

Transcript Ep. 58: Forums of Discussion: sub\urban - journal for critical urban research

[00:00:00] **Intro:** This is the Urban Political, the podcast on urban theory, research and activism.

[00:00:10] **Markus Kip:** I welcome you to this episode introducing the German Language Journal for critical urban research called sub\urban. My name is Markus Kip, and I hand over to my colleague Ross Beveridge who had a conversation with two members of the editorial collective of the journal, Gala Nettelbladt and Nina Gribat. The occasion for that conversation was the 10th anniversary of that journal, and the conversation touches on issues such as why it is important for the journal to publish in German, how the editorial collective organizes itself horizontally, the open access strategy of the journal, and finally, also its relationship to political debates and struggles of the current moment. It is the first part of a series of episodes introducing and discussing a variety of publication outlets and discussion for urban research and action in different geographical contexts.

And now over to you, Ross.

[00:01:21] **Ross Beveridge:** It's 10 years' birthday of sub\urban this year. So this is the reason for the occasion for the interview, it made us think it would be really interesting to talk to you guys about, why the journal was set up, what you've achieved and these kind of things.

Because we obviously read it and we are fans of it. We know what sub\urban does, but of course lots of people outside of Germany and German speaking countries won't know it, of course. We had this idea that I'd be very interesting to hear from, non-English speaking outlets that are contributing to urban studies and political debates in cities.

So, if we go back, if we rewind back 10 years to the beginning, what was the context? You know if we think about the German context then, and what prompted you to set up sub\urban.

Some of us were part of the critical geography group, meeting regularly in Kreuzberg and within this group we started a conversation that somehow in the German speaking academia at the time, urban studies or critical urban studies was a little bit of a dispersed kind of affair.

There was not really a dedicated journal to urban studies or to critical urban studies at the time. And that would also integrate different disciplinary perspectives. So, the German debate at the time and also the critical debate at the time was somehow very dispersed in different disciplinary journals.

[00:02:56] **Nina Gribat:** So, what we wanted to set up was like more or less, a forum to have more interdisciplinary debates. And also, we had to really provide a forum for critical urban studies to come together in the German speaking world. I think we were also a little bit maybe frustrated that there were so many options at the time already, like in the

anglophone world and some of us had also been to some exchanges to this world, visited like conferences and we were a bit frustrated that we didn't have an option like this.

I wasn't there 10 years ago, so it's very hard for me to answer that question. But I think from what I've, heard and also read, in sub\urban is that I think maybe a second dimension or a second reason for founding the journal was to also engage a dialogue or start a conversation with more interdisciplinary English-speaking discussions, that were going, literatures that were going on at the time. Because I think there was a kind of feeling that was very much not part of the German speaking discussion at the time. So, there was like, I think maybe quite a closed discussion in sociology that would then sometimes maybe address urban issues, but maybe more on the side.

[00:04:23] **Gala Nettelbladt:** And then there was, discussions and planning that were happening on very German topics, but both in terms of, I think themes and topics, but also in terms of like conceptual and theoretical perspectives on the issues that were discussed. We felt like there wasn't. I mean, I wasn't there, so I can't say we felt like, but I think there was a bit of a bit of a need to open up that space to also more international debates.

Maybe one point to add, we really thought it was also a very important thing to have a German language journal, to have the opportunity to also expand upon the anglophone discussions, because I think some of us had made the experiences that the topics we were looking at, in order to really place them into an anglophone setting, you would have to also invest quite a bit to make them relevant somehow. . And I think that this form of translating somehow between the very particular context that you might be doing your research in and like a so-called international audience or an international debate. I think you also lose bits in this translation process.

[00:05:45] **Nina Gribat:** And I think that we were interested in also creating like a German language forum in order to address this, but not to close ourselves off in any ways, but to also have a possibility to address our concerns more or less. Sorry, just to briefly add one more point that I think seems relevant is that,

[00:06:08] **Gala Nettelbladt:** that the way I perceive it, is that there was also always already a very sort of conscious, like self-positioning positionality that was very critical of, I mean in the sub\urban collective, that was very critical of the English speaking here, Germany in urban studies as well. And I think that was a big motivation to say, it's going to be German speaking journal.

And I think what was there from the start, and I think what is very beautiful about it is that there was always an effort and still is to also translate urban studies literatures from other contexts. So not just from the English-speaking world, but also from Brazil, and I think there's Spanish texts, French. Russian, I think even one. So, I think that's an important point to add.

