

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Graduation Plan: Mimi Cepic

Personal information	
Name	Mimi Cepic
Student number	5504090

Studio		
Name / Theme	Public Building	
Main mentor	Henk Bultstra	Project Design
Second mentor	Ger Warries	Technical Building Design
Third mentor	Sang Lee	Research and Theory
Argumentation of choice of the studio	I wanted to experiment with creating a public creative commune in the city of Berlin	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	(Re)Mind the Wall: Designing a circular Creative Commune for the people of Berlin

Goal

Location	Park an der Spree - Friedrichshain, Berlin
Research Problem	<p>Friedrichshain district has transformed into a hyper-gentrified area. Although being the smallest district by size, it has the largest population density. There are about 290.400 local residents living within the district's area of 20km². However, with only 5.4% of the locals owning their own property¹ there is little authority over how city lots are being occupied and who they are for. The Mediaspree development is an 'urban renewal' project that has commercialized most of the properties along the Spree canal, and the public spaces that are there are named after Mercedes Benz, with its enormous, shiny logos dangling above them. The rapid commercialization of Friedrichshain has resulted in a major conflict for the residents of the area. Masses of locals have established the Sink Mediaspree collective, their protest against the privatization of land along the Spree. Oppressed by the property owners of Friedrichshain, the locals seek the liberation of public space, and continue to form a resistance in the fight for communal urban land.</p> <p>The site chosen for this project is Park an der Spree, the infamous "backside" of the East-Side Gallery, the longest continuous remains of the Berlin wall, transformed into an open-air art gallery and memorial of the fall of the Wall in 1989. Park an der Spree has been proposed for luxury condo developments, however the public's backlash</p>

<p>⁸ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Home-ownership-rates-across-German-federal-states-left-and-NUTS-3-districts-right_fig2_280037199</p>	<p>granted them the park to remain public for now. There is a desire to occupy this lot because it is currently a no-man's land / dead end space. The site is bordered by the Spree canal and the Berlin wall, a historical landmark. It can only be accessed from two access points: the streetside corners on either end of the Wall. Most people pass the entire 288m length of the park without entering it because they choose to walk along the "front-side". This causes the dead-end effect. The park is large, over 36.000m², however it is unprogrammed and lacking accessibility and local engagement. The residents of Friedrichshain are fighting for the land, yet they are unable to facilitate any real transformation to the space because as users of the park, they lack ownership of their public space.</p> <p>The context around this site is rapidly transforming with a decreasing consideration for the true needs and wants of its users. This park holds historical value, however, has been left untouched since the fall of the wall. It has the potential to be transformed into a local collective hub if the architecture is designed for users, not consumers.</p>
<p>Research Questions</p>	<p>How can architecture resist gentrification by allocating local communities to create their own public space?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can architecture create transformative spatial conditions for different public functions? - How can the existing physical conditions and natural elements of the site be re-adapted and re-contextualized into a public urban landscape that attracts human engagement? - How can the architecture provide accessible and affordable resources for its community without the privatization of the property? - How can the construction and materialization of the architecture provide affordable and environmental solutions for community building?
<p>Design Assignment</p>	<p>(See below)</p>
<p>The project is inspired by the "free, colorful, everchanging, and fluid" ² identity of Berlin. The design seeks to encapsulate the different layers of the city's history and culture into a re-adaptation of Park an der Spree, as a means of providing the residents of Friedrichshain with an adaptable urban backyard that gathers people and their creative ideas.</p> <p>My interpretation of a public condenser is defined by the location of the site and the users who will occupy it. 58% of the local residents in Friedrichshain range from 25-55 years of age³. It is a district full of young people within varying creative fields who are constantly seeking for new public spots where they can gather and connect with others. Through interviews with locals and observational studies in Berlin, I found that</p>	

many people want communal artist studios and creative workspaces, places where they can gather to collaborate, exchange ideas, and meet new people. They need to be affordable and accessible to everyone, somewhere where people can make things with different materials and occupy themselves freely. Others would like more green pockets within the dense urban area, more moments to rest and hangout, places where spontaneous interactions with people can occur.

