



Consuming the World

Cristina
Palicari

Consuming
the World

Bachelor
Thesis

Cristina
Palicari

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Preface

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It was sometime during my travels that I discovered my fascination for this topic. The global nomads. The people in search of the *now*. A *now* that would encompass everything: the love, the happiness, the belonging. The home. Everyone, including me, was apparently chasing the same thing: a *here* more valid than all near, and a *now* more profound than all those prior and ahead. I found mine the moment I arrived in Berlin.



Berlin was to me, and to all the rest of us, a city like no other. A glass bubble inside which anything could happen. With its own rules and sleeping schedule, Berlin simply doesn't follow the normal course of any other city. Like any other dystopian amusement park, Berlin's rides are endless and for different target groups. The spirituals and the reckless, the creatives and the misunderstood, the familists and the loners, all seem to have gathered from every corner of the world to witness the same magic: one city's ability to transform itself into a home, faster than any other. But was it the home they were really chasing? Or the speed, the fastness? The here and the now?

Everyone I was meeting seemed to have been coming from a long journey, an exotic life story, a rich travelogue. They all seemed to have witnessed a lot but for some reason they chose Berlin as a safe haven, an island on which to anchor for a year or two, or four. In one of my first nights there I met a really interesting woman. She seemed to have been there for a while so the fresh Berliner in me asked with enthusiasm,

'Do you think you'll live here forever?'
'Berlin is not my forever city' she replied.

Her answer stayed with me a long time, for some reason it kept coming back in my talks with others. That was when I started noticing: they were all afraid of the word *forever*.

'Do you think
you'll live here
forever?'

'Berlin
is not my
forever city.'

All those people in search of the fast, the here and the now, the short-term Berliners, long-term travellers: all of them were running away from forever. Was I witnessing the rise of a new generation? A generation of racers and runners fearful of eternity? Was it possible that the bravest, the ones venturing the furthest, were also the ones most afraid? And most importantly, was I one of them?

Those were the thoughts that lead me into researching the people in search of the now, or the global nomads¹, as they seem to be defined.

What is all this border crossing doing to our societies and what are its roots? In a world of extreme mobility, who will have the advantage? The runner or the settler? The consumer or the consumed?

Introduction

We are currently living in what some might call 'dark times'. Since the '50s, we have been experiencing an uninterrupted development of a society of consumers. In our society of affluence, through stages of modified capitalism, we have seen the transition from a state of incommensurate production to one of lavish and excessive consumption.





We have embraced an ideology that has gradually stripped the working class of their values and ideals while at the same time maintaining and endorsing the bourgeoisie. Consumption has become a method for social gathering, feeding us a false sense of belonging and inclusion. What Zygmunt Bauman defines as 'liquid modernity', our contemporary world is a reality celebrating the transitory rather than permanent, the immediate rather than long term. A society where *individual achievements cannot be solidified into lasting possessions because, in no time, assets turn into liabilities and abilities into disabilities*².

It is a precarious life; and in a world of uncertainty, the first lesson you learn is adaptation; what are the terms and tactics for not being left behind. And for that to work, all you have to do is learn how to start over, when the moment comes. Learn to let go of things, to dispose, to dump, to replace, to hurry. In a world of new beginnings, you must master swift, painless endings.

*The briefing which the practitioners of liquid modern life need most is not how to start or open, but how to finish or close*³.

As Bauman describes it, a life of successive new beginnings also means a story of successive endings.

Being nomadic is the oldest and, somehow ironically, the youngest form of existence. We used to call them hunter-gatherers³ or pastoral nomads⁴; nowadays we classify them in different ways: expats, backpackers, remote work nomads, digital nomads. Still more of us move around for work, for pleasure, for love or to explore. But how is all this mobility influencing our societies? In a state of perpetual flexibility, what changes are cities going through?

National identity is diminishing, since the rise of capitalism has produced immense asymmetries of power. The nation-state has lost its sovereignty, while the global city has become the new dominant form. It is easier than ever to be rootless, when everything is constantly being adjusted to the global market and the new network of power. But with so much flexibility also comes indifference. There is no time to develop a sense of belonging and solidarity, and one modern citizen becomes psychologically and politically removed from the other. What effect is this having on our notions of citizenship and identity?

This paper's aim is not just to be an analysis of nomads, but a larger examination on our society; a reflection on how we see and consume the world. Tourism, migration and mobilities are no longer marginal aspects of our world; they have moved to the centre of contemporary societies and are

4. hunter-gatherers are humans surviving by pursuing wild animals and foraging for wild vegetation. Hunting and gathering are activities that occupy at least 90 per cent of all human history. Very few

contemporary societies are still classified as hunter-gatherers. Source: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/hunter-gatherer-culture/>
5. pastoral nomads migrate with their domesticated

livestock, in order to find pasture for their animals to graze. They do not live in the same place but periodically move around, having focal sites they return to. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nomadism#ref120628>

important elements constituting our individualities. While offering a perspective on the economic, political and social settings that helped shaping a new generation of nomads, I wish for this thesis to start a conversation on the promise of a new urban civilization, its vitality, immediacy and doubts, as well as what it means in relation to our notions of citizenship, identity and belonging.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one makes use of tourism and lifestyle migration studies, presenting a review of key ideas and concepts related to long-term traveling as a phenomenon. This part of the research will provide a better understanding of the new generation of travellers, global nomads, as well as their roots and history.

Chapter two presents the context in which these new nomads have formed and what factors facilitated the creation of a new urban civilization. In taking a critical look at our contemporary society, this chapter explores notions of time, space, excess and precarity, investigating some of the foundations that today form the basis of our thinking.

In the last chapter we make a transition from the previously analysed global scale of events, to a smaller, local scale. Using Berlin as a focal point, we notice how key concepts are shaping our approach to the city.

In the past 30 years, a big emphasis has been placed on Berlin's identity (re)construction, place marketing strategies, representation and staging the urban changes the city was going through. We will analyse how these strategies have led to increasing mobilities in the city and what kind of visitors it attracts. Issues of gentrification, cultural consumption, urbanism and place memory will be examined, as well as more personal concerns including identity and belonging, for a better understanding of what a global city entails and why it attracts today's nomads.

We will conclude by reviewing processes of consumption and their relation to the act of travelling. We will discuss the process through which we find pleasure and satisfaction, finally going back to Bauman's concept of liquid modernity and how it relates to our global nomads.



Who are the
nomads?

Mobility has seen a huge increase in recent decades. Travel and tourism rank among the largest industries in the world and now, thanks to advancements in technology, people can cross spaces faster and with less effort than ever.

In a world where everything seems to be about mobility and movement, virtually as well as physically, the biggest question has become: why even stay?



The nomadic life and worldview seem to have arrived in full force. People move, ideas and philosophies, ideologies, goods and capital, all intertwining together around the globe, penetrating every aspect of our lives. More people for more reasons than ever are criss-crossing the globe, from one city to the next, making it seem that the notion of 'space' our grandparents had has undergone such drastic change that nobody recognizes it anymore. As the anthropologist Marc Augé stated, we seem to be living in an era characterized by changes of scale (rapid means of transport, television, internet) and excess of space- directly correlated to the shrinking of our planet.⁶

Augé questions the sociological and ethnological⁷ notion of space studied by Marcel Mauss in his 1966 book *Sociologie et Anthropologie*. Mauss defines the individual studied by ethnologists as one totality, representing the whole culture he is a part of. He is therefore generalized rather than individualized, but precisely for this reason extreme specificity is required in collecting the data. The person is identified with the culture he is a part of, therefore the culture will be precisely located in time and space.⁸ Augé, however, suggests that anthropology will have to find new methods of studying its subjects, because of the significant changes our contemporary world is going through. Ethnologists are turning to Europe as overseas fieldwork; the ethnology of the near⁹, as he calls it.

