

# Lauselives!



FOREVER LAUSE



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# LAUSE LIVES!

The work complex at Lausitzer Straße 10 is the prototype of the Berliner Mischung – the Berlin Mix. With authentic mixed use – covering living and work spaces – it is home to the kind of price-sensitive craft trades, artists, creatives, and small-scale companies and initiatives that have long since been displaced from other parts of Kreuzberg by residential use and businesses able to pay higher rents. The same fate is now threatening the tenants of *Lause*. Many of the approximately 150 people presently resident in the buildings are threatened in their very existence by the planned conversion of today's affordable commercial units by a luxury renovation or a sale for maximum profit. This will lead to complete restructuring of the tenant structure, based on ability to pay. In addition, there is the acute danger that with the loss of *Lause*, the neighbourhood would lose a key building block and provider of a diverse, often non-commercial offer for a large user base. This includes the vital work of *Lause*-based anti-fascist initiatives, such as NSU Watch.

According to Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg's current Gewerbeflächensicherungskonzept<sup>1</sup> (Plan for Securing Commercial Space), efforts must be put into preserving the Berliner Mischung-typical commercial spaces in the district. The reason for this: it is precisely this functional and social mix that sustainable and integrated urban and economic development aims to achieve and that makes Kreuzberg attractive and such a great place to live. But this is not a mix that can be planned from above – neighbourhood relationships, collaborations and local value chains can only grow from the bottom up, and over time. Gentrification destroys well-functioning community structures to the degree that they cannot be later rebuilt.

To counteract the current situation constructively, the tenants of Lausitzer Straße 10/11 have all joined together and have established an association to represent their interests. We want to contribute our diverse skills, our large network (both local and international) and our commitment so that we can maintain the character of these buildings and develop them as a joint project. We have thus created a tangible overarching vision, defined initial building blocks, sought out partners, and examined feasibilities. As a place of solidarity, we want to open up *Lause* further and make it even more visible in the community. This would be done by reshaping the yards, actively utilizing and cultivating them (such as via urban gardening), and making use of shared spaces with an ambitious socio-cultural event programme, educational opportunities, community networking formats, and a community canteen (see page 4).



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.berlin.de/ba-friedrichshain-kreuzberg/politik-und-verwaltung/service-und-organisationseinheiten/wirtschaftsfoerderung/wirtschaftsstandort/>

To implement this, we are prepared to invest work, time, expertise, and know-how, and thus assume and shoulder responsibility. The framework conditions required for this are: 1.) Careful renovation; 2.) No changes to the rents currently being paid; 3.) Joint decision-making in the selection of tenants; 4.) Communal areas in the yards and buildings – in our view, only possible with political and property-owner support. As a model project for the city of the future, *Lause lebt* (*Lause Lives*) offers fantastic value for society as well as for the Danish owner Jørn Tækker. In our view, the following structural options are conceivable:

### Alternative 1

The public sector in the form of Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Berlin-Mitte (WBM) buys the property.

1a) The WBM carries out careful renovation of the buildings. A long-term general rental contract is signed by the *Lause lebt!* association. The association would thus assume various responsibilities, such as default risk for vacant units, but in return would get full scope to realise its concept (enabling solidarity rents, implementing the building blocks, see page 4).

1b) *Lause lebt!* founds a cooperative and takes over the buildings via Erbpacht (leasehold). The initiative is then over the next decades able to manage, shape, and organise the property. The renovation is carried out with the support of subsidies (e.g. within the framework of special urban planning regulations like Städttebaulicher Denkmalschutz [Urban Historical Monument Protection] / urban redevelopment / GRW investment), equity in the form of cooperative shares and a loan (e.g. GLS Bank).



### Alternative 2

The buildings remain the property of Tækker. The association concludes a framework rental agreement with the owner. The agreement regulates rent levels, duration, occupancy, and common areas. Another option is for the association to assume responsibility for the general tenant structure. The necessary careful renovations would be implemented by Tækker, if necessary with support from the public sector (e.g. analogous to the “self-help” housing policy of the 1990s).

# THE VISION

## **A model project for the city of the future**

*Lause* is: Ecological, community-focused, open, self-determined, participatory, self-reliant, responsible, creative, affordable, accessible, diverse, with quality of life (nearby, green, and social) and solidarity, supporting and facilitating education and culture, international, intergenerational, healthy, active (personal commitment) and secure (financially, infrastructurally and socially).

