

Place Hacking Peenemünde

Appropriation, Perception, and Interpretation of Industrial Ruins from the Period of National Socialism

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The Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde

In 1936, construction work for the Heeresversuchsanstalt (HVA) Peenemünde began on the Baltic Sea island of Usedom (see Fig. 1).¹ The entire infrastructure was set up over a comparatively short period of time, spreading over an area of 2,500 hectares that had been mostly undeveloped. It was required by the German armaments industry for purposes of research, testing, and large-scale production of weaponry, most notoriously the guided ballistic missile ‘Aggregat 4’ or ‘V2 rocket’. The construction of the HVA was very costly – particularly when considered against the background of the general economic restrictions caused by World War II – and came with interventions that greatly impacted the landscape. While some remains of its architectural and infrastructural legacy are still present today – and others are at least traceable in the landscape – many have disappeared completely, e.g. as a result of commercial development in the area.²

In 1938, a decision was made to build a factory hall dedicated exclusively to the serial production of the V2 rocket, the ‘Fertigungshalle 1’ (F1). In 1943, concentration camp prisoners were deployed to work in F1 as forced labourers, and were housed directly inside the factory building in the ‘Arbeitslager’ (forced

1 For an overview on the history of the HVA and related aspects, see e.g. Volkhard Bode, Gerhard Kaiser: *Building Hitler’s Missiles: Traces of History in Peenemünde*. Berlin: Charlotte Links 2008.

2 Peter I. Schneider, Constanze Röhl: *The Ruin of the Missile Factory Building F1 at Peenemünde and its Archaeological Intelligence*. In: Donatella Rita Fiorino (ed.): *Military Landscapes: A Future for Military Heritage*. Proceedings of the International Conference. Milano: Skira 2017, pp. 693–700; Constanze Röhl, Peter I. Schneider: *F1 (Fertigungshalle 1) and the Material Remains of the Former Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde*. In: Christoph Machat, John Ziesemer (eds): *Heritage at Risk: World Report 2016–2019 on Monuments and Sites in Danger*. Berlin: Hendrik Bäßler 2020, pp. 65–68.

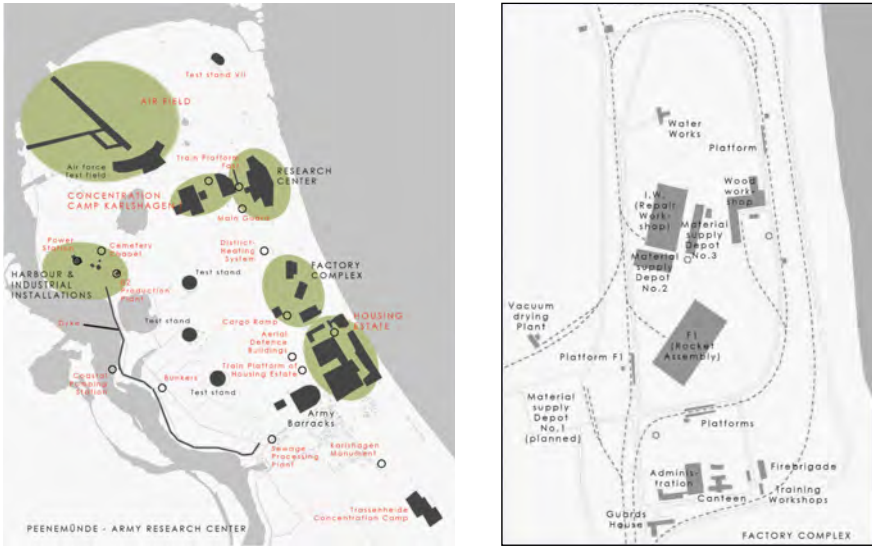


Fig. 1: Map of the HVA showing its main remains and the location of Fertigungshalle 1 (F1) (2021). Graphics by P. Schneider.

labour concentration camp) ‘Karlsbogen II.’³ Karlsbogen II was a satellite camp of the concentration camp Ravensbrück, and was situated on the base storey of F1 during the summer of 1943. The fact that forced labour was employed at the site, with all its individual consequences and narratives, is therefore an integral and non-negotiable part of its history.

At the beginning of 1945, following several air raids by the Allied forces, the HVA was evacuated.⁴ Prior to this, V2 missile manufacturing had been relocated from Peenemünde to other locations deemed more suitable.⁵ After the end of World War II, many of the HVA’s architectural and infrastructural elements were dismantled according to specifications laid down in the Potsdam Agreement, thereby including the demolition of F1. Several phases of subsequent use of the whole area of the former HVA followed, in particular by the Soviet Army and the National People’s Army of the German Democratic Republic.⁶ Nowadays,

3 On the issue of forced labour in Peenemünde see e.g. Günther Jikeli (ed.): *Raketen und Zwangsarbeit – Die Verantwortung der Erinnerung*. Schwerin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2014; Historisch-Technisches Museum Peenemünde (ed.), ‘Der Betrieb kann mit Häftlingen durchgeführt werden’: *Zwangsarbeit für die Kriegsrakete*. Peenemünde: Historisch-Technisches Museum Peenemünde 2009.

4 On the air raids, see Manfred Kanetzki: *Operation Crossbow: Bomben auf Peenemünde*. Berlin: Charlotte Links 2014.

5 One of these locations, most notoriously, was the concentration camp Mittelbau-Dora. On Dora, see Jens-Christian Wagner: *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2015.

6 For example, the large-scale ‘Manöver Waffenbrüderschaft’ took place in the Peenemünde area in 1980. See Wikipedia: *Waffenbrüderschaft 80*, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waffenbr%C3%BCderschaft_80 (accessed 12.05.2022).

wide parts lie within a restricted area due to being burdened with unexploded ordnance, mainly from Allied aerial raids as well as other military activities. The site's history is presented in a nuanced manner at the Historical Technical Museum Peenemünde, located in the former power plant of the HVA.⁷ Several other stakeholders are present at Peenemünde as well, among these the German Federal Environmental Foundation, who owns the largest portion of the area of the former HVA, designating parts of it a nature reserve.⁸ Regarding its heritage status, the site is classified as a *Flächendenkmal*, a cluster of monuments including architectural and ground monuments in varying states of preservation. In 2013, a 'Conservation Management Plan' was set up at BTU Cottbus by Leo Schmidt and Uta K. Mense, classifying the monuments of Peenemünde according to their potential for didactic presentation.⁹

A controversial but important aspect regarding the afterlife of the HVA is its mythicisation, highlighting the technical achievements and tending to downplay the reality of systemic violence.¹⁰ On 20 June 1944, the Kármán Line, the demarcation indicating the threshold between upper atmosphere and outer space, was crossed for the first time in history during a trial run of the V2 rocket at Test Stand VII in Peenemünde. This historical event, and the further evolution of the technology developed in Peenemünde after its seizure by the Allied forces, in particular its use in the Apollo Program at NASA under the former technical director of the HVA, Wernher von Braun, has led to the site sometimes even being perceived and labelled as the alleged birthplace of space flight.¹¹ This idea constitutes a very strong narrative, and can at times be instrumental in easy or even conveniently oblivion of the HVA's actual historical context. The legacy of Peenemünde is therefore a very complex one. A good example for the issues related to this uncomfortable heritage is the nonofficial memorial to the 20 June 1944 crossing of the Kármán Line, set up by the 'Förderverein Peenemünde' at Test Stand VII. While meaningful depending on people's respective approaches to the site, providing a place of commemoration for a singled-out and historically isolated facet of Peenemünde stands to be reconsidered when taking into regard its greater context of forced labour and the German armament programme.

