

THE IMPACTS OF FORMER MILITARY BASES ON
THE URBAN GEOGRAPHIES: UNCOVERING THE
SOCIAL MEANING OF URBAN SPACE BEYOND THE
BROWNFIELD SURFACE

Tina A. Nailor
Urban Studies
June 2022

Faculty Adviser: Ph. D. Lisa Hoffmann

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors,
University of Washington, Tacoma

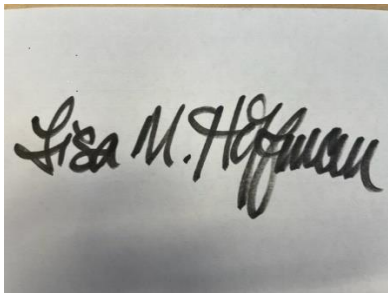
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Approved:



Faculty Adviser

Gene Clark Dillman

Acting Director, Global Honors

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Date

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Date

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Reflection of Identity

“The story told in this paper will lead you through a contrasting world of spaces. Spaces that have been a large part of my life and many others. I have lived on both sides of these military fences and each space created my identity influencing how I see the world. It was the separation of places that conflicted with my personal narrative and made it difficult to express who I am and belong. These uncomfortable spaces tell a story and call attention to our reality of spatial formation that is often unspoken.”

The Impacts of Former Military Bases on the Urban Geographies: Uncovering the Social Meaning of Urban Space Beyond the Brownfield Surface

Abstract

U.S. military bases are widely present in Germany and dominate territorial urban spaces in the metropolitan regions since WWI. The cultural interaction and the city's formation have imprinted on the lived experiences creating identities through people's daily interactions with the built environment, both directly and indirectly. In combination, the U.S. military dominating presence left behind voids that have caused a rupture in the lived environment and social production of spaces throughout communities and neighborhoods in Germany, particularly in Mannheim, the focus of this study. The U.S. military sites are as interruptive as their counterpart the military brownfields and require the same attention and thought. Even though these abandoned fields might assimilate into municipal plans, fading into the background, they carry a destructive past beneath the surface waiting to seep to the top, altering identity and social formations. The interconnection of decommissioned military sites and the social implications on the local community is understudied in the existing literature and should be expanded.

This paper argues that the social implications of spatial changes related to former U.S. military bases are not integrated into the narrative of the U.S. military base's recuperation. The lack of connecting the implications of identity formations with the economic and environmental context ruptures the landscape from its memory in the current literature. My focus is on the Mannheim region in Germany which was predominantly occupied by the U.S. military as a node of commanding headquarters. I draw on the works of Allan Pred and gather data from federal

reports and existing communal voices from local municipalities in a post-military era. Further, I examine existing German and English literature to connect the missing context to link the social implications of reclaiming public spaces. This paper's contribution is to expand our understanding of post-military presence and its complexity of integration, placemaking, and the collective memory of historical landscapes.

Introduction

“The past is not dead. It is not even past.”

- William Faulkner

After the Cold War, many U.S. military bases were decommissioned across Germany as part of the U.S. Base Realignment and Closures process (BRAC) in the early and mid-2000s (Federico, June 95). These closures left behind vast amounts of previously developed land, unoccupied and contaminated in the form of military brownfields and structures of defense. Brownfields are landscapes that are layered with contaminated soil and toxins making it difficult for the land to heal and be fertile. In this paper, I expand beyond the understanding of brownfields as environmental contamination into the historical remnants. These remnants are layering conflicting pasts of violence and warfare, making it difficult for landscapes to be nourishing environments for becoming and place-making through their past of U.S. military occupation within their soil. Land with remaining munitions from training sites and other forms of environmental contamination make these places undevelopable for the future adding to the complexity to assimilate into the growth strategies of urban planning. These are serious issues and such military brownfields have been drawing attention and interest in the academic world, expanding the critical analysis in the studies of the environment, economy, and urban planning.

Yet the literature fails to connect the social impact of military sites. This exclusion in the narrative, which separates the landscape from the cultural and social formation, contributes to the ‘collectively forgetting’ (Pred, 2004) which devalues the landscape and its symbolic relation to the people who live there (Walley, 2013). While the narrative recognizes the military’s significant impacts, it continues to apply the same topics in the fields of urban renewal and economy through the city's lens, not through its citizens.

The existing literature, this paper argues, continues to exclude the memory of violent history from the landscape. This extraction through the literature undermines the attention on the community social structure and separates the landscape from the lived experiences. The geographer Allen Pred emphasizes the connection between place and historical moment and argues that “violence is buried not only in the historical record but also, literally, in the urban landscape” creating spaces of danger (MacFarlane & Mitchell, 2019). The connection of the lived experiences embedded in former military sites is a vital aspect to be acknowledged, for the juxtaposition of the past and present enables us to recognize the continuing importance of social formations through the urban landscape (Pred, 2004). In other words, social life is intimately linked with the urban landscape such that identity and place are bound together through the lived experiences of everyday life. For example, former military buildings embody the history of U.S. military power, symbolizing warfare, exclusionary zones, and an overall spatial experience of unequal power relations. This important knowledge of our lived experiences in these spatial and power relations shapes who we are as individuals and as a society that resonates back into the built environment. As Allan Pred argues, “As a place becomes under any given set of historical circumstances, power relations are at the heart of its social structure.” (Pred, 1985). When the U.S. military occupied former German military bases in Mannheim, it rearticulated historical

records reclaiming the past of conflict that continues to echo through a contemporary urban landscape.