*It is not that anthropology has become bored with foreign fields and turned to more familiar terrain [...]; it is that the contemporary world itself, with its accelerated transformations, is attracting anthropological scrutiny.*¹⁰

6. Marc Augé (19951) Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity, Verso (Eds.), (John Howe Trans.) page 25

7. Ethnology is 'a branch of cultural anthropology

dealing chiefly with the comparative and analytical study of cultures'; source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnology>

8. Marc Augé (19951) Non-Places: Introduction

to an Anthropology of Supermodernity, Verso (Eds.), (John Howe Trans.) page 18

9. idem, page 9

10. idem, page 20

The changes in scale over the past decades have stimulated us to undertake the study of new civilizations and cultures. And in a world where individual histories are so intertwined with global histories, anthropologists today are facing a new problem: how to situate the individual.



Global nomads, as researcher Paivi Kannisto describes them in her PhD, are people who have an ability to travel whenever and wherever they wish, free from the restraints of a 'conventional' lifestyle and the package it comes with: a rooted existence, a permanent residence, life-long friendships and a reliable regular income.¹¹

We all seem to know that one person who keeps changing cities as soon as he gets the chance. He leaves home in search of something better, more meaningful, or more adventurous. He makes more friends on the road than the rest of us seem to have made in the past three years. He takes life less seriously, knows when to breathe, when to love as well as when to leave. He might stay in the same spot for one year, or two or four, claiming he finally found home, when, suddenly, when you least expect it, he takes off again. Once you have an itch for something, it's hard to let it go.

And this itch seems to be contagious. Changing homes every few years somehow became the new norm. Websites on how to be a nomad and work from abroad are proliferating, such as Nomad List, Remotive, Workfrom, or various Facebook groups. There are different summits, meetings and events catering to the lifestyle. The annual Berlin summit called 'DNX Festival' is a major event in the nomad's calendar. Pieter Levels, founder of Nomadist website, stated in his talk that there will be one billion digital nomads by 2035.¹²

Levels explains this by showing the figures in America 2015, where 30% of working people are freelancers, and the number is expected to grow. The internet speed will also increase to a speed in which you could download and back-up life-long digital memories in about two minutes. Pieter also talks about people's marital status and homeownership rate, both being in decline. Flight ticket prices are decreasing, and flight duration will probably become shorter. NASA talked about their work on new technologies for bringing back the idea of supersonic travel launched by the Concorde jet, at Aviation 2014.¹³ Therefore, with the rise of fast internet, fast travel, non-married status and less home ownership, it becomes very easy for people to take off in search of new adventures.

As cities become more globalized, the shift from one to the other is made easier. Everyone speaks English, everyone drinks Starbucks and everyone has Instagram. Keeping in touch has become effortless, all you need to do is to follow back. Distance does not matter anymore, in a world of continuous flux and connectivity.

Migration has shaped and developed cities from the very beginning. Artists, workers, refugees, travelers of all sorts, people never really stopped moving, bringing with them different cultures, shaping economies, creating cities.

11. Paivi Kannisto (2014) Global Nomads: Challenges of Mobility in the Sedentary World, Tilburg University. page 2

12. <https://levels.io/future-of-digital-nomads/>

13. <https://newatlas.com/supersonic-passenger-aircraft-revival/32600/>

Migration has always been a basic ingredient to urbanism, politics and daily life. Yet somehow, we feel it's different this time. What is it about today's restlessness that makes running away easier than ever? What is this sudden urge of wanting to belong and why are we harder to please than ever? What is the 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere' phenomenon doing to our way of interacting with space and time?

The notion of 'nomad' has existed from the beginning of time and it means being on the move. Historically it involved looking for pastures to graze and animals to hunt. However, today's nomads are moving for far more complex reasons. Twenty first century nomads do not roam in the traditional group or tribal practice; they travel mostly individually or with a partner. They rarely travel with families or become integral parts of a community. They are individuals wandering alone around the world, living a life as fascinating as it is daunting and confusing. Loneliness and isolation of the location-independent traveller therefore become main characteristics, thus providing Augé's ethnologists with the perfect study group.

Existing academic literature is very rich on the topics of migration and travelling. Travellers have been analyzed and researched from a multitude of angles; economic migrants,

expats, lifestyle migrants; refugees and exiles for political asylum have also been a cause of debate particularly since the 2015 'refugee crisis'.

However, global nomads do not quite fit these categories. They are on the move simply for the sake of moving. They are constantly looking for something new, not necessarily wanting to settle down anywhere, and also not motivated by material rewards. And interestingly enough, the amount of research on such location-independent people is very little, as much as the restlessness of Western societies might be urging it.

In the following pages, I will go through some of the key concepts and notions that have been associated with long-term travelers, and most importantly, the changes they have gone through across time.

The Drifter

The study of tourism as a sociological specialty rather than an exotic, marginal topic, emerged in the 1970s with Erik Cohen's essays. He first depicted the long-term traveller typology in his two articles 'Toward a Sociology of International Tourism' (1972) and 'The Nomads from Affluence' (1973). At the time, attention focused primarily on the ordinary mass-tourist, which also became the main target group for different entrepreneurs and travel agencies. However, Cohen proposes a distinction between different types of tourists and points out the contrast between mass-tourists and explorers. This is when he introduces the term 'drifter'.

The drifter is defined as venturing *furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed way of life of his country...The drifter has no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel.*¹⁴

He is a self-reliant individual in search of spontaneity and adventure. He represents a non-institutionalized traveller who avoids contact with the tourism industry. Drifter tourists are generally conceived as being children of affluence on a prolonged break from the adult life and middle-class responsibility, seeking new experiences in the excitement of complete new places. Cohen associated the drifter with the 'counter-culture'¹⁵, his journey being a result of his alienation from his home country.

15. Erik Cohen (1973) Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 14, page 90

14. Erik Cohen (1972) Toward a Sociology of International Tourism. *Social Research*, 39, page 168



The loosening of ties and obligations, the abandonment of accepted standards and conventional ways of life, the voluntary abnegation of the comforts of modern technological society, and the search for sensual and emotional experiences are some of the distinguishing characteristics of a counter-culture in its various forms, which motivate the young to escape their homeland, and to travel and live among different and more 'primitive' surroundings.¹⁶

16. Erik Cohen (1973) Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter-Tourism. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 14: page 93



The Backpacker

As drifting gained more popularity, Cohen's subject has been a key departure point on the literature of 'backpacker tourism', which brings together studies of drifting, wandering and youth budget tourism.

In the 1980s, researcher Pamela Riley helped reconceptualising the notion of long-term travel, detach it from the negative connotations the 'drifter' seemed to imply. She argues that such travellers are neither 'hippies' nor the adherent to a 'counterculture' and earlier depictions of them as hedonistic, anarchistic 'drifters' are no longer accurate.¹⁷

She introduces the more neutral term 'long-term international budget travel' to describe the travellers she refers to, which are often educated, professional people, well-organized and concerned with budgeting their money. Many are recent college graduates, delaying the transition into the responsibilities of adulthood. Their status is achieved on the road through the experiences they encounter.

As we can observe, at this time long-term travel starts to be portrayed more positively, as an educational experience of sorts, rather than simply the bourgeois time-wasting. She also stresses the strong ties between travellers and their home societies, placing the emphasis on the process of returning to one's native culture. Travellers learn important lessons on the road, dramatically altering their value systems, characters and identity constructs.



17. Pamela Riley (1988) Road Culture of International Long-Term Budget Travelers. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, 313-328, page 326

As long-term travel grew in popularity, around the 1990s, the term 'backpacker' started to gain prominence. 'Backpackers'¹⁸ are low-budget tourists travelling independently for a long period of time, before returning back home. Their characteristics seem to be closely connected to what Pamela Riley has described: most of the backpackers are students or graduates that undertake this journey before or after completing a degree, as a rite of passage, an initiation into adult life. They also share characteristics with the drifter and the idea of counterculture, as they tend to experiment with sexuality or drugs.

Although the backpacker is placed in opposition to the regular 'tourist', we nonetheless notice how the growing demand for this kind of travel has stimulated an increase in the infrastructure of services dedicated to backpacker culture: from cheap hostels to websites, blogs and vlogs. Backpackers therefore become crucial for certain travel products (coach travel, cheap accommodation, 'student' travel).

