

## BERLIN BETWEEN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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**Abstract.** *Berlin is one of the most interesting European cities. In the Cold War period, The Berlin Wall physically divided West Berlin and East Berlin for 28 years in period from August 1961 till November 1989. Berlin was also the symbolic boundary between West countries and Communism during the Cold War, which influenced also the architectural development in the city. The city was the biggest building site in Europe in the period of 1990s. Today, Berlin is an important art center with around 1500 cultural events daily. Berlin is also since 2005 the only European UNESCO city of design.*

**Key words:** *Modern architecture of Berlin, history of architecture, art in open urban space, UNESCO city of design, memorials at urban place.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Berlin is the city of very turbulent history that was founded in 13th century. Many radical changes happened to Berlin in the past. Today contemporary Berlin is an important world metropolis with more than 3.5 million of citizens. The World War II devastation resulted in complete destruction of the inner city center. After the World War II, Berlin was divided, as well as the whole Germany. In the year 1948, the eastern sector of Berlin, which was part of the Soviet sector become the capital of the newly established German Democratic Republic. The Western part of Berlin was under Allied rule and a part of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Berlin Wall, the symbol of divided Germany, has been built in 1961 and divided Berlin till 1989. The city was re-united in 1990, after collapse of Communism in Europe, and became again the capital of Germany. In 1990s the construction boom happened to Berlin which lead to attracting the most famous architects of the time to the city. In the period after 1990 many important modern buildings have been built in Berlin such as The Reichstag building by Norman Foster in 1999, Jewish Museum by Daniel Libeskind in 1999, German History Museum by I.M.Pei in 2003, Marie-Elisabeth-Lüders-Haus and Paul Löbe Haus by Stephan Braunfels, Potsdamer Platz by Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, Arata Isozaki, Helmut Jahn, Rafael Moneo and more.

## 2. BERLIN TODAY – 20 YEARS AFTER REUNION

The wall divided Berlin in two cities. In 2009 Germany celebrates 20 years of reunion after the Fall of Berlin Wall. Political decisions that influence people's lives very often lead to visual changes. Due to that reason, Berlin was the biggest building site in Europe in 1990s and the new era of the city began with the new modern look. Completely new city districts have been built after reunification. An enormous number of new buildings and representative buildings have been raised in new urban vista of Berlin.

Today Berlin is a strong European political center as well as a world important art center. The Reichstag building is not only the seat of German Bundestag, but also one of the main attractions for visitors due to magnificent glass dome which welcomes everyone coming to see where German parliament operates and where important political decisions are made. The architecture in modern Berlin shows that nowadays Germany is open to everyone. Berlin is rich in numerous diverse examples of memorials all around the city, dedicated to a variety of victims of the past. The city can present a great example how architecture is able to contribute to understanding the past, forgiving and remembering all innocent victims. Beside deconstructivist masterpiece, Jewish Museum by the architect Daniel Libeskind which was opened to public 2001, the Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe is another valuable example how Germany deals with past. In this case of public memorial, architecture has the main role because it makes ideas and visions visible and accessible to the public. There are also many small examples, apart from those already mentioned big architectural structures, where the respect to the victims is paid. These examples are just small in size but the message they are sending is equally strong. At Figure 4 the example of small fence at the river Spree across the Paul Löbe Haus with the names of Cold War victims could be seen. Owing to architecture, Berlin in present is dealing with the past and is ready for a better future.



Fig. 1 Wall Memory in metro station at Brandenburg gate; the newest underground station has three lines that going from Hauptbahnhof to Brandenburg gate (Berlin main train station officially opened in 2006 after almost eight years of construction work)  
Photograph made by the author 2009

### **2.1. The Reichstag- symbol of political power**

The Reichstag played an important role in the German history and was always a part of Berlin. The building had changed its appearance throughout different phases of the past. Also the Reichstag had very important role in the modern history as the symbol of German re-unification.

