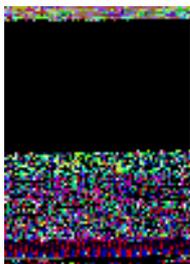


Meetingplace:

Kulturbrauerei

Report from the activities at a culture center in Berlin

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Why the Kulturbrauerei?

We are 6 persons with different backgrounds working together. One of us had the idea to go to Berlin to interview Swedish poets in exile, another wanted to study the club life and yet another was interested in the meeting of former East- and West Berlin. Our different interests made us to look for a place that could provide us with many different kinds of expressions; a place with many different forms of culture. A place that could give us a lot of inspiration and experience.

Eleven years ago the wall came down and Berlin became a place with possibilities for reconciliation of two cultures. A unique situation was created which is especially noticeable when you are in the parts of Berlin that was east of the wall. This is the reason that made us study the Kulturbrauerei, a culture center in Prenzlauer Berg, former East Berlin. We wanted to transfer the knowledge from this place to the cultural scene in Gothenburg and maybe exchange experiences and solutions for problems which often are common in all forms of cultural activities.

History and vision

The story of the Kulturbrauerei, from hitherto called the KB, begins 1989 when six partners (architects, artists, art history students): Joachim Sommermeier, Stefan Weiss, Hein Köster, Joseph V. Hober, Frank Herzog and Mattias Faust, rent a small part of 800 square meters in an old brewery. They wanted to create a space for cultural events and communication between different forms of art. This was possible due to the prevailing political situation.

When the wall came down KB became a meetingplace between east and west. Integration was desirable. KB wanted to develop a supply for Berlin, the region and Germany. In the regulations of the association it is expressed that one will maintain the architecture and make use of the characteristics of this special place.

It is also said that they should act so that parts of the arts- and cultural scene is and remains open to all, and to realize artistic and cultural projects of educational or forward looking character. KB is said to represent a complex concept of culture and to be a center for culture, politics and ecology (The ecology is hard to handle as it is in bad shape in all of DDR). KB wishes to be a fertile soil for new tendencies in young art and young artists. KB is a non-profit association.

Important dates:

- 1842 The brewery is founded and later the beer Schultheiss is manufactured.
- 1967 The brewery business ceases.
- 1978 The declined brewery complex is noticed as a distinguished place of culture and worthy to maintain.
- 1989 The Wall comes down; the first premises are being rented.
- 1990 The property is taken over by TLG Treuhand.
- 1990 The association Kulturbrauerei is founded together with the Stiftung Industrie- und Alltagskultur, the Musikszene DDR, the Sonnenuhr e.V. and the Franz Club. The share holding company Kulturbrauerei GmbH is formed.
- 1998 The restoration of the building block is started.
- 2000 The restoration is finished.
- 2011 The leasing contract with TLG expires.

Question at issue

We have chosen to investigate the KB as a meetingplace. Our interest was focused to one question: What methods are used by the KB GmbH to create a dynamic meetingplace that counteracts segregation concerning sex, age, class, culture and ethnicity. Dynamic in the aspect of flexibility and change in a specific environment; a district in former East Berlin, with a rich influence of cultural activities. Counteracting segregation because a lot of expressions and forms are assembled here and because people of different social backgrounds are coming here.

Method

In Göteborg the study was prepared by taking contact with several cultural centers with different profiles; (Röda Sten, Blå stället, Lagerhuset and others) as to find questions of interest to ask at the KB and to plant our report in actual conditions). We have also gathered material about Berlin and about the Kulturbrauerei in particular. In Berlin we have made interviews with persons who works in different parts of the activities within the KB and with the management. We have also met with persons living in Berlin, with knowledge about historical, social and cultural circumstances. Meetings and surroundings were throughout the work also documented with photo and video.

The Kulturbrauerei in Berlin

The Kulturbrauerei is located a not to long a walk from the new Parliament area, where within shortly 70 000 politicians and officials will work. If and when the EU is extended to comprise also the eastern European states, Berlin will be the very center of the new Europe. The cultural density in the parts of former East Berlin between the Parliament and the Kulturbrauerei is noticeable. Art galleries behind every gate, one must find one's way over junky back yards, up in worn staircases to find them. Theatres in small and large sizes. Centers for art and new media. Cafés welcomes you in every corner. Publishers and art collections. Pompous museums; Berlin as a reunited city at least doubled it's number of museums, opera houses and symphony orchestras. For political prestigious reasons they were earlier heavily subsidized on both sides of the wall. Deficit in the culture budget of Berlin has nowadays reached gigantic proportions, and the alternative culture is endangered by the economical cutbacks.

