

MAUER PARK BERLIN: BALANCING THE EDGE OF A PARK BETWEEN URBAN VIBRANCY AND COMMEMORATION

BERLIN, MAUER PARK. PARKSZEGÉLY PEZSGŐ VÁROS ÉS EMLÉKHELY HATÁRÁN

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ABSTRACT

Mauerpark Berlin was opened in 1994 on the former Death Strip of the Berlin Wall. Designed by renowned German landscape architect Gustav Lange, the park became soon a vibrant and free-spirited urban place. Today, Mauerpark is considered a Gesamtkunstwerk and protected by copyright. In the fall of 2020 Mauerpark will double its grounds with a Lange-authored design that commensurate with the 1994 park.

Mauerpark is also located adjacent to the terminus of the 1.4 km Berlin Wall Memorial that commemorates and illustrates the history of Germany's division. In January 2018, two artifacts from the time of the separation of East and West were found during construction

of an underground retention tank at the southern entrance of Mauerpark. One artifact is the entrance of a 1963 escape tunnel, the other one is a vehicle barrier from the former fortifications. Consensus amongst historians and stakeholders of Mauerpark is that both are significant artifacts and should be integrated into Mauerpark as part of the Berlin Wall Memorial. This will change the perception and use of Mauerpark at one of the most active entrances. Another relevant factor that is going to impact Mauerpark in the future is related to the intensive use of the park. Recent administrative directives recommend limiting activities at the edges of the park.

How can a park as a Gesamtkunstwerk with a character and mission



Fig. 1: Entry at Eberswalder Strasse during the Sunday Flea Market expresses activities of the park at the edge of the street (COURTESY OF T. VOLLMER, 2017)

that is diverging from the educational goal of commemoration integrate artifacts of a memorial? How will the recent directive of lowering intensive activities at the edges of Mauerpark define the gateway and what are the anticipated qualitative changes from formal-artistic and social-perceptive perspectives? Finally, how does this relate to consequences of reconstructing historic parks.

The paper compares the design qualities of the previous entry situation until 2018 with the new design that considers the planned display of the artifacts of the memorial and the recent guidelines that discourage activities at the edges of Mauerpark. This study touches on revealing Gustav Lange's layered design concept through personal conversations and exploring his philosophy and design language.

Findings are that the planned design integrates the memorial-related interventions and provides an invitational gesture through a new tree-grid that begins at the edge of the street and dissolves into the park. From another perspective, the new edge of Mauerpark dilutes Lange's concern for clarity. It teaches us the importance of identifying, conserving and maintaining our landmark pieces of landscape

architecture like Mauerpark as they are an expression of their time and any reconstruction will always result in shortcomings of authenticity and potentially social-cultural values.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Mauerpark Berlin was opened in 1994 on the former Death Strip of the Berlin Wall. Designed by renowned German landscape architect Gustav Lange as a winning entry of a design competition in 1992, the park became soon a vibrant and free-spirited urban place for markets, open-air concerts and diverse random activities outdoors (Fig.1). Today, Mauerpark is considered a Gesamtkunstwerk and protected by copyright. In the fall of 2020 Mauerpark will double its grounds to the west with a Lange-authored design (Mauerpark Phase II) that commensurate with the 1994 park in the east (Fig.2).

Mauerpark is also located adjacent to the terminus of the 1,4km long Berlin Wall Memorial that memorizes the history of Germany's division during the Cold War (Berliner Mauer, 2020). Over the last decades these two public spaces coexisted close to



Sources: a) Mauerpark Erweiterung, Grün Berlin Stiftung mit G. Lange, Anker und BBS, Berlin, 06.03.2018. b) Machbarkeitsstudie Mauerpark Bestand, Projektbericht, Stand 08.05.2019 | GRUPPE PLANWERK, Plankarte 07. Bestand: Häufigste und prägende Baumarten, p. 20. c) Entwurf Eingangsbereich Eberswalder Strasse, G. Lange, 15.01.2020

