Berlin by Design
Transforming the Social Dynamics of Public Open Space in a Fractured City

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses social integration strategies in regards to Berlin’s public open spaces. Social integration is important because it can facilitate economic stimulation and foster a greater sense of community. Furthermore, Berlin’s civic leaders have made social integration a top priority.

This report provides salient information concerning Berlin’s modern planning history and the social dynamics of public open space. The report analyzes two unique case studies in order to call attention to significant design challenges facing Berlin’s public open spaces. It concludes with a recommended set of design principles that can be applied to Berlin’s public open spaces.
INTRODUCTION

Planners, politicians, and urban designers have attempted to “unify” divided cities by recreating urban identities with new public spaces. Past examples have been met with varying degrees of success in many post-conflict cities. This is especially true of Berlin, which provides numerous case studies.

Since the jubilation of reunification has faded, Berlin remains a fractured city, both socially and physically (Ladd, 2000). When the frontline of the Cold War receded, Berlin was left with an over abundance of vacant land once known as the “death strip.” The death strip was a buffer between East and West, approximately 100 meters wide, created by the German Democratic Republic to discourage would-be defectors (Cuppers & Miessen, 2002; Fischer, 1996; Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). Since 1989, Berlin has experienced various redevelopments in the historic center of the city, including portions of the former death strip (Ladd, 1998, 2000; Loeb, 2006). These redevelopments were largely created to serve as images of the “new” Berlin. Many of these new civic spaces have been met with criticism as urban non-events however (Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). These unifying efforts have had negative side effects, entrenching cultural differences between former East and West Berliners (Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). Furthermore, Berliners are now indebted for generations to come because of city leaders investing headlong in new civic icons (Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006).
This report will focus on public open spaces within two of Berlin’s central districts, which represent the changing face of Berlin. Additionally, these districts represent Berlin’s past shortcomings in many ways, but also its future potential. The district of Mitte is the historic center of Berlin where much of the City’s new development has occurred (Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). South of Mitte is Kreuzberg—one of the most socially diverse districts of Berlin.

Map of Berlin showing the Berlin Wall in red, the old district names, and the new administrative boundaries in black. Map created by Mike Smith, (Source: wikitravel.org/en/Berlin, 2009; modified by the author to show the Wall).
**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Kreuzberg and Mitte offer planners the opportunity to change tactics and achieve greater “buy-in” from citizens in the continuous transformation of the “new” Berlin. The purpose of this report is to inform Berlin’s civic leaders about the opportunities for transforming public open spaces in the districts of Kreuzberg and Mitte into places that will cultivate social interactions between diverse people.

**OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this report address the relationships that the people of Berlin have with their urban environment. Those objectives are:

1. Document how different types of public open spaces within of Kreuzberg and Mitte function socially.

2. Identify opportunities to transform public open spaces within Kreuzberg, and Mitte into more sociable places.

3. Propose design principles for developing public open spaces within Kreuzberg and Mitte that foster social interaction.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The large amount of undeveloped land in Berlin presents civic leaders, planners, and urban designers with a significant opportunity to create inclusive places. Public open spaces designed with all Berliners in mind will lead to greater social integration and tolerance by making the City more
welcoming to everyone. Past efforts have been expensive, divisive, and grandiose in scale (Ladd, 1996, 2000; Loeb 2006). This report will investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of incremental steps towards improving public open spaces. These places are essential for building a sense of place and community. This report demonstrates how public open spaces, when designed appropriately, can foster sociability more so than past projects have. If planners do not seize upon this chance, Berlin’s vacant land could be developed in less than desirable fashion, further entrenching Berliners’ differences.

Moreover, creating inclusive public open space is vital if Berlin’s civic leaders hope to build an economically robust city. Tolerance—a universal characteristic of economically successful cities (Florida, 2002)—is a key factor in Berlin’s future (Krätke, 2000). Eastern Germany suffers economically from being stigmatized by many Europeans as a zone of prejudice (Krätke, 2000). Excluding Berlin, foreign investment in this region lags behind much of the rest of Europe, as many firms are reluctant to invest in the area (Krätke, 2000). Berlin has made efforts to shake off this stigma, but more progress needs to be made.
Public open space has the capacity to function as an economic catalyst for its surroundings (Lopez, 2006). Public open spaces that cultivate social interaction have the potential to establish new social networks, which can accelerate the flow of information and new ideas (Granovetter, 1981; Safford, 2009). However, if parks and plazas are not designed with the proper criteria in mind, economic stimulation may not take root. A place must first be socially active for its users to develop an affinity for it. It is difficult to develop a “buzz,” or reputation for a place without people first developing an emotional connection—a connection to place. This is essential for a public open space to become an economic catalyst. This report will examine strategies for creating a greater connection to place.

Public spaces are typically understood as places with equal access for all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status (Forsyth, 2008; Marcus & Francis, 1998). The challenge for the planners and urban designers of Berlin is to ensure vital public spaces for all of its residents. People of various ethnicities co-exist in a portion of Berlin’s public space—typically streetscapes—but they often do so out of necessity. Planners need to consider how public spaces can be designed to entice multi-cultural co-existence by choice (Bollens, 2002; Gehl, 1996).
SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL FRAGMENTATION OF BERLIN

THE COLD WAR’S IMPACT ON PLANNING IN BERLIN

Berlin is a city that has often found itself at the crossroads of history. As a result, the City’s urban form has continuously been redefined by the socio-political climate de jour (Manghani, 2003). However, no other period had as profound of an impact on the image of Berlin as the Cold War (Fischer, 1996; Ladd, 1998). As Berlin was rebuilt following WWII, the City diverged into two separate political spheres. Communism was imposed on East Berliners, which many rejected by migrating to the West (Fischer, 1996). Then in 1961, The German Democratic Republic (GDR) erected the Berlin Wall to prevent its citizens from defecting to the West (Fischer, 1996). The Wall effectively isolated the halves of the City, forcing East and West Berlin to develop independent of one another for 28 years (Storm, 2001).

When Berlin reunited, the contrast between the halves was in full perspective—the two urban forms reflecting their respective ideologies (Ladd, 2000; Storm, 2001). In West Berlin, commercial development defined much of the urban landscape (Storm, 2001). Monolithic buildings and excessively wide streets for military transport shaped much of East Berlin (Storm, 2001). Furthermore, East Berlin’s urban fabric was disjointed by sites left undeveloped since the War and by housing blocks in disrepair (Storm, 2001).

The contrast of the two halves of the City presented Berlin’s city planners with significant challenges to physically reuniting the City (Loeb, 2006). Today, Berlin is a shadow of its former self, having surmounted past challenges (Manghani, 2003). The juxtaposition of capitalism in the West and communism in the East still remains fresh in the collective memory of Berliners, however (Ladd, 2000). Much of the physical contrast has since been altered, but in the process, the socio-cultural contrasts have become entrenched (Loeb, 2006). Unfortunately, some animosity has arisen amongst former East Berliners towards the planners from the West (Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). This rift can best be understood by examining the history of city planning in both halves of Berlin during the Cold War.

East and West Berlin had a multitude of contrasts during this era of division that are widely known (Storm, 2001), but less evident were the different approaches to city planning by the two Berlins (Loeb, 2006). Throughout the Cold War, beginning as early as 1948, master plans were drafted by planners in West Berlin under the assumption that Berlin would
be a unified city (Loeb, 2006). West Berlin’s master plans depicted road connections with East Berlin and a new government complex (Loeb, 2006). While West Berlin’s planners considered the context of the whole city, the planners of East Berlin completely voided the capitalistic portion of the City from their plans. The planners of East Berlin drafted master plans as if a giant hole was punched through half of the City (Loeb, 2006).

A CITY REASSEMBLED: PLANNING A UNIFIED BERLIN

Upon reunification, the socialistic planning schemes of East Berlin were deemed irrelevant and were thus discarded in favor of West Berlin’s master plan (Loeb, 2006). Executing these plans proved difficult however, as planning for a reunified city was an uncharted endeavor (Storm 2001). Having anticipated a reunified Berlin for over half a century, the planners of West Berlin were all too eager to execute their plans without giving proper consideration to their fellow citizens to the east (Loeb, 2006).

After reunification, the most pressing issue for planners was to mitigate the Wall’s impact on the urban landscape. Throughout its existence, the Wall took various forms, each reincarnation progressively more imposing and inhibiting than the last (Fischer, 1996; Loeb, 2006). At the end of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall had morphed into two walls with the death strip in between (Cupers & Miessen, 2002; Loeb, 2006). The death strip existed in isolation as a scar across the urban landscape, dividing the City once whole. As the Wall was removed in great haste after reunification, the death strip was incorporated into the cityscape—its fate already predetermined by the
western planners (Loeb, 2006). Their strategy was to develop an urban form that recreates Berlin as it was before the War (Ladd, 1998).

