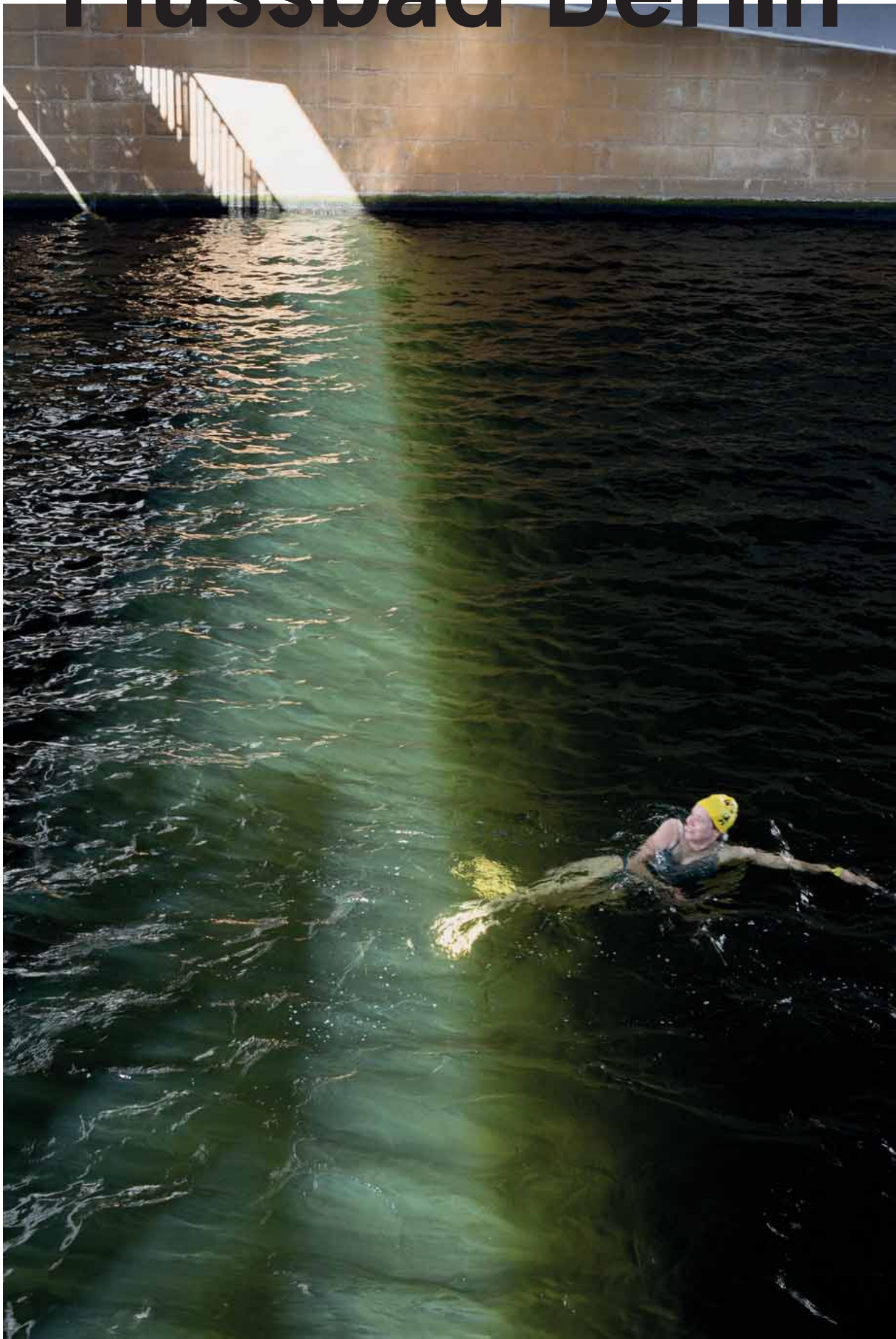


Flussbad Berlin



Annual Review No. 2
Winter 2016/17

Editorial

The “Flussbad Berlin” team has set itself a highly ambitious goal: the project wants to transform the largely unused Spree Canal in the downtown district of Berlin Mitte into an ecologically sound and easily accessible site open to all Berliners and visitors to the city. The ultimate result of our endeavour would be a brand-new and environmentally friendly recreational site in the very heart of the German capital. In our first annual review – published in English in 2016 – we provided an initial outline of the Flussbad idea and its €4 million funding, which runs until the end of 2018. Our flagship project forms part of the programme known as the “National Urban Development Projects” created by the federal government and the state government of Berlin. In this, our second annual review, our task is to illustrate how the project has developed since then and to explore the themes and challenges we are currently facing.

One of the subjects we are tackling at the moment is the ecological character of the Flussbad, which is highlighted in this issue in a number of contributions: for example, Kai Dolata explains how we are going to perform practical tests on the planned gravel filter starting in spring 2017 within a 40-metre, 100-year-old historical ship renovated by our association members themselves. Another subject we are asked from time to time is where exactly the pollution in the Spree comes from and how dangerous it is. To answer this question, we sought the help of a number of leading minds, whose answers to our “Questions about the River” can be found on page 24.

Yet another recurring question is whether the Flussbad project is even compatible with the famous cultural structures already found on and around Berlin’s Museum Island. In her impassioned plea, Flussbad Berlin’s executive board member Charlotte Hopf explains why the Flussbad suits the inimitable character of the ensemble of buildings at Berlin’s historical core in a clear and unquestionable manner.

This annual review focusses on dialogue. For example, we speak to Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer, former director of Berlin’s Altes Museum, about the desires and priorities of the museums themselves with regard to the ongoing development of Museum Island. In the process, we discover how extraordinarily well their interests as museums could harmonise with those of the Flussbad. We are also delighted that Horst Bredekamp, one of the three co-directors of the

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Senatsverwaltung
für Stadtentwicklung
und Umwelt



lebendige Quartiere





Humboldt Forum, contributed an extract of a book on Charles the Great in which he explains how swimming contributed to a sense of community already 1,200 years ago. Plus, Barbara Vinken, Germany's foremost fashion historian, does away once and for all with the claim that swimwear and culture don't mix.

And, finally, we ask two experts in the realm of urban studies to name the spaces in Berlin-Mitte we are actually going to need in the future. Indeed, sociologist Harald Welzer and urban geographer Ilse Helbrecht urgently remind us - each from their own unique perspective - that the centre of our city must constantly evolve if it is going to be able to respond to the social challenges of the 21st century. They urge us all to help Berlin-Mitte become a "self-modernising" area rather than a faux historical backdrop visited only by tourists.

We would also like to take this opportunity to provide a brief overview of the developments at Flussbad Berlin this past year - as well as a quick look at things to come in the near future.

In September 2016, Berliners elected a new local and state government. It will take a couple of years to say whether their choice was a good one for the overall development of our city. However, what we can say today with certainty is that all of the parties elected to office - at least in terms of their election platforms - acknowledged the Flussbad project and expressed a desire to achieve ecological improvements in the water quality of the Spree River. In other words, the urban development goals embodied by the Flussbad will be anchored in the policies enshrined in the coalition agreement that binds all of Berlin's governing parties.

This positive resonance was also on hand at a late-summer gathering held by the Flussbad Association in the courtyard of the European School of Management and Technology (ESMT), which is housed in the former GDR's State Council Building (Staatsratsgebäude). In addition to welcoming many of our devoted Flussbad supporters, we also hosted several members of parliament from the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus and the German Bundestag. The get-together marked the beginning of a special partnership between the Flussbad and the ESMT; as one of the major institutions neighbouring the project area, the ESMT expressed its strong support for the Flussbad's idea and will be granting us use of an almost 900 m2 space in its histori-

cally protected courtyard area until the end of 2018. Starting in the summer of 2017, we will be installing a temporary information platform directly on the Spree Canal, which will include an exhibition space, an event site and a summer café. At this wooden-terrace structure, we will be providing information and organising discussions about the Flussbad and related urban development initiatives. The site will allow us to open a window onto the history of swimming and bathing culture in Berlin. The shape of the structure will follow the exact foundations of a swimming pool known as the "Doppel-Badeanstalt" ("Double Bathing Area") formerly located at that very site. The bathing area was built in 1897 and existed in the Mühlengraben area until 1925, when the space was filled in. An historical sketch of the pool survives to this day and will form the basis of the 1:1 dimensions of our aboveground "reconstruction". Like many other riverside bathing complexes from the early 20th century, it had to be closed due to deteriorating water quality.

The history of the Spree Canal also kept us busy this past year in connection with perhaps the greatest challenge facing the realisation of our project, namely how to design the Flussbad in a manner that fulfils the requirements of an historical monument while also integrating itself into the vibrant urban context. In order to create a basis for all future planning, we undertook an exhaustive study documenting the historical site in the Spree Canal. The report, which was developed in coordination with Berlin's historical monument conservation authorities, examines the structural and architectural development of the Spree Canal between the two tips of the island at Bode Museum and Fischerinsel. Using historical maps and images from different archives, we documented the changes made to bridges, riverbanks and river shores, among others, over the course of the past century. We also examined the history of river-bathing facilities in this section. These well-documented findings will help us undertake any necessary structural interventions - such as the stairway giving swimmers access to the canal - in a manner that fully complies with historic building protection stipulations in addition to fulfilling the Flussbad's own conceptual, technical, functional and operational requirements.

Much of what we accomplished in the past several months would not have been possible without the work and commitment of our association members. For example, in addition to the already mentioned refurbishing of the historical barge known as "Hans-Wilhelm", our members also cleaned embankment paths, gave guided tours through the project area and showcased our project at numerous public appearances. They also helped to organise and carry out the 2nd Flussbad Berlin Cup in July under the patronage of the former district mayor of Berlin-Mitte, Dr. Christian Hanke. In 2016, the number of participants in the one-day event more than doubled over the previous year: 207 people swam the 1,000 metres between Bode Museum and Lustgarten to the cheers of hundreds of enthusiastic onlookers. For example, journalist Sally McGrane reports on how she got "closer than ever" to the museums on the island. We very much hope that many others have a chance to "get closer" and that more and more people recognise the potential slumbering in a bathing area like the Flussbad. By the way, it's already time to mark the 3rd Annual Flussbad Berlin Cup on 2 July 2017 in your calendars.

In 2017, we will be publishing the initial findings of the "academic collaboration" we initiated recently in which more than 250 students from various study programmes at four universities are examining the subject of Berlin's downtown Spree River and its adjacent urban spaces. As you can tell, we continue to be very active on a number of levels in our effort to transform the Flussbad project from an idea into a reality. We hope you enjoy reading about our work in this 2nd annual review!

*Barbara Schindler and Jan Edler
Flussbad Berlin e.V.*

A welcome note by Germany's Environmental Minister

Since 2014, my ministry has supported outstanding architectural and urban-design projects in Germany with the help of a programme called the "National Urban Development Projects". To date we have provided roughly €240 million in federal funds to 84 projects in 68 municipalities throughout Germany. One of these premium projects is the Flussbad Berlin. We started supporting this sustainable and innovative urban development project in 2014 upon the recommendation of an independent jury of interdisciplinary experts, and we currently fund the planning and ongoing development of the Flussbad project until 2018 with a total of €2.6 million.

