

THE FORMATION OF THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE CITY OF BERLIN, GERMANY. THE OPINION OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.
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Abstract

The present paper refers to the physiognomy of the city and is a study carried out by the Department of Economics and Sustainable Development of Harokopio University. The aim is to investigate the factors that contribute to the formation of this physiognomy and the opinion of residents and visitors on the issues in question. As a case study, the city of Berlin, the capital city of Germany, is chosen.

In order to answer the main questions of the work and to investigate the main factors that shape the physiognomy of the city of Berlin, a survey was carried out aimed at the residents of and visitors to the city. For the needs of the research, a questionnaire was created which included 11 (eleven) closed and opened-type structured response questions, was anonymous and was distributed to 150 people. The research was carried out in the months of October and November 2023. The questionnaire was addressed exclusively to adults, aged 18 to 61+.

The paper concludes with interesting conclusions. An important conclusion is that, in order to protect the special physiognomy of the city of Berlin, strategies related to the more general protection of all issues related to its sustainable development should be implemented. It is proposed that both the local government, as well as the businesses of all service and production branches, work towards the protection and highlighting of the special character of the city of Berlin.

Key words: *Physiognomy of the city, sustainable development, the city of Berlin*

1. Introduction

When we discuss the physiognomy of a city, we refer to the identity, the unique “personality” that a place holds and can be seen through the characteristics of its landscape. Additionally, this unique character cannot only be seen, but also felt, heard, smelled, even tasted. Every sense can contribute to the formation of the physiognomy of a city in the eyes of the people who come in contact with it. The physiognomy of a city is strongly affected by its history, its present and its future, as well as the way of life of its people during these times and their activities (*Stefanou, 2007*).

This essay is carried out by the Department of Economics and Sustainable Development of Harokopio University. The subject of this essay is to specify the characteristics that form the physiognomy of the city of Berlin, Germany based on the opinions of its residents and visitors. Berlin was chosen, because it holds a rich past that has left its impact on its current form and it offers an even more vibrant present, as well as a future in constant development. This choice was also affected by my personal visits to the city, during which I had the pleasure and opportunity to discover by personal experience the blending of historical heritage and modernity that makes Berlin an interesting European destination.

The objective of this essay is to determine the opinion that the residents of and visitors to Berlin have formed about the city based on their personal interaction with the city. What would the first image that comes to their mind be, when they were asked about Berlin's most characteristic monument or dish? Every one of us might have a specific belief about the city, but it is still interesting to discover the more general picture. Moreover, the essay also aims to present in total and in one place the basic characteristics of its geography and geophysics, history and architectural heritage, as well as culture, economy, protection schemes and plans for further - sustainable - development. In other words, elements that shape the physiognomy of a city, making it stand out as a unique entity.

In order to achieve this, the essay is divided into two main parts. The first part contains the second theoretical chapter and offers a brief literature review that serves the purpose of the description of the city. This way, the current physiognomy of Berlin can be better examined and understood, after taking into consideration its historical course, of which the results can still be pointed out today. There are seven paragraphs reviewing a different contributing factor to the physiognomy.

The research that was carried out for the needs of this essay is presented in the second part, which consists of the third chapter. The methodology that was followed and the results of the conducted survey are presented and discussed there. Eleven questions were asked in total, which were answered by residents and visitors of Berlin with the help of an online questionnaire and are presented in the ten paragraphs of the third chapter. Lastly, this essay comes to an end with several conclusions in the fourth chapter.

2. Part One: Description of the city

2.1. Geographical and geophysical definition

The city of Berlin is the capital and the seat of government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and also one of the 16 federal states (*Bundesländer*) of the country. With an area of 892 km² and 3.770.699 inhabitants, it is the largest and most populated city in Germany. Since the district reform in 2001, Berlin consists of 12 districts (*Bezirke*), the names of which can be seen on the map below (Figure 1). Moreover, the 12 districts of Berlin are subdivided into 97 neighbourhoods (*Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2023*).

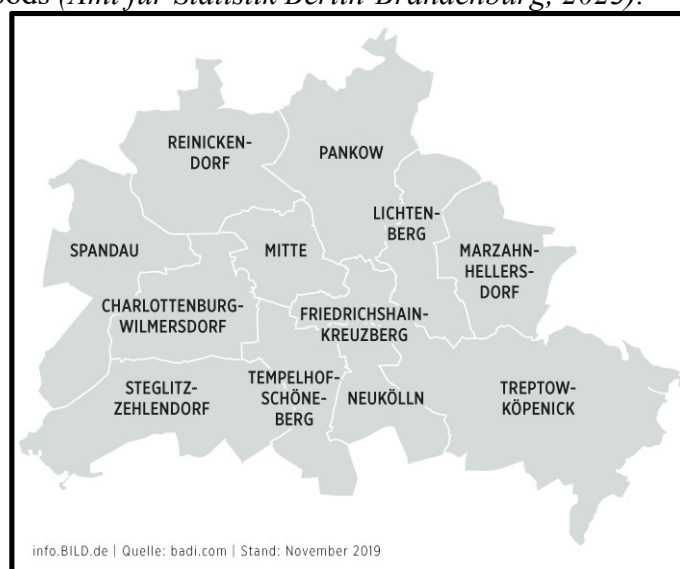


Figure 1: The 12 districts of Berlin (Source: bz-berlin.de)

The city and federal state of Berlin lies to the northeast of Germany and in the middle of the North German Plain, which greatly affects its climate causing a mean annual temperature

of 9°C. The closest neighbouring country is Poland, with a distance of 89 km from the west border. Berlin is fully encircled by the federal state of Brandenburg and together they form the Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Region (*Hauptstadtregion Berlin-Brandenburg*). Potsdam, the capital city of Brandenburg, is located on the southwest of Berlin, approximately 25 km from the centre of the city (*Britannica, 2023*).

Due to its position on the North German Plain, Berlin has a mainly flat topography, with a mean altitude of 35 m above sea level (Figure 2). The Kreuzberg hill, which is located in the homonymous district, is at 66 m the highest natural peak close to the city centre and also the place where the urban park Viktoriapark with its artificial waterfall can be found (Figure 3). (*Britannica, 2023*).