Here, close to the former wall, where the two Berlin emerged physically, large amounts of money have been invested in a new infra structure, communications and telecommunications, and many new companies, for example in the media industry are established. Alternative cultural expressions suffering from the new rental llevels, are fleeing, maybe to Prenzlauerberg, the neighbor northeast, where this development has not yet reached fully. One can notice when stepping over the border between the neighborhoods; all lots with holes from the second world war bombings are not yet filled farther east. Before "Die Wende", before the wall came down, Prenzlauerberg was a hold for radicals, oppositionals and intellectuals. This is still the case

Half of the inhabitants in Prenzlauerberg has been exchanged with new ones since the wall came down and the scaffolding rose on the wide and generous streets, lined with trees. Those who moved out did so for two main reasons; either to find houses in suburban areas with lower taxes or moving to areas where rents are not dramatically risen after renovations. Those who move here are attracted by a sense of creative atmosphere and by the possibilities that lie in the fact that all does not yet lay planned and ready.

Now the average age is 40 years, and the inhabitants are Berlin's second lowest in income, many are officially unemployed. In a part of town that earlier only saw foreigners like

Vietnamese textile workers and Russian soldiers, one can now eat schawarma, kofta or newly baked croissants at the numerous cafes.

Opinions are divided over the changeover that is going on. Old inhabitants feel uncomfortable in the new cafes. In one area an office was opened where one could “adopt a grandmother or grandfather” as an attempt to open up between the old and the new. People in general have a strong concern in how one shall form the common life here. The worry over estate speculations and the growing commercialization is strong.

Here, in the middle of the change, is the Kulturbrauerei located a culture center with soon ten years of experience.

Program

The KB markets itself as a center for multicultural activities. Here is room for everything from an industrial design museum, a Russian theatre, art exhibition spaces and an artistic center for handicapped to a rich music- and club scene.

The KB balances on the thin line between alternative, experimental and mainstream culture. Examples from the program: hiphop-festival, Strindberg in Russian, flamenco, political music from before the fall of the wall, gay-festival, percussion performance, release-party, photo market, “culture night” to support other endangered culture centers in Berlin, readings, swing band and more.

Organization

The KB GmbH is organized as a shareholder company by four so called *Gesellschaft*; Musikscene e.V., Sonnenuhr e.V., Stiftung Industrie und Alltagskultur. Besides them Kulturbrauerei e.V. is a part as an individual structure within the framework of the GmbH. The plan is to within too long associate also the International Art School to KB GmbH.

The KB e.V. is an association that works like one of the parts of KB GmbH. There are two main reasons for the considered need of such an association. The organization-form gives certain advantages compared to the company. There was also need of an organization which could work directly in the activities that the KB GmbH is to promote, outside the company’s sometimes slower decision-making process. The association arranges a diverse program.

Tenants

The KB lets spaces to a variety of arrangements; parties, artist’s organizations with a need for temporary gallery space, theatre groups and musicians. All arrangements has to fit into KB’s profile and must be approved of. The rents give incomes, and the tenants enrich the diversity of activities. Some of the tenant’s work is important, also in an ideological sense, for the long-term development of KB, among the examples can be mentioned:

Russisches Kammertheater, fits into the political vision of KB, to keep also the heritage from the former east. The theatre works as an independent organization with it’s own repertoire, and pay a low rent.

Alte Kantine is also a stage with it’s own program. They have made substantial investments and pay no rent but the KB uses the stage and all equipment twice a week.

Sabine Herrmann, one of the artists, who rents a studio of KB to a lower price, in return she keeps her studio open for the public every Saturday. She shows both her own paintings and work of other artists.

Economy

KB receives DM 500 000 as an annual governmental subsidy, uses DM 240 000 for the rent and 260 000 for projects. The leasing contract is favorable, yet the budget is tight and other possibilities of funding is constantly looked for. For funding larger events commercial sponsors are looked for, art auctions being held, art shares and merchandise products being sold.