[00:06:53] **Ross Beveridge:** I was wondering if you said a little bit more about what it means to have critical urban studies tradition in the German language. So, what difference does the language make?

You know, especially , you talked about all these different inputs, taking from other places, not just the Anglo-American debates, but, if you think about the dominance of those debates, you think you have to translate them in into a German context, or you might not want to translate them to a certain extent that might be things that aren't translatable.

What difference does the context of Germany make? That could be, it might be empirical, it might be the tradition of critical thinking or the, what's the tradition of urban thought in Germany? We talked a little bit about the context at the time, it's a bit in sociology, bit in planning, but are you tapping into a wider tradition there in German Wissenschaft, you know, in science?

And what difference do you think that language makes as well, in terms of, because I mean, it is, it does make a difference. And I wondered if you could just talk about how you think about that, how you position the journal then, and maybe ongoing since then.

I don't know. It's really hard.

[00:07:58] **Nina Gribat:** Difficult question.

[00:07:59] **Ross Beveridge:** It's a difficult one.

[00:08:00] **Nina Gribat:** I mean, maybe I find a starting point in saying that we didn't really have a tradition that we wanted to continue or something like this. Like we didn't come from critical theory or something like this. And we came from all sorts of different angles, and we always thought that it was also a benefit to bring them together and to create like a journal where you could address different concerns as long as they were critical in terms of like social relations and of power relations, inequalities, et cetera.

That sounds extremely vague now, but somehow there wasn't like this clear thing that we thought like: "okay, yeah, us here in Germany, we have a wonderful kind of heritage." Maybe even. We didn't really have anything like this. I mean, we did have of course a few texts, like when you go back to Häußermann and Siebel for instance.

[00:09:10] **Nina Gribat:** Like we did, we do have a category where we have like old texts read anew or something like this. And of course, we have some German texts in there, but we also have other texts in there that we found were like really interesting. So, we don't really have that kind of trajectory. We had the feeling somehow in terms of writing style, and I mean this is not super closely related, but I think there is something that German science was also, the argument is often developed in a fairly different way somehow, like in a lot of the German science.

Like it's not written in this very argument-oriented way, like the, that has developed in the anglophone world. I think, and I think we were inspired by this in terms of how the articles are structured. I think in that respect, I think we do have more, we take a little bit our, it's more connected to that.

I'm not sure if that makes sense.

[00:10:16] **Gala Nettelbladt:** I think that's an interesting point you raised that kind of already addresses the sort of nitty gritty, what is a good, what is a good text for us or what are the contributions we are looking at in terms of the craft or the very tool of writing.

But just to go back to your question, I think you are absolutely right Nina, that there was no tradition of critical urban thought in Germany or still, I think it's in its infancy and I think that gap was part of the motivation or the reason to found a journal like sub\urban really.

I just thought we should probably say a bit more about what the Journal does. Obviously, I just, I know the journal, but thinking now, what does the Journal do? How would you describe it? All the bits and pieces, you have different sections and someone who can't read German and wants to know what sub\urban is doing, how would you describe it? This main kind of content, in an average sub\urban issue.

We are an online open access journal, which is very important to us, and we publish twice a year. Three issues, two to three issues depending on submissions we get. And we have different sections in the journal.

[00:11:23] **Gala Nettelbladt:** So, there's a sort of like traditional article sections that, sees peer viewed articles, sometimes curated around a theme, like a specific topic that we suggest, sometimes with an external editor, curator, like a person that approaches us with an idea, but also random collections of articles that find their way to us.

We also have three other sections. One called *Magazin*, which publishes shorter texts that are a bit more, that are not peer reviewed and a bit more creative in terms of style but can also include photography for example. That is a section that is very important to us.

[00:12:05] **Gala Nettelbladt:** Then we have the *Debatte* section, which I think is quite a sub\urban thing, if you will. Where we usually have authors suggesting or proposing, sometimes rather controversial thesis. And then we invite a group of authors to respond to that claim and through that, try and spark a debate that, I think, often works very well and I think readers enjoy reading. and then we have a book review section. That's it.

I think maybe the debate format, just to explain that a bit further. We sometimes work with an old text or something like this and let some people comment on it from today's perspective. Sometimes we do have an initial text that someone submits, that is suitable for something like this because it's a bit controversial. Sometimes we do talks in it, that has also happened and also worked pretty well. So, it's a bit of an open format and it is actually quite successful in, we hear that it's often used in teaching actually.