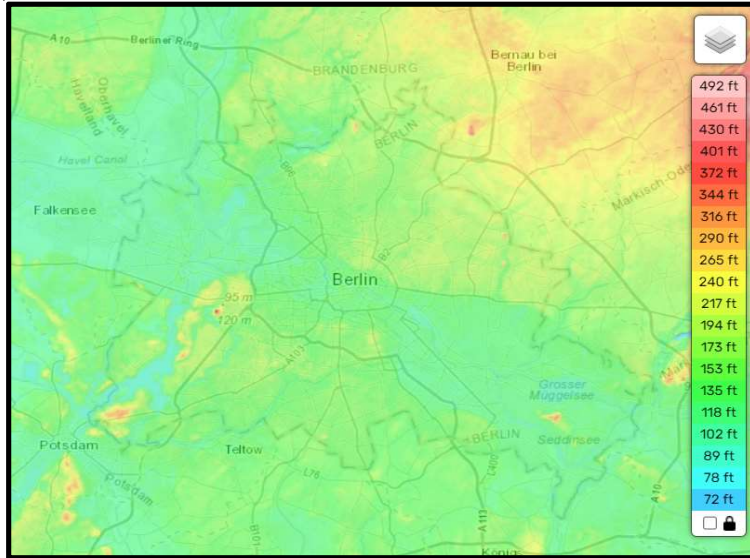


Figure 2: Topographic map of Berlin displaying elevation (Source: topographic-map.com)



Figure 3: Viktoriapark (above) and its waterfall (below) (Source: Personal archive)

In regard to artificial geophysical structures, Berlin also offers the man-made mountain Teufelsberg (Devil's Mountain) in the forest of Grunewald on the southwestern side, which took its name after the Teufelssee lake that is nestled nearby. It was made out of debris after the Second World War and served as the base of a U.S. listening station during the allied sovereignty of Germany. Today, at about 120 m above sea level it is the highest peak of Berlin and serves as an athletic and recreational shelter, as well as an open-air street art gallery (Figure 4) (*Berlin.de, 2022*).



Figure 4: Teufelsberg in Grunewald (Source: Berlin.de)

Moreover, Grunewald is the largest forest in Berlin and home to numerous lakes. It is considered a protected leisure site, where visitors can exercise, swim or walk their dogs freely, thus being a preservative factor of the quality of life of the citizens (*Bertram and Larondelle, 2017*). It is easily accessible by public transport and offers a wide variety of infrastructure (first-aid posts, pubs, etc.) and monuments, such as the Platform 17 Memorial, in memory of the approximately 10,000 Jewish people of Berlin that were deported from that site (*Berlin.de, 2023*). Apart from Grunewald, Berlin has two other large forest sites; the Köpenicker Forst (Köpenick forest) in the southeast, in the district of Treptow-Köpenick and Tegeler Forst (Tegel forest) in the northwest, in Reinickendorf, which both, however, lack the degree of accessibility that Grunewald holds (*Bertram and Larondelle, 2017*).

A further contribution to the city's urban green areas, which make up about one third of Berlin, are the over 100 parks that can be found within its region. Some of them are relatively new, as they were created after the fall of the Berlin Wall in its former "dead strip", such as the Mauerpark (Wall Park) or are the result of a land use change. An example of this is the Tempelhofer Feld at the site of the former Berlin Tempelhof Airport, which was given to public access in 2010 and is now the largest park of the city, visited by thousands of people every day (*Kabisch and Haase, 2014*). Other notable parks and gardens are the Tiergarten - Berlin's most popular park -, the aforementioned Viktoriapark, Gardens of the World, Volkspark Friedrichshain - Berlin's oldest park -, the Botanical Garden in Steglitz and Treptower Park on the banks of the river Spree, among many others (*Berlin.de, 2023*). One last honourable mention should be made to the city's cemeteries which, according to the Senate Department of Urban Mobility, Transport, Climate Action and the Environment, number up to 224, with 182 of them being publicly open. In the later years, actions have been emerging in order to repurpose the use of many of these cemeteries, in an attempt to further include them to the sustainable green infrastructure of the city and the everyday activities of its inhabitants (*Holleran, 2023*).

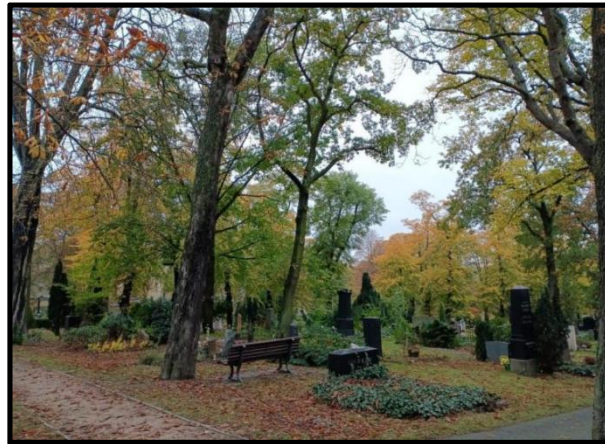


Figure 5: Old St. Matthäus Churchyard (Source: Personal archive)

Furthermore, Berlin is rich in bodies of water. The most prominent one is the river Spree, which runs through the middle of the city and covers a total distance of 46 km within the region of Berlin. It is the main tributary of the river Havel - another distinctive river that flows through the city for about 27 km -, joining with it in the district of Spandau. The river Dahme is a tributary of the river Spree and flows through the district of Treptow-Köpenick for about 16 km. These three main rivers are considered federal waterways (*Bundeswasserstraßen*) and are used for shipping purposes. Additionally, a large number of lakes can be found in Berlin, such as the Müggelsee - Berlin's biggest lake -, the Wannsee or the Schlachtensee, etc. Overall, the water bodies of Berlin, whether we're talking about a big river or a smaller canal, cover a total area of about 58,9 km² (in-Berlin-Brandenburg.com, 2023).

Thanks to this wide range of green spaces, forestation and water bodies, Berlin enjoys biodiversity regarding its flora and fauna. There are approximately 431,000 trees in the streets of Berlin, 75% of which are linden, maple, oak, plane and chestnut trees. On average, there are 80 street trees per kilometre (*Berlin.de*, 2021).



Figure 6: Street trees in the districts of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (above) and Mitte (below) (Source: Personal archive)

According to the German Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), in 2018 the flora of Berlin consisted of about 1,500 different species of fern plants and flowers. A few examples of them are the common ragwort, the few-flowered garlic, ivy, sea pink and the common holy. The Berlin Botanical Garden and Botanical Museum - one of world's

biggest botanical gardens - hosts more than 20,000 species of fern and flowering plants and 1,800 tree and bushes species (Sukopp, 2006).

