

## Limits of Public Space Evaluation under Overlapping Urban Priorities

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### Abstract

Public spaces emerge through the layering of interventions implemented over time in response to shifting urban priorities, regulatory frameworks, and moments of urgency. Concerns about climate change, security, and crime are increasingly shaping how these are adapted and managed. These efforts are rarely coordinated and arise from fragmented processes. Evaluation approaches within each domain tend to rely on standardised and quantitative indicators, which can miss perceived quality, while generalised quality evaluations rely on qualitative ones. Neither accounts at the same time for both how quality attributes are perceived and institutionally produced. These tools work best within separate domains and temporal isolation. The objective of this paper is to rethink evaluation by conceptualising public space as a site of negotiation, with a particular focus on the intersection of urban security and climate adaptation. Rather than assessing these agendas as separate performance domains, the paper explores how their interaction shapes the quality conditions of public space over time and challenges what evaluation can meaningfully capture. The paper combines a policy and planning document analysis with spatial observations to trace how security and climate adaptation measures are translated into built interventions, and to make the resulting trade-offs and synergies legible for evaluation. The analysis shows that public space quality cannot be adequately assessed through individual interventions alone, but depends on how measures are combined, sequenced, and implemented over time. This requires evaluation approaches that recognise quality attributes as institutionally produced conditions. The findings highlight the limitations of domain-specific evaluation in capturing the temporal and institutional character of public space quality. The paper does not propose a new evaluation method but identifies three reorientations for future evaluation practices: toward temporal sequencing, relational reading, and cross-domain interaction. This perspective contributes to more context-sensitive approaches to public space evaluation in cities facing overlapping demands.

**Keywords:** public space, urban security, crime prevention, climate adaptation, assessment

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## **1. Introduction**

As cities respond to escalating climate risks, rising security concerns, and shifting socio-political pressures, public spaces are being reshaped through interventions that arrive from separate institutional domains - often without coordination, and rarely with shared criteria for success. Cities implement de-sealing, tree planting, and green infrastructure to address heat and flooding; simultaneously, they install surveillance systems, anti-terrorism barriers, and access restrictions to address crime and violence. These interventions originate in different institutions, operate under different mandates, and are assessed against different conceptions of what constitutes a successful outcome. Public space, in this sense, is rarely the product of a single design intention. It emerges through the cumulative layering of measures implemented incrementally over time, in response to shifting priorities, regulatory frameworks, and moments of institutional urgency. Under these conditions, public space is not a stable object with fixed qualities. It is a site of negotiation, continuously shaped by competing institutional logics whose interventions accumulate, interact, and sometimes contradict one another. What counts as quality in such a space depends on who is doing the counting: the same tree canopy can represent climate resilience or a security liability; the same bollard can represent protection or an obstacle to adaptation. While comprehensive frameworks for evaluating the quality of public spaces do exist, they treat quality as a phenomenon experienced by users, without tracing the attributes they record to the institutional processes that produced them. Hence, this approach results in a blind spot when multiple domains shape the same space. This paper examines that structural blind spot through the specific intersection of urban security and climate adaptation. The two domains were selected for three reasons. First, both agendas are currently being implemented at scale in cities across Europe, yet through entirely separate institutional channels, funding streams, and planning instruments. Second, both agendas produce spatially tangible, material outcomes that take the form of competing physical prescriptions, which makes their interaction observable and analytically tractable in ways that other overlapping priorities, such as digitalisation or social equity, are not. Third, while synergies between crime prevention and climate adaptation have begun to attract attention in the literature (Chamard, 2024; Jonescu et al, 2024), the implications of their intersection for evaluation specifically remain unexplored. The objective is to diagnose this limitation empirically, through an analysis of planning, policy and institutional documents as well as targeted spatial observations, and subsequently to identify what the evaluation would need to account for to do justice to the holistic evaluation of public space quality.

## **2. Background**

Public space has been understood as a site of democratic encounter (Francis, 1987; Carr et al., 1992; Parkinson, 2012; Sezer, 2020), as socially produced and politically contested (Lefebvre, 1992; Mitchell, 2003), and as shaped by regimes of ownership, access, and management that make its publicness a matter of degree rather than a fixed condition (Madanipour, 2003; Kohn, 2004; Carmona, 2010). What matters for this paper is not a definitional resolution of these debates, but a specific implication they share: public space is continuously produced through social and institutional action, and through the accumulation of interventions that shape one's perception of it. This paper's argument unfolds across three public space typologies: the park, the plaza, and the street. As Carmona (2010, p. 166) notes, morphologically based categories of public space are

almost infinite in their complexity. Yet when considered in terms of functional use, socio-political value, and institutional layering, these three types represent a wide enough spectrum in the question of how quality is perceived and assessed.

In planning practice, the quality of public space is assessed through a wide range of approaches, from standardised checklists and site audits to performance monitoring. These approaches differ not only in method, but in what they fundamentally ask of a space. Dziekan et al define evaluation as a systematic assessment of a measure's value and importance, guided by criteria established through a set of standards (2013, p. 12). They stress that evaluation must be distinguished from other forms of assessments, such as monitoring and audits. An audit is a systematic check against predefined criteria or standards (EFUS, 2007, p. 10). Monitoring is a systematic tracking of indicators over time to follow developments and implementation progress. Both can deliver information for evaluation, but on their own, they do not yet say anything about the *quality* of the space. This distinction is important because the two domains examined alongside public space quality - security and climate adaptation - rely predominantly on these narrower forms. The following section explores how public space quality is understood and evaluated, and the underlying logic of how each domain constructs its assessment, what each makes visible, and what remains invisible.