[00:13:12] **Nina Gribat:** So, people like to use it in teaching because it's really, I think it shows that you can have different perspectives on issues and that critical urban studies is also a fairly diverse field with very different conceptual approaches, methodological approaches and with also a lot of debate between.

And I think that's something that we try to also address in the journal, like is this diversity. Like we are not a kind of critical urban studies equals political economy approaches journal. We do try to address more diverse perspectives.

Actually, I wanted to ask you about that.

But one question before that, just in terms of the money, the financing. This is a big thing for these kinds of ventures. How do you finance sub\urban and what about the editorial board? I mean, is anyone receiving a salary or half a salary? Is it all sort of coming out of your own, time budgets?

How does it work? How many people are on the editorial board? How do you keep it going? It's presumably very tricky.

[00:14:23] **Gala Nettelbladt:** sub\urban works as a collective. There's 15 of us at the moment, which I think is important to mention.

And we all do this for like, we don't get paid. Some of us, I don't know, have contracts that allow for sub\urban to take place during work hours. Most of us don't. Is this correct? Yeah. And we have at the moment funding through the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* DFG, which is also running out though, so it's very precarious but Nina's going to say more about this in a second. Which allows for one *Sekretariat*, secretary person that gets paid and that sort of takes or looks after the sort of like everyday logistics of the admin stuff.

[00:15:05] **Nina Gribat:** But we've only had this person since our last round of DFG funding. So, for a long time we really operated completely on a voluntary basis in that sense. We've always paid obviously our proofreading and also the layout, someone who's doing the layout. So, this was like always expenses that we've had. And the last DFG funding allowed us to get support on all the organizational issues and also increasingly also on a demanding technical issues because we do use an open journal system, OJS open journal systems software to publish it.

And it sounds as if the software's just there and you use it, but it's far more complex than that. And Michael has been a really great help in making that run much better, and also making our processes, that are quite complex, run much smoother. In terms of finances, we did have two rounds of DFG funding.

So, the German Science Foundation, they do try to invest a bit in creating like an open access publication network in Germany. So, we've put in applications to receive funding through two of those streams. And that has been very helpful, over the last years.

And we've also now, we are organized as a *Verein*, an association basically. So, we can receive donations, and we do have some supporting members, who also pay monthly fee. They are not really subscribers because we are open access, so everyone can read us without paying for it.

We did have a little perk for people who donate above a certain fee per year. They get a print version. So, we don't really exist in print, but we do produce some print for those who are our *Fördermitglieder*, our supportive members. So, we have supporters. They do that. And we also, for those authors, who are in an institution that has institutional money to fund open access publications, we do also charge publication fees. For authors who don't have this, we still publish it for free, obviously. So, we try to make the journal accessible, both for readers and also those authors.

And it's always been like a mixed funding, but the DFG funding has helped a lot. In the future now, or right now we are super happy that we won't charge any publication fees any longer, because we've joined another consortium that is trying to get all the university libraries and research institute libraries to join funds.

So, they're creating a pot of money that then hands out that money to journals who are part of their network. So, a network has founded, that we are part of it. And for the next three years we'll receive funds through that channel, won't charge any publication costs any longer.

I think it's a fantastic solution. It's been quite some work to set it up, but we hope that this is kind of the future of open access journals like ours. So, complex. But it's good that there's hope for this kind of project, even if it's always a little bit uncertain.

Maybe we can talk a little bit about the content. We touched on it, you said there are 15 of you. A question that we had was, what does critical urban studies mean? In this German context, context sub\urban. You don't have a one kind of school of thought on the editorial boards.

[00:19:07] **Ross Beveridge:** So, could you say a little bit more about what you try to do there? Do you have a strategy for dealing with the different debates? Do the editors reflect the diversity of debates? Do you think about that when you invite people? Do you spend the whole time having massive arguments about what urban theory is?

Or the political economy people fighting with the post-structuralists? How does it work? especially in terms of pooling content together. I just wanted to add one more thing about the editorial board, which I think I forgot to say is that what I think makes the collective very special is, there's 15 of us and the way I think we are organized is very non-hierarchical, or it is for sure, both in terms of like institutional affiliation. So, there's people with professorships and people who've just handed in their PhDs like me, and we are at work in like very democratic structures, taking decisions together, meeting once a month, investing a lot of time in curating the journal and working together and being very deliberate about the fact that this is something that is very important to us.