A wide range of wild animals call Berlin their home. Particularly, the number of foxes that can be found in the busy centre of Berlin has risen in the last years, making it a more popular habitat than the forests. Another animal species that is quite possible to come across in Berlin is the racoon and the wild boar, as well as rabbits, bats and red squirrels. Beavers are also often encountered in the waters of the rivers Havel and Spree. Furthermore, Berlin has the widest variety of birds in all Germany, ranging from pigeons to sparrows and seagulls and from hooded crows and kestrels to white-tailed eagles (Deutsche Welle, 2016).

What Berlin is not very rich in, is the total hours of sunlight during the year. On average, the sun shines for a little less than 2,500 hours per year, with July being the sunniest month and, on the other hand, January being the month with the fewest hours of sunlight (Figure 7) (Climate-Data.org, 2019).

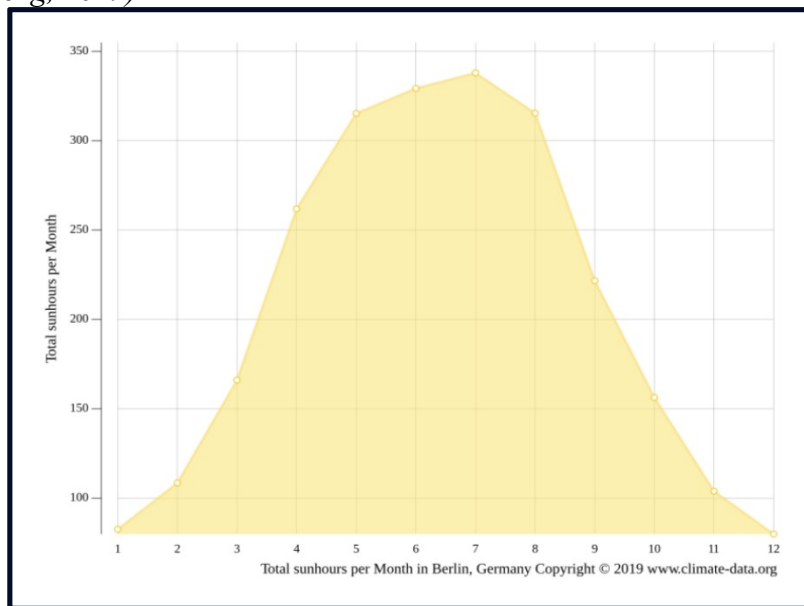


Figure 7: Total hours of sunlight per month in 2019 (Source: Climate-Data.org)

2.2. History and architectural heritage

The first traces of human life in the region of Berlin can be chronicled back to the 4th century B.C.. Centuries later, the areas around the rivers of Spree and Havel were settled by Germanic tribes and then Slavic ones. A common theory regarding the name of the city is that it originates from the slavic word “*blro*”, which describes a dry area among the swamps (Stöver, 2010). According to Stöver, the area that we know today as Berlin was once part of the twin city Cölln-Berlin, which was established on the right and left side of the river Spree. The twin city was most likely a slavic trade town of little importance, with the first official written mention to Cölln being dated in 1237. In 1709 the twin cities, along with their suburbs, were ultimately unified under the reign of King Friedrich I and Berlin became the capital of the Kingdom of Prussia. Therefore, it could be said that Berlin in its current form is a relatively “young” city.

In order for Berlin to become the seat of the monarchy, changes to the architecture of important buildings were made. The most well-known buildings that underwent modifications are the Berlin Palace (*Berliner Schloss*) and the Arsenal (*Zeughaus*), which are located in the present-day district of Mitte. They both are samples of Baroque architecture and today they

serve as the Humboldt Forum and the German Historic Museum (*Deutsches Historisches Museum*) respectively (Figure 8) (*Härtel, 2006*).



Figure 8: The Berlin Palace (above) and the Arsenal (below), around 1900
(Sources: *BerlinLayers.com / Berlin.de*)

After his coronation, the successor King Friedrich Wilhelm I undertook more alterations to the façade of the city, thus contributing to the establishment of Berlin as a European capital and leaving architectural marks that are still visible today in Mehringplatz, Leipziger Platz or Pariser Platz, to name a few examples. However, the architectural works flourished even more during the reign of King Friedrich II, whose name is connected to the construction of the Berlin State Opera (*Staatsoper Berlin*), St. Hedwig's Cathedral, Prince Heinrich Palace - which today serves as the main building of the Humboldt University - and the Old Library (*Alte Bibliothek*), all still located in Forum Fridericianum, at the beginning of the Unter den Linden boulevard (*Härtel, 2006*).

During the Napoleonic Wars, Berlin suffered great losses in terrain and many casualties. Nevertheless, it became a stronghold of resistance against the French occupiers. After the liberation of Germany in 1813, the city met with economic flourishing, while the railway system grew larger, in order to serve the rising demand, and the streets, especially Potsdamer Platz, were more populated by passersby and stores. At the same time, it became an artistic and scientific centre. This era was marked by landmarks like the New Guardhouse (*Neue Wache*), the Konzerthaus Berlin and the Old Museum (*Alte Museum*) - all of the above being works by neoclassical architect Friedrich Schinkel. Another architectural work of the 19th century that has also left its impact on modern-day Berlin is the tenement apartment buildings with inner courtyards, in order to house the constant rising numbers of working-class inhabitants (Figure 9). Furthermore, the roads were constructed broad enough to sustain even today's traffic and new means of transport, such as the wagonways, emerged. Lastly, it was during this era that the Red Town Hall (Rotes Rathaus) was built, which to this day remains the seat of the Senate of Berlin and took its name by its characteristic façade, which consists of red bricks (Figure 10) (*Härtel, 2006*).



Figure 9: Tenements in Prenzlauer Berg (Source: urbancontents.berlin)



Figure 10: The Red Town Hall (Source: Personal archive)

The German Empire was founded in 1871 and Berlin became its capital. One of the most essential projects was the development of a sewage system that would be able to support the needs of a growing metropolis and its increasing population. Meanwhile, works for the electrification of Berlin had begun with the electric lighting of streets and the introduction of the electricity-powered locomotive, trams and the subway system. Berlin was also a pioneer

in utilising air travel in Germany, with an airport of European standards already by the start of the 20th century. (Härtel, 2006). With regards to monumental architecture, to commemorate the victories that lead to the German Unification, the Berlin Victory Column (*Siegessäule*) was erected in 1873 on the Platz der Republik in the district of Mitte, as well as the Reichstag building in neo-renaissance style some years later, in order to house the parliament of the unified Germany. (Figure 11) (Stöver, 2010).