7 See Historisch-Technisches Museum Peenemünde: Mission Statement, <https://museum-peene-muende.de/about/leitbild/?lang=en> (accessed 12.05.2022).

8 See Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt: DBU-Naturerbefläche Peenemünde, <https://www.dbu.de/index.php?menuecms=2697&id=87#> (accessed 12.05.2022).

9 See Uta K. Mense, Leo Schmidt: Denkmallandschaft Peenemünde: Eine wissenschaftliche Bestandsaufnahme – Conservation Management Plan. Berlin: Charlotte Links 2013. Within this classification, F1 falls into the highest category, 'A', indicating that the ruin is of fundamental importance for understanding Peenemünde and its history.

10 Constanze Röhl, Peter I. Schneider: The Material Remains of the Former Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde between Mythicization, Uncomfortable Heritage and Reclamation. In: Fritz Jürgens, Ulrich Müller (eds): *Archäologie der Moderne: Standpunkte und Perspektiven*. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt 2020, pp. 289–331.

11 See the example in the flyer published by BUND: Peenemünde, https://www.naturstiftung-david.de/fileadmin/Medien/Downloads/NNE_Patenschaften/1412_121620_pee_faltblatt.pdf (accessed 12.05.2022).



Fig. 2: Bunker inside Fertigungshalle 1 (F1) (14 April 2016).
Photo by P. Schneider and C. Röhl.



Fig. 3: View of terrain inside Fertigungshalle 1 (F1) (6 September 2021).
Photo by P. Schneider and C. Röhl.



Fig. 4: Concrete floor at Fertigungshalle 1 (F1) (6 September 2021).

Photo by P. Schneider and C. Röhl.

Site F1

From a contemporary perspective, F1 denotes the ruin of a factory hall built from reinforced concrete in the area of the former ‘Versuchsserienwerk’ (experimental plant), with the core area of the archaeological site F1 corresponding approximately to the building’s dimensions of 120×245 m.¹² While several documents exist that testify to the factory’s architectural design – characterised by a striking shed roof which at the time of its construction set a new world record in dimensions arched by single shed components – it remains unclear whether the few existing blueprints actually show a specific state of the planning process or the building as it was indeed finalised. Nowadays, the site of F1 is a place undergoing natural reclamation and is located within the restricted area; access by the public is prohibited. The material legacy of the ruin itself, situated in its entirety in a pine forest, is quite diverse.¹³ In some places, larger structural elements that have not been completely demolished remain (see Fig. 2), whereas other parts of the site at first glance constitute a seemingly unmanageable hilly

12 Constanze Röhl, Peter I. Schneider: Coping with Concrete and Contamination: Lessons to be Learned from the Archaeological Investigation of the Missile Factory Building F1 at Peenemünde. In: Peter Schneider (ed.): *Catastrophe and Challenge: Cultural Heritage in Post-Conflict Recovery*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Heritage Conservation and Site Management, December 5–7, 2016, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg. Cottbus: BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg 2017, pp. 83–98.

13 This pine forest is the final stage of nature successively reclaiming the site, indicating that the timeframe for scientific investigation is rapidly closing.

terrain of overgrown piles of concrete rubble and other debris (see Fig. 3). While an assessment of what might still lie beneath this debris is almost impossible, in other places the original floor is still *in situ* and visible (see Fig. 4). In terms of monumental character, F1 partially offers comparatively clear legibility that one would commonly associate with a ruin; simultaneously, it is a field of debris that is being retransformed by natural processes into a landscape.¹⁴ Its cognitive capture requires an accordingly diverse set of criteria in order to perceive the site in terms of the building it once constituted.¹⁵

Perception

Different attitudes can be identified regarding the perception and appropriation of the material legacy – architectural and archaeological remains alike – related to Peenemünde.¹⁶ From the perspective of building history and archaeology,¹⁷ a site like F1 constitutes an archive of the former HVA and its multi-layered history, including later phases of re-use of its area. Within this approach, following a theoretical framework proposed by the historian and Holocaust researcher Raoul Hilberg,¹⁸ a ruin can be seen as a three-dimensional source complementing two-dimensional ones, like the F1 archival records in the form of the above-mentioned blueprints or photographic documents from Allied aerial reconnaissance. Nevertheless, the remains of F1 will – even in the totality of records available – only ever offer a fragmentary picture. Furthermore, the ruin itself can develop a strong affective component when seen as a testimony to the history of the camp Karlshagen II.

Scientific investigation and institutional presentation to the public are currently the only legal means to approach the site of F1, but they are by far not the only means available.¹⁹ There is a range of different forms of appropriation. One of these is illegal digging and looting, abusing the site for purposes of monetary

14 On the differences between ruins and debris, see Sebastian Sowa: Zur Ästhetik von Ruinen: Eine Prognose für die Zukunft. In: *Anthos: Zeitschrift für Landschaftsarchitektur* 51 (2012), 2, pp. 38–41.

15 This applies to many places of the former HVA, not exclusively F1.

16 One way of perceiving Peenemünde is shown in the brief analysis of an inventory on offer to tourists at a kiosk at Peenemünde, including items 'evoking a Germany of the time before the war', thereby creating a 'rather skewed view of German history and the history of the site in particular' in: Ulrike Dittrich, *Pieces of the Past: Souvenirs from Nazi Sites – The Example of Peenemünde*. In: Bill Niven/Chloe Paver (eds.), *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010, pp. 114–123, here 119.

17 The authors' work at F1 began in 2016. Since 2019 it has continued in a combination of building research and archaeology as the DFG-funded project 'Die baugeschichtliche Erforschung der F1 in Peenemünde als Beitrag zur archäologischen Erschließung materieller Hinterlassenschaften an kontaminierten Kulturerbestätten'.

18 See Raoul Hilberg: *Die Quellen des Holocaust: Entschlüsseln und Interpretieren*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag 2009.

19 While some sites in the restricted area – for example, Test Stand VII – can be visited via guided tours, F1 currently cannot be accessed by the public.

gain and causing great damage to its material legacy.²⁰ However, F1 and other sites in the area of the former HVA are also subject to other forms of appropriation, which are presented here paradigmatically via the phenomenon of Urban Exploration ('UrbEx'). Often, though not always, for places belonging to controversial historical time periods and events, the practice of UrbEx and its different underlying motivations are an expression of legitimate interests being pursued, albeit accompanied by illegitimate procedures for gaining access to sites.