Hence it is not surprising that the backpacker becomes part of a well-defined system of conventional tourism. What was once a handful of 'drifters' slowly turned into a major global industry. The backpackers become part of the same mass tourism industry they originally wanted to distinguish themselves from. We therefore witness the gap now formed between the ideology and the practice of backpacking.

18. Pearce, P. L. (1990) The Backpacker Phenomenon: Preliminary Answers to Basic Questions. Townsville: Department of Tourism, James Cook University

The Lifestyle Traveller

In 2009 Scott Cohen introduces the notion of 'lifestyle travel'. In comparison to the terms introduced before, 'lifestyle travellers' are not necessarily expected to return back home. Either long-term travellers or full-time travellers like the global nomads, they are individuals who *repeatedly return to long-term travel and consider travel to be their way of life*¹⁹. Inspired by sociologist Anthony Giddens, who claims that maintaining a coherent sense of self in today's modernity becomes more and more problematic and individuals now face a diversity of possible selves²⁰, Cohen notices that people now go on an intense search of self through their lifestyles, especially through travelling.

As globalisation is exposing us to a vast array of people, cultures and places, people become forced to go on the search of a more coherent sense of self through an increasing range of options, under the threat of a 'personal meaninglessness'²¹. Identities in today's modernity have shifted away from their traditional forms, and Giddens also observed how, the more post-traditional the background of a person is, the more preoccupied with the (re)construction of the self he becomes. In modern societies, he says, self-identity becomes 'an inescapable issue'²², where people are compelled to make important everyday choices about their clothing, appearance and leisure as well as their career, beliefs and relationships, or mobility, as Cohen suggests. Thus self-identity becomes a project taken on individually and independently, as a continuously revised biography.

19. Scott Cohen (2009) *The search for 'self' for lifestyle travellers*, University of Otago, New Zealand, page 4
 20. Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity
 21. *idem*, page 201
 22. *idem*, page 104



The Global Nomad

The concept of 'global nomad' that Päivi Kannisto introduced in her PhD thesis and that I will keep referring to in my thesis, was inspired by, and synthesized Cohen's 'lifestyle traveller'. Since Cohen's definition is valid for both long-term and full-time travellers, Kannisto shifted the focus to the latter- the travellers who do not have any plans of returning home. However, she did not fully agree on Cohen's choice of words. The term 'lifestyle' shouldn't be used as a singular noun since it is clear that global nomads do not all share the same lifestyle. It is rather a set of practices that unites them.²³

The term 'practice' she uses goes back to Giddens' studies on sociology. He defines 'practices' as *an ongoing series of practical activities*.²⁴ This definition carries a sense of regularity and continuity, routine-driven activities in people's day to day lives. Hence, practices are the basic elements of which lifestyles are made; and mobility is one of them. Therefore, instead of a single, fixed identity, Kannisto's research studies changing subjectivities emphasising movement.

The interesting thing is that most of the global nomads she interviewed started out as lifestyle travellers or backpackers, until they eventually reached the point a buying a one-way ticket and not returning home. This is where one of the major differences between global nomads and other travellers appears: global nomads are homeless and do their travels without being attached to a specific geographic location.

23. Päivi Kannisto (2014) *Global Nomads: Challenges of Mobility in the Sedentary World*, Tilburg University, page 18
 24. Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, page 81



Although long-term travellers also make lengthy journeys, the home always remains an important point of reference for them, both physically and mentally. For some of them returning home is the ultimate goal of the trip. Global nomads, however, do not plan on settling down and are constantly searching for something new. As Zygmunt Bauman describes them, they are *people of many places but of no place in particular*.²⁵

Another big difference is the fact that their journey is not extrinsically motivated; by not making the return home a priority, their goal is not to show their parents or mentors how much they've changed, or to influence in some way their home societies; they are not necessarily travelling to learn and develop themselves. They simply follow intrinsic motivations.

Thirdly, instead of meeting and socializing only with other tourists, global nomads tend to immerse themselves in local cultures. You will not find them in your regular expat bar, but rather adapting to the local lifestyle and day-to-day practices. However, the question mark here lays on the word 'local', since it is still debatable to what extent do they really integrate.

25. Zygmunt Bauman (2005) *Liquid Life*.
Cambridge: Polity Press. page 67



Consuming the World

We have discussed the differences and similarities between different long-term travelling practices and motivations. There are a lot of ways in which people get caught up in the *swirling vortex of global tourism*²⁶. With travel costs and durations decreasing and far away places becoming easier to visit, now there seems to be a huge competition between nations and cities in achieving the higher number of incomers. They all wish to attract and target different businesses, people and tourists. But what exactly is the backbone of this mass mobility, from a social theory point of view?

In the following chapter we will be having a look at the many different facets of our globalized world. As exciting and stimulating it may be, it also comes with many hazards, insecurities and instabilities.

26. John Urry (2003) *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity



Liquid Life

Ideas on travel have been gaining such prominence since the 1990s, also among the sedentary. It seems our society has slowly started to shift its focus from the permanent to the transitory; from long term to immediate. And with this it also turned identity from fact into a task²⁷, as Giddens described. A never-ending task, a demand to always be on the look-out for your own identity. A constant search of self. And somehow, this new form of identity comes in the shape of a matrix, needed to be filled in according to the global trends, as just another way of inclusion. An inclusion in a society of solitary people, each in their individual pursuit of happiness.

The one who best described the increasing fluidity of the everyday and the ubiquitous sense of permanent flux is the Polish sociologist and philosopher, Zygmunt Bauman, who defines it as 'liquid modernity': *a society in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines.*²⁸

Not being able to keep its shape or stay on course for too long, it is an environment that challenges you to be fast-moving. You must modernize, you must keep up, you must strip yourself of any old possessions in order to be able to accumulate new ones. The more possessions you have, the more they will slow you down. Your survival depends on the speed and efficiency with which you consign products to waste. Nothing is allowed to outstay its welcome. Always be aware of sell-by dates and don't be afraid of dismantling old identities- there's always a better one to put on.

27. Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Polity Press

28. Zygmunt Bauman (2005) *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. page 2



‘Life in the liquid modern society is a sinister version of the musical chairs game, played for real. The true stake in the race is (temporary) rescue from being excluded into the ranks of the destroyed and avoiding being consigned to waste. And with the competition turning global, the running must now be done round a global track.’

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Bauman 2005, 3

It is a life of constant new beginnings, yet, precisely because of that, you must master the act of ending. The constant new beginnings thus become a series of successive endings.

But with so much flexibility, uncertainties and insecurities will appear. Our capitalist economic system, defined by decentralization and flexibility captures a range of experiences threatened by this system- situations of permanent uncertainty, such as the lack of a *secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle*.³⁰ As exciting as our modern times are, they are also really precarious.

Such precarity seems to be a defining feature of our life and it has been a central object of sociological concern since the 1970s. Sociologist Charles Masquelier analyses it best in his book *Bourdieu, Foucault and the Politics of Precarity*, where we see that the notion of precarity has been approached in two main ways: objectively, referencing the structural transformations of workplace and labour market in a globalized world, and subjectively, representing the deeper psychological impact that comes with it, the permanent uncertainty.

Economist Guy Standing goes further in explaining this concept by introducing the definition of a new class: the global ‘precariat’³¹: a growing insecure class formed by the new flexible labour markets of capitalism; the new

30. Guy Standing (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. New York: Bloomsbury, page 16

31. idem.

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millions without an anchor of stability or security. It is also a class that, by not being grounded by anything, lacks political stability and can therefore easily switch between extremes of Left or Right. As capitalism makes the shift to non-regular jobs, flexi and part-time jobs, casual and temporary labour as well as a growth of employment agencies, employment and job insecurity become defining features of our societies.

However, Foucault associates this precarity with power and domination³². By recognizing that power has become detached from traditional structures of responsibility and accountability, giving rise to flexible and unpredictable labour markets, Foucault correlates the entrepreneurial behavior with a *uniquely articulated exercise of freedom amidst security*.^{32.1} As neoliberalism is pushing more people into becoming entrepreneurs, individuals become more active in the production of competition, being present in all decisions and learning to adapt to the reality of their precarious life.