Figure 11: The Victory Column in front of the Reichstag building on the Platz der Republik. Pre WWII. (Source: Welt.de)

During the so-called “Roaring 1920s” Berlin became a modern metropolis and a pole of attraction for artists, scientists and generally free and avant-garde means of expression, all while being in constant motion. The traffic grew heavier and the air travels became even more frequent, due to the construction of the Tempelhof Airport and the foundation of Lufthansa in Berlin. New housing buildings were erected in modern architectural styles, as the population kept increasing. Additionally, Berlin became a centre for cinematography, as a lot of cinemas and studios were operating in the city. Theatre, literature and newspaper printing also developed (Härtel, 2006).

In the years of the Nazi rule in Germany, the plans for the city were quite different. The 1920s were considered decadent and architectural works were in process in order to transform Berlin into an imposing imperialistic centre, the “*World Capital Germania*”. Many of those plans were never completed or destroyed during and after the war. However, some traces can be still found, such as the placement of the Victory Column in the Großer Stern (*Great Star*) square (Figure 12), away from its initial location, the Olympic Stadium (*Olympiastadion*) (Figure 13) - built for the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin and used today for the home games of the football club Hertha BSC, as well as various other sporting and musical events -, the peculiar *Schwerbelastungskörper* in the district of Tempelhof (Figure 14) and even some street lamps designed by Albert Speer. Lastly, some bunkers, mainly underground, still remain and are either sealed or are offered for tourist tours (Stöver, 2010).



*Figure 12: The Victory Column today.
(Souce: Personal archive)*



*Figure 13: The Olympic Stadium.
(Source: Personal archive)*



Figure 14: The Schwerkbelastungskörper today. (Source: Berlin.de)

The city was surrendered on the 2nd of May 1945, after the air raids and the Battle of Berlin had left it in ruins and with destroyed infrastructure on a large scale. Post-war Berlin was divided into four sectors, one for every Allied force: the Soviet Union, the USA, Great Britain and France. During the Cold War, the city was split into West and East Berlin (Figure 15). West Berlin was enclosed by the Berlin Wall, which was built in 1961 in order to prevent East Germans from fleeing into West Berlin. The Berlin Wall became a tourist attraction of West Berlin, even though it had turned the area around it into a dead zone. A primary example is the Potsdamer Platz, a pre-war bustling centre, which was heavily altered and desolated during the division of Berlin (Figure 16) (Härtel, 2006).

Both sides of Berlin were reconstructed after the war. East Berlin became the capital city of East Germany and thus was rebuilt and restored to follow the soviet architectural style. Characteristic traces of this architecture can be seen around Alexanderplatz, such as the Haus des Lehrers (Figure 17) and, most importantly, the TV Tower (*Fernsehturm*) which was built in 1969 and is now a main tourist sight and city symbol, combined with the World Clock (*Weltzeituhr*), a nearby attraction (Figure 18) (Härtel, 2006).

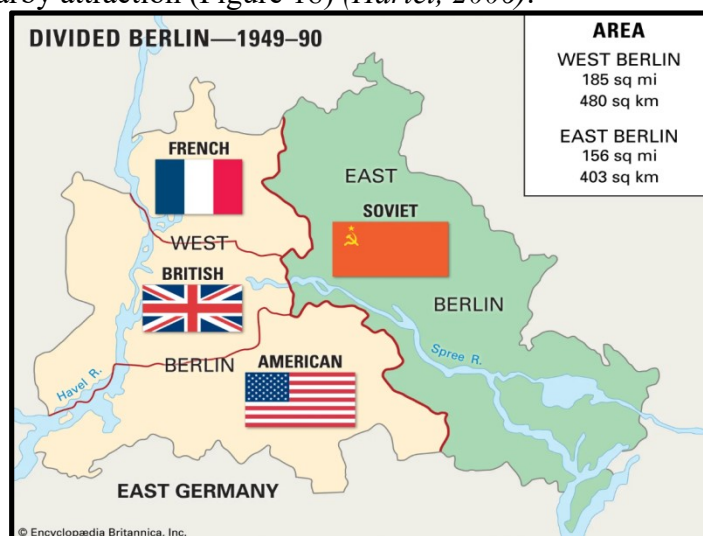


Figure 15: Berlin divided into four sectors. (Source: Britannica.com)



Figure 16: Potsdamer Platz pre WWII (above) and in 1982 (below).
(Sources: tip-Berlin.de / trolley-mission.de)



Figure 17: Haus des Lehrers in 2022 (Source: orte-der-einheit.de)



Figure 18: The World Clock (left) and the TV Tower (right).
(Source: Personal archive)

The Berlin Wall fell on November 9th, 1989, marking the beginning of the German Reunification. The reunified Berlin became once again the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany and a period of reconstruction and building of infrastructure began, in order to prepare the city to become a contemporary metropolis and the seat of the German state. Many governmental buildings were constructed and many headquarters of various institutions were relocated to Berlin. The fall of the Berlin Wall left vast areas of land whose use was about to change, whether it was to become plots where, for instance, new houses or new parks would be built (Stöver, 2010). Two of the most promoted projects were the redevelopment of Potsdamer Platz as a business and services centre of modern architecture (Figure 19) and the restoration of the Reichstag building that would house the parliament.



Figure 19: The Potsdamer Platz today. (Source: Welt.de)

In the 21st century, Berlin is one of the most visited cities in Europe, with 10.4 million visitors in 2022 - more than of them being international (*Statista, 2023*). It is a city with a rich history and traces of its past can not only be found everywhere, but also they have been harmonised with its vibrant present.

2.3. Culture and arts in Berlin

Berlin is an international city, which attracts thousands of artists, especially those who engage with urban or contemporary art, and visitors who want to explore its different cultural offers. Artists find a welcoming place in Berlin to present their art, while they are also being aided by the state (*BSBI, 2022*).

A plethora of museums and galleries can also be found in the city. The Museum Island (Museumsinsel) is one of the most prominent complexes of museum buildings in Berlin, consisting of five state museums, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (*UNESCO, 2023*).

