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RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO 'TERRITORIAL STIGMATIZATION': Visual Research in Berlin

CÉCILE CUNY

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Abstract
This article deals with the symbolic dimension of the transformation process in a post-socialist large-scale housing estate in Berlin after reunification. This reflection is based on the concept of 'territorial stigmatization' and I use a photographic method to analyse the representational strategies employed by residents to manage territorial stigma: identifying with depoliticized images of the past, exiting the estate and questioning the very principle of representation. The first two strategies seem to be different ways of internalizing dominant representations of place. The latter differs from the first two in its use of iconic means to challenge the current spatial order and its opening up of possibilities for emancipation. The article thus also shows how photography as a research method can reflect on existing power relations.

Introduction

'It's not as nice as it used to be round here' was the common refrain of respondents, regardless of social category, when I asked them about the urban changes in the northern district of Marzahn, Berlin. Built in the final decade of the socialist period on the outskirts of East Berlin (see Figure 1), this housing estate comprising 60,000 units was home to the families of skilled workers, engineers and civil servants who were able to obtain an apartment under the complex housing allocation policies applied by local authorities, state enterprises and housing cooperatives (Rowell, 2006). After reunification, throughout the 1990s, selective residential mobility and the privatization of the housing stock altered the socio-demographic structure of the area, in particular the northern part of the estate, so that at the beginning of the 2000s, northern Marzahn was the target of two federal programmes, the first called Soziale Stadt (Social City), dedicated to the regeneration of neighbourhoods identified as 'needing further development' in German cities (Walther, 2002), the second called Stadtumbau Ost (City Restructuring East), designed to 'remove' vacant estates from the housing markets in East German cities (Bernt, 2005). Alongside physical and socio-economic change in the area, northern Marzahn was transformed by political categories and public narratives, which depicted this residential location as a place of social marginalization (Häussermann and Kapphan, 2000; Hannemann, 2001).

In this article, I do not tackle the structural and institutional dimensions of this transformation process, which I have already analysed elsewhere (Cuny, 2014). Instead, my focus will be on its symbolic dimension, which recent literature has brought into the scientific domain through the concept of 'territorial stigmatization'. This literature analyses cases of urban marginalization as the outcome of symbolic power through which elites impose and justify their own interests by defaming the places of the 'others' (Wacquant et al., 2014). This 'blemish of place' arises from the production and spread of spatial metaphors such as 'ghettos' or 'banlieues' by the media, bureaucratic entities or private firms, which 'alter social identity, strategy and structure' (ibid.: 1272–73). Based on this theoretical standpoint, which endows images with performative power, several studies have analysed the strategies residents use to

handle this stigmatization (Slater, 2017). However, little attention has been given to the visual dimension of these strategies, i.e. the representational strategies residents employ to manage territorial stigma. The first, substantive, aim of this article is thus to bring these strategies to light and examine their capacity to (re-)order the power relations that shape experience and meanings in 'defamed' places.

My research findings are based on an empirical study documenting the representational strategies a specific category of Marzahn inhabitants pursue in the face of structural change. The study is part of a larger ethnographic survey on resident participation in restructuring policies in Berlin that I conducted in the mid-2000s (Cuny, 2014). For the purpose of this survey, I lived in the northern part of this large-scale housing estate for two years, conducting around forty semi-structured interviews, as well as a large number of informal interviews with different categories of residents, and attending multiple meetings of local community organizations, consultative bodies and more informal groups. In the course of this enquiry, I met a number of residents belonging to the former socialist Intelligenz[1], who had moved into the district a few years before reunification and had remained there despite the changes. Some of these residents had been involved in a local initiative to combat the 'City Restructuring' programme in northern Marzahn between 2003 and 2006. These residents were aged between 30 and 50 at the time of reunification and had subsequently experienced downward social mobility. Many were long-term unemployed persons or had gone into early retirement at the time of the study. My interest in this category of residents lies in their experience of structural change: as Pierre Bourdieu (1979: 164) puts it, social downgrading leads to a mismatch between the inherited habitus and the actual conditions of practice, which can prompt discourses and practices that challenge the socio-spatial order. In the context of this article, I focus on how residents represent their neighbourhood and use photographic portraits to (re-)produce the spatial orders of the urban policies pursued in Marzahn before and after reunification. A second, methodological, aim of the article is to show how visual methods can contribute to urban research. In particular, I highlight the conditions under which photography can reflect on existing power relations and be a means of emancipation (Lees, 2004).

I begin by delineating the representational strategies in residents' responses to 'territorial stigmatization' in the existing literature on this phenomenon. I then present the method I used to analyse the strategies the residents I met in Marzahn employed, indicating where this method borrows from the fields of photography and urban studies, respectively. The article then moves on to an analysis of seven portraits, which highlight two representational strategies already documented in the existing literature, and one that is new and would not have been identified without a visual methodology. This third strategy creates possibilities for new narratives.

[1] I have retained the German term here, because it distinguishes the East German category from the Soviet 'Intelligentsia', which meant something different (Kott, 2001: 56). In the German Democratic Republic (GDR) this category encompassed a wide range of socio-professional positions: engineers, technicians, doctors, nurses, teachers, journalists, architects, senior and middle managers in state administrations and enterprises (Solga, 1995; Fulbrook, 2005). The existence of this category is linked with the GDR's drive to modernize its economic apparatus and its corresponding emphasis, from the mid-1950s, on technological development and the development of its education system (Kott, 2001).