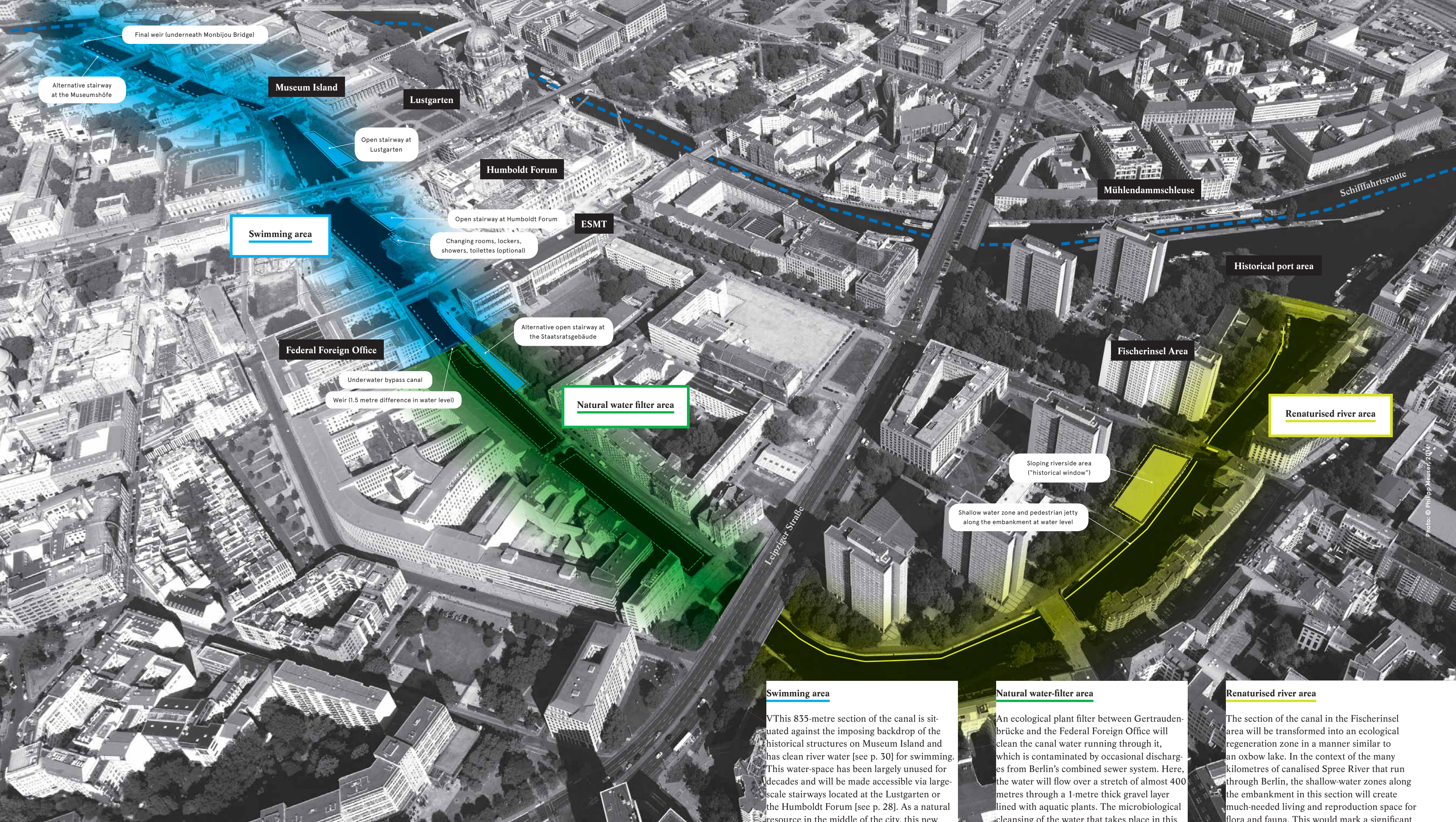
The project seeks to harness the potential of the Spree Canal in Berlin's historical centre and render it usable in new ways. The plan is to transform an 835-metre stretch of the canal into a swimming area open to the public. In the upper part of the waterway, which comprises roughly 1.8 kilometres, the project foresees a unique biotope landscape and a reed basin for the natural cleansing of the canal water.

The Flussbad would thus become a symbol of an environmentally friendly city that has rediscovered the river at its core and opened it up as a space for all to use.

If it would be possible to achieve a level of water quality in the Spree Canal comparable to a natural waterway, the project could become an ambassador for ecology, sustainability and the responsible use of resources. The Flussbad would also embody a type of modern architecture that showcases the extent to which designed environments can move and inspire us.

Barbara Hendriks

*Dr. Barbara Hendriks
Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety*



Flussbad Project Berlin

Flussbad Berlin is an urban development project designed to reactivate a stretch of water in the historical centre of the city known as the Spree Canal, which has lain almost entirely dormant for 100 years. Our plan divides up the Spree Canal into three sections, each with its own unique use, atmosphere and function.

Swimming area

This 835-metre section of the canal is situated against the imposing backdrop of the historical structures on Museum Island and has clean river water [see p. 30] for swimming. This water-space has been largely unused for decades and will be made accessible via large-scale stairways located at the Lustgarten or the Humboldt Forum [see p. 28]. As a natural resource in the middle of the city, this new public space will attract residents and visitors alike back to the city centre: to gather, relax or swim in the clear water. This everyday sensory experience will give people a new perspective on the historical city and create a new level of use, perception and meaning for the increasingly streamlined area of Berlin-Mitte. It will also enhance its cultural and social meaning and make it sustainable for the future.

Natural water-filter area

An ecological plant filter between Gertraudenbrücke and the Federal Foreign Office will clean the canal water running through it, which is contaminated by occasional discharges from Berlin's combined sewer system. Here, the water will flow over a stretch of almost 400 metres through a 1-metre thick gravel layer lined with aquatic plants. The microbiological cleansing of the water that takes place in this section will make it possible to swim without care in the water that emerges after filtering. This continuous process is powered solely by gravity; in other words, the filtered water flows naturally into a swimming area that lies at a level that is roughly 1.5 metre lower.

Renaturalised river area

The section of the canal in the Fischerinsel area will be transformed into an ecological regeneration zone in a manner similar to an oxbow lake. In the context of the many kilometres of canalised Spree River that run through Berlin, the shallow-water zones along the embankment in this section will create much-needed living and reproduction space for flora and fauna. This would mark a significant contribution to the ecological improvement of waterways, to which Berlin is internationally obliged. By removing select parts of the canal wall, this section will create green areas with shallow riverbanks [see p. 26] that will act as an "historical window" on Berlin's old city walls that have remained hidden until now. A new jetty at water level would invite visitors to explore the canal.



If not here, where else?

Charlotte Hopf

Flussbad Berlin is a large-scale urban development project for Berlin's Mitte district – literally the “centre” and the heart of the historical city. The project seeks to improve the water quality in the Kupfergraben area of the Spree Canal to such a degree that people can swim in the water without a second thought. The planned swimming area would stretch from the weir in front of the Federal Foreign Office to the Bode Museum at the tip of Museum Island. The many positive ecological, social, cultural and urban-planning facets of the Flussbad project have received praise and acknowledgment from the general public, from local players and from the press. However, one question remains unanswered to this day: Is it appropriate to go for a swim in a world heritage site?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to outline and understand the cultural importance of Museum Island. The UNESCO World Heritage Commission describes it as the following: “The Berlin Museum Island is a unique ensemble of museum buildings which illustrates the evolution of modern museum design over more than a century. It is an outstanding example of the concept of the art museum, going back to the time of the enlightenment and the French Revolution. Five museum buildings belong to the complex of Museum Island, which was declared part of the World Heritage by UNESCO in 1999: the Pergamon Museum, the Altes Museum (Old Museum), the Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery), the Bode Museum (formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum) and

the Neues Museum (New Museum). Museum Island is an integral part of the cultural heritage of the 19th century, the age of education and science. The modern museum is a social phenomenon that owes its origins to the Age of Enlightenment. The opening of the formerly royal collections and treasuries to the general public has been called for ever since the French Revolution”.

This excerpt already contains the basic principles of our own approach: that is, that the emergence of Museum Island is inextricably linked to the social upheaval resulting from the Enlightenment. The image of mankind that emerged in this reform movement was one of individuals capable of being rational, free, equal and acting in solidarity with one another; and this image formed the basis for German archaeologist Aloys Hirt's call in 1797 for the establishment of a museum for the public, rather than one exclusively for the princes. Hirt referred to the presentation of artworks solely in palaces and gardens as “inexpedient”, and his call for change ultimately led to the creation in 1830 by Schinkel of the “museum” known today as Berlin's Altes Museum. The building's outdoor staircase – the upper hall of which gave visitors an eye-level view of the residents of the palace lying across the park – was much less a provocation than the physical expression of a profoundly changing society. The Lustgarten itself, which had served until then as marching grounds for the Prussian army, was completed at the same time as the museum and was the logical continuation of this changed image of human beings in public spaces. Schinkel also took inspiration for the design of this garden space from French models, mostly from the Tuilleries in Paris. On a trip to France, he had noticed the “mass of Sunday people” who gave expression to their middle-class self-image while strolling in the park.

Although the design of Museum Island in the 19th century was indeed shaped by the Enlightenment's image of mankind, this central location in Berlin's Mitte district – where the military, the church, Prussian royalty and priceless works of art would all find their place – was also influenced by the political and social ideas propounded by each of the German regimes

of the 20th century. At the end of the 1990s, the critical reconstruction of the Lustgarten by landscape architect Hans Loidl borrowed heavily on Schinkel's design and marked the square's ultimate rejection of its former status as a marching ground for the Nazis and a site for mass rallies in the GDR. The refurbishing served to bring the site full-circle back to the



ideals of the 19th century – and “the mass of Sunday people” gratefully accepted it.

The ideals of the Enlightenment contain the answer to the question posed above with regard to the specific tradition of Museum Island: they entail participation rather than exclusiveness, a balance of interests rather than the maintaining of privileges, diversity rather than monotony, tolerance rather than discrimination, information rather than prejudice, education rather than ignorance, the common good rather than individual interest, and freedom of choice rather than proscription. These ideals – that is, the Enlightenment itself – are Europe's most important world heritage. They do not belong in a museum nor should they be protected in an anxious way. We should never cynically dismiss them as outmoded and unrealistic. These ideals must be lived and shared generously, and Museum Island admonishes and encourages us to do just that. Who, if not the societies of Europe, has the privilege of being able to trust in the absolute effectiveness of the Enlightenment? The idea of strengthening this trust – and engaging in all of its related controversies – is all the more

necessary in an era in which nationalism, discrimination and egoism in almost all countries in Europe are causing many to openly call into question the freedom, equality and solidarity of mankind.

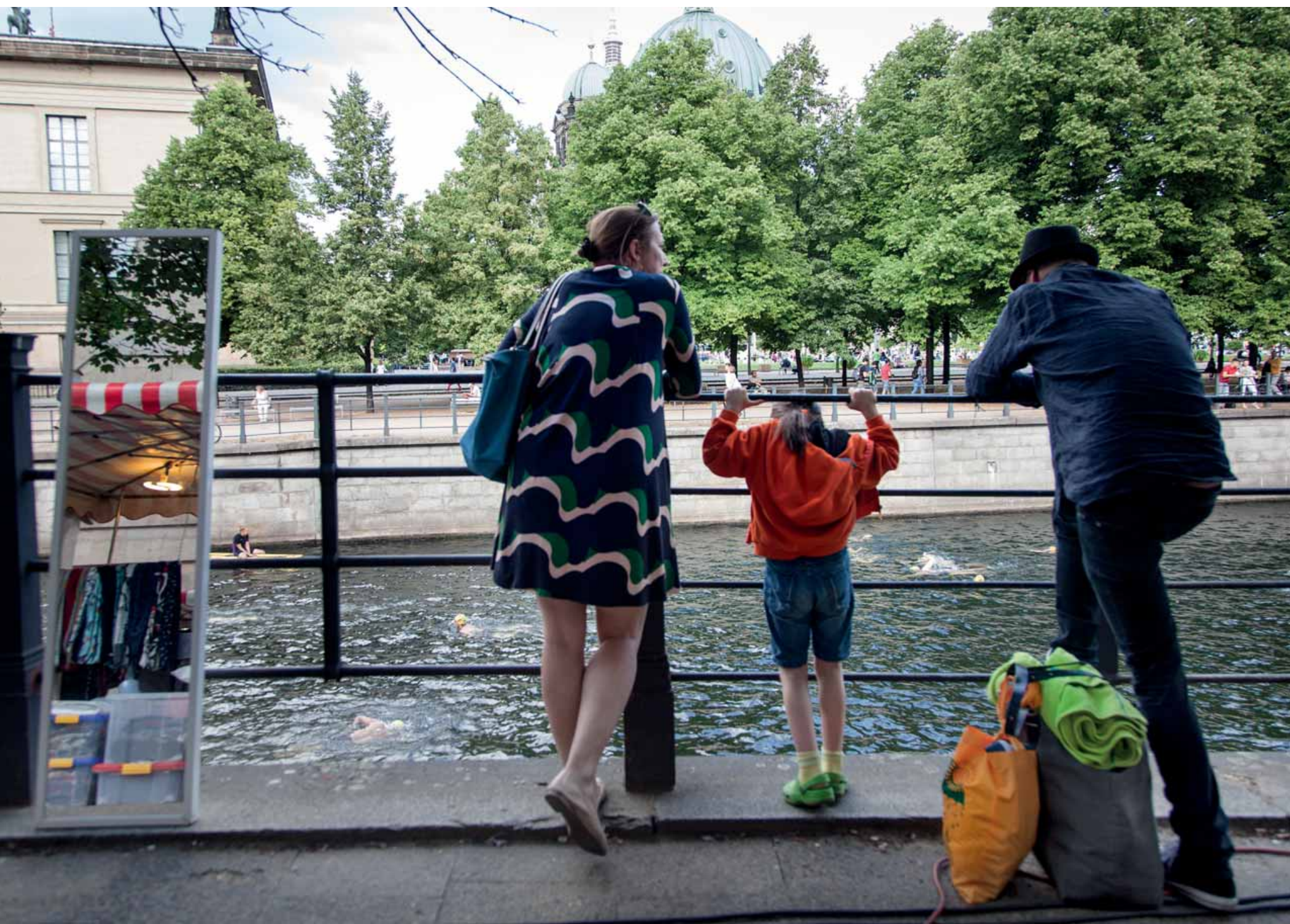
Against this backdrop, the Flussbad Berlin emerges as both a risk and a necessity. By putting its trust in future users, that is, in the civil society of the future, the Flussbad creates a public space that invites all of us to share the values of sustainability, diversity and community, to name just a few. By issuing this invitation to Berliners and visitors from all over the world, we come closer to the ideals of the Enlightenment. When all is said and done, Museum Island is simply the natural spot from which to send out this invitation.

