BERLIN - THE INFLUENCE OF THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF THE INHABITANTS ON THE TYPICAL FEATURES OF THE CONTEMPORARY URBAN SPACE

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the research is to assess public urban space’s architectural and urban changes due to different cultural influences in one part of the urban district of Berlin Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg – “Berlin Kreuzberg” – a redevelopment area, which was defined around 1980 by the International Building Competition IBA 1984/87. Through it, photographic records of the individual buildings have been created, which are compared with the current state of the development.

The area has a high representation of foreigners and residents with a migration background, and, with 63.5 %, a high share of non-European cultural influences. For comparison, a small part of the urban district of Lichtenberg – “Berlin Lichtenberg” – is selected.

The results show the effects of cultural differences (architectural and urban) – changes in groups (Shape, Mass, and Space), as well as, for example, by comparing the number of services in both localities.

Based on the data obtained, we can state no radical reconstructions in the “Berlin Kreuzberg” locality have been made. (Moggert, 2022a)

KEY WORDS: Cultural differences and influences; urban space; architectural and urban changes; Berlin Kreuzberg; Berlin Lichtenberg; immigration
Introduction

Berlin’s interesting demographic situation, with 55.44% of the city’s population consisting of foreigners and residents with a migrant background, led the author to question whether the different cultural backgrounds from which people in the city come can change the urban space.

Berlin itself is a city that is constantly evolving and is also inspiring in terms of solving the problems of urban space in the context of historical development. (Moggert, 2022a) The dividing of the city into two parts – West and East Berlin, had a dramatic impact on the city space. The locality of Berlin Kreuzberg was situated in West Berlin, while opposite it, the Lichtenberg district was part of the capital of the GDR1.

The research locality Kottbusser Tor – part of Berlin Kreuzberg, the area with the largest proportion of inhabitants with a migration background and foreigners, 63,5%, was chosen as the main research location. Although the 99.5 ha surface area may seem small, it is where the main action of the Kreuzberg district takes place and brings us interesting findings. This location has been particularly compared to a small-sized part of the Lichtenberg district (Weitlingkiez) which has 24,8% of inhabitants with a migration background or foreigners. (Moggert, 2022b)

An addition critical aspect of city development is the political and legislative impact. The author is acquainted with the situation but the paper is focused on the architectural and urban changes of the public space.

The author evaluated Berlin as one of the most interesting cities in Europe to begin the research on the architectonic and urban impact of cultural differences. It has a rich history, constant building development and is known as a centre of contemporary architecture. The potential future research extends the application to other European countries to get extended results as well as results on the architectonic and urban influence of immigrants who went back to their home country.

The previous investigations were focused mostly on the social aspects. This research exposes the architectural and urban changes in the public space.

Aim of the paper and research questions

The research aims to evaluate the changes in public urban space concerning the demographic transformation of Europe in the context of international migration. It traces the influence of a social phenomenon – different cultures – in the urban archi-
The research questions and working hypothesis were formulated:

- Do foreigners and residents with a migration background have an impact on urban space?
- Are they changing it?
- How do they change it? (Moggert, 2022b)

Methods

An important aspect of the theoretical part of the thesis was the understanding of the topic and the importance of the concepts of cultural differences and typical features of a contemporary city, which are key to this paper. The paper deals with the significance of different cultural influences within the urban space. It was, therefore, necessary to define which influences would be involved and which typical features would be relevant to the thesis. Based on the definition of these terms, the evaluation of statistical data on the share and type of immigrants and residents with a migrant background in the total population in the city of Berlin, and the evaluation of the...
selection of sites based on the interviews conducted, the sites that the thesis further addresses were selected. Their similarity, especially in terms of distance to the city centre, the size of the location and the number of houses, was important for the selection. The sites are Berlin Kreuzberg, here concretely the Kottbusser Tor redevelopment area (Hämer and Arbeitsgruppe Stadterneuerung, 1981) (hereafter termed “Berlin Kreuzberg”) and Berlin Lichtenberg, here concretely the Weitlingkiez (hereafter termed “Berlin Lichtenberg”). The selection of these sites is made so that the two sites can be compared. The “Berlin Kreuzberg” site is a site with a high proportion of immigrants from Turkey, whereas the “Berlin Lichtenberg” site has a minimal proportion of immigrants from Arab countries. (Moggert, 2022a)

Table 1. “Berlin Kreuzberg” and “Berlin Lichtenberg” - Proportion of foreigners and residents with a migration background and Germans (source: author’s archive, data - Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg)

The research was divided into two parts – an analysis of both sites and their selected subdivisions, and an evaluation of architectural urban changes in selected subdivisions based on the determined algorithms on the “Berlin Kreuzberg” site. The comparisons and interpretations of the collected data show us the impact of cultural differences on urban space with the example of the city of Berlin. (Moggert, 2022a)

Part of the work was inspired by the structure of the dissertation “The quality of urban structure according to the evaluation of their inhabitants.” (Matyášová, 2020)

**The local investigation**

The core research method was a local investigation, which took place in July and October 2021, the main content of which was the acquisition of a photographic record
of individual buildings of selected sub-locations in “Berlin Kreuzberg”. Furthermore, data on the type and number of characteristic services in both locations were recorded. Due to the difference in the size of the areas of the sites, this number was recalculated to the area of the selected territories. These distinctive services were further examined in terms of different cultural influences.