[00:20:16] **Gala Nettelbladt:** And even though, we are very conscious of the fact that the decision to work in a collective means investing a lot of time that sometimes we don't have. But that is something that I think is very crucial or is I think a very essential part of how we work and it's something that we want to continue.

Like we meet every second Friday a month and sometimes our meetings, they last for hours, and we really take time to discuss, even just one article at length and in depth. And I think that's quite unique. And from that then stems discussions on different topics and themes.

[00:20:55] **Gala Nettelbladt:** I don't know if you want to make a start on that?

Yeah, I can make a start on the difficult question on what constitutes critical urban studies. I mean, I already said that we do try to reflect the diversity of critical urban studies in many ways. So, we do consciously try to bring in different voices into the debate and also into our editorial collective.

[00:21:21] **Nina Gribat:** So, if we feel we need more people, we really think on who could join us. So, we are not ending up as a bunch of researchers all addressing all the same things. In a topical sense, also looking at what people actually research, but also in terms of approaches. We are trying to have some diversity in our group, as difficult as it is, also.

And in terms of big conflicts, I think in some ways, I mean, I haven't been as involved as you in the last two years because I had a child, he's pretty young now. That's quite a few sub\urban babies. And we also, we work as a collective, so sometimes people also step back for a time.

As far as I see it, I think we're kind of appreciative to what different perspectives can bring to the table, and that makes us a little bit non-exclusive and not so super conflictual. So, I don't think that any of us really thinks like, this is a school of thought, that's the best and needs to be there all the time and is better than all the rest.

We are appreciative that different schools of thought can address different aspects of critical urban thought. And that's useful to provide space for in the journal. I think it's something we're proud of. This heterogeneous set of perspectives.

[00:22:48] **Gala Nettelbladt:** And maybe just to give our listeners an idea of like themes and topics that were part of our last issues. We had one on feminist and queer analysis of the city. One on emotions in the city, another one on childhood in the city, which was interesting, and people thought was quite unusual maybe. But also, there's always, and I think quite regularly, over the past years' issues on methods of critical urban studies. And they're also connected to knowledge production and what it means to be a critical urban researcher. So, there's definitely, I think, that dimension that we also like to see in the journal. Just to have to reflect on our own ways of knowing.

I think there's issues sometimes that have a bit more of a political, economic lens on say, housing. But then there's also those that look at everyday gardening practices. I think it's not mutually exclusive. I think we benefit from that variety. Sorry maybe another really impossible question to answer, but so what's the hook that holds everything together? what's the critical part? Something Markus and I, and I'm sure lots of researchers are always, not always, but sometimes asking themselves, and we think about it in terms of, the content in the podcast, sometimes. What does it really mean? Often you can just, if you're reading an article, I suppose if you get an article and someone sends it, you can sense it if it's critical urban studies. But how would you really recognize it. If the strand isn't important, what's the thing that makes it part of that category of critical urban studies?

[00:24:36] **Gala Nettelbladt:** We should really be able to answer this question, but it's such a tough one, isn't it? I don't know, maybe a starting point would be to reflect a bit more generally on the sort of like academic system we find ourselves in. I think compared to, say, US American or that UK context, I think urban studies generally in Germany, but critical urban studies in particular still hold a very minor space in academic institutions, which I think mirrors in the fact that there's very few, if any, professorships on interdisciplinary urban studies in Germany.

Yeah, not very many. And so, the idea to connect critical thought with empirical research on the urban whatever we define it as, I think, is something that is not very developed. And I think is a contrast to, say, geography schools in the UK where, everyone reads Marx, or the post-structuralist. That synergy is simply often non-existent. Same with planning. It's very technical, it's very close to engineering.

And so, I think that conversation between critical thought and just the social science generally and the more built environment disciplines is something, like I don't want to make gross generalizations, but it's something that happens very rarely within the German academic system.

[00:26:11] **Gala Nettelblatt:** And I think this is our starting point and it's probably like a very dull definition, but this is how I would see it. I think over the years, we also had discussions about this again and again. And we have these discussions when we look at our articles also, like, what is the critical angle in this at all?