The original building of the Reichstag, German Parliament, was built in the style of the Italian Renaissance in 1894 by architect Paul Wallot. The Reichstag building suffered huge damage in bombing during World War II. Renovation of the building which was carried out according to plans by Paul Baumgarten, started in 1954 and was finally completed in 1972. After German reunification, Sir Norman Foster was commissioned to carry out the design for new Reichstag. The major change was removing mezzanine floors and adding a new glass dome to the room. Adding the new glass dome was very successful as the dome became one of the main tourist attraction of the city. Glass panels in the dome allows visitors to look at down into the parliamentary chamber beneath.



Fig. 2 Reichstag, German Parliament;  
Photograph made by the author 2009

### **2.2. Paul Löbe and Marie Elisabeth Lüders Haus – part of the new parliament complex**

When the German parliament was moved again to Berlin, after re-unification, new additional administrative buildings had to be constructed due to new administrative needs. This new complex which is positioned just next to Reichstag is a symbol of new growing power of united Germany. Buildings are reflecting visual power due to its size and suit perfectly to the Reichstag. The Reichstag rests on one side of the river, and at the other two huge modern buildings on the other. The river Spree in the same time separates two buildings with Reichstag and is emphasizing the re-unification even stronger.

The new modern buildings, Paul Löbe Haus and Marie Elisabeth Lüders Haus, alongside the river Spree has been built after the design of the architect Stephan Braunfels. The Marie Elisabeth Lüders Haus is situated on the eastern bank of the river Spree and together with the Paul Löbe Haus creates a functional and visual unity. Two pedestrian bridges over the river Spree connect this two buildings. The building Paul Löbe contains more than 900 offices for the deputies of the German parliament, and is 200m long, 100m and 22m high. The name of the building Paul Löbe is after the last parliamentary president, until 1933.



Fig. 3 The two left side buildings are divided by the river Spree. At the left river side is Marie Elisabeth Lüders Haus. At the right side is Paul Löbe Haus; Photographs made by the author 2009



Fig. 4 Detail of memorial could be seen in front of the Bundestag complex. This is one of the numerous examples how the German government pays respect to the victims of the past; Photographs made by the author 2009

### 2.3. Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe –urban memory

The building Memorial in the heart of Berlin means official recognition of historical mistakes. This Memorial is part of new modern urban Berlin together with more symbolic memorials all around the city.

The Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe stands in the heart of Berlin, just next to Brandenburg gate in order to send message to all, not only visitors as this is one of the most visited tourist location in the whole Berlin, but also to be visible to the German politicians on their way to Reichstag. This monument, open to public day and night as a place as a remembrance of six million Jewish victims, has been made by the architect Peter Eisenman. The construction work on the Memorial, consisting of the Filed of 2,711 concrete slabs arranged in grid pattern and the underground memorial center, began in 2003 and ended in 2005. The size of the field of concrete slabs is 19.073m<sup>2</sup> with height that vary from 0-4,7m. Each mounted steale has been made from high performance concrete.



Fig. 5 The Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe  
Photographs made by the author 2009

#### 2.4. Potsdamer Platz - simbol of new Berlin

The Potsdamer Platz, a new downtown center with its business buildings, is the highlight of new modern Berlin from 1990s. This modern area consists of the three main parts, Daimler City of the DaimlerChrysler Areal (1998), the Sony Center (2000) and the Beisheim Center (2004). This part of Berlin was known as a desolate, sandy no man's land in the time of the Cold War. Looking back into the history, Potsdamer Platz was high lively metropolis center in 1929. After the World War II, this part of the town was totally destroyed and was marked as no man's land. During the Cold War this strip of sandy soil was dividing west and east Berlin until 1989. Important international investors and in the most famous international architects such as Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, Arata Isozaki, Helmut Jahn, Rafael Moneo and others came to Berlin after Fall of the Wall in 1989. In the 1990s Potsdamer Platz was the biggest building city in Europe.