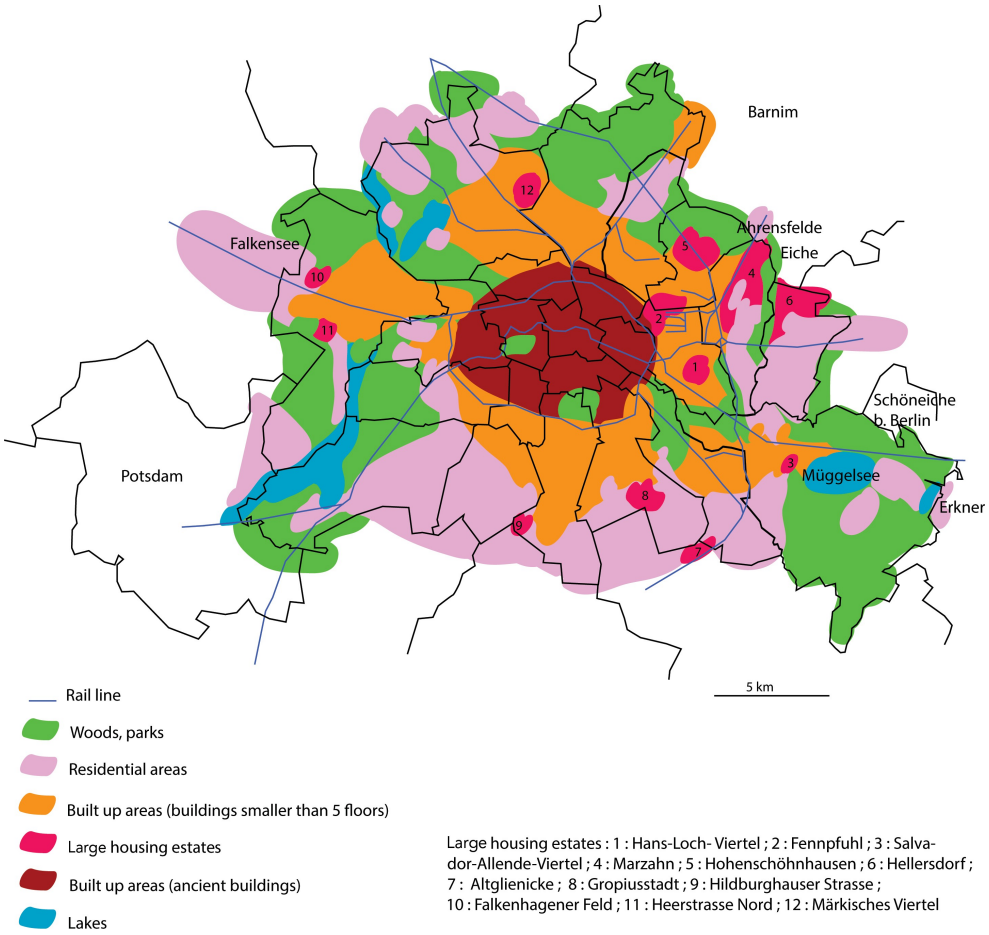

FIGURE 1: Main types of housing in Berlin in the late 2000s (source: map drawn by author based on data from Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2000)

Challenging power through visual rearrangements of stigma: delineating the representational strategies in residents' responses to 'territorial stigmatization'

Scholars exploring responses to 'territorial stigmatization'[2] agree on the fact that residents are not passive recipients but agents who actively re-appropriate the stigma that is imposed on them through the defamation of the places they live in. To support this argument, scholars focus on narratives or images that counter stigma (see Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2069; August, 2014: 1317; Kirkness, 2014: 1284), showing that internalizing it is not the dominant response to stigmatization among residents (Slater, 2017). Although those studies do not explicitly aim to highlight the representational strategies that underlie the images produced by residents to counter stigma, or even the ways in which they internalize it, they nevertheless develop an image theory and describe some of the strategies employed by residents. Two of these studies develop a fairly explicit analytical framework, which I develop more fully in this section.
David Garbin and Gareth Millington take as their starting point the three dimensions of space identified by Henri Lefebvre (1974) to locate residents' responses to

[2] Slater (2015) has conducted a fairly exhaustive review of this research.

‘territorial stigmatization’ in the realm of ‘representational space’—i.e. the space that residents imagine as they experience it. Based on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power, both authors also see ‘representational space’ as the realm of symbolic struggles over the definition of ‘reality’: ‘Territorial stigma incites residents to enter a representational space, or field, where they encounter dominant technocratic and media representations of space and, critically, envisage a transformed space’ (Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2074). From the authors’ perspective, symbolic struggles are productive in that they enable residents to rearrange space by developing an alternative representation of it. This process is well documented in Paul Kirkness’s study of two French banlieues in the city of Nîmes, where he shows that the young residents he encountered during his study produced images that countered stigma through public performances in which they ‘positioned themselves in visible spaces where they could be recast as central occupiers and “owners” of the cité’ against the police or other state agents (Kirkness, 2014: 1290). Julia Eksner (2013) describes a similar performative agency in the ‘defamed’ Kreuzberg district in 1990s Berlin.

These descriptions are fairly precise examples of the central mechanism of the ‘iconic logic’ that has been theorized in the field of visual studies (Boehm, 2007). To employ the title of a work that is emblematic of this approach, ‘the viewer is in the picture’ (Kemp, 1992)—in other words, the image informs ‘reality’ by locating the viewer at a point in relation to which the perception of ‘reality’ is organized. This mechanism corresponds to Kevin Lynch’s definition of ‘imageability’: ‘that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer’ (Lynch, 1960: 11). For Lynch, just as painters compose their pictures in relation to a fictitious point at which they place their viewer, architects and urbanists create space by situating their objects in relation to a fictitious locus from which those objects are to be seen, perceived, experienced, interpreted or, in Lefebvre’s terminology, ‘lived’. They institute space (and ‘reality’) by pre-ordering our view of it. In accordance with Kirkness’s and Eksner’s accounts, re-ordering this normative view by de-locating and re-locating the viewer so that he sees ‘things’ that he cannot or should not see, under the terms of the norm, is precisely what residents do when they counter ‘territorial stigmatization’ with alternative images or ‘temporary rescripting’ (Kirkness, 2014: 1291). By reading the different accounts of residents’ responses to ‘territorial stigmatization’ in the existing literature from this theoretical perspective, I identified three representational strategies, i.e. three different ways residents use to rearrange space as previously defined by the stigma. The first corresponds to the ‘submissive strategies of internalizing stigma’ described by Loïc Wacquant (Wacquant et al., 2014: 1276). As exemplified by Eksner, whose German Turkish and German Arab working-class youth respondents ‘distanced themselves from their peers, whom they perceived as agents in the production of their own exclusion’ (Eksner, 2013: 346), this strategy consists in locating oneself at the point from which the ‘dominant’ elites defame the places of ‘others’, i.e. in viewing one’s own place from an outsider’s perspective. Residents who employ this strategy absent themselves from the negative image but split their own group into two: the ‘others’ who fit the stigma, and themselves, who are able to escape it. A second strategy corresponds to the ‘counternarratives’ or ‘counterstigmatizing images’, exemplified by Garbin and Millington’s respondent in La Courneuve, a banlieue located on the outskirts of Paris. She ‘feel[s] Courneuvian ... despite all the attacks against [them], despite the stigma, despite everything’ (Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2075). As the authors put it, this sort of representation is based on ‘introspection’, i.e. on an immersive view in which space is described from the perspective of those living in it.