Lustgarten, Friday, 27th May 2016, 2:25 pm © Charlotte Hopf

¹ <https://www.unesco.de/kultur/welterbe/welterbestaetten/welterbe-deutschland/museumsinsel-berlin.html>

² I would like to provide the following note to illustrate my point. During my time as a research associate at TU Dortmund, we took our students on a trip to Berlin to visit the government district. After inspecting the buildings, we had a picnic on the meadow in front of the Reichstag. We asked the students, most of whom had non-German roots, to describe their impressions. Their responses made very little reference to any actual buildings; instead, almost all of them expressed enthusiasm at the fact that it was possible to sit undisturbed on the grass in front of the parliament building in Germany and have a picnic. They argued that this would not be possible in the countries they came from in North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Europe.

Charlotte Hopf is an architect and co-founding member of the Flussbad Berlin Association. She is also a member of the Flussbad executive board.



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cc Axel Schmidt



Decadent and a little bit dirty



© Julia Fischer

**To swim the crawl between old bricks:
Sally McGrane already tested the stretch and took part
in the 2 Berliner Flussbad Cup in July 2016.**

Growing up in San Francisco, every couple of years my aunt Linda would drive up from Santa Cruz, spend the night at our house, and “escape from Alcatraz” in the morning. She got up at “the crack of dawn,” as my mother put it, and, with the other swimmers, took a boat out to the dreaded former prison island in the middle of the freezing cold bay. A few hours later, we brought them hot coffee as they emerged, trembling with mild hypothermia, back on the city’s shore. Some wore wetsuits, which my aunt said was wimpy. For “such a short swim,” she just smeared a little Vaseline under her armpits.

So when Sophie announced she was going to swim in the Spree – from Bode Museum to the Schloss bridge – it didn’t sound entirely crazy to me. My friend and co-author had already done it once, last year: the first-ever “Flussbad Pokal” was part of a grass-roots campaign to clean up the canal along Museum Island, and turn it into a public swimming pool. Ok, Sophie said, as the party at her boyfriend’s art studio grew more crowded, she did get quite sick afterwards. But she didn’t really think it was from the Spree water. And, sure, going down into the river, especially on a grey day, in the rain, in a bikini, was a little spooky. There’s one part, she said, where you swim under a long, low bridge, where the trains run, and it’s almost totally black, under there, like a passageway in a dream. But it’s magical, you can’t believe it. There you are, swimming through the heart of Berlin, and you look up, and there’s the Pergamon! This year’s “Flussbad Pokal” was July 3rd, she added. Maybe you and Frank want to come?

“Oh ja,” said Frank, a painter, who started swimming in the 90s, when the water stopped working in his apartment. He began showering at the public pool, and figured, as long as he was there, he might as well do a few laps. “We’re doing that.”

The Sunday of the swim Frank, my ex-boyfriend’s mother Uli, and I walked over from our respective apartments, all a stone’s throw from Museum Island, and registered at the Märchenhütte. Uli, who after years of waitressing finally retired and moved from her somnolent town deep in Brother’s Grimm territory to Berlin last year, had signed on as soon as I told her about it. “I’m tough,” she said, when I asked her if she was worried there might be rats in the canal. “When I was a teenager, at one of our swim competitions, I had to swim past rats in the river, and a dead pig.”

Afterwards, while Frank and Uli lit cigarettes in the sunshine – something that, unlike escaping from Alcatraz, would shock any reasonable Californian getting ready for an open water swim I looked through the information packet. Along with a map and a bright yellow swim cap, there was a copy of an article from The New York Times, where I also sometimes write. “What makes the soul of a city?” began the piece by the paper’s architecture critic. “Not long ago, Berlin advertised itself as poor but sexy; now rapid gentrification has contributed to an identity crisis, partly symbolised by the fake Baroque palace under construction in the middle of Museum Island,” Michael Kimmelmann writes. A Flussbad, he argues, would be a viable alternative to the Schloss, as a symbol of the city’s modern identity – “a whimsical, environmentally friendly Flussbad-for-the-people” instead of a “behemoth of weird Prussian nostalgia.”

I couldn’t have agreed more. A few weeks before, Frank and I went to the Schloss’s open day, and wandered through the raw concrete structure, past sightseers with selfie sticks, stands selling meat balls from cities starting with “B”, and big plastic donation boxes, with sad little mountains of 5 Euro bills. As we surveyed the cavernous, Berghain-esque entrance hall from above, Frank observed that, if they really wanted to raise money, they should throw a techno party here. With lots of drugs. Maybe he should suggest it? I agreed that they needed a new approach – it was going to take a lot of 5 Euro bills to recreate the Kaiser’s castle, as if nothing in the 20th century had ever taken place.

The day of the Flussbad swim was warm, and sunny. Just before 5 pm, we met Sophie, smiling in bright red lipstick, and at the signal the four of us made our way with the other swimmers down the stone steps across from the Bode Museum. The water was cool, fresh and pleasant, and it smelled like one of the lakes. The high, scarred stone walls of the Bode Museum rose across from the start flags, and we swam over to them. Then we lined up, treading water, until the start sounded, and we were off. The thousand meters were as magical as Sophie promised. One after another, the museums rose up from the water, their familiar stones closer and more intimate than usual. Then under that bridge – just like Sophie said, there was something eerie about it, visceral, like passing

through some sort of canal of the subconscious. “Hey Sandman!” Frank called up, when he swam past the art market behind the German Historical Museum. “How’s business?” A startled friend peered over the railing, into the river, opened his eyes wide, then shrugged. “Like always! Bad!”

Approaching the turning-point buoy, floating just in front of the Schloss bridge, with its alabaster nudes – depicting young heroes’ combats and deaths – even the new Schloss, whose still-concrete entrance always looks to me like a mask with no eyes, seemed kind of dynamic, against the blue skies. I swam more slowly, on the way back, trying to draw out the experience. It was the kind of swim that changes you, a way of being in the city that imprints itself somewhere deep within you, something you don’t forget – like swimming in the Aare, but more urban. If the Flussbad were to happen – if this was something you could do, everyday – I’m pretty sure it would change your life. This swim alone was, for me, one of those typically Berlin pleasures – decadent and a little bit dirty, exhilarating and probably not entirely healthy, inexpensive and priceless. Afterwards, as we posed by the bridge with Sophie’s daughter for an official Flussbad photographer’s picture, I had to agree, again, with The New York Times architecture critic, who concluded his article by saying that the Flussbad would be a good thing for Berlin; that “to recuperate a long-adjacent waterway at its center” would “keep faith with its post-Wall soul.” The photographer didn’t need to tell us to smile. “Let’s see that ciggy!” he said, and snapped a shot.

Sally McGrane is a journalist from Berkeley, California who has been living in Berlin for more than ten years. She has written for The New York Times and The New Yorker and is a guest author of the “10 nach 8” column on ZEIT.DE, where this text was first published on 15th July 2016.



Welcome on Board
Introducing our test filter
on the "Hans-Wilhelm"

Kai Dolata

Our technical feasibility study produced a number of estimates with regard to the Flussbad's filter system, and we've been working for over a year now on a prototype filter built to scale in which we can test these estimates.

The filter

Our filter consists primarily of water plants and gravel of varying granule sizes. Impurities are filtered out in the spaces between the gravel, while the roots of the water plants clean the spaces between the granular material. This principle has been tried and tested and is used successfully all over the world: however, until now, it has not been used in the middle of a flowing river. Seeing as the quality of the Spree fluctuates significantly – indeed, it can be quite poor, especially after heavy rain-falls and potential sewer overruns – the filter must be able to cope with input water of varying quality yet still always generate water that is safe to swim in. This is our greatest challenge.

Today we are in the process of building a prototype test filter that will help us verify the findings of the technical feasibility study. The engineering firm we selected as part of a bidding process, AKUT Umweltschutz Burkard und Partner, has been working on the development and planning of this test filter system together with Pecher und Partner and the Kompetenzzentrum Wasser since the end of 2015. Professor Heiko Sieker from the engineering company known as Ingenieurgesellschaft Prof. Dr. Sieker is monitoring the entire process.

Planning steps

An initial design made in January 2016 foresaw setting up the test filter in the approximately 100 m² lock basin located directly at the Federal Foreign Office, which today is a decommissioned lock for sport boats only. However we rejected this approach due to incalculable conditions. Since last spring, we've been working instead on installing the prototype as a floating system in an old barge.

The ship

The roughly 40-metre long, 5-metre wide engineless barge by the name of "Hans-Wilhelm" was built in the 1920s and belongs to the Berlin-Brandenburgische Schiffahrtsgesellschaft e.V., better known as the "Historischer Hafen Berlin" ("Historical Port of Berlin"). In May 2016 we began working in

close cooperation with that association to get the barge ready for its special new use.

The barge was examined in the dry dock of the Hegemann shipyard in Berlin-Spandau. It was then stripped of any rotten wood planks and old silt build-up, plus the entire bottom of the ship's bow and stern were replaced. After getting a splash of fresh paint, the ship's hull was brought to the Historischer Hafen, where the installation of the test filter is currently underway.

The test filter in the barge

The three holds of the "Hans-Wilhelm" have a surface of approximately 55 m² each and serve as structural hulls for the filter system. The filter foresees three fixed-bed filters, each with a capacity of approximately 24 m³, the lower half of which will consist of a granular layer through which the Spree water will flow and be cleaned. The three fixed-bed filters will operate simultaneously so that we can achieve different results in a short period of time. It will take some time for each individual filter to "get going"; indeed, a complex biological process will be taking place in each basin, and the filters will also have to face the changing water qualities of the Spree.

Shells are known to perform very well as an effective filter, and we are going to test – and hopefully prove – this ability in a separate "shell reactor" basin.

There will also be a freshwater tank holding a volume of roughly 80 m³ and simulating the Flussbad's planned swimming area. In the feasibility study, we showed that the water in the entire 835-metre swimming area will be replaced once a day with fresh, filtered water. In this test tank, our goal is to measure and make sure that the filtered Spree water is able to constantly maintain the necessary quality standards and does not fall under the stipulated benchmark values. The configuration will have to be adjusted in at least one fixed-bed filter depending on what kind of results we see in this tank.

