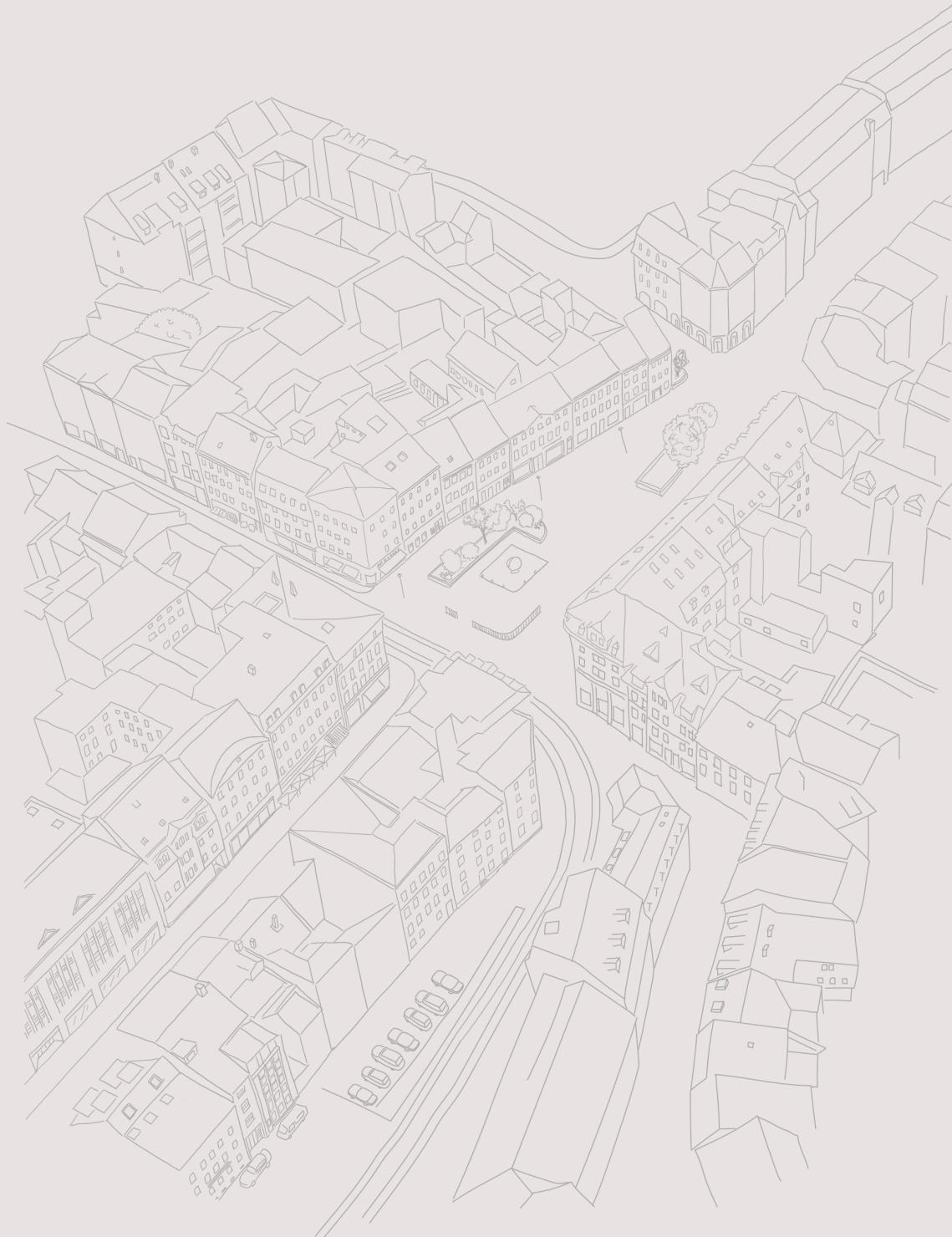


PLACEMAKING AT ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ



Report of the Placemaking Lab | WS1920
Integrated Urban Development & Design

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

ABSTRACT

Over the years, the city of Gera has witnessed multiple events that affected its economic and social infrastructure. As a result, much of its population began to move to nearby bigger cities seeking better career and life opportunities. Consequently, significant areas within the city have been suffering from abandonment and neglect. In this report, the IUDD student group of the Bauhaus University Weimar aims to employ the key concepts of Placemaking as a tool to revitalize a particular site within Gera's city centre, the Zschochernplatz, and its surroundings.

Acting as an end point to a central commercial strip, the Sorge, and an entrance to adjacent housing areas, the Zschochernplatz with its diverse buildings typologies, is of great urban importance to the city center of Gera. While the Zschochernplatz already provides a sense of belonging to the surrounding community, it could also serve as a counterpoint to the future large scale Neue Mitte project in the city center.

After extensive analysis, community mapping and engagement, different ideas were developed for possible program scenarios in the Zschochernplatz along with a design proposal that is inclusive and supports multiple user groups. The final outcome is as varied as the input from the community engagement and 'placemaking' experience. The resulting ideas outlined in this report range from multi-modal mobility options, promoting the enhancing textile industry, land marking the square as a food destination, to ongoing community interactions.

In the future, a successful interplay of civil society, public authorities, and interested investors will ultimately allow for the successful implementation of the concept in order to transform Zschochernplatz into an exciting destination and to activate its surrounding areas. //*Gheyath*

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT TEAM BACKGROUND

The Integrated Urban Development and Design (IUDD) is a consecutive and a practice-oriented master program at the Bauhaus-Institut für experimentelle Architektur (Bauhaus.ifex). The interdisciplinary practice on sustainable concerns and global transformation processes is the main objective of this four-semester international program, where students from different parts of the world assemble for developing ideas and strategies for an integrative and sustainable urban development. (Schmidt, 2020)¹

Problems and urban transformations of the current century serve as training material for students. In addition another particularly important part of this educational program is the combination of spatial scientific-analytical and urban developmental-design oriented approach, as well as the integration of a practical component "Model Projects" (Bauhaus University Weimar, 2020). //*Bardo&Biniyam*

¹ Information about the course from University's webpage, available at <https://www.uni-weimar.de/en/architecture-and-urbanism/institutes/bauhaus-ifex-english/iudd-programme/>

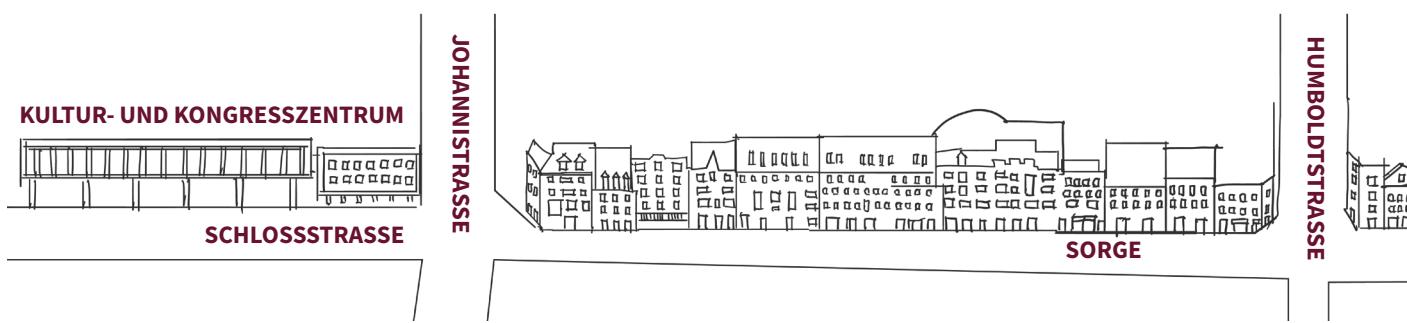
1.3 PROJECT INTRODUCTION

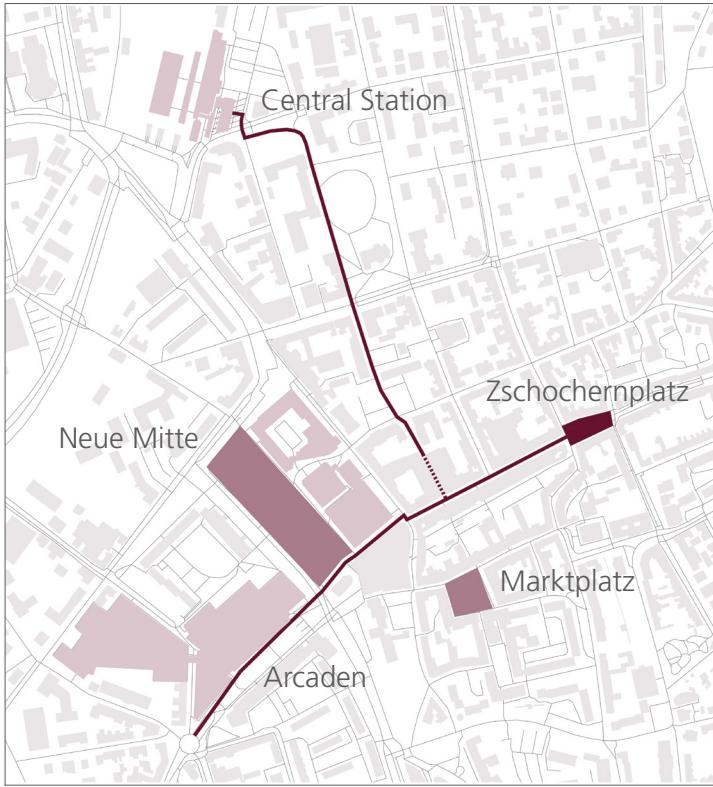
Gera, a former textile city, settled in the 'Weiße Elster' river valley, is a city of charm, recognized for its art, culture, greenery, sports, history and architecture. Over the 19th century, the city has been through several layers of history with major events having affected the city such as the World War I & II, Weimar Republic times, German Democratic Republic (GDR) times and also the reunification.

After the reunification in 1990, the city lost much of its industrial capacity causing an economic downfall and infrastructural collapse, resulting in a large portion of population displacing to nearby big cities for better job opportunities (especially a significant amount of young population). Also, due to this ongoing economical shortage in Gera, many significant retail and business streets have become dull and inactive. Public plazas such as Zschochernplatz, that could have played a role as an important place of congregation and interaction, is currently being used as a parking lot and pass-through. Retail streets such as Sorge (connecting Zschochernplatz and the Arcaden), which was once active has now lost many customers and visitors, due to the Arcaden, a large shopping mall, which has pulled the commercial vitality out of Sorge.

As a result of this, fewer job opportunities in the city and a decline of the young population, public squares have become less active and have failed to attract people. The absence of activities in public squares and plazas has become a matter of concern for the city development authority of Gera as many of its public spaces lack social interaction and cohesion among the people. Providing seating and other amenities would encourage people to linger, improving the activities of businesses that face the streets and public spaces.

Planning strategies taking into consideration the needs of people could be implemented for the local community and those strategies could help to redefine these public spaces, bringing a new outlook. It is also important that the local residents, of all ages, cultures, backgrounds, etc. are considered to come up with an equitable and inclusive place which is open to all. Hence, through placemaking, the needs of the community and social interaction can be fostered, to activate Gera's public spaces.





OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

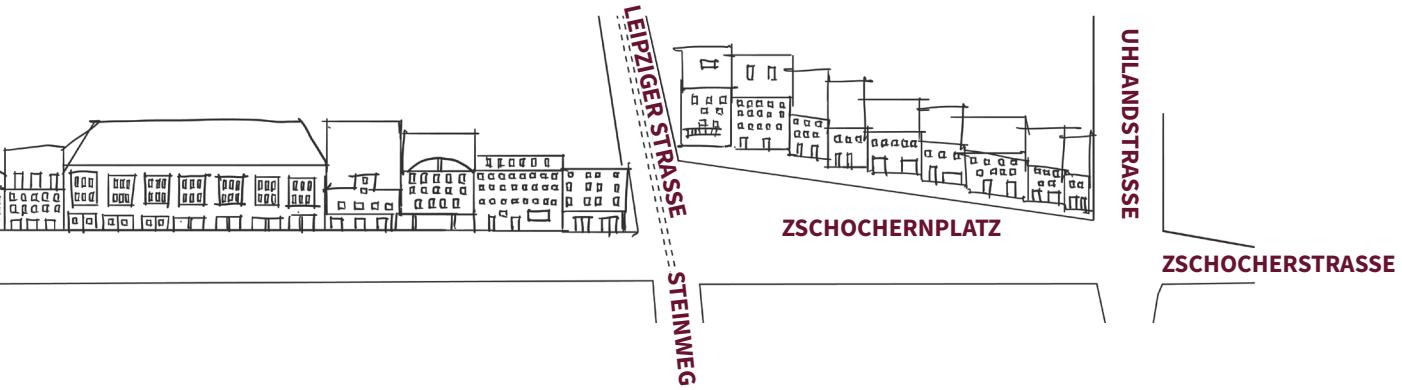
Currently Gera's administration faces the challenge of how to balance the different developments at the city center, reconnecting the spatial gap between Arcaden and the old-town. This plan would be an initiative to 'restart' the whole city centre and gradually revive the area, including the Sorge and Marktplatz. Neue Mitte which is located between Arcaden and Sorge has been seen as an ideal location for this project. This 2.5 hectares, disused land is waiting for reactivation for 15 years. In recent years, by the effort of IBA Thuringia and local association "Ja für Gera", Neue Mitte started to be re-imagined and discussed as the new and strong center of Gera. The city council approved its master plan in 2018, followed by the draft of the development plan in 2019.

The new concept of mix-used of Neue Mitte might provide new shopping places, office space, playground, social housing with the goal of attracting young people to Gera. Aside from the focus of developing the new mix-used project, how could Neue Mitte reactivate the surrounding old city centre, such as Sorge, Steinweg and Marktplatz is the most vital question.

Located at the end connection to Sorge, Zschochernplatz plays a decisive role in balancing Neue Mitte in the city center and residential areas at Zschochernstraße. Therefore, it should serve as a focal point to extend the pedestrian movement that starts from Neue Mitte, creating a transition between active commercial and quiet living areas.¹ //Ahalya&Amin

1 Data derived from:

https://www.gera.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=135497&_nav_id1=&_nav_id2=&_lang=en



1.2 WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking is a methodological approach in urban planning that shapes cities based on how public spaces can serve the needs of their citizens. In Placemaking, citizens are considered the 'experts' while planners provide support as moderators. To access the ideas and perceptions of the local population, different tools such as interviews, behavioural mapping, questionnaires, workshops and surveys are used. Key findings learned from the community are taken into account in the further process, leading to the planning and design of public spaces that could serve as the heart of their community.

Placemaking is about constructing and cultivating the relationship between people and their environment. Also, it is the foundation of resilient cities and vibrant communities through the extensive and focused management of local quality, the creation of shared values, community capabilities, and cross-domain cooperation in local cities. When having a sense of belonging to a "place", it is not only helpful to our own health and well-being, but also important to the physical environment and economic health of the city. Part of this experience comes from people's active participation in the creation of meaning and use of „place“ in the past. However, if a region is already difficult to sustain, less attention and resources will be invested to manage community interactions.

Facing issues of the 21st century, we will find effective solutions by focusing on creating and supporting local places. Today's cities will face more than one challenge, including poverty, environmental degradation, social isolation and inequality. Focusing on Placemaking provides a practical, proactive and integrated approach to global change and resilience issues at different spatial scales.

Just like the fact that not all cooks are chefs, not all public spaces are places, not all public events are placemaking programs. Placemaking, as a human centered process of building up the character and quality of place, is the key to that difference. It might even be the key to the future of cities across the world. For a challenging place like Zschochernplatz, it is especially important to mobilize the local community to discover their actual needs for public space. And by placemaking, we believe the whole process will become the first step of its revitalization. //Yuchi

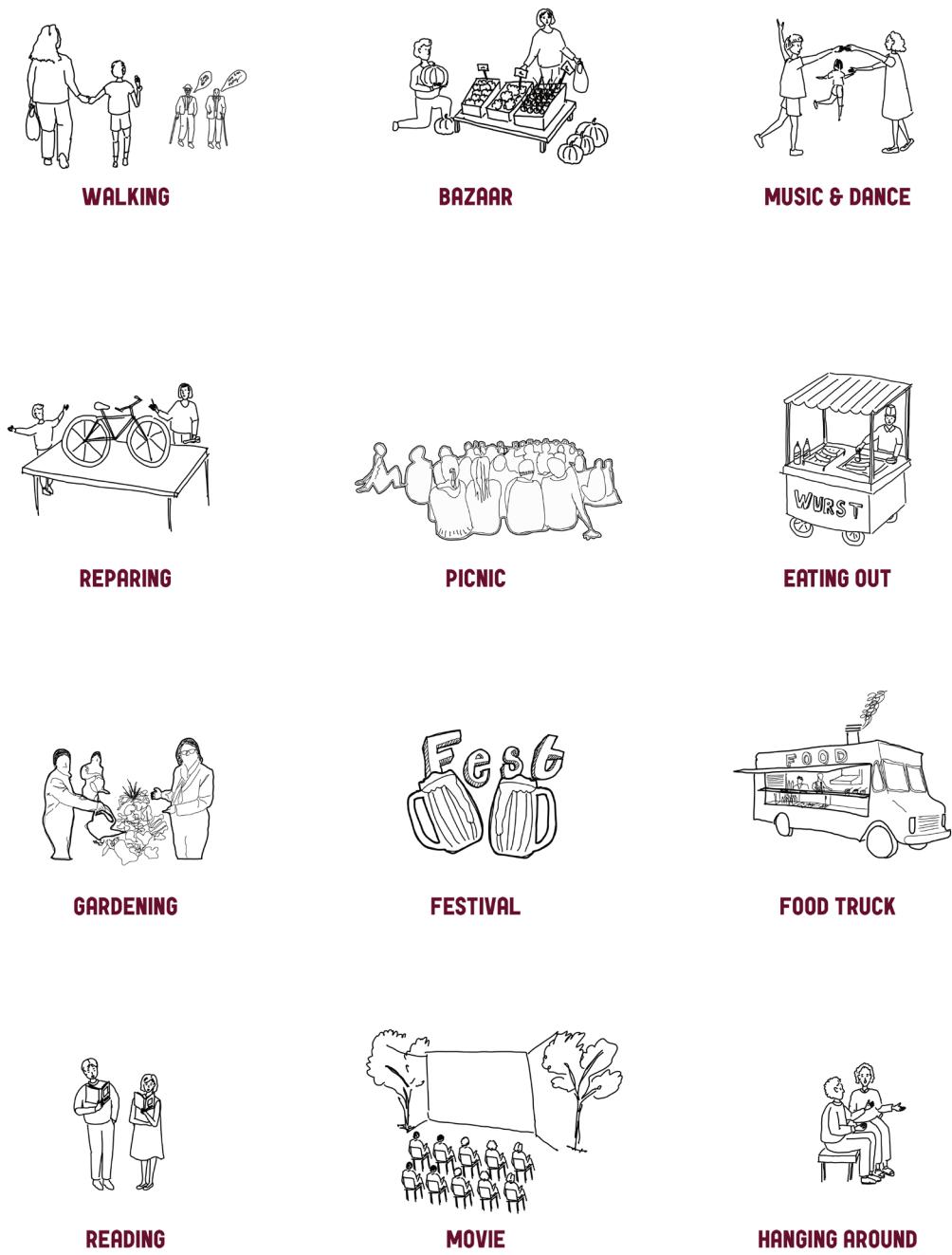


Figure 01: Activities based on Placemaking (See in chapter 3.2)

2 DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 HISTORY & MORPHOLOGY

1237

One of the oldest cities of Thuringia, Gera was mentioned as a town in 1237. It was under the protectorship of Vogts of Weida from 1209. The Vogts' city castle was built in the southwestern part of town in the 1350s. Until it became a royal residence of Reussians (Imperial Count) in 1673, Gera was surrounded by a city wall for almost four centuries for protection.

