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German as a foreign language

'Station to Station':

Circulation in the 'New Berlin'

Simon Ward, Aberdeen

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This article uses the insights of Michel De Certeau into the perception and experience of the urban environment as a way into examining the relationship between transport infrastructure and developments in Berlin since the opening of the Berlin Wall. It demonstrates that the huge logistical task involved in bringing together two networks that had grown apart over 40 years was only one aspect of the constant conflict between the planning of the urban environment and the experiences of those who experience that environment. To exemplify that broader conflict, the article focuses on one key aspect of Berlin's transport development: the construction of the new central rail station at the heart of the city. It contrasts the perspectives of those responsible for planning the new building, both the architects and the directors of the Deutsche Bundesbahn AG, with those who currently use such 'railway space'. This conflict sheds important light on what constitutes the 'ownership' and acceptable use of public space in, and on the shaping of the urban imagination for the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Standing at the top of the World Trade Center, the French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau was struck by the illusion of omniscience that this perspective of New York appeared to give the spectator:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp […]. When one goes up there, one leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators […]. His elevation transforms him into a voyeur. The exaltation of a […] scopic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. (De Certeau 1984: 92)

For De Certeau, this perspective represents one of two ways of representing the city. The other perspective is that of being down 'in the crowd':

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it. (De Certeau 1984: 93)

The tension between these two ways of thinking about and experiencing the city environment informs my examination of how to chart the concrete changes which have taken and are still

taking place in Berlin since the opening of the Berlin Wall. One way of mapping those changes is, indeed, to show how the changing shape of the city has been represented on its maps. The act of mapping correlates to the bird's-eye perspective in De Certeau's twofold analysis. Mapping a city is, in a fundamental sense, a political act. Mapping involves selection, and selection implies a hierarchy of inclusion and exclusion. There are any numbers of ways of mapping a city: you can map its surface, the streets and buildings, you can map the subterranean sewage systems. What you choose to map indicates what you consider to be important about a place.

Mapping may depict what exists in a sign system, but this abstract system becomes the basis for future planning. As De Certeau suggests, the development of the 'Concept-City', is a threefold operation: rational organization represses all physical, mental and political pollutions; a synchronic system is substituted for the resistances offered by traditions and a universal and anonymous subject is created which is the city itself (De Certeau 1984: 94). Urban planning is based on a conceptual system which has divorced itself from the practice of lived experience that was its original source.

One of the key points of conjunction between the 'Concept-City' and the lived urban experience is the city's transport network. In a city as large and sprawling as Berlin, one of the first concerns of its citizens is how to get from A to B, and for that reason the transport infrastructure of a city is a key way of understanding how it functions. Within Berlin there are two major forms of rail transport: the underground system and the Stadtbahn or S-Bahn. The importance of transport networks is shown by the fact that in 1997 742 million people used the Berlin U-Bahn, while 246 million people used the S-Bahn (Schwenk 1998: 175). The following examination of the development of the Berlin transport system over the last ten years offers a valuable insight as to the priorities at the heart of urban planning in the new German capital, but also importantly sheds light on the difference between the clean lines of planning and the muddied waters of reality.

The Politics of Mapping Cold-War Berlin

Transport maps in Berlin following the division of the city were always quite directly political. For example, the 1984 S- and U-Bahn map of East Berlin pretends that West Berlin does not exist

at all.[1] The map of the West Berlin underground system from 1968 excludes the Stadtbahn for its own political reasons, for this part of the rail network was run by the East German railways (Deutsche Reichsbahn) after the war throughout the whole of Berlin, and this continued even after the Berlin Wall was built, right up to 1984, when the Western section was taken over by the West Berlin transport authorities, although they too failed to invest in it up to 1990.[2] This map effectively describes one of the two main aspects of the divided transport network which confronted transport planners in Berlin in 1990. The underground lines run through East Berlin but the stations are crossed out because the trains do not stop there. In another political move, the West Berlin map uses the pre-1933 station names in the East and only has the GDR names for these stations in brackets underneath so Thälmannplatz is called Kaiserhof, and Walter-Ulbricht Stadion is called Schwartzkopfstrasse. This historical-political sense of mapping is also highlighted by the fact that the connection between East and West between Schlesisches Tor and Warschauer Strasse is still indicated, if by a broken line. The lines that do run within the East are indicated through thin empty lines.

