

# Berlin's Border Dogs

Audio stories about animals in Berlin



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*Former border guard dog in front of the remains of the Berlin Wall. (Copyright: Tierschutzverein für Berlin (TVB). All rights reserved.)*

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*Berlin's Border Dogs* by Marie Permantier

An audio piece from the project seminar “Animal Topographies” held at the Institute for Cultural Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and run by Britta Lange and Mareike Vennen (summer semester 2021).

Animal topographies are site-specific explorations that view places where animals have played a special role in the past or present: spaces where animals are kept, and places that they have occupied. The audio stories that can be heard here started with theoretical and historical examinations of urban animal topographies and different forms of movement, tracing historical and current routes. The auditive hunt for clues leads through Berlin sites both known and unknown, where it explores relationships between humans and animals.

What was life like for the guard dogs, route dogs, and sniffer dogs that patrolled the former death strip at the Berlin Wall? Marie Permantier brings together voices that give accounts of the animals' everyday lives back then and asks what happened to the suddenly unemployed dogs after the Wall fell. She unravels the meaning of being an animal border guard in the context of the Cold War and of becoming an ideologically charged projection screen for ideas of ‘the other’ beyond the Wall.<sup>1</sup>

Other audio pieces tell the stories of Where the Rats Live, Dead Animals, Cat Colonies, and Haunting Cattle.

## Footnotes

1. You are listening to an interview with Sybille Weigel, employee at the Berlin Animal Shelter pound; excerpts from the NVA documentary *Schutz- und Fährtenhunde der Grenztruppen* (GDR, 1988); excerpts from Erich Honecker's ceremonial address to the Berlin State Council Building, 19 January 1989; an interview with Ronald Sima, former corporal of the Potsdam-Babelsberg K-9 unit; excerpts from the GDR textbook *Diensthunde: Ihre Abrichtung und Haltung* by Haberhauffe & Albrecht (Berlin, 1979); an account given by wall victim Willi Block (1934-1966), based on the web-based documentary project *Chronik der Mauer*; an excerpt from *ZDF heute Nachrichten*, 10 November (FRG, 1989); excerpts from the BBC documentary *Walking the Wall* with P. Bartels, former chief editor of the BILD newspaper (UK, 1994); excerpt from Durs Grünbein's poem “Portrait des Künstlers als junger Grenzhund 9” (Portrait of the Artist as a Young Border Dog 9) from *Schädelbasislektion* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991). ↵