1780

During these years Gera's buildings were destroyed by the Fratricidal War of Sachsen (1445-1451) and by various fires between the 15th and 18th centuries. The deadliest one known as "The Great Fire" happened in 1780 and destroyed almost all the city. From the very beginning of the 15th century, Gera developed a very strong textile industry which was always a boost for its economy and development. Although Gera suffered from these fires, the strong textile industry helped the city to recover itself after all these disasters.

1830

In the 18th century, the steady development of the city continued with the initiation of the machinery industry. The city had adapted to the early stages of capitalism very rapidly. The first factories were built in the western part of Gera in the 1830s. In the following years, due to growing traffic issues, parts of the city wall were removed. New railway lines were introduced in 1859 and 1865. In 1892 an electronic tram system started to operate in Gera.

1890

During this period, the main commercial area of Gera was Sorge Street. The ground level was mixed-used (mostly retail). It was accessible by walking and tram. The place that now is Zschochernplatz used to be a building with a narrow street on either side.

1915

Gera experienced its wealthiest period before WWI. During the war, the city was also affected due to economic, social and political challenges. However, after WWI, the strong industry helped the city to recover and become an important big city in Thuringia. In 1938 the building placed in Zschochernplatz was demolished and then turned into a parking lot.



Zschochernplatz, 1917



1938



1942

	1945
	1946
	1984
	1990
	2018

Gera was affected by WWII intensely due to catastrophic aerial bombardment. In 1946 the city was occupied by the American Army. As a result of heavy bombardments, much of the city center was destroyed.

After the end of WWII, Gera was part of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) which was a socialist state under Soviet influence. During GDR periods, large scale building developments such as Culture and Congress Center Gera (KUK) were constructed, especially in the areas that were damaged over the war.

Meanwhile, the area around Sorge was still a commercial and popular place to shop. Accessibility of the street did not change much, only cars traffic were added. It was not until 1984 that the tram was moved one street away from Sorge.

With the German reunification, Gera suffered the same circumstances as other Eastern German cities. The change in the economic and political system had motivated the industry to change their locations from east cities to bigger cities. According to a census made in 1995, Gera had around 123,000 inhabitants; in 2014, according to the Stadtverwaltung Gera (2014) [5], there are approximately 95,000 inhabitants, meaning that Gera lost almost a quarter of its population after the reunification. Local shops were closed due to the opening of big shopping centers and so, Sorge and Zschochernplatz were slowly abandoned.

In recent years, Gera authorities are concerned about the current situation of Gera. There are currently several plans to revive Sorge and Zschochernplatz, as an example of these plans stands „Neue Mitte“; a mixed-use project located in the eastern part of the Sorge.¹ //Alicia&Dilsad



Zschochernplatz, 1975



1986

1 Data derived from:

https://www.gera.de/sixcms/detail.php?id=135497&_nav_id1=&_nav_id2=&_lang=en

https://www.citypopulation.de/en/germany/admin/16_thueringen/

<https://www.iba-thueringen.de/geras-neue-mitte>

2.2 DEMOGRAPHY

Historically the epoch of the bourgeois evolution and enforcement of capitalism due to the onset of industrialization in the middle of the 19th century changed the economic and social structure of Gera, which also led to the city population growth, with the number of inhabitants rising from 7,000 to over 17,000 from 1808 to 1852. Along Gera's most prosperous period between 1870 and 1930, there was a demographic boom with a massive increase in population to up to 83,000 inhabitants at the end of 1930. The city reached its peak population in 1988 with 135,000.

However, after German reunification in 1990, Gera experienced an economic crisis with significant unemployment, due to the closure of nearly all the city's industry-based stakeholders. This led to the population shrinkage from 129,000 in 1995 to less than 96,000 two decades later.



Figure 01: Population & economic relationship

Source: Diagram/Picture own illustration, Data: City of Gera, 2019.

POPULATION STRUCTURE / SOCIAL STRUCTURE / SHARE OF IMMIGRANTS

Recently, the city of Gera has prepared a population and household forecast based on the registered data in 2018. In three example scenarios, it shows that the development of the population will remain constant or only decreased slightly, and may even be optimistic in the long term. The previous estimations from the 2013 still had a purely decreasing approach. Since then, the influence of supra-regional migration, both within Europe and from outside Europe, has had an increasing impact on the demographic development in Gera.

The peak of non-European migration to Germany and Gera was between the years 2015 and 2016. Excluding the movements and short-term registrations in the initial reception center for asylum seekers operated in Gera between 2015 and 2017, the city recorded structural population growth for the first time since 1988. These increases particularly affect children and young people as well as younger adults. The continuing birth deficit was temporarily compensated by migration surpluses. Contrary to earlier expectations, the number of births also rose to over 800 in 2017. The population and household prognosis for 2018 shows a range from which possible developments can be derived for all age groups and times.

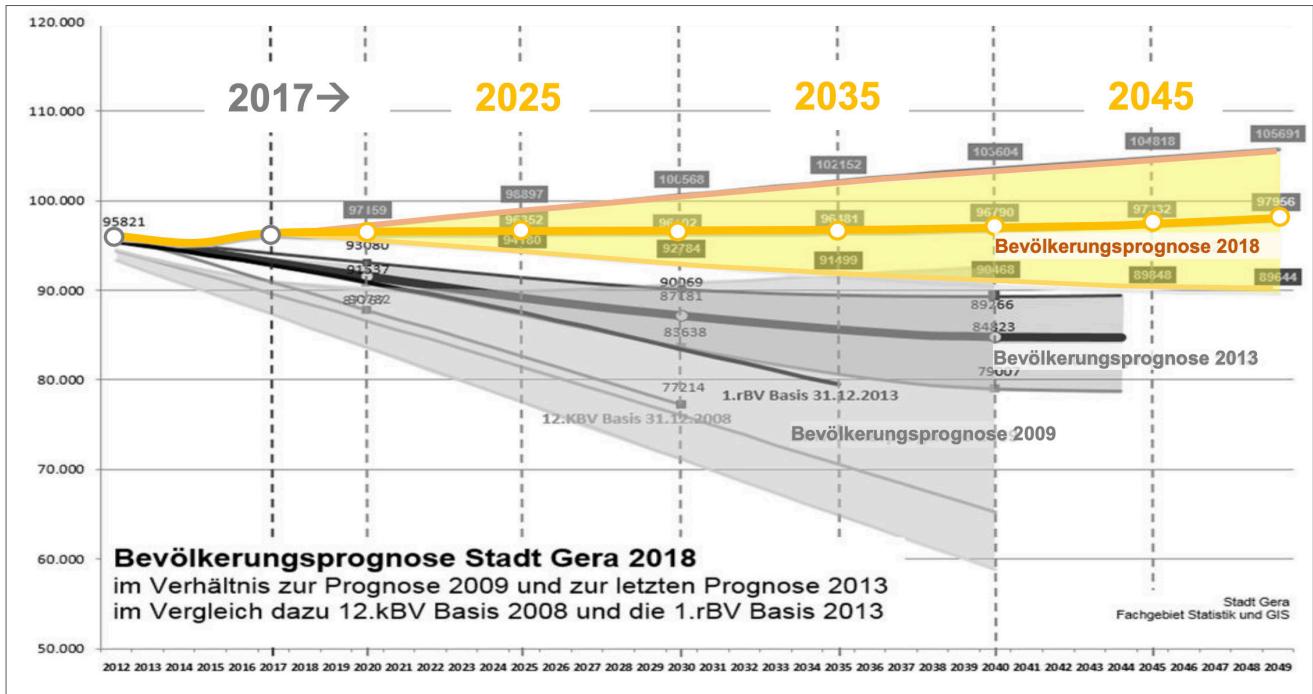


Figure 02: Population projection - base 2018, source: City of Gera, Department of Statistics and GIS

According to the city of Gera Department of Statistics and GIS, the greatest level for growth, stability or decrease in population development is always relying on the expectation for external migration. These migration trend analysis was used to derive three scenarios for the demographic forecast. The period 2013 - 2017 includes the direct impact of immigration to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. This event has a clear and probably lasting effect on the city of Gera, with a significant amount of migrant population being located at the city center and surrounding areas.

2 DATA ANALYSIS

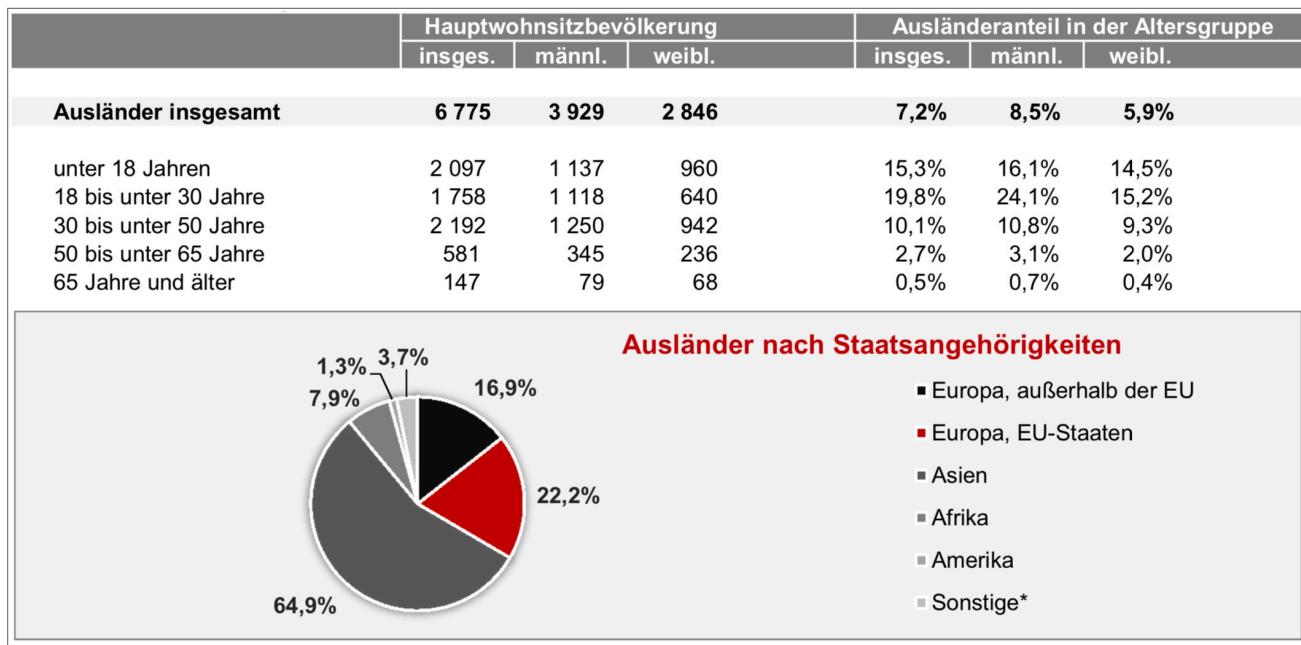


Figure 03: Share of immigrants by nationalities - October 2019

Source: City of Gera, Department of Statistics and GIS

AGE STRUCTURE / DEVELOPMENT

According to the city of Gera (2018), the age tree (Figure 04) shows the long-term trend in different age groups in the forecast with snapshots in 2017 (base), 2025, 2035 and 2045. The main variant of the population estimation for 2018 is shown. The shortage of working-age population is expected to characterize Gera for more than three decades, fact that has a strong impact on the city image and economic development.

In the base year 2017 (darkest shade) the pronounced weakness is clearly visible in the number of young people between 20 and 27 years. This is the echo effect of emigration and the extreme decline in births since 1990. The shrinkage will remain visible in the old age tree as a historical event in the coming decades. The number of teenagers and young adults will continue to recover and stabilize slowly, but will not return to the strength of the late 1980s.

It is expected that the current considerable weakness among the young adult population cannot be completely compensated by immigration. Therefore, the labor supply in Gera will be strained in the middle age groups in the future. The overall population of adults over 65 years of age will change only slightly in the next decades (City of Gera, 2018).

This demographic forecast informed directly how the design and policy strategy for the urban realm, including for Zschochernplatz, should perform in order to respond to this demographic profile, specially considering the social and economic issues brought by migration trends inward and outward Gera. //Thuy

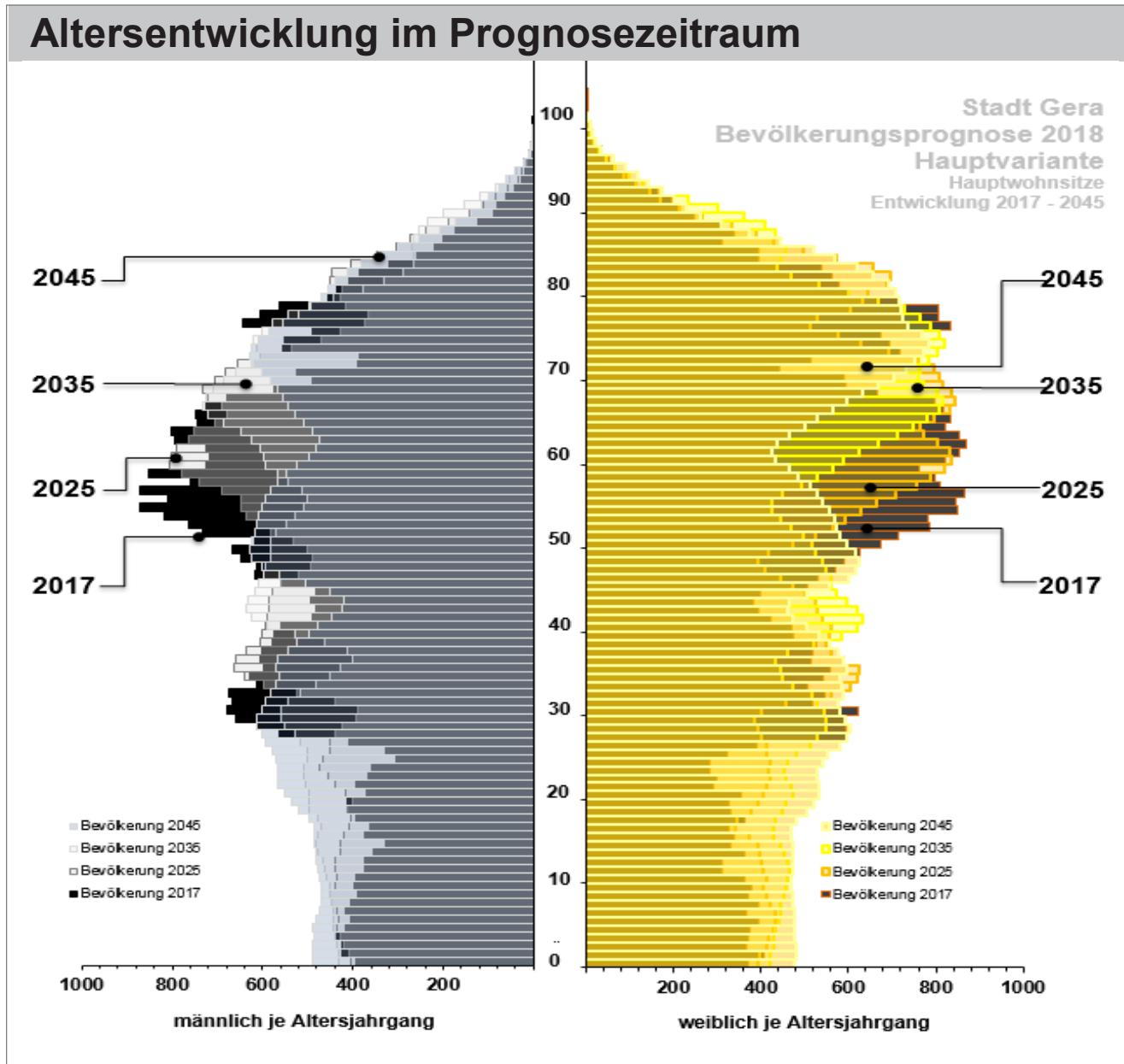


Figure 04: Simulation of age structure, source: Stadt Gera, Fachgebiet Statistik und GIS

2.3 LAND USE

As part of the continuous research process, a land use and transportation analysis was done during site visits. On this section of the report initial key aspects will be provided as part of the research that will further on be used to explain connectivity aspects explained in section 4.2. Moreover, for further recommendation design scenarios for the site. The studied area covers the main site, and the principal commercial street, the Sorge. Zschochernplatz is approached by 6 streets, which gives the site the advantage of being a focal point from the Sorge, and at the same time has the potential of becoming a central attraction.

After review and analysis of the data collected from the on-site findings are developed and discussed as follows. In our data collection, 34 buildings were found within a radius of 290m that captures the land use from the street and the square, all which are mixed used (considering ground floor and upper floors). As can be seen in the following image the largest share of land use complies in retail, residential and cultural buildings. To be specific, 30.89% of the square's ground floor surrounding is a retail area, 42.7% is residential area, and 6.76% is used as a service area (Figure 03). The commercial activity in Sorge street results to be more active and vibrant, in contrast with Zschochernplatz, that resulted as a transition rather than a destination place.

