

What will Wedding Casinos look like in 2025? Jaspar Joseph-Lester

When we try to imagine the future of Wedding (north Berlin), we probably picture the streets liberated from the hundreds of casino outlets that currently populate the district. To suggest that these small-scale casinos will in 2025 be unchanged is a direct challenge to the more familiar CGI visualisation of urban futures that we encounter everywhere. We know very well that future imaginings of the city are bound to narratives that focus on urban transformation, and it follows that in the face of shiny new developments and socially transformative media-scapes, there is little scope for alternative urban futures. It is difficult to imagine Berlin in the future without picturing aspirational architecture. Yet, the casinos that pepper the streets of north Berlin point to a different story: here, we find spaces that refuse to change.

The images at the centre of this collaborative city guide were captured seven years apart but, in most cases, the casino facades have remained untouched. They look just as they did seven years ago and, we might suggest, just as they will continue to look – even far into the future. The texts in this series respond to the stasis of Wedding's casinos and anticipate the future of these spaces through the lenses of fiction, philosophy, critical theory, political science and law. Together they playfully confront the consequences of an urban landscape that is stuck in time.

Casino: Reinickendorfer Straße² Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos

It's always this time of year. Work slows down, the city empties, no regulars around – perhaps a couple of lost tourists asking directions. Nothing to do. And she starts: let's open a bar or let's get a food counter in or I don't know what else. Every year, something else. Improvement, she says, otherwise we will be left behind. She gets all worked up and spends weeks planning it. Last year, or was it a couple of years ago, she was going on about going online. What's wrong with the website we have, I said. Nothing as simple as that though. She wanted to go all online gambling – CASINoneLINE, she said – we have the name ready. Like those things we see on TV where people go and bet online and are having a party all together. This is the way to go global, she said, and started dreaming again. I leave her to it. I know better than to object now, or even try to understand what she is doing. I just need to nod when she explains, and I can carry on thinking about the real issues. The upstairs neighbour, for example. Not the old lady that never goes out anymore, she is all right. It's the new guy. Every morning I pick up his crushed beer cans from my front door, every night loud music and all these people in and out. We are peaceful people here, we have even stopped playing music – it's been a few years now, no one bothered to fix the stereo when it went bust, just

Casino: Nettelbeckplatz¹ Ahuvia Kahane

Time is the number of change in respect of before and after.
Aristotle, Physics IV

Newton certainly thought that time was empty and homogeneous. In his sensorium, everything moved along from T₁ to T₂, to T₃ and into the infinite future of T₁, in sync with the monotonous tick-tock of God's eternal clockwork, whose pendulum always moves back and forth by the laws of gravity and motion and whose hands always go round and round in circles. Which makes it very hard to tell time, because the damn things (Newtonian determinism, God's clock) are 'timeless' instruments. They never seem to go anywhere or to change. So, the tick-tock of heavenly time is not, as Aristotle had put it centuries earlier, 'the number of change' (but does the passage of historical time matter when time is 'timeless?'). It is just 'a number', an unpredictable counting which we enact as we stare at the same spot in space and cast the Godhead's loaded dice. We never have time. And yet (as Samuel Beckett, for example, knew well) we live by the hope which only time provides. Our luck will change... today or tomorrow perhaps.

In a world of infinite, homogeneous time, chance – if we can find it – is the font of mercy, of course. Losing

everything is a comfort. Death is not a threat, but a promise. It is not the sanction of Being but its gift. "In the end", as Anselm Kiefer says, "we know that everything falls down". Hope exists because the world – not the eternal world of Newton or Aristotle's homogeneous time, but the world into which we, like honest dice, are thrown (geworfen) – becomes the object of care (Sorge) when we look at it again another day.

We recognise the same storefront, the same corner, the same row of windows, the same dreary yellow plaster, the same extension on top of the roof. But to make sense of these images, to turn pictures of a casino in Wedding into icons of hope, we must tell ourselves stories. We must weave little narratives ("discursive accounts of events arranged along an axis of time") in which the dice of time have been cast, in which we are free to cry out, in joy or in sorrow, at the ebb and flow of life's vicissitudes.

"The art of storytelling," Paul Ricoeur says, "retains the public character of time while keeping it from falling into anonymity". It is precisely in the art of storytelling, in our fragile freedom to arrange images and words in the order of our consciousness, that we create the world in public, outside of ourselves and gain the prize of undying (in Greek, *aphthiton*) eternity.

As the Greeks know well from their most treasured words (those of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey), Troy will fall and Odysseus will come home. The end of the plot



is the beginning of the tale. We sometimes call this end 'fate' or 'good fortune', or just plain 'good luck'.

In truth, luck has nothing to do with it. In God's universe, fate is the indifference of time, its refusal to change, its amoral disregard for human suffering, as Oedipus the King knew well. But in our beautiful, fragile, mortal world, fate is the inevitable necessity of throwing the dice and playing an unpredictable game.