The other aspect of the divided transport network was the main rail link between East and West Berlin: the S-Bahn connection at Friedrichstrasse. It is perhaps no surprise that the most frequently-recalled images at the checkpoints in November 1989 are those of Trabants and Wartburgs: connections via the road network, for all its state of disrepair, were at least present, whereas the network connections within the centre of Berlin in 1989/1990 were barely existent. The under investment by the west Berlin authorities meant that in the early days after the fall of the Wall they had to borrow huge amounts of rolling-stock from the Reichsbahn.

Reconnecting the Two Berlins

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[1] This map is available on-line at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/Netz_1984_klein.gif.
[2] This map is available on-line at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/Netz_1968BVG_klein.gif.

The lack of connections between east and west are made clear in the transport map from 1990:[3] there is still one S-Bahn line cutting across the border from West to East - the S3. Like the underground lines which pass through the *Geisterbahnhöfe* of the East, the north-south S-Bahn line runs through but does not yet stop at Potsdamer Platz and Unter den Linden. Nevertheless the fact that circulation between East and West has commenced is indicated by the united nature of the map, even though the political border is still inscribed into it.

By 1991, that border is now a different tariff zone.[4] The most obvious development is that a whole series of S-Bahn lines now run from parts of East Berlin, through Friedrichstrasse and across to Zoologischer Garten. In addition, the stations on the North-South axis of the S1 and S2 down from Friedrichstrasse to Anhalter Bahnhof are being brought back into service, though the depiction of the lines indicates that this is in fact a skeleton service.

The pace of change is indicated by the radical changes that are denoted by the map of 1993.[5] In terms of the S-Bahn, the lines running from Zoologischer Garten across to the Ostkreuz have been remodelled in this arch form to suggest a symmetry. By 1993, however, major changes have taken place with regard to the U-Bahn. The lines between East and West have been connected up, and the U1 and U2 have swapped the routes they take. The line between East and West from Alexanderplatz through to Wittenbergplatz was reopened in November 1993. In addition the station names have changed: Otto-Grotewohl-Strasse (which in 1968 was Thälmannplatz) is now Mohrenstraße; Schwartzkopfstrasse has regained its old name, while on the S-Bahn line Marx-Engels Platz is now Hackescher Markt. Another interesting aspect of the new design is that the end of the U1 at Schlesisches Tor is now much closer to the Warschauer Strasse S-Bahn station which is in the former East Berlin. This indicates already the plan to reconnect these two stations through the U1, as indicated in the U-Bahn map of 1968. The reconnection came into effect in October 1995.

This is obviously an abbreviated and selective account of what was a major logistical exercise, costing major sums of money and requiring major amounts of labour. Up to 2002 it was forecast that 20 billion marks would have been invested in the rail networks of the city (Schwenk 1998:

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[3] This map is available on-line at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/Netz_03_1990_klein.gif.
[4] This map is available on-line at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/Netz_06_1991_klein.gif.
[5] This map is available on-line at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/Netz_11_1993_klein.gif.