Since the city suffers from a decreasing population, which is followed by the vacancy of many buildings in the city, Zschochernplatz itself, also suffers from the same problem as the city center in general. As can be seen in the map and diagram (Figures 02 and 03), the issues are represented as active, semi-active and inactive areas of the Zschochernplatz, the Sorge and Zschochernstrasse. This is based on the level of activity at a particular place or way. The level of activity in Zschochernplatz is inactive and the activities are not satisfactory but in Sorge street, 66% of the area is active, 23.75% is semi-active and 10.16% of the analyzed area is inactive. This shows the activities are more in the Sorge Street, not on the Zschochernplatz.



Figure 01: Facades uses, source: Own Illustration



Figure 02: Land Use Map
Source: Own Illustration from on-site observations

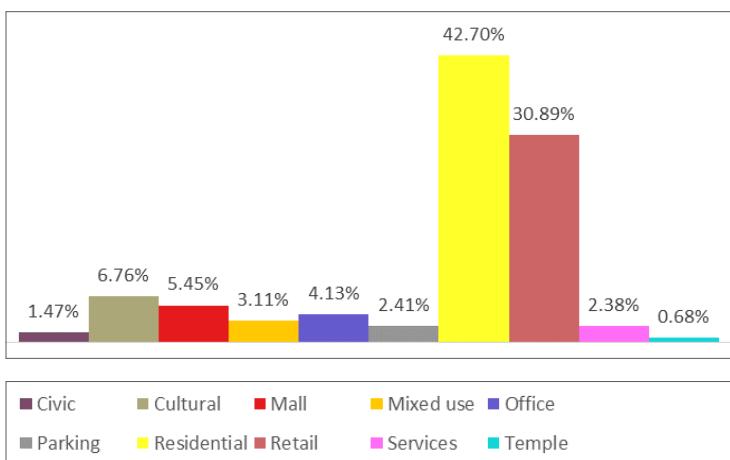
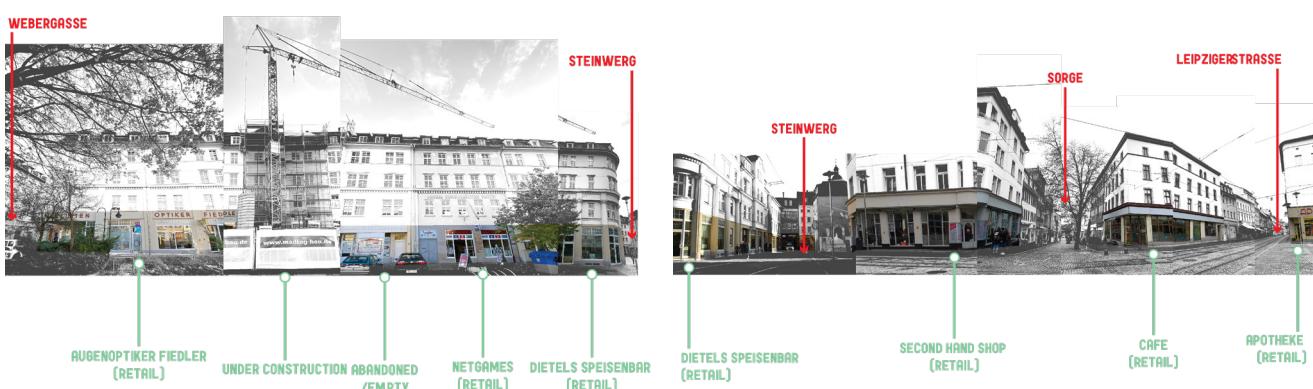


Figure 03: Proportion of Land Use
Source: Own Illustration from on-site observations

Legend for Figure 02 & 03



2 DATA ANALYSIS

The four facades of the square were visually described in the pictures of Figure 01, and the majority of the buildings are vacant. The ground floors of the used buildings are currently used for commercial purpose and the upper floors are occupied by offices and housing. One of the occupied places is a game shop. As observed on-site and through interviews, it is the most frequented destination in the square, not only by young, but also middle-aged generations. The single piece of playground equipment, a revolving ball, is one of the attractions in the Zschochernplatz that some families use. Additionally, the pharmacy on the northern corner of the square is also a frequented place by the users of Zschochernplatz and nearby areas.

As it is derived from on-site observations, the lack of seating areas affects, in addition, the attraction for people who walk through, to actually stay. Due to the physical condition and the image the square has, the activities mentioned above are affected, which leads the square to end up as it is today.

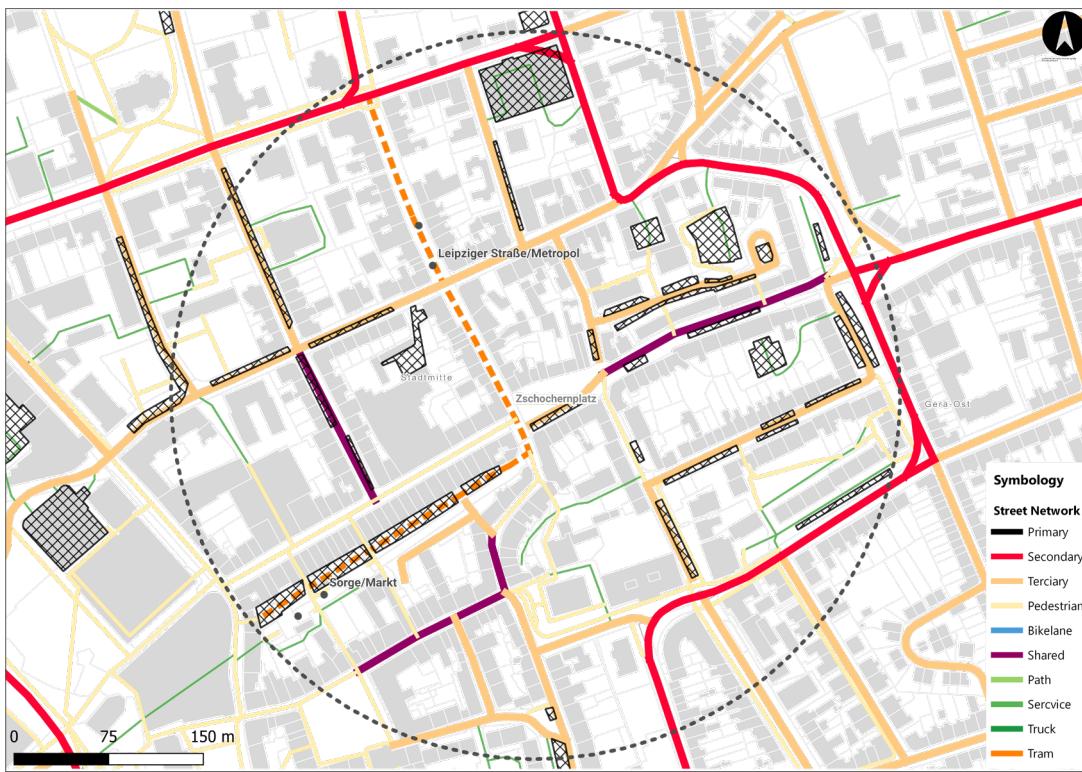


Figure 04: Street Network, source: Own Illustration

TRANSPORTATION

The public transport system in Gera comprises 3 tram lines, 22 bus lines and 200 public transport stops. From on-site observation, there has been a lack of Universal Design aspects on the streets in terms of transitioning and crossing spaces and articulations.

From all the transportation infrastructure, at Zschochernplatz there is no station in it, however there are public transport stations within a walkable distance, there is room for improvement regarding mobility and accessibility to the square.

The findings from the analysis regarding the transportation system and activity, is that Zschochernplatz acts as a 'dead end' for the car traffic coming from Zschochernstraße, but still there are cars parking in some parts of the square for using services like the game shop. This has an impact on the users safety and security.

The problems found are the following: Lack of clear boundaries in shared spaces and calm traffic areas for example pedestrian speed limit; Pavement materials and other elements in the transition from one square to another; The use of the bike as a mode of transport is not encouraged since there is no cycling infrastructure nearby. Last but not least, there is no clear way-finding navigation from Gera main train station as well as from Gera Arcade. In this sense, there are general conditions that could potentially permit the use of sustainable modes of transport. //Biniyam&Bardo

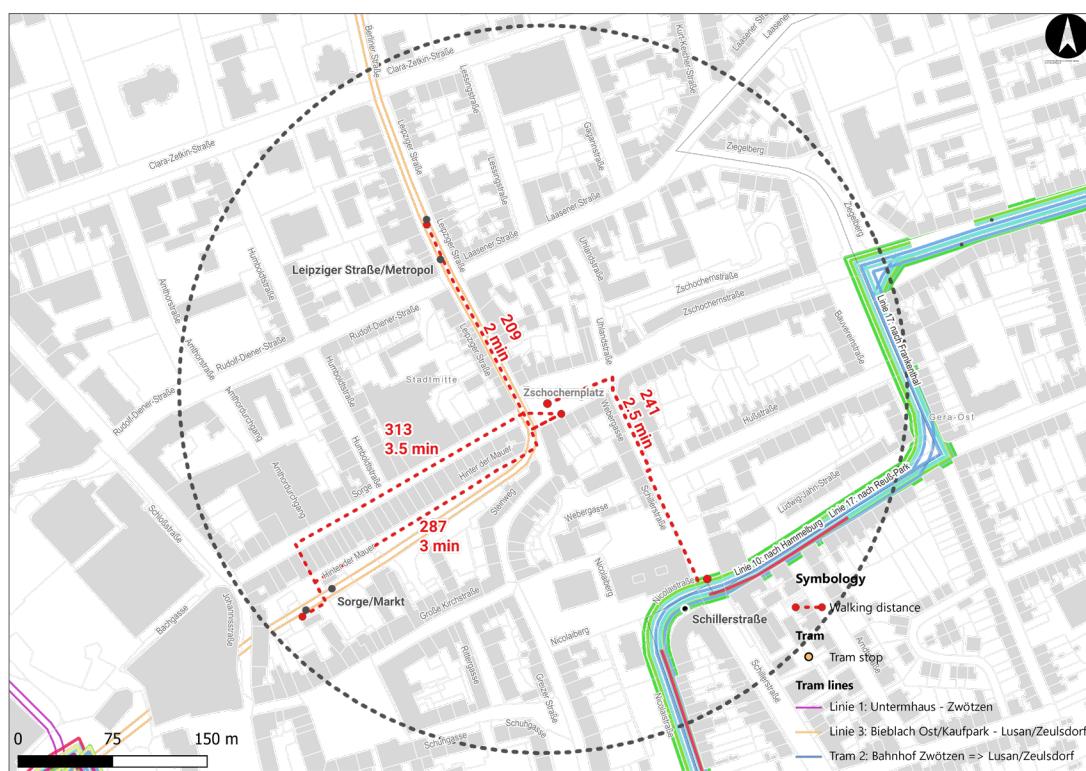


Figure 05: Proportion of Land Use, source: Own Illustration

2.4 PLACE ANALYSIS

The following chapter describes an ethnographic analysis and narratives from on-site observations.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ

Upon arriving at the Gera train station, there is a sense of calmness, no major sounds, not too many people walking. There is a sentiment of something missing as if you saw a canvas unfinished with some elements that are not tied up and that's why it becomes hard to read or to understand. When continuing walking towards the city center the architecture changes without any warnings. For example, a red cathedral, even with some elements stands just in front of it a very imposing GDR building and some big greenery that could be a great public space, all put together in one street, but, again... too many pieces not tying up. Silence became less prominent as the noise from a tram is heard, and with it, the sight of more people. Once in the Sorge, a once very vitalized commercial street, more people gathered than in the previous city blocks but definitely not as many as the pictures of the 80's show. Elders and small families are the most prominent users, they mostly are window shopping, some stop at the stores to buy some groceries, some just stroll around. The further one walks through the Sorge, the emptier it gets, even with the buildings, as if some kind of ghost barrier was there from the upper part of the Sorge until the tram tracks and it's just after crossing these tracks that a square appears, our specific point of the study: Zschochernplatz.

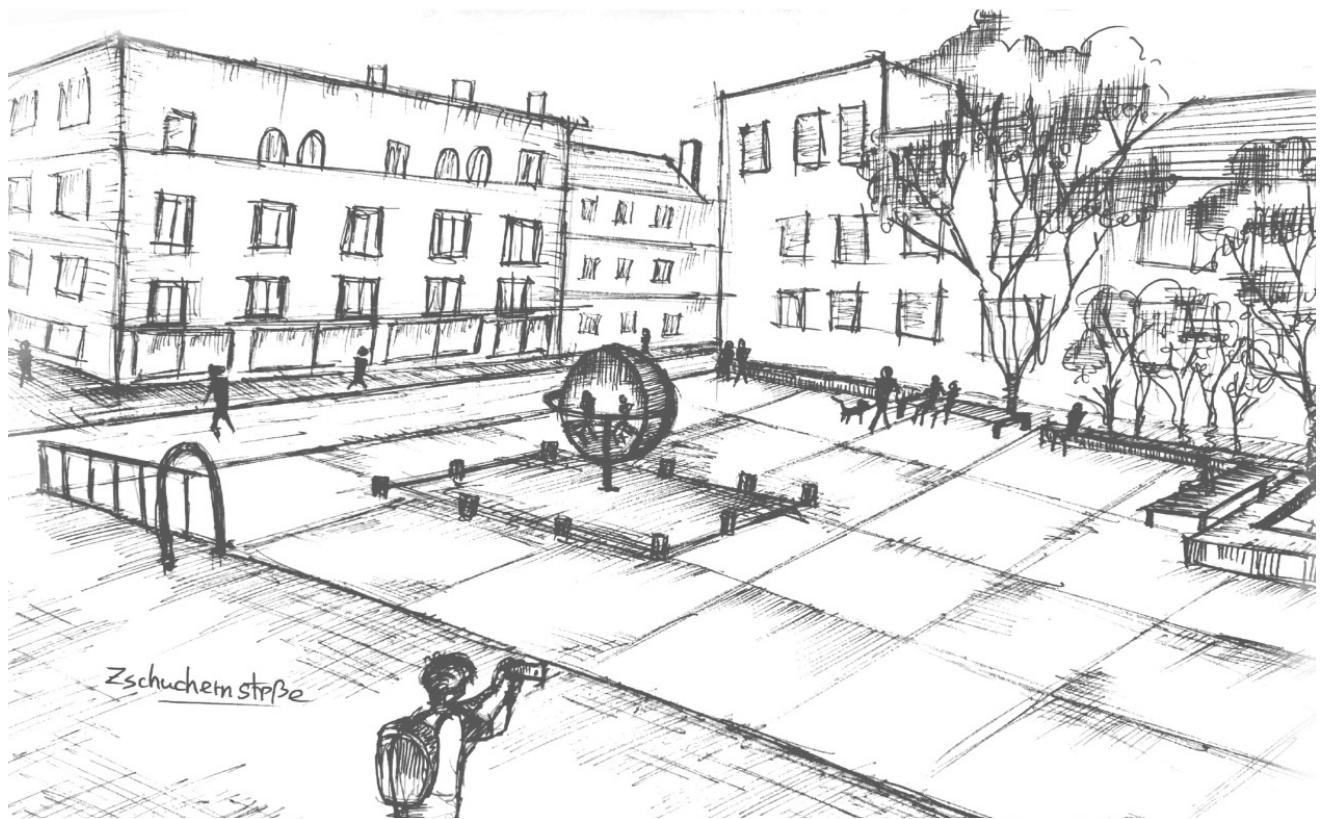


Figure 01: Sketch by Amin, 2020

What one can see from the Sorge, is an open space, which is very nice if it is inviting as one can observe anything happening in the Platz from a far. From our observations people who were using the square were walking through it to reach a destination, the ones that stayed a bit longer were just people waiting while looking at their phones, some children playing briefly in the spinning sphere as their parents waited for the tram or for some other reason. The only ones who seemed to stay were elders, as some used the space to socialize with what it seemed to be their neighbors. It would be unfair to say that the Platz is unused, but it is not friendly; the blame can be taken for the weather or the visit time, but truth is, the square itself is not welcoming enough to stay longer.

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATIONS

But is the square really not welcoming? First impressions can be biased due to several subjective reasons and opinions, so, in order to understand the square better, an observation method was applied: the TESS Method¹. This method was applied several days at different hours and in different forms². It didn't matter much the day or the time, the results showed that an average of elders and middle age persons are the main users of the space, meaning that they use it and not just transit through it. The main activities done by the users are sitting, leaning and stand while reading or look to their phones, followed by people that commute mainly from Sorge to Zschochernstraße, Zschochernstraße to Steinweg and Leipzigerstraße by walking and cycling. The rotating sphere in front of Leipzigerstraße used as a game is briefly but often used; children play with it in several ways while their parents wait.

Through the square, there is a pharmacy, a restaurant, a video game store, a flower shop and an optic store. Among these, the video game store is the most visited and it has a car entrance with some parking outside it, making cars and people interact in a space that just has some fences that are performing more as a barrier to the eye than protecting the pedestrians from the cars. The game store, the pharmacy and the optic store are the most frequently visited stores in the square.

After an interview with two women that were socializing in the square, some opinions and general information about the place were displayed. They implied that they use the square frequently, but that there is not much to do, no play opportunities for children to come, that there is "too many old people", and that all the youngsters leave. They have lived here since the GDR period, and they recognize that back to that time, not only the square but the city was more lively with more markets and less abandonment in the districts. For their opinions within the square, they implied that it's frequently too dirty, there is lack of seating and that at night sometimes it's dangerous.

¹ TESS: Toolkit for the Ethnographic Study of Space

² The TESS Method was applied in three forms: Behavioral - and movement analysis, and interviews.

2 DATA ANALYSIS

SPATIAL OBSERVATIONS

The square has a lot of potential to become a lively space, friendly for neighbors who already use it, welcoming for newcomers and even comfortable for daily commuters. For a better understanding of how the square is now spatially built and recognized, the analysis will be divided in two parts: linkage & access, and comfort & image.

LINKAGE AND ACCESS

Zschochernplatz is fortunate enough to have direct linkage to several important streets in the city center. In the west, the square is connected to the Sorge, a once very transited commercial street which is directly connected to the now-commercial zone in Gera and to the future mix-use project, Neue-Mitte. It is also near two tram stops, the nearest one within a block north away, the other stop is within five minutes walking south in the street "Hinter der Mauer" which is between the Sorge and Steinweg which leads to major city landmarks like Salvatorkirche and the Marktplatz. On the other side, in the east, the square is connected to Zschochernstraße, a street with housing in its majority but with some small commerce. So, what its meant by "fortunate", is that this square is both directly and indirectly connected to busy areas and perhaps the most important ones in Gera, also, all walkable.