The rebuilding of Potsdamerplatz started in 1980s. Investor Daimler-Benz bought a plot of land along the Landwehr Canal to the Wall in the time when still this part was considered to be lifeless and just one peripheral site. After Fall of the Wall, this part became the top real estate in Berlin. The first big competition on this site was organized in 1991 for "Potsdamer and Leipziger Platz Competition for Urban Design Ideas". Architects Heinz Himmler and Christoph Sattler won this competition.

The main architectural attractions at Potsdamerplatz are the Debis Tower by Renzo Piano and the Daimler-Chrysler Atrium with changing art exhibition and an auto showroom in the public space, The Sony Center and Cinema Complex and Film Museum, The



Arkaden Shopping Mall by Richard Rogers, a 3D IMAX cinema and Musical Theatre and Casino.

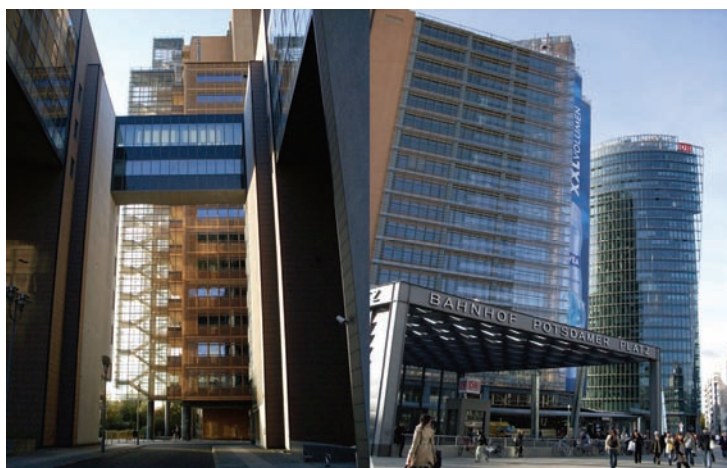


Fig. 6 Potsdamer Platz;  
Photographs made by the author 2009

## 2.5. East Berlin - past and future

East Berlin became the capital city of the East Germany after Second World War. The typical architecture of socialism is still present in the east part of Berlin. In Figure 7, Figure 8 and Figure 9 the most important parts of East Berlin could be seen. After reunification of Germany, government spent huge investments for reintegration of the two parts of the city. Many changes happened since 1990s. Still, architecture of these two parts, mainly the survival of sky-scrapers from communistic period, made the visual differences between eastern and western part of the town clearly discernible.



Fig. 7 East Side Gallery,  
Photograph made by the author 2009

East side gallery, TV tower and Alexander square are three landmarks of the east Berlin. The East Side Gallery is 1.3 km painted part of former Berlin Wall, along the Mühlenstrasse in former East Berlin. This is the largest remaining evidence of the past city division. Today, wall mural with its visual testimony of the spirit of the liberation, made by various world artist, is one of the main touristic attraction in Berlin. In year 2009 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution and the Fall of the Wall of Berlin.

Fernsehturm (TV tower), with its 365 meter, the highest structure of Berlin topped by a metal globe is the symbol of the old East German regime. The purpose of its high structure, which is impossible not to be seen from almost all central parts of the town, was to remind those in West Berlin that they were surrounded by the East German State.

Alexanderplatz is the main square in the eastern part of Berlin, named to honor Alexander I, Tsar of Russia. In the 1970, Alexanderplatz became a typical socialistic urban square. The former department store "Centrum Warenhaus" was the largest department store in DDR and is transformed nowadays to a modern department store. Important traffic junction with S-Bahn (surface rail network) as well as the underground railway, together with well known buildings such as Hotel Stadt Berlin (123m high hotel), the Haus des Lehrers (Teachers' House), The House of Travel and the publishing house building (today Berliner Zeitung) had the aim to make this square competitive with West Berlin.

