

168 Hours Berlin-Friedrichshain: A Spatiotemporal Analysis

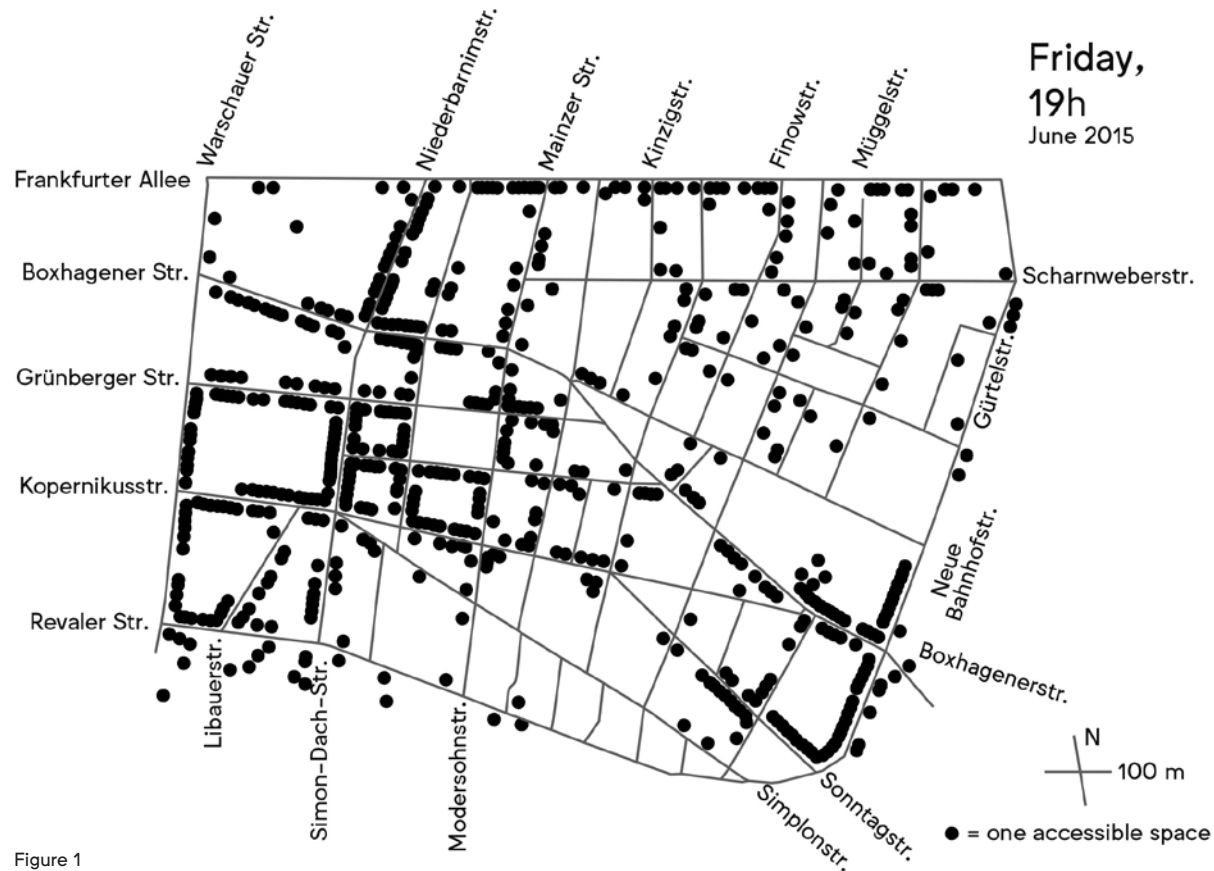


Figure 1

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In contemporary Western cultures, people are generally accustomed to seeing the night as a time of either rest or entertainment. In this respect, the city at night is constructed as the opposite of the day, as a time and space for a carnivalesque loosening of (self-) control and daytime constraints.¹

As such, the night comes packaged with conflicts. If we do not participate in the night, we commonly complain about nighttime revellers and the imposition of their experience of the night upon our own. Yet cities and regions paradoxically support the revellers' night, while cracking down on those forms of nightlife that take place in abandoned spaces and alternative venues.² Choices are made as to which nights are granted allowances, and this choice is a political and economic one. In other words, certain nighttime activities are privileged in the amount of space they are allowed. When these nights are privileged, they necessarily come into conflict with other nocturnal forms that are normally taken for granted.