175). I have used the mapping of the transport networks because, in a way, it demonstrates my point that the maps in themselves only tell a technical, conceptual story of the rejoining of the two halves of Berlin. A map, as De Certeau reminds us, is a static depiction of a state of affairs. De Certeau contrasts the static quality of the map with the dynamic narrative of the tour. Maps can only hint at the lived experience of 'touring', of travelling on these reconnected lines, and cannot capture the emotional impact which the reopening of lines that had been closed for many decades had on the citizens of Berlin. At the beginning of his 1999 reflections on unified Germany, Günter de Bruyn recalls a moment of epiphany at Berlin Alexanderplatz underground station:

> als ich an Ort und Stelle hörte, daß nicht mehr Thälmannplatz oder Grotewohlstraße als Ziel genannt wurden […], spürte ich eine Fröhlichkeit in mir aufsteigen, die Ähnlichkeit mit meinem ungläubigen Staunen, das wenige Jahre zuvor die Öffnung der Mauer begleitet hatte, das aber jetzt sofort seiner Zweifel beraubt wurde, durch den einfahrenden, deutlich mit Ruhleben bezeichneten Zug. (De Bruyn 1999: 7)

The transport system had been an ever-present reminder of the political division of Berlin, which should also serve as a reminder of the emotional weight which these maps, part of Berliners' everyday experience of the city, accrued over the period. Every line that re-opened after 1989 was a practical sign that the stark political division was over.

Reconnecting Berlin, Germany and Europe

The 1993 transport map may suggest a reconnected Berlin, but as the elections of 2001 reminded us, maps tell by no means the whole truth. In any case, the reconnecting of the S- and U-Bahn lines was only the beginning of the story as far as the transport system of the new Berlin was concerned. For it was not just Berlin that had come together, but the two Germanies, with Berlin as their new capital. That Berlin, therefore, would be a central part of the new connections, in transport terms, between West and East, was signalled by Helmut Kohl already in his speech 'zur Überwindung der Teilung Deutschlands und Europas' outlined to the Bundestag on 28th November 1989:

> Über den Ausbau der Eisenbahnstrecke Hannover-Berlin wird weiter verhandelt. Ich bin allerdings der Auffassung, daß dies zu wenig ist und daß wir […] uns einmal sehr grundsätzlich über die Verkehrs- und Eisenbahnlinien in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland unterhalten müssen.

> Vierzig Jahre Trennung bedeuten ja auch, daß sich die Verkehrswege zum Teil erheblich auseinanderentwickelt haben. Das gilt nicht nur für die Grenzübergänge, sondern beispielsweise auch für die traditionelle Linienführung der Verkehrswege in Mitteleuropa, für die Ost-West-Verbindungen. Es ist nicht einzusehen, weshalb die klassische Route Moskau-Warschau-Berlin-Paris, die ja immer über Köln führte und zu allen Zeiten große Bedeutung hatte, im Zeitalter schneller Züge […] nicht mit eingebracht werden sollte. (Kohl 1989: 13510-13514)

Kohl's vision of a reconnected Germany as a part of a reconnected Europe (in true Adenauerian fashion he did not forget the Rhineland) appealed to a vague historical tradition ('traditionelle Linienführung', 'klassische Route'), conveniently forgetting that such East-West connections had also been central to carrying out a war on two fronts. Kohl's grand perspective was perhaps indicative of a haste in re-establishing 'traditional' connections (akin to the desire to reconstruct the 'traditional' centre of Berlin) while losing track of the cultural and economic effects of forty years of division.

It becomes evident from Kohl's vision that the reconnection of Berlin into a European-wide transport infrastructure means that emotion and politics cannot be divorced from the technical logistics of the enterprise. Within the East-West and also North-South axes which run through Berlin, the re-direction of transport into and around Berlin was central to the planning of the transport networks. Kohl's narrative was ultimately translated into a design. After much debate, the solution arrived at was the so-called *Pilz-Konzept*.[6] The *Pilz-Konzept* is only the latest in a long line of attempts to rationalize the circulations of passengers and commodities through Berlin. One can go back to the early years of the twentieth-century for the first designs which considered a radical remodelling of the centre of Berlin, plans which were picked up and modified by Albert Speer in the 30s and also by those architects participating in the design competitions of the 1950s.[7] The *Pilz-Konzept* is, however, the first time that this remodelling of transport networks in Berlin will actually fully be realized. It might also be argued to represent, of course, the dominance of bird's eye conceptual planning over the lived experience of the city. This manifests itself in quite practical ways, such as the extreme difficulties of building tunnels through sandy, watery Berlin, but for the purposes of this paper I wish to focus on the impact of the intersection of the conceptualized and lived experience of transport space which will be made

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[6] Available in map form at: http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/verkehr/stadtverkehr/de/pix/netz_pilz.gif. On the *Pilz-Konzept*, see Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen 1994.

by the building of the new railway station at the top of the 'mushroom stem' and right at the heart of circulation to and through the new German capital. We need to consider the effects this facilitation of circulation throughout Berlin and Europe may have for the people actually experiencing the space.

