

**“How public can the private be?
Private Actors’ Impact on Publicness in public space production.
Evidence from the Mercedes Platz, Berlin Germany”**

Bachelor Thesis

Submitted by

David Schulze-Seeger (s4569911)

Supervised by

Charlotte Miller

Faculty of Spatial Sciences



Table of Contents

1. Background	
1.1 Urban development of Berlin after 1990.....	3
1.2 Mercedes Platz.....	4
1.3 Research Problem.....	5
1.4 Structure of Thesis	5
2. Theoretical Framework	6
2.1 What is Public Space?.....	6
2.2 Distinction of publicness between Process and Product.....	6
2.3 Process.....	6
2.3.1 Organisation.....	6
2.3.2 Intention.....	7
2.3.3 Accessibility.....	7
2.4 Product	8
2.4.1 Usage.....	8
2.4.2 Design.....	8
2.4.3 Perception.....	8
3. Conceptual Model.....	9
4. Methodology	10
4.1 Choice of Data Collection and Data Analysis Method	10
4.1.1 Process.....	10
4.1.2 Product.....	11
4.2 Quality of Data and Ethical Considerations.....	11
5. Results and Discussion	11
5.1 Process.....	11
5.1.1 Organization	11
5.1.2 Intention.....	12
5.1.3 Accessibility.....	12
5.2 Product	13
5.2.1 Usage.....	13
5.2.2 Design.....	15
5.2.3 Perception.....	16
6. Conclusions.....	18
7. Bibliographie	19
8. Figures.....	21
9. Appendix.....	22
9.1 Transcribed Interview (Translated)	22
9.2 Original Analytical Framework of Leclercq et al. (2020).....	27
9.2 Survey Data.....	28

Abstract

This paper investigates the involvement of private actors in the production of public spaces and their impact on publicness. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including stakeholder interviews, user surveys, and an analysis of planning documents, the study focuses on the single case of Mercedes Platz (MP) in Berlin. The main research question will be assessed along a firm and concise conceptual model, assessing the publicness of the MP regarding aspects of the *process*, and the *product* (the space itself). The findings demonstrate the predominant role of private actors in the *process*, driven by commercial interests, while citizen participation remains limited. Even though the acceptance of the *product* was perceived as rather equal, usages focusing primarily on financial returns, discrepancies in design preferences, and a lack of vibrant public character are evident. The case study demonstrates that private actors have a negative impact on publicness. Therefore, this scholarly paper emphasises the necessity for improved harmonization between public and private entities to foster the creation of dynamic and vibrant public spaces. Future research could then undertake more nuanced case studies to establish comprehensive guidelines and fundamental principles to achieve this objective.

1. Background

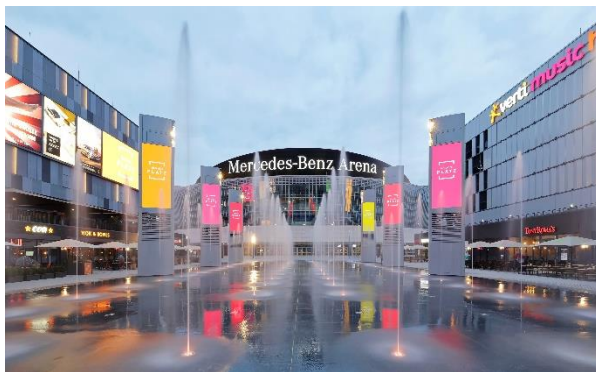
Public spaces serve as focal points of interaction, recreation, and identification in the urban fabric (Gunder, Madanipour, and Watson, 2018). They have always been established as irreplaceable fundamentals of human social lives and are therefore crucial for society by representing public values such as inclusivity, responsibility, and equity. However, recent debate about private actor involvement in public space production instigates contrasting viewpoints, leading to diverse outcomes in the academic field. Some authors, such as Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren (2020) state that private investors increase civic pride, revitalize the housing market, and create new jobs. They say that this highly “ideological debate” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p.2) is focusing too much on the negative outcomes of privately owned public spaces since these often restore shared spaces in urban areas by attracting residents, tourists, and investments (Galkowski and Antosz, 2022). Thus, cities rely more and more on private actor involvement in public space production. Yet, other scholars speak of “the end of public spaces” (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013, pp. 429-448; Wang and Chen, 2018, pp. 1-21; Paköz, Sözer and Doğan, 2022, pp. 64-66) and state that privately owned public spaces reduce the diversity, vitality, and vibrancy of cities. Here, the term of such called “pseudo-public spaces” is mentioned. It describes any space that is owned and managed by enterprises that “only have profits in mind” (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022, p. 65). Combined with an emerging market-driven governance, these places often lose the original meaning and significance of public spaces (Haque, 2001; Madanipour, 2010; Reynaers and De Graaf, 2014). This development has led to rising concerns about whether private actors can uphold public values in public space production (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020).

1.1 Urban development of Berlin after 1990

The city of Berlin, which displays a unique history including the fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of the 20th century, offers great circumstances to further investigate the notion of private actor involvement in public space production. Through the merging of East and West Berlin and the connected economic-political turn, a certain “reunification euphoria” resulted in great plans to redevelop plots of land, mainly focusing on the inner city (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014, p. 12). Projects such as the “Potsdamer Platz,” considered the biggest construction site in Europe in 1994, aimed to attract influential global players, which brought in skilled workers to revitalize inner city urban areas (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014). A climate ideal for private investors was created. Subsidies from the government for redevelopment projects led to a total of 25 billion Euros spent just shortly after reunification (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014).

1.2 Mercedes Platz

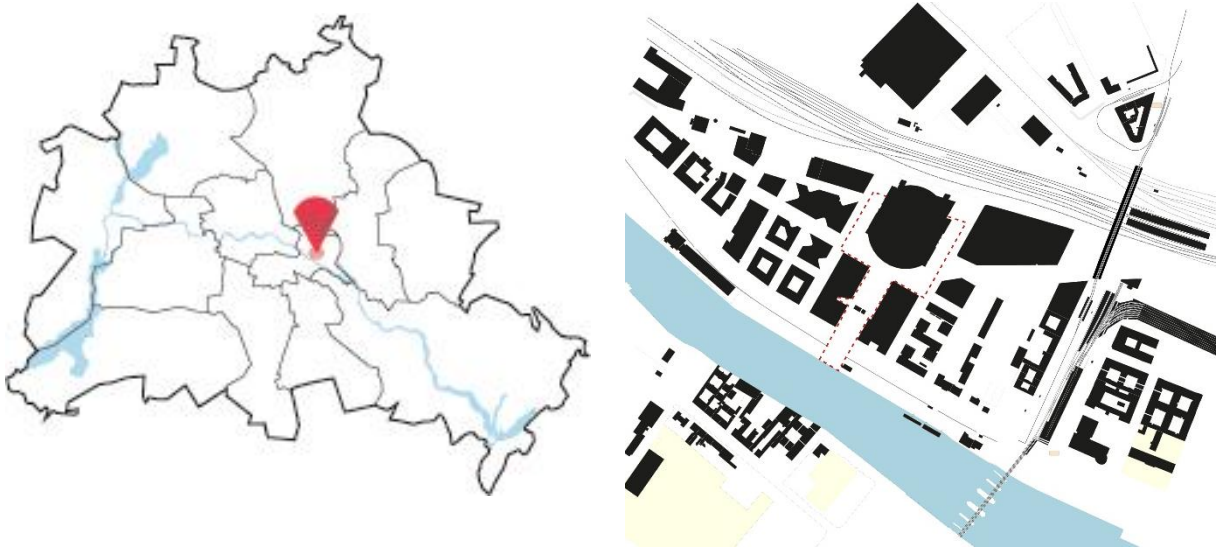
Even though urban development slightly stagnated around the year 2000, another big property investment area was launched in 2004. It was the intention of the district council of “Friedrichshain Kreuzberg” (FK) to revitalize the area along the river Spree and create a vibrant city district for the future by combining art and media in urban development (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004). Next to attracting private global media players, such as “Universal Music Group”, the private actor of the “Anschutz Entertainment Group” (AEG), was found to construct the site. The American owner, who facilitates over 120 arenas worldwide (AEG,2023) and is one of the world’s leading businesses in the entertainment and sports segment (AEG,2023), started the construction of the site in 2006. Even though most of the planning area was underused land, back then the promotion of privatization of public land, was already seen critically by the public (fig. 1) (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014). Today, the square and the arena are part of the 3.7km long urban development project, which was at its beginning considered to be one of the biggest projects of Berlin after reunification (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014).



Figures 1, 2,3, and 4 from top left to bottom right – Mercedes Platz, Berlin Germany

This paper attempts to contribute knowledge to the academic debate, by looking at a specific example of private actor involvement in public space development in the city of Berlin, Germany. The case study this paper will take into consideration is the MP which is located in the city centre close to the river Spree, belonging to the district of FK (fig. 5 and 6). The square itself, which is directly connected to the Mercedes-Benz-Arena, was constructed in 2018. However, it was already set in stone to add a public space in front of the arena (formerly O2-Arena) while planning for it in 2004 (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004). With the name rights changing in the year 2015 from “O2-World“ to the “Mercedes-Benz-Arena“, the new square worth 200 million Euros was added in front of the arena complex. Though, it is still run by the same owner (AEG), thus not affecting the ownership structures. The public space offers

over 7000 m² of building site featuring the “Verti-Music Hall”, the “UCI movie theatre”, a bowling lounge, and up to 20 cafés, restaurants, and bars (www.mercedes-platz.de, 2023; www.aegworldwide.com, 2023).



Figures 5 and 6 – Location of the Mercedes-Benz-Platz, Berlin Germany

1.3 Research Problem

There is not only a clear imbalance between the perceptions along scholars regarding private actor involvement in public space production. Even real-life examples depicting different cases, highlighted from diverse angles, show varying results (Wang and Chen, 2018; Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Chan, 2023). This suggests further investigation of the topic. Moreover, it is relevant to constantly add further nuances into the discussion, through different examples, approaches, and results. Consequently, this research does not intend to create and establish universal laws and rules but tries to expand the knowledge regarding privately owned public spaces, with the help of a case study. Furthermore, the occurrence of civil society protests, petitions, and the advocacy of alternative agendas against the privatization of public space (fig. 1) (Arandelovic and Bogunovich, 2014), demonstrates that this field of urban planning leads to friction between the society and official actors involved. Thus, the central question of this research is:

“How does the involvement of private actors in the production of public spaces, such as the Mercedes Platz, impact their publicness?”

The sub-questions are:

1. “What is publicness and how can it be measured?”
2. “Are public values in the *process*, along the aspects of organization, intention, and accessibility, of the Mercedes Platz upheld?”
3. “Are public values in the *product*, along the aspects of usage, design, and perception of the Mercedes Platz upheld?”