Key developments since reunification have been as numerous as they have grandiose (Ladd, 2000). Potsdamer Platz, Leipziger Platz, and the Pariserplatz were redeveloped to represent the “new” Berlin as recreations of the old Berlin (Ladd, 1998). These projects, in addition to others like the Holocaust Memorial, transformed the death strip.

The most ambitious “death strip reunification project” yet has been Berlin’s new train station, the largest in Europe (Loeb, 2006). Upon reunification, the City inherited a great deal of redundancy in services, including transportation infrastructure (Storm, 2001). Rather than reaching a compromise on which station would function as Berlin primary train station, civic leaders decided to build a new one (Loeb, 2006). These projects, and many more, have forever shaped the image of Berlin, but at a great cost (Ladd, 2000; Loeb 2006). Berlin had a debt of €60 billion in 2007 (Parkin, 2006).

The intangible costs to Berliners have also been significant. The designs for East Berlin by West Berlin planners were to erase much of the old socialistic urban form (Loeb, 2006). The most glaring example of this is the demolition of the Palast der Republik—the former seat of government for the GDR (Goehler, 2007; Ladd, 2000; Loeb, 2006). The Palast der Republik was much more than just a government building, but a cultural icon as well (Goehler, 2007). The Palast der Republik housed a ballroom, a performing arts center, a discothèque, and even a bowling alley. It was a place where
many East Germans came to socialize, laugh, play, and fall in love. When asbestos was discovered there, its plans for demolition were fast-tracked. Now there exists a massive construction site where Palast der Republik once was. This example epitomizes the cleft between East and West. While many former East Germans were diametrically opposed to their government, they still held an affinity for socialist architecture and the sense of community that developed around it (Fischer, 1996). To many, the reconfiguration of East Berlin has been an affront to their sensibilities.

\textbf{Berlin’s Diversity}

Reunification has had negative implications for another segment of Berlin’s population—its Turkish community (Fischer, 1996). After the fall of communism, Berlin experienced new dynamics with its population of immigrants, as those living in East Berlin were predominantly from Eastern
Europe (Fischer, 1996; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003). This did not bode well for many of the Turkish who suffered from language barriers and/or educational deficiencies (Fischer, 1996; Kil & Silver, 2006). The result has been something of a demotion for the Turkish within the social order of Berlin’s immigrant communities (Fischer, 1996). This is not a welcomed development for a group that already lacked integration with the rest of Berlin (OECD, 2003). The Turkish community, Berlin’s largest immigrant population, is relatively insular (Fischer, 1996). This phenomenon is attributed to the high value the Turkish place on existing social networks (OECD, 2003). For example, there are nodes within Turkish neighborhoods that are often comprised of immigrants of specific communities within Turkey.

The Turkish are only part of Berlin’s diverse mixture of immigrants. Immigrants from all corners of the globe make up 12.9% of the City’s population (OECD, 2003). 36.6% of Berlin’s foreign population hails from Europe, Russia, and North America. About a third (33.6%) come from the Near and Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, some of which come as refugees. The Turkish (125,081) represent 29.8% of Berlin’s foreign population.

The settlement patterns of foreigners living in Berlin has ebbed and flowed between the various inner city districts in both parts of the city over the last two decades (OECD, 2003). Of Berlin’s inner city districts, Kreuzberg and Wedding have the largest portions of foreign populations—34.4% and 30% respectively (OECD, 2003). These two districts were once
considered part of West Berlin’s periphery, which is in part why many immigrants located there (Kil & Silver, 2006). The death strip once formed Kreuzberg and Wedding’s district boundaries, which was in large part why those areas were peripheral (OECD, 2003). Mitte, Berlin’s central district, was also bound by the death strip but as part of East Berlin. It too has a fair amount of residents that are immigrants (OECD, 2003). A large portion of Mitte’s adjacent death strip has already been developed—cause for concern of many Berliners (Loeb, 2006). For these reasons, Mitte and Kreuzberg will be the area of focus for this report.
**A FRAMEWORK FOR BERLIN’S SOCIAL DYNAMICS**

**BERLIN’S PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

Public open space is an essential component of the social ecology of a city. According to Lewis Mumford, there are four human needs—protection, culture, commerce and ceremony, the need for finding meaning and value (Goltsman & Iacofano, 2007). Berlin’s public open space fulfills most of these needs to varying degrees. Public space is a significant component of urban life in Berlin, by which it provides people a medium for social interaction, cultural expression, commerce, celebration, civic identity, and political discourse.

Berlin is like no other city in the world in that it is steeped in a historical malaise—aspects of which have been deployed by competing subcultures to define various elements of the City’s public open space. Twenty years after reunification, Berlin’s public open spaces are starting to acquire some consistency. Perhaps this can be attributed to the many parks and plazas in Berlin that have been conceived through the design competition process. This has undoubtedly created an accessible process for Berliners to become involved in the creation of new places. However, the design competitions often apply an arbitrary criteria determined by design juries for each competition (S. Bätz, personal communication, April 8, 2009). Typically, these competitions are concerned with large parks and plazas—the primary components of public open space that are ubiquitous throughout the City.
Social Dimensions of Urban Design

Concepts such as harmony, beauty, variety, and order have been thought of as attributes of the [physical environment] itself. Designers have unconsciously relied [on] their own implicit values and perceptions, projecting them on the physical world as if they were inherent qualities. Not so—one begins with the images and priorities of the users of a place and must look at place and person together.

Kevin Lynch—A Theory of Good City Form, 1981 (p. 150)

Space and society are intrinsically linked. Humans have been manipulating their environment long before planning professionals existed. Space has influenced social relationships to one degree or another (Dear and Wolch 1989, in Camona, Heath, Oc, Tiesdell, 2003). Relationships are constituted through space, constrained by space, and mediated by space. Therefore, urban designers affect the possibilities for interaction within the built environment they help create.

Physical factors certainly influence what people can and cannot do, but they are “neither exclusive, nor necessarily the dominant influences on behavior. [...] Design matters but not absolutely. What happens in any particular environment depends on those using it” (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 106). While urban design cannot determine behavior, it can be used to manipulate the probabilities for certain behavior.

When predicting probable uses of a space, one must consider how the design satisfies the hierarchy of human needs, established by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 article, Theory of Human Motivation (Carmona et al.,
Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs requires that the most basic need be met first:

- Physiological needs: comfort and warmth
- Safety and security needs: freedom from harm
- Affiliation needs: belonging to a community
- Esteem needs: feeling valued by others
- Self-actualization needs: artistic expression, acceptance

Understanding *how* design satisfies these needs helps planners, landscape architects, and urban designers more accurately predict how the social dynamics of an urban open space will function.

- **Physiological:** William H. Whyte (1981) documented how people react to sunny areas and shaded areas, on days warm and cold—satisfying their physiological needs. Places designed to provide comfort both by and from the elements would thus be more useable.

- **Safety:** Research in crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) has shown that people tend to avoid spaces in which they feel vulnerable (Newman, 1972, 1996). Public space design can counter safety issues by allowing for natural surveillance and providing sociable places.

- **Affiliation:** Urban open spaces can often invoke feelings that lend to a sense of place, connecting many different people to a greater community. These spaces provide settings for friends and families to gather and appreciate each other’s company.
• *Esteem*: Open spaces can help meet these needs by providing group settings, both active and passive. Sport and recreational uses provide active settings for others to come together and experience moments of appreciation.

• *Self-actualization*: Urban open spaces can often represent, for some, the opportunity to fulfill the highest of human needs. For example, an outdoor music festival would present such an opportunity for the performing musicians. Designers thus need to consider how the programming of a place either facilitates or inhibits self-actualization needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs thus provides an important prism for considering the validity of urban open space design for the purpose of sociability.

In his book *Life Between Buildings*, Jan Gehl (1996) alludes to this notion in his proposed categorization of outdoor activities.

• *Necessary activities* (going to work, school, or shopping) are minimally influenced by physical design, as people must do certain things.

• *Optional activities* (taking a walk, people-watching, etc.) depend more on the setting—if a place is welcoming and there is opportunity.

• *Social activities* (conversations, communal activities, etc.) require the presence of others, which is largely determined by the desirability of a space.

Gehl asserts that social activities are greatly diminished with lack of quality spaces, and optional activities suffer as well. Therefore, a high quality
public realm is an essential element for a socially integrated city. This concept will play a key role in identifying opportunities for cultivating social interaction.

Gehl (1996) also proposes a scale of social interactions, varying from being alone to being together. The spectrum ranges from the high end of “close friendships, [to] friends, acquaintances, chance contacts, [and] passive contacts” (p. 17). Without active spaces, the low end of this spectrum disappears. This may seem insignificant to some, but less intense social interaction is quite significant (Marcus & Francis 1998). When people recognize others who are different, it becomes an acknowledgement of their right to the city as equals (Marcus & Francis 1998). Successful public spaces enable social interaction at all levels, and thus are essential for a healthy public realm.