[00:26:32] **Nina Gribat:** And I think in the beginning we had a, we had, some agreement that it should be like *Gesellschaftskritisch* in some ways, like, for processes of marginalization, of inequalities for power, et cetera, et cetera. We are interested in articles that address either the manifestations of inequalities and marginalization processes, that address power relations or power structures.

But I think it's fairly broad in many ways. When you talk about the non-sexist city, for instance. You can talk about issues of racism, of diversity. I think you can pick your battles, I mean there's a lot to be discussed and it's fairly broad in some sense, but one of these issues, I think, needs to be addressed in an article in our journal somehow.

[00:27:36] **Gala Nettelblatt:** Can I just, I mean, this is in German, but can I just read it from the 2012, sort of position paper manifesto.

"Unseres Erachtens muss kritische Forschung über eine negative Dialektik hinausgehen, indem sie nicht einfach das Bestehende kritisiert, sondern das im Entstehen begriffene positiv hervorhebt, respektive die konkreten Potentiale für gesellschaftliche Veränderung bestärkt und affiniert."

I think this is what I wanted to say is that, and I think we haven't talked about this, but that we try and, every now and then also have contributions by activists. So, for example, we had several pieces on *Deutsche Wohnen & Co. enteignen* the last years.

[00:28:30] **Ross Beveridge:** So, this was the housing Campaign for re-municipalization, wasn't it?

Exactly. Here in Berlin. And that is, I think a connection or a bridge between academia and activism that is stronger and sometimes a bit weaker in the issues we publish. But I think that's an important part of the answer to your question also.

[00:28:48] **Ross Beveridge:** Yeah, that was another part of my question actually, but you can maybe go into that because that's another thing where we think about, we certainly set ourselves the mission in the podcast of connecting research with activism and politics.

We are aware, we haven't really managed that. We've had some activist guests, but somehow it just works in the way that it becomes more of an urban research podcast. We want to change that. We wanted to ask you, how do you guys deal with that? Because as you said, it's part of that critical aspect. But of course, it's more than that. It's praxis, isn't it? It's, how do you engage with the urban world around you and you mentioned you have had some contributions from activists, so maybe, if you want to, talk a bit about the theory and the practice and the difficulties of doing that?

I think our aspiration is that we do engage a lot also with social movements, with activists, et cetera, realizing of course, that people who are fighting all the battles in the real world are, in most cases all super busy and working in very precarious situations that are most often even more precarious than the work situations in German academia.

We know that we can't really expect activists to fill our journal somehow. I think none of us has the illusion that this would happen. And we've also made the experiences that it's sometimes not so easy to bring activists or social movements in conversation with more theoretical debates.

And that also needs to be done in a fairly careful manner. In one way not to exploit people whose primary concern is obviously not publishing in like a scientific journal. But at the same time, we also want to be relevant for people who are involved in movements, et cetera. And I think there's also, of course, often in many cases within these movements, you do also have academics that kind of engage.

[00:31:13] **Gala Nettelblatt:** Yeah, I think I would agree. Or highlight the danger of exploiting activists. What kind of you know, like not using them as Yeah. Anyway, basically all that you said. But what I actually want to say was that even within our editorial board, we have examples of researcher, activists that are very active in both arenas.

And I think that is quite a strong part of our DNA as well. People are very active in organizing around housing issues here in Berlin, but also anti-racism for example. And that obviously shapes the way we work and look at things we publish tremendously.

And then we also, not to give this too much space, but we also sometimes see ourselves as a platform for petitions or calls, open letters. had one for example, where we then just used the infrastructure, we have to assemble people. For example, the beginning of Covid, there was an open letter on the responsibility or like the urgency of the housing sector to respond to homelessness, all these questions around housing, and inequalities there that gained in urgency during Covid and the isolations and so on.

And I think going a bit away from this question around content, like in the journal. I think the very fact that we operate as an open access online journal with all of us working for free is a bit of a political move, if you will, within the German academic system. There's this very strong sense of not wanting to be with a publisher, for example, like staying independent, creating a network, establishing a network with all these other open access journals in order to stay open access and to counter the hegemony of these big publishers that take huge fees and are not very accessible at all.

I wanted to ask a little bit about your impact. And also, your interactions with German academic community over the last 10 years. You've mentioned something about journals, you've created this network. There's certainly, being independent, and being apart from that and being open access is, I think is a really big statement.

[00:33:32] **Ross Beveridge:** And it is a kind of a strong move in context of academic publishing, that's so captured by these big publishers. But how has sub\urban impacted on, and interacted with German scientific communities? What kind of response has there been over the last 10 years?