By always being exposed to danger and insecurity, individuals constantly need to learn to adjust to unpredictable and rapidly changing circumstances. The fear of failure then normalizes and standardizes people's behaviours. You are obliged to accept the pressing matters of self-adjustment and act as entrepreneur.

32. Michel Foucault (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, page 269

32.1. Charles Masquelier (2018) *Bourdieu, Foucault and the Politics of Precarity*. University of Exeter

33. Lorey, I. (2015) *State of insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. London: Verso, page 111

34. Michel Foucault (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

'Precarisation' therefore becomes a process of *making individuals governable*³³ and neoliberality blooms on a *culture of danger*³⁴, as Foucault described it, driving all its members into producing their own satisfaction.

Consuming Life

Zygmunt Bauman compares his definition of 'liquid life' with the city Eutropia from Italo Calvino's 'Invisible Cities': the city that is not just one, but all cities together. However, only one of them is inhabited at a time, while the others are empty. Once they live and consume the life there, the inhabitants move to the next one. And so, through rotation they are constantly on the move, from city to city, starting a new life, with a new job, new friends and new family. They all move to the next city, *which is there waiting for them, empty and as good as new.*³⁵

And because their society is ordered without big differences in wealth or position, the change will swiftly take place. Eutropia therefore seems to be the paradise of global nomads. With no strings attached to anything and anyone, you are free to walk away whenever you feel tired of your current life. The move comes with the hope of a great change, leaving you refreshed and optimistic. However, in no time the changes themselves will stop bringing any real change.

*The inhabitants repeat the same scenes, with the actors changed; they repeat the same speeches with variously combined accents; they open alternate mouths in identical yawns. Alone, among all the cities of the empire, Eutropia remains always the same.*³⁶

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35. Italo Calvino (1972) *Invisible Cities* (William Weaver Trans.) Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company. page 64
36. *idem*, page 65



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It is only total gratification that would make them content with staying. However, since that is a highly unrealistic prospect, they will forever remain on the move, as the crave for consuming drives them further.

Liquid life is thus, consuming life. And in a consumer society, the feeling of satisfaction remains enticing only as long as the desire stays unfulfilled. The non-satisfaction of desires therefore becomes the fundamental law under which this system can operate. Every moment of satisfying a need or desire brings with it the birth of another need or desire. The search must go on. Without the perpetual frustration of desires, how can the consumer-targeted economy endure? Satisfaction thus becomes very individualized and it is the duty of every consumer to be responsible for their own desires, as well as assuring the means of satisfying them.

‘Insofar as he consumes, he is a producer. What does he produce? Well, quite simply, he produces his own satisfaction.’

Consuming Time

Once individuals are reduced to a mere sequence of transitory experiences that leave no trace, it is the past that tends to be unforgivingly and systematically destroyed³⁸. We witness a state of precariousness, not only concerning mobilities of capital and people but also of time and space.

Firstly, it is important to discuss our perception of time and how we make use of it, as well as how we dispose of it. Since the Enlightenment era, the idea of progress has experienced drastic change. What was once a utopic ideal is now a mere illusion. As Augé investigates in his book *Non-Places*, after *two world wars, totalitarianism and genocidal policies*³⁹, we must ask ourselves if we have made any progress at all. History stops carrying any meaning when no lessons appear to be learned and taken forward. Instead, we seem to be witnessing an 'acceleration of history'.

*We barely have time to reach maturity before our past has become history, before our individual histories belong to history writ large.*⁴⁰

We are witnessing an overabundance of events, not only because of an immeasurable amount of information and news, but also because of the growing interconnections between them and the network that binds them all together, the current 'world system'. The overabundance of events seems to promote an explicit and intense daily need to give meaning to things: to permanently give meaning to the present, if the past does not matter anymore.

38. Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer (1979) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (John Cumming Trans.), London: Verso. page 216

39. Marc Augé (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso (Eds.), (John Howe Trans.) page 24

40. *idem*, page 22





Can we then refer to modernity as a process of creating a new collective memory? But through this process of constructing a new urban memory, what happens to our old one? Is the past still reflected in today's world or are we witnessing a total homogenization of user regulations, identities, cultures and memory?

French historian Pierre Nora defines 'lieux de mémoire' as any place in nature, material or non-material, which by the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community; any place of historical significance, such as a monument, a museum, or an event that may play an important part in the collective memory of one society. But as sites of memory become more popular and more commercialized by the influx of tourists and their mass-consumption of culture and history, they tend to homogenize varied local memories. Modernity's process of constant renewal and obsolescence generates a proliferation of museums and sites of memory. Museums are no longer encapsulated in dedicated buildings. They are everywhere around us and seem to be occupying large portions of our everyday culture and experience.

When we look at urban restorations of old centers, museum villages, even flea markets and vintage fashion, and especially the rise of internet and the enormous digital database steadily growing day by day, we seem to be witnessing the rise of a new museum culture, a true spectacle and *mise-en-scène*. This process thus creates the risk of transforming them into 'invented traditions'. A *relentless museummania* as Huyssen states in his book *Twilight Memories*.⁴¹



41. Andreas Huyssen (1994) *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. London: Routledge. page 14

A lot of our environment is constructed out of a need for historicizing. But through our pursuit of nostalgia, aren't we just mimicking realness? Aren't we creating a *phantasmagoria of the past*?⁴²

We became obsessed with a religious accumulation of traces of our past, visible reminders of what we used to be. In a society where finding oneself became the true goal, do we think we might get closer to it by looking through all the reminders at what we used to be? Hoping to suddenly encounter our unfindable identity, we want to decipher *what we are through what we are no longer*, as Nora wonderfully describes it. The overabundance of events, news, history as well as 'museums', databases and traces of our past seems to have given us an intense need to give meaning to things. And by doing so, we become only more avid for meaning. And that is how, eventually the true sense of meaning becomes obsolete.

We will delve deeper into this topic in chapter three, looking at how museummania developed in Berlin and what effects it had on visitors.

42. Chris Rojek (1991) *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations of Leisure and Travel*. Glasgow, University of Glasgow. page ii

Consuming Space

Supermodernity's excess⁴³ can also be seen in relation to space. The spatial overabundance appears not only through changes in scale of means of transport, urban concentrations, movements of people, but also through an excessive flux of images, symbolic universes created all around us, through signs, codes, rules; a collection of codes which everyone accepts and acts in accordance with. In order to be able to consume, you need to know the codes of consumption. What we consume therefore transforms into signs rather than commodities.

Certain places start existing only through the words that evoke them; they are what Augé defines as 'non-places'.⁴⁴ They have the peculiarity of being defined partly by the words and texts they offer, the 'instructions of use' (no smoking/ take right-hand lane/ you are now entering the..) All those remarks, rules and codes are *addressed simultaneously to each and any of us: they fabricate the 'average man', defined as the user of the road, retail or banking system.*⁴⁵

All the non-places, physical or virtual, seem to be forming their own cosmology, which is objectively universal and at the same time familiar and esteemed. As a tourist in a foreign country you will encounter the same big hotel chains, supermarkets, coffee companies. You can be lost in a country you do not know and still feel like home.



43. Marc Augé (1995[1] *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso (Eds.), (John Howe Trans.)

44. *idem*, page 7
45. *idem*, page 81



Another ‘distortion’ of the space takes place through what Henri Lefebvre calls an *occasional eruption of violence*⁴⁶, by taking as example the Marais district in Paris. There, the old class struggle between bourgeoisie and aristocracy can clearly be seen- an aristocratic neighbourhood which has been pushed in the service of material production, shops, new apartments; a space that has been both ‘uglified’ and ‘enlivened’, through a process which he defined as ‘popularization’, and ultimately as *bourgeoisification*.⁴⁷ Nowadays we refer to it as gentrification. Innumerable historical towns and not only were transformed by this sort of conflict.