With its affordable rents, the project gives its participants the chance to commit their time to voluntary activities that benefit the local community. Diversity provides fertile ground and inspiration for unconventional ideas. *Lause* is a test bed for new models of community life and ways of doing business (social entrepreneurship) and thus for social and economic innovations.

Not just tenants would benefit from the project building blocks proposed below: people living and working in the neighbourhood would also benefit. With these components, we want to pursue a multi-generational approach and to involve children and senior citizens from the neighbourhood. Financially disadvantaged people too should be able to spend their time in a place with a high quality of stay, without having to consume. As a modern village square, the *Lause* aspires to be a meeting place for the various groups from the neighbourhood.

## **The Project Building Blocks**

### **InterLause**

*InterLause* is an on-going series of events aimed at informing and discussing urban political issues. The program takes place in the premises of Lausitzer Straße 10, is open to all residents of the neighbourhood and also serves to exchange and network various initiatives.

### **LauseLive!**

This is a curated program of concerts, readings, plays, performances and exhibitions at *Lause* featuring established and lesser-known pop, classical, independent and theatre performers, as well as visual artists. For this, we make use of contacts from within our network (e.g. Sophiensaele, musicians from the Berliner Philharmoniker) and probe initial partnerships (e.g. with Groupmuse). In addition, we are planning a regular neighbourhood cinema. The programme will be run in a low-threshold way, allowing artists to try out new approaches and to attract visitors who would not typically attend such events.

### **Community and Event Space**

We plan to create a community and event space, which people from the local community would be able to use and which would provide room for our different ambitious event series. This should also include provision of a community canteen with affordable and healthy food. For this, we are already in talks with the refugee initiative *Über den Tellerrand kochen*. The rent for this space would be shared by all tenants and the canteen would be economically self-supporting.

### **Open Workshops**

As part of a continuous workshop programme, the members of the association (including craftspeople, artisans, artists, authors, musicians, illustrators, programmers, graphic designers, filmmakers, theatre makers, designers, producers, photographers) and their supporters would share their knowledge on a voluntary basis, both internally and for the wider community. The effects are many: community empowerment, education, synergetic collaborations, sustainable economic stabilisation, and social and cultural participation. Over 50 members from the initiative have so far agreed to run regular workshops. The reason this can be done: lower rents facilitate volunteerism.

## Courtyard Design

We aspire to introduce horizontal and vertical greenery in the far courtyard on the southern side, installing (raised) horticultural beds to ensure a high quality of stay for tenants and neighbours, and to brighten the dense building structure and closed-off areas. This would be set up, tended, and maintained by the tenant collective, with extensive involvement of the neighbourhood (workshops/continuing AGs). For this, we would work together with successful urban gardening initiatives (e.g. Prinzessinnengärten) and specialist architects, with whom we have already

agreed partnerships. A further possibility is a throughway to the neighbouring school/school garden, opening up space for cross-generational projects alongside the senior citizens' home located opposite.

## Solidarity Rents

To take account of the heterogeneous financial abilities of the various tenants, the rents will be tiered on a solidarity basis. Shared space and volunteer work are thus enabled by tenants who are in stronger financial positions.

### A Sample Calculation of Solidarity Rent

| Tier | Use   | Preis per m <sup>2</sup> | m <sup>2</sup> | Total    |
|------|---|--------------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1,2  | Offices, projects, associations (full-time structure) | 7,80 €                   | 2000           | 15.600 € |
| 1    | Trade crafts, art                                     | 6,50 €                   | 900            | 5.850 €  |
| 0,5  | Non-profit (voluntary structure)                      | 3,25 €                   | 500            | 1.625 €  |
| 0    | Shared spaces   | 0,00 €                   | 250            | 0 €      |
| 1,5  | Storage   | 9,75 €                   | 125            | 1.219 €  |
|      |   |                          | 3775           | 24.294 € |
| 1    | Comparison vs. current price                          | 6,50                     | 3774           | 24.531 € |

#### Explanations

- Each rental unit can voluntarily opt for a higher tier
- The structure is not rigid: by majority vote of the association members, a rental unit can be classified in a different category.
- Only the office space is calculated, not the designated storage areas and living spaces
- The current average rent is approximately €6.50.

#### We want ...

- ... to provide all tenants of the Lausitzer Straße 10/11 with long-term prospects - i.e., stable and affordable rent
- ... to keep and further develop Lause as a space for political work, art, culture and social commitment
- ... to offer a self-determined alternative to gentrification as a model project for the city of the future
- ... to be an inspiration for all, that share our ideas and visions