1.4 Structure of Thesis

First, this paper sets out a definition of public space and its dimensions, to contextualize the term properly by also acknowledging its broadness and complexity. Then, in order to properly weigh

and assess “publicness”, this paper divides the term into two parts. By looking at the publicness of both the *process* and the *product* a firm and concise analytical framework is applied which will help to guide this research. Consequently, the results gathered from the primary and secondary data collection of the case study MP will be illustrated and discussed. Here important connections and synergies between the different aspects of the *process* and the *product* will be pointed out. After assessing the publicness of the privately owned public space, conclusions from this singular case study will be drawn to contribute to the academic and societal debate of private actors involved in public space production.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 What is Public Space?

To get an understanding and to provide a frame of reference for this research, it is crucial to define and contextualize the meaning of public space. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1974) was one of the first scholars who rejected the perspective to see space as a reading of an absolute object. He claims, that every society produces its own space (1974). This notion comes from a time when space was seen as a static, absolute container that could be measured as a physical entity (Gunder, Madanipour, and Watson, 2018). With time, scholars realised that networks of relationships, power structures, and social flows play a crucial role in public spaces as well (Gunder, Madanipour, and Watson, 2018). Gunder et al. (2018) continue to argue that spaces are at their core socially and culturally produced, and that “their production is infused with power and politics” (2018, p. 18). Having recognized the detachment of public space from the physical world itself and realizing the importance they have within our social lives, makes it possible to further dive into the contextualization of the publicness of public space.

2.2 Distinction of publicness between Process and Product

This manuscript is inspired by the analytical framework, by Els Leclercq, Dorina Pojani, and Ellen van Beuren (2020) (see Appendix, 9.2). The important notion that is derived is the distinction between the publicness of the *process* and the publicness of the *product*. For the *process*, which is concerned with the implementation of public space, public values such as accountability, transparency, responsibility, and inclusivity are assessed based on the degree of organisation, control, and accessibility (2020). Here, this paper wants to make a change in the adopted analytical framework. Instead of the aspect of “control”, this paper identifies a more relevant aspect to utilize which is the aspect of “intention.” Due to the focus of this paper on the motives and goals of private actors involved in offering public spaces, an adaptation was necessary to delve further into the private operators’ objectives of the project. The *product* on the other hand, which is concerned with the space itself, focuses on the perceived publicness, the usage of the place, and its design. Both notions are investigated apart from each other but will be synthesised to determine the overall impact of publicness in the end.

2.3 Process

2.3.1 Organisation

Until the late 20th century, the responsibility for providing public space was primarily held by the government (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020). Public space was defined as “open space, accessible to all and managed by the state on people’s behalf” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p. 1). Governmental agencies, municipalities, and public institutions were considered the main authorities in charge of public space development (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020). However, due to the post-industrial decline and increasing global competition faced by cities, governments started involving private actors in the production of public space to make use of their resources, skills, and expertise (Sassen, 2013). This transition, which came mainly out of the urge to overcome public sector inefficiencies, leads to a more market-driven governance that focuses more on deregulation, privatization, and liberalization (Haque, 2001; Reynaers and De Graaf,

2014). Consequently, the *process* of public space affairs underwent a reorganization, where the structure has redefined its alignment beyond governmental bodies (Carmona et al., 2008). Private actors such as businesses, developers, and private investors became increasingly involved, taking over tasks that were originally managed by public actors and operating under more centralized organizational structures (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020).

2.3.2 Intention

According to Leclercq et al. (2020), the privatization of public space and the resulting treatment of public space as a “vehicle of private investment” (2020, p. 2) has led to rather positive outcomes. They argue that a virtuous circle gets activated where better environments boost civic pride, revitalize the housing market, and lead to the creation of new jobs. Here, publicness is achieved through an attractive environment that has success in creating such cascading effects leading to better urban environments (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020). However, the transformation towards private actor involvement in public space production brought about a change in the primary intention behind the development of public spaces. Rather than seeing public space as a provision of inclusive, open, and accessible space for the public (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020), the emphasis changed to facilitating public space as a means to primarily driving economic growth (Chan, 2023). The notion of public space as a “commodity” became more dominant, highlighting the economic return as a primary goal (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, pp. 1-2). This has led to concerns about the ability of private actors to uphold public values in the production of such spaces.

2.3.3 Accessibility

Weber (1958), defines public space as “open to every individual regardless of culture, religion or even social status”. This stresses the aspect of participation and accessibility true public spaces offer, as “public space is embodied by participation” (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022, p. 65).

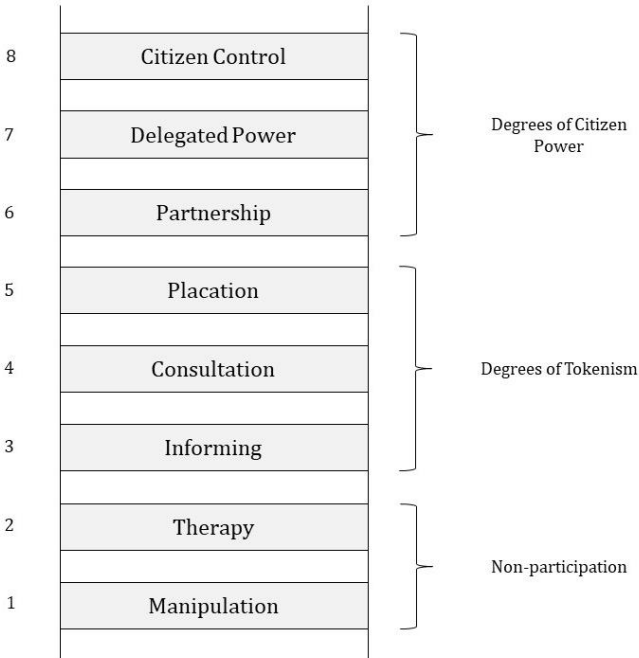


Figure 7: Ladder of Participation by Sherry R. Arnstein (1969)

However, participation processes can have different degrees, providing distinctive levels of involvement, therefore leading to various forms of accessibility (Arnstein, 1969). Thus, this paper utilizes the concept of the "ladder of participation" (fig.7) (Arnstein, 1969) to assess the accessibility of the *process*. The concept establishes a spectrum of citizen participation in the planning process, ranging from "manipulation" to true "citizen control." As shown in Figure 7, the eight stages are categorized into three different headings. The heading of "non-participation", describes the degree where no legitimate citizen involvement is present. Here, powerholders merely educate participants (Arnstein, 1969). The second categorization, "Degrees of "Tokenism", portrays a form where citizens are heard, however, there is no insurance that their concerns will be "heeded" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). The ladder steps six to eight represent the "Degrees of Citizen Power". Here, citizen involvement in decision-making processes is assured. This can be achieved through "Partnerships", "Delegated Power" or real "Citizen Control" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

2.4 Product

2.4.1 Usage

The usages of public spaces are basic elements of the city, implying their importance in providing publicly accessible space (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022). Yet, the effect of the privatization of public spaces is that the *product* is more and more managed for seeking profits and serving paying customers (Chang and Weng, 2018). This results in usages often focused on a profit-orientated layout (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022; Chan, 2023) leading toward public spaces becoming rather places of consumption (Zukin, 1998). Here, the term of so-called "pseudo-public spaces" (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022, p. 64-79) is mentioned. The term refers to "any space that is owned and managed by enterprises that only have profits in mind" (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022). Even though these places resemble certain public values at first sight, due to their economic and profit-orientated layout, the opposite gets achieved (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013). Instead of focusing on usages which engage users with the space through non-financial activities (Paköz, Sözer and Doğan, 2022), the primary intention is mostly laid out for increasing consumption (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022). Therefore, many authors label these public spaces rather as a commodity than a public good (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022; Chan, 2023).

2.4.2 Design

Well-designed urban environments are key to attracting private investment and users (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023). Often, "attractive design" (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022) helps to revive the real estate industry, enhance community satisfaction, and create employment opportunities (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020). Furthermore, design aspects in public spaces play a crucial role in reflecting public values (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020), by inviting users to engage with the space. However, privately owned public spaces are often criticised for their lack of uniqueness, them being highly homogeneous, and their excessively clean nature (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022). Since the primary intention is focused on generating financial returns through users of the space, these places are often "not designed for long periods of seating and walking" (Wang and Chen, 2018, p. 10). Also, according to Gałkowski and Antosz (2022), opportunities such as taking a break or engaging in networking are not considered enough in design aspects of privately owned public spaces. As these characteristics are usually "pivotal in high-quality public spaces", the lack of them can lead to "uninviting spaces" (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022, p. 5).

2.4.3 Perception

In general, privately owned public spaces often represent "safe and clean [...] urban environments" (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023, p. 4). Due to the perception of seeing public space as a commodity, a high focus on maintenance and service quality is present (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023). This leads to a general perception of privately owned public spaces feeling rather "overly sanitized"

(Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p. 2). Here, the notion of pseudo-public spaces comes into play again, describing the “perfect simulation of real urban spaces” (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022, p. 7). Even though the intention may first appear evident by looking through a layer of aesthetic design and vibrant events (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022), these spaces are often blamed for private actors inherently prioritizing “business interests over public values” (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023, p. 4). This has a great impact on the perception of the public character. Here, the objective is focusing less on the provision of public goods, and more on the economic return. Moreover, this can often lead to a reduction in diversity, vitality, and vibrancy (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p. 1; Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013, pp. 429-448). This progression shows a massive antagonism to what public spaces and their connected public values are intended for.

3. Conceptual Model

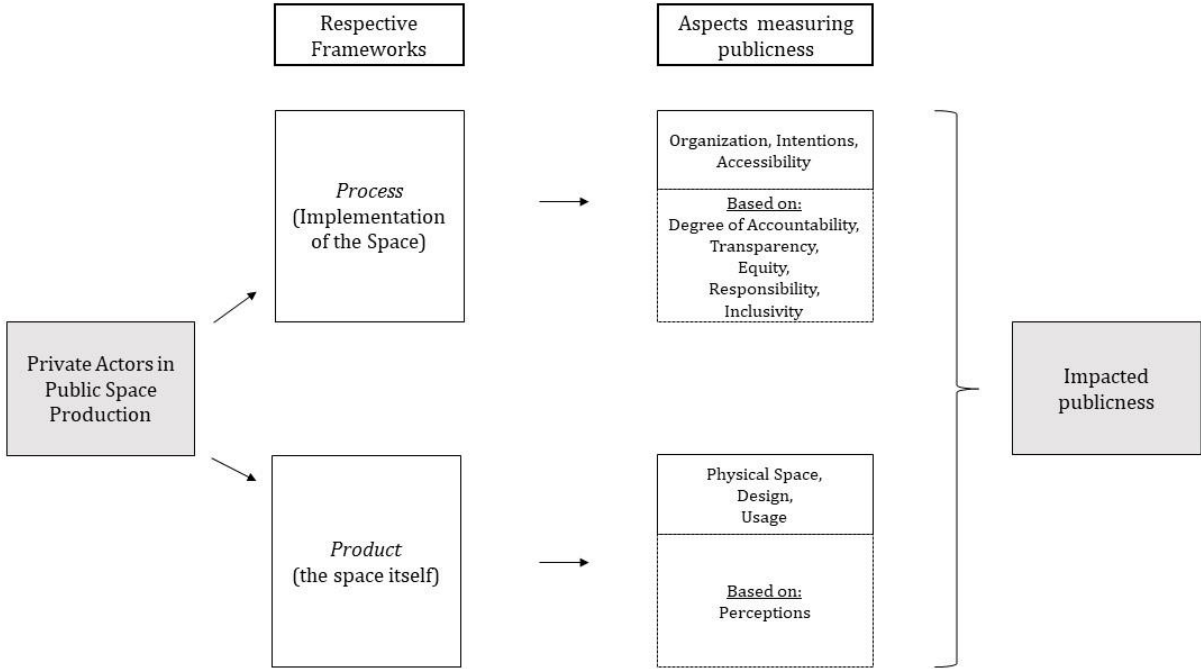


Figure 8: Conceptual Model – Private Actor Involvement in Public Space Production and Their Impact on Publicness

By distinguishing the assessment of publicness into the *process* and the *product*, a more nuanced and detailed investigation is possible. Additionally, by laying out the specific aspects measuring publicness for the *process* and *product*, a robust framework and theoretical lens is provided which will be elementary for the structure, coherence, and clarity of this manuscript.