[00:33:49] **Nina Gribat:** It's always difficult to really say, oh yeah, this is exactly what we've done in some ways or the impact that we've had. We know that we are read and that our readership increases. We do know that it's also in different disciplines that we do have, like the diversity that we want to address is also in our readership.

I think we are acknowledged as serious journal because when we all started out, like we have a very hierarchical academic system in Germany and at the time none of us had a professorship, so we were all in lecturer positions, working in precarious contracts.

[00:34:34] **Nina Gribat:** And, I think in our more hierarchical system, it is also a step to found a new journal from that position. And I think that's an important thing for us. Also, in our non-hierarchical working ways and to also keep this momentum not to be too much within the institutions in some sense, like as we've existed now for this time.

And I think in between we also thought, okay if we then attach ourselves to certain institutions, maybe that would also work, but we consciously decided against it.

How are we perceived? I mean, Gala has said before that there's not this huge surge of critical urban studies within German academia. I think over the last 10 years it's probably grown. Definitely. I mean it's super, it's really developed, and I think we do also have a part in it. And I think we are like super highly regarded by that community that is growing.

But in the wider sense, like also we are just a small pond in a large sea maybe. Quite niche, no? For sure. I think there's two dimensions. One is how have we developed as a collective, and there I think, the way I look at it, having joined just a couple of years ago now, is that it was a very empowering process.

Like in Germany you would usually not have a bunch of lecturers that, some of you guys had finished their PhDs either had.

[00:36:19] **Nina Gribat:** That's quite a lot. We're just still doing them and finish them.

[00:36:23] **Gala Nettelbladt:** So, to take that courage, if you will, to just say no, we see there is a need for an interdisciplinary urban studies journal, and so we are just going to go for it, I think is very unique and like super rare. You would usually have five professors sitting around a table being like, okay let's come up with an idea for a new journal. I think that's how it would, that would be the usual mainstream way. And you guys just broke with that, and I think that was very brave and had a lot of momentum.

And I think, I would even dare say that, or I guess it's an open question if that was an inspiration to others as well, to just be like, hey, we don't have a permanent contracts, but we have a voice nonetheless. And I think that is very inspiring to many early career researchers. It was to me anyway, for sure.

So that was the one thing and then the other. I think. It's so hard, like it's very self-preferential and really hard to say. But I would also agree that sub\urban probably played a big part in the opening of the urban studies conversation the last 10 years.

The fact that now it's very common for students to read English speaking papers, articles in class, that the conversation has brought. And for sure, and I think, I don't know, in my humble opinion, I think sub\urban was a part of that. I don't know.

[00:37:44] **Ross Beveridge:** Yes, we're already talking about it. But if you look over the last 10 years, what would you say were the main challenges, obstacles that you had to overcome. Obviously, financing is this constant problem. This is a big one. And alongside that, what have been the main achievements? What have been the real highlights of the last 10. Things that you think have really been great and good fun and had a real impact on sort of debates as well.

[00:38:10] **Gala Nettelbladt:** I think the parties are usually quite good.

[00:38:17] **Ross Beveridge:** You have to tell everyone when the party is. Plan their trip to Berlin.

There's no party lined up at the moment, unfortunately. I mean we've had a lot of highlight issues. We had, the children one was a highlight or the childhood one. We did have, a fairly early one was on the post political city.

[00:38:41] **Nina Gribat:** I think that was also a highlight. The planning as political practice for me is still a highlight, and many more. I think what we notice, like what remains to be difficult for us sometimes is to generate a lot of submissions that are of high quality. So, I think that we have invested a lot of time in working with authors to improve quality that of submissions.

We've noticed that we do get more submissions if we do calls for paper. So, we ended up doing more and more themed issues over the years. Like in the beginning we also had some open issues still. So, I think it's also get gotten better, I think, but we've had quite a few experiences also with submissions that have received bad reviews and that were never touched again.

That kind of never made it into the journal. Our quote of acceptance I think is also not super high. I think it's less than half that kind of make it. And most have quite a few revisions in the end. There're not so many occasions that articles just fly through.

So, I think that's a process for us, and still an issue. But we also are sometimes surprised with the responses to some topics instead of others, like I think that's kind of yeah.

[00:40:15] **Ross Beveridge:** So which topics have been really sort of hot ones and which ones have you thought would be really popular and just didn't really spark interest.