Lefebvre also highlights the transformation of the Mediterranean area into a *leisure-oriented space for industrialized Europe*.^{47.1} Comparing it to a sort of neo-colonization, this space has acquired a specific role in the social division of labour. The immediate access to sun and sea, as well as urban centres and temporary accommodations have created a distinctive quality, giving birth to a *culture of quantitative*. It is a space in which wastefulness, surplus objects, expense and consumption reign supreme. As a contrast to the productive focus of Northern European city, here the focus is placed on love, sports and reinvigoration. Hence, the Mediterranean perimeter becomes a space of consumption, of sun and sea and eroticism, where waste and expense appear as only goal. A great *vacationland festival*, as Lefebvre defines it.

Nevertheless, there are many more places that seem to be in accordance with the idea of a great vacationland festival, in one way or another. They do not have to necessarily be by the sea in order to fulfil the criteria- that of lavish consumption and satisfaction of pleasures.

Long before drifters and backpackers came to birth, in the late sixteenth century it became fashionable for young aristocrats to visit Paris, Venice, Florence, and especially Rome. It was a standard itinerary called 'The Grand Tour' meant to enhance their classical education and was associated with a rite of passage that young upper-class European men, particularly from England, were undertaking when coming of age (about 21 years old).

The custom flourished from about 1660 until the arrival of large-scale rail transport, in the 1840s.^{47.2} The itinerary was possible only for a privileged class- the class that gave birth to the scientists, authors, artists of the time. However, while the original purpose of the Grand Tour was educational, a big amount of time was spent on frivolous pursuits, such as drinking, gambling and intimate encounters- some of the tourists saw this experience as a chance to indulge in promiscuous pursuits with no further consequences (we can notice the similarity with Erik Cohen's drifters). Upon returning home, they were meant to be ready to take in their responsibilities of aristocrats. The Grand Tour was ultimately appreciated, as it made British architecture and culture develop dramatically, but many viewed it as a waste of time from which the tourists did not come home with more than when they left.

47.2. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/nd/grtr/nd_grtr.htm
<https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/how-tourism-hasnt-changed-since-the-grand-tour>

48. Lisa Colletta (2015) *The Legacy of the Grand Tour: New Essays on Travel, Literature, and Culture*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press

The aristocratic tradition eventually declined, but the Tour evolved into different shapes, destinations remaining more or less similar. A tour of the Continent was seen as the ideal method through which to gather taste, knowledge, culture and good manners. Nowadays, although the emphasis is placed more on leisure rather than education, those ideas of self-improvement and pursuing a higher goal are still very much embedded in travellers. Travel to Europe is thus not just an adventure: it is rooted in Western culture's conceptions of culture, knowledge and sophistication.⁴⁸

As the Grand Tour used to proclaim particular cities as fashionable destinations throughout the 17th and 18th century, nowadays cities become fashionable based on the extent to which you can consume- as much as possible and as fast as possible.

For a while now, one of the most popular destinations in Europe (especially for global nomads) seems to be Berlin. But how did this timid city, that was once turned into an abandoned village by the cold war geopolitical forces reigning over it until the early 1990s, manage to boost its social and psycho-active infrastructure to such an extent that it is now bursting with people from all around the world, coming to witness its splendour? What happened in the meantime, how much and how fast? What is the recipe that managed to bring Berlin in the focus of Europe, if not the world? What made Berlin a true vacationland festival?



Consuming Berlin

The 20th century has been crucial in shaping the cities and societies we now live in. Europe experimented with a wide range of political ideologies, economical strategies and imperialistic aspirations, each contributing in its own way into triggering both of the World Wars.

Nowhere is this truer and more evident than in the city of Berlin, a city that has always played an important role in the history of Europe; as Karl Marx said, *he who possesses Berlin controls Europe*.



What was once a small fishing village built on the sand banks of the river Spree before the Middle Ages rapidly evolved into the trade centre of the Prussian Empire, to later become the capital of the re-united German Reich after 1870. After a consuming World War, Germany emerged as a growing democracy under the name of 'Weimar Republic', which eventually collapsed due to the devastating effects of the Great Depression and the country was thrown into the hell of Hitler's Third Reich.⁴⁹ That led to a Second World War which proved to be disastrous for the country. After the war, Germany as a whole was divided. Berlin itself as well- into zones of allied occupation which rapidly evolved into a capitalist West and a communist East. The Berlin Wall stood for what seemed to be an eternity, but after almost 30 years of suffering and physical division, the collapse of the wall finally enabled the city to start reclaiming its place in Europe, as a symbol of liberty and progress.

It is not always easy to answer the question of why Berlin has become one of the most popular cities in the world. For it is not a beautiful city, as many other metropolises are known for. When comparing its skyline with that of New York, Paris or London, Berlin still comes across as sort of provincial capital. As Peter Schneider analyses in his book *The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*, seen from above, it is lacking everything a big city is known for. There is no financial district, no nightlife district, and the famous TV Tower, Berlin's 'Eiffel Tower' is *merely a modest copy of the Paris original*⁵⁰.

Berlin can easily be classified as the ugliest capital of Western Europe. But that is precisely what makes so many people fall in love with it. What attracts them to this city is exactly what they feel is lacking in more beautiful ones: the weirdness, the incompleteness, the outlandishness- and especially the liveness that accompanies this package- the city without a closing time.

Art critic Karl Scheffler described Berlin in his 1910 lament as an urban landscape *defined by a fundamental lack of organically developed structure*. It is a city *condemned forever to become and never to be*.⁵¹ However, it is precisely its incompleteness and imperfection that afford such a sense of freedom.

In a beautiful and perfectly restored city, the newcomer might easily feel excluded. There is no space left for him. Everything is planned to the millimetre, everything is complete. But Berlin, by offering so many voids and spaces of 'potential', it gives the visitor the feeling that the city might have a place for him too. That here, anything can happen.

49. <https://www.activehistory.co.uk/ib-history/extended-essay-history-samples/berlin.pdf>

50. Peter Schneider (2014) *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. London: Penguin Books. page 4

51. Karl Scheffler (1910) *Berlin-Ein Stadtschicksal*, 2015 Eds., Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag. page 219

City and Leisure

So, what exactly did all those years of political and economic instability do to the city's population? How did it reflect upon them, on their built environment and social life and when exactly did Berlin turn into a centre of leisure?

The answer to this question goes way back in the 20th century, when Kaiser Wilhelm II decided to make Berlin's transformation his personal goal and completely modernized it. That is when Berlin grew drastically in size, by becoming an epicentre of science and technology. By 1912 it already counted two million inhabitants.

After the Great War however, Berlin lost its capital status. Although it was seen as an unstable and violent place, in the aftermath of defeat, it was still the second-largest city in Europe, after London. Despite its marginalisation in political terms, it remained of major cultural importance. The moral degeneration occasionally gave rise to revolutions and political chaos, which somehow had their own appeal and the German capital started attracting a significant number of foreigners for the first time. The city kept growing and soon became a centre of recreation and diversion, a new capital of leisure. That is when the myth of Berlin in the 20s began. Mixed feelings of hope, fear and excitement were characterising the city during the convulsive Weimar period, in a state of cultural and political flux.⁵²





After the Second World War, Berlin became a military occupied zone temporarily administered by the four Allies, who started shaping the city's cultural agenda. The art that was censored during the Nazi period was now being exposed everywhere in the city. It felt like the city was experiencing a huge 'hunger' for culture and vitality.

West Berlin was becoming one big *showcase of capitalism*⁵³ through its luxurious department stores and new architecture; it decided to place an even stronger focus on leisure and culture after the Wall was built, as a solution for keeping people inside and maintaining the capitalist island alive. A major policy was created for this reason: lifting the curfew in bars and clubs. This policy made Berlin the city it is today, marking the beginning of a rapid flourishing of the nightlife.

In 1968 however, West German students revolted against the petit bourgeois image in which the city had transformed, despite poor living conditions.⁵⁴ Their movement marked the evolution of a new face of Berlin, transforming itself into a cranky and remarkable place, mostly populated by school drop-outs, punks and all sorts of radicals. This is when nightlife grew in power, especially in the notorious Kreuzberg neighbourhood. Soon enough, the city marketing began advertising West Berlin as a 24/7 tourist destination. 'Berlin nonstop' or 'Berlin, continuously open' became slogans.