For the future they strive to get institutional support. Lack of money makes the creative space smaller. The varying activities under KB's roof doesn't have equal economical support, which can create internal tensions.

Earlier the KB had help from governmentally paid unemployed trainees. Last year they were 27 and this year only seven, after the reduction of subsidies. Now only four persons make longer trainee-periods in their education. Eight persons work as freelancers. They are employed for specific fields of activities, to create a program within that field.

One of these projects is *Iberocultura* that works with Spanish and Latin American culture; film series, literature, debate, flamenco program and an annual classic Spanish music-festival. Martin Paulus who runs the project is responsible for the economic balance and the funding of it.

Renovation with consequences

The KB has over the years grown to use 8 000 of the estate's total of 25 000 sq.m. The TLG Treuhand, a company that was formed to manage all former East German property, manages the whole property. Treuhand invested DM 100 million for the property's restoration and reconstruction, which was finished last summer. Treuhand let spaces for example to a cinema complex, restaurants, offices and a food store.

After the renovation the KB has an overweight of culture consumption, the artists within the KB misses more colleagues on the producing side and wish the whole former brewery complex could have a stronger atmosphere of being a culture factory.

The architects who planned the reconstruction of the premises wished for more artists' studio spaces in the buildings, and for larger areas to be used for different cultural purposes. Today several spaces stand empty and unused. It's difficult to find artists who can afford to pay a rent of DM 25-30/sq.m., several moved when renovation started.

The KB has a special lease. Until 2011 they pay for their space, which interior is not renovated, DM 5/sq.m.

According to the agreement between the KB and the Treuhand the whole block is marketed as KulturBrauerei, as opposed to the strict culture center called KULTURBRAUERIEI. This rises among the visitors confusion of what is what. The commercial activities have another price level. Some of the activities can be misunderstood as part of the KB program and might even threaten the genuinely good reputation of the KB.

KB has a need to make clear its profile towards the other parts of the block, and is looking at developing such strategies.

One can also see possible new partners for cooperation in some of the activities, for example the cinema, which is open to a certain degree of cooperation. The KB's outspoken nonprofit character and the commercial activities are mutually dependent of each other. The cultural profile of the block attracts tenants, and The KB might through the renovation attract a wider diversity of visitors.

Three fundamental activities

Many organizations and single activities are performed in the name of the KB. We have chosen to give a closer description of two specific and continuously run activities that has been part of the KB right from the start, and one that is emerging.

Stiftung Industrie- und Alltagskultur

runs Sammlung Industrielle Gestaltung, a collection of objects, archives and photographs that tells the history of industrial design in former East Germany.

Through the efforts of dedicated persons and with the support of organizations like the Bauhaus Archiv and the Berliner Museen the original collection was saved from being spread or placed at design museums in the West, after the wall came down

Hein Köster, a veteran from DDR-times, manages the institution. 1983 he was kicked from his job as editor in chief at the DDR design magazine *Form und Zweck* after writing an article about a fictitious museum in Prenzlauerberg, which was considered to be too critical to the DDR regime. He was then installed as manager of the archive at the governments' school for industrial design. Even if he was hindered in his work as a publicist, he had in this position an excellent view of the design history of DDR

The purpose of the collection is to secure the design and the objects of a changing German history. The collection focuses on specific themes that show how the hierarchy in the German society was formed in the design; the objects of the people versus the objects of the powerful, prohibited and permitted design. The collection consists of design for public and personal use and many of the objects are accepted gifts from private donators. The collection secures material from industries closed down in connection to the unification of Germany.

Visitors reach a high number during exhibition periods and consist of a mix of people from former east and west. Many are design students on different levels from high school to post graduate.

The collection receives subsidies that cover wages for four employees, rent, office but not much more. For the nearest future there are plans for a café and a museum's shop. Within two years both the attic and the ground floor will be made into new exhibition spaces.

Sonnenuhr e.V.

The Sonnenuhr (Solar clock) works with people with different mental and physical handicaps. But the aim is not to shelter and care, the Sonnenuhr turns their activities towards an audience, with the clear vision to make the creativity of handicapped people possible and visible.