UrbEx and its context

The phenomenon of UrbEx as a movement with a "self-conscious reflection" can be traced to the mid-1990s.²¹ One of its practitioners, Jeff Chapman, also known as Ninjalicious, summarised it in 2005 as 'a sort of interior tourism that allows the curious-minded to discover a world behind-the-scenes, sights like forgotten subbasements, engine rooms, rooftops, abandoned mineshafts, secret tunnels, abandoned factories and other places not designed for public usage.'²² Within this world behind-the-scenes, abandoned buildings feature as especially appealing. Peter Robinson, who heads the Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Management at Leeds Beckett University, points out that ruins represent the 'accessible sites' which are worthy of appreciation and chosen for conventional tourism, while derelict places like abandoned buildings are those which 'should not be visited', but hold particular appeal for urban explorers.²³ The archaeologist Timothy Webmoor shared his thoughts on the archaeological investigation of Building 500 on the Stanford campus along similar lines:

Was the building a ruin? I began to wonder about the project and the documentation of Building 500 – as designated on Stanford University maps and soon to be refurbished and opened as the new home to the archaeology center. Sure it had been abandoned, but it seemed too convenient, too close, surrounded by immaculately maintained campus buildings. More than that, the tropes of ruin wilderness influence the growing attraction and valuation of *certain types* of ruins. Such ruins tend to satisfy three knotted and (neo)Romantic impulses: a longing for individual freedom and liberation from the supposed sameness imposed by modernist production and organizing schemes; the dialectical swing away from an aesthetics of simplicity and order toward complexity and mess; the desire for witnessing objects-among-themselves undisturbed by human intervention. Ruin wilderness,

20 Constanze Röhl, Peter I. Schneider: Kontaminierte Fundstellen in der Archäologie der Moderne. In: Archäologische Informationen 43 (2020), pp. 149–158.

21 See Paul Dobraszczuk: *The Dead City: Urban Ruins and the Spectacle of Decay*. London/New York: J.B. Tauris 2017, p. 12.

22 Ninjalicious (J. Chapman): *Access all Areas: A User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration*. Toronto: Infilpress 2005, p. 3.

23 Peter Robinson: Conceptualizing Urban Exploration as Beyond Tourism and Anti-tourism. In: *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR): International Journal of Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty 3* (2015), 2, pp. 141–164, here p. 144.

offering counter-hegemonic intellectual, aesthetic and sensory offerings, is the flipside to idealized conceptions of pristine nature. Entropy has become chic.²⁴

Two aspects are particularly important for our discussion of the nexus of UrbEx and the legacy of Peenemünde: media and visualisation, on the one hand; and the broad range of motivations, on the other. Ninjalicious pointed out that urban exploration ‘requires [...] nerdy research and geeky aesthetic sensibility’,²⁵ being a far cry from ‘passively consuming entertainment’ but rather creating ‘authentic experiences.’²⁶ What began as a subculture²⁷ came gradually more into public focus, in particular via ruin photography. The criminologist Theo Kindynis remarked, regarding the visual representation of Urban Exploration or ‘recreational trespass’, that ‘the practice has increasingly aligned itself with hegemonic forms of spectacular visibility and mediated identity construction and is being assimilated into a dominant neoliberal culture of consumption.’²⁸ Despite a certain degree of commercialisation, UrbEx continues to follow subcultural core values. As the architect Ian Douglas-Jones stated, ‘the burgeoning underground subculture of UE is now the property of mass media [...] the portrayal of UE [is] the kind of consumable entertainment UE is trying to escape’, hinting at the presence of subcultural core values that are still of importance.²⁹ In the next section, we discuss the ways in which mediated representations of derelict places speak about the self and its interpretation of the place’s history.

According to the geographer and urban explorer Bradley L. Garrett, who is well aware of the danger of ‘capitalist colonisation’,³⁰ UrbEx can be seen as a ‘political act [...] a subversive response to the imperatives of late capitalism that encourage spectatorship over participation [...]’³¹ via ‘discovering “TOADS” – temporary, obsolete, abandoned or derelict spaces [...] [U]rban explorers trespass into derelict industrial sites, [...] abandoned military installations, [...] bunkers [...] – simply for the joy of doing so.’³² Hedonism looms large here; however, the underlying motivations are more diverse and defy simple categorisation. This falls in line with a statement made by Garrett, that ‘the entire movement is

24 Timothy Webmoor: Entropic Chic and Proximate Ruins. *Ruin Memories: A Portfolio*, <http://ruinmemories.org/2013/06/entropic-chic-and-proximate-ruins/> (accessed 12.05.2022).

25 Ninjalicious 2005 (see note 22), p. 9.

26 Ninjalicious 2005 (see note 22), p. 3.

27 The topics of the modern ruin and urban exploration in a broader scope in their relation to further subjects have already been addressed by the authors in an article published in 2020 (see note 10).

28 Theo Kindynis: Urban exploration: From Subterranea to Spectacle. In: *British Journal of Criminology* 57 (2016), 4, pp. 982–1001, here p. 984.

29 Ian Douglas-Jones: Urban Exploration & The Search for the Sublime. Typescript 2008, p. 24, www.in-d-j.com/9.Writing/07-03-09_SUBLIME/Urban%20Exploration%20and%20the%20search%20for%20the%20sublime.pdf (accessed 12.05.2022).

30 Bradley L. Garrett: Undertaking Recreational Trespass: Urban Exploration and Infiltration. In: *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39 (2014), 1, pp. 1–13, here p. 10.

31 Bradley L. Garrett: *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*. London, New York: Verso 2013, p. 8.

32 Garrett 2013 (see note 31), p. 4.

organised in contradiction to any grand narrative or defining motivation.³³ For example, selected sources show that actively opposing neoliberal capitalism as indicated by Garrett,³⁴ escapism from the confines of capitalism or a ‘search for the sublime’,³⁵ a renunciation of the mundane by ‘enabling individual freedom, imagination and subjectivity’,³⁶ ‘recoding people’s normalised relationships to city space’,³⁷ ‘a way to attract attention, to claim the right to alternative heritagisation by incorporating certain places that official institutions have neglected to include into an organic understanding of the city’,³⁸ or the initial impetus ‘to observe (and often photograph) unimpeded material decay’³⁹ are among the many incentives existing within a community that ‘shares a fascination for the past and the history embedded in it, although their way of presenting or simply not presenting [...] establishes a clear difference.’⁴⁰ UrbEx might also bear some resemblance to ‘adventure tourism’ as practised by ‘explorer travellers’ in a tradition that is related to Romanticism, with exclusiveness equalling the inherent value of places visited.⁴¹ This community is nevertheless not as unified as it might seem, as is shown by examples from the discussion of feminist issues⁴² and the response to it,⁴³ or the statement that ‘urban exploration practices are not free of normative constraints, and do not represent an atomised, individualistic, entirely open and unbounded reading of the built environment’.⁴⁴

33 Garrett 2014 (see note 30), p. 5. Compare also Luke Edward Bennett: *Interpretive Communities at Work and Play in the Built Environment: Published Works Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the Basis of Published Work*. June 2015, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Interpretive-Communities-at-work-and-play-in-the-Bennett/3a803af69e80809b5c94699e57e4bc2866dbb225> (accessed 12.05.2022).

34 See Constanze Röhl/Peter I. Schneider 2020, (see note 10), pp. 289–331; Garrett 2013 (see note 31).

35 See e.g. Douglas-Jones (see note 29).

36 Summarised by Robinson 2015 (see note 23), p. 144.

37 Garrett 2013 (see note 31), p. 6.

38 Pablo Arboleda Gámez: *Heritage Claim through Urban Exploration: The Case of ‘Abandoned Berlin’*. Unpublished Thesis Presented in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in World Heritage Studies, Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus-Senftenberg (Germany), September 2014, p. 9.

39 Garrett 2014 (see note 30), p. 5.

40 Arboleda 2014 (see note 38), p. 39.

41 See Jennifer Laing, *Warwick Frost: Explorer Travellers and Adventure Tourism*. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto: Channel View Publications 2014, p. 8. Compare also Mike Featherstone on the heroic life as rejection of the mundane in: *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010, pp. 58–62.

