

THE “BERLIN HAUPTSTADT” COMPETITION 1957-1958

Towards public space projects in European Post-war

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Resumen

El espacio público siendo quizás uno de los campos que con más frecuencia se estudia en los últimos años, carece sin embargo de episodios suficientemente alejados en el tiempo que nos permitan reconocer su historia reciente. La irrupción del pensamiento organicista y más tarde existencialista tras la 2ª Guerra Mundial cambió el modo de pensar en todas las áreas del conocimiento, también en aquellas relativas al urbanismo y al proyecto de ciudad. Con el cambio de contexto encontrado en las capitales europeas, cristalizó la necesidad de una ciudad “humanizada” que se reconoce en algunas propuestas aisladas de aquellos años, pero que también fue transformando la forma de pensar el espacio público en los diferentes CIAM celebrados, influyendo de manera determinante en la continua revisión de la “Carta de Atenas” y llegando a estar en la base de su disolución.

A pesar de las continuas revisiones llevadas a cabo en el periodo de postguerra, la distancia entre los presupuestos teóricos CIAM y las realidades urbanas que encontraban los participantes, les llevó a un cierto escepticismo y produjo un desplazamiento de intereses desde la teoría urbanística a la práctica proyectiva, tratando de resolver cuestiones concretas para posteriormente extraer conclusiones. El concurso “Berlin Hauptstadt”, un ambicioso Plan convocado en 1957 por la “Internationales Bauausstellung” para una hipotética capital alemana, fue un último episodio en aquellos debates que nos muestra las incertidumbres y contradicciones de algunos participantes al enfrentarse al proyecto de espacio público desde la desconfianza en sus bases teóricas.

El concurso se planteaba con un programa muy extenso y sectorizado que respondía a necesidades institucionales de la Alemania Occidental, dando prioridad al entramado de infraestructuras viales sobre el tejido urbano existente, y a una cierta vocación monumental o publicitaria de la cultura occidental. En el jurado entre otras personalidades participó Alvar Aalto, quien poco antes había participado en la construcción del barrio “Hansa” ejemplificando la ciudad moderna en el extremo opuesto del “Tiergarten”. En “Berlin Hauptstadt”, algunas propuestas, asumían profundas variaciones en la forma de proyectar el espacio público respecto a las pautas presentadas por los CIAM de aquellos años. Se plantea así su estudio como un último registro de estas reacciones pragmáticas al cambio de contexto con el que podamos encontrar las condiciones latentes en el proyecto de espacio público de posguerra europeo.

Palabras clave: Berlín, Postguerra, Espacio Público, Huellas, Memoria

Abstract

Public space, being perhaps one of the urbanism most studied topics on last years, however lacks events sufficiently distant in time to recognize its recent history. The emergence of organic and later existentialism philosophies after Second World War changed the way of thinking in those areas of knowledge relating to urbanism and city planning. The switched context found in European capitals after the War crystallized the need for a “humanized” city. This need was indeed in some isolated projects realized during those years, but was also present in the way public space was thought in different debates and urban planning discussions hold at the International Congresses of Modern Architecture, where the decisive influence of the “Athens Charter” prerogatives and its several re-views was on the basis of its final dissolution staged by Team X in Oterloo in 1959. Despite the on going revisions conducted in the post-war period, the gap between theoretical assumptions and ur-ban realities that CIAM participants found at that time, led to some skepticism and a loss of interest in urban theories and aimed them to set on a projective practice, solving specific issues for further general conclusions.

The “Berlin Hauptstadt” Competition, an ambitious Plan for the capital of a united Germany convened in Berlin 1957 by the “Internationales Bauaustellung” was a last episode in this period of discussions and dissolution of modern urbanism that shows uncertainties and contradictions of some participants when were faced to the public space projects distrusting their theoretical bases. While building projects were still regarded more or less as in pre-war period, in some cases, the public space projects presented in the submitted proposals, are perceived with some important variations comparing to the planning guidelines defended by the CIAM urbanism at that time. Thus, the study of Berlin Hauptstadt competition is here presented as a compilation of these pragmatic responses to the switched context, which will allow us to find nuances and differences of interpretation between some of the presented proposals to unveil latent conditions in the public space projects at European post-war.