Within the access of the square itself, the circulation between commuters is mostly marked on the sides not in through the square , there may be certain reasons for this, as for in the time when this was analyzed a construction blocked a lot of area in the square . Bikers seemed to also prefer the sides, but some also rode in the middle of the square . While average commuters pass through the tram tracks without any problems, for some persons crossing is more dangerous as there is lack of signals and also the street is made of cobblestone. In addition to that, the speed of the tram contributes as barrier and creates unsafe conditions. What is also worth mentioning is the car activity in the square. Although it is not a car zone, it is also not car-free. The game store has a parking zone in front of it, taking space for proper pedestrian circulation. It is important to say that Zschochernstraße is also a street with car circulation, so part of the square in the east side, is also used for the automobile.

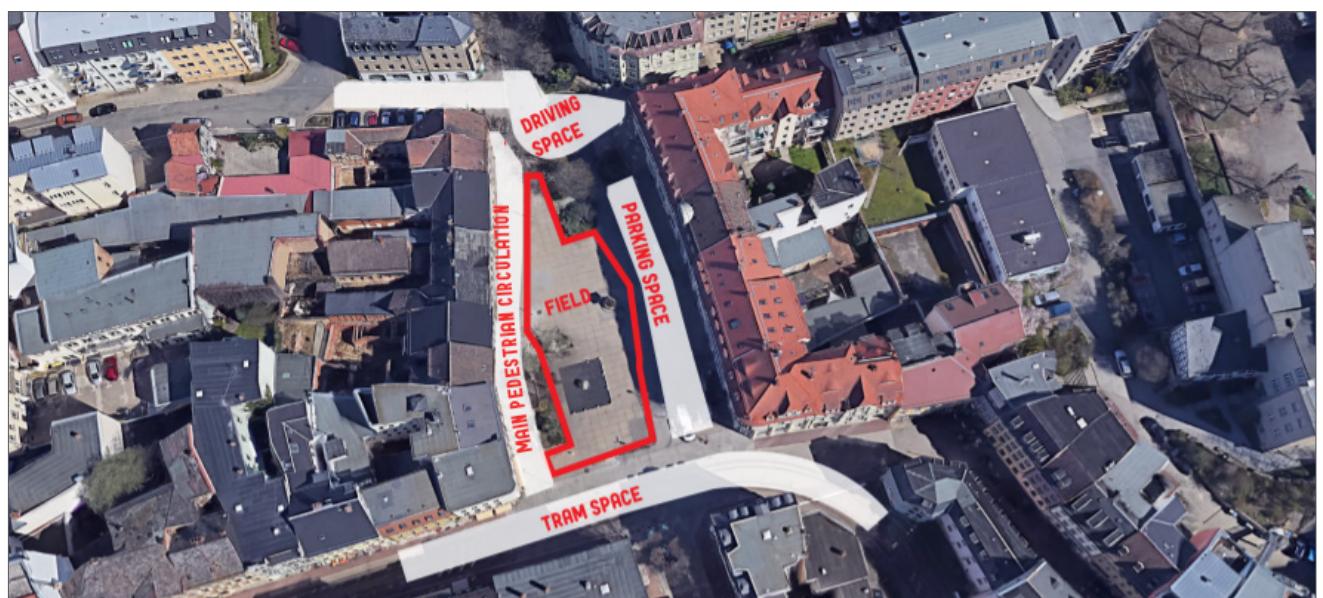


Figure based on "Public Space Design Guide for Urbanists" by Mark Childs. Current square space for people is pressured by circulation space.

COMFORT AND IMAGE

Perhaps the biggest potential for the square is its scale (1860m^2); this amount of empty space can host many activities, it also helps to have a sense of enclosure which is important for the human eye as we tend to encrypt the space and know the starting point and the end point. In this field, some greenery is found, as it is winter most of the trees are leafless and they don't provide any shadows or smells, in fact they just obstruct the sight of what's further them.

For sitting, in front of the greenery, there are some small spaces to sit. These are used, as we said previously, by elders who tend to sit and socialize, but these benches do not invite people to stay neither do they provide any comfort. There are also not too many street lamps which creates a lack of light at night. Along with the visuals that the square has, a well in the middle of it is hard to ignore, as many people use it to linger. The architecture within the square is diverse among each other. There is still a building with a "Liberale Demokratische Partei" billboard in its facade, a building under renovation and others with some decay features, all of them even if they are diverse, are taken as homogeneous for their abandonment. With the lack of urban furniture and unattractive image, it is easy to understand why people don't stay longer and why they just pass through it. //Alicia&Dilsad

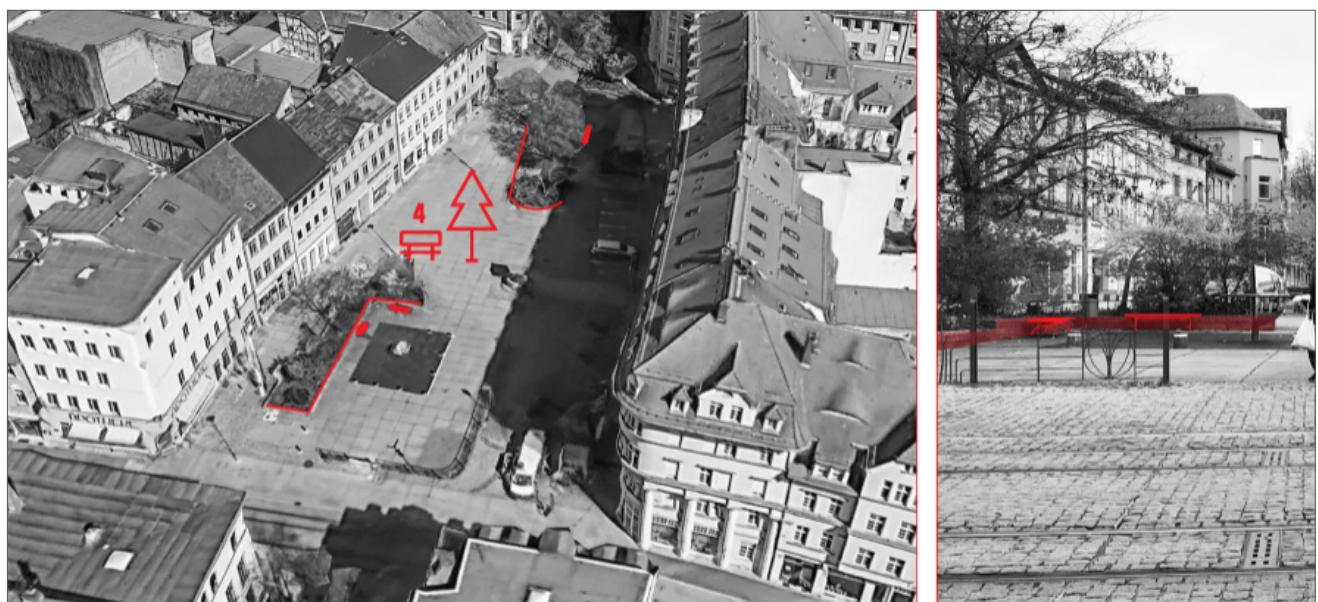


Figure based on "Public Space Design Guide for Urbanists" by Mark Childs. Places to sit, lack of visibility due to planters. The red lines mean the available sitting spaces: four benches, and a line of concrete planter edges.

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 FINDINGS

By means of a comprehensive analysis of the historical background, demographic structures and our own observations an image of Gera was becoming more significant and a process of brainstorming started. An essential Placemaking step was now implemented: To get in touch with the community and listen to what they have to say. A series of interactive exercises and intercept surveys were organized together with the public to identify the features, places, and ideas that people consider should be improved. Additionally, it was interesting to have a closer approach to the “local experts” - the real users, people experiencing Gera daily.

These activities took place in three central locations in the city center: Marktplatz, the Steinweg and on the Zschochernplatz itself. On a Friday, the 22nd of November, the group interacted for one day with many people from different backgrounds and received wide-ranging input. It can be said that although there are many varieties of ideas and comments, the result of this workshop has a fairly common consensus. In the following the individual tools and results of the workshop are presented:

YOUR FAVOURITE PLACES

A large map of our study area was shown to the participants with the request to show their favorite places as well as the places that need improvement and mark them with either green or red stickers. The result shows that both the most liked and disliked places are in the Altstadt. The favorite places for people were Sorge and Marktplatz. The most rated places correspond to two different types of urban features, as for a street, the Sorge, and for a public square, Marktplatz. These places, which are both well-known landmarks of Gera, are oriented to local retail and were highly-evaluated by citizens.

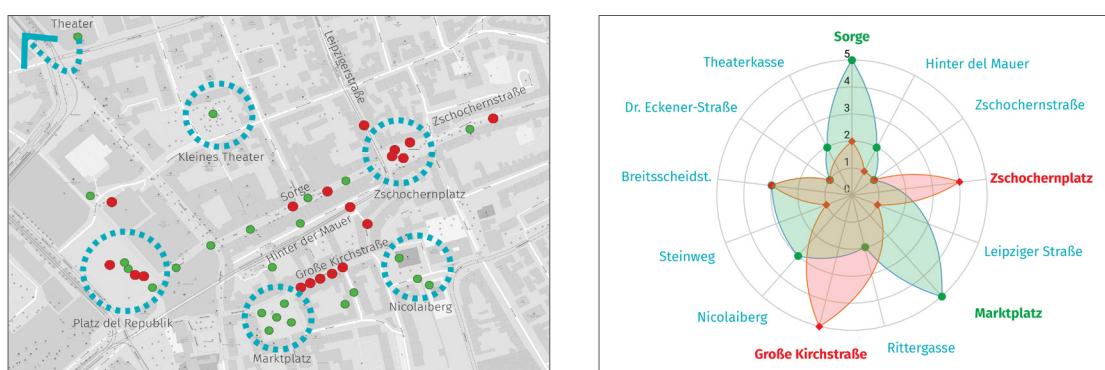


Figure 01: Result of favorite places (green dots) and places to be improved (red dots)

In contrast, the places that people feel need the most improvement are Zschochernplatz and Große Kirchstraße. Again, corresponding to the same types of urban features as the best-rated cases, a street, and a square. These places are closely related to the favorite ones. In the case of Zschochernplatz, it is the end of Sorge, separated by Leipzigerstraße where the Straßenbahn (Tram) passes by. Moreover, the relationship between Große Kirchstraße and Marktplatz is even closer, being one part of the other.

RATE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

To collect people's opinion in more detail, citizens were asked to rate their neighborhood according to 8 suggested categories: Seat options, play options, bike paths and cycling, signaling, green area, walkways, events, traffic-calming measures. The highest rate that people perceived was traffic calming measures in the neighborhood with a qualification just above the average. The features that people rated the least are seat options followed by play options, and bike paths and cycling.

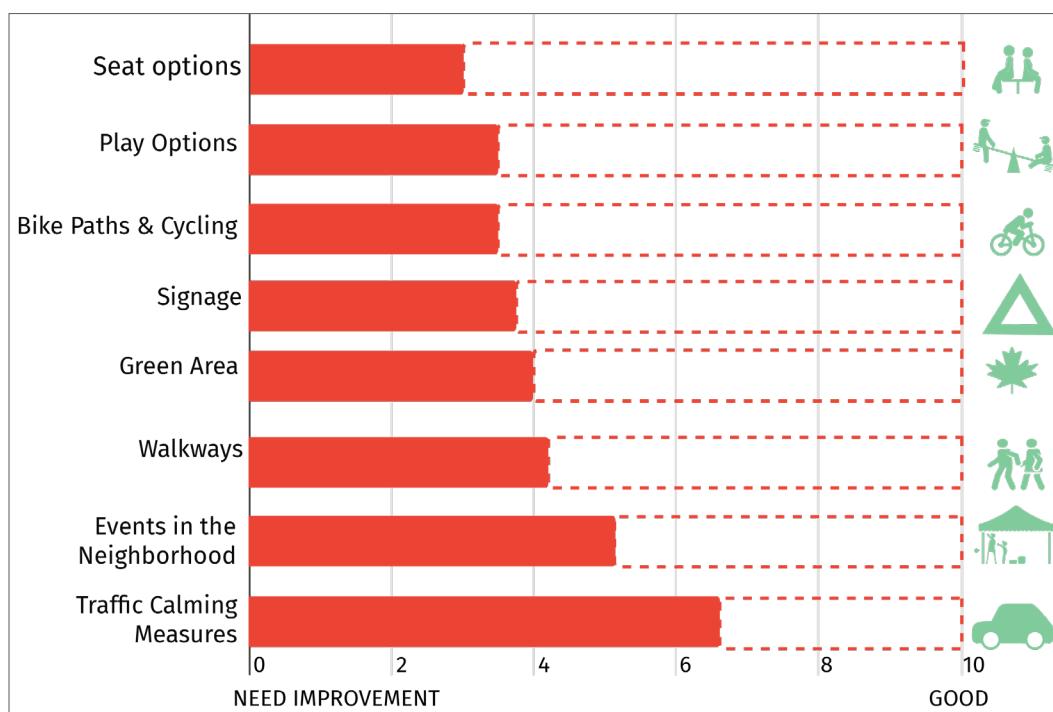


Figure 02: Result of "Rate Your Neighbourhood"

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

POST-IT

An extensive survey using post-its gave us a lot of ideas from the residents. They were asked to write comments on small pieces of paper and stick them on the described place. They were also asked to provide some of their ideas to improve the city. It was possible to categorize their suggestions in 5 main topics:

- Public Space
- Retail
- Mobility
- Buildings
- Ideas

This enabled us to get a picture of wishes and suggestions of Gera's citizens. The interesting point is that many specific ideas were repeated, such as: playing facilities for children, buildings renovation, more cafés and bars, and diversity of shops.



Figure 03: Results of "Post-It" Activity

INTERVIEWS

Informal interviews with residents were an essential part of our work. Both targeted questions as well as spontaneous conversations clearly showed that memories of times when the Zschochernplatz and its immediate surroundings were still flourishing evoke nostalgia and many people long for a reactivation of the place. Restaurants that operated years ago are being wished back, but also events, music and culture. „Public life is no longer there“, as one resident sadly describes and “we don't go out on the weekends anymore”.

Many of the comments also have a political and societal background, but in general it can be said that many wish for a vital, inter-cultural and communicative public space that invites people to stay, offers children opportunities to play and creates activities for the community. //Maya

It was possible to extract several topics that people addressed in their answers about the public space:

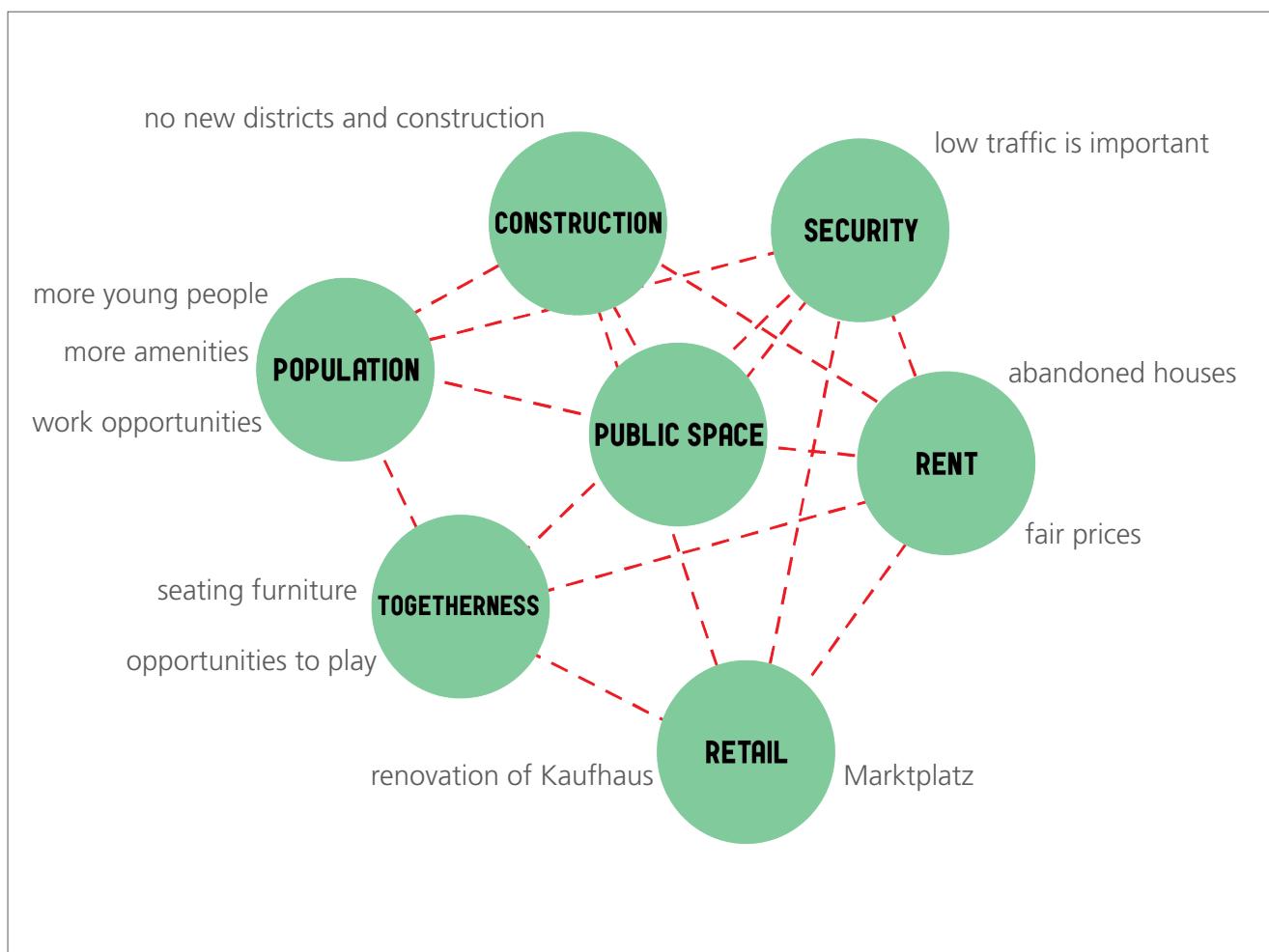


Figure 04: Results of Interviews

3.2 PROGRAM

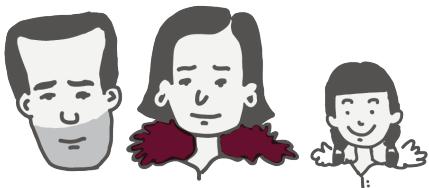
Performing several observations and analysis methods was useful to identify key users and based on demographic data, to build user profiles — personas. To understand better the role of each persona in the public space, it was crucial to accompany each character with a story, a background with a focus on their interests and desires related to public space. Hence 3 main characters emerged as the outcome of this method.