The technical difference between our test filter and the planned filter system lies in the fact that we have to pump the water into

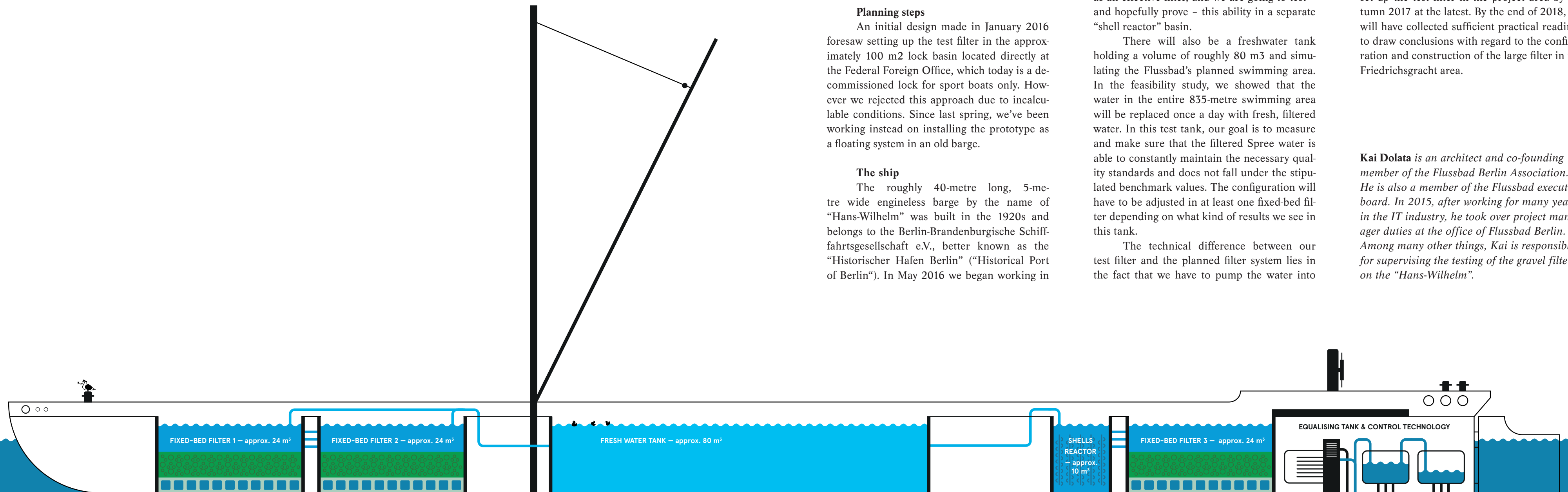
the ship's hull and then out of the hull afterwards. Unfortunately, if we cut a hole in the ship's hull for the water to move through, we would end up with a shipwreck rather than a ship.

The measurements

While the test filter system is in operation, we will be taking a number of readings in both the water and the filter. First we want to get a better idea of the current pollution levels in the Spree so that we have an initial starting value. After each fixed-bed filter, we will measure the capacity and quality of the filtration. At the end of the freshwater tank, we will examine the quality of the water once again. When all of the readings are in, we will publish our findings in a format that is as comprehensible as possible. A "creative media research group" at the HTW Berlin is currently working on a study examining how this can be carried out most effectively.

Once it's ready, the "Hans-Wilhelm" historical barge – with its roughly 20 metre-high mast, test filter system and overall brand-new look – will be moored in the Spree Canal next to the ESMT courtyard, where we will simulate the actual situation of the water as best as possible. Our goal is to have all the permits and set up the test filter in the project area by autumn 2017 at the latest. By the end of 2018, we will have collected sufficient practical readings to draw conclusions with regard to the configuration and construction of the large filter in the Friedrichsgracht area.

Kai Dolata is an architect and co-founding member of the Flussbad Berlin Association. He is also a member of the Flussbad executive board. In 2015, after working for many years in the IT industry, he took over project manager duties at the office of Flussbad Berlin. Among many other things, Kai is responsible for supervising the testing of the gravel filter on the "Hans-Wilhelm".



Cross-section of the test filter including the tanks in the three holds (sketch by B/EUCKER SANDERS).

Questions about the water

Sulphate levels in the Spree

Heiko Sieker

We've heard a lot in the past several years about sulphate levels in the Spree. First off, what exactly is sulphate?

Sulphate is the salt of sulphuric acid. It comes from open-cast coal mines in the Lausitz region of Germany, and is the result of the mineral known as pyrite – so-called fool's gold – coming into contact with oxygen. Sulphate is water soluble, which means it makes its way to the Spree via groundwater.

Is it harmful to drink Spree water because it contains sulphate?

No. The amount of sulphate in the Spree is not toxic. You'll find more sulphate in some common mineral waters than in the Spree. Water containing sulphate would only have a laxative effect in a very high concentration and if you drank it regularly.

Is it dangerous to swim in water containing sulphate?

No. Even if you swallow water containing sulphate, the amount of sulphate you're taking in is negligible. Berlin's bathing water guidelines contain no limits for sulphate. Sulphate is not a problem for the Flussbad.

Even so, isn't it possible to filter the sulphate out of the water?

It isn't necessary to remove the sulphate from the water. It would only become a problem if the concentration of sulphate rose to a higher level. If that happened, we would indeed have to treat the Spree water to make it suitable for swimming. So far, the only approach we have is to dilute the concentration of sulphate by introducing sulphate-free water. Research is still underway on new procedures that remove sulphate from water via filters.

Stephan Natz is a spokesperson for Berliner Wasserbetriebe, Berlin's waterworks company.

Professor Dr.-Ing. Heiko Sieker is a civil engineer and honorary professor for urban hydrology at TU Berlin. He advises the "Flussbad Berlin e.V." in technical and water-related matters.

Dr. Cornelia Ziehm is a lawyer and expert for consumer protection and law. She works at "Deutsche Umwelthilfe", an environmental organisation, and is a board member of "BürgerEnergie Berlin", a citizen-run energy policy association. She is also member of the board of "Flussbad Berlin e.V."

Wastewater in the Spree Canal

Stephan Natz

How much and how often is wastewater pumped into the Spree Canal, and especially into the planned Flussbad swimming area?

It depends on how much rainfall occurs in the areas that have mixed sewage pipelines with overflow channels directly into the Spree Canal. There are seven such discharge points, one of which is a large, 1.8-metre pipe at the Schleusenbrücke. So far we have no readings of the quantity of discharged wastewater. What we were able to do is to use rain data from the past 20 years to calculate an average annual discharge of roughly 40.000 m³ based on a maximum of 11 "cloudburst days".

Why is wastewater diverted into the Spree Canal in the first place? Isn't this what wastewater treatment facilities are there for?

Berlin's inner-city combined sewer system is designed to channel all wastewater – that is, all rainwater and sewage – to treatment facilities for cleaning. However, when there is a sudden and heavy rainfall, the amount of water exceeds the threshold of what these facilities can process. This "too much", which also contains wastewater from private homes, is then channelled into the river via overflow pipes so as to prevent flooding on streets and in buildings.

What kind of solutions is Berliner Wasserbetriebe – Berlin's waterworks company – exploring to try and prevent these overflows in the future?

We're currently working with the state of Berlin to build wastewater storage space, i.e. underground basins and storage channels as well as weirs and throttles in the pipelines themselves. But we see rainwater management as a broader social responsibility; we think the property owners and public authorities involved in every new construction project should pursue modern rainwater solutions that help prevent sewer overloads during heavy rainfalls. One example would be to disengage paved surfaces from the sewage system by instituting greening measures. Another would be to consider creating temporary rainwater storage surfaces by designing green areas and sports fields that lie at a lower level. Potential solutions that encourage seepage and evaporation can also be generated by "green" roof areas and facades.

The right to clean water

Cornelia Ziehm

Do we have a right to a clean, swimmable Spree?

No. There is no legally enforceable right that can be derived from the applicable law for individual citizens. However, the "Water Framework Directive" adopted in 2000 obliges EU member states to achieve and maintain a certain quality in their various bodies of waters as well as in the groundwater. This directive contains maximum values for heavy metals, such as mercury and cadmium. The "Nitrate Directive" contains additional regulations with regard to dumping fertilisers into waterways. These individual European specifications were adopted in Berlin and Germany, more specifically in the federal government's Water Resources Law and in the state Water Law in Berlin.

Does the Water Framework Directive also apply to bathing water?

Yes, with regard to the maintenance of the values stipulated in that directive relating to certain pollutants and other environmental parameters. The EU's "Bathing Water Directive" was also revised in 2006; it applies solely to those rivers and lakes identified as bathing areas. In those bodies of water, citizens can assume that the requirements are being fulfilled and that they face no (acute) health risks, such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

What requirements do designated swimming areas – which would include the Flussbad in Berlin – have to fulfil in order to meet bathing water guidelines?

Basically, the water cannot make swimmers sick. This is why the first thing they do is check for indicators that suggest the presence of faecal matter, e.g. coli bacteria or intestinal enterococci, which are bacteria that originate in the digestive process of humans or animals. They can cause diarrhoea and vomiting.

Who checks whether the water fulfils the safety requirements?

That's done by the authorities in each German state or Bundesland. In Berlin, it's the Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales (Office for Health and Social Affairs, LaGeSo) and the health authorities in each individual district. During the swimming season from May to September, we carry out regular checks

of the water quality in lakes and rivers where public swimming facilities are designated.

Will the Flussbad fulfil the bathing water guidelines?

Yes, according to the research we've done until now, it looks like it's possible. Our biggest challenge is heavy rainfall. Indeed, Berlin's sewage system is still not set up to avoid overflows in such cases. Berlin has to solve this problem overall, that is, independently of the Flussbad project. If Berlin's government doesn't address this problem in the coming years, the Flussbad would most likely have to block access to the bathing area on heavy rainfall days.

What does the Flussbad mean with regard to compliance with the Water Framework Directive?

The Flussbad is a model project. It's not designed to clean the entire Spree. That being said, the planned filter system especially would lead to improved water quality in a very popular and visible section of the Spree. This would make a considerable contribution to the compliance with the Water Framework Directive in Berlin; in this sense, it would support the Berlin administration in their efforts to comply with the guidelines.

The Spree Canal is officially designated as a federal waterway or "Bundeswasserstraße". What does this mean for the Flussbad project?

The "federal waterway" designation means that the federal government is responsible for the body of water and that it is intended to be used for maritime transport. All large rivers and canals are federal waterways. One possibility would be for the federal government to re-designate this canal – which runs between Bode Museum and Inselbrücke and today is no longer used by ships passing through the whole length – and give the responsibility for it to the state of Berlin. Another possibility would be that it remains a federal waterway but that the federal government makes a binding commitment to block it off to shipping.



Visualisation of the ecological renaturation planned for the Fischerinsel area, including a waterside jetty
cc 2016 realities:united, Berlin | Flussbad Berlin e.V.



Visualisation of the swimming area at the Humboldt Forum
cc 2016 realities:united, Berlin | Flussbad Berlin e.V.



Visualisation of the swimming area alongside Museum Island, including a floating dock
cc 2016 realities:united, Berlin | Flussbad Berlin e.V.

“This stinking canal is not something the museums should tolerate either.”

A walking tour of the Lustgarten and the Kupfergraben areas with Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer, former director of the Collection of Classical Antiques on Museum Island, and Tim Edler, the author of Flussbad Berlin. Katrin and Hans Georg Hiller von Gaertringen conducted the interview.

We're standing on the open staircase in front of the Altes Museum, looking out on the Lustgarten, the forecourt of the museum. Nearby, the cranes circle around the construction site of the Humboldt Forum.

Mr Heilmeyer, in the 1990s, you successfully initiated the redesign and re-greening of the Lustgarten. Now the Lustgarten borders on the Spree Canal, the planned area for the Flussbad. You are the former director of the Antiques Collection and former deputy director of the State Museums of Berlin, which is why we wanted to speak to you about this site, and of course about the Flussbad. Maybe you could tell us first how and why the museums re-discovered the Lustgarten for themselves.

Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer: People have almost forgotten about it today, but the Lustgarten was in a terrible condition well into the 1990s. It was by no means a Lustgarten – a “pleasure garden” – anymore. In 1936, that is, starting in the Nazi era, it was used as a paved square for parades. Then in 1950, Walter Ulbricht decided that the remains of the neighbouring palace were to be demolished as well, and the parade space extended all the way to the Staatsratsgebäude. I experienced it myself as a student; we gathered here for demonstrations, but then were expected to march past Ulbricht.

