in these two districts. I begin by engaging with a "multicultural garden" and continue with several garden projects of a different sort: a secret garden in a public park, a "Turkish" garden in the gaps of the Berlin wall, and a woman's back yard.

Attending to these garden stories, I argue that the gardeners' diverse activities of growing vegetables and socializing don't neatly fit into multicultural diversity models and the categories of action and forms of "urban care" that urban planners and immigration policies have carved out for immigrants (see also Caglar 2001). Through these garden stories, we can trace the contested meanings of integration: these range from creating home through nature and growing roots in the city, to notions of vegetable integration, to dreams of creating cosmopolitan ties to nature. There is no single story to be told

about gardens: instead, they provide heterogeneous tools for creating a sense of belonging to place, as well as for negotiating existing ideas about urban citizenship and Europeanness. While people hope to wall out history and social conflict through care for plants and urban nature, history keeps creeping back into gardens everywhere. The garden stories I will present are crowded with fences, bureaucracies and conflict. And yet amidst all of that, they also forge unexpected connections and create a sense of belonging to place in a context in which immigrants are often seen as being "out of place". They thus produce new political identities that negotiate existing ideas about citizenship – and often evade existing spatial orderings of the state and local urban policy. Through these gardens stories we can see that, as Shiho Satsuka points out, nature can become a unifying tool for building the nation, yet it also has the "potential for opening up other points of view" (Satsuka 2004: 19).

Vegetable Integration and Creating Home through Nature: A Brief History of Gardens in Berlin

Berlin is a city abundant with gardens. Arriving in Berlin by train, you pass hundreds of rows of green garden plots abundant with flowers, trees and vegetable beds. Neatly landscaped bushes intersperse with patches of grass and trails, and a small garden shack in the middle of each lot. Often, these gardens are perched alongside train tracks, or tucked in between five-story high apartment buildings. Fenced-in, they often feature short, neatly mowed lawns, and here and there, a German flag hanging from the fence or the garden shack. And, if you look closely, you might also find small clay or plastic figurines with a bright red hat peeking through the bushes: the so-called "garden gnome"

has been a constant inhabitant and something like an icon of the German allotment gardens for the past century.[131]

In Berlin, like in many other German cities, these allotment gardens (*Schrebergarten* or *Kleingartenkolonien*)[132] are plentiful: there are 930 allotment garden sites with more than 75,000 individual garden plots not only at the city's edges but spread across the entire city (SenStadt 2010). Since these garden plots are state property, most residents lease them, paying both an initial (2000 -5000 Euro) and an annual fee of about 500 Euro. While regulations of these plots tend to be very detailed – often prescribing the size and design of garden cottages and fences, the amount of time one can stay overnight in the cottage, the diversity and composition of flowers, vegetables, "weeds" and trees, as well as the height of the grass – they are also spaces of diversity. The gardens are not only abundant with flora, but also rich in animal diversity. They provide a habitat for different birds species, as well as insects, amphibians (such as toads and frogs) and vertebrates (such as foxes, mice, gophers, rats and sometimes wild boar).

During my fieldwork between July 2007 and September 2008, I lived in Neukölln, a neighborhood with a high percentage of immigrants. In this district, many allotment gardens are tucked in between apartment buildings, often in close range to

[131] First used as decorative figures in royal gardens, then in bourgeois front gardens (*Vorgärten*) and finally in the allotment gardens, the "garden gnome" (*Gartenzwerg*) became both a key symbol for the allotment gardens and German national identity. Like the allotment garden, the garden gnomes have undergone something like a cultural revival in the 1990s.

[132] Allotment gardens are usually called *Schrebergarten* in Germany, referring to 19th century German physician, Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber, who, concerned about the negative impact of urbanization on children's health, promoted the access of urban youth to land for exercise – either in the city or the countryside.

each other, right next to busy streets or hidden behind a church or in a bend of the small river canal.[133]

Local and national newspapers have reported a "revival of the gardens" and since the 1990s, allotment gardens have become increasingly popular in Berlin – especially among young Germans as well as Turkish immigrants and Turkish Germans of all generations. Thus, whereas until recently, many allotment gardeners were older and retired, more recently, younger neighbors, often with families, have moved in. In this context, journalists, politicians and urban planners have discovered the allotment gardens – once considered as an icon of German national identity – as important tool for integration: as some have pointed out, working together in the garden improves social relations and thus can improve integration (Wolf 2008).[134] Yet, some have also noted that "there are a few ethnic groups" – especially Turkish immigrants – "that isolate themselves from the communal life of the allotment garden associations", risking to turn into "garden ghettos"[135] (Wolf 2008).

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[133] In fact, although there are not very many public green spaces and parks in Neukölln, the borough has a high percentage of allotment gardens – 96 complexes with almost 10,000 individual lots covering 1000 acres (SenStadt 2010). In contrast there are only two complexes in Kreuzberg. Altogether, there are ca. 75,000 individual allotment garden lots in more than 900 allotment complexes in Berlin, covering 4 % of the city space – thus no other city in Germany has as many privately used gardens as Berlin. 75 % of the gardens are property of the state of Berlin and they are administered by the local district authorities. Most residents thus have to apply for a garden plot with the local district authority and lease it for an initial price of 2000-5000 Euro – depending on the size of the lot and its vegetation – and also pay an annual fee of about 500 Euro. With the lease, the gardeners have commit to obey the rules of the Federal Allotment Garden Laws (*Bundeskleingartengesetz*) and the regulations of individual allotment garden associations.

[134] Even the Federation of German Garden Friends, traditionally an association with mostly German members, has recently published a brochure and guide on integration in allotment gardens (*Bundesverband deutscher Gartenfreunde e.V*. 2006). Wolf states: "Integration does not only take place in the much attended "intercultural gardens but also in the one million "normal allotment gardens" in Germany, where about four million people follow their hobbies" (Wolf 2008: 6). Thus he proposes to consider new forms of engagement and integration in unusual places and to look across hedges, fences and other boundaries (see also Spitthöver 2005).

[135] Translation from German, B.S.

In this context, "multicultural" or "intercultural gardens" have become popular across Germany in the past decade. The city of Berlin has been very accommodating to these gardens because of its abundant open spaces and vacant lots. The Berlin Senate adopted a measure that allows district authorities to allocate land for multicultural gardens and to provide equipment to facilitate the start-up (see Müller 2009). In addition, the urban planning department and neighborhood associations such as the "*Quartiersmanagement*" (see below), environmental groups, or church organizations have promoted gardens as an important form of integration. Politicians praise gardening and people's engagement with plants as an opportunity to overcome language barriers and ethnic differences. For example, in 2007, Berlin's "Representative for Integration and Migration"[136] (*Integrationsbeauftragter*) advocated the gardens as an opportunity to let integration "grow":

> "There is more than just fresh air in a garden. There is exchange, people take up responsibility and shape their environment; and you can see people's identification and integration grow."[137]

Thus, in past years more than twenty multicultural gardens have been founded all across the city. These gardens are often situated in immigrant neighborhoods and on former

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[136] This position has existed in Germany since 1978 – formerly under the name "Representative for Foreigners" (Ausländerbaeuftragter) – on the level of cities, states and also on the federal level. Representatives for Integration and Migration usually work for the Ministry for Social Affairs and aim at representing the needs and interests of immigrants in Germany, as well as promoting their integration into German society.

[137] Translation, B.S., from: Der Beauftragte für Integration und Migration. 2007. Berlin – Hauptstadt der interkulturellen Gärten. Pressemitteilung.
http://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/presse/archiv/20070824.1000.84088.html
The original reads: "Im Garten ist mehr als frische Luft. Hier findet Austausch statt, hier wird Eigenverantwortung und Gestaltung praktiziert und man kann Initiative, Identifikation und Integration wachsen sehen" (ibid.).

urban "wastelands" – such as abandoned railway yards, torn down apartment building lots and other vacant pieces of land. For example in the borough of Kreuzberg, four gardens have come to life since 2003, and there are currently two multicultural gardens in Neukölln (see sections below). Located in different parts of the city, the gardens are diverse in participant structure and scope. Yet all of them share a sense of being part of a social movement: the gardens are all members of or at least linked to the nation-wide "Intercultural Foundaton" (*Stiftung Interkultur*).[138] The *Stiftung Interkultur* aims at fostering intercultural contact and ethnic integration through gardening and leisure activity; and it provides support for gardens all over the country. The foundation has been recognized as a paradigm for projects of integration, of civic engagement for tolerance and environmental education by many government agencies.[139] In Germany, an emerging scholarship evaluates and promotes these gardens as promising "social spaces of micro-integration" (Werner 2008).[140]

Christa Müller, currently the head of the garden foundation, highlights that, whereas, according to her, the hopes for ethnic diversity have shattered a long time ago in places like Kreuzberg, the beginnings of a "true" multicultural society and integration are sprouting in the intercultural gardens (Müller 2000).[141] In the gardens, people

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[138] Originally, the foundation – and thus the movement to create intercultural gardens – started out in the city of Göttingen, where it was partially initiated by Bosnian refugee and immigrant women. As enthusiasm grew for the gardens, they began to sprout in many other cities across Germany and the *Stiftung Interkultur* was created.

[139] In the past years, the foundation and some of its founders have won many awards, such the "Award for Integration" of immigrants by the German Federal President, the Award for Innovative Environmental Education by the Federal Environmental Ministry or the Award for Civic Engagement by the Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance (see www.Urbane-landwirtschaft.de).

[140] See also Rosol 2006; and Meyer-Rentschhausen 2000.

[141] As one gardener proclaims in a local radio interview: "Multicultural is parallel, inter- is with each other- that's the difference!" ("Wurzeln Schlagen in der Fremde, July 4, 2009, rbb) (transl: *"Multikulti ist parallel,*

exchange seeds, share recipes, cook and barbecue together, and they bake bread in a communal oven. Through sharing knowledge and growing vegetables – that some people know from home –people literally "grow roots abroad" (*Wurzeln in der Fremde schlagen*) (Müller 2000). Thus intercultural gardens are

> "successful integration projects because they encourage participation and provide scope for formative action. Not only the soil but also the heterogeneous social community, the neighborhood where the garden is situated, must be turned over and refashioned" (Müller 2007).

By mutual sharing of knowledges and learning from each other, people experience themselves as competent and they do not have to feel like their presence is being questioned or unwelcome in the gardens. As Müller writes: "Nature does not value, nature creates home" (*Natur bewertet nicht, Natur beheimatet*) (Müller 2009). For her, urban agriculture provides a wide range of possibilities: it creates the experience of home and freedom, it puts people in touch with nature amidst a city full of consumption; it intervenes in a world dominated by the market, industrial agriculture and passive consumption – a world in which the bases of subsistence have been removed from people. Thus, many intercultural gardeners see spaces of vegetable gardening as new forms of political action, they use the gardens as base from which to trigger and shape change in the neighborhood, for self empowerment and to help reshape urban nature. Hence, gardens intervene in a world in which the connection to the natural world has been lost in everyday life, and in which bio-diversity diminishes day by day (Müller 2009).

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inter ist miteinander, das ist der Unterschied"). Accordingly for Müller, integration is a process in which, "in the real sense of the word," "participants negotiate their reality with others and appropriate the new developments that arise in the process" (Müller 2007).

In this world of disconnection, gardens are places "of grounding, and of becoming and passing" a "treasure trove of sense/meaning of life" (ibid.).[142] They fulfill a desire for freedom, empowerment, and a sense of connection to community, nature and spirituality. In this sense, intercultural gardens are imagined as different from both allotment gardens – privately used plots, with clearly fenced-off boundaries – as well as public parks, in which people usually do not take care of the landscape or reclaim it.

The popularity of multicultural gardens, allotment gardens, and other practices of urban gardening needs to be situated in the context of other current institutionalized and popularized forms of attending to nature in Berlin – such as the emergence of urban nature day, guerilla gardening, and urban nature viewing practices such as the tour of weeds mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. But their popularity can also be understood within a longer history of gardening, seen as a key element of German national identity.

Like in many other countries across Europe, allotment gardens emerged in Germany in the mid 19th century as an idea by political rulers, municipal administrations, and welfare organizations to confront and control poverty and hunger. In many cities, so- called paupers' gardens (*Armengärten*), and "alcove colonies"(*Laubenkolonien*) were created in urban areas. Replacing financial support for the poor, they aimed at allowing people to self-sustain by growing fruit and vegetables (SenStadt 2010). Also, originating in Paris and Luxembourg in the mid 19th century, workers' gardens were facilitated by the Red Cross across the city of Berlin at the turn of the century. In this context, the

[142] My translation.

gardens were intended to provide refuge for the poor from the crowded and dusty apartments (the "*Mietskasernen*") – in which they lived. They provided both space for workers to recreate and grow their own vegetables but were also a key strategy to strengthen the family and to distract male workers from going to taverns (ibid.).[143] Often referred to as "colonies", some of these gardens carried names of German colonies at the time, such as "Togo" or "Kamerun" (van der Leyden 2002) – and still do so today.[144]

In contrast, during the Nazi regime, gardening became a privilege reserved to "honorable comrades of German blood" and all Jewish people were barred from the allotment gardens (Stih/Schnock cited in Mandel 2008: 123). This happened at a time when concepts of "nativeness" and home/"*Heimat*"[145] had a high currency and garden landscapes were promoted as expressions of racial difference and cultural superiority of the "Germanic people": landscape architects such as Seifert, State Attorney for the Landscape, in the National Socialist party – followed the ideology of "blood and soil",

[143] In fact, in Neukölln, in 1920 representatives of the central association of workers and gardeners (Zentralverbund für Arbeiter und Schrebergärtner) called for the dissolution of the division between the workers and the Schrebergardens (SenStadt 2010).

[144] In 2004, antiracist and refugee activists organized an "anticolonial walking tour" through Berlin that included a walk through the "African quarter" in Northern Berlin (named as such during the height of German colonial expansion at the end of the 19th century) and a visit to the garden colony " Togo" (since1939). During the tour activists spoke about the colonial history of individual street names in Berlin, colonial euphoria during Nazism, the current political situation in Togo, as well as the situation of Togolese and other African refugees in Berlin and Brandenburg (see http://de.indymedia.org/2004/04 /81220 .shtml).

[145] The notion of "*Heimat*" has a long and complex history in Germany. Both meaning home and homeland, it has been a key term in German national discourse. *Heimat* indicates a particular relation between humans and their environment: the idea that Germanness is rooted in the land – via ties of (blood) heritage and a particular relation to the land. Different natural landscapes such as forests, mountains and rural landscapes, but also domesticated nature such as the garden, have been saturated with national meanings within narratives of Heimat and these landscapes were considered part of home/*Heimat*, and thus homely.

thus echoing the Nazi imperative to cleanse the "German landscape" of foreign elements (Gröning/ Wolschke-Bulmahn 1992).[146]

Both during the economic crisis after WWI and after WWII, the allotment gardens served an important function by providing food to an impoverished urban population. When much of Berlin was destroyed after the bombing towards the end of WWII, many people also used them as permanent residence (SenStadt 2010). In East Germany, allotment gardens were encouraged by the state in the 1980s as a supplement to collectivized farming (Fulbrook 1991: 236).

But even beyond this history of allotment gardens, the popularity of gardens and domestic green spaces can be traced throughout the 20th century in Germany. As Gröning and Schneider argue, the idea of the garden as "amplification of the house" emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and triggered debates between urban architects, landscape designers and garden users. Whereas gardens were a privilege of a few who owned villas at the edges of the city before the turn of the century, the situation radically changed in the course of the 20th century: today, about 30% of the urban population in Germany has a garden – either a house with a private garden or an allotment garden – thus, in spite of class difference, gardens have a high social currency in Germany (Gröning/Schneider 1999: 150):

> "Town gardens – indeed any spaces in which people gardened in town – are not just diminutive or undistinguished objects, they are the scenes and products of a network of social, physical and symbolic orderings of private living space. They

[146] Landscape architects and garden designers used the concept of nativeness to build gardens. The garden became an expression of racial superiority and the understanding of and closeness to nature by the Nordic people. In their article, "The Mania for Native Plants", Gröning/Wolschke-Bulmahn (1992) point out that, in line with Hitler's statement that the German people needed to be cleansed of "foreign influence", the Nazis sought to cleanse the "German landscape" of disharmonious foreign elements.

> are microcosms of everyday life – rich and largely unexplored testimonies to the habitual orderings of house and garden. Above all, they are scenes of intense personalization" (Longstaff-Gowan 1993, quoted in Gröning/Schneider 1999: 150).

Yet this emerging attention to urban nature and gardens in the city does not have a simple origin and cannot be easily explained with previous German fascinations with nature, and the longer history of urban gardening. Rather, I argue it is the result of a complex amalgam of changing conservation practices that have also entered city policies, Germany's self-fashioning as one of the most environmentally oriented countries, as well as the high currency of global environmental practices and concerns, and international movements and critiques of industrial agriculture and consumption practices. In addition, as Marit Rosol's has pointed out, the current trend towards civic engagement in green spaces is also a consequence of a "crisis of green space" in Berlin – a crisis that can be traced back to the fiscal crisis in Berlin in the 1990s and increasing retreat of the social welfare state: in the past decade, the state has increasingly withdrawn and now subcontracts the maintenance and care of public green space to private companies and ever more relies on the initiative of individual residents (Rosol 2006).

But most of all the dream of the garden speaks to current discourses around urban decay, "failure" and national anxieties around immigration, impurity and racial segregation. As David Teague points out, although they are usually treated as separate phenomena, urban desires for nature need to be connected with debates about urban spaces of otherness (or "savage spaces"), such as white fears of the "ghetto" or appeals

to "urban wilderness" (Bennett/Teague 1999: 6).[147] The recent turn to nature – and the popularity of gardens – therefore needs to be situated within current debates about urban planning and immigration, as well as the re-emergence of national anxieties about spatial segregation and "ghettos" in the post-unification context. The two Berlin boroughs of Kreuzberg and Neukölln have been at the very center of these national concerns about "troubled" neighborhoods. After revisiting their histories and trajectories in national imaginaries about "immigrant spaces", I then turn to several garden stories and ask: in what ways does urban gardening and other practices of attending to nature and plants in the city rearticulate – both in official rhetoric and in daily practice – discourses about immigration, race and integration? And how does caring for urban green space and for broader urban ecologies articulate with the experience of marginality and with cosmopolitan desires?

The City's Body: Ghettos, Social Hotspots and Parallel Societies

> "*Brennpunkt*" = combustion point, hotbed or hotspot, skid row, or troubled neighborhood
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> hot·bed (hŒt"bµd") n. 1. An environment conducive to vigorous growth or development, especially of something undesirable.
>
> hot·spot (hŒt"spŒt") n. 1. An area in which there is dangerous unrest or hostile action.[148]

[147] Teague describes middle class white suburban families' illusions to escape the cultural and environmental contexts they inhabit: "The same solipsistic ideology that drives a family to be terrified to send their children to mingle with children of other ethnicities… also drives the family to demand insularity and autonomy that characterize suburban life" (Teague 1999: 166).
[148] See, LEO, German English Dictionary (http://dict.leo.org/)

Kreuzberg and Neukölln are two adjacent boroughs located in the Southeast of Berlin. Since the early 19th century, when meadowlands still covered most of their area, thus placing them outside of the city walls, these two districts have experienced shifting borders and the re-makings of urban-rural relations. Even before the city's expansion, Kreuzberg was a crossing point of many migrations: in the 17th century, Huguenot Protestant refugees sought asylum in Kreuzberg from persecution by French Catholics and built elaborate "French" vegetable gardens and orchards (Düspohl 2009). In the 19th century, immigrants from Silesia, Pomerania and Eastern Prussia who had lost their land settled in the city in search for work (Mandel 2008: 151). Since the beginning of the 20th century, when Berlin's population had grown to almost 2 million (from about 200,000 in the early 1800s), both districts were thus inhabited by immigrants and also many working class residents who had recently migrated to the city from the countryside in search of work (Mandel 2008).[149] After World War II, the two districts lay within the American sector along the edges of the Berlin Wall, dividing the city into two halves and cutting West Berlin off from the surrounding countryside. Because of the proximity of the Berlin Wall, almost all the streets in the North-Eastern parts of both districts were dead ends. During this time, many neighborhoods in these districts became the new home of so-called "guest workers" from Turkey, Greece, and Spain. Because of low housing rates, these migrant workers settled in the two districts situated in the "shadow of the wall" in the 1970s and 1980s.[150] Shaped by this history of immigration, especially the North

[149] See for example Strohmeyer, 2000, and Bernet 2004.
[150]In the history of both boroughs, we can therefore see the traces of some of the social and economic transformations after WWII in Germany: the history of immigration form Southern Europe and Turkey

Eastern part of Kreuzberg become famous for both its multicultural population, but also a bohemian and "alternative" lifestyle, shaped by the Berlin punk rock movement and the emergence of alternative subcultures in the 1970s when many young West Germans moved to a divided Berlin to avoid military service and take advantage of the heavily subsidized economy and cultural scene.[151]

Today, many Turkish and Arab immigrants of the second and third generation own small family businesses in the area – from vegetable stores and bakeries to electronics shops, cafes and *Döner* Kebab stands – one of the most popular foods among Berliners today.[152] Often referred to as "Little Istanbul", one Kreuzberg neighborhood covering several large-scale apartment blocks surrounding a local underground train station in the area of the *Kottbusser Gate* (the former Southern city gate, often referred to as the *Kotti*) is especially famous locally for its "multicultural" and "anarchist history". During the division of the city, the Berlin wall was just four blocks away. A huge, eleven-story apartment complex at the *Kottbusser Gate* was built in the 70s. Originally imagined to be a new modern, European utopia by architects and urban planners, it today is considered an eye-sore, a ruin of modernist dreams gone awry, housing up to a thousand people – many of whom are Turkish, Greek, Kurdish and Bosnian immigrants.[153]

Just a few blocks from the *Kottbusser Gate*, a weekly "Turkish market" marks the edge of both districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln. Situated along one of the few green

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between the 1960s and the 1980s, growing unemployment and de-industrialization after unification and the current retreat of the welfare state.

[151] In Kreuzberg, there is also a long history of squatting bestowing it with fame across the world.

[152] For a discussion of the cultural history of the Döner sandwich, see for example Seidel-Pielen 2007.

[153] In this area, about 80% of the local residents are non-German citizens.

spaces in the area – the *Landwehr* canal, built in the mid 19th century by Lenne[154] – the market bustles with vegetable stands, pastries and breads, household supplies, fabrics, and the fragrant aromas of spices and scents of freshly baked *börek*.[155] Many Berliners stroll along the canal's banks, and do their shopping twice a week at the market. Pushing through the crowds in the isles of the vegetable stands, Turkish women pull shopping carts filled with vegetables behind them, while sellers shout out the newest sale prices in a mix of Turkish and German. On the canal, tourists float by in boats. Microphone amplified voices of tour guides emanate through the trees from the banks.

Together, the two boroughs cover an area of about 20 square miles – of cobble stone streets, with housing ranging from run down 19th century apartment blocs, to 60s and 70s style apartments, to 18th century preserved village structures, and freshly renovated apartments with stucco ornaments in the Western edges of Kreuzberg. A few green spaces and parks are perched in between.

Since the 1990s, while history was remade and Berlin's formerly divided downtown was reconstructed as the new cultural center of the next millennium, many

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[154] The canal was built between 1845 and 1850 according to the plans of Prussian gardener and landscape architect Peter Joseph Lenne. Its name "*Landwehr*" means something like "defensive dyke" and refers to the former fortification area in front of the walls at the city's edges, marking the outer boundaries of the city and shoring it off from the surrounding countryside. Connecting the upper Spree river in the East with the Lower part of the river in the West, and running parallel, south to the river, the canal was conceptualized to help ease boat traffic and the transport of goods on the Spree. Situated outside the former city walls, it also served as an overflow channel to the adjacent meadows South of the city as they were drained. The canal thus was an important catalyst for the expansion of the city: it enabled the transport of building materials to the edges of the city. Whereas the canal today is a popular area to recreate among Berliners and is also a famous tourist destination, it was hardly noticed by the local population at the time it was built because it lay outside of the city walls. As Mr Wirths, a local lifetime Neukölln and Kreuzberg resident and former tour guide told me once: "We are not even in Berlin here!" Until fairly recently, Kreuzberg and Neukölln used to be located outside the city walls. Finally, the canal is also famous for a local murder during the Weimar Republic. When she was killed, Rosa Luxemburg's body was thrown into the canal in January, 1919.

[155] Middle Eastern phyllo dough pastry dish, filled with ground meat, feta and or vegetables.

neighborhoods in Kreuzberg and Neukölln, just a few blocks away from the new center, were labeled as urban wastelands and spaces of otherness within the newly forming re-unified nation. Especially neighborhoods such as the Kottbusser Gate, and Northern Neukölln have entered national news as *Problembezirke* ("problematic areas") or as so called *soziale Brennpunkte* ("hotbeds/spots", "combustion points")[156] – and thus as places of high unemployment (in many neighborhoods more than 30%) and poverty, crowded with drug dealers, Turkish gangsters and run-down urban environments.[157] More recently, in Northern Neukölln, conflicts at a local high school triggered a nation-wide debate about violence and integration of Turkish immigrant youth. Teachers at the Rütli school wrote a letter to the Berlin Senate demanding (security) assistance and threatening to otherwise close down the school because they could not deal with student troublemakers anymore.[158] As a consequence, Neukölln entered the national imagination as one of the nation's most dangerous boroughs.

Since the Rütli school incident, debates about Turkish youth loathing education and being ignorant towards public rules and the German language – thus resisting integration into German society – have proliferated. "Education" has become a key site of attention in discourses on immigration: they have become code words in which the

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156 The term has been loosely defined by the Association of German Cities and Towns ("Deutscher Städtetag" – an association of all city and town administrations in Germany. It refers to residential districts in which a conglomeration of factors "negatively impacts" inhabitants' opportunities and living conditions (Deutscher Städtetag 1979).

157 Whereas there is a long history of scholarship on Kreuzberg (see e.g. Lang 1996, Mandel 2008), with a lot of publications focusing on its Turkish immigrant communities, only recently have German sociologists, anthropologists and urban planners discovered Neukölln as a research site. Many of these studies highlight Neukölln as a "problematic" immigrant district (see e.g. Hauessermann 2000).

158 For months, national news was packed with reports about Turkish youth and the Rütli school. Yet, in the midst of the "school scandal", another scandal surfaced when it became clear that some journalists reporting on the school had actually paid teenagers to "act like gangsters" and to throw objects out of their classrooms in front of the camera to illustrate the point.

white middle class and local political actors mark immigrant social spaces as deficient and as in need of integration. While growing unemployment, poverty and crime has been a reality in some areas in Kreuzberg and Neukölln and in many other Berlin neighborhoods, interpretations of what the sources of these social problems are vary. While some discuss immigrant marginalization and discrimination, others locate the source in immigrants themselves. From this point of view, both boroughs – and especially Neukölln, with the Rütli school and its surrounding neighborhoods where many non-European immigrants live – are paradigmatic for the failures of multiculturalism. Thus Kreuzberg and Neukölln have mutated into the most highly contested and visible immigrant spaces in Germany. And while the images about these boroughs remain contested in many ways, they have moved these spaces to the center of current national debates about integration, exclusion, "ghettoization", "parallel worlds" and crime.

National newspapers and TV describe both areas as "ethnic enclaves", "problematic districts", or "hot beds", and predominantly "Turkish spaces", threatening to turn into "ghettos" and parallel societies. References to Black ghettos in America and the French *banlieues* after the riots at the edges of Paris in 2005 abound. Together, these allusions illustrate that these spaces are imagined as dangerous spaces of otherness. Thus these neighborhoods as physical environments become markers of immutable difference and thus racialization. Interestingly, Germany's history of Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust remains unmentioned and lingers as a specter. And although cultural imaginaries about immigrant ghettos have re-emerged across Europe, they need to be

situated in a specific national context of discourses around immigration and integration in Germany.[159]

In the last decade, immigration politics in Germany, have become synonymous with integration (Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 143) – at least symbolically.[160] Conferences such as the Islam conference and *Integrationsgipfel* ("Integration Summit", 2006) have been organized since 2006 – highly publicized events that brought different political and social actors together – ranging from unions to immigrant organizations, or political parties and entrepreneurs – with the aim to discuss and solve "problems of immigrant integration" and to develop a "national integration plan". While efforts to integrate immigrant communities appear to aim at social inclusion, the integration metaphor is full of contradictions. Although it addresses questions of past exclusions, it mainly focuses on immigrants' inability to "integrate" and thus locates "the immigrant problem" in their failure (Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 137, 149).[161] Consequently, "integration has [..] become an official concept of political control of immigrants" (Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 143), as well as the key metaphor that frames immigration in the public arena, in policy, as well as in much institutional and daily practice.

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[159] See for example the work of Loïc Wacquant who tracks and critiques "territorial stigmatization" and the moral panic about the banlieues of Paris as "ghettos" in France in the context of neo-liberal capitalism (Wacquant 2008), as well as Paul Silverstein's *Algeria in France* (Silverstein 2004).

[160] See for example Ronneberger and Tsianos, who, in their genealogy of post WW II immigration discourse, make this argument (Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009).

[161] For a more detailed discussion of these entanglements of integration with the history of post WWII immigration, notions of the nation, a technocratic model of the welfare state and its "integrative" function, see Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009 and Lanz 2007. Until 1965, Germany did not have an immigration law and only relied on the "Ausländerpolizeiverordnung" (AVPO) of the Nazi state in 1938 (Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 139).

In this context, many projects such as the so called *Quartiersmanagement* – a city development and integration project funded partly by the "Social City" Program of the EU and the federal German government – aim at fighting racial segregation, poverty and urban decay in "problematic urban neighborhoods", or "areas with special need for development" such as the Kottbusser Gate in Kreuzberg and North Neukölln (see Marcuse 2006)[162]. These initiatives aspire to improve the "quality of life" in neighborhoods by networking and funding neighborhood projects such as private lessons for school kids, violence prevention programs, art projects, neighborhood clean-up days, street tree-planting activities or funding for school outings (for example to local forest schools). Since the Social City Program has been implemented, some neighborhoods have changed significantly: during the time when I lived in the proximity of the Rütli school, many students, artists and gallery owners moved into the area, new cafes opened and rents rose significantly, making it increasingly difficult for long-term based and poorer residents to afford to live in the area.

Ethnic segregation and spatial isolation have thus become key concerns (Mandel 2008; Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 142) in official policy, media and urban planning around integration – and in it, the notions of "parallel society", "social hotspot", "problematic district" and immigrant "ghetto" are often used almost interchangeably. What these notions share is the assumption that Muslim immigrants in particular have

[162] For a detailed discussion of the Social City program and its genealogy, see Marcuse 2006. The term "area with special need for development" (*Gebiet mit besonderem Entwicklungsbedarf*) is an administrative term in Germany, used for neighborhoods that are marked by social segregation, poverty, high unemployment and derelict environments such as urban wastelands. Since the implementation of the Social City program in the 1990s, the designation of certain neighborhoods as "special need for development" has provided the basis for funding and the introduction of social and economic programs to fight poverty and improve their residents' social opportunities.

been unable and in fact are not *willing* to integrate into "German society": they have created separate and enclosed social spaces and physical environments – spaces in which the state is not present or at least is weakened, spaces that are dangerous. However, state interventions are far from absent in immigrant neighborhoods. To the contrary, spatial policies in Germany had a strong impact on the urbanization process and the shaping of specific neighborhoods (Mandel 2008: 89-91; Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009): Whereas during the Nazi era, Jews were forced to "segregate" and to live in "ghettos", post-WWII residence regulations have attempted to "balance" populations and to "distribute" non-EU immigrants – and especially Turkish immigrants – across many neighborhoods in Berlin (Mandel 2008: 89; Ronneberger/Tsianos 2009: 144). As a consequence, Turkish immigrants made up about 20 % of the population in districts such as Kreuzberg, that nevertheless were to be perceived as predominantly "Turkish" or "immigrant spaces". The underlying assumption in these post WW II immigration and residence policies has thus been that spatial segregation has an "explosive" quality that ultimately threatens to destroy society and that must be countered by creating a "spatial balance". This has also deeply affected the city's approach to create "diversity" and "spatial balance" through its urban greenery policies. A brochure on "Green Berlin" recently published by the City Department for Urban Development, reads:

> "From an urban planning perspective, a city quarter that is supposed to function and attract permanent residents requires above all a balanced blend of living and commerce, of residential, transportation and green spaces and, not least, a heterogeneous population in which old and young and different nationalities can live together. The qualification and upgrading of public spaces is an essential objective of urban development and it benefits the residents of all districts of the city. Green and recreational areas are of elementary importance especially in densely built up inner city areas. They reduce noise and pollution, thereby improving the quality of life. [..] Not least, green spaces also have a

> social function as meeting places insofar as they contribute to the integration of all segments of the population." (Green Berlin, Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development, 2009: 55)]

This logic of "diversity" – both in terms of human and non-human structures of the city – is invoked by politicians and summarized in words such as "*Abschottung*" ("walling off"), "*Toleranzschwellen*" ("tolerance levels"), "*Brennpunkt*" ("hot bed, combustion point") and "*Belastungsgrenzen*" ("impact limits") – terms that invoke images of fire, impact and walls and suggest that "immigrants are walling themselves off from the rest of society", reaching "thresholds of tolerance" and the "limits of impact".

These fears about immigrant separation and the emergence of ghettos certainly do not remain uncontested.[163] Yet they are situated within a longer history of urban imaginaries and spatial policies in Berlin and Germany more generally: 19th century anxieties about industrialization and urbanization, glorifications of the countryside as space of purity versus the city as "racially impure" during WWII; Nazi policies to segregate and cleanse the city from "foreign elements"; East and West German spatial policies around immigration during Berlin's division; as well as the remaking of Berlin after "unification". Finally, the 1990s marked a period of nationalist euphoria and a huge construction boom in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin wall. Hopes were high for Berlin to become a new European capital and a "global city" (Till 2005, Sassen 2001). Yet, in the face of an overestimated growth of the real estate market and an abundance of failed large-scale construction projects, the city plunged into a fiscal crisis

[163] In fact, many local young Berliners take pride in living in these districts that are also often seen as "hip" and "cosmopolitan". Moreover, Berlin's mayor recently praised Berlin as multicultural city and, referring to the relatively high unemployment rates, called the city "poor but sexy".

in the late 1990s.[164] In addition, unemployment rates and poverty rose among many Berliners, affecting immigrants and asylum seekers in particular (Lanz 2007: 124). It was in this context that concerns grew around growing social inequalities, spatial segregation, as well as the emergence of "ghettos".[165]

Most recently, the debate about urban decay and ethnic enclaves has taken a new twist and has somewhat intensified. In the fall of 2009, the publication of an interview with Thilo Sarrazin, former center-left Social Democratic finance minister of Berlin, as well as the publication of his book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* ("Germany does away with itself"), triggered a wave of heated dispute across Germany (Sarrazin 2010).[166] In the interview, Sarrazin painted a gloomy picture about the future of Berlin and its "underclass problem". Lamenting a "mentality of state dependence" in the crumbling capital, he accused the city's Turkish and Arab immigrant communities in particular for depending on the state by not being productive or taking "part in the normal economic cycle" (*Lettre International* 2009). According to him, "A large number of Arabs and Turks in this city, whose numbers have grown thanks to the wrong policies, have no productive

[164] See also Chapter 3. For a more detailed discussion of the construction boom and "metropole" dreams of the 1990s in Berlin see Rada (1997), as well as Lanz' discussion of the effects of Berlin's economic restructuring for immigrants living in the city after 1989 (Lanz 2007: 120ff).
[165] In this context, images of decay and vermin abound. For example, in 2008, a member of the business-friendly Free Democrat party in the Mitte district of Berlin was quoted suggesting "new job opportunities" for Berlin's unemployed: addressing the city's growing and displaced rat population (after years of construction and digging in the center of Berlin), he suggested that unemployed people who otherwise "collect bottles, could get one euro for every dead rat." (*Spiegel International* 12/16/2008)
[166] For a more detailed discussion of the publication of Sarrazin's book, see Chapter 3. Sarrazin was Berlin's finance minister for seven years, until spring 2009. During this time, he took strong measures to confront the city's high debts of 70 billion Euro and to control public "spending". Sarrazin also became known for defending the revised unemployment benefit system "Hartz IV" by calculating that one could have a balanced diet for 4 Euro per day, as well as for complaining about unemployed people wandering Berlin streets in jogging pants all day.

function except selling fruit and vegetables" (ibid).[167] The same would be true for the "German underclass" who – like Turkish and Arab immigrants – used to work in state subsidized industries, such as cigarette factories and electronics, he continued. All of them had lost their jobs due to the economic restructuring after unification as well as increasing outsourcing of manufacturing in the West.[168] Yet unlike the "German underclass" and unlike other immigrant groups, such as Vietnamese and Russians, Sarrazin saw the Arab and Turkish communities as the source of the problem since they were truly *unwilling* and *unable* to integrate: he claimed, the first immigrant generation who has lived in Germany for more than forty years hardly speaks any German and is unwilling to do so – and their children do badly in school and are later unwilling to work, while reproducing at higher rates than any other group (*Lettre International* 2009). In addition, Berlin's Muslim communities produced nothing but "headscarf girls".[169] "Berlin will" therefore "never be saved by Berliners" (*Deutsche Welle* 2009). So the story went.[170]

But Sarrazin's narrative and the debates surrounding it also had a spatial dimension to it. It compared the city to a body that is unable to sustain itself: whereas there is some productive circulation, there is also a superfluous twenty percent that is disconnected from the economy and physical environment of the city, depends on

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167 See translation *Spiegel International*, Oct 1, 2009.
168 Sarrazin saw this as a European phenomenon because according to his story, much of the cheap unskilled labor, formerly performed by immigrants, has been transferred to non-European countries.
169 The full quote reads as the following: "I have no respect for someone who does not do anything, who depends on the state but does not live by its rules, who does not take care of their children's education and constantly produces small headscarf girls." (*Lettre International*, translation, B.S.)
170 Sarrazin also blamed the predominance of "leftist attitudes" and the strong presence of the 1968 generation for Berlin's crumbling status. According to his history of economic stagnation, Berlin had never "fully recovered from the loss of the Jewish elite in arts and business during the 1930s" (*Deutsche Welle* 2009). In addition, the divided status of Berlin during the Cold War did not allow the city to ever recover. While many skilled workers left the city, unskilled migrant laborers as well as leftists came.

external help and therefore of no use. According to Sarrazin, this "blown up infrastructure" (*Lettre International* 2009) could be seen in the breadth of the city's streets; and its wastefulness could be traced in Turkish and Arab spatial practices and their reliance on the state: producing tons of garbage every weekend, they barbecue in the city's parks – especially the Tiergarten – and the city cleaning services have to pick up all of it up each Monday (*Lettre International* 2009). According to Sarrazin, the district of Neukölln in particular, was "problematic" in this respect: thirty percent of all people who live there depend on unemployment, whereas the average rate in Germany was only eight percent. Thus, it could be compared to Harlem in the 1950s and its "increasing atmosphere of despair". And interestingly, for Sarrazin, the transnational connections that rural immigrants from Turkish Anatolia created – many of whom migrated to Germany during the early years of the "guest worker contracts" – were to blame: thus his main concern was that Turks in Berlin marry a Turkish boy from Anatolia or brought their bride from an Anatolian village to Germany (*Lettre International* 2009). From this perspective, immigrants colonized the local city space, as well as the national body, by reproducing and clinging on to traditional religious beliefs and their transnational ties to rural communities, while being dependent on the state and not caring for the local environment.[171] The solution to this, in Sarrazin's eyes, would be to curb further immigration of "unskilled workers", to discontinue allowing residence permits for

[171] "Die Türken erobern Deutschland genauso, wie die Kosovaren das Kosovo erobert haben: durch eine höhere Geburtenrate" (*Lettre International* 2009).

partners and children, as well as disallow public assistance for immigrants—even those who have worked in Germany for more than four decades.

The publication of Sarrazin's interview reignited a national debate about Turkish and Arab immigrant communities in Germany and their resistance to integration. Many politicians across the political spectrum criticized Sarrazin for fostering racism. Several Green party members asked him to step down from his position as member of the Board of Directors of the German Federal Bank and some sued him for sedition. Furthermore, Sarrazin's current employer, the Bundesbank – Germany's Federal Bank – was quick to distance itself from his statements. In December 2009, prosecutors dropped the lawsuit against Sarrazin. Nevertheless, for several weeks, images of "immigrant spaces" in certain neighborhoods in Neukölln and Kreuzberg were circulated over and over on TV – together, they entangled a discourse about changing global economics, with racialized notions of urban space infiltrated by uneducated rural migrants unwilling to work, speak German and walling themselves off in derelict neighborhoods – and thus to "integrate".

In this and the context of previous debates about troubled neighborhoods in Kreuzberg and Neukölln, much attention – both in public debate as well as everyday talk– has not only focused on crime but also turned towards the physical urban environment and its streets. In early 2008, the mayor of Neukölln stated that garbage as well as too much dog shit on sidewalks are the cause for this district turning into a "ghetto". Thus many local initiatives – funded by the social city programme – aimed to

clean up the neighborhoods from dog shit and trash on the streets, such as left behind computers, TVs, couches, and other kinds of furniture.

These images of crime and run-down urban environments invoke what Andrew Light has called the metaphoric transformation of urban space into a kind of wilderness marked as "alien" or savage space", and a space of despair: the unknown at the edge of civilization that comes to haunt imaginations of the city and that, with its emphasis on a language of separation, savagery and European middle class rationality stands in the way of understanding the complexities of urban life (Light 1999: 140).[172]

These debates about urban ghettos then go beyond what some scholars have called the "new racism" in Europe: a form of racism that replaces direct references to biological metaphors with cultural terms. Instead, of simply relying on notions of homogeneous culture, the idea of racial difference assumes a spatial definition in the very image of the urban ghetto in Europe.[173] Place thus becomes a basis for stigmatization. Furthermore, the image of the pathological immigrant family, stuck in the urban ghetto, makes other forces that deprive communities of sustainable environments and futures become invisible (see also Bennett 1999: 176).

It is in this context of debates about urban ghettos and their pervasiveness that the urban gardening projects have to be situated. In the past decade, many multicultural or intercultural gardens have been founded all across Berlin. Since 2003, four gardens

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[172] Although Light refers to the American context, I would argue that his analysis rings true for European contexts as well –notions of non European immigrant neighborhoods as "urban wilderness" are deeply entangled with ideas of racial difference. See also Bennett (1999: 176) on anti-urbanism.

[173] See e.g. Thomas Sugrue's understanding of "racial geography" in post war America: i.e. "many racist distinctions between black and white citizens were displaced onto supposedly more neutral observations of the differences between black and white neighborhoods." (Bennett 1999: 174)

have came to life in Kreuzberg, and there are currently two in Neukölln – one of which I will now turn to.

A Garden in between a Mosque, a Cemetery and an Airport

At the Western edges of Neukölln, tucked in between the famous Tempelhof airport,[174] a large park called "Rabbit Heath" (Hasenheide), a Christian and a Muslim cemetery, and one of Berlin's biggest mosques, the "Berlin Turk *Şehitlik Camii*",[175] there is a small plot of land called the "Pyramid Garden". The garden was opened in spring 2007. It is tended to by Germans, as well as Turkish and Iranian immigrants who live in the neighborhood adjacent to the cemetery. The official purpose of the garden project is, according to its founders and a small brochure handed out to all newcomers, to create a place of neighborliness, of togetherness, a place of encounter between different cultures – in a neighborhood with many immigrants and little public green space. Also, the project aims at allowing different local organizations to meet and network. But above all, it aspires to integrate people from different cultures and all ages in its project and to help restore the damaged image of Neukölln as a "problematic district". When I began my fieldwork in 2007, Neukölln's reputation had especially taken a hit after the debates around the Rütli

[174] Tempelhof airport was built in 1927, expanded into one of Europe's largest airports during the Nazi era and became famous during the Berlin airlift after the war.

[175] *Şehitlik Camii* was built in 1985 and carries its name from the adjacent Muslim cemetery, built in 1863 as a cemetery for Ottoman diplomats (*şehit*, in Turkish, means martyr, or soldier cemetery). The building thus references a history of Muslim sojourning in Berlin and Prussia that does not begin with the immigration of the so called Turkish guest workers in the 1960s and 70s but goes much further back into the history of the Ottoman Empire and its intimate connections to Europe. Today, many former "guest workers" who live in Kreuzberg and Neukölln, use the mosque for daily prayers, socializing and also for funeral ceremonies. However, it is not possible to bury the dead in the adjacent cemetery anymore, and so the deceased have to be either buried in the Gatow cemetery that is the only cemetery in Berlin that allows burial in a pall instead of the Christian coffin. About 90 % of all Muslim families living in Berlin decide to send their deceased "back home" (see Rode 2009).

School in the northern part of the district.[176] Like other integration projects (such as "Campus Rütli" and the *Quartiersmanagement*), the multicultural garden at Columbiadamm was promoted as a "paradigm of integration" in local media, as well as by politicians. In this respect, many thus considered it as part of a new path in Neukölln: a path away from "chaos" and "parallel worlds" towards "togetherness" and integration.

When I joined to participate in the garden's activities in summer 2007, things were just getting started. Some of the vegetable beds had already been planted. Flowers and vegetables were staring to grow in them: beans, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, potatoes, peppers, basil and tarragon. Sunflowers were towering over a bed of squashes and radishes and a few other herbs were peeking through the ground. On one side of the vegetable beds, a few weeds were thriving tall. As everyone had cleared the piece of land from the many weeds prospering on it, one of the gardeners decided to leave a few: they reminded him of the rubble plants growing after the war when he was a child.

[176] A few years after the "scandal", the students now had created their own clothes brand called "Rütli" and a huge million euro financed project to remake the school into "Campus Rütli" had begun – displacing a community of gardeners that had been gardening in a garden "colony" called "hand in hand" since the mid 19th century, adjacent to the school.

Figure 6: rubble plants (photograph by author)

Until recently, the plot of land had been maintained by the local office of green space as a storage space for equipment that was used for landscaping the adjacent cemeteries. Due to budges cuts and lay-offs, the storage space was shut down, merged with another one in Neukölln and the equipment for the cemetery was moved to this other location. Surrounded by red colored brick walls on three sides, and a little fence bordering to the cemetery, the garden now covered half an acre of land. Towards the cemetery, you could see a little grove of trees and shrubs, and peeking through them, the old crooked graveyard stones of the cemetery. Towards the left, the mosque's minarets were peering through the trees and towering high above the garden. On the right side of the plot, next to the airport, the storage barracks were being renovated. Someone gave the garden the name "pyramid garden" because the roofs of the barracks had a pyramid-like shape.

An artist had begun to set up shop in the center of the plot, with a little garden house. Collecting the gravestones of the former graves from the cemetery, he had piled stacks and stacks of gravestones, ranging from marble to simple rock on the edges of the plot alongside the wall. Stacked up, they were now waiting to have a second life and to be turned into sculptures.

Integration with a fence?

Although, the garden's official aim was to foster integration of people from different cultures and across different generations, individual gardeners' motivations and desires exceeded this aim and the pleasures they sought in gardening were much more elaborate. People had many hopes and dreams about what the garden should be. For some, the garden was full of secrecy, wonder and a sense of magic. For others, it was a welcome opportunity to engage in a project of integration, to meet people and prove that things can be done otherwise in Neukölln. For some, it turned out to be a bureaucratic nightmare of odd conceptions about appropriate nature. For others, it provided a promising occasion to grow their own vegetables, fruit and flowers – some of them familiar from home.

Mario was in his mid-sixties. He had grown up and lived in Neukölln for all his life, recently became unemployed and now could not wait to get started with the garden. From his childhood, he remembered the Muslim cemetery. Hidden behind a fence, it was like a secret to him, full with a sense of wonder. You would follow the paths along the graves in the Christian cemetery alongside huge bushes, and a gate. Beyond the gate,

you could see a half moon peeking through from the Muslim cemetery, he remembered with the curiosity and sense of awe of a child.

Although Mario wasn't much into gardening today and didn't have his own plot, he was curious to learn more. He was always in the garden, helping out with everyday maintenance. And he was the gardener who had insisted to leave some of the rubble plants. And he was very knowledgeable about anything that had to do with Berlin – especially the history of urban-rural relations and the changes of the Berlin and Brandenburg landscape. The first time we met, he traced the entire history for me all the way from the Prussian empire's efforts to drain the swamps in the surrounding countryside; the introduction of potatoes as a new common crop, the fast expansion of the city, and the foundation of Greater Berlin in 1920. Referring to the sandy, swampy and rather flat landscape in the region, he said: "You really have to get used to this land here and it's not all that beautiful or special either."

Mario remembered when he used to play marbles on the sidewalk as a child. The grown ups would sit outside on the sidewalks or lean out their windows to chat with neighbors. Then, all of the sudden, people stopped socializing on the sidewalks and out their windows. They turned towards their living rooms instead, hiding behind their TVs.

For him, the post WWII history of Turkish immigration and settlement in Neukölln was not a story of "segregation": it was much rather a story of mutual change and learning – especially in regard to food practices, such as baking bread. In the 1970s, the Turkish immigrants slowly started to open up many bakeries and they learned German recipes. And Turkish kids taught German kids again how to play marbles.

Cem was in his 50s and had lived in Neukölln since the 1970s when he migrated from Anatolia to Berlin. As he participated in several neighborhood projects in the *Quartiersmanagement* in a small Neukölln neighborhood nearby (Schillerpromenade), he was interested in building a multicultural garden and help foster integration and good neighborly relations in the area. Together with his wife, Emine, his son, Ali, and his mother Ayse, who was in her late 70s, he had begun to cultivate one of the first vegetable beds in the garden. Cem was very eager to have regular garden meetings and to have an ongoing discussion about how the plot could be improved. He also dreamt of growing enough vegetables to sell and share them with other (multicultural) gardens across the city. Yet a few months later, Ayse became ill and as Cem and his family decided to take her to their apartment and care for her, there was not much time for the garden.

Thus, just a few months after the season had begun, Serife and Mehmet, Cem and Emine's neighbors, took over their plot. In spring of the next year, they planted seeds that relatives had brought from the Black Sea near the city of Samsun. From them, they grew beans, peppers, and savoy cabbage. Mehmet would have liked to grow water melons too. But in Berlin's chilly climate, they would not have feared well. In contrast, the cabbage thrived, and from it, Serife made *dolma* every week: she cooked the leaves and when they were soft, she wrapped rice and a mix of minced meat, onions, parsley and other herbs and spices into them. Since there was so much cabbage, everyone in the garden benefitted. Soon another adjacent plot in the garden became available and Mehmet and Serife decided to tend to it as well, growing even more beans and cabbage.

Because of the bounty, some gardeners started joking that Mehmet and Serife had begun to maintain a mass industrial production site, feeding more and more people with the cabbage and beans. In addition, on bread baking days, the couple sometimes invited neighbors and baked 60 to 70 Turkish pizza and pita bread in the clay oven – to the amusement of some of the other gardeners. Yet Mehmet and Serife were yearning for an even bigger plot of land – and a bigger oven. For the 30 years they had been in Berlin before they migrated from the Black Sea, they had lived in an apartment without garden or balcony. Growing peppers and tomatoes in small pots on their windowsills, they had always yearned for the big gardens they knew from their families back in Turkey.

Figure 7: beans and cabbage (photograph by author)

In addition, now Mehmet had more time than he used to. For many years, he had done assembly line work at a local electronics manufacturing company. Then, as many companies moved away from Berlin after reunification, he lost his job, and was

unemployed for many years. He now had a small job as part of a state job creating measure but he still had much time to spend in the garden. Serife was working as cleaning personnel, and had less time during the week. So Mehmet tended the garden, watered the plants, did the weeding, and also planted the seeds until Serife came for the harvest.