Seniors are the most prominent of all current user groups in Gera. They enjoy places to sit, where they can observe the urban bustle.



Students are a desired user group, because they bring opportunities and ideas. To them the Zschochernplatz is a central location. They want places like cafés and bars, where they can meet friends.



Young families, a growing group in this area, want a secure and friendly neighborhood. They need playgrounds and activities, where they can meet other families and feel like their children grow up in a good environment.

Along with the interaction with citizens, identifying actual and potential users, defining the structure of the activities, it was possible to identify key features, places, and services that people considered in need of improvement. A daily program of activities was therefore formulated in order to attract and engage multiple target groups. //Ramon

The program includes most of the activities defined by the community and distributes them over different times of the day as shown in the following diagram:

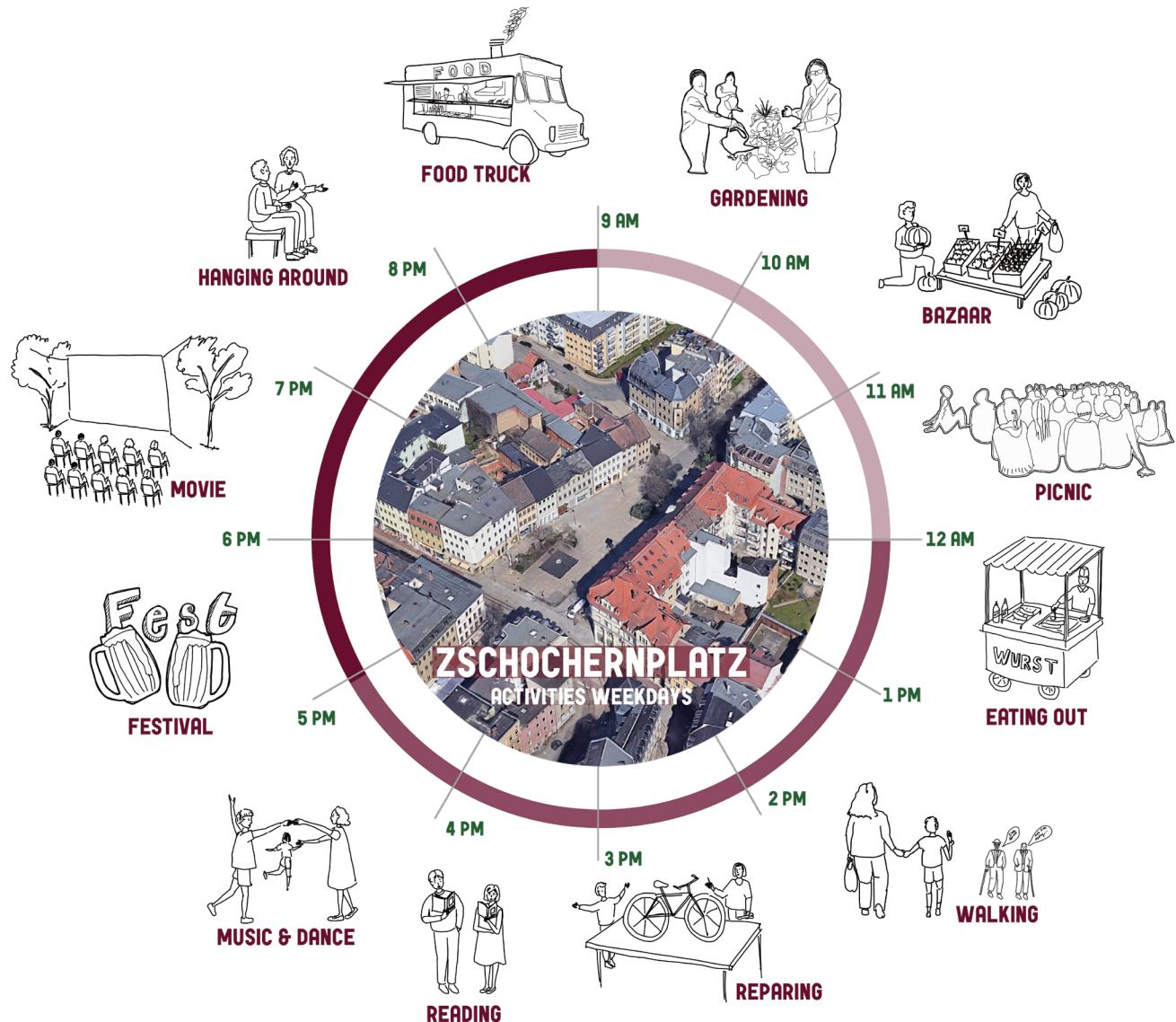


Figure 01: Potential activities during the day with different groups of users.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE LOCATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



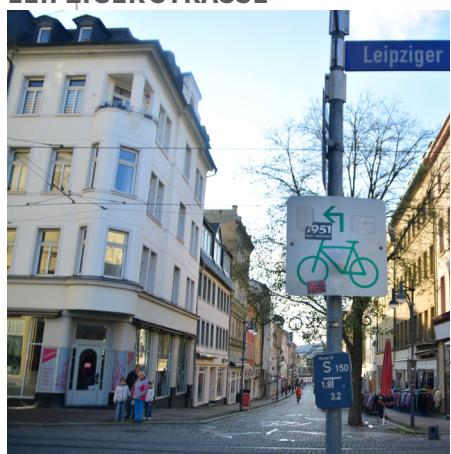
THE SURROUNDINGS OF ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ



STEINWEG



LEIPZIGER STRASSE



IMPRESSIONS OF THE LOCATION

THE SORGE



ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ



4 SCENARIOS

The transition from the analysis to the proposal and design phase is a defining point within the placemaking approach. Having at the table several ideas from the research and analysis, the development strategies from the city as the ISEK describes, community engagement results, and the individual students' ideas, brought questions on where and how to focus and take to the next step. In the case of placemaking, however, there is not a higher level on researcher or designer perspective, as the community itself is also the expert. Therefore, the group decided not to have a hierarchy of ideas, but to gather and merge them according to their similarities. With this approach it was possible to establish goals that covered several needs such as: Enliven the city center; Better connectivity within the city center and its surroundings; increase economic opportunities; gathering place for diverse community; Provide food and comfortable places to sit. Later these goals were experimented in four different scenarios in Zschochernplatz: Textile, Connectivity, Food and Social Engagement. These scenarios had two main consequences on the Zschochernplatz project development: first represent four specific approaches of how to deal with the many issues of the place, and also feed the potential design concept developed for the later phase. //Gabrielly

4.1 TEXTILE

FOSTERING IDENTITY THROUGH TEXTILE DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

One of the major assets that have contributed to the development of Gera's economy over the past years is its textile industry. The aim of this scenario is to promote the city's history in the textile industry within the innovation sector through textile design, fashion design and technology. The proposal aims to highlight the Zschochernplatz as a focal point for the city center's vitality both commercially and culturally. In addition, to integrate it with nearby future development projects including Steinweg, Neue Mitte, and the Goethe Gymnasium.

As illustrated in the diagram below, the activation of Zschochernplatz could trigger a larger positive impact for the entire neighborhood's future development. Firstly, it could bring a balance of commercial activity by serving as a counterpoint to the future large scale Neue Mitte project, in addition to reviving the upper part of Sorge on the way. Moreover, it could provide a collaboration space for future startup communities taking place in nearby Steinweg that is already undergoing a co-working space and a renovation development by a couple of investors. Furthermore, incorporating related business in the Zschochernplatz would open doors for future connections with the close by Goethe Gymnasium, which is proposed to be a textile school in the future.

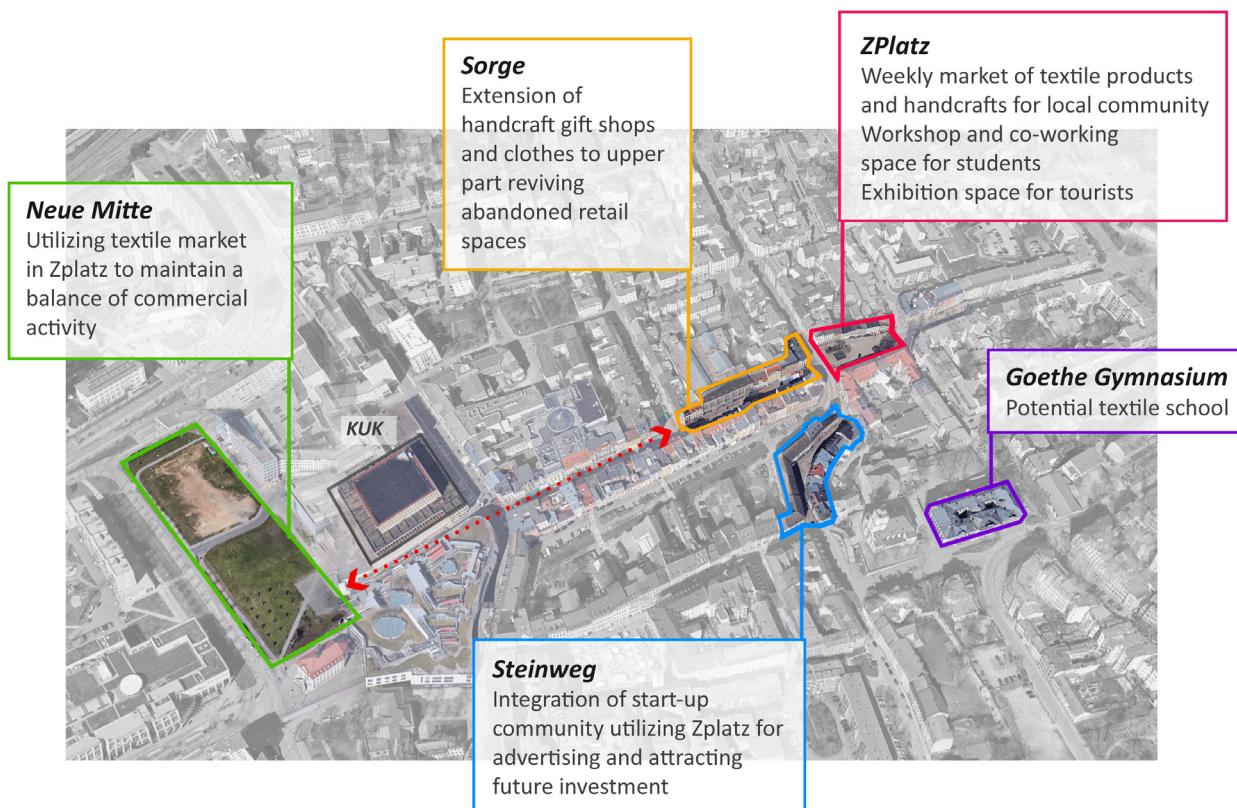


Figure 01: Textile scenario neighbourhood impact, Source: Own Illustration, 2020

Considering all of these potential development plans and activities, the Zschochernplatz could hold weekly textile and handcraft markets designed by local and start-up communities in Steinweg, workshop spaces for students of textile design school, and seasonal exhibitions to engage tourists and the local community. In addition to enlivening daily lives in Zschochernplatz, playgrounds are provided to gather the targeted potential users including children, students, workers, and young families. Furthermore, in order to make Zschochernplatz a destination, colorful textiles could be used as a material to construct a multi-purpose pavilion. For instance, this multi-purpose pavilion could host a playground for children, a pop-up store or a street food. Additionally, this would encourage people to engage in the local community. The students or workers who are working in the textile business could provide textile designs to promote their products. The local residents shall also participate in group activities to make textile products for the pavilion. Ultimately, through this proposal, the Zschochernplatz is envisioned to bring social cohesion and economic prosperity to both the local community and the neighborhood as a whole. //Minseo&Gheyath

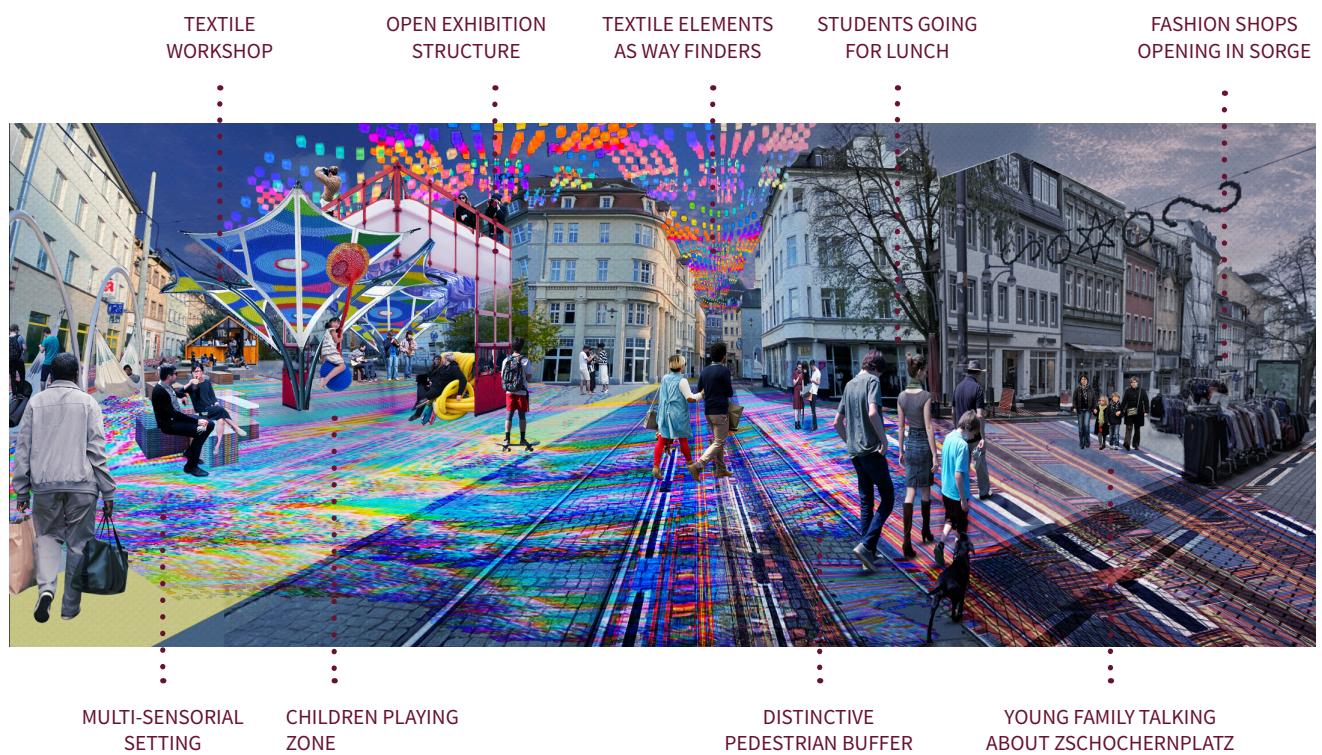


Figure 02: Textile scenario collage, Source: Own Illustration, 2020

4.2 CONNECTIVITY

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS IN THE CITY CENTER

Major transportation challenges around the city center impact Zschochernplatz and its neighborhood. To understand this better, our research and analysis look into the macro scale of the city as well as the micro scale which covers the local surroundings. The connections in the city play an important role as to highlight, discover and recognize the many variables that influence the project. Specifically, how the tram, car, bus, and pedestrian inner-city routes could affect the user-experience and urban development. During our research and field visits, we noticed the lack of 'guidance' when arriving from the train station (Gera Hauptbahnhof) to Zschochernplatz. This accessibility issue has high contrast in comparison to the arrival experience in Weimar, where a wide path guides people to walk the way without previous knowledge of where the city center is.

To achieve a similar "solution" in Gera, a pathway was studied and explored that consists of a route from the train station, the town hall, church and ending up in the Sorge. Following this 'path' we bridge both the train arrival terminal and the main commercial street (Sorge). Thus providing people walking to the Sorge and Zschochernplatz with not only clear routes, but routes that also enhance a sense of place and attachment (Fig. 1). We aim to activate not only the Zschochernplatz as our main site but the context as well. Therefore, to respect the spacial configuration the Sorge has, we decided it was crucial to continue the axis through Zschochernplatz, as a breakthrough connection and homogeneous transition from one place to another.

