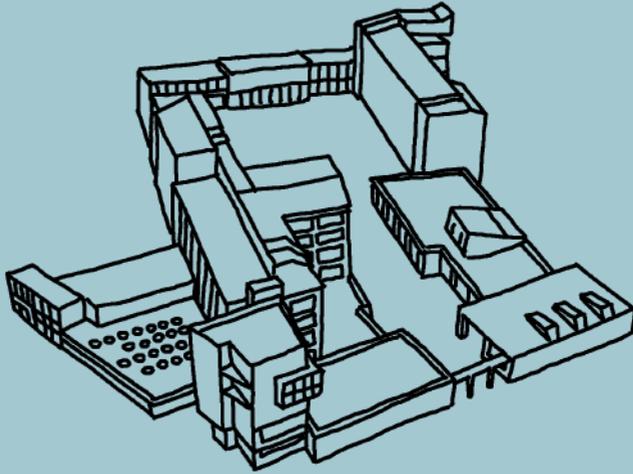


ExRotaprint

An alternative model for urban development
from 2004/2007



Gottschedstr., 4
13357 Berlin
Germany

 exrotaprint.de
 ExRotaprint

ExRotaprint is the former site of the Rotaprint printing press manufacturing plant in Berlin's Wedding district. In 2004, visual artists Daniela Brahm and Les Schliesser formulated a concept in which on-site tenants would take over the property. The goal was to develop the location to serve a heterogeneous mix of uses for Arbeit, Kunst, Soziales (work, art, and community) and affordable rents for all. Following lengthy, arduous negotiations with the Berlin Senate and the Liegenschaftsfonds Berlin, the tenant-founded ExRotaprint gGmbH took over the complex in 2007. In order to ensure the project's long-term development as a not-for-profit and rule out real estate speculation, a ninety-nine year heritable building right contract was signed with two foundations, Trias and Edith Maryon. Today, ExRotaprint represents a space of possibility for the realization of new social urban development strategies, free from the exclusionary consequences of speculation and financial profit.



Credits: Daniela Brahm

WHERE

ExRotaprint is the former site of a printing press manufacturing plant in Berlin's Wedding district. The Rotaprint company was a German printing press manufacturer considered to be a pioneer of small-format offset printing. Founded in 1904, the company began its production at Reinickendorfer Straße 46 in 1916 and it had a lasting influence on the city block between Gottschedstraße and Wiesenstraße throughout the following decades. After the air raids of 1945, 80% of the area's production sites were destroyed. In the early 1950s, productivity increased rapidly, creating demand for new production spaces. Rotaprint began to rebuild and redesign the Wilhelminian-era commercial buildings that had survived the destruction of the war. Architect Klaus Kirsten was commissioned to design new, architecturally ambitious buildings that gave the site its current identity. Due to new advances in electronic technology, the company went bankrupt in 1989. From that moment, the site was left without any future prospects. The complex is now included in the Registry of Berlin's Historically Protected Monuments.

LOCATION

Urban

TYPE OF SPACE

Complex of buildings

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Industrial (printing press manufacturing plant)

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1904/1907 and 1950s

SURFACE AREA

8,400 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Private

The buildings are owned by ExRotaprint gGmbH and the land is owned by Trias and Edith Maryon Foundations

CONCESSION

Owner

99 years regular rent for land through heritable building right

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Underused

COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE

Industrial workshops

Offices for community outreach organizations and classrooms

17 practice rooms for bands and musicians

22 artist studios

1 cafeteria

Space for events, conferences, workshops

2 guest apartments

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Workdays: 80%

Weekends: 20%

OPENING HOURS

Open all day for workers

Open to public only during specific events

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

450

WHAT

ExRotaprint is a model for urban development that rules out financial profit through ownership and establishes a diverse, open environment for all community groups. ExRotaprint rents an equal amount of the overall space to each area (work, art, and community) and the spatial coexistence of manufacturing, creativity and job services provides a mix that creates mutual exchange, critical consciousness, and

future growth.

Inside ExRotaprint there are businesses, community outreach organizations, and independent creatives. The community outreach organizations guarantee that the complex is open to people who live in Wedding and are part of the social fabric of the district.

SURFACE IN USE

8.400 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Commercial
Coworking and workspace
Culture and arts
Design, crafts and production
Ecology and environment
Education and training
Entrepreneurship
Housing
Technology
Welfare

ExRotaprint rents spaces to projects operating directly within its neighborhood: a German-language school for migrants, counseling services for the unemployed, a learning center for school dropouts, and a project offering career guidance to youth.

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

The activities are open to everyone

COLLABORATIONS

Ex Rotaprint is a space of possibilities. Musicians, designers, writers, and artists rent office spaces, practice rooms and studios. The tenants bring their own activities into spaces, they are extremely well-networked and create their own professional structures.