This paper aims to integrate this social aspect of military land use and redevelopment into the academic literature to expand interdisciplinary discourse and critical thinking about U.S. military bases that seep into their brownfield mediation. This paper focuses on Mannheim, Germany, a region that was occupied by the U.S. military allied forces after WWII and became central to establishing U.S. command centers sprawling through the urban fabric and expanding its positionality on the global stage. Mannheim is currently redeveloping many former U.S. military bases that have been decommissioned and are trying to revitalize and integrate the vast amount of land back into the urban environment. Many resources and studies address these processes by focusing on the environment, economy, and urban planning, but lack the connections and focus on the U.S. military spaces that continue to shape social relations and identity formation through the lingering past that connects to the redevelopment of placemaking.

Significantly, the former U.S. military spaces are centrally located in Mannheim and thus directly influence the social construction of the community and individual identity. Such landscapes shape the perception of what is defined as normal and resonate in the behavior and participation in the public space and the ideologies that are carried within a society. In addition, through the historical military build-up, Mannheim itself has a central position in the country and region. Mannheim's strategic location and infrastructure not only was the foundation for the U.S. base's development but it was at the heart of the U.S. German relationship of cultural exchange

and the social production of space. The centrality of these spatial relations is an important aspect of the history of place in Mannheim.

In the following pages, I begin with historical background on the U.S. presence in Germany after WWI and WWII - key moments for understanding the more recent closures and the cultural and social context of the American and German relationship. I then review the connections created post-WWII and the American occupation in Mannheim's urban composition of scale and location to highlight the base closure impacts in the region. This will lead into a discussion of the existing debates in the literature about U.S. military base closures and its exclusion of the social formation in identity and place-making as a participation of a conscience exclusion. Further, I will thread the missing literature with the generated voids in the urban fabric of Mannheim together. This will help analyze how these created voids that are inviting spaces of danger (McFarlane and Mitchell, 2019).

Combining these strategic military locations with the social and cultural formation sets a continuity of conflicting layers through military spaces. Only through the German and U.S. military relation, build on existing infrastructures and history, has socioeconomic spaces expanded into a global network of warfare.

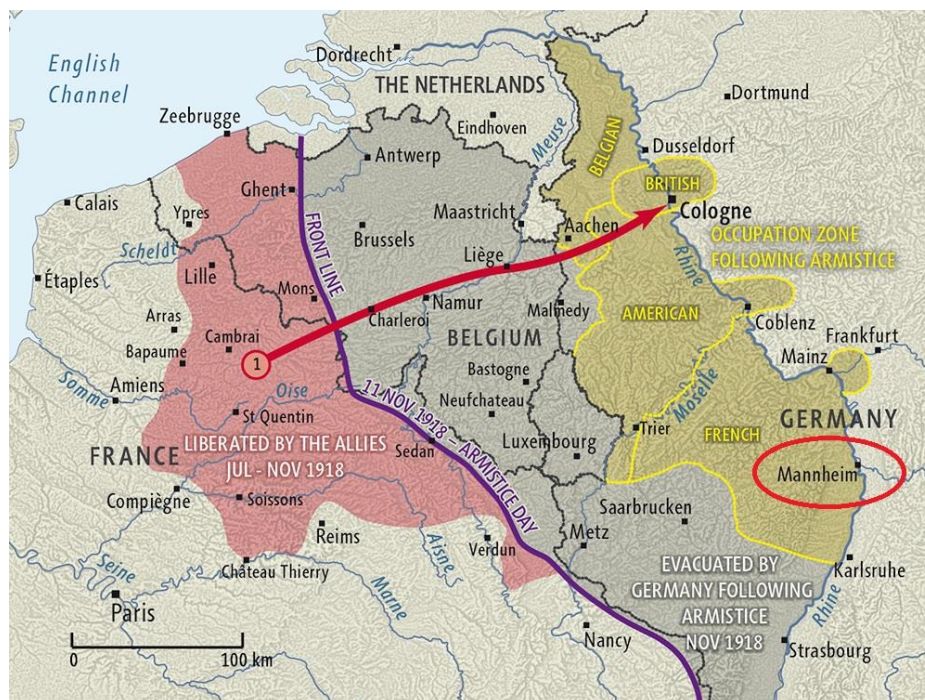
WWI:

Shaping the Landscape and Relations to Come

The U.S. Military has been a part of German history since 1917 when during

WWI the U.S. officially declared war on Germany. The main goal was to support Britain and French forces, who had been fighting since 1914, to defend their territorial lines and stage

attacks. The U.S. contributed to ending the war in 1918. From 1918 to 1923 about 250,000 U.S. soldiers were stationed in the Trier and Koblenz region, only 1 hour from Mannheim (*Armistice and Occupation of Germany Map*, n.d., see map below) Due to the high numbers of U.S. troops, soldiers initially had to be housed among German civilians creating a cultural and social exchange. Even with the anti-fraternization laws at the time that prohibited allied soldiers from socially interacting with the German community, American and German relationships were shaped through daily shared experiences, introducing a reproduction of cultural and spatial formations (*Nach Dem Krieg: Die Alliierte Rheinlandbesetzung 1918-1930-Regionalgeschichte.Net*, n.d.). This region became a familiar territory for the U.S. military while the U.S. troops experienced the region's culture and landscape adding to shared histories and collective memories.