By all accounts, this immersive perspective produces a 'sense of shared experience and mutual understanding' (August, 2014: 1325) that turns the stigma into positive identities that are valued because they differ from the majority identity. In the interpretation of many authors, residents use this strategy to claim their 'right to difference' (Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2075). The third strategy is often associated with the second, as it is also based on an insider view. However, what it shows is not 'defamed' space, but a social construction of the 'outside'. This representational strategy thus entails reversing the stigma, as shown in this example, borrowed from Kirkness's study of two banlieues located on the outskirts of the southern French city of Nîmes: 'First, fighting bulls, getting drunk, all that ... it never became something that I ever felt was me' (Kirkness, 2014: 1288). In this example, the resident cited responds to 'territorial stigmatization' by a symmetrical stigmatization of the French traditions of Nîmes, characterizing them as deviant and dangerous.

As Garbin and Millington argue, the limitations of all these representational strategies lie in the fact that they reproduce the stigma even as they try to escape, ignore or reverse it: 'resistance can never proceed from a position "beyond" the territorial stigma' (Garbin and Millington, 2012: 2079). That is why all the authors I have cited use the term 'tactic' rather than 'strategy' to describe the different kinds of responses residents have to 'territorial stigmatization'. According to Michel de Certeau (1980), 'tactics' operate in a space predefined by dominant representations, so they can adjust it, but never (re-)appropriate it and (re-)order the power relations that shape it. In my view, these limitations also arise from the discursive nature of the images that are acquired under scrutiny, i.e. from the interview method used by all the authors cited above. As I argue in the next section, visual methods differ from interview or participant observation in that they produce physical images and provide a perspective on representational strategies that differs from that of interviews.

'Negotiated' portraits[3]

To explore the representational strategies of the residents I met during my investigation of the restructuring policies implemented in Marzahn since reunification, I adopted a protocol in which the participants were asked to choose 'a place in [their] neighbourhood' where they were willing to be photographed. The portraits were shot using a large-format film camera (see Figure 2). To involve the participants in the shooting decisions, I used a Polaroid back to take several intermediate shots,[4] which were used to discuss 'strategic' choices such as viewpoint and angle, framing and depth of field. I documented all these discussions in my field diary. The people I photographed were able to keep the Polaroid prints after the shooting session.[5] A few weeks after photo shoot, I also gave them a final A4 print of their portrait and, at the end of the survey in June 2007, I organized an exhibition at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin, as part of a public event—the Long Night of the Sciences—to which they were all invited.

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[3] Based on Séméniako (1996).

[4] Polaroid is one of the main brands to have marketed instant developing processes. In a large-format film camera, the Polaroid back replaces the frosted glass on which the image forms. For the final photo, the back is replaced with a frame containing the negative film. Instant photographs provide an opportunity to preview the final image (framing, view point and angle, exposure, depth of field, etc.). These days one can find digital backs, but they are still too expensive to be used in a social-science study.

[5] In a few cases, I was able to borrow them for scanning. Most, however, were lost within a few days of the shoot.

This shooting protocol differs from more conventional data collection techniques, such as interviews or participatory observation, in that the image it produces of the bodies and places photographed is physical, not discursive. In this way, representation takes place before language: viewers see an image of 'something' even if they cannot name what they see (Boehm, 2007). In the field of photographic theory, this characteristic has been addressed by Roland Barthes (1980)—among others—through the distinction between the punctum (a detail that affects us, makes us experience what we see on the photograph as if it were 'really' present) and the studium (the information that we read about the photograph in the context of a discursive culture and education). The punctum refers to perception before speech (but not beyond culture, since there is a visual culture that governs what we see), whereas the studium corresponds to the meanings we construct by naming what we see within the possibilities of language.

Barthes' distinction between punctum and studium is only an analytical distinction. As the different examples show that he cites, both are present in a photograph and there are no definitive rules linking them together (ibid.: 71–72). This is why my method also differs from those usually employed to study 'images of the city'. This concept, borrowed from Lynch (1960), has given rise to a wide variety of approaches both in France and abroad, in which visual methodologies are used to explore the mental images through which city dwellers inhabit different urban contexts (Ledrut, 1973; Latham, 2004; Authier and Lehman-Frisch, 2012; Schoepfer, 2014) or experience them (Degen, 2008; Petiteau and Pasquiers, 2001; Petiteau and Renoux, 1993; 2012). My interest in such methods is linked to my professional background: I trained at a film and photography school before starting a master's degree in sociology. These visual methods entail that the production of physical images (maps, drawings or photographs) by the researcher or participant is combined with an elicitation interview in which the participants explain their experiences and feelings. In these methodologies, speech acts as a 'developer' that elicits the discursive image from the physical image. The analysis that follows then focuses on the connections between the physical and discursive images of a given place. Photography is usually considered as a transparent representation of space.

In contrast to visual methodologies based on eliciting protocols, the aim of my own method is to produce photographs (i.e. a physical image). Participants are directly and personally involved, through the photographing of their bodies and through their shooting choices, in the production of the image of themselves and the place where they live. We are in a situation of 'negotiation', a term I borrow from the photographer Michel Séméniako (1996), meaning that the images are produced within the framework of a technical setup designed by the photographer in such a way as to facilitate the actions of the participants. In my case, these actions are supported by the intermediate Polaroids which, like a mirror, offer a preview of the final photograph so that the participants can correct, in discussion with me, the technical shooting choices (viewpoint and angle, exposure, framing, depth of field). The participants also compose their image by adjusting their pose on the basis of this preview. This effect is created by the frontal viewpoint, which I required the participants to adopt in reference to the photographs of August Sander:

> The frontal pose, the only image of the self which, from their experience of the mirror, subjects can truly control, constitutes in itself a kind of invitation to the model to take charge of his portrait ... The preparation session is quite long ... to give the subject time to find a pose that satisfies

> them ... The posing time, also extended,[6] together with the small number of shots (just two or three), lend each shot a form of solemnity that gives the subject a sense of responsibility. During those few seconds of imposed immobility, the model is virtually obliged to become aware of stillness as a construction, almost an image (Lugon, 2001: 157).