42 Carrie Mott, Susan M. Roberts: *Not Everyone has (the) Balls: Urban Exploration and the Persistence of Masculinist Geography*. In: *Antipode* 46 (2014), 1, pp. 229–245.

43 Bradley L. Garrett, Harriet Hawkins: *And Now For Something Completely Different... Thinking Through Explorer Subject-Bodies: A Response to Mott and Roberts*. In: *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* 46 (2013), 1, online, <https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/garrett-and-hawkins-response.pdf> (accessed 12.05.2022).

44 Bennett 2015 (see note 33), p. 15.

The appeal of modern ruins and its relation to UrbEx

The sites explored come with an apparent lack of a ruin's characteristic: distance in time. For his analysis of modern American ruins, the historian Nick Yablon for example chose an accordingly descriptive title *Untimely Ruins*.⁴⁵ These ruins are furthermore set apart by their comparatively unprepossessing building materials, such as bricks or concrete, respectively their character of mass fabrication. These construction materials might be perceived differently as well, though. The archaeologist Gavin Lucas points out that concrete 'subverts the very opposition of tradition and modernity'.⁴⁶ The modern, untimely, or contemporary ruin therefore does have the potential to provoke contemplative thoughts. It can provide an unusual setting and individual, often exclusive experience. As stated by geographer Tim Edensor, industrial ruins become 'symbols through which ideologically loaded versions of progress, embedded within cultures of consumption and industrial progress, can be critiqued'.⁴⁷

The modern ruin can furthermore also be endowed with an inherent aesthetic appeal. For example, Zachery Fein noted in his dissertation, 'The Aesthetics of Decay', that: 'Usually when used in reference to architecture, the term ruin is concerned with ancient works that have decayed over hundreds or thousands of years, and still act as architectural expressions of culture, and on an exclusively aesthetic level: beauty. When applied to many of the great architectural works of the industrial revolution, this term and this definition are also befitting'.⁴⁸

The inward gaze triggered by the ruin is well known from romantic displays of nostalgia and melancholy. However, using modern ruins as a setting can also have different motivations, leading to results which can be extremely problematic when modelled against the background of the manifold implications that recent historical events, especially those dating from the 20th century within the context of the period of German National Socialism, have for contemporary society. One example of such unthinking behaviour, using the modern ruin as a stage for hedonist posing, can be seen in a photo that was taken in the abandoned

45 Nick Yablon: *Untimely Ruins: An Archaeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819–1919*. Chicago, London: Chicago University Press 2009.

46 Gavin Lucas: *Concrete Modernity. Ruin Memories: A Portfolio*, <http://ruinmemories.org/2013/06/concrete-modernity/> (accessed 12.05.2022).

47 Tim Edensor: *Industrial Ruins. Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*. Oxford, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing 2005, p. 15. Interestingly, a publication from 1996 showing the 1980s documentation of derelict buildings using artistic black-and-white photographs complemented by poems testifies to a politically persecuted group of Greifswald residents using techniques of documentation along the lines of urban exploration as a way of expressing their discomfort with local developments and politics at the time. Robert Conrad, Lutz Wohlrab, Martin Bernhardt: *Zerfall & Abriß: Greifswald in den 80er Jahren*. Berlin: Lutz Wohlrab 1996.

48 Zachery E. Fein: *The Aesthetic of Decay: Space, Time, and Perception: A Thesis Submitted to the University of Cincinnati, Division of Research and Advanced Studies for Partial Fulfillment for a Master of Architecture In the School of Architecture and Interior Design of the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning, 2010–2011*, p. 15, <http://zfein.com/architecture/thesis/thesis.pdf> (accessed 12.05.2022).

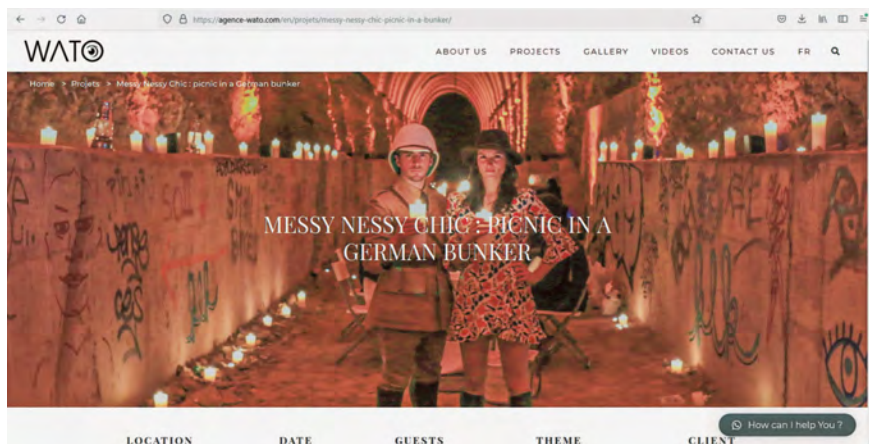


Fig. 5: 'Picnic in a German Bunker'. Screen shot from <https://agence-wato.com/en/projets/messy-nessy-chic-picnic-in-a-bunker/> (accessed 12 May 2022).

underground V2 supply facility at Méry-sur-Oise on the outskirts of Paris, entitled 'We went on a Picnic in a Parisian Nazi Bunker'⁴⁹ (see Fig. 5). The carefully staged persona of one of the two main protagonists involves cosplaying in colonial attire, thereby rendering the whole event even more disturbing in its apparent nonchalant approach to several highly controversial historical issues at once.⁵⁰ Such careless behaviour nevertheless seems to showcase a self-indulgent extreme that hardly fits into the spectrum of motivations underlying Urban Exploration as a subculture, but instead highlights its appeal for commercial purposes.

Returning to the question of its underlying motifs, UrbEx has to be understood as one part of a wide range of possible forms of accessing and owning the urban environment via unconventional means, such as parkour, rooftoping, skateboarding, and street art.⁵¹ As Garrett formulated it from a viewpoint immersed within the practice, 'urban exploration is about temporarily occupying and reimagining the spaces of the city', with spatial transgression playing an

49 Messy Nussy: We Went on a Picnic in a Parisian Nazi Bunker. Messy Nussy Cabinet of Chic Curiosities (23 February 2018), <https://www.messynussychic.com/2018/02/23/we-went-on-a-picnic-in-a-parisian-nazi-bunker/> (accessed 12.05.2022). The shafts and chambers are depicted by Bunkerfreunde München: F-Mery Sur Oise – V2 Nachschublager 1401, https://www.bunkerfreunde-muenchen.de/main.php?g2_itemId=303390 (accessed 12.05.2022).

50 This seems to be a common trope for the involved event agency, WATO, which also offers commercial events involving urban exploration themes. See the advertisement on their website for Messy Nussy Chic (previous note) as well as the presentation of their team: WATO: Our Story, <https://agence-wato.com/en/about-us/> (accessed 12.05.2022).

