Re-Linking Urban Infrastructure

movement, moments & memories

by

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Abstract

Throughout antiquity, the wall served not only to protect the city, but also to unite the citizens to the point where their identity was in the wall. Against this tradition of the wall as the very originator of society and domesticity, in Berlin, we faced a wall that denied society, a wall that tore Europe apart. Issues hovered around what are we to make of a wall that divided families, one that was also known as the "Iron Curtain", "a wall whose very name evoked an inflexible, unrelenting, terminable sense of death." The Berlin Wall crumbled on November 9, 1989 together with its power to contain when the guards, stepped aside and let the crowds through. Its physical absence has left a big scar on the landscape of Berlin, but more importantly a deep scar in the minds of the people.

The thesis proposed different contexts within a linear site, with the injection of main components such as a library, a theatre, artist housing and an Documentation and Interpretative Centre, integrated with the East Side Gallery. These 'container of activities' are then linked by a series of courtyards, which became the 'Connector' of activities.

It is not our aim to dictate a new identity for a city, but identifying 'fragments' that can be useful, and letting the fabric, or the society develop upon these to form the story. The Berlin Wall may be the answer for Berlin's identity, despite its controversies and difficulty as it touches upon the uncertainties of psychological attributes. There are always 2 sides to a wall, and 2 sides of a story.

The mixed-use development aims to reflect the changes in the meanings of the Wall, from its physical form to a 'barrier in the mind' -the differences on the other side of the Wall, to bringing people together - be it graffiti or paintings of freedom. When new developments evolve from old infrastructure, it reinforces the concept of connecting and separating new and old.

1 Neil leach, The Bridal Chamber, (p. 210)