Unlike some of the visual methods discussed above (Latham, 2004; Degen and Rose, 2012; Schoepfer, 2014), my protocol does not entirely hand over shot production to the subjects. The aim is to introduce into the shooting situation, but also into the image, a difference between—on the one hand—the viewpoint of my subjects, situated within the field of view and facing the lens, and—on the other hand—that of a fictitious viewer, whose presence is nevertheless explicitly marked in space by the position of the camera. This difference makes the choice of viewpoint—and with it, the position of the fictitious viewer—an important factor in my discussions with the participants, which prompts them to explain how they want to represent the space for others. This reflexivity is absent from visual methods in which the aim of the interviews is to use a physical image—whose form is considered as already 'made' at the time of interviewing—as a starting point for a narrative of space. My experimental approach seeks to place the participants in the position of accommodating to and, in some cases, contesting the order of visibility in which they usually live, as my protocol asks them to combine the representation of themselves and of the space within a single view. In other words, it asks them to identify with the place they live in, in the knowledge that this process is highly problematic and will trigger discussion.

FIGURE 2: Large-format camera, September 2005 (unless specified otherwise, all photographs were taken or are owned by the author)

[6] The silver emulsions available today allow much shorter posing times than in Sander's day: 1/60 of a second in the case of my portraits, compared to several seconds for Sander's portraits. This aspect is therefore less important in my case than it was in his.

Responding to 'territorial stigmatization' within the framework of a photograph: the representational strategies of Marzahn residents

The case of Marzahn differs from other examples of 'defamed' places documented in the existing literature in that its symbolic meaning changed radically between 1980 and 2000. In the section that follows, I begin by presenting a brief history of the urban policies pursued in East Berlin from the 1980s to the 2000s to characterize the different shifts in the 'blemish' of Marzahn. I then describe the representational strategies employed by the residents I photographed to manage this blemished image.

From 'Platte' to 'Quartier': a brief history of urban policies in Marzahn 1980–2000

The first plans for Marzahn date back to the early 1970s, a period during which Erich Honecker, First Secretary of the ruling party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), launched an ambitious building programme intended to 'give' every household a modern home by 1990 (Rowell, 2006). Under this programme, three large-scale housing estates were planned in the north, east and south-east of the East German capital, of which the Marzahn estate is the oldest and largest. The urban design and architectural characteristics of these estates were not new: they were based on a series of developments, from the 1920s, starting with the experiments of Neues Bauen (the name given to the Modern architecture that emerged in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s) and continuing with the industrialization of building techniques in the 1950s that gave form to what became known as the 'Platte' (Rowell, 2006: 83; see also Hannemann, 2000). Although similar techniques were developed in West Germany (and in other western and eastern European countries, such as France and the USSR) during the same period (see Dufaux et al., 2003), the 'Platte' was a category specific to East Germany, used both in the vernacular and in technical terminology to describe the elementary components of all the large-scale housing estates and, more generally, those estates as a whole (Hannemann, 2000: 14). Honecker's building programme was justified as an expression of the (new) social structures produced by socialism (Rowell, 2006: 95), so the 'Platte' was also a symbol of socialist urban policies—an 'amalgam' of ideology and building practices (ibid.).
At reunification, the term 'Platte' continued to be used by the media, experts and politicians to refer to East Germany's large-scale housing estates. However, the future of the 'Platte' was highly controversial. While the West German press wrote in sensationalist terms, associating the 'Platte' with categories such as 'slums' or 'the Bronx', for experts and politicians, the 'Platte' was reduced to a technical term with no political undertones. At that time, the definition of the 'problem' of East Germany's large-scale housing estates was confined to technical explanations filtered through the prism of the West German debates of the 1980s, which prioritized maintaining the social mix of the original population by improving the quality of the buildings and public spaces (Bodenschatz, 1991; Schümer-Strucksberg, 1997; Bodenschatz, 2004). In the late 1990s, the 'problem' of these estates was reformulated in more economic terms, with a focus on the issue of 'housing vacancy' (Wohnungsleerstand), which was reaching record levels there.[7] In 2002, the first

[7] In the 1980s, housing vacancy in West Germany's large-scale housing estates was estimated to be 3% on average, and 10% in the most extreme cases (Deutscher Bundestag, 1988: 18). In East German cities, it reached an average of 10%, going up to 30% in the most extreme cases in the late 1990s (BMVBW, 2000: 2).

demolition plans were formulated in Berlin and other large cities, within the framework of the federal 'City Restructuring East' (Stadtumbau Ost) programme. In Marzahn, the urban action and development plan (Handlungs- und Entwicklungskonzept) provided for the demolition of 4,400 dwellings spread across 11 sites (Fritsche and Lang, 2007: 22). The demolition plan for the northern part of Marzahn was the most extensive, affecting 1,200 dwellings. It was the only operation that combined demolition and refurbishment (of around 400 dwellings).

In the north of Marzahn, the residents were subjected to this programme in the context of the 'Social City' programme, which had already begun in 1999. In this part of the estate, selective residential mobility, the privatization of the housing stock and the way renovation was conducted by local housing firms during the 1990s had resulted in an increase in the jobless and migrant households' share of the area's population (Cuny, 2014). The 'Social City' programme introduced a shift in the categories used to describe the situation of the estate. Unemployment rates and the proportion of foreign residents were used as criteria to classify different 'urban types' within a single category of 'districts deserving further development', which were subsidized in terms of the programme. Northern Marzahn thus became associated with neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg and Neukölln, located in the centre of Berlin, which because of various problems were already being described through 'ghetto imagery' (Eksner, 2013). In Marzahn, this image was reinforced by media stories about fighting between young (male) migrants from the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States—the former Soviet territories) and young (male) German 'neo-Nazis'—in reality such fights occurred only occasionally, but stories about them were used to sustain the stigma (Häussermann and Kapphan, 2000). The 'ghetto imagery' was also conveyed by fictions, such as the movie alaska.de (2000), which was shot in the neighbouring large-scale housing estate of Hellersdorf and showed young people from poor or broken (German) families hanging around and looking for trouble. Not surprisingly, 'vandalism' was mentioned under the 'housing problems' during the 1999 opening conference of the 'Social City' programme in northern Marzahn. Greta Dahlewitz, a resident I interviewed in 2005, also complained about young people having 'wild parties' in the vacant buildings of the district; local authorities and residents focused on problems they had often read about in the local press.