This conflict of nights is particularly complex in Berlin. The city has gone through massive changes since the fall of the wall in

1989, being transformed from an isolated and dreary ruin somewhere in Eastern Germany to the capital of a reunited nation. For our analysis, we chose a neighbourhood of Berlin that is one of the hot spots of Berlin's famous nightlife: Friedrichshain, between Warschauerstraße in the West (see map by Schmid in this issue), Frankfurter Allee in the North, Ostkreuz in the East, and the rails of Berlin's S-Bahn in the South. This section of the city provides classic examples of urban diversity and its conflict zones. As part of former East Berlin, the neighbourhood contains a complex and often problematized mix of residential zones, a high density of commercial and service areas, and nightlife venues, which equally attract locals and foreigners while burdening residents with pollution, noise, and rising rents. We use this neighbourhood as a case study to begin our study, focusing first on revealing the overlapping spaces of night within a single spatial unit. In doing so, we aim at transforming the unitary discourse of the night towards a broader understanding of "nights."

As a starting point, we categorized every public and private space accessible from the street in the neighbourhood on the basis of four characteristics: type of space,

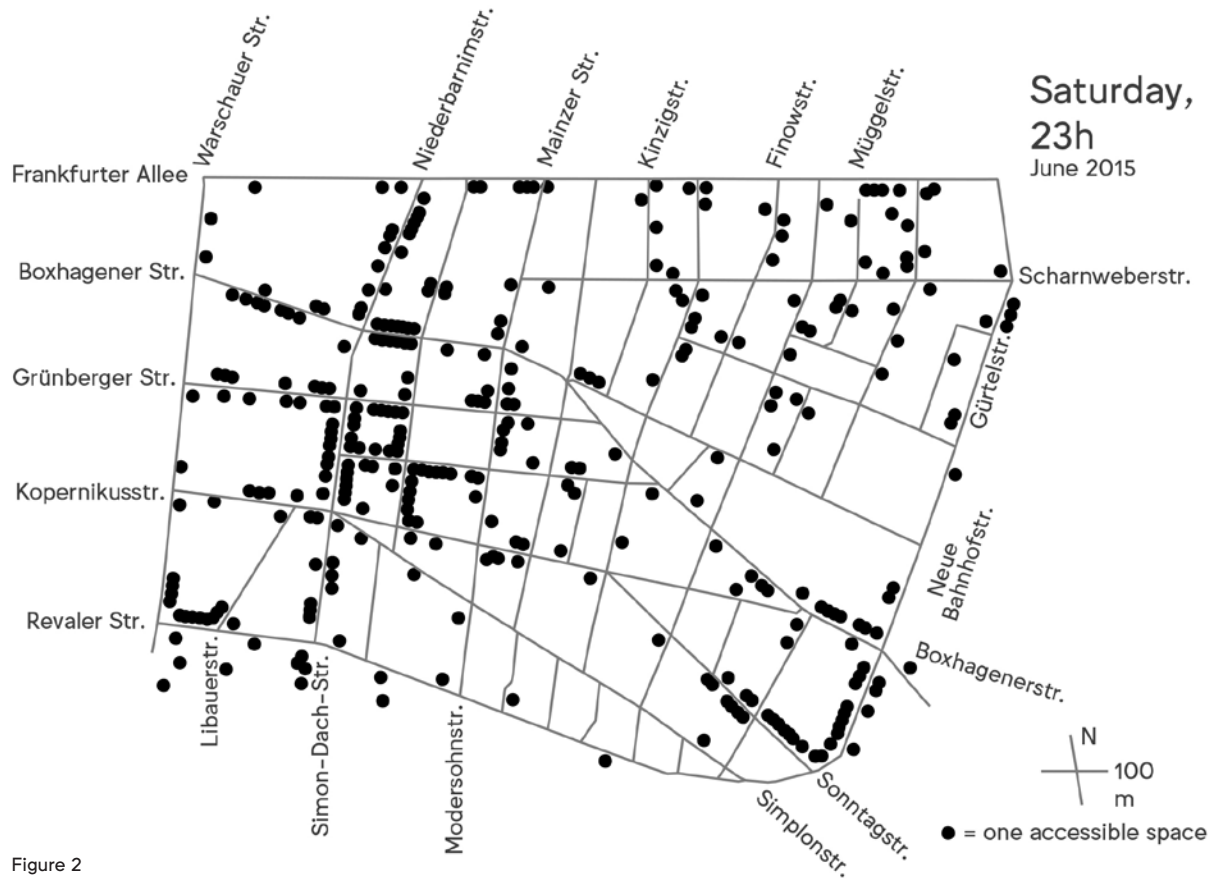


Figure 2

means of accessing (e.g. through a door), times of accessibility (e.g. opening hours), and requirements for people wishing to stay (e.g. purchasing something). The information was collected based on a temporal cycle of 168 hours (one week). After collecting this data, we mapped the information to show spaces that are open at certain times of the day. Every dot on the maps stands for an open/accessible entrance at the given time proximate to the public space on which their entrance faces. All other places, for example private homes and closed shops, are not depicted since they are conceptually absent from the city's "accessible" space, even though they exist. Our analysis shows that while the city as a physical entity is the same at any given moment of the week, the type and amount of accessible space is highly dependent on time and in a constant state of flux. Throughout the

168 hours, spaces will appear and disappear on the map, suggesting that they become (in) accessible over time, and that the shape of the city morphs and shifts markedly at night.

The maps themselves show the neighbourhood at 7pm on a Friday evening, with 637 accessible spaces (fig. 1), and at 11pm on Saturday night, with 333 accessible spaces (fig. 2). Immediately visible are the differences in density and organization of accessible spaces. While the city offers many bars, cafés, restaurants, stores, and services on a Friday evening, it closes up on Saturday night. The only types of places that open (instead of closing) are the nightclubs. Interestingly, the vast majority of accessible spaces at night are spaces of the nighttime *economy*. In this way, the city not only closes up spatially, but also reduces the diversity and possibilities that are linked to the space as a whole, instead