## 2.1 Public space quality

Although there is no single definition of quality in public spaces, it can be revealed by observing how people use them. This insight stems from a long lineage in spatial and behavioural observation - from close reading of everyday street life to systematic activity mapping and pedestrian counting to time-lapse studies and structured observation protocols (Jacobs, 1961; Burano Gruppe, 1972; Whyte, 1988; Dellemann et al, 2002; Gehl, 2011; Gehl and Svarre, 2013). From this, the presence of diverse users lingering and interacting emerges as the primary evidence of spatial quality. But what must spaces provide to sustain such use? Carr et al (1992, pp. 87-136) argued that they need to satisfy diverse human needs, which they classified as comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, and discovery. Scholars and practitioners have sought to identify a wide range of quality attributes and indicators, which have since been operationalised for evaluation purposes. Gehl (2011) structured 12 criteria across three groups: protection, comfort, and enjoyment. The Project for Public Spaces developed the Place Diagram, organising the qualities of successful places around four attributes: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image, and 33 indicators (Project for Public Spaces, 2021). Mehta's (2014) Public Space Index (PSI) measures quality across five dimensions: inclusiveness, meaningful activities, safety, comfort, and pleasurable, and through a structured scoring system applied across multiple space types. The weighting of variables within such indices is, as Mehta (2014, p. 70) acknowledges, a complex task unlikely to produce consensus, as different spaces with different expectations could generate dozens of variations. A similar framework, employing eight dimensions (Accessibility and Linkage, Maintenance, Attractiveness and Appeal, Comfort, Inclusiveness, Activities and Uses, Purposefulness, and Safety and Security), Public Space Quality Index (PSQI), was developed and tested in India by Praliya and Garg (2019). Designed for application across diverse urban contexts, UN-Habitat (2020) proposed site-specific assessment toolkits structured around five dimensions: use and user, accessibility, amenities and furniture, comfort and safety, and green environment, with 20

indicators. What unites these frameworks is that they evaluate quality as a condition experienced by users, and not as products of the processes that produced them. This matters because the quality attributes are shaped by institutional decisions that define what each attribute means and how it is spatially manifested. When those definitions and implementations diverge, user-side-only evaluation registers the result without detecting the conflict that produced it.

## *2.2 Security and safety evaluation*

Safety has long been recognised as a precondition for public space quality. Jane Jacobs (1961) identified it as the foundational concern. The concept of safety in public space is multifaceted but usually refers to traffic safety and safety from crime and violence (Jacobs, 1961; Gehl, 2011; Mehta, 2014). The paper focuses on the latter, including both objective risk and the subjective perception of safety. When spaces are perceived as unsafe - whether due to recorded crime, media reporting, or visible signs of disorder - institutional responses follow. Security measures are implemented, and with them comes a distinct evaluation logic. Rooted in environmental criminology and its foundational frameworks, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Jeffery, 1971) and Defensible Space Theory (Newman, 1972), this logic asks whether a given spatial configuration minimises criminal opportunity and perceived danger. Success is defined as crime and fear reduction and risk minimisation (Clarke, 1995; Cozens and Love, 2015; Franke and van Soomeren, 2021; Larcher et al, 2022). The spatial environment is treated as a variable to be optimised for behavioural outcomes, but the behaviours in question are criminal acts, not the diverse social interactions that public space quality evaluations value. Hence, CPTED principles have been criticised for producing the opposite effect: spaces optimised for security can become exclusionary, over-controlled, and inhospitable to the very social life that makes them safe in the first place (Kohn, 2004; Németh and Schmidt, 2007; Németh, 2010). Németh and Schmidt (2007) proposed a 20-indicator index structured across four categories: laws and rules, surveillance and policing, design and image, and access and territoriality. The critical tension within this domain, however, is that security interventions do not merely protect people but reshape public space. Németh (2010) demonstrates empirically that as behavioural control in publicly accessible spaces increases, individual choice decreases and the openness that constitutes publicness erodes. Since its inception, CPTED has evolved through three generations: from physical design strategies in the first generation, through the incorporation of social and psychological dimensions in the second, to the third generation, which integrates crime prevention with sustainability, public health, and quality of life (Saville and Mihnjac, 2019). This third generation is the closest the security domain comes to acknowledging cross-domain interaction, though its evaluation instruments have yet to operationalise this aspiration. EU's Security by Design report (Larcher et al, 2022) also acknowledges the tension between different agendas, noting that overdesigned security measures may lead to obtrusive and aesthetically unpleasant solutions, and advocates for integrating protection into urban design. Yet the evaluation logic remains anchored in protective performance: bollard resistance ratings, standoff distances, vehicle approach angles. Security interventions thus reshape not just safety but also comfort, accessibility, and other attributes that public space quality frameworks measure, yet without any evaluative connection between the two.

### 2.3 Climate Adaptation Evaluation Logic

Thermal relief during heat, access to shade, shelter from wind and rain, and generally comfort have long been recognised as a dimension of public space quality (Gehl, 2011) and are tightly connected with climate. Cities are implementing adaptation measures that reshape the sensory and microclimatic conditions of public spaces at an increasing scale. Yet institutionally, the evaluation of these interventions is anchored not in experiential quality but in environmental performance. It is assessed primarily through monitoring (cooling capacity, stormwater attenuation, sealed surface ratios, vegetation coverage, and carbon sequestration are tracked against baseline projections using biophysical models, GIS-based spatial analysis, and remote sensing (Welle et al, 2015; Zardo et al, 2017; Dumitru and Wendling, 2021). Success is expressed in engineering units, such as degrees of cooling and tonnes of carbon per hectare. Major institutional frameworks, including the IPCC's (2022) adaptation assessment and the European Environment Agency's (2019, 2025) reports on green infrastructure, consolidate this optimisation logic. These instruments acknowledge that climate interventions affect the use of space; the evaluation, however, remains oriented toward environmental performance. A tree is assessed by its quantitative cooling contribution, not by how it structures visibility of social interaction. A permeable surface is assessed by its infiltration rate, not by whether it facilitates or impedes pedestrian movement. It registers the physical features of public space through a bioclimatic lens that is structurally inattentive to the security conditions or experiential qualities those same elements simultaneously produce.

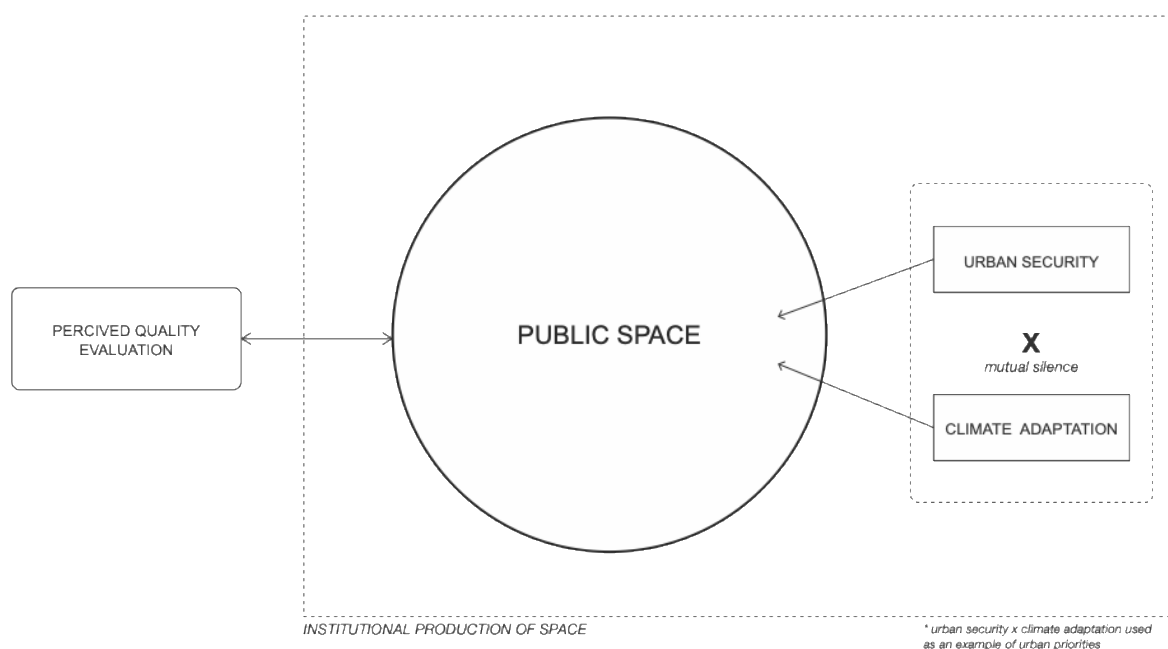


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework. Source: Ines Dobošić (2026)

3. Method

The study combines two complementary methods. First, an analysis of planning, policy and institutional documents and laws in which they are anchored reconstructs how security and climate are institutionally framed and traces the pathways through which each domain’s priorities are translated into spatial interventions. Second, spatial observations across three public space types trace how those institutional priorities materialise in the built environment, and what their co-presence means for evaluation. The analysis was confined to one city, Berlin in this case, because a single institutional and legal context was required. Security and climate adaptation are configured through different actors, instruments and statutes within the governance system, so tracing their interaction depended on holding that context constant. Both operate within a common analytical frame: a defined set of quality attributes and physical elements through which the two domains’ interventions could be investigated. The unit of analysis is the relationship between institutional framing and physical configuration. To establish this frame, the quality attributes discussed in the reviewed literature and institutional documents were extracted (some stated directly as such, some identified through interpretation) and consolidated into a smaller set, since the same quality recurs under different terms across sources. An attribute was retained only if it appeared in both the theoretical literature and the institutional corpus and could be tied to an observable physical element - that is, only where the theoretical and institutional framings converged on the same spatial prescription, even if under different names. This yielded the four attributes in Table 1: safety, comfort, accessibility, and environmental quality. Each attribute was coded according to how it related to the theory of public space, the security domain and the climate domain, how each defines it, and through which physical element it is spatially observable. The mapping is interpretive throughout. It showed that several attributes are claimed by both domains, which are sometimes given different meanings. The empirical scope of the study is deliberate: the analysis focuses on what is built and institutionally documented.