**SOCIAL INTERACTION IN PUBLIC SPACE**

Lyn H. Lofland (1998), in his book “The Public Realm: Exploring the City’s Quintessential Social Territory,” offers greater insight into the nature of social interaction amongst strangers. Lofland proposes five principles of interaction between strangers:

1. Cooperative motility: an un-choreographed dance people do as they move through crowded spaces.
2. Civil inattention: the public faces people use—a form of non-verbal communication.
3. Audience role: taking an interest in the people within one’s surroundings—people watching.

4. Restrained helpfulness: “mundane assistance,” responding to a question such as, ‘Can you tell me how to get to...’

5. Civility towards diversity: acceptance of others, treating all equal.

These five principles of are employed by the motives strangers have for interacting in public (Lofland, 1998):

- Privacy and avoidance
- Territorial defense
- Possibility or impossibility of rescue
- Sociability
- Equity or inequity

The above principles, and motives for their employment, point to a lesser likelihood for visual and verbal encounters to occur. Nevertheless, social encounters amongst strangers do occur, and understanding why is crucial. A certain set conditions must exist for interaction to occur between strangers (Lofland, 1998):

- **Open persons**: Individuals who are more available for encounters due his or her situation—e.g. an officer on patrol, a person walking a dog, etc.
- **Open regions**: Places where people are mutually approachable—e.g. a festival at park, a tourist attraction, etc.
- **Triangulation**: A “process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to other strangers
as if they knew each other” (Whyte, 1980: p. 94)—e.g. food vendors, public art, festivals, benches, etc.

The concept of triangulation will be further explored in this report, as it provides a promising means for increasing the probability for social interaction in urban open spaces.

It is also important to understand the different relational types amongst strangers:

• *Fleeting*: Chance encounters between random strangers.

• *Routine*: Some strangers have public lives, like bus drivers and police officers. These are often familiar roles to most strangers, creating scenarios that influence public behavior.

• *Quasi-primary*: An emotionally infused exchange that can last between minutes and hours; and can be a positive or negative experience for either of the participants.

• *Intimate-secondary*: Similar to quasi-primary, but lasting from weeks to years; and it is a uniformly positive experience for the participants.

*An example of triangulation in Berlin.*
(Source: Author, 2008).
Lofland (1998) notes that these relational types are ever changing. What may start out as a fleeting encounter, could develop into an intimate-secondary relationship, but then later revert to quasi-primary.

Urban open space that better facilitates these relational types can benefit a community tremendously. When the above relational types occur, “weak ties” are added to existing social networks. Weak ties allow for information to flow more easily through social networks (Granovetter, 1973), and can have economic benefits for a community (Safford, 2004). Understanding these relational types can provide insights to the potential of a place in facilitating relationships.

When considering public space, it is important to understand that between the private realm and the public realm lays the parochial realm—the realm in which friends and neighbors interact (Lofland, 1998). A neighborhood playground would be an example where neighbors come together and interact. Often the boundary between the public realm and parochial realm is ambiguous. It is important to determine whether or not a place truly is public space, or if it is parochial space. Public space can greater facilitate interaction between strangers, whereas parochial space tends to facilitate embedded relationships. Parochial space can be beneficial though, in that the social networks associated with such spaces can quickly mobilize around a common cause. Public spaces with pockets of parochial spaces would thus serve as ideal places to foster social interaction and further develop social networks. Therefore, this report will use the presence of parochial and public space as a criterion for selecting case studies.
Parochial and public space can be used to contextualize types of triangulation. First, it is important to think of triangulation in terms of Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs.

Forms of triangulation that satisfy human needs:

- **Physiological**: food vendors, seating, public restrooms, dog service stations, and water features
- **Security**: SOS kiosks, accessible and escapable places, and police or security officers
- **Belonging**: playgrounds, petting zoos, dog parks, community centers, and youth centers
- **Esteem**: sports and recreation facilities, and community gardens
- **Self-Actualization**: festivals, markets, parades, public art, social rallies, and street performers

Categorizing triangulation in this manner allows one to now consider the characteristics of triangulation.

Characteristics of the forms of triangulation:

- **Physiological**: can draw together dozens of people at once
- **Security**: dictates the success of other forms of triangulation
- **Belonging**: facilitates uses that are typical of the parochial realm
- **Esteem**: facilitates uses that are more parochial in nature than uses associated with **belonging**
- **Self-Actualization**: often provides large-scale triangulation—well suited for public space.
From this exercise, it becomes apparent there are two types of triangulation—triangulation for parochial realm and triangulation for public realm. Parochial realm triangulation encompasses the needs of belonging and esteem. Public realm triangulation includes physiological and self-actualizing needs. Safety transcends both the parochial and public realm. Therefore, this report places a strong emphasis on public realm triangulation, including safety.

The importance of public realm triangulation is evident in literature by William H. Whyte (1980), Ann Forsyth and Laura Musacchio (2005), Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis (1998), and Susan Goltsman and Daniel Iacofano (2007). These authors tend to analyze public space in similar ways, such as:

- Accessibility: connections, entrances, paths, visual access
- Appearance & Sensory Issues: cleanliness, landscaping, microclimates
- Programming: intended and unintended uses
- Safety: activity, lighting, maintenance, protected playgrounds, surveillance, SOS kiosks
- Seating: locations, quantity, quality, types, variety, alternatives
- Triangulation: food services, landmarks, water features, toilets, public art, miscellaneous
- Versatility: allows for different uses on a daily, seasonally and yearly basis
- Types of users: men, women, young, old, Germans, non-Germans, parents, dog owners, etc.
• Intensity of use: peak use times, types of users
• Typical behaviors: active or passive social engagement, activities, locations
• How sites either facilitated or inhibited social interaction

This report analyzes Berlin’s public open spaces based on these criteria.
This report is the product of research that has been sponsored by the NEURUS exchange program and partially fulfills requirements for a Master’s Degree in Urban and Regional Planning. The intent of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. What types of public open spaces cultivate social interaction within Kreuzberg and Mitte?

2. What opportunities exist for transforming open spaces into more sociable places within Kreuzberg and Mitte?

3. What is an appropriate set of design principles to be applied to open spaces within Kreuzberg and Mitte that will foster greater social interaction?

These questions are best answered through a combination of analytical methods, including observational analysis, informal interviews, focus groups, and SWOT analysis. This report presents these methods in the form of two unique case studies of two very different of public spaces. These case studies allow for a comparative analysis, which contrasts two environmental design strategies and integrates those strategies into a comprehensive approach for making Berlin’s public space more socially interactive.
CASE STUDIES

The first case study looks at Görlitzer Park—a large neighborhood park located in Kreuzberg. This park is an asset to its surrounding residents, as there is a deficit of public open spaces in Kreuzberg. Berlin provides an average of 3.85 hectares per 1000 residents, where as Kreuzberg provides only 1.12 hectares per 1000 residents (Senate Department for Urban Development, 2008). The intensity in which Görlitzer Park is used makes obvious this deficit of public open space.
The second case study analyzes Alexanderplatz—a large plaza in east Mitte. Alexanderplatz is not only a significant public space for Mitte, but also for the whole of Berlin. It is the location for Berlin’s primary public transportation hub, drawing Berliners from the far reaches of the City. Furthermore, Alexanderplatz is an ideal site for political demonstrations, festivals, markets, and shopping.

These two places were selected based on the following criteria:

1. **Well-Used Spaces**—use is a phenomenon that can be difficult for designers and planners to impose upon a place and therefore it is viewed as something that should be harnessed to improve the social quality of places.

2. **Social Diverse Users**—for the purpose of this report, social diversity is defined as the intermingling of different people in terms of age, gender, race, and cultural identity.

3. **Strong Presence of the Public Realm**: it is important to identify public open spaces that are predominantly used by the public realm rather than parochial realms. At times, parochial realms territorialize public places and that can have negative impacts in which the presence of other potential users is discouraged.

4. **Poor Design Qualities**: public open spaces with the three previously mentioned characteristics would seemingly be successful places; however, the *quality* of social interaction must also be taken into consideration. Design is the most salient factor that contributes to
quality social interaction over which urban designers and planners have control.

These four characteristics will be discussed in further detail in the analysis of the case studies.