The New Lehrter Bahnhof

The site for this new station had lain empty for thirty years, and had been the site of the Lehrter Bahnhof, finished in 1871 and knocked down in 1959 having lain in ruins since the war. The transport function of the railway station had become increasingly irrelevant with the growing divide between east and west which had meant that Berlin was a political flashpoint, but that those sites near the border, later the wall, - and the Lehrter Bahnhof was right up against the wall - became economically redundant as they were disconnected from the circulation of people and commodities.

The unification of Berlin suddenly placed these empty sites at its centre at a premium, as multinational companies sought to re-establish the circulation of commodities in Berlin and establish connections further east. The new centre of Berlin, from Potsdamer Platz north, consists of the multinational cities of Daimler-Chrysler and Sony on Potsdamer Platz, the new governmental quarter around the Reichstag, but also the new major railway station just north of that governmental quarter. All these new constructions were conceived of as representative, in some way or other, of the new Berlin and indeed the new unified Germany. The emotional, political, commercial and logistical were intimately connected.

The national resonances of the railway station project were underscored by the fact that the reconstruction of the centre of Berlin coincided with the urgent need to revamp the state-run railways. In the west was the Deutsche Bundesbahn, seen as a moribund loss-making state-run company. It now had to take over an incomparably decrepit East German railway system which had still been running under its pre-1945 name of the Deutsche Reichsbahn.[8] In 1994 the

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[7] On the history of urban planning in Berlin in the twentieth century, see Reichardt and Schäche 1986.

[8] On the history of the German railways, see Gall and Pohl (1999: 377-421) for a very positive account of the process of unification and privatisation.

Deutsche Bundesbahn was privatized. It was not broken up into many different companies, nor was there the same distinction made as in Britain between Railtrack and the operating companies. The new head of the DB, Heinz Dürr, addressed the question of whether the Bundesbahn should continue to create railway stations as monuments, or whether it would not be more appropriate to look at a building as a commodity which, after having served its purpose, may disappear again without too much of an effort or expense and be replaced by a new and more up-to-date commodity.

Dürr established a new policy under the title the 'Renaissance of the Railway Station'. Behind the plan was an awareness that in post-war Germany railway stations had been reduced to bleak shelters for the marginalised members of society. Under Dürr's new plan, not only would railway stations be renewed, but 90% of the land within cities currently owned by the railway would be made available for building projects. There are projects going on throughout the west and east of Germany, but the Lehrter Bahnhof project is one of the largest-scale and also, given its location, most media-prominent, as it took on a symbolic significance for the new Berlin which no commentator has failed to mention.

The architect who produced the winning design was Meinhard von Gerkan, one of that group of architects described by Brian Edwards in the following terms:

> The new railway age has ushered in the epoch of the universal designer – architects able to create memorable stations anywhere in the world. The station is an important building type within the classless, nationless global village of the future. (Edwards 1997: 181)

Gerkan has designed numerous international airports and railways stations, and his thoughts on the process of designing for transportation correspond to Edwards' call that the 'design needs to reflect the values and image aspirations of the modern railway age' (Edwards 1997: 178). In his writings, Gerkan argues that everyone would now accept that transportation 'spaces' are not only seen as functional channels for the delivery of technical goods but above all as 'living spaces'. According to Gerkan, railway stations and airports are not simply dispatch facilities, but above all should be seen as major parts of our environment which have a clear right to be designated as 'environmental space' (Gerkan 1997: 14). One of Gerkan's associates revealed in 1997 what kind of environment they were designing:

> Ich glaube, man wird ein tolles Raumgefühl haben. Das ist doch eine imponierende Halle. Ich freue mich jetzt schon auf das klassische Konzert da drin zur Einweihung […]. Aber eines steht fest: Dieses Haus wird ein Synonym für Berlin werden. (Dietz 1997)

The station is a signifier for high culture and for a Berlin which does not yet exist. The fact that this kind of architecture is designed to be part of Berlin as spectacle was underlined in 1997. The plan for the mixed-use quarter around the station had been originally designed in 1994 by another star architect, Oswald Matthias Ungers. At the beginning of 1998, however, the Bundesbahn directors demanded that the 47 meter high hotel to the south of the station be made smaller and moved to another site, so that from the parliamentary quarter one could see Gerkan's 'glass railway cathedral' and equally those in the railway station could gaze upon the river and down to the Chancellery and further south to the other glass and steel structures at the centre of Berlin, the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz (*Berliner Morgenpost*: 1998).

It would seem that the new railway station does reflect the shift of emphasis from production to consumption. What distinguished the railway station originally was the circulation of people:

> As an architectural type, [the railway station] belongs clearly and exclusively to the category of nineteenth-century steel and glass edifices that have been termed 'traffic buildings'.
>
> The 'traffic' function found its architectural expression in a far more immediate way in the railroad station than it did in other types of steel and glass architecture. In market halls, exhibition pavilions, arcades and department stores the traffic of goods took place in a stationary fashion, in the form of storage and display; in the railroad station, the human traffic literally poured through, actively, in the form of travellers streaming in and out of the trains. (Schivelbusch 1986: 172)

The circulation of passengers however, is becoming secondary to the railway station's function as a site of consumption, a place from which to consume not only goods, but also the representative architecture of the district. The train station is no longer primarily a gateway. It is no longer a case of tracks in the city, as Schivelbusch described it, but arcades in the station. Brian Edwards has described this shift in the following terms:

> The spectacle of travel, expressed both in mechanical forms of trains and in the human drama of rushing people, is an entertainment to many. Stations are part of the world of leisure; a resort for the urban tourist, the shopper and the unemployed. (Edwards 1997: 173)

Whereas railway stations once cloaked their industrial origins - the processes of circulation - in stone and classical architecture, now railway stations let you view the circulation, they aestheticize that circulation, but effectively offer an anaesthetic to dull the pain of exclusion and

impotence. Both Gerkan and Edwards expound the rhetoric of the railway station as a democratic, public space:

> The station, with its democratic open structure, its public spaces inside and out, and its corridors of movement etched upon the face of the city, represents an important civilizing element. (Edwards 1997: 172)

The steel and glass design for the Lehrter Bahnhof certainly appears democratic, open and, above all, transparent, echoing the new cupola atop the Reichstag.[9] Gerkan's design for the Lehrter Bahnhof nevertheless directs the traveller/consumer/office worker towards certain kinds of lived experience. It is a specific kind of public which is expected to inhabit this place. This is strongly implied by one of the few newspaper articles to describe the current use of space in the area around the future Lehrter Bahnhof. The journalist began with the following description:

> Das künftige Bahnhofsviertel an der Invalidenstraße: Zu Fuß sind hier fast nur Bauarbeiter unterwegs. Der Verkehr übertönt den Lärm der Großbaustelle von Lehrter Bahnhof und Tiergartentunnel. An der Heidestraße, die am Humboldthafen nach Norden führt, befindet sich in einem Gebäude des ehemaligen Lehrter Güterbahnhofs ein Trödelmarkt. Mit Radiomusik, Skat und viel Bier schlagen die Verkäufer die Zeit tot. Gegenüber eine Imbißstube in waldgrünem Bretterverhau: Auf karierten Wachstüchern verbreiten Blumen fahle Gemütlichkeit. Nachts bieten Frauen an der Ausfallstraße ihre Körper an. Berliner 'Umland' in Sichtweite des Reichstags.
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> Dieser Öde soll der neue Lehrter Bahnhof Leben einhauchen. Tor zur Stadt und Tor zur Welt - so kann die frühe Geschichte und die neue Utopie des Bahnhofs auf den Begriff gebracht werden. (Hillenkamp 1999)

