



## Abstract

This essay presents personal observations, experiences, and reflections from daily life and field excursions during my six-months PhD training in doctoral research proposal development at Technische Universität Berlin, Germany, between May and October 2025. The discussion explores three core areas: first, the urbanization trajectories of Berlin and Dar es Salaam; second, the status and characteristics of public open spaces in both cities; and third, lessons Dar es Salaam can draw from Berlin in the management and preservation of public open spaces to enhance urban sustainability.

Although the full historical accounts of Berlin and Dar es Salaam are extensive, this essay provides a concise comparative overview. Both cities—one in Europe, the other in Africa have evolved into cosmopolitan centers shaped by political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics. Dar es Salaam, once under German colonial rule from 1891 to 1918, shares historical connections with Berlin, which was already a major metropolis during that period (Davies, 2010; Brennan, Burton, & Lawi, 2007). Today, both cities reflect their layered histories and diverse populations. Berlin is home to Germans, Turks, Arabs, and other groups, while Dar es Salaam hosts Africans, Arabs, Indians, Persians, and others (Personal observation). Current estimates place their populations at over six and seven million respectively (Davies, 2010; The Guardian, 2015).

The global discourse on sustainable urban development, emphasized by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, highlights the need for inclusive, safe, and resilient cities by 2030. Public open spaces play a vital role by offering comfort, recreation, social interaction, and cultural expression (Sanga, 2020).

Berlin demonstrates how planned and inclusive public open spaces contribute to sustainable urban life. Its parks, gardens, and playgrounds are equitably distributed, safe, and well maintained (Personal observation). These spaces are accessible to all and reflect a strong commitment to sustainability. In contrast, Dar es Salaam struggles with rapid urbanization and weak management of open spaces. Encroachment and land conversion threaten existing gardens, parks, and playgrounds, leaving many residents without safe or clean recreational areas (Hassan & Mombo, 2017). Public open spaces are scarce and poorly maintained, reflecting broader challenges in planning capacity and governance. The contrast between the two cities highlights both Berlin's achievements and Dar es Salaam's struggles. However, the Tanzanian city can adopt

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lessons from Berlin's spatial planning and management. By prioritizing inclusive design, equitable distribution, and sustainable maintenance, Dar es Salaam can better preserve its open spaces and improve urban quality of life.

Generally, this comparative reflection underscores the importance of public open spaces in shaping the quality of urban life. Berlin offers effective models of planning and management that align with global sustainability goals. Dar es Salaam, though constrained by rapid growth and limited resources, can learn from Berlin's experience to improve its governance of public spaces and contribute to the global vision of inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities.