

Grassroots Protest, Urban Space, and the Environment in West Berlin and Munich, 1970-1990s

In this panel we intend to explore how citizens' groups engaged with issues and controversies related urban planning, city and state interventions into the city landscape, and the environment from the 1970s to the 1990s.

In the time span examined by the papers on this panel, some protest issues were common to several West German cities, while others were specific to a particular city. West Berlin, while not officially West Germany, is said to be distinguished from many other West German cities by the degree of its grassroots' political activism and its large, dynamic alternative culture. Once reunified, Berlin became the most direct site of engagement between east and west as well as a focus of new investment, development, and accompanying protest.

Both before and after the "wende" other German cities also featured active protest movements. Grassroot organisations against nuclear power usually formed in cities like Munich where residents had access to the countryside and could join forces with those living in rural regions. Indeed, both Berlin and Munich featured significant acts of citizen engagement and protest against urban planning that visibly challenged government policies.

The papers in this panel will focus on the changing ideals, goals, and methods of engagement over a twenty-year period. Moreover, they discuss the specificity of the protest actions to the cities in which they occurred and which aspects have a more general dimension. The papers therefore question the uniqueness of Berlin in the German context, given its iconic status as a hub of alternative protest, by comparing it to Munich.