For the purpose of evaluating individual buildings in “Berlin Kreuzberg”, a system of algorithms was created, divided into the groups Shape, Mass and Space. The shape represents a group of elements determining the appearance of the building, such as changes in fillings, ornament, or material. Mass is understood as a change in the volume of an object within the volume group and changes in the size of the built-up area. The space determines the changes taking place around the building and refers to changes in the appearance of the public space, the use of the ground floor of houses, and green areas. The changes were scored in the range of 0-30 points, with 0-10 points indicating the
preservation of the object without significant changes, 10-20 points indicating a change in European character, and 20-30 points indicating a change with the influence of a different culture. A rating showing a number with a negative value was used in cases where there is an outflow of European or different cultural influences. The weight of the value was derived from the assessed element’s size – the parcel’s size. The research evaluated around 180 houses in the “Berlin Kreuzberg” area, on the streets Adalbertstraße, Oranienstraße and Waldemarstraße. For comparison, photographs of individual houses taken as part of the International Building Exhibition IBA 1984/87 were used, which show the situation of the buildings in approximately 1981. It is a complex system that solves individual connections between groups and the percentage representation of individual elements; for the purpose of the paper, however, a simplified explanation of the methodology was used. We can list, for example, arabesque patterns, types of arches or arcades, the use of expressive colours or other types of material typical for a given culture, assembly elements, marketplaces, water elements, or compositional arrangement of space as different typical cultural signs. (Moggert, 2022b)

Figure 3. Example of comparing photos from 1981 and 2021 (source: author’s archive and https://berlin.museum-digital.de2)
Table 2. Recording the types and numbers of characteristic services (data obtained by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>&quot;Berlin Kreuzberg&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Berlin Lichtenberg&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store/bakery</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair cutter</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internetcafe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastronomy</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist temple, prayer room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque, cultural center of Islam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synagogue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Recording the types and numbers of characteristic services (data obtained by the author)

Results and discussion

Analysis of both sites

"Berlin Kreuzberg" is typical of dense block development with an area of 34.1%, compared to the built-up area in “Berlin Lichtenberg” - 25.6%, in proportion to the total areas. Public spaces, private spaces, and public greenery occupy a similar percentage of area in both locations. However, “Berlin Lichtenberg” is characterised by abun-
dant greenery in the form of rows of trees and groups of bushes, which, for example, on Marie-Curie-Allee street reaches 26% of the street area. Of interest is the high 22% representation of semi-public spaces in “Berlin Lichtenberg” compared to 8.5% in “Berlin Kreuzberg”. This is due to the construction in the Neues Bauen style, where the area around the blocks of flats is surrounded by a low fence and accessible to the public through gates. According to the Statistical Office in Berlin, the quality of housing in “Berlin Kreuzberg” is rated as low, while in “Berlin Lichtenberg” it is mostly average.

Diagram 1. Percentage representation of cultural influences in characteristic services (data obtained by the author)

**Evaluation of architectural urban changes of “Berlin Kreuzberg”**

The evaluation of selected streets was carried out by the Statistics software. According to the results, selected parts of the “Berlin Kreuzberg” location remain unchanged. From the point of view of dividing the research into individual groups, cultural influences in the Shape group are manifested by a change in ornament from 5% and material from 2%. Volume changes and changes in the size of the built-up area in the Mass group are culturally influenced by only 1% and these are small additions or superstructures of objects with characteristics of different cultural influences. The Space group appears to be the most interesting group in terms of research topics. This group also addressed the change in the use of the ground floor of houses according to the representation of cultural influences, and what is interesting is that there was an 18% increase in the services offered in the category of 20-30 points (different cultural influence), we also observe a decrease in services of European influence by 9% and an overall increase in commercial use of the ground floor of houses, also 9%. The green areas remain preserved, and there are an 7% increase in changes to the European character, this involves the planting of new trees and new park improvements, especially in the clearings. New market areas, street seating areas, etc. affect changes in public space through different cultural influences an increase of 3%. (Moggert, 2022b)
Diagram 2. Evaluation of changes in the use of the ground floor of houses according to the representation of cultural influences (data obtained by the author)

Conclusions

Data from the entire selected location show us that the “Berlin Kreuzberg” location has a high representation of gastronomic services, half of which are run by people with different cultural backgrounds, and at the same time has more than twice the representation of accommodation services, which confirms the fact that the place is popular with tourists. Furthermore, on a small area of 99.5 hectares, there is a Buddhist prayer house, mosques and Islamic cultural centres, a church and a synagogue. (Moggert, 2022b)

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Footnotes

[1] German Democratic Republic

References