² Interview 04 with Sophie and Jakob (see appendix for full interview)

I have developed 4 principal layers that will define the overall scope of my project:

The Human: a focus on the program of the public condenser, the activities that will enhance the existing park and encourage the public to participate in creative social gathering. The public condenser will consist of 4 programmatic typologies:

- **Exchanging/Exhibiting:** A flexible public market hall/square that allows the people a space to sell, trade, and display their local businesses, services, products, and artistry.
- **Making/Expressing:** Studios and workshop spaces that will accommodate different types of creative work and hobbies. These spaces will share a large communal space where people can exhibit their work and the community can socialize and hangout. This space is open to all, allowing anyone the opportunity share their work, or discover someone else's.
- **Growing/Gardening:** A greenhouse where locals can come and grow plants and their own crops. The greenhouse would be accompanied with a kitchen and dining space where the users may prepare their own meals to enjoy at the park.
- **Playing/Relaxing:** An urban beach/pool area near the canal that is surrounded by nature and provides ample seating and lounge space of people to enjoy the waterfront. The area will be in close proximity to basic amenities- toilets, showers, changerooms, etc. The waterfront will also include a boardwalk that connects the park to other public spots to create a large, continuous promenade along the canal for the locals.

The Material: a focus on the existing physical elements and conditions that define the borders and boundaries of the space (i.e., the Berlin wall, paved paths, etc.), and seeks ways to re-adapt them into a new layer of spatial planning on the site. This is where I will experiment with waste and upcycling of materials to create a low carbon, locally sourced material palette for the project. The design will experiment with the re-adaptation of existing materials (ex. The Berlin Wall) to then re-contextualize them back into the design.

The Landscape: a focus on developing an overall landscape that fuses to natural elements and the material elements into an urban park that is well connected with paths for pedestrians, bikers, and skaters.

The Circular / Natural: a focus on implementing circular design strategies in order to achieve a sustainable, affordable, and adaptable park for all future use. Some strategies of interest include:

- A water management system that will nourish the plants and vegetation, providing the opportunity to implement water features through out the site, as well as an urban pool/beach.
- An upcycled material palette that will make up the construction of the physical interventions on the site.
- Adaptable spaces that will accommodate a hybridization of functions and programs for different needs of the community.

³ Broschüre: Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg - Kleinräumige Daten (2019)

It is through the blurring of these design layers that an urban backyard for the locals of the area and Berlin, will manifest itself into an “everchanging and fluid” prototype of a public park.

Process

Method description

The methods for this project include:

- Thorough site analysis through research of history, context development, landmark significance, social transformation, gentrification/local conflict, and demographic.
- Data collection through field work, observation, interviews with locals, visual studies, etc.
- Literature review on Circular design, designing out of waste, urban mining, etc.
- Precedents and case studies on:
 - o Mediaspree vs Sink Mediaspree
 - o Public/Park transformations in Berlin
 - o Remains and re-use of Berlin Wall
 - o Circular design/Upcycling architecture, waste architecture (ex. Willa Welpeloo by Superuse Studios)
 - o Waterfront revitalization projects (ex. Copenhagen Harbour Baths by BIG and JDS Architects)
- Material Palette through the collection of research and data on locally sourced waste materials around the site. These materials will be collected and catalogued to develop an overall material palette for the project.

Literature and general practical preference

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Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The relationship between my topic, my studio and MSc – Architecture track is that they are interconnecting different social, economic, and environmental issues and all require a complex multiplicity of architectural solutions and interventions to be addressed. That is what I seek to define as I carry out my graduation project.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional, and scientific framework.

The relevance to my graduation project on a larger social, professional, and scientific scale is my interest in architecture without ownership; in designing a truly public space where the users are free to do as they please with no need to consume. With many cities becoming more and more gentrified, there the users of public space are left with less power to design a space as they truly desire. The project experiments with different spatial typologies that could provide an accessible, affordable, and inviting urban backyard in the heart of a hyper-gentrified area.