4. Methodology

4.1 Choice of Data Collection and Data Analysis Method

The primary objective of this research is to contribute to the academic debate by offering in-depth insights and distinctions through the examination of a single case. Therefore, this scholarly paper focuses on conducting a case study of the MP in Berlin, Germany. The case study serves as an excellent example of the involvement of private actors in public space production. The decision to choose this particular case study was influenced by the availability of sufficient secondary data, allowing for a comprehensive analysis. The conceptual model (fig. 8) also references the more detailed analytical framework, describing the data collection and analysis (fig. 9). Here, the thesis differentiates again between the publicness of the *process* and *product* of public space. This framework suggested a mixed-method research approach. Qualitative data, in the form of interviews and a policy document analysis, was employed to examine the *process*. Quantitative data analysis, through surveys, was used to evaluate the *product*. Other methods, such as conducting surveys with stakeholders involved in the *process* would have been possible. This would have allowed for correlations between organisation, intention, and accessibility to be tested. For the analysis of the *product*, observation checklists could have also aided to test the impacted publicness of design, usage, and perceptions. However, since this paper is interested in exploring the in-depth details of the case study, the chosen methods accommodate altogether.

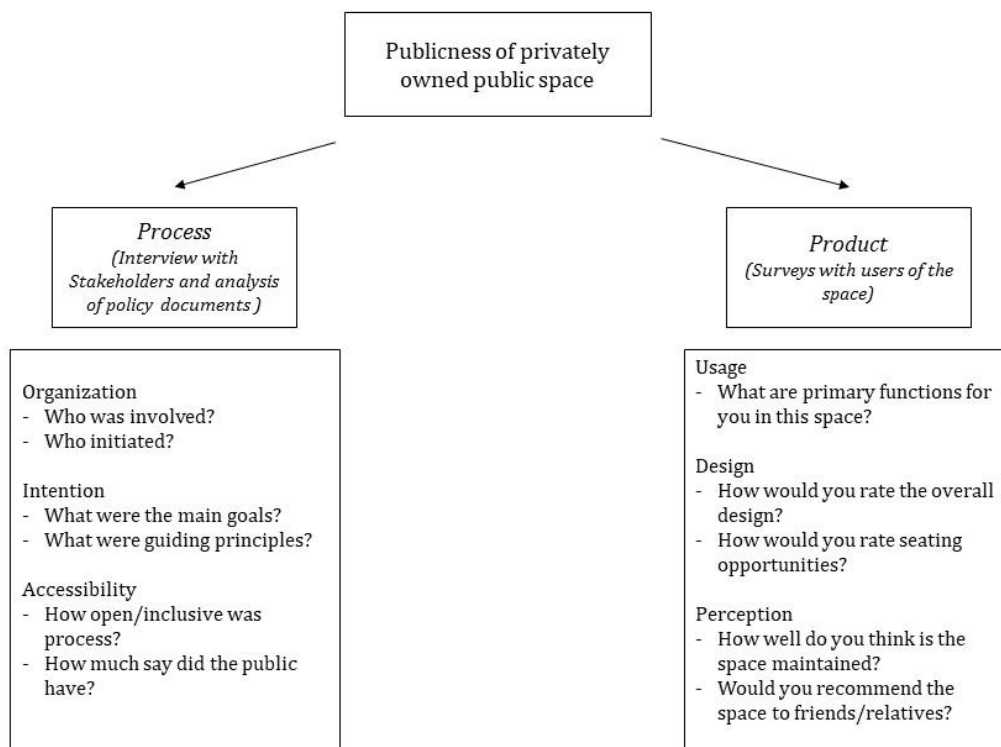


Figure 9: Analytical Framework – Process and Product with example questions related to aspects of publicness

4.1.1 Process

A semi-structured, in-depth interview was conducted to investigate the implementation of the MP. This paper managed to interview a representative of the main architecture bureau involved in the *process*. This allowed insights into crucial internal knowledge of the *process*. Furthermore, policy documents and reasonings of layout plans provided by the city of Berlin were investigated to gather vital information along the aspects of organization, intention, and accessibility. The

combination of both primary and secondary data resulted in a compressed output that could back each other up.

4.1.2 Product

Surveys were conducted to gather data on the *product*, allowing respondents to rate the design of the public space, interpret the usage and give smaller qualitative feedback on the MP. This provided overall insights into users' perceptions. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The collected data was analysed by investigating the output of the survey data, along with the aspects of usage, design, and perception, using descriptive statistics. Since this research is not concerned with finding correlations in a large sample of different privately owned public spaces, to then draw significant conclusions on the whole population, statistical tests were not conducted.

4.2 Quality of Data and Ethical Considerations

The reliability of the data was ensured by using the same set of questions in the surveys, promoting consistency (Fitzner, 2007). However, as only one interview could be conducted, the reliability of the findings cannot be assessed. Future research should consider conducting more interviews. The validity of the data was achieved by aligning the interview and survey questions with the analytical framework and its aspects of assessing publicness. Despite some possible degree of interpretation in some of the survey questions, they contributed to obtaining an accurate understanding of people's opinions on the publicness of the space. For the conducted interview and surveys, capturing the participant's consent was of priority, and preserving participants' anonymity was assured. For the interview written consent was accepted before the interview, for the surveys, users were informed that by participating in the questionnaire, they gave consent for their answers to be used in this paper. Ensuring confidentiality was of utmost care.

5. Results and Discussion

To shed light on the study's central objective, which is to investigate the impact on publicness of public spaces where private actors are involved in their production, the following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the collected data from the MP. Here, different insights will be highlighted along the adopted framework consisting of the *process* and the *product*.

5.1 Process

5.1.1 Organization

The key actors involved in the *process* were the district council of FK, providing the legal layout plan, and the private entity "Anschutz Entertainment Group," (AEG) the land's owner and operator. Although the city of Berlin set out a frame of rules for the respective part of the land and additional guiding principles for the larger area, it was in full responsibility of the AEG to develop, design, and finance the area. Additionally, these guiding principles for the area set by the city of Berlin can be rather interpreted as an "offering plan" over the timespan of 15-20 years (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004, p. 98). This makes the private actor in this case the superior decision-making authority, with the most influence in the *process*. Furthermore, and as stated in the reasoning of the land-use plan, usually the guiding principles get established before the planning process of the construction site. However, a "peculiarity" in the *process* was that the creation of the guiding principle of the area and the actual planning process of the site took place simultaneously (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004). Normally, first the guiding principles of the area are established and then a plan for the construction site is developed. This unusual exception made in the planning processes by the city of Berlin stays unexplained. It also meant that the AEG thus directly "codetermined the guiding principle" (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004) including surrounding areas.

Here this shift in organisational modes becomes rather clear. As the owner of the land has the upper hand in the planning process, the AEG operates in a relatively centralised organisation. This portrays an environment where the private actor “can act relatively independently” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p.2), thus having a direct effect on the part of land the operator owns but also on surrounding areas. This top-down hierarchy is also confirmed by an answer in the interview which was held for this scholarly paper:

“Our job was to present the client (representatives of the AEG) options A and B which they could then decide between.” (Interviewee 1)

Even though it is acknowledged that this particular quote depicts a rather normal routine, it still shows the centralized organizational position (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020) that the AEG had within the *process*. Overall, a lack of public say in the organisation of the MP aligns with the observed notions regarding a transition in the organisational allocation of public spaces towards less public responsibility. (Carmona et al., 2008; Reynaers and De Graaf, 2014).

5.1.2 Intention

The intentions and goals for developing the MP can be again split into the position of the council of FK and the AEG. For the district council of FK, the MP is part of a bigger urban development aimed at creating a vibrant inner-city, revitalizing crucial land properties, providing connections to the surrounding areas of the city, as well as creating commercial land uses (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004). From the perspective of the private actor, the goals come from a rather similar direction. As their business model focuses on creating event venues for entertainment purposes, their main goal was to create a public square in front of their already existing “Mercedes-Benz-Arena”. Here commercial functions, such as restaurants, bars, cafés, beer gardens, a cinema, a bowling alley, and other event venues such as the “Verti Music Hall”, were the primary focus. Although safety was also an aspect that needed to be considered, as the square needs to have the capacity and safety guidelines to facilitate up to 17000 visitors of the Mercedes-Benz-Arena, it becomes rather clear that:

“Primarily, there was an economic interest” (Interviewee 1)

The case study of the MP shows a market-driven, profit-orientated background (Haque, 2001; Reynaers and De Graaf, 2014). This leads to an attitude of intending public space more as a “commodity” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, pp. 1-2), reflected in highly commercial usages. Instead of prioritizing public values such as accessibility, inclusivity, and openness (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020), and offering free activities for all possible users of the space, the presence of restaurants, bars, cafés, and event venues within the MP creates financial barriers that solely have “profits in mind” (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022, p. 65)

5.1.3 Accessibility

The framework plans and local zoning guidelines from the city council of FK for the MP were already incorporated into the plans of the Mercedes-Benz-Arena in the early 2000s. In this early planning stage, it was made possible for citizens to inform themselves about the goals and reasons of the plan and to comment on the project in the context of an exhibition (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan 2-4 VE “Arena am Ostbahnhof”, 2003). Two statements were created and were to be considered in the later planning process. In the legal documents, there is no indication of any further public participation process, except for a few minor complaints from neighbouring parties. Applying the “ladder of participation” (Arnstein, 1969) (fig. 7), the stage of “consultation” is most applicable in this situation. This can be also observed in the reasoning of the binding layout plan. Here, most of the citizens’ concerns, mentioned in the statements resulting from the exhibition, were usually answered along the lines of being “unsubstantiated” (Begründung Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum

Bebauungsplan V-3, 2004, pp. 97-98). In this case, citizen participation was seen as a “required motion” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219), to have “participated in the participation” (1969, p. 219). However, an argument mentioned by the interviewee is that during that period, the area mostly consisted of underused land, therefore questioning the necessity of further public participation processes. Additionally, since the AEG is the owner of the land, there are no legal requirements to include such participatory measures. Nevertheless, as also admitted by the interviewed architect:

