

## The water system in Berlin's Potsdamer Platz



Visible water cleansing through a planted biotope does not just stabilize the water quality, but also adds a strikingly dune-like note to the austere urban landscape.



No parapet or railing – stepping stones lead over the expanse of urban water.

Large underground cisterns store rainwater from the roofs and make it available for re-use and supply of the water features.



Question after question cropped up on the top of the red Infobox in the middle of Potsdamer Platz, and deep abysses opened up in front of it. Colourful hard hats moved as though on invisible strings, and so did the lorries, full or empty after they had tipped their loads out, divers poured the cellar foundations into the groundwater at night, coloured piping ran to and fro over streets and excavations, cranes raised and lowered everything that was needed inside and outside, up there or down here. Expectations of the completed Potsdamer Platz were immense, and the problems on what was once Europe's largest building site were highly complicated. Two demands: people were not just supposed to work here, they were supposed to spend their leisure time here as well.

A vibrant urban construct was to be created, which is difficult in the shadow of towering company headquarters. And the intention of setting high ecological standards for the project had caught on as well. There were the following problems: very little space was available for leisure provision, and it was subject to all sorts of demands and wishes. What devices for planning open space, what themes can be used to do justice to a lot of people and the urban design at the same time, and finally to come close to meeting ecological aims?

Herbert Dreiseitl had already worked on Potsdamer Platz immediately after the Wall came down, with an Anglo-German planning team. The theme of water as a defining element in the open space had convinced both the Senate and the investors from the outset. First of all the design possibilities caught their imagination, and secondly they were fired by the chance of meeting the ecological challenges. The suggestion that rainwater should be used for flushing toilets and watering green areas was met with interest. The same was true of the idea of using the rainwater that collected in the underground tanks to feed a water



Even when frozen over in winter, the water provides an interesting context for the architecture.

Everything comes together here: active life, prestigious architecture and a filigree pattern of water features that contain in fact just collected rainwater.