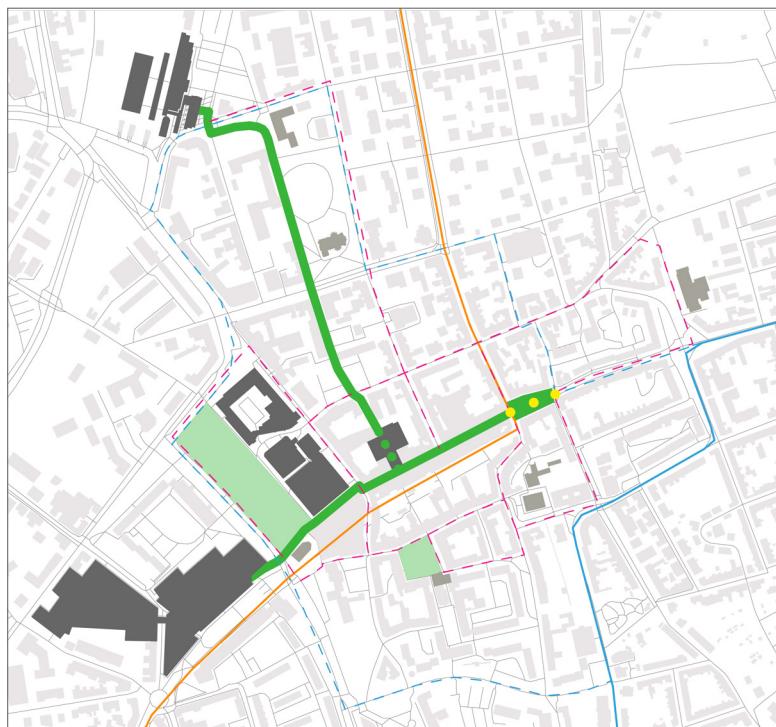


Figure 01: Own Illustration, 2020

As part of the process, at the micro scale, the Zschochernplatz was proposed as a mobility hub; a multi-modal transportation station, where a tram and bus stop are proposed as well as bike parking, and more pedestrian-activity attractions. The idea of proposing the Zschochernplatz as a Mobility Hub space (Fig. 2) comes along with seeing the place as a portal to activities. A place where people will not only pass through, but where they could do grocery shopping, or eat while waiting for the tram or bus. The mobility hub concept will make the neighborhood more attractive to new residents and it will help businesses on the Sorge and the platz / square. //Marieliz

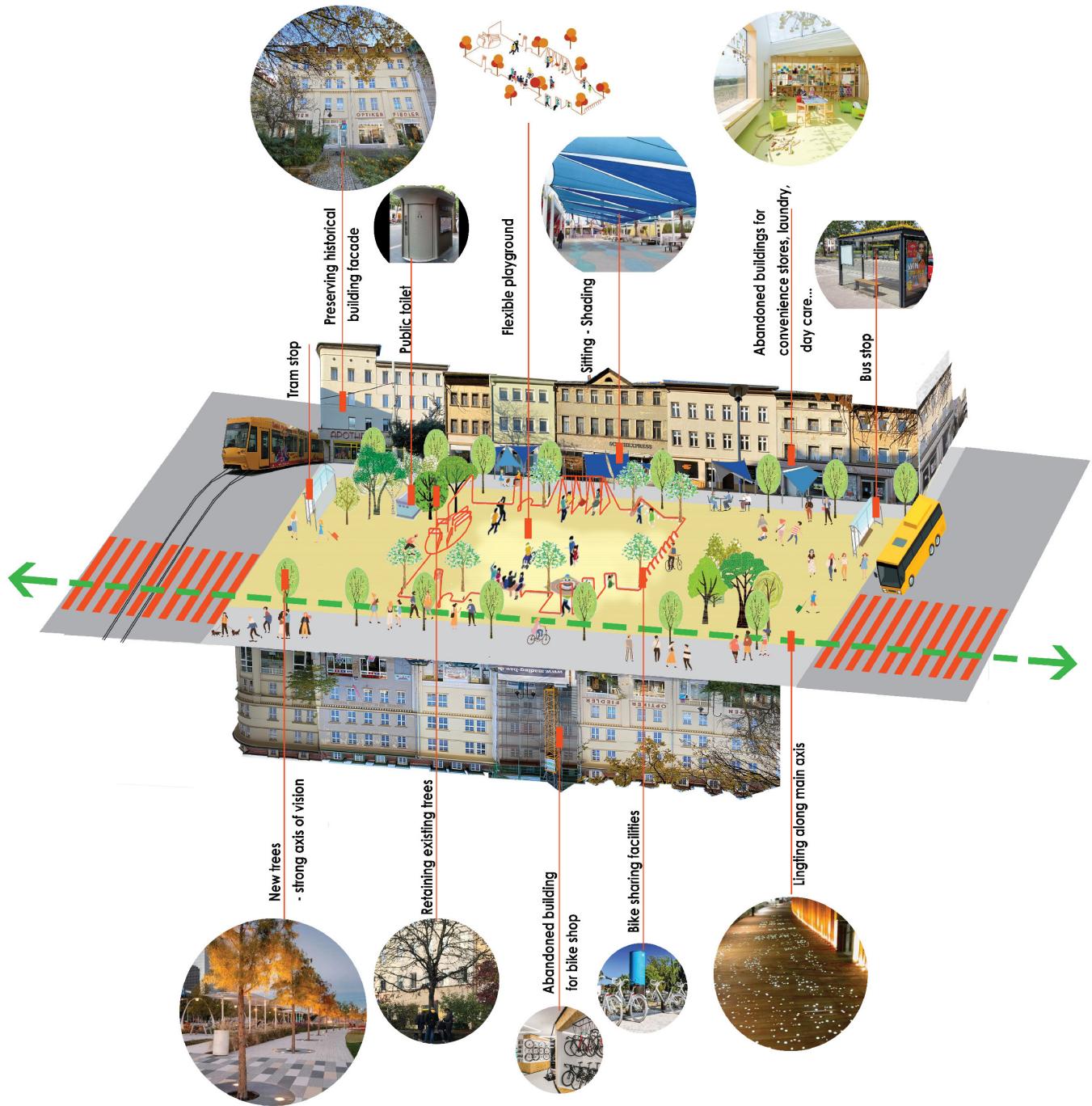


Figure 02: Own Illustration, 2020

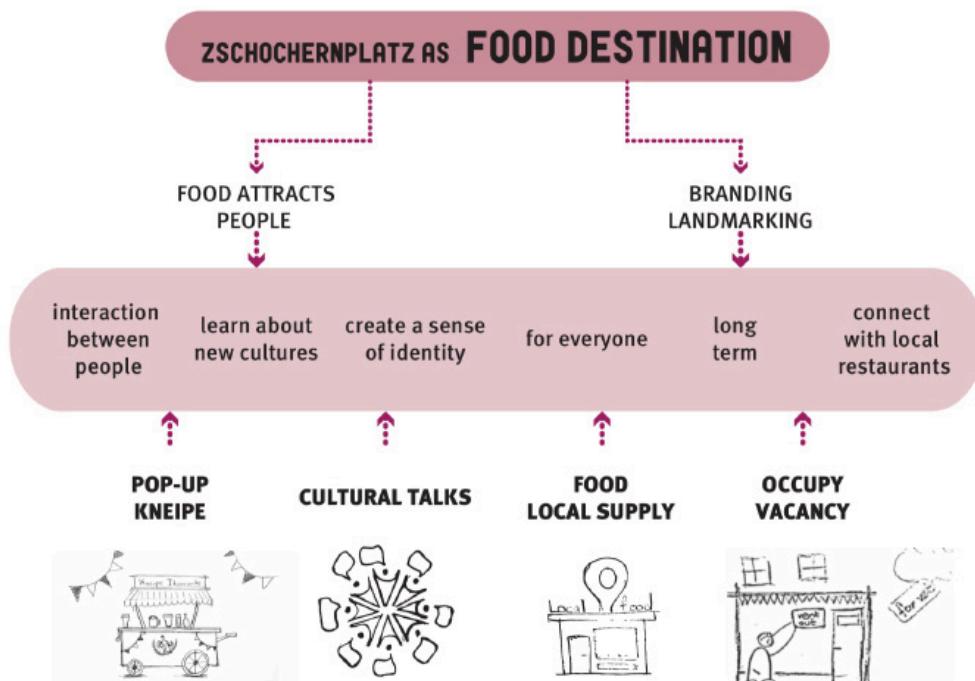
4.3 FOOD AND BEVERAGE

MAKE PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME AT ZSCHOCHERN

Zschochernplatz is nowadays mostly used by people walking through. Typical movement patterns cross the square, leading from Stadtmitte to the neighborhoods east of Zschochern. However, as there are neither activities nor landmarks to stop for, people would just have no reason to stop there. Conducting an engagement exercise in Gera in November 2019, we have learned about a former food-shop called 'Suppentopf' that is very much missed by the local residents. People mentioned how important it was for them to have a close-by eating-out opportunity. Advantageously, the neighborhood is already becoming an ethnic food hub with 'Sangam' and 'Dietels Speisenbar' on Steinweg. Along with other restaurants such as 'Bistro Lotus', they are attracting people from all over Gera to the neighborhood. Further food offerings can now help to bring more people towards the square.

For this reason, we propose to make Zschochernplatz a vibrant, long-term food- and beverage - destination. Diverse activities promoting food (e.g. culture talks), along with the variety of existing food-related businesses, can help create a platform for people's interactions. To begin with, a 'Pop-Up Kneipe' is a wagon or kiosk on Zschochern, which can be used to sell beverages to people while they socialize or learn a new language at Zschochern. Their quality of stay can be increased by providing movable tables, chairs and umbrellas. The presence of furniture and/or a kiosk will further entice the attraction of the square to passersby. In general, any restaurant or café around Zschochern should consider having an outdoor presence.

Besides augmenting the social benefits, bringing food to Zschochernplatz can attract more food-businesses to settle around the square or cooperate with existing local restaurants. This can further stabilize the local micro-economy. It is important to make the activities inclusive to make it a great food destination serving people from all over Gera.



The previous image "food scenario diagram" visualizes how our principle of 'Zschochern as a food destination' is built up from goals and activities. A more detailed explanation of the activities can be found in the table below. The aspect of 'Occupy Vacancy' shall be considered as a long-term goal of moving successful activities into the vacant ground floors of the enclosing buildings of Zschochern. //Julian

Title	Description	Benefits	Time-line	Connection to other scenarios
Pop-up Kneipe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> foster social interaction within existing local community thanks to language-learning in a comfortable atmosphere loose installation/wagon to serve as an experiment vendors could sell prepared food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheap and quick to implement barrier-free (socially and monetarily) low business-risk no experts for operation needed flexible use at different locations 	short-term	Community Node
Cultural Talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monthly event local people introduce their culture to other community members accompanied by serving food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> platform for social bonding enhance identity with the area/Zschochern 	short-term	Textile Network Community Node
Local Food Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> food production (e.g. bread) on vacant Sorge ground floor areas local sale at Zschochernplatz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> foster micro-economy on a neighborhood-scale (parts of supply chain stay in the neighborhood) create job positions enhance identity: local businesses serve locally produced food to local customers 	short-term	Textile Network

4.4 COMMUNITY CENTER

PROMOTING SOCIAL INTERACTION AND INCLUSION

An essential component of any design, not only to reactivate and attract people, but also to create opportunities to increase and establish the relationships between the current residents and future users is the support of social interaction. According to the demographic analysis, in Stadtmitte, there is a large number of older inhabitants, which creates the need and the desire to ensure a multi-generational approach attracting new families and young people. There is also the opportunity of a multicultural diversity with the inclusion of the 23% of immigrant population living currently in the neighborhood, that creates an important scenario to continue with the promotion of inclusion and attraction to new users into the neighborhood, as well as for the square.

The main purpose of this scenario is to generate social interactions in order to open up new windows of possibilities and engagement in Zschochernplatz. Thus, the design concept under the social engagement approach was developed in a progressive model of three phases of community interaction: Inviting, collaborating and inspiring, which promotes social activities and neighborhood cohesion through time (Figure 01).

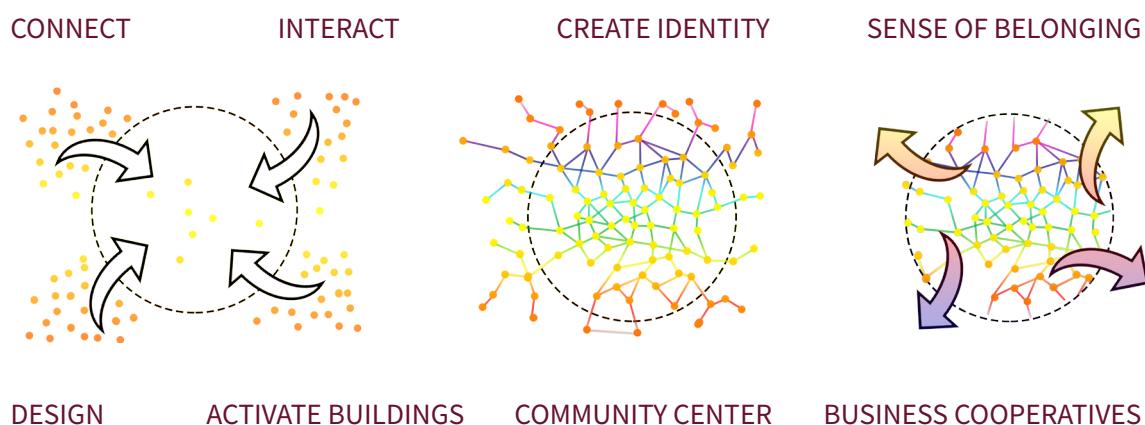


Figure 01: ATTRACT → CREATE → ESTABLISH
Source: Own Illustration, 2020



For that reason, within a short-term scenario, the design concept tends to provide a common platform for the nearby community to discuss and act in the place. This could happen by offering a range of activities to foster neighborhood cohesion which will target people from multicultural and intergenerational backgrounds.

These temporary activities may be developed further in the mid-term with the cooperation of the local community and allow people to be aware of the process. These activities could be art exhibitions, music events, cultural talks, open-air cinema, weekend markets, workshops, and other scenarios that promote inclusion and attraction to the plaza. Unused storefronts may be used temporarily as community centers to promote not only the integration of these places but also to motivate in a long term their rent and reducing the abandonment situation in the sector.

In the long-term it will offer opportunities for the local business retailers with permanent business platforms in Zschochernplatz and the surrounding empty buildings. The square would work as a center for community gathering and social engagement, by creating a point of interaction within the neighborhood and the city. //Jean Carlos

Figure 02: Development Process
Source: Own Illustration, 2020

5 A VISION FOR ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ

Understanding the role that this square played in the city was a key aspect in creating a design concept that really fits its place. Our vision intends to incorporate many of the ideas proposed in the scenarios. This primary design concept shapes the place around two important goals: reconnect the community and form a destination within the historic center of Gera.

From the research and local investigation done for Zschochern, a conclusion was drawn that transforming the reality of this square would be only possible through a multi-scale approach, meeting different demands. At the larger scale, the square had relevance for the historic center of Gera, while in the neighborhood it was a forgotten space by its community.

Other influences come from the surrounding. On the macro scale, there is strong competition from other clusters such as Arcaden and Neue Mitte, whereas in the close neighborhood there is a strong historic potential from Steinweg and Sorge.

Revitalizing Zschochernplatz includes supporting a wide range of activities. To reach this, first, its physical features need to improve to fit different users and become attractive and functional for local people and visitors.

As it is shown in the Design Concept diagram (Figure 01), the primary design idea is to create three zones to meet different goals: create a destination for Gera, a community place for the neighborhood, and a third central core that connects the previous two. It is also important for Zschochernplatz to connect the city center to the residential neighborhood with a clear pedestrian path as mentioned in chapter 4.2. Connectivity.

The multi-functional open-space was planned to create a destination place for the city. Located at the southern part of Zschochern, closer to Sorge (In Red, image XX), it can hold bigger events such as fairs, exhibitions, seasonal markets and shows. This area would also be activated with fixed assets for Food & Beverages and an Artisans' Market.

And the upper part in green (Image XX), the Community Meeting area could offer a more personal public space for inter-cultural exchange and a safer environment for children's play. In addition, in this zone a pavilion is recommended to hold activities and workshops for the community. Additionally, in the long term, this area of Zschochernplatz would be complemented by buildings' ground floor uses.

In between these two main areas, the central focal point would be a transitional area, a place to rest with plenty of seating and an interactive water element that encourages play and is a focal point for the square, one of the main wishes from the community.

All these three areas function self-supporting, yet integrated manner, keeping Zschochernplatz active all day, during all week and in different seasons of the year.

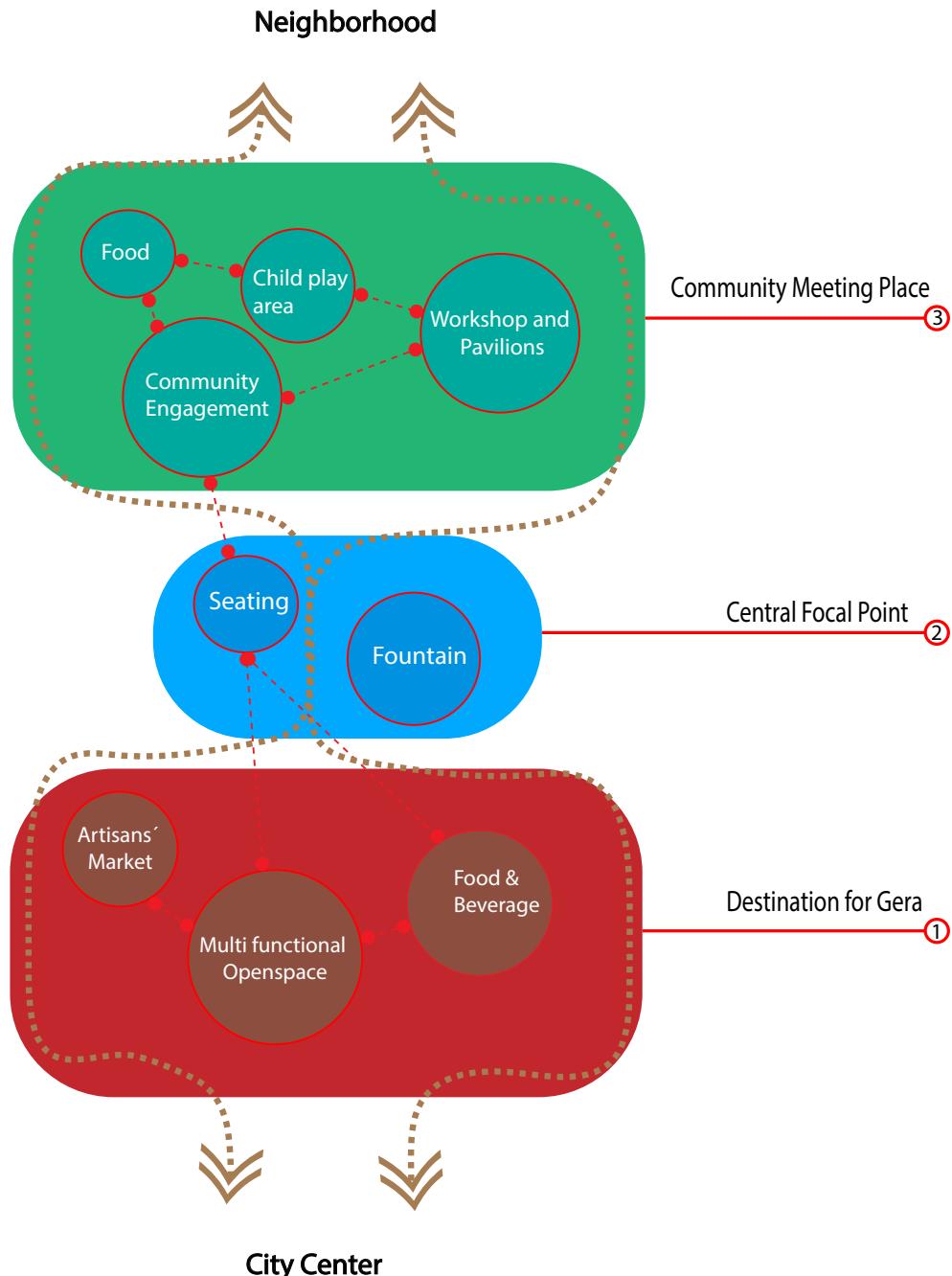


Figure 01: Conceptual zoning of Zschochernplatz. Source: Authors.