Table 1. The four quality attributes and how each is defined across the literature and institutions

| Quality attribute | Public space quality (evaluative reference)                         | Urban security documents                                                                 | Climate adaptation documents                                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Safety            | freedom from fear; freedom from harm by others; feeling safe        | absence of crime; risk minimisation; visibility and territorial control                  | reduced exposure to climate risk                                             |
| Comfort           | Positive thermal and sensory experience; quality of stay            | an environment free of fear-inducing cues; absence of disorder and visible deterioration | thermal and microclimatic relief, shade, cooling, shelter from wind and rain |
| Accessibility     | open access for all, without economic, physical or symbolic barrier | graduated and controlled access; territorial regulation                                  | access to climate-comfortable spaces                                         |

| Quality attribute            | Public space quality (evaluative reference) | Urban security documents                  | Climate adaptation documents                                         |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Environmental quality</b> | green environment; sensory richness         | a sightline liability; vegetation setback | vegetation cover; unsealed, permeable ground; ecological performance |

### 3.1 Institutional Framing

In this paper, the term planning, policy and institutional documents encompasses documents of varying legal status and governing function, including binding laws and regulations, formal planning instruments, non-binding strategies and action plans, design guidelines and standards, implementation programmes, and monitoring and evaluation tools. The study is exploratory, and the purpose is not a comprehensive policy review but a targeted reconstruction of the institutional frameworks through which public space is produced. The set of documents was compiled through institutional mapping (senate departments and borough offices relevant to urban security and climate adaptation) and iterative cross-reference tracing across documents. A document was retained if it met at least one of two criteria: (a) it prescribes or leads to spatial interventions in public space under the domain of security or climate adaptation; or (b) it establishes how such interventions are assessed. The resulting set contained 20 documents. Each document was read through five analytical dimensions: (1) problem framing: how it defines the urban problem it addresses; (2) spatial interventions: what physical measures it prescribes; (3) institutional responsibility: which actors are mandated to implement and evaluate the prescribed interventions; (4) evaluation logic: what indicators or monitoring mechanisms the instrument embeds and whether these could register cross-domain effects; and (5) cross-domain acknowledgement: whether there is reference to the other domain. From this reading, a framing typology (Table 1) was constructed, mapping the two domains across all five dimensions, making the structural divergence between them visible and the condition of mutual silence traceable.

### 3.2 Spatial Reading

The purpose of spatial reading is investigative. From the spatial prescriptions contained in the reviewed institutional documents, the physical elements addressed by both domains were identified: vegetation, lighting, barriers, surfaces, and street furniture. It is this cross-domain co-presence that makes them analytically productive: they are the built elements at which competing evaluation logics converge on the same physical object/space. Elements that appeared in only one or two domains, such as CCTV cameras (security only) or drainage infrastructure (climate only), were excluded from the observation frame.

For this, three sites were selected, one for each typology established in Section 2: a park (Görlitzer Park, Kreuzberg), a plaza (Breitscheidplatz, Charlottenburg), and a street (Scharnweberstraße, Friedrichshain). A site was eligible if it was subject to security and/or climate adaptation, whether through formal designation or the applicability of both domains' guidelines to its typology. The sites function as typological probes rather than in-depth case studies. While a single site cannot represent the full diversity of its type, the

probes demonstrate that the condition exists and is legible in a built form in different space types. At each site, the five elements served as a structured observation lens. For each element, the reading poses two questions. First, what is physically present, i.e. what interventions from which domain is visible in the space? Second, what would existing evaluation frameworks register about this element, and what would they miss? Each site was visited in daylight and after dark. Observations were recorded through photographic documentation, annotated map and field notes, organised against the five elements and the five analytical dimensions used in the document analysis, so that the spatial reading and the institutional reading share one analytical structure. The observation was interpretive rather than quantitative: it recorded which interventions are present and how competing evaluation logics would read them.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Institutional insights

The document analysis reveals that security and climate adaptation do not merely address different problems, but they construct different meanings of the same quality attributes. Safety, comfort, accessibility, and environmental quality are central to how public space quality is evaluated, but when these attributes are traced through the planning instruments that govern Berlin's public spaces, they fracture: each domain claims jurisdiction over the same qualities, defines them through its own logic, and evaluates them against criteria that are invisible to the other. Security instruments frame public space as a site of risk, in which spatial configuration enables or deters criminal behaviour. The General Security and Public Order Act in Berlin (ASOG Bln, 2006) provides the legal basis for classifying certain publicly accessible streets, paths, squares, or other areas as Crime Hotspots in Berlin (*kriminalitätsbelastete Orte*). The Urban Crime Prevention advisory materials (*Städtebauliche Kriminalprävention*) frame building and public space design as affecting both actual safety and perceived safety, and seek early counteraction to signs of neglect (Belkahla, 2024). *The Urbane Sicherheit* guidelines connect insecurity to disorder through Broken Windows Theory (Kelling and Wilson, 1982) logic: neglect, vandalism, and visible deterioration are treated as precursors to norm violations. Under this framing, safety means legibility, visibility, and territorial control; comfort means an environment free of fear-inducing cues; a well-functioning space is one in which criminal opportunity has been designed out. Climate instruments frame the same space as a site of environmental deficit (SenMVKU, 2025). *StEP Klima 2.0* (SenStadt 2022) identifies heat load, sealed surface ratios, and insufficient vegetation as the problems to be resolved. *Klimarisikoanalyse* (SenMVKU 2026) assesses climate risk through spatially differentiated indicators of heat stress, drought, and flooding exposure. The Heat Action Plan (SenWGP 2025) frames heat as a public health risk and positions public space as a delivery mechanism for cooling infrastructure. Under this framing, safety means protection from heat-related mortality; comfort means thermal relief, shade, and access to cool spaces; a well-functioning space is one in which environmental performance has been optimised. Both domains claim to produce safer, more comfortable, better-functioning public space. They do so through definitions that are not merely different in emphasis but structurally incompatible: a dense tree canopy is comfort under one logic and a safety liability under the other; an open, paved, well-lit surface is safe under one logic and an environmental failure under the other. This divergence in problem framing and quality defining