Nadira was from Iran. Living in a small apartment a few blocks away, she also desired to have access to her own piece of land for the first time in Berlin, a peaceful refuge in the middle of the city. In her vegetable beds, she was growing tall sunflowers, radishes, savory, tarragon and Persian basil. The tarragon was from Iran, and this year, her sister had also brought a few young basil plants from Iran. Nadira's friend Susanne had grown up in Southern Germany, and was a student now. Susanne spoke excitedly about the garden and how it is an opportunity for people to take responsibility for a piece of land in the city. In it, she grew tomatoes, zucchini, lettuce and squash. She also wanted to learn from "other cultures" and met with Nadira to teach each other German and Farsi. For her, being involved in a multicultural garden was a very different thing than the allotment gardens because they are collectively run.

Thomas, one of the founders of the garden, had lived in Neukölln for many years. Since 2005, he had been involved in fighting for the garden space with others. Finally, in May 2007, the district government granted the space to some of the activists. Thomas was proud of the garden coming to life. In his vegetable bed, tomatoes, squash, basil, arugula, and different kinds of herbs were thriving. In addition to his volunteer work in the garden, Thomas also ran a small environmental consulting company in

Neukölln. Together with five other colleagues, he was working on a large variety of projects that, according to him, aimed at creating a more sustainable local urban environment – ranging from a campaign for a "cleaner Neukölln" that encouraged residents to pick up their dogs' poop on Neukölln sidewalks, to building aviaries in courtyards or getting local residents involved in creating flower beds around street trees growing on sidewalks. Many of these projects were funded by the *Social City Program*, and supported by several local *Quartiersmanagement (QM)* in Neukölln. Just recently, he had joined a nearby *Quartiersmanagements* himself and through it, was able to receive money from the district and a few other local organizations, like *aktion mensch,* for the multicultural garden.

Thomas was an entrepreneur who liked drawing different people together. On his company website, he described himself as a "self-confessing" Neuköllner, who cared about the borough as his home. His motto was: "whereas some compose headlines about Neukölln's problems, Neuköllners fashion their city for themselves in the meantime". Thomas did not appreciate what he considered to be a widespread "carelessness" of people in the neighborhood. In regard to dog poop removal project he was involved in, he said: "some people don't care about anything – even if they have to pay fines. They do it anyway. It's a certain attitude towards their environment ("*Umwelt*"). They just expect the state to take care of it and clean up after them. And this is the case in Neukölln more than in any other place in Berlin." Thus for him, the multicultural garden was a chance to do things differently. It was special to him as people started to take care of their surroundings: "When you grow something, it opens your eyes and you

become more conscious of what's around you," he said. When he talked about the garden, there was a sense of magic in Thomas' voice and a sense of faith. He was committed to working together with residents to "improve the living environment" in Neukölln. "Greening" the city for him, was to care of one's social surroundings, to advance social connections, to help people get rid of their fears of bureaucracies by working together with different institutions (in order to receive permission for growing plants in public spaces) and also to perk up the appearance and image of the neighborhoods.

When I joined the garden activities, about twenty people had signed up to share garden plots and regularly come to tend the garden. During the week, people would come irregularly, whenever they had time, to water the plants and tend the garden. On the weekends, people would meet to socialize, work on communal projects and also to discuss things that needed to be done. On these days, about fifteen people would be present. Nadira, Mario, Cem and his family, Mehmet, Serife, and Susanne (a woman who Thomas had major conflict with), as well as Thomas, and his partner, were some of the "regulars". Yet when we began to meet to plan the details of how the garden should be organized, who would get what bed to grow vegetables and flowers, quickly people got into quarrels.

One Sunday morning the new members met to discuss the future of the garden. It was a sunny day and the sunflowers were already towering high above the ground in Nadira's plot. Everyone gathered in a circle, sitting on chairs on the grass, while Cem's son explored the new flourishing garden. He was joined by a photographer, who stood at

the edges of the vegetable beds taking pictures of all the plants. Thomas explained to us that the photographer was doing an art project on plant diversity in Berlin's gardens. The project was already well attended by the public, including me the anthropologist, who had come all the way from California to participate.

The main item on the agenda was the opening party for the garden. Soon, we all found each other in the middle of a heated debate about how to organize the event. Thomas wanted to invite 200 people and also suggested a big stage for musicians to accompany the party. Others questioned whether having so many guests would destroy the garden. "Why would we want to invite 200 people into the garden? They'll trample over all our vegetable beds and the grass and we'll have to plant everything new," Susanne pointed out. Thus, the debate about whether to get a stage or not, did not just stir up questions about how to organize events – but also about the garden's public boundaries.

As the meeting went on, quarrels multiplied. It soon became clear the stage question could not be settled quickly. Another dispute that caused a stir, were the costs of the garden plots and access to communal gardening. Garden plots would cost 200 Euro per year. Having a fairly modest budget, several people at the meeting, were not able to afford the annual fee, and thus were not able to grow their own vegetable beds. And at this point, there was no communal vegetable bed yet. Thus, all communal activities so far included helping to clean out the garden shed and watering the plants. In addition, Susanne and Nadira were upset at Thomas for having hacked down a tree in a small corner of the garden, bordering to the cemetery, without consulting with others. In

his defense, he said he had tried to just cut down a few branches, but cut them too far by accident. Their complaints were followed by a debate about one vegetable bed that had been neglected by some people who were supposed to take care of it, but never showed up in the garden. Thomas suggested giving them an ultimatum. Everyone should have a "concept" for their garden after all instead of overgrowing their little plot with weeds and neglecting it.

Another disagreement was the relationship of the gardeners and the artist. Klaus, the sculptor, was a member of the garden and used part of the space, but did not actively participate in any of the gardening activities. He had recently complained that someone had knocked off and broken one of his sculptures. He wanted to have it reimbursed. And he suggested putting up a fence in between the garden and the artist space. Grudgingly, the gardeners ended up deciding to build a fence. Thomas thought it would be better for "public relations" if nothing was damaged by the gardeners. Another destroyed sculpture would clearly create an image that the gardeners were reckless.

The following Sunday everyone gathered again in the afternoon to build the fence. Fred, a man who was in his 60s, and had an allotment garden in Neukölln, came by, curious to inspect the new garden. When he saw a group of people building the fence, he was infuriated. Familiar with elaborate fencing from his own allotment garden association, he was utterly annoyed at what he considered to be a German tendency to build fences around everything. Standing next to the gardeners, as we all began to build the fence, placing fence poles into a fresh cement base, he burst out and went on a little tirade: "Why do you need a fence here? People will jump over it anyway if they want to

damage the sculptures." Thomas responded: "we are building a fence between art and nature." Someone else said, jokingly: "you only have a civilized garden if there is a fence". Fred continued in a cynical tone: "Yes, that's right. Over there is the enemy! Watch out! Why do you need cement in the ground to hold up the stakes of the fence? Why does it need to be so sturdy? It's like a fortress! Who will lean against it so that it needs to be covered in cement? Maybe some wild boar? That's what you call preparing for the next war. I thought this was a multicultural garden. No, this is "integration with a fence"!

With his rant at the construction site, Fred reacted to what he considered an all too familiar "German" adherence to orderliness - and a tendency of excessive fortification, fencing and obliging to clear rules. More particularly, he took offense in the face of the sturdiness of the fence: surrounded by concrete, the fence was, in the most literal sense, set in stone. And, with its green wiring towering high above the ground, it went right through the center of the garden. Visiting the multicultural garden that day, Fred had clearly expected something else. I, the anthropologist, felt pretty similarly. Having just recently joined the group, I had been curious to see what the garden was all about. Little did I expect to have to build a fence as one of my first contributions to the garden. But it was certainly more: I was irritated, especially by Thomas who seemed to tell everyone what to do and bossed people around. Following the imperative of "togetherness", he wanted to reach out to his neighbors, but ended up just pushing his own agenda through in the end, without a clue of what other people might want to do. Furthermore, at first glance, the garden seemed to be more about symbolic politics and

performing an ideal of "togetherness" to the public. People's dream of having a piece of land, a peaceful refuge in the middle of the city, seemed to be crushed by endless fights over bureaucracies, rules, building fences, ripping out weeds, debates about cleanliness and chopped down trees. Plus, with annual fees being fairly high, many could not afford to pay for a garden plot. From this perspective, the garden seemed to be something like a gated community, creating its own insular nature.

But then again, what was it that Thomas and others cared about? What motivated them to come here during almost all of their free time? I had to rethink my first aversions and initial reaction. Indeed, "togetherness" and integration was a common goal, almost something like a "belief system" for people. Right next to the garden, the mosque had received much public attention since it was built – in the wake of debates about "ghettos" and the visibility of Muslims in the neighborhood. In particular, *Şehitlik Camii* had ignited controversy around the height of its minarets, peeking out high behind the trees of the adjacent park – thus making the mosque visible from far away.[177] In contrast, the garden was not marked as a "religious" or spiritual space, although people desired a refuge, an enchanted space that was free of daily worries and divisions. Clearly, the garden was entangled with many dreams and the search for ease from social

[177] Like many other mosques throughout Europe, the *Şehitlik Camii* became the target of controversy among local authorities shortly after additional construction in 2003. After monitoring the measures of the building, the Berlin building department realized that the mosque's minarets and dome were about 8 and 4 meters above the allowed height. After some debate, the mosque's architect was asked to pay a fee of 80,000 Euro to avoid having part of the minarets demolished (Dölfs 2003). After my fieldwork in 2007/8, *Şehitlik Camii*, like several other mosques in Berlin, also became the target of repeated arson attacks by individuals – reigniting debates about growing right wing and racist sentiments against Muslims in Berlin and across Germany and Europe.

divisions. And yet this desired island of peace and calm was inflicted with much bickering.

In particular, Mario's story about the changes in his neighborhood since he had been a child, suggested to me that he yearned for a nostalgic landscape of a time during which people did not sit isolated in their homes, watching TV. And yet, Mario expressed his doubts about what the garden was all about: "sometimes I feel lost…about what "our project" is and what I can do specifically. People use the garden for their own purpose. And then there is also the garden as a "project". But often, once I am there, I don't know what that project is and what it exactly means and what I can do about it." He once wrote on the garden's blog. Thus, despite the fact that everyone had their own agenda in participating, there were a lot of confusions about how to create "community" and how to go beyond working on each person's individual plot. "We still have to grow together as a group", Mario concluded. In fact, like Mario's concerns, the bickering revealed the slipperiness of a language of integration and suggested that projects of integration did not work out in predictable ways: in contrast to the ideal of a peaceful refuge, fences popped up, bureaucracies got into the way, trees were cut down, and confusions were voiced. And yet, notwithstanding these histories and conflicts seeping into the garden, the multicultural gardeners stuck around. And beyond their own hedges, other, less well funded or institutionalized gardens proliferated.

The Rabbit Heath (Hasenheide)

> "Berlin – a green city? Everyone loves to say it these days. But what is it? It's just a pile of concrete after all.." (Ilker, gardener in the Hasenheide Park)

The Hasenheide Park is a park in the district of Neukölln, situated on the border to Kreuzberg, adjacent to the mosque, the multicultural garden and the airport. Covering about 50 hectare of green meadows, it is dotted with oak and beech trees, elderberry shrubs, a rhododendron grove, a small pond with luscious vegetation, and winding paths throughout. In addition, the park also features a small kiosk, an "adventure playground" with an "Arabian nights" theme, including Sinbad's ship and Alladin's wonder lamp, an open air theatre and cinema, a basketball court, a skateboard and miniature golf parcours, a nature trail, a leash-free zone for dogs,[178] as well as a small "zoo" with goats, sheep, and a llama.

The park's name Hasenheide (Rabbit Heath) goes back to its original use as a rabbit hunting ground for the local elector/prince of 1678 who acquired the land and built a fence around it – inciting the anger of local farmers who used the meadows as pasture land for their livestock. [..] In the early 19th century, the first public gymnastics site was opened here by Heinrich Ludwig Jahn, the nationalist founder of the 18th and 19th century German gymnastics movement.[179] Since 1936, the Hasenheide was landscaped as a park in the tradition of the "*Volksparke*" or "*Volksgärten*" (people's

[178] This "dog zone" is partly privately funded – among others, by the "Pedigree Initiative for the Nature of Dogs" which donated 20,000 Euro for a relandscaping of the dog meadow in 2008.
[179] Today, a statue of Jahn commemorates the first public gymnastics site at one of the entrances of the park.

parks/gardens), created at the turn of the 19th century in Germany and aiming to provide urban residents access to nature and recreation.[180] An admirer of the Hasenheide, Alexander von Humboldt once wrote about it on his travels through Russia: *Ganz Sibirien ist eine Fortsetzung unserer Hasenheide* (All of Siberia is a continuation of our Rabbit Heath).[181]

After the bombings at the end of World War II, when much of Berlin had turned into rubble, one of the many rubble hills in the city was constructed at the edge of the park.[182] Today, it towers seventy meters high above the park's landscape. The rubble mountain, the park's landscaping and the mosque peeking through the trees constitute important elements of the park's "material memory".

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[180] Whereas many parks emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries in Berlin and throughout Europe, these were primarily royal gardens and not accessible to the general population. In the 19th century, urban parks served primarily symbolic and ornamental purposes and were geared towards use of the bourgeoisie (Rosol 2004). Although the idea for the design of the "people's gardens" (*Volksgarten*) had already emerged in the context of debates about the aesthetics of gardens and "garden art" (*Gartenkunst*) at the end of the 18th century when philosophers, such as Christian Hirschfeld, called for the creation of parks available to the general public, they did not emerge until the mid/late 19th century. This is when urban planners and landscape architects such as Peter Joseph Lenne and later Gustav Mayer (garden director in Berlin) further shaped the ideas of the parks for the "Volk" in criticism of the narrow aesthetics of the earlier idea of the *Volksgarten*. As cities expanded and housing and streets became more crowded, anxieties rose about crowded spaces, the proximity of the working class and the bourgeoisie, as well as deteriorating health and lack of possibility for movement and daily exercise (Rosol 2004). The gardens and parks thus also aimed at providing recreation, education and strengthening a sense of the nation: they had an educational purpose and sought to harmonize class relations by providing sport as a form of discipline. Nature here, became an idyllic refuge from workers' living conditions, considered to be prone to moral decay and deteriorating health (Rosol 2004). As Rosol points out, the creation of public urban green spaces was thus tightly connected to the development of Berlin into an industrial metropole, and went hand in hand with the emergence of municipal administrations: until today, the urban Green Space and Garden Offices are part of the municipal administration. Whereas the former parks followed certain rules for clothing and conduct, the re-landscaped parks of the early 19th century expanded their scope of activities: no longer were they designed simply for "civilized walking" but also, with larger meadows and fields, they allowed for more activities such as running, picnicking and dwelling on grass areas (Wimmer 2001).

[181] In fact, in lieu with what some have called the technique of "cross-fading" (Ette 2009) or the power-laden dynamics of "transculturation" (Pratt 1992), Humboldt's view on landscapes often blended different landscapes and places into one description. As Ette (2009) points out, Humboldt's writings about his travels in Russia thus were rich in references and mirrored his experiences in the Americas and at "home" (see also Bisky 2009).

[182] See chapter 1 on the history of rubble, the construction of rubble mountains and landscaping policies to cover up the traces of destruction in post WWII Berlin.

Today, many people who live in Kreuzberg and Neukölln use the park. On a sunny day, the park is crowded with joggers, Nordic walkers, children jumping around on the playground, old and young people who picnic or sit on benches. At one corner in the park, there is a meadow that, during the warm summer months, is populated by nudists who enjoy the sun. People take their dogs on a stroll and sit at the kiosk and play cards or have a beer in the afternoon. At night, people also walk or bike through the park to the nature cinema to watch movies. At night too, sometimes one encounters foxes in the park.

Yet in the past decade, the park has also grown to be seen as a "dangerous place" "in the hands of drug dealers" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2008). Young Arab and African drug dealers "battle with each other for the Rabbit Heath in Berlin", many headlines of local and national media read (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2008), proclaiming the Hasenheide as something like a "no go area" – for "normal citizens".[183] Martial images of escalating "bloody" battles between rivaling bands of Arabs and Africans abound. Framed by these images, police seem helpless in the face of escalating conflicts and the park itself appears to have been "lost" to raging masses of immigrant criminals. Just like the multicultural garden across the street, located in "dangerous" Neukölln, the Hasenheide has become a controversial space for local policy makers, police, and residents who live close by.

[183] The use of the term "no go area" here signifies a space of immigrant crime, marking it as off limits for white Germans. This use thus departs from the version of no go area as a space of racism that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5. Some of the comments on news articles on no go areas in the city and the Hasenheide Park in particular reveal the racialized affect attached to no go areas: one commentator says the police should stay away from this place and leave it up to the Arabs and Africans killing each other. Others call for deportation of all immigrants who illegally sell drugs in Germany. Another comment describes these "no go areas" as places in the center of Germany where no "normal" citizen can go" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2008).

In the past few years, several local initiatives – often non-state, privately or corporative-funded – have tackled the "problem of drug dealing" in the park: for example, addressing drug dealers, a few German women living in the neighborhood wrote "rules of conduct" on some of the paved paths – and included slogans such as "Döner instead of drugs" and "Neukölln housewives against dealer chatter". Together with school children, they also organized a "leaf raking day" and raked foliage in those areas where drug dealers hide drugs.[184] In 2008, the mayor of the Neukölln borough held a ceremony to officially open a zoo together with Berlin zoologist Ralf Rese. Populated with geese, rabbits, goats, sheep, and a donkey, the zoo aims to draw families with children to the park and thus make the area "less attractive" to the drug dealers.[185] Similarly, the nature trail, featuring a "trail of trees" (*Baumlehrpfad*), created in 2008, was intended as initiative to complement the zoo's "pedagogic" intentions.[186] Newspaper articles have framed these neighborhood and city initiatives as attempts to "conquer

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[184] see *Tagesspiegel* Oct. 5, 2008.

[185] Consequently, several newspaper headlines read something like: "Animals chasing Drug Dealers out of the Hasenheide" (*Welt*, Jan. 12, 2008; *Berliner Zeitung,* Sept 8, 2008, *Berliner Morgenpost*, June 1, 2008). One news article quoted the mayor of Neukölln saying that the zoo is supposed to bring back some normality to the park. Rese donated some of the animals to the Neukölln Office of Green Space (*Berliner Zeitung* 2007). He is curator of a local private museum for zoology in Berlin (*Privates Museum fuer Tierkunde Berlin*), which aims to teach young people who grow up in the city to discover and become familiar with plants and animals in the city – in a context of an increasingly technological and urbanized world, as well as high crime rates. The Museum offers a "petting zoo" for children and also school outings to teach urban children how to not only learn to relate to pets such as dogs and cats, but also to chickens, insects and hermit crabs (see http://www.pmtb.de/aufgaben.htm).

[186] The idea of the "*Baumlehrpfad*" goes back to the concept of the "*Baum des Jahres*", which draws on the idea of the "Arbor Day" as it emerged in North America. As Rese points out on his website, in Nebraska, one of the first white settlers – journalist Sterling Morton – began to grow trees, shrubs and flowers on his own new property because the local landscape was poor of trees. Working for the first Nebraskan newspaper, he wrote about his admiration for trees and called for an "arbor day" across the state. On April 10, 1872, on the first "Arbor Day" about a million new trees were planted across the state. On April 25, 1952, German president Theodor Heuss planted a maple tree in the courtyard in the capital city Bonn and thus declared the first national "Arbor Day" in Germany. The *Baumlehrpfad* in the Hasenheide references this history – it includes many trees of the year from the past decades, such as the *Stieleiche* (oak), the Walnut Tree, and the *Eibe.*

back the park" (*Tagesspiegel* 2008, Oct 5). Other initiatives in more well off districts have spent millions of Euros on re-landscaping parks to make it more "family friendly" as well as hospitable for elderly people through cutting back shrubs for more visibility, new playgrounds, and putting up lights (ibid).

When I mentioned the "Rabbit Heath" to friends and informants during my fieldwork, it caused a wide variety of reactions – ranging from "it's a beautiful park" to eyebrow raising and people telling me they would not set foot on it because they were afraid of all the criminal activity going on. And yet again, others had made it an integral part of their daily lives.

Maria Mama

Figure 8: Maria Mamma (photograph by author)

"We began planting our garden here, because we were here all the time anyway. It was Ilker. Maybe he was bored, but he just started moving the earth back and forth as we sat on the bench and chatted." Özgür told me, as we too sat on a bench next to a few big birch trees in the park. Together with a group of friends, previous co-workers and neighbors, Özgür cultivated a small garden plot next to some tall bushes right in the middle of the park. Because of the bushes, the plot was hidden from sight for people who walked along one of the main paths through the park. Not many by-passers thus paid attention or even saw the secret garden. And so the local authorities had not discovered it yet either. Hidden in the bushes, there was also a barbecue. Especially on the weekends, the men would barbecue meat and some vegetables there. But a few years ago, the city had outlawed barbecuing in the entire district of Neukölln, and so they had to hide the grill from public view.[187] Everyday, a kestrel would fly by and sit down on the grass to wait for his share of meat, which the men would happily hand to him. "*Er ist unser Turmfalke*"/"He is our kestrel!" Ilker said proudly. In addition, the men also fed two foxes that came by regularly. "What we have here is real nature!" Ilker pointed out.
The men all lived in Berlin, most of them in the districts of Neukölln and Kreuzberg. A few came from districts further away and rode their bikes to the park everyday, bringing food, plants, drinks, and card games. Most of the men were between their late 50s to early 70s. They had migrated to Germany sometime in the 1970s, during a time when Germany signed contracts with Turkey to send migrant workers to help build Germany's economy (the so called "guest workers") and thus the height of migration from Turkey.

[187] See also my discussion of the barbecuing debate in chapter 4.

Like several of the other men, Ilker had come from a small village in Eastern Anatolia. In Berlin, he worked at Siemens for many years assembling adapters. Since then he lived in Neukölln, just a five-minute walk away from the park. At some point, he started to have neck pain but ignored it for a long time, until he could not work at all anymore and had to retire early. This is when he and his family got a dog – a doberman. It was a big, strong dog and Ilker trained it and the dog won a German championship and 1000 Euro. He used to come to the park with the dog and meet friends here. Then, one year, when Ilker went to Turkey for the summer and left the dog with his brother and cousin in Germany, the dog's leg was injured. Ilker returned but the dog's leg never recovered, although he ended up paying 1500 Euro to take it to the vet. The dog's health deteriorated and when the dog died, Ilker began to come to the park every day to see his friends, and to play music once in a while. Sometimes, he also plays at weddings. He prefers going to the park instead of the bar or tea house where it's always smoky. "here I can really breathe. And if we come here often, we'll all live longer!"

Ilker's friend, who also regularly comes to the park, is blind. He used to work in construction. One day a few years ago he fell on a metal bar and lost his eyesight. That's when he started going to the park with Ilker. He now wears big sunglasses, and is often dressed in a suit with a small blind person patch on the sleeve.

> "Berlin – a green city? Everyone loves to say it these days. But what is it? It's just a pile of concrete after all.."

Whereas for the men, Berlin was just a pile of concrete, their garden, was real nature. It was called "Maria Mama", because someone had found a marble figure resembling Maria, the mother of Jesus, and had placed it in the middle of the vegetable bed. The

plot consisted of a small area of soil, about 20 meters long and four meter wide, with small tree branches marking its edges. The garden was covered with tall yellow sunflowers, smaller, orange blossomed flowers, tomato vines, small raspberry bushes, strawberries, potatoes, cucumbers, mint, several yellow and red peppers, a few small lettuces and nettles growing in between. Three small trees grew along its edges: a plum tree, an apple and a pear tree. As I frequently visited the garden and its caretakers during the summers of 2007 and 2008, it underwent constant changes. People kept adding different plants to it, bringing seeds and ripping out other old plants that had dried up. Ilker and Özgür told everyone who showed any interest in the garden they should bring by plants they did not need any more, or that weren't doing well at home. One time, Özgür brought several pepper plants on his bike all across the city from his brother's garden.

Yet altogether the garden seemed to be a failure – at least according to its caretakers. When I came to visit, the men often complained about how things were not going the way they were supposed to. One day, someone had stolen two of the three trees Ilker had planted: the apple and pear were gone and all that was left was the plum tree. Another time, the figure of the woman that had given the garden the name "Maria Mama", had disappeared. Now a pink stuffed bunny rabbit replaced it. Also, the earth didn't seem to be fertile enough for some of the plants. But above all, the ongoing problem was the water supply: there was no nearby faucet with a water hose that was publicly accessible. But Ilker knew the owner of the kiosk that was just about 100 meters behind the bushes on the main path through the park. He had offered Ilker and his

friends water from the faucet in his kitchen so they would stop by there everyday and bring a watering pot, fill it up and water the plants. It was a tedious business though because everyone had to go back and forth several times before the soil was moist enough. It was a dry spring and summer.

"What is your ideal garden?" I asked Ilker one time. Ilker's dream was to extend the vegetable garden and to grow more strawberries. In fact, he imagined the strawberries to cover the entire park and take over all of its space. "That's what I call freedom", he laughed.

From the perspective of "multicultural gardens" as well as the shiny brochures of parading "nature in the city", Maria Mama, was a joke, possibly not much more than an ephemeral garden – if it was visible to anybody at all. It was the project of a few elderly men, who were retired or had recently become unemployed with no prospect of finding a new job at their age – a project of immigrants who had migrated to Germany in the 1970s, had worked here for years, and who now had become superfluous. Yet their garden created an alternative way of inhabiting space. Attempting to create a sense of belonging to place in a context in which immigrants are seen as being "out of place" or a potential threat to the tranquility of a place – the garden was a fragile enterprise that, on a daily level, threatened to fail all the time, because of lack of access to water and the threat of theft or discovery by the municipality. And yet among the gardeners there was a sense of hope for an alternative world of connection – a world that sat quite boldly right next to constraining imaginary landscapes of the "ghetto" as well as the neatly landscaped and mostly quite well financed projects of multicultural gardens and Berlin's

urban nature. In fact, the gardeners were hardly bothered by all the media excitement about the park as a dangerous space of drug dealers and criminality. But above all, with their garden, they expressed a yearning for "real nature" and a home abundant in human and non-human relations – in-between and beyond the cracks of the concrete rubble of Berlin, as well as current invocations of "urban wilderness". In this sense, Maria Mama provided a place of dreams in between the estrangement from spaces of nature, sealed national identities and culture in Berlin. As Ilker put it, despite some people's claim, Berlin was not really a green city, but rather a pile of concrete. In contrast, Maria Mama offered him and the other men, a sense connection to both Berlin and Turkey and a possibility to create a natural environment of their own.

Similarly, other gardens have emerged in Berlin in between walls, world political systems, and the state's attempts to draw straight lines and create order.

A *Gecekondu* in Berlin

Osman Kalin is a local celebrity. In the 1980s, when the Berlin Wall marked the boundary of Kreuzberg to East Berlin, Osman Kalin took advantage of a gap in state control and an "error" in precise territorial division.

Local legend has it, that it was the year 1983 and Osman had just quit his job.[188] After being a construction worker in Berlin for many years, he struggled with back problems and was forced to retire early. Osman thus spent much of his free time reading the Koran. But soon he got bored, and was ready for a construction project of a

[188] Many Berliners love to tell Osman's story and both the local news, as well as several Turkish newspapers have also reported on his garden frequently in the past, see for example: FAZ 2007; Niendorf 2008; Reuters 2009, and Miliyet 2000. The following story draws on both local narratives as well as the news reports.

different sort. Living in Kreuzberg in West Berlin, just a few blocks from the Wall, one day, he discovered a little triangle of land (on a small green strip that used to be a canal) right next to the wall that was littered with garbage. Nobody seemed to make use of it. Osman cleared the plot and began to grow onions on it. As time went on and nobody seemed to be bothered, Osman began to plant more vegetables. Slowly, the abandoned lot grew into an elaborate vegetable garden – with tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, onions, garlic, beans, whine and collard greens – in Turkish: *Kara Lahana* – thriving in it. And together with his wife, Hatice, he planted several cherry and plum trees. They built a fence and a small shack out of materials they found on the streets in his neighborhood. A neighbor joined them and received a little plot in their garden. During the summers, Osman, his children and grandchildren, as well as neighbors and other members of the family would meet in the garden everyday to work in the garden, to enjoy the sun, eat fresh vegetables and socialize.

Struggling with a small pension, Osman began to harvest his crops and sell them at the local weekly Turkish market at the *Landwehr* canal. It was not until quite a while later that local authorities knocked at Osman's door. Yet, to his surprise it was not the West Berlin police, or American soldiers (this part of West Berlin belonged to the American occupied zone at the time), but the East German border patrol. It turned out that Osman had cultivated his garden on territory that belonged to the German Democratic Republic on the other side of the Wall. When the Berlin Wall had been built in the 1960s, the East German government decided to save money and cement, and instead of following the zig-zag contours of the border between East and West Berlin,

they constructed a straight line. Osman's vegetable garden thus was located on a triangle that had been skipped but that legally belonged to East Berlin. When the border patrol officers demanded Osman to show his papers and permission for his garden, he told them to be ashamed of themselves. He simply wanted to grow an Anatolian vegetable garden and as a grandson of the Ottomans, they better showed him some respect. He would not leave, he affirmed –not over his dead body. The officers were so stunned that they agreed his garden could remain where it was – as long as he did not build it higher than their wall. They departed in befuddlement. The next Christmas, Osman's family received a package with biscuits and wine from East Berlin–and so did they in the years to come. Only once did the officials return when the sunflowers grew taller than the wall – and the Kalin family had to cut them down.

Over the years, the small hut grew into a two-floor shack, cobbled together from metal sheets, old doors, wooden beams, grids left over from abandoned fridges, and other things Osman's family found in the streets, on construction sites and in the area near the wall. In front of the shack, Osman placed a table and several old armchairs so the family could sit in front of the garden on the sidewalk, observe street life and drink *çay*. Nothing was able to interfere with the Kalin family idyll. And when one of the tables was stolen one time, he got another one and cemented its legs to the ground. The shack also survived heavy storms and winters and even a fire. The only problem was how to get water for the garden—but fortunately it rains a lot in Berlin. And when it doesn't, the priest from a nearby church helped out the Osman family and provides them with water ever since.

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell and Osman's garden was no longer situated in a small abandoned corner in the shadow of the wall at the edges of West Berlin, but right in the center of the unified city. Now on the border of the boroughs of Kreuzberg and Mitte, the local district office complained about Osman's "illegal use" of public lands. Yet, Osman was little impressed. He insisted that the East German state had entrusted the piece of land to him, and so it belonged to him now. And in fact, to prove the point, he expanded his garden by a piece of land that had previously been hidden behind the wall. In the end, the dismal state of Berlin's finances assisted Osman in his cause. As part of reunification plans and in the midst of restitution and open property claims, the area of the former wall at Bethaniendamm was re-landscaped and expanded into a green strip. Yet just when redevelopment plans approached Osman's garden, the city ran out of money. Hence, Osman was, once again, left alone. In 2004, the borough administration finally granted him the right to stay and recognized his garden as a significant part of local history – especially in lieu of the district's famous tradition of squatting. More recently, local "multicultural gardeners" as well as "guerilla gardeners" have fashioned the small garden as prime exemplar of "urban gardening" – and thus Berlin's popular movements to take over abandoned lots in the city to grow vegetables. And thus, Osman's garden became well known among Berliners – and for some, turned into a symbol of the "myth of Kreuzberg" – a place in which all kinds of things are possible.[189]

[189] Niendorf thus argues that, in a sense, it mirrors the development of Kreuzberg since the 1980s (see Niendorf 2008). Although there are many allotment gardens across the city, Osman's garden differs from the allotment landscape in so far that Osman simply took over a piece of land that was abandoned but legally belonged to the (East German) state.

Moreover, the garden shack has affectionately been called the "Berlin *gecekondu*" among many local Turkish immigrants – in reference to the famous Turkish *gecekondu* in which many of their relatives have lived in Turkey. Literally called places "built/settled overnight"[190], *gecekondu* are "illegal" low cost apartment buildings that rural migrants set up at the outskirts of many Turkish cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, from the 1950s and 1960s onward. By building the houses in one night, the *gecekondu* families were able took advantage of an old legal loophole which maintains that if one builds a house overnight and moves into it before dawn, the city is not allowed to tear down a dwelling. As many families migrated from rural regions into Turkish cities at the time, *gecekondu* areas proliferated at the edges of many Turkish cities. They were simple in structure, usually with only one level and with courtyards and trees, resembling the structures of Anatolian villages – only that they soon were situated in the middle of the sprawling city.[191] Resembling the *gecekondu* in cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, the garden's fame thus also spread as far as Turkey. Chuckling about Osman's clever dealings with the Berlin authorities, several news articles reported on the famous Berlin *gecekondu*.

Today, the Berlin *gecekondu* still exists, situated on the edge of the sidewalk on the little triangle in between streets where the former wall once stood. It is mentioned in several city guides. Once in a while, a tourist bus stops by.

With his *gecekondu* Osman Kalin danced a wirewalk dance on multiple borders – legal, physical and administrative. In the middle of a no man's land in the gaps between

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[190] *Geçe* means "night" and *kondu* translates into "settled" or "placed".

[191] The *gecekondu* phenomenon is certainly connected to poverty and unemployment in many rural parts of Turkey – and as, Stephan Lanz, points out, often, entire villages moved to the outskirts of cities such as Istanbul, creating "villages in the city" (Lanz 2007)

concrete walls, as well as the confusions around the reordering of space and property after the fall of the wall, he took advantage of the (East German state's) desire to simplify and to draw straight lines. And it was in the very space of ambiguity and the gaps created by state standardization that he claimed his right to an abandoned piece of land. In the process, the *gecekondu* – at least for a moment – undid existing spatial orderings, reshuffled the borders between the state, the commons and private property – and it pointed to their ambivalences and gaps. Cobbled together from thrown-away pieces of old fridges, wooden beams and left-over furniture found in the streets, the *gecekondu* constituted a "rubble ecology" that, above all, offered something like a fairy tale and a sense of promise to different communities – in Berlin and as far as Istanbul and Ankara.

However, while some gardens are the matter of dreams, others become nightmares.

Courtyard Gardens

"Bettina, the rabbits! The RABBITS! I can't deal with them anymore. They are driving me crazy." Imran's voice sounded desperate. It was July 2009, and Nursen, Imran's neighbor and owner of two cats and two rabbits, had just had surgery and now was in the hospital for ten days. Imran had volunteered to help out Nursen and take care of her animals. Yet, after only two days, it was clear to Imran that the whole enterprise proved more difficult than she had imagined.

Both Imran and Nursen lived in a five-story apartment building right along the Landwehr canal at the borders between Neukölln and Kreuzberg. Imran had a two-room

apartment on the third floor, and Nursen a small one bedroom on the ground floor. Imran was in her mid 30s, Nursen in her 60s. Imran lived with her husband and two children, Nursen with her two cats and two rabbits. Nursen's apartment had a small back patio that looked out onto the inner courtyard of several 19th century old apartment buildings – the walls without windows and dotted with holes from WWII bombings. In the spring, birds would nest in them. Right outside the patio, there were a few bushes, a small patch of grass and a playground. Both inside her apartment and in the back courtyard, Nursen created space for the rabbits and cats. In between the courtyard shrubs, Nursen cultivated a small garden plot, with carnations, roses and tulips and a few pepper wines. On the grass, she had put up a little hut for the rabbits, in which they could hop around, protected from neighbor dogs and other cats. Fındık and Minoş, the two cats, came in and out through the back door, and roamed around in the neighborhood and along the canal, across the cobblestone street. The rabbits, too, would sneak out the back window or patio, both on ground level and hop around the grass in the back courtyard and in Nursen's vegetable and flower garden adjacent to the patio.

While Nursen was in the hospital, Imran's task was to feed the animals and let them in and out of the apartment. While the cats, according to Imran, were fairly easy to take care of, the rabbits were not sticking to the rules – they would constantly sneak out the back door and Imran would have to chase after them, all across the grass in the courtyard and the adjacent playground. Having two children and working half time, Imran was overwhelmed with it all, tired of running after the rabbits without end. But

most of all, she was worried Nursen would run into trouble with the housing association – as she had before.

In fact, because of her garden and the animals, Nursen was caught in constant conflicts with the housing association. The association argued that, by growing her own plants, she was illegally using the public space of the bushes and that, by letting her animals roam around freely, she and her animals were taking over and disturbing what is supposed to be communal space. Right next to her garden, there was a playground and Nursen's landlord was not pleased to see the rabbits hop around in between the children playing there.

Worse yet, the quarrels with the housing association were not the only ones.

Due to back problems and an illness of her spine, Nursen had been forced to retire early a few years ago. As a single mother, she had worked at an assembly line for a phone manufacturer and also as a cleaner. Like many others who migrated from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, Nursen paid a high price for her manual labor. She now depended on a wheelchair (which she jokingly calls her Mercedes) and a small pension, as well as public assistance. Due to her small income and the high costs for an attorney for her son, who was in prison, Nursen hardly got by. Struggling, she found herself quarreling with the local social office for more financial support again and again. In recent years, social assistance had decreased in the course of a general cut back of social benefits. In order to assess her need, a social worker would regularly come by her apartment. I happened to be present during one of these visits when a heated dispute unfolded between Nursen and the social worker, Imke Meyer. Nursen was hoping to

receive an extra allowance for a new bed and a coat rack. Yet the social worker did not comply because she thought Nursen was not being frugal enough. What was she thinking? She never had enough money, and always complained about it, and cried. And yet, she spent too much money on her animals. Worse yet, she was smoking cigarettes all the time! You couldn't ask for more money if you had a whole family of animals to take care of and spent money on unnecessary things like garden plants and cigarettes – so the reasoning of Miss Meyer went.

To both the housing association and the social office, Nursen was an annoyance, crazy cat lady, constantly trying to stretch the rules with her "illegal" garden and the four animal monsters in it. Nursen in contrast did not see any good reason why anyone would be bothered by a few vegetables and beautiful flowers in between some ugly bushes as well as by a few tiny rabbits and cats. In addition, Nursen had a special attachment to the cats and rabbits. As she once told me proudly, she had smuggled one of the cats, Minos, from Turkey on the plane– as well as the two rabbits. When she had stayed in a small town near Istanbul for a summer and one of her neighbors had found a street cat – Minos. The cat was injured and Nursen took care of it for weeks and then decided to bring it back to Germany. Now the cats and rabbits were Nursen's family. Nursen's husband died in the early 70s, just a few years after he moved to Germany following her. Her daughter now lived close by but didn't stay in touch much and Nursen's son was in prison. The only relative that sometimes came to visit were her sister who lived in Cologne and her granddaughter, who liked to tease Nursen for being "backward", for wearing a headscarf and talking to Allah too much, and for caring more about her cats

than about her family. Nursen in turn accused her granddaughter of being brainwashed by all the talk about the lack of integration of Turkish families into German society and European culture and for not taking her grandmother's cultural beliefs seriously enough.

To make ends meet and ameliorate her tight financial situation, Nursen gleaned and collected things wherever possible: she picked up food at a nearby soup kitchen, collected old furniture on garbage pick-up days from the sidewalk, and traded food with people in the summer who have gardens or who pick fruit in parks or vacant lots. Since she had the automated wheelchair, she felt more mobile to do all these things and also was able to discover the city in new ways.

Nursen felt like she had paid a big price during her time in Germany, working so hard and losing some of her family. Her garden and animals provided a piece of home for her. As she said to me once, she, like many men and women who migrated to Germany in the post war period, had worked herself "broken" ("*wir haben uns alle kaputt gearbeitet*"). Now in their 60s and 70s, many of her former colleagues – all first generation Turkish immigrants – depended on walking aids or wheel chairs and had severe physical impairments at a relatively early age. Indeed, due to harsh and sometimes environmentally hazardous working conditions and hard physical labor, the rates for early retirement and disability among Turkish immigrants have been much higher than for German citizens of the same age groups (Lüneburg/Seibt 2007).[192] In addition,

[192] A 1992 study by the Center for Turkish Studies in Germany shows for example that 46% of all so called former "guest workers" have had a serious illness during their time of stay in Germany – often related to hard physical labor and lacking health precautions by employers (Lüneburg/Seibt 2007) - and women have been affected disproportionately high by this. In fact, in recent years, there has been growing awareness among city administrations, public health officials and social service institutions around the "special health and social care needs" of aging Turkish immigrants in Berlin. Many stress in this context

growing unemployment after re-unification disproportionately affected non-citizens and has pushed many immigrants into early retirement (ibid; Lanz 2007). "We didn't watch out," Nursen told me and a friend one time when we had tea the day before her 40th anniversary of being in Germany. "We were stupid. We did not know our rights then and didn't defend ourselves. And now many of us are sick or in the wheelchair. Especially women who contracted for work at the assembly line. I let myself be bossed around by my boss and worked overtime constantly – and I was a single mother with two children and even had a second job!"

Coming from Turkey Nursen had dreamt of a better life in Germany. "Home" was a fragile term for her, a site of constant transition and renegotiation. She had grown up in a small village in Southern Anatolia, where her father owned a bakery. Like many other Anatolians, her family migrated in the late 1950s to Istanbul in search for work. They lived in the *gecekondu* at the outskirts of Istanbul. When many of their neighbors decided to sign up for short term labor contracts to go to Germany in the 1960s, both Nursen and her sister decided to give it a try as well.[193] They thus became part of the circulation of a whole set of migration technologies – and dreams – in an effort to rebuild Europe from the ruins of the war. And this is how Nursen arrived in Berlin in the late 1960s, working in a factory for a local phone company. Like other "guest

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that due to Germany's longstanding commitment to only guaranteeing temporary work and visa permits, and its fairly recent affirmation to be a country of immigration, no special arrangements have been made for care of elderly immigrants. Yet in these debates, illness often tends to be framed as a consequence of a "lack of integration" into German society: a lack of language skills and cultural networks, as well as the "stress of migration" and immigrants' focus on return (see e.g. Lüneburg/Seibt 2007).

[193] After WWII, Germany's agricultural and industrial interests, like those of many other Central European countries, triggered a set of technologies of circulation – ranging from recruitment centers to medical exams to trains to short term working permits – to bring migrant workers from Turkey and other Southern European countries to Europe (Berger 1974).

workers", she was assigned to live in one of the migrant barracks in the city and was given a small amount of square meters of "living space". In the preceding years, a number of policies affected the urban dwelling of Turkish immigrants in Berlin – and thus also Nursen's living situation. As the government did not recognize Germany as a country of immigration,[194] it limited immigrants' chances of staying in Germany permanently by the late 1970s and also took steps to improve integration for those who desired to stay – for example by making residence permits conditional on long-term work contracts, as well as requiring proof of children's school attendance and a minimum of "adequate dwelling" of at least 12 square meter per adult and 8 per child in order to avoid overcrowding (Mandel 2008: 148).

Considering this history, Nursen's quarrels and the efforts and sleepless nights she went through to write letters, make phone calls, go seek legal advice, and defend her courtyard garden and animal family can then be seen in a different light. From the viewpoint of property owners, neighbors and social workers, her community of vegetables, flowers, cats and rabbits was anything but a site of nostalgia or successful integration. Instead, they were monsters, trying to push the boundaries of the state, private property and neighborly relations. Unlike the multicultural gardens, her garden community created a parallel society transgressing what counts as desirable urban nature. And yet, for Nursen it was home.

[194] In 1977, the Federal State Commission asserted that Germany is not a country of immigration and introduced regulatory measures to limit "guest workers'" right to stay permanently in Germany (Castles 1984 cited in Mandel 2008: 148).

Reprise

In this chapter, I have tracked different garden stories to show how urban gardens are both a contested terrain as well as sites of hope in which new forms of community and belonging are articulated in contemporary Berlin. Although historically, gardens have played an important function for nation-making in Germany, there is no single story to be told about them today. Instead, the gardening and place-making practices that I have revisited, provide heterogeneous tools for creating belonging through urban nature. While people hope to wall in culture and keep history out of their gardens, both come flooding back into them. Thus, gardens help forge (transnational) connections AND divisions. They become spaces of cosmopolitan dreams, as much as they become tools of bureaucratic control. In them, Berliners make claims to land and rights in a context of widespread unemployment, a growing retreat of the welfare state and a political climate in which the unemployed become superfluous and immigrants are seen as unwilling to "integrate".

Through the garden stories, we can see the contingent meanings that mark the term and practice of integration. In the multicultural garden, integration emerges as a matter of bureaucratic negotiation and quarrel. And yet this garden community also encourages the circulation of seeds, plants and dreams across national boundaries. Other gardens, such as the Berlin *gecekondu*, take advantage of legal loopholes and the state's tendency to draw clear lines, and thus inspire people in Berlin and as far as Ankara to take chances. In contrast Nursen's courtyard garden and Maria Mama challenge urban nature – as defined by property owners, planners, policy makers and social workers – in

more fragile ways. While they might be objects of nostalgia at one moment, they also threaten to turn into monsters at any time.

Attending to the heterogeneity of these stories, we can begin to see the limits of contemporary models of human and non-human diversity as they continue to shape urban policy – as well as a common language of integration and urban ghettos: often, these metaphors suggest bounded ecologies of belonging – they imagine urban neighborhoods as containing immutable cultures, in which the presence of undesirable others – and especially too many of them – threatens to create uncontrollable growth. As racial distinctions of immutable difference are displaced onto seemingly neutral perceptions of derelict immigrant neighborhoods, these spaces are marked as alien. Yet, through gardening, they become more than "home", a refuge from social ills, or an escape from the city as "hypermodern space of non-nature" (Caldwell 2011: 133). Thus, in addition to listening to the ways in which urban nature practices redefine ethnic subjectivities (Jerolmack 2007), in this chapter, I have traced the disputes that gardens trigger and the connections they forge. From this perspective then, gardens illustrate heterogeneous possibilities for remaking nature out of the material and symbolic ruins of Germany's racial and ethnic divisions.

Chapter 3

The Thai Park

The Prussian Park (Preussenpark) is a small park dotted with meadows and lined with pathways and large beech trees in the district of Wilmersdorf, near the former center of West Berlin. On one side, the park nestles a large causeway that leads all the way to the city forest *Grunewald* at the Western margin of Berlin. The other side of the park is adjacent to a middle class residential neighborhood of 19th century apartment buildings and several large high rise buildings that house municipal administrative offices. Landscaped at the beginning of the 20th century, when the former village of Wilmersdorf became part of the expanding city of Berlin, the Prussian Park was created as an "unprecedented modern meadow, offering space for local citizen's to camp out and play" (Christoffel 1981: 164, transl. by author) – a "modern meadow" accessible to the public on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays. At the beginning of the century, one of the park's attractions was a temple-like "refreshment hall", where citizens could buy ice cream and soda, as well as a playground with sandboxes for children, the statue of an antelope, built by a famous sculptor, as well as a small toilet house (Christoffel 1981: 37). Early images of the park show bourgeois German couples promenading through the park, sitting on lawn chairs, bathing in the sun, and mothers with their young children in strollers.

Although the park's landscape is still similar today, its use has changed. On any afternoon during the summer, the central meadow in the park bustles with people. From May through September – during any weekday or the weekend, with sun or rain, Thai, Laotian and Vietnamese immigrants and their children gather on the park's central meadow to prepare, share, trade and sell food. Starting around noon, the vendors, most of them women, arrive at the park – on foot, by bus, underground train, or by car. Setting up their stands, they spread out blankets and mats, put up coolers, cooking utensils and little plastic stools and tables. The women stick colorful sun umbrellas into the ground, and stack up vegetables and fruit in front of the mats to sell, while heating up small gas stoves for cooking. Soon, the aroma of spices, vegetables and meats – an elaborate mixture of tangy, and sweet scents – fills the air. Sounds of chatter and laughter echo across the park. Children chase each other through the rows of sellers across the meadow, shouting at each other in exhilaration. Women sit on the mats, stir in pots and pans, and prepare soups and rice dishes, while chatting with their neighbors, or sitting together in small groups playing cards or gambling. Most of the women trade and sell their food amongst each other and they also sell it to visitors who come to the park, eager to try out the different aromas spreading out on the meadow.

In the past years, vendors and frequent visitors have renamed the Preussenpark, affectionately calling it the "Thai Park" or the "Thai Picnic" instead. Yet the Thai Park is a seasonal phenomenon. Depending on the temperatures in spring, it begins in early April or May. During the later season in August through September, several women sell mushrooms they have gathered in the forests at the fringes of the city: chantarelle,

porcini and boletus mushrooms lie across the vendors' mats. On warm days there are hundreds of people gathered on the meadow. Yet also during colder months in spring and early fall, a persistent group of about sixty people, equipped with down jackets, wool hats, gloves, blankets, tarps and hot tea, keep the Thai Park alive. During the winter, the park goes to sleep.

In recent years, the Thai Park has received widespread attention across the city by local newspapers and tourist guide-books – as well as the municipal authorities. Images of wild immigrant hordes squatting the park's meadow, illegally selling food, drugs and sex abound. Often these images mix or sit side by side with yearnings for exoticism and for Berlin's "Little Thailand". Local German visitors often stress the park's tranquility and praise its authenticity as they comment on its "colorful" market and vending culture. "It's just like in Thailand!" many park-goers say when they come to the park for the first time. In contrast, the local municipality eyes the park's community with suspicion and closely monitors the vending activities. As preparing and selling food (without a license) is illegal in public space in Germany, the Thai Park has triggered city-wide debates about illegal vending, appropriate use of public green space and practices of citizenship.

In Germany, the history of urban green spaces and public parks is closely intertwined with ideas about public welfare and sociality. As I have shown in the previous chapters, green spaces have served as material and social resource to mediate social conflicts, redefine citizenship and negotiate race and class difference. Whereas urban gardens also served to feed people and put them to work, the value of public

parks has been more narrow: to provide space for recreation from work and the stress of urban life for urban residents.[195] Thus, labor and practices of food production have largely been barred from public green spaces – except in a few designated areas. It is because of this history and exclusion of food production and labor from public "urban nature" that the Thai Park, as well as other practices of "barbecuing" in Berlin's parks (see Chapter 4), become so controversial: cooking in public (and selling the product) goes beyond recreation – narrowly defined as non-labor and associated with ideas of cleanliness, health and hygiene – and thus offends cultural assumptions about appropriate relations to the urban environment and proper use of public green space. Indeed, in the Thai Park, people do not simply come to recreate from work. Instead they have taken control over and have used the resource of urban green space in a different way: through practices of economic collaboration and exchange, as well as cooking, they have transformed the meaning of this common space – in a current context of austerity

[195] In Berlin, public parks and green space did not emerge on the political agenda on a larger scale until the late 19th century. The onset of industrialization and the expansion of the city and its population gave way to anxieties about the collapse of the moral order of the city. At the turn of the century, Berlin quickly grew into a city of the working classes and rental barracks (Jäckisch 2009: 52). For urban planners, one strategy to confront this "crisis" was to develop green spaces all over the city and to allow Berlin's residents to "restore their health and exercise in connection with nature" (ibid.). In this context, planners and urban reformers elaborated on the environmental and social benefits of green spaces in the city: according to one public official and urban planner of the time, Martin Wagner, urban green space possessed both the value to counter the toxic environmental effects of the city as well as its social ills. Thus people should use green space for recreation from work and refreshment. Some public officials, like Wagner, even suggested an ideal ratio of green space per citizen – twenty square meter (Jäckisch 2009: 54). At this time, urban green spaces, or so called "people's gardens," (*Volksgärten or –parke*) were to be "places of exercise, recuperation, of sociable conversation, and also of the enjoyment of nature, as well as the formation and refinement of manners" (SenStadt 2010). Basic to the idea of the park was also that you go there and you experience what it means to be a citizen and German – as well as the idea of "integration" in so far that strangers meet in one single public space. Yet some of these people's gardens in the *Volkspark* tradition especially catered to the working classes: instead of hosting fancy restaurants or cafes where the bourgeoisie would purchase drinks and food, some of these parks included small kiosks or taverns that provided hot water for workers to brew their own tea or coffee at the park. By mid century, this possibility for people to tap into public resources for food and recreation disappeared.

and urban restructuring. Although far from being uniform, increasing austerity policies have had an impact on many immigrants' lives. Moreover, in the past two decades after the collapse of socialism, peoples' life trajectories have been unmoored, as many, especially immigrants, lost their jobs and had to search for new, often more insecure strategies to sustain their livelihood. What is so unique about the Thai Park is that it has persisted for many years – despite these measures of austerity and urban restructuring and despite municipal controls.