DESIGN CONCEPT FEATURES

- 1** New pathways allowing for better accessibility for pedestrians and increasing business frequency. The pathways were planned to support direct routes for people passing through the square and support the ground floor commercial uses and meandering paths that connects various activities or program elements.

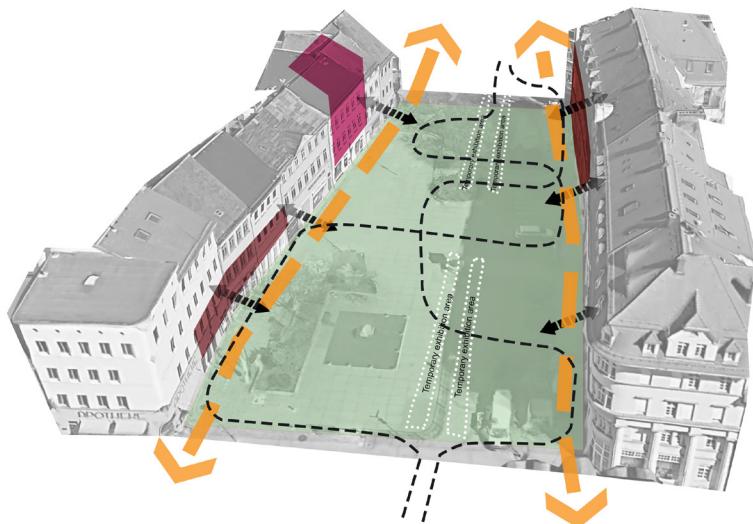


Figure 02: Circulation flow and circulation at Zschochernplatz. Source: Authors.

- 2** Definition of main zones as part of the design concept for Zschochern: providing flexible usage area for everyone as a destination, a focal point with permanent installations and a community meeting place with playground.

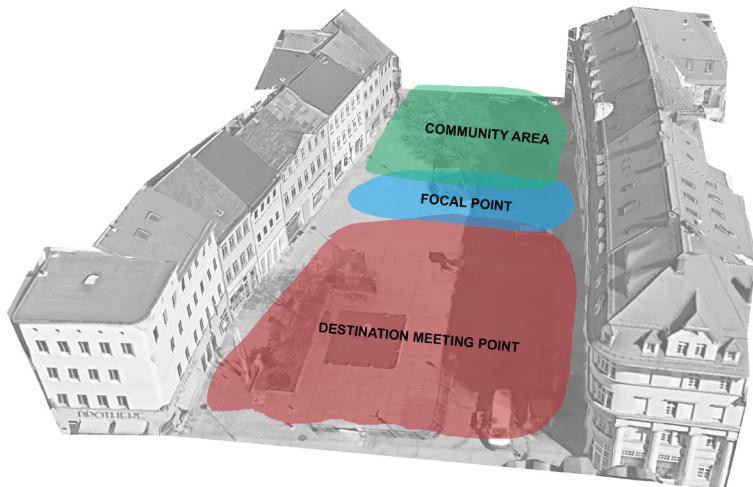


Figure 03: Main zones at Zschochernplatz. Source: Authors.

3

Each main zone comes with a supportive programming: multi-functional area: artisans market, performances, food & beverage; Focal point: more seating and physical design elements; Community meeting place; inter-cultural exchange, playground, food-serving.

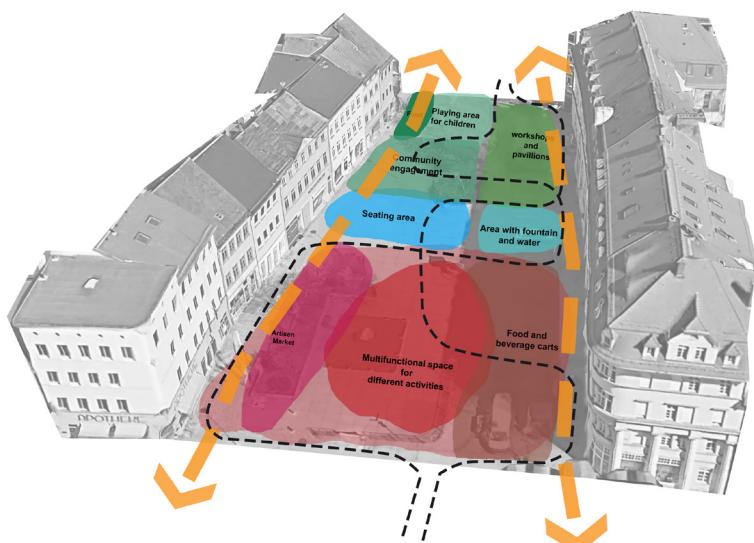


Figure 04: Supporting activities at Zschochernplatz. Source: Authors.

4

Installing more seasonal plant groupings will ensure a four-season landscape that's always attractive. Currently the landscape creates a barrier in the space. Reorganized planters and added vegetation can provide shade and pleasant places to sit, while changing the landscape according to the different seasons.



Figure 05: Greenery at Zschochernplatz. Source: Authors.

5 A VISION FOR ZSCHOCHERNPLATZ

5

Street furniture: Offering a hospitable environment with outdoor seating and shading. Likewise, support sustainable modes of transport through bike stalls and in the longer term the tram stop.

The following illustration represents how the activities and suggested structures could work at Zschochernplatz. At the lower part near Leipziger Str. the design is flexible in a way that allows locals and visitors to interact with space and enjoy local food, beverages, a concert, or see the local craft. In the center of the square, a water play element and seating area form the focal point of the square and transition zone to the upper part. This area was designed to support community activities and be calmer and safer for families and children.



Figure 06: Concept design illustration. Source: Authors.

The collage below brings an idea of how the atmosphere at Zschochern can be a vibrant place for Gera. The different areas designed at the square support a wide range of those activities for the locals and to attract visitors. Larger shows and screenings at the center hold the attention of who came from Sorge and people enjoy the mix of uses on the buildings around the square. //Gabrielly



Figure 07: Concept design illustration. Source: Authors.



Figure 01: Own Photography, 2020

6 CONCLUSION

Given the challenges the city of Gera is facing, the proposed approach on Zschochernplatz is a small-scale intervention that could result in a larger positive impact within the urban context. The main goal behind our project is to provide a tool for the local community to regain and explore the city's great potentials.

To achieve that, Placemaking was incorporated as a tool to bring the people together in order to evaluate and explore potentials for Zschochernplatz to become their very own community space.

The process initially started with analyzing the Zschochernplatz with the least preconceived ideas through ethnographic space studies and systematic observations. Following that, our group focused on looking at the challenges that the city was facing and examining the main reasons behind them by studying multiple layers such as the city's history, demographics, current land-use, economy and transportation infrastructure.

The next phase was about learning from the local community through further interaction with the city officials along with extensive field work. During this process, the community needs became clearer, and early design concepts and activity programs for the square were developed.

At the final phase, our group developed four possible scenarios based on different goals including: improving the city center's commercial and cultural vitality through the textile industry legacy, improving the connectivity and creating a mobility hub, using food to attract people and creating fun activities to engage the local community. The four scenarios were later merged together into one potential proposal which was primarily intended to shape the place for reconnecting the community and forming a destination within the historic center of Gera.

Placemaking at Zschochernplatz is an example of how community based research can inform and shape a proposal to reactivate a square. Moreover, it is a way to develop a bottom-up approach to push urban development at a local scale. To determine the direction for Zschochernplatz and its role in Gera, we suggest that the tools and ideas provided as part of the project, be used by the community; local residents, business and property owners, and city officials should work together for 'making a place'. This might also encourage more grass-roots organizing through Ja für Gera or other organizations to help engage the community in the planning process, its implementation and the long-term management of the public space. //Gheyath&Amin

7 APPENDIX



Social Strategy ideas
To promote Social interaction and Inclusion in Zschochernplatz

1. Economy and jobs
2. Social city and citizenship
3. Education and applied knowledge
4. Urban center and quality of life

Possibility of working with the community leaders to create events and activities into the project.

- Current population
- Immigration Representatives

Thus, Using the new spaces through different activities to create inclusion between immigrants and residents

Pop-up Plaza Events
Social interventions in the context to reactivate the space and to attract people

Open Gallery - Art walk
Temporal Open Exhibitions In the Streets

Music Presentations and Cultural Talks

Activities for Different ages.
A little free library

Source of the Photos: Pop-Up Plaza Enhances Art Walk, Hints at What Could Be in Lemmerz
<https://a.streetblog.org/2014/04/01/pop-up-plaza-enhances-art-walk-hints-at-what-could-be-in-lemmertz/>
By Sahra Sulaiman.

Social Strategy ideas
To promote Social interaction and Inclusion in Zschochernplatz

Art Spaces and bussiness
To create local business that allow the permanence of the society

Artesanal Market
Local Community ← → New users
Integration with

Craft Shops Workshop
Relation with the building and the facilities OF THE NEW SPACE

Source of the Photos: Pop-Up Plaza Enhances Art Walk, Hints at What Could Be in Lemmerz
<https://a.streetblog.org/2014/04/01/pop-up-plaza-enhances-art-walk-hints-at-what-could-be-in-lemmertz/>
By Sahra Sulaiman.

AHALYA

The idea of turning Zschochernplatz into a multi-modal mobility hub is to both complement the bus and tram stops, and to bring other sustainable mobility options such as bike and scooter sharing that leads to major destinations within Gera, especially to the main train station. Consequently, this option can boost the activity in the square by having food kiosks, convenience local stores, bike repair shops, play areas within the neighbourhood.

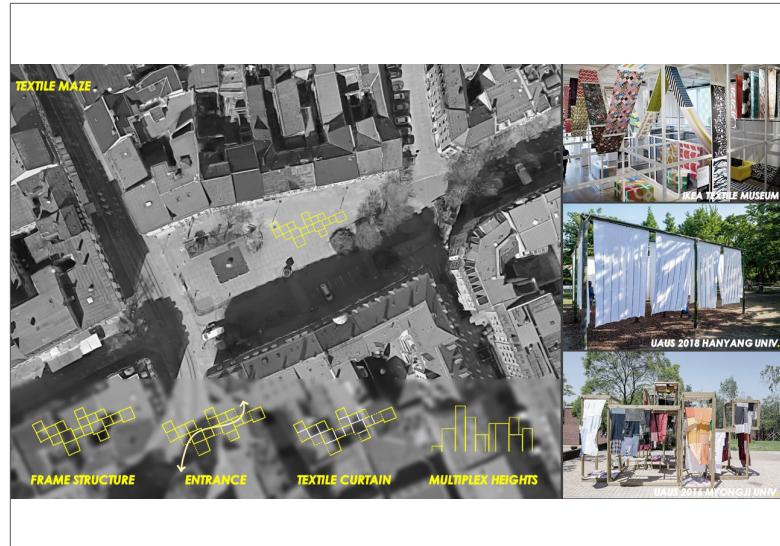
JEAN CARLOS

The interaction and participation with the community are essential to the good development of each project through time. For that reason and with the aim to promote social interaction and inclusion in Zschochernplatz were developed different social strategies ideas, which could be applied in cooperation with local leaders of the community and immigrants representatives. These may incorporate the development of new multi-diversity scenarios that take into account the needs of the current and new users in the evolution of this new place.

7 APPENDIX

MINSEO

In order to revitalize the ZschochernPlatz, planned a pavilion using textiles, which was Gera's main industry. The basic structure is made of simple framework so that it can be easily constructed quickly and then the roof or walls are made of textiles. In addition, people will participate to build the pavilion and local residents will create play structures for children with handcrafted textiles. As a textile pavilion, it will be able to remind the history of Gera by remembering its features and encouraging people to engage in their community.



MAYA

Through communal activities, events and food services the interaction between citizens will be strengthened. A community center that provides space for the residents but also a chance to create something on their own is implemented on the Zschochernplatz and serves as a interactive element. With a temporary solution a "test-phase" will give the opportunity to start a business and observe the success. Later the activities can take place in the buildings in the near surroundings. This will garantue a benefit on the long term.



Concept

Z.platz as a place where the **lines** -time, ages, generations, history, tradition, knowledge-converge to grow stronger. Where the social **tissue** and the urban **fabric** meets to heal, to **learn** and revitalize.

Genius Loci

Z.plz weaving with light, knowledge, time, space.

Activities+Integration

Seasonal weaving workshops

Interactive/Adventure Playground

Collective painting/design



RAMON

Through the research some aspects for further designs and developments. First of all, It is necessary to identify the Genius Loci of the place, the "soul" and "identity" of this location. Questions such as what it was, what is the current role of it, how it arose and how it should evolve are aspects to consider. Hence, light, knowledge, time and space are the key lineaments to guide a design concept.

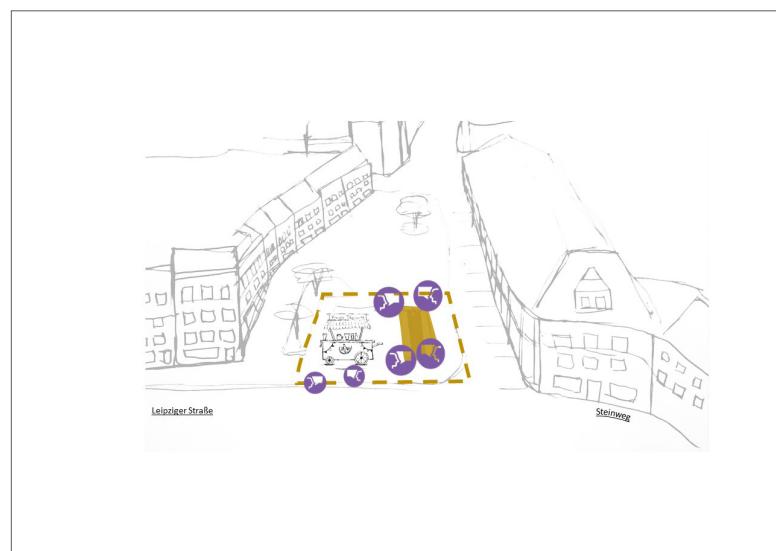
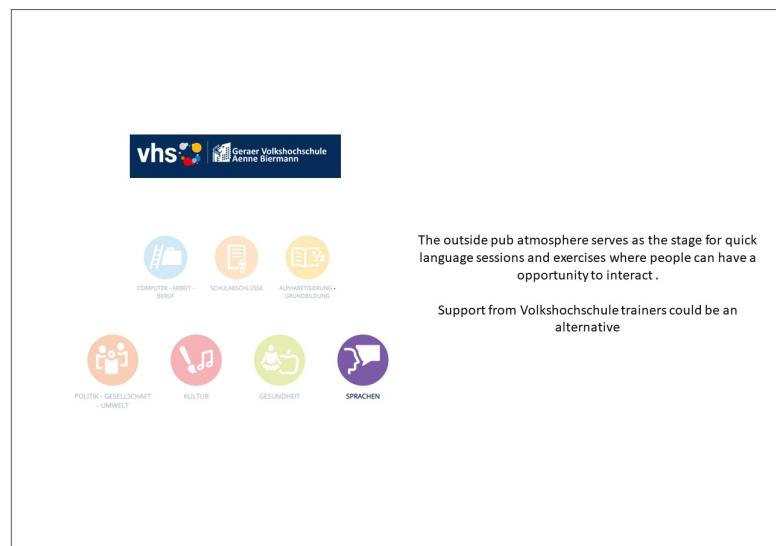
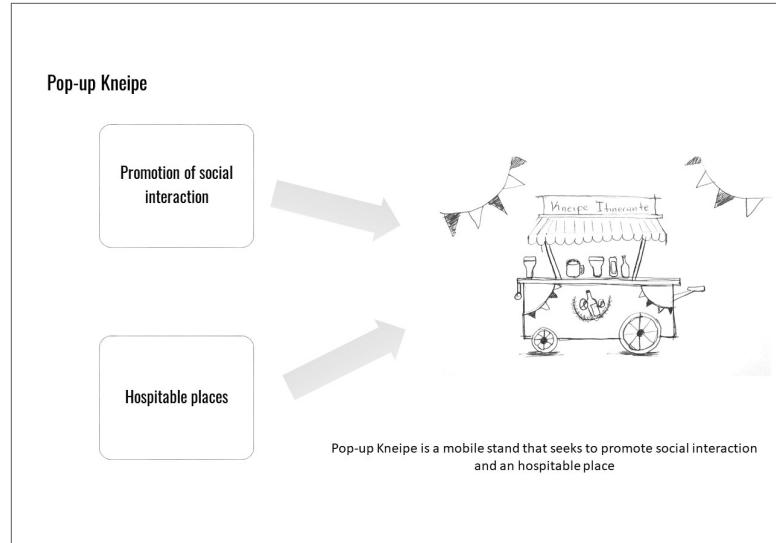
Zchochernplatz as a place where the lines of time (ages, generations, history, tradition, knowledge, experience) converge to grow stronger. Where the social tissue and the urban fabric meets to heal, to learn and revitalize.

Consequently, some similar cases and ideas are referenced to illustrate the potential application of the design concept.

7 APPENDIX

BARDO

"Pop-up Kneipe" is a mobile beer stand that looks to foster local interaction in the centre Gera . The idea behind is to have a flexible and mobile beer-stand at different public spaces of the city centre where one could get quick language lessons. This project not only sums up to diversity of activities at Zschochernplatz but also is a quick low-cost experiment to cope with the vacant buildings environment.



1- Adventure playgrounds

Adventure Playgrounds are free, public celebrations of child-directed play stocked with loose parts (such as cardboard boxes, fabric, tape and string) and staffed by playworkers. An introductory version of the classic adventure playground model, they gently introduce themes of risk and freedom by welcoming people of all ages and abilities to play together.

(PopAdventurePlaygrounds)



2- Pop-up libraries



3- Re-mem-brance sculptures

The Virginia Women's Monument in Richmond, US.



Sculpture in Boston, US.