When did the idea emerge to reinvigorate the Lustgarten by greening it up?

WDH: We brought the Antique Collections back to the Altes Museum in the early 1990s. As someone who was influenced by the “68er generation”, this Nazi parade square had always bothered me tremendously. It also bothered me that the communists in the GDR simply took the space over and continued to use it as a parade square.

So we started to look at the site. Initially, the state museums felt that they weren't responsible for it. Today, however, they are very happy about the work we did back then. They like what we created here, that is, the lawns, the large fountain in the middle and the linden grove along the Kupfergraben. It is beloved of Berliners and tourists alike.

And now the relationship is set to change again, as the Lustgarten will soon lie between two major museums – the Altes Museum and the Humboldt Forum.

WDH: I'm looking forward to that. The whole situation has the potential to initiate a dialogue that goes well beyond the Lustgarten, which will indeed become a new centre of Berlin's museum landscape. I'm a former director, and I can attest that the museums feel more responsible for the Lustgarten than ever.

Is this why the museums responded so sensitively when the Flussbad idea was presented to the public?

WDH: Yes, this sense of responsibility for the Lustgarten has grown in recent years and perhaps explains the irritated reaction of Hermann Parzinger, president of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Foundation), to the Flussbad. However, the criticism he expressed in the Tagesspiegel newspaper was somewhat harsh for my taste. Personally, I am far from being an opponent of the Flussbad.

We descend the outdoor stairway of the Altes Museum and stroll through the small grove to the banks of the Kupfergraben.

WDH: This stinking canal is not something the museums should tolerate either. It bothered all of us at the museums for a long time. It would be fantastic if you were able to have a positive influence on this situation in the manner you've suggested. Berlin's waterways should be unifying elements, not ones that separate. These high riverbank walls – with a bridge every now and again that allows me to get over the water quickly – make that difficult.

But some people insist that these riverbank walls must be preserved for historical and conservation-related reasons.

WDH: In my opinion, the walls aren't that historical at all.

Tim Edler: This year, the Flussbad Association commissioned the heritage-project planning office known as “ProDenkmal” to generate an independent report on the history of the riverside area. This is why we now know we're no longer standing on the original Schinkel riverside wall. It was so dilapidated in 1937 that they had to replace it with a new construction. However, the current canal wall does indeed correspond quite precisely to the Schinkel design – with the exception of a staircase to the water, which was here originally.

Mr Heilmeyer, why do you think Berlin's conservation officials and state museums are so vehemently in favour of preserving this canal wall?

WDH: I can only speak from the perspective of the museums, and as such I'm somewhat surprised by your question. The idea behind everything the museums do is – understandably – more along the lines of “we manage what goes on inside, not what happens outside”. With regard to the urban environment of Museum Island, we consider Berlin's Senate Department for Urban Development as being the responsible body in such matters. What we're most likely to hear from Museum Island people is that they already have more than enough to do in terms of their own work and restoration activities in the museums.

Is this attitude likely to change, for example, when the James Simon Gallery is finished, thus creating a new entranceway to the museums?

WDH: I hope so. The view to the outside will no doubt open up considerably. I was at the topping-out ceremony for the new entrance hall, and when you stand up there in the hall of columns, you get a much different impression of the environment. You perceive the Zeughaus

and the Humboldt Forum so much more. It's fantastic.

But what about the water?

WDH: The hall of columns is designed in a very open fashion and also faces the Spree Canal, which runs directly beneath it. It wasn't something the architect David Chipperfield had planned for originally.

TE: I found what you said about the general attitude of the museums very interesting, namely that they don't see themselves as being responsible for the outer architectural environment. For me, it seems as if the loss of Berlin's original historical centre – that is, the area between the Marienkirche around Petriplatz to the Cölln area – has made the Museum Island something like an "ersatz centre". These days, when people are looking to visit an historical environment, they come to this spot here.

This is a place where newlyweds come to have their wedding photographs taken against this historical-romantic backdrop ...

TE: This is a gesture of affection towards the museums; however they don't seem to be willing to assume the major role of being the "centre of the city". I personally would find it important that the museums take on more responsibility in this realm. They form a space that is a means of identification for all Berliners. The Humboldt Forum especially offers the opportunity to play a more multifaceted role. As far as I'm concerned, the museums should participate more – and in a more responsible manner – in current discussions regarding urban development. All of us at Flussbad Berlin would thoroughly enjoy engaging in deeper discussions with the museums. Indeed, our project is geared towards cooperation not confrontation.

WDH: However, I would like to point out here – with regard to the question of who should feel responsible for this area and its ongoing development – that it doesn't make any sense to include only the museums and the Berlin Senate. The most decisive body here is the general public, that is, all of us. We must raise our hands and talk about how we can better handle this part of the city, especially the Spree Canal.

In the course of our conversation, we continue on our walk, leaving the small linden grove behind us and making our way to the Schlossbrücke. We cross Unter den Linden Boulevard with its habitual and relentless stream of cars. Then we make our way to Schinkelplatz, where we come to a stop facing the Humboldt Forum on the other side of the canal. Before us lies the wide canal and beyond that the base of the former Kaiser Wilhelm monument.

WDH: My suggestion would be to make this spot right here the central area of the Flussbad. Why can't access to the water be here,

instead of at the Lustgarten? It wouldn't prevent people from swimming all the way to the Bode Museum.

Wouldn't it be necessary to be able to exit the water – for safety reasons – on the way there and back?

TE: It would be possible to solve that problem without any major structural interventions. For example, we could install a simple resting dock every 50 metres. It doesn't even have to be a ladder. It would probably be enough to have small platforms in case of emergencies. There are many design possibilities in this case.

But before we deal with problems like this – that is, the ones that can be solved – we have to work on developing a fundamental understanding of the extraordinary opportunities presented by the Flussbad project. In contrast, the Office of the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media – which, among other things, finances the Humboldt Forum – stated that its only interest with regard to the Flussbad project lies in avoiding any risk to the world heritage status of Museum Island.

WDH: That sounds absurd to me. How could the Flussbad possibly affect the world heritage status of Museum Island? Where is it written that it's prohibited to swim in the vicinity of a world heritage site? I can't imagine this is the case, and I can only encourage you to keep trying to get the message across. Today, this body of water here is murky and has no function, but we have a tremendous opportunity to do something about it, that is, to transform it into something more than just a reflective pool for the surrounding buildings. And yet, in order to take full advantage of this opportunity, we would have to first make the water clean, indeed clean enough to swim in.

At this point in the conversation, we walk past the backdrop of the Bauakademie and cross the Schleusenbrücke. Tim Edler leads us through the foyer of the ESMT, which is housed in the former Staatsratsgebäude of the GDR, and we exit onto the large courtyard on the other side.

It's amazing to see such a large green space – one that hardly anyone knows even exists – right here in the middle of the city.

WDH: Mr Edler, in our earlier conversation, you mentioned that there was a swimming area here during the era of the Prussian Kaisers. Where was it exactly?

TE: The Mühlengraben – a side arm of the Kupfergraben – used to run right here where the courtyard is today. In 1897, they built a swimming pool right where it started.

WDH: Goodness, this bathing area had its own swimming pool? I had understood people just went swimming in the Kupfergraben itself.

TE: They did that, indeed. All of these bathing complexes followed the same principle; they were built over one part of the river and people swam in the river water that flowed through the stilted or floating structures. At this particular location – which is where the Kaiserdenkmal (a memorial to the Kaiser) was built in the 1890s, that is, directly where the Humboldt Forum is being built today – there were two such bathing complexes in the Kupfergraben.

WDH: It's amazing how much more modern the 19th century was!

TE: We try to highlight this history as much as we can, of course. The Flussbad is not just some crazy idea that came out of nowhere. In fact, the truly crazy thing is the fact that there isn't a bathing complex here anymore, nor could it exist today considering the condition of the Spree River. The last river bathing complex was closed here in 1925 after hygienic conditions made it untenable; the water was simply too dirty. But we want to prevent this sad condition from becoming anchored in people's minds as something that can't be changed. We can't accept that the only purpose of the Kupfergraben is to function as an empty reflective water surface.

WDH: But don't we have to clean up the entire Spree first?

TE: Yes, certainly. But we want to start that process here. If we make a strong start here, people will eventually ask: "Why is it OK for me to swim here but not over there?" The pressure will rise. We're hoping that in 100 years people won't be able to remember when the idea of swimming in the river actually started because it will be taken as a given everywhere.

WDH: That's a very nice narrative. Every historical process has to start somewhere.

Mr Heilmeyer, any final thoughts on our stroll today?

WDH: I believe the Flussbad initiative should remain optimistic. The idea of constructing a large-scale open staircase accessing the water at the Lustgarten caused distress in a couple of people; indeed, anyone who responds by arguing "these people are tampering with a world heritage site and endangering its status" is already on the defensive. But if you can do without this large open staircase and if you instead say "we'll access the water from the Staatsratsgebäude or the Humboldt Forum, but the canal all the way to the Bode Museum is essential as a swimming route", then I see absolutely nothing standing in the way of the Flussbad. The project presents such a great opportunity to transform this filthy and almost entirely unused canal into the exact opposite of what it is today, that is, to make it visible and useful again. And, in the end, people will call for more access points to the river and ask "Why not build another staircase?"



Tim Edler is an architect and author of the Flussbad Project. He is a founding member of the Flussbad Berlin Association and responsible for the ongoing development of the project.

Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer is a classical archaeologist. In 1978, he became director of the Antikenmuseum (Museum of Antiquity) in West-Berlin and, after the fall of the Wall, director of the reunited Antikensammlung (Collection of Classical Antiques) on Museum Island. He was also deputy director of the State Museums of Berlin and a professor of classical archaeology at FU Berlin.

Swimwear

A cultural

tour-de-force



Woman with Great Dane in Biarritz © ullstein bild

*A conversation with literary scholar and fashion theorist Barbara Vinken about the culture of swimwear and bikinis.
Interview conducted by Katrin and Hans Georg Hiller von Gaertringen.*

Mrs Vinken, in most discussions surrounding the proposed Flussbad, someone inevitably suggests that people in swimsuits simply aren't compatible with the noble status of Museum Island ...

This critique is amazing to me. Just look at Switzerland, where river bathing areas are quite common, for example, the Rheinschwimmen in Basel, the Flussbad in the Aare in Bern and the Frauenbad in the Limmat in Zurich. These are all entirely civilized spaces right in the middle of the city. And this status has a lot to do with the fashion people wear there. I consider swimwear to be one of the most civilised forms of fashion in existence.

What exactly would you say makes swimwear so "civilised"?

Even though swimsuits and bikinis involve very little material over otherwise naked skin, they are nevertheless highly sophisticated clothing items. Are you familiar with the "Piscine Joséphine Baker", the swimming pool on the Seine in Paris? It's the fanciest 'bathing ship' in the world. When I was in Paris, I went there to do some people-watching: I saw silver bikinis, high-heeled shoes, golden skin and shiny jewellery. It's a great location.

When did swimwear first emerge as a fashion? Did it originate in France, too?

Perhaps we should distinguish between the swimsuits people started wearing in the 18th century and the type of swimwear that qualifies as a fashion item, which emerged in the late 19th century. France indeed played a pioneering role. The first fashionable bathing suits appeared at the end of the 19th century in Biarritz and on the beaches of Normandy. Back then, there wasn't any distinction made yet between swimwear fashion for men and women, i.e. swimwear involved covering the upper body, arms and legs to the elbows and knees respectively. This degree of unisex apparel didn't mean the swimwear was unfashionable; on the contrary, even Chanel made bathing tricot before the First World War. They were usually made of cotton and sometimes even wool. The swimsuits absorbed a great deal of water; they were heavy and took a long time to dry. Much like a wet t-shirt.

Was it the invention of elastane, otherwise known as spandex and Lycra, which dries quickly and doesn't wrinkle, that truly made swimwear fashionable? Those fabrics meant we could keep bathing suits on for longer and wear them at the beach and in the pool.

