

## NEW FUNCTIONS FOR FORMER HARBOUR AREAS. EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATION OF NEGLECTED CITY SPACES

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### Abstract

The paper deals with a subject of functional adaptation of former harbour areas. These spaces are still problematic abandoned brownfields in many cities of Europe. This is a continuation of the subject undertaken already in the publication in ACEE (Vol.3 No.1/2010), referring to a German case study Osthafen Behala in Berlin. The case of study in Berlin reflects the city policy of upgrading processes. Similar changes, but on a bigger scale, appear in other world urban spaces: in London in Great Britain as well as in the German city of Hamburg. Such processes are correlated closely to the new functions and cityscape of brownfields. It is a view, wherein today spaces of new use can be well recognised. The chosen example will present these city planning and cityscaping situation of ex-industrial brownfield. Furthermore, the photo documentation in London as well as in Hamburg and photos and researches in situ carried out by the author in Berlin between 2004-2011 constitute, next to the literature, the primary source for the presented remarks. Conclusions illustrate the approach to the revitalisation process, presenting today's situation of the brownfield against the background of two cases of similar subject. Moreover, transformation of the former harbour areas into the new use in correlation with the cityscape is a new and original subject.

### Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje temat adaptacji funkcjonalnej dawnych terenów portowych. Przestrzenie te są w dalszym ciągu w wielu miejscach Europy problemem jako opuszczone nieużytki współczesnych terenów miejskich. Przedstawiony materiał jest kontynuacją opisu badań podjętych już w publikacji ACEE (Vol.3 No.1/2010) – odnoszącego się do niemieckiego obszaru Osthafen Behala w Berlinie. Analizy podjęte w Berlinie odzwierciedlają politykę miasta polegającą na wspieraniu procesów rewitalizacji. Podobne działania, choć w większej skali, dokonywane były w światowych ośrodkach urbanistycznych: w Londynie w Wielkiej Brytanii oraz w mieście niemieckim, Hamburgu. Procesy te są ściśle powiązane z nowymi funkcjami oraz krajobrazem nieużytków przemysłowych. Zaobserwować przy tym można widoki, w których nowe użytkowanie obszaru jest łatwo rozpoznawalne. Wybrany przykład przedstawia urbanistyczną i krajobrazową sytuację byłego terenu przemysłowego. Dokumentacja fotograficzna w Londynie i w Hamburgu oraz fotografie jak i badania in situ wykonane przez autorkę w Berlinie w latach 2004-2011 stanowią obok literatury, bazowe źródło informacyjne. Wnioski opracowania obrazują stosunek do procesu rewitalizacji przedstawiając sytuację obecną wybranego przypadku na tle dwóch tematycznie podobnych przykładów. Ponadto, przekształcanie byłych terenów portowych na nowe użytkowanie, w powiązaniu z krajobrazem jest problemem nowym i oryginalnym.

Keywords: Adaptation; Harbour areas; Re-use; City spaces.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The paper is aiming mainly at presenting the new possibilities of adaptation of former harbour areas. The case study in Berlin is the East Harbour "Osthafen Behala", which is placed in the district of Friedrichshain.

The site itself presents the local history of the place as expressed by its architectural heritage, such as the listed industrial granaries. Urban dimensions, such as the size and shape of the area characteristic for the harbour zones, permit many public activities in the open space. Moreover, the specific location forms a wide

connection and access to the waterside. The site is also located between two historically important bridges, the Oberbaumbrücke and the Eisenbrücke.

As far as the problem is concerned, to be similar cases the London Docklands in Great Britain (cf.: Fig. 1) and the Hafencity in Hamburg in north Germany appear (cf.: Fig. 2).

These two harbours are both being developed in living and working areas, where pedestrians find their ways and free spaces as well. The different feature is the size of sites. The two spaces of London Docklands and Hafencity are larger than the Osthafen Behala in Berlin [1], [2]. The similarity is, that the new housing estates are built there in a modern way. The comparable subject in the three cases is the modernity of present houses and connected with the superiority of new structures in comparison with vanishing old buildings. This means a loss of vernacular values.