In the case of Marzahn, 'territorial stigmatization' thus became a self-fulfilling process: the early 1990s saw an initial shift, as the 'Platte' ceased to symbolize the rise of socialist society, instead representing the decline of its urban heritage. Renovation and restructuring policies depoliticized the concept and its related urban form to ensure its 'normalization' (Hannemann, 2000), which nevertheless still remained problematic. At the same time, a second shift occurred in northern Marzahn: this part of the housing estate was classified as a 'district deserving further development' and became associated with other districts of Berlin that had already been labelled 'ghettos', regardless of their specific histories. Against this background, the residents I met employed three strategies to manage the stigma imposed on them: carefully avoiding the 'Platte' and composing a depoliticized image of Marzahn's urban history; exiting the estate; or obfuscating the view. I interpret the first two strategies as different ways of internalizing the stigma. The third strategy differs from these in that it uses iconic means to challenge the current spatial order and opens up possibilities for new narratives.

The three ages of Marzahn

In the following three portraits, the viewer's gaze is directed towards the urban and architectural form. They show three different eras of the urban history of Marzahn, the choice of which relates to the social trajectories of the households represented in the portraits. They nevertheless reflect the same strategy, which consists of distancing oneself from the 'Platte' by representing the positive aspects of the socialist, functionalist and residentialized ideals that sustained the successive urban policies pursued in this part of Berlin. When I started this part of my enquiry, I had expected to encounter residents, such as the Hinrichs, who identified with the positive aspects of the socialist past, as this attitude corresponds to a common perception of East German identity as 'ostalgic' in West Germany (Engler, 1999). To meet Astrid Meyer, a resident who did identify with the functionalist ideal, was rather unexpected, but it pleased me, as this ideal had been strongly disqualified in the French context and I hoped that she would be able to argue in its defence from a German perspective. However, to hear Greta and Jörg Dahlewitz, who had so strongly fought against the demolition of their own building, now praising the new one, surprised me.

In the first portrait, Jochen and Josepha Hinrich pose in front of their neighbourhood dispensary (see Figure 3).[8] This viewpoint initially did not interest Jochen, the main scriptwriter in this portrait. Originally, he had wanted to pose in front of the mural that marks the entrance to the dispensary, which can be seen in the background. It turned out that the wall was damaged, and that grass was growing between the paving stones, which Jochen did not like: 'It's going to look badly maintained again'. After he had walked around the dispensary, he finally chose the viewpoint from the park opposite, provided that the portrait include the mural.[9] The choices the couple made need to be understood in relation to their social trajectory: he had been a sound engineer at the East German radio; she was a former translator-interpreter at the Ministry of Culture. Both had been unemployed since 1989, when they had both suffered mild heart attacks. They were subsequently declared disabled and then granted early retirement. They had been allocated an apartment in Marzahn in 1986 on the basis of their former jobs, but after reunification their prospects for mobility, whether social or residential, came to a halt. While their three eldest children had been able to secure a higher education and had left the district—their sons qualified as an IT specialist and a historian, respectively, while their daughter became a lawyer (the youngest son was still attending the Catholic school in the neighbouring district)—the couple's life had contracted to the neighbourhood: their everyday lives were punctuated by lunch at the dispensary canteen, weekly meetings of their bible group at the evangelical church (a practice that dates back to reunification) and the occasional local cultural events to which their neighbours invite them.

[8] The names of all persons in the photographs are pseudonyms to distinguish the real persons from the representations of selves constructed in the protocol.

[9] Field notes, 16 August 2006.

FIGURE 3: Jochen and Josepha Hinrich, 16 August 2006

FIGURE 4: Astrid Meyer, 20 August 2006

FIGURE 5: Greta and Jörg Dahlewitz, 20 October 2005

FIGURE 6: Shooting of a local television broadcast in the large-scale housing estate of Marzahn, 2003 (source: personal archive of Greta Dahlewitz)

FIGURE 7: Jochen and Josepha Hinrich, 16 August 2006, detail

We can see in Jochen's interest in the mural an attempt to revitalize the emblem of the socialist city formerly embodied by Marzahn. Interestingly, it does not feature the buildings that are typically used to show the 'Platte' model (see Figure 6), but a prototypical office building, which has housed public services and administrations

since the socialist period. The centrality of the building, and the public services associated with it, are also underlined by the perspective chosen in the mural and by the contrast between the warm colours used to represent it and the cold background of the surrounding buildings (see Figure 7). The portrait of Jochen and Josepha Hinrich picks up the chief markers of the political turning point associated with the Honecker era and the advent of 'consumerist socialism'.[10] It can be understood as a depoliticized and nostalgic image of the socialist city, since the image of the socialist city chosen by Jochen and Josepha recalls some 'positive' aspects and pushes into the background more controversial ones.

The portrait of Astrid Meyer (see Figure 4) is a counterpoint to that of the Hinrich couple, in that she explicitly positions herself in a more critical relation to the image of Marzahn during the socialist period. In the process of deciding on the shooting location, we take the path that runs around the southern part of the district and leads to the park separating it from Eiche, a neighbouring community located in the Land of Brandenburg.[11] We stop halfway: Astrid does not want to leave the district, as she wants the renovated buildings to be included in the photograph. Overall, she finds that the district had been 'done up' well after reunification. According to her—though this was confirmed in many interviews—the district already had a bad reputation in the 1980s, reflecting a change in the housing allocation system in the final years of the regime: up to 1984, the imperatives of the capital's economic and scientific expansion policy took precedence, whereas the priority subsequently shifted to rehousing families from poor city-centre accommodations (Cuny, 2014: 35–43). Astrid, who had married an engineer and had been a saleswoman at Exquisit, a department store in the centre of East Berlin that sold Western products, had been satisfied with the apartment she and her husband had in Schöneweide thanks to the housing cooperative to which her husband belonged at that time. During our walk, she explained that she had travelled extensively around the district on her arrival in 2000; she had liked the quietness, the greenery and the accessibility of the main amenities (supermarkets, dispensary, public transport). Compared with her old home in Schöneweide, a former industrial and working-class area of Berlin, where most of her connections still lived, she liked the fact that she could get by on her own in Marzahn. After the death of her second husband, she had to get by without the help of her daughter, who did not live in Berlin, as she did not want to depend on her husband's daughter.[12] The viewpoint that Astrid Meyer assigns the spectator in her portrait is thus that of a person who, unlike the Hinrichs, does not adhere to the political project embodied in the construction of Marzahn, but still values its functionalism.