The Berliner “IBA” announced the competition in 1957 as an important event for the future development. Although finally this important roll was not played, the competition represents a last episode on the CIAM urbanism discussions when disagreements and divided opinions were the usual context. Some participant’s proposals highlight the uncertainty and the loss of trust on urbanism theories of the time. Despite the range of proposals, there was little difference between the proposed buildings for Berlin Hauptstadt and those exhibited by CIAM in pre-war years, but on the other hand there were big differences between the pedestrian ways and the public spaces ideas proposed in Berlin Hauptstadt and those determined by the CIAM theories. This Thesis challenges the analyses of several public spaces based upon concepts such as picturesque landscapes, inter-ventions from the existing city ruins or mixed use public spaces, which shows a pragmatic attitude to plan the city in this change of context after Second World War.

Key words: Berlin, Post-war, Public Space, Huellas, Memory

1. Berlin Hauptstadt: 1945 - 1958

1945. Governments and divisions in post-war Berlin

During last days of War, the Ally armies involved discussed the rule of Berlin, at the Postdam Conference the city was divided in four different administration areas ruled by each one, and was planned several times as a united city until the beginning of the Cold War and the foundation of Germany Federal Republic in October 1949. Then a period started in the history of the city when urban planning acted as a controversial propagandistic weapon successively used to win media battle by the different administrations. In 1946 a team led by Hans Scharoun presented the first Plan to define a future development for the Capital known as "KollektivPlan", in an open house exhibition called "Berlin Plant" held at the Hohenzollern Castle. The Plan, based on an open green band parallel to the Spree River, considered the deva station an opportunity to begin a new urban concept in) for the city centre. Other Plans, such as "Zehlendorf Plan" also showed in this exhibition or the one known as "Bonatz Plan" (1948), were much more respectfull with the old city.



Fig. 1. Fritz Tiedemann. Berlin 1949-1951. (Top to bottom; Pariser Platz; Rathausstrasse; Marx Engels Platz and Friedrichshain). Domröse, Ulrich. "Fritz tiedemann So weit kein Auge reicht" exhibition at Berlinische Galerie. Berlin 2001

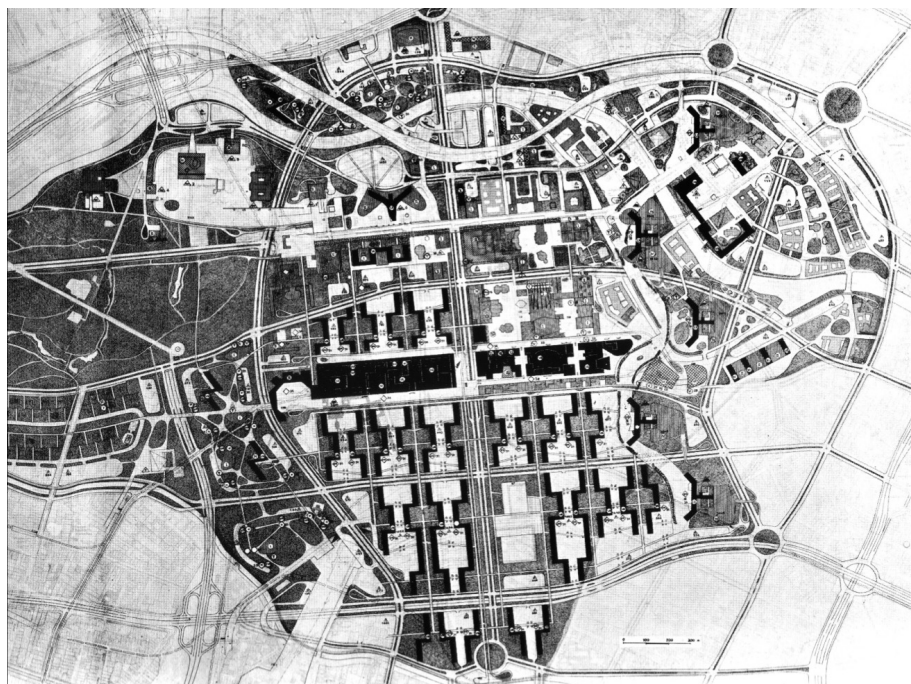


Fig. 2. Le Corbusier. General Plan for Berlin Hauptstadt 1958. Boesiger, W./Girsberger, H. "Le Corbusier 1910-65". Ed. Gustavo Gili. Barcelona 1971. Pg. 348