The description wonderfully captures the ways in which the margins of Berlin are precisely the opposite of a sanitized consumer experience: the wooden shack, the unnecessary quantities of beer, the plastic table cloths, the flea market and the shabby prostitution. The renaissance of the railway station may claim to signify a civilizing influence, but by removing the obstinate bodies from the seamless process of circulation, the transparency of the Lehrter Bahnhof and its new environs plays a major role in the sanitized reconstruction of the urban imagination.

This tendency was underlined in the debate in October 2001 concerning new DB boss Hartmut Mehdorn's plans for the Bahnhofsmissionen as detailed in a number of German newspapers in October of this year. Mehdorn is keen to keep the homeless and drug-addicts away from his re-

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[9] See Bund Deutscher Architekten et al. 1996: 110-15 and also http://www.buegelbauten.de/de/ge/jll_ge_bk_de.html.

born railway stations. In an interview with the *Bild am Sonntag*, he said that homeless people were not 'bösartige Leute', but they did not belong in railway stations. For that reason he wanted to close down the points where food was provided to the homeless in the Bahnhofsmissionen. At the same time Mehdorn also made the point that he had the feeling that the authorities 'die Junkies am Bahnhof haben wollen, weil sie sie da auf einem Fleck haben' (*Bild am Sonntag* 2001: 96). According to Mehdorn, however, the stations were not responsible for the problems in Germany's towns and cities.

While this may be true, it is also disingenuous. There is another side to this story, as told by those who run and those who use the missions. Reported in the *FAZ* was the perspective of Helga Fritz, who runs the mission at Bahnhof Zoo:

> Herr Mehdorn vergißt, daß für viele Menschen der Bahnhof ein Stück Heimat bedeutet. Viele erleben hier ihre sozialen Kontakte, lieben den Trubel und all das. Der Bahnhof bleibt - auch wenn die Bahn privatisiert ist – ein öffentlicher Raum. (Pottharst 2001)

In these ways the battle lines are being drawn over the attempts by the Bundesbahn to sanitize circulation in Berlin and make travel more of an acceptable spectacle. The new railway stations are not merely sites of consumer capitalism where commodities are consumed: the consumption of the spectacle would seem to be equally as important. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau rejects the term 'consumer', however, in favour of the designation 'user'. In his analysis of the cultural phenomenon of space, he insists that space, like other products, is not simply consumed: it is used. This ties in with the distinction he makes between 'place' and 'space', arguing that place is 'the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of co-existence. It excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place) […]. It implies an indication of stability' (De Certeau 1984: 117). Space, on the other hand, 'exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables […]. Space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space' by those who use it (De Certeau 1984: 117). In that use, that practice of space, lie the 'multiform, resistant, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised' (De Certeau 1984: 96).

This brings us to a question that relates to all the current building projects in Berlin: what kinds of public space are being created? For all the praise of 'movement', there is something static about

the conceptions of the railway station as a public space. The architects of the railway station's renaissance prescribe a certain kind of use of their place which seeks to exclude other users and other usage of that place. How effective their plans turn out to be in reality will depend on whether or not the consumer will be confronted with the 'other side' of urban reality. The bird's eye perspective implied in every schematic representation of a place also blanks out that which does not fit into the planned spatial practice. As the grand designs of the Lehrter Bahnhof and other new railway stations in Berlin imply, the passengers will be encouraged to forget that the 'other side' of urban reality has not in fact disappeared, but has been moved to another, marginal space that will not be marked on the map and whose stories will not be told.

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Transport maps of Berlin can be accessed online at: http://www.schmalspurbahn.de/netze/

Biodata

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