Berlin has influenced pop culture in multiple ways, whether it is by providing the setting for fictional - or not - stories to unfold or by being the place where German and international artists have lived and worked, even as early as before the years of the Weimar Republic. For example, pioneering silent movies of German expressionism, such as "Metropolis", "Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari" and "Nosferatu" were produced by companies based in Berlin (*Stöver, 2010*). The German films "Der Himmel über Berlin" (1987), "Lola rennt" (1998), "Good Bye, Lenin!" (2003), and "Das Leben der Anderen" (2006) are internationally acclaimed and showcase famous sites of the city, such as the Berlin State Library or the Oberbaumbrücke in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (*Münch, 2007*). Lastly, the recent neo-noir series "Babylon Berlin" depicts the city during the 1920s and is filmed in several locations across Berlin.

Literary landmarks were also written in or inspired by the city; "All Quiet on the Western Front" by Erich Maria Remarque and "Berlin Alexanderplatz" by Alfred Döblin being primary examples (*Stöver, 2010*). Hans Fallada's best-seller anti-Nazi novel "Jeder stirbt für sich allein" (Every Man Dies Alone), published in 1947, is set in Berlin, as well as the biographic book "Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo" (We Children from Bahnhof Zoo) (1978), about the lives of young drug addicts, and the Cold War themed "The Innocent" (1990) by British writer Ian McEwan.

Musical expression also thrives in Berlin. Musicians and bands that were formed in Berlin have made a big career, such as the actress and singer Marlene Dietrich, the band Ton Steine Scherben and singer Rio Reiser, singer and actress Nina Hagen or the industrial music bands Einstürzende Neubauten and Rammstein. Moreover, iconic rock stars such as Nick Cave, Iggy Pop and David Bowie have lived and worked in Berlin; Bowie, especially, released his so-called "Berlin Trilogy" consisting of three full-length albums.

Berlin has a good number of sports clubs; the most well-known of them being the football clubs Hertha BSC and 1. FC Union Berlin and the basketball club Alba Berlin.

Hertha Berliner Sport-Club was founded in 1892, taking its name from a blue/white steamship that was sailing on the rivers Spree and Havel. The club has been through major events following the history of the city and is a founding member of the German Football Association. On the other hand, 1966 marked the founding of 1. FC Union Berlin in East Berlin and it is widely known for its loyal fan-following. Both clubs have played European matches in various tournaments. Regarding basketball, Alba Berlin was founded in 1989 and is currently one of the most victorious German basketball clubs with a successful European career (*Albaberlin.de, 2023*).

2.4. Physiognomy Highlights

2.4.1. Brandenburg Gate

It was in 1791, by order of King Friedrich Wilhelm II, that Berlin acquired the neoclassical 26-metre-high Brandenburg Gate (*Brandenburger Tor*), its most prominent landmark (*Härtel, 2006*). It was greatly damaged during the Battle of Berlin and remained so for many years after the Second World War. During the Cold War, the monument became a symbol of the division of Germany, as it served as a gate to the borders between West and East Berlin. Today, after a course of restoration, it has been reconsidered as the symbol of the reunified Germany and became an imposing sight and a must-see for every visitor of Berlin (*Figure 21*) (*Ayyash, 2013*).

2.4.2. The TV Tower

The TV Tower (*Fernsehturm*) was built in the 1960s in order to support the national TV broadcasting of East Germany and shortly after its completion it became an emblematic sight of East Berlin. It is located at Alexanderplatz and stands at 368 metres tall, being Germany's tallest building. It is visible from a distance of about 80 km and today it attracts more than a million tourists every year, who enjoy the view of the city from the observation platform or the restaurant at its sphere, namely 203 metres above ground level (*Berlin.de, 2023*).



*Figure 20: Tourists gathered around the Brandenburg Gate
(Source: Personal archive)*

2.5. Surrounding area

Berlin is fully enclosed by the federal state of Brandenburg - there have even been attempts to unify these two states in the past (*BLPB, 2020*). Potsdam is the capital of Brandenburg and borders Berlin on the southwest, where it is easily accessible via public transport. It serves as a popular destination for day trips, especially combined with the UNESCO World Heritage site of Sanssouci Palace and its gardens, built by Prussian King Friedrich II “the Great” between 1745-1747.

Moreover, Berlin Brandenburg Airport “Willy Brandt” is the sole international airport of Berlin and is actually located in the state of Brandenburg. It opened in 2020 and since then has replaced the former airports in the state of Berlin, such as Tempelhof or Tegel.

2.6. Institutional protection schemes

Since 2012 Berlin, as well as the whole country, follows the “Strategy for Biodiversity Preservation”, in order to protect and expand its rich biodiversity. These protective measures apply to the categories of “National Parks”, “Nature Reserves”, “Landscape Protected Zones”, “Nature Parks and Biosphere Reserves” and “Natural Monuments” of which Berlin has more than 620 (Tertilt, 2010). Moreover, Berlin is a member of the Natura 2000 network, with more than 15 large preserved areas, alias more than 30% of the surface of the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area (WWF, 2012).

Berlin is completely self-sufficient in regard to its water supply. Its system consists of water pumps located in protected zones. Almost a quarter of the city belongs to one of these 13 districts, where prohibitions and regulations apply, such as a general building ban close to the conservation areas (Berlin.de, 2023).

Following the Historic Preservation Law of Berlin (1995), preserved monuments and historic properties cannot be altered, unless there is an authorization issued by the responsible protection committee. In Berlin, around 16% of all buildings comply with the aforementioned law and about 25% of all buildings in the inner city are considered monuments (Roesch, Hoffmann and Nehls, 2023).

2.7. Economy

The economy is mainly supported by the services sector. Specifically, it is considered the European start-up hotspot, attracting innovative entrepreneurs and highly-skilled professionals from all around the globe. Berlin is also a big scientific and research hub, thanks to its four research universities and more than 100 higher education and non-university institutes. Arts and culture is another important economic sector, as the city has an international appeal to artists, related businesses and art tourists, offering numerous performances, museums and galleries, as well as hosting highly acclaimed cinema, music, fashion and sport events (Urban Development Concept Berlin 2030). Berlin has also been a popular destination for international congress meetings. According to the ICCA - International Congress and Convention Association, Berlin is in 7th place worldwide, as of 2022, with 113 meetings held there. Of course, tourism of all kinds is generally a strong contributor to the economy, with more than 10 million arrivals in 2022 (Statista, 2023).

3. Part Two: The opinions of residents and visitors

In order to investigate the physiognomy of the city of Berlin through the opinions of its residents and visitors, an online survey was conducted during the months of October and November 2023. The survey was based on a questionnaire made on Google Forms, with 9 close and 2 open ended questions in the Greek, English and German language, it was anonymous and was distributed to 150 people aged 18+. The results are discussed below.