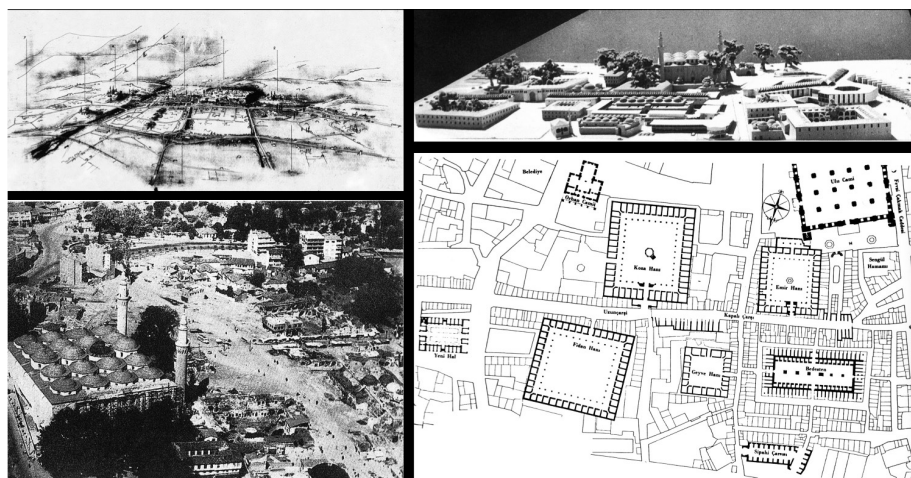


Fig. 3. Luigi Piccinatto. General Plan for Berlin Hauptstadt 1958. Luigi Piccinatto e l'urbanistica moderna. Author: Federico Malusardi. Ed. Officina Edizione. 1993. Pg. 97

2. The set-up

Planning a Capital. “Berlin Hauptstadt”

The working area proposed at the competition basis, extending west – east from Tiergarten to the Spree Island, did include a large area of the city-center under the rule of the soviet military powers. It was understood as a provocation by the eastern authorities that shortly after convoked a new Berlin Hauptstadt Competition exclusively for the recently born GDR. Those competitions where set as part of a propagandistic race held at that time by the east and west authorities turning their backs to citizens. The competition program for Berlin Hauptstadt was also ambitious and although in a first step was proposed only to rebuild the Reichstag parliament as a kind of local regierungs building, finally the idea of restoring the Capital of a united Germany was set at the program.

The selected jury was also as important as the competition was, including among others: Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius, Pierre Vago, Otto Bartning or Cornelius Van Eesteren. Being involved in the B-H organization the UIA and other international institutions, the competition was announced all over the World, and got a great acceptance. Around 143 proposals were submitted.

3. Monumentality and closer scales

The C.I.A.M. at Bridgewater and Hoddesdon

The 1958 “Berlin Hauptstadt” competition can be understood as the last episode in the urban plan-ning’s history of a unique Berlin before the Wall building as well as the last episode on CIAM Urbanism. Most of the proposal submitted, were still under the influence of “The Charter of Athens” principles defined in the CIAM1933 in Athens. Since that time, studies about public space came prominence becoming one of the main issues of division and disagreement between participants. The incidence of a deep criticism in concern to modern urban planning carried out by authors such as Lewis Mumford in his writings: “Technics and Civilization” (1934) and later in “Monumentalist, Symbolism and Style” (1949) in respond to the CIAM 6 celebrated in Bridgewater (UK) 1947, moved Giedion answer with articles such as “About a new monumentality” or “The humanization of the city and the new regionalism” that reflected a kind of revision of the Athens principles. Later, recovering some of the ideas already developed by Patrick Geddes in the early 20th century, the “Doorn Mani-festo” (1954) signed as an act of foundation by Team 10, becoming public space one of the main topics in which there were disagreements with the CIAM theories. The Berlin Hauptstadt Competition, confirmed this fractures opened especially after the CIAM 8 “The heart of the city” celebrated in Hoddesdon 1951.

Modern urbanism as an institutional urban planning

Despite the efforts done by Sert, Giedion and the other organizers for keeping modern urbanism as an avant-garde theory of urban planning, the expansion of their ideas all over the world confirmed a standardization of concepts which were already an institutional way of doing for the new democratic capitals that were founded during these years. So it can be seen in many projects presented to the Berlin Hauptstadt Competition.

Most of the first prizes awarded, were local teams of architects and urban planners, which had a precise knowledge of the urban problems in Berlin, and they could work in a closer scale to solve its real state. So it was the winner proposal, featured by Friedrich Spengelin, Fritz Eggelin y Gerd Pempelfort. Some other awarded proposals such as the one by Hans Scharoun and Willy Ebert or the one presented by Alison and Peter Smithson and Sigmund Wonke worked from a less real situation.