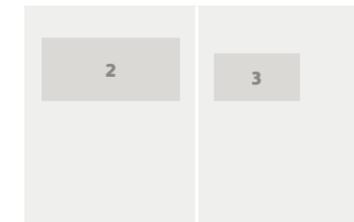
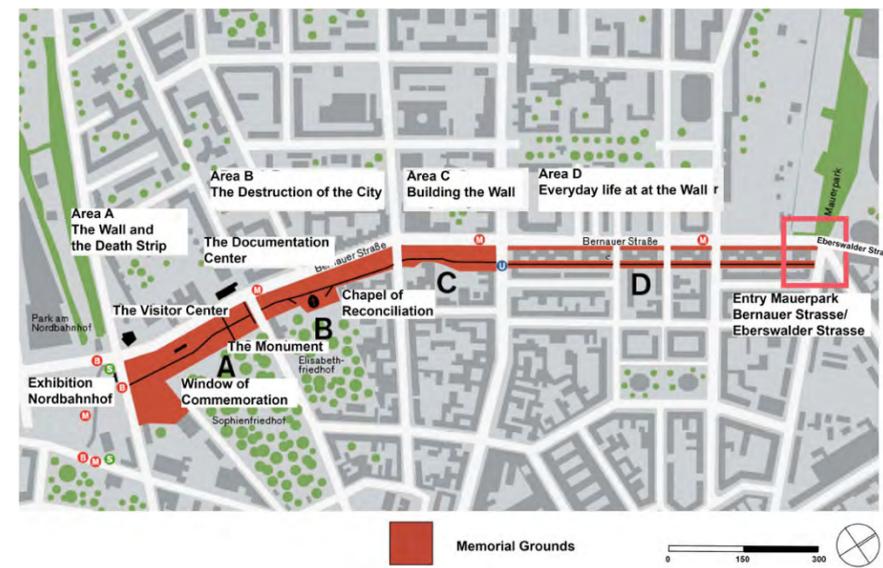


Fig. 2: Mauerpark Phase I and II - Overall plan with major design elements and geometries designed by Gustav Lange. The design of phase Mauerpark Phase I was constructed from 1994-1997. The design of Mauerpark Phase II is expected to be constructed by fall of 2020.

Fig. 3: Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse and the location of the south entry Eberswalder Strasse at Mauerpark as red rectangle (Berliner Mauer, 2000).

each other without negative interferences and their own agenda (Fig. 3).

In January 2018, two artifacts from the time of the separation of East and West were found during construction of an underground 7400 cubic meter storm-water retention tank at the southern entrance of Mauerpark (Fig. 4). One artifact is the entrance of a 1963 escape tunnel, the other one is a historical vehicle barrier from the former boundary fortifications. Consensus amongst historians and stakeholders of Mauerpark is that both are significant artifacts illustrating the impact of the Berlin Wall at its time. Therefore, they will be integrated into Mauerpark as part of the Berlin Wall Memorial (Tagesspiegel, 2018).

Another relevant factor that is going to impact Mauerpark in the future is related to the high popularity and intensive use of the park. Concerns by adjacent neighbors have significantly increased over the last ten years and are mainly related to noise in the evenings and at night. The overuse is also related to a trend in most European and other metropolises all over the world - tourism is a growing industry and impacts not only the core areas of cities but also their surrounding neighborhoods such as the district of Prenzlauer Berg where

Mauerpark is located (Prenzlauer, 2019). Therefore, local, community-driven strategies for Mauerpark recommend limiting activities at the edges of the park (Freunde, 2020).¹

The paper compares the design qualities of the previous entry situation before the works on the retention tank with the new one that will be completed in the fall of 2020. This study also touches on revealing Gustav Lange's layered design concept and explores his philosophy and design language. The paper assesses the recent design plans from 2019 to 2020 at the southern entry Eberswalder Strasse that a) accommodates a new entry integrating Mauerpark East (Phase I) and Mauerpark West (Phase II); b) revisits the unmapped design before the building of the retention tank and compare it to Lange's original design concept from 1994; c) accommodates the artefacts from the Berlin Wall that were discovered in January 2018; and d) responds to the recent guidelines that limiting intensive activities on the edges of Mauerpark.