**Observational Analysis**

The researcher has conducted in-depth observations using photo documentation to illustrate the physical and social qualities of Görlitzer Park and Alexanderplatz. This analysis documented the sites’ the physical design by accounting for the following design factors:

- Accessibility: connections, entrances, paths, visual access
- Appearance & Sensory Issues: cleanliness, landscaping, microclimates
- Programming: intended and unintended uses
- Safety: activity, lighting, maintenance, protected playgrounds, surveillance, SOS kiosks
- Seating: locations, quantity, quality, types, variety, alternatives
- Triangulation: food services, landmarks, water features, toilets, public art, miscellaneous
- Versatility: allows for different uses on a daily, seasonally and yearly basis
The social qualities analyzed are:

- **Types of users**: men, women, young, old, Germans, non-Germans, parents, dog owners, etc.
- **Intensity of use**: peak use times, types of users
- **Typical behaviors**: active or passive social engagement, activities, locations
- **How sites either facilitated or inhibited social interaction**

**FOCUS GROUPS & INFORMAL INTERVIEWS**

Local residents were contacted to ascertain Berliner’s preferences for public spaces. The researcher attempted to organize focus groups based on demographics, ideally seeking focus groups representing former West Berliners, former East Berliners, and Berlin’s Turkish community. However, a limitation of this report was the inability of the researcher to organize a focus group representing former West Berliners. Furthermore, there is an over-representation of former East Berliners, and an under-representation of Turkish Berliners.

Three focus groups were organized with following demographics:

1. Two Turkish Berliners and a former East Berliner: 20-30 years old
2. Three Former East Berlin men: 50 – 65 years old.
3. Two Former East Germans and their son: 12-55 years old
Twenty-five informal interviews were conducted—a process that depended on opportunity based on time, place, and language barriers. Many informal interviews were initiated as fleeting encounters, and so conversations often needed to be summarized after they took place.

Interview subjects ranged in age from 20 to 65 years old, with an overwhelming majority under the age of 35. Sixteen subjects were German—eleven from former East Germany, of which three were former East Berliners, and five were former West Germans. Eleven of the interviewees were foreign-born Berliners—three from the EU, four from Australia, three from the US, and one from Turkey.

Questions asked were:

1. What is your opinion of Görlitzer Park—likes and dislikes?
2. What is your opinion of Alexanderplatz—a likes and dislikes?
3. How often do you visit these places and for what purposes?
4. How do you think these places could be improved?
5. What is your favorite park or plaza in Berlin and why?
6. What is your least favorite park or plaza in Berlin and why?

**SWOT Analysis**

The final component of analysis for each case study is a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). A SWOT analysis identifies internal and external factors that can have positive or negative influences on the study areas, allowing for a greater contextualization of
each area’s potential for becoming more socially integrate places. This report’s SWOT analyses integrate the observational results with the results from the focus groups and the informal interviews in order to provide meaningful recommendations.


**Görlitzer Park**

Görlitzer Park is situated in the southeast part of Kreuzberg. It is a socially active park in one of Berlin’s most multi-ethnic neighborhoods.

![Aerial photograph of Görlitzer Park](Source: www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de)

**Quick Facts:**

- Oriented northwest by southeast
- Average length: 3,100 ft. (945 m)
- Average width: 575 ft. (175 m)
- Approximate area: 35 ac. (14 ha)
Gorlitzer Park: Foreign Population and Density of the Surrounding Area, 2002

Population per Block
- 199 or less
- 200 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1000 - 1999
- 2000 or greater
- Foreign
- German
- Low Income Areas

Created by Joe Batcheller, 2009
**History**

The site of Görlitzer Park was once a train station, Görlitzer Bahnhof, which opened in 1867 and accommodated Berlin’s southeasterly routes. It became obsolete as a train station because it was heavily damaged in WWII and because its rail lines were located almost entirely in the Eastern Bloc. It did, however, maintain very limited rail service for freight trains through the 1960’s, after which the site was used primarily as a salvage yard. Most of the remaining ruins were left standing until 1976. The only physical remains of Görlitzer Bahnhof are three buildings, a railway bridge at the southeastern end of the Park, and remnants of a pedestrian underpass located at the crater in the centre of the Park.

For many years, the site was an urban wasteland, having served as a salvage yard for a period of time. Then in 1980, due to a grassroots movement initiated by residents of the area, the City was persuaded to improve the conditions of site. Clean up of the area began with the removal of considerable amounts of scrap materials and waste. During the process, groundwater and soil contamination was discovered as the result of decades of industrial use. The rehabilitation process lasted for three years. Finally in 1984, after years of anticipation, a design competition was conducted in order to determine the Park’s layout. Görlitzer Park opened in 1985 after the first phase of construction was complete. Other phases have taken place since then, with the most recent phase having been completed in 1998.
Pamukkale fountain, the Park’s most recent construction phase, has resulted in total disappointment and has been the source of much debate. It was constructed in large part to serve as a symbol of multiculturalism between the Turkish community and Germans. The fountain was meant to be a representation of the natural hot springs in Turkey known as Pamukkale—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Portuguese sandstone was used for the construction of the fountain, which prove to be a poor choice of materials. The fountain was in operation for only six weeks when it began to deteriorate. Sandstone happens to be a very porous material. An early frost occurred, freezing the water that was absorbed by the sandstone, and thus causing the stone to crumble. It was deemed a safety hazard and has since been fenced off to prevent injury. This however has not discouraged graffiti artists from accessing the site to ply their trade. The site has remained an eye-sore since its closing over a decade ago. In that time, there have been various lawsuits to determine which party—the construction company, the district, or the architect—is financially liable for the mishap.
The most recent judgment (November, 2008) found the responsibility to lie with the architect.

**Observational Analysis**

**Accessibility: Connections, Edges, Paths, Visual Access, Wayfinding**

- A large brick wall surrounds Görlitzer Park, averaging ten feet in height, or three meters. This wall is a significant physical barrier to greater accessibility to the Park by limiting the number of its entrances. The wall also prohibits visual access to Görlitzer Park.
- The Park features an old rail bridge at the southeast end of the Park, which connects the Park with the greater citywide park system. This bridge is elevated above the adjacent park system though, and very limited access to the greater citywide park system.

*Perimeter wall,* (Source: Author, 2009).
• A logically designed network of paths adequately accommodates pedestrian circulation within the Park; however, many of the paths’ surfaces are of poor quality. Most of the paths’ surfaces are packed dirt. One of the Park’s primary paths has potentially hazardous surface for walking—cobblestone with deep ruts where mortar should be—and pedestrians often avoided this surface, especially when the Park is less populated.

• Görlitzer Park has very poor signage. Users are significantly disadvantaged in terms of orientation, as there are very few visual cues for the amenities within the Park and how the Park connects with its surroundings.

**Appearance & Sensory Issues: Cleanliness, Landscaping, & Microclimates**

• To a certain degree, Görlitzer Park suffers from an image problem, both real and perceived. For one, the Park has a considerable amount of graffiti covering the buildings, fountain, and perimeter wall. Berlin is a city with tremendous amounts of graffiti however—more so than other cities. The people of Berlin seem to have a much

*North depot, (Source: Author, 2009).*
higher tolerance for graffiti though, likely due to its thriving art scene. Furthermore, graffiti does not carry the stigma of being associated with gang violence like it does in the United States. However it still detracts from the image of Görlitzer Park.

- The Park is poorly landscaped as well. No feature contributes more so to this than the Park’s over grown bushes, as it appears as though they have never been pruned. The bushes are prohibitive to greater visual access to the Park and they also collect litter. Furthermore, the Park lacks tall trees and trees in general, and opportunities for uses to interact with nature. Due to the Park’s lack of quality trees, sunny areas dominate most of it. There are some shaded areas in the Park, but they are sparsely located.

**SAFETY: ACTIVITY, LIGHTING, MAINTENANCE, PROTECTED AREAS, & SURVEILLANCE**

- Daytime activity facilitates passive surveillance, however drug dealers do not seem to be deterred by this.
- Passive surveillance is not possible at night because the Park is poorly lighted, with adequate lighting in only two specific areas: the main football (soccer) field and north entrance.
• Public Order Officers (Ordnungsamt) rarely monitored the Park, which may explain why Görlitzer Park has become a haven for drug dealers.

• The Park is unmaintained, which has led to areas of over growth that are difficult to monitor and tend to collect litter.

• There are four main areas for children to play and interact—all of which are enclosed by fencing and provide safe environments.

**TRIANGULATION: AMENITIES & PROGRAMMING**

**SEATING:**

• Locations: northwest entrance, buildings, crater, central path, pond

• Quantity: ample by buildings, NW entrance and crater; inconsistent by paths

• Quality: mixed—some newer, some vandalized

• Types: park benches (dominant) and patio chairs

• Alternatives: steps of the old train platform, runes, and grass

**FOOD SERVICES:**

• Edelweiss Café located at the old train depot next to Pamukkale fountain

• Roasted chicken vendor on north corner adjacent to the Park
Edelweiss Café is housed in the middle building on the old train platform. The steps along the platform provide a popular place to hang out and watch others pass by, (Source: Author, 2009).