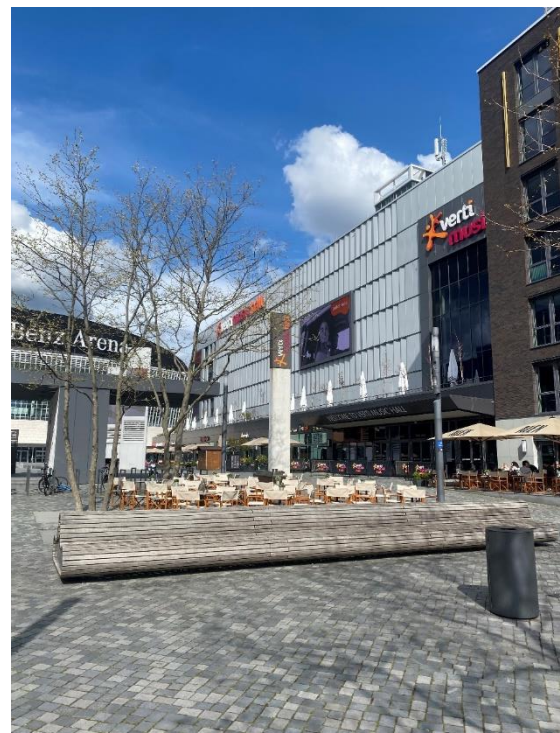
“Today, there would have been more public participation in the process.” (Interviewee 1)

Even though efforts were taken to include citizens in the early planning stages, there was “no assurance that citizens’ concerns and ideas will be taken into account” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219). Consequently, the accessibility of the *process* can be overall labelled as a form of “tokenism” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

5.2 Product

5.2.1 Usage

Most of the survey participants indicated that according to them, the primary usages of the MP were either going out for lunch and dinner or visiting any of the entertainment opportunities (Mercedes-Benz-Arena, Verti-Music Hall, UCI movie theatre, etc.). Usages such as listening to music, encountering people, relaxing, and playing games were less prominent. Only a maximum



Figures 10 and 11 – Restaurants and cafés on Mercedes Platz

of eight percent of the respondents agreed with either one of the latter. Furthermore, nearly eight out of ten respondents indicated a lack of seating opportunities, which needs to be improved (fig. 13 and 14). This relates to the fact, that a certain degree of safety needs to be sustained since the square is also meant to accommodate thousands of people in the event of a concert for example. In that case, too many benches could lead to less space for visitors of the venue to gather. This was also mentioned by the architect involved in the *process*. However, the scarce usage of free seating opportunities pointed out by nearly 80% of the users, indicates the intended commercial focus of the square. Mostly usages connected to financial revenues, such as restaurants, bars, and cafés are provided. Moreover, nearly one-third (32,7%), saw the usage of the MP as a place where they could

pass through to get to different locations. This embodies the opposite character of a public space, as public space is meant to engage with its users (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022). Instead of focusing on non-commercial usages for users to freely interact with, activities mainly focusing on increasing consumption are present (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022). Also depicting that nearly forty percent of the users of the MP are tourists and visitors (fig. 12), shows that the MP is not a place for neighbouring residents to leisure, but intends to attract tourists and investments (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022). This economic focus, represented by the usage of the space, additionally displays similarities to the notion of the city becoming a place of consumption (Zukin, 1998). Even though it may seem that the MP resembles certain public values at first sight (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013), the usages essentially concentrate on maximizing financial gains (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022).

Do you live in Berlin?

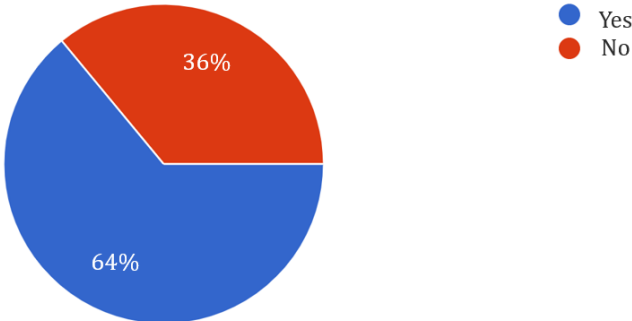


Figure 12 – Descriptive Statistics from the user survey

How do you perceive the availability of seating opportunities?

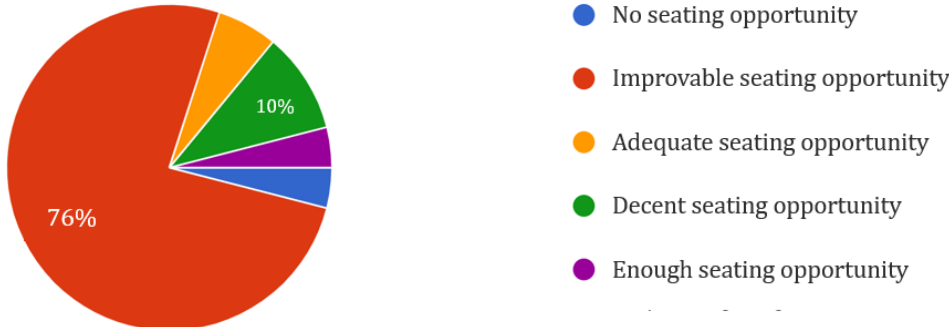
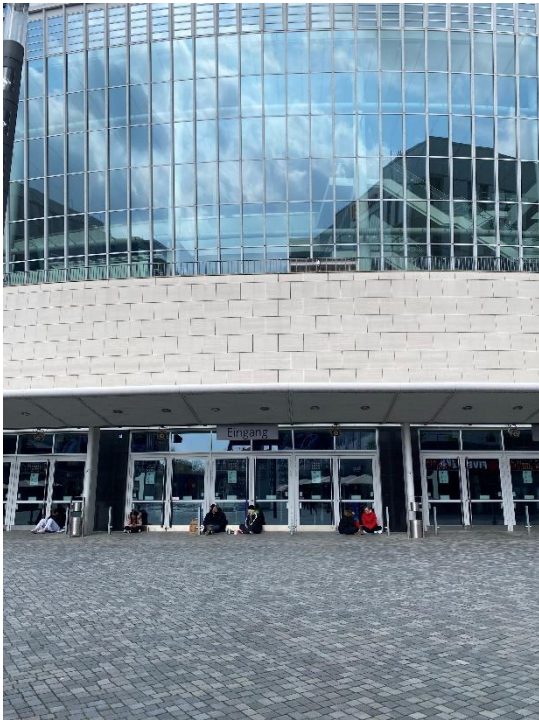


Figure 13 – Descriptive Statistics from user survey

5.2.2 Design



Figures 14 and 15 – Entrance of MCB-Arena and view towards river Spree from Mercedes Platz

The overall sense of the arrangement of the MP is equally distributed among users of the space (fig. 16). Roughly one-third dislike the design (Rank 1-2), the others appreciate it (Rank 4-5), and nearly 30 % nor likes or dislikes the MP (Rank 3). Though, a great factor that is often mentioned by users is the lack of green spaces. Nearly half of the users (40,6%) are unsatisfied with the lack of trees, bushes, and other greenery (see Appendix, 9.3). Often mentioned in the open question part of the survey, is the bland, too spacious, and grey character the square represents. Some respondents also point out the very uniform design, connecting it not only to the architecture of the buildings but also to the grey-sealed surface of the ground (fig. 14). This demonstrates a lack of public agreement with the arrangement of the square, mainly regarding green areas and the aforementioned seating opportunities. Though, one cannot neglect the fact that people who are

How would you rate the design of the Mercedes Platz?

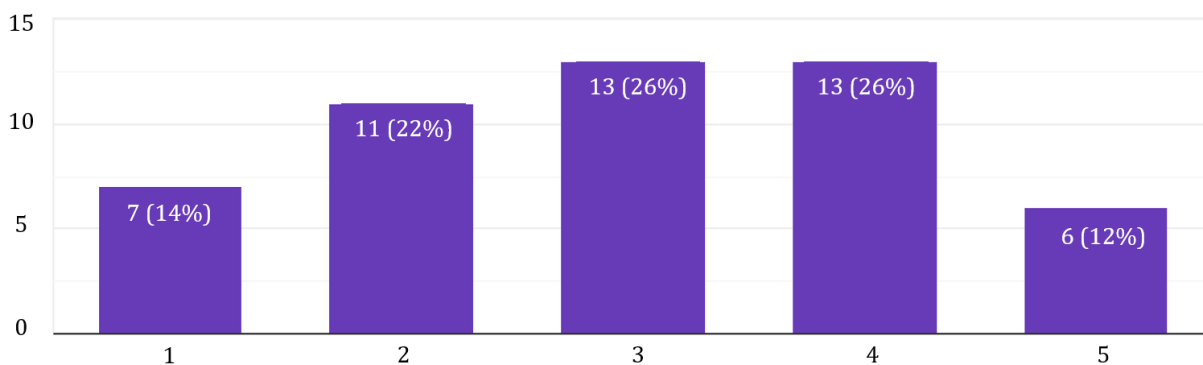


Figure 16 – Ranking design from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good)

unsatisfied with the design are more likely to provide more critical reasons than satisfied people. Additionally, the aspect of safety also influences the design, as mentioned by the architect involved in the process:

“Knowing that we also had to accommodate for up to 17000 enthusiastic fans, we also had to build with rather robust materials.”

Nonetheless, respondents pointing out the lack of seating opportunities and green spaces, which are usually “pivotal in high-quality public spaces” (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022, p. 5), shows a disagreement in design aspects, depicting the MP as a rather “uninviting space” (Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022, p. 5). This can be connected to the intention of seeing the MP as a “vehicle of investment” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p. 2), since the AEG was focusing more on catering to the needs of private investment (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023). Instead of an arrangement enabling users “to sit down, take a break and engage in networking” through more free seating opportunities and green areas, the design elements of the MP show a rather negative impact on the publicness of the space. Also, users mentioning the impressive, yet generic and homogeneous design of the space (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022), affirms the suspicion of a diminishing quality of the public character in privately owned public spaces (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013; Sorkin, 1992).

5.2.3 Perception

Even though the overall satisfaction of the space is distributed quite equally, the aspects of safety, cleanliness, and comfort are all very one-sided (fig. 17 and Appendix, 9.3). In 94% of the answers, users indicate that the MP is either well or very well-cleaned. Similarly, over 85% of the users indicated that they either feel safe or very safe on the square. Additionally, nearly two-thirds indicated that they feel comfortable on the MP. However, not even half of the people would recommend the MP to friends or relatives. Nearly 60% are not sure, would not, or would definitely not recommend the public space to others (fig. 20). Even though, users are highly satisfied with the aspects of maintenance, safety, and comfort, something is missing which would make them recommend the square to their friends and relatives.

How well maintained/ How clean would you say the Mercedes Platz is?