Map 1; Armistice and Occupation of Germany, Nov. 11, 1918. American forces pushing towards the Rhine and into the Rhineland

The allied territories also signified the U.S. military as designated American Force in Germany (A.F.G.), Koblenz (The American Forces in Germany (A.F.G.) - Regionalgeschichte.Net, n.d.). The river Rhine, a natural border and main infrastructure in Germany, is often referred to as “The Gate of the World” in German “Das Tor der Welt” (Bildung, n.d.) it connects Koblenz with Mannheim which highlights the Rhine as strategically important through its geopolitical contribution in the Rhine region, also referred to as the Rhineland, that became a focal point in the post-WWI era embedded in the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty is a contested part of German history, reinforcing the centrality of this place in those collective memories. It forced the Rhineland to be demilitarized from German troops, replaced by the allied military and required a “war guilt clause” to be recognized by Germany, deeming Germany sole responsibility for the war. This led to heavy reparations that Germany had to pay (Moses, 2015). These conditions led to political friction and structured humiliations seeping into Germany’s citizens that led to an anti-Versailles movement which would later be a powerful tool in Hitler’s propaganda.

This is a pivotal moment, as it shows the formation of a nation's identity with geopolitical movement. These relationships are fundamental in understanding the American and German relationship today and the urban environment in which it is built. The Rhineland becomes a geopolitical strategic location through the allied occupation, reinforcing its central role in political movements and campaigning through these occupied zones (Moses, 2015), directly connecting the occupied zones with the social production of spaces in Germany.

WWII:

The U.S. Occupation of Germany and the Spatial Mechanism of Military Bases

After WWI Germany's landscape was fractured and the German economy continued to struggle. The remainder of the Versailles treaty continued to fester humiliation among German citizens and fueled discontent between nations, contributing to the growth of the national socialist rise to power. On September 1st, 1939 WWII began and the war devastatingly sprawled across Europe by December 1941 with the U.S. joining in reaction to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

In Germany, the U.S. troops advanced once more into the familiar Rhineland with its British allies and crossed the Rhine river in March 1945 entering the city of Mannheim (see map 1). Due to Mannheim's location to its neighboring city Ludwigshafen, both shared a strong and diverse industrial infrastructure in railways, highways, and distinctive waterways. With the extensive ports that supported machinery, electrical, and chemical plants, air chief marshal Harris prioritized airstrikes on Mannheim (British Pathé, 2014). With over 150 air strikes more than 51% of Mannheim was destroyed. On March 29th, 1945 the U.S. troops occupied Mannheim and its centrally located German barracks.

By building upon the existing infrastructure of the former German barracks, the U.S. military expressed domination while also reviving contested historical relations, and layering memories of war, loss, and occupation - in the center of the city. This produces an interwoven connection that is becoming of place, founded on the reconstructed history of violence and defeat in the form of warfare that is now part of daily activities built into the landscape. With the U.S. occupation of these spaces, Mannheim and its citizens had to adjust to a new role of negotiating their formation of biographies while rebuilding home and spatial relations in a fractured landscape linked to a new formation of post-WWII German identity. It was upon the allied forces and the U.S. to reorganize a post-WWII Europe and its reparations. The Rhineland became a

central part of the U.S. allied zones connecting its nodes with the existing infrastructure embedded in the Mannheim landscape. Germany was controlled by the allied forces through their autonomous zones, making Germany a platform of political dynamics among international powers.

