

## Unifying Berlin: Creating Social Cohesion with Public Open Space



Joe Batcheller  
Masters Student  
Urban and Regional Planning  
University of California, Irvine

## Problem Statement

The purpose of this research is to determine if the development of public open space can facilitate social cohesion in Berlin, and how.

## Research Questions

- How can the development of public open space facilitate social cohesion?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding public open space in facilitating social cohesion?
- Do public open spaces created since re-unification foster social cohesion?
- Are Berlin's open spaces that feature elements of triangulation successful in fostering social cohesion?

## Objectives

- Examine the transformation of Berlin's fallow land into public open space initiated by either government or grassroots groups.
- Examine the social dynamics of public open spaces intended to represent the "new" Berlin.
- Explore the social dynamics between various community groups, both formal and informal, involved with open space planning.

## Objectives

- Determine planning methods and policy regarding the creation of public open spaces that are intended to foster social cohesion.
- Identify potential methods for further research.



“Berlin is poor, but sexy.”  
Klaus Wowereit, Mayor of Berlin

- A Cultured City – Over 5% of Berliners are said to be artists.
- A Diverse City – Immigrants from all continents inhabit Berlin.
- A Green City – Berlin has a vast amount of open space.
- A City of Division – East & West / German & Non-German
- A Capitol of a “Contrived State”

## Social Cohesion

- 3 Stages – Dialog, Understanding, Trust
- Dialog can be facilitated via triangulation, thus presenting opportunities for social cohesion.
- Triangulation: when an external stimulus draws strangers together.

## But how can triangulation lead to understanding and trust?

- Proactive – Tailor triangulation efforts for neighborhood groups and youth groups.
- Retroactive – Analyze the social dynamics between grassroots groups involved with common public space projects.



## Methods

- Literary Review
- Expert Interviews
  - Mark Donfried, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Founder
  - Anne Duncker, Foreign Ministry, Specialist on Turkey
  - Alexander Longolius, Checkpoint Charlie Foundation, Founder
- Social Network Analysis
- Informal Interviews

## Potential Limitations

- Time constraints
- Unsure of the potential significance of case studies.
- Interviews may be difficult to obtain.
- Language barriers
- Scope

## Potential Significance

This research is intended to provide insights for expediting the process of bridging cultural gaps.

Perhaps further research of this topic can allow for the extrapolation of planning methods and policy applicable to post-conflict planning.

## • Questions & Concerns