51 On skateboarding, see Ian Borden: Another Pavement, Another Beach. Skateboarding and the Performative Critique of Architecture. In: Ian Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell (eds) with Alicia Pivaró: The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space. Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press 2002, pp. 178–199; see also Ian Borden: Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture, the Body and Performative Critique. Oxford, New York: Berg Publishers 2001. For a mention of street art, see Garrett 2013 (see note 31), p. 6.

important role in all of these activities.⁵² This last fact can be further highlighted through a comment made by the artist, writer, and stalker Markiyam Kamysh, the son of one of the Chernobyl liquidators and author of the book *La Zone*, detailing the infiltration⁵³ of Prypiat.⁵⁴ In the 2019 stalker documentary *Ice of Chernobyl*, he describes the profound difference between tourist tours to Pripjat and the illegal access gained by stalkers after a hike through 55 km of wilderness as follows: ‘These are 55 km of absolute hell and hardcore. If I follow the official tour, then it goes as follows: I exit the car, and yes, now I’m here. That is cool, yes. In this moment, a sacramental question arises, to which there is no answer in 99% of the cases: And now?’⁵⁵ This implies that genuine access to, and experience of, such a place has to be earned and cannot be simply commodified and consumed.⁵⁶ It is furthermore interesting that the term ‘stalker’ refers to the 1979 movie *Stalker* by Andrei Tarkovsky,⁵⁷ which, according to the art historian Hartmut Böhme, ‘poses radical challenges to the cultural self-perception of industrial societies and their relation to ‘irrationality’ as well as in particular to nature.’⁵⁸

Another one of the above mentioned activities, rooftopping, also known as roofing, sky walking, or free high climbing, offers insights into how the contemporary cityscape can be claimed and reinvented.⁵⁹ Rooftopping is characterised

- 52 See e.g. the work by Thomas Raymen: *Parkour: Deviance and Leisure in the Late-Capitalist City: An Ethnography*. Bingley: Emerald 2018; on ‘transgression and the edge’, see Douglas-Jones 2008 (see note 29), pp. 27–28.
- 53 Infiltration usually refers to live sites, whereas place hacking can be applied to urban exploration. As Prypiat is at times a partially live site, this term can be applied here. See Michael J. Rosen: *Place Hacking: Venturing Off Limits*. Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books 2015, pp. 38, and p. 11 on these terms.
- 54 Makyian Kamysh: *La Zone*. Paris: Arthaud 2016.
- 55 See the film’s page on the International Movie Database, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10340836/> (accessed 12.05.2022). Quote translated from the German original in subtitles: ‘Das sind 55 km absolute Hölle und Hardcore. Wenn ich mich nach der offiziellen Tour richte, dann sieht es so aus: Ich steige aus dem Auto aus, und ja, ich bin jetzt hier. Ist cool, ja. In dem Moment reift eine sakramentale Frage heran, auf die es in 99 % der Fälle keine Antwort gibt: Und jetzt?’
- 56 A similar, but more commercialised approach can be found in the Flaneur Society’s ‘Guide to Getting Lost’, created ‘as a response to Walter Benjamin’s book, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*’. Leo Davie: *The Flaneur Society Guide to Getting Lost. The Coollector* (18 March 2014), <https://www.thecoollector.com/flaneur-society-guide-to-getting-lost/> (accessed 12.05.2022). On Kevin Lynch and the ‘disalienation in the traditional city’, see Fredric Jameson: *Postmodernism or, The Cultural logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press 2005, p. 51.
- 57 See the film’s page on the International Movie Database, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0079944/> (accessed 12.05.2022).
- 58 German original: ‘[...] stellen radikale Herausforderungen an das kulturelle Selbstverständnis der Industriegesellschaften und deren Verhältnis zur „Irrationalität“ und vor allem zur Natur dar’. Hartmut Böhme: *Ruinen – Landschaften: Zum Verhältnis von Naturgeschichte und Allegorie in den späten Filmen von Andrej Tarkowskij*. In: Hartmut Böhme: *Natur und Subjekt*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1988, pp. 334–379, <https://www.hartmutboehme.de/static/archiv/volltexte/texte/natsub/ruinen.html> (accessed 12.05.2022).
- 59 See Luis Carlos S. Branco: *Flying Bodies. Skywalker and Rooftopper Youth Communities in Interaction with the Contemporary Megalopolis*. In: David Callahan, Anthony Barker (eds.): *Body and Text: Cultural Transformations in New Media Environments*. Springer 2019, pp. 81–97.

Urbex: A peek inside the lives of Montreal's rooftopers, trespassers and urban explorers

From the highest rooftops to rusted bones of abandoned buildings, urbex — urban exploration — in Montreal is more than just an edgy hobby for some.

JP Karwacki

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Shot from atop the Sun Life Building. The photographer and rooftoper @stealthymask says there are few buildings in the city he hasn't looked out from the top of. PHOTO BY PHOTOGRAPH: @STEALTHYMASK / INSTAGRAM

Fig. 6: The rooftoper @stealthymask overlooking a cityscape atop the Sun Life building in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Screen shot from <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/urbex-a-peek-inside-the-lives-of-montreals-rooftoppers-trespassers-and-urban-explorers> (accessed 12 May 2022).

by its views – often vertical – of the city from extremes heights, documented in photos⁶⁰ or videos, and mainly obtained through risky and illegal climbs on buildings.⁶¹ Rooftopping, according to the cultural studies researcher Luís Carlos S. Branco, can have different motivations, i. a. ‘an aesthetic drive to capture the city in art; to feel and to relate to the city from a different perspective and an ideological desire to challenge the limits of the permissible’, therefore also ‘questioning the way we relate to our cities’.⁶² Often the photos show the climbers themselves perched atop building structures at vertigo-inducing heights or in unsafe situations. For example, one photo depicts the photographer and rooftoper @stealthymask⁶³ in a scene that has strong reminiscences of the 1818 painting ‘Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer’ (‘Wanderer above the Sea

60 On the commercialisation of photography in this context, leading to increased risk-taking, see Neil Ta: *Why I'm Fucking Done With Rooftopping*. Neil Ta Photography (18 September 2014), <http://www.neilta.ca/blog/5-reasons> (accessed 12.05. 2022).

61 See e.g. Bradley L. Garrett, Alexander Moss, Scott Cadman: *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights*. London/New York: Prestel 2016. Rooftopping can involve other key features as well, but for this chapter it is being defined according to the architectural historian Davide Deriu, who states in his article on rooftoping photography that, in its basic expression, it is an activity that involves gaining access to roofs in order to take photos. Davide Deriu: ‘Don't Look Down!': A Short History of Rooftopping Photography. In: *Journal of Architecture* 21 (2016), 7, pp. 1–29, here p. 2. It originated in Russia as well as other countries formerly belonging to the Soviet Union during the first decade of the 21st century. Branco 2019 (see note 59), p. 81.

62 Branco 2019 (see note 59), p. 95.

63 J. P. Karwacki: *Urbex: A Peek inside the Lives of Montreal's Rooftoppers, Trespassers and Urban Explorers*. In: *Montreal Gazette*, 21 April 2021, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/urbex-a-peek-inside-the-lives-of-montreals-rooftoppers-trespassers-and-urban-explorers> (accessed 12.05.2022).

Immer mehr Abenteuerlustige und Erkundungsfreudige, die sich für die versteckten Geschichten hinter verlassenen Orten interessieren, bezeichnen sich als Urbexer.

Die Bezeichnung, die sich von dem Begriff **Urban Exploration (städtisches Erkunden)** ableitet, verweist auf den forschenden Charakter, den die meisten Spaziergänge in verlassenen Krankenhäusern oder verwaisten Bunkeranlagen haben.