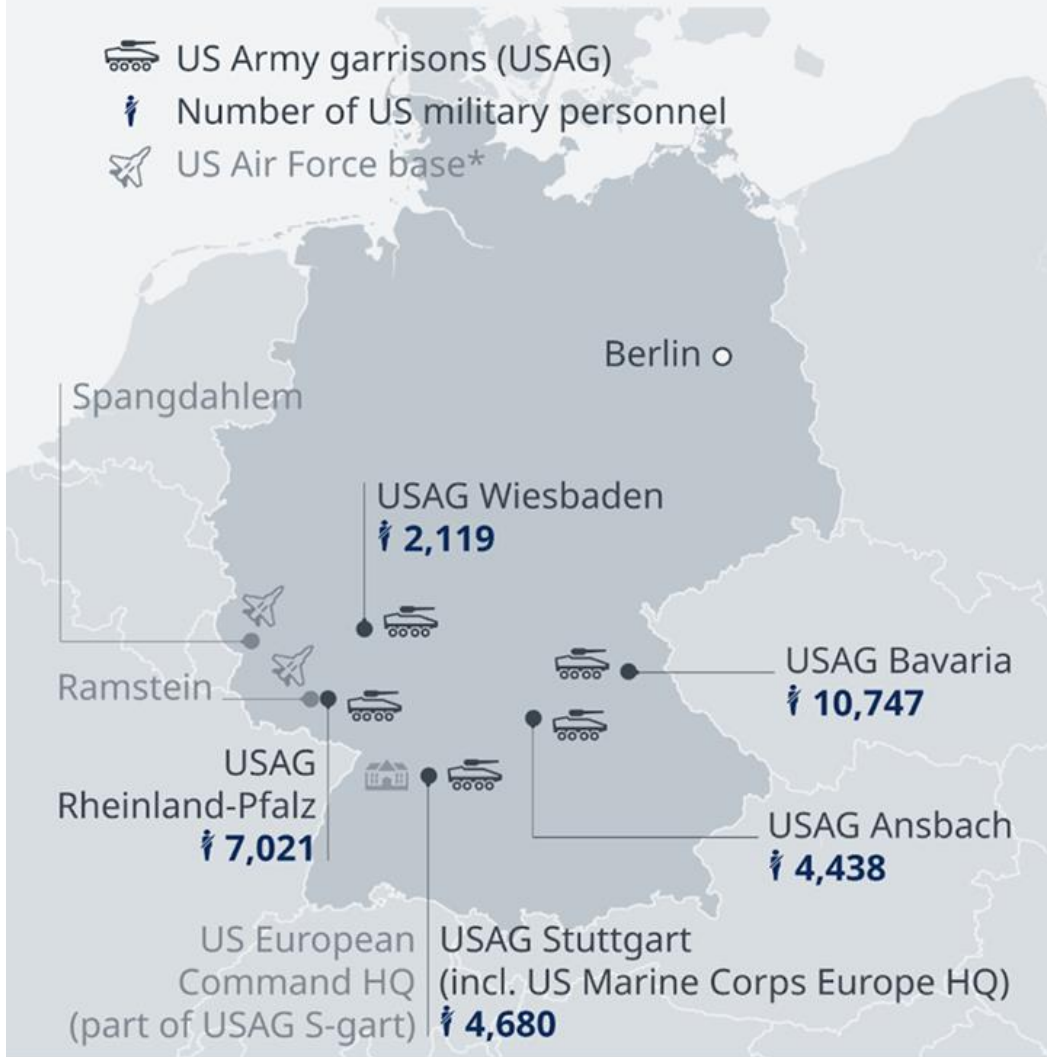
In 1949 the occupying forces handed their military governing over to Germany, leading to an end of occupation in the 50s, ushering in a new beginning of the collaboration in “global crisis management” through the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. Due to the U.S. established infrastructure and geopolitical development, Germany's strategic location remained an important factor that reflects in the present day and its role as a host country for the U.S. EU Command headquarters (EUCOM), commanding the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, U.S. Marines Corps Forces in Africa and Europe (*November*, n.d.) (see Map 2).

With the U.S. military command centers located strategically within the Mannheim region, the city's communities and infrastructure felt the daily presence of reproduced power through the U.S. military within the structures of everyday activities. These daily paths intersected with the military sites for the majority of residents, creating new kinds of social and spatial experiences. For instance, public transportation and sidewalks were passed by military facilities with barbed-wire fencing and U.S. military gates of exclusion. A daily commute to work or school, reinforced by the military presence, normalized the colliding worlds of warfare and social life. It is these relations that must be accounted for in the literature on U.S. military base closures and to which I will return below.

US military installations in Germany

Total number of US military personnel: ~38,605

-  US Army garrisons (USAG)
-  Number of US military personnel
-  US Air Force base*



*Specific numbers not available
Around **9,600** US Air Force military personnel throughout Germany

Source: US Army; US Air Force | August 2019

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Map 2: U.S. military troops and headquarters in Germany with Mannheim in the Rheinland-Pfalz region. DW, 2019, (Welle (www.dw.com), n.d.)

BRAC, Base Realignment and Closure Process

To dive deeper into the U.S. urban development and the impact it has on the sociopolitical context between the U.S. and Germany we need to look at the numbers that reveal the scale and time of change. When the Cold War ended in late 1980 and the Soviet Union was no longer a threat, the U.S. scaled back drastically and introduced the Base Realignment and Closure program. BRAC is an authorized process by the Department of Defense to reorganize and restructure the U.S. forces to increase readiness for operations with a focus on efficiency worldwide (Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), n.d.). In the wake of BRAC, the United States has withdrawn approximately 200,000 troops from Germany within 5 years from 1990 to 1995 (BICC, 1995). In Mannheim alone, 7442 U.S. military personnel, 2087 U.S. civilians, and 2700 German civilians¹ have been reduced and 563.4 hectares returned.

In addition to the dramatic scale of personnel changes, demilitarization occurred at a fast rate. The average base closure was completed within a year. Combining the scale and time frame, the German government faced a unique and complex challenge. The U.S. government demanded compensation for the military structures and land development (GAO, 1994a). The transition of land purchase was followed by a process through the Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA). This transfer of formerly occupied U.S. military sites is a negotiation based on geopolitical relations and experience. BRAC and the U.S. military downsizing is the dominating voice in the literature presented today, highlighting the economic and environmental effects many nations face and to which they must adapt today. Even though a majority of U.S. military

¹ German civilians working on US bases decreased consistently, starting with 72,800 in 1989 and 31,880 remaining in 1995 (Statistical Annex; Deutscher Bundestag, 1991)

forces are extracted from Mannheim, the main headquarters remain, both refiguring the relationship of the city to the U.S. military presence and reinstating the intimate ways that U.S. military occupation has infiltrated local identities and social relations. This infiltration between the city and their U.S. military sites remains a significant structural change that reorganizes the surrounding enclosure by indirectly generating new living patterns and paths through the daily navigation of class formation (Pred, 1984). This emphasizes the influence larger decisions have on the occupying spaces in foreign countries through the disruption of geospatial relations.

Importance of Social Dynamics of the Built Landscape

The closing of U.S. military sites has been a leading discussion in the academic realm and continues to expand its literature. The U.S. military bases created a built environment of control and domination through its military with effects on people's collective memories and everyday lived experiences that shape their identity. The social aspect of communities and individual formation of the biographies are rarely included or connected in the military base closure narrative. Rather, the focus is on the brownfields and their military facilities, the economy, urban development, and the environment. Consequently, such literature on military bases is disconnected from the social production of space. As mentioned, such an exclusion is a contribution to the subjectivity of "collective forgetting" (McFarlane and Mitchell, 2019). This is critical to note as this creates a void in the literature juxtaposed to the voids created in the abandoned U.S. military bases in the urban space. Both voids - in literature and the former U.S. military sites - continue to bury and silence connections among biographic formation, the generation of new spaces, and memories of domination and symbolic violence. This analysis

thus expands the conceptual tools we have to navigate between these voids. These connections can help uncover the complexities of U.S. military base closure processes and their influence on human geographies.

As mentioned, existing literature on former U.S. military bases can be divided into two broad categories of economic impacts and environmental degradation. The first category of the economic impact of former military sites has been studied and analyzed by the relation of the military centrality occupying land within the city. Zimmer (2004), for instance, connects the historical U.S. military buildup in the Philippines from the Clark Air Base, to Subic Naval Base and brings it into the local context as an economic significance in the U.S. military expenditure on the local economy. He analyzes the U.S. bases sprawl into the regional urban growth, limiting local development but perpetuating American consumerism. The expanding bases, for instance, contributed to 80% of economic activities through the customized market for the U.S. stationed communities. Just as in Mannheim, the surrounding service and supply industry created an agglomeration of civilian employment geared toward U.S. soldiers' income and consumption that contributes to the local economy.

The sudden closing of the U.S. bases in 1992 (BRAC)² not only ended an over 100-year occupation but also the annual \$700 million in spending on the local economy and the 14,000 domestic jobs in the Philippines (Zimmer, 2004). Such an extraction in spending of the regional economy forced the Philippine government to find sustainable solutions. To develop the “left behind” U.S. infrastructure, strategic financial options had to be put in place for a successful conversion for revitalizing the domestic economy. In the Philippine case, it ended up creating

² The restructuring of the U.S. military bases was administered at the end of the Cold War in five phases of 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005, closing hundreds of installations around the world

more jobs than the U.S. bases ever provided. The Philippines is an example of the community's connection to its land and its rooted identity reflected in its independence for its economic success.

Yet in terms of concerns of economic decline through the U.S. military base closures, researchers have conflicting observations. Other studies have mentioned, for instance, the anxiety and dependency on U.S. military bases. Hill (2000) incorporates the historical military buildup, and its influence on the community, and connects it with her investigation of the U.S. case of the Truman Annex in Key West, FL. Hill revealed resistance from community leaders to U.S. base closures due to disappointing past experiences in the redevelopment agencies, leading to distrust of the Department of Defense, and finally, the misconception of dependency in an economy to which they have come accustomed (e.g., Hill, 2000).

Both Zimmer and Hill address the economic impacts and the fragmented redevelopment strategies connected with historical developments to current economic circumstances that impact communities and local municipalities. Unlike Zimmer, Hill's case is based in the U.S. and contrasts a different domestic response to the U.S. military base closures. Both pieces of literature highlight the U.S. military impact on the local economy and its influence on regional community leaders, emphasizing the outcome of negotiations that are founded on the embedded past lived experiences.

Expanding on the economic narrative, Bagaeen (2006) focused his studies on the economic opportunities in the military conversion process, particularly with the urban base reuse as they provide prime real estate and opportunity for inclusive planning. He highlights the importance of community and social inclusion through active government roles as well as

planning for sustainability and economic competitiveness important to encourage economic development (e.g., Bagaen, 2006).

While these three researchers do include the local community, their focus is on the economy and the redevelopment on a federal and national level. Thus, they do not address how economic issues are also intertwined with the formation of the local identity and culture through spatial representation and imposed power. A military base generates a particular type of local economy that serves U.S. troops' professional and personal consumption needs. Local businesses around Mannheim's Franklin Village, for example, catered to the soldier's income and needs. Used car dealerships, bars, secondhand furniture, as well as tailors, and dry cleaners created hybrid places in Mannheim's center, changing the spatial social practices in the city. "Hybridity is not just a mixing together but a dynamic where the colonized appropriate and transform dominant cultures." (Jacobs, 1996). Such hybrid economies and urban spaces may create a false dependency and fracture the local economic infrastructure, including the social structures within.

Environmental Challenges

An additional focus, of the existing literature on military base closures in non-U.S. locations, is around environmental issues. Collectively recognized is that the re-use of defense facility's environmental degradation increases its complexity in redevelopment. Lack of experience with the process and the time it consumes are contributors to the complexity of city planning and land use development with former military sites (e.g., Bagaen 2006). In contrast to Bagaen (2006), who mentioned the opportunities of urban base location, researchers such as Kim expand the discussion in the environmental context to be based on the lack of accountability from the U.S.

military, not the host nation (Kim, 2018). Kim's case study of Onna, Okinawa in South Korea, has exposed a structural failure based on outdated environmental awareness and the lack of holding Washington D.C. accountable for environmental cleanup. Supporting research by Hansen (2004) emphasizes the complexity of the redevelopment process due to the lack of municipal experience in contamination cleanup and disposal which ultimately diminishes the economic opportunities (e.g., Hansen 2004). Moreover, Kim's research expands on a fundamental perspective through the environmental discussion by revealing an uneven power relation between host nations and the U.S. military. It is based on exploitation with negative economic consequences.

In the environmental framework of research, we need to expand our understanding of the complexity and costs that fall upon the host nations and the complexity it extends in the geopolitical frame of unequal power in negotiating environmental cleanup and remediation. Further, studies on the impacts of military facilities must draw connections to its rippling effects, on the local communities, the market, and economic implications. Their negative impact destroys the ecosystem and the symbiotic relationship many cultures and communities have with their land and environment. Excluding the social aspect of the military environmental issues, deteriorates the communal voices to advocate and emphasizes inequitable planning and policies. By shifting our attention to the local level of inclusion we can recognize the reproduction of social structures rooted in the formation of biographies of everyday life. Prioritizing the connection of community and the environment we can protect sustainable local economies, the organization of daily life, and foster participatory demography.

In addition, the extensive scale and ratio of the U.S. military sites occupying land, often centrally as in the case of Mannheim, in relation to the municipal population and size, is often

not recognized. Disregarding such emphasis can obscure the perception and bring out of focus the ramifications of military closing and environmental degradation. Moreover, urbanization occurred across the region with the expansion of military bases, with their command centers in Mannheim, establishing networks of infrastructures, such as airstrips, storage, and training sites. The location also addresses jurisdictions, policies, and political relations and highlights the complexity of urban development in the revitalization and integration process. In Kim's research, she highlights the central location of Yongsan Garrison by sharing Seoul's Mayor Park Won-soon's protest in June 2013 "The city can only probe along the walls surrounding the base at best...The actual magnitude of contamination must be much bigger than what we have found". This quote underlines the exclusionary jurisdictions and power relations.

The literature gap is a disconnected narrative that fails to construct a complete picture of the ramifications caused by decommissioned U.S. military sites and cannot therefore collectively suggest solutions for the sustainable and equitable redevelopment of these sites.

The Mannheim Situation: Centrality, Exclusion, and the Social under the Surface

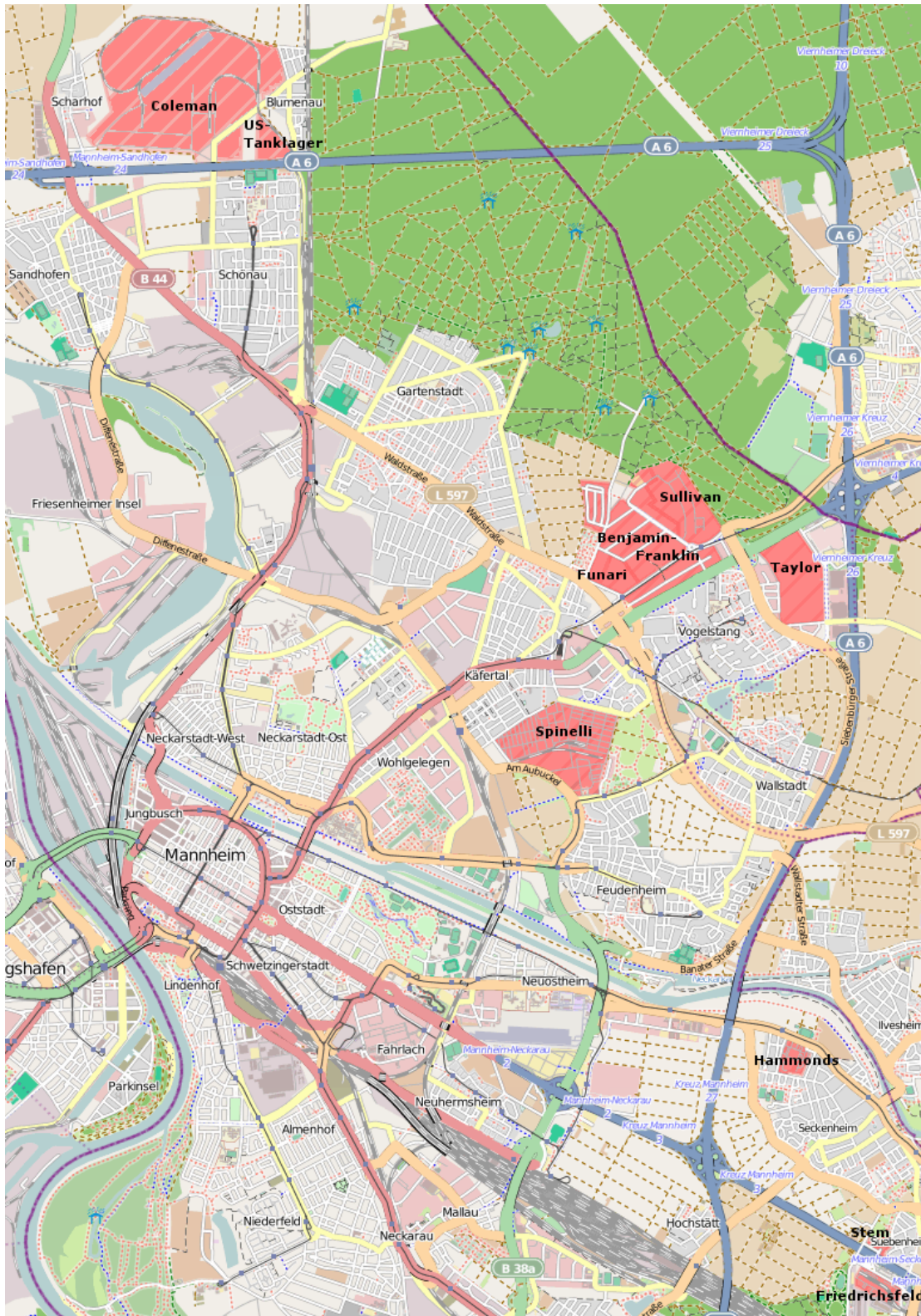
In the Post WWII era, a growing concern about communism in 1950 led to the expansion and investment in revitalizing old German barracks to strengthen U.S. military bases and presence. These barracks were mostly centered in cities. The central location combining the existing infrastructure from the former Mannheim industry facilitated a sprawling network of nodes expanding the U.S. military presence throughout the Mannheim region and connecting other military facilities.