In this chapter, I track the Thai Park's intimate economies and social worlds – and the ways in which they transcend intended and planned economies of green space, "urban nature" and public welfare. I will attend to how vendors, costumers and visitors at the park change and re-imagine the landscape and facilitate new relationships to nature and place in the city – through food, vending and gambling practices. I will also trace the ways in which people put up different markers to transform the economy of a park, perform place and create a "Thai space".

This chapter is partly inspired by Neferti Tadiar and Abdumaliq Simone. Like Simone (2004), I am interested in tracing "instances of disarticulation" – practices outside of conventional contexts of institutions, municipal governments, formal economies, households, and identities – and I ask how these become a resource for social collaboration.

Thus, instead of using a binary lens and simply focus on how, in this site, Southeast Asian immigrants conceptualize and use urban green space and how their practices relate to the state's attempt to regulate it, this chapter highlights ambiguities

and contradictions in people's attempt to build alternative social worlds and economies of public space. In this spirit, I engage Neferti Tadiar's strategy to track the "things" that "fall away" from and don't get recognized within familiar modes of production, experience and political subjectivity (Tadiar 2009). By tracking "instances of disarticulation" and the "things that fall away", both Simone and Tadiar develop a mode of analysis that attends to "the political seeds of an alternative future which already exists in the form of devalued social modes of experience" (Tadiar 2009: 9) – and thus to possibilities that may point to what Simone calls "the city yet to come" (Simone 2004). For Tadiar, attending to the things that fall away is a way of writing against the narrative foreclosures inherent in the subjectivities produced by global capitalism and the nation state. As Tadiar points out, contemporary urban developments produce all kinds of "surplus people and populations" and disposable life forms. To center attention to these unrecognized life forms that "fall by the wayside of history" (15) is thus to highlight the hidden human costs of metropolitan achievement and to attend to the forms of civil society that emerge despite of it. Let me then follow these two authors and trace the makeshift practices of the Thai Picnic, and of crafting a life in the cracks of official economies, discourses of the neo-liberal state, and planned use of public green space.

Origin Stories

There are numerous origin stories of how the Thai began to picnic and "take over" the park. Although nobody can really pinpoint any exact dates, it must have been sometime in between 1993 and 1994 when people started to regularly meet at the park – just around the same time when unemployment had risen and the city began to plunge into a

financial crisis. Some people say it all started with the woman with the purple hat. She still is a seller at the park today. The story goes like this: The woman with the purple hat used to live close to the park. Then one sunny weekend, more than 15 years ago, she spent an afternoon with her children and family on the meadow of the park. They had a pleasant afternoon and so the next weekend they came again. And soon other family members joined. And they again told other family members and friends about the park. And so more and more people came. And then several women had the idea to prepare and cook food at the park. As others heard about the "Thai picnic" in the park, even more Thai came. And as people sat across the meadow, they started trading and selling their food to each other. People were happy to be outside in the fresh air instead of sitting in their small apartments. It has been like that for a long time.

Stories of Migration

Today, not only Thai immigrants, but immigrants from all over South East Asia come to the Thai Park as vendors and buyers, or just to visit family and friends. Many of the regulars do not live in the park's proximity but in different parts of the city – sometimes up to an hour of a ride away. Once in a while, people even travel from all across Germany, just to stop by the park on a weekend.

Most of the sellers in the park are Thai, Vietnamese or Laotian women. Some women come with their relatives and children, some with their friends and partners, and some come alone. Many of the Thai women have German husbands and partners. These men tend to come with them early in the day, help carry foods and set up the mats and cooking utensils. Then, for the rest of the day, they sit in small groups on lawn chairs at

the edge of the hustle. In contrast, Laotian and Vietnamese women most often have partners of the same nationality and sit and work together with them on the mats. The park's community thus comprises a diverse array of migration histories and experiences in different transnational economies.

Most of the Thai women are in their 50s and 60s and came from rural provinces in northeastern Thailand such as the Chiang Mai province. Some also grew up in or near Bangkok. They had migrated to Germany as domestic laborers or through marriage. In the past decade, many of them had lost their jobs or had to leave their work because of health related issues. For example, one woman whose chicken feet soup was particularly popular among vendors in the park, had worked at a Sarotti chocolate factory for years in Berlin. Then she was laid off and began a new job packing batteries into packages. It was hard repetitive work. Then she worked as a cook. But she started having arthritis and pain in her joints. Her hands were starting to be crooked. So she retired and went to the park. For her, it was better to work here than be at home. And you were always in the fresh air.

The life trajectories of many of the Thai women in the park thus reflected some of the larger trajectories of Thai migration to West Germany since the 1970s. At that time, up until the early 1990s, many of the Thai migrant women who came to Germany were from farming families living in rural North-Eastern and Northern regions of Thailand. Then, since the 1990s, women also migrated from central and Southern regions, where tourism is a key industry and where they worked as employees in offices

or department stores. Thai migration to Germany has always been highly gendered.[196] Today, women make up about 85% of the Thai community living in Germany (Pataya 2009). Many of these women are married to German men. Yet the specific trajectories of their migrations vary: some women migrate as single mothers in aspiration to find economic security to support their children, others come as sex workers, others have met German men in Thai tourist areas and migrate to Germany as their fiancées, and again others come to seek German husbands to build a family, seek a new life and find economic stability. Some women also already have kinship networks in Germany, thus making it easier to access information and support to migrate and find German husbands (Pataya 2009: 23). Others facilitate their migration through friends and brokers working with individual German men, marriage agencies or transnational syndicates (Pataya 2009: 23). Because of the specifics of German immigration policies, for many, marriage is the only means to legally immigrate to Germany and also receive a working permit.

In contrast to the Thai women, Vietnamese immigrants at the park had different histories in East and West Berlin, thus reflecting the dual history of Vietnamese migration to East and West Germany during the Cold War.[197] Some of the Vietnamese and Laotian vendors at the park came to West Berlin in the late 1970s as political

[196] The Thai community in Germany has also steadily grown in the course of the past decades: whereas in 1975, there were about 2000 Thai living in Germany (with almost an equal number of men and women), by 2007, the community had grown to 53,952 (Pataya 2009: 22; 2003). Like Germany, Japan is another important destination for female Thai labor migration (ibid.).

[197] As Hillman points out, this dual history of migration to East and West, and the resulting unequal legal status, as well as the history of the political situation in Vietnam, still have impacts on divisions within the Vietnamese community in Germany today (Hillman 2005: 95) – divisions that were certainly also present in the Thai Park community.

refugees.[198] From 1978 onward, about 40,000 Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees who had fled the political turmoil and ethnic conflict during and after the Vietnam War by boat received political asylum in West Germany (Bui 2001: 16). For the first few years after their arrival, these immigrants usually lived in asylum homes and then later were able to move on to their own apartments. They often found employment in the metal industry (Hillman 2005: 86).[199]

Yet others at the park had spent part of their lives in East Berlin during socialism – they had migrated from Vietnam to East Germany as part of the GDR's training and study programs initiated since the 1950s.[200] In the 1980s, the East German government signed a bilateral agreement with the reunified Socialist Republic of Vietnam to offer training to Vietnamese workers in enterprises in East Germany.[201] Both Vietnamese men and women thus migrated to East Germany in the following years. These industrial training programs were viewed as both a strategy to increase labor supply to German industries but also as developing aid and solidarity effort to poorer countries in the global south (*Hillman* 2005: 86). With contracts lasting up to five or more years, many of the Vietnamese workers were employed in the garment industry. A small portion of their income was allocated to the Vietnamese government and some was paid in the form of consumer goods. By 1989, about 60,000 Vietnamese migrant laborers lived in East

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[198] Since the Vietnam War, and especially after the worldwide student protests against it, West German public discourse closely followed the political situation in Vietnam.
[199] By 1984, the numbers of Vietnamese refugees accepted to West Germany decreased steadily (Hillman 2004).
[200] During the Vietnam War, the East German socialist government also signaled solidarity with Northern Vietnam by encouraging unions, schools and employers to provide material support for the population in Northern Vietnam (Bui 2001: 16).
[201] East Germany had similar agreements with other socialist countries such as Mozambique, Angola and Cuba (Bui 2001: 16).

Germany (*Hillman* 2005: 90). In the months before the Berlin Wall came down, thousands of Vietnamese migrants crossed the border from east to West Germany and applied for political asylum there (Bui 2001: 16).

After the collapse of socialism in 1989 and the re-unification of East and West Germany, Vietnamese migrant laborers were confronted with a completely new situation. In fact, their future became a topic of heated debate both within Germany, as well as between the German and Vietnamese government. In the following years, many East German enterprises laid off their Vietnamese employees, or asked them to leave by offering bonus payments (Bui 2001: 17). Many Vietnamese were also deported during this time (some returned in the late 1990s or early 2000s as asylum seekers). Those who stayed did not have the same legal status as other migrant laborers who had immigrated to West Germany before 1989. In 1993 the re-unified German government introduced a policy that allowed Vietnamese immigrants who had participated in the labor and training programs under the socialist government to extend their visas if they could show proof of regular earnings, housing and a "clean" criminal record (ibid.). Yet as unemployment was rampant in these years, many had difficulties finding new employment. It was at this moment that informal economies offered new opportunities for making a livelihood. Thus, many of the former contract workers began to work as street vendors and cigarette sellers, or they turned to self- employment and opened up tailor shops, small restaurants, floral stands, grocery stores and Asian snack bars. At the same time, images of Vietnamese cigarette smugglers and petty criminals dominated public discourse on Vietnamese immigrants in re-unified Germany in these years –

especially in Berlin (Bui 2001). As anti-immigrant sentiments grew in the aftermath of unification, several asylum seeker homes were attacked in former East Germany, and Vietnamese residents also became the target of this violence.[202]

These diverse histories of migration – and the different kinds of work and job opportunities that came along with them – were present in the park. Yet, there was also a shared sense among most that things had been better before the Wall came down. Most of the Vietnamese families and the Thai women, as well as their German partners, had relatively secure jobs at that time. And if someone lost their job, it was relatively easy to find work again in no time. Then everything changed. Many of the vendors lost their jobs in the city's manufacturing industry, or they had to close down their small businesses. For many it was hard to find new formal employment and so they received so called Hartz IV unemployment benefits – thus living off a tight budget.[203] For many, there were only a few jobs here and there and only for a few months, not knowing what was next. Many of the Thai women who were employed worked in the hotel business as maids. Others did seasonal labor and worked in a fish factory during the winter. In the spring, they never knew whether they would get hired again in the fall. It was unpredictable. Thus, the Thai Park offered a viable alternative to many in the summer.

Similarly, many of the Thai women's German husbands or partners had lost the basis of their livelihoods and now received Hartz IV social benefits. Mario, Manee's partner, for example had lost his bratwurst stand next to a popular little beer garden

[202] In recent years, the number of Vietnamese asylum seekers have increased. And most recently, there has been a wave of deportation of Vietnamese undocumented immigrants in Berlin (see *Deutsche Welle* 2009).
[203] See my discussion of Hartz IV in the following section.

called the "Loretta Garden" in the former Ku-damm center of West Berlin. His stand used to be on a small lot that was sold to a private investor who built a hotel – and so he lost his lease and was evicted. Before the Berlin wall had come down, the Loretta Garden and Mario's business were thriving. Then, in the 1990s, as some put it, everything "went down the creek" (*alles ist den Bach runtergegangen*). And whereas Mario's neighborhood, the area of the Ku-damm, had been West Berlin's center during the division of the city, the center now had shifted elsewhere: as a consequence, people would talk about different centers all the time: for some, the center was still in the former West Berlin, whereas for others, it was in the city's former Eastern part called "Mitte" now. As economies and livelihoods shifted after the fall of the wall, you never knew exactly where the new "center" was.

Cultures of Austerity

Preparing, selling, and swapping, food all day long, the Thai Park community of vendors provided not only viable resources for sustaining their own livelihoods but also an antidote to the austerity of current discourses of welfare and state formulas on how to live frugally on unemployment.

Tropes of austerity and indulgence have populated debates about the economy, the labor market and the welfare state in the past decade in Germany – and throughout Europe. In the context of the most recent period of recession, many European governments, including France, England, Ireland, Germany, Greece and Spain, have made significant changes in their social system, cutting pensions, social benefits, diminishing health and education services and state support for the unemployed, to

counter "deficits" and bolster "stability". Thus as Zizek, has put it lately, in this "permanent state of economic emergency" (Zizek 2010), austerity policies flourish.

In Germany, austerity made a particularly strong appearance after the turn of the millennium. It was then, that the Social Democratic and Green government introduced large-scale reforms to the labor market and the welfare system – the most comprehensive in post war German history since the year 1949.[204] Titled, *Agenda 2010*, this series of reforms aimed at reducing unemployment, reforming the social security system, enabling economic growth and thus strengthening Germany's position in the global economy. Referring to the EU's Lisbon Strategy and its deadline of 2010, the reforms included cuts in the public health system, pension and unemployment benefits, as well as tax cuts.

One key component of these reforms has been the so-called Hartz measures. Developed by the Committee for Modern Services in the Labor Market, in short, the "Hartz Committee", led by Volkswagen's personnel director, Peter Hartz, the Hartz policies took effect beginning 2002 through 2005. Whereas the Hartz I-III reforms aimed at creating jobs more easily and producing flexible labor[205], Hartz IV primarily affected welfare and unemployment benefits (*Sozial- und Arbeitslosenhilfe*): it reduced both welfare and unemployment rates and joined them into one single system.[206] Under this new system, in order to receive unemployment benefits, Hartz IV recipients must agree

[204] See Heinrich 2004.
[205] For example, Hartz I-III restructured and expanded so called "job centers" – state funded job agencies – thus creating possibilities for advanced training, and offering new types of employment such as so called "mini jobs" with lower tax and insurance payments and grants for individual entrepreneurs – called the *Ich AG*, ("Me Inc.").
[206] Currently, the monthly Hartz IV support is 359 Euro per person, in addition to money for housing. Regular unemployment benefits, in this system, are now restricted to a time period of 12-15 months.

to provide proof of their efforts to seek employment. They can also be forced to accept a job offered to them through a state job center. In case of non-compliance, Hartz IV claimants face reduction or loss of their payments.[207]

As Hartz IV primarily affects people who have been unemployed for more than a year, the word has entered the national imagination as a synonym for long term unemployment benefits. And it has come to be associated with a culture of poverty. After 2005, austerity measures have particularly targeted Hartz IV recipients – with some politicians suggesting to cut parental support for recipients and further restricting its coverage of rental support. While some have praised the Hartz measures for reducing unemployment rates throughout Germany, the reforms have also been highly controversial. Many critics have argued that lower unemployment statistics remain unreliable, since many unemployed do part time work and are thus not counted under Hartz IV. Trade unions and Germany's socialist party (PDS) in particular, have criticized the reforms for dismantling the welfare state, increasing economic inequalities and pushing more people into precarious labor markets and low paid work (Heinrich 2004). In addition, increasing numbers of children receive Hartz IV through their parents – with rates ranging around 60-80% of those of adults.[208] Thus, for many, Hartz IV and the agenda 2010 have become synonyms for neoliberal economic policies a la Reagonomics and Thatcherism (Heinrich 2004).

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[207] Although these regulations are limited by constitutional rights such as the freedom of movement, Hartz IV recipients are also required to report to state job agencies regularly and provide proof of legal presence in the county in which they are registered.

[208] These criticisms made it all the way to the Germany's Federal Constitutional Court, which, in early 2010, in fact, ruled current Hartz IV benefit rates to be unconstitutional.

In Berlin, austerity has been a key strategy since the mid 1990s and because of it, the most current economic downturn has appeared as a rather distant problem to many. For more than a decade, the city has had a 60 billion Euro debt. After re-unification, both Berlin's economy and built landscape underwent re-structuring in fundamental ways. As urban planners, politicians and policy makers sought to create a new German capital and a global city, Berlin turned into the world's "biggest construction site" and for many years the local housing market boomed.[209] Imagining the city to transform from an industrial to a service city of global capital, urban planners and economic policymakers pushed to de-industrialize large parts of the city. Thus, the Treuhand, the trust agency responsible for privatizing East German enterprises and organizing economic "unification" between East and West, closed down most manufacturing companies in the Eastern part of the city (Lanz 2007: 123).

In former West Berlin, many manufacturing companies moved away in the context of re-unification. Then, by the mid 1990s, the situation radically switched from boom to bust: planners had overestimated the willingness of global developers, banks, and insurance companies to take up residence in Berlin. Many publicly funded construction projects lost their funding (Lanz 2007: 143). Thus, much of the newly built urban infrastructure remained unoccupied and stood empty right in the middle of the city. As result, the inflated housing and real estate markets collapsed and the city plunged

[209] In the process of reconstructing Berlin's urban landscape, new forms of exclusion and displacement emerged. Whereas, many considered West Berlin during the Cold War to be the capital of squatters and conscientious objectors, planners and public officials set out to transform Berlin into the new German capital. Many former low rent-housing neighborhoods, especially in the city center, quickly gentrified, and turned into expensive residential and shopping areas (see Rada 1997; and Abgeordnetenhaus cited in Lanz 2007: 141).

into a huge debt crisis. Furthermore, with ongoing de-industrialization, unemployment rates rose high above average throughout the city – ranging from 15 % to more than 20 or 30 % in some districts (Lanz 2007: 123-4). Although unemployment has decreased in the past years, Berlin's unemployment rates are still twice as high than the national urban average in Germany (14.7 % versus 8% national average) and 17 % of the population receives welfare benefits.[210]

Like all urban reform in neo-liberal times, none of these developments have been uniform. Rather they constitute heterogeneous experiments that translate into new experiences and subjectivities (Rofel 2007). Nevertheless, the restructuring of Berlin's economy and the rush to transform the city into a global metropole was deeply racialized and has had particularly negative impacts for immigrants (Lanz 2007: 124). Before unification, many immigrants had been employed as so called guest workers in local manufacturing industries. West Berlin's largest immigrant community was from Turkey. Many Turkish immigrants had come to work in Berlin in the course of the so called guest worker contracts in the 70s and 80s – and they were primarily working in the city's manufacturing sector.[211] With the increasing de-industrialization of the city, many of these immigrants were laid off, or replaced by cheaper labor from Eastern Europe. And due to racial discrimination in the labor market, as well as a lack of access to further public education, many Turkish immigrants had a hard time finding new opportunities for employment. Thus, Turkish immigrants were disproportionately affected by rising

[210] See the monthly unemployment and labor market statistics by the German Union Federation (DGB): http://www.berlin-brandenburg.dgb.de/article/archive/7/. Interestingly, the current economic crisis has had a relatively low impact on unemployment in Berlin, since the service economy has not been affected on a large scale so far.
[211] See also Chapter 2 and 4.

long term unemployment in the 90s and 2000s. While many immigrants remained in unemployment for years, some also saw themselves with no other choice than to leave Berlin and search for new opportunities in "West Germany" or to return to Turkey (Lanz 2007: 123ff). Simultaneously, in the context of flailing economies and de-industrialization, informal and illegal economies, such as street-vending, black market trade, domestic labor and prostitution mushroomed all over the city (ibid.). Many immigrants were able to find informal work in cleaning service, construction and gastronomic industries or work in private households as nannies or cleaning aids. For many immigrants, these economies offered precarious and low wage work, yet they also presented an opportunity to survive in Berlin and stay close to kin.

The life trajectories of immigrants in the Eastern parts of the city were also marked by increasing employment insecurity, yet often in a different way. In East Berlin, Vietnamese immigrants formed the largest community of labor migrants during socialism. They had migrated to East Germany as contract workers and as part of educational exchange-/work training programs during socialism (and hence, unlike in the West, were not referred to as "guest workers", but as "socialist friends"). After the collapse of the socialist East German government, many of these migrant workers lost their contracts and were pushed into informal economies as they could not find new employment but had to provide proof of independent income in order to maintain their visa status. Not until 1997, did these contract workers receive the same legal status as West German migrant laborers and thus the right to claim social and unemployment benefits. Many Vietnamese thus became entrepreneurs in shadow economies and

developed trade networks to former socialist countries, for example, selling untaxed cigarettes and coffee from neighboring Poland. As these informal economies stretched across re-unified Germany's new borders to Poland, discourses around Vietnamese "zones of crime" pitched Vietnamese immigrants as clever criminals who use up state social support and participate in illegal trade of cigarettes and weapons (Bui 2001; Lanz 2007: 128-131).[212]

It was during this moment of financial crisis and emerging informal economies that cultures of austerity took center stage in Berlin. The Berlin Senate introduced cuts to its public care and housing expenditures. As anti-immigrant sentiments grew in the mid 90s, many blamed the economic crisis. Whereas conservatives tended to explain xenophobia as logical response to the high numbers of immigrants in the country, Social Democrats and the Green Party saw it as unfortunate outcome of social anxieties unleashed by economic restructuring and the loss of secure employment (Lanz 2007: 133). In addition, national media increasingly portrayed immigrants as taking advantage of social benefits, and in the following years, immigration policies highlighted "self-help" among immigrants as "key means to integration" (*Abgeordnetenhaus* cited in Lanz 2007: 135).

In the face of flailing local economies and lack of public funds, both Berlin's urban landscape and images of it changed. Since mayor Klaus Wowereit made the famous statement that "Berlin is poor but sexy" (McGrane 2009), poverty and people's

[212] This racialized image of criminal Vietnamese immigrants also had effects on policymaking and the municipal government's willingness to grant these immigrants legal status in Berlin up until their equal treatment with other, formerly West German labor migrants in 1997 (Lanz 2007: 131).

"creative" strategies to cope with difficult times have became a selling point to pitch the city as a creative cultural capital. As the city also sold much of its public property in the center to private investors (Lanz 2007: 143), local municipal services have been reduced to a minimum. This has lead to what some call a "crisis of public green space" (Rosol 2006), affecting public services such as garbage pick ups, street cleaning and winter service while leaving parks and green spaces unmaintained for longer periods of time. Yet these cracks in official economies and ordered landscapes provided opportunities both for spontaneous vegetation and new social practices to emerge.[213]

Enacting Austerity: The Hartz IV Menu

In 2008, one German politician came up with a recipe to enact austerity by putting an end to immigrant wastefulness and the unemployed's indulgence in state benefits: Thilo Sarrazin, board member of the German central bank and head financial official in Berlin, commissioned a three day menu plan for the unemployed. According to his calculations, Hartz IV recipients should be able to "eat well" on a minimal budget – to be exact, 3.76 Euro per day: bread rolls, muesli or whole-wheat toast for breakfast; spaghetti, sausages or soup for lunch; salad, bread and cheese for dinner. With only 3.76 Euro, his "Hartz IV menu plan" promised to provide a balanced and healthy diet to the poor.[214] To prove the Hartz IV menu and its thesis, a state employee at the Financial Office checked and calculated the prices in local discount supermarkets. The details of day one of the plan turned out as follows:

[213] See McGrane 2009 on the reduction of municipal services in Berlin.
[214] In 2008, 320,000 households received Hartz IV benefits (Onken 2008)

> Breakfast: 2 bread rolls, 25 grams jam, 20 grams butter, 1 slice of cheese, 1 apple, 1 glass of juice, two cups of tea.
> Lunch: 100 grams ground beef, 125 grams spaghetti, 200 grams tomato sauce, spices/oil.
> Snack: 1 cup of coffee and 1 yoghurt
> Dinner: half a cucumber, 130 grams meat loaf and 200 grams potato salad (see Troesser 2008).

Each gram of food would be carefully measured and still be just enough to cover the basics in terms of daily calorie need. Yet above all, the main requirement for what many would later jokingly call the "Sarrazin diet" was: rigorous abstinence and austereness – hence no cigarettes or alcohol, nor fresh vegetables from local markets nor fresh goods from bakeries – were part of the menu.

Soon after its publication, the "Sarrazin diet" stirred up a national debate, receiving both affirmation as well as criticism from across the political spectrum.[215] And, it sparked a flood of publicly staged calculations, shopping and cooking sessions. Hordes of journalists flocked into supermarkets to try out the "Hartz IV menu" and calculate its accurate pricing. Others came up with recipe books and brochures for Hartz IV recipients.[216] As one journalist writing for the conservative weekly magazine *Die Welt* wrote when she tried out the "Hartz IV diet" for five days: buying 25 gram jam, one slice of cheese, and 130 gram meat loaf, one was confronted with mathematical challenges such as the rule of three. If 130 gram of meat loaf is supposed to cost 56 cent, can you

[215] In fact, conservatives, leftist groups and welfare organizations all raised concerns about the feasibility of the plan and its long-term health effects, possibly leading to malnutrition. In addition, a main target of criticism was that the plan omitted that children were only allocated 2.28 Euro per day for food according to Hartz IV (Geissler 2008). Others argued the plan's scrupulous and painstaking calculations ultimately scorned the unemployed and poor.
[216] See *Die Welt* 2008 "Arbeitslose zeigen wie man für 4.33 Euro satt wird", http://www.welt.de/politik/article3211600/

buy the 400 grams package for 1.69 Euro (Troesser 2008)? Confused, she had to get out the calculator on her cell. Yet would a Hartz IV recipient be able to afford a cell phone in the first place? And what would you do with the rest of the 270 gram of meat loaf if you did not want to eat meat loaf four times a week? The same was true for the ground beef, the spaghetti, butter and the sauce. In the end, the journalist composed several meals combining the ground beef and meat loaf – and some of the food went bad.

Within the gaps of these meticulous calculations, and their exuberant public mutations, a (cynical) world of austerity emerged. And in it, one could trace a shift in immigration discourse and the reformation of the welfare state: in Berlin, the food plan took on a special urgency as public debate had increasingly cast immigrants as having no qualms about "milking" the German welfare state for more and more money. A year later, and as already discussed in Chapter 2, Sarrazin criticized the high immigrant population for taking advantage of the state in an interview in the Berlin based magazine *Lettre International*: "In Berlin there is a bigger problem than elsewhere because of an underclass that does not take part in the normal economic cycle" (2009). In relation to Turkish and Arab immigrants, Sarrazin added that their numbers have grown "because of the wrong policies" and that they have "no productive function other than selling fruit and vegetables" (Dempsey 2009). In addition, Hartz IV recipients, tend to be at home more often, they like it warm, and regulate the temperature with an open window, he claimed. Thus, in order to curb wastefulness, the unemployed would be better off wearing warm sweaters in their apartments to save energy costs, he further concluded. [217]

[217] http://www.derwesten.de/nachrichten/politik/2009/5/13/news-119647061/detail.html

Most recently, the publication of Sarrazin's book, "Germany does away with itself" (2010) has contributed to a further proliferation of images of immigrants as not frugal enough and as not having the right – protestant – work ethic – and it has sparked a national debate about the failures of "multiculturalism". Although Sarrazin's statements have been and continue to be controversial, they have set the stage for new demands for more restrictive immigration, economic and welfare policies to crack down on unproductive, superfluous immigrants.

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In her article on the Hartz IV menu, the journalist dreamt of the sweet smell of freshly baked chocolate croissants – a staple that would certainly be strictly prohibited under the Hartz IV diet. Yet one person's dreams and desires of indulgence in luxurious foods are another one's nightmares. While the food and cooking in the Thai Park transcends the sense of smell and taste of some, to others, it provides the possibility for exuberant trade, communal gathering and indulgence in delicious foods and gathering practices – as well as a source of income, however insecure it might be.

Indulgence

The Thai Park community provides an antidote to the austerity of current discourses of welfare and state formulas on how to live frugally on unemployment. Cooking, preparing and selling food, as well as gambling are its key strategies. During any day in the summer, an abundance of food spreads out all over the mats across the meadow: some people sell fruit and vegetables – from mango, *longan*, *mangosteen*, papaya and *rambutan*, to *pak choi*, cilantro, bamboo shoots, *kanah* (brokoli leaves) and Thai basil.

Figure 9: Mango, *longan* and *mangosteen* (photograph by author)

The women prepare and indulge in a wide variety of dishes: fried mackarel, green papaya salad (*som tom*), spring rolls, fried shrimp, various rice dishes with chicken or tofu, pad thai with shrimp, crab cakes, different types of soups (with chicken feet, or regular chicken or beef), and skewered sour sausages.

Figure 10: Sour sausages and Thai apple (photograph by author)

Others sell deserts of all sorts: fresh cut mango or Thai apple (*poodza*) served with a mix of sugar, salt and spices, rice cakes, golden threads (*foi thong*), sticky rice and coconut deserts wrapped in (banana) leaves. Drinks range from coca cola, beers, tea and caipirinha, to Thai ice tea, *Air Bandung* (a Malaysian sweet milk drink with rose syrup drink), *pandan*, or grass jelly drinks. Some vendors also offer children's toys – like plastic bubbles, hello kitty flying pencils and bubble gum. Several Thai women offer massages to sellers and their friends as well as to other visitors who come by the park to buy food.

Figure 11: *Pandan* and *Air Bandung* (photograph by author)

The vendors cook food for their families, eat together, chat and sell and trade dishes among each other. (Visitors usually pay more for a dish than the sellers do amongst each other – for example, a pad Thai dish sells for the price of 3 Euro between sellers and 5 Euro for others). In fact, there is never any shortage of foods throughout the day. During each afternoon, a vendor from an Asian grocery store in the nearby underground train station comes by with a shopping cart full of produce. During a busy day, people run out of supplies and thus buy from him to stock up on *pak choi*, rice, sauces, or fresh coriander and basil. Other informal trade networks cross in the park: in the evening, right before dusk, a few Polish or Turkish vendors roam through the park to offer cheap goods from Poland, just a 40 mile ride away from Berlin. Many Thai, Vietnamese and Laotians buy cigarettes, alcohol and coffee from them.

Hi-Lo

Figure 12: *Hi-Lo* at midnight (photograph by author)

Yet people at the Thai Park do not only indulge in food, trade and conversation, but also in games of chance. During warm summer nights, the park is often crowded until midnight. As dusk approaches, the Thai picnic slowly mutates into an open-air casino. Vendors set up small gas lamps, offering islands of light amid a gloomy meadow. Then, as the park grows dark a couple of foxes, rabbits and a flock of crows join in on the grass. They carefully sneak past all the people perching on the ground while they peruse the area for leftover food.

This is the time of *hi-lo* – a dice game in which you can lose it all, wreck your life, or win big.[218] Illuminated by the lamps, several playing fields emerge under the beech

[218] *Hi-lo* is often played in the Philippines and throughout Southeast Asia. It is similar to the Chinese game *Sic Bo* (or *Tai Sai*, or *Dai Siu*) that also was brought to Casinos in the US via Chinese immigrants in the 20th century.

trees at the edge of the park.[219] The game works like this: a large table cloth with different hand written subfields with number combinations of two or three numbers – each number under 10 – is spread out in the middle. People gather around it, crouching or sitting on stools. The dealer of the game sits in the middle: she throws three dice, placed on a little plate with a basket on top. Before the dice roll, everyone places their bets on different combinations marked on the cloth. The goal is to predict the right number combinations of the dice; and the choices on the cloth are: single numbers, two or three of the same number, "high", "low" or different number combinations. The croupier's assistant makes sure everyone finishes placing their bets in time before the next round. And she also provides the players with drinks. Once all the bets are set, the dealer throws the dice. All combinations under 10 count as low, and all above 11 as high. *Hi-lo* is any combination that adds up to 11. If you have placed your bets on a two-number combination that ends up winning, you get three times the money back. If you place it on lo, and the dice add up to less than 11, you get twice the amount – the same is true for high. If you win a *hi-lo* combination, you get seven times the amount. The dealer collects all the bets and distributes the gains to all the winners. Then, the players place their bets once again and the dice roll. And so on…[220] The game continues until late in the night.

A Laotian and a Vietnamese family run the *hi-lo* games: one Vietnamese family of several young brothers in their thirties and two Laotian sisters in their fifties. The two

[219] Sometimes, a couple of small poker tables are perched right next to them.
[220] At times, the "conduit of fiscal liquidity" (Klima 2002: 261) in the hi-lo game, can be pushed even a step further: if someone places a bet, another player, who ran out of money, is allowed to move his neighbor's money on a different combination and thus place a bet himself. If he loses, he has to pay back the money to his co-player. If he wins, he takes the gain.

sisters run the games with mostly women who tend to do lower bets – usually between one or two Euro coins – whereas the men usually place their bets 10 euro and higher. Some people just come by for a quick game, others play all night.

In the dim light of the gas lamps, money moves back and forth – between vendors, costumers and dealers. Some people come with the money they made during the day, selling soup, stir-fry, spring rolls and salads. If they are lucky, they make even more. If not, they lose it all. Zooming in on the quick staccato of tumbling dice and money bustling back and forth, people crouch on plastic stools or squat on a mat or pillow. Some stand by the game, chatting with others, throwing in their bets once in a while. And again others just sit and watch or stand close by. Yet once you start playing, you get hooked, people say. And you want to keep going, chasing after that one exuberant moment when the cubes tumble to eleven and you strike *hi-lo*. You hear stories of people losing almost everything, wrecking their lives and marriages. And even some of the players consider the gambling indecent, or a waste.[221] Yet once you start you get hooked. *Hi-lo* creates expenditure, the desire to make it big time, and above all, as everyone gathers around the game: sociality. Thus, expenditure and wastefulness (of time and money), but also indulgence in sociality is the logic of the game. This is not a logic of austerity or efficiency of utilitarian economics. And as Alan Klima writes, "gambling does not pretend to asceticism" (Klima 2002: 249). Not unlike the funeral casinos in Klima's ethnography, *hi-lo* does not "contribute to a production of individuality that might be folded into a new economic order". And although gambling can also be read as

[221] Like in Thailand, gambling is illegal in public spaces in Germany – except official casinos. Thus it is seen as a shady practice to most – even the gamblers themselves.

capitalism's fetish, as "everything that is wrong, unreal and "fetishistic" in global economy", gambling generates "a value, a commerce in community" (Klima 2002: 260).[222]

Amid the gambling, there is one man in the park who calculates the "expenditures of happiness and disappointment" (Klima 2002: 248) carefully. He carries a small booklet with him, jotting down the combinations of numbers as he wins and loses. Convinced, that there is a trick or a method behind the throwing of the dice, his booklet is filled with pages and pages of hastily scribbled down numbers. Cem is one of the few Turkish men in the park and he is married to Nuan who is Thai. Nuan and Cem make their living keeping the park clean and sanitary. Nuan is paid by the municipalities to clean and care of the restrooms adjacent to the park. Cem clears the meadow every evening from left over trash – and all the vendors pay 5 Euro to him every day. While he works on the meadow, he takes little breaks and plays *hi-lo*. Each time he plays, he takes notes of the dice combinations, trying to figure out the "method" behind the game and improve his predictions. People tease him. They say he is addicted to the game and his book of numbers is his "bible".

Signs: Public and Private and the Gaps in Between

Gambling and food vending without license are illegal in Germany. Yet people at the park avoided official rules and made use of grey zones. In response to the indulgence in

[222] In his analysis of funeral casinos in Thailand, Klima also draws on Georges Bataille's notion of expenditure and his attempt to imagine an alternative political economy – an economy that is not based on a culture of utilitarian assumptions but on surplus, excess and "accursed share". Thus the key trope here is not efficiency, but expenditure – "*depense*: to use up, to consume, to spend, expend, to exchange value in an economy of the broadest, most expansive, expensive and wasteful wealth of the term" (Klima 2002: 242).

gambling, cooking and vending and the large gatherings during the summer, local municipal authorities have made several attempts to regulate the Thai Park community. In 2006, the municipal authority of Wilmersdorf put up several signs at four of the entryways to the park. Written in Thai, English and German, the signs set up new rules of conduct. In particular they prohibited:

-barbecuing, cooking, refining and lighting or operating a fire
-putting up garden furniture (such as tables, stools, tents and umbrellas)
-using coolers to an extent that exceeds the usual quantities for a household
-selling goods and offering services
-keeping dogs or other pets off-leash and not removing dog droppings immediately
-bicycling
-producing noise with musical instruments or stereos
-using the meadow after 10pm

Figure 13: Rules of conduct, Thai Park (photograph by author)

Yet surprisingly, in addition to these regulations, a fenced area of about 200 square feet was built across the other side of the park a few years ago. A sign next to it, read

"Cooking and barbecuing area". Inside the fenced area, park users were allowed to prepare food on little cement circles. Yet if anybody wanted to use the space, they had to walk and drag all their food and utensils for about ten minutes all the way from the meadow across the park to the cooking area. In the end hardly anyone ever bothered to go all away across the park. And thus the official "cooking area" stood empty.

Instead of adhering to the official cooking areas, people snuck around rules – from creating a versatile structure of the everyday market that can easily be disassembled, to performing "being Thai". Many vendors actively trafficked in stereotypes about being Thai. For example, drawing on cultural images of the Thai as peaceful, they regularly praised the Thai Park for being laid back and clean. Sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, vendors would position themselves against Arab and Turkish immigrants using other parks in Berlin. Many emphasized that the Thai Park was the best park in town, and things were more peaceful, clean and multicultural than in other parks – especially the Tiergarten.[223]

During the summer, the local "office of order" (*Ordnungsamt*)[224] regularly check in at the park, making sure that people stick to the rules – while closely maintaining official definitions of public and private. When patrols approach the park, the first person to spot them sends a high pitch whistle across the park. Within seconds, plastic stools hide

[223] See Chapter 4. As one vendor put it: "The Tiergarten is pure chaos! Even the police are scared and avoid that place, because they get in trouble there. And then the immigrants leave all the trash behind! In the Thai Park, all the garbage is cleared away in the evening. The park is clean!" But this laidback culture of being Thai also was contrasted to German culture: in Germany everybody was always hectic and stressed and nobody could ever relax. In contrast, the Thai Park was so much more peaceful, so the story went.
[224] The *Ordnungsamt* is part of the municipal administration. Its public officers wear uniforms but no arms, and have a similar task as do local police: to maintain public order and security. The officers thus survey adherence to rules of conduct in public spaces such as parks, streets and sidewalks. In Berlin, each district has its own *Ordnungsamt*.

in bags, sun-umbrellas disappeared and if it is a rainy day, tarps are torn down and folded together in a flash. The dice games vanish swiftly. One time I sat on a little stool at the park chatting with several sellers, and as we heard the whistle, Nim, one of the sellers, quickly pulled away the stool from under me – much to my puzzlement. When the officers then go through the park and inquire about everyone's activities, people say: "we are having a family picnic!" – marking a private space and presenting them with a common image of the Asian extended family. Then the officers ask about each individual's belongings. Every adult is allowed to have two coolers. Most of the time, the sellers have more than two coolers. To help out, everyone who did not bring any food claims one or two coolers. If a cooler is not claimed, the officers take it with them. If they find a sun umbrella or any plastic stools, they do the same – since it is against the regulations to set up any private "furniture". One weekend, Manee told me, she had two of her coolers taken away and two plastic stools. She went to the office of order the next Monday and had to pay a fine. They gave her the coolers back – but the food in it had turned rotten.

Yet the state not only entered the park via regular patrols. I frequently heard rumors about city officials spying on the vendors from a high rise office building right across the park, or even from a helicopter flying over it. Thus, even if people were able to sneak around official attempts to create order and control the activities in the park, a dreadful sense of state's presence always lurked around the corner.

Interlude

My own "arrival" in the Thai Park was tightly linked with working within the cracks of official rules myself. I conducted fieldwork in the Thai Park during three consecutive summers between 2007 and 2010. I spent time at the park, speaking to vendors, their families and visitors, and also to residents who did not participate in the park's economy. I participated in everyday activities at the park, such as buying food and drinks, occasionally helping set up stalls, picnicking, eating, sitting around and chatting – and I also participated in gambling. Although German and white women came to the park to buy food, it was unusual for non-Asian women to spend any prolonged time talking to the vendors. Thus, when I first approached some of the vendors about my research interests, many eyed me with suspicion: was she a spy for the local municipality, the office of order, or even worse, the police? As many vendors had been the target of recent controls by the city, not surprisingly, their initial reaction was to stay at a distance. Nevertheless, as I struck up conversation with a few vendors, unexpected overlaps in my own and my informants' biographies would trigger our mutual attention: many of the vendors had travelled to the US, or had kin there, and were fond of American popular culture and thus were intrigued to talk to "the student from California". In addition, several vendors and their families were struggling with a serious illness; as my mother was going through cancer treatment at the beginning of my fieldwork, we shared some of our worries and hopes about loved ones and found consolation in mutual stories of illness and healing.

Sitting with vendors on the meadow throughout the day, and often until late at night, I was able to observe their daily interactions with each other, with their families, costumers, and also the local municipalities. Furthermore, I learned about and engaged with people's worries about their daily income, about debts, and financial insecurities; and I listened to gossip about other vendors and complaints about the often rainy German weather.

After spending prolonged times at the park, some people still remained at a distance, tolerating my presence but otherwise ignoring me. And then again, others seemed to become more comfortable and also began to speak more frankly with me. It was not until one particular incident though when I realized how much the Thai Park community was built in complicity and solidarity against authority. One day, the patrol went through the park and several municipal officers asked everyone present to claim their food. Two coolers were allowed per person. Nim, the vendor I was sitting next to at that moment had too many coolers. So I quickly claimed two of them to help her out. Although everyone was in a rush at the time and I had not perceived anyone taking notice, several people later approached me with a friendly nod and a smile on their face – to my own surprise. Thus, only after symbolically "running away" and sneaking around the controls by the office of order, did I receive some recognition of vendors usually ignoring me.

The Park's Intimate Economies

Practices of exchange in the Thai Park are closely entangled with intimate relations between sellers, and thus are shaped by kinship, region, race, class and gender. Some of

the different vendors had become experts in preparing different specialities – for example, the woman from the Chiang Mai Province who makes the spicy papaya salad, or the woman whose soup with chicken feet had become popular, or the mushroom women who sell mushrooms they picked in the forest. Spatial divisions in the park usually follow lines of gender and nationality: most of the Thai, Laotian and Vietnamese female vendors squatted the core of the meadow. Towards the entrance of the park, there were a few Vietnamese families and also the Vietnamese and Laotian families running the *hi-lo* games. Then, all the way on the meadow's edges, the German husbands sat on their lawn chairs, taking up a rather passive role, mostly not participating in the hustle on the meadow. Only in the mornings and evenings would they help their wives and partners to haul the goods and utensils to and from the park. Otherwise, they were pretty superfluous. Clearly, the women were in charge of the trade and exchange – as well as the income. And some of them even hired their own (mostly female) assistants – to help them cook, mix drinks, cut fruit, or distribute money and watch over bets in the *hi-lo* game.

Aside from these spaces of expertise and gender, divisions of public and private did not really make much sense in the park, since it constitutes both an extended living room and a public mini-market. Many of the female vendors said, even if sometimes, going to the park was not all that lucrative, it was still better than sitting around at home and being bored. Manee called the Thai Park her living room. "I even bring my own blanket and pillow!" she laughed.

Yet for a living room, the space on the meadow was quite busy. Goods and money moved back and forth and circulated all over the park. The vendors constantly traded food and groceries and other staples with each other. During any day, people came and visited each other at their stands and showed the things to each other that they wanted to share or trade. Some traded mushrooms for money, or rare items such as wild boar stir-fry. Others exchanged their lettuce or fresh fruit with someone else's soup or noodles.

At the same time, money circulated and everyone shifted money around, back and forth – all the time. Oftentimes, one vendor would borrow money from another vendor. Then they would spend the money on buying some of their own staples to make food. Or they would use it to play *hi-lo* for a while. And once they made some money, they'd pay their debts. (Generally, the sellers made less money than the people who ran the *hi-lo* games. Yet their income was more constant – something around 50 Euro per day, which, if the sellers came to the park every day during the summer, added up to 1500 Euro per month.)

When he assisted his uncle in the *hi-lo* game, Kip carried bills and coins with him constantly, so he could provide people with change. Sometimes he also played with that money himself. When he lost, it would go back to the bank. Every day, he received some money for helping out. He called it his pocket money. Similarly, Oma (the Laotian women running the other *hi-lo* game) would sometimes start the day by borrowing money from her sister who also runs a game - maybe around 100 Euro. Kip explained to me, on a bad day, Oma made something between 10 Euro and 50 Euro. She hardly ever

lost any money because she made sure that people distributed their money across the game and not too many would put a large amount of money on *hi-lo*, which paid 7 times the amount of the bet. The best days for her were when many people played. Then she made more money – sometimes up to a 1000 Euro. But I heard Kip and others complain that she was wasteful with the money she made. When she made good money, she would go to the casino and gamble it all away! But if she did win, she gave her sister the money back. And if she didn't, she would wait a while. But that's how the money circulated.

Mostly, all of this borrowing and lending seemed to go rather smoothly in the general "conduit of fiscal liquidity" (Klima 2002: 261). Everyone was able to keep track of things. Yet once in a while, frictions emerged. Work relationships were saturated with different kinds of affect – feelings of friendship, loyality, affection, pity, and at times anger and disappointment. Sometimes people got into quarrels over their mutual expectations, broken bargains, growing debts and payments that did not come through. A fight would emerge, until the person who was in default would finally pay back. But sometimes, people also went so far as to cut off connection to each other – after passionate disagreements. For example, Manee had worked for Duan, selling mushrooms, fresh fruit and drinks. One day Manee told me she had stopped working for Duan. They had been quarrelling a lot and Duan was complaining that Manee was not working fast enough. At the same time, Duan wasn't consistent with her payments to Manee: one time she would pay her 10 Euro, and then the other day she'd pay her 30. It kept changing constantly. Manee was not happy about it. One day Duan called her at

home, and yelled at her and told her that her heart was hurting and she was disappointed with her and could not take it anymore. She talked and talked and cried and cried. As she revisited the phone conversation to me, Manee rolled her eyes in annoyance. She said to Duan: "ok, let's part in a friendly way then." And she hung up. Otherwise the conversation would have been going on and on and on. And although Manee kept rolling her eyes, she also seemed distraught about the disagreement. She first did not want to part. What should she do? Buy all the things for making drinks and the fresh fruit herself? She did not want to do it. But then she did and now it turned out ok.

However, Manee had to rely on her partner Arne more now. Whereas Duan had organized transportation before, it was now Arne who had to haul all the goods to the park by public transportation. He often complained about it – the load seemed to be getting heavier and heavier! One morning, when I talked to him, Arne's face was all wrinkled up because he was not happy about all the stuff he had to carry. He and Manee would put all the food into several small carts and take them on the underground train to the park.

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Aside from quarreling some people were also unhappy about not making all that much profit in the end. In fact, several women said to me once that they had become vendors out of boredom. They felt it wasn't that lucrative for them after all to spend all day in the park: you sell something and then you buy something from someone else. So, at the end of the day, you end up spending all the money you earned. And even worse, some people gambled it all away. Especially the Laotian women running the gambling games

were a target of gossip in this regard. Oma, one of the older sisters, would make lots of money from her *hi-lo* game. But then, at night, she would go to the casino and gamble all the money away that she made during the day! - so the story went. But also others, were the target of gossip. One afternoon, a woman in a military outfit with high heel black boots passed by Manee's stand and chatted with her. After she passed, Manee leaned over to me and whispered: "she always wears fancy things to the park. But this woman gambles a lot. She even goes to the casino! She lost 100,000 euro! But guess what: she is very lucky. Her husband is very rich. But when he found out that she lost all that money he said to her: don't do it again otherwise I will divorce you! She didn't do it for several months and everything was fine. But then she went again and lost a lot of money again. And her husband kept his word. So now she is divorced and she gets 1000 Euro from her husband per month. She has a kid with him too, you know. That's why. But she still has to pay rent. This happens when you gamble too much." But on top of being a gambler, in Manee's eyes, this woman was also a negligent mother! Her boy was 9 years old. The other day, he had hit his lip with a plastic butterfly he was playing with. And his brother had a big scar in his face. His mom came here and gambled and didn't pay attention. "Things always happen with kids. Accidents happen all the time. But sometimes you can prevent them if you pay a little attention!"

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In her ethnography of the intimate economies of Thai markets in Bangkok, Ara Wilson traces the key role of Thai market women in Thailand's entry in global economies in the past and present (Wilson 2004). Developing a notion of "intimate economies", she

shows how capitalist systems of productions and exchange are closely intertwined with cultural meanings and identities of everyday social life, such as gender, kinship, sexuality and ethnic ties. Thus, she defines intimate economies as "the complex interplay between [..] intimate social dimensions and plural economic systems in a context shaped by transnational capital" (Wilson 2004: 11). Because they blur the boundaries between public and private, between capitalist and noncapitalist transactions, intimate economies trigger public anxieties (Wilson 2004: 20). Similarly, in the Thai Park in Berlin, relations of exchange are deeply embedded with relations of gender, kinship, ethnic ties and affect. And it is precisely these intimate economies that confused the municipal authorities and enabled the vendors to "pretend" they were simply having a family picnic and act as sellers at the same time.

The Mushroom Lady

Figure 14: Steinpilze (*boletus edulis,* or porcini) (photograph by author)

The intimate economy of a mushroom can have a strange scent, both sweet and bitter. Like a few other vendors, Manee collects mushrooms in the late summer and sells them at the park. She is in her early 50s and grew up in a village near Bangkok. Unlike the journalist's desire for croissants, Manee dreams of the scent of mushrooms.

Looking back at her life, she said to me once, she feels like everything has been a roller coaster ride – up and down – not unlike the game *hi-lo*. When she was young, she was married to a Thai man and they had a child. Then, a few years later, her husband started being abusive. Manee ran away. After some time, the opportunity came up to go

visit a friend who had immigrated to Germany. And so Manee went to Berlin. Only two years later did she come back to fetch her daughter, Tanaka. Manee got married to a German man. It was an arranged marriage: she put an ad into the newspaper, looking for a German husband and received hundreds of responses. Her new husband, she picked out of a final choice of three. Her son is from that marriage.

For several years, she worked all the time and only took care of the children. But then, she met an American man who she fell in love with. They snuck away together and went on several road trips. Then her mother died and her lover bought her the ticket and they met back in Thailand. She took care of her mother's funeral and spent time with her family. And when everything was taken care of, she left with him to the U.S. for six weeks. They travelled to Colorado and Florida and took a boat tour in Tennessee – and they gambled in casinos.

Like many other Thai women in the park, Manee had provided for her family back home for many years. From her earnings in Germany, she bought land for her parents and siblings and also provided financial support for them to build a house. And although she returned to Bangkok regularly, she could not imagine going back for good. What would she do there? She probably would just have to fix the old broken house of her sister and nieces again and take care of everything. Manee's mother was dead, as well as one of her sisters and her only brother. Her brother died in a car accident and then a few months later, her sister died of lung cancer. Her other, youngest sister now lives in the house near Bangkok. Manee paid for the house and for most of her family's property, including her nieces and nephews and their children.

And now even her father was gone. It was late in the summer when her father died two years ago. Manee was just on her way back from the forest and she had picked lots of mushrooms. Suddenly, the phone rang and her sister from Thailand said: "you should come if you want to see dad." An artery in his head had exploded and he was in a coma in the hospital. She cried and cried and had just picked all these mushrooms. She flew to Thailand and her father was still alive. She said to him: "Dad, if you can hear me, squeeze my hand." He didn't. But she still felt like he knew she was there. The next day he died.