4. Open floor plan and preexistences after war

**“Nothing to conserve.” Le Corbusier’s Plan for Berlin.
From Inside. The plan proposed by Luigi Piccinato**

We aim to know whether the work with ruins and background from former Berlin did influence the planning of the new city. Some proposals, as the one held by Luigi Piccinato, were trying to find within the inner public spaces, a city which came growing organically from the previously existing remains. This idea, in which Piccinato had already been working when he faced the challenge of projecting to rebuild historical city centres of some Mediterranean cities such as Bursa or Istanbul,

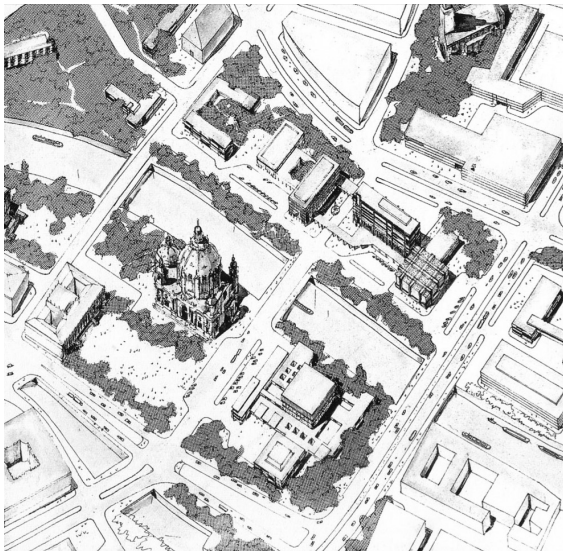


Fig. 4. Luigi Piccinato. Axonometry for Berlin Hauptstadt 1958. Luigi Piccinato e l'urbanistica moderna. Author: Federico Malusardi. Ed. Officina Edizione. 1993. Pg. 97

was set forth once again in Berlin, a city with a very different urban structure, more open and undefined, where there existed no close link between housing and squares as found typically in Mediterranean cities. In the proposal of this Italian author, the square appears not so much as a result of a specific urban space restoration but as an element in a system itself capable of recomposing the pieces of still standing blocks in Berlin-Mitte.

Therefore, the general shape of the appointed city by Piccinato was not a closed and defined one, but instead a consequence of the inner rebuilding process. As once happened in the medieval cities he drew up, the outcome of urban strains growing up from the inner city.

5. Life in the street. Overlaid uses on ancient public spaces

Form Hoddesdon to Dubrovnic, and the Doorn manifesto

We try to find precedents of public spaces approaches which had been projected without any specific use, where beyond the specific zonation provided by the competition programme, projects would look upon spaces with overlaying uses or activities with an a priori non defined use. Those teams closely linked to the Team X ideas displayed during CIAM '53 and '55, presented these kind of spaces focusing their projects.

Shared uses. The Plan proposed by Van der Broeck and Bakema

The sections presented in this proposal showed complex city-buildings which were filled up with many different uses overlaid in different levels. This was a first step to dissolve the separation of functions promoted by CIAMs in the "Athens Charter" a shared goal with other team X members.

Streets in the air. The Plan proposed by Alison and Peter Smithson

The Alison and Peter Smithson proposal for Berlin Hauptstadt relied on a net of street-patterns with non-defined use overlaid to the ancient city. This street net could be experienced on different moments, welcoming all those a city daily life provides as an events basis. As seen for open spaces in rural villages, it was expected that spontaneous use of such places would provide new meeting forums, such as the open air parliament proposed as stands by the Reichstag.

The idea of using the street as the community main public space had been repeated by the Smithson back from their proposal presentation at "Golden Lane" competition, Coventry 1952, but in Berlin Hauptstadt elevated streets gaining a quasi-monumental scale and becoming the proposal leading space.