privileging one nocturnal form: the profitable night.

One can already identify certain hotspots of nightlife consumption—the clubbing district and the bar and café-lined streets along the *Partymeile* (main drag) of Simon-Dach-Straße—which appear in the first map but become even more apparent in the second map. These hotspots are also embedded in a continuous residential urban fabric, within which all buildings host commercial activities on their ground floors and residents on their upper floors. They are surrounded by and embedded in areas that are closed to the general public. Thus, we can implicitly see the overlapping spaces of the night, where commercial and residential locations, as well as clubs and bars, occupy shared regions and times of the night. The maps show that there are at least two dominant forms of the night: the night of private homes, and the night of publically known and privately run places of consumption.

Extending beyond this, we can imagine that there are several other nights that exist beyond the commercial night—illicit activities, but also legal ones such as fitness, flânerie, or spending time with friends or family at home, all of which occupy the space-time of night. Furthermore, within the space of the club mile, people occupy different nights in accordance with their roles. While the revellers are generally front and centre in cultural representations and politics, the night represents working hours for security staff, bar staff, bottle collectors, and police.

To conclude: the night does not exist; instead there are nights (see also Meier/Henckel in this issue). As our maps show, the status of the city as a generally accessible space changes with the passage of time. As day cycles into night, the city concentrates commercial activity into bars and clubs, and yet this time is also used just as actively in residents' private spaces and homes. Both of these nights are visible in our maps, the former by the presence of visible dots and the latter by "empty" expanses. While academic

and planning professionals are focused on the night as an engine of consumption, our maps show that there are many nights overlapping each other in this neighbourhood. The question of which night is dominant provides a frame through which we can begin to examine power relations and think critically about relationships and privileges in a city or neighbourhood.

NOTES

- 1 Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City. Paris, Berlin, London 1840–1930* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998).
- 2 Tobias Rapp, *Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno und der Easvietset* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009).