This study will therefore delve into revealing the diverse layers of the landscape in history and the original design concept and execution of Mauerpark and respond to the following questions: How

¹ Friends of Mauerpark [Freunde des Mauerparks e.V.] are a grassroots organization that is been committed to preserving and promoting Mauerpark and mitigate between local residents and users

can a memorial with educational goals being integrated into Gesamtkunstwerk of a with a substantially diverging character and mission, and how does the recent directive of lowering intensive activities at the edges of Mauerpark define the new gateway at Eberswalder Strasse? What do these changes of the recent design from 2020 mean for the formal and socio-cultural qualities in comparison to the original design? These findings are applicable to other parks and plazas in landscape architecture and will lastly reveal more of Gustav Lange's rather undocumented design philosophy and language. This is important to understand, value, preserve or restore and maintain his oeuvre in Berlin and elsewhere.

METHODS

Mapping from aerial photographs, analysis of the original design concept, analytical drawings, and tracing of unpublished construction documents created the basis for this study. Online research for background information on the Berlin Wall Memorial, history of the site, contemporary uses and cultural context supported the

study. Further knowledge was generated through conversations with the landscape architect Gustav Lange and understanding his design philosophy and language through collaboration in the design process (Author, 2020).

HISTORY OF THE AREA BEFORE MAUERPARK

In the early 1800's, the eastern area of Mauerpark served as a parade ground for the Prussian army. Ironically this was also one of the places of the 1848 German revolution when 20,000 workers protested against the Prussian King to obtain higher wages, regulated working hours and the right for free education. In 1877, the area served as the freight railway for the Berlin Nordbahnhof as the southern terminus of the Berlin Nordbahn. After the second world war the railway was renamed into Güterbahnhof Eberswalder Straße [Freight Railway Eberswalder Straße] and part of West Berlin. In 1961, after the building of the Berlin Wall, only a small part of local freight traffic remained and was finally closed in 1985. Remnants of the railway are integrated in the 2020 design of Mauerpark Phase II.



From 1961 to 1989 the eastern area of Mauerpark was part of the “Death Strip” between the border fortifications “Hinterlandmauer” [Inner Wall] and Vorderlandmauer [Outer Wall]. “Death Strip” commemorates that at least 140 people were killed when crossing the border from east to west (Berliner Mauer, 2020). One notable detail at Mauerpark is that Schwedter Strasse was the western boundary of East Berlin until 1988 when West Berlin sold a 50-meter-wide strip of the railyard. The remnants of border fortifications that were found in January of 2018 were part of the Berlin Wall from 1961. After the falling of the wall in 1989, the area was soon used as an informal park which led to the announcement of the official Mauerpark design competition in 1992 that was won by Gustav Lange.² Most of the eastern part of Mauerpark was realized by fall of 1994.

DESIGN OF MAUERPARK

The main elements of the 1994 Mauerpark are the grand open meadow as a clearing in the city, an embankment with the 300-meter-long “Hinterlandmauer”, the Schwedter Straße as the demarcation of the “Vorderlandmauer” until 1988, and the western edge that delineates the “Vorderlandmauer” of 1989. This line creates the actual transition between the design from 1994 and the Mauerpark II.^{3,4} The park redefines

this void, this wide and open field – from a Prussian parade ground, to a railyard, to a death-strip, to a park that lives the city. Mauerpark includes smaller, special places as legible design interventions that are expressed through basic geometric forms such as circles, squares and rectangles that contrast with the sensation of openness (Fig. 2). Mauerpark accommodates incentives for diverse and flexible, spontaneous modes of appropriation by groups or individuals and self-driven activities. Lange believes that gaps and seams are the free space of the city. Spontaneity is essential for life and applies to people and vegetation alike. Within formal-spatial framework there is still space for randomness – straying vegetation and people (Fig. 1, Fig. 5)

ORIGINAL DESIGN ENTRY EBERSWALDER STRASSE 1994

When Gustav Lange designed the entry of Mauerpark at Eberswalder Strasse, he envisioned a grove of trees that would guide visitors in the park providing shade and comfort in the hot summer days. Mauerpark, was provided with a 0.45m to 1.00m base of topsoil on the former death strip. Grown with plants and green it would create a new layer on a mentally contaminated site that was ready to write a new story. At the sidewalk of Eberswalder Strasse, a flight of up to eight, wide and low steps would