corresponds to a separation in institutional jurisdiction. At the state level,<sup>1</sup> climate adaptation falls under the Senate Department for Urban Mobility, Transport, Climate Action and the Environment (SenMVKU),<sup>2</sup> while urban security falls under the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport (SenInnSport).<sup>3</sup> The Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing (SenStadt)<sup>4</sup>, incorporates both agendas to a certain degree insofar as their interventions are implemented in the built environment, but does not do so in depth. This division is reproduced at the Borough<sup>5</sup> level: climate-related responsibilities sit with the Office of Transportation and Green Spaces<sup>6</sup>, public order and security enforcement with the Public Order Office,<sup>7</sup> and spatial planning with the Urban Planning Office.<sup>8</sup> Each domain embeds its own criteria for assessing success — and no instrument in the corpus measures across both. The Police Crime Statistics (Polizei Berlin, 2026) records crime frequency by location; CPTED audits score spatial compliance against predefined design principles; perceived safety surveys capture subjective fear at a point in time. Success is defined as crime reduction, fear reduction, and risk minimisation. On the climate side, the risk analysis assesses climate risk across twelve action areas through spatially differentiated indicators: heat load, drought stress, flooding exposure, and vegetation loss. The Urban Green Spaces and Public Spaces action area evaluates public spaces solely based on environmental indicators. Security, crime prevention, and policing do not appear among the twelve fields. The evaluation architecture does not omit security by accident; it is designed around environmental risk categories in which crime is not a variable. A security evaluation that records a space as safe cannot detect whether the conditions that produced that result have degraded thermal comfort, restricted access to cooling, or reduced the environmental quality that the climate instruments define as essential. A climate evaluation that records a space as performing well cannot detect whether the vegetation that provides those gains has reduced the visibility and territorial legibility that the security instruments treat as preconditions for safety. Each domain can declare success by its own criteria, while the other domain's definition of quality remains unmeasured. The analysis of cross-references confirms what the preceding dimensions imply. No security instrument in the analysed corpus references climate adaptation, environmental performance, or the quality attributes that the climate domain defines. Conversely, no climate instrument references security conditions, crime prevention, or the quality attributes that the security domain defines. The closest approach is the Heat Action Plan, which identifies heat-vulnerable populations, including elderly and homeless people, but does not assess how security interventions affect those populations' access to cooling infrastructure. The Security Summit Action Plan (Senatskanzlei, 2023) acknowledges health and social prevention alongside policing, but this refers to adjacent social services, not to the other domain's conception of spatial quality. This silence is not an accidental oversight. It is the structural consequence of an

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Original names in German:

<sup>1</sup> Land Berlin

<sup>2</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Mobilität, Verkehr, Klimaschutz und Umwelt (SenMVKU)

<sup>3</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport (SenInnSport)

<sup>4</sup> Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen (SenStadt)

<sup>5</sup> Bezirk

<sup>6</sup> Straßen- und Grünflächenamt (SGA)

<sup>7</sup> Ordnungsamt

<sup>8</sup> Stadtentwicklungsamt

institutional architecture in which different agencies hold different definitions of what quality means and assess them through separate instruments.

Table 2. Document analysis across five analytical dimensions

| Analytical dimension                                            | Urban security / crime prevention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Climate adaptation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>(1) Problem framing</b>                                      | Public space as a site of (possible crime) risk, where spatial configuration enables or deters criminal opportunity; disorder, fear, and concentration of crime as the central problems; subjective and objective safety as distinct but linked concerns.                                         | Public space as a site of environmental deficit or potential, where climate-change impacts (heat, flooding, drought) are spatially differentiated; unequal burden distribution across neighbourhoods as the central problem; vulnerability, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity as the operative categories.                                                                                                                  |
| <b>(2) Spatial interventions (or conditional leading to it)</b> | Lighting for elimination of dark corners; sightline clearance and vegetation setbacks; access control barriers and bollards; hostile furniture; CCTV; zone signage;.                                                                                                                              | Greening and trees; de-sealing and permeable surfaces; stormwater retention; shaded seating; cooling corridors; water features; green/blue infrastructure on rooftops and facades.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>(3) Institutional responsibility</b>                         | <p><i>Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport; Landeskriminalamt; Polizei Berlin; Ordnungsämter.</i></p> <p>Mandate: public order, crime prevention, threat response. Separate reporting lines, separate data systems. Advisory role in planning via SKP but no binding integration mechanism.</p> | <p><i>Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen; Senatsverwaltung für Mobilität, Verkehr, Klimaschutz und Umwelt; Grünflächenämter</i></p> <p>Mandate: environmental protection, urban development, climate resilience. Separate reporting lines, separate spatial data systems. Coordination via BEK and FNP but no binding integration with security domain.</p>                                             |
| <b>(4) Evaluation logic</b>                                     | <p>Checklist-based audits against CPTED principles; crime statistics; before-and-after comparison; compliance scoring; perceived safety surveys. Predominantly point-in-time.</p> <p>Success defined as: crime reduction, fear reduction, risk minimisation.</p>                                  | <p>Quantitative environmental metrics: temperature reduction, runoff attenuation, vegetation cover, sealed surface ratio. Biophysical modelling; GIS-based spatial analysis; remote sensing; proxy indicators and hotspot methodology. Performance measured against baseline projections.</p> <p>Success defined as: measurable environmental improvement (degrees of cooling, m<sup>2</sup> de-sealed, % canopy cover).</p> |

**(5) Cross-domain acknowledgement**

Security instruments do not mention climate adaptation objectives, environmental performance metrics, or sustainability targets. Spatial prescriptions (e.g. vegetation setbacks, surface sealing for barrier installation) are formulated without reference to their climate implications.

