

## Developing social connection through architectural interventions at in-between space

When walking through our selected area in Friedrichshain, I found out very quickly there is, as was already visible on maps, a decent amount of 'green space' in and throughout the area. The 'plattenbau' structure of the neighbourhood allows for these areas to exist due to the distance between each building block. However much of this 'green space', is not used greatly as a place where people go to or reside, mainly because the spaces often don't allow for this or appear uninviting.

Another issue I've encountered through interviews with residents of the area, is the disconnection from their neighbours, a sense of community seems to be missing. One couple living closer to Ostbahnhof explained they they don't feel it is the nicest area due to the issue of homelessness and alcoholism on the streets, especially with a small kid. They mostly just talk to their direct neighbours but that is about it.

A general space where everyone can come together and form connections seems to be lacking. As people with issues in social life like homeless are just as much part of the community as everyone else living in the area, they too should be included. The spaces all people in Friedrichshain, regardless of their age or background seem to use are parks, the public spaces that exists amidst the building blocks. It is for this reason I choose these parks as spaces where a public intervention could be placed.

The answer in finding a form of connection should lay in that which connects each group, in what they have in common, either as interest or as need. The goal here is to create a place where those willing to become part of the community, and society as a whole, can find a meaning in life, feel that they matter, enjoy leisure time, socialise and connect. The question is therefore:

*How can architectural interventions activate and enrich existing green spaces with the aim to create a sense of belonging for those who need it and allow for interaction so that a community can develop where everyone is welcome?*

For doing so, I plan to do more research on connection, in-between space, commoning and spaces of social aid. Part of this will be literature, but for the latter I hope to find my information by visiting different spaces that have a program in place to integrate people into society or gives aid in other ways. I already visit one place in Rotterdam where the re-integration into society is the aim by giving people meaningful exercises and get structure so they can get back on track. This place worked with people that were already part of a trajectory so that social workers knew who they were dealing with and through that this place hosted daytime activities as being a full- or part-time job. These activities were mainly different crafts like woodwork or metalwork, something I currently intent to do as well.

I plan to visit other places alike but also try to see night shelter places for the homeless and talk to the people there to get to know how a system of re-integration works. By combining literature and precedents I intent to find ways to integrate those in need whilst socially connecting and forming a community.

Reading list:

Architecture that connects:

- Christian Borch, Martin Kornberger, *Urban Commons. Rethinking the City* (London: Routledge, 2015).
- Urban Think Tank, Torre David. *Informal Vertical Communities* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2012).
- Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space. The City as Commons* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).
- Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Rituals and Walls. The Architecture of Sacred Space* (London: AA Publishing, 2016).