**Figure 1.**  
The London Docklands, Great Britain: Pedestrian zone and modern buildings along the River Thames. Photo: W. Strabel

## 2. NEW USES IN THE FORMER EAST HARBOUR IN BERLIN, GERMANY

The process of revitalisation of “Osthafen Behala” area is officially based on the transformation guidelines set out by the Berlin City Council, which allows private investors to realise the projects [4]. The revival of the site assumes a few elements. The Spree River Area, including the east harbour, shall be spatially united with the surrounding urban site. Both, the existing and the new

characteristics of the district, which help to give the space its form, shall be considered when rearranging the shape of the city.

Available areas now exist along the Spree River, where in the past industrial plants were situated (cf. Figs. 3-10).

At present, the area is active as a commercial and office complex that has been transformed from neglected industrial buildings, creating a strong functional contrast with the past. The remaining harbour activity is now retreating from the central and the southern part of the site, which continued to operate until 2006.

The industrial area also changed from an urban planning point of view [5].

The remnants of granaries are essential, especially considering their history. Today they create a historical image of the site. It must be mentioned, however, that from its creation until 2005 the productive complex had such specific original industrial elements as factories, interior and exterior industrial facilities, open squares, and streets. The arrangement of these elements, which present a specific industrial composition, has been changed since 2006.

The Berlin City Council prepares plans for the Spree River Area, which call for the construction of new buildings in industrial areas in the Friedrichshain district. The plan will directly influence the Osthafen Behala site, which is located in the southeastern part of the Spree River Area. It is presently a dynamically changing part of Berlin.

A few significant guidelines have been created by the city's authorities in order to revive the district [4],[5].

The rehabilitation process is concentrating on the introduction of a spatial and time continuity at first. It aims to equalise the hitherto differences of the development trends of the neighbouring districts caused by the political division of the city between 1961 and 1989. Furthermore, the present programme of revitalisation for the area is to be combined with the general evolution of strategic urban spaces and of



**Figure 2.**  
The public open space and the new architecture of the Hafencity in Hamburg, Germany. Photo: The author

the sites situated between the city centre and the Rummelsburger Bucht, located to the north and south of the research area. The new economic utilisation of the area, dominated by new forms of work, contrasts with the former industrial history of the place. Innovative enterprises now focus on multimedia and design functions. In the future leisure, sport, and cultural activities will also be emphasised.

The basic goals of development at the Spree River Area, which involves “Osthafen Behala” harbour, are [4]:

- The development of new districts as living and working areas in order to gain a new quality of the upgraded industrial parts of the city
- building additional bridges to connect both sides of the Spree River
- separating the urban-spatial elements and cityscape-spatial elements, making use of them as planning possibilities for the Spree River Area
- creating small and large linear and spatial ele-