Yes. A very decisive moment came in the 1960s with the invention of Lycra, which is lightweight, flexible and dries quickly. Another important thing is that even when it's wet, Lycra is not see-through.

Why is swimwear often so colourful?

Not only is it colourful, it's often bright and sparkly. Both traits serve as a visual distinction between swimwear and underwear which - at least in old days - was almost always white. Of course, underwear was a role model for swimming suits, at least in terms of the cut. However, bikinis, swimsuits and underwear had to be designed so that they would not be mistaken for one another. To this day, swimwear maintains this ambivalent relationship of imitation and distinction from underwear. As a literary expert, I would argue that every textile is also simultaneously a text. We communicate through our clothing, even though we don't always know what we're saying. In this sense, swimwear fashion oscillates between erotic charm, decoration and asexual expediency.

And what do highly colourful swimming trunks and colourful bikinis express?

That's "a broad field", as the popular German saying goes. Those colourful swimming trunks and bikinis express the fact that we are not wearing underwear, which is what the lower classes did up until fairly recently when swimming in the sea, for example in England. Instead, we're announcing that we've dressed specifically for swimming. Colourful swimwear also marks a definite contrast to everyday grey. But clothing, and especially swimwear, also represents seduction and play. In a strict sense, bikinis and swimming trunks have no practical function; one could swim better - or at

least just as well - in the nude. They are used merely to hide or cover up. Of course, this is related to a sense of shame. And yet, there can be no eroticism without shame. The current burkini-bikini debate spotlights precisely this point.

In other words, the strong colours and patterns found in swimwear are literally pointing to that which they conceal.

Exactly. In this sense, bathing fashion is a paradoxical speech act. But I insist that we see this as an expression of culture, not a lack thereof. Only a completely naked body says "I position myself beyond culture; culture is bad, decadent. When I am naked I can rediscover the healthy paradise that lies beyond a sinful Eros". This is the spirit of the FKK, the naturist "free body" movement that began around 1900 and advocated a new type of lifestyle in which clothing was associated with culture, which was generally seen in a negative light as somehow sick. In the Prussian era, people began seeing clothing as being constricting and un-free, as alienating people and putting them into class groups and traditional roles. From out of this tradition came naturism and naked swimming, especially in East Germany, where it is not only accepted but also encouraged right up to today. I think it's right not to condone naked bodies in the city. I don't believe in some sort of utopia before the original sin; in fact, I would consider that to be anti-social. By the way, the 'first skin', i.e. the naked body, is just as coded socially as the clothed body. When you are clothed - even if it is only with those famous four wafer-thin mini-triangles pulled through a ring to form a bikini - everyone can see you. The piece of fabric says "yes, I do not deny the gaze of others, but am willing to look and be looked at". In other words, I have created a relationship to myself, and in doing so I establish a relationship to others. This is exactly what clothes do. And all you need is a small piece of fabric.

In other words, everything is OK if you have a bathing suit on?

A river swimming pool is not going to drive a city into barbarism, as long as it's not an FKK area. A swimming area can be an extremely civilised space - much more beautiful, more elegant and more amusing than many other public spaces.

So we should not allow ourselves to be threatened by the thought of the Flussbad?

A river bathing area would have a civilising influence on the city, and God knows there's still much of that to be done in Berlin.

Prof. Dr. Barbara Vinken is a literary scholar and fashion historian. She is a professor at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. In 2013, she published a book called "Angezogen. Das Geheimnis der Mode" (Dressed. The Secret of Fashion) and in 2016 the anthology "Die Blumen der Mode. Klassische und neue Texte zur Philosophie der Mode" (The Flowers of Fashion. Classical and Modern Texts on the Philosophy of Fashion).

Charles the Great: A swimmer ahead of his time

Art historian Horst Bredekamp is co-founding director of the Humboldt Forum alongside Neil MacGregor and Hermann Parzinger. Bredekamp also happens to be a long-time swimming enthusiast. In his 2014 book “Der schwimmende Souverän” (The Swimming Sovereign), published by Wagenbach Verlag, he examined the hitherto unexplored importance of swimming going as far back as the early Middle Ages. In the following excerpt from his book, Bredekamp demonstrates the social importance of swimming in the time of Charles the Great (747-814), the Carolingian emperor who united Western Europe:



A French depiction from the 15th century shows swimming lessons taking place in public in a river just outside of the city walls. The book illustration shows that the swimmers wore either white swimming trunks or nothing at all, a fact that did not seem to disturb onlookers.

Taken from “*Livre de Josephus de l’ancienneté des Juifs*”, 1475–1500 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

“In his biography of Charles the Great, Einhard – who was his planner, confidante and fine arts advisor and who most likely was closer to him than most of his contemporaries – made mention of swimming. The 22nd chapter is devoted to a description of Charles the Great’s outer appearance as well as his physical habits, and it ends with an astounding passage devoted entirely to swimming:

Charles loved the vapours of hot natural springs and was such a good and habitual swimmer that nobody could match him. As a result, he built a palace in Aachen and spent the final years of his life there and nowhere else. He invited his sons, but also his ‘optimates’ and friends, sometimes even his palace guards and bodyguards, to join him for a swim. He often swam with one hundred or more people.

[...] The final two sentences make it clear that swimming was in no way an expression of narcissism, but instead a presentation of one’s own body aimed at a community of people. Charles the Great clearly took his love of swimming and turned it into a community-building and socially differentiated performative act. [...] This procedure is linked to the often mentioned phenomenon that Charles the Great worked hard to ensure ‘flat’ hierarchies – in the sense of the modern usage of the term – so as to escape from the isolating effects of Byzantine court ceremonies. And there was perhaps no other activity that provided more illustrative proof of this principle than swimming in a group, which rendered all participants equal as soon as they got in the water. But precisely this equalizing effect of swimming also offered the opportunity to engage in differentiations together. Indeed, the importance of ‘community bathing’ lay in the fact that Charles the Great identified and categorised the very society he went swimming with”.

“Berlin needs more functioning public spaces.”



*A conversation with urban geographer Ilse Helbrecht.
Interview conducted by Hans Georg Hiller von Gaertringen.*

© Matthias Heyde

Professor Helbrecht, you teach urban geography at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin. What is your area of research?

My particular interest is urban research. It's a very interdisciplinary field, as it's not only us geographers, but also ethnologists, sociologists and economists who are interested in the diverse fabric of a city. My focus lies particularly on the interdependence between urban space and society, that is, how certain spaces influence certain forms of behaviour and which social conflicts emerge in that space.

This brings us directly to Flussbad. The idea of the project is to make an existing space – in this case the Spree Canal from Fischerinsel all the way to the Monbijou Bridge – accessible once again to residents and tourists alike. Perhaps the first question should be: what importance does this Spree Canal – also called the Kupfergraben – have to date?

The Spree Canal used to be purely a location of work. It served as a traffic route for the transportation of goods. In other words, its purpose was clearly defined. If the Flussbad is implemented, this Spree Canal would gain an entirely new perspective and could be used in a new way.

What meaning would the canal take on if it were clean and accessible?

One has to see it in the context of the question of how the demands placed on the city – and specifically on the inner city – have changed: today, the area has become a predominantly experiential destination. Seen in this context, a section of the Spree Canal – if it were made accessible to all – would take on a very different function. In this sense, this Flussbad project would be an example of the transformation of the city in general, whereby the river and water could become an additional location for experiences. It's not so much a question of the actual swimming but instead of all the things can take place at the site.

The city as a location for experiences, could you define that more precisely?

Today, the centre of Berlin caters mostly to leisure, recreation and experience. It has become a location for experience, because it has spaces that are vibrant and places where things happen. But also because people actually do things.

In other words, new attractions emerge beyond the regular traditional sights?

Exactly. Take the Mauerpark, a public park in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district, as an example; it's not particularly attractive, but it transforms into something spectacular when something happens there, such as the flea market, karaoke events and people taking strolls, sitting or lying on the grass. These are things I want to see, and this is precisely the new element of our era. At locations such as these, Berlin becomes the stage of urban life. This is where something I call “performative urbanity” takes place. And this is exactly what the residents of and visitors to a city want to experience in the centre of Berlin; its dense and vibrant diversity. In this case what's very

important is that the location remains versatile, interesting and varied, that I don't go there and say "OK, that's the Spree River, and now that I've seen it, we can go". Instead, I should want to stay there. Urban planners call it "Aufenthaltsqualität" – the quality of time spent at a location – even though that sounds slightly dry.

Does this apply only to residents or also to tourists?

Initially for residents. But tourism has also changed tremendously. When people today visit a city such as Berlin, they no longer seek out the traditional sights alone; instead, they go out and experience the nightlife in Kreuzberg or everyday life in Friedrichshain. The trend is moving towards what we geographers call "new urban tourism". For many visitors, Berlin is interesting because its residents are (purportedly) interesting, because so many different cultures, subcultures and characters live and work here. It's a place where I can experience things that do not exist elsewhere. And these things can't always be found in museums but instead first and foremost in the urban space.

Are you saying that tourists today come to observe the residents of Berlin?

Yes, exactly. They swarm out to see them. Many people say: I want to experience the Berlin scene, because there's nothing like it in Nürnberg, Erfurt or Hannover. The street becomes a stage, and the visitors sit in street cafés in the Graefekiez and simply watch what goes by.

Certainly tourists aren't the only people who do that. I like to do it, too.

Of course, I do, too. Experts call it the "tourist gaze". We all have it, not only when we pack our bags and travel somewhere. I would like to have this flair, this form of holiday behaviour, in my own home town. You know, sitting down in a café, perhaps with a newspaper in my hand, even though what I'm actually doing is watching people go by. And maybe I even take a stroll myself. Studies show that Berlin's alleged problem of having too many tourists is caused at least in part by Berliners ourselves, because we also "consume" our city.

If we think about the Flussbad in this context, it's clear that the Spree Canal would guarantee this stage-like character, especially because people can stand at the edge and look down. At the same time, when you swim in the Spree, your gaze looks up from out of the water. The result is the very thing you describe, this reciprocal relationship between spectator and actor, and indeed it emerges for both, swimmers and spectators: either way, we see and are seen.

In this sense, the Flussbad would be perfect because it has an opposite side. The river can be looked at from two sides. On the one hand, you can see the people on the other side, and on the other hand, you can see the people swimming in the water. And the people who are swimming see the others looking down on them from above.

If we now think of what you said about locations as "stages" in the urban landscape: should one of the goals of urban planning be to create such locations?

That's a great question. This is the point at which science has to move out of an observational mode and into an evaluation mode. I believe we cannot and should not stop this trend because there are so many positive aspects to it.

And they are?

Cities have always been sites of immigration and integration, and our urban society is getting more diverse every day. If a capital city wants to represent diversity and successful integration, it has to make available functioning public spaces. And when I say "functioning" I don't mean the infrastructure that lets you get quickly from A to B, but spaces where a public realm is

created. These are spaces that are openly accessible and places where people with different backgrounds and lifestyles can meet and gather in non-violent interactions.

But aren't tourists the only ones gathering in Berlin's historical centre because hardly anybody lives there anymore?

Draining the city centre of its function as a residential space is a process happening worldwide. However, the district of Berlin-Mitte has a tremendous advantage in terms of its location, because a large number of people still live here, which is the result of its socialist legacy. Marxist ideology foresaw the levelling of any town-country divides, and they also rejected the idea of the city as a pure marketplace, which meant that they intentionally built residential buildings. I'm referring to the long row of buildings at the city centre on Rathausstraße and Karl-Liebknecht-Straße. There are also high-rises on Fischerinsel. In this respect, we still have a surprisingly large number of residents at the city centre. This is an anomaly, but it is a positive one. However, I do, of course, recognise that Museum Island is becoming increasingly a tourist district, as it is the case at many successful major tourist destinations in the world. And as a result, the residents of the area allow the visitors to take the area over. In these cases, we have to ask ourselves how we can create a space for living and gathering at these sites – one that is attractive for the people actually living in Berlin. Of course, a Flussbad swimming area in the Spree would contribute significantly to that.

Do you have any recommendations with regard to the implementation of the Flussbad project?