NETWORK

Local
National
International

WHO

ExRotaprint e.V., the first platform created during the initial phase of the project, decided to found the not-for-profit company ExRotaprint gGmbH by majority vote in 2007. The tenants who were interested in being actively involved in the development of the project became partners. Presently, ExRotaprint gGmbH is composed of eleven partners, one of which is the tenants' association, RotaClub e.V., which has a single collective vote in the company. Each tenant can join Rotaprint e.V. and thus be involved in the decision-making process of the not-for-profit company. The partners meet once a month to discuss issues concerning the project's development and all related current and long-term issues.

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. ExRotaprint gGmbH (not-for-profit, limited liability company, 2007)
2. RotaClub e.V. (association of all renters, 2005)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

2 managers
3 full-time employees (administration, caretaker, general maintenance)
1 freelancer (building maintenance)
1 freelancer who takes care of the rental of shared spaces





HOW

ExRotaprint institutes a unique form of ownership and self-organization: it is a model for ownership without private ownership. Rental income provides the financial basis of the project and covers the costs of the renovations, the building modifications, the annual rent of the ground, and the operational expenses. The heritable building right formed with the Trias and Edith Maryon foundations allowed the project to avoid the standard market logic and its associated consequences and risks. The ground rent that ExRotaprint pays annually to the foundations refinances the purchase of the site and enables the foundations to take on new projects of a similar nature. This creates a long-term cash flow extending beyond ExRotaprint and its own interests.

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Bottom-up

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Horizontal

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

10% Public grants
90% Rental income

Currently annual rental income totals 460,000 Euros. In accordance with the heritable building right contract, ExRotaprint pays the foundations an annual ground rent of 10% of net rental income (currently 46,000 Euros per year), or at least 35,200 Euros per year, equivalent to 5.5% of the initial land value (2007).

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

100% Free

Watch the video
"From industrial
production to
collective urban
development"



Did you know?

The Heritable Building Right

The heritable building right was introduced in Germany in 1919 with the Heritable Building Right Law in order to promote residential construction and enable lower-income populations to build homes. At the same time, the idea was to create an instrument to oppose property speculation.

A heritable building lease describes the transfer of the right of use from the owner to the ground leaseholder for 99 years.

This instrument divides up ownership of property by separating the parcel of land from the buildings. The party providing the heritable building right owns the land; the party receiving the heritable building right owns the buildings. A heritable building right is equivalent to ownership with all the associated rights and obligations related to property management. With a heritable building right contract, the landowner leases the parcel of land to the recipient of the heritable building right for an agreed period of time.

The heritable building right means that the land can be effectively withdrawn from speculation and permanently used for the common good of society without the barriers to entry being increased by rising prices over time.



How did your story begin?

After the Rotaprint company went bankrupt in 1989, the district took over the management of the buildings and rented them for short-term periods. In 1991, the ensemble of Wilhelminian-era commercial buildings and 1950s-era extensions were listed as a monument and placed under strict historic preservation protection, a status that probably saved them from demolition. From 2000 on, we were tenants in one of the former Rotaprint buildings, owned at the time by the City of Berlin, which put it up for sale. Our story began in 2004 as a tenant initiative: we started the ExRotaprint project with the people who were already renting spaces on site, a very diverse group. In 2005, we decided to create the association of tenants ExRotaprint e.V., which was our first platform. At the same time we started negotiating the purchase price with the city. The managing board of the association handled the negotiations and was the contact representative for city politics and the public. At the beginning, the effort to develop a bottom-up project was totally uncertain, and to make it real we needed tenacity, ideas, political pressure, and eventually the support of the district and state. After two years of negotiations and political pressure, we were able to purchase the 10,000 sqm Rotaprint complex in 2007. After the purchase, the association decided to establish the not-for-profit ExRotaprint gGmbH, which today manages the complex for which it alone is responsible based on a ninety-nine year heritable building right.

Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

Besides the diverse mix of users (workers, artists, community members), the most inspiring thing is the legal construct we have built in order to ensure the long-term objectives of the project and the system against speculation. For this purpose we set up a legal configuration, which consists of a heritable building right and the not-for-profit status. This legal solution separates the land from the buildings: the buildings are owned by ExRotaprint gGmbH, while the foundations retain ownership of the land. Based on a ninety-nine-year heritable building right, ExRotaprint manages the site and is responsible for all aspects related to project development, the renting of spaces, financing, and renovation; only the sale of the complex is excluded. Any financial profits generated must be used for the preservation of the historical architectural monument and the promotion of art and culture.

“We set up a legal configuration, which consists of a heritable building right and the not-for-profit status. This legal solution separates the land from the buildings: the buildings are owned by ExRotaprint gGmbH, while the foundations retain ownership of the land.”

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

Dealing with different entities (neighbors, politicians, people from different countries): it is important to always try to establish close, direct contact with people. We always overcome difficult situations by getting close to people, in order to communicate and open up to them. Don't write emails - talk to each other instead.

Interview with: Daniela Brahm

