

# **Unfinished Metropolis**

# **Urban Development Manifesto for Berlin- Brandenburg**

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[unvollendete-metropole.de](http://unvollendete-metropole.de)

# Preamble

The centenary of the incorporation of Greater Berlin is a good occasion to look back. Today's metropolis is the product of actions taken over generations, especially since the 1880s. Its rich legacy encompasses ruptures, destruction and expansion, unique and often fascinating places, opportunities and problems. The 100th anniversary of Greater Berlin is also an occasion to look forwards. Even and especially in times of a pandemic. Our city, with all its potential, must turn to the great challenges of the age: climate change, resource conservation, circular economy, social cohesion, digitalisation, sustainable food and agriculture, diversity of centres, green mobility, inter-state cooperation, political coherence – all realised in a framework of attractive and resilient urban development. The paradigm shift towards sustainable, conserving urban development must be energised, with a broad public debate on the responses to growth and contraction processes.

This Manifesto represents the essence of the “Unfinished Metropolis” project organised by the Architekten- und Ingenieurverein zu Berlin-Brandenburg and its partners (exhibition 100 Years of Urban Planning for Greater Berlin, Perspectives from Europe, results of the International Urban Planning Competition for Berlin-Brandenburg 2070, Metropolengespräche, BB2070 – Magazine for urban planning and urban living).

We use the term “urban development” in a broad sense extending beyond the concrete structures of the metropolis. It also encompasses the political, social and cultural conditions under which construction occurs, the actors that influence the process – planners, developers and their opponents – and finally the impacts and messages of the buildings themselves. Construction also affects the configuration of public space, the architectural design of our spatial environment. As such, urban development also comprises the relations of production, the production process and the city as product, with the emphasis on the latter.

We regard this Manifesto as a contribution to the much-needed discussion about future urban planning in Berlin and Brandenburg. It is addressed in the first place to the policy-makers responsible for making the key decisions, but also to civil society, business and academia. In that sense it is both medium and message.

# Development Aspects

## 1 Make the star shine

Starting point: Since the late nineteenth century, the Greater Berlin area has developed radially, along the railway lines and arterial roads. The resulting star shape has survived despite the increase in car use since the 1960s, in part because of city's divided status during the Cold War.

Outlook: Berlin und Brandenburg already have a shared concept for a sustainably growing metropolis: The star settlement concept concentrates future growth along the star's rays and discourages sprawl. This model needs to be made much better known, more broadly accepted and actively implemented. The delineation of built and green space needs to be clarified, as does the concrete implementation in actionable plans and real development. Institutional and processual efforts and effective instruments are needed, including municipal-level planning (with land use plans) and determinations supporting urbanisation of settlements within the settlement star and maintenance and restoration of landscape outside it.

## 2 Reinforce and expand centres and their variety

Starting point: Because it was incorporated comparatively late (1920), Greater Berlin retains a unique abundance of centres of various forms and sizes, with different development trajectories. Brandenburg also possesses a multitude of splendid centres.

Outlook: A multiplicity of centres is enormously advantageous for a sustainable metropolis. The centres themselves are subject to structural transformation processes, for example affecting retailing, office space and housing. In this context the future of the three principal centres – historical Mitte, City West, and the

centre of Potsdam – is a matter for further public discussion and planning efforts. On the other hand, the corona pandemic shows how at risk the centres are. In order to maintain and expand this unique configuration of centres, an integrated centre development programme for Berlin and Brandenburg should be prepared and implemented. Complementing the StEP programme for Berlin, it should facilitate change of use, correct negative trends and expand existing practices ("active urban centres").

## 3 Maintain and create socially and functionally diverse residential areas

Starting point: Over the past 150 years the Berlin region has experienced all kinds of housing policies with all kinds of results –and changing reputations over time. The outcomes include high-density neighbourhoods, highly dispersed settlements and much in-between. The inter-war modernist developments in Berlin and Brandenburg supplied high-quality housing at affordable prices, while the private sector continues to bring forth exemplary projects. Housing is a special kind of commodity that requires public care and attention.

Outlook: The biggest challenges are energy modernisation in the existing housing stock, creating new affordable housing to architectural and planning standards, preserving and creating appropriate diversity, and preventing urban sprawl. This also means strengthening and densifying the existing and concentrating new developments on brownfield sites within the overall framework of the star-shaped city. Especially in Brandenburg, the conversion of disused military sites to housing is a stand-out feature.

## 4 Expand rail transport

**Starting point:** Rail transport has powered Berlin's growth – within and beyond its limits – for 150 years. Very early on, the radial lines were joined by the ring railway and, following Berlin's division, by the outer railway ring.