² Hamburg-based landscape architect Gustav Lange won the design competition and Mauerpark opened officially on November 9th of 1994, the fifth anniversary of the falling of the Berlin Wall. Lange, also Professor for Landscape Architecture at the University of Kassel (GER) has comprehensive portfolio of built work that expands all over Germany and includes many renowned projects in Berlin (GER) such as the Mauerpark Berlin, the courtyards for the German Bundessrat, or the Narva Courtyards (Stimmann, 2001). Lange also authored the artwork “Treppe ins Nichts” [Stairway to Nothing] as a symbol of democracy against the royal plaza at the contemporary art exhibition documenta IX in Kassel (GER). The stairway was later destroyed by the mayor of the city.

³ The location of the “Vorderlandmauer” 1989 will be also visible on the ground with a 50 cm-wide strip out of two strips of steel and a double row of cobble stones.

⁴ Mauerpark II was designed by Lange from 2011 in collaboration with the Buergerwerkstatt included many suggestions from local residents and stakeholders. The Berlin-based office BBS partnered with Lange to develop design development and construction documents and leading the construction supervision. In the construction supervision phase, Lange is authoring the artistic supervision of the project.



Fig. 4: Traces of the escape tunnel (foreground) and cut-off vehicle barriers (background) during excavation work on the retention tank on January 9, 2018 (PHOTO BY AUTHOR, 2018)

Fig. 5: Random and spontaneous vegetation in the seams and gaps of the naturally-broken granite blocks that create a consistent theme of materials at Mauerpark (PHOTO BY AUTHOR, 2017)

absorb the slope of the new soil layer and create a legible, architectural gateway to Mauerpark that provides multiple opportunities to sit and gather or perform. The grove of trees would start right at the top of the stairs and would dissolve further down in the park to invite for free movement and activities of any kind. Special places were defined as geometric, form-based carrees of trees or voids defined by robust slabs of naturally-broken granite stone as legible and distinct interventions. At Eberswalder Strasse, Lange conceptualized the grove of trees as a dissolving grid of European aspens (*Populus tremula*). These were selected because their leaves would flicker in the light and salute people to enter and define Mauerpark’s character as a place of dynamics and vibrancy. European aspens grow naturally on open woodlands and usually on poorer soils. This seemed to be a good choice for the park.

GROWTH AND WITHERING OF THE GROVE

The planting of the dissolving grove represents a simple idea that was executed poorly. Almost three quarters of the first generation died shortly after the opening of the park in 1994, two thirds of the second generation of replanted trees did not last long, and a third generation that was planted in 2009 finally created a modest canopy of trees (Krüger, 2019). Aerial photographs that were retrieved from 2000 to 2016 (google 2000, 2006, 2015, 2106) show that Lange’s idea of a dissolving grove of trees never really came to fruition (see also Fig. 7).