3.1. Demographics

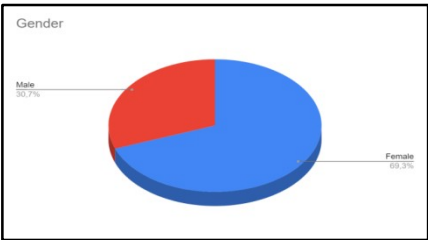


Figure 21: Gender

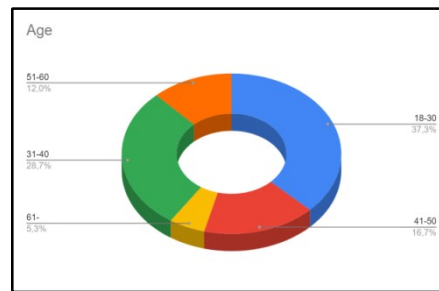


Figure 22: Age

Of the 150 people that answered the questionnaire, 69.3% were women and 30.7% men (Figure 21). 37.3% were aged between 18-30 years and 28.7% between 31-40. The next age groups were 41-50 and 51-60, with 16.7% and 12% respectively. People aged 61 and older accounted for 5.3% of the sample (Figure 22).

3.2. Which is the most characteristic plant of the city?

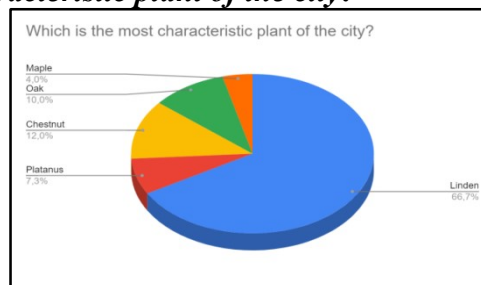


Figure 23: Characteristic plants

This question included the species that account for 75% of all the street trees in Berlin (*Berlin.de, 2021*). 66.7% of the replies show the linden tree as the most characteristic plant. According to a report by the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Mobility, Transport, Climate Action and the Environment in 2022, out of 432.404 street trees, 35% were indeed lindens.

Visitors and residents can also be affected by the fact that the boulevard Unter den Linden (*under the linden trees*) is a popular location. It is one of Berlin's oldest boulevards and linden trees are planted along the promenade in the middle of it. The boulevard passes multiple sights, the most important being the Brandenburg Gate. There is also a homonymous U-Bahn (metro) station (*Berlin.de, 2023*).

Next come chestnut trees with 12%, oak trees with 10%, platanus trees with 7.3% and, lastly, maple trees with 4%.

3.3. Which is the most characteristic monument of the city?

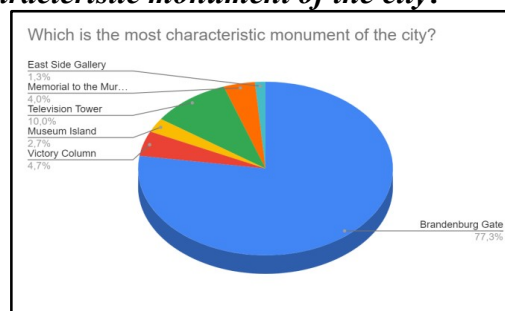


Figure 24: Characteristic monuments

77.3% of the answers agree that the Brandenburg Gate is the most characteristic monument of Berlin. Of course that comes with no surprise, considering its history, modern-day meaning and popularity.

The TV Tower in Alexanderplatz comes second with 10%. Up next are the Victory Column (4.7%) and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (4%), a memorial close to the Brandenburg Gate, which commemorates the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Museum Island got 2.7% of the answers and East Side Gallery came last with 1.3%. Surprisingly so, as the East Side Gallery is the longest remaining segment (1.3 km) of the Berlin Wall and serves today as a world-famous street art open-air gallery. It can be partly due to the fact that it attracts only around 800,000 visitors annually, however the actual number is difficult to calculate due to the nature of the monument (Yan, Xu et al., 2019).

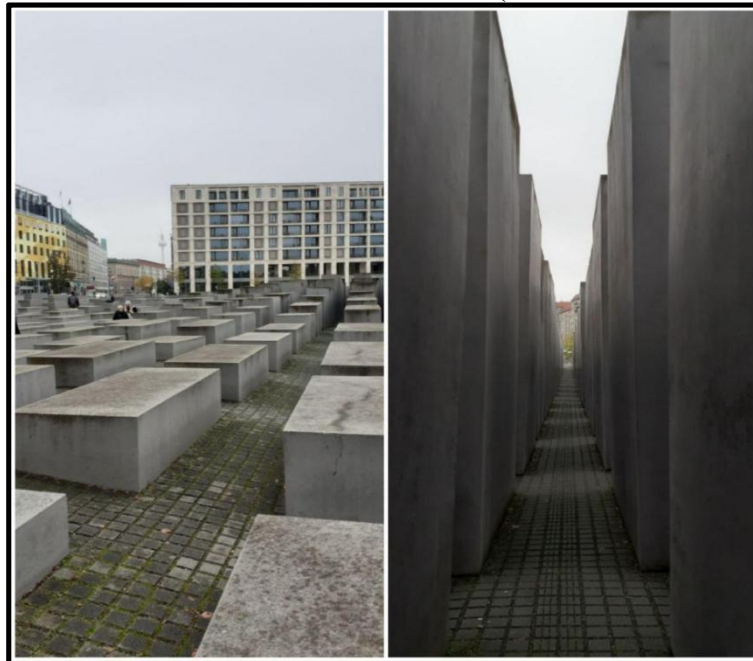


Figure 25: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Source: Personal archive)



Figure 26: East Side Gallery (Source: visitBerlin.de)

3.4. Which is the most characteristic dish of the city?

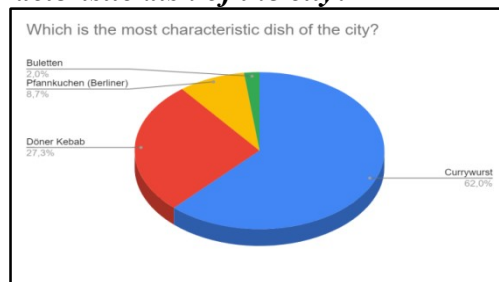


Figure 27: Characteristic dishes

Currywurst - sliced sausage spiced with curry ketchup and served with fries - was pointed out as the most characteristic dish, with 62%. This fast food dish is said to have originated in 1949 in Berlin by chef Herta Heuwer (Figure 28) - even though there are some objections (DPMA, 2023). Today, currywurst can be found anywhere in Berlin and there is even an official Day of the Currywurst in Germany. Döner kebab is another fast food dish with Turkish roots and comes second with 27.3%. Berliner Pfannkuchen, a type of jelly doughnut, got 8.7% of the answers and Buletten, namely traditional German meat patties, 2%.