The architectural future of East Berlin is in further urban development. The positive urban development is possible only by integrating typical socialistic architecture. These sky-scrapers from the communistic period are a part of the past. The successful future could not be built by destroying the leftovers of the past. There are always ways of reconstruction that could bring progress and modernization.



Fig. 8 Fernsehturm  
Photographs made by the author 2009



Fig. 9 Alexanderplatz  
Photographs made by the author 2009

### 3. BERLIN TODAY AS UNESCO CITY OF DESIGN AND ART CENTER

Using public spaces for art installation is common in Berlin. The city is famous as world art center and attracts artist worldwide. This tendency is particularly strong in the last ten years and is considered to be the top art destination in Europe due to big number of galleries and good life conditions for artists. The city is also official UNESCO city of design since November 2005 as the first city in Europe to have this title. This title was result of incredible creative industry of the city. The creative potential of Berlin resulted in almost 11.700 Berliners working in fashion, product and furniture design, architecture, photography and visual arts. At this moment, UNESCO world cities of design are Berlin (Germany), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Montreal (Canada), Nagoya (Japan), Kobe (Japan) and Shenzhen (China).

#### 3.1. Art in open urban space as part of modern Berlin

Today trend is to make art in open urban space in order to make art more accessible and visible to all citizens. Here is an example how art could assume a role in public space. At Brandenburg gate with installation of Greek artist Kalliopi Lemos. This installation at Brandenburg gate is part of trilogy "Crossing" (Eleusis, Istanbul and Berlin) made by Greek artist Kalliopi Lemos. Each exhibition in this trilogy is consisting of a different installation of wooden Turkish boats which were found abandoned at Greek islands. These three cities are typical route of migration from East to West. Artist raises a question of the feeling of being in between borders, cultures and identities. The last part of trilogy is held in Berlin in period of 13<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> October 2009. By putting this installation in front of the Brandenburg gate, boundaries and limits of art in open spaces are moved forward. Berlin is the best place to make such avant-garde story with a strong message. The time has come when public space also participate in the evolution of art.



Fig. 10 Installation "At the crossroads" by Greek artist Kalliopi Lemos;  
Photograph made by the author 2009



#### 4. CONCLUSION

Berlin is the city of diverse architectural styles as the turbulent history has always been reflected in the architecture. Today Berlin is facing many problems, the same as the other metropolises. Berlin had learnt a lot from the past. The present shows how past should never be forgotten. Without understanding of past there is no future.

It could be concluded that Berlin is definitely unique city with rich history, fruitful present and without no doubt a city with great possibilities for future development. Thanks to its diversity Berlin is an international cosmopolitan that will always attract people from all around the world. It is also well known that Berlin gives endless creative possibilities as the UNESCO city of design. After the Second World War different architectural styles have been developed in the town divided by the Wall. In the year of celebration of 20 years of German reunion after Fall of the Berlin Wall, many questions have to be raised in Berlin and still a lot of work has to be done in order to make Berlin better. The biggest treasure that Berlin has is the fact that Berlin is the city of past, present and future.

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## BERLIN IZMEĐU PROŠLOSTI, SADAŠNJOSTI I BUDUĆNOSTI

**Biljana Arandjelović, Kaja Pogacar**

*Berlin je jedan od najinteresantnijih evropskih gradova. U periodu hladnog rata grad je fizički bio podjeljen na Zapadni Berlin i Istocni Berlin 28 godina u periodu od avgusta 1961 do novembra 1989. Berlin je simbol granice između Zapadnih zemalja i komunizma za vreme hladnog rata što je također uticalo i na arhitekturu Berlinu. Grad je bio najveće gradiliste u Evropi za vreme devedesetih. Danas je Berlin bitan umetnicki centar sa oko 1500 dnevnih umetnickih događaja. Berlin je također i jedini grad u Evropi koji nosi titulu UNESCO city of design.*

Ključne reči: *moderna arhitektura Berlina, istorija arhitekture, umetnost na otvorenom prostoru, UNESCO grad dizajna, memorijali na otvorenom prostoru*