LANDMARKS, PUBLIC ART, AND WATER FEATURES:

- Pamukkale fountain (inoperable) at the northwest end of the Park
- Sculpture at the edge of the crater in the center of the Park
- Pond located by the east corner of the Park

A sculpture peeks above the horizon, (Source: Author, 2009).
Recreation:

• Youth center located at the old train depot next to Edelweiss Café

• Football (soccer) fields (two)—one features Astroturf, locker rooms, lighting, and seating for spectators; the other is a well-worn grass field without goals; both are surrounded by 20 foot tall fences (6 meters).

Toilets, Miscellaneous:

• Public restrooms are located at Edelweiss Café, by the football field locker rooms, and directly outside the Park at a south central entrance (fee applies). However, these restrooms are poorly marked.

• Festivals and rallies are occasionally held at Görlitzer Park, usually occurring between May and October. Impromptu celebrations do occur however during the winter months.

An impromptu musical performance at the southeast end of the Park, (Source: Author, 2009).
**Versatility: Allows for Different Uses—Daily, Seasonally and Yearly**

- Most areas are relatively versatile—allows for recreation, festivals, picnicking, dogs, sledding, and sunbathing.
- The secondary sports field occupies a large area directly adjacent to areas of high traffic use. It eliminates other possible uses because it is surrounded by a tall perimeter fence, and could serve many other functions.

**Types of Users: Gender, Age, Socio-economic Status, Ethnicity, Race**

**Predominantly:**

- Ages 20-40
- Equal of mix of men and women
- A majority are white (in the winter)
- Working and middle class
  (seemingly)

**Other Notable User Types:**

- Dog owners
- Drug dealers
- Parents with children
INTENSITY OF USE: PEAK TIMES—WINTER

- Weekend peak use time is between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Weekday peak use time is between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- The Park is sparsely populated in the mornings and after dusk.
- Peak uses may vary by season.

TYPICAL BEHAVIORS: ACTIVE OR PASSIVE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT & LOCATIONS

ACTIVE:

- Drug dealing near the crater
- Children playing in designated areas
- Playing football (soccer), usually at the main field
- Recreation of all types in various locations
- Pick nicking and grilling is usually conducted towards the southeastern half of the Park where there are wide-open spaces.
- Sledding is common in the winter, typically at the northwestern hill.
- Festivities in various locations

PASSIVE:

- People walking throughout the Park.

A group of young Berliners grilling in the Park, (Source: Author, 2009)
• People-watching occurs predominately by the old train depot and the crater.
• Dog walkers typically gravitate near the crater, but are also dispersed throughout the Park.
• Bicycling occurs throughout the Park, but it is merely recreational and not for exercise.
• Sunbathing is common at the crater.

HOW DOES THE SITE FACILITATE SOCIAL INTERACTION?

• Pedestrian flow is channeled at the northwestern end of the Park, which provides excellent opportunities for people watching. People typically pass in front of the steps of the old train platform, a prime gathering area, and continue onward past the secondary football field towards the crater in the center of the Park.
• The crater provides an open gathering area where people can engage in various social activities. Drug dealers tend to solicit buyers near areas with overgrown vegetation towards the periphery of the crater. This activity does not seem to dissuade residents from using the Park however.
• There are two hills within the Park—one at the northwest end and one at the southeast end—that provide a well-suited pitch for children to go sledding in the winter. The hill at the southeast end also serves as a natural amphitheater for festivals and impromptu musical performances. These hills however, have over grown bushes
surrounding them, create many secluded nodes that are difficult to monitor.

- Another feature of the Park is the unused portion of the old train platform also provide a gathering area, as people tend to enjoy the heat island effect that it creates during sunny, but brisk days.
- The main football field also provides a source of sociability for both players and spectators.

**HOW DOES THE SITE INHIBIT SOCIAL INTERACTION?**

- The Park’s overgrown vegetation has created a number of secluded nodes that facilitate nefarious behaviors.
- Fencing and vegetation restricts pedestrian flow between the main area of the Park and the nature area surrounding the pond.
- The Park’s perimeter wall creates an unwelcomed barrier between those inside the Park and those passing by the Park. This is especially true at the southeast and northwest ends of the Park where greater connectivity would seem natural.
- The Park has a number of eyesores, such as Pamukkale, graffiti and litter, which contributes to stigmatization of the Park to Berliners outside of the immediate area.
FOCUS GROUPS & INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

OPINIONS OF GÖRLITZER PARK—LIKES AND DISLIKES?

Many subjects were quick to note the Park’s blighted image and its unsafe atmosphere after dark. Those living in the area, or whom had once live in the area, generally had favorable views of the Park. Those from other parts of Berlin tended to have low opinions of the Park.

FREQUENCY OF USE AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES?

Subjects from the immediate area tended to visit the Park on a regular basis in the summer, but less frequently in the winter. Those subjects typically frequented the Park at least once a month in the summer for extended periods of time (more than two hours), but usually not more that four times per month. Typical activities described were grilling food and pick nicking, playing music, playing ball, and people watching. Many of the older subjects said they did not go to Görlitzer Park because there are other parks closer to where they live and that are much nicer. Turkish subjects said they usually only visit the Park in the summer.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR GÖRLITZER PARK?

The first response most people gave called for the repair Pamukkale Fountain. People also were dissatisfied with the Park’s landscaping, saying
it lacked tall trees and that the bushes were scraggly looking. Fewer people seemed bothered by the litter and graffiti.

**SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths**

- Görlitzer Park has a good deal of social activity during the daytime. The Park has two great areas for people-watching—the steps along the old train platform and the crater at the center of the Park. Parents with their children and dog-walkers frequent the park on a regular basis and provide a steady source for social activity.
- The Park has a fair amount of diverse users. There are no particular groups of people that dominate the Park, which is a favorable situation.
- There is a good amount of triangulation at Görlitzer Park. Seating is well located along high-traffic areas. There are food services both within the Park and within the immediate vicinity of the Park.
- The Park has versatile spaces that allow for various types of uses and thus facilitating social activity.
- The southeast end of Görlitzer Park connects to Berlin’s greater park system, making it a potential significant component of the park system.
WEAKNESSES

SAFETY: Görlitzer Park suffers from a number of safety problems, some which can be easily mitigated. Poorly lighting and over grown bushes prevent the possibility of passive surveillance. Drug dealers present a more difficult problem, but nonetheless one that is solvable. Addressing these issues would greatly increase the safety of Park.

LEGIBILITY: Görlitzer Park also has a poor degree of legibility. Legibility is the capacity of a space to communicate to its users its purpose, identity and image (Czerniak & Hargreaves, 2007). For many residents of southeast Kreuzberg, the purpose of Görlitzer Park was simply to replace a blighted area with green space, and to provide an underserved neighborhood with a much-needed park. The Park’s identity has been loosely established as a place for multi-cultural co-existence on the site of a former train station and wasteland. Görlitzer Park’s image is the most bankrupt of legibility’s three components.

IMAGE: As previously mentioned, the Park’s drug activity presents problems for Görlitzer Park in terms of safety, but not surprisingly also for its image. In Part as a result its drug activity, many Berliners from other parts of the City think of Görlitzer Park as blighted area. The graffiti covering the depot buildings, Pamukkale Fountain, and the Park’s perimeter wall also contribute to its poor image. Additionally, the Park’s many unsurfaced paths contribute to a negative image. Most notably, there is a large dirt area between the old train platform and Pamukkale Fountain where a great deal pedestrian flow is directed. Resurfacing this area would
be a tremendous improvement. The Park also has problem with litter collecting in the bushes and near an area where a group of people consistently have bonfires.

**ACCESS:** This is a problem for Görlitzer Park on various levels. There are a number of physical to the Park and within the Park. The perimeter wall and the fencing within the Park—by the pond and around secondary sports field—both restricted pedestrian flow. Removing the perimeter wall and the overgrown bushes would improve visual access to the Park. Furthermore, signage within the Park is poor and improving it with significantly benefit access within the park.

**LANDSCAPING:** The Park’s unmaintained landscaping contributes to the previously mentioned problems. Additionally, Berliners have expressed their desire to interact with nature—a phenomenon on which Görlitzer Park does not capitalized.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Görlitzer Park would likely serve as a catalyst for economic stimulation to the surrounding area. The Park could be rebranded to create a better reputation for the area as perceived by other Berliners outside of the area. Quality public spaces have the capacity to improve the image of areas and thus, provide a source for economic stimulation. Quality public open spaces often help raises land values for surrounding areas. A revitalized Görlitzer Park would become a likely catalyst for economic stimulation for southeast Kreuzberg.
• The WALL Company, specializing in street furnishing, provides philanthropic opportunities for communities to embetter their public open spaces through WALL’s pilot program. This is an opportunity that should undoubtedly be pursued.