In late summers and in fall, Manee regularly collects mushrooms together with other Thai women in several forests at the city's Western edge. For example, the Spandauer forest comprises one of the city's large deciduous woodlands, and hosts several nature reserves and many different mushrooms – ranging from chanterelles *(Cantarellus cibarius)* and porcinis (*boletus edulis)*, to *Rotkappe* (*L. vulpinum,* or *Leccinum quercinum)* and puffball mushrooms (*Bovist*). Some of the areas of this and other forests were closed to the public and the pickers had heard rumors about munition from WWII in the forest. Another favorite location for people to pick mushrooms was a forest and heath land area at the edge of the city. Because of its heavy military use during WWII and the Cold War, munition was scattered all over this area. As a consequence, much of the forest had been closed off to the public. That is why it was one of the best places to sneak in and collect mushrooms. Yet one day, the Heinz Sielmann Foundation – a famous wildlife filmmaker and photographer – bought part of the forest to open up an animal park. They were planning to put bisons and wild horses in there and make it into

something like a "wilderness area". Parts of that forest were thus closed off and fortified even more. But neither the nature reserves, nor the animals nor the munition would keep the women away. They usually went around 4 or 5 am in the morning, snuck through the fence and thus were able to avoid the patrols.[225]

Sometimes, the women spent up to 8 hours picking mushrooms in the early morning. Then they would come and sell them at the park for 15 Euro a kilo – about a third of the price in regular grocery stores.

Manee's daughter, Tukata, often teased her mother about the mushrooms. In her view, the mushroom picking did not really seem to be about money at all. She thought it was strange how all the women kept going to the forest every single day and then be so tired all day and not make that much money after all. "It's like therapy to them! Everyone goes together and they enjoy it so much!" Indeed, Manee told me one time that she felt like she was addicted to mushroom picking. Sometimes she would go five times a week, sometimes even more. One time, last year, she had not gone picking mushrooms for a while and she was supposed to have surgery. A day before the surgery, she was nervous and talked to a friend who had been going to the forest. "Why don't you come with us? You can lie in bed for the rest of the week—do something now to distract you!" So Manee went along. But she had not done this in a while. And they found lots of mushrooms! And they were in the forest all day. She knelt down a lot and was very exhausted that same night. She could hardly sleep and kept thinking about the mushrooms all night. The next day, all her muscles ached—and she had to have the

[225] Conversation with Manee, September 2009.

surgery! It was a mess! Then after her surgery, when she awoke from the anesthesia, her thoughts travelled immediately to the mushrooms. She saw them in front of her eyes. And then the next night again, she could not sleep. She kept hallucinating about the mushrooms. They were constantly there. She could even smell them. They just wouldn't let her go. As she told me the story, she repeated a gesture with her hands, imitating the shape of a mushroom and holding it in front of her face very tightly—then she inhaled the mushroom's scent, closing her eyes. She kept repeating the gesture several times, until I could almost sense the sweet smell of the mushroom myself.

The Gamblers

Kip is in his mid 30s. During the summers, he is at the park almost every day, helping out his brother and uncle who run one of the *hi-lo* games. Many of his kin are regulars at the park: his father, usually dressed in a grey suit wearing a grey hat and using a walking stick, regularly plays *hi-lo*, his two brothers, close to him in age, his uncle and aunt and his nieces and nephews, who often run after Kip, teasing him, or demanding his attention with a new game. Together with his younger brother, he was assisting his older brother and his uncle with the *hi-lo* game. In the afternoon, he was responsible for setting up the game and keeping it running smoothly. As his uncle was throwing the dice, Kip would keep track of the money, distribute the gains and losses and give the players change if they needed any. And he made sure all the players would get something to drink. Wearing jeans, a T-shirt, a jeans jacket and a baseball hat, Kip did not seem as well prepared as some of the other park goers who came with thick jackets to fight the cold in the fall or on chilly summer evenings.

Having been unemployed for a while, Kip depended on the extra money he was making at the park. Also, as he put it, being in the park was less boring than sitting around at home. Kip would often talk to me about his confusion dealing with bureaucracies to receive the social benefits. He found himself working through lots of incomprehensible paperwork, which he tended to fill out with great care. But each time he sent it to the social office, there was something missing and the officials there complained. And then if he sent in more information and documents, he received a letter in the mail, saying he had responded too late. Then it would take months for the money to come through – if it did at all. It was mind- boggling to him. Others felt similarly. Many of the Thai women depended on their husbands to translate the highly formalized bureaucratic language to them.

Kip was born in Vietnam in 1970. Tropes of suffering and repeated displacement populated his story of his own and his family's migration: a few years after his birth, his family fled the political turmoil and violence in Vietnam to live in Laos near the capital. Although his parents were able to tend a small piece of land and had a few chicken, they were not doing so well. Then one day, his mother said to Kip and his brothers and sisters that she would send them on an adventure at night. Kip had no idea what was happening, but it sounded intriguing. That same night Kip and his siblings crossed the river to Thailand on a makeshift float – many people joined them, but his parents stayed behind. He still remembers the leeches on his legs as they crossed the river. When his parents followed, he does not recall. But they did at some point. They then all lived in a refugee home in Thailand for two years. But things were not so easy in Thailand either,

and the Thai resented the Vietnamese. So his parents discussed whether to leave and try to go to the U.S. Kip was excited. He did not know what it would be like there, but he remembered listening to a song from a jukebox in Laos. He had no idea who it was. Later in Thailand he learned it was Elvis Presley. And because he liked the song, he liked America. Yet it turned out to be impossible for his family to go there. Instead, they received political asylum in Germany and lived in another refugee home at the edges of West Berlin for several years.[226] That was in 1979.

Kip fashioned himself as a solitary person and as an outsider. One time, he commented to me that he felt different, a little bit of an outsider and observer to what was going on in the park. He also expressed his cynicism and dismay vis a vis the gamblers – especially vis a vis his father, who had gambled the family's money away. And although he came to the park almost every day, he hardly ever gambled himself – at least not with his own money. He knew a lot of people – at the park and beyond – but would not call them friends. Maybe it had to do with the fact that he had always been in the middle of everything –four of his brothers were older, the other is younger and so are his three sisters. Everyone approached him with their concerns. And so somehow he ended up not knowing where to stand, or whom to approach if he needed advice. Sometimes he also thought he got this way that night when they were crossing that river. Or when he came to Germany and did not speak a single word of the language and was reprimanded by his teachers for things he did not understand. His arrival in Berlin was a

[226] The refugee home was Marienfelde, which at the time was accommodated refugees from East Germany to the West and was thus situated at the seam between the competing systems of Western capitalism and socialism –often called the "gate to freedom".

shock: who are these people here and what language do they speak? And what did they want from him? And all the children at school were curious, but he had no interest in them. And the teacher never seemed happy with him: "What are you doing? You have to learn more! Why don't you understand? What kind of sweater are you wearing? That looks dirty!" He still remembers it all.

When I first met Kip, he was unemployed and receiving Hartz IV. He had started an apprenticeship with a carpenter a few years ago and then was laid off, because his boss said he was not trying hard enough. The local job center had offered him the apprenticeship after a short period of unemployment. Kip would have rather studied art but he had to take up the offer. So he ended up doing the job only grudgingly. Now he felt like there was a big void in his life. He didn't really know what to do next. All he cared about was painting and graffiti. But how could you make money out of that? Still, he was working on a booklet on graffiti and art and Confucianism. And maybe one day he would find someone to publish it.

Kip prided himself for having done a lot of graffiti all over Berlin – and especially knowing the ins and outs of the underground train system. One time, he pointed over to the bushes on the side of the meadow: in between them, there was the emergency exit of the underground train station right next to the park. You only needed a good screwdriver to lift up the door to the shaft – and you could be inside the underground tunnel in no time. During the week, at 12:45 am the last train runs by. You wait until the last train passes and then you go in and you will be all by yourself there. And you can do whatever you want. You do not need any light, because the lights are on

down there anyway – which is not the case with all underground lines in Berlin. In the early 90s, at a time when nobody was at the Thai park yet, Kip would often sit down there in the tunnel and spray.

Not unlike the Thai Park, for Kip, spraying graffiti, offered a way to renegotiate urban infrastructures and marking the city's space in ways that diverged from its official, intended use. Yet in contrast to the Thai Park, spraying provided a space of solitude – below ground. And it is this very difference that made the Thai Park so distinctive and curious: above ground, it was highly visible – a world of reciprocity and refusal to stick to the rules.

Reprise

In this chapter, I have traced the emergence of new economies and socialities in a public green space. The Thai park community provides an antidote to a culture of austerity that has led to increased privatization of public resources and state formulas on how to live frugally on unemployment: seen, within its own discursive framework, the park community is all about indulgence, wastefulness, risk and pleasure. People prepare, sell and swap foods. And they actually feed themselves well. Continually marking this public green space – by putting up sun umbrellas, stools to sit on, tents and tarps for rain protection, and thus squatting the center of the meadow throughout the entire summer – the vendors brave not only cold weather and rain, but also formal economies and official definitions of how to use urban green space. At the same time, the intimate economies of the Thai Park defy current racialized images of immigrant Hartz IV recipients wasting the energy of the state and illegitimately relying on social benefits. In a sense, all of the

participants in the park's economy – the vendors, the gamblers, and the costumers – create an urban food sovereignty – not a self-organized urban soup kitchen providing charity, but a food swap and open air casino that circumvents the state and responds to the reduction of "social welfare" by coming up with a formula on how to live and collaborate in difficult times. Yet from the perspective of official discourse this does not count. Rather, it is seen as cheating the state.

In his dissertation "Unruly Streets: Everyday Practices and Promises of Globality in Mumbai" (Anjaria 2008), Jon Anjaria points out that in contemporary studies of urban informal economies, street vendors have emerged as politically charged figures, holding the promise of collective resistance against the destructive forces of global capitalism and neoliberal policies. Instead of celebrating street vendors as inherently subversive and as "informal proletariat" (Davis cited in Anjaria 2008: 40) signaling a new emancipatory politics, Anjaria highlights the contradictory ways in which street vendors' everyday strategies and desires are enmeshed with the state, with neo-liberal discourse and modern sensibilities of urban order.

Similarly in this chapter, I have tried to show how the Thai Park vendors adhere to notions of order and cleanliness and how they utilize racialized images of the Thai family, of welfare recipients, and other, more "savage" barbecuers, for their own ends to circumvent municipal controls of selling food in the park. Furthermore, the intimate informal economy of the park and the complexities of vendors' use of public space cannot be easily explained as direct result of urban restructuring and austerity policies. However, following Tadiar and Simone, I have also attended to practices, subjectivities

and things that "fall away" and don't get recognized within familiar modes of production, political subjectivity and discourses of austerity: for example, Cem's *hi-lo* notebook, both a "bible" and an accounting book, calculating risk and insecurity as a way of life, meticulously traces expenditure and chance, while trying to find the formula for a lucky strike. Not recognizable within the usual categorizations of race and religion – as Cem is Muslim – his bible does not follow the logic of any Sarrazin plan for a frugal life. Similarly, as Kip's fragile efforts to make a living in Germany, and his memories of displacement – the leeches as he crossed the river to Thailand, the bright lights as he sits in the underground spraying graffiti, and the boredom as he monitors the constant circulation of money in the *hi-lo* game, are subjectivities not recognizable in current debates about immigrant wastefulness. And lastly, the smell of Manee's mushrooms exceeds an economy of efficiency: picked in the disturbed landscape of forests of unexploded ordnance and newly founded nature parks, their smell is both haunting and sweet. And it triggers memories of loved ones far away or gone forever.

The Thai park's community comprises forms of sociality and exchange not clearly recognizable within the logic of official economies and the welfare state – and perhaps this is the very reason it has been able to persist despite official controls for so many years. Looking at the park's socialities, we can trace the emergence of an intimate economy and social world – a world in which people have a sense of belonging and at least to some degree, a sense of control – a world in which people rework uneven global forces in their everyday lives.

The Thai Park emerged at a historical moment in Berlin when unemployment increased, local economies flailed and precarious labor conditions proliferated across the city. And although, in a sense the Thai Park can be understood as privatizing a public safety net, it is much more than that. With its intimate economies, the Thai Park follows a different path than the utilitarian logic of the neoliberal welfare state. Furthermore, its vendors draw on images of the Thai as peaceful, and they perform an "authentic tradition" of Thai markets and the role of the Thai market woman. They thus also distinguish themselves from other more "savage" park users – the theme of the following chapter. As I have shown here, the park's cooks follow a recipe different from the austerity plans of the "Sarrazin Menu". Although this cooking practice might seem ephemeral and certainly is never really "outside" anything, it sustains alternative urban livelihoods and infrastructures – and it has so for many years.

Chapter 4

Barbecue Area

"Berlin has a barbecue problem" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2009a)

"All barbecuers must be barbarians, and all barbarians must be barbecuers" (Warnes 2008)

"Barbecuing offers the possibility of integration. Everyone barbecues together. This is a good experience" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2009a).

"If Turkey joins the European Union, we will go to Paris and barbecue in front of the Eiffel Tower!" (Turkish barbecuer in Istanbul)

Figure 15: Smoke (photograph by author)

Thin layers of smoke are hovering in the trees. A few rays of sun make their way through the gaps in between leafy tree tops. Slowly, they illuminate the grey haze and create an ephemeral palimpsest of shadows and light that cuts through the forest in long lines. An effect of smoldering coal, roasting meat and burning tobacco, the clouds of smoke in the

air form a meeting place of many smells and particles. They are the product of communication, a weekend ritual slowing down time and adding flavor to the day. Yet the layers of smoke are also a warning sign: they are the trace of fire. Thus, amid the grey haze lurks fire's potential to destroy order and break down the boundary between civilization and chaos, between the city and wilderness.

In the summer, this corner of Berlin must be about the foggiest place in town. If you walk down the large boulevard to the north that stretches along the banks of the river Spree, you reach the edges of Berlin's largest green space, the Tiergarten ("Animal Garden"). Approaching the meadows of the park, you can smell the fragrance of barbecued chicken, lamb or beef, boiling tea and sweet tobacco. Only a few steps further and you encounter the spectacle of thin layers of smoke dancing in between tree branches and playing in the afternoon sun.

In recent years, this mixture of fire, smoke and smells has captured many Berliners' attention. For some, it is a site of pleasure – the trace of a pleasant afternoon spent eating, chatting and relaxing with family and friends in the park. For others, it is an insult to the "fresh air" produced by Berlin's cherished "green lungs" and an annoying disturbance in an island of tranquility amidst the fast pace of the city.

During the weekends, many Berliners, and especially Turkish families, extend their lives and homes into Berlin's biggest open green space. In what local media often refer to as the summer's "barbecue peak season", you can see hundreds of Turkish immigrants – of all generations – gathered on several meadows along the northern edges of the park. Picnic blankets are spread out all over the grass, people sit on them, eat, and

play cards, backgammon or chess while kids run around. Sometimes meeting in small groups of three, sometimes in large extended families of thirty or more, people come here to socialize, prepare tea and cook food on small grills. In the morning, the park fills quickly. Thus many Turkish families head out early to the park. Some arrive with just a few things. Others pack an elaborate set up for the day. Blankets, plastic folding chairs, wooden chairs, kitchen tables, hammocks, prayer rugs – and most importantly a small grill – are all put in a car and hauled to the park to set up surrogate living rooms as people barbecue and enjoy the afternoon sun. Tennis rackets soccer balls, hammocks, card games and backgammon boards come along to provide for leisurely activity. *Shishas*[227] and tea-pots offer opportunities for additional socializing and add to a perfect meal.

[227] *Shishas*, or *hookahs*, are often also called *narghile* in Turkish. In both Turkey and Germany, smoking *shishas* is a social event – usually you smoke a *shisha* with guests at your home or in a café. Turkish and Arab immigrants have introduced shishas and shisha bars to Berlin decades ago. Only in the past few years though have shishas become more popular in German cities – and especially in Berlin and Cologne where *shisha* bars are a trendy destination not only for Turkish immigrants of all generations but also for many young Germans. Aside from cafés, the Animal Garden is one of the few public places where people smoke *shishas*.

Figure 16: Barbecuers in the Tiergarten (photograph by author)

Some families have come to the Tiergarten for more than twenty years, and many have their favorite spots. Others only visit once in a while for special occasions to meet their extended families or celebrate a birthday. Local legend has it that Turkish immigrants have barbecued in the park for decades. Originally, so the story goes, they used to gather on a meadow at the edge of the park right in front of the Berlin Wall and the Reichstag building. Not unlike in the Thai Park, this use of public green space has triggered much controversy in recent years. Yet whereas the cooks in the Thai Park perform an image of the peaceful Thai, barbecuers in the Tiergarten offend German sensibilities and ideas about control over nature: barbecuing turns out to be a "savage practice" associated with the wild, abundant in racial connotations and attaching itself to contemporary constructions of Muslim immigrants as urban Europe's ultimate other.

Concerned with environmental pollution, the City Office for Green Spaces (*Grünflaechenamt*) has therefore begun to closely monitor what local media refer to as "wild barbecuing" and its traces: large amounts of litter, smoke and "bad smells". These measures to regulate the use of the Tiergarten and other parks in Berlin have especially targeted Turkish immigrants. Since 1997, the city has outlawed barbecuing in most of Berlin's parks – especially in immigrant neighborhoods – while designating specific areas for barbecuing in a few select parks such as the Tiergarten (*Zeit* 2009). In 2003, the local municipality also introduced security controls – cynically called "barbecue police" by some – in order to prevent any picnicking beyond these designated barbecue areas (*Tagesspiegel* 2005). Unlike in the Thai Park, barbecuing and these policies surrounding it have set off national and even transnational controversy over the possibilities and limits of "multiculturalism", the protection of "nature" in the city (especially air pollution and waste disposal), and exclusionary practices in Berlin's public spaces – making it into national news. Its restriction has also ignited protests among local immigrants and even provoked strong opposition beyond the city – and as far as Istanbul.

Why is it that barbecuing becomes such a charismatic object of controversy? And why does it capture people's imagination across Berlin, Germany and Europe? In order to answer this question, I track barbecuing – and its material traces – as a border practice in this chapter. I argue that barbecuing is attached with racial meanings – it becomes an "invented tradition" (Warnes 2008), a matter of "culture" that marks territories, bodies and difference and re-negotiates urban citizenship across borders. Tracing local media and public officials' responses to barbecuing in the Tiergarten, I first analyze how park

and city officials' ideas about the "appropriate uses" of urban parks, are entangled with stereotypes about Turkish immigrants, with ideas about bodies and practices "out of place", as well as with current debates about ghettoization and "integration" and segregation of immigrants in Berlin. Yet barbecuing becomes a matter of politics and culture beyond Berlin, Germany and Europe. Straddling the borders of Europe and Asia, the city of Istanbul has its own "barbecuing" debate. Briefly revisiting some of this debate, I argue that, if we look closely, we can discern echoes of it in Berlin and vice versa.

Thirdly, I explore immigrants', environmentalists' and Germans' strategies of inhabiting and remaking "green space" in the Tiergarten and other parks. Here I am interested in the ways in which barbecuing creates a sense of place and nostalgic yearning for "nature" in the city and how it is connected to ideas about urban citizenship, as well as to experiences of displacement and migration. Barbecuing utilizes fire and smoke – it is a method of cooking meat with the heat and smoke of burning wood or charcoal. Thus while barbecuing becomes a marker of difference, it is also a material, embodied practice that remakes public space. It leaves traces of smoke, and sometimes garbage. Through attention to the affective and material worlds that surround barbecuing – air, fire, smoke, meat and garbage – I hope to get a glimpse of the imaginative and material geographies at work in the remaking of notions of citizenship, as well as in the remaking of the nation.

The improvised nature of barbecuing requires a method that does not confront it head-on. In this chapter, I therefore read in between the lines of official histories and

straightforward accounts of "what barbecuing means". Like barbecuing itself, this requires a slow process, of letting smoke unfold and roasting the meat of the matter for a while.

*

But first, let me turn to a brief history of the Tiergarten. Through fragments of this history – stretching across centuries – I offer initial insight into the cultural significance of this green space within Berlin's history – its role in the making of the German empire, the modern nation and the current remaking of Berlin into a new European metropole.

The Animal Garden

> "The wounds of war may be healed, but the scars are green" (Simonds 2008).

The Tiergarten, or "Animal Garden", is the largest, oldest and also the most famous park in Berlin. Located right in the new center of the city, along the banks of the river Spree, near the Brandenburg Gate, it is often referred to as the "green lungs of Berlin". As the air temperature of the city tends to be several degree Celsius higher than in the surrounding countryside, the park provides a crucial source of cool and moist air. Covering 210 hectare, the park is among Germany's largest inner-city parks. It comprises a variety of different landscapes ranging from mixed forest[228] and "wild" meadows to carefully landscaped "English" lawns, from a rose and a beer garden, to a small creek and

[228] There is a rather large diversity of trees in the park – ranging from sycamore and Norway maple, common and mountain oak, hornbeam and European beech, birch and elm trees, but also yew and alder trees, white poplar, cottonwood, willows, honey locust, robinia, wild cherry trees and large shrubs such as rhododendron (Schicks 1995: 15).

several ponds. It also offers a habitat for many bird species, insects and mammals, such as foxes, rabbits, squirrels, martens, bats, rats and mice (Schicks 1995: 14).

Several larger boulevards, divide the park into six main parts through its center and on its Eastern side. With the famous "Victory Column" at the park's center, the boulevards stretch out to different directions in the city in a star shaped form. Along them, you can walk past tree-lined walkways and view many sculptures graphically depicting Prussian aristocrats enacting hunts of "wild animals" in the park, such as deer, buffalo and wild boar. These scenes point to a long history of the park that goes back to the year 1530 when it stretched over a much larger area of land. But even more than that, they enact the domestication of "nature" and the wild in the name of urban civilization – one of many competing imaginaries of the city, nature, and the nation that thread throughout the history of the park.

In the 16th century, at a time when keeping wild and exotic animals was the province of electors and kings, demonstrating their power, the park, while not maintained for the larger public's "education", spread all the way to the Berlin castle and served as showcase and hunting territory for the elector of Brandenburg (Kaselow 1999: 32).[229] A fenced park, it was inhabited by many "wild animals" such as foxes, deer, and wild boar. As Berlin grew over the next centuries, the hunting grounds reduced in size. In the 17th and 18th century, the Tiergarten slowly grew into a carefully landscaped

[229] In her history of the visual display of exotic animals in zoological gardens, Kaselow (1999) points out that for 18th and 19th century European aristocrats it was common to keep wild and "exotic" animals in parks (see also Anderson 1998). These included a large variety of animals ranging from deer, foxes, wild boar, peacocks and even lions, bears and wolves. Not until the mid 19th century, did "wild" animals move to the zoos for public display to a wider, bourgeois, audience. Many zoos were established all over Europe, and Berlin's zoological garden was founded as the first zoo in Germany in 1844 (32), catering to a long-standing desire to classify and control animals and other non-humans (Anderson 1998).

recreational forest. Following a baroque philosophy of nature's rationality, local electors created a geometrically ordered network of alleys throughout the forest landscape – converging at the castle and thus pointing to the centrality of state power (Carmesin 1995: 30). During this time, the forest area also served as a refuge for people fleeing the Huguenot wars. Receiving favorable treatment among the Prussian elites, these French protestants, often referred to as *refugies*, were allowed to put up tents in this forest area in 1750 to offer beverages to city dwellers, thus serving as "garden restaurants" at the edge of the city. In addition, hoping to boost Prussia's exports, the elector of Brandenburg (who didn't like hunting) offered small pieces of land to the refugies – many of them working in the textile trade – to grow mulberries for feeding and raising silk worms for silk production (Twardawa 2006). Yet after years of planting mulberry trees and bushes, the efforts failed miserably due to poor harvests on Berlin's part sandy, part swampy soils.

In the 19th century, the park was designed by Peter Joseph Lenné and transformed into a Prussian national park, including a pleasure garden, several memorials and a complex network of alleys and walking paths. Following the idea of a people's garden, Lenné also added less visible and clearly ordered areas (and thus highly controversial ones) that could serve as spaces of encounter and recreation for Berlin's residents – especially for the poor working classes living in crammed rental barracks in the expanding metropole (Carmesin 1995: 34). After the turn of the 20th century, in the years of the Weimar Republic, public reformers and landscape architects envisioned

more visible spaces of public encounter for collective exercise and gymnastics in the tradition of the people's parks (*Volksparke*) (Carmesin 1995: 37/38).

During the fascist era, the Tiergarten became part of Nazi plans to build "Germania": the Nazis wanted to rid Berlin of what they considered "provincial architecture" in relation to other imperial centers such as London and Paris, and planned to reconstruct Berlin into a world capital. Most of the buildings that the Nazis envisioned were never built, but in an effort to reorganize the city along a North South city axis, the main avenue through the park was widened and the so called Victory Column – dating back to the 19th century and commemorating several Prussian war victories – relocated to the center of the park.[230] This axis was planned to serve as a parade avenue, including an underground highway for redirecting traffic. Sections of the tunnel were built and still exist today. In 1944, Goebbels also proposed to use this avenue as an airstrip.

During WWII, when Berlin was heavily bombed, the Tiergarten was largely destroyed. Many trees burnt. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the park was used as a place to grow vegetables and was further logged down by Berlin residents who had a shortage in firewood. Many people also hunted rabbits in the park at the time.

When Berliners confronted the question of how to dispose the large mountains of rubble throughout the city, one consideration was to simply pour a layer of rubble

[230] Today, the victory column remains a contested historical site with multiple meanings attached to it. Due to the statue's glorification of military power, the Green Party and PDS introduced a proposal to the municipal parliament to have the statue demolished – without success (Ladd 1997: 199). Aside from being a symbol of Nazi violence, the column has also entered contemporary popular culture as cultural icon: it has served as the center for the Love Parade for many years, it provides the title of the city's major gay magazine, and it was also featured in Wim Wenders' movie *Wings of Desire* as a place where angels meet.

over the Tiergarten. Although some of the rubble was used to fill up the soil (Schicks 1995: 15), these plans were abandoned in the end and the new city government instead moved some of the rubble to dumping grounds near parks and forests in the city and its edges.[231] In the following years, these piles of debris transformed into green hills: dense vegetation was planted and the hills were integrated into the city's landscape to add to the landscapes of parks and forests.

Yet the Tiergarten did not remain a void for long. In the late 1940s, the city government felt strongly enough to call the destruction of the city forest located in the Tiergarten "the biggest scar left behind by the war on the city landscape" and made its reconstruction one of its top priorities.[232] In the following years, thousands of trees were donated from West German and other West European cities to be planted in Berlin. This reforestation took place even during the time of the Berlin blockade and the so-called Berlin airlift – when trees were flown from all over Germany and Europe into West-Berlin by planes. The first tree planted after the war was a linden tree.

During the division of the city and after the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Tiergarten transformed into a border zone and acquired an important meaning as a green space for West Berliners who found themselves surrounded by the wall and cut off from the surrounding countryside. In the shadow of the wall, various communities thus settled in different areas of the park: for example, the gay community, nudists, German families picnicking and immigrants barbecuing in front of the Reichstag, as well as prostitutes on the main boulevard (*Strasse des 17. Juni*) cutting through the park. At the same time, as

[231] For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 1.
[232] „Die Linde am Großen Stern", in: *Telegraf*, March 18, 1949, translation by author.

Germany's "economic miracle" set in, many residents retreated into private spaces of gardens and vacation homes in their search for green space and leisure (Staudinger 1995: 48).

After unification, several edges of the park, especially on its Eastern side, were designated to be clear-cut and to give way to the construction of new government buildings in the re-unified capital. In this context, environmentalists organized a wave of protests against the clear cutting of trees and the planned transformation of the park into a showcase for the nearby new government district.

Today, the park is located adjacent to the new government district and the new main train station. Its edges reach up to the Brandenburg Gate and the former course of the Berlin Wall, the traces of which today are only marked by a row of cobblestones on the pavement. Most recently, the Tiergarten has become famous for large scale events such as the Love Parade in the 1990s and "public viewings" during the world and European soccer championships.

Changing imaginaries of power, the nation and urban nature have deeply shaped the park's landscape. Both the vegetation and use of the park have changed again and again in the course of its use as hunting grounds, its transformation by baroque and modern landscaping ideals, the city's rapid expansion during industrialization, the deforestation and bombing during the war as well as national reconstruction during the post-war period. For many Berliners today, the Tiergarten is both a symbol of Berlin's unique location in the history of modern Germany and it conjures up memories of war, persecution, and division. And yet, the park is also home to many unplanned human and

non-human communities today, which once again triggers anxieties around the boundaries of nature, the city and the nation.

Barbecue Area: "Wild Barbecuing"

Figure 17: "g" like "Grillgebiet" = "BBQ area" (park map at one of the many entrances of the Tiergarten)

In the opening scene of the movie *Babakiueria*, a group of Australian Aborigines arrives by boat on the shores of an unknown land (Featherstone 1986). Encountering a small crowd of white European Australians who hang out and picnic at the beach, the Aborigines ask them: "What is the name of this place?" One of the white Australians answers in confusion: "Errr. Barbecue Area."

Tricked by their own colonial imagination, the Aborigines are convinced they have set foot on a previously undiscovered territory. They invade "Babakiueria" and take control over its inhabitants. Throughout this reversal of roles between whites and natives, the film creates a sarcastic portrayal of racial stereotypes, in which European

Australians are a minority, whose families are displaced, and who become the target of paternalistic colonial policies to "integrate" whites into Aboriginal society.

Not unlike *Babakiueria*, some areas of the Tiergarten became the site of debate about the "wild" practice of barbecuing and the role of racialized others, unwilling to integrate into civilized society. For the past three decades, many of the park's meadows have been a popular destination for Turkish immigrants to picnic and barbecue during the summer – prompting an ongoing controversy around environmental pollution, litter, bad air, smoke and appropriate use of public space across the city for many years to come.

Like *Babakuieria*, Berlin's barbecue debates turn barbecuing into a matter of "culture", thus inventing barbecuing and picnicking in urban parks as a "cultural tradition" and attaching all kinds of meanings to it (see also Özkan 2008: 127). In these debates, "Barbecue Area" emerges as a seemingly distinct cultural territory, in which Turks have taken over German lands. "Barbecue Area" is furthermore marked by tradition, a sense of rural lifestyle, a lower class status and backwardness – everything that offends the urban "civilized" and bourgeois order. Colonial metaphors abound. Until today, local newspapers and many Berliners claim the "Tiergarten" has been taken over by Turkish crowds – the park has become a "lost country" – the site of an invasion, like a "barbarian migration" (*Völkerwanderungsähnliche Invasion*).[233] Thus nobody should pay much attention to it anymore. Invading with smoke, smells and leaving piles of trash behind, barbecuing is a breach of civilization And yet despite these seemingly clear

[233] See Flamm 2009.

spatial demarcations and border drawings, the smoke emanating from the barbecues – and the lurking threat of fire breaking lose – continues to transgress many different boundaries.

*

In the 1990s, at a time, when immigrants had already been barbecuing for more than a decade, barbecuing entered national politics. Just a few years after re-unification of East and West Germany, Berlin officials began to worry about inappropriate use of public green space and the representative function of the Tiergarten – no longer situated in the shadow of the wall, but right in the new center of the city. Arguing that Turkish barbecuers increasingly took over the park, displacing German citizens (Flamm 2009), conservative politicians as well as public officials began to closely monitor what they referred to as "wild barbecuing" and its traces: large amounts of litter, smoke and "bad" smells. After ongoing controversy in the Berlin Senate, the city office for "green spaces" (*Grünflaechenamt*) set out new regulations in 1997, outlawing barbecuing all over Berlin's public parks – except in designated "BBQ areas" (Flamm 2009). As a consequence, many public parks – especially those located in immigrant neighborhoods, such as Neukölln and Wedding – were now completely off-limits for barbecuing.[234]

[234] The Görlitzer Park in Kreuzberg is one of the few park in immigrant neighborhoods where barbecuing is allowed, yet not without controversy.

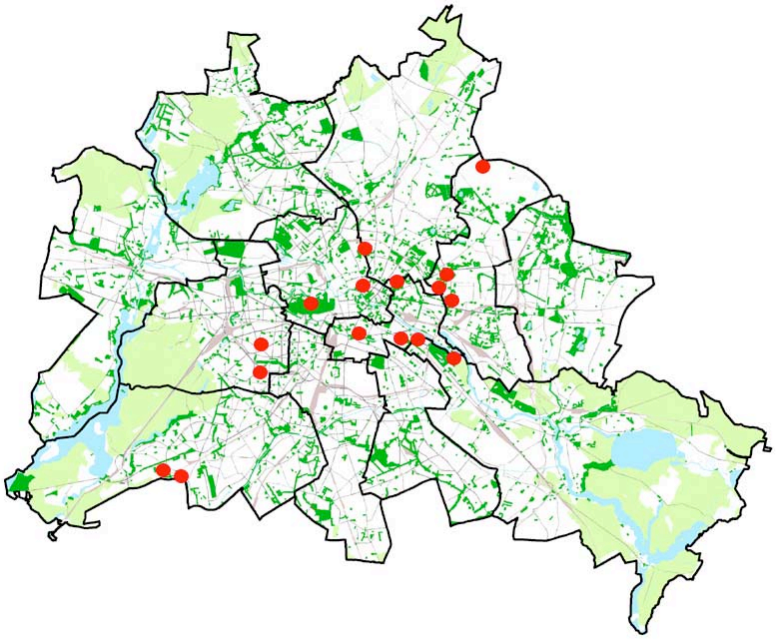

Figure 18: Barbecue map of Berlin (Senate Department of Urban Development, 2004)

Among barbecuers, these regulations triggered migrations and boundary crossings – especially between immigrant districts in former West Berlin and the less diverse Eastern districts of the city, where barbecuing is allowed in a few parks. Thus, for example on weekends, you can now see barbecuers who travel from their neighborhoods in Wedding, a former West Berlin district with a big Muslim immigrant community (where outdoor barbecuing is completely off limits) to areas in the East, such as the post-unification era "Wall Park" (*Mauerpark*) that runs along the former wall in the Eastern district Prenzlauer Berg, adjacent to Wedding. Due to fears of heightened racist sentiments in the East, many Berlin Turks tend to not spend any or much time in the Eastern parts of the city, on the weekends, hundreds of people cross the border of the

Eastern and Western districts along the train tracks. Some walk with big backpacks, others push wheelbarrows full of barbecue utensils.[235]

In the Tiergarten, a few meadows perched in between the Spree River, the Bellevue Castle (the residence of the German president) and the main boulevard running through the park, Strasse des 17. Juni, thus also became one of sixteen remaining "barbecue areas" in Berlin. Most barbecuers who come to the Tiergarten today don't live in its proximity as their neighborhood parks have been closed down for any cooking activity.

Yet the controversy is far from settled and has kept smoldering for years. Calls for outlawing barbecuing all over the Tiergarten has continued to incite local political debate. At the end of the 1990s, Eberhard Diepgen, Berlin's conservative mayor donated a special birthday gift to Volker Liepelt, one of his party friends, and opponent of barbecuing in public parks: an electronic grill. On the birthday card he wrote: "Volker Liepelt's resistance agitates open air mass barbecuing – hence, vote for the home barbecue by and with the Christian Democrats!" (Flamm 2009). In the early 2000s, suggestions for a new "barbecue police" to prevent any "wild barbecuing" beyond designated areas increased (*Tagesspiegel* 2005a). A "barbecue guide" published by the city's Senate Department for Urban Development in five languages – German, English, Turkish, Arabic and Russian – sets out an elaborate rule book on how to have a

[235] Many Turkish immigrant's spatial practices adhere to the lines of division between East and West before the fall of the wall. As some friends explained to me, due to the absence of Turkish immigrants in East Berlin during socialism, they felt that they were at greater risk for racist discrimination both in daily life as well as in efforts to find housing or jobs in the East. Moreover, local media frequently report about a strong presence of Neo-Nazis in East Berlin, which has increased people's sense of a threat of racist violence. In this respect, many eastern parts of the city, are "no-go zones" to Turkish and other Muslim immigrants, as well as people of color living in former West Berlin.

barbecue "at your heart's content" in Berlin: barbecue only in special designated areas, bring your own grill and coal or fire wood, do not collect any branches in the park, never place a barbecue directly under a tree, do not grill anything that does not fit on your grate – i.e. don't grill a whole dead animal! – don't make any fire on the ground, extinguish the fire when you are done, pack away the trash and recycle; don't put the trash in open trash containers because crows and foxes will be enticed to pick out the rubbish form the bins (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung 2004).

Figure 19: Barbecue Guide (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung 2004)

In 2003 and 2004, members of the conservative party also suggested introducing a general 5 Euro-barbecuing fee –igniting protest among other political parties, as well as large parts of the local population. In April 2009, after a series of sunny spring days and

media reports about excessive barbecuing in the Tiergarten, the barbecue debate once again resurfaced on the media's and local municipalities' agendas. The year 2009 promised to be a big barbecuing year. In the first months, the city's Office of Order reported to have registered 99 offenses against park rules – almost as much as during the entire last year, according to a local news report. In addition, local authorities conveyed that municipal services were understaffed and their financial resources dwindling. So-called private "security services" thus might soon have to be responsible for the clean-up. "What if the state just left the garbage in the parks?" a local politician suggested in the news.

Cracking down on garbage, the city's Office of Municipal Sanitation recently also came up with the idea to offer a "dirty corner hotline" for concerned citizens to report littered areas all over Berlin – and especially in parks. A "sweeping force" of concerned citizens willing to clean-up with a broom and dust pin set out to go through the parks and their neighborhoods. Their "cleaning status" would be available online.

As Conservatives have introduced various measures to regulate barbecuing, many of these barbecue rules remain contested. Members of the Social Democratic and Green Party have debated the possibilities and limits of local restrictions of barbecuing. Others poke fun at the rather helpless "barbecuing police" trying to control masses of people hanging out on the grass in the summer. And many Berliners point out the humorous aspects of the endless debate. In 2003, German president Johannes Rau defended barbecuing in Berlin's parks and said this spatial practice should be considered a "cultural right" of all Turks living in Germany. Once again, in response to his statement,

conservative politicians and media lobbied a campaign against barbecuing. For example Germany's – and Europe's – best-selling tabloid newspaper, the BILD, circulated a petition asking Berliners whether barbecuing should be outlawed in their city (Özkan 2008: 127).

Thus, barbecuing in the Tiergarten, and in other parks turns out to be a site of intense contestation over the boundaries of "multiculturalism" and the protection of nature in Berlin's public spaces. Curiously, on all sides of the debate, barbecuing becomes a matter of "culture" and is associated with a particular ethnic group – Turkish immigrants (see also Özkan 2008: 127). It is in this sense of cultural difference that barbecuing – including the consumption of meat, the production of fire and smoke and the practice of squatting the lawn – becomes a racialized practice of occupying and shaping "urban nature".

Fire, Smoke, Meat and Garbage

In both the public debate as well as in media images, the material traces of barbecuing trigger anxieties around cleanliness, pollution and transgression. "Barbaecue areas" become sites of excess, and proof of a "failed integration" of Turkish immigrants as well as a lack of state control: covered with blue garbage bags and endless smoke clouds moving through – the Tiergarten and other parks generate stories of excess, unrefined consumption and bad environmentalism. Fire, smoke, meat and garbage evoke feelings of transgression and disgust – and they become signifiers of otherness.

Smoke hovers over the park and threatens to pollute the "green lungs of Berlin" in many local news articles: "Hundreds of people have squatted the area; black or white

smoke is rising everywhere" as one recent newspaper article states (*Berliner Morgenpost 2009a*). Then there are reports of an invasion of smell – the smell of burnt chicken wings, thighs of lamb, meatballs and garlic – charred patches of grass and burning trash cans – evoking a sense of the entire park being burnt down. Images of Turkish immigrants squatting on the lawn, their faces covered in smoke, abound.

And even further: not just the parks but other districts close to the Tiergarten are at risk of smog pollution from excessive barbecuing: "The Animal Garden belongs to everyone", a journalist says in a local news report clip while showing an aerial shot of the park, "but if the Tiergarten continues to be so carelessly ravaged, then people in closeby districts like Spandau will soon suffocate from smog" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2008).

In these urban doom scenarios, smoke infuses the city and its neatly landscaped nature spaces. A harbinger of fire, it threatens to break down the boundary between order and civilization, chaos and wilderness. Fire is always both a social and a natural reality (Bachelard 1964: 10) and as Andrew Mathews has shown, "fire is a powerful symbol of chaos, often marking the destruction of order in both social and natural worlds" (Mathews 2003: 78). As this symbol of disorder becomes a target of state control, foreigners and outsiders are often held responsible for it. The threat of fire in the city – lurking in between the lines of much of the barbecue debates – is thus a reminder of competing and muddled borders and it points our attention to how the city is never separate from nature and humans never fully in control of urban landscapes. Fire usually emerges at the city's fringes. And it is important to remember that not only do the borderlands between the city and nature or "wilderness" constitute these fringes,

but so do parks, green spaces and "barbecue areas". And perhaps, that is the very reason these landscapes take on so many different meanings, blending into each other in unexpected ways, in struggles over urban citizenship and claims for a right to the city.

But smoke and fire are not the only source of bad feelings. Images of garbage piles populate the media reports as well. "Berlin has a BBQ problem", another recent article in a local newspaper proclaims, just after a first warm weekend over Easter in Berlin. "Every weekend more than fifteen tons of rubbish are collected in the Tiergarten alone". There is garbage as far as you see in the Tiergarten", […] and "after people leave, the crows come and pick up the trash and mess things up even more" (*Berliner Morgenpost 2009a*). It is a battle of the city against the wild migrant hordes: "Every Monday, the Barbecue Meadow in the Tiergarten looks like a battlefield. The city clears away the garbage of the migrants. Yet the conflict keeps smoldering," (Flamm 2009, translation by author) one headline reads.

Local politicians are quoted to say that the Tiergarten, the city's showcase park, needs to be saved. Others have already given up on this area of Berlin.[236]

Steven Gregory has shed light on the racialized meanings of garbage: in his book, *Black Corona*, Gregory tracks the "potency of garbage as polysemous symbol of disorder and threat to community" (Gregory 1998: 125) in debates about rubbish and neighborhood clean-ups in Queens. In local official and political debate in Queens, rubbish signifies corruption and violation of turf – and underlines perceptions of Black

[236] The mayor of Neukölln pointed out that municipal authorities are powerless against the barbecuing masses these days: "Schon in Neukölln, wo sich das Problem noch in Grenzen hält, geht es nicht anders. Vier Leute vom Ordnungsamt brauchen Sie doch zu einer Wiese mit tausend Grillern erst gar nicht hinzuschicken. Die kriegen eins auf die Mütze" (*Berliner Morgenpost* 2009b)

neighborhoods as sites of danger and urban blight (Gregory 1998). Similarly, the "migrants' garbage" cleared away by city officials symbolizes the threat of violence and danger posed by Muslims living in Berlin. And most of all, it stands for their ignorance and sense of entitlement vis à vis the "charities" of the state. The barbecuers' garbage thus illustrates what national media have increasingly claimed: that immigrants are wasteful and take advantage of social benefits in times of Germany's financial distress. In order for them to "integrate" appropriately, they need stop relying on the state and instead "help themselves"[237].

Finally, tales of bloody and inappropriate meat practices add the final touch to a state of emergency in Berlin's parks. The opening scene of a feature article in the weekly national newspaper *Die Zeit* depicts a panorama of savagery: on a humid Monday morning, as the park slowly awakes, joggers run through the park, dew sparkles on the leaves of trees, and two big men with tattoos on their hands drag a bloody wether/lamb leg out of the bushes – together with tons of trash, the last remnants of a "normal" barbecue weekend (Flamm 2009). As they enjoy the afternoon sun each weekend, Turkish immigrants revel in roasting chicken wings, meatballs, and thighs of lamb – or even worse: entire animals. The smell of burnt meat fills the air. Another article in the local newspaper, *Der Tagesspiegel,* reports Turkish "wild barbecuers" hanging out at the river shore, grilling a lamb and camping right next to signs prohibiting barbecuing. A Turkish man standing next to a sign complains there are not enough plates marking the off-limit-areas (*Tagesspiegel* 2005a) – his omission signals his provinciality and illiteracy

[237] See also my discussion of austerity in Chapter 3.

vis-à-vis the written rules of urban public order, food consumption and German environmental standards.

Like smoke and garbage, excessive barbecuing of meat in public – and not in the safely bounded domestic realm of the home – functions as a sign of otherness. This echoes a longer history of casting certain meat consumption practices as a sign for an antisocial mentality and evidence of racial difference in Germany.[238] Thus, immigrants' relations to non- humans – as meat – become a symbol of their otherness, and the need to manage their behavior and educate them about appropriate environmental practices.[239] But even more, the meat eaters themselves appear almost animal-like – as beasts of prey spun out of control. It is in this sense of immobile otherness, disconnection and being

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[238] In Nazi political discourse, mistreatment of animals or specific practices of meat consumption came to be seen as a sign for antisocial mentality or even as evidence for 'Jewish blood' (Arluke/Sax 1995: 231-232). As Arluke and Sax have shown in their book *Animals in the Third Reich*, discourses on animal rights and meat consumption were connected to a larger thematic framework in the racial ideology of the time: the notion of the racial purity of Aryans. This idea was based on the assumption that the human race had become contaminated and impure through both the mixing of races and the consumption of animal meat – a major reason why many Nazi leaders favored vegetarianism. Returning to a 'purer nature' and the 'animal nature' in humans was regarded as an alternative to modernity, technology and urbanization - often associated with Jews who were seen as having cut off humans from nature (Arluke/Sax 1995: 230-7). One key element of Nazi anti-Semitism was thus that "Jews, and by association Christians, had scorned the natural world" (245).

[239] Between 2005 and 2007, rotten meat occupied the center of much public debate in Germany. In 2007, yet another rotten meat scandal emerged after news spread that a whole sale meat producer in Bavaria had sold tons of fowl meat (*Ekelfleisch*) from slaughter residue to buyers all across Germany and especially in Berlin – many of them *Döner-Kebab* sellers. After a large scale testing of chicken, beef, lamb and pork meats, experts found the rotten meat (*Gammelfleisch)* in hundreds of *Döner-Kebab* skewers for sale in *Döner* stands in Berlin – as well as in sausages and hamburger meat for sale in grocery stores. The expiration date of the meat was overdue by four years. Politicians raised concerns about illegal slaughtering and use of the meat from animals that were sick, as well as larger issues of animal welfare and the ethics of mass meat production. And for weeks, newspapers were filled with images of gross looking, spoiled *Döner Kebab* meat – making rotten meat almost synonymous with *Döner* meat. In response, Europe's *Döner Kebab* trade body, the Association of *Döner* Producers in Europe criticized national media for scape-goating doner producers for the flaws of the meat producing industry (Reuters 2007).
During my fieldwork, I talked to several Kebab vendors whose business had been affected greatly by the rotten meat scandals in 2007. Many of them were upset that the media had focused primarily on the *Döner* meat and created an image that all *Döner* in Berlin were potentially affected, not paying much attention to other kinds of fowl meats that had circulated – such as rotten pigs heads mixed into sausages!

out of control that the BBQ area becomes an extension of the "ghetto" and the problematic district – an image that has dominated so much of public debate about immigrants in the city in the past decade.[240]

Images of smoke, meat and garbage conjure up the Animal Garden as a place of lawlessness – a place of wilderness beyond civitas. The notion of barbecuing as "wilderness" amid the city needs to be situated in the context of current debates about integration, segregation and "ghettoization" in Berlin. Whereas the ghetto or "problematic district" has become coded in a racial language of otherness and the threat of crime in urban immigrant communities, the "barbecue area" becomes the savage space amid "urban nature" and tranquil green space – and a sign of immigrants' urban AND environmental illiteracy.

As Andrew Ross notes, tropes of "urban wilderness" often vilify certain urban inhabitants (Ross 1999: 141) and have been used "to justify the treatment of minority inhabitants of the inner city as "savages" to be contained by the forces of civilization (Bennett/Teague 1999: 6). In a similar vein, David Teague points out that cultural fears around racial mixing and urban environmental pollution often articulate together: the hesitation of white people to get their kids to the same school with immigrant/minority kids needs to be seen in connection with white people's desire to live in the "green suburbs" (Bennett/Teague 1999: 6/7). Teague thus argues that the "cultural dimensions" of white fear of the inner city and urban wilderness are connected to the "ecological

[240] This notion of immigrants as ignorant and disconnected vis à vis the urban environment emerges in many media stories about barbecuing. In Flamm's article in *Die Zeit*, the Turkish woman, Ayşe does not know how to read the Berlin map and in fact, only knows this one specific spot in Berlin – her own home and the Tiergarten. Thus, for some, "this part of Berlin is lost" (see Flamm 2009)

dimensions of suburbanization processes and ethnic/racial segregation in the city" (ibid.).

Following this literature, I argue that images of "wilderness" and "nature in the city" are entangled with various ideas about otherness, race, nation and class. In the barbecuing debates, current anxieties around the emergence of "ghettos" and immigrant segregation in Berlin sit side by side with desires for green space AND fears of "wilderness in the city". But even more than that, human-nature relations become a central site in efforts to construct certain bodies as culturally other and as 'out of place' – and thus in their racialization. Recent scholarship in geography and related disciplines has illustrated a shift in much racial discourse from previous, but no longer legitimized, forms of 'beastialization', in which people of color are no longer directly compared with animals. Rather, stories about the cruel treatment of animals– such as illegal hunting practices, the killing of animals for religious ritual or the eating of pets – tend to characterize people as 'beastly' and claim their inferiority as human beings (Elder/Wolch/Emel (1998). These authors have illustrated this by showing how human-non-human relations in cities play an important role in contemporary constructions of race and place-making (Elder/Wolch/Emel 1998, Wolch 2002).[241] For example, Griffith

[241] Similarly, in their essay "*Le Pratique Sauvage*: Race, Place, and the Human-Animal Divide", Elder/Wolch/Emel (1998) focus on how not only biology or culture in the broad sense, but *specific* cultural relations between humans and animals that depart from a white Anglo-American norm and that are considered to be 'out of place'– such as dog fighting or treating dogs as food – are interpreted as transgression of species boundaries and as a consequence come to serve as the basis for racialization. For further literature on the connections and historical ties between urban 'nature spaces' – such as zoos – and race and colonialism, see Kay Anderson's work on zoos (Anderson 1998). Anderson argues that, situated deeply within Cartesian legacies of thought, the zoo became a site where not only human but also metropolitan mastery over nature was popularized by bringing animals in proximity with people, yet confining them and leaving them at observable distance within a domesticated and enclosed metropolitan space (46).

et al. (2002) examine the ways in which practices of relating to animals – such as treating dogs as food animals – come to function both as signs of racial otherness and as sites of resistance to racialization and marginalization among Filipinas in Los Angeles. From this perspective, conflicts over human-animal practices fuel ongoing efforts to racialize and devalue certain groups of immigrants and people of color.

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Curiously, barbecuing is widely considered a German leisure activity – Germans love to barbecue sausages (usually pork) and steak – yet in the confined space of their home.[242] You prepare food, involving a flame – and thus produce unpredictable amounts of smoke – either in the closed space of a kitchen, on your balcony, or in your garden. The sparks, smoke and smells emanating from this activity usually are held at bay – by vents, walls, or bushes separating one's home garden from the neighbor's. Yet what is it about cooking – and barbecuing – in public that offends the senses and poses a threat? Is it that lighting coal to make a fire and barbecue out in the open space of the city creates a threat of fire going out of control? With just a little bit of wind, sparks from the grill can float anywhere and ignite a forest fire. But there is more to the threat of fire. And perhaps, it is the sparks of ideologies of difference, nature, and race that reignite as the barbecue fire smolders.

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We might get a better sense of what makes barbecuing into such a charismatic object, if we take a closer look at cultural imaginaries of the nation and German public space – and their boundaries. Published as an election campaign leaflet by the Green Party, a

[242] On stereotypes about German fascinations with barbecuing, see for example Wilkens 2009.

photographic image of a public park setting in former West Berlin – (perhaps the Tiergarten?), taken in the year 1989, gives us a glimpse of "paradise": next to a big sign, spray painted with a graffiti of black letters reading P-A-R-A-D-I-S-E, two German nudists enjoy a tranquil afternoon in a carefully landscaped setting. Sitting in two armchairs beneath an unopened umbrella, the man and woman are reading a newspaper and a book. Behind them are trees and bushes. Beneath them, in the picture's foreground, are two Turkish men and one woman having a picnic. An older and a younger Turkish man are facing the camera while the woman, wearing a small headscarf knotted at the back of her head, is looking away from the camera.

