

Far Right Violence in Berlin 2003 bis 2006

Manchester, 28th February, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen:

Dealing with the topic of “far-right violence“ in the public is subject to heavy fluctuations – individual, particularly brutal crimes heighten the interest in this phenomenon, soon, however, other subjects will determine the public discussion again.

But far-right violence adheres to other principles than the public attention, it attracts. Unfortunately it is a **constant manifestation** in our society.

Any type of crime impairs the security feeling of the citizens. Politically motivated crime, however, is only of minor importance in relation to the general crime in Berlin – nevertheless it targets the fundamental values of our community. It opposes the human and civil rights which are guaranteed in the Basic Constitutional Law and wants to turn violence into a means of policy. That makes politically motivated crime particularly dangerous.

Xenophobic acts of violence represent a major part of far-right violence. Some 470.000 foreigners from approximately 190 countries live in Berlin and about 350.000 Berliners with German nationality have a migration background. No doubt, immigration and a cultural variety offer chances, but they also entail potential conflicts. It is important that in a city with an ethnic variety latent extreme-right ideas may not consolidate and threaten the coexistence of the community.

Now as before it will remain the task of the entire society to prevent far-right violence and to develop preventive and intervening measures.

Within the framework of Germany's federal security system the Berlin office for the protection of the constitution, which I have been in charge of for many years, surveys and analyses as a domestic intelligence service any extremist efforts which target our free democratic constitutional structure. We inform decision makers, national institutions and the public as well. Government advisory services include strategic consultation with a long-term scheduled perspective but also a short-term support in relation to executive measures of the police.

The close cooperation of all German security agencies is based on the common assessment, that right-wing extremism must be combatted right from the beginning with all means we have. In this respect has the **Berlin office for the protection of the constitution made an important contribution to present this study.**

We have **analyzed the phenomenon of far-right violence in our city in the fields of offences, suspects and victims.**

First of all I would like to make a few introducing remarks about the methodology of the study and the development of far-right violence during the past few years. Subsequently, I would be pleased to make you familiar with some essential results of the study which explain in detail the crime-scenes of far-right violence in Berlin.

Methodology

- **Consecutive study between 2003 and 2006 focused on quality aspects**
- **Basic issues**
 - What is the extent and what are the features of far-right violence in Berlin?
 - What is the interrelation between far-right violence and right-wing extremism?
- **Data used as a basis**
 - Berlin Police Department of Criminal Investigation/Politically Motivated Crime, Berlin Office of the Public Prosecutor, Attorney General (Federal Central Criminal Register), Residents' Registration Office, own data
 - 300 acts of violence, 364 suspects, 296 victims

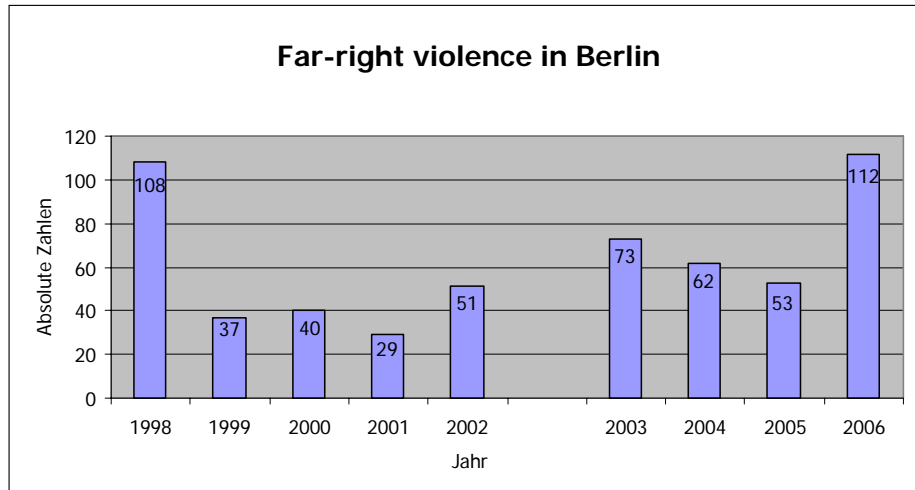
Consecutive study between 2003 and 2006 focused on quality aspects (last study between 1998 and 2003)

Basic issues (S. 8 f)

- **What is the extent and what are the features of far-right violence in Berlin?** Violence is not just violence as there are differences in relation to perpetrators, interrelated factors and victims. A more profound analysis of the real facts explains the quantity and the quality of far-right violence in Berlin.
- **What is the interrelation between far-right violence and right-wing extremism?** Apart from voting behavior, membership in organizations and demonstrations, violence is another means of political extremism. This follows the question about the interrelations between far-right violent acts and right-wing extremism with regard to organizations and geographical areas.