[00:40:26] **Gala Nettelblatt:** I remember having just joined in 2020, one *Debatte*, contribution in the debate section on east Germany and the role of urban research in East Germany was quite big. And we even had a public zoom event, like online zoom event, where quite, I think we had a lot of participants and that was really interesting for people.

So, the question of like how to do research in Eastern Germany and how, like what are the limits also of like concepts and approaches developed in Western Germany, even still today. So, I think that had a lot of resonance. And also, that, I think earlier issue on like urban social movements with Margit Mayer. And the debates around that I think is also something that people associate with, sub\urban or think back or, I sometimes have people walk up to me and they read that and that sort of what they think of when they think of sub\urban.

[00:41:27] **Nina Gribat:** I think the experiences that we've had is if the topic is too broad or too specific, and it's sometimes a bit difficult to strike the balance. And it's also sometimes a bit difficult to say like, how many people are really working on certain topics, on certain concepts or so. The post political city, as far as I know, or post political urbanism, has received quite a lot of submissions back then. I mean it's years ago, it was one of our first issues. And then I think as far as I know, shortly after we had an issue on the police or on police work, and that was more complicated to receive as many submissions.

So, it's a bit like, I think for us it's also not always so easy to predict.

Looking forward to end the interview. Do you have plans for the coming years? Is there a strategy? Are there certain things in the pipeline? Do you have things up your sleeve for the next few years for sub\urban? What's in store for your readers?

[00:42:40] **Gala Nettelblatt:** I mean we just celebrated 10 years which was very big for us this year.

Both with a special issue, and also a new layout. Both of our, homepage and the print version. I think, I don't know if that's like a plan or rather a question mark to me, for sure is how we continue financing the journal. I think the next two years with this Koala initiative that Nina talked about, is going to be much easier, but still, there's no continuous funding.

So that's something that worries us a lot or that is just a never-ending story. How we continue working as a collective, also. With like people, I don't know, everyone's careers have developed, a lot people have children, have professorships. And there's still so much that needs to be done for sub\urban, but I think resources are very scarce.

I think I didn't mention it before, but it's always two people, two editors reading, like reading and editing one text. And that takes a lot of time if you think about it. So how are we going to negotiate that in the future? I think is also something to think about.

[00:43:50] **Nina Gribat:** I think another issue that we've discussed for quite a while is how we can maybe also broaden the media.

Like how can we include also audio formats, and how can we really make use of our digital platform. I think we are also discussing like sometimes we discuss it, regularly we discuss it again, like how can we be relevant to the moment in some ways?

And I mean in most cases we decide against it. Also, when it goes according to what can you post here or there? Or do we join like a certain petition or whatever. And in many cases, we decide against it because we don't really have the resources to do it. And the core things we do already take up quite a bit of time.

I think we do have aspirations to also include audio formats and to make the whole digital world a bit more exciting. But that's like an open construction side and we haven't really started addressing it. It would also be possible to include films and all sorts of things as an open access journal.

[00:45:03] **Nina Gribat:** But so far, we haven't managed, but hopefully we'll manage at some point because it would be also great. I think we do have a, like right now we have a few, issues in the pipeline that are coming that I think are also super exciting. And we are meeting, as a collective we meet twice a year for a retreat.

And this is usually the occasions when we discuss like what we do in the future, which topics are coming up, and we are going away today. I think now that we've managed to do our celebrations and the redesign and stuff like this, that's taken a lot of work, we'll address this now.

[00:45:48] **Gala Nettelbladt:** I think one thing or Project on my mind that might be interesting for your listeners as well is that we are looking to connect with journals in other countries, who do similar things. We thought about the Radical housing journal in the UK, for example, but also one in Milan in Italy. And to look at an exchange, but also may be possible projects we could do together collectively, internationally, while keeping true to our mission to broaden the German speaking debate.

I think that's something that many of us find very interesting or is definitely something high up on the list. So do reach out if you're here.

[00:46:27] **Ross Beveridge:** Thank you. Thank you both very much. That was excellent and really, [incoherent] so everyone listening to the podcast should learn German so they can read sub\urban. We certainly encourage them to do that.

Take you a while perhaps, but it's certainly worth it if you can then read sub\urban.

So, thanks. Thanks very much.

[00:46:43] **Nina Gribat:** Thank you.

[00:46:50] **Outro:** Thanks to you for listening.

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