• The north depot building is unoccupied and provides an opportunity to engage the surrounding community. Community groups could be engaged as potential occupants and become key players in the revitalization of the Park. Such a strategy could lead to better community involvement, “ownership,” maintenance, and surveillance of Görlitzer Park. The building could possibly function as community center or a Turkish Museum.

• Connecting Görlitzer Park to Berlin’s greenway system would provide a good opportunity for inter-cultural mingling. Integration with the greater park system could allow Görlitzer Park to become a popular resting area for those circulating throughout the City’s greenway system. Görlitzer Park could become a popular hang-out along Berlin’s greenway system.

• An opportunity exists for a weekly market to be held at the Park by involving the surrounding area’s residents. The excess portion of the old train platform presents the perfect place for a farmers’ market or an artisans market. A pavilion structure could eventually be built to house such a function.

• The Park’s northwestern hill covers part of Spree Baden’s roof—an indoor aquatic center. Tall bushes and fencing block access to the roof,
however removing these features and converting the rooftop to a green roof would enhance that portion of the Park.

- Food amenities are commonplace in Turkish parks. The private sector could be engaged in order to find an operator for a concessions stand within the Park. This could lead to greater multi-cultural interaction.

**Threats**

- Drug dealers could potentially further territorialize areas of the Park and lead to deepening negative perceptions of Görlitzer Park by other Berliners.

- One area of the craters perimeter has been monopolized by a group of users who like to have bonfires every day. Some users often complain about people who do not use the designated area of the Park for grilling. Both of these issues could potentially be addressed by installing grills/fire pits.

- The surrounding neighborhood could degenerate, affecting the image, quality, and popularity of Görlitzer Park.
RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE I: FULFILL IMMEDIATE NEEDS WITH LOW-COST SOLUTIONS

• Install human-scaled lighting to illuminate pathways for better nighttime safety.
• Remove tall bushes and replace with grass or low-lying ground cover to maximize view corridors.
• Prune the low branches on trees to allow for better visibility throughout the Park.
• Improve accessibility to the pond by removing the fencing and the over growth surrounding it.
• Remove fencing surrounding the secondary football field to provide park users with a more versatile space for recreation.
• Remove graffiti from the windows of the youth center to provide greater visual access

PHASE II: FULFILL HIGHER-COST IMMEDIATE NEEDS

• Remove the remains of Pamukkale Fountain and replace it as it was originally intended. This would provide not only a symbol of multiculturalism, but also a great source for triangulation.
• Remove the Park’s perimeter wall, or at least significant portions of it, to maximize Park access and view corridors into the Park. Removal of the wall would also lessen opportunities for graffiti artists to ply their trade and would thus help mitigate the Park’s negative image.
PHASE III: FULFILL SECONDARY NEEDS

• Facilitate greater triangulation:
  
  o Construct a small food concessions stand near the pond to create increased social activity at the southeast end of the Park. It can also help foster dialog between diverse people.
  
  o Install grills/fire pits surrounding the crater. One area of the crater's perimeter has been monopolized by a group of users who like to have bonfires every day. Another complaint is that people do not use the designated area of the Park grilling. Both of these issues would be addressed by installing grills/fire pits.
  
  o Install chess and backgammon tables near the central corridor.
  
  o Incorporate a small stage within the central crater, which can be use as a natural amphitheater for the purpose of music festivals, theatrical performances, and community rallies.

• Plant diverse vegetation—most importantly trees—to create greater visual interest and opportunity for park users to interact with nature.

• Improve legibility by re-surfacing paths—perhaps with pea-gavel or bricks from wall—and by providing quality signage to enhance wayfinding into and throughout the Park.
Alexanderplatz is located in central Berlin and serves as the City’s preeminent plaza. The City’s primary public transit hub is located adjacent to Alexanderplatz, which certainly brings a great deal of social activity to the plaza.

**Quick Facts:**

- Orientated northwest by southeast
- Average length: 640 ft. (195 m)
- Approximate area: 5.3 ac (2.15 ha)
- Average width: 360 ft. (110 m)

**History**

Alexanderplatz originally served as an important weekly marketplace for various goods, most notably oxen, cattle, and wool. The Plaza was redeveloped in the 1930’s as a traffic circle and transit hub. This arrangement lasted for nearly forty years, but was reconfigured as a
Alexanderplatz: Foreign Population and Density of the Surrounding Area, 2002

Population per Block:
- 199 or less
- 200 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1000 - 1999
- 2000 or greater
- Foreign
- German

Created by Joe Batcheller, 2009
pedestrian plaza in 1969 when the GDR decided years earlier to rearrange East Berlin’s central street layout. A design competition was held in 1964 to determine the layout and aesthetics of Alexanderplatz, from which Alexanderplatz was given a socialistic slant. During the Communist era, Alexanderplatz was the center of the East German capital. It was surrounded by low-density development, plenty of open space, and excessively wide traffic axes. Critics have said that with the many incarnations of Alexanderplatz, “there has been a significant loss of urban qualities,” (www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de). This may have been true, however Alexanderplatz did fulfill one very important function—a location for mass political protest. On November 4, 1989, it was the setting for a peaceful revolution, where nearly one million people came together to demand greater freedom. Following reunification in 1990, Alexanderplatz was targeted as one of the most important sites in central Berlin to be redeveloped. Since then, the square of the 1970’s has been replaced by a new design.

The "International Competition for Urban Design Ideas – Alexanderplatz," was held in 1993 to determine a new concept for the Plaza and the surrounding area by engaging the public (www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de). Much of the debate focused on increasing density, with the redesign of the square as the centerpiece. On September 8, 2003, the submittal of architectural firm GMP of Berlin, in cooperation with WES + Partners of Hamburg, was chosen from a total of 26 entries. Their design has gradually taken shape since April 2000, with two of the four binding land-use plans (I-B4a—Alexanderplatz, and I-B4d—Alexanderstraße Shopping Mall) having
been implemented and realized. Construction on the Plaza was started in February 2006, with the following major renovations:

- Granite tiles were installed for the plaza’s new surface.
- Many of the surrounding buildings were cladded with large stone tiles and their interiors were renovated.
- U-bahn entrances were encompassed with granite benches.
- Green space on the southeastern side was replaced with a new shopping center.
- The cost is estimated to be €8.5 million.
OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS

ACCESSIBILITY: CONNECTIONS, EDGES, PATHS, VISUAL ACCESS, WAYFINDING

Alexanderplatz functions quite well in terms of accessibility. Framed by five tall buildings, the Plaza reveals its expansiveness to users entering from one of the multiple access points. Pedestrian routes are infinite, as are the view corridors. Signage and wayfinding is also well done, allowing pedestrians to navigate the space with ease.

Architects rendition of the winning entry for Alexanderplatz, (source: www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de).
APPEARANCE & SENSORY ISSUES: CLEANLINESS, LANDSCAPING, & MICROCLIMATES

- There is a lack of adequate greenery within the plaza. With only very few trees, the Plaza can be a very impersonal and unwelcoming place.
- Alexanderplatz is constructed of granite, which contributes to its cold, impersonal feel. It is reminiscent of the “brutalist” style employed by many architects of the urban renewal period in the U.S., like I.M. Pei, who design City Hall Plaza in Boston.
- On clear days, the sun dominates Alexanderplatz, which can be inviting for users on brisk days, but can also discourage users on hot days. There are some shaded areas, but only one location is tree-shaded.
- Graffiti is present on the benches surrounding the U-bahn entrances.

SAFETY: ACTIVITY, LIGHTING, MAINTENANCE, PROTECTED AREAS, SURVEILLANCE

- Social activity during the daytime provides the Plaza with a good deal of passive surveillance.
- The Plaza is well light at nighttime, inviting social activity and facilitating passive surveillance.
- Maintenance workers are occasionally present, usually to empty trashcans, which helps sustain the Plaza’s clean image.
- Public Order Officers (Ordnungsamt) will occasionally patrol the Plaza, but seemly only on days when the Plaza is particularly crowded.
- SOS kiosks are located nearby in the U-bahn station.
TRIANGULATION: AMENITIES & PROGRAMMING

SEATING:

- Locations: U-bahn entrances, south end of the Plaza.
- Quantity: Very low—approx. 525 linear feet (including the fountain wall).
  - According to Whyte’s formulation, an appropriate amount of seating for Alexanderplatz is 7695 linear feet (one linear foot of seating per 30 square feet of plaza space).
  - San Francisco’s Downtown Plan would call for approximately 1800 linear feet of seating (one linear foot of seating per linear foot of plaza perimeter).
- Quality: Mediocre—vandalized, no moveable chairs, few alternatives.
- Types: benches with backrests (dominant), benches without backrests.
- Alternatives: fountain wall, steps.