I would advocate an approach of small steps and careful testing. A project such as this, which is important but also complex and ambitious, will most likely not function perfectly at this location from the very beginning. There is a good reason why the first phase – in which people make a location their own – is always very important. We cannot predict down to the last detail how such an appropriation is going to proceed. We know this from all of those parks that planners build with pre-determined paths, only to find that people make their own paths. City planners learned a lot from those developments, and often sites are opened up and followed by an observation phase in which they see what people do with it. I believe this initial implementation phase would be very important for the Flussbad; the project organisers will have to be very clever, always trying things out and first seeing how they work. And then move to the next step by learning from the previous one.

In the realm of technology, it's likely that the Flussbad will have to commit to something firm from the very beginning, for example with regard to the filters and the like. But I believe that it would be good to pursue a planning philosophy that acknowledges we're not going to be able to have the perfect design from the start, especially in terms of the small-scale details and what and how the space is introduced to the public. Instead we should be prepared to have a two or three-year trial phase. We should say, we're making a start. The whole area is a soft spot and has to be dealt with delicately, because there are so many symbolic buildings in this section of the Spree Canal from the Federal Foreign Office to the Monbijou Bridge. In fact, it doesn't get any more symbolic than this area.

Tim Edler, the creator of the Flussbad, always says the Flussbad should be in the centre of the city precisely for this reason. That is, so that it can symbolise new values such as ecology and social coexistence and not just fulfil the function of any pool whatsoever at the edge of the city.

The location is what makes this project so exciting. It is mind-blowing to think that we could all just jump into the Spree Canal and go for a swim.

Prof. Dr. Ilse Helbrecht ist Geografin. Sie unterrichtet an der Humboldt-Universität Berlin und befasst sich vor allem mit kulturellen Grundlagen des Zusammenlebens in Städten, der Theorie der Urbanität, europäischen Wohnungsmärkten und aktuellen Fragen der Stadtentwicklungspolitik.

Swimming in a UNESCO Heritage Site? *Of course, why not?*



Harald Welzer

© Wolfgang Schmidt

The summer of 2016 is turning out to be the summer of anti-Enlightenment. Indistinguishable attacks and killing sprees spread fear and terror while irresponsible elite wannabes organise the so-called Brexit and a democracy at the edge of Europe – and yet part of Europe – transforms into a totalitarian society. Live. Without the rest of Europe noticing the dimensions of what is happening, especially in Turkey, where we're seeing mass arrests, suspensions and the elimination of the rule of law that lies at the very foundation of modern statehood. Indeed, the rest of Europe – this supposed model community of values – seems unimpressed and pays little notice.

Something is being fractured this summer, namely the self-evident nature of a 'civilising project' embodied in a modern form of statehood shaped by western values. It was this statehood that gave the inhabitants of societies in Europe and North America the highest degree of freedom, prosperity and security ever seen in history. Today, however, democracies are retreating worldwide. And even in countries where democracy still reigns, anti-democratic forces are gaining strength and making their way to power.

And once again we do not see an appropriate level of outrage. It's as if the fact that people such as Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump or Viktor Orban might be negotiating foreign policy, economic policy, cultural policy and domestic issues next year isn't a real and impending danger. It's as if these people didn't represent the radical opposite of the very things modernity sought to achieve. As with the major social changes witnessed in the 20th century, the "Best Before" date of functioning statehood came and went before the system actually truly broke down: this was the case before WWI, in the Weimar Republic, in the Soviet system and in the GDR. In each of these instances, the façade always held longer than the material substance, and elites were always the last to realise that they were living in a world that had long since come and gone.

Allow me to put it bluntly; no matter how you spell it (and lord knows how much time has been wasted arguing about that issue), the Humboldt Forum is a passé, anti-Enlightenment project that hangs uncomfortably suspended amidst a sense of global importance, an imperial lifestyle and a claim to 'high' culture. And its architecture is merely a replica, an expression of the fact that we have completely lost the direction of our civilising project. It embodies a world not of yesteryear, but of a time before yesteryear. It is the physical expression of ignorance in the face of the major challenges of our time, which can be summarised as the following: the ongoing development of an open civil society into a resilient community able to face an ever-increasing number of geopolitical, ideological, ecological and social pressures; the rediscovery of a cultural approach that expresses who we want to be, what we want to represent and what we are prepared to defend in order to achieve our goals; the lasting socio-ecological pacification of the capitalist economic system; the establishment of long-term peace; and, finally, significant increases in social justice.

Among the elements of the civilising project we should consequently foster a more socio-political approach, a deeper public sphere, a summons to civic participation, more sustainability and, if you like, more modern urbanity. It is thus easy to see that 'museumification' is hardly the most appropriate means to ensure this new urbanity, especially when it consists of a replica. Much more appropriate would be to reinvent the city as an analogue political public space – one of exchange, meeting and innovation of use. The reasons for the sustainable quality of cities – their perseverance in contrast to regimes, nations, empires, etc. – consists in them being continuums of transformation able to maintain and modernise themselves in diverse communi-

ties and transformed economic conditions. We know of no large-scale social form that does it as well as cities, which is the reason why the renaissance of sustainable practices – such as urban gardening, sharing of common goods, cycling, new forms of living, cooperatives, etc. – always start in cities and not in parliaments, universities and think tanks.

The 'inviting' city that is able to constantly self-modernise is obviously both politically and socially the most resilient form of culture we know, and we have an obligation to develop it further. At this point in history, a project such as the Flussbad is just as important as it is contemporary. It unites inviting nature with sustainable approaches in the ongoing development of a unique urban form of social and cultural posture. In this guise, it is much more closely linked to the incomplete project of the Enlightenment than to any 'high culture' simulation which, in the end, is nothing more than a contribution to content-free city marketing.

But let us come back to the beginning, to the stress and dangers of our age. Today, more than at any time in the past seventy years, we must remind ourselves of what we have to lose. This includes standards of openness and modernity in the best sense – standards that we have been able to maintain until now. We must make sure we do not formulate, redefine and renew these standards in the sense of the 19th century but rather of the 21st century.

Prof. Dr. Harald Welzer is a sociologist and member of the advisory board of the Flussbad Berlin Association. He teaches transformation design at Universität Flensburg and social psychology at Universität St. Gallen. He is also director of the non-profit foundation "FUTURZWEI" and co-founder of a public initiative called "Die Offene Gesellschaft".

We're going to love the river

Personal perspectives on the Flussbad in Berlin



Günther Bachmann

Professor and general secretary of the Council for Sustainable Development

Quality through densification: Flussbad Berlin is a successful example of dual development in inner-city planning. Cities and their rivers have always had an ambivalent relationship to one another. A river's key importance as a supplier of drinking water is offset by the pollution caused by waste disposal of all kinds. It's not surprising that many cities eventually turned their backs on their rivers and other bodies of water. These days, however, there's a new awareness for water in the urban setting, be it new apartments and office complexes at the water or even beach bars and bridges for gatherings. Yet the question remains as to whether we want to live at or with the water. The Flussbad Berlin project resolves this ambivalence and sheds light on the urban planning dogmas that persist to this day, which hold that when we talk of a 'mix of functions', we're most likely talking about a separation of functions. Flussbad Berlin highlights a key challenge facing growing cities; indeed, inner-city densification can only succeed if we develop the city core in a two-fold manner, by additionally creating and fostering those green urban recreation areas that are so essential for vibrant, liveable and heterogeneous city centres.



John von Düffel

Author and dramaturg, Deutsches Theater, Berlin

The Flussbad Berlin initiative creates a great opportunity to experience Berlin as a city on the water – which it actually is, in addition to so many other things. A swimming route along a historical part of Berlin would make it possible to experience the city in a very special way. At the same time, it would reconcile the city and the water. We continue to criminally underestimate the value and importance of water, especially in the case of the Spree and its contamination due to deposits originating in the Lausitz region. A swimming area in downtown Berlin would be surprising and vibrant evidence of Berlin's quality of life and creativity, which is fed to a large extent by water.



Katharina Grosse

Artist, Berlin

Fluss Bad

Swimming in rivers is absolutely the best. Imagine the thoughts we'll have swimming in the Spree. It will be different. I will behave differently in this city after I emerge from the water. / I will see the works of art on Museum Island differently if I can swim around them. / If the water is soft, I will look at the water's surface with different eyes. / The river will tell us when it's dirty and pumped full of sewage. We won't want that anymore. / We're going to love the river.



Dieter Kosslick

Director of the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale)

Anyone who wants to keep their head above water should learn how to swim. That's why I'm a Flussbad fan.



Philipp Oswalt

Architect and professor of architectural theory and design at Universität Kassel

Berlin, Kupfergraben 2017: Berlin feels foreign here. It's a sterile urban space filled with ministries, corporate buildings, museums designed for large streams of tourists, luxury apartments costing €20,000/m² with residents who – as we've seen in Venice and New York – leave their homes empty 48 weeks out of the year. No real Berliner would spend time here. I have vague recollections of 2004/2005, that short moment when the "Volkspalast" embodied a different form of public presence that took over the urban space here. The Flussbad is a new, two-fold utopia; it's an effort to create space for another form of public presence, to civilise the site again. Its appearance would be as surreal as the railway track that so profanely cuts through the Olympus that is Museum Island, except it would have poetic grace and charm.



Hortensia Völckers

Artistic director of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Culture Foundation)

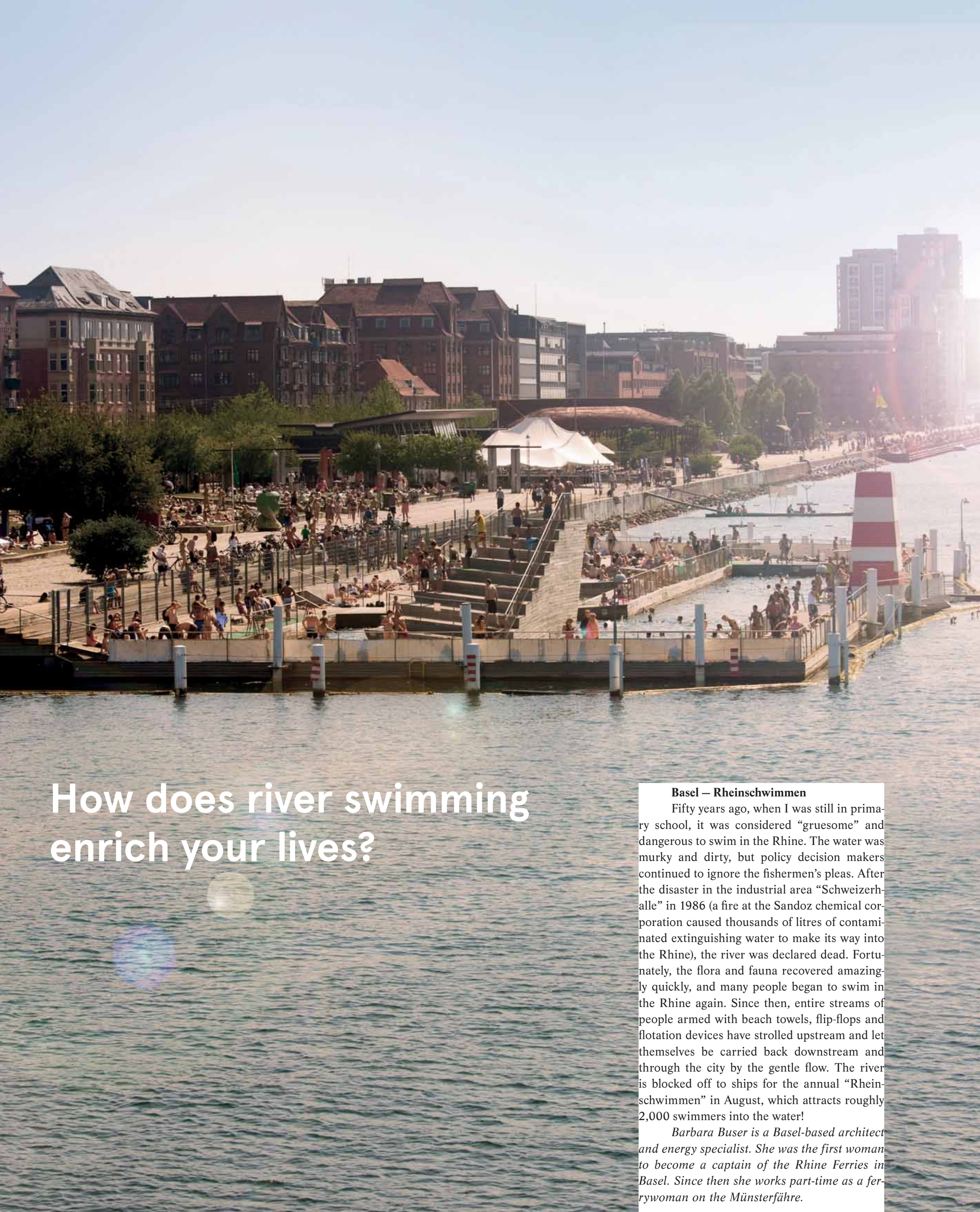
The Flussbad is much more than just another place to swim in Berlin. The Spree Canal, which is in a sub-optimal ecological state today, could become a lifeline for Berlin once again. The Flussbad itself could also become a powerful symbol for a city that's great to live in – a city where ecological future, valuable cultural treasures deserving preservation and contemporary forms of recreation complement each other in a harmonising urban ensemble. It's a good thing that Berliners are working together to transform the Spree Canal and, in a sense, give it back to the people. But the Flussbad cannot be allowed to become another site of commerce and consumption in the heart of Berlin. If the various players involved are successful in building a 'bridge' between preserving historical architecture and creating inner-city recreational spaces, then I don't care too much about the question as to where exactly the stairway would go. I will certainly go swimming in the Flussbad, but that's not the decisive point; it's the site that's important, a place where people can spend time together without any pressure to consume, a place where everyone can benefit first-hand from the ecological efforts undertaken by urban dwellers. The Flussbad makes it clear what cities might need in the future – but also what they can offer. For me, this is the project's most important element.