Figure 28: Memorial plaque commemorating Herta Heuwer. (Source: Goethe-Institut)

3.5. Which is the most characteristic sound of the city?

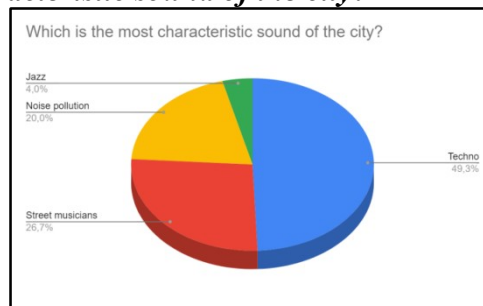


Figure 29: Characteristic sounds

Almost half of the people who answered the questionnaire (49.3%) agree that Berlin is characterised by techno music. Indeed, Berlin is globally famous for its electronic music scene, attracting both DJs and fans of this genre, who visit its numerous techno clubs. It holds mainly an “underground” character, mostly oriented to younger people and alternative lifestyles, and greatly accounts for the vibrant nightlife of the city (Kühn, 2015).

Numerous musicians can be found playing in the streets. Due to its history and urban development, Berlin offers multiple sites for activities like strolling or shopping, instead of just one main city centre, which makes the city more appealing to street musicians and helps

them find an open space where they can showcase their talents (Nowakowski, 2016). This can be a good reason why street musicians come second with 26.7%.

One fifth of the answers state that Berlin is afflicted by noise pollution, which characterises the city. As in almost every big modern city, there is road traffic noise, especially during the night and in certain areas. This can be harmful to the health of the local residents, so several measures are in force (European Environment Agency, 2022).

3.6. Which is the most characteristic event of the city?

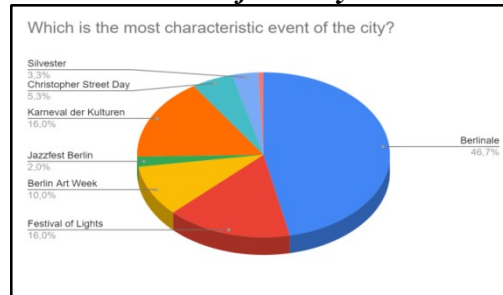


Figure 30: Characteristic events

Berlin is rich in cultural events. One of them, which has international recognition and thus rightly got 46.7% of the answers, is the *Berlinale International Film Festival*, which has been taking place in the city since 1951. It is held every February and attracts a great number of international visitors on each of its eleven days. It is considered one of the biggest worldwide film festivals and has a strong political vibe due to its history and foundation in the early days of the Cold War (Berlinale.de, 2023).

The *Festival of Lights* is an annual festival that lasts for ten days every October under the aegis of the Governing Mayor. It is an open space festival, during which many monuments and hotspots of Berlin are illuminated by lighting artists. *Karneval der Kulturen* (Carnival of Cultures) celebrates the diversity and multiculturalism of the city. Its main attraction is the parade that takes place in Kreuzberg every spring, but there are also a range of performances, theatrical plays and dance displays in several streets (Berlin.de, 2023). Each of these events got 16% of the answers.

Another famous art-related festival - among many others - is the *Berlin Art Week* with 10%. It is held every September for five days and it hosts contemporary artists and their works, such as installations, performances or talks, in several galleries across Berlin. It is an opportunity for art lovers to come together and get into discussions and collaborations, all while promoting Berlin as a global artistic centre (Berlinartweek.de, 2023).

Christopher Street Day or *Berlin Pride Celebration* (5.3%) is an annual demonstration to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising, to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community of Berlin and to fight for their rights, as well as to raise awareness. It is the main event of the Pride Month in Berlin (Berlin.de, 2023).

Music events can also find their space in Berlin. Among them, *Jazzfest Berlin* (2%) is one of the oldest European jazz music festivals, being held every year since 1964. Other honourable mentions are the *New Year's Eve Party* (Silvesterparty) (3.3%) in front of the Brandenburg Gate and the countercultural *Fusion Festival* (0.7%) a little outside the city.



Figure 31: One of the main venues of the Berlinale.
(Source: Personal archive)

3.7. Which is the most characteristic personality of the city?

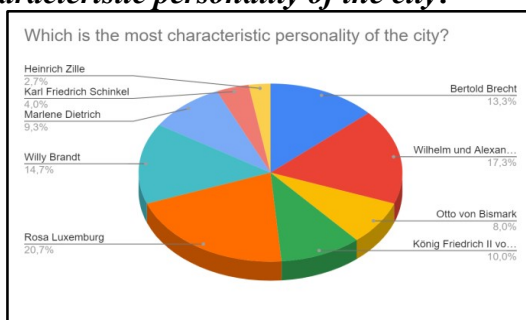


Figure 32: Characteristic personalities.

In this question, there is a bigger discrepancy for the first time. 20.7% of the respondents chose Rosa Luxemburg as the most prominent personality. She was a Polish revolutionary who was executed for her actions in 1919 in Berlin. She was mainly honoured by the East German government. The Rosa Luxemburg Memorial, Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz (square) and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Straße (street) can still be found around Berlin.

Immediately next come the brothers Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt with 17.3%. They were scientists and researchers and are mainly commemorated throughout the city by - among others - the Humboldt Forum museum, the Humboldt Library and last but not least, the Humboldt University of Berlin.

Willy Brandt, former Governing Mayor of West Berlin, former chancellor of West Germany and Nobel prize holder, comes next with 14.7%. The international airport of Berlin-Brandenburg is named after him, so it is no surprise that his name can be more widely heard by residents and visitors arriving at Berlin by aeroplane.

Playwright and poet Bertold Brecht, who got 13.3%, spent several years of his life in Berlin and co-established the theatre company Berliner Ensemble with his wife. King Friedrich II is responsible for many of the prominent monuments that are still standing in Berlin and got 10%. Actress and singer Marlene Dietrich (9.3%) was born in Berlin and made

an international career as a Hollywood star. Otto von Bismarck, the first chancellor of Germany, got 8%, architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel 4% and illustrator Heinrich Zille 2.7%.