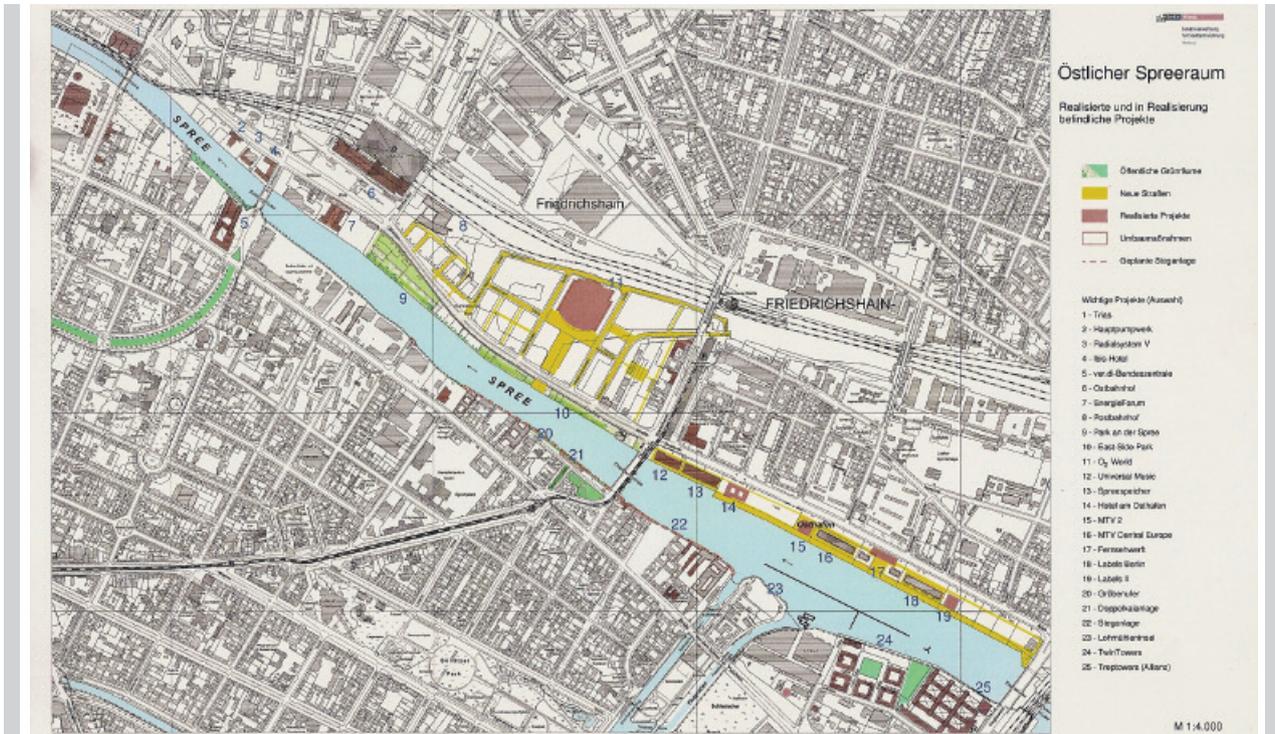
ments of division (public spaces, green areas along the river, and square spaces)

- planning parks and a network of parks, which will contribute to a new image of the formerly industrial districts
- designing public open space along the Spree River
- involving public actors (residents) in adaptive reuse and re-integration projects.

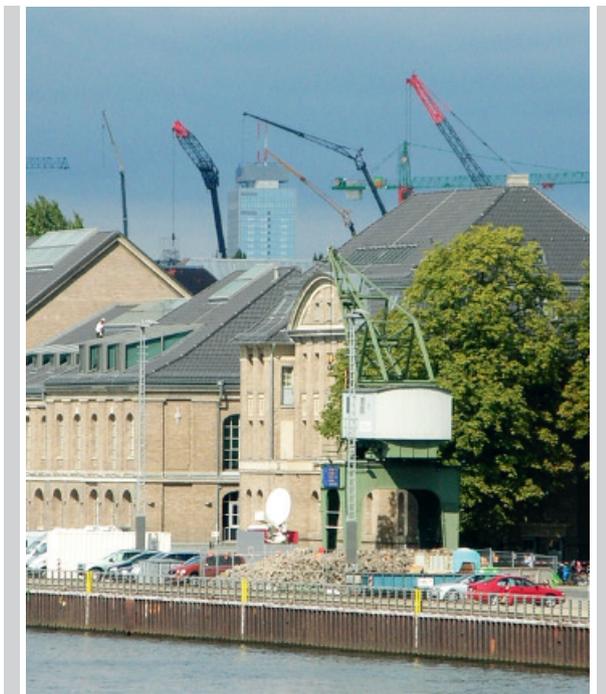
### 3. THE PERIOD OF POST-INDUSTRIAL REHABILITATION IN THE FORMER EAST HARBOUR IN BERLIN

The renovation and modernisation of the former factories and the creation of open areas around them has been planned since the end of the 1990s.

Contrary to the industrial plans, the upgrading process is based on the existing (industrial) urban network [4].



**Figure 3.** The plan of the Osthafen Behala on the background of the Spree River Area. The numbers 12-19 mark the old and new buildings of the harbour (brown colour: the new realised projects). The yellow colour means streets and pedestrian spaces. Sources: Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Berlin, 2011



**Figure 4.** The old substance of the Osthafen Behala: the historical granaries functioning now as offices. (On the right): The old crane. In front the metal and concrete riverbank of the Spree River is to be seen. Photo: The author



**Figure 5.** The Osthafen Behala. On the right: The historical granary re-used for the media building. In the background: The new structure with office functions. Photo: The author

In 2003 The Berlin Harbour Company (Behala) was structurally transformed into a private company. Until 2005 the re-used site, which was still called Osthafen Behala, had a kind of an unofficial main industrial square. This open area might be maintained in order to create the site's main outdoor area, and is located favourably as far as the surrounding cityscape is concerned. Moreover, it might serve as a



**Figure 6.**  
Cranes of the East Harbour in Berlin in front (on the right).  
In the background: living houses of the neighbourhood.  
Photo: The author

footpath and a typical meeting point.