Viele Urbexer sind passionierte Fotografen, die in den stillschweigenden Kulissen den Zerfall von Konsumgütern und Mauerwerk dokumentieren und in authentische Lebenswelten vergangener Tage

Fig. 7: ‘Rear-view figure’ pose inside an abandoned building in Bavaria. Screen shot from <https://www.voucherwonderland.com/reisemagazin/lost-places-bayern/> (accessed 12 May 2022).

of Fog’) by Caspar David Friedrich.⁶⁴ Both show a male figure in a short dark coat from the back, turned in the direction of a view into the distance. The main difference lies in the fact that the wild landscape stretching into the distance depicted in the painting is replaced by a far-reaching, almost seemingly endless modern cityscape with skyscrapers in the photo (see Fig. 6). A popular science article by the journalist and political scientist Markus Wolff interprets the ‘Rückenfigur’ (‘rear-view figure’) in the painting by Caspar David Friedrich as a means to turn the act of contemplation itself into its main topic, as the viewer of the painting is merely in the role of a witness to the landscape being contemplated.⁶⁵ While it ultimately remains unclear whether the photo is indeed a conscious restaging of the painting, the similarities of composition resonate strongly. Whether this spectator does indeed hint at a romantic ‘Sehnsuchtsperspektive’ (‘perspective of longing’), wants to be portrayed as an explorer or a conqueror, acts as a mediator, or, on the contrary, signifies the dissociation of the viewer via the exclusive, difficult, and also potentially dangerous setting of the rooftop ledge, remains equally to be discussed. According to the media theorist Maja Klausen, a photo like the one by @stealthymask can also be classified as a ‘hero shot’, reinforcing masculinism by showing ‘conquerors of the urban terrain’ as a figure produced for public consumption.⁶⁶ Klausen also considers the ‘hero shot’ to be an ‘entrepreneurial response to the fetishization of social action as a marketed commodity in neoliberal times’. While it stands to question

64 On this comparison, see also Maja Klausen: *The Urban Exploration Imaginary: Mediatization, Commodification and Affect*. In: *Space and Culture* 20 (2017), 4, pp. 372–384, here p. 375.

65 Markus Wolff: *Caspar David Friedrich: Die Landschaft der Seele*. GEO Epoche Edition 18, 12 December 2018, <https://www.geo.de/magazine/geo-epoche-edition/20083-rtkl-deutsche-romantik-caspar-david-friedrich-die-landschaft-der> (accessed 12.05.2022).

66 Klausen 2017 (see note 64), pp. 375, 382.

whether the ‘hero shot’ with its implications is always the underlying motivation, the ‘rear-view figure’ pose can also be found in photos of urban explorers outside of⁶⁷ as well as inside⁶⁸ (see Fig. 7) modern ruins. Their motivation remains to be interpreted for each case separately, but they are interesting to note, as the majority of photos from abandoned places do not include people at all.⁶⁹

Exploring the modern ruins of the HVA

Various publicly accessible sources testify to an interest in the material remains of the former HVA, as can be seen via the features of Urban Exploration and its commodified offshoots.⁷⁰ Some of these might be the result of obtaining legal permission, but others clearly involve trespassing. Photos of abandoned places pertaining to this particular era of history in Peenemünde can be found in various sources. The oxygen plant is, for example, included in a book with the evocative title *Phantom Sites: Forgotten Places in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*.⁷¹ The presentation of the site comes with an accompanying text that, even though not complete, is obviously trying to give a critical approach to the site’s history. This example indicates that UrbEx photography books do not necessarily follow purely commercial lead stories, and are not only directed towards an audience that is supposedly oriented mainly towards consumption.⁷² Rather, they can also serve as a visual aid in the contemplation of disruptive social narratives.⁷³ The same building also appears on a website called *Outdoorsüchtig* (Addicted to the Outdoors), and the power plant housing the Historical Technical Museum, even

67 See, for example, Gerado Cataldo: Urbex Joachim Kroll Manor, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/101389862@N07/40033070583> (accessed 12.05.2022).

68 See, for example, Martina Fuchs: Lost Places Bayern – 7 Verlassene Orte in Bayern. In: Reisemagazin (April 2019), <https://www.voucherwonderland.com/reisemagazin/lost-places-bayern/> (accessed 12.05.2022).

69 See Constanze Röhl, Peter I. Schneider 2020 (see note 10).

70 See for example the ‘Online Museum Peenemünder Haken’, detailing the site’s history via providing a GIS-based photo tour focussing on the restricted area, <https://www.urlaubs-insel-usedom.de/peenemuender-haken.htm> (accessed 12.05.2022).

71 Martin Kaule, Arno Specht: Der Treibstoff des Todes: Sauerstofffabrik Peenemünde. In: Martin Kaule, Arno Specht (eds): *Geisterstätten: Vergessene Orte in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*. Berlin: Jaron, 2nd ed. 2018, pp. 77–82.

72 This stands in contrast to an approach exemplified by a newspaper article, offering a dramatic title but failing to even label the photo included of Peenemünde correctly, showing the oxygen plant as ‘V2 Rocket Factory’. See Jennifer Newton: The Lasting Legacy of War: Poignant Images Show Abandoned Ruins from World War II that still Scar the Landscape. In: *The Daily Mail* (6 September 2019), https://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-7407599/Poignant-images-abandoned-ruins-World-War-II-scar-landscape.html (accessed 12.05.2022).

73 See for example Eric Manten’s review comparing two urban exploration photography books. Eric Manten: Book Reviews and Comparison: Abandoned America and Autopsy of America (13 July 2017), <https://www.mantenphotography.com/blog/2017/7/book-reviews-and-comparison-abandoned-america-and-autopsy-of-america> (accessed 12.05.2022).

though not an abandoned place, seems to be perceived as such, as it forms part of a series by Jörg Thamer named *Lost Places an der Peene: Kraftwerk Peenemünde*.⁷⁴

Also videos show locations inside the restricted area. The approaches expressed in these can differ greatly, and vary from taking the viewer along on a walk in the restricted area, sometimes with musical underscores to a montage of photographic impressions.⁷⁵ One video explains the site's background and delivers advice regarding appropriate behaviour according to the ethics of the UrbEx community, addressing the viewer thus:

Dear community. Throughout this country and beyond its borders, there is a world of decay. Be it buildings, factories or other facilities. Created by man and abandoned again by man. Much is then left to its own devices and nature returns. Sometimes slowly and sometimes faster. The decay usually starts slowly and always continues to progress until the total collapse and the complete resolution. All of these places show and tell us their stories. It is a journey into bygone times and epochs. Through our research and search, as well as contacting people who help us, we can visit these places and show them here. We distance ourselves from break-ins, damage or theft. Nothing is changed, smeared or redecorated either. The photos show it as we found it.⁷⁶

Peenemünde appears also in drone flights⁷⁷ and – unfortunately – on a metal detecting channel.⁷⁸ Furthermore, it is interesting to note that abandoned

74 Jörg Thamer: Wandern auf Usedom, https://io.wp.com/outdoorsuechtig.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/16-Wandern-auf-Usedom-DSC04883_jpg.jpg?ssl=1 (12 May 2022); Jürgen Kemper: Lost Places an der Peene – Teil 2, <https://www.24notes.de/lost-places-an-der-peene-teil-2/> (accessed 12.05.2022). See also a view inside one of the derelict barracks of the 'VKN-Lager', a barrack camp later reused by the NVA, shown in a photo by Franka Hörnschemeyer as part of the series *Versuchsanlagen – Peenemünde: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Kunstvereine: Jahressgabe Franka Hörnschemeyer – Serie 'Versuchsanlagen Peenemünde 2001–2002'*, <https://kunstvereine.de/de/jahressgabe/aus-der-serie-versuchsanlagen-peenemuende-2001-2002> (12.05.2022).