Climate instruments do not reference security conditions related to crime prevention, or policing. Two documents (*BerlinStrategie 3.0*, *Koalitionsvertrag*) reference both domains but in entirely separate chapters with no cross-referencing. The *Hitzeaktionsplan* identifies heat-vulnerable populations but does not assess how security interventions affect their access to cooling infrastructure.

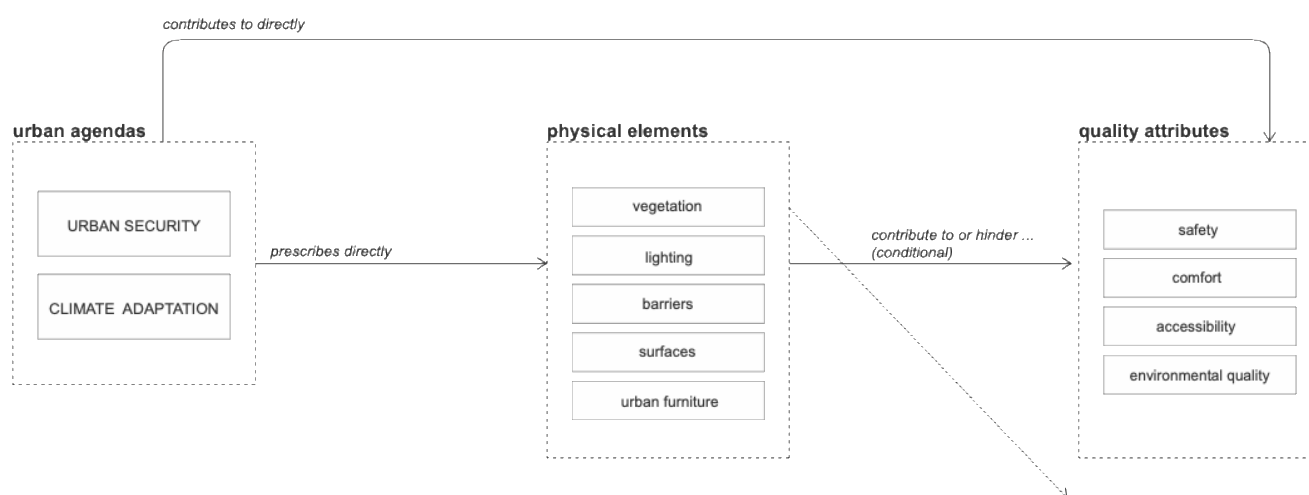


Figure 2. Analytical frame: Pathways through which institutions shape public space quality.  
Source: Ines Dobošić (2026).

#### 4.2 Spatial constellations

The following three sites are read through the five spatial elements identified in the methodology. Each site represents a distinct public space typology and demonstrates a different way in which the evaluation blind spot diagnosed in the document analysis manifests in physical space.

##### **Park**

Görlitzer Park in Kreuzberg is a prominent example of the overlap between climate adaptation and security agendas in an urban park. The park is simultaneously a designated crime hotspot (*kriminalitätsbelasteter Ort*), a weapon and knife prohibition zone (*Waffenverbotszone*) subject to intensified policing measures, and in *StEP Klima 2.0* (SenStadt, 2022), an open space with the potential for bioclimatic enhancement. Read across the five elements that contribute to the quality of a space, the spatial co-presence of both domains has physically materialised. Under the premise of safety and crime prevention, the park's historical brick perimeter wall with gaps allowing open access from

surrounding streets has been recently fitted with metal fencing and a turnstile, creating a real barrier for access.



Figure 3. Aerial view of Görlitzer Park. Source: Geoportal Berlin, TrueOrthophotos 2025 (DOP20RGBI), SenSBW. Modifications by author (2026).



Figure 4. Entrance to Görlitzer Park from Wiener Str.



Figure 5. Perimeter wall on Görlitzer Str



Figure 6. Newly planted trees in the park

Source: Ines Dobošić (2026)