Sarah Wiener

Top chef, entrepreneur and head of the Sarah Wiener Foundation, Berlin

Going for a swim in the Spree? What a tremendous idea. A plunge from Museum Island into the cold water – it would be amazing! A more than 800-metre inner-city swimming area along Museum Island consisting of naturally cleaned water – it would have an immense impact and also help to increase appreciation for our precious water resources. A Flussbad in Berlin-Mitte? I would love it!



How does river swimming enrich your lives?

Basel – Rheinschwimmen

Fifty years ago, when I was still in primary school, it was considered “gruesome” and dangerous to swim in the Rhine. The water was murky and dirty, but policy decision makers continued to ignore the fishermen’s pleas. After the disaster in the industrial area “Schweizerhalle” in 1986 (a fire at the Sandoz chemical corporation caused thousands of litres of contaminated extinguishing water to make its way into the Rhine), the river was declared dead. Fortunately, the flora and fauna recovered amazingly quickly, and many people began to swim in the Rhine again. Since then, entire streams of people armed with beach towels, flip-flops and flotation devices have strolled upstream and let themselves be carried back downstream and through the city by the gentle flow. The river is blocked off to ships for the annual “Rheinschwimmen” in August, which attracts roughly 2,000 swimmers into the water!

Barbara Buser is a Basel-based architect and energy specialist. She was the first woman to become a captain of the Rhine Ferries in Basel. Since then she works part-time as a ferrywoman on the Münsterfähre.

Brussels – Pool is Cool

Due to its history and internationality, Brussels is a very heterogeneous city with a prosperous „Oberstadt“ and a poor „Unterstadt“. Although the desire to cool oneself down on a hot summer day is shared by all inhabitants, there are no public open air swimming pools in the Belgian capital – they have disappeared successively since the 1970s. Based on the fact that open air swimming pools have the potential to create a common identity in Brussels, we have founded POOL IS COOL. They foster the creation of public open air swimming possibilities, draw attention to their idea with urban actions and research the political, economic and urban context for this.

*Paul Steinbrück
www.pooliscool.org*

Chicago – Urban Rivers

Chicago is the third most populous city in the United States. It’s rare to find refuge amongst the congestion of nearly 10 million Chicagoland residents. Industrialization of the „Windy City“ at the turn of the 20th century resulted in a thriving economy. But where people prospered, the local wildlife suffered; barge traffic and pollution of the river drove animals away and caused fish and plants to die off. At the same time, the pollution that came with industrialisation has made the Chicago River undesirable for the community: the river is dirty; it smells; it hosts minimal life.

The founding members of Urban Rivers seek to solve a two-fold problem that pollution has created: how can we rehabilitate habitat in downtown Chicago while also allowing the community to enjoy nature in the city? Moreover, how can we drive a project that can be applied not only in Chicago, but in other urban rivers around the world?

*Brette Bossick
www.urbanriv.org*

Copenhagen – Harbor Baths

Just 15 years since the first “new generation” of public baths opened at Islands Brygge, the Copenhageners consider it a natural thing to swim in the harbour. However swimming in the harbour is not a new invention. Until the 1950ies there were several “bathing houses” located in the inner harbour, but they all closed due to the poor quality of the water. Today where the water is clean the demand for more baths, flexible opening hours at swimming facilities and facilities for use during the winter is increasing. In the near future there will be established a lot of new swimming possibilities in Copenhagen due to new “swimming zones” that allow people to jump in the water in designated areas. It is now part of the strategies of the municipality to use the harbour as the “blue common” in order to create attractive public spaces and encourage people to use the water for recreational purposes both swimming, kayaking, sailing, fishing etc. Swimming in harbours or rivers of cities literally changes the perspective on the city and adds new qualities into the urban life. In the growing cities the lack of (public) space makes it necessary to consider the water as a common urban space that invites people to use

it. Therefore the cities should offer clean waters and consider it a multifunctional public space accessible for all citizens.

*Claus Alstrup Borre
http://teambade.kk.dk*

London – The Thames Bath

So many urban waterways have been in decline since the warehouses and industry along its riverbanks closed. Nowhere is this more exposed than in London where high rise development is now fast replacing the lowrise blocks along the river’s embankments. Concerns over the ‘canyonisation’ of the river are evident in areas such as Vauxhall and Nine Elms. Impenetrable private developments are now a physical barrier between communities and the river. Luxury developments are crowding out the river’s edge effectively privatising public space. To make matters even worse, a high percentage of the sold apartments are being purchased by overseas investors who are not living in them, thus creating soulless communities. The plans to reclaim rivers aren’t a solution to the housing situation but do provide access to what is usually the largest public space in the city. In London the central section of the Thames is 7x the size of Hyde Park - these are huge underutilised spaces that are usually dominated by commercial river traffic. Forming a natural connection between the manmade embankment and the river has been key since the very beginning. We’re aiming to do this through public space, encouraging access to a new floating public space for swimmers and non-swimmers alike. Access to Thames Baths will be free and offer on board educational and community spaces that communicate the opportunities, past and future, the river offers citizens.

*Chris Romer-Lee
www.thamesbaths.com*

Munich – Isarlust e.V.

It’s magical to gaze from one of the small bridges in Munich’s English Garden in the direction of the cool Eisbach and watch young people allow the stream to take them downriver. Unfortunately, swimming is prohibited here, as it is everywhere on the Isar. Much has indeed happened in Munich since the ecological restoration of the southern Isar, but the entire waterway should be made into an open space where swimming is possible. Especially Munich, where the population continues to grow by roughly 30,000 people per year – and where both affordable housing and public space are getting scarcer –, urgently needs non-commercial, green and freely accessible spaces in the middle of the city. An Isar bathing area between the Deutsches Museum and the Patent Office could create such a space.

*Sina Weber
www.isarlust.org*

New York – + POOL

New Yorkers used to swim in the rivers around Manhattan all the time. Starting back in the late 1800s, up until the 1930s, there were 15 floating bathing houses dotting the coastline of New York City. It was a place of refuge from the heat, a place to bathe, and a place of communi-

ty. Over the years New York’s population rose sharply, and so did its industry. The success of the city unfortunately made most of the waterfront inaccessible, and turned the once fresh and vibrant river into one polluted with runoff and sewage. Today, the majority of people in New York City have little to no relationship with the water that surrounds them. The people on Manhattan are surrounded on all sides by water they can’t access, let alone swim in. Just like a beautiful park, the rivers that run in and around cities like New York are inherently public space. Not having access to it is like having a huge wall between you and the water. In order to create opportunities to get in these rivers cleanly and safely, we have to take care of these waters, and treat them like the precious natural resource that they are. A project like +POOL not only gives access to the river for the first time in almost 100 years, but it calls attention to why we can’t in the first place.

*Archie Lee Coates IV
www.pluspool.org*

Zurich – Smooth sailing from here on

Floating downstream on the Limmat River and then getting dried by the sun on the lawn or the wooden deck is part of a successful summer for Zurich residents. For almost 200 years now, they have known how to appreciate their city’s river bathing areas. The Limmat runs from the Old Town to the former industrial area and further on to the outskirts of the city. As a result, the five bathing pools each have their own character, whether it’s historical, urban or close-to-nature. And when the sun goes down at night, some of the bathing areas shine in a new light and serve as dance floors, open-air cinemas or stages. For urban life in Zurich, the river baths are much more than just swimming areas – the “Badis” [pronounced bad-ees] are valuable oases in the middle of the city..

*Patrick Müller
www.stadt-zuerich.ch/ssd/de/index/sport.html*

Havnebad, Copenhagen © Nicolai Perjesi



cc Annette Hauschild / OSTKREUZ

Only
if
there
are
lots
of us ...

**It's important to become a member of the
Flussbad Association. Here's why ...**

The Spree belongs to Berliners! Let's make it ours again! Let's rid the water of all the dirt and garbage we put into it. Let's experience how nice it is to spend time swimming in the water and lounging at the waterside. In the middle of the city. Let's revive Berlin's historical centre and breathe new life into it. Let's integrate it back into our daily lives. Let's show everyone that sustainable urban development isn't some unachievable utopian idea. Let's create a new urban lifeline. Let's connect our world heritage site to a modern urban society. Let's work together to foster a more ecological city.

All of the members of the Flussbad Berlin Association - in addition to our many enthusiastic volunteers - are committed to pursuing these goals. We started in 2012 with only 15 founding members, and by the end of 2016 our non-profit association was already up to 250 members and hundreds of additional supporters. Thanks to their patronage, we've been able to move our project forward and communicate our idea to an even wider audience.

The institutional funding we've received to date from the German Federal Government and the State of Berlin has made it possible for

us to get closer to achieving our goals. However, these funds are earmarked and exclude support for the work done by the association. This is why we need your support. Indeed, only if there are lots of us can we make a difference. Your membership as an individual, group, family, company or institution provides long-term support and makes it possible for our initiative to be heard. Your membership fees* and donations* are the backbone of all the work we do at the association; in other words, you make it possible for us to expand our activities and acquire further funding.

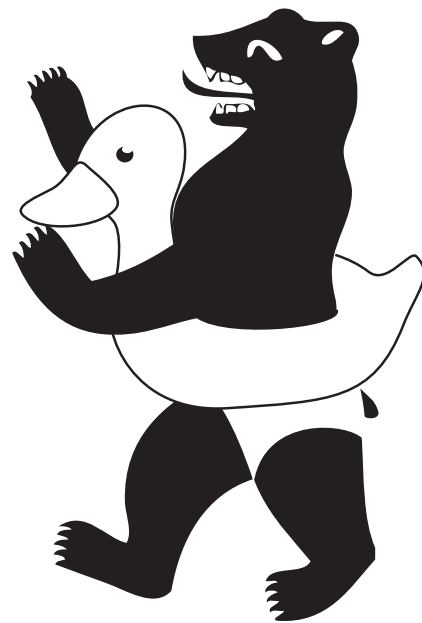
It's possible to win back the Spree as an urban space for us all - but only if there are lots of us. Only if we are many can we succeed at transforming the Flussbad from an idea into a reality. Each donation* helps and anyone can become a member - starting with an annual membership fee of 30 Euro*. Just use the form enclosed here or visit us on our website at www.flussbad-berlin.de/mitgliedschaft

** Membership fees and donations are tax-deductible; the reduced membership fee is 20 Euro.*

We're looking forward to receiving your support!

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www.flussbad.berlin