FOOD SERVICES:

- Bratwurst vendors—one stationary, and several mobile vendors.
- Two full service restaurants face the Plaza.
- Quick service restaurants—approximately twelve are in the S-bahnhof; about half as many are located in and around the Plaza.
LANDMARKS, PUBLIC ART, AND WATER FEATURES:

- **World Clock**: erected in 1969; 33 feet (10 meters) high with a radius of 5 feet (1.5 meters). The clock displays the times of the earth’s 24 time zones and displays the names of the most important cities within each time zone. A likeness of the solar system displaying the planets and their orbits sits atop of the world clock, and it completes a full rotation in one minute. The World Clock tends to a popular attraction for tourists visiting Alexanderplatz. In 1997, the world clock was restored and updated, adding significant cities to their corresponding time zones.

- **Fountain of International Friendship**: erected in 1969; 20 feet (6.2 meters) high and with a radius of 75.5 feet (23 meters). The Fountain is typical of the socialistic styling of the 1970’s. Unfortunately, the does a poor job of facilitating interaction. It was renovated in 2002, and augmented in 2006. It was deemed a culturally significant site and has been listed as a protected historical site. The fountain will
remain at Alexanderplatz for the fore-seeable future as will the World Clock.

RECREATION:

• There is no permanently programmed recreation, but there has been temporary programming in the past, such as beach volleyball and ice-skating.

• Skateboarders will occasionally visit the plaza.

The Fountain of International Friendship, (Source: www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de).
TOILETS, MISCELLANEOUS

- Public restrooms are located next to an U-bahn entrance and in the S-bahnhof (fee applies).
- Festivals and rallies are occasionally held at Alexanderplatz, usually occurring between May and October. Impromptu gatherings and rallies do occur however during the winter months.

VERSATILITY: ALLOWS FOR DIFFERENT USES—DAILY, SEASONALLY AND YEARLY

- The Plaza is very open and thus relatively versatile. Festivals, markets, and rallies are commonplace at Alexanderplatz.
- The fountain occupies a large area directly adjacent to areas of high traffic use. It eliminates usable space, which is most evident during the seasonal markets.

TYPES OF USERS: GENDER, AGE, SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, ETHNICITY, RACE

- There is no dominant user type at Alexanderplatz, other than shoppers. It seems to have an equal mix of people in terms of age gender, and socio-economic status.
- Minorities do use the Plaza, but it is difficult to say whether or not their presence is representative of their proportionate population.
INTENSITY OF USE: PEAK TIMES—WINTER

- Weekend peak use time is between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
- Weekday peak use times are between 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Alexanderplatz is sparsely populated early in the day.
- After dusk, it is moderately populated compared to the early daytime.
- Peak uses may vary by season.

TYPICAL BEHAVIORS: ACTIVE OR PASSIVE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT & LOCATIONS

ACTIVE:

- People typically visit Alexanderplatz to engage in commerce, both formal and informal. Occasionally vendors will peddle small, second hand goods near the Fountain.
- Restrained helpfulness is also a common form of social interaction.

PASSIVE:

- People typically use the Plaza to pass through, engaging in cooperative motility, walking from one transit mode to another or to one of the several shopping outlets.
- Some often pass the time by people-watching.

Looking southeast, (Source: Author, 2009).
• Many people at Alexanderplatz constantly engage in civil inattention, using forms of non-verbal communication.

**HOW DOES THE SITE FACILITATE SOCIAL INTERACTION?**

• People typically use the Plaza to pass through. However, some do tend to gather around the fountain, the World Clock and the U-bahn entrances. People often gravitate towards these features, which are quite spread out, as a way to avoid the vast center of the Plaza.

• Pedestrian flow is oriented towards the peripheral areas of the Plaza, and also towards the streetcar tracks. This is also likely the result of people’s desire to avoid the expansive void in the center of the Plaza by orientating themselves towards its prominent features. These patterns of behavior could be capitalized on to encourage greater social interaction by providing more seating and greenery to entice users to sit and spend more time at Alexanderplatz.

**HOW DOES THE SITE INHIBIT SOCIAL INTERACTION?**

• The Plaza is an open expanse, lacking unique nodes that could provide different experiential setting.

• The Plaza is very stark and unwelcoming to pedestrians who might wish to stop and spend an extended period of time in the space.

• Alexanderplatz lacks adequate seating and greenery, which contributes to its unwelcoming feel.
• While the Plaza has some forms of triangulation, there could be much more effective forms.

• Alexanderplatz lacks different micro-climates, which contributes to its inhospitality. Greater variety in micro-climates would present users with more places to spend extended periods of time.

FOCUS GROUPS & INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

OPINIONS OF ALEXANDERPLATZ—LIKES AND DISLIKES?

Most subjects confirmed Alexanderplatz’s unwelcome feel, having little appeal as a place to spend extended periods of time. All subjects identified the Plaza as a place for shopping; however, most said they do not view Alexanderplatz as the most desirable place to shop. Most cited proximity as the primary reason for shopping elsewhere, depending on what they would shop for. A few were slightly disturbed that Alexanderplatz has been so define as a hub for shopping. The plaza is dominated by shopping outlets and does lack other uses within the surrounding buildings, such as cultural uses.

FREQUENCY OF USE AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES?

Subjects said when they frequent the Plaza, they usually do so to shop, eat, or attend an event. Many said the fact that Alexanderplatz is a major hub for public transportation makes it a convenient location for eating and
shopping. Most frequent the Plaza randomly, usually on weekends, but not on a regular basis.

**IMPROVEMENTS FOR ALEXANDERPLATZ?**

Most people cited Alexanderplatz’s lack of greenery as the first thing to change. Some suggested de-emphasizing plaza’s mono-functionality as shopping area by introducing other uses to its surroundings, such as cultural uses. A couple of people were dissatisfied with the number of mobile bratwurst vendors at Alexanderplatz and recommended limiting their presences.

**SWOT ANALYSIS**

**STRENGTHS**

- Alexanderplatz has a great deal of social activity, although the quality of interaction is lacking.
- There are diverse users at Alexanderplatz, which can be capitalized on to create a more socially integrated city.
• There is some triangulation at Alexanderplatz, but it tends to be lacking in quantity and quality.

• The Plaza has many versatile spaces that allow for temporary programming, like markets.

• The fact that Alexanderplatz is primary hub of for the transit system serves the plaza by bringing many different users there from various parts of the City.

WEAKNESSES

• Alexanderplatz is an uncomfortable place to spend extended periods. The Plaza is capable of functioning as Berlin’s “living room” (Wohnzimmer, Stube), like many of the great plazas of the world. However, the issue of comfort must first be addressed. The most obvious feature to target is the plazas lack of seating. Creating micro-climates and visual interest are also important components to a plaza’s comfort.

• While plazas are characterized as places dominated by hardscape surfaces, they should not be completely absent of vegetation. People appreciate the visual variety and shading that vegetation offers.

OPPORTUNITIES

• A more comfortable and enjoyable plaza would provide economic stimulation for the surrounding businesses. The various businesses in and around the Plaza would surely welcome more people spending
more time at Alexanderplatz. Businesses should be further engaged as stake-holder to help shape the future of the Plaza.

- Outside interests could be engaged to improve triangulation and enhance the appeal of Alexanderplatz. The plaza could benefit from: sidewalk cafes, interactive art, a weekly market, and perhaps free wi-fi.

**Threats**

- The biggest threats to Alexanderplatz are complacency and stagnation. To think the winning design (2003) for the plaza will be the end-all and be-all would be problematic for Alexanderplatz. Berlin’s planning department’s web site makes the claim that: “Alexanderplatz is now about to become the well-liked meeting place for the young and the young at heart.” But one must ask, ‘how would they know this?’ Planners and designers need perform post-occupancy evaluations with each re-incarnation of the Plaza to be able to make such claims. Post-occupancy evaluations would help planners and designers better understand how the Plaza functions and how it could be improved. Alexanderplatz is far too important of a place to be ignored, because if planners and designers become complacent with the design of the plaza, Berliners may not find it to be an appealing place.
RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE I: FULFILL IMMEDIATE NEEDS

• Provide more seating, locating it near high-traffic areas to provide opportunities for people-watching and active social engagement.

• Provide more greenery to create micro-climates and greater visual interest. This can be achieved by planting trees near seating, and creating flower beds and patches of grass to break up the monotony of the hard surfaces.