In the East vandalism was practiced on a considerable scale. The East also had more things to destroy, and not as much money as the West for the wiping out all the irregularities.



The fall of the Berlin Wall marked a very important moment in the development of the city's nightlife. The unification of the city created a scene for electronic music never seen before. All the ravished and abandoned buildings marked by the presence of the wall were taken over by people who turned them into temporary nightclubs, organizing all sorts of illegal parties. There was an immense feeling of freedom and relief after the unification, celebrated with nonstop parties. Clubs became the place in which, for a brief period, people divided by gender, race, sexuality and politics were all united under a mutual love and dedication to techno music. Gay people felt more welcomed there than anywhere else, and women didn't feel the pressure they used to feel on the streets.

Fast forward thirty years and the nightlife culture still thrives, being constantly maintained and refreshed by the huge influx of tourists in search of the true 'Spirit of Berlin'. There is no better explanation for the city's contemporary success than the networks of leisure and consumption it has created, nurturing and maintaining themselves through this all-weekend-long nightlife ritual. Berlin's slogans from the 70s still prevail today, advancing partying into a sustainable lifestyle model. Alluring and immersive architectural spaces contribute to the leisure infrastructure, through their liberating aesthetics ranging from darkness, decay and desertedness to fairy-like, DIY improvised structures, openness and hedonism.

'It is here that you can find a shattering of all 'traditional' values and 'normativity', replaced with a culture of empowerment and freedom, escapism and 'letting go'.

Nicolas Hausdorf and Alexander Goller describe this very well in their book *Super Structural Berlin*, where they carefully analyse how the city's current settings, in particular the nightlife infrastructure and the drug infrastructure, serve in creating very unique and peculiar identities.

It is easy to discover that the city has a very active market of *pharmacological alchemy*⁵⁵, offering tourists and nightlife participants a big and easy to reach range of illegal substances. Berlin has managed to produce a specific, somehow aesthetic connection to its massive drug usage; certain areas or streets have been cognitively correlated to this image, through media and famous movies, like *Christiane F.* and *Berlin Calling*.

The distribution of space in the city even facilitates the distribution and use of drugs. The unmonitored open spaces and big parks, the ruins, the old, the abandoned, the architecture of decay and especially the 24/7 club culture are no more and no less than the ideal loci for experiencing the thrill and stimulation of being introduced to just another consumer-oriented urban-sized amusement park.

Nightlife and drugs are therefore forming a very aestheticized cultural commodity. They become yet another consumerist ritual for a society that wants to rebel against traditional values and break out from the socio-ideological binds tying them up to their societies of origin and older generations. Their escape to Berlin is one last rebellion against the *meticulously preplanned normativity* of their lives.⁵⁶

55. Nicolas Hausdorf & Alexander Goller (2015) *Super Structural Berlin: A Superstructural Tourist Guide to Berlin For the Visitor and the New*

Resident. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, page 27
56. idem, page 14



City and Memory

The upheavals Berlin has experienced have not only been political but also aesthetic, being accompanied by a series of urban regenerations and architectural transformations. Contemporary Berlin, a city marked by the 20th century, now showcases its past on almost every street corner. This city has been erased and re-written throughout this violent century more times than any other Western city and its journey can be read not only in the built space's visible markers, but also in the images and memories repressed by traumatic events.

The city's rich history appeals and allures, through both the good and the vicious. By now, the city's tourism managers have understood that Berlin's monuments of murder are the ones bringing the highest revenue.^{56.1} The city's dark episodes thus become its main selling point. To return to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, we can see how Berlin's sites of memory, which are obviously sites of past traumatic experiences, have not only been constructing different narratives around them but have also explored the dynamics of place memory in the city. They became sites of cultivated memory. Simon Ward delves deeper into this topic in his 2016 book *Urban Memory and Visual Culture in Berlin*. Ward analyses the two ways in which the dynamics of place memory⁵⁷ are formulated in the city: through the (re)construction/repair of the urban environment as well as the careful curation of material remnants; a selection of 'wounds' and 'empty spaces', which capacitates the critical perception of time.⁵⁸ None of those methods is purely 'authentic', but they are also not being dismissed as only artifice.

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57. Simon Ward (2016) *Urban Memory and Visual Culture in Berlin: Framing the Asynchronous City, 1957-2012*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
58. *idem*, page 13

56.1. Peter Schneider (2014) *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. London: Penguin Books. page 6



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Borrowing Andreas Huyssen's term of 'museal gaze', we can analyze our way of dealing with the material remnants of history, through our relentless *museummania*.⁵⁹ As the boundaries of the museum become ever less distinct, designated places in the city will take up that role. Place memory in the urban space becomes therefore a source of exoticism and spectacle for the viewer. The museal gaze in Berlin can not only be found in conventional museums but also in the built urban environment. Pedestrian zones, public spaces, restored urban squares and pre-existing memorial spaces expand the notion of museum in an amorphous, homogenized way.

In his article 'The Voids of Berlin', Huyssen recalls his encounter with Potsdamer Platz. Walking through the square, he says he *could not help but remember*⁶⁰. that this tabula rasa that was left to be a no-man's land after the war had once been the site of Hitler's Reichskanzlei or the space to be occupied by his megalomaniac urban development project 'Germania'. Also, the wall itself, after it had been removed or sold in pieces to tourists, became another void of the city, marking the void as *second nature and as memorial*⁶¹. The voids of Berlin were never empty: they were always filled with history and memories, of things both built and unbuilt.

Daniel Libeskind expressed his opinion on the void of Potsdamer Platz by suggesting, instead of redevelopment of the area, keeping it as a wilderness, an open space, where *the street simply ends in the bushes*. The reason is simple: what happened to this area was no more and no less than the divine natural law.

*Nobody wanted it, nobody planned it, and yet it is firmly implanted in all our minds. And there in our minds, this image of the Potsdamer Platz void will remain for decades. Something like that cannot be easily erased, even if the whole area is developed.*⁶²

62. Daniel Libeskind (1992) Daniel Libeskind mit Daniel Libeskind: Potsdamer Platz. Radix-Matrix: Architekturen und Schriften, ed. Alois Martin Müller, Munich and New York: Prestel, page 149

City and Image

I would like to structure this subchapter in two parts: the image Berlin was trying to create for itself after the fall of the Wall, and the image of Berlin now. They are two different images, obtained in different ways. Nevertheless, they serve the same purpose: the attraction of mass-tourism, proliferation of cultural attractions, 'pseudo-events'⁶³ and the stimulation of mass-consumption.

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63. Daniel J. Boorstin (1964) *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Harper Colophon Books



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City and Image Then

Although Berlin has gone through different waves of deliberate cleaning and creation of 'voids', most of the cleaning has been done in the name of mid-century modernization. By the 1960s numerous neighbourhoods were witnessing a process of flattening, to make way for new modern architecture. Demolition continued throughout the end of the century, as architects and urban planners became enamoured with the thought of a clean slate, wiping out numerous damaged but still usable structures in the name of *urban renewal*.

After the fall of the wall Berlin had suddenly lost its importance as centre of strategies of the Cold War. The rivalry between the East and the West had assured its international significance. Now however, the city was '*devoid of its mission*'⁶⁴. Its decision and image makers had to look towards the future. The new goal for the recently unified city thus became achieving the status of a world city. In order to push Berlin in the global economy and accelerated urban competition, strategies had to be made. And, in a country struggling with a transition between two political regimes, the politics of urban development also became closely linked to the chance of *collective identity (re)construction*.⁶⁵ A decade of great and rapid urban development plans began.

In the mid-1990s, construction site landscapes were predominant as well as striking. Their number and scale were remarkable, especially when they started to be used as entertainment. Flashy images and text began to surround them.