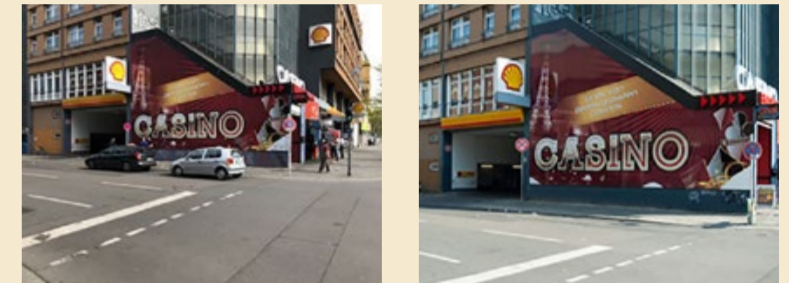


the usual ding-ding of the machines. But he blasts the music so loud that everything is shaking. It's as if she does not even hear the thumping, she does not even know what I am talking about when I mention it, what with her dreaming about global nonsense and online changes and all that. It's as if she knows, and I know, that just like the food counter and the bar and even that change of shop window that she wanted (you have the whole world here, what more do you want, I said) will ultimately fail, because nothing has ever happened, no project has ever been materialised, nothing has or will ever change here. But I let her go on about it, it makes August go by faster.

Casino: Müllerstraße³ Esther Leslie

Nearly Christmas time, the stores beckoned, with weakly glimmering LED fairy lights and mini-Maggi sauces on a keyring - enhancements to life, shall we say? A Christmas tree gewgaw caught my eye – a coin-operated arcade machine. It was all glitzy metallic in pink, with a tumble of golden coins falling in a cascade. This is the image of luck, the crock of gold coins at the end of the rainbow. Casino joy. Tangible, beautiful. Elusive. Arcades are where dreams should come true. Arcades today gesture not at shopping caverns - dustier and less populated than those on the edge of being, through which Surrealists wandered. Their lights dim out for good. Arcades persist only for the gambler or player, the very last place where coins tinkle metallically and so figure the anticipation of bliss. "When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done", wrote J.M. Keynes, in 1936, in the tumult of economic crisis – evident, in another metaphor, as enterprise becomes bubbles "on a whirlpool of speculation".

The economy inflates and pops with unregulated speculations. "It is usually agreed that casinos should, in the public interest, be inaccessible and expensive. And perhaps the same is true of Stock Exchanges". The wheels spin: punters hope to hit the number



that makes the gold jingle. The economy gyrates; its centrifugal force catapults this one to riches, this one into debit. It never stops. But seven years from now all is ether, bytes, part of an operating system that cashes out in flickery light the illusions propelling an economy. In 2025, it was decided that the casino is the economy. This corner of Antonstrasse became a stock exchange, chock-a-block with bitcoin bandits.

Casino: Gerichtstraße⁴ Matthias Heumeier

01.09.2027, Berlin-Wedding: It all started with the micro-housing apartments on Müllerstrasse about a decade ago. Primarily serving young professionals with high incomes, the apartment complex quickly became a symbol of ruthless foreign investment and was subject to controversy amongst local residents. With rents soaring to an all-time high and social housing at maximum capacity, many Wedding residents were anxious about being pushed out. Various demonstrations during the summer of 2020 mobilised hundreds of residents from across the political spectrum.

Despite obvious resentments towards the project, the investors developed a second complex just across the street. Its opening in May 2021 marked a tipping point in the conflict and the protests turned into riots: windows of the building complex were shattered, doors were broken, tenants were harassed and attacked. Yet, the most severe acts of aggression remained invisible. Countless hacking attacks not only targeted the tenants personally but effectively took the buildings off the infrastructural grid. In 2025 the buildings went out of business.