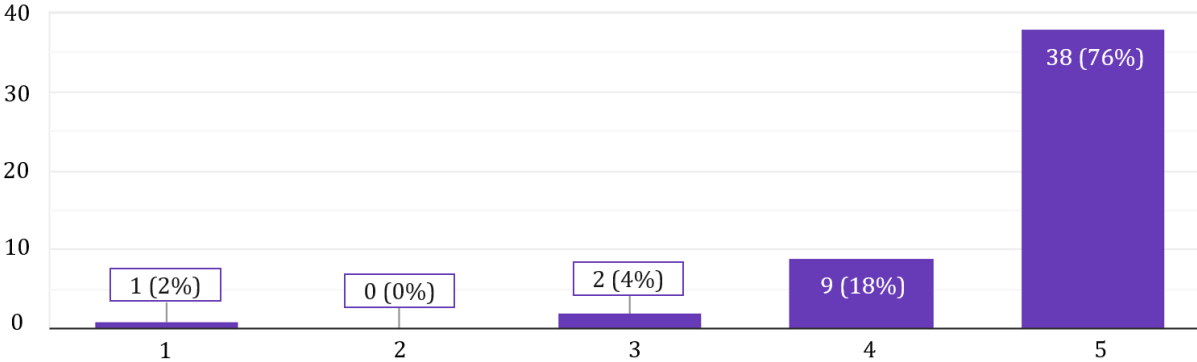


Figure 17 – Ranking cleanness from 1 (very unclean) to 5 (very clean)



Figures 18 and 19 – Commercial banners and main square on Mercedes Platz

This missing part is the “diversity, vitality, and vibrancy” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020, p. 1; Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013, pp. 429-448) of the space, typically present in public spaces. Through the usage and design of the space, the MP implies a prioritization of business interest over public values, impacting its publicness (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023). Due to a layer of clean, safe and well-maintained aesthetics, users subconsciously encounter the presence of private values such as a market-orientated intention, high commercial use of the space, and a strong profit-orientated focus (Paköz, Sözer, and Doğan, 2022). One could say, it is nearly too safe and too clean, implying a rather “sanitized” area (Leclercq and Pojani, 2023, p. 4), leaving no space for a vibrant and lively public space (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013; Leclercq, Pojani and Van Bueren, 2020; Gałkowski and Antosz, 2022). Or how one user of the space put it in words: “Making it less cold and more cozy” (See Appendix, 9.3).

Would you recommend the Mercedes Platz to friends and relatives?

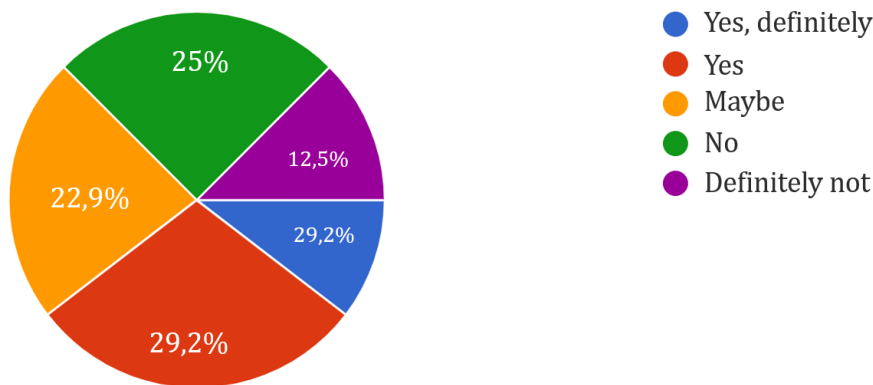


Figure 20 – Descriptive statistic showing multiple-choice answers

6. Conclusions

This research paper, which examines a singular case study, represents a rather negative impact of private actor involvement in public space production. The centralised organisation of the *process* showed that the AEG could act rather independently in the project (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020). This limited the influence of the public entity, leading towards an intention, which saw the public space rather as a driver for economic growth (Chan, 2023), instead of a provision of a public good. Additionally, the degree of accessibility in the *process*, which was assessed as a form of “consultation” (Arnstein, 1969) did not allow for a serious involvement of citizens, thus further affecting the MP’s publicness. This resulted in a *product*, which usages were mainly focused on financial returns. Furthermore, the design could not cater to the needs of the users, indicated by the disagreement in design aspects, as well as the perception of users pointing out a lack of “diversity, vitality, and vibrancy”. (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013, pp. 429-448,).

This research recognizes that by choosing a rather particular example this approach allows only for a very one-sided perspective. Other cases have also shown different resulting impacts on publicness in this context, where the private actor managed to fulfill public needs (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020; Leclercq and Pojani, 2023). Focusing on multiple nuanced cases of privately owned public spaces in future research will aid in further exploring the implications of private actors involved in the production of public spaces.

Ultimately, this paper illustrates that the means to success for private actors providing public spaces are currently still functioning like a barrier, discouraging public users to engage and identify with highly commercialised public spaces. It is therefore the responsibility of governments, to “regain trust” (Leclercq, Pojani, and Van Bueren, 2020), in order to facilitate a connection between private actors and public users, to strengthen the nature of public spaces.

7. Bibliographie

Arandelovic, B. and Bogunovich, D. (2014) 'City profile: Berlin', *Cities*, 37, pp. 1–26. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.10.007>.

Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder of Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216-224.

Bezirksamt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg von Berlin Abteilung für Stadtentwicklung und Bauen Amt für Stadtplanung und Vermessung, *BEGRÜNDUNG gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan 2-4 VE „Arena am Ostbahnhof“ für Teilflächen der Grundstücke Mühlenstraße 12–30 (Flurstück 99 und 105 der Flur 25) und ein zwischen Spree und Mühlenstraße gelegenes Grundstück mit der Bezeichnung Flurstück 60 der Flur 25 sowie eine Teilfläche des Flurstücks 197 der Flur 26 östlich der Warschauer Brücke zwischen dem U- und S- Bahnhof Warschauer Straße*, 2003

Bezirksamt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg von Berlin Abteilung für Stadtentwicklung und Bauen Amt für Stadtplanung und Vermessung, *BEGRÜNDUNG Gemäß § 9 Abs. 8 des Baugesetzbuches zum Bebauungsplan V - 3 Für die Grundstücke Mühlenstraße 4–11, 31–33, eine Teilfläche des Grundstücks Mühlenstraße 12–30 und eine Teilfläche des Rummelsburger Platzes im Bezirk Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Ortsteil Friedrichshain*, 2004

Carmona, M., de Magalhães, C., & Hammond, L. (2008). *Public space: The management dimension*. London: Routledge.

Chan, E. (2023) 'Government-driven commodification of public space: The case of Kwun Tong Promenade, Hong Kong', *Cities*, 134, p. 104204. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104204>.

Fitzner, K. (2007) 'Reliability and Validity A Quick Review', *The Diabetes Educator*, 33(5), pp. 775–780. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145721707308172>.

Gałkowski, M. and Antosz, P. (2022) 'The hidden boundaries of public space: Awareness of civil rights restrictions in privatized urban squares in Poland', *Cities*, 127, p. 103722. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103722>.

Gunder, M., Madanipour, A. and Watson, V. (2018) *The Routledge handbook of planning theory*. New York: Routledge (Routledge handbooks).

Haque, M.S. (2001) 'The Diminishing Publicness of Public Service under the Current Mode of Governance', *Public Administration Review*, 61(1), pp. 65–82. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00006>.

Langstraat, F. and Van Melik, R. (2013) 'Challenging the "End of Public Space": A Comparative Analysis of Publicness in British and Dutch Urban Spaces', *Journal of Urban Design*, 18(3), pp. 429–448. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2013.800451>.

Leclercq, E. and Pojani, D. (2023) 'Public space privatisation: are users concerned?', *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 16(1), pp. 1–18. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2021.1933572>.

Leclercq, E., Pojani, D. and Van Bueren, E. (2020) 'Is public space privatization always bad for the public? Mixed evidence from the United Kingdom', *Cities*, 100, p. 102649. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102649>.

Lefebvre, H. (1974). *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell (translated from the original 1974 edition by N. Donaldson-Smith).

Madanipour, A. (2010). *Whose public space?* London: Routledge.

Paköz, M. Z., Sözer, C., & Doğan, A. (2022). Changing perceptions and usage of public and pseudo-public spaces in the post-pandemic city: The case of Istanbul. *URBAN DESIGN International*, 27(1), 64–79. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-020-00147-1>

Pojani, D., & Maci, G. (2015). The detriments and benefits of the fall of planning: The evolution of public space in a Balkan post-socialist capital. *Journal of Urban Design*, 20(2), 251–272.

Reynaers, A.-M. and De Graaf, G. (2014) 'Public Values in Public-Private Partnerships', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 37(2), pp. 120–128. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2013.836665>.

Sassen, S. (1991). *The global city*, New York, London, Tokyo. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Weber, M. (1958). *The City*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Zukin, S. (1998). *Urban Lifestyles: Diversity and Standardisation in Spaces of Consumption*. Urban

www.aegworldwide.com, 2023, official homepage of Anschutz Entertainment Group

www.mercedes-platz.de,2023 2023, official homepage of Mercedes Platz

8. Figures

Figure 1: <https://www.tip-berlin.de/stadtleben/mercedes-platz-12-fotos-von-ostgute-bis-heute/>

Figure 2: <https://www.tip-berlin.de/stadtleben/mercedes-platz-12-fotos-von-ostgute-bis-heute/>

Figure 3: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Ftennagels.com%2Fprojekte%2Fmercedes-platz-berlin%2F%3Flang%3Den&psig=AOvVaw1j7JP9fiKYVA0BCugluFHj&ust=1685622479562000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CA4QjRxqFwoTCOi3iKLHn_8CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAS

Figure 4: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fde.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FMercedes-Platz&psig=AOvVaw1j7JP9fiKYVA0BCugluFHj&ust=1685622479562000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CA4QjRxqFwoTCOi3iKLHn_8CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAc

Figure 5: Self-made Map via "Adobe Illustrator" inspired by https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FBoroughs_and_neighborhoods_of_Berlin&psig=AOvVaw3dpmK9DYG97BET996jYqtK&ust=1685623378081000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CA4QjRxqFwoTCLDjuMfKn_8CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE, 31.05.2023, 14:00

Figure 6: Self-made Map via "Adobe Illustrator" inspired by <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=11/52.4127/13.3820>, 31.05.2023, 14:30

Figure 7: Ladder of Participation by Sherry R. Arnstein (1969)

Figure 8: Self-made Conceptual Model via PowerPoint

Figure 9: Illustrated adopted and adjusted analytical framework inspired by Leclercq, E., Pojani, D. and Van Bueren, E. (2020) 'Is public space privatization always bad for the public? Mixed evidence from the United Kingdom', *Cities*, 100, p. 102649. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102649>.

Figure 10: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 11: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 12: Google from Descriptive Statistic from self-conducted Survey output

Figure 13: Google from Descriptive Statistic from self-conducted Survey output

Figure 14: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 15: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 16: Google from Descriptive Statistic from self-conducted Survey output

Figure 17: Google from Descriptive Statistic from self-conducted Survey output

Figure 18: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 19: Self taken picture, 20.04-25.04.2023

Figure 20: Google from Descriptive Statistic from self-conducted Survey output

9. Appendix

9.1 Transcribed and Translated Interview

Interviewee 1: Architect in the landscape architecture office “Topotek1”

D: Okay, then to formality. By this, you declare your consent to the use of the personal data collected during the following conversation:

The data is collected during an oral conversation that is recorded with a recording device. For the purpose of data analysis, the orally collected data will be transcribed, and the data will be anonymized. Identification of the interviewed person is therefore excluded.