Data used as a basis (S. 13)

- Berlin Police Department of Criminal Investigation (Politically Motivated Crime/PMK), Berlin Office of the Public Prosecutor, Attorney General (Federal Central Criminal Register), Residents' Registration Office, own data.
- **300 acts of violence, 364 suspects** (325 different persons, among them 31 detected as suspects on repeated occasions), 296 victims.



There is an inconsistent share of the 300 violent acts perpetrated between 2003 and 2006.

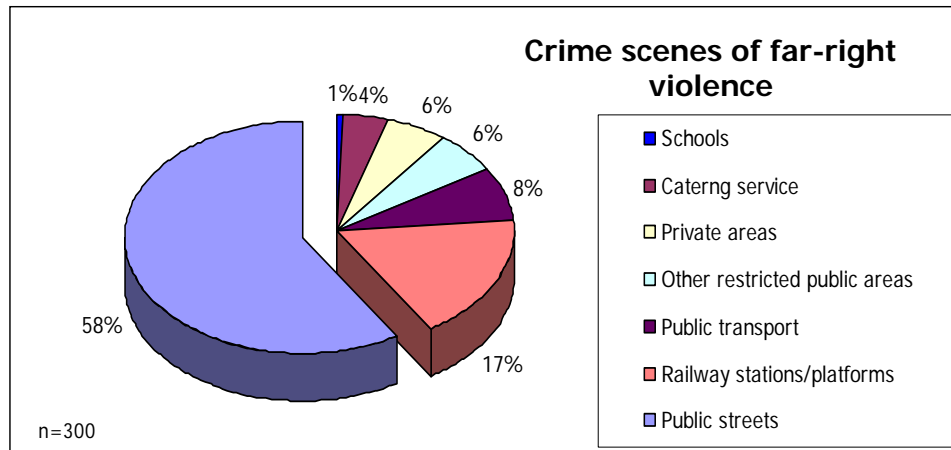
The number of 73 far-right violent acts perpetrated in 2003 decreased during the next two years to 63 and finally to 53. **In 2006 the number of violent acts skyrocketed up to 112, which is more than double in comparison to the year before (a plus of 111%).**

In a long-time comparison between 1998 and 2006 the number of violent acts in Berlin was subject to **heavy fluctuations**. Due to alterations in the process of recording politically motivated violent acts in the year 2001, these figures, however, can only be compared with each other to a certain degree. Since then an increasing number of offences has been regarded as politically motivated violence. In this respect offences like "hate crimes", which do not explicitly target the political system, will be included in the statistical data as well.

*Although the data of **politically motivated violence** is **not yet available for the year 2007**, the very high level of violent acts which was reached in 2006 is not to be expected for the last year.*

Comparison with general criminal violence:

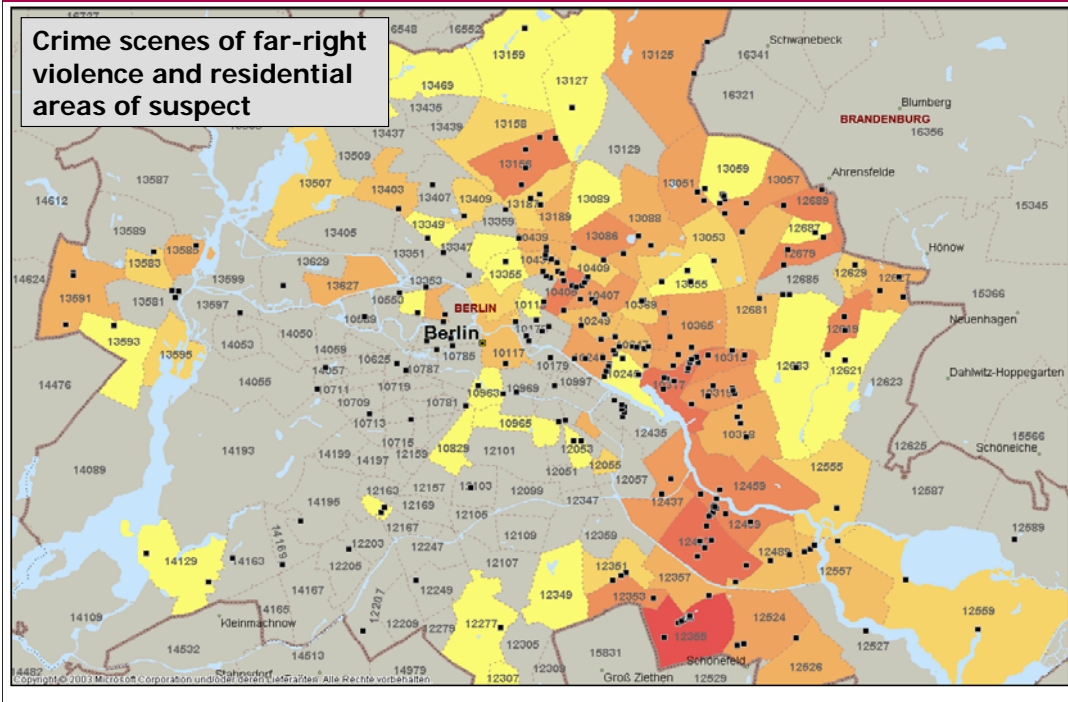
*Between 2003 and 2006 an **annual number of some 45.000 physical injuries** was reported in Berlin. The number of all politically motivated violent acts in the field of right-wing, left-wing and aliens' extremism remained in Berlin, however, always at a level of **less than 300 offences per year**.*



