

## **Bridges in Berlin - before and after the reunification**

**Prof. Dr. Sigrun Prah**  
**University of Applied Science, Krefeld, Germany**

### **Abstract**

Bridges connect places not only physically, but - especially in a formerly divided country - symbolically. In the case of Berlin, Germany, several bridges were no connections but physical symbols of separation for 28 years. They were located on the former border of West and East Germany and therefore not in function anymore for years but cut off by walls.

Three bridges in Berlin will be explored in terms of symbolic meaning and function. All three bridges were located not only between banks but between countries and political systems, between east and west.

The Glienicker Brücke is located on the historic route no. 1 and connects Berlin and Potsdam passing over the river Havel. During the cold war, this was the place where spies from east and west were exchanged. The bridge has appeared respectively was rebuilt in several spy movies.

The Bornholmer Brücke connecting the two Berlin neighbourhoods Prenzlauer Berg and Wedding over train tracks was the symbol for the opening of the wall on the evening of November 9th, 1989. This is where thousands of people first walked from the east to the west on that very evening and on the days to follow.

The Oberbaumbrücke connects the two neighbourhoods Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain over the river Spree. It is a symbol for the unification not only of two cities and two systems but also of two neighbourhoods which form one neighbourhood now. The streetcar that was disconnected by the wall has been reconnected, and the bridge is known for the symbol of reunification, a moving neon sign of two shaking hands.

These three bridges now connect people and landscapes physically and symbolically, and they continue to be a reminder of the cold war, the separation of two countries and of the reunification.