The portrait of Greta and Jörg Dahlewitz (see Figure 5) highlights a final change in the urban history of Marzahn. Greta unhesitatingly chooses for the couple to pose in front of their former building, which had meanwhile been entirely restructured as part of the 'City Restructuring East' programme in Marzahn. On the day of the shoot,

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[10] This term, borrowed from historian M. Fulbrook, refers to the gradual abandonment by the regime's elite of the founding ideals to satisfy the population's more immediate and pressing demands (Fulbrook, 2005).

[11] At the end of the second world war, West Berlin was a political enclave within the GDR, and its political and administrative organization was based on that of the Hanseatic city states, where municipal institutions were also endowed with the prerogatives and political autonomy characteristic of the German Länder (federal states). In 1996, a proposed merger of the Länder of Berlin and of Brandenburg was rejected by the populations of both Länder, so Berlin is still today a political enclave within the Land of Brandenburg.

[12] Field notes, 20 August 2006.

Greta and her husband Jörg dress to reflect their sense of the importance of the occasion. She has put on makeup, he is wearing a suit and tie; both are dressed up to the nines. The street is still under construction and not very sunny. I propose taking the photograph in the garden. I choose a small hillock that gives a bird's eye view of the park and the buildings. The choice of viewpoint sparks off a series of comments from Greta on the new developments: 'Were the trees really in this place? They were right to remove the skateboard track, the youngsters used to hang around and it was always noisy'. I begin by positioning them so that their old building is in the background (see Figure 8). On this side, there are no balconies, and Greta finds the buildings a bit austere. Jörg regrets that he hasn't dressed more cheerfully. Both prefer the viewpoint that is finally chosen, which provides a view of the play area and the balconied facades.[13]

The image they constructed emphasizes the urban restructuring project. They not only chose to be photographed in front of the new residence, but the few remarks they made during the shoot about the developments show that they approved of the urban and architectural choices: these developments put the working-class youths living in the neighbourhood and the commotion they caused at a distance and thereby contribute to the social and urban upscaling of the building. Indeed, the municipal property company's goal is to attract a clientele of comfortably-off pensioners (Cuny, 2014: 74–82). The choice of this viewpoint can be understood in terms of the social and residential trajectory of Greta and Jörg Dahlewitz before and after reunification. When the couple moved into Marzahn in 1986, Jörg was a police inspector. He had been promoted and transferred from Karl-Marx-Stadt,[14] his and Greta's home town, where Greta had worked as a coach at a school for competition athletes. She used her move to East Berlin as an opportunity to change jobs and found work in the administrative departments of a construction company. After reunification, the company closed down and Greta, having retrained as a secretary, held a succession of jobs in the non- profit sector and experienced periods of unemployment of varying length. Jörg was dismissed in 1994. He joined forces with an unemployed friend to set up a recruitment agency, which failed to prosper. In 2004, when the urban regeneration project was completed, they had both been unemployed for more than a year and were living on benefits. These circumstances forced them to give up the apartment that had been allocated to them in the new building, because they could no longer afford the rent. Nevertheless, they wanted to stay in the neighbourhood, where they still had friends, and they moved into a building that was part of the municipal company's housing stock.

Though the contents of the images of Marzahn differ from one portrait to another, depending on the social and residential trajectories of the people photographed, the principle of their production remains the same: in each case, the aim is to position the viewer in front of the urban and architectural forms of Marzahn from different eras. The outcome is three images of the city: the socialist city, promoted at the time of the construction of the estate; the functionalist city, refurbished in the programmes of the 1990s; and the residentialized city, product of the urban restructuring projects of the 2000s. The reactivation of these images by the three households can be understood in terms of their social trajectory, but can also be explained by an image that constitutes a reverse shot of their portraits: the 'Platte' is carefully avoided. The mural visible in the portrait of the Hinrichs does not infringe this rule, since the buildings are kept in

[13] Field notes, 20 October 2005.

[14] This industrial town in Saxony reverted to its original name, Chemnitz, after reunification.

the background. The three Marzahn households considered here thus identify with depoliticized images of the history of the estate. They identify with nostalgic views of the socialist city or the 'normalized' images promoted by renovation policies pursued since the 1990s.

FIGURE 8: First version of the portrait of Greta and Jörg Dahlewitz on a Polaroid print, 20 October 2005

Exiting Marzahn

The two portraits in this section emphasize urban and architectural forms that are not part of the large-scale housing estates generally associated with 'Marzahn' but also relate to the everyday experience of place. As I had already been living in the area for two years, I knew the areas where Alena Schultz and Uwe Kloppenburg led me to take their portraits quite well, as I enjoyed going there during my spare time. In contrast to them, I had chosen to live there only for a few years. Indeed, both Alena and Uwe consider themselves 'captives' of the estate. For this reason, I interpret their strategy as a way of escaping from the stigma imposed on Marzahn.

Alena Schulz chooses to have her portrait taken in the allotment that she rents in the village of Eiche, a few metres from her home, on the other side of the border with Brandenburg (see Figure 9). When we get there, she explains the regulations for allotments (Kleingärten) in Germany, contrasting them with the Datsche (weekend home) during the socialist era. According to her, allotments should in no way be perceived as 'leisure' areas (Erholungsfläche), because of the obligation on allotment holders to cultivate fruit and vegetables, whereas the Datsche would have been a place of relaxation, where people could get out of the city and away from their tiny apartments. Before we decide to set up the camera in front of the shed, which she describes as her 'oasis', she shows me around: I see the different fruit trees in the garden, as well as the arrangements she has made to turn the allotment into a weekend retreat, even in winter (sofa bed, cooker and gas stove).