Contact information that would allow identification of the interviewed person at a later date will be provided for documentation purposes only, in a separate document, by my supervisor of the scientific project. After the completion of the project, this data will be deleted.

The storage of personal data for documentation purposes can be objected to by the interviewed person at any time. Participation in the conversation is voluntary. The conversation can be terminated at any time. The consent to the recording and further use of the data can be revoked at any time. Do you agree to this?

Interviewee 1: Yes.

D: Perfect. Yes, this is a formality that we have to go through. Well, before we start, I just wanted to quickly mention that, um, for the elaboration, I divided it into two parts, namely to test this public space and its connection with private actors. In the process, I mainly focus on the organization, goals, and overall planning, and that's where you come into play. Later on, I will also conduct fieldwork and examine the product itself, the space, where I will also conduct surveys with users of this space. But yes, without further ado, um, I would also like to ask you if you could briefly tell me something about yourself and also about the company Topotek 1?

Interviewee 1: Okay, we are an office primarily of landscape architects, and we have a total of, I think, over 50 employees. Originally, we were very focused on landscape architecture and urban planning, but now we also have an architecture department. We have always worked internationally, so we have many projects in Germany but also abroad. That means Switzerland, France, Denmark, Italy, and currently, we also have projects in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Exactly, um.

D: And how long have you been working at the company, if I may ask?

Interviewee 1: Seven years.

D: Alright. Then I would now directly come to the Mercedes-Benz-Platz and ask how you and Topotek were involved in this project and what the role of your company was there?

Interviewee 1: Exactly, so basically, the Mercedes-Platz was a relatively typical construction project in the sense that a private client contacted us and wanted to have the outdoor area designed. Um, so we worked there with a large planning team, as there always is in such a big project. That means there were technical building services planners, that is, the office Hapolt. Are you familiar with them?

In addition to that, we had to check with HHP, a fire protection expert. We had the office Kardorf, which handled the lighting design for the facades and the main installation. We also had a facade

builder, NTK. The structural engineering was also done by the office Hapolt. And we had two other technical building services planners. In the project, there was also a traffic planner because we had to examine the parking of the underground garage, the fire department, and the site itself. That's where the planning office Arnhof came into play. And because we were a bit uncertain about everything related to constructions and structures, as a large part of the project was the substructure, we also got involved in bringing in experts. People who are specialized in buildings with concrete, water, and so on, and they checked our plans and passed them on to the clients.

D: I can see that it was a large team that you were probably in close communication with.

Interviewee 1: Correct.

D: Now, um, did you mean that the client approached you briefly, or how did that happen?

Interviewee 1: So the client, we had a planning meeting every week. I have to think about it because it's been a little while. I think there were meetings about every two weeks with the clients and planning every week. So the client gradually saw the discussion and expressed their opinion if there were any questions about the design.

D: So there was close collaboration as well. And just to clarify once again, the client in this case was the AEG AG, the "Anschutz Entertainment Group"?

Interviewee 1: Exactly, that's the Anschutz Entertainment Group.

D: Alright.

Interviewee 1: Yes, they actually already owned the arena before when it was still the O2 Arena, and they own the property. And they decided to build this new complex with a cinema, a concert hall, and so on.

D: Yes.

Interviewee 1: There is also a parking garage next to the arena, I think that belongs to them as well. And right next to the arena, there is a new high-rise building now. Not the Amazon Tower, but another one, and that also belongs to them.

D: Yes, it's a very large area, of course, very interesting. It would be great if you could send a site plan or something similar afterwards. But we can clarify that later as well.

Now you've already described who you were in contact with. Could you describe your typical tasks in this project from your perspective?

Interviewee 1: Well, for the client, it was mostly about design-related matters, and even if there is a specification, you have to propose an A and a B version to them, and then they have to decide which one they prefer. And they also reviewed all the color elements and patterns during the entire selection process.

D: Okay, so it was always very detailed, of course. And who was the person from the client's side that you had contact with? Which person can you highlight?

Interviewee 1: So, regarding the main people, I know that one of them no longer works there, I'm sure of that, um, that was Mike Günther. And the other client, who is now responsible for the entire Germany area since it's an American company, um, is Michael Kütter.

D: Alright, and they had the decision-making power in that process, of course. So you were more the delivering part, and the decision-making power naturally rested with the clients.

Interviewee 1: Yes, well, the main desire was for the stadium to have an additional district, so to speak. So it was always very important to them that it remains flexible in use and compatible with the other companies. I mean, that comes from this vision, this American vision, and it was also incorporated into the concept. You can imagine that well.

D: Absolutely, of course. There are similar projects worldwide (by AEG) that are quite similar. And in that regard, as you mentioned, the theme of entertainment and, of course, sports is at the forefront, as well as leisure. Could you perhaps tell me what the major guidelines and framework conditions expressed by the client were?

Interviewee 1: Maybe I'll show you a site plan real quick. Can you see this?

[Shows a picture of a site plan via screen sharing.]

D: Yes.

Interviewee 1: Exactly. Well, I mean, basically. So, to explain briefly, we built these two buildings, which also have substructures.

D: Excuse me? Oh, so that's all-underground parking?

Interviewee 1: Exactly, that's all-underground construction beneath the buildings. The program, I mean, so we have these central strips on the left and right for restaurants, for which we had to provide terraces. Um, in this block down here on the left, we have an assembly area, and at the top, we also have a rooftop bar. Up there, we also had the theme of restaurants, with terraces for the restaurants, up here as well. So we have a lot of restaurants and cafes.

D: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee 1: That was part of the emphasis. On the main square itself, we have this basic field, and they also wanted, this is another basic field, to have the same color. That was the idea, that the basic field can be transformed, for example, into a beach volleyball court or a stage can be built on it. So it's a flexible construction.

D: Yes, and of course, this square itself, which is quite large, isn't just dedicated to one function, apart from the terraces. Alright, that already helps a lot. Um.

Interviewee 1: Exactly, and those side areas of the arena were always intended for relaxation and a quiet place, which is why there are trees there, and it's not really built up. There are bike racks and bicycle stands there, with the same design on the other side, and also this lower first square is more intended for that, which means there are seating furniture, trees, and just a green, peaceful place.

D: And I was never quite sure about this because there are also renderings where the square extends all the way down to the Spree River or even through the East Side Gallery. How precisely is the scope defined there?

Interviewee 1: That came from the authorities, let me see if I can find it. So, there were a few things that were fixed in the development plan (Bebauungsplan). Yes, that exists in many big cities. Those are plans where you can see how much can be sealed, whether there is resident protection or not, or if there are pathways for residents or not. There are simply many parameters stipulated there.

D: Ah, very interesting.

Interviewee 1: Exactly, and it must be stated somewhere here, this visual connection. And that was always a topic. For example, there are these two pavilions in the middle, and they actually wanted to close them, but the visual axis had to be maintained. Also from the arena.

D: That makes sense, it's very prominent when you're standing in front of the arena. Very interesting, and I will definitely try to get in touch with the district office regarding framework plans and development plans. Now, if you have nothing else to add.

Now I wanted to ask again, how did it look in terms of involvement processes of completely different actors in the planning process? Of course, in an architectural office, it often only happens on a bilateral level, but I wanted to ask if you know a bit more about how that looked? Also, in terms of citizen participation, there are many different ways to involve citizens. Were there any measures taken in this regard during the planning?

Interviewee 1: So, for this project?

D: Yes, only for this project.

Interviewee 1: No, not that I know of. But you also have to imagine, and it is also a private property, so yes, it would be possible, but you also have to imagine that not long ago, this site was still empty.

[Shows a photo of the empty Postbahnhof site around 2008]

Interviewee 1: So it is a private property, and back then when they built the project, there was nothing there, and no direct neighbors who could have been involved. They simply didn't exist. Nowadays, if you were to build there, there might already be a consultation process.

D: Can you, because you're only talking about this project now, maybe draw some comparisons to how it is in other projects?

Interviewee 1: I have to say, it rarely happens, actually too rarely, but we (Topotek1) don't have that many public projects. Often it's the plans that we receive that have already been coordinated with the public from the city's side. But I haven't participated in such a meeting yet.

D: It's fair to say that maybe that's not your primary responsibility as an architectural firm, but rather on the city's side.

Now I would like to move on to the last part of the interview, where we should touch a bit on the goals of the project. What were the goals of this project considering its location, clearly if you look at the photo of this empty plot, that's reason enough to develop this project. But now, with Berlin as the location and the context in Berlin, what were the goals of this project?

Interviewee 1: Well, the goal is to have an American developer who, if you look at Wikipedia, has mostly developed stadium projects in America. So, their plan is to do the same here in Berlin. The goal was also to create a small neighborhood, so I think it's primarily commercial. However, in the area around the East Side Gallery, there were also restaurants and cafes that didn't exist before, and there are now new office buildings as well. So, it's also beneficial for people working there, as they now have places to eat. They have complemented the existing offerings in the area, especially in terms of gastronomy and entertainment like bowling. They looked at what was already available in the area and what was missing, and I think that's the reason behind the program.

D: Okay. Now, I wanted to ask another question, but I forgot it again. Then I'll ask you again if you can compare this project to your other projects. Was this project comparatively typical in terms of its process?

Interviewee 1: Yes, actually, it was quite normal for a project of this size. It involved a lot of interdisciplinary teams working together and coordinating with each other. The client was also

very involved and paid close attention to what was being done. Ultimately, all the plans were reviewed and approved by the client or their representative. We also had construction site visits with the client, so they were quite active and interested.

D: Interesting. Oh, yes, I wanted to ask another question. It's related to the surrounding area, which has undergone some changes in recent years. First, I wanted to ask if you are familiar with Mediaspree AG.

Interviewee 1: No, I'm not familiar with them.

D: Alright, no problem. In my research, Mediaspree AG was involved in a larger plan to create a waterfront area along the Spree and improve access to the water, and the Mercedes-Benz Platz project is part of that plan.

Interviewee 1: Is that in this area?

D: It extends from there to the Oberbaum Bridge and further east.

Interviewee 1: Well, I know that there is new residential construction happening here, as well as green spaces that are being maintained. These green spaces serve as a connection to the new office buildings. There is a theme of a promenade along this waterfront where people can walk, making the area look more appealing. The private developer had to contribute to these improvements. They had to improve the sidewalks and add greenery, which was their responsibility. Unfortunately, I wasn't involved in the process early enough, but it's usually customary that if you are responsible for removing trees or if there is a large amount of sealed surface area like here, you would have to plant new trees elsewhere as a compensatory measure. I'm not sure if that was the case back then.

D: That's interesting to know that there is such a guideline.

Interviewee 1: Also, as I mentioned earlier, the building near the arena, the high-rise and the parking garage, I assume their idea was to buy these multiple plots and then build. However, the overall structure of the neighborhood, as I mentioned before, was already defined in the urban development plans (Bebauungsplänen). Everything was predetermined, including the locations and heights of the buildings.