**Outlook:** The underground, urban and regional networks are operating at their capacity and frequency limits. Expansion of the tram network is slow. Full use must be made of any reserves. The growing metropolis requires more rail transport: Regional, overground, underground trains and trams as appropriate, extending outside the city limits. This includes well-designed transport hubs enabling smooth intermodality. The connectivity of the outer railway ring needs to be utilised in accord with the star paradigm, and the benefits and feasibility of another rail ring further out should be investigated. A new mobility culture will require a strategic partnership between the two states, rail operators, the regional transport authority VBB, the forum of municipalities, academia and business (following the Munich model).

## 5 Create quality streets and squares

**Starting point:** The Greater Berlin area was initially shaped by major radial roads, which acquired their specific character from their major squares, urbanised villages, suburbs and landmarks. From the late 1920s onwards, Berlin was a testing ground for car-driven development. The legacy is a fragmented motorway system and a road network designed primarily to serve the motor vehicle.

**Outlook:** Every effort must be made to adapt the outdated car-oriented urban fabric for the turn to green mobility demanded by climate change. Today, again, the main streets and squares will be crucial for the success of green mobility. We need to create a city where more trams and electric buses, more cyclists and pedestrians and fewer cars coexist fairly in green public space.

## 6 Conserve, maintain and expand green and open space

**Starting point:** The Berlin region possesses a rich and diverse landscape (even if some has been lost to car-driven development): green streets and squares, parks, allotments and cemeteries, lakes and waterways, forests and farmland. Berlin is proud of its green World Cultural Heritage and its tradition of exemplary care of its historic gardens.

**Outlook:** Adequate funding and personnel need to be secured for the maintenance and development of urban green space and natural landscapes, in order to satisfy growing expectations and meet the challenges of climate change. Inner city streets and squares must be regreened and adapted to cope with expanding demands. Regional parks must be strengthened (also institutionally) as a central element of the settlement star promoting regional identity, recreation, leisure and contact with nature. Sustainable regional food supply chains should be supported and expanded. The high standard of the historic parks and gardens must be maintained.

## 7 Protect the water resources

**Starting point:** Berlin and Brandenburg is a region of water features, with the Rivers Spree and Havel, canals and many lakes. The waterways serve multiple functions: transport, drainage, leisure and climate. But above all Berlin sources its drinking water from wells close to its water bodies. Water is central to the natural landscape, but the urban space is relatively detached from the waterfronts.

**Outlook:** Securing the water supply is a central priority for the entire region, as a growing population increases demand while the climate crisis exacerbates shortages. We need stronger protections and better management of water resources, improved public access to water bodies, responsible leisure use, and at the planning level, integration of water bodies into urban space and landscape. In particular water management actors in Berlin and Brandenburg must intensify their cooperation with each other and with other architectural and regional development actors.

## 8 Integrate major new projects sensitively into the existing city

**Starting point:** Greater Berlin has been shaped by major transport infrastructure, in particular airports and railway stations, as well as industrial and military facilities. Each following their own location logic, they have configured the costs and benefits of the metropolis. But new projects have redistributed forces in the region: the post-reunification reconfiguration of the airports and major railway stations, as well as expansive developments at the EUREF Campus, in Johannisthal/Adlershof, in Potsdam, in Ludwigsfelde and in many other Brandenburg municipalities.

**Outlook:** This dynamic development continues, with major projects at Südkreuz, in Siemensstadt, at the former Airport Tegel, in Grünheide and so on. Since the departure of the last Russian forces in 1994, their enormous military sites have gradually been repurposed and still offer great potential. Integrating these capacities and linking them with the metropolis as a whole requires cooperation between city and region. Ensuring that each new development retains its characteristic, historically conditioned form and mix of uses must can help to generate identity.

## 9 Reconceive municipal planning and development

**Starting point:** Berlin and Brandenburg have unique historical experience with the three major modes of economic urban development: private enterprise (for example in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century); local authority-driven (for example in the Weimar Republic); and state-led (for example under the Nazis and in the GDR). The question here was not only who led urban development – the central state, the municipality or the private sector – but also what scope it covered: public space, public transport, energy supply, water and sewerage, waste disposal, food production, hygiene, housing.

**Outlook:** Today the municipal urban development of the Weimar Republic could serve as a model, not in its specific iteration but as a concept that needs to be interpreted for our times. A sustainable metropolis requires strategic policy with a long perspective, a capable administration and responsible control – whether through

rules, cooperation or publicly owned enterprises – over a regularly reassessed spectrum of public services. The objective is a new, stable form of cooperation between strong municipalities and a respected private sector.