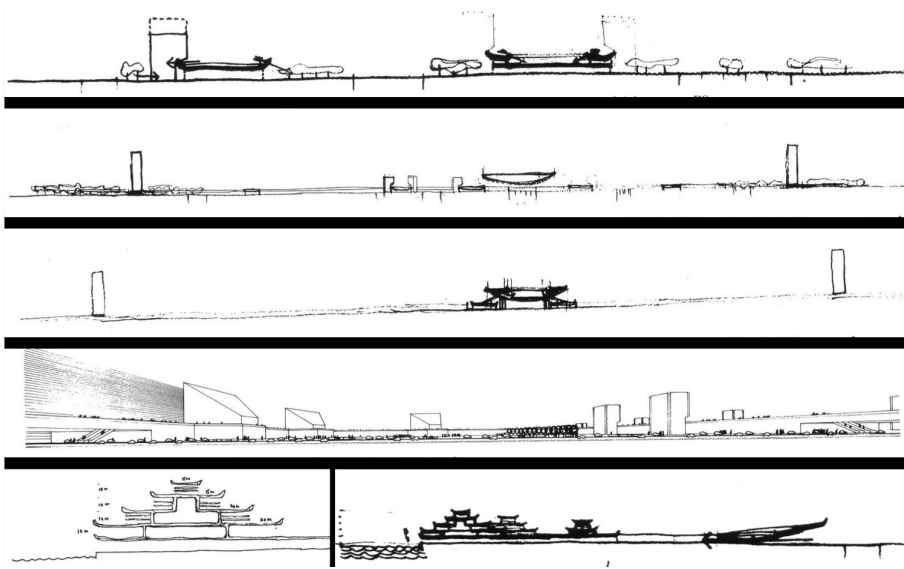


Fig. 5. Alison y Peter Smithson, Sigmond Wonke Sections for Berlin Hauptstadt proposal including the "Chinese wall". 1957. "The Charged Void. Ur-banism". Monacelli Press. London. 2004

6. Landscapes as a urban principle

1957. The irruption of urban motorways Plan

In post-war years, although Berlin was immersed in its state of emergency, great scale plans were approved which appointed a metropolitan character to its wide territory. A new motorway plan for the whole city was approved in 1957 to solve the hypothetic growing traffic of a united capital overlaid to the existing urban structure. The new scale of these infrastructures extended over the flat landscape of the Spree Valley with its lakes and woods, suggested some participants to work with a re-born Metropolis that could have an overview of the whole ruled Land.

Towards a definition for "Urbanism." The CIAM in LaSarraz

In spite of the consolidated tool in city planning that was landscape, the irruption of Modern urbanism theories did relegate it to an obsolesced practice. At the first CIAM congresses, since the first one held in La Sarraz 1928, the necessity of defining "Urbanism" as an objective method to project the city indeed the exclusion of other technics that such as Landscape were linked to the subjective interior of the author. Considerations about use, orientation, building densities or transport lines where the only ones admitted in the modern planning without any other distractions. Thus, in the first paragraph of French CIAM I minutes, was defined: "1. Urbanism is the organization of all functions of collective life. It is extended over urban developments and land. The urbanization can never be compromised by pretensions of an pre-existent aestheticism, its essence is that of a functional order"... But some CIAM participants, overall those who were still linked to the RingGruppe in Berlin at the 1920's, were not convinced at all about leaving landscape concepts from urban projects.

From “Grosstadt” to “StadtLandschaft.” Korn and Rosenberg

At the Berlin Hauptstadt competition there were some proposals, which relied in a landscape concept. We try to establish how landscape, rejected in LaSarra CIAM 1928 as a valid starting-point to plan the city from, was again a starting motive for urban project. Arthur Korn and Stephen Rosenberg proposal relied on a first bird's-eye sketch over Spree River for their presenting the capital as a sediments crust to which programme is afterwards made fit. Thus author's eye was so, once again, the starting point from which the territory is projected as it had been for landscapers who planned industrial cities new extensions during the last half of XIX century. Such resources were not new to Arthur Korn work, who had already undertook similar practices during his work together with MARS group, for the rebuilding of London in 1942, where a lineal cities cascade duplicated itself down both Thames river banks. But in his Berlin Hauptstadt project the choice for landscaping criteria was further developed, even getting him to leave behind orthogonal structures and setting forth artificial landscapes in a complex geometry. Landscapes that could be understood closer to the expressionist concept “Stadtlandschaft” than to modern City planning.