D: So, to summarize, you and your company, Topotek1, were tasked by the developers to find design solutions within the existing framework of the site.

Interviewee 1: Exactly, that's correct. Although it may appear to be a public space, technically it's not. It's a semi-public space. So, when we had questions about accessibility, it was ultimately the decision of the developer whether they wanted to potentially face legal consequences if someone got injured. They were not obliged to there, however, not enough apartments. They don't really have this mix of uses there. When criticizing the plaza, you have to look at what is built around it. I also have some critical views on the whole new neighborhood that was built there. It's a purely office district with a mall and the huge Amazon tower they are building there. So, the entire neighborhood can be seen as critical. Even the urban development plan itself.

D: So, would you say that the responsibility lies with the city of Berlin and its regulations?

Interviewee 1: Yes, the thing is, do they have to be only offices, or could there also be apartments and a playground? That's more of my question.

D: Yes, you have already mentioned many important points. Especially the fact that it is still an arena that can accommodate 17,000 people, which is important to consider and something I hadn't thought about before.

Interviewee 1: Yes, and in terms of access for emergency vehicles or other heavy vehicles, that also had to be taken into account. That's why they couldn't just create green spaces there. But yes, a bit less concrete could have been used.

D: Alright, then I can simply say thank you for the interview, and I would actually end the recording now.

Interviewee 1: Yes, you're welcome. It was a pleasure.

[End of the interview]

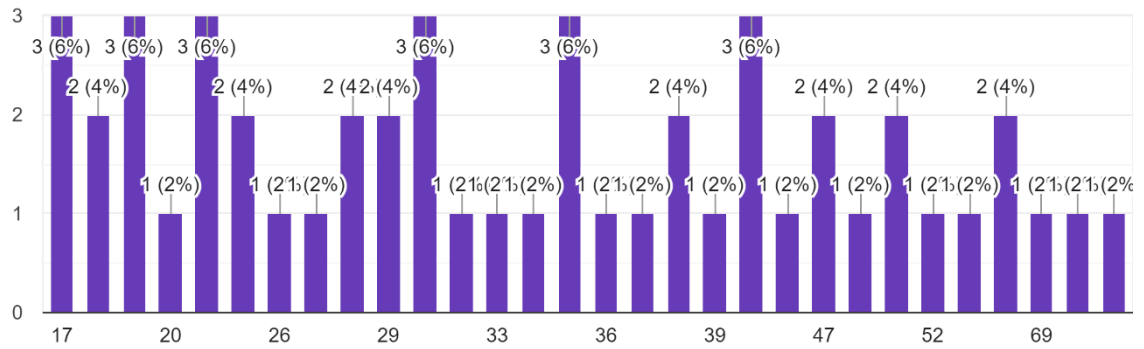
9.2 Original Analytical Framework of Leclercq et al. (2020)

	Publicness	Related analytical questions	
Process	Ownership & control	Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the actors? How they organised? - Initiates, decides, controls? - Pays? - Is responsible?
	Accessibility	How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive/open is the process? - Much control is applied? - Inclusive are applied policies?
Product	Valued outcome	Success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality? - Whom does the outcome serve? - Reason(s) for success? - Sustainable in future?
	Perceived publicness	Public?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publicness achieved in values? - Publicness achieved in space?

The figure above shows the original analytical framework from the article: “Is public space privatization always bad for the public? Mixed Evidence from the United Kingdom” (2020) by Leclercq, Pojani, and van Beuren. The conceptual model and analytical framework for the data collection and analysis of this paper were inspired by the above. Though, some changes were made, as well as other points were considered to be more important, as explained in section 2.2.

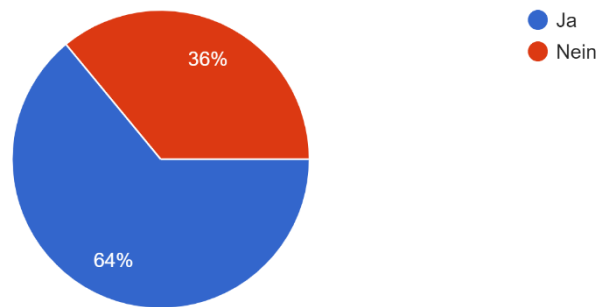
Wie alt sind Sie?

50 responses



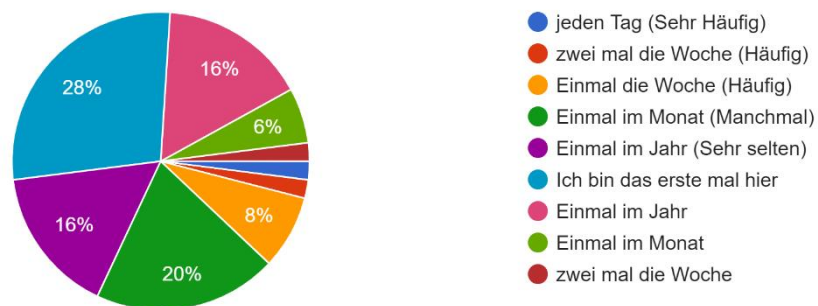
Wohnen Sie in Berlin?

50 responses



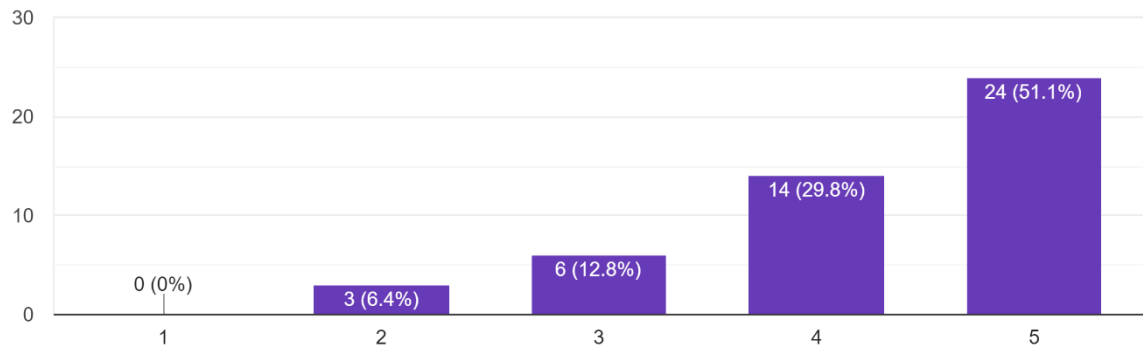
Wie oft besuchen Sie den Mercedes-Benz Platz?

50 responses



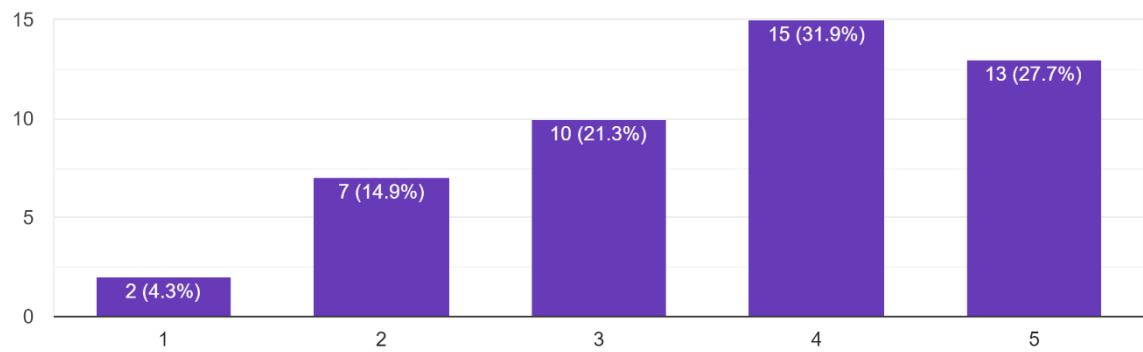
Finden Sie der Mercedes-Benz-Platz ist gut angeschlossen/gut zu erreichen

47 responses



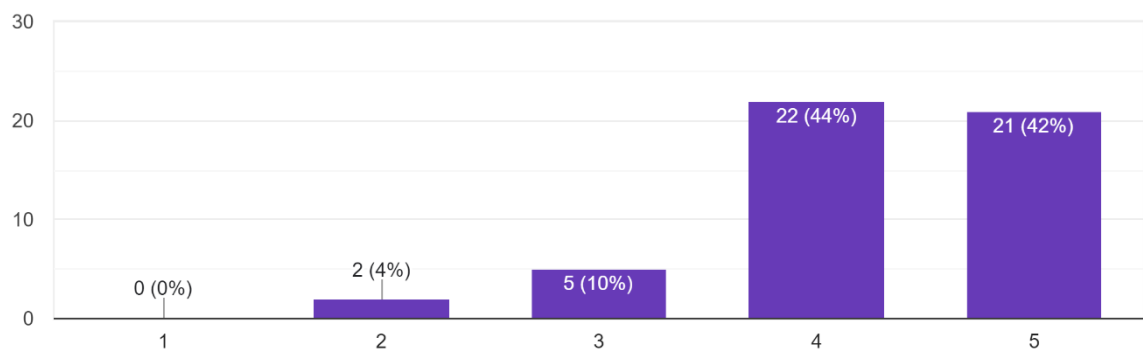
Fühlen Sie sich hier wohl an diesem Ort?

47 responses



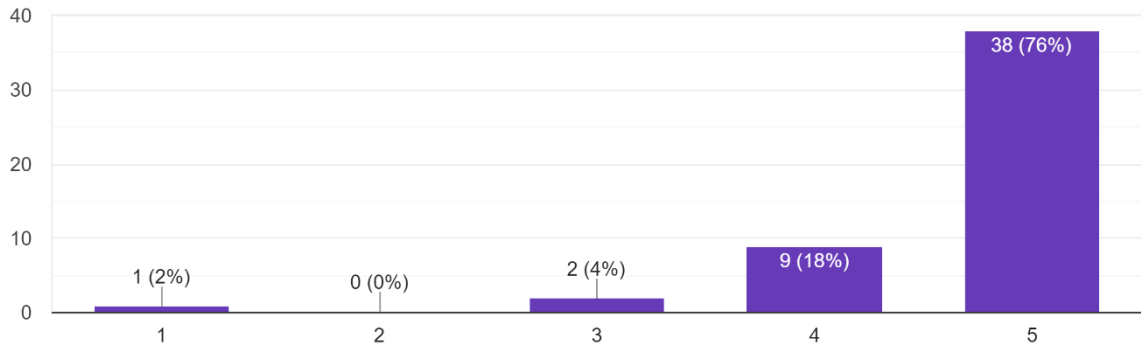
Wie sicher fühlen Sie sich hier ?