The choice of this place as a shooting location can be understood in terms of Alena Schultz's social trajectory and how she describes Marzahn to me. During the socialist period, she had worked as an economist at the national rail company (Deutsche Bahn). She kept her job after reunification until 1994, when her position was relocated to the company's headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. Her husband, an engineer who had lost his job before her, refused to follow her there, so she resigned. Both she and her husband then remained jobless for several years before taking early retirement. Their 'attachment' to Marzahn can be ascribed primarily to the impossibility of leaving it. Her husband had obtained a three-room apartment there in 1987, owing to a special mayoral allocation. At the time, his main wish had been to improve the situation of the family of four, who had been living in a small and squalid two-room apartment in an old building in the centre of East Berlin. Alena was not a fan of the large-scale housing estates during the socialist period and had little more affinity with the political projects of the 1990s: 'Marzahn has always been and still is a dormitory estate', she tells me. Although she locates her portrait in an 'allotment' outside the estate, the image she constructs of the former remains closely connected with the latter. The carefully adopted living space of the 'allotment', situated 'in the countryside', is a way to get away from the city and the restricted space of the estate.

I find a similar strategy in the portrait of Uwe Kloppenburg, who situates his shoot in the landscaped wasteland between the districts of Marzahn and Hellersdorf and the town of Eiche, at the border between the city of Berlin and the Land of Brandenburg (see Figure 10). This wasteland is 'landscaped' in so far as the paths, cycle paths and different viewpoints that punctuate this recreational area are regularly maintained by the district parks department. During the photo shoot, Uwe nevertheless associates it with 'nature': he explains that he chose this place because he comes here regularly to take photographs of animals. Indeed, he is an amateur animal photographer and takes

a few shots with his camera while I am setting up the photographic apparatus.[15] In the interview I conduct with him a few months after the shoot, he describes the estate as a place of exclusion, which offers young people few social prospects and traps them in a 'subculture of survival'.[16] At a public meeting, he also describes the district as a 'ghetto'.[17] This description needs to be understood in relation to the isolation of Uwe and his family, since all the connections they developed during the socialist era have left the area. He thus includes himself in his reference to the 'ghetto': formerly a printer in the East German army, he lost his job following reunification and now lives on benefits with his wife. He says he 'gets by' thanks to local voluntary groups through which he exchanges small services. Like Alena Schultz, he considers himself a 'captive' of the place where he has to stay despite the changes in its population and its image. By directing the viewer's gaze in the opposite direction, away from the estate and towards a wasteland that is still open to possibilities, he produces an image of 'nature' that is the reverse image of the 'ghetto' he refers to in the interview.

Whereas in the three portraits analysed in the previous section, the representational strategies of the households consisted in producing positive images of the estate by recalling the past, Alena Schultz and Uwe Kloppenburg try to escape the devalued images associated with it by situating the viewer in front of other urban forms. In so doing, they both use strategies that reproduce and internalize stigma nevertheless: the first in that it carefully avoids the 'Platte' and promotes a depoliticized version of it, the second in that it escapes the 'ghetto' by identifying with reverse images of it.

[15] Field notes, 30 September 2005.
[16] Interview, 28 November 2005.
[17] Field notes, 26 April 2005.

FIGURE 9: Alena Schultz, 9 August 2006

FIGURE 10: Uwe Kloppenburg, 30 September 2005

The obfuscated image

The last two portraits (Figures 11 to 13) share with the preceding images the refusal to represent the housing estate. However, they differ in their questioning of the very principle of representation. This reflexivity entails the implementation, in the shooting process, of systems of viewing that make the image of place unrecognisable. They show a way of representing 'Marzahn' that creates possibilities for new narratives about it, which must be explored through a renewed language and imagination of place. Herein lie the emancipatory possibilities of photography as a research method.

Martin Witte's portrait (see Figure 11) is harder to read than those that precede it. For example, the people outside this research field to whom I have shown this photograph have seen the 'empty' space between Martin Witte's body and the sculpture as a compositional error: 'Were you trying to take a picture of Martin Witte or of the sculpture? Neither of them is in the centre of the image'.[18] Yet this was a deliberate choice by Martin Witte and myself. When I asked him if I could shoot his portrait, he knew exactly where he wanted to be photographed and unhesitatingly described the sculpture that appears in his portrait: designed by two East German architects and installed in 1985 at the entrance to a park that runs through the heart of the northern part of Marzahn, it symbolizes for him the 'liberation' that access to the large-scale housing estates represented, compared with the housing conditions in the ancient buildings in the centre of Berlin during the socialist period. Martin and I choose this viewpoint for its 'legibility': it excludes other elements of setting (in particular a view of the estate) that would blur the perception of the statue and allows the bench, which is part of the sculpture, to be included in the frame. When he looked at the Polaroid, Martin Witte nevertheless asked me if the 'gap' between him and the statue was not a problem. We discussed our impressions and came to an agreement that it created an ambiguity that we wished to maintain.[19]

FIGURE 11: Martin Witte, 24 September 2005

At first sight, the representational strategy in Martin Witte's portrait is similar in its logic to that analysed in the photograph of the Hinrich couple. In fact, his social

[18] This remark was made to me by participants at Klaus Eder's doctoral seminar at Berlin's Humboldt University (research notes, 21 November 2005).
[19] Field notes, 24 September 2005.

trajectory is similar to theirs. Witte grew up in a working-class communist family in Hennigsdorf, an industrial town on the outskirts of Berlin. He trained as a journalist and then spent his whole career at the Stimme der DDR (Voice of the GDR), the official East German radio station. He was given an apartment in Marzahn in 1986 when his son was born. He lost his job in 1994, with no prospect of getting another. From then onward, his life started contracting into his residential area. Like the Hinrichs, Martin Witte believed in the political project of the large-scale housing estates, which he associated with the sculpture he wanted to pose with. However, his portrait does not situate the viewer to face the sculpture or himself, but in front of a wall overgrown with vegetation, which allows a thin sliver of a view of the buildings between its extremity and the edges of the sculpture (see Figure 12). The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman (2000: 252–55) comments on a similar arrangement in a work by Barnett Newman. Though I do not pretend that Martin Witte or I were thinking about this work at the time of the photo shoot, his comments nevertheless cast light on the sense of a fortuitous visual arrangement, the effect of which appealed to both of us when we looked at the Polaroid print: deprived of perspective, the viewer's gaze seems to be sucked in by the sliver, and this suction creates the sense of the physical presence of a place without actually depicting it. Although the estate is not visible, we feel its presence 'behind'. A process of this kind is also at work in the next portrait.