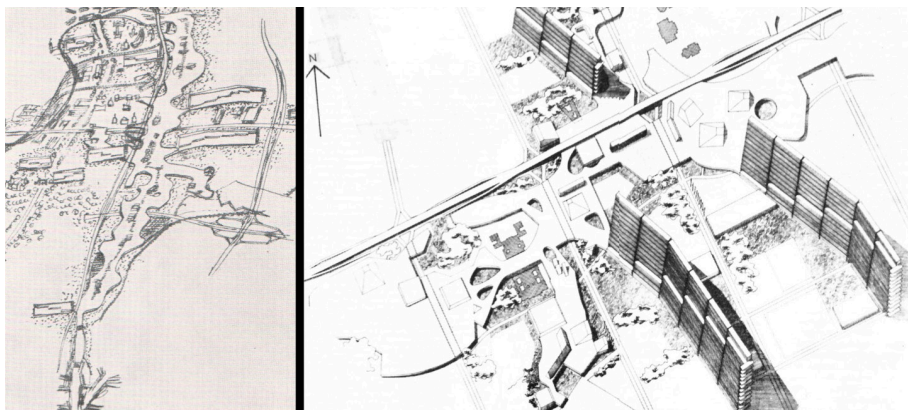


Fig. 6. Arthur Korn y S. Rosenberg Axonometry and sketch for Berlin Hauptstadt. In Friedrichstrasse and Leipzigerstrasse 1958. Hein, Carola. Exhibition catalog “Berlin Hauptstadt” in Berlinische Galerie. Berlin 1990



Fig. 7. Jorn Utzon, Peer Aben, Jorgen Michelsen, Erik and Henry Anderson. General Plan for Berlin Hauptstadt. 1958. Krohn, Carsten. “Das ungebaute Berlin: Stadtkonzepte im 20. Jahrhundert.” DOM Publishers, 2010

7. An elevated point of view

A body without head. StadtKrohn

The influence of some expressionist's theorist such as Bruno Taut, who wrote "Stadt Krohn" was still deeply assumed between German architects and urban planners. The conception of city as a whole landscape, on which societies were convoked, was already described by Taut as a lack or a necessity of the garden city and a valid formal way to project this and other urban developments in early twenties. Berlin landscape is inexorably linked to the Spree river presence and its multiple meander, for the city being mainly flat, the river performs the only natural border, shaping its development through History. Somehow Berlin has always had public buildings and public spaces that elevated the point of view of its citizens allowing them to have a comprehension of the entire city. Some existing places, as the memorial to the fallen in the War of Independence Monument erected in ViktoriaPark by Schinkel, or the TV tower Fernsehturm act as urban observatories where population goes to watch each other. This kind of point of view is also linked to the romantic landscape paintings, which showed an awesome and enormous nature where humankind was involved.

Chinese landscapes. The proposal by Ebert and Scharoun

The fluvial landscape also suited the idea of "Stadtbandkonzept" suggested for the German capital city by the "Kollektivplan" team conducted by Hans Scharoun in 1946, developing on Athens Charter standards the idea of a Capital city organized through parallel strips, bands along the river bed. However for his Berlin Hauptstadt proposal, he relied on building structures individually developed as Auditoriums, Libraries, Theatres and other kind of public institutions that were assembled one each other without any plan to be ordered. These built masses appeared tied to one another, taking people in to a chained terrace levels through a sequence of stairs. Somehow, the public space proposed by Scharoun for Berlin Hauptstadt brought the city in to a higher level, showing some ability to build city by just adding terraces and not by ordering a flat ground, as it used to be in some oriental towns. Thus, there is a precedent for this rejection on urbanism and fascination for

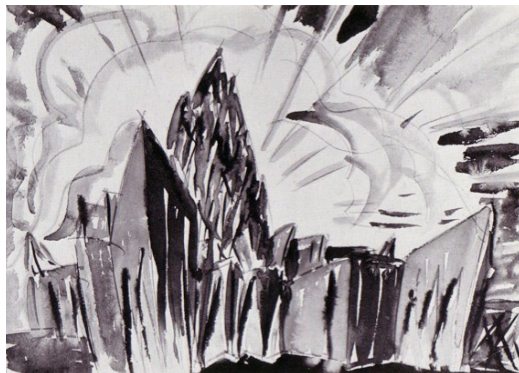
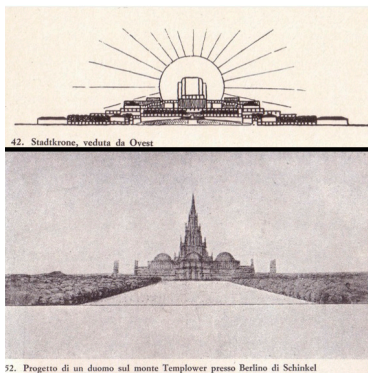


Fig. 8 y 9. Hans Scharoun. 1919 aquarelle and 1943 aquarelle. Akademie der Künste Berlin

Chinese cities in his writings of the convulse war period: “Chinesische stadtebau” where Scharoun described it as a model for organicist cities. These writings were published two years after his death illustrated by the watercolour study for imaginary projects he also painted during wartime. The watercolour paintings showed some expressionists landscapes occupied by hundreds of citizens in a high-rise pilgrimage, a premonitory image for Berlin Hauptstadt.