65. Claire Colomb (2012) *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989*. New York: Routledge. page 4

64. Neil Brenner & Roger Keil (2006) *The Global Cities Reader*. New York: Routledge. page 332



Billboards and posters, large-scale models of the city, exhibitions, kiosks and info boxes appeared, from which visitors could watch the construction. Passersby were invited to witness the 'show'. *Visiting construction sites in Berlin soon became more popular than going to the theatre, a museum, or a concert.*⁶⁶ Berlin under construction became a *stage*, marketed to the world through its iconic urban development sites.

The most disputed construction site was the one at Potsdamer Platz. What was once the busiest square of the city back in the 1920s had become after the Cold War a big *urban wasteland*.⁶⁷ It was heavily bombed in World War II, and in 1961 The Wall was the one structure dominating the square, having replaced all the other demolished buildings. Potsdamer Platz quickly turned into a hotspot for Cold War tourism, where visitors from the West could have a glimpse of East Berlin, from an elevated platform.

After the fall of the wall it became a site of prime real estate. But the development at Potsdamer Platz, the Daimler project was, in the public opinion, the most hated project of Berlin.

However, Manfred Gentz, the leader of the project, decided to turn it from the most hated into the most popular one by opening it up to the public. From that moment on Gentz started inviting important people and the press to the construction site, where lavish parties and

events would take place. Developers at the Potsdamer Platz were organizing periodic shows, performances and philharmonic concerts. Fireworks were also present. Manfred's strategy proved to be successful: more and more Berliners were attracted to the magic of the site. Every few months they would be surprised again with another new and unprecedented construction *happening*.⁶⁸ The mega-project transformed itself from a banal under-construction zone into a *temporarily spectacular space*.⁶⁹ The city was one big construction site, with Potsdamer Platz the spectacle at its centre- an amusement park of sorts. Employment of star architects to handle this urban regeneration and the labelling of Potsdamer Platz as *Europe's largest construction site*⁷⁰ were as well part of the city's strategy of claiming its position on the global stage.

In the famous 'Info Box' near the construction site, visitors could follow the progress of the work and look at models of future buildings, overwhelmed by high-tech images and digital simulations of 'the city of future'. The box was nevertheless serving as an exhibition and advertisement campaign for the big corporations taking up the space. Berlin was now advertising itself through the slogan *Bühnen, Bauten, Boulevards* (stages, buildings, boulevards) and was organizing guided tours in over two hundred construction sites as well as different open-air stages. The city thus made a quick transition *from void, to mise-en-scène and to image*.⁷¹

66. Peter Schneider (2014) *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. London: Penguin Books. page 21

67. *idem*, page 22

68. Peter Schneider (2014) *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*. London: Penguin Books. page 37

69. Neil Brenner & Roger Keil (2006) *The Global Cities Reader*. New York: Routledge. page 333

70. *idem*, page 333

71. Huyssen, A. (1997) *The Voids of Berlin. Critical Inquiry*, 24, 1, 57-81. University of Chicago Press. page 71



In 'The Voids of Berlin', Huyssen discusses the notion of city as text, city as conglomeration of signs. This concept appeared once modern city literature took shape and reached its peak in the 1970s and 1980s, through the debates on architectural postmodernism. In the meantime, we witnessed a major transition from the textual sense to graphic images. Now the idea of *city as sign* is more relevant than ever. However, the ways of achieving it are completely different. Back then, the discourse on city as text was involving architects, urbanists, philosophers and theorists, on a journey of redefining and creating new urban spaces. Now the discourse is taken over by developers and politicians aiming towards increasing revenue from mass tourism, commercial spaces, department stores, events, festivals, spectacles of all kinds.

This is also what happened during Berlin's reconstruction periods. In its attempt to fill in all the voids, Berlin became a site concerned with image and advertising.

When talking about redevelopment and regeneration, we notice how central to this kind of urban politics are the aesthetics of cultural consumption. All of them seem to lure in a new species of tourist – *the urban vacationer or metropolitan marathoner who have replaced the older model of the leisurely flaneur*⁷², as Huyssen states. Here we can observe the call on global nomads the author was making, already in the 1990s. He notices how the target group of city culture has changed in this sense. The flaneur used to be the symbol of a city dweller hungry for a dialogue

with the place, understanding its language. Now however, the new city culture wishes to appeal to the tourist and mass-consumer.

The Info Box was used as an improvised museum of the city's historical relics, a *dumping place for the remnants of the GDR*⁷³. A catalogue of selected fragments of history and nostalgia for the 1920s, a clear example of the process of transforming history in exoticism to consolidate mass-tourism during Berlin's renovation. The box became a huge success in the city, celebrating Berlin's temporality, the city in a state of becoming. However, when the box was finally dismantled, all those exhibited fragments of the wall and watchtowers were swiftly displaced, as another act of *historical annihilation*.⁷⁴ The space occupied by the box was taken over by shiny new constructions. Now, without any visual reminder of Berlin's history and symbolism, Potsdamer Platz claimed Berlin's spot in the global world, erasing its World War II traces and the two distinct German states.

Potsdamer Platz was advertised as the heart of Berlin, which might have been true in the 1920s. However, many things have happened there since then, which developers would purposely avoid talking about: the position it had in the Nazi period, the production of weaponry and forced labour camps during World War II, the utopic project 'Germania', the proximity to Hitler's bunker, the expropriation of Jewish-owned businesses in the area and the court of *Volksgerichtshof*, which handed down approximately 13,000 death sentences in 1935.⁷⁵

72. Huyssen, A. (1997) *The Voids of Berlin*. *Critical Inquiry*, 24, 1, 57-81. University of Chicago Press. page 68

73. Neill Brenner & Roger Keil (2006) *The Global Cities Reader*. New York: Routledge. page 336

74. *idem*, page 336
75. *idem*, page 336

It is also important here to talk about the Kaisersaal of Hotel Esplanade. The Kaisersaal was one of the two buildings in Potsdamer Platz that survived the bombings of the second World War and for this reason was declared a monument. However, after the design of the new square was made, the architects realized they had overlooked this building and it was now in the way of their new masterplan. They had to fix this mistake somehow.

In March 1996 the Kaisersaal was relocated a few dozen metres from its original location through a very impressive and costly technique, developed by Sony and promoted as a public event and spectacle. The building's move was received with great fanfare and thunderous applause. It became an enshrined part of the Sony Corporation, pieces of it enclosed by glass and 'museified'. Relocating and manipulating what was considered a landmark was just another classical Berlin deconstruction of history. A copy of a traffic light from the 1920s was erected in the old place of the Kaisersaal and a fragment of the Wall was added to the site, exposing again the process of *commodification of history and memory* at Potsdamer Platz.⁷⁶



76. Claire Colomb (2012) *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989*. New York: Routledge. page 4

To conclude the Potsdamer Platz story, if there is one thing to be observed from the handling of this development it is just how easy it is to reconstruct place image by putting together selected fragments of history and erasing unwanted ones.⁷⁷

What is represented at Potsdamer Platz is simply an upgraded and marketable historical memory.

77. Claire Colomb (2012) Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989. New York: Routledge. page 4

City and Image Now

It is no doubt that in the past 30 years many great architects have come to Berlin to participate in the city's reconstruction, through various new landmarks and architectural pieces. However, these new buildings carry no relation to the city's severed soul. When it comes to magnificence, every other major city in Europe has something better to offer. But what's unique about Berlin is exactly the neglected warehouses and industrial ruins from which the city 're-creates' itself. *The landmarks of Berlin are old gasometers and water towers, deserted hospitals, disused airports, onetime docks, vacant train stations, abandoned CIA surveillance facilities and Stasi prisons, moldy bunker and tunnel complexes from two dictatorships, and warehouses of all kinds. This is where new life takes root.*⁷⁸

The association of Berlin with roughness, grittiness and ugliness is no longer a distinctive trait of the city, but an attraction as such, and has been exploited and marketed in every way. The city's mayor Klaus Wowereit called Berlin *poor but sexy*, which soon became a slogan well known by everybody.⁷⁹

The famous and omnipresent presence of World War II ruins in the city, post-war neglect and post-wall voids have helped maintain the rough, notorious image of Berlin even after years of reconstruction. Some of the dirty, semi-ruined buildings standing out from the otherwise clean, gentrified city, become focal points for tourists. We can see this again as a process of 'museification' and cultural consumption; artifacts giving the visitor a sense of wilderness and exoticism.