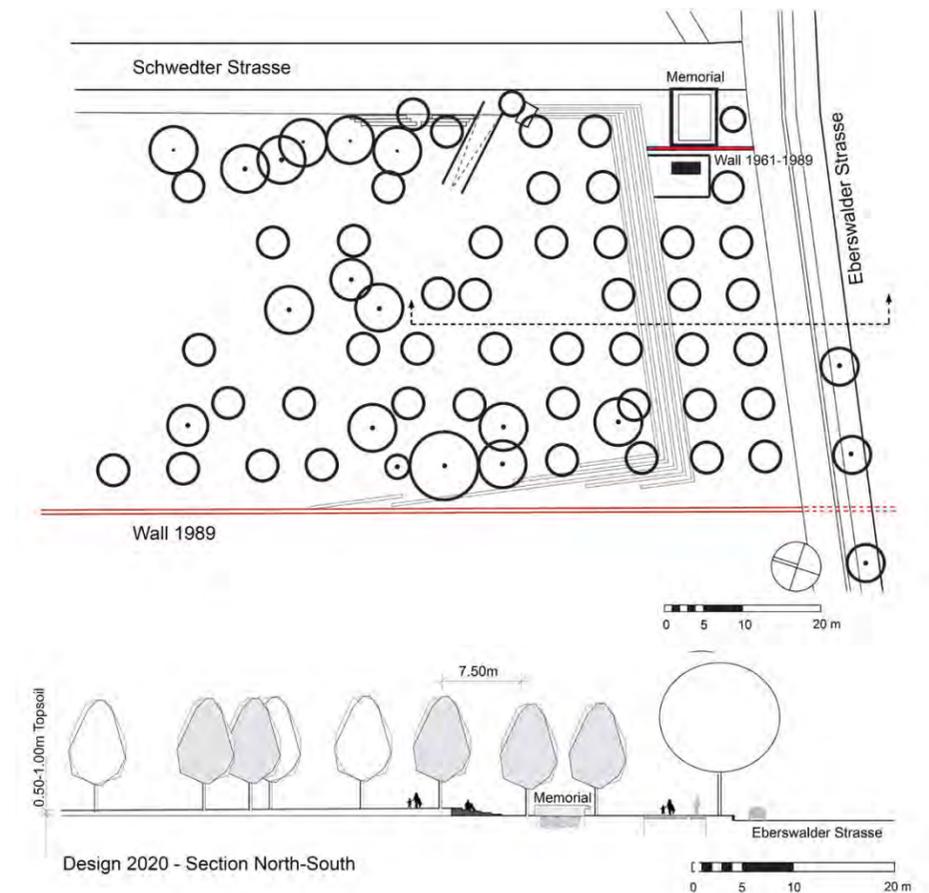
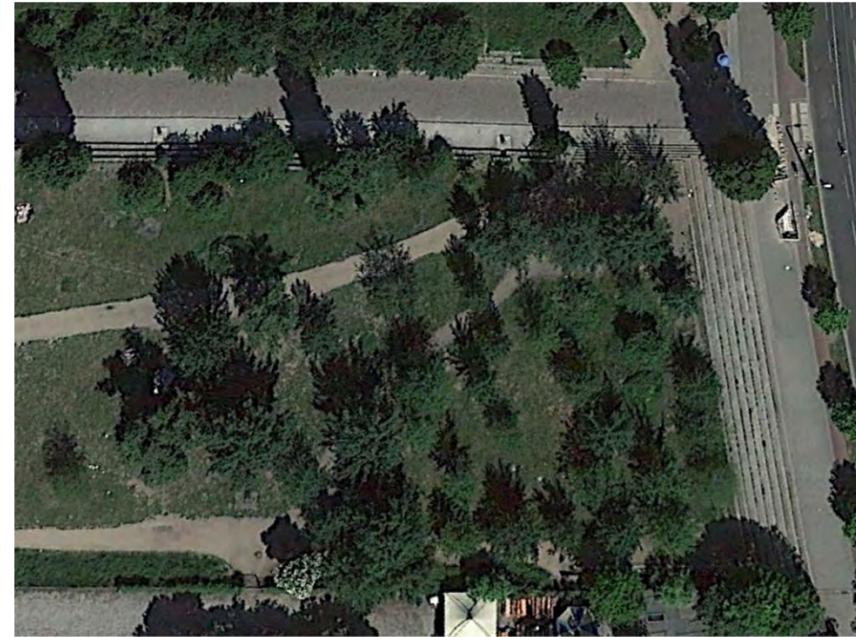
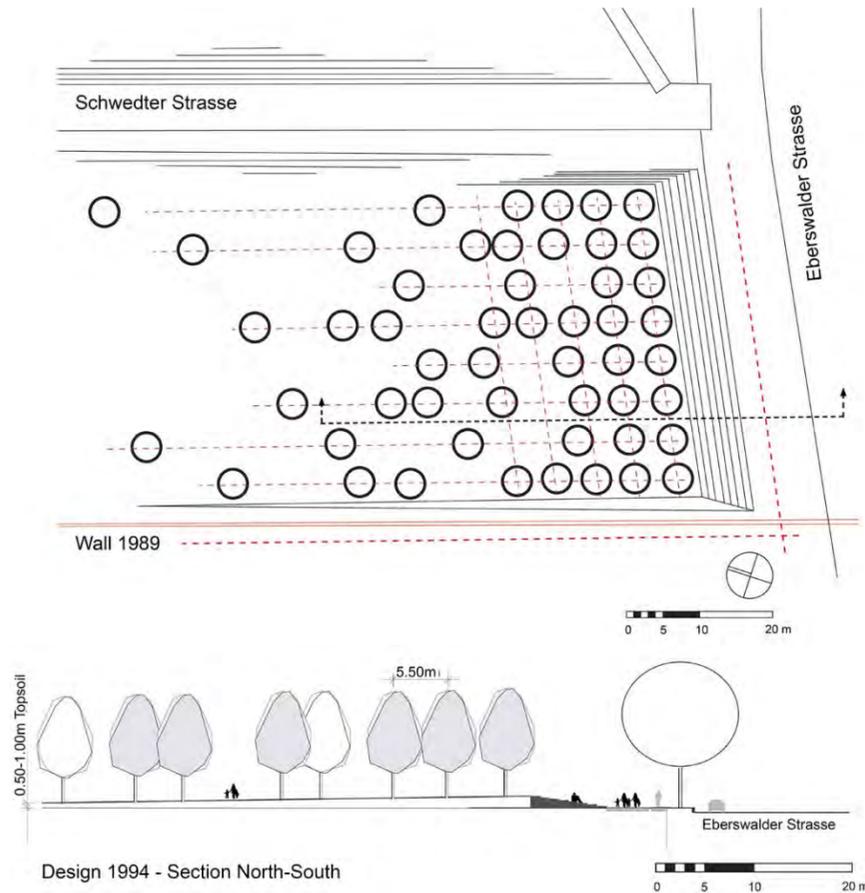
The gateway at Eberswalder Strasse had to face more challenges. After the

