

Robert Clinton

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Cohen

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## Research Design

Across the world, and throughout time, people have struggled to cohabitate space in a peaceful and equitable way. Even in our “progressive,” first world societies, conflicting understandings of diversity continue to dominate the discourse on ideal civilizations, especially as it pertains to major metropolitan areas. New York City in the United States of America and Berlin, Germany are especially interesting cities to view racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic issues through because both cities have crafted a national identity celebrating diversity, acceptance, and remembrance when, in fact, their populations continue to struggle to live harmoniously.

Specifically, though the conversation on German’s ethnic acceptance, or lack thereof, is often thought of in the context of the Jewish population, and Holocaust, today’s issues mainly center upon Turkish-German conflict. The Turkish population in Germany grew substantially in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as “guest workers” were invited to immigrate and perform service sector jobs in a rapidly growing German economy desperate for a larger labor force. Though thought of at the time to be a temporary solution to a employee shortage, Turks settled in Germany and have grown to become the largest non-native population in the country, much to the chagrin of many

Germans unhappy with a rising population of “others.” Recent polls show that there is increasing resentment by Germans to the Turkish population, especially in the context of their dominant religion, Islam. As a result of both religious and larger ethnic discrimination, Turkish peoples are often informally barred from certain are occupational and housing opportunities in Germany, and have very different usage patterns of public space in cities. It must be noted also, however, that a large percentage of the Turkish population has expressed a desire to interact with only people of their same ethnic background, so the segregation of this group comes from both internal and external attitudes. Germany’s progressive, yet problematic, hyper-awareness of their Jewish population’s historic and contemporary space in the nation’s identity seems to almost distract from the larger current issues regarding Middle Eastern and Islamic tensions in the city, and makes a nation with continued issues of cultural division seem more progressive than it actually is.

Simultaneously, New York City struggles with race-relations while maintaining its “crossroads of the world” status as a paradise for immigrants making their way into the United States. New York City’s intentional branding as the world’s financial center already links it with a larger global identity, and this perception worldliness is furthered by dominant images of the Statue of Liberty and its calling for the world’s “...tired... poor... huddled masses yearning to be free...,” Ellis Island and its remembrance of long ago European immigration to the City, and the various ethnic enclaves within the five boroughs. Enclaves, though, are what make New York City less of a melting pot and more of a parfait- stratified, separated, and removed. Increasing exclusivity has led to the City’s lessening diversity and increased gentrification, which is characterized by a largely

affluent and white population. Again, public space can be used to view these changes in demography, and community gardens are one important representation of neighborhood change and how ethnic culture is preserved, or lost, when city and/or private interests govern how space is distributed, valued, and used. Whereas the Lower East Side's community gardens were once expressive of the community's Puerto Rican heritage, many have been destroyed to provide housing for the emerging gentry. A similar story has played out in Harlem, communities in Brooklyn and Queens. Again, though, an "us versus them" mentality has emerged where integration within a mainstream society seems to no longer be a goal of the subjugate people of the City. Thus, New York City remains one of the United States' most ethnically, racially, and economically diverse places to live, but the level of voluntary interaction between citizens of different backgrounds is low.

Superficially, Berlin and New York City are heterogeneous and progressive, but beneath the surface clearly have major problems with discrimination, participation in public space and civic life, and (self imposed) racial stratification. Thus, this project seeks to better understand how public space in both cities, specifically community gardens, is governed by formal or informal understandings of citizenship. Questions I seek to answer include: Do all people have the same right to urban practice? Are community gardens seen as safe spaces for all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, to recreate and share skills, or are they homogenous, socially stratified "public" space where deep-seeded, and concealed, prejudices become apparent? Is ethnicity or race expressed in Berlin's community gardens differently than in New York City's? If so, what does this say about garden participation and/or racial/ethnic segregation in both cities?

My status as a participant-observant researcher puts me in a unique position as both an insider and outsider when working in Berlin. I will be working with and in a network of community gardens, thus will do on the ground observations on how gardens are set up, who uses them and for what (volunteers and general citizens; food production versus strictly leisure), and if/how ethnicity is expressed in gardens (physical structures; type of food grown). However, as a non-citizen who likely looks more Turkish than German and has limited language skills, I'll experience the gardens in a different way than many people I'll work alongside. When in Berlin, I will also look more broadly at public space in Berlin to determine if and how people self-segregate, where the Turkish population lives, works, and spends their free-time, and how Turks participate in the larger Berlin culture. I imagine my work will be much more ethnographic observation than active interview-based, but if I come across people, both German and Turkish, willing to speak to me (in English), I would like to discuss with them their opinion on ethnic stratification and the use of public space in Berlin.

In New York City, I would like to focus more in on interviews in community gardens where I speak to both the garden coordinators and volunteers about how their gardens are an expression, or not, of the community's larger ethnic makeup. I will both ask about who used the gardens, but will also observe for myself the demographic of the community and participants, and will hopefully engage with volunteers on larger questions of garden stability in the changing New York City. I'd like to hear ethnic gardeners' input on not only how they view themselves in the context of their own gardens but also how they see and participate in public space in the City in general. It will be noteworthy to see how gardens in both cities promote cultural preservation and/or

cross-cultural collaboration, or do not. And, I imagine there will be similarities in the imaginings of both the dominant and minority people of both cities on their place in their respective homes.

This project will culminate in a video presentation composed of interview, still photographs, and general footage of the communities in both cities, both garden and surrounding area. I anticipate, and would like for there to be parallels drawn between the research in both Berlin and New York, and think a comparison would be most clearly explained in a storytelling of my experience via a short film.

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