



Figure 8.44 Federation Square, Melbourne. (a) The plan and (b) a general view.

the open space. This neglect of the intentions of a design directive shows that unless they are highly specific they can be easily avoided.

At the time of this study (2004) the last remaining open site on the Platz is that occupied by the United States Embassy before World War II. A design for the site (by Moore Ruble Yudell of Santa Monica and Gruen Associates of Los Angeles) was proposed but for security reasons, after the 1998 bombing of the United States Embassy in Nairobi, the United States Government does not wish to meet the requirement of building to the property line – a requirement put in place to make the square an enclosed space. It wanted a 100-foot setback. Negotiations have taken place between embassy officials and the Berlin administration to resolve the impasse. Both groups wish to have the embassy in its traditional location to add prestige to the Platz and vice versa. Given this situation the Embassy has had the upper hand in the negotiations. A settlement has been reached whereby the setback will be considerably smaller than the United States government wanted and it will pay for the consequent design and

construction changes required in the surroundings.

The reactions to the square are mixed. Many architects (and the lay-public, I suspect) would have preferred to have had the modern glazed global glitziness of Potsdamer Platz. Perhaps the image sought by these critics was more like that of the Federation Square (completed in 2002; see Figure 8.44) in Melbourne (Dovey, 2004). That square is a *total* urban design in which formal and technonic inventions reign supreme within an anti-classical composition. Frank Gehry has found the Pariser Platz to be a little bit like a stage set' (Gehry, 2001). Daniel Libeskind was more scathing. He considers the guidelines to be 'anti-democratic' and 'authoritarian' and the results 'banal'. He does not seem to have commented on the square as an urban place or node. What the design does do is put the Brandenburg Gate on centre stage and makes the other buildings background. Few architects want to be painters of the background. The clash of values represents the conflict between private desires to be self-expressive and public interests in all urban design work.