75 See, for example, *Verlassene Orte in Mecklenburg Vorpommern: Lostplace – Spaziergang durch die Kiehnheide 2*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Twkj8MDkhpU>; *vnn-urbex.de: Im Bunkerwald von Peenemünde – Teil 2 Heeresversuchsanstalt*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpRQVm_iUok; *vnn-urbex.de: Hitlers Sauerstoffwerk Peenemünde*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl-aeA73NXo>; *Ruinenfilmer: Sauerstoffwerk Peenemünde*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uym63a6CAyA>; *ShipTV-Schiffskanal: Ruinen und Relikte der Raketen-Zeit in Peenemünde – Spuren der V2-Tests auf Usedom*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VilarTucPAo> (showing sites inside as well as outside of the restricted area); *Willi Seiner: V 1 – HEERESVERSUCHSANSTALT – Teil 1 – Lost Places*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lFkoj5w88> (all accessed 12.05.2022).

76 Quoted from the English original. This video includes the ruin of the service building belonging to the VKN-Lager amongst sites from different contexts. *Typ mit Kamera: Verlassene und vergessen, eine Lost Place Tour auf Usedom (July 2021)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVo5cRw5jww> (accessed 12.05.2022).

77 See, for example, *Savercop: Verlassenes Peenemünde 4k #DJI Mavic Pro# Nr.50*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voHBW5Ksnio> (accessed 12.05.2022); see also an example of use simply as a scenic setting by *Mad Meson: Usedom Hotspot, Peenemünde/Karlshagen, ehemalige Kaserne, im Sonnenuntergang*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SA8wLifFeZQ> (accessed 12.05.2022).

78 See, for example, *KingPin-TV: Lost Places (Bunkerfund Der Bunkerwald von Peenemünde)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dtf4le8kECY> (accessed 12.05.2022).

structures from the more recent past are included in a video that makes no allusions to Urban Exploration but rather documents the state of the actual village Peenemünde as it exists today.⁷⁹ Another observation shows that the official presentation of a site, in this case the area of the former concentration camp Karlshagen I, whose scarce remains form part of the trail around Peenemünde set up by the Historical Technical Museum and which are generally accessible to the public, does not seem to compromise its affective properties, as it features on a channel called *Verlassene Orte in Mecklenburg Vorpommern* (Abandoned Places in Mecklenburg Vorpommern).⁸⁰

Two further videos show a different approach in presenting the site, though, including what media theorist Maja Klausen (discussed above) interprets as the ‘hero shot’, distinguished by drawing on filters, changing speed, and a rather dramatic soundtrack. In the first example, ‘Matze The Explorer’ shows a video entitled *Vergessene Orte. Das Versuchsserienwerk – Unterwegs in der Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde* (Forgotten Places: The Experimental Plant – Out and About in the Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde).⁸¹ The video starts by following a pathway towards the seashore. At around 30 seconds into the video, a person suddenly walks into the frame of a static shot of the open sea and comes to a stop in the ‘rear-view figure’ pose at the water’s edge. This part of the video is underscored with a sea shanty-style soldier song called *Wo Matrosen sind* (Where the Sailors Are). The video then switches to its opening titles, followed by an explanatory text focussing on F1 and the surrounding historical events, including a mentioning of the concentration camp prisoners, the concentration camp at Mittelbau-Dora, and the aftermath of the site; this is followed by a shot of a technical drawing of F1. Then we see the same person, again only from behind, walking into the woods and disappearing into them. This is followed by various impressions from the site, with a clear focus on F1, including showing the person accessing one of its structures, but without further explanation. The video ends with a black-and-white shot of a replica of the V2 rocket in front of the Historical Technical Museum. The music underscoring the whole second part of the video is the piece *Todgeweihte* (Moribunds) by the Martial Industrial band *Waffenruhe* (Ceasefire).

The second example is a video by ‘aska’s Lost Places’ entitled *Trümmerfeld V2 Produktion* (Debris field V2 production).⁸² Again underscored with a soundtrack by *Waffenruhe*, it shows very hectic, sped-up movement throughout the site F1, switching between sepia, black-and-white, and naturally coloured pictures. The view is often simply focussed on the ground, but considerable time is also allotted to the inside of one of the bunkers at F1. Further explanations are given in

79 *Unterwegs in Mecklenburg Vorpommern: Rundgang durch Peenemünde* (Februar 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaYKI-wonKA> (accessed 12.05.2022).

80 See *Verlassene Orte in Mecklenburg Vorpommern: Station 5 KZ Arbeitslager Karlshagen Peenemünde*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvmTDlvWG6U> (accessed 12.05.2022).

81 *Matze the Explorer: Vergessene Orte: Das Versuchsserienwerk – Unterwegs in der Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPhK-XRQAhc> (accessed 12.05.2022).

82 *aska’s Lost Places: DE Trümmerfeld V2 Produktion*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHu65_QTlRU (accessed 12.05.2022).

the description of the video, mentioning facts regarding the building, its current state, and how V2 rocket production at this site came to an end. *Waffenruhe* seems to be a popular choice for some channels. For example, it also provides part of the soundtrack for the ‘Nibelungentreue video’ of Peenemünde by ‘RioDeLaNorte’, featuring the area of F1.⁸³ The three videos by ‘Matze The Explorer’, ‘aska’s Lost Places’, and ‘RioDeLaNorte’ exemplify the interconnection of exploration, appropriation, and self-presentation, including elements that can be associated with the rather ‘heroic’ style. This becomes particularly obvious when compared to another video, *Ruine der Fertigungshalle 1 der ehem. HVA Peenemünde (Zustand 2021)* (Ruin of Fertigungshalle 1 at the Former HVA Peenemünde [Condition in 2021]) by ‘Ship TV – Schiffskanal’, which shows a rather leisurely stroll through the ruin without any further editing via filters or musical scoring.⁸⁴

The common denominator in all the videos compiled here for the case study of Peenemünde and F1 is the depiction of abandoned structures from the site of the former HVA. Not all of them can be labelled Urban Exploration, though. While some openly show an attachment to the scene or provide allusions in the names of the channels and/or videos, others appear to be unaware of actually documenting ‘abandoned places’ in the sense of UrbEx. Further difficulties arise in some cases because of discrepancies between what might be the practice of Urban Exploration and what could also potentially be related to different motivations. Some of the examples seem to be catering to a specific public, and understanding their videos seems to require a certain level of initiation. The behavioural spectrum to be expected for a site like Peenemünde is therefore very broad and sometimes quite obscure, which makes it difficult to define. Some motifs remain open to interpretation for the casual viewer.

Conclusion

‘Untimely ruins’, to return to Nick Yablon’s expression, provide an important site of self-experience and self-presentation for Urban Explorers. Transgression is often part of such experience. Per se, UrbEx proper should not be dismissed as an inappropriate practice. Problems arise through legal issues or in cases where, in violation of the basic rules laid down within the community, sites are altered, or artefacts are moved or purloined. They arise in particular, however, when certain sites are being abused as settings for inappropriate self-promotion or an unethical habitus. For F1, this could be addressed with according counter-measures. While monitoring the restricted area is impossible in terms of logistics, its mythicisation can at least be (partially) replaced by presenting findings gained via scientific investigation to the public. Equally difficult logistically is the inclusion

83 RioDeLaNorte, Meer, Sonne, Sand, Bunker und Vergeltungswaffen, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_avN2ALeAt8 (accessed 12.05.2022). Information on *Waffenruhe* is scarce; only one article could be found: merz: Der rechte Burgfrieden – Die Label ‘Castellum Stoufenbour’ und ‘Lichterklang’, <https://de.indymedia.org/node/8845> (accessed 12.05.2022).