3.8. Of the latest EU/state-funded programs in Berlin, which is the most important?

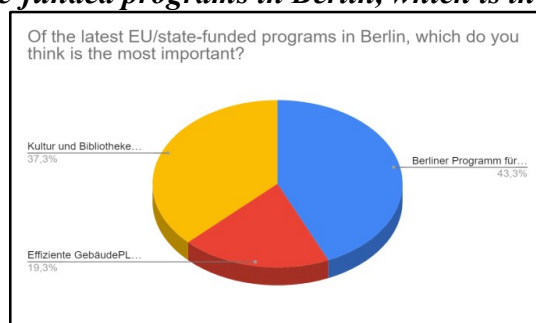


Figure 33: Important programs

The “Berliner Programm für Nachhaltige Entwicklung” (BENE II 2021-2027) (*Berlin program for sustainable development*) comes first with 43.3%. A total European fund of 210 million euros is helping in turning Berlin into a green city with low-carbon emissions (*European Commission, 2023*). Emphasis is given on energy efficiency, Environmental Management Systems, protection and measures against climate change, preservation of urban nature spaces and sustainable multimodal mobility within the city. An example of an on-going project that pertains to BENE II is the ecological renovation of the guest house “Campus Wuhlheide” in order to host the Berlin State Music Academy (*Berlin.de, 2023*).

The “Kultur und Bibliotheken im Stadtteil - KUBIST” program (*Culture and libraries at different parts of the city*) got 37.3% of the votes. This Europe-funded program supports cultural and artistic projects in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as well as the development of cultural institutions, such as libraries, music schools, community galleries, museums of regional history and other infrastructure. A project funded by KUBIST is called “Digital Zebra”. It promotes digital literacy and helps with every-day digital tasks (*Berlin.de, 2023*).

“Effiziente GebäudePLUS” (*Efficient buildings*) is a state-funded program for the energy renovation of residential buildings in Berlin. According to the funding guidelines of the Senate Department for Economy, Energy and Businesses, it is aiming at a reduction of energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. This program collected 19.3% of the votes.

3.9. What is the most negative trait of the city?

This was the first open ended question of the questionnaire. The most frequent answers are related to cleanliness, the housing crisis, big distances, noise/traffic, social inequality and the weather. Specifically, 20.6% believe that Berlin is a dirty city, referring to much rubbish in the streets and railway stations. Some respondents have even regarded graffiti as uncleanliness. Housing crisis comes next with 14%, a problem affecting the residents. According to the respondents, rent prices are high, as there is an apartment insufficiency. Thus, finding an apartment can be a time-consuming process. 10% pointed out the size of the city/state and its large distances as the most negative trait. Noise and traffic/overcrowding got 9%, as well as the social inequality that can be seen throughout the city, mainly in regard to homeless people. Lastly, the weather of Berlin got 8.6%, with many characterising it as cold and dim. More answers mentioned criminality - concerning mainly drug use -, grinding construction sites and bureaucracy, while a 4% could not name a negative trait.

3.10. What is the most positive trait of the city?

The answers to the second open ended question were even more compact. 24% agree that the city has a rich cultural diversity (*"It is a multicultural city, with influences on food, music etc from all over the world"*, *"International flair"*). Indeed, according to the Berlin-Brandenburg Statistics Office, 22% of the population was of foreign origin. The feeling of acceptance and free expression comes second, with 18.6% of the respondents feeling that Berlin is a place where *"anyone can be what they want to be"*. Parks and green urban spaces was the third most frequent answer, getting 15.3% of the responses. 10.6% was given to the good infrastructure, mostly in reference to public transport and wide roads. The plethora of sights and free-time activity options came next with 10%. Lastly, some more answers concerned the big number of museums and art institutes and the rich history of Berlin.

4. Conclusions

Berlin is the capital city and the governmental seat of Germany, as well as one of the 16 federal states of the country. It has mainly a flat topography with limited natural elevation. The green spaces of the city consist of three large forest sites and numerous urban parks and cemeteries. In regard to bodies of water, three main rivers flow through Berlin and serve as federal waterways. Due to the variety of greenery sites and water surfaces, there is a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, with thousands of street trees and different species of fern plants and flowers.

Human life traces can be chronicled back to the 4th century B.C., owing its name to the Slavic tribes that were then settled there. It was part of the twin city Cölln-Berlin, which were unified in the 18th century. Shortly after, it became the seat of the monarchy, thus being subject to many architectural and constructional changes. Over the course of the years, it was established as a European capital with an architectural heritage that can still be seen today. In the early years of the 19th century, Berlin met with an economic flourish, development of infrastructure and even more architectural landmarks. In the years after the foundation of the German Empire, more infrastructure works were in progress, such as the sewage system and electrification, in order to turn Berlin into an international metropolis. During the "Roaring 1920s" Berlin became an artistic and libertarian hub, until the rise of nazism, when there were plans to turn the city into an imposing imperialistic centre.

The end of the Second World War left the city greatly damaged. Most importantly, the division of Berlin came shortly after, as well as the construction of the Berlin Wall, with West and East Berlin developing separately from then on. After the German reunification, building and infrastructure work began once again, so as to prepare the city to become a contemporary European capital. Today, Berlin is an international city attracting numerous visitors to its various museums and art institutions, while having a strong presence in pop culture. It hosts a wide variety of art events, festivals, as well as sporting events. Moreover, many attractions can be found, while the city is also strongly connected with the encircling state of Brandenburg.

Different protection schemes are in force, in order to preserve the nature and urban face of Berlin. The economy is mainly supported by the service sector, being a popular start-up and scientific-research centre. Art and culture also account for a big part of the economy, in addition to tourism.

The results of the conducted survey give a clear picture of the physiognomy of Berlin through the opinions of its visitors and residents. According to their responses, the most characteristic plant of the city is the linden tree, while the Brandenburg Gate was strongly chosen as the most characteristic monument. Currywurst and techno music were the most

popular answers when the respondents were asked about Berlin's most prominent dish and sound, respectively. The film festival Berlinale appears to be the most famous event, while Rosa Luxemburg was the most frequently encountered answer among the leading personalities. "BENE II 2021-2027", a program promoting sustainable development, was pointed out as the most important EU-funded project. Regarding the negative traits of the city, many respondents believe that uncleanliness is the biggest problem of Berlin. On the other hand, its multiculturalism was celebrated as the most positive characteristic.

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