

Stadt – Bibliothek – Urbanität. Die Stadt Berlin, die Zentral- und Landesbibliothek (ZLB) und ihre Standorte. In: *RaumPlanung*, 170, September/Oktober 2013, S. 57-62.

SUMMARY: City – Library – Urbanity. The City of Berlin, the Central Library and its Locations

The paper discusses the locational decision for a new central library, the *Zentral- und Landesbibliothek* (ZLB), in the city of Berlin. Presently the holdings of the ZLB are split up between two main locations. One located in the inner city district *Kreuzberg* and the other one in the district *Mitte*, close to the core of the inner city. Both facilities are frequently overcrowded, suffer from a lack of modern equipment for media and internet use and do not offer enough multifunctional space for interaction between users. The Senate of Berlin, therefore, is planning an attractive new building for the city library at an estimated cost of 270 Million Euro.

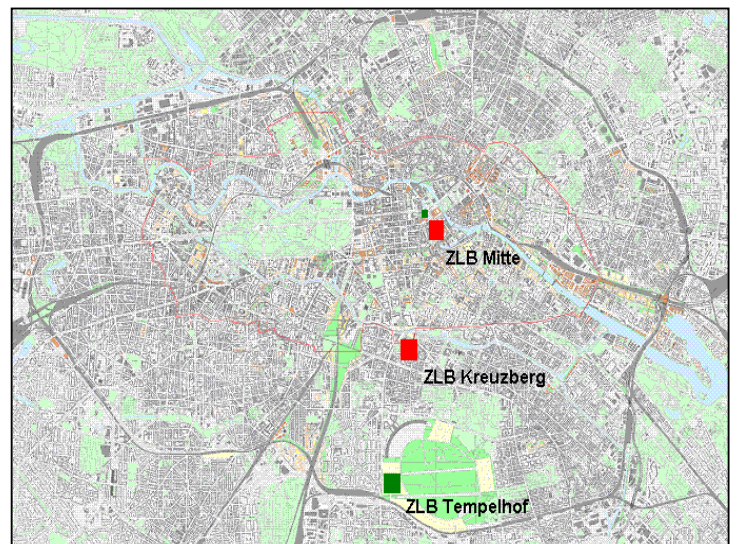
While many citizens and experts favour a central location for the new ZLB in the inner core of the city, the present plan followed by the Senate is to build the library at a decentral location on the south-western edge of the former *Tempelhof* airfield, currently a wide and open green space. This location lies beyond Berlin's typical dense inner city housing and mixed business areas, set in the transition zone between outer core and frame of the city and in the vicinity of large scale commercial operations. Hence also at considerable distance from the city's core areas with its important cultural, educational and scientific institutions. This locational decision is highly contested in the city by many planners, architects and citizens alike.

The paper analyzes the properties of the potential new and present locations of the ZLB and compares them to the general locational requirements of a central city library. It describes the decision process in which a rather well substantiated investigation was first undertaken to evaluate a number of appropriate inner city locations according to a set of objective criteria. This investigation, however, did not include the Tempelhof site. Then, after an intervention of the mayor the final decision was made for exactly this decentral location in an intransparent political procedure pushed by the ruling administration.

It is argued that in determining an optimal location for a city library, the transportation costs of users and the urbanity of the site are decisive criteria and that urban development and social effects should be taken into account. The different locations in various parts of the city are assessed according to these aspects.

Further, the core problem is explained using a simple theoretical model that compares the costs of different library locations for the users and the city as a whole to determine where an *optimal location* could be. In general, transportation costs, born by all users taken together, *decrease* progressively from the urban fringe towards the center. The *social costs* of land born by the city, on the contrary, *increase* progressively from the fringe towards the center. These costs are logically highest in the center implying that urbanity is highest there, too. In addition, in this high price environment typical urban activities complementary to library visits would be relatively expensive for many library users.

ZLB Locations within S-Bahn (City Train) Ring



Source: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umweltschutz, Berlin; own additions

This is highly relevant in a city like Berlin, where one fifth of the working age population earns incomes below the poverty line. All in all, a location for a library not right in the core, but at a moderate distance from the core of the city, appears to be optimal. A location fulfilling the requirements in the case of Berlin is the facility of the ZLB in Kreuzberg. Such a location could also contribute to restoring the city's urban structure that is, especially close to the core, still highly fragmented and has large areas of persistent and concentrated urban poverty. Other locations with similar properties can be found in a ring around the core of the city.