Exit is possible at all times, including after the night closure, and some gates remain open during the day, but the access regime is graduated rather than absolute. Vegetation is plentiful and orderly: planting along paths is well-maintained, with trimmed understory and clear path edges ensuring sightlines, and enough trees for shade. Considering the climatic burden of the area, defined in *Umweltgerechtigkeitsatlas* (SenMVKU 2025), the strategic urban plan *StEP Klima 2.0.* (SenStadt 2022) identifies the site as a potential area for bioclimatic enhancement. Lighting follows the main paths and bigger gathering spots after dark, ensuring visibility. The concept was recently extended and upgraded under Berlin's street-lighting guidelines (SenMVKU, 2024); it treats the park as a crime hotspot, with fixtures made individually controllable and lighting levels set in coordination with the

police. Surfaces are mixed but largely unsealed, with broad lawns; the main paths are paved in asphalt. Against the near-fully sealed streets surrounding it, the park retains substantial permeable ground. Benches are mostly in good condition and widespread, which contributes to the comfort of spending time in the park. Each element is layered onto the park by separate institutional decisions whose agendas sometimes align and sometimes conflict: the understory thinned for sightlines is the understory that would otherwise thicken the canopy's cooling or provide better animal refuge. In addition, daily circulation of police, public order officers, and park rangers marks the park as continuously managed under the security logic. A security assessment that records a controlled, low-risk space with sightlines held and access regulated could score positive points in the park. Climate assessment could record the same as negative. A framework for public space quality must decide what it is looking at. Is the park safe? The fence and managed sightlines suggest controlled risk, but they also signal that danger exists, which shapes perceived safety regardless of actual crime levels. A daytime survey conducted while gates are open may register accessibility, yet the security infrastructure remains legible as a reminder of the threat. Comfort is not independent of this reading. Accessibility is temporally conditional: present by day, absent by night. No instrument assesses this condition as a single, jointly produced quality. Each domain evaluates the park as though the other were not there.

### **Plaza**

Breitscheidplatz, in Charlottenburg, was the site of the 2016 terrorist vehicle-ramming attack, and the security response that followed physically shapes the space to today. These have been harshly criticized and countermeasures are planned. These new measures would address both issues of safety and security, but also of climate. On the plaza, what is observable today is a layered accumulation of interventions from different moments and mandates, but barriers carry the space: sand-filled steel basket barriers and anti-vehicle bollards mounted on ramps line the perimeter. Fencing and prohibition signage define controlled access zones during the Christmas market and other gatherings. Together, these elements form a hostile vehicle mitigation landscape that is legible at a glance: the plaza communicates that something happened here and that the institutional response is ongoing. Surfaces are predominantly sealed hardscape, with heavy multi-lane traffic running directly adjacent on Budapester Straße and Tauentzienstraße. The *Umweltgerechtigkeitsatlas* (SenMVKU 2025) defines the area as subject to multiple environmental burdens and the strategic urban plan *StEP Klima 2.0*. (SenStadt 2022) identifies as the site of action for blue-green measures for cooling during the day and at night, which would mean de-sealing and greening. A small cluster of trees provides shade in one area and a fountain offers a water element. Benches around trees and around the fountain provide seating in the shade but are not plentiful. The security infrastructure was implemented under political urgency following a crisis event and established physical conditions. The new development plan calls for a climate-resilient redesign of the space. Within that framework, it prescribes closure to through-traffic explicitly for security reasons — to prevent vehicle attacks on Breitscheidplatz — which simultaneously frees carriageway space for what the same document identifies as climate adaptation measures. A security assessment that evaluates the barriers' protective performance would be recorded as positive.



Figure 7. Aerial view of Breitscheidplatz. Source: Geoportal Berlin, TrueOrthophotos 2025 (DOP20RGBI), SenSBW. Modifications by author (2026)



Figure 8. Across the street from Breitscheidplatz



Figure 9. Sand bags as vehicle barriers



Figure 10. Hostile vehicle mitigation barriers

Source: Ines Dobošić (2026)

A climate assessment that would measure sealed-surface ratio and greenery would be rather negative. A public space quality assessment that assesses the space as found condition could find that the barriers impede the passage of wheelchairs and bicycles, or that benches in the shade are comfortable. Each assessment would provide a coherent interpretation. However, none would register that the condition encountered is the result of uncoordinated institutional action over nearly a decade, nor that the quality of this plaza is not a designed outcome, but rather a product of which domain arrived first.

### Street

The Scharnweberstraße in Friedrichshain is part of the *Ostkreuz-Kiezblock* and presents a trend of a new way of thinking about the role a street has or could have. Measures implemented largely fall under traffic safety and climate protection, which are housed by the same institutions as previous probes, but their effects stretch further. A modal filter, metal bollards blocking through-traffic for motor vehicles while permitting passage for pedestrians, was installed as part of the district's area-wide traffic calming programme,

implemented under the Borough's wider traffic-calming programme and anchored in the Berlin mobility act (*Mobilitätsgesetz*).

The intervention was designed as a traffic safety measure, and its planning document specifies the evaluation logic accordingly. What is observable at the site is a row of bollards on an otherwise unchanged asphalt street. Adjacent to the filter, the reclaimed street space has been provisionally activated: parklets, a table tennis table, and seating elements have appeared in what was previously a traffic lane.



Figure 11. Aerial view of Scharnweberstraße. Source: Geoportal Berlin, TrueOrthophotos 2025 (DOP20RGBI), SenSBW. Modifications by author (2026).



