

The Public Space

Becoming a Venue for Public Event

Petra Kohse (journalist) walks by the *Speakers Arena* twice a day.

Younger people probably don't even know what that is anymore: the public space. For decades, squares—and really any street space of even modest size—have increasingly been used for commercial purposes, with the Christmas market giving way to the Easter market, the May market, various summer events, wine festivals, fall festivals, and finally back to the Advent market. The fact that anyone who wants to go out to sit and watch has to spend money has become so normal that even the few remaining open spaces are no longer frequented.

Ironically, right in front of the Pallast building —the high-rise complex in Berlin-Schöneberg that spans Pallasstraße—there is currently an interesting contrast to be experienced. Against the backdrop of the numerous balcony honeycombs with their satellite dishes, which inspire artists worldwide but mostly depress the residents, a small platform of speakers has stood for several weeks now: whenever you happen by, it's teeming with life: photo shoots are taking place, teenagers are hanging out, children are climbing on the sculpture and exploring it, and even older people with shopping bags are venturing over.

In fact, this sculpture titled *Speakers Arena*, made from 350 recycled speakers by the French-American artist Benoît Maubrev, can do even more. You can —Marschall McLuhan "*The Medium is the Message*" comes to mind— become yourself a broadcaster, connect to the system via phone or Bluetooth, play texts or music, or even plug in instruments (<https://benoitmaubrey.com/arena-berlin/>). A relatively small intervention, fitting the location on multiple levels—or better yet: a contribution for free use, minimally organised—and suddenly a space is public again—and cultural. Is it that simple? It is that simple.

Unfortunately, it will only be on display until the end of October

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Petra Kohse

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