Sonnenuhr runs studios for ceramic, painting, sculpture, photography and video. An important part of the Sonnenuhr is theatre and performance; their theatre group Ramba Zamba is well known and acknowledged far beyond Berlin city borders.

A group of people around the Sonnenuhr works more or less for free, but there are also employed staff. The employed all have professional backgrounds as actors, directors, musicians or artists. They express how inspiring it is for their own artistic work to take part

in the work. The sun's children have a strong presence in the creative process that opens up for creativity also in those around.

Most different from other public activities for handicapped is that at Sonnenuhr consider them professional artists and equal colleagues, non-handicapped as well as handicapped. One example of this philosophy is found in their theatre/performance group Ramba Zamba. All is professionally managed, from light, stage setting, costumes to music. The plays are marketed like at any other theatre, without calling attention to the fact that the plays cast handicapped actors. The theatre has a permanent stage and is supported by the city of Berlin by the same terms as other independent theatres,

The Sonnenuhr creates an example of a unique way of working with handicapped people. It's also an example of a successful method to work against segregation between people of different origins and social circumstances. Through Sonnenuhr's work, people meet who would otherwise never have met.

International Art School

In the summer of 2000 "International Art School" was carried through for the first time. It was a one-week workshop with five artists in different media. One of the artists, Sabine Herrmann, has her studio inside of the KB, and is one of the prime movers of the Art School. While the workshop lasted, Sabine found the KB as bubbling as it should always be, people working out in the open yard practically all day and night. The workshop was ended with an exhibition

For next summer is planned to work on the theme of "bridges"; a local architect will show on the forgotten bridges around in Prenzlauerberg, the thought of building bridges over the no mans land that still stands empty between east and west, and will with several artists shape bridges as philosophical ideas.

The school will have evening classes, weekend classes on different themes and an international workshop every summer. What is most needed for realization are means to employ a person to administrate. The classes will be financed by fees and supported by outer sources like participating artists' embassies. The school has its philosophy from the Bauhaus thought "a spiritual center that starts out from the creative impulse and from tolerance".

A school within the premises would create a meeting spot for generations, a place to share experiences and energy. It would also give more activity in daytime, and in a higher degree characterize KB as a culture producer.

The visitors perspective

The KB has a mixed audience, from all age groups, and here you can feel comfortable wearing either a suit or a T-shirt. To the KB come visitors from the Prenzlauerberg neighborhood as well as from the whole of Berlin. Tourists also find their way here. The wide variety in arrangements attracts different audiences to different events. As a culture center the KB has a reputation of high quality at a low price.

The central location in Prenzlauerberg also contributes to attract visitors. The KB estimates to have more than 200 000 visitors a year

The culture arena in Berlin offers an enormous number of cultural events, which creates competition for the KB program. Thus it is important to keep a pronounced profile. The KB, like many other culture centers, works hard on how to make their vision and aims visible for

the visitors. That is the reason for the thorough investigation in the visitors view of the arrangements and atmosphere, and in how the audience is composed according to age, gender, education, interests etc.

Most arrangements happen in the evenings. That makes it possible to see that single arrangement only, without seeing the KB as a complex of cultural organizations and events.

To create room for the occasional arrangement is part of KB's philosophy, but the lack of a natural meeting spot within the premises, makes it difficult for the visitors to meet at other occasions than at the particular event.

The KB might, maybe especially for former west Germans, seem like an "east spot". And it is true that the KB builds parts of its profile on a will to create space for a threatened East German culture. At the same time the KB wants to house the contemporary and be "up to date" with what happens in Berlin. This makes the marketing of the KB an act of balance.

The KB is mentioned in the tourist guides as an alternative culture center. For many, who maybe not know the origin of the Kulturbrauerei or cannot see the variety in offers, the KB has lost some of it's status as an alternative scene. Some visitors think that by the restoration, and the entry of commercial interests, the KB has lost some of its original atmosphere.

On the other hand new visitors come here to take part of the program. Besides, some of the commercial activities create possibilities. For example, the visitors of the cinema "spills over" to other KB arrangements, and vice versa.

Summary

This is a report concerning the Kulturbrauerei in Berlin, Prenzlauerberg. The report has been put together by six students from Kulturverkstan, a 2-year course in project management and IT.