This predisposition towards the decrepit and grim is now associated with something unique, artistic, hip and especially lively. Therefore we cannot help but notice the process of transforming itself into a mere trend: just another spectacle.

Decay is celebrated and maintained especially in the nightlife community, where the dark and decrepit club aesthetic goes hand in hand with cold electronic beats, drug and sexual consumerism. The *pale dance-floor citizens*⁸⁰ are thus being brought from all corners of the world to witness the spectacle of Berlin's nightlife. They indulge in a 3-day club exploration fuelled by drugs and non-conventional sexual experiences; a journey of self-discovery, youth and freedom taking place through ruins and dark corners.

What is interesting to notice here is that Berlin's image is stronger in the mind of the tourist, than of the local. The tourist, the traveller, the global nomad, they all come to Berlin in search of this notorious image and become, therefore, the ones producing the image they came to expect.⁸¹ They will indulge in the previous mentioned club pilgrimage, acting with little inhibitions because no one knows them there and they feel young and free. The 'no photos inside' rule imposed by bouncers helps maintain this utopic nightlife paradise in which you can do whatever and no one will judge. The travellers will most likely be shocked by this experience, will tell their friends about it, which will tell their other friends and thus the illusion maintains itself by the constant influx of newcomers, people ready to party, experience, consume.

80. Nicolas Hausdorf & Alexander Goller (2015) *Super Structural Berlin: A Superstructural Tourist Guide to Berlin For the Visitor and the New*

Resident. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, page 27
81. *Idem*, page 58



‘The tourist produces
Berlin as the drug-
fueled party paradise he
has come to expect.

His enthusiasm is the
true energy source
continuously refuelling
the myth of Berlin.’

To end this chapter, I will quote Henri Lefebvre's question from his book *The Production of Space*: is a city a work or a product? ⁸³ He takes the example of Venice: it is a city constructed through a unitary code, a common language. A space associated with a particular time, it offers the tourist a spectacle. It doesn't take much of a connoisseur to perceive Venice as a 'festival'. Here, the physical traits like the canals and the architecture coexist with the psychological ones, with the idea Venice wants to reflect- romanticism, refined pleasures, sophistication. They mutually reinforce each other, creating almost a theatrical play, a sort of involuntary *mise-en-scène* ⁸⁴.

Berlin on the other hand, although as distinct as possible from Venice and all the clichés it represents, becomes in a way closely related to it through how it makes history its product. The practice is not even always voluntary. Sometimes it is the void rather than the built environment that becomes Berlin's selling point. It is exactly in those places of memory that we find a proliferation of attraction spots and cultural mass-consumption. It is therefore the loss of place that transforms Berlin into a product.



Conclusion

I would like to conclude this thesis by coming back to the idea of consumption and just how enormous our desire is to consume things that are not even needed.

Sociologist John Urry explains that the sociology of consumption is not strictly bound to the purchase of different material objects. Consumption also applies to services, such as traveling and holidaymaking.⁸⁵ Tourists and travellers consume because finding experiences outside of their everyday lives gives them a sense of pleasure. When they 'go away' they look at their environment with more interest and curiosity than they would do back home. A main aspect of consumption is buying time, and travellers manage to do so by replacing time which should be spent working with leisure, or other more enjoyable ways of working. Travelling for pleasure, as opposed to necessity, presupposes that there is a sort of 'experience' out there waiting for you to find it, which cannot be found within the boundaries of your daily life.⁸⁶

85. John Urry (1995) *Consuming Places*. London: Routledge. page 129
Trans.) Cambridge, UK: Basil Blackwell. page 73

86. Cohen, E. (1979) A Phenomenology of Tourist Experience. *Sociology* 13(2): 179-201. page 182



We saw how the 'museal gaze' became embedded in the structure of a city. How the musealization of a city is framing the past as a *directed visual consumption*.⁸⁷ In a postmodern world that dissolves boundaries between high and low culture, elite and mass forms of consumption, there are also less distinctions between 'reality' and 'representation'.⁸⁸ We find pleasure in inauthentic manufactured attractions, disregarding the 'real' world outside while naively enjoying the 'pseudo-events'⁸⁹ that have been constructed for us.

The American historian Daniel Boorstin opened up a discussion about the change from travel to tourism in the middle of the 19th century. He compares the modern tourist's experience with being in a comfortable 'bubble', which has nothing to do anymore with the 'real' risks and dangers travel was previously linked to. Travel changed from being an active experience to being a passive and very comfortable one, therefore the change from 'traveller' to 'mass-tourist'.⁹⁰

And in a world where being a nomad means having no real home, but a huge network of digital support, we must consider the truth in Boorstin's statement. While it is true that global nomads leave their homes in search of adventure, immersing themselves in local communities and starting life over with every new city, we should still consider the vast amount and variety of websites, blogs, world summits and digital communities they have at their disposal.

87. Simon Ward (2016) 'Urban Memory and Visual Culture in Berlin: Framing the Asynchronous City, 1957-2012'. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. page 174

88. Jonas Larsen (2014) *The Tourist Gaze 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism.* Chapter 24. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. page 305

89. Daniel J. Boorstin (1964) *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* New York: Harper Colophon Books
90. idem, page 79

91. Colin Campbell (1987) *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism.* Springer.

92. John Urry (1995) *Consuming Places.* London: Routledge. page 129
Trans.) Cambridge, UK: Basil Blackwell. page 13

93. idem, page 13
94. Zygmunt Bauman (2005) *Liquid Life.* Cambridge: Polity Press. page 2

We live in an era saturated by an image culture, where representations are more exciting than reality. We have become accustomed to consuming these representations and chasing excitement, novelty, fiction. Professor Colin Campbell describes this process of modern consumption as consisting mainly from daydreaming and anticipation.⁹¹ Campbell explains that individuals do not seek satisfaction from products, but rather from the anticipation of what they could bring, from the imaginative *daydreaming*. The desire to consume is therefore not simply materialistic. *It is rather that they seek to experience 'in reality' the pleasurable dramas they have already experienced in their imagination.*⁹²

And in a world where the pursuit of satisfaction is the main goal, and satisfaction rises from anticipation and *imaginative pleasure seeking*⁹³, we can't help but notice: aren't the biggest 'dreamers' the ones at advantage? Seeking pleasure through the anticipation of your next steps becomes very fruitful when you take a lot of steps.

To go back to Bauman's 'liquid life' concept, which inspired me to write this paper: life in the liquid modern society cannot stand still- it is a series of successive new beginnings. But in order to begin, one must know how to swiftly and painlessly end.

*And with the competition turning global, the running must now be done round a global track.*⁹⁴

Bauman believes that in a society of volatile values, in which space and distance not only matter little, but an absence of itinerary and direction is recommended, those who cannot afford to be on the move do not stand a chance. Novelty and precariousness become essential values, egoism and hedonism grow into assets. Therefore, the greatest chances of winning such a competition belong to the people that can best adapt to it. The ones capable of *'flowing like water'* through any situation, possessions or people, the ones that love to play and be on the move, carefree about the future. The ones *at home in many places but in no place in particular*.⁹⁵

Bauman calls them liquid modern people.
Kannisto calls them global nomads.

I would call them the ones that understood
how to properly consume the world.

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Thanks

It's been a very exciting writing process in these past six months. Many thanks to my friends and family for the support, to Berlin for being such a big inspiration source, and to all the global nomads I met along the way.

Consuming the World

Thesis Written By
Mentor
Second Tutor
Proofreading
Graphic Design Tutor
Graphic Support

Cristina Palicari
Ernie Mellegers
Roosmarijn Hompe
Madeline King
Corine Datema
Macarena Perez

Cristina
Palicari

BA Interior
Architecture Thesis.
Royal Academy of Art.
The Hague.
February 2020
3066908