Figure 12. Access to Scharnweberstraße



Figure 13. Regulations in Scharnweberstraße



Figure 14. Play & protect barriers

Source: Ines Dobošić (2026)

The street is quieter than the surrounding area; pedestrians and cyclists move through at a pace that the through-traffic formerly made difficult. Implemented measures do the work for two domains unintentionally, and the Borough's own decision document acknowledges that the intervention produces effects well beyond traffic reduction. It

states that the reduction of through-traffic has positive impacts on climate and environment through emissions reduction, and envisions that, depending on the extent of redesign, the pedestrian zones created by the concept will become climate-resilient public spaces. The *Umweltgerechtigkeitsatlas* (SenMVKU 2025) rates the areas' green space provision as poor; the filter physically creates the precondition for addressing this deficit without meaning it. The same spatial conditions it produces, reduced vehicle speed, increased pedestrian presence, and activated street frontage near a school, correspond to the conditions that crime prevention identifies as safety-enhancing: natural surveillance, territorial definition, and the reduction of anonymous through-movement. No security instrument was involved in producing these conditions. This is the evaluation failure that the street typology exposes: domain blindness. The modal filter generates spatial conditions that serve traffic safety, climate adaptation, and crime prevention simultaneously, yet it is evaluated exclusively within the domain that authorised it. The traffic assessment will count vehicles and measure accident reduction. The climate assessment would measure de-sealed surface area and vegetation cover — neither of which yet exists, because the surface remains asphalt, and the greening the planning documents envision has not been built. The crime-preventive effects the intervention incidentally produces, a quieter street with more eyes, a school environment with reduced vehicle threat, are present but belong to no evaluation because no security instrument governs this site. A public space quality assessment would register comfort and a more sociable street environment but would have no mechanism for tracing these conditions to a traffic-calming instrument, let alone for recognising that the same intervention is simultaneously performing unregistered work for two other institutional domains. Each domain assesses its own mandate. None registers what the object is doing for the others.

## **5. Discussion**

Both the analysis of institutional documents and spatial observations point to one condition: the same public space is shaped by domains that, in their evaluation practices, don't register one another, leaving quality conditions that each assesses as though the other were absent. What evaluation frameworks could record as attributes of the space are not independent conditions, but products of institutional logics that define the same words differently. This is a structural problem, not a data gap. The evaluation frameworks reviewed in Section 2 assess quality as a condition experienced by users. They do so competently and, within their stated purpose, reliably. But they treat these attributes as given features of a space and conditions to be observed. They are not designed to trace the attributes they record to the institutional processes that produced them. When multiple domains shape the same space, and political shifts, that push one or other are frequent, as the three sites demonstrate, the origin becomes consequential: the same tree, the same bollard, the same surface carries competing definitions of quality depending on which institutional logic does the assessment. At the same time, as the document analysis demonstrated, the institutional instruments themselves operate in silos. Quality evaluation cannot trace attributes to their institutional origins; institutional evaluation cannot see beyond its own domain. Between the two, there is no mechanism for registering that competing definitions of the same quality are being produced in the same space.

The strongest counterargument is that domain separation is a deliberate feature of good governance, not a failure. Each agency holds a defined mandate; each instrument maintains internal coherence. While this separation is understandable, the question arises: how to deal with it in the context of the assessment of multifaceted spaces. Furthermore, how could it be integrated in perceptual assessment? This paper's finding frames this under the need for reorientation of the public space quality evaluation.

Three reorientations:

- *Temporal sequencing*  
Firstly, the evaluation should consider the origins of quality conditions, as these may result from the sequence of events. Which domain arrived first establishes the spatial and material constraints within which subsequent interventions must operate. Reading this sequence surfaces the preconditions that a record of a single point in time may omit.
- *Relational reading*  
Secondly, evaluation should consider the quality attributes of physical elements in relation to each other and their institutional origins, rather than assessing them in isolation. What scores positively in one, can be produced by the same institutional action that scores negatively in another. Considering them in relation to each other reveals the trade-offs inherent in a single institutional action, which would otherwise remain invisible.
- *Cross-domain interaction.*  
Thirdly, evaluations should not only assess performance within individual domains but also map the interactions between them. An intervention may perform tasks in domains that have not explicitly authorized it. Mapping these interactions renders such tasks visible, whereas evaluating a domain solely against its own criteria leaves these tasks unrecorded.

Two limitations must be acknowledged. First, the three sites function as typological probes and establish that the condition that is legible in a built form across different space types exists, but not how prevalent it is. Second, the analysis operates at the level of institutional framings and physical configurations, and it does not include user perspectives. While public space evaluation frameworks foreground perceived value, for this study, holding users outside the frame allowed the institutional layer to be characterised on its own terms. The three reorientations set out above are the result of this approach.

## 6. Conclusion

Existing public space evaluation frameworks do not account for the institutional conditions under which spatial quality is produced. This paper demonstrates why these frameworks require an update by examining the intersection of urban security and climate adaptation in Berlin. A combination of document analysis and spatial observation showed that urban agendas operate in mutual silence, and that this silence is evident in the built environment. These conditions are legible in the physical fabric of the city, yet invisible to the evaluation tools that claim jurisdiction over them. The paper's contribution is conceptual: it establishes that the quality attributes are not neutral features of the space but products of institutional action, and that under domain overlap, a single physical element registers as a different quality to each domain that assesses it. Following this

diagnosis, the paper proposes three reorientations that expand the user-centred evaluation, directing it toward the conditions under which spatial quality is produced. Operationalising these into transferable evaluation instruments is the next step this diagnosis makes possible. This approach, which involves interpreting the quality of public spaces through the evaluation logics of the institutions responsible for them, can be applied wherever urban priorities are pursued through separate institutional channels. This condition is not unique to Berlin; it is a structural feature of sectoral urban governance.

### Disclose AI usage

During the preparation of this work, the author used Claude (Anthropic) to assist with the writing process, including the development of arguments and structural reasoning and DeepLTranslate for partial translation of source documents and the author's own writing. The author reviewed and rewrote all AI-assisted content and takes full responsibility for the published work.

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