Uli Linke provides an analysis of the racial aesthetics of this picture (Linke 1999a, b) – as well as the construction of nature and white public space. For Linke, the Turkish migrants' clothing, their cooking of food on a grill and their positioning on the ground accentuates the difference of this group vis-à-vis the German nudists in their armchairs who are positioned as "overlords" of nature. The clothed body of the dark skinned Others signifies a lack of refinement, a commitment to traditional values and a simplistic rural lifestyle, whereas the unclothed white bodies are tropes of modernity, a cosmopolitan, urban life style and expertise of refined consumption. Rendered highly visible in the foreground, the migrants nevertheless are positioned at the margins of the nation while the naked German bodies, partially hidden by trees and bushes and their shades, are positioned within the "natural domain" at the top and the center of the nation (Linke 1999a: 61-62).

Linke's analysis gestures at an important link between the construction of race, nature, and the body in contemporary Germany: in the photograph of "paradise", the placement of different bodies, engaged in activities of refined leisure and simple consumption in a landscaped urban park, comes to signify racial difference. Linke argues that after the unification of East and West Germany, the public display of naked white bodies and the invocation of wilderness in the city took on a distinctly nationalist agenda: it was at this moment that an ideology of difference re-emerged – and it celebrated the naked body, placed in "natural settings", reposed on green grass, surrounded by shrubs and tall trees. This image of nature as a symbol for difference in an urban setting echoes a longer genealogy of racial ideologies that not only inscribe difference into bodies but also into public spaces and natural landscapes (often purged of alterity). As Linke reminds us, the placement of different bodies in particular kinds of natural or urban landscapes played a key but shifting role in the construction of whiteness and national identity throughout German history – and it took on a high currency in Nazi corporeal imaginaries that linked nature, the nation, with human bodies, discourses of blood and public space. [243]

With Linke, I thus argue that "body space and public space" continue to intersect (Linke 1999b: 129) in contemporary contestations over barbecuing in Berlin's parks. Yet Linke's approach also leaves several questions unaddressed. First, Linke curiously does not more deeply engage the fact that the picture of "paradise" is a photograph in an election campaign leaflet by the Green Party. This raises the question of what kind of

[243] For example, Nazi racial discourse saw the "Jewish Other" as scorning the natural world.

"paradise" or political vision and what kind of multicultural landscape this image seeks to create. Read against the grain, doesn't the image portray conviviality?[244] Both, barbecuers and nudists occupy the same space and seem hardly bothered by each other after all. Furthermore, what other, longer legacies of anti-Muslim sentiment tie into these images? In order to explore some of these questions, we need to consider the larger issue of how current anti-immigrant sentiments in Germany, (and on a larger, European scale) differ from and/or echo previous versions of racism and anti-Semitism: how are race and nature articulated in contemporary discourses on migrants and how are the boundaries of the nation contested within a new Europe? Linke theorizes processes of racialization across time, nevertheless the Nazi racial aesthetic seems to function as a main referent, as well as a Black and White dichotomy.[245] Yet as Moore et al. point out, racial and natural verities have no intrinsic meaning but can have both liberating and

[244] I find Gilroy's work on conviviality useful here since it provides a lens that does not assume impermeable boundaries of race, culture identity and ethnicity in advance and is open for surprises (Gilroy 2004). Gilroy uses the concept of conviviality in order to attend to "the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life" in many urban areas (Gilroy 2004: xi). This concept neither assumes racism to have disappeared nor does it celebrate an abstract notion of 'tolerance'. Gilroy thus also distances himself from the concept of identity in an analysis of race, power and politics. The openness that characterizes conviviality mocks closed fixed and reified identities. Instead, it refers to unpredictable and ordinary experiences of contact, cooperation and conflict as key features of social life (Gilroy 2004: xi).

[245] A similar problem might be at work in Martin Jay's work, on "No State of Grace. Violence in the Garden". Here Jay points out that authors such as Zygmunt Baumann have linked the so-called gardening impulse in Western culture with the domination of nature that has ultimately led to 20th-century totalitarianism. Jay examines this thesis by taking a closer look at a variety of landscape architectural styles. In particular, he focuses on recent claims by German historians that concepts of the wild garden, favored by opponents of carefully landscaped gardens, nevertheless adhered to Nazi ideologies of blood-and-soil. Although Jay cautions not to make too fast conclusions concerning the political implications of ways of relating to natural landscapes, he argues that gardens are never sites of innocence and both ideas about wilderness as well as landscaped gardens continue to tap into totalitarian fantasies of human control over nature (Jay 2003).

dangerous effects (Moore et al 2003: 3).[246] Instead of assuming a racial unconscious that keeps reifying older and preexisting established orders (the Nazi past in particular), an analysis of race and landscapes thus might benefit from more closely considering how racial categories are highly unstable (Dominguez 1994) and how notions of nature and the body articulate with the politics of race, nation, gender and class to create different political projects.[247]

Thus, secondly, it is important to consider the gaze of the woman with the headscarf and the men squatting on the grass – as they look right at the German couple in the background, as well as the viewer. What counts as a heap of trash or a wild horde to some, is another person's sense of order and leisure time.

An Afternoon in the Park: Rural-Urban Yearnings

> "In the park you can breathe. The air is good – not like at home when you sit around and watch TV all day. And in the park, things taste differently. The aroma is so much better. Even if you barbecue on your balcony, it's not the same as it is in the park. The air in the park makes for a better aroma. And the grease of the meat drips off the grill." (Cemal, barbecuer in Berlin)

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[246] Moore et al refer to the concept of articulation here as well as Gramsci's notion of the 'conjunctural' – both concepts, that help conceive of race and nature in terms of history and social struggle, thus accounting for the ways in which racial and natural verities can have both liberating and dangerous effects (Moore et al. 2003: 3). For example, the sharing of symbols in both Hitler's and Black nationalist LeRoi Jones' use of the concept of Lebensraum (living space) is troubling but doesn't produce allied political visions.

[247] Paul Gilroy's analysis of the relationships between race and history in *After Empire*, might push the view that Linke is opening up even a bit further. Gilroy formulates his project in the following way: to write "a different history, composed of critical reflections on the idea of race" (Gilroy 2004: 34) as the product of modern political culture and its philosophies of power, government and statecraft. Yet Gilroy wants to move beyond the melancholia of revisionist versions of history; he does not want to "compile an inventory of catastrophic episodes, but rather explore the moral and conceptual challenges that racist thinking poses" (Gilroy 2004: 33). Similarly to Foucault (1994), Gilroy writes a history of the present: rather than looking at history contained in the past or projecting the past into the present or vice versa, he insists in the continuing force of the (colonial) past to shape the present in complex ways. Gilroy thus develops a strategy to report scenes of racial violence, war and genocide and connects them with the present *without assuming a same logic* (Gilroy 2004: 33).

Köfte recipe for a "city full of herbs":
½ kg minced beef
bulgur
two onions
several slices of dry white bread
parsley
cumin
sumac
black pepper
tomatoes
and a few other secret ingredients

Figure 20: Tiergarten, on a Sunday afternoon (photograph by author)

On a chilly Sunday, sometime in the summer in 2008, Cemal calls me early in the morning. Usually calm, his voice sounds excited and full of enthusiasm. It is the day after a big soccer match during the European Championship: Turkey won unexpectedly against the Croat team in the quarter-finals and will play against the German team in the semi-finals. Cemal and a friend had watched the game in a café. Then, as Turkey won, everyone went out on the streets and celebrated. They went to the Ku'damm – one of the most famous boulevards in Berlin – with hundreds of others. The streets were

jammed and thousands of people gathered, stood around, watched or walked or rode their car up and down the avenue, honking loudly.[248] The weather reports predicted rain for today, yet Cemal had a good feeling. The weather was looking good so far – ideal for an afternoon in the park with family, friends and a grill – and a curious researcher – to whom Cemal seems eager to demonstrate and explain that barbecuing is a "Turkish cultural tradition".

We meet at the Tiergarten in front of the Bellevue castle, the official residence of the German president. Cemal arrives together with his sister, Yasmin, who is visiting from Istanbul for the summer, as well as his cousin Ülkay and his daughter on bicycles. We search out their familial spot in the park, on the meadow near the castle, under a large chestnut tree. Others have already gathered on the meadow, with grills, lawn chairs, blankets, carpets, and fold out tables spreading across the grass. Smoke emanates from grills and expands in thin layers across the park. A savory smell is in the air. As we settle down on the ground, spreading out blankets, Cemal unpacks the grill – a three stand. Ülkay brought cake, Yasmin made a salad and Cemal unwraps a huge container with *Köfte*.[249] "It is a special mix, and it contains a whole city full of herbs!" he explains, pointing to the diversity of tastes and smells he brought with him when he bought the herbs and ingredients in Turkey – parsley, cumin, sumac, black pepper and tomatoes. Yet he won't reveal the entire recipe, he says to all of us in a secretive voice.

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[248] In recent years, victories by the Turkish national soccer team have generated large gatherings in public spaces by Turkish immigrants. If the Turkish team wins, especially in the European championship or the world soccer cup, many Turkish Berliners go to public squares to celebrate the national team's victory and display ethnic and national pride – especially vis-à-vis other European teams. Like Germans, many Turkish immigrants flock out on the streets after a match, create car convoys, waving the national flag and honking loudly.

[249] Koefte are Turkish meatballs.

The last time he was in the Tiergarten, Ülkay collected tree branches and hid them in the bushes. Yet in the meantime someone must have discovered them – they are gone. Ülkay and Cemal are not bothered by it since they found a whole grill hidden in the bush the other day and took it with them. Everybody brings and takes something with them. Cemal lights the fire, waving air with a small cardboard piece to keep it lit. Looking out for the first sparks, we hear the sounds of mice in the undergrowth next to us. Finally, as the fire calms down and the coal begins to smolder, Cemal takes out the *Köfte* mix, forms small meatballs and puts them on the grill.

As the *Köfte* sizzle on the grill, Cemal explains to me that for him, the park is a breathing space – a space where you take a break from everyday life in the city.

The air in Berlin can be stifling. Berlin feels like a modern prison – an invisible border. When you are at home, you watch Turkish TV. When you go outside your apartment, to the hallway or the street, people do not greet you. Germans do not greet you because you are a foreigner. For twelve hours you are a Turk. And then you go to work and then you are.

He pauses for a moment.

"A German!" Cemal's sister replies.

Cemal continues:

In the park you can breathe. The air is good – not like at home when you sit around and watch TV all day. And in the park, things taste differently. The aroma is so much better. Even if you barbecue on your balcony, it's not the same as it is in the park. The air in the park makes for a better aroma. And the grease of the meat drips off the grill. It's healthier that way. And if you use wood charcoal it's healthier too – unlike other types of coal. If you go to the park, you have to sit on the

ground. You don't want to bring a lawn chair, like many others do. Sitting around on all that furniture is unhealthy – you are so dependent on all those gadgets – chairs, tables, TVs, electric stoves. With real fire, things are better, and sitting on the ground is nicer too – and that is what recreation is all about.

Cemal has knee problems and as he explains the advantages of barbecuing and sitting in the park to me, he keeps getting up and moving around. Knee problems or not, it is recreation to sit on the ground, he insisted, and it can't be any different than that.

In the park you breathe deeply. You feel freedom.

Ülkay thinks some people abuse this freedom in the park.

They dig huge holes in the grass to make fires and barbecue entire lambs in them. Sometimes you see people accidentally putting trees and bushes on fire that way. And many leave heaps of trash behind. But these are Turks, Arabs, Greeks – and Germans. And yet it all gets blamed on the Turks.

Cemal's family migrated from a small village in Anatolia to Istanbul in the 1960s. Cemal and his sister Yasmin continued to Berlin a few years later, and two of their siblings stayed in Istanbul. When Cemal goes to Turkey, he and his family barbecue all the time during the summers. Spending the summer in his native village near Fetiye, he has a barbecue in the trunk of his car all summer long.

You never cook at home and you go barbecue on the beach and all kinds of other places. In fact, barbecuing is a Turkish tradition. And if people join, even if they are strangers, you offer them food – it's about hospitality.

Taking pleasure in fiddling with utensils, building a fire and handling the greasy meat, Cemal reminisces in memories of days spent outside, on the beach, barbecuing. In these memories, there is a sense of nostalgia for rural Anatolia and for a more simple life

– away from Berlin – a desire for venturing outdoor to cook meat, for abandoning civilization and a yearning for rekindling "some flame from an agrarian or frontier past" (Warnes 2008: 6). And yet, Cemal insists, Turkey is not a village. As he once showed me pictures of his journeys back home, his recollection of these travels, were filled with photographs referencing what he calls "the wonders of the world" – the worldliness of natural and "historic" landscapes such as the mineral terraces of Pamukkale, the waterfalls and the antic ruins near Antalya, the beaches of Marmaris and the Bosporus – sites of international tourism and global connection as well as the travels of his grandfather to Europe and America.[250]

Both Cemal and Ülkay have lived in Berlin for 25 years. Ülkay works in a hotel. For more than ten years, Cemal was working as a forklift truck driver. Then he was laid off in 1996. Today, he receives *Hartz IV* unemployment benefits. Occasionally he works odd jobs as part of the local job center's work creating measures. Sometimes, Cemal feels like he made a lot of mistakes. His sister, Yasmin, came to Germany in 1966 and then, after working for the same company for 30 years, retired and went back to Istanbul

[250] In 1992, after living in Germany for 26 years, and working in an automobile factory for Daimler Benz, Cemal finally had the money to buy his own Mercedes and take a long vacation in Turkey. He got an excellent deal on an old Mercedes for 300 Deutschmark and drove all the way to Italy with it and then took the ferry to Çeşme in Turkey. The car broke on the way, but he was able to fix it himself. And later he sold it for 2300 Deutschmark. As Barbara Wolbert has shown, Turkish families' travel pictures often signal a borderline between Turkey and German, between the rural Anatolian landscape and their new urban homes in Europe– a borderline that is transgressed as the families go on their annual trip to Turkey. Marking absent landscapes and people, these photographs then create a sense of place under conditions of displacement – a social space stretching across Germany and Turkey (Wolbert 2001).
Similarly, at the time, when Cemal showed me pictures of his summer vacation in Turkey, he also stressed histories of German-Turkish connection – the Berlin Baghdad train, and the "collaboration" during the First World War – perhaps to underline the ironies of the marginalized position of Turkish immigrants in Germany today and racist immigration laws – and especially their status as foreigners, despite the long-term presence of transnational social spaces and even though many Turks have lived in Germany for more than 30 years or were even born there.

– at the right time. Back in Turkey, she bought several houses in the countryside. She is well off now. She still has health insurance in Germany and comes to receive medical care and visit her brother and friends regularly. Cemal says Yasmin is a capitalist. She has five credit cards. When one dispo credit is all used up, she simply uses another card. Whereas Cemal thus worries about his sister overstraining her credit, Yasmin, on the other hand, (as well as his other siblings living in Istanbul) is concerned about Cemal not having much of a life and future in Germany. Indeed, Cemal sometimes wonders himself.

What does one want in Germany today? Germany is not the same as it used to be. There is less work and so much unemployment! You used to know the people in the house you live in. Now, nobody knows each other anymore. And everyone sells drugs on the streets. And you don't feel safe. There is no future in Germany. It's better in Turkey now. Or you go to Hongkong. China!"

Yet Cemal has lived in Berlin for a long time, and something still ties him to the city. As he moves from one short time job to the other, he gets to know the city in new ways. He has worked all over the city – in a chocolate factory near the center, at a wood firm and as a forklift truck driver in Kreuzberg, at the Office of Green Space on the edges of Berlin in Spandau, and at a forestry station in the Grunewald, pruning trees and bushes all day long. He has spent a lot of time in the forest – and he knows it like the palm of his own hand, as he once explained to me – implicitly challenging all the media reports about Turkish immigrants' lack of knowledge about the city. In this sense, for Cemal, barbecuing is also about claiming knowledge of and the "right to the city" (Levebvre 1996, Mitchell 2003): when he first came to Berlin, Cemal jokes, he did not

notice any Germans barbecuing in parks. Then they saw all the Turks in the parks and some started to barbecue too.

In his chapter, "Carne, Carnales and the Carnivalesque" in *Dancing with the Devil*, José Limón engages with a transnational discourse shared by upper class Anglo and Mexican Americans that casts Mexican lower class men in the idiom of "human rubbish, animality, aggressiveness and abnormality – in the Christian realm of the devil, if you will" (Limón 1994: 125). Limón illustrates that the ritualistic production and consumption of barbecued meat (an event called *carne asada*) and the humor and language play that goes with it, is a (highly gendered) strategy of resistance to dominant images of Mexican masculinity – and a form of class and ethnic distinction among Mexican American men in South Texas. For Limón, the humorous enactment of body play and sexualized mutual taunting around the consumption of meat is not a matter of anxiety, or cultural ambivalence but rather an expression of "carnevalesque critical difference, though never with its own [gendered] contradictions" (126). This form of play around meat and bodies involves a parody-like exploration of alternative possibilities and the creation of a sense of freedom from everyday experiences of injustice and degradation (135).

Similarly, Cemal and Ülkay engage in a form of masculine play – for them, it is a man's matter to put up the grill, prepare the meat and barbecue it. Being familiar with the lay of the land in the park, they know where to find the right branches to light a fire. But by performing an expertise in food preparation and informal park etiquette, they also distinguish and perform class and ethnic status. Cemal's insistence on minimalist

consumption – on squatting on the ground instead of lawn chairs and on using wood coal as well as his desire not to bring too many fancy utensils – can perhaps be understood as a means to distinguish himself from German middle class norms of appropriate behavior in public space.[251] And on a more basic level, barbecuing is of course, also about saving money (as one does not go to the restaurant or a café to consume food), even if, as a Turkish friend living in Berlin suggested to me, eating meat nevertheless remains a sign of, however moderate, wealth, as not everyone can afford to eat meat on a regular basis.

In an interview for the German magazine *Die Zeit*, anthropologist Werner Schiffauer has argued that barbecuing in Berlin is an extension of the rural tradition of communal village feasts. Thus barbecuing is much more than a refuge from crammed rental apartments in Berlin. Rather, it constitutes an effort to "acculterate" and to create a home in a new environment – to settle down and create a public living room and escape homelessness (Flamm 2009). In contrast, I argue that barbecuing is far from a "Turkish tradition" – rather it is a practice of inventing a tradition AND expressing a worldliness by transgressing racialized boundaries, as well as the lines between private and public, and claiming a right to visibility in public space. Cemal and his friends' desire for simplicity and the indulgence in *Köfte,* containing an entire "city of herbs", can thus perhaps be understood as a yearning for a taste of a rural, and more tranquil life beyond everyday marginalization in Berlin. Similarly, Cemal's recollection of transporting a grill

[251] For a similar argument about minimalist food preparation and consumption practices among Mexican American men, see Limón (1995: 139).

in the trunk of his car in his home village in Turkey expresses a nostalgia for the rural and for a more simple life – away from Berlin.

As Ruth Mandel points out in her work on practices of place-making among Berlin's Turkish migrant communities, *helal* dietary rules – especially around the consumption of meat – have moved to the forefront for many people in *gurbet* (exile) in order to avoid "moral contamination" in Germany (Mandel 1996: 151).[252] With Mandel, Limón and Wolch et al., I thus suggest that eating habits and the consumption of meat in public spaces not only become an important symbol for resistance and ethnic pride (Wolch et al 2000: 80) in Berlin, but also a strategy to overcome a form of "pollution" in the city based on everyday exclusion. By barbecuing in public parks, Cemal and others transgress a division of everyday life into two worlds – the Turkish home and the German world of work (see Mandel 1996: 151). Refusing to domesticate the barbecuing of meat, they place it into the public realm,[253] and thus blur the boundaries between the public and the private, as well as the "native" and the foreign. Moreover, as many Turkish immigrants migrate from different districts to other districts (often in the former East) to search out parks, where you can still barbecue, they also transgress racially segregated spaces in East and West Berlin.[254] In this sense, the barbecue picnic is a

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[252] In particular, Mandel points out the association between pork and promiscuity, fueling efforts to avoid German foods – as well as restaurants, butchers and grocery stores (Mandel 1996: 152), which has resulted in a large local industry that caters almost exclusively to Turks.

[253] I am drawing on and inverting Melissa Caldwell's argument on the French Fry and the role of McDonald's in Moscow here (Caldwell 2004).

[254] As I have discussed earlier in this dissertation, East and West Berlin have different histories of migrant laborers settling in the city. Whereas East Berlin's main migrant community was Vietnamese, and much smaller, many Turkish, Greek, Italian and Spanish migrant laborers settled in West Berlin during the division. After the Berlin Wall tumbled, many immigrants in East Berlin were forced to return to their home countries. Thus, the population was more diverse in the West. And this has had an effect on many immigrants until today: many of my Turkish and African informants expressed hesitation to travel or live

makeshift spatial practice that challenges existing divisions and normative notions of urbanity.

Barbecue Cross-Talk

Cemal's and Ülkay's enactment of "barbecue area" both taps into stereotypes of barbecuing as a Turkish tradition, and utilizes them to challenge – and perhaps escape – everyday experiences of marginalization. Thus, despite the petrified language of talk about clean cities and parks, about people, smoke and rubbish, there is also cross- and back-talk – and not only by barbecuers, but also in media and political discourse. Barbecuing becomes attached to a whole palimpsest of different cultural meanings and the status of Turkish immigrants in Germany – in Europe and beyond.

Whereas some public officials, such as president Johannes Rau see barbecuing as a "cultural right" of all Turks living in Germany (Gurbet Portal 2003, cited in Özkan 2008: 127), or as a sign of "lived integration" among Germans and Turks (Flamm 2009), Turkish and German speaking media in Germany have utilized barbecuing as an expression of cultural pride. In the past years, Turkish newspapers with special editions in Germany, like *Hürriyet*, have also reported on clouds of smoke in Berlin's urban parks (see *Tagesspiegel* 2005b; *Hürriyet* 2005).

In the past few years, other Turkish-speaking media have in fact, officially declared barbecuing in Berlin to be an important element of the Turkish cultural tradition (*Hürriyet* 2002). In addition, several Turkish newspapers have reported on plans

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in the Eastern parts of the city because they perceived white Germans to be more racially prejudiced there. Thus, their everyday movements and living patterns in many ways reproduced along the line of the former Berlin wall. This was especially true for immigrants who had already lived in Berlin before 1989.

to outlaw barbecuing throughout the entire city of Berlin. These news quickly turned out to be a rumor once one read below the headline. Referring to an actual decree by the city to ban barbecuing throughout Berlin during the world cup, a Turkish newspaper headline read: "Ban for barbecuing for Turkish people during the world cup" (*Radikal* 2006).

Interestingly, the Turkish speaking reports make their way into German newspapers: emphasizing that a lot of the most dedicated barbecuers are Turkish migrants and that every summer, Berlin's urban parks are crowded with them, local butchers, quoted in *Hürriyet*, also find a voice in the German newspaper *Tagesspiegel*: "Turkish people love meat. Among all the people in the world, the Turkish are the barbecuing world champions" (*Tagesspiegel* 2005b). Furthermore, several Turkish butchers report to have difficulties supplying the large demand of meat during summer months. Drawing on *Hürriyet*'s portrayals, the *Tagesspiegel* article is framed by photographs portraying Turkish barbecuers surrounded by smoke and piles of trash in the Tiergarten (*Tagesspiegel* 2005b). Yet the article criticizes the *Hürriyet* (as well as other Turkish newspapers) for celebrating barbecuing in Berlin as a "Turkish cultural tradition" and for affirming the high meat consumption as a sign of economic wealth without considering its environmental impacts on "Berlin's green lungs". Thus, when Turkish newspapers say: "don't touch our barbecue" (*Tagesspiegel* 2005b), they forget about the piles of trash and also the trees suffering from the smoke and heat in the park.

In these conversations, barbecuing becomes a signifier for difference, as well as a site of debate around multiculturalism and different forms of exclusion/inclusion in

Berlin's urban spaces. Barbecuing is not only a contested topic in the local media, but has also become an important issue for local political parties and organizations. Since 2003, when members of the conservative party, the CDU, suggested continually to introduce a general 5 Euro-barbecuing fee – several other political parties as well as local residents articulated vehement protest. As mentioned earlier, the German Green Party has used images of the Turkish community barbecuing in Berlin's parks as part of their election campaign leaflets in the past.[255] In 2001, the Green Party also argued against the outlawing of barbecuing in Berlin's parks, for protecting it in designated areas in the Tiergarten, and offering signs and advice on environmentally conscious barbecuing (*umweltbewusstes Grillen*).[256] The party argued that barbecuing is a lived practice that offers possibilities for integration.

> "barbecuing in Berlin apparently responds to a broad need in the population – as can be seen in the intensive use of the Tiergarten. In a dense city (verdichteter Stadtraum), there are no other possibilities to fulfill these needs in a private setting. Collective barbecuing has a socially integrating function and it is consistent with a multicultural Berlin." (2005b)[257]

Accordingly, in summer 2002, two members of the Green Party, Wolfgang Wieland (who was also Berlin's mayor at the time) and Özcan Mutlu organized a "multicultural barbecue" in the Tiergarten to illustrate solidarity between Germans and Turks in response to efforts to restrict barbecuing in public parks. The *Hürriyet* reported on the event, showing Wieland cooking meat and offering beef and chicken to his guests.

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[255] See discussion of Uli Linke's analysis earlier in this chapter.
[256] http://gruene-berlin.de/mitte/archiv/papiere/mai/grill2.html
[257] In a more recent article, a Green Party member is quoted saying: „Barbecuing offers the possibility of integration. Everyone barbecues together. This is a good experience." (Ich verstehe die Moeglichkeit des Grillens als gelebte Integrationsmoeglichkeit. Alle grillen zusammen. Das ist eine gute Erfahrung) (Berliner Morgenpost 2009, translation by author).

Wieland was also quoted saying that Berlin knows about barbecuing because of the Turkish migrants living in this city. Since barbecuing is the favorite leisure activity of Turkish migrants in Berlin and since it testifies to the encounters between different cultures in Berlin, conservative attempts to get rid of it in the Tiergarten should be stopped, he continues. And: "Immigrants are part of our society. Everybody is welcome to barbecue and picnic here." Yet there is one request: "They just must make sure to take care of the environment" (*Hürriyet* 2002). Thus, barbecuing becomes a matter of otherness and culture – but also a threat to the environment. A crucial element of an imagined "integration" of immigrants thus turns out to be "environmental consciousness" and "public responsibility".

In the last few years, Turkish organizations, like the Turkish Union Berlin-Brandenburg (*Türkischer Bund Berlin-Brandenburg*, TBB), reacted to frequent complaints about Turkish barbecuers leaving too much trash behind in the Tiergarten. One of the Union's major goals for 2002 was therefore to strengthen environmental consciousness in the Turkish community. For Eren Uensal, a member of the coalition, "environmental consciousness is closely tied to the question of integration". [258] During one particular trash picking event-day, according to the Union's report, about

> "50 young – most of them Muslim - people from 10 different countries gave a good example of environmentalism by taking away the garbage left in the „Tiergarten"-park with forceps and bags. The campaign should strengthen the environmental awareness of immigrants, as stated by the organizers. Some members of the Bundestag were also present at the campaign"

[258] For a summary of these projects see: http://www.tbb-berlin.de/de/frame.html

In addition to picking up trash, flyers were put up on trees: "painted by small children from the kindergarten and carrying also proverbs about the environment from the prophet Mohammed (s.a.s.), Leonardo da Vinci, Roman philosophers, poets and from the bible." A member of INSSAN points out: "In this way the message can be perceived not only today. Also the next days passers-by can read the wise and beautiful proverbs about nature."

Figure 21: Flyers on trees, Tiergarten, summer 2008 (photograph by author)

Barbecue City Istanbul: ***Carnivore Islamistan***

Despite all the barbecue cross- and back-talk, it was not until I took a trip to Istanbul to visit Cemal's and other informants' families that I realized that "barbecuing" is a spatial practice that incites debate across national borders. In fact, Istanbul, a city that has been an intermediate stop of many rural migrants from Anatolia on their way to Germany, like Cemal, has its own barbecuing debate. In it, barbecuing in public parks and beaches become contested sites in which nationalist, secular and urban subjectivities collide with rural, "traditional" and religious ones. Attending to this debate, provides glimpses of

some of the larger political contexts at stake: the role of Islam in Europe and the reshuffling of Europe's borders – especially in the face of Turkey's potential integration into the EU. These re-borderings of a new Europe all matter tremendously in conflicts over the appropriate use of public space, citizenship and environmental consciousness across Europe and beyond.

Walking along the Marmara Sea, from Bakırköy all the way towards the Bosporus and the Golden Horn, you pass long stretches of green space. Constructed in the 1990s, as part of rehabilitation projects to clean up and "green" the Golden Horn (Göktürk et al. 2010: 16)[259], these parks offer large patches of lawn – squeezed in between the water and busy roads – as well as trees, bushes, a few winding paths and benches. In many areas, these green spaces are also the only access and openings to the water.[260]

Families come here to have a picnic or barbecue on the grass. Some people also go swimming or bring fishing poles to catch a fish. Not unlike in Berlin, they bring hammocks, blankets, carpets, lawn chairs, strollers, go-carts or bikes for the children – and grills. Sitting on chairs or blankets on the grass or lying in the shade under the small young trees of the park, people of all generations chat, play backgammon, drink tea and eat. The menu ranges from watermelon, tomato and cucumber salads, bread, koefte, kebab, fried eggplant and peppers to simply sunflower seeds. During the summer, as temperatures rise, the heat mixes with the hot smoke of the barbecues. Only the water offers a slight breeze. When it gets crowded, people huddle around the grill on small

[259] The Golden Horn used to be Istanbul's major industrial zone, and was home to the city's main shipyard as well as many factories (e.g. for household appliances and engines for agricultural production) (Göktürk et al. 2010: 16). It therefore was exposed to industrial pollution for a long time.
[260] As real estate values are very high for spaces along the water, only residents of the upper class or public authorities have access to seaside properties (Özkan 2008: 128).

strips of grass close to the road or right next to a parking lot. Pigeons and sea gulls fly around or sit on the grass in between. A few vendors sell pink cotton candy, mussels or barbecued fish on the side of the pathway – streaks of smoke from the grill fill the air. Once in while, you see a small shooting stand on the seashore: with a rifle, you can aim at small hand-drawn images of birds on a board, or shoot balloons against the horizon of the Marmara Sea.

Most recently public discourse has highlighted that many people who visit the park are, like Cemal's family, first or second-generation migrants from rural Anatolia. They come from lower or lower middle class backgrounds, therefore don't have money to go on vacation and live in small apartments with no immediate access to outdoor space for leisure, so the story goes (Özkan 2008: 128). While they used to go picnic outside the city in the forest or on the coast, now the former rural migrants can picnic close to their urban homes.

Officially, barbecuing is illegal in most parts of the city, including most green spaces – due to concerns about environmental pollution, smoke, fire hazards and cleanliness (Özkan 2008: 128). Nevertheless, you can see picnickers and barbecuers all over the city – which has triggered heated controversy in recent years.

Part of the debate was set off by an article published in the left-liberal newspaper *Radikal* in July 2005 (Kırıkkanat 2005). In it, the author, Mine Kırıkkanat, reported on growing cultural divisions in Istanbul's public spaces. Beginning a tour of the city with the Istanbul International Airport, she described the airport as a beacon of modern Istanbul, lighting "up Turkey's non-Arab face" (Kırıkkanat cited in Vick 2005). In

contrast, the ride to the city, revealed a different Istanbul: driving along the road towards the historic city center, you pass scenes of urban backwardness and an invasion of shantytown people – the "black Istanbul":

> "men in their underwear rest ruminating, women wearing black chadors or headscarves all are fanning the barbecue. . . . This view is repeated every 10 meters square, our dark people cooking meat by the sea that they turn their [behinds] toward. Here it is impossible to find one single family grilling fish. Well, if they liked fish and if they knew how to grill it, they would not just be lying there in their dirty undershirts, underpants and longjohns; they would not ruminate and belch; and they would not in any case be this chubby, short legged, long-armed and this hairy!" (Kırıkkanat cited in Vick 2005).

Dubbing this scene "Carnivore Islamistan", Kırıkkanat placed Istanbul's divisions of race, class and region in a language of meat, consumption, dress and appropriate use of public space.

Complaining about the urban poor taking over Istanbul's parks and beaches with grills, white underwear (*don*), and headscarves, the author drew on several controversial cultural images. The consumption of meat– and especially *kebab*, which is associated with Anatolian food and Kurdish culture – stands in contrast to the Istanbul native's preference of fish. Not unlike in Berlin's barbecuing debate, Kırıkkanat described the consumption of meat in public as an anti-urban, uncivilized practice by rural migrants from Anatolia and Arabs – Istanbul's "black people" – casting them as beasts of prey – and as incompetent people who have never even seen the Bosporus or know how to read a traffic light (Vick 2005). Thus, like other commentators following her, Kırıkkanat concluded: "On Sundays in the summer, the coasts of Istanbul look like Arabia at best" (K. cited in Özkan: 109).

But more than barbecuing was at stake. Published just a few weeks after the opening of Caddebostan beach – a public beach in the Istanbul district of Kadıköy, on the Asian side of the city along the Sea of Marmara – the article also zoomed into the cultural politics of beach wear and the headscarf. Kırıkkanat accused working class men wearing the *don*, which basically are white briefs, for offending urban cosmopolitan sensibilities, as much as women wearing long cloaks.

Kırıkkanat's article triggered a heated public debate. Like *Radikal*, other newspapers published stories about the "misuse" of parks and beaches by the urban poor in the following months (Sabah 2005; Özkan 2008: 110). Again, others critiqued the public dismay as elitist, as unacceptable denial of "authentic" Turkish (rural) traditions and as discrimination of lower class migrants from rural Anatolia living in Istanbul today (*Hürriyet* cited in Özkan 2008: 111). In contrast to secular voices, these populist accounts defended the "tradition" and authenticity of certain kind of beachwear and barbecuing. Writers such as Timur Danis spoke in favor of wearing longjohns, the *don*, pointing out that it was a symbol of one's class status and poverty and thus should be worn with pride. Following this lead, his satirical magazine *Leman* lobbied for a beach rally titled "Hold on to your Underwear" (Vick 2005).

Eventually, the municipal government responded to the debate by regulating the use of barbecues, as well as the wearing of the *don* and the headscarves in public beaches. Affirming the secular republican values of white Istanbul citizens (Vick 2005), soon, guards patrolled the beaches to make sure beach-goers would adhere to the modern code of dress of bathing suits. Thus, the municipality "tried to regulate civic enjoyment by

imposing middle-class, 'European' standards upon them though without much success" (Işın 2010).

Not unlike in Berlin, different parties in the controversy attached a wide variety of meanings to barbecuing (and beachwear) and saw it as an authentic expression of the culture of the urban poor – thus engaging competing definitions of urbanity. As Özkan has pointed out, how "this so-called authenticity related to the habit of barbecuing in city parks was by no means clear," and in "what ways barbecuing in city parks was a rural tradition also remained unexplained" (Özkan 2008: 111).

In this portrayal of public parks along the Bosporus and the Marmara Sea, picnicking and barbecuing thus came to illustrate and in fact, stand for the cultural disjunctures of class and regionality created in the course of migration from the countryside to the city in Turkey and beyond. In this view, barbecuing in public parks conflicted with a Western, European style of urban living and refined consumption (Özkan 2008). And most of all, barbecuing was blamed for creating an "ugly surrounding", polluting the air with smoke (Özkan 2008: 133).

While the barbecue battles in Berlin's parks, drew lines between the foreign and the native, the Istanbul debate engaged questions of how "modern" and "European" the proper Turkish citizen should be.[261] At the heart of that question lies an increasing fissure between two symbolic communities and political movements in Turkey. Since the 1990s, the duality between civilized "cosmopolitan citizen" and uncivilized "rural

[261] Modern Turkey, though to a large part Muslim, was founded in 1923 as a secular republic, and was led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who envisioned the nation-state from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire based on the French definition of secularism.

migrant", between the "white Turks" and the "black Turks" – between what Stephan Lanz has termed the "urbanites" and "anti-urbanites" – has had a strong hold in both public and academic discourse in Turkey and beyond.[262] The anti-urbanite stands for the provincial uncivilized urban community that is led by affect and does not know how to act adequately in public space. In contrast, like in the barbecue image of the Green party in Germany, the civilized urban cosmopolitan citizen engages in consumption, is economically independent, owns private property, is commercially oriented – and environmentally "conscious".[263] Rather than squat on the lawn and prepare food in public, these urban citizens engage in more "refined" urban practices, such as having tea at a café or going out for dinner at a restaurant (Özkan 2008: 139).

In Istanbul, the dual categories of urbanite and anti-urbanite gained renewed currency as images of urban doom began to prevail in much public debate about the city's development in the 1990s – both in Turkey and internationally, and especially in Germany (Lanz 2005). In the decades before, Istanbul had quickly grown into a city of millions, and many poor rural migrants increasingly characterized a significant part of the

[262] The two different political camps represent these two different groups: the populists supported the black Turks and the elitists backed the white Turks (Özkan 2008: 102). Prime Minister Erdogan campaigned as a "black Turk" and drew on a form of populism with roots in Islam (Vick 2005). In some districts, the competing parties of the populist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) which especially caters to a conservative Muslim population and the Republican People's party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) representing the concerns of mainly upper middle class secular urbanites (Özkan 2008: 138), thus reflecting the social divisions between the secular citizens and the Muslim traditional masses. As Stephan Lanz (2005) has pointed out, the duality between urbanites and anti-urbanites certainly fails to grasp the complexities of urban everyday life – both in Europe and beyond. Instead it engages fears of blocked modernization and secularization that have both played a role during the making of the Turkish nation under Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s, as well as in contemporary modernization efforts to pave the way for Turkey's entry into the European Union (see also Özkan 2008: 113, 108).

[263] In his study of Istanbul barbecuers, Özkan points out that, in fact, many barbecuers challenged the notion of urban citizenship, ownership and (il)legitimacy. He quotes one park user: "None of us are legitimate in this country. [..] The owner of that expensive house is no more legitimate than I am. They launder money; we barbecue." (Özkan 2008: 134).

city's population. The emergent discourse of failed urbanization then targeted these "anti-urbanites" as the internal enemy of the city. Imagined as chaotic others, that pose a threat to urban order, they were excluded from urban citizenship. Urban elites portrayed their habitat, the makeshift arrangements of the *gecekondu*, in an increasingly negative way, imagining them as non-places and no-go areas – places where civitas has ended and crime prevails (Esen 2005: 37).[264] In response to "urban plight", "clean" urbanization became a new keyword for re-creating urban social order and a search for purity. Thus the question of how to behave in public space became a key element of these efforts to re-create order.

In Germany, Istanbul was often described as "mega-space without character, overcrowded by (rural) people" (Arin cited in Lanz 2005: 1), and like other cities in the global South, "as space of mass poverty and race riots, traffic chaos and mountains of trash" (*Spiegel Spezial* 12/1998, cited in Lanz). These racialized images of a bleak nature of the non-European, immigrant city reverberate in both barbecue debates – in Berlin and along the shores of the Bosporus and the Marmara Sea. Thus, the savage practice of barbecue straddles the borders between what constitutes the "European city" and its proper urban citizens and inhabitants.

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[264] As I have notes in Chapter 2, *gecekondu* are "places built over night". They are "illegal" low cost apartment buildings that rural migrants set up at the outskirts of many Turkish cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, from the 1950s and 1960s onward. By building the houses in one night, the *gecekondu* families were able took advantage of an old legal loophole which maintains that if one builds a house overnight and moves into it before dawn, the city is not allowed to tear down a dwelling. As many families migrated from rural regions into Turkish cities at the time, *gecekondu* areas proliferated at the edges of many Turkish cities. They were simple in structure, usually with only one level and with courtyards, trees and a small field for subsistence cultivation, resembling the structures of Anatolian villages – only that they soon were situated in the middle of the sprawling city (Esen 2005: 37).

For many immigrants living in Berlin today, like Cemal, the geçekondu were an intermediate stop on their way from Anatolian villages to urban Europe. And again like Cemal, many Berlin Turks still have family who live in the former gecekondus. Not unlike in Istanbul, these migrants have become the internal alien, the Islamic other, threatening the urban order. As Lanz writes: "In this respect, Berlin and Istanbul elites share a far-reaching consensus: the dangerous virus no longer comes from the outside, it is already on the attack inside the city" (Lanz 2005: 3) – as it has been exemplified in the fight against the headscarf in defense of a secular urban culture. Yet not only the headscarf, but the barbecue has become a target in this discourse against the anti-urbanite (Esen 2005: 50). And as I have shown, many barbecuers, like Cemal challenge this frozen image of the anti-urban and uncivilized Muslim immigrant– and the normative assumptions about how to use public space connected to it. They do so by performing this very image of the rural backward other returning to the center of Europe in an ironic way. As one informant once put it: "If Turkey joins the European Union, we will go to Paris and barbecue in front of the Eiffel Tower."[265]

The Fireguard: Chasing Smoke

Smoke and fire, not unlike the barbecuers are the outsiders of the city, that which threatens the urban order and the boundary between the city and "wilderness". While

[265] The title of this section thus draws on Erik Gongrich's multi-media installation "Istanbul: Picnic City". This installation engages some of the makeshift practices of barbecue by displaying inappropriate or "crude" forms of occupying urban space. It thus questions normative notions of urbanity. For Gingrich, the picnic functions as a "metaphor for temporary uses of urban space and makeshift spatial structures abundantly existent in Istanbul" (Özkan 2008: 96). By pointing to "a living with and making use of public space that can turn even a highway junction into a picnic site", he traces instances of a different type of urban order (ibid.).

some cherish the fresh air in the park, accepting smoke as a small side effect, others are irritated by it. Tracking down the smoke, spotting it, and putting out its sources, they combat the threat of fire. And yet in it all, smoke infuses unexpected places and desires.

Back in Berlin, Ralf considers himself the fireguard of the Tiergarten. During the summer, he patrols the park with his bike. He is well equipped with a bike trailer carrying all kinds of utensils – a fire extinguisher, a fishing rod, a blanket, a big container with water, a pocket-knife. On a busy afternoon in the park, he rides past the meadows crowded with barbecuers surveilling the park for fire. He looks out for smoke and tracks down its sources: does it emanate from coal on a grill or does it come from burning grass, bushes or even a tree? If everything is calm, he settles down under a tree – on the lookout for sparks from a grill catching fire in the grass or the trees. If a fire does break out, people often do not know what to do. This is when Ralf intervenes: if it is a small fire, he puts it out himself. If it's bigger, he calls the fire department. He knows how to give precise directions: "Come to the eleventh tree on the right in front of the castle!" he once said when he called the fire department. Nobody has hired him for this – he acts as a fireguard on a volunteer basis and cooperates with environmental organizations (such as the *Nabu*) and the Office of Green Space, responsible for the park's administration and upkeep. Sometimes, police also patrol the park, enforcing the rules to not throw burning coal in the bushes or barbecue an entire animal – which does happen occasionally, according to Ralf, especially on Ramadan or other Muslim holidays. People get tickets all the time. Sometimes, there is an ambulance at the edge of the park, ready for emergency action in case someone gets burned.

Then there is the trash.

Once in a while, as he tours the park, Ralf picks up empty bottles or plastic bags lying around – any trash he can find on the way. With the fishing rod, he sometimes pulls random objects out of the nearby pond – chairs, bikes, medical utensils from the nearby hospital – and sometimes even sick fish. But it is not only Ralf who scavenges the trash. In the evenings, after a busy afternoon, many critters – usually rats, foxes, and crows – roam the park, on the lookout for something edible. They find a bounty of snacks – in and around trashcans, in the bushes, or on the edges of the grass. Then, the next morning municipal employees come to pick up any remaining trash.

Sometimes, Ralf also saves an animal. The Animal Garden does not have its name for nothing, he tells me. There is a large diversity of animals – especially birds usually rare in urban areas, such as kingfishers, blue tits, and nightingales, and Ralf is familiar with many of them. Sometimes he saves birds falling out of bird nests, or displaced rabbits after a loud populous parade went through the park. In fact, when his friend, Ulrike, an environmental activist, who worked with him as part of an initiative "Save the Tiergarten" in the past, first introduced me to Ralf, she said, he knew every animal and creature – no matter whether it was a rat, a raccoon, a fox, a toad, a crow, or the many humans – some of them odd and strange – that hang out in the park.[266]

[266] In fact, Ralf insisted he had had various odd encounters in the park: on weekend mornings, a naked woman was walking through the park, playing the violin. And then, at times, you would see a man with a sled on wheels, four huskies pulling him.

"The air has changed in Berlin lately", Ralf says to me one day as I accompany him on the fire watch. *"In many areas in the city, people complain about their mouth getting dry. This is due to the acidity of the air. And that again is due to many factors. It has not been researched much."*

In contrast, in other areas of the park, there is a very special atmosphere, he explains. And in others, everything just seems dead and lifeless. And then again, in the BBQ areas, a thick smoke has become part of the atmosphere. Later, as we tour around the BBQ meadows, Ralf swerves for a second and then falls off his bike.

"It must be this bad air! All the smoke."

He points to clouds of smoke drafting through the trees.

"Many people burn wood coal and that's what smells so strongly! And if people leave the smoldering coal on the grass, and the grass is dry, then it gets dangerous. The city has cut down the grass to decrease the fire hazard. It also considered installing sprinklers. The local Office of Green Space also put up garbage containers that are built in a way that people can't stack the garbage on top of each other –to prevent people from throwing in flammable material. "if the garbage cans start burning, then hell will break lose."

Usually, Ralf watches the scene and if he sees smoldering coal, he uses the fire extinguisher. Ralf does not see himself as a police man but as something like a lifeguard – someone who watches and in the bottom of his heart wants to participate too. He feels dedicated to nature conservation and for that, he proudly explains to me, you have to transgress boundaries and rules. For him, the fire watch is about the use of green space and making sure that people do not use green space in a way that nothing remains.

Ralf's nick name is Rabe Ralf, which translates into "Raven Ralf". This name came into being when he launched a small environmental magazine, which he named just that: Rabe Ralf.[267] Ralf, the human, is in his 50s and has been unemployed for a few years. Waiting to do further training, he works odd jobs in the meantime – offering forest pedagogy workshops and ecological citizen advice. For several decades, he has been an adamant environmental activist. He has been part of the initiative "Safe the Tiergarten" (*Rettet den Tiergarten*) and together with his friend Ulrike, who is an artist, he has participated in various protest activities in the past two decades. In the mid 1990s, just when the city and federal government had made plans to reconstruct Berlin's center, build a new government district at the edge of the park, and cut down many trees, they became Tiergarten activists. Like them, many others got involved trying to save the trees and protest against the plans.[268] Both Ralf and Ulrike share a passion for the Animal Garden and a sense that the park is a microcosm – "whatever is going on in the park gives you a glimpse of what is going on in the world at large", Ralf once put it. In the face of the park's recent histories, as well as the present, for Ralf, the Tiergarten stood as a cautionary tale for the rest of the planet.

Ulrike's and Ralf's tales of these protest activities are fragmentary, punched with episodes of anger, nervous break down, sadness and small victories. And they are crowded with trees and fire: logged down and burning trees, funeral ceremonies, tree

[267] Rabe Ralf is the title and also the character of a gallows song/poem written by a German poet (Christian Morgenstern) on his wanderings through the March Brandenburg – a story about an injured raven that finds no help, helps itself and dies in the end nevertheless.
[268] Ulrike and Ralf protested against the planned construction of a tunnel under the Tiergarten, and against the additional logging of trees as part of the reconstruction of the new government center in Berlin and the main train station after the fall of the Wall (e.g. as part of the *Initiative Baumschutznotpass,* they created a tree protection emergency passport).

cemeteries, hundreds of crows foreshadowing the loss of habitats – and the smoke clouds of protest. For them, trees give us a clue for how humans relate to their human and non-human world. Fire and smoke become a tool to battle both the political and material re-landscaping of the city and call attention to its costs – they burned some of the logged down trees, and thus attracted local residents attention to the loss of trees in the city.[269] And as Ulrike recalled some of the protest stories to me once, she kept quoting a sentence from Brecht: "What times do we live in when a conversation about trees is almost a crime? – Because it engages a silence about so many other atrocities" (translation by author).[270]

Thus, for Ralf and other activists, the battles over the trees were more than just about the trees: they were about a fundamental shift in European and German politics in the mid 1990s – the remaking of the nation after the end of the Cold War and the victory of capitalism. Yet Ulrike once pointed out to me, it was not just about humans either. In fact, she never cared much for humanism: *Der Humanismus kann mir gestohlen bleiben – der denkt immer nur an sich selbst* ("Humanism can go to hell – it always thinks

[269] In the course of the tree protests, activists came up with ideas to alert citizens of the logging: they created tree protection emergency passports for people to buy and Deutschmark bills with dead trees on them. Ulrike wrote fairy tales about the Tiergarten and distributed them widely. They danced naked wearing gas masks to call attention to a polluted world without trees (which she jokes, was a challenge for her, because she is in her 60s, but nobody recognized her because of the mask in the end). As part of a funeral ceremony, they took cut down trees, branches and leaves and burned them in front of a church. The fire spread a marvelous scent into the air. And Ulrike put a red carnation right in front of it. It almost caught fire, but one of the protestors took it out in the last second, she tells me with tears in her eyes. He was a wearing a sign that read: "The trees are dying silently, why don't YOU scream?"

[270] "Was sind das fuer Zeiten, wo ein Gespraech ueber Baeume fast ein Verbrechen ist? Weil es ein Schweigen ueber so viele Untaten einschliesst?" Brecht wrote these lines while in exile in Denmark in 1939. During one of their activities, this quote made it on a "tree emergency passport" that was handed out to passersby in the Tiergarten.

about itself!"). In the end, they did not reach their goals: many trees were cut down, especially in those areas close to the Reichstag.

In our conversations, both Ralf and Ulrike expressed strong dismay against the standardization of "nature" in the park. What some consider "park compatible", they regard as "typical German". Ralf thus spoke with cynicism about Germans' fascination with order:

Everything has to be in straight lines and in order. For example many trees have scars because their branches were cut off to ensure that not too many branches stick out on the pathways through the park. It's as if everyone would run through the park with blinds on and thus get hit by tree branches all over the place!

Or the vegetation on the edge of the park, near the chancellor's office: the grass and all the plants there are like embanked germs, walled off, so they remain at a safe distance – not unlike the fountains right in front of the building, lined up like soldiers. At another corner of the park, near the castle Bellevue, motion detectors line the walls, dividing the park and the castle. Sometimes a bird or a big insect causes a false alarm.

Just a few meters away from the motion detectors, crowds of barbecuers squat the meadows.

Like Ralf, other activists' narratives express a nostalgia for the wild amid German orderliness and amid post-unification efforts to build a new German capital. In an article, titled *Unbehandelter Lungenkrebs* ("Untreated Lung Cancer"), published in 2001, in "Rabe Ralf", he reported about the continuing destruction of "wilderness" in the Tiergarten: as the park was mostly used for recreation, more and more flora and fauna disappeared: the

numbers of different bird species had decreased, and rabbits, foxes, moles, and hedgehogs had become more rare. Overuse and pollution had caused damage on much of the grass, shrubbery and trees to the extent that many trees had been logged down. Trash scattered across the park frequently. And with the construction of the new train station nearby, the park's role as a corridor for fresh air circulation had been diminished. The park had been ravaged for the purposes of recreation and capital (with the increasing popularity of the Love Parade). In contrast, Ralf reminded his readers of the attention paid to the park after WWII, when its trees had burned during the fire bombings or logged down in the aftermath of the war: it was then that other cities across Germany and many other countries donated trees to reforest the park. At this time, re-creating the forest was a key attempt to "heal" the urban landscape from the wounds of war.