58% of far-right violent acts were committed in public streets.

Every one out of four violent acts was perpetrated in the direct vicinity of/or at railroad property (17%) and public transport (8%). Only a small portion of the violent acts (8%) was committed in private places. Schools were irrelevant in relation to the crime scenes (1%). (S. 15)

One reason for the high number of offences perpetrated in public streets could be the **special local circumstances**: encounter purely by chance, high frequency of visitors, anonymity of the crime-scene area. (S. 18 ff)



Localizing far-right violence in the urban area is very important in respect of a comprehensive, **empirically supported debate about the reasons** and gives a hint to take preventive measures. The presentation of areas where far-right violence concentrates does not mean to stigmatize individual local parts or residential areas.

A classification of violent acts according to districts shows **that far-right violence is geographically concentrated in the Eastern part of Berlin. 54% of far-right violent acts are perpetrated in three of 12 Berlin districts.** This is not true, however, of **all parts** of the districts – the offences are perpetrated **only in certain local parts** of the districts. (S. 20 f)

When we compare the crime scenes of far-right violence (black dots on the map) and the residential areas of the suspects (colour marking on the map) **four concentrated areas** come to our attention (Lichtenberg, Niederschöneweide and Johannisthal, Rudow, Prenzlauer Berg). The crime scenes are in most cases around **vital spots like traffic junctions, main roads and in or near train stations** - sometimes, however, in **residential areas** as well. This contradicts the assumption that an increasing number of violent acts is exclusively perpetrated near the “vital spot” of a main road or a train station. Right-wing extremism in Berlin tends “to cluster” in some parts of the city. Most of the crimes are committed within a radius of up to 2.5 km away from the suspects’ place of residence. (S. 25 ff)

Example: Lichtenberg train station



A typical example of a concentrated area is the one around the Lichtenberg train station

The **neighbouring Weitlingkiez** emerged as a **focus of confrontations** between right- and left-wing extremists.

Both parties reclaim the territory because of the enormous **historical symbolism of the area**.

In **none of the areas can any distinctive features be observed with regard to the social structure and the social environment**. They are not the city's trouble hotspots.

The "social status" was mostly classified as "middle" (2) and the population development ("dynamics") is specified as "steady" (+/-) on the "Monitoring Social Urban Development 2007" project level ("Monitoring Soziale Stadtentwicklung 2007", which covers the period between 2005-2006). Among other things data on unemployment, transfer payments and relocations to other districts are used to determine the "development index".

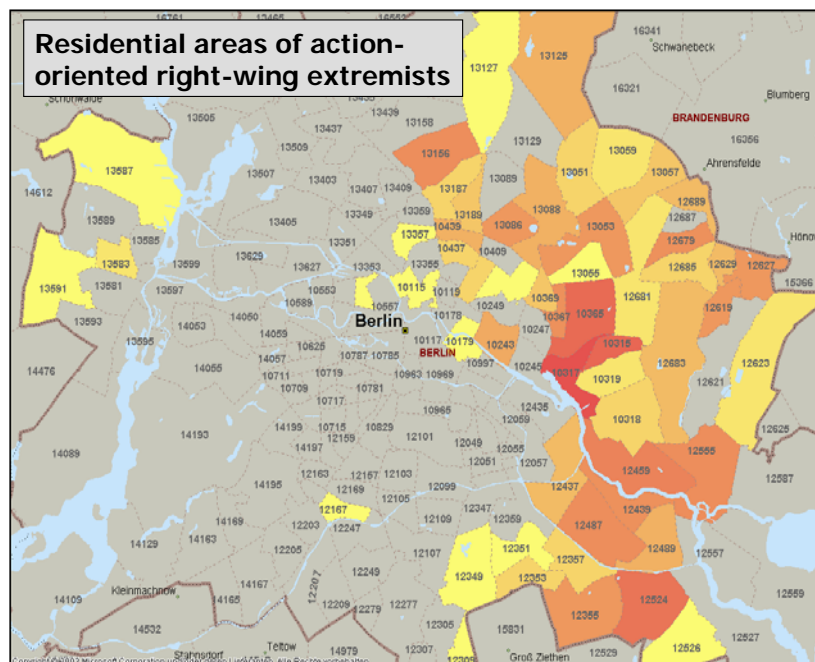
Example: Patterns of diverse areas with a concentration of far-right violence