ALICIA

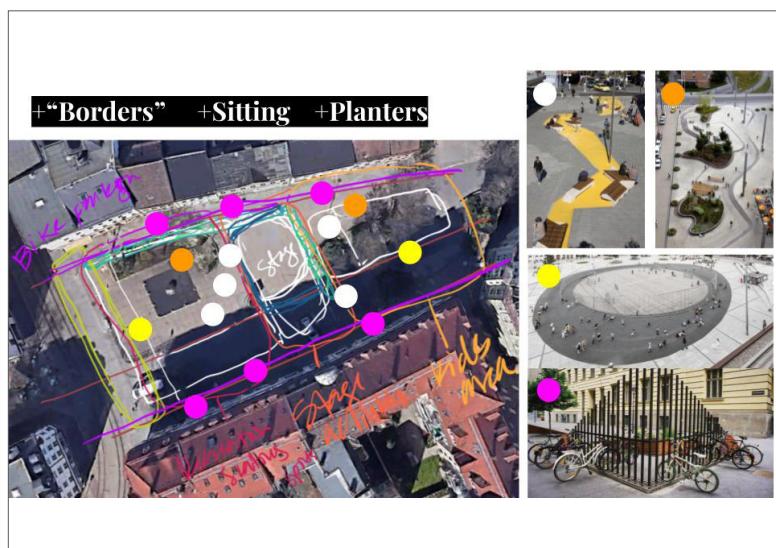
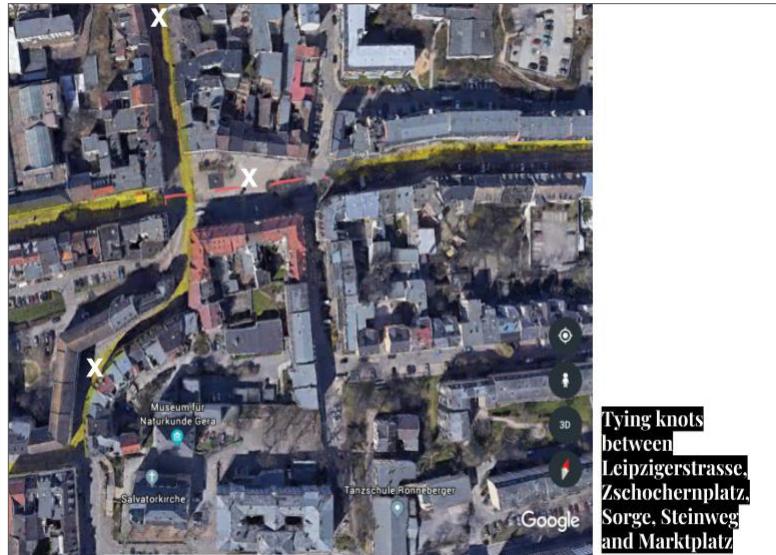
Adventure playgrounds: free public areas where children are provided with tools in order to build something new.

POP-UP Libraries: an open library whose structure can be used for several activities (language cafes, extracurricular activities for children, cultural talks, etc...).

Remembrance sculptures: sculptures of people from Gera that head from the sorge to Z-platz.

MARIELIZ

The idea about the transitions is to target the weaknesses that Zchoschernplatz suffers as an actual place that's mainly used to transit from point A to B. Considering not only the safety 'borders' and crossing ways, the problem is seen on a bigger scale within the city. Thus these ideas about merging the small interventions in the square and surroundings, and the urban tissue.



Idea and according principles	
idea	benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food production in vacant Sorge ground floor • Serve temporarily on Zschochern, permanently in Arcaden, KUK, Elsterforum) • (Arcaden, KUK, Elster, Zschochernplatz organisation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local production, local utilization • Employment positions for also non-academics • Revive area from Arcaden up to Zschochernplatz
prerequisites	Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business model KUK, daily events • Administration organisation to solicit idea • Contracts with local buyers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Production, local utilization <p>-> ISEK GERA foster economy and create jobs foster "Urbane Mitte"</p>



JULIAN

Restoring vacant ground floor areas in buildings on Sorge allow for the settlement of small-scale food-manufacturers, e.g. of a bakery. Zschochernplatz as a frequented square can be used as the first place to sell the goods. Moreover, the municipality of Gera can support the business-owner in setting up supply agreements with local buyers, such as the KuK or Arcaden. If successful, supply and usage are kept local which strengthens the local economy. Besides, new employment positions are created which counterattacks the high unemployment rate of the city. In addition, both the entrepreneur's and customer's identification with the area can be enhanced.

GABRIELLY

The proposal below is a response in contrast to the current reality of Zschochernplatz. Colourful treatment on the buildings, to enhance the architectural features and set them as a vivid landscape. The pavilion at the lower part of the square is meant to isolate the tram traffic, attract pedestrians from lower Sorge and hold community exhibitions and workshops. All the furniture along the square is meant to be movable so people can arrange and use them as they wish. At the upper part, the playground is attractive for children and makes the transition between the public area of the square and the more residential character of Zschochernstraße.

AMIN

Inspired by the General Gordon square at Woolwich, London where the concept worked as to rejuvenate public spaces, a comparison was made, implemented by the shown sketches. The aim is to improve the square, considering the potentials and weaknesses, by creating a center of attraction, to increase the amount of more greenery and multi-use spaces, in a way to revitalize the space for the community.

Case study: General Gordon Square, Woolwich, London.

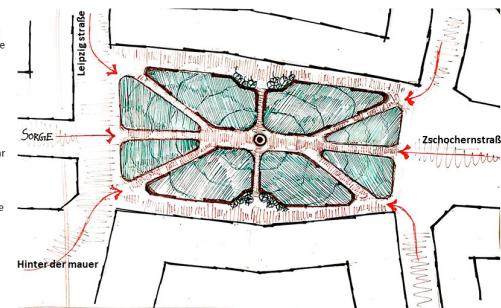
Common Features:

- Approx. area : 1 Ha.
- Concept: Rejuvenating public spaces and bringing people back to the heart of the city both socially and commercially.
- To create an unique space that could be enjoyed both in the day and evening.
- The soft landscaping of General Gordon Square addresses the shortage of green open space in the center of Woolwich generating a sense of calm and relaxation while providing a functional space that can be transformed and layered with other uses.
- Terracing is utilized to improve the usability of the steeply sloping squares, with level routes provided throughout to ensure accessibility for all users.



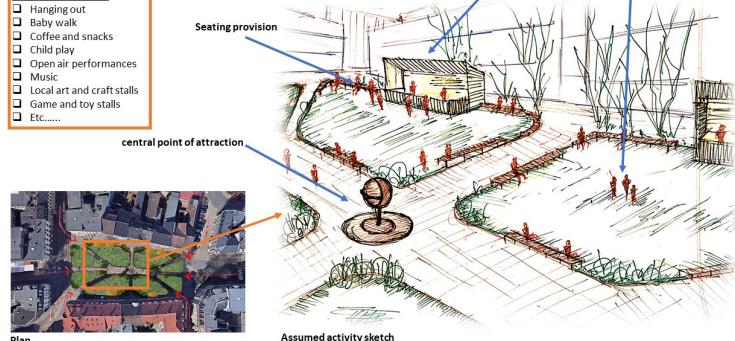
Implementing Design Ideas: @ Zschochernplatz, Gera.

- Creating a central point of attraction which could be noticed from Sorge and Zschochern Straße.
- Tried to reduce the hard pavement surfaces and designed the pavement according to the possible access points from the surrounding streets.
- Created some green surfaces which could be used for different activities in different occasions.
- Provisions of seating arrangements provided aligned with the border of green chunk in regular intervals.
- Inclusion of some refreshment facilities like coffee and snacks stalls in order to attract people and made them stay longer.
- Provisions of different children playing facilities like small game shops or toy stall would like to enhance the attraction of the Platz for the children.



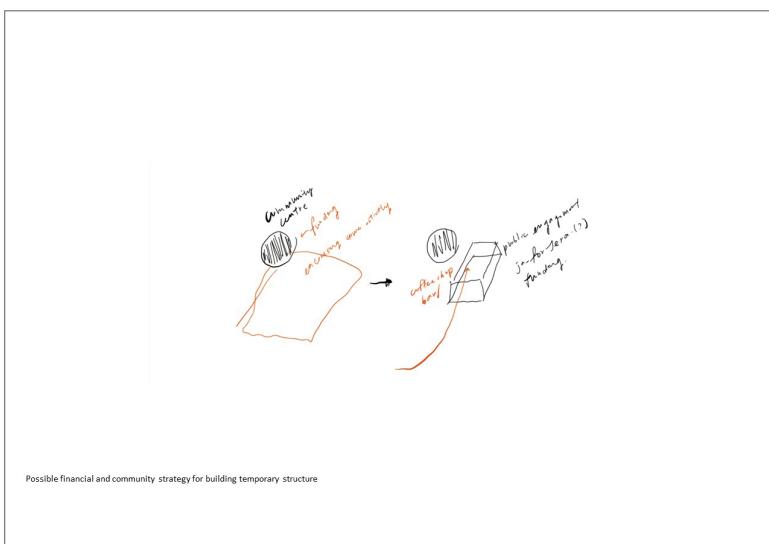
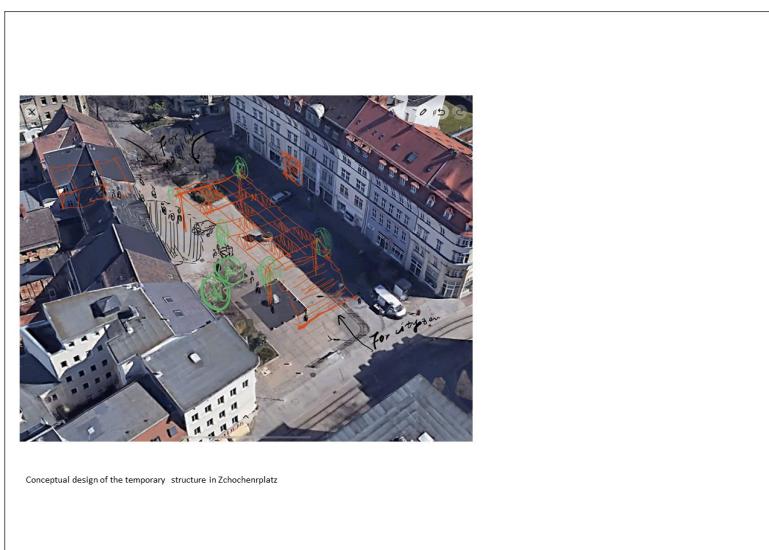
Implementing Design Ideas: @ Zschochernplatz, Gera.

Probable activities:
<input type="checkbox"/> Hanging out
<input type="checkbox"/> Baby walk
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee and snacks
<input type="checkbox"/> Child play
<input type="checkbox"/> Open air performances
<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Local art and craft stalls
<input type="checkbox"/> Game and toy stalls
<input type="checkbox"/> Etc.....



**PING-YI**

To engage the community into creating their own structure, this proposed idea consists of a temporary pavilion that could lead to a long term installation. The convenience of being temporary and built by locals, makes it easier to redesign or remove. Thus serving as a tool for the community to create their own zones and sense of ownership of the place, after all its for their use.



7 APPENDIX

YUCHI

As an early development activity, the open air cinema can quickly gather a large crowd in zplatz. Not only can we attract gera citizens through cultural influence, thereby creating opportunities for communication, but also promoting the development of small businesses. By showing films on different themes, it can also provide a reason for all kinds of people to enjoy zplatz. As for co-operation, local elderly associations and primary and secondary schools can be used as publicity channels. And through cooperation with nearby cinemas, it can drive the overall business development.

Short-term: Open air Cinema

-spring or summer nights

Advantage

- easily attraction
- temporary furniture
- drive product sales



Possible content

- DDR movies/family movies/silent movies...

Possible audience

- Schools/Senior Association...

Long-term: Local Landmark

-historic memory

Advantage

- easily attraction
- temporary furniture
- drive product sales



Possible content

- DDR movies/family movies/silent movies...

Possible audience

- Schools/Senior Association...

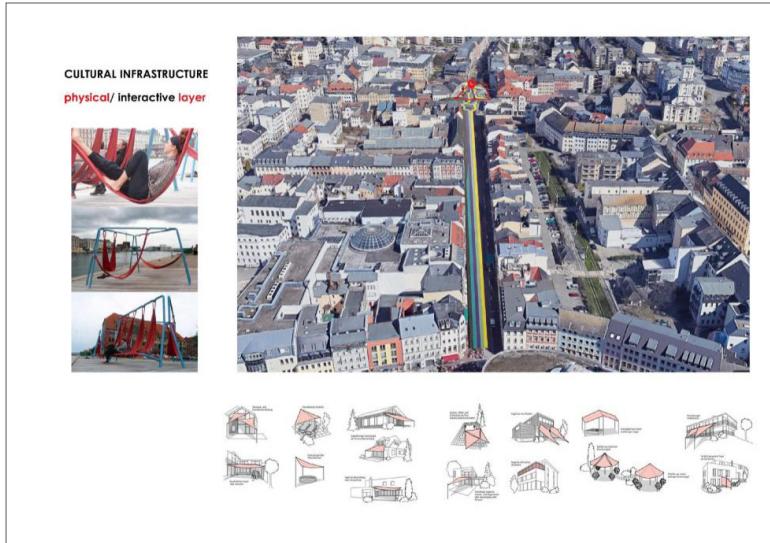
THUY

The proposal aims to enhance the blending of the trading with the cultural activity. It focuses on exploring the potential for the tourism, with an attempt to prepare the designed space as a cultural infrastructure that introduces an outdoor lounge with information posters on other points of interest within walking distance, the temporary installation determines to activate the square by encouraging visitors to also explore the surrounding area.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE physical/ interactive layer

Gera
CITY TOURS
Never stop exploring
Free walking Tour



**THUY**

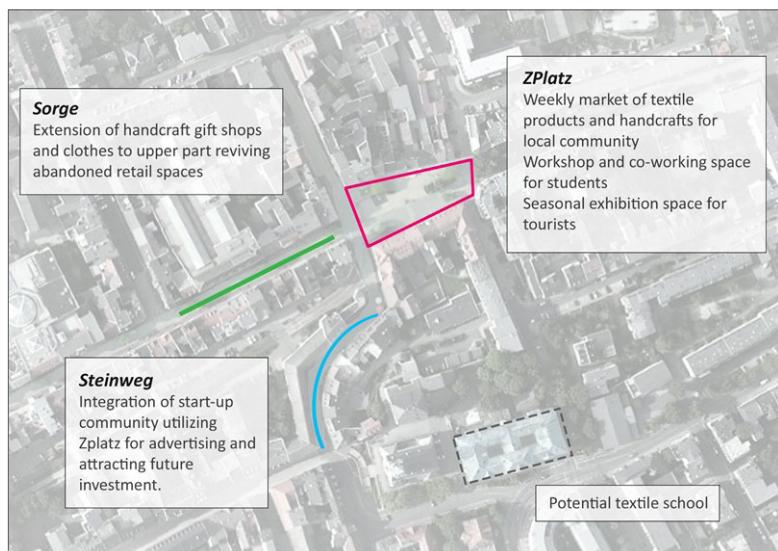
At the same time the plaza is a meeting point for tourists who might want a free walking tour and experience the city on foot. This could also include temporary events like markets or public art performances, which can create a more diverse and vibrant experience in the city, maximising the use of public space.

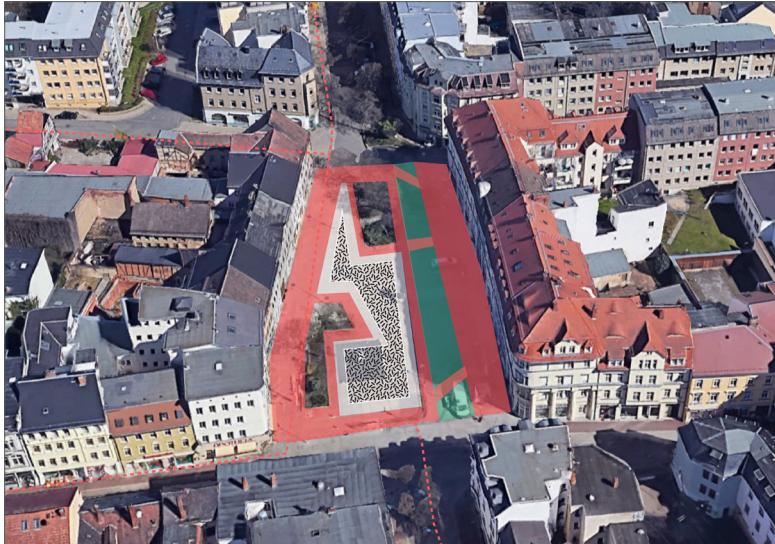
**BINIYAM**

The main idea is to introduce some activities that could be adopted in a short-term or long term, with a concept of "something to do or something to experience". Starting with movement design, where the space could only flourish with pedestrian activity through the facilities and the programming within a car-free street. Then the color aspect could be introduced since the actual appearance reflects on the lack of attraction. With this, the addition of water features and greenery, and elements for active leisure events. Consequently, integrating the street-side building functions, so that the area could be developed incrementally, this would lead to the long term intervention. Public spaces often get extra appeal when there are 'playing' elements. Attributes that interact with people give a space a different atmosphere.

GHEYATH

The main idea is to promote Gera's textile industry within the innovation sector through fashion design and handcrafts market. Through such setup, the Zplatz is highlighted as a focal point for the city centre's vitality both commercially and culturally in addition to integrating it with the local community and future development projects including Steinweg, Neue Mitte, and the Goethe Gymnasium. Moreover, the direct effect of such a program is predicted to revive the commercial activity on the upper part of Sorge and its vacant retail stores, activating the whole neighbourhood as a whole.







STREET PLAN - BETTER STREETS BETTER PLACES
Pedestrian Enhancement Plan

images: street plan tactical urbanism project



FILL THE GAP / SMALL INTERVENTIONS
playgorund projects for all

images: aldo van eyck projects in amsterdam

DILSAD

First of all, our observations on Plaza show that ZschochernPlatz needs better ground programming which should be consider with different colors, design elements to organize various uses. In addition to this, adaptable and affordable street furniture should be part of these zoning. The situation of public spaces of Gera after Reunification reminds me of the situation of Amsterdam's parks and plazas after WWII and Aldo Van Eyck's design for these abandoned spaces. The main ideas of Eyck's design were using basic materials, simple forms to create an adaptable playing structure that is open for other uses too. This can be an inspiration for Zschochernplatz's street furniture for playing, sitting and meeting.