city of Berlin decided to build a 7400 cubic meter stormwater retention tank just at the entry of Mauerpark, it resulted in a complete removal of about 40 aspen trees and one pyramid poplar that had – over the years become an important landmark for the entrance. While the city had guaranteed the replacement of removed trees, they did not survey the trees that were cut down beforehand.

Another event impacted the entry situation at Mauerpark: From December 2017 to January 2018, two artifacts from the time of the separation of East and West were found during construction of the stormwater tank (Fig. 4). One artifact is the entrance of a 1963 escape tunnel, the so-called “Weinstein-Fluchttunnel”. This tunnel was never completed and caused the people from East Berlin that were involved severe punishment from the East German Government (Dressler, 2018). The other artifact is a historical vehicle barrier from the period of the cold war. Consensus amongst historians and stakeholders of Mauerpark was that both are significant artifacts illustrating the impact of the Berlin Wall at its time. Therefore, they will be integrated into Mauerpark as part of the Berlin Wall Memorial (Tagesspiegel, 2018).

THE BERLIN WALL MEMORIAL ON BERNAUER STRASSE

The Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse is the central memorial located on the 1.4-kilometer former border strip and one of four locations that are supported by the Berlin Wall Foundation. The mission of the 2008-founded foundation is to document and provide



information about Berlin Wall and the German division and the East-West conflict. Under this mission, historical sites and authentic remains are preserved to create places of commemoration (Berliner Mauer, 2020). The main locations and artifacts of the memorial are located further west along Bernauer Strasse while the entrance for the Mauerpark at Eberswalder Strasse is located at the eastern end of the memorial (Fig. 3).

Corten steel construction that frames and protects the remnants of the former vehicle barrier and also carries boards for information display (Fig. 8 and 9). Berlin-based Landscape architects (SINAI) and architects (Winkelmüller and ON architektur) are responsible for the design (Sinai-Winkelmüller-ON, 2019). These three firms have already worked collaboratively on the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse.

ANALYSIS

DESIGN CONCEPT OF DISPLAYING ARTIFACTS OF THE BERLIN WALL AT MAUERPARK

The entrance of the Mauerpark at Eberswalder Strasse will display the surface of the entry of the escape tunnel with a rectilinear Corten steel plate and the contours of the foundation of a former railyard building, the remnants of the foundations of the Berlin Wall at Schwedter Strasse, and a 1.00 m high

1994 Design Entry Eberswalder Strasse
The design displays a grove of 45 aspen trees in a polygonal grid that relates to the orientation of Schwedter Strasse in the east, Eberswalder Strasse in the south, and the alignment of the 1989 Berlin Wall. The first line of trees starts at the top of the flight of seven to eight stairs with a tread of 1.00 m and a total riser of 0.14 m. Beyond walking, this configuration allows for multiple

opportunities to sit on the stairs. The grid dissolves towards the interior of the park through increase of spacing of trees in the axes from south to north and omission of trees towards the center of the park. This design feature creates small clearings that suggest small rooms in the grove. While the grid creates a strong sense of unity and coherence, it is balanced with strategic omissions and exceptions to create a sense of looseness and spontaneity.

