



HALENSEE: BEYOND BUILDINGS,  
BORDERS, BOUNDARIES, AND BY-LAWS  
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Having obtained my Dr.-Ing. degree from the Berlin University of the Arts in the early 2000s and returning to the city for shorter- and longer-term visits over the years, I was no newcomer to Berlin. Grunewald and Westend, however, were still largely blank spots on my mental map. Most of my previous experiences of these areas had been limited to riding my bike between the heart of Charlottenburg, where I lived for a while, and Dahlem.

With its large villas and their gardens and luscious tree canopies, this part of the city always appeared otherworldly, and I almost always got lost.

Now, for the first months of the fellowship, I found myself working in one of the majestic Grunewald villas that I had only paid marginal attention to in the past, usually passing through the area (when at all) as fast as possible. Now, in the mornings, I sometimes went for a short run around Hundekehlesee. After a few weeks at Wiko it dawned on me that this small lake appeared on a map that I sometimes showed in one of my courses on topics related to the intersections of environmental, landscape, and forest history. The area surrounding Hundekehlesee was an example of how private development in the early twentieth century marred public access to a natural amenity. By 1909, the land along the lake's eastern edge had been plotted and sold off to private developers (not without protests by forest conservationists), destroying parts of the forest and the public pathway that now only leads along its western side and that I used on my runs. Halensee, a water hole formerly called Hohler See, at whose southern tip Wiko's Villa Linde occupies pride and place, is another case in point. Today, the only and very limited access to the southern part of the lake is located next to Villa Linde. Friedenthal Park, the only extensive public area abutting Halensee in the north, owes parts of its existence to the area's early twentieth-century use as Berlin's first fairground, also called Halensee Terraces (Terrassen am Halensee) and Lunapark. Located at the opposite end of Halensee, Wiko could be described as a contemporary fairground of sorts for scholars. Yet, it is as easy to associate as it is to dissociate some of the institution's luxuries and strengths that I experienced with some of the things that Berliners would have come to encounter at the Halensee Terraces in the early twentieth century.

There and then, a large restaurant founded by Berlin's best-known restaurateur and one of the city's famous culinary chefs became the social center. At Wiko, in a different way, Dunia and her staff continue this tradition; they took great care of us, navigating the ever-changing pandemic restrictions with never-ceasing energy and good humor, and with continuous adjustments to lunch-delivery and distribution systems demanded by the special circumstances. Besides the first colloquia that we were able to hold in the same room sitting at a distance, wearing masks, in coats and scarves until the end of October, it was these lunches and the first dinners that brought us together, "socially distanced," and, for a while at least, within the same spaces.

As physical distances had to be increased during the seemingly endless second wave of the pandemic that stretched well into the spring of our fellowship year, intellectual and

professional distances decreased. When communal lunches and same-space gatherings were no longer possible, I moved to my own apartment in Berlin-Friedrichshain. Now I would bike perhaps more than ever before in Berlin, between the city and my Wiko office in Grunewald, crossing a transect of the city, from its easternmost edge within the light-rail circle to its western edge just beyond the Ringbahn. This movement across urban territory inadvertently followed the itinerary that early-twentieth-century Berliners living in the working-class district of Friedrichshain would have undertaken on special occasions on their day off, to experience diversion and entertainment of various kinds at Lunapark on Halensee. Crossing district and rail lines, the river Spree, and Tiergarten, upon reaching Grunewald one entered a different world. At Lunapark in the early twentieth century, this world comprised a swimming pool with artificial waves; a shaking staircase; a house that could be turned and stood on one side; a roller coaster; an early version of the auto scooter; and, tragically, ethnological expositions including the so-called Somali Village. Wiko's otherworldliness a century later was not characterized by Lunapark loudness, but rather by the luscious quietness and serene atmosphere of its villas and their gardens, providing a setting that in these pandemic times was suggestive of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*. Yet, metaphorically speaking, Wiko also provided water to swim, or even float in, e.g., the extraordinary supply of library resources that never appeared to dry up, not even during the worst "lockdown" times. Waves and shakes were offered by colloquia participants, fellow Fellows, and Daniel Schönflug during and between various meetings and the regular colloquia. These weekly Tuesday meetings, despite or perhaps because happening mostly on Zoom, also provided free roller coaster rides into various disciplines, their approaches and methods. They offered insights into topics as diverse as the discovery of the oldest stars; the development of medical robots as small as a human cell; the nature of the tragicomic; and the different character traits of rural and urban bats in Tel Aviv. Alexander Bevilacqua and George Lewis's colloquia presentations and two of the Three Cultures Fora were dedicated to questions of race and (de-)colonization in history, in contemporary music, and in the human, social, and natural sciences, thus inadvertently also providing the necessary critical context for Lunapark's early twentieth-century colonial ethnological expositions.

Providing both seclusion and diversion during a year in which the world was characterized by pulses of spatial contraction and expansion, Wiko gave me the time and mental space to develop ideas and collect materials for my next book projects and to research and write several articles, including chapters on the role of independent environmental film

in 1970s West Berlin urban development; on the varying roles of plants in the history of landscape architecture; on the early years of landscape architectural education and racial and gender discrimination in the U.S.; on how Humboldthain, one of Berlin's earliest public urban parks, in the late nineteenth century became a hybrid expression of both nativism and colonialism and fostered an educational experience of empire; and on the color green and its multiple roles and meanings in landscape planning and design. The various events characterizing our fellowship year – among them first and foremost a pandemic ravaging the globe that required isolation and social distancing and that is causing ever-greater inequalities – has set in stark relief the importance of identifying, explaining, overcoming, and transgressing boundaries and borders of spatial and other kinds. In various ways, Wiko provided multiple opportunities for this purpose. At our farewell party, several Fellows commented that it felt like a wedding. Finally, after a fellowship year that had simultaneously appeared like a split second and a lifetime, social distance melted away on the dance floor of Villa Linde's terrace.