And still, today, Ralf searches out patches of "wilderness" in the park – and finds them. As we pass through a patch of woods on our bike tour through the park, Ralf comments on the thick undergrowth with a sense of excitement:

"This is a "Plaenterwald" he explains to me.

"It's almost like a small jungle in the middle of the city – unlike many of the other trees in the park."

Yet not only do trees come to stand in for the "wild" in Ralf's yearnings. As we pause at one of the barbecue meadows, crowded with people, for a moment, Ralf says, in the tone of an anthropological observer:

"Isn't it astounding that ALL these people have the same impulse to go outdoors and use this space?"

Then he surprises me with an odd comparison:

"It's like an invisible Indian village – I imagine the tipis in between. But you don't see them. They are invisible but they are there."

As he speaks, he draws the shapes of several cone-like tents into the air.

Acting as the fireguard of the Tiergarten, Ralf engages in a practice of citizenship that centers around environmental stewardship. Keeping the fire at bay where things "get out of control" – whether it's capitalism's desire to log down trees and create profit, or efforts to "recapitalize" Berlin (see Ward 2010), or the city's internal outsiders who threaten to put the park on fire with their barbecues. Ralf's ethic of wilderness serve as a critique of German orderliness and invokes a naturalness of different people being in the park. In this respect, his enactment of environmentalism does not become a vehicle of exclusion. Rather it offers a possibility for negotiating different public presences in the park. Both environmental activists like Ralf and Ulrike *and* barbecuers like Cemal claim a "right to the city"[271] – either by fighting the disappearance of trees, or asserting a right for freedom from everyday marginalization – and most of all: by claiming the right to breathe deeply while filling the park with smoke.

[271] Lefebvre's notion of the "right to the city" encompasses not only citizen's rights to participate in urban life within the parameters of Western liberal democracy and institutional practice, but also the appropriation of public space in everyday life and thus other forms of political subjectivity (see Özkan 2008: 116, and Levebvre 1996). Lanz defines this battle over urban citizenship as the demand for the right "allowing one to occupy a place and receive the necessary infrastructures" (Lanz 2005: 10).

Conclusion

Following barbecue's key ingredients – fire, and meat, as well as its traces – garbage and smoke – I have tracked various ways in which barbecuing animates anxieties and creates pleasure in Berlin and beyond. Rather than being a closed entity or practice, confined to a clear territory of "barbecue area", barbecuing turns out to be a makeshift practice that resists regulation, transgresses clear boundaries and national borders. As smoke, fire, and smells capture different people's attention and engages notions of otherness, "wild barbecuing" can be seen as a border practice in which the urban and the rural, the city and nature, Europe and its others are reshuffled in unexpected ways.

For some barbecue's blend of fire, smoke and smells creates a taste of freedom and closeness to "nature" that allows you to breathe more deeply and take a break from everyday life and social exclusion. For others, barbecuing pollutes and disturbs the environmental order of the city. From this perspective barbecuing is seen as beastly practice that illustrates a lack of civilized knowledge and conduct on the part of Muslim immigrants in Europe. Finally, others, environmentalists such as fireguard Ralf, chase down the smoke in the Tiergarten, keeping the fire at bay while yearning for the noble savage's cookery and for spaces of wilderness in the city. What these different imaginations share across Berlin and beyond is that barbecuing becomes an "invented tradition" and attaches to a palimpsest of racial and cultural meanings. Both in Berlin and Istanbul, barbecuing is seen as savage practice by many – and barbecuers come to figure as the internal other threatening the "civilized" order of the city, the nation, and Europe.

Indeed, there is a longer history of seeing barbecue as savage practice. In his book *Savage Barbecue*, Andrew Warnes explores the powerful racial connotations bound up in barbecue – both its name and history. Conventional origin stories of barbecue's etymology and history have claimed that barbecue arose from Caribbean Native cooking practices. From this conventional perspective, Europeans encountered the word *Barabicoa* in the Caribbean as it was used by the Taino to signify a wooden rack supported by four stakes that was used to slowly cook meat over an open fire (Caldwell 2005: 6). Challenging this origin story of barbecue as a native "traditional" cookery, Warnes argues that the story of barbecue is a transatlantic one – and its distinctive mythology of freedom, savagery, pleasure and masculinity has existed since the onset of European colonialism. Rather than being a native Indian Caribbean practice of cooking meat, barbecue is an "invented tradition" (Warnes 2008: 4)[272] that emerged from a European colonial gaze yearning to connect the practice of smoking foods with ideas of savagery and the wild. Thus, "barbecue mythology arose neither from actual Arawakan life or any indigenous culture, but from loaded and fraught colonial representations that sought to represent those cultures as the barbaric anti-thesis of European achievement" (Warnes 2008: 6/7).

A peek into the journals of Christopher Columbus reveals this long-standing European hunger for barbecue: upon their encounter with Native Americans, Columbus' crew eagerly listened to the lure of Taino references of a mythical island in the Atlantic called "*Babeque*" – an island abundant with pearls, gold, precious stones, and the sweet

[272] Warnes draws on Hobsbawm's notion of an invented tradition here (see Hobsbawm 1983).

aroma of spices – a mythical place where one can collect gold by candlelight (Warnes 2008: 14). On their second journey across the Atlantic, when supplies were poorer and the crew's hunger even bigger, instead of finding gold, the men encountered a marvelous and ghastly scene of smoke cookery upon their landing at Guantánamo Bay – a feast of fish, rabbits and serpents[273] slowly cooked high above a small fire. The contemplation of this culinary scene is saturated with ambiguity: a sense of marvel at the slow cooking process and the sweet fragrance of roasted fish on the beach – as well as a sense of bewilderment in the face of the beastly serpents. Above all, barbecue offends a European sense of cooking meat as a practice of human control over nature (Warnes 2008: 8). And thus, for Warnes, Columbus' reports of barbecue encounters engage a colonial debate that both searches out the humanity of the natives and prepares them for cultural assimilation and "civilization" (Warnes 2008: 16). The closeness of the word barbecue with barbarism is thus not coincidental and arises from the stereotype that "all barbarians must barbecue and all who barbecue must be barbarians" (7).

In Columbus' narrative, the beastly cookery of serpents' meat is what casts the natives as uncivilized barbaric other. In contrast, today's barbecue encounters in Europe have a different sense of what makes a beastly feast: here, it is the roasting of an entire animal – a practice too close to "nature", as well as immigrants' alleged distance to nature and lack of environmental literacy that offends European senses. The consumption of animal meat as a symbol of otherness thus reappears in current discussions of multiculturalism and, together with barbecue's traces of garbage and

[273] The account of this scene is based on the journal of the fleet's physician, Diego Alvarez Chanca. What the crew saw as serpents, were in fact iguana (Warnes 2008).

smoke, serves as a basis to juxtapose Turkish cultural practices against a presumed "German" environmental consciousness (and thus defining Turks as potential transgressors of species boundaries and of the confines of a carefully landscaped urban park). Yet, like in early colonial encounters, Berlin's barbecue debates engage deeply ambivalent feelings vis-á-vis the cooking of meat in public: on one hand, as I have shown in the fireguards' narratives, there is a fascination with the sweet smells of spices and slowly cooked meat, and with the frontier and nature spirit of barbecuing. On the other hand, barbecue arouses a sense of disgust and revulsion against a primitive practice beyond the pale of European civilization. Challenging these European imaginaries, others re-invent barbecuing as a tradition connecting it to their everyday life and migratory histories, as well as a desire for freedom and a breath of fresh air from the experience of marginalization in a European city.

In light of these ambivalences and multiple meanings of barbecuing, I have tried to show in this chapter, that both in Berlin and Istanbul, barbecuing is perhaps less an activity with deep cultural meanings, than a ritual that functions as a busy intersection (Rosaldo 1993: 17). It is a ritual "where a number of distinct social processes intersect" (17). Rather than a closed off space of barbecue area, the practice and social space of barbecuing thus may be read as a "crossroads" that " provides a space for distinct trajectories to traverse, rather than containing them in complete encapsulated form" (ibid.).

In this spirit then, what does it mean that barbecuing in parks captures people's attention and becomes such a contested practice in Europe today? I suggest that the re-

emergence of barbecue, seen as a savage practice, illustrates a tension in contemporary configurations of citizenship and belonging in Germany – and Europe. Barbecue's appeal is not only that it draws lines of difference between the European civilized self and the Muslim other.[274] As they are "part Turkish", "part German" at different times of the day, for Cemal and other barbecuers, barbecuing reopens up an important question: who belongs where and who gets to be what kind of person? Through the practice of barbecuing, parks become a place where this question is mapped out anew.

Figure 22: End of Barbecue Area (photograph by author)

[274] In this regard, the barbecuing debate illustrates that difference does not only get articulated through spatial metaphors but also through material, embodies practice and people's relation to the urban environment and nature. See for example Ayşe Çağlar's analysis of the key role of spatial metaphors such as the ghetto in contemporary racial discourse in Germany (Çağlar 2001).

Chapter 5

Forests: The *Unheimlich*

> In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible.
> - Homi Bhabha 1992, 141

The traces of the past years could be seen and felt everywhere. The paint on the walls of many buildings had crumbled. The fence, walling off the camp from the surrounding forest, had started to rust. Weeds overgrew the cement ground around the buildings. With the collapse of the socialist regime, the base was deserted and its buildings stood empty for years. Not only had "nature" returned in many ways, but also its boundaries had been redrawn: right during "re-unification" between East and West Germany, the surrounding landscape was transformed into one of the first nature parks in the March Oder region in Brandenburg. Then, in 2007, the half-ruined barracks found a new use: the local administration in Zarin[275] leased them to two parties: the so called "Sozial Park", a subcontractor, who provided housing for refugees, and a man who fixed up the remaining facilities. Asylum seekers from Kenya and many other countries (such as Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, and Vietnam) now found themselves living in an isolated shelter on the ruins of the former military barracks – just 45 kilometers east of Berlin.

[275] The names of villages and people in this chapter are all pseudonyms to protect my informants' privacy and anonymity.

Tucked away in the forest, this "refugee home", which everyone called the *Heim*, was invisible to many local residents.

Looking out the window from Virginia's room all you could see is trees. Virginia was in her mid thirties and had recently arrived from Kenya in Zarin. Her room was located on the second floor in the former barracks of the military base, and Virginia shared it with another woman from Kenya. In it, the furniture was carefully arranged: a wardrobe, a few bookshelves, two beds next to the wall, three chairs and a table. On the bookshelves, there were several frames with photographs of two other Kenyan women who had lived in the room in the past. Virginia did not know their names, but she had heard that they both lived in Berlin now.

Until just a few months ago, Virginia had lived in a village in the Rift Valley in Kenya. She was growing maize with her family on a small piece of land. In early 2008, shortly after the national election, Kibaki, a member of her tribe, the Kikuyu, announced victory over Odinga, a Luo. Soon, tensions arose in her village. Many people disputed the results and were angry at what they experienced as a fraud. For them, Kibaki's claim was another expression of the long standing unquestioned advantaged social status of Kikuyu. [276] In her village, many different ethnic groups had lived peacefully with each

[276] In 2007, the erupting violence between Kikuyu und Luo was unprecedented and it emerged unexpectedly to many. And yet, it certainly did not come out of nowhere. Rather, it needs to be seen in the historical context of both the specificities of the British colonial regime's policies as well as the specifics of the colonial liberation struggle in Kenya: both exacerbated tensions between the country's two main ethnic groups, the Luo and the Kikuyu. Exercising colonial rule through the division of tribes, the British incorporated the Luo into the colonial army (and also government) to fight against Kikuyu. Later, the Kikuyu fought for liberation in opposition to the colonial regime, while the Luo tried to negotiate through civil rights and were organized in trade unions. Finally, the subsequent postcolonial government of Kenyatta consolidated Kikuyu power, which created the current base for potential resentment among other ethnic groups, especially the Luo (see e.g. July 1997).

other in the past. Luo and Kikuyu had intermarried. Virginia herself was Kikuyu and was married to a Luo man. And yet, after Kibaki's announcement, neighbors and relatives became enemies overnight. Supported by oppositional party leaders, local Kalenjin and Luya youth began to chase after and attack Kikuyu. Some people were stabbed, others' houses were burnt down. Then, Virginia's neighbor's house was set on fire. Virginia was forced to leave her husband, as well as her children, in a rush. Together with others from the village, she fled to the forest. There would be no return for her. After hiding for two weeks in the "bush" and staying in a refugee camp outside the Rift Valley, she managed to gather resources for leaving the country with the help of the Red Cross. […]

Suddenly, a loud noise interrupted Virginia's story and jolted us back into the present. BAM, BAM, BAM! The sounds emanated from the forest and cut through the air. Then there was a short pause. And then again: BAM, BAM, BAM! For just a moment, we took the sounds for those of shotguns. It was as if the military base had come to life again. Had the soldiers returned to do their drill exercise? Startled, we peered out the window into the forest. Silence enveloped the trees. A cold breeze entered the room. […]

*

This chapter is about an unhomely dynamic at work in the remaking of the nation at the edges of Berlin. It is also about stories of mysterious sounds, corroded landscapes and a mercurial forest in the middle of Europe. The sounds of gunshots cutting through Virginia's memories are my guide for navigating through this landscape – a landscape that is the result of many re-borderings: between Europe and its others, between nature

and culture, between East and West: In an uncanny way, these sounds echoed the very violence Virginia had fled. Their unclear origin suggests that in order to understand what's going in this place, we have to let got for a moment what we think we know and instead track a sense of dis-place-ment – a feeling of the "*un-heimlich*". In German, *unheimlich* both means un-homely and uncanny. In the most literal sense, *unheimlich* refers to the state of not having a home. But it also describes a sense of uncertainty – a displaced perception in which something seems familiar and yet remains strange – a state of not being able to trust your senses. Freud has theorized this cognitive dissonance as the psychic dimensions of the uncanny (Freud 1919). In contrast, postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha have used the notion of the unhomely for describing a postcolonial condition of displacement and to refer to those who do not have a home, and yet are expected to be "authentic" (Bhabha 1992: 202).

Rather than following down Freud or Bhabha's path, I am interested in ethnographically tracking the unheimlich. Like Joseph Masco in his analysis of the "nuclear uncanny", I trace the *unheimlich* as a sense of dislocation and anxiety that is produced by inhabiting a risky environment – an environment in which fear of invisible forces colonizes space (Masco 2006). Yet unlike Masco, I track the *unheimlich* not as it is produced by nuclear weapons and radioactive material, but as it comes into being by the sensory confusions of everyday racisms, of being in limbo in the forest at the edges of a European metropole, and as it emerges in a social and material landscape in which the value of objects, of personal histories and imagined futures has shifted.

Following the *unheimlich* as an ethnographic object, I first provide a brief overview over the ways in which different histories – of the nation, of migration and shifting borders throughout Europe – have materialized in the landscape and how they have shaped the March Oder region and the park, as well as the refugee home and military camp more specifically. Second, I turn to the refugee home, the Heim, the bunker, and the nature park. Tracking refugees' and East German views on place in Zarin, I show that people's respective experience of exile, postcolonial displacement and postsocialist transition shaped multiple perceptions of the local landscape as *unheimlich*: populated with secrets and strange encounters – and yearnings for the past and a different future.

"Somewhere between Berlin and Poland"

Figure 23: Swampy ground with drainage canal in the March Oder Park (photograph by author)

The March Oder Nature Park, is located 45 km East of Berlin, near the Eastern border to Poland. Founded in 1990, right after the fall of the Berlin wall, this park lies within the March Oder region in East Brandenburg – one of the most sparsely populated regions in Germany. Previously inaccessible to West Berlin during Germany's division, this partly swampy, partly sandy region is one of the many nature parks and popular eco-tourist destinations that have been created in postsocialist East Germany. Many bicycle paths wind through the area, and tourist brochures market the park as an ideal place for recreation from the stress and pollution of the city; they praise its "idyllic" small villages, its abundant nature and its hilly landscapes of deciduous forests, lakes, creeks, moors, meadows and orchards. Weekend travelers come from Berlin to follow the traces of the famous nineteenth century German writer Theodor Fontane's Rambles through the Mark Brandenburg (Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg) who wrote about the rapidly changing countryside around Berlin.[277] Hiking trails track Fontane's narrative and thus reinscribe historical meaning of national and literary significance into the landscape. But the region is not only one of romantic literary imaginations, but also one of "exploration": several local tour guides offer "jeep safaris" to explore the beauty of endless forests and untouched landscapes in this undiscovered land "somewhere between Berlin and Poland.[278]

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[277] See Fontane (1971). Fontane and other writers of the time, recorded the disappearing waterlands in the Oder region and reflected on the green fields and meadows that came in their place (see Blackbourn 2006: 185).

[278] Imagine, taking "an adventure tour, like scientists and explorers used to do, to the most impassable parts of the world – an individual tour without hurry to the wonders of nature and to almost forgotten testimonies of our past" (see http://www.brandenburg-tours.de). The advertisements for these tours are full of promises of surprise and wonder: an abundant landscape of enchanted lakes, gloomy moors, fish ponds and winding creeks, steep hills and romantic valleys and even sand dunes.

The park is also a European bird conservatory and habitat for a rich diversity of different bird species. Each fall, forty thousand Nordic geese migrate from Scandinavia and land for their winter retreat in the area, offering a big spectacle for tourists and bird lovers alike.[279]

And yet the March Oder park is more than just a nature park and a tourist destination. It is situated in the region of East Brandenburg, a borderland, both of marshes and shifting sands, in which all kinds of physical and political borders have been redrawn and continue to be so in new ways today. Nature, war and engineering projects have all been historical actors that have transformed the landscape and its borders here: the ice age, the Prussian empire, 18th and 19th century armies and engineers who drained wetlands, two worlds wars, deforestation and socialist land reform have left their traces on the landscape and have reshaped its boundaries.

The March Oder region had been part of the "frontline of the Cold War" (Nelson 2005: 99) during Germany's division. But the fall of the Berlin wall twenty years ago, once again rearranged the region's relationship to Berlin. Travel to the Eastern countryside became especially popular among West Berliners (Book 1995: 184). Today, tourism flourishes as many former state forests, military training grounds and barracks, as well as mining areas are transformed into nature preserves and recreational areas. Yet as Brandenburg is mainly characterized by agriculture, the GDR's legacy of large farms and fields persists today and accounts for most of the agricultural landscapes in East Germany. In addition, with Poland's integration into the EU in 2004, the March Oder

[279] In fact, as in many other places, nature conservation and tourism have often been at odds with each other in the park.

region is no longer situated at the borders of Europe but has now moved to its center. And yet new – and more invisible – borders have emerged.

"I feel Brandenburg"

As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the transition from socialism to a capitalist system was accompanied by rapid, and often traumatic transformations in which various social geographies continue to be rearranged.[280] While a reunified Berlin has been remaking itself as a new European metropole, the former East German countryside surrounding it has taken a much different course. In recent years, more than 25 % of the population East of Berlin has become unemployed in the course of the restructuring of local forestry and agriculture, as well as the closing down of many local industries and East German military bases after unification. As a consequence, many young people – and especially women – have moved away from East Brandenburg in search of work in "the West". Today, the region East of Berlin, is often referred to (especially by Berliners as well as local residents in the area themselves), as a somewhat abandoned place in the backwaters of Berlin. A recent song by songwriter Rainald Grebe references some of the images that are connected with this development: while Berlin has become a new European metropolis where life is flourishing, Brandenburg is an empty and boring place

[280] Anthropologists of Eastern Europe have developed nuanced ethnographic accounts of the cultural, economic and political dimensions of the transition from socialism. See e.g. Lampland (1995) on the recommodification of land and labor in Hungary; Verdery (2003) on the transformation of property in Transylvania; Caldwell (2004) on poverty and the "social poetics of economic practice" (Herzfeld quoted in Caldwell 2004: 6) in food aid programs in postsocialist Russia; and Dunn on shifting networks of value in Poland (Dunn 2004). Scholars such as Borneman (1991, 1995, 1998), Boyer (2005), Gläser (2000), Berdahl (1999), Till (2005) have traced various dimensions of the post-socialist transition in Germany through attention to the transformation of kinship, intellectual life, media markets, the state, national identity, memory and the intricacies of village life.

where nothing ever happens – a place you only pass on the way to somewhere else. "I feel so empty today", he sings, "I feel Brandenburg". But according to this imaginary, the region is not only deserted, boring and "empty", it is also populated by accidents, crazy people, and wild animals. Just recently wolves (formerly extinct to the region) have returned:

> "There are countries where something is happening. There are countries were something is really happening. And then there is Brandenburg. Brandenburg. Oh Brandenburg. […]
> I feel so empty today. I feel Brandenburg.
> In Berlin, I am one of 3 million. In Brandenburg, I can soon live alone. Oh Brandenburg.
> [...]
> I feel so empty today. I feel Brandenburg. In Berlin, you can experience so much. In Brandenburg, the wolves are back. Oh Brandenburg.."
> (translation of section of the song „Brandenburg", by Rainald Grebe, 2006)

While the political border between East and West Germany disappeared, a cultural boundary has emerged: due to its high unemployment rates and depopulation, Brandenburg, like much of the rest of East Germany, is set apart as the West's other – it is lagging behind the more "advanced" West and is lacking in charisma (see e.g. Berdahl 1999). Thus, it seems that "the matter has been settled that this is a place apart" (Stewart 1996: 42). Yet while this image of the "East" as empty and boring seems to respond to a current lack of "development" and "progress", it also echoes a much older motif of the "Eastern" frontier.[281]

[281] I trace current notions of the "Wild East" in more detail in chapter 6 of my dissertation. For a more general historical discussion of distinctions between "Eastern" and "Western Europe", see Wolff (1994). Since Frederick the Great's expansion of the Prussian Empire, images of the "wild East" with its "desolate" landscape of swamps, plains and forests in need of colonization abound. Playing a key role in Nazi ideology, the idea of the frontier also figured prominently in imaginations of the East as empty land, populated by an indigenous (Polish) population (that was often compared to Indians). Inspired by authors writing about the American West, Hitler and other key Nazi figures incorporated the frontier spirit in their rhetoric to justify the expansion of space for the "German race" and the internal colonization of the East.

Yet I argue that *both despite and in response to* these images and senses of place, it has been in the very gaps opening up after the end of socialism that people have started to remake their lives. New ideologies of nature conservation, as well as spatial practices and borderland nostalgias have emerged. Like several other nature parks in the region, the March Oder park, was founded in accordance with the national park program of the socialist East German government right after the fall of the wall and just a few days before official "unification" in 1990. The aim of the national park program was to "take advantage of the moment of national transition"[282]: this meant to transform the borderland spaces that the East German state had created in order to maintain its borders – both to West Berlin and "the West" more generally – into conservation areas and to also foster ecologically sound forms of tourism. Thus, whereas much of the forest in the area used to be industrial forest, attention now has shifted towards nature conservation and efforts to foster and maintain a mixed forest ("*Mischwald*") instead of monocultures.[283] Today, more than 30% of Brandenburg is protected nature and landscape area ("*Landschafts- und Naturschutzgebiet*"). In this sense, the nature park itself,

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In 1941, Hitler proclaimed "the Volga must be our Mississippi" (Blackbourn 2006: 293), and that Germans needed to create gardens, fields and orchards in the desolate East (303). Blackbourn points out that the American frontier appeared in many other unexpected places throughout the 19th and 20th century in Germany (Blackbourn 2006: 293). Among others, it makes an appearance in Theodor Fontane's *Rambles through the March Brandenburg* in which "after a rain drenched boat journey across the Wustrauer Marshes" he and his companion felt "as if we had traveled across the Kansas River or a prairie far in the West" (Blackbourn 2006: 293).

[282] Interview with Sybille Ross who is one of the co-founders and first administrators of the park (September 2009).

[283] See Schama (1995) on the history of mixed forest ideologies in German forestry and environmental discourse.

like many other parks in the region, is the product of previous border zones and the voids their disappearance has left behind.[284]

No go zones

Yet not only have imaginary, economic and "natural" geographies shifted in the March Oder region. While images of ruins and economic gaps and undiscovered nature abound, the region has also become a site of contestation over new immigration policies and racial exclusions. The nature park and the March Oder region – together with other rural regions of East Germany – now belongs to what the media have begun to refer to as the "no-go areas" of the country. The idea of "no go areas" emerged in response to several violent attacks on immigrants, refugees and citizens of color in several East German small towns in the weeks before and during the World Cup in 2005. In a radio interview, former government spokesman Uwe-Karsten Heye – referring to the recent incidents of right wing violence – warned people of color who were planning to attend the World Cup to avoid certain areas of eastern Germany. Heye's statements received a lot of criticism from both right and left as well as from antiracist groups. Many criticized him for mapping entire parts of East Germany – and especially rural regions – as "no-go zones" (see ICare News 19/5/2006). In contrast, the African Council in Germany agreed with the notion of the "no go area" and created a "danger atlas" of places in

[284] In the course of these transformations of former military zones into "nature parks" and protected areas heated debates abound. In some cases, nature conservation efforts clash with local attempts to foster tourism. At other times, new state interests collide with those of local residents and conservationists. In the debate around the so-called "Bombodrom" in Northern Brandenburg, the German military has attempted to turn former red army bombing grounds into the biggest air force bombing range in Germany. Local protest against the continued creation and maintenance of such a "sacrifice zone" (Masco 2005) has been strong. As a result, the debate has been going on for seventeen years and the German parliament was scheduled to make a decision in summer 2009.

former East Germany where people of color are exposed to a high risk of racist violence. Thus, while some critiqued such danger atlases for falsely mapping entire regions as dangerous zones, and for reproducing popular constructions of the "East" as backward, others saw them as an important political tool to point to racialized geographies in Germany. In any case, the mapping of the East as "no-go-zone" has had powerful effects on popular imaginaries of the "East" as somewhat "off the map".

Figure 24: Map of no go areas in Germany, 2006 (www.nogoarea.de)

(the grey center in the middle of East Germany is Berlin, the dark red area right around it is Brandenburg and all other rural regions in former East Germany)

While these debates about "no go areas" focused on incidents of racist violence, they largely ignored another conglomerate of racialized spatial dynamics in the "East": the EU's new border regimes with its sets of laws of policing immigration, its strategies of demarcating belonging and regulating exclusions and inclusions have arrived in the region[285]: like Virginia, many refugees – from a wide range of countries such as Kenya,

[285] All members of the EU, except Ireland and the UK are part of the Schengen Area and have to adhere to Schengen regulations as they were implemented in the Schengen Treaty in 1985. The central aim of the treaty was to ease border controls between Schengen members while tightening them with non-member states. When East Germany became part of West Germany, it also joined the Schengen area in October

Cameroon, Nigeria, Sudan, Turkey, Pakistan, India and Vietnam – have found themselves living in several isolated shelters in the forests of East Germany and also in the March Oder Park. While the outer border of the EU has been reinforced through tighter immigration and asylum laws, as well as stricter monitoring of illegal border crossings throughout the Mediterranean, the centers of Europe have strengthened their strategies of isolating refugees and asylum seekers within.[286] In this context, Germany's asylum law has undergone several major revisions. In 1982, the "*Asylverfahrensgesetz*" (asylum process law) mandated that all asylum seekers be accommodated in so called asylum homes, which has continued to be the dominant approach in many regions in Germany, even in the context of certain EU revisions of that guideline. These new policies have had the effect that the numbers of asylum seekers coming to Germany and receiving asylum status there dropped dramatically. [287]

In Brandenburg, as in many other rural regions of East Germany, increasing isolation is also a consequence of post-unification asylum and immigration policies. Part of the re-unification process was to equally "distribute" the number of asylum seekers in East and West German counties. Thus, only a few years after the Berlin Wall had tumbled, East German municipalities had to rush to accommodate asylum seekers. First,

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1990. Before, it lay outside the Schengen regulations. While there were many guest workers programs with other socialist countries such as Poland, Hungary, Cuba, Mozambique, Algeria, and Vietnam, East Germany's immigration policies and official discourse about foreign "socialist friends" stood in sharp contrast to West German immigration politics (for a more detailed discussion see Gökturk/Gramling/Kaes 2007: 67).

[286] For further discussion on the "New Europe", see e.g. Boyer 2005; Glick-Schiller 2005, and also Shore 2000, Mbembe 2004; Mandel 2008.

[287] They dropped from 128,000 in 1995 to only 35,600 in 2004 (Pieper 2008). After staying in a so called "Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung", a "first arrival accommodation/facility" for three months, asylum seekers are "distributed" to different homes in different counties according to quotas, independent of individual preference.

new shelters were put up in cities, and then, as a response to xenophobic attacks on these shelters in the 1990s, many refugees were relocated to new "homes" in rural East Germany – often on the grounds of former military barracks that stood empty in the forest. During this process, many local social welfare organizations were slow to respond. Instead, many private contractors from the "West" offered to be in charge of the accommodations in remote rural areas. They signed contracts with long duration and high costs for local municipalities (Fluechtlingsrat Brandenburg, FRB, 2005). Today, about 6000 asylum seekers live in 30 refugee homes in different locations in Brandenburg. Official legislation does not allow refugees to work, and the so-called "residential law" restricts any travel outside of the county limits. Thus it is illegal for asylum seekers within the March Oder County, to take a train to Berlin, just a forty kilometer ride away. In addition, due to Germany's restrictive asylum and immigration law, as well as insufficient qualification for the category of political refugee in individual cases, many of these asylum seekers are not granted asylum (and hence official refugee status) for years, thus remaining in a status of legal, economic, geographical and emotional limbo for sometimes up to eight or more years.[288]

As a response to these out-of-the-way camps, many refugees, refugee activists and advocates have struggled against invisibility, boredom, immobility and isolation of refugees and asylum seekers in the forests of Brandenburg for years. Some activists have even argued that the so called "residential law" echoes German colonial strategies of surveillance. In former German colonies, such as Cameroon, spatial policies were

[288] Although people often do not qualify for refugee or asylum status, they are at risk if they return to their home country. For that reason, they often remain in a legal limbo for years (see e.g. Pieper 2008).

introduced to segregate indigenous from European populations: these polices required indigenous populations to claim residence in a particular region and did not allow them to move outside of it – officially not in the name of colonization but in order to secure their "protection" and "health".[289]

Thus, while the EU border no longer is in close reach in the March Oder region and has instead moved eastward, more invisible borders have moved into the region's forests. Whereas, like in much other European contexts, German rural landscapes – and its forests in particular – have constituted key sites through which to imagine the nation (see e.g. Schama 1995), the question of who belongs and who is seen as being "out of place" is once again reshuffled. The displacements that are created in the course of this process are the topic of the sections to follow.

[289] See: http://thevoiceforum.org/node/308 and Njoh 1997 on Germany's colonial spatial policies.

Arriving in Zarin

Figure 25: Train station near Zarin, between Berlin and Polish border (photo by author)

In the March Oder park, debates about new geographies of exclusion were particularly contested because of a whole series of scandals surrounding the location and relocation of several refugee camps in the region: The most recent re-location was triggered by the extreme isolation of the refugee home on a former military site, in the midst of a forest, 5km away from the next village, and an hour walk away from the next bus stop. In contrast, in 2004, the previous camp near the village of Ronersdorf had to close down due to a case of corruption: the manager and subcontractor of the camp had illegally hired refugees to build an ostrich farm right next to the camp for one Euro per hour (which had the closure of the camp as a consequence). Many of the refugees told me they had worked on the farm although they knew they were being exploited. Still, it was

better than doing nothing, as some explained to me. Today, the ostrich farm is a popular stop for tourists to take a break and eat "exotic" bird meat.

In early 2007, the refugee camp – due to continuing protests by advocacy groups and refugees –was moved from its former location in the center of the park to a new location at the edge of the park: a former socialist military site, at the side of a road through the forest, about 2 km away from the 200-people village of Zarin. The camp now was half an hour of a walk away from a train line stop on the way between Berlin and Poland, situated amidst a landscape of dense oak, birch and pines forests, dotted with large meadows, lakes and several marshlands.

Walking on the partly paved and cobblestone streets leading from the nearby train stop past the village, through the forest to the refugee camp at the edge of the nature park you pass long stretches of birch, beech and pine forests, and a few green meadows. Later on, you encounter several ruins: an abandoned old factory, a train station that isn't in use any more but that seems to be someone's home now, several old telephone poles, with their wires cut, and a few farm buildings that look deserted and are for sale. In the village, there are both newly "fixed" or built houses and run down ones: a closed down village store, an old partly renovated villa, that now seemed abandoned, the chimneys of the coal ovens that used to create what many people today refer to as the distinct smell of the "air" under socialism, while providing heat for many households, right next to a new small supermarket chain and a big parking lot. Further down the village is a small hotel for eco-tourists, set up on a farm that had been run by an

agricultural collective during socialism. Right next to it sits the ruin of an abandoned house.

Figure 26: Ruins: abandoned house in the March Oder region (photo by author)

As you exit the village, you approach the nature park. There are no clear markings of its boundaries, except a sign that reads "*Naturpark Märkische Schweiz*". You walk down the forest, at the side of the road and after a few hundred meters, you see a large rusty fence around a cement paved area with barracks on it, half empty. Across from the camp, on the other side of the street, overgrown with weeds, there is a bus stop at the side of the road, with a schedule of a bus running once a month, on the first Wednesday. Not unlike the big gaps in the bus schedule, the weeds and rust did their own work, coming to dominate space and time.

Figure 27: Bus stop, service once a month (photo by author)

During my fieldwork in Zarin, I always carried my passport with me. If I had traveled alone as a white person with a German passport, I would most likely not have raised any suspicion to anyone. But accompanying my Kenyan informants, the possibility of being checked by the police was always at close reach. Many Kenyans said they preferred to travel with a white person when leaving the countryside and going to the city, because they would be less likely to get checked by the police that way. Nevertheless, they had to learn to inhabit the constant risk of being ticketed for transgressing the boundaries of the county and ultimately being deported: "You just pretend everything is normal. You just go your own way. But the truth is that the controls make you feel haunted. No matter where you go, you feel like someone is following you. It's maybe like you feel when you ride the train for free. But you have to do it anyway." Virginia would explain to me. Usually, these kinds of racial monitoring and random "security checks" are conducted in trains and train stations on the way to or from Berlin. But they also occur

in the countryside, as I once encountered myself with Mike, a Kenyan asylum seeker, who did have a legal permit, when walking on the side of a road through the forest near the entrance of the park. These borders are mainly invisible – especially to local residents who have citizenship, as well as to visitors and tourists who can move freely. Yet they are present all the time. And they haunted many of my informants like an unwanted friend that followed them around no matter where they went.

Unheimlich Part I: The *Heim* in the "Bush"

> "When I first arrived here, I thought this was a farm and we were just making a stop on the way to our final destination." (Virginia)

The refugee home, which everyone called the *Heim*, was located on the grounds of the former military barracks on the side of the road through the forest. When Virginia arrived here a few weeks ago, she thought it was a farm in the middle of the forest. Entering the site, there were no signs anyone resided here: you pass through the main gate – open most of the time –with a sign on it that read: "No winter service provided. Use at your own risk."

Someone had ripped a hole into the rusty wire, just big enough, so a person could fit through. Right behind the entrance, there were more buildings: a storage hall that was almost transparent, with several big cars and trucks inside; slightly towards the right, another big hall, used as a workshop, with sounds of welding metals reverberating from it. Further towards the right, up a small slope and near the forest, you could sometimes hear the gun shots from the paint ball facility built on top of a big U-shaped building. (As I once walked up the hill, the man who ran the paintball course

recommended to watch my step: there were paintball-bullets on the ground and if you'd step on them, paint would explode over your clothes). At the bottom of the hill, there were more old buildings, with a few trabants and other GDR cars with flat tires rusting in front of them.

Figure 28: Immobile: Trabant with flat tires (photo by author)

The *Heim* was in one of the barracks near the entrance. It stretched over three stories, with big long hallways that had no windows and rooms on both sides of the hallway. The *Heim* was usually pretty empty. Although, officially, three hundred asylum seekers were registered to live in it, only about thirty to forty people lived here on a regular basis. The people who stayed here had come to Germany as asylum seekers from a wide range of countries and for a variety of reasons. Like Virginia, some had fled racial and ethnic violence in Kenya. Others, like Ari had fled torture and the ghost houses in Sudan. And again, others simply came to look for a better life – like John, who was a celebrity in Kenya and had come to spend a few years here to make some money to make a career

back home while being in the legal limbo of asylum – or like Duc, who was from Vietnam and had lived in East Germany during the socialist period and now had returned to receive treatment for an illness, to make a little money and support his family in Hanoi.

Although there was usually one social worker present during the week, there was no official control of who came in and out of the *Heim*. People explained to me that basically everyone was seeking to live in the city. After years of waiting and enduring complicated bureaucratic procedures, some asylum seekers had managed to receive permits to live in apartments for medical reasons or because they had a family with children. The ones who stayed were families who were still waiting for their permit, newly arrived asylum seekers, like Virginia, or older people, like Ari and Duc, or people who were physically or mentally ill: thus people who had gotten stuck for legal reasons, or who didn't have the social networks or energy to make a life in the city. Thus, many lived and worked "illegally" in Berlin (usually in precarious jobs such as cleaning personnel, kitchen aids, construction workers and hotel maids) and only traveled once a month to officially register at the *Heim* and claim their presence and social benefits. No one really seemed to have a good clue about who exactly lived here on a regular basis and who just stayed for a few days, on their way to somewhere else. Yet for those who stayed, "living in the *Heim*" constituted a contested practice. During my visits at the *Heim* many would tell me stories of losing their minds after having stayed in the *Heim* for more than a year and they would tell me stories of being afflicted with boredom, madness and

illness – and sometimes even seeing ghosts. In some sense, the place itself appeared to be afflicted with confusion and ghostly presences.

Heim both means "home" and "asylum" in German, and there are several double meanings and ironies attached to this term: the term *Heim* is somewhat ironic since nobody considered this a "home", but rather saw themselves as living in a "nowhere land". In contrast, the term "asylum" took on a double meaning for many people: Over the course of my fieldwork, several refugees told me they felt like they had been seeking asylum but ultimately found themselves living in an insane asylum in the forest. A Kenyan woman who only irregularly stayed at the *Heim*, said: "people are crazy here! It's a madhouse!" And Jamal, who had lived here for several years described his own situation: "sometimes I go into the kitchen and forget what I wanted there. I have forgotten what I wanted in this place. Why am I here?" A sense of living "nowhere" in the forest and of things being off the mark haunted much of people's lives and their stories about this place. Thus the *Heim* and the forest were anything but *heimlich* (homely), and in a strange twist, were rather *unheimlich* (which in German means: unhomely/uncanny). And in fact, for many, the "feeling" of this place in the forest was something to ponder about over and over again; "living in the *Heim*" and the forest constituted a contested practice.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, one of the Kenyan asylum seekers, Mike, had given me the advice to not go and talk to people at the Heim immediately upon my first arrival, but rather to pause for a minute, sit on a rock and simply look at the forest, the buildings, the fence and the surroundings and imagine the

lives of the people living here. He was convinced that just sitting down and SEEING and FEELING the place would tell me more than talking to anyone. And indeed, although, my attempt at a quiet moment of reflection failed miserably, I did get a first glimpse of the *unheimlich* that day: riding off with my bike and a racing heart, I had mistaken the watch dogs for wild boar, unsettling my own assumptions about what and who was at "home" in this place.

A sense of the *unheimlich* was also shared by many of the refugee activists and advocates in the region. Many activists I spoke to had organized against the isolated refugee homes for years; they had witnessed the multiple relocations of the *Heim*, and knew many stories to tell about the controversies that surrounded it. But most of them had also never spent much time at this place – they saw it as gloomy and as a mad house. "Why would you want to do fieldwork in THAT place? People are crazy there and they seem to have lost their minds. Plus most of them don't do anything all day and just sit and watch TV. There is nothing going on there", a refugee advocate working in Berlin responded to me when I told him about my project. In some sense, the advocate's response also echoed the idea that Brandenburg is a boring place where nothing politically significant happens – especially in relation to the cosmopolitan metropole of Berlin.

Furthermore, in 2005, the Brandenburg Refugee Council published a report and brochure titled "Uncanny/Unhomely Brandenburg" (*Unheimliches Brandenburg*). Produced in cooperation with a federal anti-racist initiative for "tolerance and democracy", the brochure captures a sense of the uncanny while chronicling some of the psychological

and health consequences of living in the many "jungle homes" in the Brandenburg forests. "Life in the jungle homes", the brochure explains with a tone of cynicism, is a "unique form of living" – it is marked by being far removed from all social life, and in fact, by taking a "break from life" altogether, while hoping that something will happen in the future – moving somewhere else, or being granted asylum.

Figure 29: "Unhomely Brandenburg" brochure (*Flüchtlingsrat Brandenburg* 2005)

Moreover, local authorities defined the *Heim* as anything but a "home". When the county decided to relocate the refugee home from its previous location to Zarin in 2006, the Zarin village council debated the definition of the new site, and its "zoning": according to the minutes of a council meeting in November 2006, the former military camp was being used as a commercial zone by its current owner. Council members argued that the opening of a *Wohnheim fuer Zuwanderer und Asylbewerber* ("residential home for immigrants and asylum seekers") on the same facility would not interfere with this definition, since

such a home (*Heim*) does not provide a permanent home (and thus does not constitute "independent living"/*selbstbestimmtes Wohnen*), but rather is a provisional and temporary accommodation (*Unterbringung*) until the refugees are deported or receive a more permanent admission to stay and a regular apartment.[290] Hence the *Heim* was not categorized as "residential" (*Wohnen*) and the use of the "office building, no. 12" on the facilities would not conflict with the current use of the facilities as a commercial zone[291]. No extra lights were installed when the asylum seekers moved in (despite the fact that the place was pitch dark at night). In addition, the village council pointed out that according to county regulations, asylum seekers were not allowed to own cars and therefore the local administration would only need to construct a few parking spots for social workers and for possible visitors. Finally, the council agreed not to be liable in case of any accidents on the site.

Unheimlich Part II: "Bush" Stories

> To exorcise not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right [..] to [..] a hospitable memory [..] out of a concern for justice.
> Jacques Derrida. Specters of Marx: 175.

Together with references to the unhomely feeling of place, anecdotes and jokes about the "bush" provided an important commentary on affective and racialized geographies in the March Oder region. When Mike told me about his experience of living in the midst of the forest for years, he spoke of constantly having headaches and the fact that he was

[290] The council thus differentiated between *Wohnen* (to stay, dwell, live or reside) and *Unterbringung* (accommodation) as different forms of habitation. In a confusing labyrinth of slippery definitions, the "*Wohnheim für Asylbewerber*" (residential home for asylum seekers) was thus defined as not a home but as accommodation.

[291] In fact, council members pointed out that refugee accommodations are not allowed in regular residential areas for exactly that reason, See Ratsinfo, MOL, Beschlussvorlage, Nov. 2006

not being able to do anything literally made him sick: "We were there in the bush doing nothing, not really being able to interact with anyone except the wild animals." Fighting feelings of depression, he often would go running through the forest, and one time he even chased after an antelope. As I questioned him, he, like several others, would insist he had seen an antelope: "Believe me, it was an antelope! It had horns that go straight up. I can tell an antelope from a deer!"

Others, like Nangila, who was also from Kenya, currently living in the *Heim*, but who planned to live in the city (no matter whether with a permit or "illegally"), also jokingly referred to the forest as "the bush" in the Brandenburg countryside. For him, the bush signified a place in the middle of nowhere, a place that a lot of refugees find themselves caught in and feeling "out of place". This was a different sense of the "bush" than the notions of "untouched nature" that circulate in popular imaginations of much of the Brandenburg countryside – and especially the imagined geographies of the jeep safaris offered throughout the region, which imagine the nature park as a place apart, and as a place of exploration and exotic wonder. One time when I went for a walk with Nangila and returned back to the *Heim* in the "bush", he poked fun at the odd conjunctures of different kinds of racialized constructions of place and difference: "wait and see. Tomorrow the headlines in the newspaper will be: "Bushman gets lost in the forest and is attacked by a lion.'"

But the specter of the lion was not the only one in people's jokes: for many of the Kenyan refugees, the forest was inhabited by all kinds of creatures: lions, snakes and antelopes and who knew what else. These specters were not just strange, made up fairy

tales, but they pointed to something more important: after all, this was not a story about ex-colonial populations returning to the metropole, but rather a return to "the bush", where Europeans had (metaphorically) placed the "(noble) savage" all along. Only this time, it was the "bush" in the center of Europe. Thus, metropolitan dreams and desires of a Europe full of possibilities clashed with the dire realities of being isolated in the forests in the heart of Europe. In this sense, perhaps, the anecdotes about encounters in the bush can be seen as strategic myths that provide a critical commentary on racialized geographies and their unhomeliness/uncannyness. Like the Malaysian factory women who see spirits in microscopes in Aihwa Ong's work, or rumors about government headhunters in the Kalimantan mountains in Indonesia (Tsing 1993), these anecdotes about the bush can, perhaps, then be seen as "powerladen cultural negotiations" (Tsing 1993: 90). They illustrate that the force of state power can be both a matter of magic and terror. And they give a glimpse of a lurking threat of violence and the vulnerability at stake while living in the margins of the forest.

For some refugees, the threat of violence was anything but metaphorical. Some of the men had had encounters with Neo-Nazis in the region. In order to survive in the German bush, you needed to be strong, Mike told me. Soon after Mike had been threatened by two local men on the street one time, he began to feel like someone was following him: "You start seeing them everywhere you go. It's like seeing ghosts." Mike and other Kenyan men emphasized to me that soon after coming to the bush, they began to exercise diligently: Mike began to run everyday and pushed weights that someone had left at the *Heim*. Thus, these stories about "ghosts" in the bush need to be

seen both as political critique of the racialized geography of living isolated in the forest, as well as commentary on the "wildness" of racism and the presence of Neo-Nazis in the area. While pointing to the hidden voices of past and current racisms and the rootings of refugees within the "bush", these references also gestured towards a critique of the "savage slot" that immigrants and refugees have come to occupy in much public and scholarly debate in Europe today (see Silverstein 2004). Moreover, as Liisa Malkki has pointed out, refugees are often represented as a generic figure of the uprooted, as people out of and alienated from place and thus pathologized as "native gone amok" (Malkki 1999: 34). In fact, many of my informants had had their fair share of encounter with what they experienced as journalistic or academic tourism and some initially responded to my questions about their experiences with annoyance: "Oh no, not another person who wants to study refugees and who comes here and asks us questions and then makes a career from OUR stories. They never return. They are all *jambazi* (gangsters, thieves, bandits or cheaters in Swahili). Nobody cares a damn about us in the end." While pointing to the dubious journalistic and scholarly desires to create a touristic image of the "real life" of refugees", these commentaries also resisted the notion of refugees as uprooted, alienated from place and without agency.

A Sleeping Giant

> "If you want to smell the air of the socialist past once again, if you want to touch Sprelacart-Plates in the dark and test Aluminum spoons for their familiar lightness, and if you want to stand in line with hundreds of other people once again, like you used to wait for fruit and ingrain wallpaper, then you should go into the forest and wait in line now.." ("In the Basement Palace of the Republic", in: *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 08/04/2008)

The refugees' stories about unexpected creatures in Zarin would ring true in yet another respect. Later that same afternoon when Virginia had told me about her escape in the Kenyan "bush", I had a surprising encounter. As I entered the main gate to the refugee camp, a big silver car stopped right next to me and a man with sunglasses rolled down the window. He leaned towards me and asked: "do you know where the bunker is? I am scheduled to be there at four o'clock!" Puzzled, I shrugged my shoulders.

It was then that I discovered the origin of the mysterious sounds of gunshots that had perforated Virginia's story earlier: hidden right below the ground, under the U-shaped building across from the Heim, there was a "sleeping giant" – a nuclear bunker, built by the German socialist government at the height of cold war tensions in the 1970s. After having been closed down to the public for years after reunification, the bunker was bought by the current owner who fixed it up and ran a paint ball facility on top of it. Thus, the sounds of gunshots had not come from combat exercise, but from a paintball station, hidden in the forest. Young men from the nearby village and tourists came here, wore army clothes and shot at each other with paint bullets. Walking on the road, you had to watch your step: paintball-bullets were scattered all over the ground and if you stepped on them, paint would explode all over your clothes.

The bunker was now reopened – for Sunday tours offered to tourists and curious locals alike to "smell the air of the socialist past once again". Together with the people fixing it, it seemed to inhabit a different universe that oddly sat right next to the refugee camp – an underground cold-war world, filled with nuclear phantasies and paranoias. A month later, I took a tour of that world myself.

The Bunker and a Cold War Museum

Wearing our "original GDR" blue coats that were provided for visitors at the entrance of the bunker, we were well prepared for not only a heavy drop in temperature but also a chilling trip into the past. After descending seventeen meters below the earth, down several levels of steep stairs, we entered a strange underground world through a thick metal door. The temperature sank down to eight degree Celsius and the air smelled stuffy and was filled with the sharp odor of mold. What followed was a maze of security steel doors, walls – up to three meters thick – air filters, compressors, pressure valves, water gates, cooling systems, diesel engines, narrow tunnels, stairs and hallways. The sounds of our footsteps and voices turned more muffled the further we descended. From our guide we learned that the most important equipment units in the bunker were stored on spring/suspension platforms in case of a bomb attack. The first stop then, was the dining hall where tables, and sets of cups and plates were carefully arranged – creating the impression as if people had just walked out for a break and would return to have dinner any minute. A newspaper was spread out on one of the tables, dating back to October 1987. Then we proceeded to a big room – that, as our tour guide explained was the "dispatcher room": a room crowded with computers, flashing displays and control panels, with a big console in the middle and a big red handle – the closing mechanism in case of an emergency. Our tour guide praised the flashing displays of the control panel in the "dispatcher room" that make it "appear as if it was only necessary to turn the operating handle to bring this underground sleeping giant back to life." A picture of Honecker, head of the East German Socialist Party until 1989, hang on the

wall. In case of a nuclear strike, this secret world of security technology would have enabled 300 people to survive for three weeks without contact to the outside world. Yet, as our tour guide explained, the aim was not to enable sustainable survival on earth, but rather to create just enough time for launching a nuclear revenge. This is what you call "mutual assured destruction".

The clock in the computer room had stopped running. It was five minutes to midnight.

Figure 30: Bunker Tunnel (photo by author)

Built by the East German Ministry of National Defense the Zarin bunker served as an organizational and data processing center for the National People's Army (NVA) of the

German Democratic Republic (Bergner 2008: 84): it transferred data to the ministry of national defense in Strausberg, just a few kilometers West of Zarin, and enabled communication between different military sites and units of the armed forces (Bergner 2008). Originally, builders took advantage of the location's natural conditions – especially the layers of gravel of the glacial Barnim plateau provided a dry and thus fairly stable ground for both the construction and combat exercise. The remaining buildings served as storage and as barracks – they blocked the view from the bunker in all directions from outside the facility. The bunker itself lies hidden under a small hill in the forest, with a few chimneys, exhaust pipes and antennas peeking out from the ground through the trees. During socialism, the bunker and its surrounding military facility in Zarin was a highly secret location.

After the Berlin Wall came down and the East German military was dissolved, the bunker was also used by the (West German) Federal Armed Forces ("Bundeswehr") after unification until 1993.[292] In 1993, the bunker was closed and remained so until 2003 after several changing owners. In 1999, the bunker briefly received attention in national media when formerly deleted military data by the *Ministerium fuer Staatsicherheit* (MFS) was retrieved (Bergner 2008: 84).

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[292] According to a local "bunker historian", experts were slightly "amused" by the huge Robotron computers from Bulgaria and their gigantic magnetic tape memory (Magnetbandspeicher) (Bergner 2006). Robotron used to be both an East German and East European electronics manufacturer. It produced personal and mini-computers computers, computer terminals, measurement and testing devices, television sets and typewriters. Some of their products such as printers were also rebranded and sold under a different name in West Germany in the 1980s. The company was dissolved after unification in 1990 and then converted into larger corporations such as Nixdorf (see website by former Robotron employees who have researched the history of GDR computers and published it online since 2003, http://robotron.förderverein-tsd.de/). It is not to be mistaken with Robotron 2084, an arcade video game developed in the 1980s in the US, in which humans fight robots which are about to take over the world.