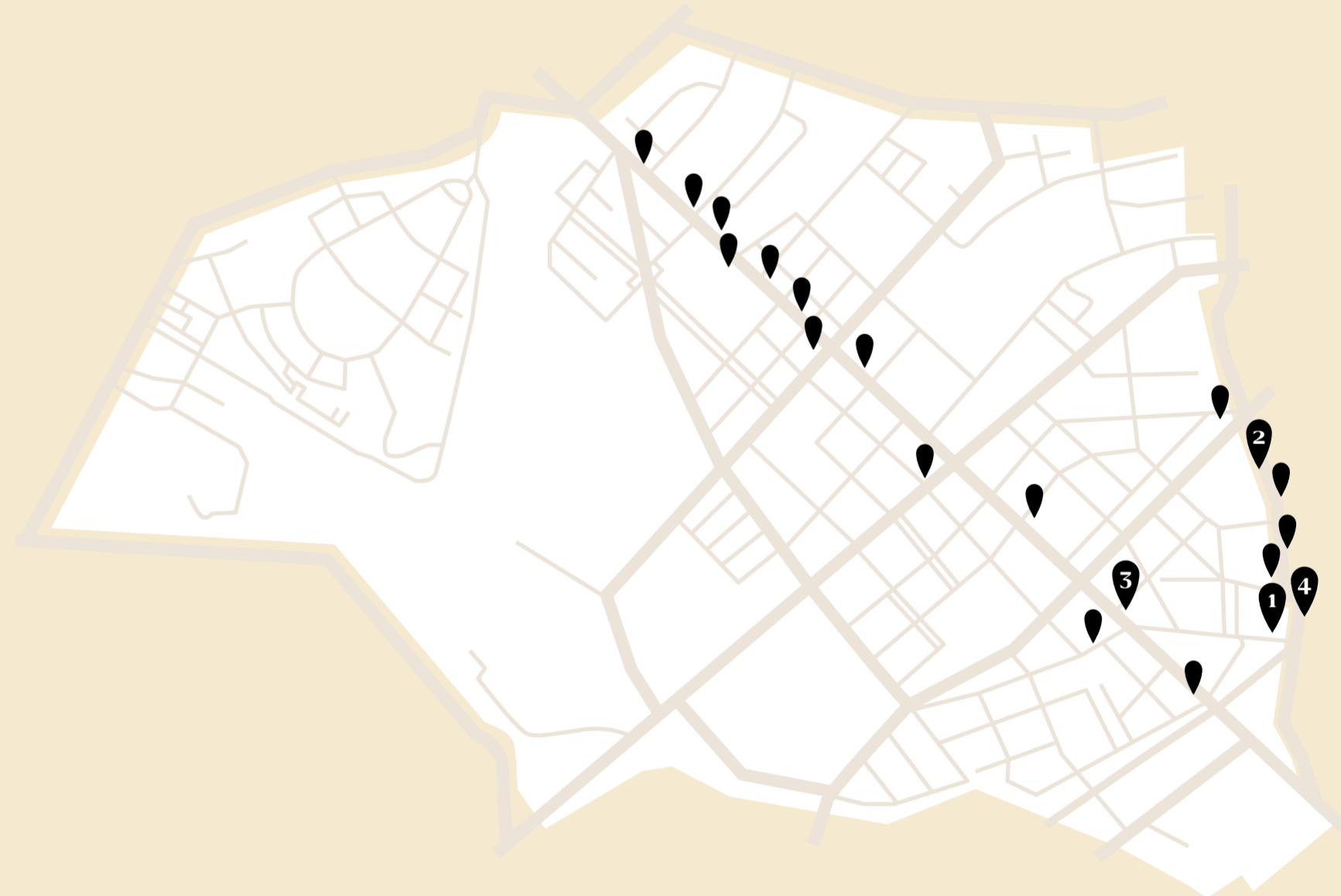
The protests became the first publicly recognised coup by Roter Wedding – a radical underground organisation claiming to have taken down the buildings. Their desire to free the neighbourhood from



'Capitalist dictatorship' and revive Wedding's tradition as a Communist stronghold made many residents sympathise with the group. Roter Wedding addressed a collective sentiment of helplessness and an ever-growing scepticism towards the political system. Many people felt that the activists had finally brought justice to a crooked system. At the same time, Roter Wedding's actions made it awfully clear how vulnerable our fully connected society had become.

Regarded as 'landmarks of capitalism, unethically taking advantage of human weaknesses', local casinos ended up being the activists' next target. On the night of June 28, 2026 Roter Wedding simultaneously hacked all 127 of Wedding's casinos and silently manipulated their slot machines. Within a timespan of 48 hours the casinos experienced dramatic losses and most went out of business within weeks.

Today's closing of the last casino still in business, the Vulkan Casino on Gerichtstrasse, marks the end of the questionable era of 'Little Las Vegas', as Wedding was often referred to.



Non-)time Capsules Ludwig Engel

I imagine Jaspar Joseph-Lester coming to Berlin with everything in mind but to encounter a strange form of (non-)time capsule. Initially, it must have been a rather random act, to walk the streets photographing the casinos of Berlin's Northern district of Wedding. The entire complex of research appears to me less like an intentional discovery and more like a curious anthropological artefact chanced upon on an urban drift. The text Jaspar published about his first encounter with this typology – *A Guide to the Casino Architecture of Wedding* – thus speaks of the excitement and curiosity an explorer has when encountering a new species. No wonder he went back seven years later to revisit his discoveries, which – surprisingly – appeared to have turned (or had continued to be) one of the last strongholds against change in the city. While Berlin transformed rapidly, Wedding casinos remained in their unreadable steady state of existence. With their blinded windows, we cannot know for sure if the casinos are empty or filled with greedy-eyed Berliners shoving their euros into slot machines. We have no idea if a specific casino just opened or is about to close – for the day or forever. When talking to Jaspar about this curious out-of-time state of the Wedding casinos, Robert Smithson's encounter with the Hotel Parlaque in Yucatan, Mexico, popped up in our conversation.



In 1969, Smithson stayed at the weirdly unfinished and/or ill-maintained hotel. He later used the snap photographs of his stay in a lecture to illustrate his idea of 'ruins in reverse'. And just like the hotel, the Wedding casinos appear fascinatingly in Jaspar's photographs in a frozen state of decay and renovation, as contemporary ruins in reverse – heterotopian (non-)time capsules, obscuring their own motives while simultaneously offering anchor points from which one can observe the transformation of the urban fabric around them.

Wedding Casinos 2011 – 2018 – 2025

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