The open space now constitutes more than half of the entire area. However, the involved footpaths must cope with vehicular traffic, which continues to increase on the site in place of the original railway traffic. The open area is limited in the urban sense by the road to the north and the river to the south. Such a geographic and urban layout creates optimal conditions for new recreational functions. Presently, however, these advantages are not used because the riverbank, which is exposed to the sun, now serves as a parking area for cars, effectively preventing any recreational use.

Of significant value are the former listed industrial buildings, i.e. the two granaries, the workers' canteen, the administration building, which constitute the local heritage and exist as land marks in the district.

Additionally, the form of the current open space is still shaped by industrial facilities (devices), as the brick crane and the coal crane, which were, however, partially disassembled in 2007 [5]. Other original elements had already been removed by 2006, i.e. the heavy loading crane and the petrol station.

The Freiladeplatz and the Kohlenlagerplatz open space areas are also significant. Yet, the adaptive reuse and re-integration plan proposes that these spaces serve as sites for new architecture, which will change the historical structure and the southern cityscape of the area. In 2002 the former granaries were finally upgraded into the Osthafen Speicher office building and the Music Central commercial and office building, and have new owners. In contrast to the other historical buildings, however, the Music Central is not listed, which has resulted in a new

image that differs from the original one. Another renovated structure is the former granary which presently functions as the MTV Gebäude media office, which officially was opened in 2004.

These relics of the Osthafen Behala site are becoming particularly valuable in the light of the past. Appropriate and careful building preservation with the necessary technical improvements will create a historical architectural image, and attract visitors to the regained open space along the riverbank.

The re-used granaries are neither spatially nor functionally connected with each other. They constitute isolated and independent forms. The only connecting element is the open space of the entire harbour and the history of the area as expressed by the typical building style.



**Figure 7.**  
New open space of the riverside in the harbour area Osthafen Behala – presently in creation. In the past the goods were here stored from the ships. Photo: The author



**Figure 8.**  
The former industrial space of the Osthafen Behala adapted for the open space, used today by the inhabitants for walking. On the right: the new building mixed in the cityscape with the old renovated structures. Moreover: on the right and on the left: The former railways for the cranes: today left unused. Photo: The author



**Figure 9.**  
The “old” and “new” on the Osthafen Behala: The cityscape of Berlin’s East Harbour. The new office building (on the left) and the listed granary as the media building (in the middle). Photo: The author



**Figure 10.**  
The present view of the Osthafen Behala: old substance mixed with the new one. From the left: The old granary with the new facades modernised as a commercial building, the historical granary re-used for offices and a new hotel. On the right deep: The new office building and listed granaries functioning as offices and services. Photo: The author

#### 4. SUMMARY

Among many interesting remarks inspired by the researched case, on the background of the harbour in London and Hamburg, some positive and negative

aspects shall be mentioned.

The area of Osthafen Behala in Berlin owns a certain wealth of local values. Its spatial and visual potential is today serving well to town inhabitants.

Ongoing architectural improvement of historical factories is constantly enlarging the popularity of the harbour.

New functions of services, commerce, culture and work settled in already recovered granaries on the site enable a rich public activity.

There are as well some negative features of the area, one of which are the architectural changes since 2005. These changes are increasingly visible with the time.

The functionally adapted space is being transformed also into a commercial area, where the new buildings hide the local values of historical objects. Therewith the original genius loci of the former industrial area is being destroyed. Similar menaces are to be recognised in the London Dockland and in the HafenCity in Hamburg, where the size of these areas is larger than of the Osthafen Behala in Berlin. Although there the loss of vernacular values is similar, considering the amount of new spaces compared with the left old one.

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