

Position Paper – Cultural Aspects of Urbanity, Gender and Migration

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Staging the New Berlin

Obligatory literature concerning place marketing strategies in Berlin describes several tactics of urban actors in the city of Berlin after the Wall fall in 1989. Obligatory chapters deal with the methodological problems and implementation of place marketing strategies (Chapter 2), analysis of two specific sites as icons of the place marketing (Chapter 6) and political discourse with reaction on the development procedure, describing the transformation of the strategies of politicians towards the local citizens and tourists (Chapter 9). As a choice of obligatory reading followed, I chose an article of Elsa Vivant – *How underground culture changes Paris*.

Place marketing and the notions of cultural sociology have been quite surprising connection for me, because I considered place marketing as a policy strictly economically oriented. I can only assume it was influenced by my central-europe-centrism-point of view. I considered (from a laic vision) place marketing as a tool for increasing profit of a city or a district. However, seeing the strategies of Berlin and partly one site of Paris, it is not only profit that marketing can increase. I would assume from the suggested reading, that the city development and restructuralization has been a main goal of both examples described in the literature.

In the case of Berlin, the specific socio-historical situation has led a motivation of place-marketing actors (citizens, politicians- local and national, global actors- international companies, civil sphere) to reinvent the symbol of Berlin as a meaningful spot on the map of the world. The strategies have differed in the past twenty years and the interests of different actors have been leading it. However, as the author claims, it was the two main motivations that led a transformation – power and deliberation [Colomb 2012]. This resulted into the unique culture-motivated place marketing strategy that built its face on visual image and attracted not only business actors, but also the tourists, artist and supported the development of „fringe“ culture. Even though the book doesn't stay with the assumption of the success story of restructuralization (critically points out the negative impact on the regular citizens), it is still very positively depicted transformation.

Much more sceptically towards the culture-led place marketing urban strategy sounds the description of the Parisien district La Chapelle- Stalingrad. The author describes how cultural center-the residents of artistic ateliers interacts with socially excluded background. As the article is quite old, it is not clear how the actual development ended up. However, it is probably not that successful as the Berlin story, as the gentrification process is made by the political interest and not

from the grass-roots movements as happened in the Berlin case (although it is not that clear which motivation was first – if the political powers, or the liberation euphoria attracting the youth from all Europe).

The topic itself is dealing with a problem of gentrification of the problematic areas and their transformation through certain order (strategy that is intentional, not spontaneous). As it is put in *Staging the New Berlin* the place marketing can be methodologically understood under certain concepts of sociological theory (the policy, the discourse, the imagery). Viewing it from the visionary cite in the Chapter 6 was very compelling. I would certainly want to read more about the commodification process which is a direct result of the “city celebrity“ like Berlin is. The understanding of the process of gentrification also needs to cover the opposite of the shiny and cool result – the increasing prices, the ghettoization of the poorer (as is very much visible on the Budapest case, where most of the Roma population – which is moreover visible and therefore threatening, becomes isolated on the edges of the city, or moves to the countryside, where their employment possibilities are downgraded).

Place marketing is in the mechanisms described in the literature only possible in the gentrified areas. Culture-led place marketing is therefore the only strategy seen as successful in this case. The reason behind is probably the possible connection of the local actors or the perpetuum mobile once created by the engagement of the creative class to the process. Using it as a universal tool can be, however excluding process of those, who find the high culture brought to the problematic area a symbol of pressure and inequality.

Colomb, C. (2011) *Staging the New Berlin. Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention post-1989*. London, New York: Routledge.

Vivant, E. (2009), ‘How underground culture is changing Paris’, *Urban Research & Practice*, 2(1): 36-52.