As far as the execution of the original design idea can be evaluated - the analysis of aerial photographs from the past has some limitations - is that the design was executed more or less after the plans of 1994 (Fig. 6).

2016 Design Entry Eberswalder Strasse
Aerial photographs (google 2015, google 2016) show the layout of the tree locations. Various images available online show character and social values of the entry Eberswalder Strasse. Then aerial photograph from June 2016 (google,

2016) shows a rather loose configuration of trees of different canopies and a subtle legibility of the grid as formal planting scheme. This perception is reinforced when analyzing photos taken from the ground. The grove demonstrates a high degree of incoherency due to missing individual trees and the presence of trees at various ages and health and even species. Another perspective is that the images on the ground demonstrate a high intensity and diversity of uses at the entrance Eberswalder Strasse. Street performers use the sidewalk as their stage while people sit individually or in groups on the stairs watching. The edge Eberswalder Strasse invited for political demonstrations and gatherings - in short - the free and liberal spirit of Mauerpark had its place not only in the interior of the park but was also carried out to the public streetscape (Fig. 1).

2020 Design Entry Eberswalder Strasse
The design displays a grove of 50 newly planted European aspen trees in a



Fig. 6: Design Plan from 1994 with the original planting concept: Trees in a dissolving 5.50 m x 5.50 m, polygonal grid (Lange 1994). Sectional elevation facing east from 1994 design plan.

Fig. 7: Aerial Photograph 2016 (SOURCE: GOOGLE, 2016)

Fig. 8: Design plan from 2020 with existing and proposed European aspen trees in a 7.50 m x 7.20 m grid, and the location of the memorial with artifacts (Lange 2020). Sectional elevation facing east from 2020 design plan.

polygonal grid equivalent to the 1994 design with the difference of applying a 7.50m x 7.20m grid. The first line of trees starts at the edge of the sidewalk. The grid dissolves towards the interior of the park and mingles with about 10 aspen trees that survived the construction work of the stormwater tank.

The flight of five stairs starts approximately 12.50m from the sidewalk to allow the placement of the Berlin Wall artifacts on the lower level adjacent to Schwedter Strasse. There, the grid of trees is interrupted through the locations of the artifacts while continuing evenly and crossing the flight of stairs into the park. Like the original design from 1994, the planting scheme creates a strong sense of unity and coherence, while it is balanced with omissions and exceptions that respond to existing trees and artifact (Fig. 8).

FINDINGS

The 2020 design is characterized by trees as living elements overlapping stairs as architectural elements of the landscape. The design responds to the new directives inhibiting activities on the edges. The canopy of European aspen trees creates a design layer that unifies the diverse elements of the entry, including the memorial-related interventions and provides an invitational gesture through a new tree-grid that begins at the edge of the street and dissolves in the park. Planted at the same time and with the prospect of being planted and maintained more carefully than the previous generations of aspens, these trees provide the opportunity to create a sense of coherence that is stronger than in the previous state of 2016. With the physical intervention of the memorial, a new layer will be introduced into the park that reveals a meaningful layer of the past. Pre-reconstruction, the entry

Eberswalder Strasse was an important place for social interaction and spontaneous, self-driven, cultural activities. Maintaining these activities was discouraged through the new design program.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Before reconstruction, the open-minded philosophy of Mauerpark was a tangible experience at the street edge of Eberswalder Strasse. In the future, Mauerpark will lose the street edge literally and metaphorically. The entry will now provide easy flow and intermediate refuge and shelter from the streetscape. The memorial will add a moment of reflection.