Incorporating Mannheim's industry, which played a key role in its development throughout history, centered it in a network of U.S. military commanding headquarters. The U.S. military in Mannheim expanded in housing, logistics, and military training areas. One of the effective expansions is the Ramstein Air Base, the U.S. Air Forces headquarter in Europe (The History of Ramstein Air Base, 2012), Wiesbaden, is serving as the headquarter for the U.S. Army Europe, both just 1 hour from Mannheim, making Mannheim central in the commanding infrastructure. Coupled with its urban growth, based on its innovative and manufacturing history core, Mannheim has also attracted higher educational institutes aiming for a growing innovative industry.

This makes Mannheim an employment and shopping center with a demanding housing market. The city's hope for the revitalization of the former U.S. military sites is to attract student housing, young families, and double-income households. To gain access to the former U.S. sites and brownfields, the city must inquire about it from the Institute for Federal Real Estate in German International (BIMa) (International, n.d.). The recent closing of the bases must be understood within the context of these regulations, not just a new empty space in the city, but sites within these regulations (what is possible).

Yet the significance of the Mannheim area reflects not only on the strategic location and the preexisting military bases but also on the centrality of command. For instance, in 1949 for several months, Sullivan Barracks housed the complete U.S. Tank unit for all of Europe. The center of U.S. military intelligence in Europe had its command center in Wiesbaden, and the U.S. military prison of all Europe was in Mannheim. The bases continued to expand through the development of NATO, the NSC-68, and the Marshall plan. The shifting focus toward Russia was charging the Cold War and embedding the U.S. Military into the German urban landscape.

By 1995 the region of Mannheim housed approximately 563.3 hectares (1391 acres) of U.S. military spaces, larger than its city center (see Map 3). Bases such as Landstuhl and Ramstein Air Base, by Frankfurt am Main, were expansions and all close to Mannheim, further connecting infrastructure to new U.S. bases and reinstating Mannheim and Germany as geographically “central”.



Map 3: Mannheim city center with connection to train, highway, river infrastructure, and the embedded U.S. military sites

(red) FrankOpenStreetMap contributors, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

As U.S. bases grew, so did the housing for soldiers and their families, schools, hospitals, grocery stores, and even movie theaters recreating the American culture and spatial familiarity. Restructuring and renaming the former German barracks aided to quickly establishing command of Mannheim's region and rebuilding a network of military infrastructure. The fast reestablishment of U.S. command was possible through these German military barracks in the urban landscape of Mannheim. This pivotal moment manifested the U.S. presence in Germany, its place in the urban landscape, and the daily lives of the residents. For example, the Kaiser-Wilhelm Kaserne barracks, centered in Mannheim, were built in 1899 and inhabited by the U.S. in 1945 which was then renamed the Turley Barracks; Benjamin Franklin Village is an agglomeration of several former German barracks expanding the city peripheries that later became one of the biggest U.S. military housings for military families, and facilities. Recreating familiarities in the built environment is a critical aspect to recreate everyday life far from home (Gottdiener, 1985). The collision of an American landscape into Mannheim's spaces is a perfect representation of two cultural identities opposing each other.

Simultaneously, however, as many U.S. military bases started to expand to accommodate family life, they also restricted access to the German communities creating social exclusion. This expansion generated the one-sided incorporation of U.S. soldiers and families into the German culture, economy, and social dynamics. Military I.D. cards are mandatory to pass through checkpoints and armed security gates. While some military housing is open access, most military facilities cut through the landscape with barbed wire fences to separate the military from civilian neighborhoods. In contrast, the neighboring communities are excluded from the operations behind these fences that affect their daily lives. The American and German relationship is complex and can be divided into military family life and military operation. Families have a

common ground to connect in the German public spaces, while U.S. military operations portray a federal level of exclusion in their built environment and the eye of the local community.

As we have discussed, Mannheim's strategic location through its connection via railways and rivers had an efficient industry and a rich network of infrastructure. As infrastructure was built upon infrastructure, it was therefore favorable for US military forces to establish a network of command centers. This was effectively established by the US military reusing former German military installations remaining from WWI and WWII. Because of preexisting German military facilities and Mannheim's infrastructure, the city became a central part of the U.S. military occupation of Germany, impacting national and political frictions that rippled into the local community.

In a landscape penetrated throughout with military compounds surrounded by fences and barbed wires that create social exclusion, I argue that the social production of military spaces is just as powerful as their military brownfield counterpart generating a toxic relationship within the individual biography formation (Pred, 1990). The fractured urban landscape reconfigures daily lives in the spatial context.