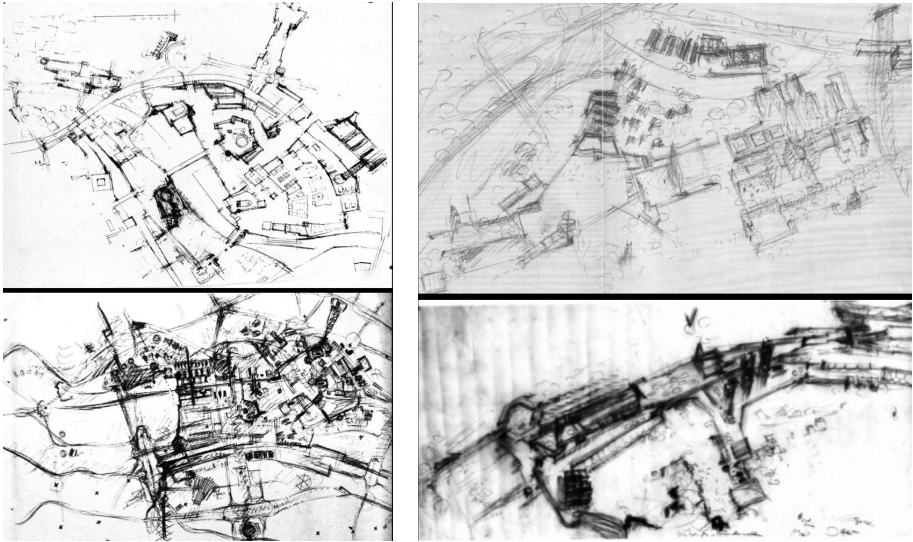


Fig. 10. Hans Scharoun. First drawings for Berlin Hauptstadt competition. Akademie der Künste Berlin. 1957

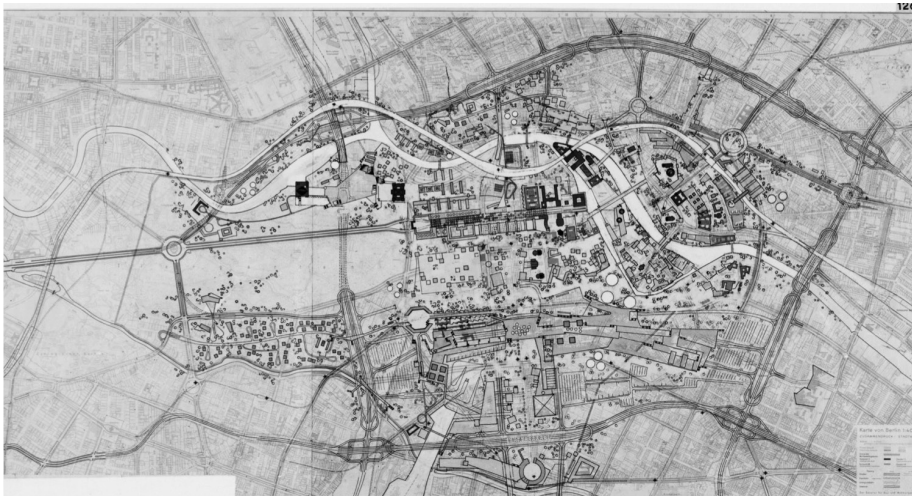


Fig. 11. Hans Scharoun and Wills Ebert. General Plan for the Berlin Hauptstadt competition. Akademie der Künste Berlin. 1958

8. Conclusions. Footprints of a new society

Changing context and pragmatism

After having a view of the different concepts used by the participants in their proposals presented to the competition, there is a first conclusion we can drop out. The postwar in Berlin, from the Postdam conference until the Wall erection in August 1961, revealed a frozen period in its recent history on which no urban plan was developed under urban arguments nor theories. Most of the urban changes occurred where done by political decisions. Somehow the global urbanism promoted by the postwar CIAMs helped to this situation, the City planning as a standardized method allowed politicians to use it as a tool for propaganda and so to fight for their own interests. Although the specific situation of Berlin, the use of urbanism as a tool for propaganda has been also a usual problem after second world war in some European cities. But meanwhile modern urbanism became an institutional tool and architects and urban planners refuted it beginning then their own research on city planning from a projective practice by solving concrete questions they found in the given context.