## 10 Take the city's role as capital seriously

**Starting point:** The German state as a whole has left powerful traces in the city, especially in the former and current government districts Schlossareal, Wilhelmsstrasse and Spreebogen. Berlin was never a universally appreciated capital city within Germany. In the 1990s Berlin gained a reputation abroad as a cheerful, tolerant and extremely attractive destination, even if the newly reunified state was not always looked upon so favourably. Germans of all ages have warmed to Berlin too, since the Love Parades and Christo's Wrapped Reichstag.

**Outlook:** Berlin needs an active capital-city policy, a point neglected when Greater Berlin was established in 1920. The federal government and the states need to show greater awareness of their capital's positive image and potential in national and international contexts, and become active and responsible partners in the city's development. This also includes suitable spaces and platforms in the capital for showcasing examples of successful urban development policy – not only from Berlin but across Germany as a whole.

## 11 Intensify exchange with other major cities

**Starting point:** International exchange is the life-blood of urban development. Berlin has a long tradition of this. In addition to numerous international competitions, it has held major exhibitions such as the General Urban Planning Exhibition Berlin in 1910, the German Building Exhibition Berlin in 1931, Interbau in 1957, and the International Building Exhibition in 1984/1987.

**Outlook:** Berlin needs new drive in international exchange and targeted cooperation projects. How are projects managed elsewhere? How are other cities designing high streets for a new era? How are others approaching sustainable housing construction and modernisation? We must learn from the experience of other cities how new rail links, new parks and new centres can serve sustainable growth. A new IBA might serve as a medium of international exchange.

# Institutional Reforms

## 12 Optimise the city/ borough relationship

Starting point: It was already clear in 1920 that the newly codified relationship between the boroughs and the city was less than ideal. Efforts to overcome the deficits through administrative consolidation and structural change have ultimately remained unsuccessful.

Outlook: It is high time to clarify and optimise the relationship between the city administration and the boroughs – and the distribution of tasks within the boroughs. Within the city government, integrative planning approaches and implementation strategies must be strengthened and planning processes accelerated. That will require an amendment to the state constitution and an administrative reform. The city administration should be responsible for strategic tasks of regional scope like the main centres, roads and squares, major green spaces, the integration of major projects and the construction of larger housing developments. The ground needs to be prepared for a comprehensive centres programme in the boroughs.

## 13 Continue developing a robust and durable relationship between Berlin and Brandenburg

Starting point: The administrative separation of Berlin from its hinterland dates from 1881, when the city left the association of Brandenburg municipalities. While the Greater Berlin Act of 1920 encouraged institutional cooperation between Berlin and Brandenburg, this was never realised. Subsequently, during the Nazi era and in the GDR, both administrative entities were de facto abolished. Although a plan to merge

the two states was rejected in 1996, positive and effective cooperation has ensued, with a joint state planning body and a forum of municipalities. But the state boundary remains an obstacle to sustainable joint development.

Outlook: Cooperation between the states, state ministries, state parliaments and municipalities must be successively deepened. That will require more state-level agreements and a joint committee of the state parliaments. Not least, inter-municipal cooperation on specific issues and in particular spaces (such as settlement axes) must be strengthened. The objective is continuous consultation and coordination on individual issues and overarching paradigms and strategies. That means strengthening existing cooperation platforms and considering the creation of new ones. As well as representatives of municipalities and the two states, strategic cooperation should include representatives of business and civil society. In the longer term fusion of the two states should be put back on the table.

## 14 Fine-tune democratic cooperation

Starting point: Greater Berlin was always a centre – and product – of political protest and civil society engagement. Powerful grassroots movements in West Berlin (beginning in the 1970s) and East Berlin and Brandenburg (beginning in the 1980) placed the relationship between politics, government, business and civil society firmly on the agenda.

Outlook: Urban development programmes require solid democratic foundations. So democratic platforms are central to empowering the relationship between Berlin's city government and its boroughs, and the cooperation between Berlin and Brandenburg. Civil society and business initiatives and institutions must be integrated in all strategic discourses – and must contribute constructively and responsibly. One good

example in Berlin is the Round Table on Land Policy where civil society, parliament, city government and the boroughs come together regularly to discuss important property issues. Another example of successful cooperation by many actors is the medium term “Vision 2030” for the Olympiapark. The objective of such cooperation processes is to agree on strategic objectives and strike a fair balance between local and regional interests, to ensure that parliamentary decisions have lasting and sustainable effects.

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