The main question the report is based upon is whether the Kulturbrauerei has succeeded in creating and maintaining a dynamic meeting point for culture that counteracts segregation especially concerning age, ethnicity, cultural context, class and gender – and if so, which methods have they used.

Methods we used are mainly interviews with people from culture centers in Gothenburg, for comparison, and with staff and tenants at the Kulturbrauerei. Outside the report there is also a comprehensive documentary material of film and footage.

The report discusses the organization of the Kulturbrauerei as a GmbH, as an e.V. and briefly describes parts in the GmbH; Sonnenuhr, Stiftung Industrie- und Alltagskultur, and a possible future part, International Art School.

The KB is in the same time a place, a congregation of cultural societies and a shareholding company. Here space is provided for commercial "mainstream" culture as well "highbrow culture" with a highly educated target group.

The KB also let spaces for a theatre and to individual artists. A considerable part of the activity is based upon special performances of different character. Because of the diversity in arrangements the audience vary for the contrasting events.

The structure of the KB as a GmbH means that different activities share a space of 8 000 square meters. They share a similar vision based on a few fundamentals: A wish to preserve the East German culture as there is a considerable risk that is, without reflection, overrun by the West German. An aim to keep a high level of artistry and be a scene for alternative culture; opposed to wide mainstream. Throughout the KB a low price level is held, not to

exclude visitors for economical reasons. The landlord Treuhand makes this possible by the low rent.

Berlin is a special place for culture, which offers an enormous amount of cultural activities and a considerable competition. In this climate the KB has established itself as a scene for a variety of cultural expressions rather than being a homogeneous scene. The good reputation of the KB has a strong foundation based partly upon the persons who initiated and still runs it, and partly upon the profile which promotes expressions from both former East and West Germany under one roof.

The Kulturbrauerei GmbH is constructed with four partners, so called *Gesellschaft*: Sonnenuhr, the Design Museum, Musikscene and Kulturbrauerei eigennutzige Vereinung. The structure aims at enabling cooperation between the different permanent activities and make possible larger common projects. Within shortly KB hopes that International Art School will be a new partner in Kulturbrauerei GmbH and create a springboard for interaction between the parts.

In the activities today the KB GmbH encounters several problems. It is difficult to base the program on the work of trainees and temporarily employed. The rules for these employments are recently changed which renders the financing of them more difficult. Another problem is that the name "Kulturbrauerei" is sold to the landlord Treuhand who now uses it to market the whole building complex. As commercial mainstream activities with their high prices share the space with the KB visitors tends to be confused. It is difficult to orient and in the long run the good reputation of the KB might be threatened.

Answer to the question at issue

Conclusions are that individual activities that are given room within the KB states an aim for integration, for example the Sonnenuhr or the Gay festival. Though, the Kulturbrauerei does not employ a specific policy to counteract segregation. However, they do act to protect East German culture. Furthermore, with their diverse program and the wide variety of arrangements, they succeed to create and maintain a dynamic meeting point for high and low, young and old, east and west, trends and traditions and for established and unestablished expressions of culture.

The organization appears open-minded and not too tightly joint and the result is rich and liberating. This makes the KB a dynamic meeting point, which in a longer perspective counteract segregation.

The website

contains photos, an extended text material and links
www.kulturverkstan.net/kulturverkstan_00/lia/berlin

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Interviews within Kulturbrauerei:

Katja Lucker	Artistic manager Kesselhaus	katja.lucker@kulturbrauerei.de
Gabriele Muschter	Director	
Joachim Sommermeier	Director	
Sabine Herrmann	Artist, Art School	
Marina Lehman	Russische Kammertheater	
Hein Köster	Stiftung Industrie und Alltagskultur	
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Anne Hardt and Lona Grand	Trainees, Kulturbrauerei	
Martin Paulus	Iberocultura	almoraima@hotmail.com
Mattias Faust	Architect	
Christin Dwertmann	Literature, Kulturbrauerei	

Other interviews:

Johan Bergström	Swedish author in Berlin
Crippa	Comibibliothek bei Renate
Bernd Langheit, Thomas Meier,	architects and living in Prenzlauerberg, as Dagmar Maria Degen

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