The new design for the entrance cannot be seen without the context of how the use of the park and public spaces has heavily increased over the last decade – cities and places becoming major tourist destinations can wear heavy on just maintaining parks and keep trees alive. The new design entry Eberswalder Strasse also reflects another age of planning and designing in public. Designing for public space today involves an inclusive approach that is weighing the specific claims of a diverse society. In this context, the 2020 design is a product of the spirit of the time.

Contrastingly, the edge of Mauerpark at Eberswalder Strasse will dilute Lange's design principle of formal clarity. This teaches us the importance of identifying, conserving and maintaining our landmark pieces of landscape architecture like Mauerpark. They are an expression of their time and authenticity cannot be reconstructed.

These findings and insights were made possible through the opportunity of working together with Gustav Lange and the support of his family. The author is most thankful for this trust and friendship.

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BERLIN, MAUER PARK. PARKSZEGLY PEZSGO VÁROS ÉS EMLÉKHELY HATÁRÁN

A berlini Mauerparkot 1994-ben adták át a berlini fal egykori halálzónája helyén. Az ismert német tájépítész, Gustav Lange által tervezett park rövid idő alatt életteli és szabad szellemiségű városi helyszínné vált. A Mauerpark ma már összművészeti alkotásnak (Gesamtkunstwerk) számít, és szerzői jogi védelem alatt áll. 2020 őszén a park területe duplájára nőtt, egy, az 1994-eshez hasonló méretű területrészt hozzácsatolása révén, amelynek tervét ugyancsak Lange jegyzi.

A Mauerpark közelében található az 1,4 km hosszúságú „Berlini fal emlékhely”, amely Németország egykori megosztottságát szemlélteti, és állít annak emléket. 2018 januárjában egy föld alatti csapadékvíz-tározó építése során a kelet-nyugati megosztottság időszakának két emléke került felszínre a Mauerpark déli bejáratánál. Az egyik egy 1963-ból származó menekülőalagút bejárata, a másik az egykori határzár egy úttorlasz-eleme. A történészek és a Mauerpark révén érdekelt felek egybehangzó véleménye szerint mindkettő fontos kordokumentum, és ennek megfelelően a berlini fal emlékhely részeként helyet kell kapnia a parkban. Ennek nyomán az egyik leginkább használt bejáratnál megváltozik a park tematikája és használata. Egy további, a Mauerpark jövőjére nézve jelentős hatást gyakorló tényező a terület intenzív használatából fakad. Az aktuális hivatali irányelvek a park szegélyeinél a használat korlátozását javasolják.

A Mauerpark összetett jellege kapcsán számos kérdés vetődik fel. Hogyan

lehetséges egy összművészeti alkotásnak számító, az emlékhely nevelési céljától jelenleg eltérő karakterű és rendeltetésű parkban a történelmi emlékek beillesztése? Hogyan befolyásolja a parkszegélyek intenzív használatának mérséklésére irányuló útmutatás a „kapu szerepet”, és milyen minőségi változások várhatók formai-művészeti valamint a társadalmi befogadás szempontjából? Végül, hogyan kapcsolódik mindez a történelmi parkok helyreállításának általános követelményeihez?

A cikk összeveti a korábbi parkbejárat kertépítészeti megjelenését a történelmi emlékek tervezett elhelyezésével és a Mauerpark szegélyei használatának mérséklésére vonatkozó irányelvek figyelembevételével megvalósuló új kialakítással. A tanulmány Gustav Lange többretegű tervkoncepciójának bemutatására is kitér, személyes beszélgetések, valamint a tervezői filozófia és az alkalmazott stíluselemek ismertetése révén.

A megállapítások szerint a tervezett kialakítás szervesen integrálja az emlékhelyhez kapcsolódó beavatkozásokat, és a rácshálózatba ültetett facsoporttal invitál látogatásra, amely az út szélétől indulva fokozatosan beolvad a parkba. Más szempontból nézve a Mauerpark új szegélye megbontja Lange letisztultságra irányuló törekvését.

A bemutatott esettanulmány a tájépítészeti Mauerparkhoz hasonló, meghatározó alkotásai számbavételének, védelmének és fenntartásának fontosságára tanít, amelyek egy adott korszak megnyilvánulásai, és megújításuk minden esetben az eredetiség és esetenként a társadalmi-kulturális értékek rovására történik.