As I was on my way out of the bunker after the tour, I met Heinrich, a man in his early 70s who sat with two other men in the sun on folding chairs and cargo boxes at the entrance, fiddling with old tools and cleaning the rust off a few metal scraps. Heinrich lived in a small room with a fold-out couch next to the former dining hall on top of the bunker. He was something like a janitor for the bunker. After chatting with him for a while, I found out that he had been an engineer for the Soviet-German ship union. He was well traveled. A spy, he had been working under cover in different parts of the world, his job was to get information about most recent developments in Western military technology. Drawn into his narrative of secrecy, expertise and Cold War masculinity, I followed him on a second tour through the building, this time above ground.

The building consisted of a front entry hall, a kitchen, a small communal room and a large dining hall. Heinrich was transforming the front hall of the building and the former dining hall, into something like a museum room. His task was to fix up things. This included collecting odd objects, like flags, postcards, clothing, or tools that can be used to tap telephones, all spread out over the floor and on tables across the room. Military coats and hats dangled from an old coat rack. Pictures of old Soviet fighter planes and the flags of several East German towns hang off the ceiling. A rug on the wall had Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' faces woven into it. Other odd socialist military gadgets were stacked on top of each other, jackets and hats spread out between them. In the tiny room, right next to the big hall, where he also slept on a fold out couch, there were more objects – piles of old military propaganda, books, postcards, uniforms –

spread out all over the bed, the couch table and the floor. With these objects he cobbled together a museum of the cold war era and of socialism. His voice was full of nostalgia as he showed me his museum. He was excited as I recognized the image of Engels. On my way out he gave me two 50 GDR Mark bills with information about the bunker and about his museum on the other side. "Last month, you should have been here. We had a tour then as well. That time, there was a guy going on the tour who used to work here as a bookkeeper here – he just wanted to come and visit the bunker, because he himself had not been allowed to enter it when he worked on the facilities here." Until right here, where we stand at the entrance of the bunker, they were not allowed to come any further. Only specialists were allowed. But this was also spy territory", he explained to me in a low voice, with a sense of secrecy. Spies from the west were here, right here, where we are sitting."

Restoring the bunker and reassembling left over military gadgets and other "junk", Heinrich and his friends tried to preserve the material history of Cold War preparations for end-of-the-world- destruction.[293] Doing this, they were not alone. Most recently, a whole network of bunker organizations and initiatives had emerged. Considering themselves to be "bunker friends" and experts, many people involved in these networks aimed to conserve and restore former socialist bunkers throughout East Germany and specifically in the March Oder region, where a lot of military was present

[293] In the field, I encountered many more recycling practices in which objects of the socialist past were transformed into objects of nostalgia, or recycled into something new. E.g., in one of the nearby the villages, just a few kilometer from the Heim, there was a man called 'ghost' who together with a Vietnamese friend, collected old socialist (military) cars, disassembled them and sent them to Hanoi, Vietnam. Others, "recycled" old buildings: catering to the local tourism, a woman in Zarin had just renovated stables of a former farm collective and opened a small eco-tourist hotel in it.

during the Cold War because of the proximity of the Wall to West Berlin (e.g Verein Berliner Bunker Netzwerk and the Bunker Alliance Network Berlin-Brandenburg).[294] There were ruins of former military barracks in many other villages around Zarin – some of them had been completely abandoned, and others were currently being repaired and renovated. But even more importantly, two had been transformed into a refugee home in the past ten years. When I spoke to East Germans who had lived in the area during socialism about this bunker and the one in Zarin, they talked about it with a strange mix of curiosity/secrecy (these places had been secret and closed to the public!), as well as horror (one woman said she started feeling claustrophobic and she began to have had a hard time breathing when she went on a tour to the Zarin bunker. She had to terminate the tour early). For many, the socialist state and military seemed to incite both: magic and horror.

And in some way, one could argue that Heinrich's recycling practice and museum catered to a nostalgia for the "East" and a yearning to "once again smell the socialist past" – a nostalgia for "socialist objects" that has been popular amongst both Easterners and Westerners in Germany for more than a decade now.[295] As Heinrich

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[294] One of the highlights of this movement has been the Honecker Bunker. Praised for its original preserved security technology, this bunker was built by the GDR government when Erich Honecker was president. The purpose of this gigantic facility was to provide full protection for governmental elites in case of nuclear attacks from the "capitalist western world". Located north of Berlin, it was opened to the public in August 2008 and then, in order to "protect" it from vandalism, it will be closed forever with cement this fall.

[295] Many authors working in post-socialist contexts have studied how nostalgia structures everyday life, popular and material culture (Boyer 2006, Boym 2001, Berdahl 1999, Sabonis-Chafee 1999, see also Rofel 1999). Attending to recent expressions of nostalgia for the socialist past, anthropologists have reflected on post-communism's effects on the experiences and historical/personal memories of those who lived within socialist countries. Authors such as Svetlana Boym and Dominic Boyer have pushed us to closely attend to the connection between nostalgic yearning and nationalism. For Boym, nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, a longing for a time and a home that no longer exists or that has never existed; thus

pointed out to me, a lot of people had not been able to remake their lives after the "*Wende*". Many lost their jobs and could not figure out how to cope with having to invent their lives all over again and compete on the job market. Their lives simply did not "fit" anymore: In contrast, during socialism, things seemed to "fit" and were reliable – e.g. the quality of the roofs of houses was much better than today. But even more than that: all objects were standardized! The battery for a car would also fit into a drilling machine or a flashlight. When Heinrich worked in Somalia as an engineer for the German-Soviet ship union, his car broke down. He was able to just take pieces from an old rusting car of the same brand that he found a few days later on the side of the street and he used them to fix his car. These objects "fit" in surprising ways and they were reliable. If you only had an intimate knowledge of these objects, their multiple functions and operations, you had the power to make standardization's magic come alive.

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nostalgia "inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms if life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2001: xiv). Similarly, Boyer's analysis gives us the opportunity to critically reflect upon the dangers of restoring an ideal home and essentialized forms of belonging (Boym 2001): he argues that the current boom for a longing for the East, that has been labeled as "Ostalgie", should actually be called 'Westalgie' (Boyer 2006: 29), because within these nostalgic narratives, West Germans narrate the east as a temporal displacement, as though "entering an East German space meant stepping backward in time" (Boyer 2006: 19). While focusing on the authoritarian aspects of the East, this cultural practice of Westalgie longs for a 'normal' future that does not carry the burdens of the Holocaust. Yet, Heinrich's and other bunker junkies' preservation of the material history of GDR visions of cold war (in)security, require a more complex framework. Daphne Berdahl's analysis of nostalgia might be useful here: in her essay "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing and East German Things", Berdahl has taken an ethnographic look at the recent boom of nostalgic yearning for 'socialist things' in Germany and challenges the common argument that Ostalgie is mere nostalgia and simply a form of backward regionalism (Berdahl 1999: 204). Breaking with the notion of the East as a fully oppressive system vis a vis a democratic and 'free' West, she draws our attention to power asymmetries at work in different forms of memory and pushes us to ask about what gets labeled as 'history' versus mere nostalgia. Thus, Berdahl teaches us that shifts in the value of objects need to be seen within a larger context in which particular kinds of histories count more than others. These kinds of nostalgic yearnings call for a careful ethnographic analysis of the complex possibilities of local/global popular cultures as sites in which both national subjects *and* oppositional practices are made (Rofel 1994: 701).

Recycling and putting together anew, was a very material way of making things "fit" again, and of repossessing a past, as well as a possible future. Recycling old materials from the barracks also was a way of re-assembling a space in which the former borders had disappeared and had created a gap, a zone in which the former coordinates of social life had crumbled and the material life of a former world had been left to decay. For Heinrich this was perhaps less about preserving the material history of preparing for global destruction. Heinrich's current possibilities were limited. He was in his 70s and wasn't able to find a "regular" job. Plus, living in the countryside and not having a car anymore, made him less mobile. He had lost his driver's license when he fell asleep in a traffic jam on the highway a few years ago. He only woke up when a police officer frantically knocked at his car window, thinking he might have had a heart attack.

Not unlike the refugees, Heinrich tried to remake a life out of things left behind. Like them, he was part of a community of the unhomely – those "who cannot easily be accommodated in the familiar divisions of social and cultural life" (Bhabha 1992). And yet, what he and other "bunker friends" in the region did was preserve the material history of the preparation for end-of-the-world disaster. Their yearning for nuclear nationalism, their sense of suspicion, and cold war conspiracy theories made an "unhomely" neighbor right next to the Heim.

Reprise

While the boundaries of nature and the nation have been redrawn in the March Oder region, the question of who and what is "naturalized" in this particular place has been reshuffled. The ethnographic vignettes in this chapter, illustrate the unhomely politics of

this process. Tracking the production and experience of a sense of the *unheimlich*, I have attended to moments in which the experience of the local landscape – the Heim, the forest, the military ruins – ruptures and perception becomes vulnerable to the uncertainty of un-homely figures (Masco 2006).

The stories of the *unheimlich* then point us to the traces of racial and imperial formations – and to what Ann Stoler has called an "ecology of ruins and ruination" (Stoler 2008). To speak of ecology here is to underscore the ignorance of Europe's obsession with its own ruins *as monuments* and instead point to the wider social topographies of ruins: the lives and afterlives of racial violence, economic collapse and interrupted futures that can be tracked in landscapes, bodies, livelihoods, sensibilities and things.[296] Overgrown with weeds, many objects and creatures acquired a strange life in Zarin[297]: the sounds of paintball guns cutting through Virginia's memories; the "sleeping giant" of the nuclear bunker hidden under the hill; Heinrich's scrap metals, polished for display; antelopes and other unexpected creatures in the "bush"; the ghosts of Neo-Nazis, or random passports controls; and: the dooms day clock pointing five minutes to midnight.

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[296] In her piece, Stoler argues against an "ignorance of ruins" inherent in the introspective gaze upon European ruins and their colonial privilege. Instead of focusing on ruins as monuments, she turns toward "imperial debris" and ruins as ecologies. With Stoler, I speak of "ecologies" to depart from a nostalgic view on ruins and instead refocus on ruination – and thus "the things people are left with", [..] "the connective tissue that continues to bind human potentials to degraded environments, [..] and the material refuse of imperial projects" (Stoler 2008: 193). Stoler furthermore writes: "Such effects reside in the corroded hollows of landscapes, in the gutted infrastructures of segregated cityscapes and in the microecologies of matter and mind" (Stoler 2008) – and I would add, they also reside in Zarin's weedy landscape, the military barracks, the rusty fence of the "home", a bureaucratic infrastructure of confusion, boredom and surveillance and the eerie feel of encounters with antelopes, lions, paintball players and dooms day clocks hidden below ground.

[297] This resonates with Ernst Jentsch's early rendering of the uncanny, in which the *unheimlich* refers to doubts whether an inanimate object might in fact be alive (Jentsch 1909).

Finally, perhaps, these vignettes show us more than the inherited histories of a landscape (see e.g. Schama 1995), or a "sense of place" (Feld/Basso 1996), but also a sense of (dis)place(ment) – what I have called the *unheimlich* here. In other words: if we want to know how new geographies of race and nation emerge across Europe and Germany today, we have to follow their affective traces and look beyond the edges of the city: we have to "feel Brandenburg".

Chapter 6

Re-Wilding the East

'Discover the wild side of Brandenburg", an issue in the local March Oder newspaper invites its readers. Peeking through the dry sandy soil of the region is a lush paradise of species diversity: wolves, great bustards and wild horses lure the reader to join an adventure tour through the Brandenburg wilderness.

Since the collapse of socialism, "wilderness" has proliferated in much of the Brandenburg countryside around Berlin. Like other rural areas in former East Germany, rural Brandenburg is "shrinking" – which means it has been characterized by de-industrialization, high rates of unemployment (especially for the small immigrant communities living in the region), and depopulation.[298] As the previous chapter illustrated, Brandenburg is seen as a place apart, lagging behind the more "advanced" West. Located in East Brandenburg, in between Berlin and the border to Poland, the March Oder Park is similarly imagined as an abandoned place in the backwaters of Berlin. Popular imaginaries picture the region – as much of the rest of Brandenburg – as a "place of nature" and as wild, empty space. The region is associated with the dryness and wetness of its land – the dry, sandy soil of the March, poor in nutrients, and the swampy wetlands of the Oder river and its notorious floods. For many, the March Oder region is therefore a place one passes through, on the way to somewhere else. Industries

[298] In the past decade, the "shrinking regions" literature has particularly boomed in Germany. See for example Oswalt 2006a, 2006b.

and people have moved away, many buildings are abandoned, factories turn into ruins and weeds grow into their place. Tropes of doom and decay abound.

At the same time, the "naturalness" and wildness of the region has become both a conservation strategy and a selling point. Tourist brochures praise the March Oder region as a natural paradise, and as the perfect place to search out untouched nature. "Jeep safaris" explore the beauty of "endless forests" and "untouched landscapes" in this "undiscovered" land "somewhere between Berlin and Poland". With the conversion of 30% of Brandenburg's territory into nature parks and biosphere reserves – and thus a network of protected "national natural landscapes"[299]. Indeed "wilderness" has returned: many animals formerly extinct to the region, such as wolves and great bustards have found protected habitats, and the numbers of rare animals such as wild geese and beavers have increased.

In the course of post-socialist transition, Western environmentalists have introduced concepts such as "close to nature forestry" to replace a former singular focus on industrial production in the area. As a consequence, many pine and beech forests have become part of protected areas, as well as the many lakes, moors, river valleys, floodplains and riverside meadows in the region. Thus, "nature" and "wilderness" are produced and remade through assemblages of environmental and economic policy, transportation routes, changing forms of land use, scientific discourse, and mapping practices.

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[299] The term in German is *nationale Naturlandschaften* and refers to a network of all nature reserves (*Grosschutzgebiete*) throughout Germany that was founded in 2005, with the aim to represent Germany's national nature heritage (*nationales Naturerbe*). See also the official website of the state of Brandenburg: http://www.mugv.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/ lbm1.c.323193.de

Yet this is only part of the story. Despite these "wilding" practices, "nature" and the environment are certainly not left all on their own. Instead, nature is redefined and new things are built all over. New streets, bicycle paths, new town squares and renovated buildings are "preparing the region for the future". Competitions such as "our village has a future" (*Unser Dorf hat Zukunft*) are popular in many towns in Brandenburg (*Ministerium für Infrastruktur und Landwirtschaft* 2010). While there have been numerous efforts to revitalize the region, many streets and houses have been renovated. Ruins sit right next to newly painted, houses and new supermarkets in many towns. In addition, unemployment rates have slightly gone down in some parts of the region – especially in those Western areas close to Berlin and its growing suburbs– often referred to as the "bacon belt" (*Speckgürtel*).[300] "The end of the world" certainly looks differently, depending on from where you stand (see also Rada 2004). Landscapes are "modernized" all over: with increasing investment in alternative energy, many wind farms have begun to dot the region.

But even more: far from being "untouched nature", the region, like the rest of former East Germany experienced a speculative boom in the 1990s, in which property regimes were reshuffled and formerly state owned forest and agricultural land, as well as

[300] Unemployment rates in Brandenburg reached their height in the 1990s and then again in 2005, above 20%, but have slightly decreased since (to around 14% in the March Oder region in the end of 2007, and 11% in 2010). Yet there are strong differences within the county: in areas with denser population close to Berlin, they are around 9%, whereas in other, less populated areas further East, such as Saarlow – which all continue to shrink in their population – unemployment is still close to 16-20%. In 2008, the former Eastern states of Brandenburg, Sachsen and Mecklenburg Vorpommern had the highest unemployment rates in Germany: 14% versus 8% national average (Brandenburger Sozialindikatoren, 2011). The population continues to shrink in towns such as Buckow and Maerkisch Oderland overall (Bevölkerungsbilanz MOL 2009, rbb 2010, MOZ 2010a). See also: http://www.leben-in-mol.de/nuetzliches/zahlen_und_fakten/index.html, 4. Okt. 2010, and http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/nn_167822/Dienststellen/RD-BB/Frankfurt-Oder/AA/Presse/Presseinformationen/2010/PI-048-2010-PI-zum-AM-06-2010.html

enterprises, public housing and military property was privatized.[301] Throughout this privatization process, thousands of people lost their jobs in the area. In the context of land reform, Brandenburg also became one of the regions with the highest percentage of GMO agriculture in Germany – not without contestation.[302] Thus, "close to nature forests" now sit side by side with genetically modified fields. While pristine nature returns, mutating organisms flourish.

In this chapter, I explore the politics of race and nation at work in the making of the "East" and the March Oder region as a space of nature and "wildness" – and its contestation. More specifically, I ask how the nation gets remade through "wilderness" and nature, and which human and non-human bodies – people, plants, animals, landscapes and "things" – are situated out of place, outside of the national body. Following this question, I attend to the trope of wildness and what I call "re-wilding" – a

[301] They were privatized by one single agency, the so-called *Treuhand*, founded in the summer of 1990. The *Treuhand* took over 75 % of the forest in East Germany to re-establish private and communal forest ownership. The agency also received massive criticism because it took control over 12,000 state owned enterprises, shutting many down and often selling them to shady profiteers, while laying off 2.5million of their employees. Amid criticism and protests, especially in the steel industry, the chair of the *Treuhand* was murdered in 1991 – allegedly by members of the radical left wing organization RAF (Red Army Faction) (Deutsche Welle 2010).

[302] "With almost 2000 hectares under cultivation (close to 50% of the German total), Brandenburg has more fields and bigger fields of genetically modified Bt maize than any other federal state in Germany" (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2008). Farmers and agricultural cooperatives sell the maize as feed to large milk processing companies such as Campina who regularly use gene-maize and gene-soy as feed. Environmental organizations, such as the German Society for Nature Conservation (NABU) have expressed concern about the proximity of genetically modified BT maize to nature reserves – especially also in the March Oder region – and have therefore called for regulatory measures to control the distance to at least 1000 meters, especially to protect rare butterflies in the region. In response, together with the regional farmer's association, the Ministry for Rural Development, Environment and Consumer Protection issued a guideline in 2008 that advises farmers to contact local nature conservation authorities to identify any conservation concerns in the case of plant genetic engineering (Federal Ministry of Education and Research 2008). Nevertheless, calls for a GMO free March Oder region abound – both by many farmers and environmentalists. Brandenburg and especially the March Oder region have become a battle ground in conflicts over genetically modified plants. Since 2005, beginning in Strausberg, numerous environmental activists have organized so called "field liberation" (*Feldbefreiung*) protest events in Brandenburg, in which they occupy GMO maize fields, ripping out plants by their roots and partly destroying the fields, thus calling attention to GMO as "hazardous waste" (*Berliner Zeitung* 2006).

narrative and material practice of 1. making habitats "natural" or becoming "close-to-nature"; 2. untaming or becoming out of control, and 3. making and becoming "alien".[303] Following these re-wilding practices, I shed light on how attempts to make nature matter in times of collapse and economic crisis get entangled with images of otherness (see also Heatherington 2010) and with new practices of exclusion, but also with efforts to challenge these. Engaging with several ethnographic vignettes, I track "re-wilding" practices across different registers: as romantic re-enactment of place in order to create a sense of belonging and as strategy to make a living, as effort to create national unity in nature, and as a way to describe a landscape of racial exclusions and displacement. These vignettes offer glimpses of a region that is in transition, a frontier space, "somewhere between Berlin and Poland" – an in-between-space where postsocialist and postcolonial worlds meet. As landscapes seemingly transform into "empty spaces" of nature, as well as zones of abandonment and dereliction, scavenging practices emerge in the cracks of legal and illegal, and in the gaps of official systems of regulation and administration. In the process, things run "wild" and don't turn out to be what we would expect them to be: a forest stops "making sense", a refugee home becomes an ostrich farm, train trips go nowhere, a nature park turns into "the bush", and a region in the East of Berlin

[303] See also Krista Harper (2006) on two meanings of the term "wild": Harper traces "wild capitalism" – and Hungarian environmentalist's critiques of wild capitalism – as it reshapes environmental problems in postsocialist Hungary. Wild refers to the ways in which nature and the market were restructured in postsocialist Hungary and Harper elaborates on two senses of the term "*vadkapitalizmus*": first, post-socialist renderings of the market as "natural" force and the inevitable triumph of capitalism, in which political elites presented "the new social order as part of the larger natural order", thus legitimizing "policies that caused major social and economic dislocations in people's everyday lives" (Harper 2006). But also a second sense in which is not merely "natural" but "savage" and out of control. This corresponds to many people's view that privatization enriched the lives of a select few whereas the large majority of Hungarians found themselves in utterly precarious situation and facing increasing social inequalities.

becomes the "Wild East" – an odd safari wilderness where cowboys, Indians, migrants and adventurers meet. In the face of these practices of un-making, re-making, and in fact, making up place, some people are puzzled, some find pure joy falling off the skies, others professionalize in funerals and safaris, and again others traverse the entire country only to bring their chicken – and dreams – all the way back "home" again.

The chapter has three sections: first, I turn to the romance of landscape in current cultural productions and performances of the "Wild East". Following the routes of two entrepreneurs who search out "wilderness" – a local safari guide and a hobby Indian – (as well as the rambles of German novelist Theodor Fontane through the region in the 19th century), I situate the imaginary production of "wild spaces" both in their longer historical context and the current moment. While this first part, is all about romance, the second will be about tragedy: as local forests and farms have been restructured and nature gets materially remade, people's biographies have been interrupted and in fact, un-tamed. Through the eyes of two people who worked in the socialist forestry industry, I trace conflicting ideologies of what constitutes a "good forest" and appropriate strategies to deal with post-socialist transition. In the last part of this chapter, I address the history of refugee camps in the region and track the transformation of the forest from a military space to a place to accommodate refugees. Again, lives and places have been untamed, yet in very different ways: here, refugee dreams about Europe and stories about displacement, conspiracy and life without traction will be at the center. Tracking these different re-wilding strategies, I examine the

material and symbolic politics of race, nation and nature (and the social life of alienation) at work in the remaking of postcolonial and postsocialist landscapes.

PART I: The Wild "East"

The Safari Tour

Our guide greets us with a big smile at the train station. Wearing khaki pants with lots of pockets, a beige hat – cowboy style – equipped with binoculars and ray ban sunglasses, Lars Reichelt is well prepared to guide us through the Brandenburg wilderness – and so is his car. At first glance, the dark green sturdy Land Rover seems oddly out of place on the empty parking lot next to the train station. Yet, as we climb into the jeep and settle on the sideway benches in the back, the world slowly begins to shift. The "terrain technologies" of our tour guide and the land rover set in motion.

We head out of town, and stop at a traffic light at a small intersection – the last traffic light we will see for the rest of the day – Lars conveys to us with a sense of promise and secrecy. Just a few moments later, the jeep veers off the road onto a small unpaved forest path. Winding our way through the woods, we follow down this bumpy "secret path". "Welcome to the March Oder region!" Lars proclaims to his guests. "We are in one of the least populated regions in Germany here. Tourism hardly exists in this place. We are all on our own – except a few bicyclists." Ready to search out "hidden places" at the borders of civilization and wilderness, we learn that we "will see things we have not seen before" and will make our way through secret, meandering paths, known only by a select few.

As the trees clear for a moment, we pass the train station of Zarin. Near the train crossing, a small gravestone on the side of the road stands as a reminder of a train accident. The train raid of Zarin! The raid happened at a time when the "Eastern train line" (Ostbahn) of the Prussian Empire connected Berlin to the far lands of Eastern Prussia, all the way to the Russian border. One day, someone stole pieces of the train tracks. The train derailed, there was a big fire and many people died. In the end, men from the village extinguished the fire and averted further disaster. Standing at the side of the train tracks, looking at the gravestone, we begin to sense the aura of a different time – a time when trains stretched across empires, connecting Zarin to Berlin and Prussia's "eastern" territories – a time of sneaky sabotage, tragic de-railings and honorable men.

As we continue through the town of Zarin, we pass an old castle – the former residence of a famous duke, von Schmettau (1743-1806). The castle is deteriorating. Paint is coming off the walls, and the majestic stairs in the front have begun to crumble. On top, the roof is partly ripped off, with a few plastic tarps only partially covering the gaps. The rest of the interior is exposed to the elements. After the Berlin Wall tumbled, someone bought this castle and began to renovate it. On one of the walls, you can still see the different types of paint used to sample the colors. The roof was partly torn down, under the pretense of replacing it. The owner received money from Berlin at the time – as many others did, who renovated dilapidated houses in East Germany. Then, all of the sudden, he disappeared – with all the money – and no one ever saw him again. The castle fell in ruins.

Next, we hit the road again – past colorful, freshly painted buildings and more ramshackle barns – down a winding path through a large meadow. What once was the duke's carefully landscaped "English garden" has turned into a large field, overgrown with weeds. Right behind a few large oak trees, on a small hill, we see the outlines of an odd building emerge: a pyramid towers over the hill and peeks through the trees. A Prussian general, cartographer and landscape architect, duke Friedrich Wilhelm Carl von Schmettau imagined the pyramid to become his grave long before he died. Yet, as he fled and died in the war against the French army, his visions never came true. The pyramid was left to decay.

At a small clearing, just a few steps from the pyramid, we park on the side of the dirt road. Out of a hidden box in the car, Lars pulls out a huge 18th century map and clips it on the side of the car.

Figure 31: off-road adventure (photo by author)

On the map, Berlin is a tiny, village-like settlement. The Tiergarten park (now in the city center) is situated at the edges and leads straight into the countryside. A small dot, Zarin is marked further East on the map. Sending soldiers to different corners all over Prussia, measuring and using oaks as orientation points (large "border oaks", which you can still see today), the duke of Zarin authored this "first" map of the region. With his maps, Frederick Wilhelm, Schmettau assisted Frederick William II, King of Prussia, to drain the Oder Marshes and "taming" the unpredictable meandering of the Oder River.[304] As we stand there on the meadow, surrounded by trees and in the presence of the hidden pyramid, gazing at the map, the landscape begins to look differently: with the eyes of the cartographer, we chart what is only half-known, and the region becomes once again a land of swamps and wetlands, a "wild" territory in need of ordering, mapping, conquering. And in it, the pyramid seems like a hidden treasure we just happened to stumble upon.

The tour's opening scene, this moment in the woods, near the pyramid, is our odd arrival story. It sets the stage for the tour's way of seeing and travelling the local "wilderness". Clearly, our guide knows what he is doing and with him, we find ourselves in the middle of an unusual, make-belief "excursion": we map, explore, and follow hidden traces of history, and see the landscape with a different eye. The map, the Land Rover and the hidden pyramid transport us into a different time and place – a time and place when the March Oder "wilderness" was an unpredictable landscape of river valleys,

[304] For a detailed history of the draining of the Oder Marshes, including the construction of a new river canal, and the severance of side-arms, see Blackbourn (2006: 19).

fens, moors, swamps and wetlands in need of being tamed – in order to prepare for the conquest over water and thus the making of the modern German nation. Oak trees become traces of the seeing powers of empire, the nation and its aura of staking out borders. In the process, a different world emerges: a world of travel, exploration, and burgeoning adventure – but also a world crowded with accidents, exile, and sudden deaths.

What follows after this moment of "first contact" is a hodge-podge tour of different time-scales and forms of "wilderness" and otherness in the region. Things are cobbled together and there is no unifying story. This tour is all make-believe (and highly selective) – a safari of empty villages in which "nothing happens", hotels that went bankrupt, stores that closed down, deserted cobblestone farm buildings, and houses with wooden planks in their windows – a landscape of ghosts towns and wild, empty land that calls for exploration – all set in an ancient land of a large basin and hills that originated during the ice age. On a bumpy dirt road, winding past meadows and through the woods, we listen to the tunes of American country songs. Then, Lars puts on the song "Brandenburg" by Rainald Grebe. "I feel Brandenburg", he sings. Just like the country songs, "Brandenburg" evokes a sense of travel through wide-open space, encounters with "wild", untamed things – and freedom. Once in a while, we discover a deer peeking through the grass from a nearby game reserve – not unlike a zebra or an antelope pausing to check out its observers.

Soon, we learn to navigate this "safari" landscape ourselves: we shoot bows and arrows against stacked up hay bales on a field at the side of a dirt road, we navigate the

land rover through a sand pit and canoe up stream a small creek. Driving through the forest, we pass an eerie landscape of war and the traces of violence: the former foxholes of Russian and German soldiers during the last battles of WWII. From the size of the trees and dips in the ground you can tell where soldiers hid in ditches and where tanks once stood. A landscape crowded with dead bodies and unexploded ordnance unfolds before us.

Then, further to the East, there are fields of tobacco[305]. The drained wetlands of the Oder stand as reminders of the conquest over nature in the 18th and 19th century: when Prussian engineers and armies built canals and drained swamps to pave the way for agriculture, they introduced new crops such as the potato in the era of Frederick the Great.

The tour continues along a route that is cobbled together, making adventure stories out of doom and failure: a former socialist collectivized farm now stands empty after having been reclaimed by its pre-war owner. The fruit trees in the front of the farm are abundant with apples; their branches crooked from the weight. Gleaners roam in between the trees, having a feast, and a sparkling smile on their faces. Finally, the tour ends with a visit of another castle that has fallen into ruin. Its now musty rooms have become the storage unit and makeshift art gallery of an elderly couple. In the front entry hall, crowded with paintings, wooden sleds, a treasure chest and other odd antiques, we pick sweet, dark-purple plums out of a big basket on the table.

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[305] The Huguenots introduced the tobacco plant to the region in the 17thcentury. Tobacco thrived on the sandy soil in Brandenburg. During the 20th century, tobacco was also a popular crop in the region: since international supplies were limited during socialism, it was quite lucrative for many local small farmers and households to grow tobacco- sometimes even in their back yards (MOZ 2010b).

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Lars is in his early 50s and grew up in Dresden in East Germany. Before re-unification, he lived in East Berlin and worked as a car mechanic. When the Berlin Wall came down, he soon lost his job and worked odd jobs for a while. Then, just a few years ago, he came up with the idea to offer "safaris" for tourists in the countryside around Berlin and to start his own business. Being in nature, seeking out adventure and hidden places seemed like the thing to do and a great way to make money. And although he now makes half the amount he used to, it's the best job he could imagine, he tells our safari group. Aside from the safari tour through the March Oder Park, he offers a whole array of "adventure tours": he takes tourists on bunker tours, or goes playing paintball, or takes them on a trip driving former Soviet tanks (that a friend has specialized in fixing up), or visits Indian re-enactments.

With his safari tour, Lars stages a scene, and performs place. What emerges is a frontier space that is far from "authentic" – the landscape of "wild Brandenburg". Wearing khaki pants, he reenacts an adventurer, a pioneer in an unknown land. The Land Rover transports us into a world of exploration. The landscapes we pass are forests, rivers, meadows, hay fields, empty farmlands, and sand pits. The technologies we use to navigate them are maps, cars, canoes, songs, binoculars, and a camera. Driving through the landscape in his land rover, he develops a "terrain technology" of mastering any environment: equipped with a four wheel drive, the land rover is a sturdy vehicle

that overcomes any environment – from the "African" steppe, to rapid rivers, jungles and deserts – all the way to "wild Brandenburg".[306]

The kind of "wilderness knowledge" Lars teaches us is about masculine adventure and the lure of the wild: driving through a sand pit near an abandoned quarry, canoeing up a small river, shooting bows and arrows against bales of hay stacked up on the side of a field, we learn to overcome any obstacle. And yet it is the seeming absence of "civilization" and local infrastructure and the absence of large-scale tourism in the region that creates that special "safari feeling". Using stereotypes of place, he produces the "Wild East" and makes it into an asset.

But not only do the parameters of place shift in the course of his tour: travelling back in time, we move on cobblestone and unpaved roads, through unmapped lands. By invoking a history of undrained wetlands and swamps, our safari tour conjures up the conquest of nature and the consolidation of the nation – yet in a region that is currently situated at the periphery. A Wild West romanticism of outlaws, derailed trains, and stolen train tracks mixes with an imperial nostalgia for the times when trains stretched along empires, connecting Berlin with its "Eastern" backwaters and provinces – and when treasures of nature and wilderness could be found in far away lands. And yet Lars' practice of creating an imaginary space of wildness is not unique or an exception in the March Oder region. Other "wild spaces" abound: ostrich farms, Indian villages, and

[306] See also Eeden (2006) on leisure activities and images of colonial style adventure connected to the land rover in African safari tourism. The image of the land rover as conquest technology over an African landscape, and its inherent binaries of culture/nature; male/female; white adventurer/native is also cultivated on the company's website: "all-terrain vehicles" with names such as "Defender", "Freelander" or "Discovery" tackle all kinds of environments: rivers, deserts, steppe – and are "still going strong" after 60 years (see www.landrover.com).

close to nature forests. And indeed, some people say, the "Wild West", or perhaps, more appropriate, the "Wild East", begins right at the edge of Berlin.[307]

The Computer Indian

Nestling a large meadow and a small conifer and beech forest, the "Little Big Horse Ranch" at the edge of the March Oder Park is a popular stop for weekend travelers, school outings, safari tourists and Indian hobbyists. Situated on several acres of land, the ranch features an old ranch building, several stables for horses and livestock, a pasture for twenty horses, a Western town, including a saloon and, sometimes, a small teepee village. Many of the glass windows of the small wooden houses, are broken – from arrow shots. In front of the saloon, you can hitch your horse to a wooden post. Next to the Western town, there is a small square with wooden benches, a big fire pit and a huge stack of hay bales right next to it.

People in town call Carsten the Computer Indian. He is in his early 40s, tall, and has a friendly smile, long blond hair and glasses. When he dons his Indian wear, he chucks away the glasses and dies his hair black. He was born and grew up on the ranch in the 1970s. After World War II, his parents had fled Eastern Prussia – what later became Poland – and settled down in the March Oder region, near the new border. Together with his partner, two children, twenty horses and a bunch of chickens, he now lives on the ranch and organizes powwows, Western shows, horse back riding

[307] Local Media, tourist brochures and the city's website advertise "Wild Brandenburg", see e.g. http:// www. berlin.de/special/reisen/ausfluege/eldorado-templin; http://www.berlin.de/special/reise/brandenburg/ and MOZ 2011.

workshops and bow and arrow shooting contests. Schools regularly book weekends at the Western town for children to learn about Indian wisdoms. Indian hobbyists and anyone who is curious come and stay in teepees for a powwow, or they join in workshops to sew traditional Indian clothes or practice bow and arrow shooting skills and horseback riding. Once in a while a safari tour stops by to visit the "wild Indians". A few times a year, Carsten and other hobbyists organize a Wild West show – like the "Buffalo Bill Wild West Show", or a staging of the Dalton brothers fight against Lucky Luke[308] – and they regularly participate in horseback riding and bow and arrow shooting contests all over Germany, Poland, Sweden and as far as South Korea. Carsten's teepee village is not the only one in the area: in a small teepee village in the park, the local environmental education center, "three oaks" regularly offers wilderness camps for city children. Sometimes, the Little Big Horse Ranch and the Three Oaks Center collaborate and exchange ideas. Yet unlike them, Carsten sees himself not as a professional, but rather "does things out of fun", as he puts it.

Indians have captured Carsten's imagination since his childhood. During socialism, his parents were very religious and they did not want him to join any state-run clubs or communist organizations like the Junge Pioniere (Young Pioneers), whose activities included a mixture of outdoor adventure and socialist teachings[309]. Thus, as a

[308] A gang of outlaws that, as Carsten thinks, most Americans don't know much about. They were one of the craziest gangs in the American West that specialized in train and bank robberies. During one of their most famous battles, the citizens of a town had the courage to rise up against them spontaneously, staging a chaotic yet successful counterattack.

[309] Run by the "Free German Youth", the Young Pioneers, served as East German's communist youth organization for children between 6 and 14 in East Germany from 1949 to 1990. Children usually attended pioneer camps in the summers – which were sometimes also international in scope – where they

child, instead of joining a youth club, he would go to the forest with his friends and play Indians. But it was his violin teacher who introduced him to the world of Indians more thoroughly. Curious, Carsten began to read one novel about Indians after another. Finally, after quite some time, he was ready for the famous Karl May novels, which were outlawed during communism, because they were considered too pro-Western, too Christian, and most of all, a favorite reading by Adolf Hitler (although Karl May had been a vocal pacifist). As some people smuggled them into East Germany illegally, they still carry an aura of secrecy. But even more than the Karl May stories, communist Indians were Carsten's true heroes: while Karl May movies, focusing on friendship between Indians and white settlers, were all the rage in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, East Germans created a communist counterpart: the "Red Western", produced by the DEFA film studios. These movies were "Westerns with a twist". In them, Indians were heroes, and white settlers capitalist villains. A critique of capitalism and colonialism, the movies depicted Indians fighting their oppression and expulsion from their land. The main character, played by Serbian actor, stuntman and writer Gojko Mitic became one of the most popular and famous actors in East Germany and across East Europe.[310] After

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participated in hiking and other outdoor activities, similar to the German *Wandervogel* movement or the American boy scouts.

[310] While the so-called East German *Indianerfilme* also highlighted the point of view of Indians, they stressed conflict over friendship. They thus not only stood in contrast to the West German Karl May movies, but also to Hollywood Westerns that tended to portray the perspective of white cowboys and in which Indians tended to be savages. One of the first and most famous of these movies, *Sons of Great Bear*, was produced in 1965 and is set in East Germany and Montenegro. Depicting a time when gold was found in the Black hills in the Dakotas – it is a story of corrupt white settlers and fearless Indians fighting expulsion from their land. In contrast to Western productions, the directors and play writers of these movies highlighted their efforts for authenticity (and actors e.g. rode horses without saddles) (Adams 2005). Fighting relocation to a reservation, the Indians in the end come to a compromise in which they declare they will settle in freedom and begin to use the plough (ibid.). Thus, the story depicts the greed and corruption of white settlers, broken treaties and the violence of imperialism – but it also carries the

re-unification, he performed as the famous Indian character Winnetou in the so called Karl May festival – a re-enactment of Karl May's stories about the American West – near Hamburg for years. Carsten still talks about him with a sense of secrecy and wonder, while lowering his voice, as if we were about to stumble across a treasure chest.

Yet only after the *Wende*[311], did Carsten begin to be more serious about Indians. In fact, as he puts it, "re-unification opened up new possibilities for being Indian".[312] In 1992, Carsten and his family had the idea to build the ranch and create a Western space. The land was like a jungle and had been overgrown with weeds. They ripped out the weeds, reclaimed the land and made it arable. Gradually, they built the horse stables, then the small "Western Town" and the Indian village adjacent to the farm. Soon they began to rear horses, adopting them from people who couldn't keep the animals anymore.

Carsten remembers the transition in the early 1990s as a radical shift. Before the fall of the Wall, people needed each other. There was a shortage of many goods and possibilities and everyone helped each other out – whether it was fixing a broken car or assisting in house improvement and construction. Soon after re-unification, people changed. All of the sudden, they were stressed and frustrated. Everyone began to hide in their homes behind their TVs. Then Carsten did his civil service year in an elderly

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message of efforts to create a new workers state and introduce collective farming (ibid.). Despite the Cold War undertones of the movies, the East German *Indianerfilme* have been praised by some contemporary Native American activists as serious efforts to explore representations of American Indians that differ from the usual stereotypes in American popular culture (Adam 2005: 550).

311 Commonly used to refer to the collapse of socialism, the beginning of the re-unification process between East and West Germany, and the transformation from a planned economy to capitalism, the term *Wende* translates as "the turn", or the change.

312 While, in his opinion, the two Indian hobbyist communities in East and West Germany remained largely separate from each other, there were also a few openings: many East German Indians considered Western Indians to be too commercial but were open to hobbyists who proved otherwise.

people's home in the new nature park. He recalls his work there as one of the most incisive experiences in his life. Caught in the middle of abrupt changes, most of the old people were utterly confused. Their sense of security was shattered. All of the sudden, everything that had been their center of life was worthless. Then, at one point, Carsten had enough and stopped cleaning the hallways. Instead, he went into people's rooms and talked to them.

"That's why I try to do something else," he explains to me one afternoon, as we sit around the fire pit near the teepee village, while his three-year old son, Tim, shoots bows and arrows against balloons set up in the stack of hay. Carsten insists he does not mourn the former government, or the GDR. And yet, he is longing for a different path of re-unification. He misses the time when people helped each other. A self-employed computer programmer, he wants to be more than simply a worker or a computer nerd. Being Indian, for him, is thus also about not just being a name, it's about being an outsider, on the edge of things, and it's about being human and trying things out and seeing whether it works. "I shoot into all directions in the sky – and I don't want to be pinned down," he says. Although, he barely gets by, he says he is "a little happy" with what he does. He does not care much about money or having a fancy car, and he can't stand being in Berlin – which is too noisy and anonymous. His work is seasonal: during the winter, he repairs computers and fixes PC viruses; in the summer, he travels around and organizes powwows and horseback riding events. For him, being Indian is about being different. His clients and the people he works with know him not just as the computer guy, but as Indian. Hence, they call him the Computer Indian.

But above all, being Indian is about communication. "You don't simply become Indian by putting feathers on your head and wearing Indian clothes", he explained to me. "It's not about how authentic your clothes are, or what tribe you belong to. It's about a process of communication. And it's about being in touch with nature, with animals and other humans. For example, it does not matter if the beads on your jacket are in the right order. Instead, you can tell if someone has spent long winter nights stitching the pearl embroidery on ones' jacket. You can then tell someone has really engaged."[313]

Carsten sews his own "Indian clothing". In the past, other Indian enthusiasts have asked him to sell it. Instead of doing that, he invites people to his place and teaches them how to sew Indian clothes. "It's about the process of sewing. The same is true for bow and arrow shooting while riding on a horse: it's not just about the right technique. You have to know something about the people who do it. And you have to listen and attend to the animal. You have to feel out how it works: how do you get the right balance? What is the rhythm of the horse? At what angle do you hold the bow and arrow? When do you aim? – It's about the process. And the horse tells you things you don't know."[314] That's why he wants to go on a winter camp in the forest: "You learn how to get by when everything tumbles. And that's how you can teach people from the city that yearning for nature – and to experience that you don't have to live at a distance.

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[313] Recorded conversation, summer 2008.

[314] One time, Carsten recalls, he went on a bow and arrow-shooting tournament with his horses and a few animal rights activists showed up. They protested against the use of horses in these competitions. Yet, as he remembers proudly, when they saw how he interacted respectfully with the animals and how he communicated with them, they retreated, praised his interactive skills and asked him to continue. For him, his horses are his teachers and his "psychologists" on four legs.

And if you go to the forest, you can get by." His message to the children, who come to his Indian camps, is: "You too can become an Indian!" When he teaches them horse riding, how to feed horses and communicate respectfully with them, how to live in the forest, it is about the process of attending and learning from others. And as an Indian, he is something like an outsider, and the children usually listen to him more than to their teachers. The "Indian idea", as he calls it, is about thinking differently and about reminding yourself of the environment you live in, as well as the animals you live with.

"My Indian name", he tells me, "is Helaku, the one who sees the good in things."[315]

Interlude

The images of the "East" as wild space as created in Lars' safari tour and Carsten's Indian teachings, echo a whole variety of other – and much older – motifs of the frontier between civilization and wilderness. These motifs have played an important role in the intellectual and political formation of Europe (Berger 2010, Wolff 1994), and their spatial imaginaries have had multiple lives throughout European history. Most of all, the poetics of race and place inherent in notions of "wildness" were a key rationale of European colonial domination and violence (Taussig 1987). Yet in part, they also go back to long-standing German and European fascinations with the American frontier and the "Wild West". Thus, German and European travel stories, dating back to European expeditions since the 17th century not only engaged with "wild and gigantic nature" while reinventing the Americas and Europe (such as Humboldt, see Pratt 1992: 120), but also a

[315] Or also: the one who is "full of sun".

romanticized image of Indians.[316] European emigration to the Americas in the 19th and 20th century further triggered fascinations with Indians.[317]

One of the best selling authors in turn-of-the-20th century Europe was indeed Karl May, whose books Carsten read secretly as a child. May died in 1912, and wrote a whole series of volumes on Wild West adventures. May's stories revolve around the friendship between the two main characters of Winnetou, an Apache chief, and Old Shatterhand, a white German settler and adventurer, who is said to have the unique ability to knock his opponents unconscious with a single punch with his fist.[318] Although most of the stories are written in first person narrative, from the perspective of Old Shatterhand (as whom Karl May would occasionally dress up), May did not visit the US until late in his life, when he had already written a large part of his work – and when he did, he never made it further then Buffalo, New York.[319]

In Germany, these yearnings for Indians, the American frontier and notions of "wilderness" have corresponded with various kinds of experiences of marginalization and inequalities, but also with nationalist and imperial desires for expansion of the

316 Thus, the emergence of the literary figure of Indians also coincided with the establishment of the disciplines of ethnology and Voelkerkunde in the 1770s in Germany (Adam 2005).
317 For example, German translations of books such as Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1824) were popular both among émigrés and those who never were able to make it to the West but dreamt about encounters with the "American other" (Adam 2005: 554-9). Adam also mentions the geographic fragmentation in the context of the Vienna Congress (1815) as a major driving force for European fascinations with the American West. For a more detailed discussion of Indians in German literature, see also Adam (2005: 554ff).
318 Among others, the stories include: *Der Schatz im Silbersee* (1890)(The Treasure in Silver Lake), *Der Schwarze Mustang* (1897) (The Black Mustang), *Der Sohn des Baerenjagers* (1890)(The Sun of the Bear Hunter), *Winnetou I-III (the red gentleman)*, and *Old Surehand I-III* (1893-1896).
319 May also wrote numerous stories about the same character travelling to the "Orient" – although in these stories, he was named Kara Ben Nemsi. See e.g. Durchs Wilde Kurdistan (1892) (Travels Through Wild Kurdistan), Im Reiche des Silbernen Loewen, around 1902-3 (In the Realm of the Silver Lion), Von Baghdad nach Stambul, (1892)(From Baghdad to Istanbul)

"home land" throughout German history.[320] In addition, in the context of increasing urbanization and industrialization, and thus while human impacts on Central European landscapes grew and "wilderness" areas disappeared, many Germans began to identify with Indians as victims of environmental destruction, urbanization and the fragmentation of communities.[321]

In the 20th century, Karl May stories and images of the American West inspired Nazi ideas of the "wild, backward" East in need of colonization. At the same time a "nostalgia for the wild" and the noble savage played a key role in Nazi racial discourse.[322] Thus, wilderness was both yearned for, and it had to be tamed and controlled. Then, after the war, Karl May and the figure of the Indian continued to have a strong impact

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[320] Blackbourn points out that early 20th century nature conservationists tended to their homeland in a nationalist and racial framework, and the term "green" often stood as synonym for German superiority – especially in relation to the Slav "desert" or "wilderness" (Blackbourn 2006: 9).

[321] "Wilderness" thus also always sat side by side with ideas about pastoral nature. In his book, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, Thomas Lekan argues that between 1885 and 1945, "wilderness" did not have much currency among German landscape preservationists. In the face of the pervasive impact of humans on Central European landscapes, preservationists focused on a notion of cultural landscapes (*Landschaft*) and *Heim*at (home) at the center of environmental concerns. This notion of a cultural landscape of home, unlike the American wilderness aesthetic, did not rely so much on the binary between civilization and nature, but saw landscape as a "cultivated garden that blends the natural, the cultivated, and built environments in an aesthetically harmonious whole" (Lekan 2004: 15). Yet at the same time, *Landschaft*, understood, as a site of "emotional identification and environmental care" depended on a notion of a closed, national community. In fact, modern German environmentalism included a whole range of political positions, ranging from conservative stances in the Wilhemine era (188-1918) to the blood and soil discourse in Nazi racism (Lekan 2004: 16). Lekan furthermore points out that, despite Nazi goals to center "nature" and landscape preservation as part of a national revolution, promised a consideration of environmental degradation, "the Third Reich systematically subordinated environmental concern to economic recovery and war mobilization, threatening decades of preservation efforts through Autobahn construction, rearmament, land reclamation, and dam building" (Lekan 2004: 14). See also Cronon (1996) on the wilderness debate in the US, Schwartz (2006) and Blavascunas (2008) on the influence of the European pastoral tradition on nature preservation during the postsocialist period, as well as Cioc (1998) on German environmental history and its attention to pervasive human impact in contrast to the "wilderness" focus in American environmental history.

[322] Nazis were very concerned with the near extinction of wolves, bears, bison and wild horses and therefore established many conservation and breeding programs and passed new hunting laws. Furthermore, the notion of the racial purity of Aryans was based on the assumption that the human race had become contaminated and impure through both the mixing of races and the consumption of animal meat – a major reason why many Nazi leaders favored vegetarianism (Arluke/Sax 1995: 230-237).

within German popular cultures, ranging from the Winnetou movies in the mid 1960s in West Germany[323], to the anti-capitalist Westerns in East Germany, where Karl May was outlawed.[324] At the same time, a large subculture of Indian and Wild West hobbyists emerged.[325] Outdoor performances of Karl May stories, as well as Indian powwows became increasingly popular – not only among hobbyists, but also among thousands of Germans during the Cold War.[326]

Today, there are several Wild West towns and Indian villages in Berlin and Brandenburg. In Old Texas Town in Berlin, visitors can visit a gold mine, stop for a drink in the saloon, show their horse at the Blacksmith, exchange gold nuggets for money at the Bank of Texas, go square-dancing or stop by for a drink at the saloon.[327] In addition, idioms such as "Ein Indianer kennt kein Schmerz" (which translates into something like: "If you want to be an Indian, you have to be tough!") have become an integral part of the vernacular. A few years ago, the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* proclaimed Winnetou as the quintessential German national hero – and the longing for him as

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[323] West German productions of the Karl May stories were immensely popular throughout Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Set in Czech republic, performed by a French actor playing Winnetou, and an American playing the white cowboy Old Shatterhand, they were rich in cross cultural referentality and stagings from the start.

[324] In her work on the production of Wild West spaces across Europe, Ruth Ellen Gruber (2010), points out the multiple cross-cultural references in these productions: for example, the first Winnetou film she saw was in Poland, dubbed in Czech. She also recalls someone's memory of walking along the Berlin wall during the Cold war and hearing someone whistle a Bonanza theme song on the other side.

[325] In addition, country music was imported to Europe and Germany in particular after WWII and thus incorporated even more into Wild West hobby cultures (Berger 2010).

[326] The so called Karl May festival near Hamburg has been one of the most popular outdoor performances in Germany until today, drawing thousands of spectators each year. In fact, the festival is now more popular than ever. Founded in 1952, the festival has drawn a record number of more than 300,000 visitors last year.

[327] Old Texas Town was founded in Berlin in 1939 and, according to the town's website, had to soon "go underground" because of the political circumstances until 1950. See more on the history of the town at: http://www.old-texas-town.de/

something as German as the forest, or German efficiency (Spiegel cited in *New York Times* 2007).[328]

Yet beyond this history of German and European fascinations with the "Wild West", cultural imaginaries of the March Oder region, of Brandenburg and "the East" as "untamed land" have a more specific trajectory. David Blackbourn traces the mystique of the frontier between wilderness and civilization as well as the mystique of the Wild East in his analysis of the "conquest over nature" in 19th and 20th century Eastern Prussia. Frontier images emerged ever since Germans aspired to colonize eastern Prussia in the 1880s and notions of an "Amazonian landscape" of rivers and marshes (and sand) abound. Already Frederick the Great compared the marshes of Polish Prussia to Canada. When Slav fisherpeople had to give way to German farmers, the new settlements were given names such as Florida or Philadelphia (Blackbourn 2006: 303). But the frontier also appeared in unexpected places such as 19th century romanticist writer Theodor Fontane's *Rambles through the March Brandenburg*: After "a rain-drenched boat journey across the Wurstrauer Marshes, he and his companions felt "as if we travelled over the Kansas River or a Prairie far in the West" (Fontane cited in Blackbourn 2006: 293).