• Facilitate triangulation with near-term strategies:
  o Install chess and backgammon tables under shaded areas.
  o Create a weekly market featuring a rotating roster of vendors from Berlin’s various markets, representing the City’s different sub-cultures.
Site plan of Alexanderplatz showing proposed changes. Greenery is incorporated with seating that located near significant pedestrian routes. The egg shape represents a slightly lower grade, which can be flooded in the winter to create an ice-skating rink. The egg’s inner circle is a drain for the fountain. Created by Joe Batcheller, 2009.

An example of seating that is situated around the edges of large planters, (Created by Joe Batcheller, 2009).
PHASE II: FULFILL SECONDARY NEEDS

Facilitate further triangulation with long-term strategies:

• Consider options to make the Fountain more interactive, such as removing the outer wall and using part of the Plaza surface to function as the basin, allowing people greater access to the water and orienting them towards one another rather than away. It could also function as a focal point for an ice-skating rink to be programmed for the winter.

• Install large digital screens near U-bahn entrances for users to interact with one another.

• Encourage the establishment of sidewalk cafes for ground floor uses.

• Explore opportunities to establish interactive art.

• Provide free wi-fi as a means of attracting a greater number of users.
**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ALEXANDERPLATZ AND GÖRLITZER PARK**

- Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park are well-used places, and both lack essential components to provide users with social experiences of the highest quality.
- Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park have forms of public realm triangulation, but both need to provide more comprehensive offerings of triangulation.
- Vegetation matters, whether it is in a plaza or park. Berliners appreciate greenery and connecting with nature, so landscaping cannot be overlooked.
- Both Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park can better facilitate economic stimulation for their surrounding areas by addressing their respective challenges and providing high quality social experiences.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ALEXANDERPLATZ AND GÖRLITZER PARK**

- Alexanderplatz’s transportation links facilitates greater diversity amongst its users than Görlitzer Park, which has a smaller catchment area that only draws from area residents, thus dictating the Park’s level of diversity.
- Görlitzer Park attracts users for longer periods, likely due to the Park’s greenery, seating, versatility, and its users’ needs.
• Alexanderplatz has greater nighttime use—likely facilitated by its transportation links and its degree of safety relative to Görlitzer Park.

• Lack of adequate seating and greenery are Alexanderplatz’s most pressing issues, while public realm triangulation is less of an issue for Görlitzer Park.

• Safety issues, both real and perceived, are Görlitzer Park’s most salient challenges, and need to be addressed in order to successfully rebrand the Park. In comparison, lack of public realm triangulation is the reasons for Alexanderplatz’s inhospitality.

SIGNIFICANT DESIGN ELEMENTS

PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS:

• \textit{Micro-climates}: Tree-shade and sunny areas are important to users of public open space. Alexanderplatz has an obvious lack of micro-climates, while Görlitzer Park provides users with different options. Evidence shows that Berliners’ prefer being in open space on sunny days and they prefer connecting with nature. Micro-climates are an essential consideration for evaluating public open spaces.

• \textit{Seating}: People cannot be expected to socialize with one another if no opportunities exist for doing so. Seating provides a great opportunity for people to spend time in public open space. Without it, places merely become transitory spaces, as is the case with Alexanderplatz.
SAFETY AND SECURITY NEEDS:

- **PHYSICAL AND VISUAL ACCESS:** There are various design features relating to safety that seems to be neglected or misunderstood relating to the design of new public open spaces in Berlin. Lighting is the most commonly absent feature in new public open spaces. Some new public spaces have limit views and limit access, such as Luisenstadtischer Kanal Park, which demonstrates a lack of understanding of this important design element. Access must be taken into consideration when evaluating the design of public open space to ensure a baseline of sociability.

- **MAINTENANCE:** Well-kept places are often perceived to be more hospitable and safe than places that are un-kept, as made apparent with Görlitzer Park. Clean, well-groomed public spaces are more enticing to women, and if women occupy public space, so too will men (Whyte, 1980). Maintenance provides places with greater desirability, thus fostering social environments.

- **LEGIBILITY:** Navigation is a key aspect of legibility. Without it, places can be confusing, inaccessible, and inescapable. Image and purpose are also elements of legibility. Landscaping contributes to all three elements of legibility—image, navigation, purpose. Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park have shown how both an absence and an over-abundance of unmaintained landscaping can have negative implications. Furthermore, Berliners’ prefer contact with nature, so landscaping must be taken into consideration when evaluating public open spaces.
SELF-ACTUALIZATION NEEDS:

• **VERSATILE AND USABLE SPACE:** Public open spaces that allow for a variety of uses and users tend to be social places. Both Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park are capable of accommodating various events, like markets, festivals, and rallies. New public open spaces in Berlin should also be designed with this purpose.

• **PUBLIC REALM TRIANGULATION:** Many of the previously mentioned points are either directly or indirectly related to public realm triangulation. However, special attention must be paid to this critical design element as it encompasses so much more than seating and festivals. For example, it also includes public art, for which Berlin has an over-abundance of artists.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Understanding the similarities and differences between Alexanderplatz and Görlitzer Park, and the significant design issues illuminated by these case studies help in crafting an appropriate set of design principles for Berlin’s public open space. Goltsman and Iacofano (2007) propose a framework to use when formulating new design principles for public open spaces:

• Functionality—universal design that benefits everyone

• Context Sensitivity—engage citizens to determine needs, assets and culture of the community; ensures buy-in and use

• Equitable Impact—mitigate social and human impacts for a net positive outcome
With Goltsman and Iacofano’s framework in mind, this report puts forth a set of design principles for Berlin’s public open space.

**Design Principles:**

- *Provide Opportunities for Passive and Active Social Engagement:* This principle is best employed with design elements that address human needs that relate to physiology, safety, and self-actualization.

- *Create Accessible Places—Visually and Physically:* Access is critical to the safety and functionality of public open spaces.

- *Provide Versatile and Usable Places:* The functionality and thus, sociability of places depend in part on their versatility and usability.

- *Provide Adequate Street Furnishings:* This principle can accommodate people’s most basic needs and bring strangers together.

- *Design Maintainable Places:* Without considering future maintenance issues, places can fall into disrepair and become stigmatized.

- *Integrate Navigation, Connection, and Flow with Places:* Legible places are navigable, well-connected, and allow for pedestrian flow. These elements are essential for social places.

It is imperative that Berlin’s planners, designers, and civic leaders all adopt design principles that address the intent of the proposed design principles and the issues presented in this report.
CONCLUSION

Berlin must take a two-prong approach to facilitating sociability for its public open spaces. First, a place needs to provide opportunity for passive social engagement in order to populate the space. A place needs to be designed for people to hangout, become familiar with the space, and establish a connection—a sense of place. Next, a place needs to provide opportunity for active social engagement that is familiar to diverse people. That is when cultural bridges begin to form—when cultural diplomacy can take root.

Cultural diplomacy is facilitated by establishing dialog with strangers, then trust, and eventually understanding. That is the experience people of different cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds should be able have in public open space, if they so choose. Cultural diplomacy leads to greater acceptance of those who are different, acknowledging their right to the city, no matter who they are or what their background is.

Berliners of all types have common preferences towards the City’s public open spaces. These commonalities need to be harnessed in order to positively transform social dynamics in Berlin’s public open spaces. Berlin’s civic leaders have stated a goal for the City: “to become more socially integrated,” (SDUD, 2008). This report has provided various strategies for doing exactly that by methods for analyzing and transforming Berlin’s public open spaces.
It is important for many reasons for the City to provide hangouts where different Berliners can socialize. It facilitates social integration, economic stimulation, and a sense of community—all of which have positive merits. Connecting Berlin’s parks with a citywide open space network will help provide hangouts and opportunity for inter-cultural mingling. However, Berlin’s planners, designers, and civic leaders need to better understand how such places can be made more sociable.

Berlin is poised to take the next step towards becoming a socially integrated city, as younger generations are likely to have more inter-cultural relations. This report has demonstrated a strategy precisely for Berlin to become a socially integrated city.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHAN BÄTZ, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

SENATE DEPARTMENT FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

(ANSWERS ARE TRANSLATED)

Q: Do new open space projects have to meet a set of design guidelines or principles relating to sociability?

A: No—design projects are decided by a contest, usually open to designers from the EU. Design contests for large, important sites are open to designers from throughout the world. Smaller projects are given to a small, select group of chosen architects. Social interaction is considered, but other factors are considered more important, such as relaxation and ecological considerations.

Q: What design criteria need to be met for the approval of parks like those at Nordbahnhof and Gleisdreieck?

A: There are no specific criteria to be met for the design contests. Selected juries usually decide the appropriateness of the design proposals. Sometimes the district decides this, like in the case of Görlitzer Park.

Q: What do you expect for the futures of Mauer Park and Goerlitzer Park?

A: The biggest problem now with maintaining the parks is the lack of money. Parks that would be hard to maintain are not even built right now for that reason. Mauerpark is the most used park in Berlin and looks that way.
WORKS CITED