The Foundation of Historical Infrastructure in Contemporary Human Geographies

Mannheim, experienced the expanding and contracting of U.S. military bases in response to the geopolitical global climate through its alliances and strategic location in Germany. After September 11th, and the following Afghanistan war, "Main Operating Bases" M.O.B. as command centers and headquarters reinforced their presence, all within proximity to the city, emphasizing the formation of place and function generated through history. Responding to new

threats of terrorism, U.S. military facilities tightened security, and the military bases in Mannheim became even more restricted areas with limited to no access, which remained till their closing. This increased security was comparable to an extended nerve of the U.S. embedded in the Mannheim urban fabric that immediately responds to political change and ripples into the surrounding community. When the U.S. gears up and locks down its base's reactions are immediately felt within local life. Local trains are loaded with tanks, and nuclear weapons are waiting for deployment in Germany. This creates friction between the two worlds of warfare and civilian social life in which "sites of struggle" can be recognized "not as isolated, self-contained moments but as linked, across space and time" (McFarlane and Mitchell, 2019). Even though Mannheim's U.S. military bases have closed and the city is integrating the abandoned sites into its contemporary form, the former U.S. military past is rearticulated through current political reactions. This includes the fact that the headquarters continue the collective memory of the past when Mannheim became central to the U.S. military prison and tank units of Europe.



Before the military reduction: Soldiers guard the entrance of the Campbell Barracks in Heidelberg. Picture: DPA © 2022 Badische Zeitung

Germany stands at the center of European affairs and plays a key role as a member of the G-7 (1975) bringing together the world's leading industrial nations, G-20 (1999), NATO (1949), was originally to provide collective security against the Soviet Union, and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Frankfurt, Ramstein Air Force Base is the largest overseas U.S. Airbase, Wiesbaden, continues to be the Center of U.S. military intelligence in Europe, Stuttgart is the U.S. military headquarters for the United States African Command (AFRICOM) and European Command (EUCOM). These established bases now carry out international military collaboration based on the formerly established infrastructure, transporting tanks to the east through the civilian neighborhoods that were once occupied. We can conclude

that the U.S. military remaining command center's response and actions continue to affect the social formation even through the abandoned military sites because of the long-embedded history and cultural exchange they have left behind.

While the military continues to operate through Germany, some former U.S. military bases in Mannheim are reclaiming these spaces in contrast to the embedded past and a new generation of planners and habitants emerges. Mannheim's former Benjamin Franklin Village, Hammonds, and Spinelli barracks (see Map 3) have already functioned as temporary refugee housing for 12,000 refugees (*Konversion in Mannheim*, n.d.). Dutch architect Winy Maas, who is integrated into Mannheim's conversion, points out that "everything you do is immediately symbolic" (Abandoned US Army Bases Germany, 2020) he continues "we don't want a space void of history here" (Kramer, 2021). There is a conscious understanding of the abandoned spaces and the embedded history that connects to future social formation. Combining these two spatial awareness and the way these places are being processed cautions for emerging nationalism on the layering of place and becoming - these are the "moments of danger" (McFarlane and Mitchell, 2019)

Conclusion

The U.S. military bases are deeply embedded into the German infrastructure from WWI to the contemporary collaboration with NATO in the geopolitical frame. The cultural interaction and the city's formation have imprinted on the lived experiences creating identities through people's daily interactions with the built environment, both directly and indirectly. During the Base Realignment and Closure process many U.S. bases closed and left abandoned spaces in the urban fabric. It is through the past dominating presence that the U.S. military left behind such

voids that have caused a rupture in the lived environment and social production of spaces throughout communities and neighborhoods in Germany, particularly in Mannheim - the focus of this study. Even though these abandoned fields might assimilate into municipal plans, fading into the background, they carry a destructive past beneath the surface altering identity and social formations. This generates a special kind of brownfield conversion, central to the city. The interconnection of decommissioned military sites and the social implications on the local community is understudied in the existing literature and needs to be expanded.

This paper argues that the social implications of spatial changes are not integrated into the narrative of the U.S. military base's recuperation. The lack of connecting the implications of identity formations with the economic and environmental context ruptures the landscape from its memory in the current literature and generates voids, such as the Mannheim former military sites. Both voids - in literature and the former U.S. military sites - continue to bury and silence connections among biographic formations, generating new spaces, and memories of domination and symbolic violence.

This spatial analysis thus expands the conceptual tools we have to navigate between these voids. The deeply rooted history of the American allied forces from WWI to the present day has generated an intimate cultural and social formation through the collective memory of German and American relationships. Therefore, it is critical to note that the created voids are not only in the landscape but continue in the existing literature excluding these complex connections from the economic and environmental discussion. The rupture in literature and the urban fabric is a form of participating in a "collective forgetting". The archeology of the urban and the excavation of such participation, in burying the past, incinerates symbolic violence. Disconnecting the layered history within abandoned military sites continues a social formation of dangerous spaces.

These actions caution “Where they converge is in the collective project to build a different kind of urban gateway, one whose criteria for entry are not determined by class or race, but left radically open.” (McFarlane and Mitchell, 2019). Therefore, we must collectively integrate the lived experiences of the cultural and social formation into the literature of U.S. military closures, especially in foreign nations, because “The past is not dead. It is not even past.” by William Faulkner.

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