Thus, "the German frontier was in the East", writes Blackbourn. During World War II, this "urge to move East" (*Drang nach Osten*), engaged a racial discourse of place in its ideology of blood, soil and "living space": drawing on the figure of hardy settlers, as

[328] This article was titled "The Land of Winnetou"; it was published during the World Soccer Cup, and thus in a moment of national intensification. "There are the German poets and thinkers, the German forest, the German comfortableness (*Gemütlichkeit)*, German efficiency, the German longing for Italy, and there is Winnetou. Winnetou is the quintessential German national hero, an archetype of virtue, a nature freak, a romantic, a pacifist at heart. But in a world of war, he is the best warrior, alert, strong, sure" (NYT 2007).

well as the figure of the Indian, fascist Germans saw themselves as a people without land, in need of expansion. Thus the goal was to occupy the "wide open" space in the east and to bring the "green of German culture to the Polish wilderness" (Blackbourn 2006: 293). In this imaginary, German settlers would tame the endless primeval forests and the alien wilderness of Poland and create a "paradise, a "European California" (Blackbourn 2006: 301).

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Beyond these echoes of longer histories of Germans' and European fascinations with the American West, what does it mean to invoke wilderness and "wild space" in post-socialist Germany today? These recent practices of creating the "Wild East" and spaces of otherness, I suggest, respond to both experiences of regional economic marginalization, and to changing constellations of race, nation and place.

Both Lars and Carsten participate in a narrative practice, a genre of "wilding" – a practice of creating "wild space" that I encountered throughout the countryside around Berlin and that can also be traced in other "shrinking" (urban and rural) regions in former East Germany.[329] In it, the countryside around Berlin emerges as untamed land of nature and as a frontier space. This frontier space is both a physical place you can travel through and a space in which you dwell, but it is also an affective one.

Like Carsten, Lars, the safari guide, creates and performs a romance about the landscape: they dream up a "wild space", a new, less orderly foreign land. The safari tour produces an exotic "wilderness" to be explored through travel. Via stories, sounds and

[329] See for example Hagemann (2006).

landmarks, we follow the traces of empire, war and nation-making along the road. With his mix of cowboy and colonial style drag, Lars and his land rover perform adventurous travel through open, lonesome spaces, unlimited possibility and abundant nature. While creating that special safari feeling, he takes up the perspective of both native and colonial traveler – through the post-socialist countryside, while Carsten and other hobbyists play the "noble savage". Yet, like tricksters, they shift their shapes and call upon spirits. They both cater to nostalgic (Western) conceptions of the socialist past[330] and mingle them with an ambivalent desire for racialized otherness.[331] But even more: for the hobby Indian, being Indian, is about both reconnecting to and re-enchanting an imagined "natural" landscape. Producing a "wild West space" – the "Indian village", the Western town and a space of archery and human-animal connection, he repossesses a sense of community in a world gone awry after the transformation to capitalism. And what would be more appropriate than a community in wilderness?

Although Carsten sees himself as something like an ambassador of Indian culture, he does not claim authenticity. Rather, as he taught me, he creates both a physical and an affective space – a "wild space", a space of communication and connection to the environment, but also a space of unruliness in which you don't let

[330] See discussion of "Ostalgie", nostalgia for the East, in the previous chapter.
[331] In her ethnography of West German Indian hobbyists, Kathrin Sieg (2002) argues that Indian impersonations certainly rework racial imaginations of otherness that can be read as a displacement of shame vis a vis the violent history of the concept of race and the memory of the Holocaust. For her, re-enactments therefore express a deep ambivalence toward race, nation and gender. Yet contemporary Indian hobbyist cultures are also more complex and heterogeneous than that. Influenced by carnival, Wild West Shows and contemporary multiculturalisms, they integrate both anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-materialist agendas with (post)colonial and racist ones. Thus, for her, there is no single explanation – fascism, national humiliation, capitalism, or environmentalism – for these phenomena (Sieg 2002: 38).

yourself "be pinned down" by the social forces of the labor market and become alienated from nature – a space in which you shift between being computer expert and Indian archer. Both for Lars and Carsten nature and "wilderness" are also an entrepreneurial strategy. They make an asset out of regional "failure" – by tapping into already existing national stereotypes about the March Oder region as backward, doomed area and branding the region as "wild". In the process, they establish a sense of national belonging and regional identity through nature.[332]

[332] Tracey Heatherington (2001) develops a similar argument: while rural Sardinians authenticate and ironize the notion of the backwardness of the central highlands, they seize nationalist tropes of time. Embracing "barbarian" ecological ideas and invoking the figure of the primitive, they also mock global perspectives of modern environmentalism and conservation. While thus entering the political field, they nevertheless reinforce stereotypes of the Sardinian wilderness (Heatherington 2001: 302-303).

PART II: Re-Wilding the Forest

A forest that does not make any sense, or: "Berlin catches all the rain"

Figure 32: Industrial pine forest in the March Oder Park (photo by author)

One day in summer 2009, I sat with Sabine in her garden, drinking coffee and catching up. The wild boar and deer had recently taken over her yard: at night they snuck in, ate and stomped all over the vegetables. While Sabine complained about the thieves, we could hear the engines of a Cessna circling above us. All of the sudden, there was a short pause. Moments later you could hear screams. Looking up into the sky, I could see a big colorful, umbrella opening softly in the air – a parachute floating in the sky like a jelly-fish. "Welcome to Brandenburg," Sabine said.

In the 1990s, in the immediate years after re-unification, as former state run local industries disappeared, hopes were high for tourism to soon flourish in the region and

getting things out of a rut of unemployment and crumbling local economies. Preparing for a future of tourism, the county offered seminars for local unemployed villagers to be trained as tourist guides. Excited, many, signed up at that time. And so did Sabine, who lost her job as an employee with the former Forestry Institute in Friedwalde after the collapse of the socialist regime. Yet, things turned out differently and tourism never really fully picked up. Today, Sabine occasionally works as a nature guide in the park – she is one of three guides in the area. Once in a while she offers walking- or bicycle tours through the marshlands or other areas of the park. But it is impossible to make a living this way. Since early 2009, Sabine had thus joined a local organic farm, run by alternatively minded Berliners, as a seasonal worker. And most recently, she started to specialize in yet another profession: funeral speeches. Learning the craft of funeral speeches, she now got hired to attend many funerals in the region – a region with an increasingly aging population.

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As Sabine once put it: "Socialism disappeared and left a big gap. And what came in its place? Capitalism, yes. But what ACTUALLY happened? Nothing!" In the face of growing unemployment and dwindling local economies, people had to be inventive about how to make a living. And indeed, people, like her, came up with "weedy" and unusual entrepreneurial strategies. Yet for Sabine, this was arduous. And some faired better than others in this transformation. And some people just did not go through or understand the changes since 1989! They had a hard time. ("*du musst mit Menschen reden, die den Wandel nicht so richtig mitgemacht/verstanden haben*"). This is when she told me about

Mr. Jasinski. Mr. Jasinski was a forester in the March Oder region from the 1960s until shortly after 'unification' in 1990, when he had to "retire" early. I should talk to him because he "didn't go through the changes" and definitely had a different perspective. Her comment caught my attention and curiosity. What was the "right" way to look at the changes and what did things look like when you did not "understand" them? And what did the forest and the park and the region look like from the "wrong perspective"?

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In late July, Mr. Jasinski was busy harvesting. Together with his wife, and a small community of animals, including cats, chickens, sheep, a horse and a donkey, he lived on a small piece of land at the edge of the forest near the town Mueggelsdorf, on the South Western border of the park. When I visited him one Thursday afternoon, I rode my bike from Zarin across the train tracks, over a long cobble stone alley lined with beech trees. I passed several grass meadows interspersed with small canals used to drain the water off the meadows. On the side of the path, a small park map guided the way and a sign prohibited garbage disposal in the meadows. I continued all the way through the forest where I briefly chatted with a family picking mushrooms. After leaving the forest and crossing a big road with trucks swooshing by, I rode along a small paved road dotted with speed bumps to protect migrating frogs from cars. Just right across the speed bumps, Mr. Jasinski's house appeared on the left, next to a large harvested field. A big pile of firewood under a large green tarp was towering at the gate to the property. I rang the bell. The house, probably built in the 1950s, had a tiled roof, and grey paint was coming off the side.

Mr Jasinski and his wife, who used to be a chemist at the former local agricultural research institute, greeted me at the gate and after a short chat, we went to the lush garden behind the house, bursting with fruit trees, flowers and a little vegetable bed. Thirty cats, many of them kittens, and a rooster and some chicken roamed around. A donkey, several sheep and a horse stood in an open stable right next to the garden. As we sat down at a big wooden table in the center of the garden, we began to chat about the socialist land reform and privatization. Many lots, hitherto in collective hands, were turned back to their original owners from before the division. Yet still, many of these lots in the area had undeclared ownership and were not used, with many houses remaining empty.

Mr. Jasinski was not a native to this area. He spent his childhood years in East Prussia. During WWII, he, like many others, fled with his family and friends from their village to cross the Oder river to Bad Frankenhausen in Thuringen, further south. Like him, many German refugees from these areas also settled in the March Oder region after the war, when Germany ceded the territory East of the Oder river to Poland. Much later, he studied forest science in Eberswalde, and received his degree there.[333]

Mr. Jasinski was transferred to be the local forester for part of the March Oder region in Klausberg. He was responsible for five districts. Aside from him, three women and five men worked there. The women were responsible for 'forest care'- mainly ripping out weeds and clearing out unnecessary undergrowth; whereas the men were loggers. Then, in 1989, the Berlin Wall came down and everything changed. A few years

[333] For a more detailed discussion of the history of German forestry and the forestry school in Eberswalde, as well as its international impact, see Nelson (2005) and Rajan (2006).

later, he was "retired early". From then on, he was on unemployment until his real retirement benefits kicked in.

As we talked, bees buzzed by and swarmed around us (and were in fact so loud that they obscured parts of the recording of our conversation). A few tractors rattled by, slowing down for the frog protection speed bumps. Describing his life, his work and the changing forest, Mr. Jasinski traced the transformation of the landscape – and the history of the nation – through his own biography. In his stories, the March Oder region emerged as a landscape of constant changes and hardship: many German refugees from East Prussia crossed the border of the Oder river during the war and settled down in this region. At the end of the war, thousands of people died in the forests during one of the last battles between Russian, Polish and German soldiers. Today, you can visit a memorial and museum in Saarlow, a small town close by.

When Germany was divided into the Allied zones after the war and Brandenburg became part of the Soviet zone, much of the local pine forest was cut down in order to pay reparations to Russia. In addition, since there were no coal reserves in the area and many people were starving and freezing during the cold winters of 1946/7, many local residents, as well as people from Berlin "plundered" the forest and cut down trees for firewood. The results were huge forest clearings and it took years for re-growth to catch up. With the continuing division of Germany, the East German state aimed at self-sufficiency in terms of its agricultural and forest production. As a result, the socialist government introduced a wide scale land reform, collectivizing farms and forests – thus deeply transforming the rural landscape.

As the socialist government aimed at national self efficiency in agricultural production, a local research institute, originally opened by Kaiser Wilhelm, was re-opened in the immediate aftermath of the war in order to research agricultural possibilities under "extreme conditions" in the March Oder region. The ground in the area is sandy and there is very little rain. And this sandiness posed new obstacles after re-unification. In fact, from Mr. Jasinsky's perspective, the region has been desolate in its very proximity to the "unnatural" city of Berlin. As he put it: "Berlin takes all the rain away!" Located in the west, the direction from which the rain comes, and with its many buildings, all the rain tends to pour down over Berlin. But as before the war, the pine trees did great under these dry, barren conditions. Alongside collectivization and a large scale land reform, the East German government created an 'industrial forest" that depended on clear-cutting and tight control of weeds – a forest that was highly "productive". The region was called the "bread tree" of the March! After unification of East and West Germany, things fell apart. In fact, "everything went down the creek" (German expression for things going downhill)! Mr. Jasinski lost his job. Since everything in East and West existed twice ("es gab ja alles doppelt!"), many local institutions, including the local forestry research institute were closed down. In addition, Western environmentalists and foresters came to Brandenburg, fundamentally restructuring forestry. They laid-off most of the people who were working in the forest at the time. And they wanted to do things just like they had in the West: they wanted a mixed forest and they planted lots of oak trees!

This radical shift in forestry policy and environmental discourse was an outcome of changing ideas of what constitutes a good forest and how to manage and shape natural landscapes. Tracing the effects of German re-unification on former East German forestry, Nelson points out: "With reunification, close-to-nature forestry came home to Eastern Germany" (Nelson 2005: 175). In this context, East Germany's last president, Lothar de Maiziere, said: "We need a totally new concept of the forest. Ecological and cultural values must have precedence over wood production" (Nelson 2005: 175). Thus competing ecological and economic ideas about the ideal forest became key to national unification and to redefinitions of German national identity. Whereas, before unification, an industrial forest was seen as a good forest – and even close to nature – after unification ecological approaches emphasized abundance and complexity, while "restoring economic and social diversity to the farm and forest landscape" (175). As a result, post-unification land reforms prohibited large-scale clear cuts and introduced "close to nature forestry" (*naturnahe Waldwirtschaft*), modeled after Western concepts, to replace a former singular focus on industrial production. In the process, hardwoods increased up to 40%. Nevertheless, with a lack of funds after unification, these reforms were slow (ibid.).

As Western environmentalists also critiqued the devastating pollution in many East German cities in addition to the monocultural forests in the countryside (Nelson 2005)[334], remaking nature and a particular form of nature preservation played a key part

[334] Ironically, West German policies did not adhere to their own environmental standards. For example, West Germany dumped much of its garbage in East Germany before and after the fall of the Wall (Borneman 1991).

in the creation of national unity: in Brandenburg, the creation of several nature reserves in the context of the national park program in 1990, was a "gift" to unification and helped naturalize the nation.[335] Together with two biosphere reserves, the March Oder Park was one first nature reserves created in 1990. Today, these protected "national natural landscapes" comprise 30 % of the entire territory of the state of Brandenburg, and include eleven nature parks (such as the March Oder park), three biosphere reserves and one national park (the lower Oder Valley).[336] As formerly extinct or rare wildlife is reintroduced into the region, renaturing parts of the lower Havel River in Brandenburg as also become one of the biggest river re-landscaping projects in Europe. In the course of these re-naturing initiatives, nature and wilderness have become central figures in the construction of national subjects and in definitions what constitutes good citizens.

But nature and wilderness did not only play a key role in ideas about national unity. With "shrinkage" – population decline and dwindling economies – being a new development in many industrialized regions throughout Europe, "wilderness" has become an important concept and imaginary for both rural and urban re-structuring. In urban areas, this has often meant that planners move away from classic "greening

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[335] Nelson points out the obvious contradictions of the fascination with the wild on one hand and what gets to count as "wild" or "natural" in the end: "many Germans perceive the modern, artificial, park-like forest as something both uniquely natural and expressive of the German spirit at once; the complex never before seen close to nature forest is alien to the popular aesthetic. They also read the large game herd as evidence of wildness and nature, even though these animals are semi-domesticated and block the emergence of a truly natural and German forest (Nelson 2005: 186).

[336] Within this network, national parks are categorized as areas with the least of human influence. They include ecosystems in which native plants and animals are under protection, thus allowing their "own developmental dynamic". Nevertheless, sustainable tourism is allowed in these areas. Biosphere reserves, are part of the UNESCO program "man and biosphere" seeking to protect, care for and develop "internationally significant landscapes with a rich natural and cultural heritage". Nature parks are significant "cultural landscapes" that include a combination of nature reserves and areas suitable for sustainable tourism (MUGV 2011).

policies" to actually preserve "gaps" in the urban fabric to enable "spontaneous nature" to emerge in wastelands. In rural areas, "wilderness" is almost seen as inevitable outcome of population decline and dwindling economies, and has become both a marketing strategy to foster tourism but also a concept associated with uncontrollable natural and social processes. Thus, especially, in the context of "shrinking tendencies" in former East Germany, new paradigms of land use have emerged: strategies of re-naturing often go alongside or conflict with modernist schemes of land use and intensifying agriculture (such as GMO), or ideas about sustainable tourism (Rink 2009: 276).

In Germany, these post-unification reforms thus engaged changing ideas about how to order nature and society. As Cordula Kropp (2005) has shown in her work on river landscaping in the 1990s, not only did forest management schemes change, but also concepts of how to shape rivers and entire ecosystems. While trying to reestablish a coexistence of humans and non-humans, approaches that favored the "liberating experience of wild natural rivers" often replaced or at least sat side by side with an understanding of rivers as "engineered canals" (Kropp 2005: 489) – thus opening up possibilities for "un-tidying" modernist schemes and creating more "weedy" conservation and landscaping practices.

Yet for Mr. Jasinski, local initiatives for a close-to-nature-forest "did not make any sense"; in fact they were irrational and not transparent. Thus, seeing the post-unification forest with the eyes of the former socialist state,[337] and from the perspective of local ecologies, the forest – and much of the landscape in the region – had stopped

[337] See Scott's notion of "seeing like a state" (Scott 1998).

making sense: „Nobody could see through this anymore. This was not explicable for a normal thinking person," he said to me.[338] Not much of what had been, remained. And even the newly planted oak trees all ended up dying. Everybody who knew anything about the local conditions said, it would be crazy to plant oak trees in the first place. And despite their institutionalized anchoring, Westerners lacked the local knowledge and they didn't take into consideration that the weather is extremely dry here after all, which is why the oak trees had no chance. Oak trees – a mythical symbol of Germanness, just like the forest itself – thus faired badly in this process.[339]

But not only did the Western environmentalists not know about the dry climate, they were also blind to some of the local tree diversity: "if you walk around here with open eyes, you actually see that the forest is mixed: there is the pine, but also oak and beech and other types of trees in the undergrowth. And of course, lots of weeds (like the annoying *Traubenkirsche*)!"

Tracking these changes from an industrial forest to a forest that needed to be preserved and "diverse", Mr. Jasinski challenges Western environmental narratives and their lack of local knowledge and history. In some sense, he formulates a critique of national narratives about the forest and its "diversity" – i.e. the desire for oaks, and thus a "German forest". Like many others who have experienced the changes since 1989, he expresses a longing for standardization and trust – but also for a way of seeing the forest with the eyes of the socialist state, and thus, in this case the industrial forest's ability to

[338] In German: *"Da schaute keener mehr durch. Das ist nicht nachvollziehbar fuer einen normalen Menschen, und dann ist erstmal alles den Bach runtergegangen, das kann man wohl so sagen. Und wenig ist übriggeblieben".*
[339] See also Schama on the forest as mythical symbol of German national identities (Schama 1995).

produce trees and its validation of local knowledge and expertise. Not only does he echo conflicting visions between nature conservationists and local residents, but he also challenges a common environmentalist story about East and West Germany: a story that traces the failure of socialism *within* the forest and that claims that the downfall of the regime could be discerned in the country's dismal monocultural forestry (Nelson 2005).

Following Sabine and theorists of nostalgia such as Svetlana Boym, one could argue that these sentiments of loss and displacement, a longing for a time, a home, and a forest, that no longer exists is a form of nostalgia that "inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms if life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2001: xiv). And surely, the forest, in Mr. Jasinski's narrative becomes part of an injured regional identity here, and once again plays a key role in the national imagination: recounting both the war and re-unification, he tells a story of regional and national injury and loss of power. But even more, his story also critiques national environmental narratives under market capitalism and conservation efforts that ignore local ecologies and communities.

From Mr. Jasinski's perspective, re-naturing and re-wilding the forest thus did not make much sense. First of all, the industrial forest was not that mono-cultural after all, and second, the newly introduced trees, especially, did not fair well in the dry and sandy environment. Thus, while oak is seen as a national symbol, for Jasinski, it is a symbol of what's wrong with national unification and its unitary logic of wiping out local knowledge, expertise and infrastructures. As for many of the refugees, for Mr. Jasinski, things did not make ANY sense these days. "I feel like I live in a confused world. Everything is *ver-rückt* (crazy, displaced)," Amanda, a Kenyan asylum seeker, once told

me, pointing to the odd contradictions of her being stuck in the countryside without work, without language, and with no money to get her out of this situation. As gaps opened up after the collapse of socialism, nature "re-turned". In the process, human biographies, such as Mr. Jasinski's, did anything but fall into place. In fact, they became un-tamed.

Next, I will turn to a different sense of "wilderness" that I learned about in the March Oder region.

PART III: The "Bush" in Europe

Nowhere

"It's different when you come here as a tourist", Nangila told me. "You have something to do. It's nice and green and you like it, coming from the city. But if you stay in the forest for a long time, you get used to it. You don't see these things any more. There is nothing for me to do in this forest. It's like living nowhere. Yes, maybe you can see this place on the map. It's in Germany. You can point to it when you look at a map. But it is nowhere. Boredom sets in and it takes over. You don't know where you are anymore. You are away from everything. You are in the forest. And maybe you go to these places in the *Landkreis* (county). But after a while you know all of them and you don't know where to go anymore. You are not allowed to work, you are not allowed to go to Berlin. You have no aim. There is nothing. It's like living nowhere.

*

While forests were significantly redefined in the years after the fall of the Wall, the creation of nature parks and infrastructures for tourism was an important means for producing new economic possibilities, especially in unemployment ridden rural areas in East Germany. Yet not only "nature" offered new possibilities. As many asylum seekers were "re-distributed" from West to East Germany as part of post-unification immigration policies, abandoned military barracks in Brandenburg's forests offered easy – and cheap – locations to accommodate them. In the immediate years after re-unification, many former East German counties, although often not explicit about their goals, scrambled to receive funding for accommodating refugees in their vicinity (Pieper 2008).[340] Thus, in a certain sense, both "refugees" and "nature" aided in economic recovery of rural regions – or at least carried the hopes for it – yet in very different ways. And not only did strategies of making nature matter in times of economic transformation get entangled with *images of otherness* (Heatherington 2001), but also with *strategies of racialized exclusion*.

Nangila's and other asylum seekers' stories about their experience in the forest and dreams of Europe and their encounters with Brandenburg as a "wild space" in the middle of nowhere put yet another a twist on the idea of the frontier, and the "Wild East". And not unlike Mr. Jasinski's story, theirs is not a romance of the landscape but a dream of a different land gone awry.

[340] For a detailed discussion of the political economy of camps in Germany as well as formal and informal economies of migration in them, see Pieper (2008: 319, 323).

The Ostrich Farm

In 2004, local news of corruption in the *Heim* near Ronersdorf, situated in the forest close to the March Oder Park, had spread: the manager and subcontractor of the camp had illegally hired refugees to build an ostrich farm right next to the camp for one Euro per hour.[341] When the story made it into the newspaper, the camp was closed down. Generally, the county "allowed" – and funded – asylum seekers to work for so called "1 Euro jobs" at the Heim for a certain amount of hours per month. Yet the owner of the camp found a way around both these regulations: allegedly hiring several asylum seekers to do work in the Heim (and not on the adjacent facilities), he simply signed up the same people under different names. Thus one person could work up to eighty hours per month (and only make eighty Euro). The money to pay for them came from the county, which did not bother to check up on him.

Nangila, Eli and many other asylum seekers had worked on the farm. Of course, as Nangila explained, they knew perfectly well, they were being exploited. Still, they thought it was better than doing nothing. They build the stables and the fences – and cleaned the entire farm once the animals moved in. One time they even did "advertising" for the farm and performed an African dance. "And what did we get for it?" Nangila asked. "An ostrich egg and some ostrich meat!" (Not unlike when they organized an "African Evening" one time in the Heim. A few people from town and the local

[341] Thus, African ostrich meat exports to European Union markets rose quickly (from countries such as Botswana) (*African Business* 2002). But ostrich farming also provided a new investment opportunity for entrepreneurs in Europe. Today, there are many ostrich farms in the region around Berlin and in Brandenburg, as people sought economic alternatives to the formal labor market. Yet animal welfare groups have criticized the keeping of African ostriches on farms in Germany because the climate – especially long periods of rain and snow and ice in the winter – is considered to be harsh and unsuitable for the animals (Woehr 2003).

"Integration" network had set up the event and other Africans from nearby refugee camps in Brandenburg took the train to join the event. All they got was flowers. And as Nangila pointed out, they didn't even have enough money for the train ride back).

The Heim then moved to a different location near the village of Friedwalde and the so-called *Sozial-Park* took over the management. Many asylum seekers protested because the new Heim was so far removed. The new management promised them that this would be a temporary accommodation for a few weeks. In the end, people lived there for three years – a time in which Maria would walk an hour through the forest each way at morning and night every day to go to the nearest bus stop and take the train to take language classes in Berlin, and Eli rode the kids on a bike to go to Kindergarten in the village. (Petra, the German girl-friend of one of the asylum seekers) remembers driving behind the others in her grandmother's car, helping with the move, and being horrified about going deeper and deeper into the forest).

Today, the ostrich farm is a popular stop for tourists to have "exotic" bird meat. Other ostrich farms in Brandenburg even advertise their business as the perfect spot for a weekend outing in an environment with "African flair". Right next to the farm, you can now view the "wild times" of socialism: there is another former nuclear bunker that was once part of a larger secret network of facilities of "national defense". Like in Zarin, it is being fixed up today and open to occasional tours.

Obama in Ruckow

For many asylum seekers, Europe was an imaginary space, a space of civilization and progress. And yet their experience in the March Oder region departed in so many ways

from that image. Thus, many would tell jokes about their everyday life in the German "bush", mocking what they experienced as a space of wilderness, both physically and symbolically. As one asylum seeker from Kenya once told me: "I always thought in Europe everything is nice and clean and things worked smoothly and fast. You see it on TV in Kenya all the time. People are busy in Europe, and everything is in order – especially people's lives. Yet, in Germany, nobody seems to work hard, if they do at all. People take it slow. They say: Langsam, langsam! And I never expected there to be so many weeds on the sides of train tracks. Is this another Kenya? I sometimes wonder."

And there were survival stories.

Maria and Eli came from Nairobi to the March Oder region in 2001. In Kenya, they had had difficulties both because Eli had worked as a news writer and for various reasons, was targeted by the government at the time, and also because they both were members of different ethnic groups. Maria belonged to the Luo, whereas Eli was Kikuyu – which, due to longstanding tensions between these two ethnic groups in Kenya, had made it hard for their relationship to be accepted by their parents. While Eli's parents were only initially hesitant, Maria's parents had a much harder time with their relationship. They thus never married.

Maria was trained as a nurse and had worked in childcare. Eli had had a variety of jobs in Nairobi – as ambulance driver, as construction worker, as a comedian and part time free-lance journalist, as well as migrant worker in Botswana. Eli talked with a sense of wonder about the many different paths his life had taken so far, positioning himself as a traveler and explorer whose life had gone awry recently: "I have dined with kings, I

have travelled, I have been poor, and I have been in prison, and now I am here in Friedwalde, doing nothing." In 1998, during the terrorist attack at the US embassy in Nairobi, he was on duty and transported people wounded during the bombing to the hospital – and later was assigned as one of several representatives for Kenya in an international youth camp in England.

Like for many others, for Maria and Eli, their arrival story in Germany was an uncomfortable topic – you never knew exactly who was listening and for what reason. But like, again for many others, it involved paying human smugglers money, leaving on a whim, packing not more than a small backpack, taking the plane and entering Germany with a fake passport. After they stayed in the general admission center in the region for a few weeks, they lived in various refugee camps in the park and at its edge for six years, moving from one camp to another, following scandal after scandal that surrounded the different locations. After first living in the refugee camp in Klausberg for a short time, they then were re-located, together with all the other asylum seekers, to increasingly remote camps in the following years: a former military camp in the forest near the village of Ronersdorf, and then, a few years later, after a scandal about the adjacent ostrich farm broke loose, moved to the most remote location in the nature park near Friedwalde. Finally, after a German woman from a close by village, had lobbied for them for years, they were offered an apartment in a nearby town.

When he heard that a family with children was living in the forest there, the district administrator said he wouldn't allow that to happen, and so he called on the county to offer them an apartment. They first offered them something in Saarlow, right

across from the district administrator. Terrified at the thought of living right next to the county administration building, Eli and Maria declined. For them, Saarlow would have been the worst town of all, because it was known for its right wing population and people harassed Africans there. A woman who they had also become friends with, offered them to live in a house right next to her in a village nearby. For them, a small village of about 60, on the side of a road, amid cornfields, would have been a nightmare. And they would have rather stayed in the camp in Friedwalde in the middle of the forest in the nature park, miles away from the next bus station, than in this place! Then, the offer came from the county for an apartment in the village of Friedwalde, a few miles from the refugee home. The people at the county already thought that Maria and Eli would not take this offer either, and, oblivious of their situation, were ready to retreat the offer. But Eli and Maria accepted. Friedwalde, and the nearby town of Ruckow, were different because there were many tourists there. There was a big beautiful lake in Friedwalde and a few small restaurants. And people were more open there. In addition, Ruckow was famous and always busy because Bertolt Brecht had lived there for a few years and tourists made pilgrimages to his former residence. So far things seemed to work out ok. Sasha went to Kindergarten in the village and Neema to elementary school in Ruckow. Through Oma, a German friend, Maria was also able to find a job in an old people's home. Later she lost the job and then worked as maid in a hotel in East Berlin. In contrast, Eli was unable to find a job and stayed home and took care of the household. He struggled with having no paid job, but was most worried about Neema entering 6th grade and having to go to a different town. He couldn't imagine what she

would go through there. Secretly, he was hoping they could move somewhere else, perhaps to Berlin, before that. Yet, they were still in legal limbo and things did not look they would change any time soon. To the contrary, they were at constant threat of being turned down and deported.

Some people at the *Heim* thought it was crazy that Maria and Eli lived in the "Dorf" (village). Ari wondered: What would you do in the *Dorf* all the time? You'd be even more isolated than in the *Heim*. At least you were in touch with people in the *Heim* and got information. You talk to people from other countries. And you have contact with organizations that deal with immigration. In the *Dorf* you would be even more isolated.

Yet for Eli, there was reason for hope: while the dream of a more civilized Europe had been shattered to some extent for him, there was still the American dream. During summer 2008, Eli, like many other Kenyans in and around Berlin, meticulously followed the US election campaign in hopeful aspiration for a more peaceful world and a diasporic success story. When Sasha entered first grade and there was a small celebration at her new school in Ruckow, Eli asked me to take a picture of him and his beaming daughter. "Obama in Ruckow!" he exclaimed jokingly.

Arrival Stories and Trips to Nowhere: Three Chicken in Frankfurt

For many, life in the *Heim* was often without traction. This lack of traction was a source of frustration and disorientation for those who had lived in the forest for years. Yet it was also a source of much storytelling and humor. Survival and odd arrival stories, trips to nowhere and ordinary absurdities abound. In these stories, German words like *ver-*

rückt (crazy, de-ranged/dis-placed), *Dorf* (village), *Heim* (home), *Krankenstadt* (sick city), and *Busch* (bush) stood on their own amid English phrases in which the jokes were told. Repeating these words, people pointed to a sense of displacement, interrupted mobilities and a landscape of "wildness" and dereliction.

One time, Nangila, recalled, he and other Kenyans got on the wrong train in the wrong direction and travelled to Poland by accident (and thus put themselves in jeopardy, especially as Poland was not part of the EU yet at the time). "This place is so flat here." Nangila explained. "You never know where you are and which direction you are going. All you see is trees." Another time, coming from Berlin to Zarin, Eli fell asleep on the train and missed his stop. Thirty minutes later he found himself in Kostrzyn, Poland. He got stuck there because a tree had fallen on the train tracks and no trains went back West, to Berlin, and the March Oder region.

Yet this was nothing compared to what happened to him when he and Maria were still living next to the ostrich farm in Ronersdorf. They had just been in Germany for a few months. Everything was new to both of them. Maria was pregnant with Sasha; and Neema, their first daughter, was three years old. All they were doing was sitting around in the *Heim* and waiting for things to change. One day, it seemed like an opportunity came along. Snoop, a 23 year old Kenyan (nick-named after Snoop Dogg, the American rapper), who also lived at the *Heim* (most of the time), told Eli that he would go to Frankfurt for a while. He had a house there, and Eli could come stay with him on the weekend. Eli was excited and thought to himself: this might be a good opportunity to go and try to find a house for him and Maria and the children.

But things turned out to be quite a bit more complicated.

As Eli was getting ready to go to Frankfurt, he went to the local store, about 5 miles of a walk away from the *Heim* to purchase some presents to bring with him. At that time, all asylum seekers still received Chipcards in order to purchase food. The four of them got one chipcard for 400 Euro per month. The card allowed them to buy food – and only food – at the local supermarket – and a few other supermarkets in the region. They were not able to buy any clothes or beer or anything else from that. "Who needs so much money for food? What do you eat? A chicken everyday? Also, in those days, we always cooked together with other Kenyans in the *Heim* and so things were cheaper because we shared," Maria commented on the oddness of that regulation.

But on the day Eli decided to go to Frankfurt, he bought A LOT OF FOOD. He bought several chickens and rice and drinks and many other things. And he carried all of it with him. Four plastic bags! He could not buy anything with the chipcard in Frankfurt, because the card was not valid there. So he took all the bags with him. [As he told us this, he waddled from one side to the other, to illustrate the heavy weight and bulkiness of his luggage. Maria and I chuckled]. Eli walked through the forest to the bus stop, and then took the train to Berlin. From there, he took the "Wochenend Ticket" to go to Frankfurt by slow train. It was only 25 Euro but it took forever to get to Frankfurt. More than thirteen hours, all across the country. When he arrived in Frankfurt, he went to the next phone booth and called Snoop. Snoop was weird right away and said: "Ah, hi, Eli. Naaaa, it's not a good day today. Call me again in two days!" And then he hung up. Puzzled, Eli, could not believe it and tried again. Sometimes you HAVE to call

someone especially if you know they won't pick up the phone. While he kept the phone ringing, several Kenyan men whom he had met in the train earlier passed by and asked him what was going on. So Eli explained the situation to them. One said he could not take him with because he was staying with his German girl friend and she won't appreciate it if he brings more of his countrymen with him. The other three men were staying with a friend also. One of them, called Adam, tried to convince the others to take Eli with them. They had stepped away from Eli and he could hear them talk in Kikuyu. They started arguing. "What do you mean? I can't just bring random people that I don't know with me to the house!"

After a few moments of going back and forth, they decided Eli could stay with them and invited him to come along. He could not have taken back the train that same day anyway on that ticket. But they told him he could not bring all the chickens and the food with him – their friends won't know where to put all that food because they have a small fridge. So Eli put all the things, including the chicken, in the locker. And he stayed the night with his new friends.

The next day, Snoop was still not available. And so Eli went back to the train station and took the food out of the locker. He gave Adam one of the chicken to thank him. Packed with the rest of the bags of food, and the other two chicken, he took the train back to Berlin. Maria was so surprised when she saw him come back with all those bags the next day!

Eli was upset with Snoop for the following weeks. After months, they finally went again together to Frankfurt and Eli just let him pay for the trip. "you owe me! This

whole trip the other day was for nothing and it cost me 80 Euro!" So he got back to him for it.

Months later, Eli found out that Adam, one of the Kenyan men who took him to their friend's house that day in Frankfurt, was sick and in the hospital in Frankfurt Oder. Eli decided to visit him and Adam was touched to see him, since hardly anyone had come to visit. They have been friends since.

As Eli told us the story, he pulled us into a world of the absurd, the sad, and the utterly hilarious. What emerged was a story of tragic comedy. A story in which Eli mocked his own naïveté about Snoop's unreliability, a story about the oddness of asylum regulations, about the sad ironies of the chipcard system and the residential law, and the absurd difficulties of trying to get a life on track in this place. In the end, Eli had traversed the country, equipped with a bunch of chickens to invest in his dream of settling down somewhere and starting a life, only to bring his chicken – and dreams – all the way back ("home") again.

This is a story of un-tamed life paths, a story about the "wildness" of exclusion, and the complex difficulties – and absurdities – of trying to get a life on track while living in the forest – a story about the efforts one has to go through only to find oneself stranded all across the country. A tragic comedy, not unlike Waiting for Godot, it was as if life and all odds had turned against Eli. And finally, Eli's narrative is also a story about being vulnerable with only a few, fragile social networks.

Eli was unable to stay in Frankfurt, not only because the residency law didn't allow him to be there in the first place, but also because he lacked financial and social

resources. The trip also turned into an ordeal because his way of travel and also the preparation for the trip were complicated through the isolated location of the *Heim* in the forest, the chipcard system and a resulting lack of social and material resources. Both the bureaucratic and legal framework – the chipcard system, the residency law, the lack of a work permit, malingering asylum cases, and murky documents – as well as the particularities of place work to create this sense of being without traction, a sense of secrecy, suspicion and befuddlement. And together, this geography of feeling helps maintain borders between alien and native and between rational and irrational, between civilization and wilderness.

A spy at the table

In early September 2009, people at the *Heim* in Zarin took a trip to Saarlow, the town, where many soldiers died during WWII. I had been staying at the *Heim* the day before when news spread that everyone at the *Heim* was invited to attend a conference in Saarlow on "Integration and Immigration" in the March Oder region. The refugees at the *Heim* were invited to attend and take part in a performance. Most people had a vague idea what this event was going to be about. Nevertheless, many residents of the *Heim*, including me, decided to attend. After a long journey by bus, train and then bus again, we travelled trough the park to Saarlow. The performance, early in the morning, involved a "role reversal": some of the attending refugees were asked to enact European border officers, checking the papers of the mostly German participants at the conference, and giving them permission – or not – to enter Germany. While the

organizers had imagined the role reversal of "playing Europeans" as a critique of racism, many of the asylum seekers did not share this view.

During lunch break at the event, everyone gathered in the upstairs hall, where soup was being served. Steven, Nangila, Eli, Maria, I and a few other people from the *Heim* sat around one of the tables, while others who attended the conference had already settled elsewhere in the room. After exchanging stories about the day so far, a dispute between Steven and Nangila broke loose. Steven had had enough of the event. He wanted to go back to the *Heim* and tried to get others to come with. "Ok, we have done our performance this morning. That's why we came here. We're done. Let's go now." He said impatiently. Nangila disagreed and urged him to stay.

"Why would we want to stay?" Steven responded. "What is this whole event about anyway? Does anyone understand what this is about? What in the world are they talking about? What is this? I have a name tag, but they didn't even print my name on it! It's all hand written and the S in my name, Steven, looks like a dollar sign! What is this? But look, Nangila's name IS printed on HIS tag!"

Nangila defended himself, explaining he had gotten a printed tag because he signed up for the conference the day before, unlike Steven, who just signed up, at the day of the event. Steven, unimpressed by Nangila's defense, got out the conference brochure that had been handed out to everyone at the beginning of the day. Flipping through the pages, he became more agitated.

"Look, people's faces are in here. It's the same people who organized this today. This is the 8th "Integration Summit" in Saarlow. They have done this already seven

times? And things are still as bad as they are!! Explain to me, what are we doing here? We did this performance. We even came yesterday and rehearsed it. And who gives us anything? We didn't even get ANY money for this. I have had enough. I am going. I have other things to worry about than doing silly performances."

"You go and ask them" Nangila tried to calm him down. "And they will be able to explain. What else would you do right now? And you did get SOMETHING: you got some coffee and food all day. You got a good lunch."

Steven, obviously unsatisfied with Nangila's response, looked at him with suspicion:

"Ah, now I know. They are paying YOU for this. This is what it is. They are paying you so you get us motivated to go. That's why you are so eager about us going. You are their spy. Tell me, how much are they paying you? What else do they want you to get us to do?"

Nangila, like others at the table, now chuckled. "No it's not like this! They are not paying me. They had the flyer at the *Heim* and everyone could see it!"

*

Although Steven's accusations against the organizers to have hired Nangila in order to plot against everyone else were only half-serious and had a joking undertone to them, they nevertheless did get to the heart of a more serious matter. Expressing his feelings of distrust, Steven conveyed a sense of conspiracy that was not only evident in this particular event but also infused everyday life in Zarin in many ways. The day after the summit in Saarlow, I learned that several people at the *Heim* also accused Nangila of

plotting with the organizers of the conference because he had not told them about the event ahead of time. Thus, accusations and suspicions circulated among the refugees, creating a whirlwind of debates and resentments against each other, but most of all against the odd institutions (of "wildness"?) around them. From the perspective of living in the forest for years, and the sense of everyday uncertainty and isolation, while struggling to find traction, "integration", with its odd language and staging of events, looked like a conspiracy, a bad joke. And everyone was a possible suspect.

These stories of corruption circulated in other contexts as well. In particular, their sense of suspicion became palpable in the face of seemingly arbitrary bureaucracies as well as the specter of state power and racism – a sense of suspicion, and as I showed in the last chapter, a sense of the *unheimlich* that people experienced in their everyday lives in the *Heim*. But this sense also went far beyond the *Heim* and seeped into other moments and places.

*

These stories illustrate that racism created the permission for corruption, on all sides. And corruption created a sense of "wildness", a blurring of boundaries – a wildness and arbitrariness that might lurk just around the corner any moment. Deborah Bird Rose has defined the "wild" as the process of colonization and the specter of racism itself: "Wild people (colonizers) make wild country (degrading, failing). Colonization and the wild form a matrix: settler societies and their violence" (Rose 2004: 4). In a similar sense, re-wilding seen from the perspective of the refugees living in the March Oder Park is a

process of making "wild country", a landscape, that, in Amanda's words, is *ver-rückt*, and based on racial exclusions and displacements.

The odd mixture and convergence of disparate practices, affects and places created a sense of the absurd and untamed: everyday racisms, murky bureaucratic procedures, the constrictions and arbitrariness of the residency law and other regulations, ongoing legal limbo, a daily struggle to find traction, boredom, the remoteness of the *Heim*, the unhomeliness of the camps' surroundings and the military camps, long routes of travel in the forest, and the circulation of mutual suspicions. For many, joking about this absurdity, and a sense of bewilderment and "wildness" became a matter of keeping your everyday sanity. Yet, as Eli once put it, sometimes, when you do a lot of comedy, the line between reality and joke becomes muddled. And, similarly, the line between belief and disbelief, humor and outrage in the face of rampant and "wild" inequality blurs.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this dissertation, we followed the routes of weeds growing in the rubble. With these emerging post war ecologies, "nature" became an urban practice. More specifically, the wide emergence of sticky goosefoot in the city was tightly linked to the catastrophes wrought by fascism, as well as the division of Berlin and the history of urbanization, migration, trade, and climate change throughout Europe during the Cold War. In contrast, this last chapter focused on emerging "weedy" ecologies in a post-socialist and postcolonial world at Berlin's fringes. In the cracks of frail economies, many role reversals, estrangements and "ruderal" practices emerge: formerly extinct "wild

animals" reenter the region, plants overgrow the ruins of former military camps, computer specialists pose as Indians, refugees move into former military spaces and build an ostrich farm, while others re-enact war or go on safari tour. Foresters become funeral speech experts, asylum seekers perform as border guards, and letters easily get mistaken for dollar signs. In the process, former schemes of natural and social order are un-tamed, sometimes even abandoned, creating a sense of out of placeness and something that is difficult to know: as different forms of "wilderness" take over in the shrinking countryside, what human and non-human "pioneers" make it their habitat? And what happens to former modernist schemes to create order – such as a forest that is protected and not cultivated any more, a military camp that is abandoned, or a refugee home that becomes an ostrich farm?

Like in Lars' safari tour, there is no unifying, simple story here – rather, different time-scales and forms of otherness are cobbled together. Frontier imagery appears both in the experience of postsocialist transformation and in the face of shifting postcolonial borders as Fortress Europe solidifies. The vignettes in this chapter have thus shed light on different material and symbolic practices of wilding and the ways in which these affirm and negotiate different alterities – natural, economic, racial and post-socialist regional identities.

I have tracked wilding practices across different registers: as economic strategy and romantic re-enactment of place, as guideline for conservation and land use in order to create national unity in nature, and as a sense of bewilderment in the face of postsocialist transition and racial exclusion. These stories then tell us about a shifting

"ecology of nationhood" (Comaroff 2001): following practices of re-wilding, we see how the nation gets remade through "wilderness" and nature, and how some human and non-human bodies – people, plants, animals, landscapes and "things" – are situated out of place, outside of the national body.

Coda

This dissertation began with the insight that the current rhetoric of a clash of cultures and parallel worlds that is so pervasive in contemporary Europe – as well as the mono-naturalism and culturalism persistent in thinking about urban and rural environments – are poor tools to think with. Today, as I am writing my closing remarks, nationalist and anti-immigrant voices once again merge to create a renewed sentiment of a "Fortress Europe" while European governments solidify austerity policies on a long-term basis. In the context of the recent social transformations sweeping across the Middle East, and the war in Libya, fears of an uncontrolled influx of (North-)African refugees have led EU nations to embark on further tightening immigration and asylum policies, as well as considering for a radical revision of border controls within Europe and its outer edges.[342] As these struggles over who gets to define Europe's borders and its "home affairs" resume, urban policies and public discourse about European cities continue to stress a framework of urban disconnection. In Germany, we can recognize this framework in stubborn assumptions that insist in locating the source of conflicts around immigration in immigrants themselves – and especially in their assumed lack of sense of belonging to the environments they inhabit.[343] As I have shown, we can trace the echoes of ideas

[342] Denmark's recent controversial announcement (May 2011) to re-erect border controls to Germany and Sweden in order to curb the movements of illegal immigrants in between the countries, represents one first step to overhaul the border politics of the Schengen system which loosened border control among EU nations while increasingly surveilling Europe's outer borders.

[343] See also my argument in Chapter 2. In these assumptions, we can discern echoes of notions of *Heimat*. Both signifying home and homeland, the notion of *Heimat* rests on a particular relation between humans and their environment: the idea that Germanness is rooted in the land – via ties of (blood) heritage and a particular relation to the land – for example through agricultural practice. During the Nazi period this idea of the homeland culminated in the hatred against anything that is foreign in the land and ultimately led to a whole variety of "homeland policies" and efforts to relocate human and non-human populations and

about what it means to be German and the notion of "*Heimat*" in these debates. At the same time, metaphors of the ghetto and "social hotspots" invoke images of a lurking danger in cities: the danger of fire breaking lose, the threat of wilderness disrupting the order of the civilized city. Thus, the question of who belongs where and who is seen as out of place remains central in a world in which immigration, mixing and cultural hybridity persist to be a problem: who travels and dwells where and with whom?

In this spirit, the preceding chapters followed different travelers and dwellers in Berlin and its edges – German, immigrant, human, non-human – to ask about the remaking of national, racial and European boundaries. While all the chapters addressed different sites to examine efforts to create belonging and home through relations to the environment and to nature spaces, they also went beyond tracing the imagination of homogenous communities. Beginning with the story of sticky goosefoot, I illustrated how the experience of urban breakdown during and after the war triggered an "art of noticing" (Tsing 2010) among Berlin botanists that diverged from post-WWII urban imaginaries about the nation, nature and the city: as botanists followed plants like sticky goosefoot, a world of cosmopolitan urban connection unfolded in front of their eyes. Sticky goosefoot's ruderal practices, its rubble ecologies, thus provided a mode of attention for the following chapters: they pointed us to the unexpected life that emerges out of the "disturbed" landscapes of nationalism; and they reminded us that "urban nature" is always the outcome of histories of globalization and environmental change.

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restore belonging – and culminating in extermination. Yet as Lekan (2004), points out, throughout German history, discourses of "homeland" (*Heimat*) always included both democratic and pluralist understandings as well as racist and nationalist ones (Lekan 2004: 6).

Rather than constituting parallel worlds, or homogenous entities, ruderal communities emerge in the juxtaposition of different environments, they thrive in in-between spaces, and they learn to live with impact, relocation and "disturbance". And yet, with all their unpredictability, rubble ecologies are deeply ambiguous figures. Resisting both to be domesticated, bounded nature and culture, AND the untouched purity of wilderness – and thus the stuff nationalist dreams are made of – ruderal practices provide an alternative framework to thinking about heterogeneity in cities. Following the idea, I traced practices that emerge at the margins of the city and its bounded spaces of nature and culture, as well as social worlds that materialize from the juxtaposition of contrasting environments. Moving from the ruins of the war to the gardens of today's Berlin, Chapter 2 examined the ways in which urban gardening and other practices of tending to nature in the city attempt to mimic AND transcend the bounded semiotics of urban ghettos in Berlin – as well as a concept of culture neatly cultivated in gardens and fenced in.

With a similar attention to the complex social worlds that bubble up in bounded spaces of nature in the city, the next two chapters turned their view to debates about multiculturalism and the use of urban parks. Following the intimate economies of the "Thai Park", I showed how Southeast Asian immigrants use a green space in the city not simply as space of leisure but as material resource to create a Thai space while transcending contemporary cultures of austerity through food practices. Whereas the "Thai Park" was able to survive through a performance of place as exotic and other, this was not the case as we travelled to yet another urban park. Chronicling different

productions of "barbecue area" in the *Tiergarten*, Berlin's largest city park, I traced how barbecuing becomes a charismatic object, triggering anxieties and pleasures in Berlin and as far as Istanbul. Through urban discourse and policy to both contain and create barbecuing as a Turkish cultural tradition, "barbecue area" emerges as a savage space threatening the internal civilized order of the city – via the specter of fire, smoke, garbage and pollution. These debates and policies around barbecuing can then be read as efforts to mark off a space in the city as "other", a space in which immigrant bodies are cast as being out of place and racialized on the basis of their allegedly inappropriate way of inhabiting the urban environment. At the same time for Turkish immigrants, barbecuing is a makeshift cultural practice, a way of creating connections to "nature" in the city that provides a source of ethnic identity and challenges European imaginaries of domesticated urban nature.

Chapter 5 took us out of the "savage space" of the city and into the forest at Berlin's edges. Tracking refugees' experiences and stories about the "bush" in the March Oder Park, in the middle of Europe, I argued that in order to get a deeper sense of unfolding racial geographies, we need to track a feeling of the *unheimlich* – and thus attend to a sense of displacement and cognitive dissonance that emerges out of the everyday threat of racist violence as well as contradictory practices of remaking the nation through nature and immigration policies. These contradictory policies determine what human and non-human bodies – people, plants, animals, landscapes and "things" – get to count as part of nature, or as out of place, outside of the national body.

The *unheimlich* at the forest edges of Berlin tells a story about affective geographies throughout Europe: the condition of not having a home, and the collision of different, postcolonial and postsocialist time frames. Within the same landscape people see home *and* the un-homely. Here and in other chapters, I thus show how there are multiple interpretations and histories present in natural landscapes. These multiple layers give way to sometimes surprising connections and imaginations: a deer turns into an antelope, a pine forest turns out to be both a socialist ruin and a space of diversity; and barbecuing in the park is both a practice of making a mess and creating home. Finally, Chapter 6 attended to practices of renaturalizing and othering the former socialist East. As I followed different rewilding practices in the March Oder Park, we saw how the "wild East" is remade as a space of inauthenticity, a space of returning to nature *and* making it alien – a space of wilderness, racism, and economic corruption.

These seemingly disparate instances, places and communities provide snapshots of social exclusions and racialization practices that work through environments and narratives about nature. But they also shed light on creativity at the margins of the city. By attending to the ways in which both humans and non-humans transgress bounded naturecultures, I hope to have offered different ways of thinking about the heterogeneity of life in today's cities and their edges.

If we want to imagine a future of social and environmental justice in contemporary cities – and thus envision what AbdouMaliq Simone, focusing on racial and class inequalities in urban Africa, has called the "City Yet to Come", we need to think harder about how unlikely neighbors in today's cities and their edges – and

barbecuers, food vendors, foresters, environmentalists, sticky goosefoot, antelopes, safari guides, mushrooms, gardeners, rabbits, bunker friends and refugees might be among some of them – inhabit and traverse existing hegemonic spatial orders and environments. This dissertation hopes to make a contribution to that larger project.

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