

SOC 576 Cultural Aspects of Migration, Urbanity and Gender

Barbora Novotná (344487)

Position paper

Claire Colomb

Tölle, A. 'Urban identity policies in Berlin: From critical reconstruction to reconstructing the Wall'

In his article on urban identity policies in Berlin, Alexander Tolle classifies Berlin as a post-socialist city and tries to map its changing place marketing strategies from 1990 to 2010. Berlin, as well as other post-socialist cities, tried to get rid of the communist legacy radically and to merge the group of Western developed cities as soon as possible. However, it turned out that it is precisely the communist legacy, embodied by the wall, that makes Berlin attractive to businesses and tourists alike.

This made people responsible for city marketing change the strategy and include the narrative of a divided city in the image of Berlin. The reemergence of the post-socialist narrative is clearly symbolized by the reemergence of the Berlin Wall that was razed to the ground on most places first, but then reappeared on such symbolically heavy places as the Potsdamer Platz.

It is arguable whether or not Berlin is a post-socialist city. While being a part of the former Soviet block, it definitely has a different position which is closer to Western global cities than other post-communist capitals, e.g. Prague. The vicinity of West German investors who found it sensible to invest in Berlin urban development may have done so by feeling that it actually always has been a part of West Germany. Therefore, it is possible to consider Berlin a post-socialist city, but a very exceptional one.

With its concept of place identity which puts emphasis on the role of inhabitants who narrate its story, Tolle creates space for interpreting the turn in Berlin image as an aspect of its history that was not possible to neglect and needed to be told, rather than a strategic step of place marketers. In general, Tolle stays in balance between the planned and consciously created image of the city and the one created naturally by its inhabitants.

Tölle, A. (2010) 'Urban identity policies in Berlin: From critical reconstruction to reconstructing the Wall', *Cities*, 27(5): 348–57.