We can see that there are other patterns of very diverse areas with a concentration of far-right violence

(on the left: Schöneweide, on the right: Rudow).

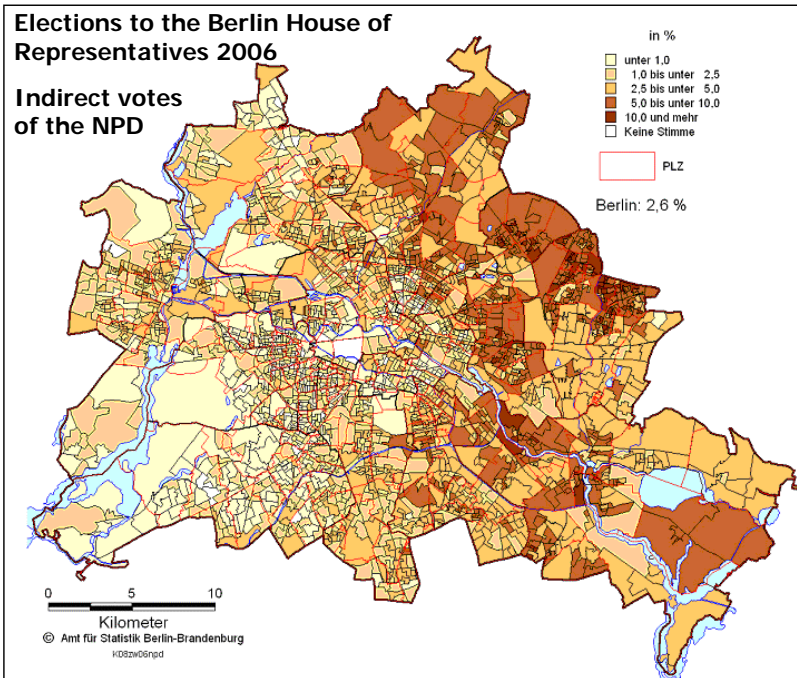
There are for example old and new buildings, but also detached family houses, multi-family houses and apartment blocks.



Residential areas of action-oriented right-wing extremists

A comparison with the residential areas of all action-oriented right-wing extremists and the places where far-right violent acts are perpetrated underlines the assumption, that problems of right-wing extremism and far-right violence are not identical, - geographically, however, they are almost the same.

The **residential areas of action-oriented right-wing extremists focus on three districts** (Lichtenberg, Treptow-Köpenick and the Southern part of Neukölln). **These areas match up with the concentrated areas of far-right violence in Berlin.** (S. 32 f)



In terms of the geographic share the election results roughly indicate that the residential population is inclined towards extremist-right parties.

The **NPD achieved 2.6%** of the indirect votes during the **elections to the Berlin House of Representatives/(Berlin State Parliament) in 2006**. The party achieved results above average in five Eastern districts and in one Western district of the city.

The geographical evaluation shows **a correlation between the election results of the NPD and the areas of far-right violence at district level**: In districts where far-right violence predominated above average, the NPD usually achieved election results which were also above average.

A more detailed examination of the results with regard to the votes makes the correlation even more transparent. It can be observed, that **the number of votes which the NPD achieved in local parts with a heavy concentration of far-right violence, is explicitly above average.** (S. 31 f)

Results

- The geographical areas of far-right violence are identical with the areas of right-wing extremism in Berlin
- Far-right violence resembles youth group violence

The geographical areas of far-right violence are identical with the areas of right-wing extremism in Berlin.

Suspects take hardly any active part in extreme-right organizations although empirical results indicate a common social environment of violent perpetrators and right-wing extremists.

Far-right violence resembles youth group violence.

In the majority of the cases the suspects are male suspects who are between 15 and 24 years old. Especially victims and suspects, who are involved in confrontations between the far-right and the far-left, have more or less the same age. Apart from criteria like crime-scenes in the residential environment ("reclaiming the territory") and the spontaneous perpetration of offences after leisure-time activities is this another indication of combined far-right violence and youth group violence.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Claudia Schmid