Thus, we have the proposal of Piccinato in Berlin Hauptstadt working with the existing to develop a non conclude city, far away from previous works like the one of Villa Sabaudia (1934) organized as an axial and well oriented, shaped city.

We find in the Smithson proposal a complex city centre with a “charged void” conception, much more picturesque and aerial than the one projected for Golden Lane, four years before. Their concept “area of quietude” proposed at the Berlin competition was used once again a year after, in the elevated plaza that support the Economist buildings.

At last we find that Landscape was again used to city planning and thus many proposals were not based on such concepts as transport main lines or building zonings, but in imagined landscapes, which were after filled up with the program. The proposal presented by Arthur Korn and Stephen Rosenberg was quite a renounce of the CIAM principles, which Korn drew up with the “Ernst May Brigade” in the soviet cities between 1930 and 1933 and ten years later in London with the MARS group.

Utzon with Abben and Anderson, also settled up another landscape concept which he import from distant cultures to Berlin. He used the Mayas platforms from the Yucatan half island, and the oriental ones as well, in different projects during those years when he was fling constantly from Denmark to Sidney. But he used it not only to project specific buildings like the one of Sidney Concert Hall, in Berlin and later in other places of a smaller scale such concepts were used for urban planning as well.

Landscape was also the final solution for a concept, which Hans Scharoun was working on during all these postwar years in Berlin. The Spree-band he already proposed inspired by Peter Friedrich in the Kollektivplan (1946) as a consequence

of the traffic main lines and as a logic separation of functions of the city, was presented in Berlin Hauptstadt as a liberated build mass which disposed at the Leipzigerstrasse permitted Tiergarten Park to be continuously expanded all over the Spree valley. The enormous build mass shaped with gold roofs, presented a high level of public spaces that were able to convoke and bring up citizens for having a view of their entire inhabited landscape.

The necessity of a human city after war

Despite of their different approaches to the Berlin Hauptstadt solitudes, most of the presented proposals showed up a concerning about what was named: "Humanisierung der Stadt" (Humanization of the city), that was a exposed necessity in their submitted texts. But humanizing was a extremely difficult goal at that time in Berlin, a city immerse at the epicenter of the "Cold War"

After so many decades isolated and frozen by the "Wall", Berlin or better the Berliners have developed its own way for city planning. The restricted life they could overlay to the city voids, have leave specific footprints and shaped the ground showing up their own the daily uses of the city. After the "Wall fallen" the great efforts token to unify the divided city by both governments revealed another, thus softly, division. The one established between a real city sculpted by the citizens daily life and other one planned by the council occupying most of these charged voids with a new remake of the Wagner Plan (1925) or the reconstruction of the 19th century city.

Even now having a walk by the city void grounds that once were planned in the Berlin Hauptstadt competition, is possible to see the great value they still have for preserving a sort of places with a closer scale, in such a great City. Sometimes, the footprints confirm some of the ideas that were appointed in the competitors proposals. The inner city proposed by Piccinato is present now in very different places like "PrizessinGarten" or "Pfefferberg" which with their own specific character made from their inside uses, influence the whole neighborhood where they are sited.

The ground beside the Reichstag, contrary to the idea of an open-air parliament presented by the Smithson, is today marked with the footprints of the rows of the visitors who want to climb up the new dome and take a view. Meanwhile footprints in other places such as the Mauerpark at Prenzlauerberg show us a rich and with various uses place, where citizens find them selves.

Also the landscape is present in some public spaces of the city freely occupied as observato-ries. The intense relation with the river proposed by Korn and Rosenberg can be lived in the bridge Admiralbrücke where the spring solstice is in alignment with the Landwehrkanal and so people meet this day to presence the sunset. Footprints on both sides of the canal bring the observers to the meeting point.

One of the few elevations existing in the city grounds, hosts footprints from the Grossbeere-nstrasse and Tempelhofstrasse avenues that are self concentrated in the National Monument pro-jected by Schinkel in 1822, in memoriam of the

Independence war fallen. The observatory an octa-gonal base which crowns the ViktoriaPark, give to citizens a place to sit down all over the hill skirts and watch the city landscape and its skylines. This kind of city recognition was also the basis of the landscape proposed by Hans Scharoun for the competition.



Fig. 12. Berlin-Mitte from south Tiergarten b.1961. CASABELLA. n. 228. June 1964

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