84 Ship TV – Schiffskanal, Ruine der Fertigungshalle 1 der ehem. HVA Peenemünde (Zustand 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNIN4V764SI> (12.05.2022).

of the site into the official route maintained by the museum.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, this might offer a long-term solution. As became obvious in the video on Karlshagen I, institutional presentation, easy – and in this case, also legal – access, and appreciating the affective qualities of an abandoned site are not mutually exclusive. Making F1 accessible to the public could indeed offer a great chance to actively demystify it by providing information on its actual history, evolving around Karlshagen II, and thus making use of the site's affective qualities.

There might even be overlaps between the concerns prevalent in different fields of institutionalised research and those within the UrbEx community. A very telling example for this is the publication *Chernobyl: A Stalker's Guide* by the writer, photographer, and stalker Darmon Richter, which includes not only a critical and extended view of the region's history but also an in-depth discussion on tourism to Prypiat. Richter appears to see the place and other sites in the region as a three-dimensional source in the sense of Hilberg, mentioned above.

If space is 'a site of movement and action, ever ambiguous', whereas place indicates instability, as the sociologist Emma Fraser defines it with reference to de Certeau and Merleau-Ponty,⁸⁶ then Urban Exploration could perhaps act as a 'therapeutic' means. Via the conscious outreach to sites like Peenemünde through place hacking as a deliberate act of transgression, their immanent properties of instability might in fact be remedied.

UrbEx is part of a movement that allows for the location of the self in a complex and at times confusing or even chaotic societal environment, equivalent to the modern cityscape.⁸⁷ With this background in mind, sites like the former HVA seem to complement and 'extend' urban space, as well as provide an alternative concept. The anthropologist Bjørn Thomassen postulates that liminal spaces found 'at the fringes' allow 'a break from the normal'.⁸⁸ This implies that Peenemünde is a liminal place that is not in a marginal position, but rather in a state of 'in-between'. Edensor, for example, also attributes 'transgressive and transcendent possibilities' to the modern ruin.⁸⁹ Exactly herein is where great potential lies, but also the danger of abuse in terms of the projection of esoteric notions about history. Spaces that allow for creative freedom must be contextualised and mediated in cases where they are fraught with inconvenient historical issues.

85 As of 2021, no information panels exist inside the restricted area surrounding F1, for obvious reasons. Unauthorised visitors might not necessarily be aware of the type of site they are actually entering illicitly.

86 Emma Fraser: Urban Exploration as Adventure Tourism: Journeying beyond the Everyday. In: Hazel Andrews, Les Roberts (eds): *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience and Spaces In-between*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge 2017, pp. 136–151, here pp. 137–138.

87 See for example the YouTube video by the rooftoper Usamalama, featuring a soundtrack including the song 'Society' by SOKOS, opening with the question: 'What is it about society that disappoints you so much?' Usamalama: *Craziest Rooftop in London (Urban Climbing)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6qaDKx4t90> (accessed 12.05.2022).

88 Bjørn Thomassen: Revisiting Liminality. The Danger of Empty Spaces. In: Hazel Andrews, Les Roberts (eds): *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience and Spaces in-between*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge 2017, pp. 21–35, here p. 21.

89 Edensor 2005 (see note 47), p. 4.

Subcultural expressions of appropriating the city, such as those that became obvious for rooftopping and Urban Exploration, can also exist in forms that are fully integrated into consumer society. The anthropologist Thomas Raymen stated in his dissertation on parkour: 'As Post-Fordist Western societies shifted toward a consumer-oriented economy, consumer capitalism had to stoke the desire for cool and alternative identities such as parkour that tapped into subjectivities increasingly oriented to socio-symbolic competition and individualistic distinction.'⁹⁰ He furthermore notes: 'In more ways than not, parkour and other similar forms of urban transgression are hyper-conformist to the values of neoliberal consumer society. They embody a creative risk-taking, rule-breaking, entrepreneurial ethos of neoliberalism; whilst also embracing the 'cool individualism' of edgy, transgressive cultural identities which have become commodified norms and that consumer capitalism thrives upon.'⁹¹

Kindynis comes to a similar conclusion. Referencing the cultural theorist Mark Fisher, and analysing the perception of an ad campaign by Nike using rooftopping imagery with a 'hero shot', he comes to the conclusion that

such 'appropriation' may in fact be rather less contradictory than one might otherwise suspect. Perhaps, as Mark Fisher suggests, it is not that recreational trespass and its imagery – having previously possessed a genuinely subversive potential – is now being assimilated by the spectacle, but rather that the desires and aspirations that have driven Urban Exploration from the outset (thrill-seeking, sensation-gathering, cultivating an edgy 'transgressive' persona) are themselves *precorporated*: pre-emptively formatted and shaped by a late capitalist culture of consumption ([Fisher] 2009: 15).⁹²

The architectural historian Ian Borden points out how, according to Walter Benjamin, 'Architecture offers itself to us as an object [...] But architecture is no object [...] [I]t is a mythologized image of the effects of capitalism.'⁹³ Nevertheless, in several of the examples detailed in this article, architecture is not attributed any agency, but is reduced to the status of an object, a place for projections, or a stage. This fits the statement that there is currently an 'extraordinary intensification of academic and popular interest in the ruins of the recent past and associated realms of dereliction. We seem to be in the midst of a contemporary *Ruinenlust*, which carries strange echoes of earlier obsessions with ruination and decay',⁹⁴ which can be seen as an expression of commodification, wherein authenticity becomes a mere construct. In this sense, the modern ruin is a resource of neoliberal capitalism.

90 Thomas Raymen: *Parkour, Deviance and Leisure in the Late-Capitalist City: An Ethnography*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited 2018, p. iii.

91 Raymen 2018 (see note 90), p. 4.

92 Kindynis 2016 (see note 28), p. 993. Kindynis refers to Mark Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*. Winchester: Zero Books 2009.

93 Ian Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell (eds.) with Alicia Pivaro (see note 51), p. 3.

94 Caitlin deSilvey, Tim Edensor: *Reckoning with Ruins*. In: *Progress in Human Geography* (London) 37 (2013), 4, 2013, pp. 465–485, here p. 465.

Abstract

Place Hacking Peenemünde

Aneignung, Wahrnehmung und Interpretation industrieller Ruinen aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus

1936 wurde auf der Ostseeinsel Usedom die Heeresversuchsanstalt Peenemünde zu Zwecken der Entwicklung und Produktion im Rahmen des deutschen Rüstungsprogramms erbaut. Insbesondere kann der Ort mit der sogenannten V2-Rakete in Verbindung gebracht werden, die dort unter Einsatz von Zwangsarbeitern gefertigt wurde. Peenemünde stellt ein »unbequemes Erbe« dar, an dem unethische Werte mit dem Streben nach technischem Fortschritt ungeachtet der moralischen Kosten zusammenfallen. Der Beitrag stellt die diversen Formen und möglichen Motive der aktuellen Aneignung der materiellen Hinterlassenschaften des Ortes, insbesondere im dortigen Sperrgebiet, paradigmatisch am Beispiel des Phänomens der »Urban Exploration« dar.