For her portrait, Juliane Steiner would not even consider anywhere else but her home. To decide on the location, we looked at each room. We started with the kitchen, one of the rooms in her apartment with the most light, which looked out onto the fields of the neighbouring communities in the Land of Brandenburg. Then we went on to the lounge, which was darker because of the neighbouring building. Juliane considered several possibilities, but none satisfied her: she found the corner near the window too dark, she seemed doubtful about the sofa, pointed out a small table with a bouquet of flowers and the photographs of her children, but didn't like the calendar on the wall. In the corridor, she would have to remove most of the objects belonging to her husband, which she didn't like. Finally, in the bedroom, she hesitated for a moment in front of a picture of poppies, of which she was very fond. We finally returned to the kitchen, despite a few hesitations in favour of the living room, which she thought might be more appropriate and contained two other pictures she liked. After putting on and immediately taking off a jacket, removing the objects from the windowsill and putting a plant there instead, she leaned against the sideboard and posed for the photograph (see Figure 13).[20]

Up to this point, I had analysed this image in terms of Juliane's social trajectory. Having started out as a teacher in the city centre, she left this job to work in the canteen of a company in Marzahn after the birth of her son. She finally lost any prospect of finding a stable job in the late 1990s, despite having retrained as a secretary. This period saw her activities contract to the home and the family sphere. Observation of the shooting location thus showed how this woman's professional activities and social relations outside the home had shrunk, leaving only the traditional representation of a woman posing in her kitchen and taking care of her home.

Nonetheless, in composing her portrait, Juliane also places the viewer in front of an architectural component, the window, whose frame cuts off the view over a space that we divine without seeing. Indeed, all we see of the view through the window is the white—on the photographic film seemingly burnt—part in the top left of the

[20] Field notes, 27 April 2004.

photograph and then, below, a few coloured spots that emerge from it. We perceive this part of the portrait as the sky above a building, and other harder-to-identify objects (a tree-lined street?), because we connect together all the white and coloured spots within the window frame. For Georg Simmel (2003: 30), a frame—whether around a picture or a window—in fact generates 'an interior concentration within which [a] unity is produced'. The image that emerges from Juliane Steiner's window is therefore the product of looking through a structure that isolates a portion of space and presents it to the viewer's eye. Although the viewer is unable to describe precisely the space they see, they feel its presence 'behind' the window; they imagine it.

Unlike the earlier portraits, those of Martin Witte and Juliane Steiner give a physical sense of the space without actually depicting it. As viewers, we are incapable of defining or describing the space from the photographs, but we cannot deny the fact that the portraits represent it, as we imagine it. In both cases, this act of imagination proceeds from systems of viewing present in the field of view, which are activated by photograph. These two portraits suggest a more subversive way of representing 'Marzahn' than the previous photographs: they do not direct our gaze to pre-existing images, but use photography and architecture to stimulate our imagination and temporarily suspend our language; we see a place without being able to describe it in words. Both representations of 'Marzahn' say nothing about the place but still show it and thus deactivate the visual clichés usually associated with it (which are reproduced in the depoliticized versions of the 'Platte' as well as through the reverse shots of the 'ghetto'). They may not (re-)order the power relations that shape this place but they at least suspend language and stimulate imagination. I claim that the emancipatory possibilities of photography as a research method lie precisely in the imagination of the viewers: they are free to associate new images or stories according to their visual culture or experience with a place that they see as undefined, open to exploration and fiction.

FIGURE 12: Martin Witte, 24 September 2005, detail

FIGURE 13: Juliane Steiner, 27 April 2004

Conclusion

This article analyses the representational strategies residents of a large-scale post-socialist housing estate in Berlin employ in response to stigmatizing representations that are used to justify the urban restructuring policies undertaken since reunification. It draws on the existing literature centred on the concept of 'territorial stigmatization', which endows images with a performative capacity and the 'blemish of place' with a symbolic power through which dominant groups distinguish and defame the places of 'others'. This article contributes to this literature in that it brings to light the representational strategies that underlie the production of images by residents to counter stigma, as well as the ways in which they internalize it. In so doing, residents (re-)produce space at a symbolic level.

In contrast with the 'defamed' places analysed in the existing literature, Marzahn is characterized by its 'territorial stigmatization' taking the form of a self-fulfilling process: in the 1990s the 'Platte' provided a foretaste of a dystopian future before the imagery of the 'ghetto' replaced it in the 2000s. The residents I met used three strategies to manage the stigma imposed on them under these circumstances: carefully avoiding the 'Platte' and composing a depoliticized image of Marzahn's urban history; exiting the estate; and obfuscating the view. I interpret the first two strategies as different ways of internalizing the stigma, while the third uses iconic methods to suspend the associations between the name 'Marzahn' and pre-existing images of the place. This latter strategy exemplifies the emancipatory and critical possibilities of photography as a research method.

My approach differs from other 'classical' methods such as the interview or participant observation in that it produces a physical image of place, whereas the image produced by the latter is discursive. It also differs from existing visual methods through the involvement of the photographic subjects in the photographic protocol: I do not entirely hand over shot production to the participants, but let them choose where their photograph will be taken and engage them in discussions about the shooting choices. This approach introduces reflexivity in relation to the process of representation itself, a reflexivity that is absent from the visual methods already being employed in the field of urban studies. However, the way this reflexivity is embodied in the finished pictures distinguishes the final two portraits considered in the article from those that precede them. In contrast with the earlier images, where reflexivity operates through discursive means in the course of the shoot, and is thus documented in field notes, the final two portraits use iconic means, i.e. systems of viewing (a sliver or a window), that are activated by photography and which have the effect of questioning the very act of representation within the framework of the portraits. Both portraits thus emphasize the visual resources embedded in the urban design and architectural forms of places. Photography can thus activate these visual resources to enable people to re-appropriate their place by exploring new images and renewing the everyday language or expert terminology in which it is described. As I had been trained as a photographer before engaging in urban research, I developed my own method and produced the photographs myself. But my experience also pleads for greater collaboration between researchers and visual artists, showing how such associations can open up new avenues for urban research, documentary arts and fiction.

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