50 responses



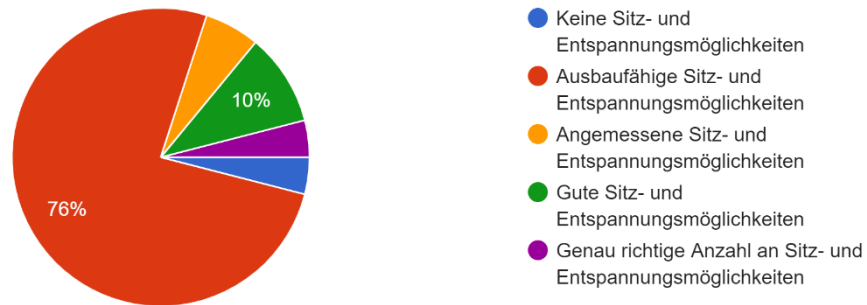
Wie gut gewartet/gepflegt ist der Mercedes-Benz Platz Ihrer Meinung?

50 responses



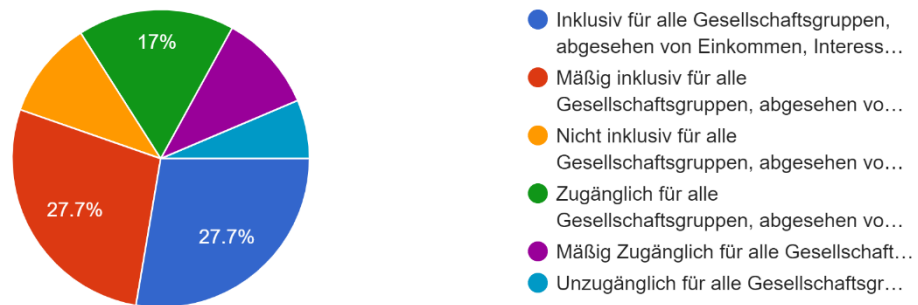
Wie empfinden Sie die Berücksichtigung der Sitz- und Entspannungsmöglichkeiten?

50 responses



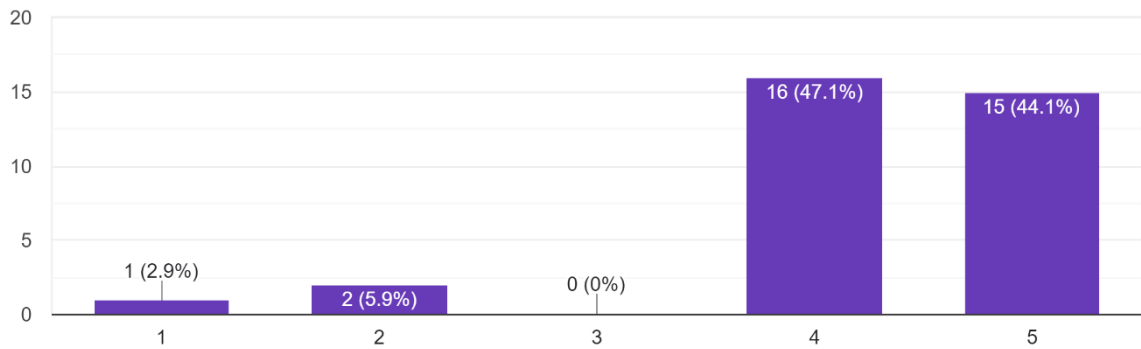
Wie inklusiv finden Sie den Mercedes-Benz Platz bezogen auf unterschiedliche Bevölkerungsgruppen?

47 responses



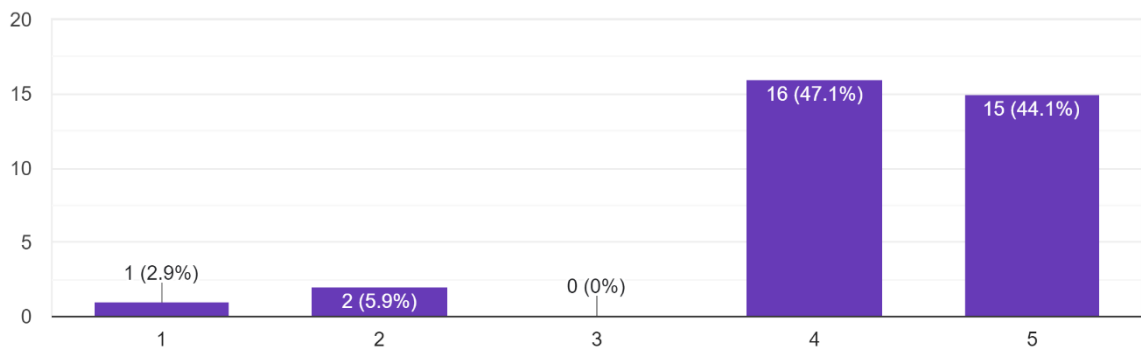
Fühlen Sie sich eher dass Sie sich einem privaten, oder in einem öffentlichen Raum aufhalten?

34 responses



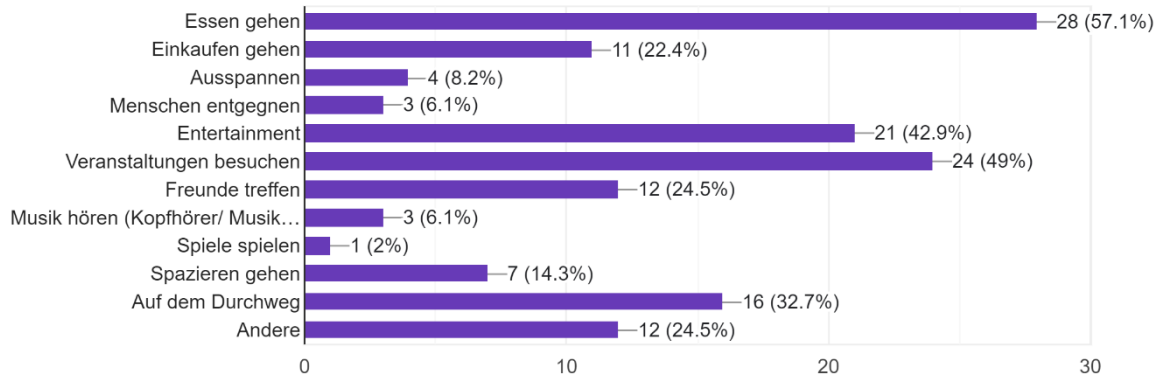
Fühlen Sie sich eher dass Sie sich einem privaten, oder in einem öffentlichen Raum aufhalten?

34 responses



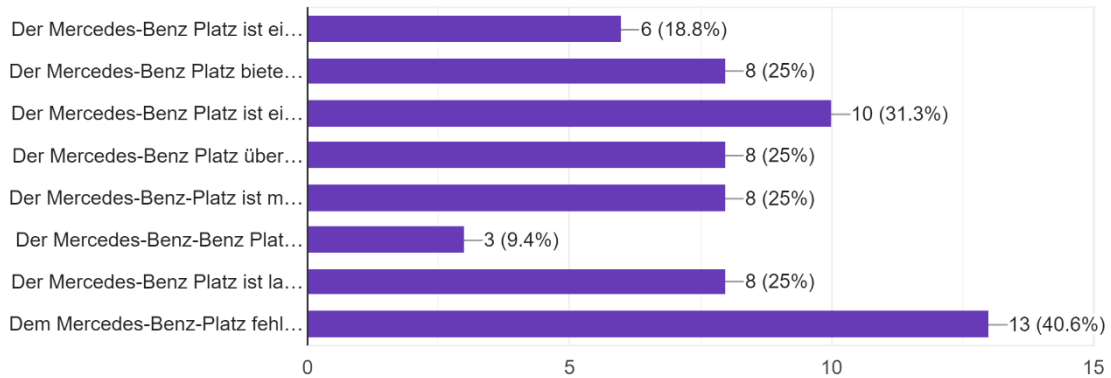
Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach Funktionen des Mercedes-Benz-Platzes?

49 responses



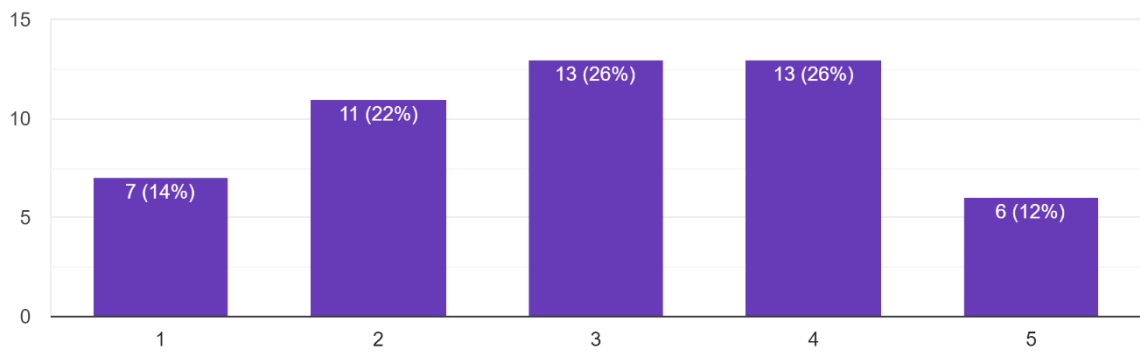
Mit welchem Satz stimmen Sie am meisten überein?

32 responses



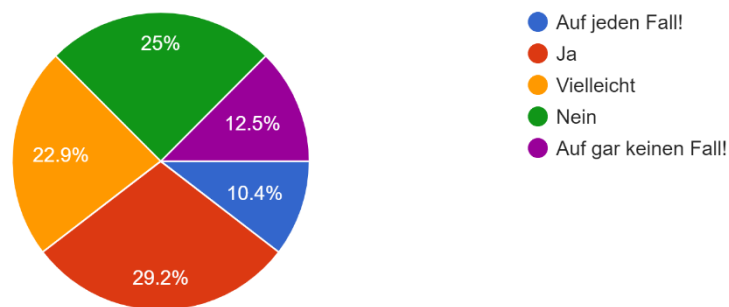
Wie würden Sie die Gestaltung des Platzes bewerten?

50 responses



Würden Sie den Mercedes-Benz-Platz Freunden/Bekanntem weiterempfehlen?

48 responses



In welchen Bereichen würden Sie Verbesserungsvorschläge anbieten?

20 responses

Toiletten

Weniger Läden, mehr grün, sehr einheitlich

Café

Sitzmöglichkeit, mehr Grün,

Sitzmöglichkeiten

Alles abeeißen, Mehr Bäume

Mehr Bänke,

Weniger Versiegelung

Directions signs,

In welchen Bereichen würden Sie Verbesserungsvorschläge anbieten?

20 responses

Grüner, sitz, ansprechenderes Design

Ampel (älter) , Müll vorne

Barrierefreiheit

Grün, spiel platz

Commodified

Mehr grün, Kinder Möglichkeiten, individueller

Mehr grün,

Sitze, grüne

Weniger kalt, mehr gemütlich

Mehr intresse der Menschen vertreten

Mehr Bänke, Bäume, weniger teuer

Irgendwelche weiteren Anmerkungen zum Mercedes-Benz Platz

10 responses

Triste

Spacious, very gray

From Canada

Zu teuer

Like a crossroad, passing through

Touristisch

Grüner, Kinder spiel Platz

Sehr grau

Parken ist teuer

Touristisch

Grüner, Kinder spiel Platz

Sehr grau

Parken ist teuer

Obligatorischen drei Bäume